THE TOPOS OF UNHOMELINESS:

REPRESENTATIONS OF HOME AND HOMELAND IN CHINESE AMERICAN AND TIBETAN CHINESE LITERATURE

by

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The dissertation is dedicated to the people from ethnic minorities.

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KEHAN MEI, MA

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This dissertation studies the representations of home and homeland in the literary works of some major writers in Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese literature. The chosen writers include Amy Tan, Frank Chin, Ha Jin, Yan Geling, Zhaxi Dawa, Alai, Pema Tseden, and Takbum Gyel. By examining their fictional and non-fictional works, this dissertation explores an interesting phenomenon: even as the writers are in their homes, they are (un)consciously haunted by a sense of homelessness, which has formed a major theme in their literary works. According to the current scholarship of Asian American and Tibetan Chinese literature, the anxiety over home for Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers comes from different sources. While for the former is rooted in their ancestral home, for the latter is derived from the loss of traditional home. This dissertation argues that the anxiety over home for both ethnic groups is much more complicated than it is recognized. For the Chinese American writers, the anxiety figures in literary representations of Tan's disharmonious home, Chin's estranged home, Ha Jin's transitional homeland, and Yan's dualistic homeland. In those representations, the home loses its

homeliness in the conflict between the mother and daughter, the dispute between the father and son, the rootless movement from filiation to affiliation, and the fruitless search for an ideal home. For the chosen Tibetan Chinese authors, the anxiety is represented as Zhaxi Dawa's hybrid homeland, Alai's universal homeland, Pema Tseden's incompatible home, and Takbum Gyel's transitional homeland. In those writers' works, the home loses its simplicity, uniqueness, harmony, and authenticity as a result of the hybridity of primitivity and modernity, the merge into modern history, the confrontation between tradition and modernity, and the transition from the old era to the new one. By analyzing the images of home and homeland in the two ethnic minority groups' literature, the dissertation argues that the home plays different roles in the two group of writers' writing careers. For Chinese American writers, it is like a haunting ghost, which stimulates both love and hate; for Tibetan Chinese writers, it is a changing muse, whose transformations make it difficult for them to show their love for it. The difference comes from the different nature of their identities and structures of feelings. Each group's identity consists of two parts: one natural and the other national. The dominant variant and the recessive variant of their identities are opposite. The opposite determinants of the dominant and the recessive variants are responsible for different representations of home and homeland in the Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers' works.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2003, there appeared a poem in Chinese literary circles, which attracted considerable attention from critics. It reads like a love poem:

> All my words are the words of searching/All my journeys are the journeys of searching/What am I searching for?/I cherish your name by heart/I hope to see you in my dream/I memorize every word you whisper to me/They bring me your breath, your heart beats/Like home and family/Like another me/They will live with me in my lifetime.[1]

This poem by Ciren Weise, a female Tibetan poet and writer, is filled with the sentiments of passionate affection, yet it is not a love poem for any particular person. The "you" addressed by the persona "I" is her homeland, Tibet. When writing the poem, the poet was living in Tibet. Thus, the theme of missing home appears rather bewildering. One cannot help wondering why she misses home when she is physically living there. What is she searching for? Yan Geling, a female Chinese American writer, expresses a similar sentiment about her homeland when she says, "I suffer from nostalgia when I am outside of China, but I also feel nostalgic when I return to Beijing. I often speak to myself that I have no home, and my home is where my heart dwells peacefully."[2] She uses the term "nostalgia" to describe her feeling about her homeland. If she has this feeling when she is outside of her homeland, it is understandable that she misses it. What perplexes us is that whether in China or outside of China, she is nostalgic. What is the cause for her attitude toward her homeland? There is little doubt that both writers, despite being physically at home, are haunted by a sense of homelessness or an anxiety over home. Why do they share a similar feeling about their homelands? Within modern continental thinking, philosophers like Martin Heidegger have initiated a poignant discourse about the meanings of homeland and homelessness. Against this background, I wish to explore the problem of homelessness within the two female writers' words. Is their anxiety similar in spirit to the Heideggerian term, "the unhomely," the essence of the human being?

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[1] Weise, *The Notes of Tibet* (Guangzhou: Huacheng Publishing House, 2003), 354. The poem has not English version. It is translated by me.

[2] Shi Jianfeng, "Yan Geling: Being the One Living outside," *China Writer* (Mar. 30, 2009), accessed February 20, 2021. http://www.Chinawriter.com.cn/2009/2009-03-30/70118.html.

Point of Departure for the Dissertation

Home(land) seems to be a permanent topic in world literature, especially in ethnic minority literature. All ethnic minority writers in the world are preoccupied, even obsessed, with writing about their homelands and native cultures. Nevertheless, in ethnic minority literature, the writing of home(land) usually mixes with a feeling of pain. From the two writers' words mentioned above, we can feel the pain in Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese literary works. Being a Chinese living in the US now, I am interested in the people who have natural connections with me. I wonder why Tibetan Chinese living in Tibet try to search for their homeland and why Chinese Americans, whether living in China or America, feel that they have no home. What is wrong with their sense of home? Is it because of the same reason that makes them suffer from this common anxiety over home? Do they share similar ideas regarding their homelands? What is the meaning of homeland for them? These questions about homeland constitute the focus of this dissertation.

2020 and 2021 seem to be two special years for both groups of people. In these years, they suddenly became the public focuses in America and China. As the pandemic started, in 2020, the racism against Asian Americans, especially Chinese Americans, has gone from bad to worse. In 2021, Marvel Studios released *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings,* the first Marvel film with an Asian lead (a Chinese lead). In November 2020, Tenzing Tsondu, a Tibetan shepherd who only spoke Tibetan and knew little about Mandarin, started a craze for Tibet and Tibetan culture in China. His innocent smile attracted and is still captivating people from other ethnic groups to come to his homeland, Litang, a small town in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. These events caught my attention as well. They have deepened my sense of certainty in choosing the home and homeland writings of the two ethnic groups as the topic of my dissertation. Through the analyses of the similarities and differences of the two groups of writers who write about their home(land), we can acquire a deep understanding of their social status as well as their mentality as ethnic minorities living in America and China.

Literature Review and Dissertation Topic

In 1974, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* edited by Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong came into public attention. Since then, Asian American literature has become a literary field where numerous scholars and critics devote their time and energy to Asian American studies. In the scholarship of Asian American literature, the common themes are usually race, culture, and identity politics. With the increase of the works written by Asian American writers, this literary field started to tie to other fields, such as feminism, queer studies, translation studies, postcolonialism, and psychoanalysis. For instance, Sau-ling C. Wong and Jeffery J. Santa Ana, in "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature" (1999), highlight the bond between Asian American ethnicity and gender. Karin Auilar-San Juan, in "Landmarks in Literature by Asian American Lesbians" (1993), discusses the phenomenon of homosexuality in Asian American literature. In "The Gendered Subject of Human Rights: Asian American Literature as Postcolonial Intervention" (1999), Leslie Bow illustrates Asian American subjectivity demonstrated in Asian American literary works in terms of postcolonialism. Martha J. Cutter, in "An Impossible Necessity: Translation and the Recreation of Linguistic and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Chinese American Literature" (1997), examines the relationship between language and race in Asian American literature. Richard Jean So does a similar study in his "Collaboration and Translation: Lin Yutang and the Archive of Asian American Literature" (2008). David Leiwei Li interprets the identity of Asian Americans with psychoanalytic terms in his "The State and Subject of Asian American Criticism: Psychoanalysis, Transnational Discourse, and Democratic Ideals" (2003). Whatever those scholars and critics try to reveal through their research, they all aim to make their audience aware of the problematic status of Asian Americans' existence in America. Although they subdivide and fractionize Asian Americans' existential predicament into issues related to gender, sexuality, language, social status, and psychology and make the audience understand the complexity of Asian Americans' existential anxiety, they forget to look back to the origin of their predicament and anxiety. In other words, they have overlooked the fact that the sufferings and pains Asian Americans experience come from the same place: their home. Here, the home means not only the individual home but also the collective home, the homeland. All the issues Asian

Americans face in their life happen in the home or are brought by the home. Of course, there are a few scholars whose study focus on home and homeland. But they set their eyes on the ancestral home, which cannot fully reveal the depths of Asian American writers' feelings for home and homeland. For instance, Jean M. Amato's *The Representation of Ancestral Home and Homeland in Chinese American Fiction (1960-1990s)* (2005) is a case in point. The book mainly discusses Chinese Americans' ancestral homeland, China, and barely covers representations of home in America.

In Tibetan Chinese literature, there is a similar situation. Tibetan belles-lettres began in the thirteenth century and was modernized in the 1980s.[3] Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani call contemporary Tibetan literature "the new Tibetan literature," which is the subject matter of half of my dissertation. In their reading, contemporary Tibetan writers tend to depict the juxtaposition of land and cityscapes to convey temporal concerns: "The passage of time may be more concretely known or experienced through the physical changes in places…A geographically remote place awakens the memory of remote times."[4][5] They borrow David Der-wei Wang's "anticipatory nostalgia" to describe the Tibetan writers' emotion for their homeland and believe that the unnamed pains in those writers' blood is caused by their fear of losing their original home, traditional Tibet. In the meantime, they also stress that contemporary Tibetan literature often points to the past, when the traditional Tibet was still in its heyday. In their interpretations, Tibetan Chinese's existential predicament and anxiety come from the loss of the past homeland. However, like the conclusion given by the scholars studying home and homeland in Asian American literature, their conclusion is not comprehensive enough to address what modern Tibetans are concerned about. The meaning of home for modern Tibetans has been changed. It is not only the past homeland but also the present one. Modern Tibetan writers never try to confine themselves and their people within this past glory. They do not aim to draw their

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[3] Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, "Introduction," *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), xx.

[4] Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, "Introduction," xxiii.

[5] Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 54-55.

people back to the past through their literary words. Instead, they focus their literary creation on the current home, where they are living.

The lack of interest in the significance of the home in the scholarship of Chinese American literature and the inadequate interpretation of the themes of the home in both scholarships of Chinese American literature and Tibetan Chinese literature have motivated me to explore the images of the home in both areas and its relationships with both ethnic groups. For my dissertation, I have decided to focus on selected representative writers from the two areas. From Chinese American literature, I have selected four writers, Amy Tan and Frank Chin, who were born and grew up in the US, and Ha Jin and Ya Geling, who were born in China but emigrated to the US. From Tibetan Chinese literature, I have also chosen four writers, Zhaxi Dawa and Alai, who wrote their literary works in Chinese, and Pema Tseden and Takbum Gyel, who wrote in Tibetan language. All the eight writers have written fictional works with the themes of home and homeland. In Amy Tan's and Frank Chin's works, the home is the center of conflicts and disintegrations and the battlefield of the war between the mother and daughter or the father and son. In Ha Jin's and Ya Geling's works, it becomes the origin of the protagonists' mental sufferings. In Zhaxi Dawa's and Alai's works, the home is a place of chaos, in which everyone tries to find a way out. In Pema Tseden's and Takbum Gyel's works, it becomes the scene of the conflicts between the father and the mother on the one hand and dogs and humans on the other. Yet why are these ethnic minority writers preoccupied with the themes of home and homeland? Why do these writers portrait their homes with an ambiguous and even negative tone? Do their unfavorable attitudes toward home and homeland come from what is related to the home? If yes, what significance does their preoccupation with the home have for their sense of identity and subjectivity? How do their attitudes affect their literary imagination and creativity? These are some of the major issues that this dissertation seeks to probe.

Although there are many studies about ethnic minorities' descriptions of home in literature, the comparative study of home in Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers' thinking is a neglected area in literary scholarship. American and Chinese scholars and critics in the two fields—Chinese American literature and Tibetan Chinese literature—have done excellent work in studying the writers and their works respectively, but the connection between the two

groups has received little attention. This neglect has made us blind to the inner world of ethnic minorities in America and China and existential struggles for social recognition and survival as they live on the fringes of the main cultures. To fill up the vacuum, I work on the literary representations of home and homeland in Chinese American literature and Tibetan Chinese literature as the topic of the dissertation, which is a comparative study of the eight writers' literary writings of home and homeland.

Aims, Scope, and Approach

My dissertation aims to reveal how the writing of home and homeland is related to ethnic minorities' thinking of their being and identity. I compare and contrast issues of ethnicity, ethnic culture, subjectivity, and ethnic identity and their relationships with the conception of home in the chosen Chinese American writings and similar issues and relationships in the chosen Tibetan Chinese writings. For the analytic materials, I have chosen Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), Frank Chin's *Gunga Din Highway* (1994), Ha Jin's *A Free Life: A Novel* (2007), and Yan Geling's *The Human Realm* (1998) for my case study of Chinese American writers, and selected Zhaxi Dawa's *The Restless Shambhala* (1993), Alai's *The Epic of Root Village* (2018), Pema Tseden's *Balloon* (2019), Takbum Gyel's dog serial for my case study of Tibetan Chinese writers.

As a tentative thesis for the dissertation, I argue that the home plays different roles in Chinese American literature and Tibetan Chinese literature: the haunting ghost in the former and the changing muse in the latter. In terms of sweeping generalization, the Chinese in the US and the Tibetans in China face different existential problems, which make their anxieties take on distinct forms. The social identity of Chinese Americans was built upon the identity of those Chinese immigrants who came to America as coolies in the nineteenth century. Their life on the margins is the origin of anxiety in the mind of the Chinese in America. What they are worried about most is whether or not the homeland to which they have immigrated can be their home. Consequently, they care about whether they could be welcomed by the mainstream society and recognized by the majority. In other words, they care about whether they would be welcomed by the current homeland where they dwell. In this sense, their ethnic anxiety is embodied in their

fear of being unable to get out of their peripheral existence and the possibility of being permanently excluded from the social center. I call this structure of feelings the periphery-phobic anxiety. In this anxiety, Chineseness, Chinese culture, Chinese identity, and other signs of Chinese Americans' differences become major issues in their personal struggle to achieve American identity and in their literary representations of characters who struggle to enter the American social and cultural center.

Within a different context, Tibetan Chinese's anxiety displays itself in the opposite form. I name it center-phobic anxiety. Tibetan Chinese are born, grow up, and live on Chinese soil. Their families, from generation to generation, never leave China. Chinese people have gotten used to their existence. These Tibetan Chinese are unlike Chinese Americans, whose low social status and invisibility seem to be related to their ethnicity, Chineseness. Their anxiety is not the anxiety about the absence of the opportunity to enter the center, or about the unacceptance by the homeland. Their problem is the oblivion of their ethnicity, made possible by the totality of the mainstream culture in China and its modernization. In the process of being assimilated into the mainstream culture, Tibetans have been losing their unique ethnicity—their homeland is no longer the muse with the unique aura. To maintain their uniqueness, Tibetan Chinese writers intentionally highlight their ethnic origin, ethnic culture, and ethnic identity to distinguish their group from the modern Han culture. Hence, what they emphasize in their writing of home is to break the influence of the center and escape from the center.

In my dissertation, I divide Chinese American writers into the American-born and new immigrant writers. The American-born writers, like Amy Tan, Frank Chin, and others, usually write in English, the dominant language in America, because of their unfamiliarity with their native language, Chinese. The new immigrant writers, like Ha Jin, Yan Geling, and others, are different. They prefer to write both in Chinese and English. Similarly, Tibetan Chinese writers are divided into the Sinophonic and Tibetophonic writers. Since they grew up in inland China and are unfamiliar with their native language, Tibetan, the Sinophonic writers, such as Zhaxi Dawa and Alai, use Mandarin, the dominant language in China, as the medium for their works. The Tibetophonic writers, such as Pema Tseden and Takbum Gyel, growing up in their homeland, Tibet, prefer to present their works in their native language, Tibetan, even though they

might be good at Mandarin. We can see the similarities between the two groups through their different choices of language: the American-born writers and Sinophonic writers are naturally monolingual. English and Mandarin are the only languages in the places where they grew up, so they have to write their works in the dominant languages. But the new immigrant writers and Tibetophonic writers have more options in their literary career. For instance, Ha Jin and Yan Geling know both Chinese and English, and Pema Tseden and Takbum Gyel know both Tibetan and Mandarin. Nevertheless, their choices of writing language are different. The new immigrant writers are bilingual writers who stand between Chinese and English, while Tibetophonic writers are the self-identified monolingual writers for whom Tibetan is their first choice.[6]

Chapter Overview

The dissertation consists of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 examines the characteristics of home and homeland in the four Chinese American writers' works. The home(land) in their works is characterized by different features. It is disharmonious in Amy Tan's works, estranged in Frank Chin's works, transitional in Ha Jin's works, and dualistic in Yan Geling's works. The diverse writing of home and homeland reveals those writers' thinking of their ethnic identity and presents the problems in the construction of their identity.

Chapter 2 examines the writing of home in the American-born writers' literary works. Specifically, it mainly discusses Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Frank Chin's *Gunga Din Highway.* In these two works, Tan and Chin depict their homes divided into two worlds: the mother's world, constructed with ideas and elements of Chinese culture, Chinese family, and traditional motherhood, and the daughter's world, constituted by ideas and elements from American culture, American family, and American daughterhood; the father's world, the world of Charlie Chan, full of ideas about how to be the model minority, and the son's world, the world of Chinaman, filled with the expectations and wishes of being the new Chinese American. The confrontations and conflicts between the two worlds in these works constantly bring anxiety to

[6] Even though Pema Tseden also writes his works in Mandarin, all his film works are Tibetan-language films.

the characters and endow their literary works with tension, richness, and subtlety. In Tan's section, Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia offers insights to explore the disharmonious home. In Chin's section, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's thinking of family romance can unveil the myth of the estrangement between the father and the son.

Chapter 3 focuses on the works of the new immigrant writers and mainly discusses two novels, Ha Jin's *The Free Life* and Yan Geling's *The Human Realm*. Different from the American-born writers, who have adequate knowledge of American and Chinese cultures, the new immigrant writers' knowledge of the two cultures shows an asymmetrical disparity. They are Americans who are unfamiliar with American culture. They are not Chinese by citizenship but deeply understand the Chinese and Chinese culture. They write Chinese stories in English but hope to be understood by American readers. In Ha Jin and Yan Geling's novels, highlighting Chinese topics and avoiding American topics suggest a root-searching tendency in an alien setting. Their anxiety about the homeland reflects the writers' anxiety about their Chineseness, (un)consciously viewed as an obstacle to the center of America. To release himself from this anxiety, Ha Jin employs deconstructionism to deconstruct the original meaning of homeland and redefine it in his way in *The Free Life*. To demonstrate the dual homelessness, Yan Geling uses psychoanalytical knowledge to draw out how difficult a Chinese immigrant woman's life is if she attempts to survive in both China and America.

Chapter 4 explores the meanings of the home and homeland in the four Tibetan Chinese writers' works. In terms of distinctive features, Zhaxi Dawa's works are characterized by hybridity, Alai's works by universality, Pema Tseden's works by incompatibility, and Takbum Gyel's works by transitionality. Through a discussion of these features, we can learn that the writing of home and homeland in Tibetan writers' works is different from the writing in Chinese American writers' works. Chinese American writers hold a love-hate attitude towards their homeland, while Tibetan Chinese writers only show their love for their home(land). Their dissatisfaction with their home(land), which reflects their pain of homelessness, comes from the change brought to the land rather than the land itself.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Sinophonic writers and mainly discusses Zhaxi Dawa's *The Restless Shambhala* and Alai's *The Epic of Root Village*. In their writing of homeland, they

create two worlds: the modern world, characterized by modern ideas and technology, and the primeval world, featured with primitive ways of thinking and living; the rural world, informed by the history of the village, Root Village, and the urban world, presented by the invasion of the modern ideology. Both writers grew up in inland China. In their eyes, Tibet is a part of China, and its culture constitutes a part of Chinese culture. The image of Tibet should not be defined by eternal peace and purity. Their homeland also follows the steps of other places in China, experiencing the wash of the historical flood. They attempt to use the Tibet depicted in their works to break the stereotype of Tibet defined by the center culture. For my discussion, Homi Bhabha's conception of hybridity helps better understand Zhaxi Dawa's writing of homeland while Fredrich Nietzsche's thinking of human history provides me with insights into Alai's writing of homeland.

Chapter 6 targets the Tibetophonic writers and mainly discusses Pema Tseden's *Balloon* and Takbum Gyel's dog serial. The two writers were born and live in Tibetan culture. In their eyes, the home(land) is split into two worlds: the father's world sponsored by traditional religious beliefs, and the mother's world supported by modern feminism; the world of the dog featured with traditional virtues and merits, and the world of the man characterized by superficial modern humanity. In the splitting, their people experience existential dilemmas and spiritual conflicts. Facing the modern transformation of Tibetan culture and the gradual disappearance of Tibetanness in Tibetan people, the two writers display their anxiety about the loss of their unique existence in the modernity-centered society. The focus of their writings is on the Tibetan world, Tibetan culture, and Tibetan people. The highlighting of Tibetan culture in their writings suggests an intentional tendency to separate themselves from the center and to create their own world, the Tibetan world. For my discussion, I draw upon the Taoist notions of *yin* and *yang* to illustrate the relationship between modernity and tradition in Tibet in Pema Tseden's work and Martin Heidegger's thinking of authenticity and inauthenticity to illustrate the relationship in Takbum Gyel's works.

The conclusion compares and contrasts the similarities and differences in the eight writers' perceptions and conceptions of home and homeland. True, they all have a sense of homelessness in their writing of home and homeland, but the two groups of writers' feelings and

emotions towards the homeland are quite different. These differences come from the structure of feelings emanating from their ethnic identity, where the visibility and invisibility of the two parts of their identities directly decide their attitudes towards their homelands and their thinking of it. I tentatively suggest that the writings of home and homeland in the literary works of Chinese American writers and Tibetan Chinese writers display a common phenomenon, i.e., the search for cultural roots in ethnic minority literature. In contrast to the writers in the mainstream culture, the ethnic minority writers always turn back to their original culture and attempt to resolve the anxiety of their existence through literary creation. With their writings, they attempt to depict the existential difficulties of human beings and highlight the predicament of the existence of their groups. Their writing of home is, thus, not only a discursive practice for the ethnic minority writers to create their own world, restore their ethnic culture, reconstitute their subjectivity, and remold their ethnic identity, but it also serves as a therapeutic procedure for those ethnic minority writers to mitigate their anxiety and resolve social, moral, intellectual, and emotional problems so that their being can be re-confirmed.

CHAPTER 1

OBSESSION WITH HOME AND HOMELAND:

THE HAUNTING GHOST IN CHINESE AMERICAN WRITERS' WRITING CAREER

In this opening chapter, I am going to examine a fundamental issue that lies at the root of the major Chinese American writers' literary career and offers an overview of its impact on their creative activities. This fundamental issue is their obsession with home and homeland, which appears like a haunting ghost in their literary and non-literary works. This haunting ghost is not only the demon in Goethe's conception of creativity that constantly inspires them to engage in creative efforts but also the storehouse of creative resources and materials for their fiction, poetry, and essays.

Home is traditionally viewed by Chinese people as their physical and spiritual dwellings, in which one lives and from which one comes. From it, one learns who he is, where he comes from, and which group he belongs to. It offers one the sense of belonging and certainty, within which one can feel safe, happy, and peaceful. It is the only place that is permanent there, welcoming one's stay and return. Ironically, in Chinese American literature, home is never the place depicted above but a problematic place that is the center of external and internal conflicts. This phenomenon is duly reflected in some major Chinese American writers' life and literary career. In Amy Tan's works, it is the battlefield of the war between mother and daughter, in which they "both won and lost" and are "not sure what the battle was."[1] In Frank Chin's works, it is the site of estrangement between father and son, in which they live in different worlds. When the son's world comes in contact with the father's, they just destroy each other.[2] In Ha Jin's works, it has a feature of transitionality. It is not fixed and necessarily related to the original homeland, where you were born and grow up. As he says, "Your homeland is any place, preferably the place where you die. … the homeland is no longer a place that exists in one's past

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[1] Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 46.

[2] Victor G. Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ'— A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 388.

but a place also relevant to one's present and future."[3] In Yan Geling's works, it has a feature of duality, which means that home is not a singular noun. This duality splits Yan and the characters in her works physically and spiritually and determines the duality in their nature. As she says, "No matter in China or America, I am the marginalized, who is excluded from the mainstream… Therefore, I have nostalgia when being outside of China, and I also feel nostalgic when returning to Beijing. I often speak to myself that I have no home, and my home is where my heart dwells peacefully."[4]

Why are Chinese American writers so obsessed with their home and homeland? Why and how do their home and homeland become problematic? As a matter of fact, their obsessions are the manifestations of Chinese Americans' physical, emotional, and spiritual homelessness: for the American-born Chinese, such as Amy Tan and Frank Chin, their home is lost in the conflict between who they are and who they should be; for the new immigrant Chinese, their homeland is lost for the uncertainty of the home: they have no idea where their home is and where they should belong. Because of the multiple sense of loss, the Chinese American writers are inevitably caught up in the obsession with home and homeland. As a consequence, the obsession is the embodiment of Chinese Americans' identity crisis, which makes them unsure about who they are or should be and where they belong. The haunting ghost of identity crisis stimulates and pushes Chinese American writers to engage in a quasi-therapeutic process to write about their pains of homelessness in their literary works and makes home and homeland one of the most significant themes of Chinese American literature. The following will discuss how the four Chinese American writers, Amy Tan, Frank Chin, Ha Jin, and Yan Geling, write about their senses of home and homeland in their works and how they express Chinese Americans' ethnic anxiety through their depictions of their protagonists' obsession with home and homeland.

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[3] Ha Jin, "An Individual's Homeland," *The Writer as Migrant* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 65.

[4] Shi Jianfeng, "Yan Geling: Being the One Living outside," accessed August 15, 2020, http://www.Chinawriter.com.cn/2009/2009-03-30/70118.html.

Home for the American-Born Chinese Writers: What Should the Home be?

In Chinese American literature, there are two groups of writers in whose writings home is demonstrated in different forms and becomes problematic for different reasons. What makes them question their home differs from group to group. In the American-born writers' works, such as in Amy Tan and Frank Chin's works, home is broken in the disharmony and estrangement between the old and young generations of Chinese Americans. It is the generational conflict in the thinking of who they should be that tears the home apart and makes the American-born Chinese homeless. The home becomes the field of the disharmony between the mother and daughter and the site of the estrangement between the father and the son.

Home in Amy Tan's Works: A Place of Discord

For Amy Tan, the home is too Chinese to allow her and her protagonists to be the Americans. This Chinese home makes her confused about who she is and draws her from her self-identification as an American. Tan knows that she cannot be an American without her Chinese heritage, but the Chineseness in her blood cannot represent everything in her life. She, at first, is an American. "Chinese" is the adjective that modifies the noun, American. She should have it but cannot live for it, like what her mother and the mothers in her novels do. The conflict in the thinking of Chineseness between the mother and the daughter directly causes the disharmony in their home and makes both the mother and the daughter have no feeling of being-at-home.

Superficially, the disharmony is demonstrated by the daily conflicts between the mother and the daughter. In her six novels, *The Joy Luck Club* (1987), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2000), and *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2009), and *The Valley of Amazement* (2013), Tan shows her obsession in writing the conflicts between mother and daughter. The conflicts cover a gallery of mothers and daughters: the four daughters and mothers in *The Joy Luck Club,* Pearl and her mother Winnie in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Kwan and her younger sister Olivia in *The Hundred Secret Senses*, Ruth and her mother Lu Ling in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Bibi Chen and Sweet Ma in *Saving Fish from Drowning*, Violet and her two mothers, Lulu Mimi and Magic Gourd in *The Valley of*

Amazement. In each of the conflicts, the mother-daughter relationship is presented in an irreconcilable tension. The mother and the daughter are always on the two opposite poles. They contradict each other in their ways of thinking, life, and love. When describing the mother-daughter relation, Tan writes, "In a way, this is how it's been with my mother and me ever since. We both won and we both lost, and I'm still not sure what our battle was."[5] She uses the term "battle" to describe the relationship between the mother and the daughter, which indicates their home, no matter for the mother or the daughter, is not the origin of safety, happiness, and spiritual peace, but the battlefield of the war between them.

The mother and daughter seem to be the "permanent" enemy for each other at home. Both are not the mother and daughter they expect. At the beginning of Tan's first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, when a woman imagines her future daughter, she says,

> In America I will have a daughter just like me. But over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan—a creature that became more than what was hoped for.[6]

In this statement, the mother imagines her ideal daughter, who will speak perfect American English and be mentally like her, like the Chinese. She will happily accept the gift, the swan, from her mother. It represents not only the mother's "good intentions" but also her original homeland, China. In Tan's novels, all the immigrant mothers have such a beautiful dream about their daughters, who should have a perfect American appearance and an intact Chinese soul. In Tan's family, this combination of the outer American and inner Chinese was also the life philosophy with which her parents cultivated her and her brothers. In her parents' words, "We should always think like a Chinese person but we should always speak perfect English so we can take advantage of circumstance."[7]

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[5] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 46.

[6] Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 1.

[7] E. D. Huntley, *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 2.

However, the daughter is never the daughter whom the mother expects. She is too American to understand and accept her mother's Chineseness, which, in her eyes, is the origin of her self-abasement and shamefulness. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Jing-mei speaks out her feelings about her mother,

> She and Auntie An-mei were dressed up in funny Chinese dresses with stiff stand-up collars and blooming branches of embroidered silk sewn over their breasts. These clothes were too fancy for real Chinese people, I thought, and too strange for American parties. In those days, before my mother told me her Kweilin story. I imagined Joy Luck was a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war.[8]

In this narration, it is easy to read the daughter's anxiety about the Chineseness in her mother and auntie. Jing-mei does not understand why her mother and auntie make themselves so different from other American mothers. For her, their costumes and behaviors are eccentric, either too "fancy" or too "strange." Her mother's Chinese appearance makes her ashamed and embarrassed. Even their club is viewed as a stupid and alien secret gathering, which is for certain evil goals. Wendy Ho comments, "In living in the United States, Jing-mei assimilates certain stereotypical and racist views of the Chinese which alienate her from her own mother and heritage. She turns her mother and the other Joy Luck mothers into foreigners and exotics. These appropriated narratives and images, which reveal her own desire to acculturate and assimilate into white America as a model minority…"[9]

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the American daughter, Ruth, never shows any sympathy for her mother's difficulties in being an immigrant in America. She treats her mother in how other Americans treat the Chinese immigrants: disdaining her Chinese accent and traditional beliefs. For instance, the mother, LuLing, always speaks her poor English. She cannot even pronounce properly her daughter's name given by herself. The narrator says, "It used to mortify Ruth when she shouted for her up and down the block. 'Lootie! Lootie!' Why had her mother chosen a name with sounds she couldn't pronounce?"[10] Moreover, LuLing's Chinese

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[8] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 28.

[9] Wendy Ho, *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian Americans Mother-Daughter Writing* (Oxford: Altamira, 1999), 166.

[10] Amy Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001), 45.

superstitions make Ruth feel ashamed and self-abased. The mother often moves from house to house. The reason for her moving is nothing but her belief in Chinese *feng shui*. Whenever she believes the *feng shui* is not good, she will move. In fact, Tan's mother, Daisy Tan, also did the same thing. After her husband's and son's deaths, she moved the whole family from America to Switzerland to escape from the bad fortune. In addition, LuLing, believes in the ghost, especially the ghost of her mother, Precious Auntie. Whenever she makes a decision, she will force Ruth to ask Precious Auntie through Chinese sand writing. When asked why she and Ruth always clash with each other, she applies Chinese philosophy of five elements to answer the question: she and her daughter are different dragons, a fire dragon and a water dragon. Fire and water are opposite to each other in the philosophy. Therefore, their conflict is a result of nature rather than a family issue, which can be easily solved.

On the other hand, the mother is not the ideal American mother the daughter wants either. In *Saving Fish from Drowning*, Tan depicts the image of an ideal mother through Bibi Chan's voice,

> That night of the moon viewing I realized I would always be deficient in great feeling. It was because I never had a proper mother while I was growing up. A mother is the one who fills your heart in the first place. She teaches you the nature of happiness: what is the right amount, what is too much, and the kind that makes you want more of what is bad for you. A mother helps her baby flex her first feelings of pleasure. She teaches her when to later exercise restraint, or to take squealing joy in recognizing the fluttering leaves of the gingko tree, to sense a quieter but more profound satisfaction in chancing upon an everlasting pine. A mother enables you to realize that there are different levels of beauty, and therein lie the sources of pleasure, some of which are popular and ordinary, and thus of brief value, and others of which are difficult and rare, and hence worth pursuing.[11]

In the monologue, it is not hard to feel that the ideal mother, no matter for Tan or her protagonist, should be the daughter's tutor for and guide to happiness and pleasure rather than the one who brings about pains and sufferings. But the Chinese mother in her novels is always the origin of the American daughter's problems. Sweet Ma is described as the mother who tries to shape Bibi's mind, "pounding it like dumpling dough." She pushes upon Bibi her notion of good things—telling her to be glad that she is not as bare-dressed as a tree in winter, to be grateful that

[11] Amy Tan, *Saving Fish from Drowning* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), 32-33.

the little skeleton of a girl lying in a gutter is not her, to recognize that the shade of a willow tree in unbearable heat is a happy sacrifice she could make to those who were either older or younger than she is, which was everybody, as it always turned out.[12] The daughter does not follow what her mother says or orders "naturally" but is forced to accept it "carefully." In *The Kitchen God's Wife,* Pearl gives her comments on her relation to her mother: She feels that there is an enormous distance between her and her mother, which makes them cannot share the most important matters in their life. She and her mother always have different feelings about the same thing happening in their life. When she was fourteen, her father was died. She was too young to bear the pain arising from the loss of her father. She could not confront her father's body in the casket. Unlike her brother, she did not cry and was unwilling to see her father's body and say good-bye. These reactions, for her mother, Winnie, became the signs of her unfiliality and non-Chineseness. That is why Pearl says that everything—the flowers on the table, her mother's memories of her childhood, and the whole family— "everything feels like a sham, and also sad and true."[13] She feels suffocated by the meaningless gestures, old misunderstandings, and painful secrets between her and her mother.

The disharmony between the mother and daughter in the home is, in the final analysis, the manifestation of the disharmony between Chineseness and Americanness in their being, especially in the American daughter's being. In other words, the disharmony destroying the physical home is the embodiment of the disharmony ruining the spiritual home, the being. The American-born daughter's spiritual homelessness is different from the Chinese immigrant mother's, which is a sense of the gradual loss of Chineseness. The mother, who emigrated from China after her adulthood, still views China as her original homeland. It means that even though she is far from China, her being still dwells in Chinese culture and her soul is a Chinese soul. She knows and identifies that she is a Chinese, even if living in America and having the American nationality. But the daughter was born and grows up in America. America, rather than China, is the home in which her spirit dwells. She has an American being. But the mother still takes the old view to see the American-born daughter and believes that the daughter, like herself, has a

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[12] Tan, *Saving Fish from Drowning*, 33.

[13] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 34.

similar emotion to the original homeland, China. The mother believes that although her daughter is in America, she still belongs to China and Chinese culture. Chineseness will give the daughter the sense of belonging and safety. Tragically, for the American-born daughter, the pain of homelessness is derived from the loss of her Americanness. This loss is caused by the imposition of Chineseness to the daughter by the mother.

In Tan's understanding, the immigrant parents, like her own parents, are so naive to believe that their children can have both American identity and Chinese character.[14] It means one can live in America and keep her Chinese character intact. This misunderstanding makes the mother always push the daughter to learn Chinese language, manners, and culture, which, in the daughter's eyes, split her being, alienate her from American identity, eliminate her Americanness, and block her way to merge into the American mainstream. The daughter believes that it is Chineseness given by her mother that makes her homeless in her own home, America. Why should an American hold such an alien ethnicity and believe in such an alien culture that other Americans dislike and disdain? If she has Chinese character, how could she be an American? Who is she? Whom will she become? These questions become endless nightmares in her life. She is permanently trapped in her own identity crisis.

The daughter was born in America, was educated in American schools and universities, and makes friends with Americans. Of course, she is American. But the outside world is not nice to the ethnic other, like her. There are various stereotypes, such as the yellow peril and the model minority, reminding her of her Chinese identity. The yellow skin, Eastern appearance, and Chinese way of thinking and living have become the most sensitive things for her, from which she tries her best to escape. But in such a circumstance, her mother never understands her and continues forcing her to learn the culture and asking her to keep the ethnic affiliation, both of which will reinforce her sense of alienation and marginalization in American society and bring her the sense of homelessness. She tries her best to be an authentic American, but her mother becomes the one who endlessly reminds her of the inauthenticity of her American being.

That is why, in Tan's novels, the daughter always disdains her mother's Chinese thinking and beliefs. To display the daughter's disdainfulness, Tan intentionally depicts the mother as the

[14] Huntley, *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion*, 2.

symbol of traditional Chinese culture. For instance, the mother-like sister, Kwan, who always sees the ghosts that other people cannot see, has *yin* (ghostly) eyes; Sweet Ma is the first wife of a man who has concubines; Magic Gourd is a prostitute teacher in Shanghai who teaches the prostitutes how to serve men. For the daughters, their minds have been polluted by ancient and outdated Chinese beliefs and morals. Due to their "pure" Chineseness, no matter what they say and be it good or bad, their daughters always view it as "Chinese superstitions" or "Chinese traditions," which should be abandoned a long time ago. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Suyuan attempts to guide her daughter, Jing-mei, with ancient Chinese philosophy, "五行" (*wu xin*, the five elements). She comments, Jing-mei has too much water, which makes her flow in too many directions. That is why Jing-mei has started half a degree in biology, then half a degree in art, and then finishes neither when she goes off to work for a small advertising agency as a secretary, later becoming a copywriter.[15] But, for Jing-mei, her mother's life philosophy is only a Chinese superstition, which lacks scientific evidence. In *The Valley of Amazement*, after Violet is sold by her American mother's lover to a courtesan house in Shanghai, Magic Gourd becomes her mother. When Magic Gourd reminds Violet of the terrible situation that she was in and asks her to behave like a Chinese, Violet views her words as the persuasion of giving up her selfhood. She is unwilling to listen to what Magic Gourd says and insists that she is an American girl. She is different from Magic Gourd, who does not have the right to live her own life. Even though she appreciates Magic Gourd's protection, her gratitude is not respect. Violet still believes that she and Magic Gourd are different by race and national origin and they are unequal. She should be socially and spiritually higher than her Chinese mother.

Indeed, the homelessness manifested by the mother-daughter debate of whether Chinese Americans should have Chineseness is what Tan experiences in her own life, which motivates her to tirelessly write the mother-daughter and the Chineseness-Americanness conflicts in her novels. As E. D. Huntley writes in *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion*, "Like thousands of Asian Americans, Amy Tan spent her childhood years attempting to understand, as well as to come to terms with and to reconcile, the contradictions between her ethnicity and the dominant Western

[15] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 12.

culture in which she was being raised and educated."[16] She had a classic minority experience: at home, she was an untamed American teenager, who always resisted her traditional Chinese parents' expectations; at school, she was the Chinese other, who experienced the hostility from her white classmates. At home or in society, she is homeless. At that time, in her understanding, the alienation and otherization of Asian Americans in America were caused by Chinese culture, to which her parents, Daisy and John Tan, insisted on clinging. In her childhood and adolescence, a self-hate emotion haunted Tan. Huntley reveals that Tan still remembers that when she was a child, she pinched her nose with a clothespin for a week, hoping that by doing so she would Westernize her Asian nose. She even wished to change her alien appearance through plastic surgery. Furthermore, Tan felt "ashamed when people came over and saw her mother preparing food. She didn't make TV dinners and use canned foods. She used fresh vegetables and served fish with the heads still on."[17] For her, Chinese food culture was so alien and strange that it should not be a part of the life of an authentic American. All the otherness in the Chinese and Chinese culture makes her have no idea why her parents were so proud of the ethnicity and culture, which many Americans did not appreciate. She was also confused about why her parents wanted her to be an American girl with Chinese character. She did not believe that it was a proper way to be an American.

Home in Frank Chin's Works: A Place of Estrangement

If in Tan's writings, the home is too Chinese to help her and her protagonists become Americans, for Frank Chin, the home will be too Americanized to give him and his "Chinamen" an opportunity to be themselves. This Americanization is not the result of the Chinese's spontaneous mimicry of the whites, but the result of the whites' "racist love." It means that the home is shaped in the whites' gaze and formed in the standards set by the whites. In the given home, Chin and his Chinamen only can be the "Americans" defined by the whites rather than by themselves. Who they are in their mind conflicts with who they are in the real world. Tan

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[16] Huntley, *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion*, 2.

[17] Curt Schleier, "The Joy Luck Lady," *The Detroit News*. November 3, 1995, accessed May 27, 2020, http://detnews.com/menu/stories/23098.htm.

presents Chinese Americans' anxiety of home in the disharmony between the Chinese mother and American daughter, which is caused by their disagreement on who Chinese Americans should be: the Chinese in America or the pure Americans. Chin shows the anxiety in the estrangement between the Charlie Chan father and the Chinaman son, which is caused by their debate of who Chinese Americans should be: the Americanized Chinese or the Chinaman Americans. Since the father (Charlie Chan) and the son (Chinaman) conflict with each other in their concepts of Chinese American identity, the home is no longer the bridge that integrates them but the site of their estrangement. Their emotional and spiritual estrangement directly contribute to the disintegration of their physical home.

In Chin's novels, the fathers are always Charlie Chan or the sons of Charlie Chan, who are "sneaky, chickenshit, sissy, wishy-washy, wispy-voiced, lay-low, cold-blooded."[18][19] They are the "ideal" or prototypical Chinese in the Western gaze. Different from the mother in Tan's novels, whose Chineseness is in her blood and cannot be given up, the father in Chin's novels is proud of his non-Chineseness and satisfied with his achievements in being the "perfect" Americanized Chinese. In *Gunga Din Highway* (1994), Longman Kwan, the fourth son of Charlie Chan, is the Chinese Gunga Din, who enjoys himself in the stereotype given by white people and tries to lead his people to follow his steps.[20] He views being Charlie Chan, the model minority, as his lifelong goal. His great dream is to become the first Chinese to play Charlie Chan, who, in his eyes, is the "perfect" Chinese American and the "father" of Chinese Americans. Longman says to his wife, even though she is not a Christian, he still loves her. The

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[18] Charlie Chan first appeared in *The House Without a Key* (1925). He is described as "very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory-tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting." See Earl Derr Biggers, *The House Without a Key* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1925), 76.

[19] Frank Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 154.

[20] The title, Gunga Din Highway, is borrowed from a poem written by Rudyard Kipling, in which the poet depicts the sacrifice of an Indian watercarrier for the English colonizers. This borrowing is Chin's intentional design, which is used to criticize the Chinese, like Gunga Din, who betrays his people to help the colonizers to conquer his own homeland.

reason is that he, like Charlie Chan, will lead and save her. In his words, God, in the image of whites, has led whites to go on the right way. In the image of Charlie Chan, God appears as "the perfect Chinese American to lead the yellows to build the road to acceptance toward assimilation."[21] The assimilation, in his eyes, is the "sweet" assimilation, which can bring about acceptance and recognition.

In *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel* (2015), the father is also the incarnation of Charlie Chan: the representative of Charlie Chan's femininity and cowardness. When facing whites, the "powerful" father immediately becomes tamed and girlish Charlie Chan. When the son, Golford Tam Lum, watches his father, he narrates:

> He walked, shuffling, bowing, and wagging his hips like a whipped dog out to sniff for leftovers. And his girlish giggle and flash of gold bicuspids that charmed every white man that had ever turned him into a female impersonator before my eyes. White people were born with the power to turn my father into Shirley Temple.[22]

When the son takes his father to the courthouse to testify against the kid who runs into his car and kills his mother, he feels painful to look at his father's reaction toward the white assistant district attorney: no matter what the assistant D. A. asks, he has only one reaction—giggling and smiling. For the son, the father, in front of whites, automatically "turns on his thirties model impersonations of brazen chorus girls, Marlene Dietrich in a man's baggy suit and Loretta Young as a nun deep in prayer like the Chinatown presidents"[23] and sends "I-don't-want-no-trouble" signal through his frequent giggles. In his short story "Food for All His Head" (1962) and his play *The Year of the Dragon* (1974), Chin depicts how those Charlie Chans try their best to confine their sons within their dream of the model minority and attempt to transform their sons into the future Charlie Chans. In "Food for All His Head," Johnny is in college, desperate to move out of San Francisco's Chinatown, but he is tethered to his childhood home by his duty to care for his dying father, who forbids him to leave Chinatown and do what he wants. In *The Year of the Dragon*, Fred drops out of college at his father's behest to take care of the family business

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[21] Frank Chin, *Gunga Din Highway* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1994), 13.

[22] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 72.

[23] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 80.

in San Francisco's Chinatown until the old man passes away. Both are dutiful and even devoted sons, ill-used by the fathers who see little value in them unless they become doctors, lawyers, or engineers, the "perfect" Chinese. Through the depictions of those Charlie Chan fathers, Chin reveals that the father in Chinese American families has been mentally castrated and lost his manhood in the process of assimilation.

The failure of Chinese American manhood presented by the image of the father is not only caused by the mental castration but also by a symbolic castration, the deprivation of voice. Chin depicts the silence of the Chinese father in his first novel, *Donald Duk* (1991). Here, the Chinese father is the ancestor of Chinese Americans, who contributed to the construction of the great country but were erased from American history by historians and scholars in the country. Silence is not a natural characteristic of Chinese people, but the result of racial discrimination rooted in American society. In the novel, Chin narrates how the protagonist, Donald Duk, a twelve-year-old Chinese American boy, changes his attitude from rejecting to recognizing his cultural heritage. He is touched by the heroism shown by the 108 outlaws in the ancient Chinese folklore, *The Water Margin*, and discovers that the Chinese, especially Chinese men, are not the people his schoolteachers teach, because he attends a private school, in which most of the students are Caucasians and the teachers always devalue Chinese people, culture, and philosophy. In this circumstance, he felt self-abased and shameful for being a Chinese. But after learning the story of the 108 outlaws, he has questions about the history taught by his history teacher. He believes that his ancestors should be like the heroes in *The Water Margin*. To dig out the historical facts, he goes to the library and tries to prove his hypothesis. In the end, he points out the distortion in his teacher's narration of the history and retrieves Chinese Americans' voices. Why should the authentic history be told by a twelve-year-old child? Why is it not the Chinese forebear or Donald's father who tells the history? This ironic plot is Chin's delicate design. He attempts to reveal that the voice of the old generations of Chinese Americans has been deprived of for a long time and the aftermath of the deprivation is not only the loss of the voice but also the loss of the courage to speak. The loss of voice manifests the symbolic castration of Chinese Americans, especially of Chinese American males.

Chinese Americans' mental and symbolic castrations featured in the works are what Chin experienced in his own life. Chin was born in Berkeley, California, 1940. In the first six years of his life, he lived with an impoverished white couple, because his parents had no time to take care of him. When talking about his childhood, he says, "I brought myself up. It was pretty good."[24] His father was a Chinese immigrant, who was the president of the Chinese Six Companies, a combined business group and benevolent association. The relationship between him and his father was not quite peaceful. In Chin's eyes, his father, as an immigrant, had been mentally and symbolically castrated by the white ideology and viewed the model minority as the perfect example for Chinese Americans. He, as a successful businessman, should be a good example for his son. Unfortunately, his son did not follow his steps. Chin went to the University of California at Berkeley and majored in English. Being a writer and playwright, he never got the recognition from his father. As he says, "We live in different worlds. And when my world comes in contact with his we just destroy each other."[25] The failure in the relation to his father made him write his father as the prototype of the "castrated" fathers in his works, such as Longman Kwan in *Gunga Din Way* and the three fathers in *The Confessions of a Number One Son,* "Food for All His Head," and *The Year of the Dragon*. Chin once commented, "My father never respected my writing. He died believing I never worked a day in my life."[26] More tragically, it was his father's stubbornness that caused his mother' death in a car crash and made him homeless.[27] In Chin's impression, the old generation, like his father, has been poisoned by the myth of the model minority and trapped themselves in the man-made myth. They do not know who they are and

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[24] David Wilson, *South China Morning Post*, 2004, accessed June 1, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/article/470907/frank-chin.

[25] Nee and Nee, *Longtime Californ'—A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*, 388.

[26] Frank Chin's Biography, accessed June 1, 2020, https://www.enotes.com/topics/frank-chin.

[27] Chin wanted his mother to come from California to attend the opening night of his play, but Chin's father would not permit her to leave, because he wanted her to attend a big tong banquet in Chinatown. On the way to the dinner, their car crashed, and Chin's mother was killed. This accident has been written in his *The Confessions of a Number One Son*. See Calvin McMillin, "Introduction," Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 19.

who they should be. All of them are playing the role of Charlie Chan. Moreover, his school experience made him know why the Chinese, like his father, preferred to play Charlie Chan. When studying creative writing in Iowa, Chin was disappointed by the feedback he received from his professors. He was told that his writings of Chinatown had not enough of the local color, and his depictions of the Chinese were not the Chinese whom American people would be interested in.[28] One of his professors persuaded him to change his writing style and create the Chinese characters whom American people liked and were familiar with. In this experience, Chin was deeply aware of the role of whites' power in the formation of Chinese Americans' image and identity, which drove him to create his own Chinese Americans, the "Chinamen." The appearance of the "Chinaman" symbolizes the irreversible estrangement of the father from the son.

To reestablish the image of Chinese Americans, Chin, in his plays, *Chickencoop Chinaman* (1972) and *The Year of Dragon*, his collection of short stories, *The Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R. R. Co.* (1988), and his novels, *Donald Duk*, *Gunga Din Highway*, and *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, creates the heroic and masculine Chinamen. What he aims at is to restore his and his people's masculinity. Chin digs out Chinese heroism from Chinese philosophy (Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*), literature (*The Water Margin*), and folktales (Yue Fei's stories) and integrates it into his Chinamen. In his writing, the Chinamen are the pioneers of America and the practitioners of the construction of the country, for instance, the grandfather in *The Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R. R. Co.,* the ancestors in *Donald Duk,* Tam in *Chickencoop Chinaman,* Ulysses Kwan in *Gunga Din Highway*, and Tam Lum in *The Confessions of a Number One Son.*[29] Chin views himself as the member of the Chinamen. He calls himself the "fifth generation of the Chinamen." When being asked who he is, a Chinese, Chinese American, or Chinaman, he answers, "So … I am a Chinaman. But, I do

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[28] Nee and Nee, *Longtime Californ'—A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*, 379.

[29] The great grandfather of Chin's mother was one of the Chinese laborers who participated in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. Before being a writer, Chin worked as a brakeman in the South Pacific Railroad and was the first Asian American holding this position. For him, both of his great grandfather and him are the typical Chinamen.

demand respect for the name. Not as a term of derision… in the same way that black used to be a term of humiliation … and they fight over it. But they've turned this word into an act of pride. And I think the term *Chinaman*, because it is our only connection with our ancestors, is something to be proud of. I think we should all be Chinamen."[30] Chin aims to rewrite Chinese Americans back to American history and society in the new image, the image of Chinaman. Who Chinese Americans are should be written and determined by themselves.

Chin particularly distinguishes his Chinaman from Charlie Chan's Chinese, like his father and the fathers in his works. He says,

> I am starting the fact that I am not Chinese. … As far as I'm concerned, Americanized Chinese who've come over in their teens and later to settle here and American born Chinaman have nothing in common, culturally, intellectually, emotionally … There is no cultural, psychological bridge between me and the Chinese immigrants. There are social, racist pressures that connect us. These connections must be broken.[31]

For him, Chinaman, different from those Charlie Chans (the Americanized Chinese immigrants), is the proper name of the Chinese in America. He feels confident in his own culture, the Chinese culture, and shows his pride in his own achievements in the construction of America. He fears nothing, has the guts to fight against inequality, and dares to shout at injustice in his life. He is not Charlie Chan and never becomes Charlie Chan. The Chinaman, the new generation, and Charlie Chan, the old generation, has no other connections, except for the connection of "social and racial pressure." Even the left connection should be broken. As Xu Yingguo comments in her *A Study of Frank Chin's Writings*, Chin's Chinaman is untranslatable, which is the representation of his dream, the dream of the ideal identity of Chinese Americans. In this identity, Chin attempts to deconstruct discrimination and racism in the given image of Chinese Americans and cut off the connection between Chinese Americans and their given negative

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[30] Jeffery Paul Chan, "I am a Chinaman: An Interview with Frank Chin (1970)," Judy Yung and Gordon H. Chang, ed., *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 310.

[31] Joan Chiung-huei Chang, Transforming Chinese American Literature: A Study of History, Sexuality, and Ethnicity, *Modern American Literature: New Approaches,* Yoshinobu Hakutani ed., New York: Peter Lang, (vol 20), 2000, 4.

features.[32] That is why, in Chin's novels, the son, such as Ulysses or Tam Lum, disconnects with his father after his mother's death. That is also why in his novels the son always desires to kill Charlie Chan, the "father" of Chinese Americans.

The Chinaman son, in Chin's novels, always lives in an intense patricide desire, which does not arise from the Freudian Oedipus Complex but from an Ethnic Complex. When confronting the castrated father, the son is aware of the threat of castration and fears to be castrated and feminized like his father. Even though the pain in his life is brought by the father and his Americanized morals, the origin of his pain is not from his biological father. The spiritual leader of the father is Charlie Chan, who leads the father to walk on the "Gunga Din Highway" and is the origin of the son's pain, the sense of homelessness. It is him that makes the Chinese unable to be themselves and speak their own language in their own country and makes them live in their home with a sense of homelessness. In Chin's words, in the influence of Charlie Chan, all the Chinese become one type of people in America, that is, "Ah-What'shisname." Who they are and how they look like are decided by whites. Therefore, the son's patricide desire is toward the original father, Charlie Chan, rather than his biological father. In the Ethnic Complex, he never tries to kill his father. What he attempts to achieve is to kill the "great" father of Chinese Americans, Charlie Chan, and retrieve the lost manhood, which has been cut off from the "great" father for decades. In the short story, "The Sons of Chan," the protagonist claims, "I feel I must find the last surviving Charlie Chan of the movies and kill him. I will use what I learned being his Number One Son against him. Gee, pop, have I got a surprise for you!"[33]

This claim reappears in Chin's novel, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*:

> Listen brothers and sisters, whites invented Charlie Chan in 1925. In the thirties, he was popping off movies and novels all over. Think, boys and girls, you never heard no yellow wasting his time wondering if he was this or that and feeling crazy enough to believe he had a dual personality and didn't know how to double-clutch. Yes, kid, our deepest blood-root agony, our most primal idiot emotions, comes from American pop fiction. Our "identity crisis" is only fifty years old and isn't rooted in the agony of our ancestors, Chinese culture, Ah-What'shisname, or anything from the

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[32] Xu Yingguo, *Chinese American Literature in Cross-Cultural Context: A Study of Frank Chin's Works* (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2008), 15.

[33] Frank Chin, *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R. R. Co.* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, (1988), 135.

> inside. Our "identity crisis," the core of our inner beings, is rooted in American camp trivia. Charlie Chan has been on our minds for fifty years. Two whole generations. Long enough to get in our blood and linger in our genes like rat poison and become a real part of us and our children. And we're something the original Chinaman never was, Ah-What'shisname. Already, brothers and sisters, already the name, the history of Charlie Chan is decaying into our unconscious to rule us from the depths where fish need flashlights and goo-goo eyes to see. For our own good, we can't forget we are the sons of Chan and our women are free to be blind to our balls and fly the coop. We can't forget why we're all of us the Chickencoop Chinaman. Charlie Chan is why people hear only buck-buck-bagaw cackle out of a Chinaman's mouth. It's not good to forget that. So I'm making my move to kill Charlie Chan and make him memorable, tonight.[34]

In Tam Lum's monologue, Chin reveals the myth of Charlie Chan, which is still cherished by some Chinese Americans and makes them proud of their own efforts in the improvement of their social status. He tries to wake up his Chinese brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters to see the damage done by Charlie Chan. His appearance is not the result of justice but the transformation of American racism and the byproduct of American Orientalism. Motivated by the Ethnic Complex, which comes from the Chinaman's resistance against being castrated like his father, Charlie Chan, the son has only one option: killing the given father, the origin of their anxiety of home: homelessness.

In the meantime, Chin took efforts to erase the negative influence of Charlie Chan on Chinese American literature. In 1972, Chin and Jeffrey Chan wrote an essay named "Racist Love," in which they reviewed the popularity of contemporary Chinese American novels and figured out that the problem in Asian American literature was white supremacy, the dominant ideology in America. It was this ideology that guided Chinese American writers, such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and David Henry Hwang, to present their people in various stereotypes. If the writers did not actively resist the stereotypes, they would copy them and confirm them by their own words. The image of Asian Americans' father, especially Chinese Americans' father, had been destroyed by Asian American writers themselves, particularly the fake writers, like Kingston, Tan, and Hwang. Therefore, in 1991, Chin wrote another essay named "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," in which he drew a

[34] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 249-250.

clear line between the real and the fake in Asian American literature. Kingston, Tan, and Hwang were included in the group of the fake. In his words, they were "servants of the whites and dump on yellow Asian American history."[35] They cared about not writing Asian Americans' voice back through their words but catering to the whites' taste and trying their best to be the model minority and recognized by the mainstream.

Home for New Immigrant Writers: Where Is Home?

Home is a theme not only in the American-born writers' works but also in the new immigrant writers' works. In Tan's and Chin's writings, Chinese Americans know where their home is. Of course, it is in America. They are Americans. What they are concerned about are what the home should be, what kind of Americans they should become, and how they should look like in the home, while what current Chinese immigrants care about is where their home or homeland is: in China or America. This uncertainty of home(land) makes them question their identity: Who are they, the Chinese or Americans? Different from the American-born Chinese, who view America as their homeland, the new immigrants still wander between their original homeland, China, and their new homeland, America. Therefore, their anxiety of home is different from the American-born Chinese's, which is mainly manifested in the disharmony and estrangement in their physical home. It is presented as the lack of the homeland, the spiritual home. Home, for them, is a place of nowhere. In Ha Jin's and Yan Geling's works, the homeland is problematic for its uncertainty. Where their home is and how they locate themselves in the home are the questions whose answers they are still looking for.

Home(land) in Ha Jin's Works: A Place of Transitionality

For Ha Jin, home becomes problematic in the process of spiritual immigration from China to America. Home in his interpretation has a feature of transitionality, which means that home is a dynamic process of becoming: the formation of the home cannot be confined by the original homeland and is an ongoing movement. If one is not satisfied with the original homeland, he can

[35] Xu, *Chinese American Literature in Cross-Cultural Context: A Study of Frank Chin's Works*, 198.

give it up and rebuild his home(land) in other places or countries he likes. The uncertainty of home is caused by its transitionality and is represented by the abandonment of the original homeland and the establishment of the new homeland. Ha Jin, in his early works, such as *In the Pond* (1998), *Waiting* (1999), *The Crazed* (2002), and *War Trash* (2004), concentrates on depicting his original homeland, China, and telling the stories of Chinese people. Unlike the American-born writers, such as Tan and Chin, whose works are always organized by the conflicts and negotiations between two worlds: American and Chinese cultures, Ha Jin's early works only demonstrate one world, that is, China and Chinese society. His first book, *Ocean of Words*, was published in 1996. It tells the stories set along the China-Soviet border (the location of Ha Jin's hometown) in the 1970s and all the characters are Chinese. In the year, he had arrived in America for almost twelve years. In the following years, he published *In the Pond*, *Waiting*, *The Crazed*, and *War Trash*, all of which are Chinese stories. It means that the first eight years (1996-2004) of his writing life were devoted to his original homeland. But this devotion cannot merely be interpreted as a display of nostalgia, which indicates the writer's emotion toward his homeland. For Ha Jin, this devotion is also a necessary move to disconnect with his original homeland, through which he intentionally cuts his spiritual bond with his homeland, China.

In his early works, Ha Jin focuses on writing the life of the ordinary people in his original hometown, the Northeast of China and the Russian/Chinese and Korean/Chinese border area. Even though the villages, the towns, and the cities where his stories happen are fictional, they are the literary creations based on the memory of his childhood life in the Northeast of China. For instance, the stories in *Ocean of Words* happen in the China-Soviet border, the story in *In the Pond* happens in Dismount Fort, a small town in the Northeast of China, the story of *Waiting* happens in Goose Village, which is located in Wujia Town in Muji City, a city in the Northeast of China, and *The Crazed* happens in the Provincial University of a Northeast province. Ha Jin's purpose of the geographic design is to express the dissatisfaction with his original home and hometown through his depictions of the protagonists' dissatisfaction with their home and hometown. Home, in those works, is not a place where the protagonists are eager to return. In *Waiting*, when describing Lin Kong's home, Ha Jin writes,

> Their adobe house was the same as two decades before, four large rooms under a thatched roof and three square windows facing south with their frames painted sky blue. … Besides him,

> chickens were strutting and geese waddling. … In addition to the poultry, his wife kept two pigs and a goat for milk. Their sow was oinking from the pigpen, which was adjacent to the western end of the vegetable garden. Against the wall of the pigpen a pile of manure waited to be carted to their family plot, where it would go through high-temperature composting in a pit for two months before being put into the field. The air of reeked of distillers' grains mixed in the pig feed. Lin disliked the sour smell, which was the only uncomfortable thing to him here.[36]

In this depiction, Ha Jin draws a picture of a typical countryside home, in which its house is made of adobe and thatches, its yard is full of the noise of chickens, geese, pigs, and goats, and its air has a strong smell of manure and reeked grains. From the busy picture of the yard, it is not hard to feel how industrious and diligent the hostess is. But the narration does not convey the protagonist's emotion for his wife. On the contrary, the readers can feel the sense of indifference and distance. It seems that the protagonist is observing other people's home rather than his. The sense of indifference and distance comes from the unspoken and well-known purpose of the protagonist's return: Lin Kong comes back home for divorce. It is not the first time. Kong has been doing it for almost two decades. Therefore, there is no exciting or happy feelings in the depiction of his home. Even if the narrator says that the sour smell is the only uncomfortable thing to Kong in the home, he never expresses that Kong feels comfortable in his home. When the story goes on, the readers will be aware that in spite of his wife, his daughter, or himself, Kong is an outsider in the home. It is him that separates himself from the home.

When depicting the landscape of Kong's hometown, Ha Jin narrates,

> At the entrance to the county town, the road was blocked by a column of horse carts transporting bricks, and tractor had to follow them at a walking pace. Bensheng and the driver, nicknamed Dragonfly, grew impatient and couldn't help curing time and again. Not until half an hour later did they reach the town center. It was market day, so the sidewalks of Central Street were occupied by vendors. They were selling poultry, vegetables, fruit, eggs, live fish, piglets, clothes. Everywhere were wicker baskets, chick cages, oil jars, fish basins and pails. A bald man was blowing a brass whistle, a sample of his wares, and the noise split the air and hurt people's ears. Some young girls at watermelon stands were smoking self-rolled cigarettes while crying for customers and waving goose-feather fans to keep flies away.[37]

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[36] Ha Jin, *Waiting* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 3-4.

[37] Ha Jin, *Waiting*, 10.

From this paragraph, it is easy to feel that in Ha Jin's writing the hometown is not a pleasant place for the protagonist as well. It is noisy, dirty, crowded, and disorderly. Everything is not on its right spot and in its right order: the house carts are in the middle of the road; the drivers drive their cars with anger; the sidewalks are not the ways for pedestrians; the vendors do not care about whether their behaviors or stuff bother other people; the young girls behave like prostitutes rather than ladies. In such an unpleasant place, the protagonist is eager to escape. However, since he is a military officer, who cannot divorce his wife after eighteen years living apart, he is unable to avoid his return. The court where he submits his application for divorce is in the town. Every year when he comes back, he will have to face both the uncomfortableness of his home and the chaos of his hometown. In his description, which depicts Kong's helplessness in escaping from the home and hometown, Ha Jin conveys his dissatisfaction with the original homeland: the helplessness in the individual existence. This helplessness in the home is also conveyed in his other early works. In *In the Pond*, the protagonist, Shao Bin, is frustrated in getting a decent life. In *The Crazed*, Professor Yang is unable to escape from the fate of becoming mad, when encountering injustice in his life. In *War Trash*, Yu Yuan is trapped in the lies and truths of loyalty and betrayal. All of them are helpless in their confrontation with the country machine.

Ha Jin's dissatisfaction with the home and homeland is directly demonstrated by his naming the town in *Waiting*. Ha Jin begins the story with a very brief introduction:

> Every summer Lin Kong returned to Goose Village to divorce his wife, Shuyu. Together they had appeared at the courthouse in Wujia Town many times, but she had always changed her mind at the last moment when the judge asked if she would accept a divorce. Year after year, they went to Wujia Town and came back with the same marriage license issued to them by the county's registry office twenty years before.[38]

In this introduction, the writer uses *Wujia* to name the chaotic town. *Wujia* (吴家) in Chinese seems to be a very common name of a place. Many villages and towns in China are named with the characters. But Ha Jin writes this novel in English. When *Wujia* (吴家) appears in English, there is another meaning that is *Wujia* (无家), in Chinese, no home. Because 无 (*wu*) and 吴 (*wu*) in Chinese have the same pronunciation, in English, the visual difference between the two characters disappears. From my point of view, *Wujia* might be Ha Jin's intentional design. He

[38] Ha Jin, *Waiting*, 3.

attempts to convey that the protagonist, even though having a home, does not have a home, in which his lover is waiting for him. Rather, now in his home, there is no lover but a woman his parents arrange for him and he does not love. How can a home without love be called a home? What Ha Jin attempts to express is that Kong is a homeless person. His homelessness is not only a result of the overwhelming external pressure, but also a result of his internal will. He would rather have no home than having an undesired and arranged home. That is what Ha Jin speaks for himself. He would rather have no homeland than having an undesired and unsatisfying homeland.

Indeed, Ha Jin's dissatisfaction with China, his original homeland, comes from his personal experience. The protagonist's homelessness is the representation of Ha Jin's homelessness. In his novels, Ha Jin attempts to express his anger for the death of his homeland, China. It has not been the beautiful homeland for him. This sense of anger began in 1989. Jin graduated from Shangdong University in 1984 and came to America in 1985. He was on a scholarship at Brandeis University when the 1989 Tiananmen Incident occurred. He says, "In China, where only 1% of young people could go to college, I not only went to college (after the Cultural Revolution ended), I got a master's degree in American literature. In the whole country maybe less than 100 people could do that."[39] When the Tiananmen Incident happened, he did not want to go back to China. In Ha Jin's mind, his homeland was dead at that moment. Even though China is his original home, it cannot give him a sense of belonging. It, in his eyes, never cares about its people and their personal life. Confronting the power of the country, the individual is always the powerless one. How can this "home(land)" be called a home? Moreover, when Ha Jin memorized the communication with his original homeland, he said,

> My mother died three years ago. She had been hospitalized for four years. I tried and tried to get a visa to see her again, and I was rejected every time. Last year, I was invited to teach a class at a Chinese university. I sent the Chinese embassy the official invitation. This time they said, "You've been rejected, so we can't proceed." In the past they used to say things like, "You don't have your original passport. You can't prove you were once a Chinese citizen." When I first came

[39] Wendy Smith, "Coming to America: A PW Profile of Ha Jin," *Publisher Weekly*, September, 2007, accessed June 2, 2020, https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/bytopic/authors/interviews/article/4087-coming-to-america-a-pw-profile-of-ha-jin.html.

> to America, I sent my Chinese passport in for renewal, but it was never returned to me. They say, "It was 20 years ago. We don't have a record for it."[40]

For Ha Jin, the homeland should not be related to the country, but to individual freedom. If the country forces one to give up his individualism for political opinions, it cannot be regarded as the home(land). In this circumstance, how can he retain his emotion for it? The last love is deprived by the rejection. The only way to relieve himself from the pain of the loss is to make the home(land) dead in his heart. That is why in his early works he expresses his dissatisfaction with home and homeland. Ha Jin's writings of the state of *wujia* (homelessness), indeed, is his transformation from Edward Said's filiation to affiliation, which is a process of "the shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*" or "the passage from nature to culture."[41] It is the manifestation of his abandonment of natural identity, the Chinese, and his acceptance of social and cultural identity, the American.[42]

To materialize his disconnection with China, Ha Jin firstly chose to write his works in English rather than Chinese, his mother language. When Chris GoGwilt, Professor of Comparative Literature at Fordham University, asked Ha Jin whether the English language distances him from China or brings China closer, he replied, "There's no doubt there's a kind of alienation. I think usually when a writer adopts another language there are a lot of motivations: necessity, ambition, estrangement. Estrangement is a big part of it, ... It creates a kind of distance."[43] Furthermore, he deconstructs the concept of home, which, for him, should not be

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[40] Dylan Foley, "Ha Jin on the Long Reach of the Chinese Government: Love, Betrayal, and the Totalitarian Machine," *Library Hub*, October 2016, accessed June 2, 2020, https://lithub.com/ha-jin-on-the-long-reach-of-the-chinese-government/.

[41] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 20.

[42] Shan Dexing, "The Other, Poetry, Freedom: A Reading of Ha Jin's *A Free Life*," *The Other and Asian American Literature,* Shan Dexing, ed. (Taipei: Institution of European and American Studies, 2015), 50-51.

[43] The conversation that follows between Ha Jin and Chris GoGwilt, a professor of comparative literature at Fordham University, took place at the University on November 16, 2006. What is quoted above is an edited transcript of their talk recorded by Guernica Editor Josh Jones, accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.guernicamag.com/spotlight/258/post/.

confined geographically and temporally. When asked why a sense of home for all his characters is very problematic, he replies,

> Yes. In fact, for Chinese, home always refers to your village, your origin. … But the word in English, "homeland," has two meanings. One is a place of origin and the other refers to where your home is. Conventionally the two are very easy to reconcile because there is very little division between the two meanings. But now the dichotomy is more obvious, and more meaningful in a way. So now when we talk about home, it's an issue of return. It's also a matter of arrival. If a home can be created, can be made, then home is in the process of becoming, instead of fixed in the past.[44]

Because of the dissatisfaction with his original homeland, home, for Ha Jin, is no longer the origin and the past. It should be interpreted as a movement, in which one's home is shaped in the changes of his thinking of home. In other words, the original home(land) is only the beginning phase of home. It can be the final home if one identifies it in his mind. It can be rejected if one feels that there is a conflict between the original home and himself. In Ha Jin's case, his original home is not the final home of which he dreams. He and his original home are in contradiction to each other in their thinking of the relationship between the individual and the country. He is unable to identify himself socially and culturally with his natural home.

But for survival, one cannot live without his home(land). Ha Jin, in his journey from filiation to affiliation, targets America as his new home(land). To build up his connection with the new homeland, Ha Jin firstly writes his works in English, which has been mentioned above. Secondly, he sets the settings of his early works in the Northeast of China, the border area of Russia and China and Korea and China. In his words, the border region is a transitional place, from which he can feel the hope of having a new home(land) and makes him closer to the United States, the new homeland.[45] The most successful step of his affiliation is that in his later works, such as *A Free Life* (2007), *A Map of Betrayal* (2014), *The Boat Rocker* (2016), Ha Jin starts to focus on writing the stories of the new immigrants. The country where his stories happen is

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[44] The conversation between Ha Jin and GoGwilt, accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.guernicamag.com/spotlight/258/post/.

[45] The conversation between Ha Jin and GoGwilt, accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.guernicamag.com/spotlight/258/post/.

transferred from China to America. If the early works indicate the disconnection with his original homeland, the later works demonstrate his effort to build a new home in the new land. No matter in his novels or essays, Ha Jin shows his expectation to have a home in the new country. In the essay "An Individual's Homeland," he writes, "We may come across lines like these: 'My mother always said/your homeland is any place,/preferably the place where you die.' In other words, the homeland is no longer a place that exists in one's past but a place also relevant to one's present and future."[46] America is the place relevant to Ha Jin and his characters' present and future. In *A Free Life*, Ha Jin depicts the immigration experience of a Chinese couple, Nan and Pingping Wu. Like him, the couple come to America through the F-1 visa. Both do not plan to settle down in the country. But when the Tiananmen Incident happens, they change their minds and try their best to have a good life there. After numerous trials and failures, Nan discovers that the home is not determined by one's original homeland but by where the freedom is. If the country can give him the sense of freedom, he can get the sense of belonging and view it as his home(land). Ha Jin speaks through Nan's voice to express his thinking of the new home. In *A Free Life*, the last part of the novel is the collection of Nan's poems. In the second and third stanzas of his "Homeland," Nan sings,

> You will have no choice but to join the refugees
> and change your passport.
>
> Eventually you will learn：
> your country is where you raise your children,
> your country is where you build up your home.[47]

Although Ha Jin has socially and culturally identified himself with America in the process of affiliation, he still lacks the spiritual bond with his new homeland: he has not spiritually identified himself as an American. It is not the proper time for him to entirely embrace his new home and identity. His anxiety of home demonstrated in his works also comes from the unfinished establishment of the new homeland. In other words, the new home is still in the

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[46] Ha Jin, "An Individual's Homeland," *The Writer as Migrant* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 65.

[47] Ha Jin, *A Free Life* (New York: Pantheon House, 2007), 635.

process of being built and he is still "waiting" for its welcoming. His affiliation still needs spiritual identification. Even though Ha Jin tries to view America as his home(land), it is easy to notice that he never directly names his home with the term "America" in his writings. On the contrary, he often uses the word, the country or the place, to indicate America, the place and country he lives in. For me, the ambiguity of the words indicates that Ha Jin is still struggling to locate himself in the new home(land). In other words, he needs time to persuade himself to spiritually give up his old identity and nationality, Chinese identity and Chineseness, and recognize his new identity and nationality, American identity and Americanness.

His failure to instantly shape a new home(land) and accept the new identity is caused by his unconscious emotion toward his original homeland. Although he tries to cut the bond with China, he cannot hide his love for it. Because of the intense love for his original homeland, his spiritual immigration is delayed and postponed. In the first stanza of *"Homeland*," it sings,

> You packed a pouch of earth into your baggage
> as a bit of your homeland. You told your friend:
> "In a few years I'll be back like a lion.
> There's no other place I can call home
> and wherever I go I'll carry our country with me.
> I'll make sure my children speak our language,
> remember our history, and follow our customs.
> Rest assured, you will see this same man,
> made of loyalty, bringing back gifts
> and knowledge from other lands."[48]

From the verses, it is not hard to read the poet's deep love to his country in the past. Ironically, in "An Individual's Homeland," Ha Jin warns his readers of the danger of nostalgia. He takes Carlos Chang in Sigrid Nunez's novel, *A Feather on the Breath of God* (1995), as an example to illustrate the negative effect of one's nostalgia. In his words, because of nostalgia, Chang is self-isolated. "He cannot leave that place mentally, continues to wait tables in Chinatown, and even isolates himself from his daughters who were raised by his wife as Germans. Nostalgia robs him of the ability to move elsewhere, and he falls through the gaps between different cultures and

[48] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 635.

languages in America."[49] In my view, Jin himself still cannot get rid of the suffering of nostalgia. His old home, China, even though dying in his eyes, still unconsciously exists in his mind. It becomes an invisible block in his way to being an American and mentally accepting America as his home(land). In the prelude of the Chinese version of *A Good Fall* (2009), Ha Jin's own words support my argument. He says that he translated this novel by himself because he wanted to demonstrate the change in his thinking of nostalgia. He has a different reading: that is, nostalgia is an uncontrollable love, not what one can control by himself.[50]

On the other hand, Ha Jin's failure to immediately have a new home(land) and accept the new identity is because, as an immigrant for decades, he knows clearly what the new home is. He is no longer the naive young man who had lots of daydreams about the New World, the land of freedom. He notices its dark side: unfriendliness and inhospitality. Facing this dark side, he cannot give himself entirely to the new home(land). He writes in the poem, "An Exchange,"

> Even if you're lucky and earn a seat someday
> in the temple housing those high-nosed ghosts,
> do you really think they will accept you
> just on the merits of your poems?
> Be warned—some of them, who were once SOBs,
> will call you a clever Chinaman.[51]

That is why Ha Jin in *A Free Life* and *A Good Fall* depicts the miserable life of the Chinese newcomers in America. They are mistreated and abused by some Americans. They are struggling with being recognized and accepted. No matter how excellent or respected one was in China, he will begin from the bottom of the society when arriving in America. No matter how hard one tries, he is still the outsider, the "clever Chinaman." The marginalization makes him hard to have the sense of belonging in the new home. Unlike Tan and Chin's homelessness, Ha Jin's homelessness is a transitional issue, which appears in the process of Chinese new immigrants'

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[49] Ha Jin, "An Individual's Homeland," 64.

[50] Ha Jin, *A Good Fall*, Ha Jin trans. (Taipei: Chinese Times Publishing Co., 2010), 7.

[51] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 658.

transformation from the Chinese to the Americans and from filiation to affiliation.[52] It is an embarrassing state in which the people have physically disconnected from their original home and lack the spiritual connection with the new home. They are still the immigrants who have not yet spiritually recognized themselves and been recognized by other Americans as the Americans. As the newcomers in America, they are eager to make their American dream come true, but it is hard for them to give up their original country and their original identity spiritually. The abandonment of the original home, the nostalgia toward the original home, and the uncertainty of the acceptance in the new home bring about the transitionality of the home, which makes Ha Jin and his protagonists temporarily unsure of where their home is.

Home in Yan Geling's Works: A Place of Duality

In the new immigrants, there is another type of home: a double home. This type of home appears in the group of the new immigrants, who, unlike Ha Jin, tending to cut his bond with China, still view China as their home and Chinese culture as the dwelling of their being. In their mind, both China and America are their home(land). They are standing between the original home, China, and the new home, America. The duality is the origin of their anxiety of home. Because they have a double home, they are both the Chinese and Americans. But because they have this double home, they cannot be authentic Chinese or Americans. For the Americans, they are too Chinese, while for the Chinese, they are too American.

Yan Geling is a representative of this group of people. She was born in a prominent family in China. His grandfather was a famous translator, and her father was a writer. Yan was recruited by the Chinese Liberty Army at the age of twelve. In her first eight years in the army, she was a dancer. In her twenties, Yan became a military journalist who participated in the reporting of the China-Vietnam War. Before arriving in America, she had been a promising writer in China. In

[52] This is one of the more common types of homelessness. This form of homelessness is defined as affecting a person that is going through a major life change or catastrophic event. Many times, when people lose their jobs suddenly and unexpectedly, they can face transitional homelessness while they look for a new job. It is one of the types of the common phenomenon: homelessness in modern society. Here I borrow it to describe one of the types of Chinese Americans' homelessness, because its representation is similar to the spiritual homelessness presented in Ha Jin's works. This homelessness is temporary rather than permanent. It is an intermediate phase between the loss of the original homeland and the recognition of the new one.

1989, Yan came to Columbia College Chicago and majored in creative writing. After the divorce with her ex-husband in the same year, she met her current husband, Lawrence A. Walker, who used to be an American diplomat. But for marrying Yan, the former Chinese army officer, Walker gave up his promising diplomatic career. In her profile, it is easy to see the differences between her and other Chinese American writers. Her home is both in China and America.

First, China is her home. Different from other immigrant writers, such as Ha Jin, who experienced the totality of the country over the individual in China and views himself as an exiled writer, Yan never cuts her connection with her original homeland. China is still the home for her. She says, "In the volleyball court, when the China team appears, I always cheer for them, feel excited for them, and cry for them. This love has become one part of our body. It has been our instinct."[53] The love is the love for her home, China. Second, America is her home. Unlike the American-born writers, such as Tan and Chin, who deeply experience American white supremacy and struggle with their ethnicity, she has gotten everything that she wanted in America. She not only learned the professional knowledge of writing, but also found her desired love. The deep love given by her American husband makes her have a home in America. It is America that gives her such a new life.

The duality of home is manifested by the duality in Yan's writing language. Unlike Tan and Chin, who write their works only in English and know little about Chinese, and unlike Ha Jin, who intentionally keeps a distance from Chinese and chooses English as his writing language, Yan is a bilingual writer, whose literary compositions are both in English and Chinese. In other words, her language also has a feature of duality, represented not only in her writing style but also in her works. In *The Human Realm* (1998), Yan depicts how the protagonist struggles with the duality of her language. When the protagonist starts the conversation with her psychiatrist, she says, "English makes me reckless and imprudent. When speaking English, I am a different person, an unbridled woman. The inaccuracy of my expression in English covers me up. It is the disguise and costume, with which you can protect yourself and let your authentic

[53] Shi Jianfeng, "Yan Geling: Being the One Living outside," August 14th, 2020, http://www.Chinawriter.com.cn/2009/2009-03-30/70118.html.

being do what it wants to do. Another language represents my other personality."[54] But the freedom given by English is limited by her native language, Chinese. The protagonist explains, "Particularly when I speak English, my half in native language becomes extremely fussy and mean. When the half in English speaks out a half of the sentence, it picks up the faults and blames me. Then every time when I organize a sentence in English, I will hear the criticisms from the half in Chinese on the half in English. For instance, it criticizes that its structure is too complicated and the selection of words is not proper. How fragmented it is. Then the half in English becomes the isolated other in my selfhood."[55] She likes the English half of her language because it is young, innocent, reckless, and straightforward. But her Chinese, her native language, uncovers another side of her personality: sophisticated, matured, shrewd, and changeable. Martin Heidegger says that language is the house of being. The two parts consisting of her language—English and Chinese—embody the two parts consisting of the origin of her being: America and China. English (representing her new homeland) is the symbol of youth and freedom, while Chinese (representing her original homeland) is the symbol of maturing and profoundness. The two parts have been the inseparable parts of the protagonist's being. Her relation to the two parts of her language is, indeed, the manifestation of Yan's relation to the two parts of her language. When asked about her bilingual writing, she answers, "I hope I can be a bilingual writer, writing in both Chinese and English. Writing in English is a practice and a challenge, for instance, *The Banquet Bug* published in 2009 was my first English work. But I will be with China, write my works in Chinese, and view the Chinese as my readers forever."[56][57]

In English, Yan behaves like a young writer who has no doubt and fear about what she will write. She is spiritually free and unlimited. That is why, when writing her first English work, *The*

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[54] Yan Geling, *The Human Realm* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, 1998), 1.

[55] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 29.

[56] Here, the time she mentioned is the time of the publication of the Chinese version.

[57] Jiang Shaochuang, "The Immigrant Literature of Spatial Crossing: Interview in Yan Geling," *The Seas and Mountains: Interview in Chinese Overseas Writers* (Beijing: Jiuzhou Publishing House, 2014), 21.

Banquet Bug (2006), she reveals the phenomenon of official corruption in China. She demonstrates the "ugly" phenomenon by depicting the oral desire of Chinese people. For Yan, the habit of eating in China symbolizes the greed in the Chinese's nature, which is demonstrated by the visible desire for food and the invisible desire for money and power. In the novel, the protagonist is Dong Dan, an unemployed factory worker whose life takes a series of unexpected twists after he discovers that, by posing as a journalist, he can eat exquisite gourmet meals for free at state-sponsored banquets. When he engages in the game of eating, he gets a chance to learn about a scandal related to the governmental authorities, the highest rungs. The story deals with how the protagonist uncovers the government's corruption without revealing the dangerous truth about himself. English allows her to be an outsider in China and view her original homeland from a different perspective. It helps her speak out what she cannot say in Chinese. It also gives her a chance to show that as an American, she has an American way of thinking. In Chinese, Yan becomes a mature female writer who has a profound thinking of Chinese immigration history and Chinese female immigrants' social status. When digging out the story of a Chinese prostitute from numerous historical documents and records, she sighed at the tragic fate of the Chinese woman and showed her awareness of the responsibility of speaking for the forgotten and marginalized group in American history. That is why she wrote down her first immigrant story, *The Last Daughter of Happiness* (1996). In the novel, Yan tells the story of a Chinese prostitute, Fusang. The protagonist is mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, docile, and tolerant. However, her good personality never brings good fortune to her. She is abducted and sold to America, abused by both Chinese and American men, and finally raped by the white mobs, who view the Chinese as the yellow peril and Chinatown as the origin of evil. The writing language, Chinese, at this moment, reminds her of her Chinese identity and her Chineseness. In this language, she is no longer the American, who watches China and Chinese people as an outsider. She is an inseparable part of the country and the people. That is why she needs to reveal injustice in their life in the foreign land.

Moreover, the duality of the home(land) is manifested by Yan's dual attitudes (love and hatred) toward her two homelands. She says that literature originates from pain and suffering. The writer has a mission to criticize social phenomena. In her words, it is called as "*审丑*" (to

criticize the ugly).[58] Her writing philosophy makes her not behave like some Chinese writers who only depict the harmony in China or some immigrant writers who give up their original root and sing for the New World. It gives her a pair of critical eyes, which is good at digging out the ugly in both societies. Even though she loves her original and new homelands and has had what she pursues in both lands, her love does not indicate that she will accept and embrace everything in both China and America. In her writings, neither China nor America is a perfect homeland for the people living there.

Except for *The Banquet Bug*, she also writes other works that aim to uncover the alienation between the people and their homeland, China. In *The Human Realm*, the protagonist introduces her experience in the Cultural Revolution to her psychiatrist. She tells her doctor how the man she loves deceives her father and asks him to be his ghostwriter and how the Chinese political system makes the people mentally enslaved. Her father writes an article called "*儿不嫌母丑*" (Do Not Despise Your Ugly Mother), in which he compares the relationship between the citizen and the country to the mother-son relationship and says that the son can accept his mother's ugly appearance but cannot bear her corruption. As a Chinese who loves his country, her father tries to remind his mother, China, of the weakness in her political system. Unfortunately, his kindness becomes the evidence of his crime for hating the government and the party. The man she calls Uncle He uses his political power to protect her father from being accused as the reactionist, but what her father pays for the protection is to name the books written by himself under Uncle He's name. Accepting the intellectual robbery, her father never feels angry, but rather shows his gratitude to Uncle He. He thanks He for saving his family and is willing to devote his whole life to writing books for He. In the meantime, Yan also reveals the social hierarchy in the Communist society. In her depiction, Uncle He, due to his political power, can have his own compartment on the train, ask the cook who works in the public canteen to cook for him, and, of course, ask his father to write books for him. Uncle He is a representative of the authority. The advantages he has are called "*dai yu*" (*待遇*, deserved privilege) in Chinese, which are the privileges only the

[58] Yan Geling, "My Ten-Year American Dream," *Shanghai Wenxue,* vol. 6, 2005, 33.

officials can have and the civilians cannot.[59] The depiction of "*dai yu*" questions the justice and equity claimed by the party and demonstrates how the party machine physically and mentally enslaves the people. Even though the people are called as host of the country, they are not included in the authority class and authentic host of their homeland.

The alienation between the people and their homeland caused by the history and the totality of the authority is rewritten in her other works, such as *The Criminal Lu Yanshi* (2011) and *Youth* (2017). In *The Criminal Lu Yanshi*, the protagonist, Lu Yanshi, because of the political movements in his homeland, spends decades coming back to his home, where his wife, who has been out of mind, cannot recognize him. In *Youth*, the protagonist, Liu Feng, the living Lei Feng and the hero in the China-Vietnam War, struggles to survive in society and is abandoned by the people he protected and helped after the disappearance of his past glory. Yan prefers to write the history of the Cultural Revolution and cares about marginalized people because she and her family were the victims of this cultural catastrophe and had the experience of being marginalized. Her father became the people's enemy overnight in the catastrophe. She deeply knows how one can be isolated and betrayed by the people she loved and trusted. The alienation between her and her original homeland becomes the source and material of her literary creation.

In her immigrant novels, Yan also uncovers the ugly side of her new homeland, America. In *The Last Daughter of Happiness*, she explores the puzzle at the heart of the conflicts between her original home and her new home come from. She demonstrates her confusion about why the Chinese, the people of meekness and industriousness, such as the protagonist, Fusang, make the Americans, such a powerful nation in the world, so nervous and scared. Where do the hostility and hatred come from? Why can America not accept and welcome a specific group of immigrants who come to America for the same purpose its first wave of immigrants had? When explaining why she brings the character, Fusang, into the story, Yan says that she is not a historical figure, but a condensation of the history of Chinese immigration. What she attempts to depict is the state of homelessness of Chinese immigrants in America. She demonstrates how hard the early Chinese immigrants survived in America. They came to the New World for the

[59] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 24.

survival of their families. But no one in this country appreciated and respected their efforts in their existence. For the Americans, even their lower wage became the sign of their natural slavishness. They were isolated and marginalized. They had a miserable life in their original homeland, but their tragic fate is not changed in the new homeland. They are still homeless. For instance, Fusang lived in China but had no home in China because her husband had been gone to America before their marriage. She settles down in America but has no home in America as well because there is no one caring about her and treating her like a human being. In the meantime, her husband, whom Fusang is looking for, never shows up in the story. Her dream of having a home is never completed in either land.

In *Orange Blood* (2013), Yan continues to depict the Chinese immigrants' homelessness. The protagonist, Ah Xian, is a Chinese immigrant who came to America thirty years ago and is hired, more correctly, adopted by a white woman, Mary. He lives with Mary for thirty years and enjoys the love given by Mary. He believes that he has a home in the foreign land and views Mary's orchard as his home. But there is always something between him and Mary, which prevents him from becoming Mary's son and merging into the home. When the Revolution of 1911 starts in China, Ah Xian wants to cut off his braid, the symbol of feudalism. His desire almost makes Mary faint because the pigtail is the "ideal image" which Mary is obsessed with. "Mary said, except his small eyes and skilled and feminine hands, her favorite was his pitch-dark braid. He argued, my homeland is in the revolution, and all of the progressives have cut off their braids! Mary replied immediately, I hate politics! I love the beautiful ancient age! Please don't stop a poor woman's obsession in the classics, my son."[60] In another scene, when the Chinese businessmen come to their orchard and want to order oranges, Mary directly rejects their offer. She asks Ah Xian to translate her rejection to those Chinese: She never makes deals with the Chinese and will not do it in the future. There is no reason for her rejection. In the end, Ah Xian, realizing the truth of the "home," leaves and cuts the pigtail cherished by Mary. He finally gives up his dream of having a home in the land of whites.

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[60] Yan Geling, "Orange Blood," *White Sneak · Orange Blood*, (Shenyang: Chunfeng Literature and Art Publishing House, 1998), 228.

Yan writes not only the homelessness of the early immigrants but also the homelessness of the new immigrants. In *The Maroon Hair* (2004), "I" is a new immigrant, struggling with surviving in the new country. But "I" is lucky. There is an American man, nicknamed the Maroon Hair, loving and helping "me." "I" seems to have a chance to have a home in America. But "my" dream of home is broken after "I" is brought into the Americans' social circle. In a painting salon held by the Maroon Hair, there is an American who asks "me" whether there are red guards in China. When the American guests in the salon talk about China, "I" hears how they imitate the Chinese spitting on the street and laugh with each other after the "vivid" imitation. Next, a talkative female zoologist tells "me" that since the Chinese had no enough food and meat, they killed seven million and three hundred and fifty thousand and three dogs overnight and ate them all. Even a disabled girl retrieves her confidence when painting the Chinese. She is proud of herself for painting a portrait of the Chinese without a Chinese model. In her words, the Chinese all look the same. The last straw that breaks "my" dream of the new home is the Maroon Hair's words. When driving "me" back home, he tells "me" how he saves "me" from the unclean, undignified, and uncivilized community where the Chinese immigrants live. When he speaks about "the Chinese," "I" can feel that there is an unspoken tone in his voice.[61] That is why in the end the protagonist, "I," asks herself whether she needs to accept the Maroon Hair's love. "I" is homeless. If "I" accepts it, "I" can have a "home." But "I" decides to say no. Maybe "I" will accept it someday when "I" can understand the language of his love.[62] Or when the Americans understand the language of who the Chinese are.

Indeed, what is expressed in the works is what Yan experienced in her real life. Yan's American dream is also disillusioned in the Americans' bias and misunderstandings. In the 1980s, America, in the Chinese's eyes, was the symbol of democracy and freedom, which their homeland, China, did not have. Most Chinese students went to America not only for learning, but also for experiencing justice and equality brought by democracy and freedom. Yan also came

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[61] Yan Geling, "The Maron Hair," *American Stories* (Beijing: Kunlun Publishing House, 2004), 38-43.

[62] Yan, "The Maron Hair," 63.

to America for those purposes. That is why she gave up everything, including job and family in China, to pursue her American dream. In America, she got to know what intellectual and academic freedom were. She says, "I love American intellectuals very much. They are rebellious. They are a group of people who always criticizes everything. Almost American intellectuals are the left wings. If you represent the conservative, you will be not a qualified intellectual. …while American intellectuals care more about individuals. They will not put the nation or state upon the individual. What they are concerned about is the individual, which is not a specific man but an abstract concept, representing the whole group of the marginalized and the disadvantaged."[63] But one incident happening in her life changed her attitude toward America, her new homeland. Before marrying with her American husband, she suffered from a four-month FBI interrogation. No matter how she explained that she was not a Chinese spy, the officers never believed her. In the end, her husband quit his job and stopped this official harassment. This experience was written by Yan in her *No Exit Café* (2001) to demonstrate how her American dream is destroyed in the process of her acculturation. Consequently, in her lecture at Fudan University, she says, "Although my brain was completely washed in America, my American dream fell through in some aspects. In fact, it is never a country of freedom. You can speak, but there is no one listening and no one publishing your words."[64]

Due to the duality in Yan's nature, it is hard for her to merge into the mainstream in both China and America. In China, she sees China from the perspective of an American; in America, she observes America from the perspective of a Chinese. She is always the other, who is different from other Chinese and American people. The otherness makes her have no idea where her home is. She, indeed, loves the two countries and views them as her homelands. But her otherness caused by the cultural and ideological conflicts draws her out of the home, tears her apart inside of herself, and, consequently, gives her the sense of marginalization and homelessness. When asked about the home, she answers, "Therefore, I have nostalgia when being outside of China and I also feel nostalgic when returning to Beijing. I often speak to

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[63] Yan, "My Ten-Year American Dream," 33

[64] Yan, "My Ten-Year American Dream," 33.

myself that I have no home, and my home is where my heart dwells peacefully."[65] Like her favorite writer, Vladimir Nabokov, her home is everywhere and nowhere. Her obsession of home and homeland comes from the uncertainty of home, more correctly, the uncertainty of homeland, which originates from the duality in her nature.

The Origin of Homelessness: The Clash of Culture and Politics

Chinese Americans' writing of home and homeland in Chinese American literature is presented in a multifaceted way: Tan's disharmony of the home, Chin's estrangement of the home, Ha Jin's transitionality of the home, and Yan's duality of the home. But the various problems of home depicted in different literary works in Chinese American literature have a common cause: the conflicts between America and China. For Amy Tan and Frank Chin, the home is broken by the cultural conflict, which makes them have no idea how to deal with the Chineseness in their blood. Due to Chineseness inherited from the mother, the daughter in Tan's works is struggling with the authenticity of her American identity and the home loses its harmony. Due to Chineseness, the son learns from his ancestors and stands at the opposite to his father, who tries his best to get rid of his ethnicity; the home loses its integrity. Those cultural conflicts between the mother and the daughter and the father and the son have the protagonists to experience the endless pain of homelessness. As a matter of fact, those conflicts are the manifestations of the conflict between Chinese and Western cultures. The protagonists in Tan and Chin's works were born in America, but America, their home, never teaches how they can integrate their ethnicity into their nationality. On the contrary, it teaches them how to disdain and hate their ethnic origin and ethnicity. Chinese culture and people were the yellow peril, which was always depicted with the conceptions: "deceit, cunning, idolatry, despotism, xenophobia, cruelty, infanticide, and intellectual and sexual perversity."[66] That is why the Chinese Exclusion Act was viewed as "the protection of the American-defined citizens in a white American

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[65] Shi Jianfeng, "Yan Geling: Being the One Living outside," August 15, 2020, http://www.Chinawriter.com.cn/2009/2009-03-30/70118.html.

[66] Stuart C. Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 201.

nation."[67] It lasted two immigration waves of the Chinese, from 1882 to 1943. Later, the Chinese were the model minority, which seemed to be some progress in their civil rights. However, it is only the transformation and extension of the yellow peril, which is still shaped by American Orientalist discourses and never enhances the Chinese's social status in the society.[68] The Chinese are still the feminine, non-heroic, powerless, and obedient other. In such Orientalist discourses, Chinese Americans, especially the American-born Chinese, only learn self-disdain and self-abasement and feel hostility and hatred from the outside world. That is why the daughters in Tan's works are unwilling to claim their Chinese heritage and the sons in Chin's works are unwilling to accept the image of Charlie Chan. Chinese Americans in their works lose a proper way to claim their identity, which makes them spiritually and emotionally lose their home.

For Ha Jin and Yan Geling, home(land) becomes problematic not only because of the cultural conflict, but also the ideological conflict, which makes them culturally and socially disconnected from their homelands. In the cultural conflict, the new immigrants experience the suffering the American-born Chinese have in their life. Due to the hostility toward Chinese culture, they have no sense of being at home in the new homeland, America. The new homeland, for them, has not yet been their spiritual dwelling. On the other hand, even though they grew up and were educated in China, the new world gives them the opportunity to retrospect their Chinese way of thinking when they arrive in America. In China, they were taught to care more about collectivism and ignore individualism. They cared more about the country, the party, and

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[67] Najia Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1842-82* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 10.

[68] In *Orientalism*, Edward Said reveals that Orientalism is the manifestation of the man-made and imaginary binary relationship between the Orient and the Occident. He points out, "… the Orient was created—or, as I call it, 'Orientalized'... The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K. M. Panikkar's classic Asia and Western Dominance." That is, in the relation, the West is the self, the master, the masculine, the civilized, the powerful, and the dominant, while the East is the other, the slave, the feminine, the barbarian, the powerless, and the dominated. America, different from its European brothers who view the Middle East as the Orient, associates the Far East (China and Japan, mainly) as the Orient. Guided by the Orientalist ideology, the Americans regarded Chinese culture as the heretical and heterodox culture, which, as the rival of American culture, could not be assimilated and changed. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1, 5.

the Chinese people as a whole, rather than the Chinese as the individuals. For them, at that time, thinking about the self and caring for the fate of the individual were not the most significant issues. When they learn Western ideology in America, which highlights the significance of individualism, they discover that what they believed in the past makes them ignore one of the most important essences of human beings. At this moment, the alienation between them and their original homeland, China, appears. That is why Ha Jin and Yan Geling's works are always the stories that tell the individual's helplessness in his or her existence. Those individuals try to speak out injustice in their life and get out of the traps of their destinies, but there is no one in their homeland understanding and helping them. For Ha Jin, it is the country, his original homeland, that places itself above the individuals and abuses them for its own interests and benefits. For Yan Geling, her original homeland has problems in taking care of its citizens, especially the people who are in the social margins and have no power. In this circumstance, their original homeland also cannot be their spiritual dwelling. It has been collapsed in the ideological conflict between China and America. The uncertainty of the home demonstrated in their literary works comes from the double negation of the two homelands.

CHAPTER 2

HOME IN THE AMERICAN-BORN WRITERS' WORKS:

AMY TAN'S *THE JOY LUCK CLUB* AND FRANK CHIN'S *GUNGA DIN HIGHWAY*

In the last chapter, I have discussed why Chinese American writers are so obsessed with home and homeland and demonstrated how the different writers address the issues of home and homeland in different ways. This chapter will examine how home—the place of discord and estrangement—is represented by Amy Tan and Frank Chin in specific literary works. It will focus on Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Chin's *Gunga Din Highway* with supplementary materials from both writers' other works.

Amy Tan: Home as Utopia, Dystopia and Heterotopia

Amy Tan is well-known for her depiction of the relationship between mother and daughter. In her literary works, the relationship is not presented as what is found in traditional works, such as in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868, 1869). In her works, mother and daughter are not interdependent and never encourage each other in daily life. On the contrary, they live in their own worlds and seem unable to communicate with each other; the conflicts and misunderstandings between them seem to exist in every aspect of their life and are impossible to be reconciled. The critics usually focus on the mother-daughter binary scheme in Tan's works. Some of them interpret it as consequences of racism, feminism, nationalism, essentialism, multiculturalism, and assimilationism,[1] and some of them read it as the embodiment of Tan's self-Orientalism. For instance, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and some like-minded Asian American critics have argued that Tan's novels are full of "exoticizing" depictions of China and traditional Chinese culture, therefore "enable[ing] Orientalism to emerge in a form palatable to middle-class American readers."[2] In the existing scholarship, the cultural and social significance of Tan's

[1] Catherine Romagnolo, "Swan Feathers and Coca-Cola: Authenticity and Origins in *The Joy Luck Club*," *Opening Acts: Narrative Beginnings in Twentieth Century Feminist Fiction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 81.

works have been highlighted and frequently discussed. But their literary significance seems to be ignored and underestimated. How delicately Tan designs her stories, how sophisticated the narrative structure is designed, and what is the role of Tan's literary designs in her demonstration of Chinese Americans' discordant home—these issues are not adequately explored. In this section, I will return to the literary strategies in Tan's works and remind the readers how Tan, as a writer, expresses her thinking of cultural and social issues in America, such as ethnic origin, cultural conflicts, and identity crisis, through her literary representations. In the following, I will focus on Tan's best-known novel, *The Joy Luck Club,* to show how the writer takes literary strategies and techniques to demonstrate the inner split inside of Chinese Americans' home (the Chinese community in America) in her works.

The Joy Luck Club is Tan's first novel, which won high praises for her and helped her achieve an eminent position in American literature. In the novel, Tan depicts the life of four women who immigrated into America in the late 1940s. She demonstrates not only their present life in America, but also their past life in China. Simultaneously, Tan also unfolds their daughters' life and sufferings related to the mothers. The four Chinese women are united by a traditional Chinese game, the Mahjong. On the mahjong table, each of them occupies a direction: the East, South, West, and North. Because of the game, the two generations, the mothers and the daughters, have an opportunity to express their feelings about the home, understand how hard life is in America for Chinese Americans, and finally come to a mutual understanding. In the structure of the novel, it seems to have two mahjong tables: on the mothers' table, the mothers tell their stories that had happened in China; on the daughters' table, the daughters tell their stories that have happened in America. In other words, Tan creates two different worlds—the mother's world and the daughter's world—in one family, which are excluded from each other and contradicts with each other. Ironically, the blood relationship between the two worlds makes them inseparable from each other. Tan's literary representation of the discordant home (not only the Chinese American individuals' home but also the whole community of Chinese Americans) can be interpreted in terms of a mixture of utopia, dystopia, and heterotopia.

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[2] Tara Fickle, "Rules and Chinese Faces: The Game of Amy Tan's '*The Joy Luck Club*,' *MELUS*, vol. 39, no. 3 (2014), 68.

Home of the Mother: A Utopia

For the mother, home is supposed to be a utopia, in which she and her daughter should live in peace, happiness, and hope. At the very beginning of the novel, the mother expresses her utopian dream of America:

> Then the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean many thousand of *li* wide, stretching their necks toward America. On her journey she cooed to the swan: "In America I will have a daughter just like me. But over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan—a creature that became more than what was hoped for."[3]

This first discursive beginning sets up the basic tone and framework for a utopian home: it consists of the mother and the daughter and offers only freedom, pride, and hope. At this moment, home for the mother should be the new homeland, America. Indeed, before her arrival, the mother believes that the new homeland can and will be the land of utopia. In the country, she can forget what made her disappointed and hopeless in her original homeland and keep what she cherishes in her hands to build a new home. But soon this illusion is dashed to pieces when she steps onto the land of "utopia":

> But when she arrived in the new country, the immigration officials pulled her swan away from her, leaving the woman fluttering her arms and with only one swan feather for a memory. And then she had to fill out so many forms she forgot why she had come and what she had left behind.[4]

Interestingly, this passage reminds me of Jacques Derrida's idea of "hospitality." As a newcomer from an Eastern country, the mother does not receive her desired welcome from her American host. The hospitality she dreams about is not unconditional. It demands something in exchange. That is, only when she meets the requirements asked by the host will the host show his hospitality to her. Only when she gives up something in her will the host welcome her coming. Only when the mother forgets the love of her origin will America allow her to enter. The

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[3] Amy Tan, The Joy Luck Club (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 4.

[4] Tan, The Joy Luck Club, 4.

disillusion of the utopian dream makes the mother aware of the potential difficulties and obstacles to have an ideal home in the country. The things she cherishes might be forgotten or lost in the process of her fitting-in in the new land. To prevent and stop the forgetting and loss, the four mothers, Suyuan Woo, An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, and Ying-ying St. Clair, organize their private social gathering club, the Joy Luck Club. When the outer world is not as friendly and hospitalable as they expected and cannot be their utopia, they only can build it within their home. America, the new home of Chinese Americans, is divided into two worlds: the American and Chinese worlds.

The mothers' utopia is built on the various symbols of Chinese culture in their life, such as the Chinese mahjong game, the traditional Chinese social club, ancient Chinese philosophy, and Chinese superstitions. First, the utopia starts from a traditional Chinese game, the mahjong game. Mahjong is a tile-based game that was developed during the Qing Dynasty. It is commonly played by four players who occupy the four directions of a square table. The game is played with a set of 144 tiles based on Chinese characters and symbols. It can only be played by the people who can read and speak Chinese and understand Chinese culture. The features make the players able to connect the people who have the same cultural background, shape their own world on the table, and keep the people who do not belong to their world outside of their world. Second, the mothers' Joy Luck Club, derived from the game, is also a traditional Chinese social organization, which is popular in the Chinese diasporas and colonized places, such as Southeast Asia, North America, Hong Kong, and Marco. It facilitates the Chinese people who come from the same hometown to have a sense of belonging in foreign cities and colonies. In the novel, the Joy Luck Club becomes a female self-assistant club, in which the four Chinese women help and support each other in their life in America. The club is brought into America by one of the four mothers, Suyuan. She remembers,

> My idea was to have a gathering of four women, one for each corner of my mah jong table. I knew which women I wanted to ask. They were all young like me, with wishful faces. … Each week one of us would host a party to raise money and to raise our spirits. The hostess had to serve special *dyansyin* foods to bring good fortune of all kinds—dumplings shaped like silver money ingots, long rice noodles for long life, boiled peanuts for conceiving sons, and of course, many good-luck oranges for a plentiful, sweet life.[5]

[5] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 10.

The club helps the women temporarily get out of the miseries in their life. But the connection of the four women given by the club brings more to them. Because of the connection, four American daughters are drawn together, and four American families are linked with each other. Therefore, the Joy Luck Club is not only a private social club for the four women but also a home for a small group of Chinese Americans. The home has its own orders and rules: suffering, pain, and conflict are forbidden to be mentioned, and the Chinese food is the only food served in the club's parties. For the mothers, it is their utopia, in which the Chinese mothers can have time to escape from the overwhelming Western culture. They can temporarily forget the miseries brought by their otherness. That is why Suyuan says that they decide to hold parties and pretend each week had the new year. Each week they can forget past wrongs done to them. They are not allowed to think a bad thought. They feast, laugh, play games, lose, and win. They tell the best stories to each other. And each week, they can hope to be lucky. That hope is their only joy. And that's how they come to call their little parties Joy Luck.[6] Even though the original goal of this club is to escape from the sense of dislocation caused by the war in China, its therapeutic function continues to work and it also plays a significant role in their life in America. In the utopian club, the Chinese mothers can be Chinese freely. They talk with each other in Chinese. They can teach their children with ancient Chinese philosophy, for instance, the five elements: "Too much fire and you had a bad temper. … Too little wood and you bent too quickly to listen to other people's ideas, unable to stand on your own. … Too much water and you flowed in too many directions, …"[7] They wear the traditional Chinese dresses "with stiff stand-up collars and blooming branches of embroidered silk sewn over their breast." They wrap the wontons, cook *chaswei*, sweet barbecued pork cut into coin-sized slices, and treat their families with the "finger goodies" (named by one of the four daughters, Jing-mei Woo)—thin-skinned pastries filled with chopped pork, beef, shrimp, and unknown stuffing (unknown for the American daughters) "nutritious things."[8] If one starts his reading with the depiction of the club and its parties, he will

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[6] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 12.

[7] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 19.

[8] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 20.

not realize that it describes the Americans' life. All the symbols described in the novel constitute a veritable Chinese world, the other world of America, the other world within America.

This veritable Chinese world exists not only in *The Joy Luck Club* but also in Tan's other works. The mothers in Tan's other works are also good at creating their Chinese world. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the mother, Winnie Louie, and the auntie, Helen Kwong, have a flower shop in Chinatown, which was used to release Winnie's pain from the death of her husband and relieve Helen's burden of the loss of her job. Because of this shop, the two families—the Kwongs and the Louies—are linked with each other and are constituted into a community which belongs to them. Almost every weekend, the two families will meet together and hold Chinese style parties, like the Joy Luck Club. For instance, at the beginning, the daughter, Pearl Louis, expresses her annoyance about her mother asking her to attend Helen's son, Baobao's engagement party.[9] Later, she feels upset by her mother and auntie's decision to hold a funeral for Grand Auntie Du, who, in Pearl's words, was actually Helen's blood relative, her father's half-sister, or some such thing.[10] Both the party and the funeral are held in the Chinese style: The big banquet dinner for the engagement is held at Water Dragon Restaurant—five tables,[11] and the funeral is Buddhist in style, even though Grant Auntie Du has attended the First Chinese Baptist Church for a number of years.[12] Only through those parties can the mother escape from the chaos in her daily life. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the mother, LuLing, makes a Chinese home for her and her daughter, Ruth. In the home, they speak Chinese with each other, eat Chinese foods, and believe in Chinese culture. LuLing even uses a tea tray filled with sand and a chopstick to create a secret space where she, her daughter, and her dead mother can communicate with each other. The Chinese sand-chopstick game is supposed to push Ruth to learn Chinese characters, but it becomes the medium through which LuLing contacts her dead mother. Once Ruth writes down "doggie" by accident on the tea tray, this word reminds LuLing

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[9] Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 11.

[10] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 13.

[11] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 12.

[12] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 19.

of her nickname called by her mother.[13] Because of the sense of guilt toward her mother, Precious Auntie, and the belief in Chinese superstitions, she believes that her mother can enter into her daughter's body through the sand-chopsticks game. Since then, the American daughter, Ruth, has become Precious Auntie's incarnation and her mouthpiece. Only in this game can LuLing temporarily forget the miseries in her life. In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, the mother-like sister, Kwan, also creates a Chinese world for her and her younger sister, Olivia. Her method is to tell Chinese ghost stories. Whenever there are just two of them, she will tell Olivia the stories heard from the ghosts she met in China. Through highlighting the function of her "*yin*" eyes, she can get the attention from the people who she cares about.

Home for the Daughter: A Dystopia

The Chinese home created by the mothers, even though being viewed as a utopia by the mothers, in their daughters' eyes, is only a failure of their mothers' assimilation and a typical example of the dystopia. It is full of alienation, pain, and despair rather than comfort, joy, and hope. They are locked in the space of the dystopian home, controlled by their mothers, and have no opportunity to do what they want to do and be who they want to be. First, the foundation of the mothers' utopia, such as history, culture, and beliefs, is unbelievable. Whenever Suyuan tells her daughter, Jing-mei, about her Kweilin story and tries to make her learn Chinese culture and their family history, Jing-mei always questions the authenticity of the story and believes that it is her mother's imagination and fiction. She says, "I never thought my mother's Kweilin story was anything but a Chinese fairy tale. The endings always changed. Sometimes she said she used that worthless thousand-yuan note to buy a half-cup of rice. She turned that rice into a pot of porridge. She traded that gruel for two feet from a pig. Those two feet became six eggs, those eggs six chickens. The story always grew and grew."[14] When the mothers are dressed up in Chinese dresses, the daughter comments,

> She and Auntie An-mei were dressed up in funny Chinese dresses with stiff stand-up collars and blooming branches of embroidered silk sewn over their breasts. These clothes were too fancy for

[13] Amy Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001), 76.

[14] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 12.

> real Chinese people, I thought, and too strange for American parties. In those days, before my mother told me her Kweilin story. I imagined Joy Luck was a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war.[15]

In the daughter's eyes, the mother's criticisms about Chinese life philosophy, such as the five elements, are her Chinese superstitions "that conveniently fit the circumstances." In the meantime, the daughter always questions her mother's Chinese way of education. Jing-mei tells her mother that she should not criticize so much and this way of indoctrination cannot lead to a healthy learning environment. "'There's a school of thought,' I said, 'that parents shouldn't criticize children. They should encourage instead. You know, people rise to other people's expectations. And when you criticize, it just means you're expecting failure.'"[16] "The feathers from a thousand *li* away," for the daughter, becomes "the twenty-six malignant gates."[17]

Second, the utopia is not a space of harmony but the site of the confrontation between the mothers' hegemony and the daughters' resistance. None of the four mother/daughter pairs can get along well with each other. The mothers play a role of God in the utopian space created by themselves, interrupting or influencing the daughters' life and making their life disorderly and chaotic. In Jing-mei's childhood, Suyuan tries her best to prove that Jing-mei is a talented girl, like Shirley Temple, the three-year-old boy who knows the capitals of all the states and most of the European countries, or other remarkable children. However, when the genius tests get harder and harder, Jing-mei reads the disappointment on her mother's face, and she feels that something

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[15] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 16.

[16] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 20.

[17] Tan names the first chapter and the second chapter with "Feather from A Thousand *Li* away" and "The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates." In the first chapter, the mothers tell their Chinese stories, which for them are the previous gifts to their daughters. Those stories are like the feathers from the swan taken away from the mother at the first discursive beginning, which include the mother's good intention and her Chinese heritage. In China, the people often say, travel a thousand *li* to bestow a goose feather—a light gift from a far conveys deep feelings. In the second chapter, the daughters tell their American stories, through which they express their feelings about the "feathers" from their mothers. For the daughters, those "feathers" are the malignant gates rather than the precious gifts. If they receive them from their mothers, they will be in trouble.

inside her begins to die. She hates the tests, the raised hopes, and failed expectations.[18] She starts to hate herself, hating her ordinary face, which lacks the glory of a genius. It is her mother, Suyuan, who brings the self-hatred to her. Suyuan is the origin of her mental sufferings. If when she was nine years old, Suyuan did not say, "Of course you can be prodigy" and "You can be best anything," she would not have made Suyuan disappointed at her and made herself disappointed at herself.[19] In the Jongs' family, the mother, Lindo, always asks her daughter, Waverly, to accompany her on Saturday market days. Waverly, by her ninth birthday, has been a national chess champion. She is touted as the Great American Hope, a child prodigy and a girl to boot.[20] The achievement, in the mother's eyes, is the result of her "excellent" education. Therefore, every Saturday becomes Lindo's showing-off day. She will proudly walk with Waverly, visiting many shops, buying very little, and telling everyone that Waverly is her daughter.[21] Finally, Waverly cannot bear her mother's behavior and asks her mother to stop subjecting her to embarrassment. The aftermath of this incident is the appearance of an invisible wall between Lindo and Waverly, which causes the disappearance of Waverly's gift in playing chess.

In the St. Clairs' family, the daughter, Lena, is always frustrated by her mother's eccentricity. She complains, "Because, even as a young child, I could sense the unspoken terrors that surrounded our house, the ones that chased my mother until she hid in a secret dark corner of her mind. And still they found her. I watched, over the years, as they devoured her, piece by piece, until she disappeared and became a ghost."[22] The mother, Ying-ying, always refuses to open herself to the outside world. She insists on speaking in Chinese, even with her American husband. Lena has to be the translator to "translate the endless forms, instructions, notices from school, and telephone calls for her." She forbids Lena from hanging around with other children

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[18] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 144.

[19] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 141.

[20] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 99.

[21] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 101.

[22] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 105.

in the community where they live and endlessly talks about ghosts and spirits to Lena, such as the revenge of the beggar killed by her grandfather and the invisible bad man living in the basement. Gradually, Lena also can see terrible things, such as dancing devils, the beetle wearing the face of a child, and tether balls splashing a girl's head all over the playground. To avoid being viewed as a freak, Lena never tells anyone about the things she sees.[23] She also becomes the person who shuts herself down, like her mother. In Hsus' family, Rose lives in the shadow of her little brother Bing's death. In her understanding, Bing's death is her fault and also her mother An-mei's fault. Her mother had a superstition that children are predisposed to certain dangers on certain days, all depending on their Chinese birthday. Those dangers are explained in a Chinese book called *The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates*. Every page illustrates some terrible danger that awaites young innocent children. Even though the birthdates correspond to only one danger, her mother worried about them all.[24] Therefore, when her family comes to the beach, her mother asks her to look after the four younger brothers. It is her mother who chooses her to be the one who makes such a big mistake. When An-mei reminds her, "*Dangsying tamende shenti*" (Take care of them) and "*yiding*" (You must), Rose realizes that it is her fate to be the chosen one.[25] In her later life, she also takes an intensely negative attitude toward the things happening in her life. For her, no matter Bing's death or the divorce with her husband, all of the bad things in her life have been determined by fate. It means that no matter how hard she tries to change the situation, the result is the same, still hopeless. What she can do when facing hopelessness is to let it go. It is her mother who makes her become the person who is unwilling to resist fate and lacks the spirit of resistance.

The utopia built up by the mothers cannot guarantee a happy ending. How can such a utopia be called a utopia? In the four daughters' understanding, the utopia is just an illusion imagined by their mothers. What they expect to get from the utopia, such as love, joy, and harmony, in the end, turns into hatred, sadness, and chaos. It is absolutely a counter-site of

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[23] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 106.

[24] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 131-132.

[25] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 130.

utopia, a dystopia. Indeed, Tan in the primary discursive beginning has predicted the conflict between the mothers and the daughters and the blur between utopia and dystopia. She writes,

> Now the woman was old. And she had a daughter who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow. For a long time now the woman had wanted to give her daughter the single swan feature and tell her, "This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions." And she waited, year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter this perfect American English.[26]

Here Tan reveals the distance between imagination and reality. In the mother's dream, she carries what she got from her mother and ancestors to America and can give it successfully to her daughter. And her daughter will cherish it as she does—the utopia where she and her daughter live is a space of harmony and love. But the truth is that her daughter not only speaks perfect English, but also has a full American personality. She, in the mother's eyes, is unwilling to accept this gift from her mother. Growing up from America's soil, the daughter, like other American people in the country, looks down on her mother for her otherness and her imperfect English. The harmony upon which the utopia is built is replaced by the discord between the mother and daughter, and the hatred between them takes the place of love upon which the utopia is developed. The utopia is transferred from the land of hope into the land of hopelessness. The only thing she can do is wait, waiting for herself to be more American and her daughter more Chinese.

American daughters' dystopian interpretation of the mother's utopia is a common phenomenon in Tan's other works. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, even though the mother, Winnie, is satisfied with the connection between the Kwongs and the Louies, the daughter, Pearl, never views it as a significant part in her life. On the contrary, she believes that it is the origin of the chaos in their life. First, the Kwongs "aren't related to them by blood, just by marriage."[27] Their weekly parties make her and her American husband, Phil, have arguments about whether they should go or not. Second, her mother, even though viewing Auntie Helen as her sister, always complains about her dissatisfaction with this sister. Pearl says, "For years my mother used to

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[26] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 4.

[27] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 11.

complain to me how she did these things—not Helen. 'Helen, she doesn't even offer,' my mother would say."[28] She is confused about how her mother can continue keeping her contact with Helen when she dislikes her. Therefore, she cannot help asking, "Why don't you just tell Auntie Helen what's bothering you and stop complaining?"[29] But when she says that, her mother stops her complaining. She stops talking to her for about two months. The conflict between the mother and the daughter comes into being. For the daughter, the mother's utopia is the origin of all the negative emotions in their home. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Ruth only wants to have a dog. But when she writes down her wish on the sand, her mother interprets it with her Chinese superstitions. She suddenly becomes her grandmother's incarnation without any reason. She puts the chopstick in the sand and writes down the character, "mouth," by random. Her mother reads it as the sign of her grandmother's coming.[30] That is why later on, whenever Ruth wants to get something, she will write it down on the sand and pretend that it is an order from her grandmother. In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, the Chinese ghost stories never attract the younger sister, Olivia, and make her like her sister, Kwan. Ironically, Olivia hates her Chinese sister, who, in her words, makes her become the only one in her family who learns Chinese. Kwan infects her with it. She absorbs Chinese language through her pores when she is sleeping. It is Kwan who pushes her Chinese secrets into her brain and changes her world view.[31] All of the depictions of the daughters' interpretation of the mothers' utopian world can be concluded into one word—dystopia.

The Writer's Imaginative World: A Heterotopia

As a matter of fact, the mother-daughter argument of utopia and dystopia, from Tan's perspective, is a misunderstanding of Chinese Americans' existential situation. In her interpretation, Chinese Americans' home should not be a utopia, which is the Chinese culture's

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[28] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 13.

[29] Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 13.

[30] Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, 77.

[31] Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 12.

domain, nor should it be a dystopia, which is the example of the failure of Chinese culture in America. It should be a heterotopia, in which Chinese culture and American culture juxtapose with and merge into each other. Michel Foucault, in his "Of Other Spaces," defines heterotopia as a space of otherness, in which reality and unreality coexist, distinct cultures and worlds juxtapose with each other, and time can be fragmented and accumulated. It is different from utopia, a place of impossible perfection. It is not a dystopia, a place of the undesirable and frightening. It exists everywhere in our modern society, such as boarding houses, psychiatric hospitals, cemeteries, gardens, museums, libraries, and colonies. In Foucault's words, "The heterotopia can juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."[32] Time in the heterotopia is in the heterochronic order, which breaks the rules of and deconstructs the concept of traditional time.[33]

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan creates a Foucauldian space of otherness, in which literary fictionality and daily life mix and intermingle with each other, the present and the past time are cut into pieces and collaged into one literary artwork, Chinese culture and American culture confront each other, and the mother's world and the daughter's world collide into each other. At first, a literary work is supposed to be heterotopic, combining reality and imagination. In other words, the space of literature should be a heterotopia, in which reality and fiction are waved into each other and sometimes one cannot tell which is real and which is fictional. *The Joy Luck Club* is an autobiographical novel that combines Tan's literary creation and her family history. It is the demonstration of Tan's imagination of the life of the Chinese immigrants and their offspring but also the demonstration of her experience of the real life of the Chinese in America. Many of the characters in the book come from Tan's own family. For instance, the daughter, Jing-mei, is created according to Tan herself and the mother, Suyuan, comes from Tan's mother, Daisy Tan. At the end of the novel, Jing-mei comes back to China and meets with her two half-sisters. This scene is inspired by Tan's own experience. Before coming to America, her mother, Daisy, had a husband and three daughters. Like Jing-mei, Tan was ignorant of her half-sisters' existence until

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[32] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *The Visual Culture Reader*, Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 233.

[33] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 234.

her mother blurted it out during an argument. When she was in her 30s, Tan traveled to China for the first time and met her three half-sisters. Furthermore, An-mei's mother is created according to Tan's grandmother. She, like An-mei's mother, was widowed by the age of 30 and became a rich man's fourth wife in 1925—a lowly concubine.[34] In the meantime, many plots in the novel are the reflections of Tan's own life. For instance, the Joy Luck Club is the literary representation of the social club with the same name in Tan's own family.[35] The fictional conflicts between the daughters and mothers reflect the real conflicts between Tan and her mother, Daisy, and the people she knows and their mothers. For instance, Jing-mei's piano incident and Waverly's chess incident are also what Tan experienced in her childhood. The hopes and expectations which the mothers have in the novel are what Tan's parents wished and expected. She says, "I used the frayed sofa in one house and snippets of gossip around mahjong tables during meetings of the real Joy Luck Club. I resurrected the horrifying sound of a neighbor girl screaming as her mother beat her in the bathroom. I carried into many stories the hopes and expectations of my parents: to practice hard to become a concert pianist; to be American enough to take advantage of opportunities but Chinese in character; to marry a generous, kind man without spots on his face." In the fictional literary world, Tan draws reality and fictionality together and creates a heterotopic space between the real world and the purely fictional world, in which she draws an Ukiyo-e presenting the real life of Chinese Americans.

Second, time in *The Joy Luck Club* is heterochronic. It is fragmented and its accumulation, the history, is fractional. Tan does not tell the story chronologically. The first chapter tells the mother's stories happening in their childhood and before they arrive in America. Then Tan stops. In the second chapter, she does not follow the regular order to tell what happens next, when the mothers arrive in America and instead turns to tell the daughters' stories happening in their childhood. The mothers' time is located between the 1930s and 1940s, the period of the Chinese

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[34] Amy Tan, "Amy Tan Reflects on 30 Years Since *The Joy Luck Club*: Writing Fiction That's Truer Than Memoir," 2019, accessed August 22, 2020, https://lithub.com/amy-tan-reflects-on-30-years-since-the-joy-luck-club/.

[35] Tan, "Amy Tan Reflects on 30 Years Since *The Joy Luck Club*: Writing Fiction That's Truer Than Memoir," 2019, accessed August 22, 2020, https://lithub.com/amy-tan-reflects-on-30-years-since-the-joy-luck-club/.

anti-Japanese war. The daughters' time is confined within the 1950s to 1960s, the period of American civil rights movement. Time, in the first two chapters, is divided into the Chinese time and the American time, the mothers' time and the daughters' time. In the third and fourth chapters, the time goes into the 1970s and 1980s. At this moment, the Chinese mothers' time and the American daughters' time, even though presenting in different chapters, coincide with each other and develop into the united time of Chinese Americans. Moreover, history is not presented in ordinary orders. Tan tells stories of four Chinese American families, but the history of the four families is cut into pieces and presented as a modernist collage. In the first chapter, Jing-mei Woo, An-mei Hus, Lindo Jong, and Ying-ying St. Clair tell their family history in turns. In the second chapter, Waverly Jong, Lena St. Clair, Rose Hus Jordan, and Jing-mei Woo tell their personal history in turns. In the third chapter, Lena St. Clair, Waverly Jong, Rose Hsu Jordan, and Jing-mei Woo continue their histories. The fourth chapter returns to the mothers': An-mei Hus, Ying-ying St. Clair, and Jing-mei Woo tell theirs in turns. This arrangement reveals that Tan attempts to deconstruct the chronological interpretations of time and history. Time and history, for Chinese Americans, are broken and organized by fragments and pieces: the mothers coming from China cannot participate in the construction of American time and history before their immigration; the daughters born in America cannot attend the formation of Chinese time and history, either. But even though time and history for Chinese Americans are disorderly and chaotic, Tan still demonstrates her hope for the integration between Chinese and American time and history, which only Chinese Americans can play the role of mediator between China and America. Even though time and history are divided into Chinese and American time and history, when the mothers enter America, Chinese time and history mix with American time and history. This mixture will continue in the next generation and constitute the history of Chinese Americans. That is why, in the end, the mothers' time and the daughters' time merge into each other and shape the history of the four Chinese American families. Finally, the history of Chinese Americans will merge into American history and become one of its inseparable parts.

The heterotopicity of *The Joy Luck Club* is also manifested by the juxtapose of two incompatible worlds: the Chinese world and the American world. The setting of the story is in America, which means that the land where the story happens is in the West. The protagonists are

all Americans, which means that the story should be a story of the Americans, a Western story. But the truth is that the story is divided into two opposite parts: the Chinese part and the American part represented respectively by the mothers' stories and the daughters' stories. In the form and content, it is easy to see the binary structure of the story. Except for the primary discursive beginnings narrated at the very beginning of each chapter, the book is cut into four chapters, each of which has four sections narrated respectively by the four mothers and daughters. The first chapter is named "Feathers from A Thousand *Li* Away," in which there are four sections telling the memoir-like stories of the four mothers. In each section, except for the first section in which Suyuan has died and her daughter, Jing-mei, replaces her to tell her story, the protagonist tells their Chinese stories in the first-person pronoun, "I." The four "my" stories shape an independent world of "us", the world of the Chinese mothers. This world reappears in Chapter 4, "Queen Mother of the Western Skies," in which the mothers uncover the cracks in the relationship between them and their daughters and reveal the sufferings they experience brought by the daughters' misunderstandings.

In the second chapter, "The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates," the four daughters memorize their childhood stories, in which they reveal how they grow up in such a "dystopian" home and how they grow up into the current women. In Chapter 3, "American Translation," the daughters continue with the stories of their home and tell the readers that even if they are in adulthood, their mothers are still the origin of their sufferings. Tan's application of the first-person pronoun, "I," gives the readers the impression that Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 constitute the world of the American daughters. In the framework, there is a pattern, which is not apparent or easy to recognize. Tan, indeed, draws a picture of loops. In the center, there is the daughter, because the mother always lives for the daughter and the center of their home is the daughter. But because of the cultural clash between the mother and daughter, the daughter shapes her own world in their home and closes the entrance through which the mother can enter. The daughter's world is a closed loop. Outside of the center, there is the mother's world, in which the mother is the master. She decides which culture she and her daughter should believe and practice, and she tries her best to keep her daughter inside of her world and her daughter's growth under her protection. Therefore, the mother's world is also a closed loop. The home is the space where the mother and

the daughter's worlds coexist. Moreover, since, in the home, the power is in the Chinese mother's hands, the basic tone of the home is decided by the Chinese mother.
Normally, the home is a Chinese home. Ironically, the Chinese home is not in China. It means that outside of the mother's world there is another loop: American society. The heterotopicity of *The Joy Luck Club* is manifested in the coexistence of the three loops and two opposite worlds: the American society, the mother's Chinese world, and the daughter's American world (the American—the Chinese—the American). Through these separations and interactions between the three loops and two worlds, Tan demonstrates the complexity in the existence of the ethnic minorities in America.

Even though Chinese and American cultures and the mother and daughters' worlds are incompatible with each other, it does not mean that they are impossible to reconcile with each other. In Tan's depiction, the mahjong game is the passage through which the mutual understanding between the mother and daughter and the hybridity between Chinese and American cultures become possible. It is like the basin and water fountain in the heterotopic garden mentioned by Foucault. When illustrating the heterotopicity of the garden, he says,

> The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. … The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.[36]

Foucault's illustration offers a new perspective to look at the home in Tan's novel. The mothers' mahjong club is the sacred space (the home of Chinese Americans), and the mahjong table is the umbilicus connecting the mothers and the daughters and linking four Chinese American families. The sacredness of the club is embodied by the special foods offered after the game. Every food has its peculiar meaning and demonstrates the wishes from the mothers. The navel of the world is at its center: the mahjong table. Every member of the club gathers together in this space, in the Chinese-featured microcosm. The club is the smallest parcel of the world of the Chinese in

[36] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 234.

America and then it is the totality of the world for numerous mothers and daughters, demonstrating the daily life and thinking of the whole group of Chinese Americans. This world has its own rules, morals, and values, which are developed based on the "other" culture, Chinese culture. It consists of four distinct families, each of which is divided into two smaller worlds: the mother and the daughter's worlds. Because of the game, the American daughters start to open themselves and their world to the Chinese mothers. Because of the game, the American daughters learn to put themselves in their mothers' position and have the opportunity to understand the mothers and their "alien" behaviors and beliefs.

With this new view, it is more meaningful to understand why Tan opens *The Joy Luck Club* with the scene of the mahjong game. It depicts that after Suyuan's death, Jing-mei is appointed to sit in her position on the table.[37] Suyuan's death is the result of Tan's intentional design, which profoundly influences the relationship between the mothers and the daughters in the novel. Since there is always a tension between the mothers and the daughters, only when the daughters feel that they have lost or will lose their mothers, they will start to have time and mood to move into retrospection of their relationship, and the reconciliation between the mothers and daughters will become possible. After Suyuan's death, Jing-mei cooks Chinese food for her father, like what her mother did in the past. She finally understands why her mother complained, for instance, about the noise in the old pipes and the one-eared tomcat from upstairs. She understands what her mother meant: "Even you don't want them, you stuck."[38] Like her mother, she also shouts at the cat, "Get away from there!" When getting help from other mothers in the club and coming back to China, Jing-mei knows the meaning of Suyuan's words: "Cannot be helped" and "Someday you will see. It is in your blood, waiting to be let go."[39] When she meets her two half-sisters, she is aware of the Chinese part in her body and mind: "And now I also see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood. After all these

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[37] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 5.

[38] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 234.

[39] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 304.

years, it can finally be let go."[40] Simultaneously, Jing-mei's participation in the game predicts the possibility of the mutual understanding between the other three pairs of the mother and daughter and the possibility of the merge of their worlds. The mothers realize in the end that they are not so Chinese as they expected and their daughters are not so American as they thought. Being in America, they still cannot help but be assimilated. The Chineseness in them has not been as pure as the Chineseness they had in the past. That is why when Lindo comes back to China, speaking Chinese and using RMB, she is still recognized as a foreigner and charged higher prices. The mothers are still struggling with the two faces: Which one is American? Which one is Chinese? Which one is better? If you show one, you must always sacrifice the other.[41] They are still confused about their identity issue, not to mention their daughters. When the mutual understanding between the mothers and the daughters happens, the integration between the two opposite worlds begins.

This literary heterotopia created by Tan does not exist only in *The Joy Luck Club*. The phenomenon of "one family, two worlds" reappears in all of Tan's works. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, she also depicts the existence of the heterotopia of Chinese Americans in their home, America. She writes,

> In the hospital waiting room, Ruth saw that all the patients, except one pale balding man, were Asian. She read the blackboard listing of doctors' names: Fong, Wong, Wang, Tang, Chin, Pon, Kwak, Koo. The receptionist looked Chinese; so did the nurses.
>
> In the sixties, mused Ruth, people railed against race-differentiated service as ghettoization. Now they demanded them as culturally sensitive. Then again, San Francisco was about a third Asian, so Chinese-targeted medicine could also be a marketing strategy. The balding man was glancing about, as if seeking an escape route. Did he have a last name like Young that had been mistakenly identified as Chinese by a race-blind computer? Did he also get calls from Chinese-speaking telemarketers trying to sign him up for long-distance calling plans for Hong Kong and Taiwan? Ruth knew what it meant to feel like an outsider, because she had often been one as a child. Moving to a new home eight times made her aware of how she didn't fit in.[42]

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[40] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 329.

[41] Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 303.

[42] Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, 59.

As we have discussed in the last chapter, the American-born Chinese writers' obsession with home in their literary works can be traced back to their identity crisis caused by the conflicts between Chinese and American cultures. In American society, Chinese Americans are defined as the ethnic minority, who, as depicted in the passage above, are the outsiders of the mainstream. In the passage above, Tan demonstrates the demarcation of the room, in which the Chinese and the non-Chinese are clearly cut into two groups. In the waiting room, except the balding man, all the doctors, nurses, receptionists, and patients are Chinese. Tan creates a mirror image of the real world and makes it upside down: in the scene, the Chinese, rather than the non-Chinese, is the host of the space. When depicting the balding man's embarrassment in the waiting room, she actually reflects the existential condition of Chinese Americans in American society. She speaks out the real feeling of Chinese Americans about the dominant culture which is absolutely unlike and dislikes their original culture. The feeling of not fitting in makes Chinese Americans stay at their homeland as the unhomely. Only through creating their own world can they go on their existence in their home.

Moreover, in her other works, Tan also applies the mothers' obsession with Chineseness to create the Chinese heterotopia in America. For instance, in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the mother, LuLing, always lives in the memory of her childhood in China and attempts to create a space with Chinese features for herself and her daughter. Similarly, Tan divides this story into two parts: the mother and the daughter's parts. The mother's part is characterized with the titles named by Chinese characters, such as *真* (*zhen,* Truth), *心* (*xin*, Heart), *变* (*bian*, Change), *鬼* (*gui*, Ghost), *命运* (*ming yun*, Destiny), *道* (*dao*, Effortless), *骨* (*gu*, Character), and *香* (*xiang*, Fragrance). The daughter's part is only titled by numbers. But the structure in this novel is a little bit different from the structure in *The Joy Luck Club*. It is the daughter's part that includes the mother's part. It indicates that the daughter should enter her mother's world by herself. The umbilicus between the mother and the daughter's worlds is the mother's memoir. Except for *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan repeats writing the heterotopia in her other works, such as *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Hundred Secret Senses*, and the umbilicus used to connect the two generations is different. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the story of the Kitchen God's wife connects

the mother, Winnie, and daughter, Pearl again. In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, the *yin* eyes of the elder sister, Kwang, link the mother-like Chinese sister with her younger sister, Olivia.

Frank Chin: Family Romance in the Chinese American Home and Community

Jacques Lacan writes in his *Écrits*, "It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law."[43] The name of the father is Lacan's development of Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex, which interprets the function of the father in the Symbolic Order. The name of the father (*le nom du père*) comes from *le non du père* in French, which has another meaning "the no of the father." It demonstrates how the father's no constitutes the foundation of human culture and social order. But the father's "no" is not always welcomed by the son. Freud writes in his "Family Romance," "The liberation of an individual, as he grows up, from the authority of his parents is one of the most necessary though one of the most painful results brought about by the course of his development. ... Indeed, the whole progress of society rests on the opposition between successive generations."[44] Not by coincidence, the development of Chinese Americans' identity demonstrated in Frank Chin's works rests on the liberation of the son from the father and the opposition between the father and son in Chinese American family.

Unlike Amy Tan, who creates a heterotopic world of Chinese Americans and depicts it from a feminist perspective, Chin adopts an opposite approach. Chinese American men are his target, and, for him, the Chinese American community is a natural part of American society, which has no difference from other ethnic groups in America. He focuses on the depictions of the estrangement and disintegration experienced by the father and the son in the home of Chinese Americans, which escape the attention of female writers, such as Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, in Chinese American literature. In his works, Chin gives his readers an opportunity to see how the name (no) of the father sets the fundamental tone for the world of Chinese Americans, how the successive generations of Chinese Americans conflict with each other in the

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[43] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 230.

[44] Sigmund Freud, "Family Romance," *The Freud Reader*, Peter Gay, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 298.

name of the father, how the son turns over the name of the father in the way of Freud's family romance, how he liberates from the father through his reset of the father's no, the symbolic order of the Chinese in America, and how ethnic identity issue influences Chinese Americans' family. In this section, I will examine critically his novel, *Gunga Din Highway*, which, in my view, systematically and comprehensively conveys Chin's ideas about Chinese Americans' home, identity, and the symbolic order of Chinese Americans in American culture.

In "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature," Elaine Kim reveals that the two types of sexualization of Asian Americans in American society: the desexualization of Asian American men and the hypersexualization of Asian American women. In other words, the men are emasculated, and the women are hyperfeminized. To go against the stereotype of Asian women, the female writers, such as Tan and Kingston, create the strong female characters in their works. In "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature," Sau-ling C. Wong and Jeffery J. Santa Ana address the reaction of the male writers to the desexualization of Asian American men. They say, "That first period male writers, for instance, implicitly understand racially motivated acts of violence as distortions and disruptions of their own manhood and patriarchal claims to power, and that they routinely express concerns about a (patriarchal) masculinity crisis, calls for an examination of their work in a gender-specific category of 'men's writing.' "[45] Chin's works belong to the category of "men's writing." In *Gunga Din Highway*, Chin conveys his thoughts about Chinese Americans' identity by depicting the problematic relationship between the father and son (the men) in the home. In his understanding, Chinese Americans' identity issue is not only related to racism in American society, but also has its roots in Chinese Americans' self-misunderstanding. Because of the misunderstanding, the conflict between the old and young Chinese Americans comes to a head in the Chinese family in the novel. The father becomes the person the son tries his best to fight against and his "name" ("no") has become the confinement the son tries his best to break down. In his terms, the conflict between the father and son can be called the war between Charlie Chan and Chinaman.

[45] Sau-ling C. Wong and Jeffrey J. Santa Ana, "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature," *Signs,* vol. 25, no. 1, 1999, 177.

Chin develops this story from a poem named "Gunga Din" written by the English poet, Rudyard Kipling. This poem is narrated by a British soldier in India. It tells the story of an Indian watercarrier (Gunga Din): how he sacrifices himself to save the life of the injured British soldier. Kipling aims to display the spirit of sacrifice of human beings, but Chin reads something else in his poem: Gunga Din is a bona fide traitor of his nation, who brings the colonizers into his country and helps them bully his people. In Chin's novel, Longman Kwan, the father, is the Chinese Gunga Din. He spends his whole life on making his dream—being the first Chinese playing Charlie Chan in Hollywood movies and being a "perfect" naturalized Chinese—come true. Unfortunately, he never succeeds. Even at the end of his life, he still plays a minor role—a Chinese or Japanese "Who Dies," and is still a Chinese excluded from American mainstream. To fulfill his dream, he gives up his family and his responsibility to be a good father and husband. For him, playing the Chinese Who Dies and being the "perfect" Chinese are more important than his family. Ulysses Kwan, the son, grows up under such a circumstance. In his childhood, if he wants to see his father, the only way will be to go to the cinema and watch his father on the big screen. His mother even asks him to show his final grades to his father's image on the screen. With the increase of his age, Ulysses realizes that his father devotes his life to a meaningless dream and notices that no matter how hard his father tries in his career, he is forever the Chinese destined to play the insignificant role of a minor character who must die. To escape from the same destiny, he cultivates himself as an opposite person who will not aim to be the obedient and non-aggressive Chinese. He resists his father's "no" and views his father's god, Charlie Chan, and the fathers like Charlie Chan as his enemies. For him, the Chinaman is his ideal father. He and his people should be the Chinese defined in their own terms, and Chinese Americans' home should be established in the name of the Chinaman.

Superficially, this story is a typical story of an Oedipal conflict between the father and son. Freud figures out the reason why we are moved by Oedipus' destiny: "Because it might have ours—because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father."[46] As a matter of fact, the natural and

[46] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey, trans. and ed., (New York:

unconscious hostility between the father and the son in the Chinese family is caused by the father-son conflict in the symbolic order of Chinese Americans: namely, each of them attempts to define Chinese Americans in their own terms. In other words, the Oedipus complex in the novel is the manifestation of the father and son's ethnic complex—which kind of Chinese Americans they would like to be. In the novel, the protagonists are Longman and Ulysses. Each of them, through the first pronoun, "I," tells their stories. It seems that there is only one pair of father and son. But, in fact, there are two pairs: one is the Chinaman and Longman, and the other is Longman and Ulysses.

Longman Kwan's Family Romance: Home in the Name of Charlie Chan

The conflict between Charlie Chan and Chinaman in Chin's depiction is double-oriented. In the beginning, Chin depicts the hostility from the Charlie Chan son toward his Chinaman father. Longman, even though playing the role of the father, is actually a son. Chin opens his story with Longman's journey to Hawaii and uses the first section, "Gee, Pop!," to describe how popular Longman as the fourth son of Charlie Chan is in the Chinese American community. Longman comes to Hawaii not to meet his Chinese American fans, but to find his "father," Charlie Chan. This Charlie Chan is not the fictional Charlie Chan in the real world but a white actor famous for playing Charlie Chan in Hollywood movies. Since Longman played his fourth son, he identified himself as the "son" of the white Charlie Chan. In Chin's depiction, Longman never shows a negative mood toward his father, Charlie Chan, not mentioning hatred or hostility. He admires the father, who is the God in his life. Even when he finds that his father has not been the Charlie Chan he expected but a fat and dirty pornographer, he never shows any complaints about his father's falling and still views him as his hero.[47] Is Longman an exception to the

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Basic Books, 1955), 280.

[47] In the end of the first section, "Longman Kwan: Gee, Pop!," Longman finds his father, who hides himself in a porn shop and uses the identity of a pornographer to undercover his real identity as Charlie Chan. He is trying to escape from the Chinese's assassination. See Frank Chin, *Gunga Din Highway* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1994), 21.

Oedipus complex? Of course, not. Longman's affection for Charlie Chan is the result of the hatred for his father, the Chinaman.

In Chin's narration, Longman is a Chinese immigrant who arrived in America alone in his teenage years. He was not a paper Kwan, as Ulysses thinks, whose name was bought from somebody having the same name, and not a big opera star in China. He was only an apprentice, who was sold by his parents.[48] Since his early age, Longman had experienced what Freud mentions in his "Family Romance" —a feeling of being slighted.[49] He was slighted not from not receiving the whole of his parents' love or sharing the love with his brothers and sisters, but because of his orphan-like life in China. Being an apprentice in a traditional Chinese opera company meant that the parents sold their child to the boss of the company at his early age, signed their names on the contract, cut their relation to him, and promised not to take him back before his adulthood. Longman grew up under such a circumstance. Later, he contacted his sister, who married to the Kwan family and emigrated to America. She sponsored him as her brother-in-law, brought him to America, and changed his fate. In his childhood, he had no opportunity to experience the Oedipus complex because he had no father and mother surrounding him. He did not know what the love for the mother and the hatred for the father were. But when he saw his sister, Ulysses' grandmother, the natural desire repressed in his unconsciousness was awakened. Therefore, he seduced his own sister, Ulysses' grandmother, and made her give birth to Ulysses' brother, Longman Jr., and also seduced his own niece, Ulysses's mother, and made her give birth to Ulysses.[50] The desire for the mother was annulled due to the incests between the brother and sister and the uncle and niece. The unconscious hatred for the father, even though repressed, is also somehow released by the incests, which can be regarded as the revenge of the son on the father.

To find a vent for this hatred, Longman needs someone to be his "evil" father. According to Freud's Oedipus complex, it is supposed that Longman should imagine his sister's husband as

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[48] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 372.

[49] Sigmund Freud, "Family Romance," 298.

[50] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 373.

his father. Since he viewed his sister as his mother, he might naturally regard his brother-in-law as his father. But because he seduced his niece, Ulysses's mother, he was kicked out of the Kwan family and had no chance to develop his father-son relation to his sister's husband. Of course, the father cannot lack. While being assimilated into American society, he recognizes that the hatred from the Americans toward the Chinese is because of their ethnicity, the Chineseness demonstrated by the early Chinese immigrants. The family issue at this moment intertwines with the ethnic issue. The ethnic complex joins hands with the Oedipus complex in Longman's identity development. Those "Chinamen" in his eyes naturally play the role of the "evil" father in his Oedipus complex and become his imaginative father who set up a "bad" symbolic order for the Chinese in American culture. The hatred for the father finally finds its vent in the hatred for the "Chinamen." As he says, "The younger generations don't remember when Americans thought all Chinese were sex perverts, opium smugglers, and torturers of women."[51] Those "Chinaman" ancestors gave the Americans an extremely negative impression on the Chinese. He feels so lucky that he is not one of them, because he has converted to Christianity at a young age. He has been Americanized spiritually. He has cut off the bonds with his Chinaman father. He has not feared such a saying anymore: There has been Pearl Buck sorting out the good Christian "Chinese-Americans" from the evil Chinese "Chinamen" before there is Pearl Harbor to make the difference between Japs and Chinks.[52]

When interpreting family romance, Freud says, "For a small child his parents are at first the only authority and the source of all belief. The child's most intense and most momentous wish during these early years is to be like his parents (that is, the parent of his own sex) and to be big like his father and mother."[53] But with the growth of his intelligence, the child will discover that his parent is not the admirable person he expects. To fill the gap between reality and expectation, he will enter the later stage to develop his estrangement from his parents. This stage is related to the imaginative activity (daydreaming), which serves as the fulfillment of wishes

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[51] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 7.

[52] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 12.

[53] Freud, "Family Romance," 298.

and as a correction of actual life.[54] He will replace his parents by others, who, in his thoughts, are "of higher social standing" or "of better birth." Longman's relation to Charlie Chan is shaped in this mode. As the son, he is aware that his "father," the Chinaman, forever lives as the underdog surviving only on the margins of American society. He is the coolie, the pervert, the pagan, and the ethnic other. He is absolutely not the person whom Longman would like to be. In this instance, he searches for someone else to replace this villain-like Chinaman father. Charlie Chan appears timely in his life.

For Longman, Charlie Chan is the symbol of the perfect father, who is the ideal signifier of the Chinese and will bring a "good" symbolic order to his Chinese sons. Earl Derr Biggers wrote, "He was very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory-tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting."[55] It was the first time that the Chinese were portrayed in such an acceptable and inoffensive image. Compared with the image of Fu Manchu, Charlie Chan indicates an enormous improvement of the image of the Chinese in American culture: the Chinese are no longer the menace of the yellow peril; they are the model minority. It is Charlie Chan that symbolizes the change of the image of the Chinese in American signification system and the victory of the Chinese's assimilation into American society. Therefore, Longman says,

> You are not Christian, but as you see, I do love you anyway. As Charlie Chan I shall lead you to your great salvation. For, it is written: As God the Father gave up a son in the image of the perfect white man, to lead whites to walk the path of righteousness toward salvation, and praise God, so the White Man gave up a son in the image of the perfect Chinese American to lead the yellows to build the road to acceptance toward assimilation. Ah, sweet assimilation. Charlie Chan was his name.[56]

To confirm his identity as Charlie Chan's son, Longman claims to the public, "Gee, Pop! to you all, brothers, friends, *sum, moh, jieyh, mooey*, and *Hawaii Five-O*. I say, Gosh, Pop! In the name of Charlie Chan, The Father, Keye Luke, the Son, and Earl Derr Biggers, The Holy Ghost. It's

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[54] Freud, "Family Romance," 299.

[55] Earl Derr Biggers, *The House Without a Key* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1925), 76.

[56] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 13.

great to be an American and chew the fat with fellas who speak the same lingo."[57] It is his perfect father who gives him this opportunity to be accepted and welcomed by his American compatriots. It is Biggers, the white and the Holy Spirit, who gives him and his people such a positive signifier. Whom he thanks is not only his father, Charlie Chan, but also the father's creator, Earl Derr Biggers.

To distinguish himself from his Chinaman father, the negative signifier, and go against his impact, Longman tries his best to be an Americanized Chinese and the perfect son of Charlie Chan, who voluntarily and happily follows Charlie Chan or Charlie Chan's white master's "no." Because Charlie Chan is the representative of obedience and inoffensiveness, the whites give their "no" to the Chinese through the image of Charlie Chan. Those "nos" are no masculinity, aggressiveness, powerfulness, and heroism. In the meantime, once the Chinese show any of the features forbidden by them, they will be tagged as the "evil." Longman follows those "no"s and feels enthusiastic in playing various obedient and weak Chinese and bloodless and cruel Japanese, who are waiting for their spiritual salvation by the whites. As he comments himself,

> For nearly fifty years, half a century, I am the most famous Chinese in America: an actor. I am Charlie Chan's Number Four Son; the Chinese nicknamed Die Say or Say Die. Yes, I am the rhythmic Christian of Charlie Chan's movie sons, the martyr, the one famous for saying nothing but 'Gee, Pop!' and 'Gosh, Pop!' I am The Chinaman Who Dies.
> Fifty years of acting in movies and TV has washed out a better me, a bigger name, a set of brighter memories from the mundane, ordinary facts of my life. I am no longer born in a village in south China and apprenticed to a floating opera company on the Pearl River.[58]

He is "Donald Duck," "the symbol of helpless and struggling China in the arms of William Bendix," the "heroic" Chinese unable to distinguishing Amellican from American who sacrifices himself for the lives of John Wayne and his soldiers, and the fanatic treacherous Jap pilot, who is killed by a kid and has only one line: "Aiiieeeee!"[59] For being Charlie Chan's perfect son, he can

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[57] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 14.

[58] Die Say or Say Die means the fourth son in Chinese. Here Chin uses the similar pronunciation of the term in Cantonese and English to make fun of Longman and laugh at him as the one Who Dies. See Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 7.

[59] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 7-11.

do anything, even repetitively playing "The Chinaman Who Dies." Even though he knows that his role will die in the end, he is still obsessed with playing those characters and repeatedly and tirelessly playing them within his fifty career years. Of course, this repetition is an unwilling choice. Hollywood seldom gives Asian male actors the opportunity to play positive and important characters. But Longman, sometimes wishing that he can be the hero in the movie, still cannot help playing those characters. It is the result of not only the outside pressure but also his internal desire. Only through playing them can he feel safe and satisfied.

His neurotic behavior is the consequence of his desire to maintain the symbolic order given by his ideal father, Charlie Chan. Since the white actor who played Charlie Chan has secluded himself from society for years, his influence in the Chinese starts to fade away. To guarantee the name of Charlie Chan, Longman decides to replace his white actor father and continue the legend of Charlie Chan. At the beginning of the novel, Longman mentions a new Charlie Chan movie. Its producer is "on a much-publicized round-the-world search for a Chinese actor who speaks English well enough to be understood by American audience to become the first Chinese to play Charlie Chan, the Chinese detective."[60] He believes that he is the most suitable Chinese candidate for that role. His belief in Charlie Chan directly causes his neurotic behavior: repetitively playing "the Chinaman Who Dies" and continuing this repetition for fifty years. In his neurotic behavior, he pursues the certainty of the symbolic order created by Charlie Chan and the assurance of his people staying within this system. In his understanding, only the name of Charlie Chan gives him and his Chinese American people such a "good and prosperous" life and makes them accepted and welcomed by the Americans, especially by the whites. Therefore, the home for Chinese Americans should be named in the name of the father, the "no" of Charlie Chan, and the social order in the home should also be based on his name (no). Everyone in the home, the home of Chinese Americans, should follow his order and behave in his order. If anyone in the home resists the order, he will be unwelcomed. His son, Ulysses, is the one. That is why Chin names the first part, in which Longman tells his story, with the title, "The

[60] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 3.

Creation." As a son, Longman creates a world in the name of his ideal father. As a father, he also gives the "no" for his sons in the world.

Although not so Charlie Chan as Longman, the fathers in Chin's other works also play the role of the followers and disciples of Charlie Chan, who have more or less Charlie Chan's characteristic features. In *The Confession of a Number One Son*, the father, called by the son "the old man," never makes a loud noise. "Just his breath and sound of his spittle dripping off his lips and hitting his clothes with little thumps, like buildings dripping onto awnings and convertible tops after a rain."[61] He is unable to take care of himself. It is the son who wheels the father around, reads to him, feeds him, combs his hair, works him out of his chair, sticks him in darkness, and closes the door on him.[62] He is ruled by fear. He fears whites. Every white man can turn him into a female impersonator. As the son says, "White people were born with the power to turn my father into Shirley Temple. He looked like a shriveled-up, hunched-over Shirley Temple sniffling back tears, going off to pout."[63] He fears for blacks. When they meet a black man who is shouting at them, "I wa-ont axe ya a question, man!", the father stops with tears in his eyes and asks the black man why he was shouting at him.[64] He cries like a kid who is mistreated by his parents: Tears run down from his cheeks, sniffle slims out of his nose, and his lower lip is chewed raw and shines with spit a bright-red like salmon eggs.[65] Even though this father is not like Longman, who has a clear goal to be the son of Charlie Chan, his femininity and inability have revealed that he is a qualified son of Charlie Chan.

In *The Year of Dragon*, the father, Wing Eng, is the respected "Mayor" of Chinatown, who tries his best to keep the order of the Christian-dominated Chinese Benevolent Society.[66] In his

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[61] Frank Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, Calvin McMillin ed., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 63.

[62] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 62-63.

[63] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 72.

[64] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 84-85.

[65] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 85.

[66] Dorothy Ritsuko McDonald, "Introduction," Frank Chin, *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The*

lifetime, he has never really merged into American society. Even though he is a bigshot in Chinatown, he clearly knows what Chinese Americans' social status in American society is. He fears for the future of his family outside Chinatown's confines after his death, so what he can do is to try his best to keep his children staying in Chinatown, the Chinese's Shangri-la. He acknowledges the whites' racist discourse about the Chinese by default and cultivates his children in their racial philosophy. When his eldest son, Fred Eng, dreams of being a writer, he breaks Fred's dream and humiliates him. The words that Wing Eng uses to reply to Fred are "When you grow up? Get responsiboo!" and "Be Chinese now!"[67] As Fred says, in his pa's eyes, only the fathers of doctors, lawyers, and engineers can feel proud of their sons and can introduce their sons to each other.[68] To prevent his son from leaving Chinatown, he asks Fred to drop out of school and stay with him till he passes. He tries his best to protect the social order in the name of Charlie Chan and ensure its operation in the next generation. Indeed, Longman in *Gunga Din Highway*, the old man in *The Confession of a Number One Son*, or Wing Eng in *The Year of Dragon*—they are all the bigshots in their community, the Chinese American community. They are powerful fathers in their homes. Unfortunately, the fathers in power are actually the sons in manipulation. They liberate from the authentic father, the Chinaman, by their family romance but falling into the trap of the whites' "racist love." Once they are not in Chinatown, they turn into cowardly, timid, and girlish sons of the whites, who are unable to control their own life and be the persons they expect.

Ulysses Kwan's Family Romance: Home in the Name of the Chinaman

Longman's home in the name of Charlie Chan, in his son, Ulysses' eyes, is, indeed, the home in the name of a wrong father, which will lead Chinese Americans to go on the Gunga Din Highway, namely, the way of Chinese Americans' self-betrayal and self-destruction. The popularity of Charlie Chan in the Chinese American community results from the whites'

Year of Dragon (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), xxi.

[67] Frank Chin, *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of Dragon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 86.

[68] Chin, *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of Dragon*, 92-93.

conscious racism and the Chinese's collective unconscious to be assimilated by the whites. Therefore, there is another pair of father and son in the novel—Longman and Ulysses. Their conflict is the other half of the double-oriented conflict between Charlie Chan and Chinaman: Charlie Chan, the father, and the Chinaman, the son.

Like Chin himself, Ulysses is a child who gets to know his parents when he was six. Before being carried back to his home, he lives with an old white couple: Auntie Bea and Uncle Jackie. In his narration, they are "blue-eyed, white-haired, old white people who have had their day in vaudeville and the silent movies and have retired to the California Mother Lode country to live in the wrinkle of yellow foothills, to love each other and raise me."[69] His self-recognition is completed with the help of his white uncle and auntie. It is his white adoptive parents that make him know who he is and where he comes from. When a one-eyed soldier asks the old couple: "What are you doing with a Jap kid?" Ulysses replies, "I'm not a Jap kid. I am an American of Chinese descent."[70] As he says, he is too young to know what an American of Chinese descent is. It is what Auntie Bea and Uncle Jackie teach him to say when people call him a Jap kid.[71] However, this recognition settles down the tone for Ulysses' self-identification. The time when Ulysses lives with the old couple is the happiest time in his life, in which *Mom* and *Dad* and *Mommy* and *Daddy* are words he hears on radio shows, but never uses, and never asks about.[72] During the time, he does not have any doubt about his identity.

Ulysses' returning home brings a vital transition to his life: from the paradise of love and certainty to the mundane world of reality and chaos. Chin intentionally names the second part in which the son and his homies, Benedict Han and Diego Chang, tell their stories in Chinatown with the title, "The World." It demonstrates how the son grows up in the world in the name of Charlie Chan, how he suffers from the name, and how he resists it. When Ulysses leaves his foster parents, the prototype of the ideal parents, the pleasure brought by the certainty of his

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[69] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 51.

[70] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 52.

[71] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 52.

[72] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 52.

identity disappears. It is his authentic family that brings about this lack. He is in "the World," the real world, where he starts to cast doubt on his identity. First, in the home, he is the intruder and unwelcomed. He is not sure about whether he is a member of the Chinese family. He suffers from the pain of being slighted by his family, which Freud mentions in his "Family Romance." Ulysses says, "Grandma doesn't like me."[73] Even when he wants to play his brother's electronic train, he is told that he needs to ask his grandma and say "*Ah-Paw-Paw*" and "*Ngaw oy nay.*"[74] Then the sense of being slighted is strengthened by his parents' love for his elder brother, Longman Kwan Jr.. His mother says Junior is more handsome than his handsome father and he should like both of his brother and pa. When the hero of the Kwan family, Junior, is home, his grandma is like "a giddily happening pinball off the walls." His mother orders him to be nice to his brother and love him.[75] His pa, Longman, who Ulysses never sees before, even after his return, comes back home from Hollywood and hosts a ten-table banquet to show off his first son to Chinatown bigshots. He calls his first son "Hollywood Junior" and dreams out loud over the food of Ulysses' first Chinese banquet about the Kwan family becoming the "Chinese Barrymores."[76] In this home, his authentic home, Ulysses feels himself as a stranger. As he says, "I am strange to the Chinese of my family, and strange to Sylvia's family, and am the stranger in the town, the stranger in the family ever since."[77]

Second, his father's indifference and coldness make him doubt whether he is a son of the Chinese. Longman, as the father, never takes his responsibility. In Ulysses' words, his pa is never home. If his mother wants to impress him with the image of his father, she will only take him to the movies, a Charlie Chan double bill. Every Chinese New Year, May, and the round of tong New Year's spring banquets in San Francisco and Oakland are the time when Longman

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[73] I have mentioned that Ulysses' grandma is actually Longman's sister. Longman Kwan Jr. is the son of Longman and Ulysses' grandma.

[74] "Grandma" and "I love you." See Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 53.

[75] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 54.

[76] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 55.

[77] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 59.

comes back. Even though Longman is home, Ulysses never feels and expresses excited and happy about his return. His father does not care about him. Longman doesn't care if Ulysses goes to the banquets, in which he is treated like a bigshot by other bigshots in Chinatown. In Ulysses' thinking, his father dislikes him for he does not know Chinese, Chinatown, tongs, how to act in the banquets, and does not even look Chinese anymore.[78] He is the other in the world in the name of Charlie Chan. Moreover, when he is burned by the gallon of boiling water, his father never shows any care and concern about his injury. It is his mother who brings him to the hospital. Once he falls into water. When he struggles in the water, he glimpses his father, who grins and laughs at him. When he is up again and sees Chinese of every size swimming around him yelling at him, he glimpses at his father continuing laughing. His capped teeth flash.[79] What is worse, when his father takes him alone, down to Lake Merritt to watch the fireworks, he calls his father "Pop" for the first time. It is supposed to be a memorable time for the father and the son. However, when he calls, "Come on, Pop," he is run over. Other people's feet are all over his back. When he looks back, his "Pop" stands and watches. He has not moved.[80] At this moment, his dream for a father who loves him is broken. As he says, "The visit with the Chinese is over."[81] This "over" is not only the end of the visit, but also the end of their father-son relation.

The uncertainty of his identity in the family and community makes Ulysses trapped in the uncertainty of his identity in American society. Because his father is the son of Charlie Chan and a bigshot in the Chinese community and Charlie Chan's name believed by the father naturally reflects the symbolic order of the Chinese in America, he starts to question the concept of the Chinese in American culture. At this moment, the family issue develops into the ethnic issue. The Oedipus complex is replaced by the ethnic complex. The conflict between the father and son is no longer because of the mother. It is the conflict between Ulysses' original self-identification as an American of Chinese descent and his father's identification as an entirely Americanized

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[78] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 60.

[79] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 65-66.

[80] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 66.

[81] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 66.

Chinese. The son believes that it is his father's misunderstanding of ethnic identity that causes his identity crisis. In the conflict, Charlie Chan, who is worshipped by his father, becomes the origin of his suffering. On the day when Ulysses is burned by the spoiling water, he has a nightmare. In it, he becomes a superman, who is flying above Chinatown in Oakland. But the superman, Charlie Chan, limits his superpower and stops him from flying higher. He only flies low with his eyes about as high off the ground as the people's knees. In the end, he memorizes, "I bump into the legs of Christmas shoppers. Some trip on my dragging cape. Some hurt themselves kicking me. I want Oakland to run out, fall away from under me, give me height by going downhill under my level flight. Let me fly!"[82] According to Freud's interpretation of dreams, a dream is the condensation and replacement of one's repressed unconsciousness. In the dream, Charlie Chan, in fact, has two symbolic meanings. The first is that he is the replacement of the father, Longman. Since Ulysses is often brought to the cinema to see his father in Charlie Chan movies, the image of the father overlaps with the image of Charlie Chan. The second is that Charlie Chan is the representative of the Chinese and the father of the whole group of the Chinese in America. It means that all the Chinese should follow Charlie Chan's "no." Therefore, no matter in home or society, Ulysses will be controlled by the name of the father and cannot be the person he wants to be. Furthermore, his superpower of flying in the dream, on the one hand, indicates his desire to escape from the confinement of the name of Charlie Chan. On the other hand, it indicates his manhood and masculinity, which Charlie Chan lacks. He loses his superpower and bumps into the legs of shoppers, which suggests that he loses his ability to demonstrate his manhood and masculinity and is symbolically castrated like his father. In presenting Ulysses' fear of being castrated by his father, Longman, who punishes him in the name of Charlie Chan, the dream also reveals his fear of losing the possibility to be a different type of Chinese Americans: namely, the masculine and heroic American of Chinese descent. That is why Ulysses suffers from the home phobia, which makes him frequently run away from home in his childhood and makes him keep a distance from his home and home community, Chinatown, in his adulthood.

[82] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 62.

When Ulysses and his homies, Benedict Han and Diego Chang, attend Chinese school, he gets to know who he is and who he will be. He goes from an ignorant American teenager, who laughs at Poo Goo and Nur Waw in Chinese Genesis, to an American of Chinese descent, who discovers that the meaning of his and his people's existence is the fictionality and hybridity in their nature. His self-awareness is awakened by their Chinese teacher, the Horse in their terms. He says,

> I can teach you to read and write Chinese, but you will never be Chinese. And by now you should all know no matter how well you speak English and how many of the great books of western civilization you memorize, you will never be *bokgwai*, white European Americans. The Chinese kick you around for not being Chinese. And the whites kick you around for not being American. Obviously you are neither white nor Chinese, but you tell me what does that mean? What is it? You are the stone monkey come to life. To learn the difference between stone idea and living fresh and blood, you must learn everything Chinese and American there is to know, you must master all the knowledge of heaven and earth, become The Sage equal to The Emperor of Heaven so as to see the difference between the real and the fake, the knowledge of what being neither Chinese nor *bokgwai* means.[83]

In his words, the Horse tries to resist the concept of duality in Chinese Americans' identity. Chinese Americans, for him, are neither the Chinese nor the Americans. Ulysses finds out the essence of their identity in his words: that is, the "self-begat," which comes from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). If they are the self-begat and self-invention, why do they need to be the people who are defined by other people? Why should all of them like his father be the sons of Charlie Chan and be castrated by him, by the creation of the whites? They should be the "Chinamen," the people who are Americans and never forget their ethnic roots.

Ulysses, in this period, finishes his liberation from his father, Longman. In terms of Freud's family romance, he replaces Longman by a new father, the Chinaman, whose spirit, in his thinking, is much higher than Longman's. Different from his father, who views the Chinaman as the "bad" father of the Chinese, Ulysses regards the Chinaman as the ideal father who can bring back manhood and masculinity to the castrated Chinese. He does the work that only men can do: building American railroads and participating in the construction of America. He is never

[83] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 93.

obedient and inoffensive: insisting on living their life in Chinese style, never distorting his Chinese heritage to entertain his American host, and never selling himself and his people for the acceptance of his white boss. Therefore, in the "world," Ulysses and his bros equip themselves with Chinese masculism rooted in ancient Chinese brotherhood and heroism. They view themselves as the soldiers of Chinese Americans, who should fight for themselves and their people.[84] Benedict, Diego, and he organize their secret fraternity originated from the story of the oath of the peach garden. Benedict Han is Lowe Bay, the first brother and the heir of the throne of Han, Ulysses Kwan is the second brother, unafraid and fearless Kwan Kung, and Diego Chang is Chang Fay, the third brother of the oath.[85] They shout at each other with the slogan, "One for all, and all for one!" They resist the no of their Charlie Chan fathers, try to fight for themselves, and create a world in the name of their authentic father, the Chinaman. In this period (from the 1950s to the 1960s), Ulysses gets away from the home in the name of Charlie Chan, inherits his great grandfather' career, and works on the railroad. The railroad brings him out of the yellows' Shangri-la, the Chinatown, and makes him get out of the Chinese's self-deception. It also reconnects him with his Chinaman ancestors, who built the railroad. He is not a person who does not have a definite identity anymore.[86] He is a descendant of those Chinamen, those Chinese Men. When figuring out the origin of his identity, he and his bros, Benedict and Diego, make friends with the blacks, Japanese, and Philippines, participate in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, support the African Americans' Black Panther Party, and organize Asian Americans' Black Tiger to fight against racism and white supremacism.

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[84] In Chin's reading, "Life is war. All individuals are born soldiers. All behavior is tactics and strategy. All relationships are martial." His philosophy of life comes from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

[85] The connection between Diego Chang and Chang Fay is that both are related to the word, "black." Diego speaks and behaves like the blacks. Chang Fay is famous for his boldness and black skin. See Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 73-76.

[86] In "Diego Change: American Rifleman," in Part 2, "The World," Diego tells of how the Revolutionary Black Panther Party made comments about the "American-born Chinks." He says, when the Black Panther declaims that "The Chinese are the Uncle Toms of the nonwhite peoples of Amerika!", all the American-born Chinks suddenly mope about not having an identity like the blacks. Their identity as Chinese Americans is in some kind of crisis, a Chinese American identity crisis. Can they really be Chinese Uncle Toms? See Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 212.

At the end of the 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement comes to its end, Ulysses finds out that those Charlie Chan's sons and grandsons cannot overturn the world in the name of Charlie Chan through the way of the blacks' revolution. In his words, "But the Revolution is showbiz. The Chinatown Black Tigers are bullshit. … That the pledge to hunt down the last living white men to play Charlie Chan and try them before a People's Court is bullshit. ... Anyway, time is running out. The Revolution is fading fast. No more Black Tigers."[87] Therefore, Chin names the Part Three, "The Underworld." Ulysses and his homies transfer their liberation from the world to the underworld, in which they start to build up their own world, the world in the name of the Chinaman. Their liberation is no longer violent, as it was during the Civil Rights movement.[88] At the moment, they attempt to liberate themselves and their people spiritually. Chin's thinking of writing is similar to Lu Xun's. For both him and Lu, writing is the best way to cure the diseases in his people's spirit. In "Rendezvous," he claims, "Writing is fighting. Life is war. The strategist says: Words are tools of the ominous. Writing is a grave matter. Be apprehensive of writing embarked upon fighting without due study."[89] That is why Ulysses is designed to be a playwright, who writes a play, "Fu Manchu Plays Flamenco Guitar," and plays it on the stage of New York. He breaks the silence of their people, humiliates whites with their own stupid and racist jokes, and reminds his people of the dangers of their existence in America. In it, Ulysses plays Fu Manchu, the symbol of the yellow peril, who says "God Fuck it!" in front of white people, sings the song of "Ching Chong Chinaman,"[90] and wears a bra, panties, garter belt, and black net stockings to threaten his white captive to give up the secret formula to Kool-Aid. This self-abasement and self-mockery, in Ulysses' understanding, is the satire, which is

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[87] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 220.

[88] The three brothers imitate the blacks and organize their own party: the Black Tiger.

[89] Frank Chin, "Rendezvous," *Conjunctions,* no. 21, the credos issue, 1993, 291.

[90] "Ching Chong Chinaman sitting on a fence/Trying to make change for fifteen cents; Ching Chong Chinaman sitting on a rail/Along come a choo-choo train/And cut off his tail; …" See Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 256.

"where you make fun of how *they* think and what *they* say in order to make *them* look *stupid*."[91] They are the descendants of the yellow-peril Chinaman who dare to laugh at whites and make fun of the whites' stupidity. They are not Charlie Chan, and fear nothing.

When Ulysses attempts to change the world created by his father, in Part Four, "Home," he is informed that his father is dying. The death of the father indicates the change of the father who sets orders for Chinese Americans. When his China Brother expresses that it would rather let Longman die than letting him alive, Ulysses replies, "If he lives, that's his problem. I'm going to ask for the second opinion without you. If he's got a fifty-fifty chance, I'm not going to fuck up his benefit of a doubt. If he lives through this and hates it, it serves him right. I'd rather he dies wide awake with all his wits and all alone the way he deserves than stoke out and coma away."[92] He feels indifferent about his father's death, because for him he is not a good father who never gives him any love. But he does not want him to die without consciousness. He wishes that his father could see how he replaces him in the home and could regret what he did in the past before his death. Now it is the proper time for him to come back home, from which he keeps away for almost two decades.[93] In his family's reunion party, Ulysses gets to know who his father was, his relation to his grandmother and mother, why his grandmother loved Longman Jr. and hated him, and why he was adopted by the white couple.[94] This Chinaman's return symbolizes that the age of Charlie Chan ends and the age of the Chinaman begins. It is the Chinaman son who inherits the unbearable history of the family, holds the father's funeral, sends him to the underworld in person. It will be also the Chinaman son who will lead the family to a new world. It is a world in the name of the Chinaman. That is why even though Ulysses is assigned as "the figurehead head of the family" by his aunties, he knows that his time is coming. After his father's funeral, he visits his brother, Longman Jr., who is also dying. In the room of the hospital, the TV is broadcasting the funeral scene at the end of *Gunga Din*: "The ghost of Gunga Din smartly salutes

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[91] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 257.

[92] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 350.

[93] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 357.

[94] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 368-373.

and breaks into a grin. The End."[95] With the hope of leading his people in the name of the Chinaman, in the end, Ulysses sets the destination of his journey at the Chinatown, the place he wanted to fly away in the past. The reason for his return is that a new baby is coming. Even though he is not the baby's father, its coming indicates that from now on his generation becomes the father. The new-born generation will feel free in the home in the name of the Chinaman and be whoever they want to be. Everything on the way home is optimistic. "The light on the block signal ahead shows green. Green!"[96] He crosses under the freeway and the broad streets paralleling the waterfront and drives to Chinatown along the streets where the trains used to run. Green![97] The "green" goes on in the following journey. In the last three paragraphs of the novel, it appears six times.[98] This green indicates the hope of having a new world. With the death of the old generation and the coming of the new generation, Ulysses feels the hope to overturn the world in the name of Charlie Chan and to build a new world in the name of the Chinaman. The age of the Chinaman is coming. A similar ending appears in *The Confessions of a Number One Son*. In the end, the protagonist, Tam Lum, holds his new-born baby in his arms.[99] The coming of his daughter indicates the return of his manhood and makes him powerful again. After he defeated his father, Charlie Chan, he became the father. The new age is coming.

The Writer's Family Romance: Writing the Death of the Father

When being asked why he used the Chinaman to define Chinese Americans, Chin replied, "And I think the term *Chinaman*, because it is our only connection with our ancestors, is something to be proud of. I think we should all be Chinamen."[100] Ulysses' dream of home is also

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[95] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 396.

[96] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 402.

[97] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 403.

[98] Chin, *Gunga Din Highway*, 404.

[99] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*, 264.

[100] Jeffery Paul Chan, "I am a Chinaman: An Interview with Frank Chin (1970)," Judy Yung and

what Chin, the writer, dreams. For Chin, the Oedipal conflict in the Chinese American family is actually the manifestation of the conflict between the two identities of the Chinese: the Americanized Chinese and the American of Chinese descent. The unsolvable family crisis in Chinese American families is caused by Chinese Americans' identity crisis. Therefore, if trying to solve the problem in home, one should first deal with the problem in identity. To deal with the problem in identity, one should first change the thinking of the father in the home. Only when the father is right, the home will be all right.

Although Chin says that only Christian fake writers, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, write their works as their autobiographies, Chin actually does the same thing. Ulysses is his incarnation in the work. He is the Son, who will overturn the home in the name of the wrong father, Charlie Chan, and build up the home in the name of the right father, the Chinaman. Like Ulysses, he came back to his home at six. In his first six years, he lived with an old white couple, who were the actors of the silent movies. For Chin, they were the prototype of the ideal parents. Like Ulysses, he also had a bad relationship with his father, who never felt proud of him and made any acknowledgment of his achievements.[101] Because of the tension between him and his father, his father became the prototype of the Charlie Chan fathers in his literary works, Longman Kwan in *Gunga Din Way*, the old man in *The Confessions of a Number One Son,* and Wing Eng in *The Year of the Dragon*. Like Ulysses, his mother died in a car crash on the day when his first play, *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, was performed on the stage of New York. It was also his father that made such a tragedy: His father, like Longman, insisted on bringing his mother to a Chinatown party. Like Ulysses, he was a student of UC, Berkley, and before becoming a writer and playwright, he worked on the railroad and was the first Chinese American brakeman. Like Ulysses, his first play, *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, was also a satire, in which Chin made fun of the stereotypes of the Chinese given by the whites and used the words created by the whites to humiliate the Chinese to reflect the whites' stupidity. Those similarities between Chin and his protagonist reveal his intention to speak out the unspeakable words through his

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Gordon H. Chang, ed., *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 310.

[101] Chin's autobiography has been mentioned in Chapter 1.

protagonists and his ambition to overturn the home of Chinese Americans in the name of Charlie Chan. The Oedipus complex and the Freudian father-son conflict in his novels are only the manifestations of the conflict between an ethnic minority, Asian Americans, and American mainstream culture. His depiction of the liberation of the son from the father is, indeed, the manifestation of his liberation from American racist culture.

Even though it is said that literary works are fictional, the writer often picks up someone in his works to speak for him and express his real thoughts and ideas. Chin, through Ulysses in his *Gunga Din Highway* and the sons in his other works, for instance, *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Confession of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, expresses his hatred toward the Chinese Americans' concepts of home and identity based on the feminized and castrated Charlie Chan. *The Chickencoop Chinaman* was the first play written by "Asian Americans to have a major New York production.[102] In the play, Chin creates the character, Tam Lum, who is a writer and filmmaker working on a documentary about his hero, Ovaltine Jack Dancer, a black boxer. In his interactions with his friends and interviewees, he discovers that the perfect father and the ideal father-son relation are usually fake and fabricated. His hero, Ovaltine, cannot escape from the myth of Freudian family romance and imagines Charley Popcorn as his father/hero. So does he. For having a higher social status, he imagines the black hair Lone Ranger as his father/hero. But when the Lone Ranger shoots the innocent youth—the future writer, Tam is awakened from his childhood daydream. He realizes that he has also been poisoned by the white myth and gone away from his authentic home, the home of the Chinaman. In Chin's words, Tam is "the comic embodiment of Asian-American manhood, rooted in neither Asia nor white America" and "forced to invent a past, mythology, and traditions from the antiques and curios of his immediate experience."[103] Through Tam, Chin expresses his idea about Chinese Americans' identity: They are the creation of the Chinese under the overwhelming

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[102] Robert A. Lee, "Eat a Bowl of Tea: Fictions of America's Asia, Fictions of Asia's America," *Multicultural American Literature: Comparative Black, Native, Latino/a and Asian American Fictions* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 142.

[103] Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong, ed., *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Garden City: Anchor-Doubleday, 1975), 34-35.

power of American white supremacism. When Tam talks with Hong Kong Dream Girl, he declares:

> My dear in the beginning there was the Word! Then there was me! And the Word was CHINAMAN. And there was me. … I lived the Word! The Word is my heritage… Born? No!... Created! Not born. No more born than heaven and earth. No more born than nylon or acrylic. For I am a Chinaman! A miracle synthetic![104]

Gunga Din Highway was published in 1994, and *The Confession of a Number One Son* came out in 2015. But the latter was actually created by Chin before the former. It had been finished in the 1970s. Because American Leisure Concepts, Inc., the owner of all rights, title, and interest to the literary property "Charlie Chan," refused to authorize Chin to use Charlie Chan as the title of the novel.[105] It was forgotten and lost for years. While doing his dissertation, Calvin Mcmillin accidentally discovered the original manuscripts for *Charlie Chan on Maui* and edited it into *The Confession of a Number One Son*. It was the sequel of *The Chickencoop Chinaman*. The reason why I mention it here is that Tam Lum in *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Confession of a Number One Son* "epitomizes the cultural and historical dilemma of the incipient Asian American writer."[106] Only by connecting the two can we have a complete look at Chin's thinking of Chinese Americans' identity and his complicated emotions to Chinese Americans' father, Charlie Chan.

In *Gunga Din Highway*, Chin depicts Ulysses' hatred for his father, Longman, the fourth son of Charlie Chan. His hatred, of course, comes from his father's coldness, but it mainly comes from his father's love for the "ideal father," Charlie Chan. In *The Confession of a Number One Son*, this hatred goes into its extreme: the hatred for the father develops into a conscious desire to kill Charlie Chan. Chin depicts the misadventures of Tam Lum: after a failed marriage and the death of his mother, Tam was exiled himself to the farthest territory of America, the Hawaiian island of Maui. There, he has a romance with Lily, a forty-three-year-old ex-nun and the daughter of a Hollywood actor famous for playing Charlie Chan. In this plot, Chin takes his

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[104] Chin, *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of Dragon*, 6-8.

[105] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, 25.

[106] McDonald, "Introduction," xv.

revenge on whites and American white culture through the sexual relationship between Tam and Lily. The image of Lily has symbolic meanings. First, she is white and represents the white people in America. Second, she always has sex with people who have Chinese blood. Tam is just one of them. In the discourses of Orientalism and the systematic racism in America, the Chinese, especially the men, are depicted as the feminized and castrated. But those Chinamen without manhood prove their manhood through the body of the whites. Third, she is Charlie Chan's daughter. This sexual relationship also humiliates Charlie Chan and is a symbol of the son's revenge on the father. Fourth, Lily is an ex-nun, also representing white Christianity. In this relationship, Chin makes fun of whites' beliefs. The spirit of salvation in Christianity pushes Lily to sacrifice herself for her father and give her body to the Chinese to wash up her father's sins. As Charlie Chan guesses, "Maybe she had some cockeyed notion of suffering for my sins against the Chinese?"[107] More ironically, Tam recognizes Charlie Chan through Lily and becomes his close friend and ghostwriter, who works on his autobiography. His intimacy with Charlie Chan gives him the opportunity to kill Charlie Chan and reform his image.

While he escapes from a world that is full of hostility and bias towards the Chinese and full of the Chinese's self-distortion and self-castration, Tam finally discovers that he still cannot avoid the haunting of Charlie Chan. The only solution is to kill the spiritual father. Chin never hides his Oedipal desire to kill the father, Charlie Chan. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in Chin's short story, "The Sons of Chan," he expresses his desire through his protagonist's voice: "I feel I must find the last surviving Charlie Chan of the movies and kill him. I will use what I learned being his Number One Son against him. Gee, pop, have I got a surprise for you!"[108] Chin fulfills this promise in *The Confessions of a Number One Son*. Even though Tam has no idea why he should come to Hawaii and eat the disgusting food in the Chinese restaurant, his encounter with Charlie Chan justifies those meaningless behaviors and conducts he did before. His coming is for killing Charlie Chan, or we can say, killing his impact:

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[107] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*, 112.

[108] Frank Chin, *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R. R. Co.* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988), 135.

> Already, brothers and sisters, already the name, the history of Charlie Chan is decaying into our unconscious to rule us from the depths where fish need flashlights and goo-goo eyes to see. For our own good, we can't forget we are the sons of Chan and our women are free to be blind to our balls and fly the coop. We can't forget why we're all of us the Chickencoop Chinaman. Charlie Chan is why people hear only buck-buck-bagaw cackle out of a Chinaman's mouth. It's not good to forget that. So I'm making my move to kill Charlie Chan and make him memorable, tonight.[109]

In *The Confession of a Number One Son*, there are full of the depictions of the characters' consciousness, the nonsense conversations between the characters, and the characters' meaningless monologues. Chin uncovers his thoughts to his readers through them. In the monologue quoted above, Chin shows his desire to kill the father, Charlie Chan, and why he should kill him. He also designs that Tam deceives Charlie Chan to be a boxer and encourages him to be a different person. It is Tam who buys every fight, drugs the fighter's water, and gets Charlie Chan to the Golden Gloves middleweight Championship of Hawaii. It is Tam who sends him to the fighting, traps him in death, and changes him into the hero of a farce. That is the revenge of his Chinaman son, who is not only Tam, the protagonist, but also Chin, the writer. In the deception, Chin aims to not only kill Charlie Chan but also reform him. As Tam tells Charlie Chan, "You never smoked, Pop. Never drank. Never chased women. Never attracted any. And you never killed a man, Pop."[110] His words suggest that Charlie Chan was never a man before. Now he is sent to the boxing ring by Tam. He is forced to be a man and does the thing which only men can do. He has not been the castrated Charlie Chan anymore. Once he steps on the boxing ring, as Tam concludes, "Charlie Chan was dead, with all his dreams."[111] Finally, the son kills the father. The Chinaman writes the death of Charlie Chan.

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[109] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*, 249-250.

[110] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*, 259.

[111] Chin, *The Confessions of a Number One Son*, 259.

CHAPTER 3

HOMELAND IN THE NEW IMMIGRANT WRITERS' WORKS: HA JIN'S *A FREE LIFE* AND YAN GELING'S *THE HUMAN REALM*

In Chapter 2, home is presented as the battlefield where the war between mother and daughter and father and son takes place. It prevents the American-born writers and their characters from their self-identification. In the following chapter, I will discuss the image of home in the new immigrant writers' works and see what the role of the home is in their identity construction.

Ha Jin: From Filiation to Affiliation: The Deconstruction of Homeland in Time and Space

Tan and Chin, both American-born writers, are largely preoccupied with their physical homes, rather than their emotional and spiritual homes, and engage in demonstrating the conflict between the successive generations in their homes. In contrast, Ha Jin and Yan Geling, the new immigrant writers, focus on depicting their homeland from multiple perspectives, such as physical, emotional, and spiritual, and demonstrating the conflict between the individual and the homeland. Even though he has won the PEN/Faulkner Award twice and other awards in America, Ha Jin does not get enough attention in American literary academia. When I searched his name in JSTOR and Google Scholar, only a few articles and books were related to him and his works. The scholars who study him are mostly scholars from China or scholars from the areas where Chinese is the official language. In other words, there are only Chinese or Chinese diasporans interested in and studying him. Western academia has a lukewarm interest in him, in my opinion, maybe because of the overwhelming Chinese elements demonstrated in his works and the political stance conveyed in his works. But the meaning of Ha Jin's works does not lie in his obsession with China and his political writing of China, but rather in his attempt to redefine homeland and the identity defined by this concept.

Homeland, for Ha Jin (Jin Xuefei), is not a fixed and stable term. Its significance, for the diasporans and immigrants, lies in its transitionality in time and space. This feature can be better understood through Edward Said's concepts of filiation and affiliation. Said states, in his *The World, The Text, and The Critic,* "Thus if a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds

and natural forms of authority—involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict—the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms—such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of 'life,' whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society."[1] Said attempts to use two terms—natural filiation and social affiliation—to show how human beings separate themselves from their private world, the home, and merge into a larger world, the society. He believes that "the breaking of ties with family, home, class, country, and traditional beliefs as necessary stages in the achievement of spiritual and intellectual freedom."[2] The transitionality of Ha Jin's homeland discussed in Chapter 1 comes from the transformation from filiation to affiliation.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Ha Jin's early works focus on depicting Chinese people's mental suffering. This tendency indicates his attempt to break the tie with his original homeland, in Said's words, breaking the filiative connection with his original country and beliefs. He does not believe that his natural homeland, China, which defines his natural identity, the Chinese, can explain and justify his existence in America. To continue his existence, Ha Jin needs to change America into his new homeland, the dwelling of his body and spirit. Therefore, his later works turn to the new land, America, where he lives at present. This transformation indicates Ha Jin's attempt to build up an affiliative connection with the new land, in which he relates to the land through the beliefs and political stance shared between him and the land. Ha Jin's new interpretation of homeland, indeed, gives the diasporans and immigrants who are unwilling to identify themselves with their natural identity a new possibility: that is, they can have a chance to get rid of the dissatisfied identity and embrace a new identity they build up in later life. Even though he has been in America for decades, Ha Jin is still called the new immigrant writer. For him, home and identity are ambiguous terms rather than terms of certainty. The uncertainty is a duly reflection of these questions: Can the new land, America, become his new homeland? Can

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[1] Edward Said, *The World, The Text, and The Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 20.

[2] Said quoted the statement from Ian Watt's *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, see Said, *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, 19.

he establish his home in America? Will he be accepted by the Americans? Is there any need for him to keep the connection with his original homeland, China? Is it possible for him to carry the burden of his original homeland, China, with him during the process of his physical and spiritual naturalization in the US? All the questions are waiting for answers, which may be found at least in part in his literary and non-literary writings.

A Free Life is one of his books that answers those questions. It tells a story of how a Chinese immigrant family settles down in America and how, in their process of naturalization, they struggle with their original homeland, China. Through it, Ha Jin illustrates why the Chinese immigrants, like him, come to America, why they decide to give up their original home, China, what happens between them and China, how they make a choice between China and America, how they struggle for survival in America, how they fail to be independent individuals in the new land, and how they finally see the hope to be themselves in America. Nan Wu is a Ph.D. student in political science at Brandeis University, where the writer, Ha Jin, got his master's degree, and plans to come back to China after his graduation. But when he witnesses the falling of his original homeland in the Tiananmen Incident, he changes his mind and decides to settle down in America. Under this circumstance, Nan's natural filiative relation to China cannot support him in his present and future life in America. Hence, he firstly breaks his physical tie with his motherland: asking his parents to send his six-year-old son to America and keeping the completeness of his nuclear family. From that point on, except for his parents, he has had no direct connection with China. Then he cuts his spiritual tie with China by criticizing its dominant ideology, making friends with the dissidents who are exiled by its government, and expressing privately and publicly his criticisms of its government and people. To strengthen the disconnection, he gives up his mother tongue, which, in his eyes, still carries the negative influence of his original homeland. In his disconnection with China, Nan is building up the physical and spiritual relation to America. He applies for the green card and tries his best to be an American citizen. He does various jobs for survival and buys a house for his family. Like other immigrants, he and his wife are busy with their American dream and working hard to pay taxes and loans. Even though he makes a home in America, his soul is still wandering and unsettled. The establishment of the spiritual relation to America is not successful. However, in

the end, he sees the hope that only in America can he get spiritual freedom and only America can be the place he defines as his future homeland. In Nan's transition from filiation to affiliation and transformation from a Chinese to an American, Ha Jin deconstructs the concept of homeland and its relations to time and space. Nan's case suggests that homeland should not be defined in terms of birth but categorized in terms of time: the past, the present, and the future and in terms of space: China and America.

The Original Homeland: The "Baggage" of the Past

Generally speaking, homeland is the place where one was born. From its definitions, we can pick up the terms, such as motherland, fatherland, origin, ancestry, nation, nationalism, and blood bond.[3] Therefore, homeland as a term is related to Said's filiation and limited by time and space. At first, it represents the past, the collective memory of a group of people who share the same ancestors. Second, it represents the specific country or place where one and his ancestors were born and raised. In his *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger reveals that human beings are thrown from the past into the present. The having-beenness in their nature is not controlled by human beings. In most parts of existence, "Dasein understands itself through its everyday experience of the world (fallenness). I am so involved with things in the world that I interpret myself as they are rather than what I am."[4] The thrownness of human beings demonstrates the inability of human beings to determine their existence at the beginning of their life. In other

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[3] Homeland is defined as a country or place of origin, where people were born and raised. But when referring to ethnic or national groups, 'homeland' implies a place of deeply rooted bonds of ancestry and belonging. Hence it is often a focus of nationalism, not least among populations dispersed in diasporas. In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, it is defined as the motherland and fatherland. The people born in it are its children, brothers, and sisters. Behind the legal or moral right—so they often say—is a bond of blood. (It helps in establishing this bond if blood has actually been spilled in defence of the land—which can then be described as 'sanctified by the blood of our ancestors'.) See Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), accessed October 12, 2020, https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.utdallas.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-833?rskey=AFy8bi&result=1.

Ted Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.utdallas.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-1130?rskey=AFy8bi&result=6.

[4] William Large, *Heidegger's Being and Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 89.

words, it means that human beings cannot determine what they are when coming into the world. For the protagonist, Nan Wu, China is such an existence: a homeland given by the past and the "mother" that he cannot choose by himself. In his poem, "Revelation," he calls China "mother":

> Suddenly he saw his mother's ugly face
> after seeing her smile for thirty years.
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> Suddenly he heard his mother's monstrous voice,
> having remembered all her lullabies.
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> Suddenly he found his mother's secret cookhouse
> stocked with human flesh and blood.
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> For the first time he tasted tears of rage
> and hated the nickname she called him.
>
> He soon left for a distant place,
> where he has lived secluded.[5]

In the poem, the mother Nan writes is not his real mother but his symbolic mother, China. This poem is the first poem in his poetry collection, which is used to justify the changes of his emotions, actions, and decisions demonstrated in the following poems. In his verses, the mother is not related to beauty, tenderness, and benignity. On the contrary, she is "ugly," "monstrous," and cold-blooded. Her "smile" and "lullabies" that Nan was familiar with now become the signs of her hypocrisy, which are used to disguise her malevolence. He loves his mother, because he is thrown into it by the past and is born with the identity as a Chinese, its son. It is "the mother" that gives him life, takes care of him, and feeds him with love in his past thirty years. He is sent by his motherland, China, to America. His study in America is sponsored by it. The reason why he studies political science is that he plans to come back to his motherland and contribute to its development. Tragically, in his transformation from filiation to affiliation, Nan realizes that the "mother," China, has a dark side: bullying her people. The mother's "secret cookhouse stocked with human flesh and blood" indicates the conflicts between the country and her people in the Tiananmen Incident. The protagonist recognizes that his symbolic mother cannot help him to be

[5] Ha Jin, *A Free Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 633.

the independent individual he wants to be. Much worse, he is drawn into the trap of nationalism set up by the symbolic mother, in which he cannot have an independent way of thinking and living. Since then, his love has turned into rage and hatred. That is the common reaction which a child has when he discovers that he is betrayed by his mother. The conflict between Nan and his motherland, China, makes the "mother" given by the past become the heaviest "baggage" on his back and prevents him from being independent and free.[6] Therefore, the beautiful "mother" becomes "ugly," and the "sweet" homeland from the past becomes the origin of all the bitterness in his life.

In terms of literary quality, this poem in the novel is fundamentally marred by an unrestrained burst of angry emotions and frustrations. In a way, it reminds one of the metaphorical cannibalisms in Lu Xun's story "A Madman's Diary." But compared with Lu Xun's use of cannibalistic images, Nan's poem lacks the subtlety and evocativeness. In fact, it should not be regarded as a poem, but an outpouring of denunciations bordering on a madman's ravings. In spite of its lack of literary merits, it nevertheless reveals the inner workings of the protagonist (and the writer) after his disillusionment in several ways.

Firstly, the homeland is a source of pain in his daily life. At the beginning of the story, Ha Jin depicts how Nan and his wife, Pingping, are worried about whether their six-year-old son, Taotao, can safely arrive in America. In the first sentence of the novel, the term "China" appears. It is directly linked to the Tiananmen Incident, which makes Nan decide to bring Taotao from China to America. Ha Jin here uses the term "massacre" to describe the Incident, which indicates that no matter in Ha Jin or Nan's thinking, this political incident is not a conflict between his homeland and his people, but the totalitarianism of his homeland over his people. "He was prompted by anger, just having seen on TV soldiers beating civilians with belts, clubs, and steel helmets, many faces smashed, bathed in blood and tears."[7] This is the first change in Nan's attitude towards his symbolic mother, China. His love for his "mother" starts to turn into rage, which comes from the witness of the falling of the mother and later gradually becomes hatred. In

[6] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 83.

[7] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 16.

the meantime, empathy works at this moment. The pain suffered by his "siblings" (his people) becomes the pain in Nan. This pain pushes him to go with his compatriots in America and demonstrate their anger in front of the Chinese embassy later. Because of his activism, his peaceful life disappears: his passport is cancelled by the government, he is investigated by the consulate, and his letters to his parents in China are checked by the officials.

The pain is also demonstrated in his relation to his son, Taotao. When his son is still in China, Nan is in pain for the confinement his son faces. In his words, Taotao stays in the cycle of violence that has beset their native land for centuries. The boy seems not to be spared the endless, gratuitous suffering to which the Chinese are as accustomed as if their whole existence depends on it.[8] That is why Nan and his wife Pingping bring Taotao to America, where the boy will "become an American," "live a life different from his parents' and take this land to be his country."[9] Reality usually goes different than expectated. When their son finally arrives, the first sentence that comes out of his mouth is "When are we going back?" His uncle and aunt tell him that they are waiting for them in Shanghai and ask him to come and take his parents back. He even does not want to stay for just another day. In his words, "No, I want to go home." In the mind of the six-year-old boy, home is China, the place Nan tries his best to escape from. Moreover, when they talk about the incident in Beijing, Taotao says, "Hundreds of uncles in the People's Liberation Army were killed." When his parents correct him that "it was the soldiers who shot a great many civilians," he replies, "No, I saw on TV bad eggs attacking the army. They burned tanks and overturned trucks. Grandpa said those were thugs and must be suppressed."[10] When Nan shows him the photos of the conflict between the civilians and the soldiers, what Taotao notices is a soldier in the photo, who was killed by the people at the site. Taotao's reactions and words make Nan realize that there are big gaps between him and his son, not only a generational gap, but also an ideological one. Those gaps bring the estrangement between the father and the son in the family, which is transferred into a pain in Nan. But Nan

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[8] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 9.

[9] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 9.

[10] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 9.

never blames his son. As he says, "This boy is too good-natured and must never go back. He can't survive there. I don't know where I'll end up, but he must become an American."[11] For him, his pain is given by "the mother," his original homeland, China. It is "the mother" that tears his son apart from him.

Furthermore, the pain is represented by his relation to his parents. Because of "the mother" and her ideology, the relationship between him and his parents, especially his father, becomes painful. Nan does not respect his father. In his eyes, the old man is "a lifetime lackey," who "lives in a network of officials and is nothing but an empleomaniac, foolishly perusing the histories of various dynasties, particularly the Ming and the Ching, to learn statecraft (or political trickery)."[12] His father never likes him, either. On his father's fifty-six birthday, the old man excludes Nan from the dinner party because he invites some important guests and is afraid that Nan, gauche and absentminded, may make a gaffe.[13] For the father, Nan is "a born loser." When Nan is in America, his father writes a letter to him. In the letter, his father writes,

> Recently I read several articles on the Chinese dissidents in the United States. Beyond question those are devious people, whom you must shun. Nobody can be a good human being without loving his country and people, and nobody can thrive for long by selling his motherland. Some of the dissidents are just traitors and beggars, shamelessly depending on the money proffered to them by the American capitalists and the reactionary overseas Chinese. Do not get embroiled with them. Do not do anything that may sully the image of our country. Always keep in mind that you are a Chinese. Even if you were smashed to smithereens, every piece of you would remain Chinese.[14]

In his father's words, it is not hard to tell the distance between Nan and his father. For his father, Chinese identity is the only and the most significant tag for Chinese overseas. No matter where the Chinese go, no matter how far they live from their motherland, China, and no matter what degree they merge into American society, they are the Chinese forever. They are "the sons" of "the mother" forever. The native homeland decides their identity. Even if they are broken into

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[11] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 12.

[12] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 54.

[13] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 54.

[14] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 328-329.

pieces, the fragments still belong to "the mother." But for Nan, the identity is another story altogether. When he discusses with his friend, Danning, about whether they should come back to China, he says, "To be honest, I don't worry about my nationality anymore. I wear my nationality like a coat." When Danning asks him whether he can be a decent human being without loving his country, his motherland, he replies, "China isn't my country anymore. I spit at China, because it treats its citizens like gullible children and always prevents them from growing up into real individuals. It demands nothing but obedience. To me, loyalty is a two-way street. China has betrayed me, so I refuse to remain its subject anymore."[15] Different from his father, who views China as the source of life of the Chinese, Nan views it as an abandoned coat, which is too heavy to wear. He is like a child bullied and betrayed by his mother. All his love for "the mother," after the bully and betrayal, turns into hatred towards her. With the hatred, he does not believe that the individual should sacrifice himself for his homeland, which never cherishes its "children" and always bullies them. His father's words, in his eyes, turn into "patriotic nonsense," which makes the people blindly believe in their "mother." This gap in thought makes him have no emotional bond with his father and his original family. When he comes back to China and visits this "original mother" after the six-year leaving, he has only one feeling about this return: "How lonely he felt in his parents' home, as though he hadn't grown up in this very apartment. Perhaps he shouldn't have come back in the first place."[16]

The original homeland, on the other hand, is also the source of the pain in his spirit. In the narration, Ha Jin depicts that people cannot express what they think in their mind and have no right to show different opinions and ideas in China. "The mother" never gives her "children" freedom. Before speaking, "the children" need time to think whether the expression is proper. They permanently live in fear of whether their behaviors or words will offend "the mother." After the demonstration in front of the Chinese embassy, Nan hears that the Chinese consulate has been investigating his involvement in a kidnap organized by one of his friends. He is warned that he should not return to China, because the consulate cannot do anything to him in America.

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[15] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 96.

[16] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 560.

If he is back in China, that will be different. He will fall into their hands.[17] He is also recommended not to say anything against the government in front of others, not even in his letters or the phone when he calls home.[18] For protecting his and his wife's families in China, Nan could not come back to China, and even in America he should have to keep a low profile. Except for the fear of being punished by "the mother," he still lives in fear of being exiled and being abandoned by "the mother." Nan has mailed his passport to the Chinese consulate for renewal. Now he is involved in the official investigation. The officials might create difficulties for him and put his passport on hold. If he cannot get back his passport, he will have no official papers to prove who he is. It means that he will become a person without an identity. He will be a child discarded by his mother. Unfortunately, fear becomes a reality. Since the Chinese consulate never renews his passport, Nan has no choice but becoming a U.S. citizen. But even the American passport cannot release him from his fear of "the mother." When he decides to come back to China and visit his parents, his wife, Pingping, warns him not to speak against the government publicly. In the past years, the police often question his parents and siblings about his activities abroad. Only when his father assures them that Nan has "cleaned up his act" and is no longer a dissident, do they stop harassing them.[19] For Nan, "the mother," his original homeland, has become "an invisible hand," which comes from the past and continues manipulating his life and making him pain spiritually at present even though he lives far away from her.[20] Because of the fear, Nan always has nightmares about her. Once, in a nightmare, he dreams that he is an escapee hunted by men wielding truncheons and wearing helmets marked with a swastika. All the Nazis have Chinese faces. In another dream, he witnesses one of his friends being arrested by the police and marches to an execution ground below the dam of a

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[17] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 44.

[18] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 44.

[19] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 525.

[20] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 45.

reservoir. His friend was not shot to death but booted half to death.[21] In his mind, his "original mother" has become the signifier of evil.

It is not only the country in which his homeland is located but also the people from his homeland that bring him spiritual pain. Nan is not the only one who suffers from the totalitarianism of his motherland. In *A Free Life*, most Chinese immigrants, in Nan's eyes, consciously and unconsciously experience the pains given by the original homeland. Nan is "the child" discarded by "the mother." He understands that the children should not always obey the orders given by the mother. After the incident of passport, Nan decides to live as an American and takes off the burden of "the mother," China. Unlike Nan, the people, such as his friend, Danning, and the exiled dissident he respects, Mr. Manping Liu, still have hopes for "the mother" and still carry the baggage of China on their back. Danning is a Ph.D. student in America. Even though he is also dissatisfied with the government, he still chooses to return to China and give up his free life in America. The reason is that he cannot abandon his mother language, the Chinese. His dream is to be a prolific writer, telling stories about his experience in America.[22] For him, only in China can his mother language play its role well. As he says, "Of course, where else can you have your readers if you write in Chinese?"[23] This dependence on the mother language pushes him back to "the mother." But in the end, even though he becomes a writer and lives a good life on writing, his dream of being a writer is, indeed, a failure. He can be only a writer who writes stories happening in ancient times. In his words, "It's safe to do that. Many, many writers are working on ancient stuff nowadays. … If you lived here, Nan, you'd have to forget about literature. ... The saddest part is that in this way we can produce only transient work."[24]

Mr. Manping Liu is a well-known Chinese scholar in political economy. But when the government knows his intention to take a large wreath to Tiananmen Square, his name appears

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[21] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 202.

[22] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 43.

[23] Ha Jin, *A Free Life,* 43.

[24] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 532.

on the Most Wanted list. After fleeing to the US, Mr. Liu never complains about the government and its political persecution. In America, he still tries to protect his dignity as a Chinese. He refuses to accept financial aid from any organization in America and supports himself mainly by writing for Chinese-language newspapers and magazines. No matter where he goes, he still speaks for the country, which has forced him into exile. Nan says that a country is just an idea that binds people together emotionally. If the country cannot offer the individual a better life and if the country is detrimental to the individual's existence, the individual has the right to give it up, to say no to it. Mr Liu replies, "We must differentiate the government from our country and people. The government can be evil, but both our people and our country are good. I'm optimistic because I cannot afford to lose hope for our nation. The world already has too many pessimists, a dollar a dozen, so we ought to take heart."[25] Later on, Nan gets to know that Mr. Liu has written to a member of the Political Bureau, begging for the permission to go back to China. What he pays for this return is that he needs to remain silent about sensitive issues and will inform the police beforehand if he is to meet with any foreigner.

At this moment, Nan feels disappointed at Danning, Mr. Liu, and the people like them. He quotes from Hegel, "The nature of a people determines the nature of their government."[26] He gradually realizes that they are the people "whose life had been shaped by the past and who could exist only with reference to the central power that had banished them from China."[27] Neither Danning nor Mr. Liu can possibly separate themselves from "the mother" who always controls and torments them. They cannot give up what they had in the past, because without the frame of reference already formed in their homeland, their life will lose its meaning and bearings. As Nan says, "That must be why so many exiles, wrecked with nostalgia, would eulogize suffering and patriotism. Physically they were there, but because of the yoke of their significant past, they couldn't adapt to the life in the new land."[28] What Nan cannot bear is that

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[25] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 321.

[26] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 321.

[27] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 356.

[28] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 356.

facing the falling of their "mother," what they do is not to give her up but wait for her change and let her continue to control their body and mind. They are "the small men," who encase themselves in "the mother' arms and make no effort to blend into American society."[29] Under the pretext of patriotism and preserving Chinese culture, they refuse to change themselves to adapt to American culture. They are also "the Canada geese," which are fed by their "symbolic mother" and have grown too fat, lazy, and comfortable to have the instinct for migration.[30] Unlike him, who has the opportunity to be a free and independent individual, they are "the sons" without physical and spiritual freedom forever, no matter where they are.

The Present Home: The Transition from the Past to the Future

Due to the incompatibility between Nan and his original homeland, which indicates the incompatibility between him and China, Ha Jin adds his understanding to the concept of homeland: the individual has the freedom to give up his native homeland and changes the place where his home is into his new homeland. Homeland, for Ha Jin and his protagonist, can be transferred from the past and China to the future and America. But the future homeland will not be reached within one day. What one needs to do at present is to make a home in the place which can be the future homeland. From filiation to affiliation, the present home is the middle phase from the past to the future. As Ha Jin defines, "We may come across lines like these: 'My mother always said/your homeland is any place,/preferably the place where you die.' In other words, the homeland is no longer a place that exists in one's past but a place also relevant to one's present and future."[31] In "Homeland," a poem written by the protagonist, Nan, Ha Jin reiterates the significance of the present to the concept of homeland. Nan sings, "Eventually you will learn:/your country is where you raise your children,/your homeland is where you build your home."[32] Therefore, for Ha Jin, where your present life and home is is where your future

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[29] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 285.

[30] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 290.

[31] Ha Jin, "An Individual's Homeland," *The Writer as Migrant* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 65.

[32] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 635.

homeland is. Although Heidegger in his *Being and Time* illustrates that human beings are passive when confronting the past, he also figures out the initiative of human beings in the present and future. In his thinking, human beings have not only the nature of thrownness and fallenness, but also the ability of projection. They can project themselves into the present for the sake of the future. Only they can live at present toward the future, can they be the authentic self. What they will be in the future and what are the possibilities they have can be decided by themselves at present. In the present level of homeland, Nan practices his self-projection. He projects himself into his present life for his and his family's future. To have a new homeland, he first builds up his home on the land and tries his best to be a citizen of the country. He regards his present life and home in America as the transitory phase and place through which he can move from the past into the future and from a Chinese to an American.

To have a home in a new country, one should keep the completeness of his family. At the beginning of the novel, Nan and his wife, Pinging, are waiting for the coming of their only one son, Taotao. When their son arrives, the essential condition for a home is ready. Then having a home in America, one should have a place for dwelling. It is a place which can give him and his family the sense of belonging. At the beginning of their immigrant life, this housing issue is a problem for them. Before their son's coming, they do not decide to settle down in America, so the place where they live is temporary. They live with a rich widow, Heide Masefield, in her home. The hostess lets them use the two bedrooms in the attic in exchange for work—Pingping cooks and does laundry while Nan drives the children to school in the mornings, and if their mother is too busy to fetch them, he needs to pick them up in the afternoons as well.[33] This existential state in Chinese is called as 寄人籬下(*ji ren li xia*), which means living under others' roof. In other words, the Wus depend on the Masefields for living. In this situation, their home is not theirs but given by others. To have a home belonged to them, Nan and Pingping decide to earn more money. They move from Boston to a small town in Georgia and open their own Chinese restaurant, the Gold Wok. Because the former owners of the Chinese restaurant, the Wangs, come back to Taiwan, before their return, the Wus can live in their home. Until now, the Wus still keep the state of living under others' roof. Several days before the Wangs' return, they

[33] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 14.

finally withdraw all their savings to buy a house and have a permanent residence at 568 Marsh Drive.[34] When they buy this house, their existential state is changed. They have not been the immigrants who float from one place to another anymore. They have settled down. Finally, they have a place belonging to them in the land. They successfully build up a physical connection between them and the land where they live. Their house is the connection.

To have a family and a house cannot guarantee to maintain a home in America. One should have the ability to earn enough money to support his family and pay the mortgage of his house. Then the home created by him can be a stable dwelling for him and his family. Nan comes to America as an international student who does his graduate work in political science assigned by the Chinese government.[35] But after the Tiananmen Incident, he gives it up, which means that he cannot rely on the university financial aid anymore and he will have to earn a living by himself and also support his family. After giving up his graduate work, he becomes a man without any employable skill, so he will not be too picky about jobs.[36] His first job is as a custodian in the medical building and is paid by $4.65 an hour.[37] So that he can receive health insurance for his wife and son, he quits the job and becomes a night watchman in a factory. He works at night and is paid $4.50 per hour.[38] But this job does not last long. The factory will move to another city, which is far away from the city he lives in. Then he takes a job as a security guard in a condominium complex and is paid five dollars an hour.[39] He works in the parking lot and helps the residents load and unload their cars. Most times, they will tip him one or two dollars. To get out of the works mentioned above, which make him into a "semi-coolie," he takes the job as a managing editor in a Chinese-language poetry magazine, *New Lines*, in New York

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[34] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 222.

[35] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 17.

[36] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 24.

[37] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 24.

[38] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 26.

[39] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 62.

City, which brings him $1000 per issue of the quarterly.[40] But the payment he gets from the magazine cannot support him in New York, not to mention supporting his family in Boston. He becomes the busboy in Ding's Dumpling.[41] At first, his job is to wash dishes in the basement kitchen and he makes four dollars per hour.[42] Three weeks later, the boss promotes Nan to the chef's assistant, whose job is to cut meat and vegetables, fry chicken cubes, and wrap dumplings.[43] After he learns enough from the chef, he moves to the Jade Café to be a sous-chef.[44] After this job, he runs his own business, the Gold Wok, and finally becomes a person living on his own.

During the process of making a home, Nan finishes his transformation from the person depending on others to an independent man. He is from a government-sponsored scholar to a self-dependent restaurant owner. He finishes his physical independence, and his body is free. It is America, the land of his new home, that pushes him to complete the transformation. As the narrator depicts, "Back in China he had been a clumsy man and couldn't even patch a flat bicycle tire, which many men could do. In their neighborhood he was known for being lazy. … he seldom lifted a finger to help her (Pingping). Even Nan's mother said that if a bottle of cooking oil fell over and spilled, he wouldn't bother to pick it up. American life had changed him. … He wasn't a feeble bookworm anymore; he was no longer ashamed of working hard to make a dollar."[45] Now he has become a responsible father and husband who supports his family with his two hands.

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[40] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 101.

[41] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 111.

[42] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 118.

[43] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 119.

[44] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 160.

[45] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 75.

Unfortunately, having a good fall in body does not mean having a good fall in spirit.[46] Nan still has no feeling of being at home spiritually in his own home. Being at home means that one can be himself in the home. But in the home, Nan is not himself spiritually. He is a person living "only in the flesh" and accomplishing "nothing in his life."[47] Those sighs come from Nan's inability to make his own dream come true. At the beginning of the novel, Nan has expressed that he dreams of being a poet and living on writing poems. But after a decade, he is busy with survival and has no time or the mood to concentrate on poetry. None of the jobs he does is really related to poetry. In this land he chooses, his mind is full of the bits and ends of family and business. The pursuit of material life draws him away from the pursuit of spiritual life. His spirit has no place to dwell. His life becomes a survival and loses its essence. Everything he does is for money and survival rather than for his authentic self. Therefore, he is never free in the home. The affiliative connection (freedom) between him and America has not yet been established. That is why he lives in the land like a guest who tries his best to depend on visible and tangible materials to prove his existence, rather than a host who can freely be himself. His spirit has not yet arrived at home. It is still homeless. The spiritual homelessness in immigrant life is a major topic in Ha Jin's other immigrant stories. For instance, in his *A Good Fall*, the immigrants and diasporans are busy with their American dream and making a home in America. To make a good fall, they give up everything in the past and try their best to settle down in the new land. But in the end, the physical fall never brings them a good fall in spirit. They live in the land with despair, fear, and panic. In "A Composer and His Parakeets," Fanling, a composer, lives in despair of loneliness. He has no friends. The woman he loves views him as a safety net—a fallback in case she cannot find a more suitable man.[48] When the bird accompanying him dies, he cries for its death, like crying for the death of his brother. In "Shame," Professor Meng, after his visa expires, hides

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[46] After *A Free Life*, Ha Jin wrote another book named *A Good Fall*, which tells the stories of immigrants. The name of the book was translated into "*落地*" (*luo di*) in Chinese, which means a good landing. Here I borrow it to describe the integration between the immigrants and the new country.

[47] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 521.

[48] Ha Jin, *A Good Fall* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 13.

himself in a basement for months and works illegally as a busboy in a Chinese restaurant to escape from being sent back to China. The desire for success in academia he pursued in the past, in the end, has been replaced by the demand to survive in the new country. In "An English Professor," the professor, Rusheng Tang, feels distraught for days and nights by his anxiety over whether the committee members will discover a minor grammatical error in the materials for his tenure evaluation. He feels shameful for his carelessness in using "Respectly yours" at the end of his report and fears the dean and other professors in the department will view him as a disqualified English professor. [49] Even though his tenure is approved by the college in the end, his anxiety shows us how insecurely he lives in the land. This sense of insecurity is not a feature which an American should have.

Nan's spiritual homelessness also originates from his nostalgia. This love for the past is manifested by the love for his past lover, Beina. Since he arrives in the new land, she has been like a ghost, always haunting his life. Due to being abandoned by her, Nan is incapable of loving any woman and his heart has remained numb. He marries Pingping only to release himself from the pain of the loss and make himself forget the heartless lover. When describing his relation to Pingping, the narrator says, "He just didn't love his wife that much, and she knew it. Pingping knew he was still enamored of his ex-girlfriend, Beina, though that woman was far away in China."[50] Because of Beina, he cannot really settle down in his own home. His body is with his wife and son in the home, but his heart never is. In a way, the triangle relationship between him, Pingping, and Beina may be read as a symbolic representation of the protagonist's ambivalent relationship to his two homelands. This visible relationship demonstrates the invisible relationship between Nan, America, and China. Even if he marries Pingping and has their son, Taotao, he still never abandons his love for Beina. Even if he has been in America and holds American passport, he still never consciously abandons his love for his original homeland, China. In the previous section, I discussed the relationship between Nan and China, which is like the relationship between the abandoned son and the mother. No matter how heart-broken the son is, he still has love for the mother who discards him. The split between the body and the spirit

[49] Ha Jin, *A Good Fall*, 140.

[50] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 9.

makes him impossible to view Pingping as his lover and view America as his "new mother." He traps himself unconsciously in the past love for Beina and China. Although he never contacts Beina, he never gives up his search for her. Likewise, although he seems to have cut off his physical bond with China, he never gets rid of it spiritually. Moreover, a poet, like an artist, needs his muse to inspire him. In the past, Beina was his muse. "When he had just fallen in love with Beina, he had written more than a hundred poems, all of which came with ease."[51] Beina is a signifier of his original motherland, China. It means that his motherland, China, was, indeed, the source of his inspiration. Now Beina and China both have gone. His poetry creation lacks its source of inspiration. That is why, for many years, Nan has no courage to write poems. His fear of writing poems is because he is not ready to become a real American and view America as his "mother." That is why the present home is called home rather than homeland. His spirit is never at home. Because of this nostalgia, the present home of Nan and Pingping is not the home for Nan's spirit and the land, America, where their home is, is not his motherland in this phase.

The New Land: The Homeland of the Future

In his transformation from filiation to affiliation, Nan firstly locks himself in the pain of the betrayal of his past homeland and is busy with cutting off the bond with it. Later, he is trapped in the immigrant life and has no time to take care of his spirit. Living as an immigrant for years, he knows that China is his past and America is his future. If he wants to be an authentic American and change America into his homeland, he should find a home for his spirit. Only being a poet and writing verses in English can give his soul a home. Only being the authentic self can bring him absolute freedom. In this phase, Nan pushes himself to write poems. He sells his restaurant and works for a motel, which gives him time to write poems and publish his own magazine. This action of selling the family business indicates that Nan, as an American, is finally relaxed in his home and does not need the materials to release him from the senses of uncertainty and unsafety. Then he forces himself to write his poems in English. As he says, Chinese belongs to the past and English to his future.[52] He knows that his spiritual homelessness comes from his

[51] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 61.

[52] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 423.

fear of writing verses in English, which indicates that he does not view American as his spiritual homeland. Fortunately, spiritual homelessness is only a temporary state. When Nan realizes his misunderstandings in the concepts of homeland and identity, he starts to open himself to embrace his American identity and America as his homeland. America is only a home for him at present, but it will be his homeland in the future. He is happy with the possibility which it gives to him. He is sure that he should depend on the American idiom and stop confining himself to the neutral English. His subject matter should eventually be American, so he should get himself ready for the task of speaking in his mother language.[53] He does not fear the criticisms from those native speakers. When encountering xenophobic questions, such as "Can you imagine your work becoming part of our language?", he has the courage and the confidence to ignore them. He has known that the vitality of English has partly resulted from its ability to assimilate all kinds of alien energies.[54] He, as a foreign immigrant, will become a part of his country, America, as his English will become a part of American English. He has the confidence that America will be his country and homeland. No one has the right to reject the truth. What he needs to do is to live freely and do what he wants to do. That is why he writes down the verses, "Eventually you will learn:/your country is where you raise your children,/your homeland is where you build up your home."[55]

Ha Jin and His Transitional Homeland

As a matter of fact, Nan Wu's transformation from filiation to affiliation reflects the transformation experienced by the writer, Ha Jin. Ha Jin also suffers from the pain given by his symbolic mother, China, experiences the confusion about his present life in America, and holds the hope for changing America into his homeland of the future. His hostility towards "the mother," China, also started from the Tiananmen Incident and the Chinese consulate's declination to renew his passport. His hesitation in accepting his American identity also comes

[53] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 626.

[54] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 628.

[55] Ha Jin, *A Free Life*, 635.

from the difficulties he faced in his American life and the questions he heard about his adoption of English as his writing language. His hope for viewing America as his future homeland is brought by the freedom he experiences in the land as a writer and poet. He can write what he wants to write and has readers for his works. In his collection of poems, *Home on the Road*, he demonstrates such a transition.

In the collection, Ha Jin divides his poems into the four parts: "*路上的旋律*" (The Melody of the Journey), "*远方的回声*" (The Echo from the Distance), "*失败者*" (The Loser), "*另一种蹒跚*" (Another Totter). In "The Melody of the Journey," he sings about the necessity of going outside. In the first poem, "*你不要在原地打转*" (Do not Turn around in the Same Place), he writes, "You see, how stable the steps on the port/The ships leaving the port/travel far away with the heavy cargo."[56] In another poem, "*小船*" (A Small Boat), he writes about a small boat, which is parking in the center of Neuse River, "The forests and meadows on the banks/ change their moving rhythm/and with the boat shape a new landscape/even though the boat is never a part of Neuse River."[57] In the first part of *Home on the Road*, Ha Jin uses the ships and boats as the metaphors to describe human beings, and reminds them that traveling is their major task. No matter where the boats are, they will have the chance to integrate into the local society and culture and change themselves as a part of the new world. In "*选择故乡*" (Choosing Homeland), he reiterates the necessity of traveling. He writes, "It is hard to imagine, I, the rootless/become your root/Maybe this is fate:/This generation suffers/for accumulating energy and improving the existential environment for the next generation/In fact, every homeland/ was the (last generation's) foreign land."[58] In his thinking, because of the overwhelming power of the past, his generation has the responsibility to create a new world for the next generation. Only if they

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[56] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road* (Taipei: Linking Books, 2017), 13. This collection is written in Chinese. All the poems quoted in this section will be translated by me.

[57] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 42.

[58] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 52.

transplant their roots into the new land, their children and grandchildren can grow from the soil and have a home in the new land.

In the second part, "The Echo from the Distance," Ha Jin expresses his anger and complaints about his original motherland, China. In the first poem, "*笼子*" (The Cage), he depicts the original homeland as a beautiful cage. The landscape inside of the cage is beautiful, comfortable, and peaceful and allures people to enter it. In "*紧箍咒*" (The Incantation), the original homeland becomes a gold hoop on the head of Chinese people, locking their minds and fates. It is like a curse cast on the whole group of Chinese people, making them suffer from generation to generation. He sings, "Tell me why once hearing 'China"/they will be stammering and tongue-tied/Someone even will lose his mind?/Tell me why grandfather and father/without the gold hoop on their head/are still suffering/dizzy and spastic?/ Tell me how I can get out of/such an invisible and intangible incantation?"[59] In "*我的中国梦*" (My Chinese Dream), Ha Jin claims, "I dream to be a scar on the face of China/… I am the unchangeable record/of unspeakable sufferings and crimes/… No matter how bright the smile on China's face/I will not share its honor/or glorify its beauty/I will be a scar on its face/and a mark of its sorrow and shame."[60] Ha Jin in this part is on his way to alienating from his original homeland and explains why the Chinese need to go out of the confinement of China. For him, the original homeland is like the cage and the incantation. If he stays in the confinement of the cage, he will have a good life; but this life is only a life of a slave controlled by the incantation of China. Therefore, Ha Jin writes, "But I have grown up/ and cannot come back to it anymore."[61] It means that he has become an independent individual who has gotten rid of the incantation and cannot be the slave anymore. Not only he but also his people need to go out of the myth of the original homeland. He, as a poet, has the mission of reminding his people what their original homeland is, so he and his words are the scars on the face of China, which shows its ugliness and darkness. In the third part, "The Loser," Ha Jin gives us the cases which demonstrate the result of the failure of getting

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[59] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 72.

[60] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 112.

[61] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 68.

rid of the baggage of China. In "*遗愿*" (The Last Will) and "*向死而生*" (Being toward Death), he depicts the deaths of two famous Chinese poets. None of them is an authentic poet at the end of their lives. One is dead with the will, "I want to write poems. I want to write immortal verses!"[62] The other does not think about poetry but about how to use the power given by the authorities to have a magnificent funeral after his death. This is the fate of the Chinese poets, either dying without having written anything, or dying for the desire for power.

In the last part, "Another Totter," Ha Jin writes for the immigrants, who are struggling to survive in the foreign land. In his verses, life in a foreign land is not an easy life. Living in America does not mean that one can have a home here and become an American. The foreign land has its own rules, which needs them to follow. In "*一位五十八岁的画家去美国*" (A Fifty-Eight-Year-Old Painter's Trip to America), he reminds the painter, "No matter how hard the life is/you should live on/ Only living on is there a miracle/… Remember the significance of your existence:/No matter where you go/your every step will become a milestone."[63] In "*困境*" (The Dilemma), Ha Jin warns, "Do not always talk about your loss anymore/Yes, you have lost a lot:/homeland, job, family, nationality/You float into a foreign land/There everything is unfamiliar/You must restart your life/Sometimes you are like a babbling infant/Sometimes you are like a frightened old man/living in a panic, losing your selfhood/For years you live/from confusion to confusion/and are surrounded by difficulties/However, does the meaningful life/not come from difficulties/and consist of difficulties?/Do not talk about your suffering anymore/There is no equality in suffering—/Compared with the ordinary people/you are the lucky one/because you have the opportunity to be a new man."[64] In the two poems, Ha Jin reveals the predicament the immigrants face; that is, the immigrant life easily turns into a spiritless life. The daily struggle for survival makes them easily forget the meaning of their existence as human beings. That is why their present home, America, is only the home for their

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[62] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 119.

[63] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 166-167.

[64] Ha Jin, *Home on the Road*, 169-171.

bodies rather than their souls. Only when they can live freely in the home, can their souls finish their falls. The immigrants will never be the "immigrants" and be physically and spiritually at home, and America will be their authentic homeland. Therefore, Ha Jin reminds the immigrants that during the process of making a home in America, they should not be frightened by the harsh life and lose themselves. Only by knowing who they are or whom they want to be, can they settle down physically and spiritually in the country and change it into their homeland, as Nan does in the end. If so, the home on the way can arrive at its final destination.

Yan Geling: Between Homeland and Dreamland: Home as a Mirage

When the Paper Republic, a non-profit organization promoting the translation of Chinese Literature in the UK, introduces Yan Geling, it says, "Yan Geling is one of the most acclaimed contemporary novelists and screenwriters writing in the Chinese language today and a well-established writer in English. To date she has published over 20 books in various editions in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the US, the UK and elsewhere; has won around 30 literary and film awards; and has had her work adapted or written scripts for over a dozen film, TV, and radio works. Her works have been translated into Dutch, English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, and Thai, and translations are currently in preparation in Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian and Vietnamese."[65] From this introduction, it is not hard to see Yan's prominent status in contemporary Chinese literature. Chinese scholars view her as a phenomenon in literature. In "Wisdom and Responsibility of Criticism: Liu Yan's Literary Criticism," Wu Jun comments that after the 1990s, Yan Geling is a literary phenomenon and is one of the centers of literary criticism in Chinese literature and World literature. She and her works have become the source of literary and cultural reproduction.[66] In contrast to her popularity in China, Yan does not get comparable attention from Western academia. Although her novels have been translated into different languages and she has been living in America as an American for years, she does not catch enough attention from Western readers. If searching for her name in Google scholar and

[65] Yan Geling's Introduction, accessed November 2, 2020, https://paper-republic.org/pers/yan-geling/.

[66] Liu Yan, *A Study of Yan Geling* (Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 2018), 2.

JSTOR, you will find that, similar to Ha Jin, most of the scholars who are interested in her are still the Chinese or Chinese-speaking scholars. This status may be attributed to the fact that she insists on writing her works in Chinese, therefore distancing herself from the circles of Western literature. It is also maybe because she focuses on writing about the immigrants' life and their spiritual suffering. This kind of topic has become the cliché for some Western scholars in the mainstream. The lack of attention makes the scholars who study Chinese American literature ignore one type of Chinese Americans. Yan is different from the American-born writers, such as Amy Tan and Frank Chin, who only view America as their homeland. She views both China and America as her homelands. Yan is also different from those new immigrant writers, such as Ha Jin, who have resentments towards their original homeland and try to cut off their bonds with it. She still loves her original homeland and insists on writing in its language. Yan represents a group of people in Chinese Americans who stand between two countries and homelands. If we ignore her, the map of Chinese American literature would be incomplete.

Yan is from the same generation of Ha Jin and also came to America in the 1980s. Like Ha Jin, she likes to write stories of the nobodies, underdogs, and disadvantaged groups in China and demonstrates their helplessness in life and fate. But because she is a female writer, the nobodies, underdogs, disadvantaged groups in her works are usually women, homosexuals, and children. Like Ha Jin, she also highlights the significance of individualism and criticizes the authoritarian strains of collectivism. However, when she writes immigrant stories, she demonstrates a different tendency, which distinguishes her from Ha Jin. For her, homeland is not an ongoing movement from the original homeland to the new homeland and from the past to the future. It results from the conflict between the homeland (the original homeland) and the dreamland (the new homeland), and between the past and the present. It should be dualistic and include both the homeland and dreamland. Ha Jin believes that the new homeland is much better than the original homeland, but for Yan, there is no good or bad homeland. On the one hand, she does not believe that the original homeland and its memory are the baggage on her back. On the contrary, the past gives her spiritual support, which helps her survive in the new land. On the other hand, even though she, like Ha Jin, adores American freedom and individualism, she has witnessed and experienced the dark side of the dreamland. She cannot embrace it and its ideology without any

hesitation and question. For her, there is no difference between the homeland and dreamland, both of which have positive and negative sides. This objective view about the homeland comes from her otherness given by both lands. In China, she is an American believing in American ideology and views the original country from Western perspectives. In America, she is a Chinese living a Chinese way of life and observes the new country with a pair of Chinese eyes. She becomes the other in both lands. She has two homelands, but it is hard to have a sense of belonging in both lands. Because of the co-existent lands, she and the people like her have no idea which one they should choose, always wander between the two, and are haunted by double homelessness brought by the duality of homeland.

The Human Realm is a novel demonstrating Chinese Americans' double homelessness caused by the lack of an ideal home in both China and America. Unlike Yan's other works, it is presented in the form of the conversations between a Chinese female patient and an American psychiatrist. The whole story is told by the Chinese woman through her answers to her doctor's questions. Since Yan had insomnia at the beginning of her immigrant life, she had an opportunity to approach psychoanalysis and go deeper in it. In her conversations with her doctor, she recognized that the mental pain undergone by some of the Chinese immigrants, like her, came from their relationships with the homeland, China, and the dreamland, America. Because they do not have a satisfying home in China, they choose to leave. But when arriving at the dreamland, they still cannot have the home they expect. Home in both lands becomes a mirage that only exists in imagination rather than reality. The double homelessness is given rise by their own decisions to leave China and move to America, so the mental pain brought by the failure of having an ideal home becomes an unspeakable pain that they are unwilling to acknowledge. The treatment of "talk out" in psychoanalysis, for Yan, is one of the best outlets to let them speak out their pain. That is why, in *The Human Realm*, Yan, based on Sigmund Freud's and Carl Jung's theories of psychoanalysis, intentionally designs the narration in the form of psychoanalytic doctor-patient conversation.

In the novel, to relieve herself from the suffering of insomnia and the haunting of her suicidal desire, the protagonist sees a psychiatrist and explores the root of her mental disorder from her personal history. She tells two love stories: one is the romance between her and He Yiqi

in China and the other is between her and Schultz in America. In both love stories, she tries her best to have a satisfying home through her love bonds with the two men. But in the end, all her efforts are in vain: She leaves China and leaves He, the man she loves for years, and she also leaves the place where she and Schultz live and leaves Schultz, the man she admires. Indeed, her failure in love is the manifestation of her failure to have a home in both countries. Whether in China or America, the protagonist is always the powerless other, who is impossible to be identified as one of their people. Her body is in the country, but her soul is blocked out. In China, when with He, she is a beggar who asks for He's love and help. In America, when with Schultz, she is the kidnapped who has to entertain him (the kidnapper) for survival. She loves the two men with all her heart, but also hates them. Both cannot give her the home she expects. This love/hate attitude towards the men is actually a symbolic representation of her love/hate attitude towards the countries she was and is in. Like the two men who cannot give her a home, the two lands also cannot give her the sense of being at home and being the self (which is the opposite of the other).

"I" and "My" Broken Dream of Home in China

"I," at the beginning of the story, is a six-year-old girl in Jung's phallic stage (ages 3-6). In this stage, the girls usually have the Electra complex derived from penis envy. They become aware of their bodies and get to know the physical gender difference between the male and female. Then they blame their mothers for not giving them the penis and not making their body powerful and complete. To regain the phallus (the signifier of power), they transfer the love for their mothers to the love for their fathers. "I," in *The Human Realm*, is experiencing the Electra complex. "I" views "my" father as "my" spiritual leader, who is "my" hero and the center of "my" home. "My" love for him is much more than "my" love for "my" mother. In "my" narration, "my" mother is the satellite circling around "my" father.[67] Her existence is for "my" father. She is from an ordinary family and has been bored with peace and trivialness in her life.

[67] Yan Geling, *The Human Realm* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, 1998), 68. *Human Realm* is written in Chinese, which has not been translated into English, so the quotations in this section are all translated by me.

She marries "my" father for the features in him that other people do not have—fearlessness, overflowing sympathy, awkwardness in politics.[68] As an intellectual, "my" father always cannot control himself to express his opinions about his country, which often draw him into danger. With "my" father, she seems to find the meaning of her existence: being the savior of "my" father. Tragically, "my" father marries her not for love but life. Due to the Electra complex, "I" believes that "my" mother does not deserve "my" father and his love. In "my" eyes, she is not a qualified wife. Even though she takes care of "my" father well, she is one of the people who suppress his nature and cover his mouth. Once he finishes his writings, she is the first one to read them, more precisely, to censor them. She, as "my" father's secret "assistant," checks his writings and sees whether there is any expression related to "the right" or "negative attitudes" in the writings. In most instances, she changes some words or deletes some sentences secretly before sending "my" father's writings.[69] "My" father always feels angry and complains about those editions ("my" father believes that those editions are made by the editors from the journals or newspapers) because they make his writings meaningless. Even though she loves "my" father, she does not understand him and what she does for him is not always good for him. For instance, she pushes "my" father to beg Uncle He for saving him in the event of the article. After the event of the novel, she also begs Uncle He for adding "my" father's name in the novel.[70] This behavior of begging is a shame for "me." It makes "my" father and "me" become the beggars in front of Uncle He,[71] castrates "our" minds, and changes "us" into the spiritual eunuchs.

In contrast, "my" emotion to "my" father is different. "I" says, "Yes. I cannot control myself when talking about my father. I love my father so much. His gene is the origin of all sensitivity, passion, and danger in me."[72] In the first several years in "my" life, he is "my" hero.

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[68] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 71.

[69] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 68.

[70] The events of article and novel will be discussed later in this section.

[71] Yan, *The Human Realm,*78.

[72] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 8.

In “my” depiction, “my” father is a kind, weak, and sentimental writer who has a pair of eyes characterized by grief and tolerance and devotes himself to write something meaningful to his country and people. Even though having some feminine features, such as tolerance, weakness, and sentimentality, he is still “my” mentor showing “me” what kind of person “I” should be. The most precious characteristic “my” father has is fearlessness hidden in his nature. It results from his pursuit of absolute freedom and his hatred towards the authorities.[73] At the end of the 1950s, when everyone in China becomes sensitive about expressing their political stances publicly, he insists on writing the articles to express his dissatisfaction with the party and the government. He even writes an article named “*儿不嫌母丑*” (Do Not Despise Your Ugly Mother), in which he uses the metaphor of the relationship between the son and the mother to describe the relationship between the citizens and the party. In his words, the son can accept the mother’s ugly face but cannot bear her falling.[74] In the meantime, “my” father does not ask “my” mother to send this article (so “my” mother has no chance to edit it). To prevent the article from being edited, he sends it to the provincial newspaper office in person and waits outside of the office for its proof. He does not permit any change, even the changes in punctuations.[75] What he means to do is to wake his home country up and let it understand the mistakes made by itself. His fearlessness, at the moment, is risky, but it makes “me” proud. That is what a man should do. Moreover, “my” father is also the one who gives me a good life. Benefited by his identity and reputation, “our” life is easier than other people. For instance, “we” have the opportunity to participate in the reading salons, in which the organizers treat the participants with foods, such as rice with pork and beans.[76] The extra food gives “us” the energy to fight against hunger, which is threatening other people at that time. Because of “my” father, “I” and “my” mother never experience financial frustration. He is the son of a capitalist intellectual and has inherited enough “fortune”

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[73] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 70.

[74] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 13.

[75] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 69-70.

[76] Yan, *The Human Realm,* 35.

from his mother. In the age of scarcity, “we” still have milk to drink and clothes to wear, even though the milk has expired and the clothes are second hand.[77] At this moment, “I” is satisfied with “my” father and the home in his name.

However, Uncle He’s arrival changes “my” view about him and “my” home. In contrast to Uncle He, "my" father is too weak to be the center of "my" home. At the age of six, for the first time, “I” realizes that “my” father is not the powerful man “I” believes and “my” home is not the home "I" wants. When “I” explains to her doctor who He Yiqi, her Uncle He, is, she says,

> He was a cadre. No, there was no boss and no employment relationship at that time. There was only the master without the servant. It included the worker, the peasant, and the soldier. Those terms at that time in China were all collective terms and had highly symbolic meanings. You could not use them in the single or plural form. They were shaped into the bronze statue consisting of two men and one woman holding a hammer, a sickle, and a musket. It stood outside of our city museum and was multiple times larger than the real people. One day, the three figures were changed into four. A man with glasses holding a satellite was added to the statue. This man was also the master of the country. Like the other two men and one woman, he was in a lunging position with a rising head and lifting chest. This man was the revolutionary intellectual, who was my father’s friend.[78]

In the passage above, “I” calls the revolutionary intellectual “my father’s friend,” which naturally draws a line between the revolutionary intellectual and my father. They are only friends, not the same person. From the information about “my” father discussed above, we have known that “my” father is also an intellectual. Although he has some features of traditional Chinese literati, he still tries his best to contribute to the development of the country. He should be the fourth man and belong to the group of revolutionary intellectuals. But, in this passage, he is not one of them. This demarcation indicates that Uncle He’s appearance let “me” know who “my” father is in society and what “my” whole family is classified as by “my” homeland, China.

At the dinner party in which “I” meets Uncle He, “I” gets to know the truth about “my” father: his fearlessness, indeed, comes from his ignorance of the danger surrounding him. When he is aware of the coming danger, he will be no longer as fearless as before. On the dinner table,

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[77] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 73.

[78] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 2.

"I" witnesses how "my" father and mother beg Uncle He to save him and "our" family. The word "saving" is neither an exaggeration nor a misuse of words. As "I" explains, "The matters of life and death happened at any time and any place in the country."[79] The "saving" does not mean saving a person's physical life but saving his political life. If one loses his political life, his name will be written in black ink and covered with a big cross in red ink. "I" clarifies, "The death of the body is relatively flat, simple, harmless, and not related to dignity. It is a natural decay which is not worthy of telling if you experience the so-called death in politics."[80] "My" father's political life is influenced by the article, "Do Not Despise Your Ugly Mother," which has been mentioned above. The metaphor of the "ugly mother" becomes the evidence of "my" father's crime. People read something else in his words. They believe that her father writes this article to express his resentments towards the party and the country. The party is the mother. This metaphor has no problem in political attitude and stance. But his mistake is in his application of the "improper" adjective and noun to describe the mother: "ugly" and "falling," which indicates that the party is "ugly" and what it does at that moment is an indication of falling. The people who read his article cut its sentences into pieces, quote them into their articles, and reinterpret them in different ways.[81] In the past, it is "my" mother who protects "my" father from danger. But now the situation has been beyond her control. Without "my" mother's "assistance," "my" father makes such an irreversible mistake. Facing the result of his mistake, "my" father does not know what to do. Later, when Uncle He shows the article to him, he is defeated. His fearlessness fades away. As "I" notices, his eyes become blank and empty and cannot focus, and the light in the eyes gradually disappears.[82] Since then, "my" father has never gotten out of the shadow of the article and gotten his fearlessness back.

In the event of the article, "I" has known that "my" father no longer can be "my" hero whom "I" can admire and depend on. Confronting the danger coming from the outside world, he

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[79] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 11.

[80] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 11.

[81] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 70.

[82] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 13.

is not tough enough to protect himself and his home (family), no matter physically or spiritually. His role in the home as the father is not played well by him. In Chinese traditions, the father should be the center of a home. In *The I Ching* (*The Book of Changes*), it identifies the father with the sky in the first hexagram of its sixty-four hexagrams. In Confucian teachings, it says, "*父者子之天也*" (the father is the child's sky). The sky here means that the child is under the father's protection and also his control. In other words, the father is a signifier of power. The status of the father is manifested by the father's character, "*父*" (*fu*), in Chinese. The ancient character of the father is presented by the image of a hand with a weapon. This image indicates two meanings. First, the father is the one who uses the weapon in his hand to fight against the wild animals and enemies and brings food and trophies for his family. Second, the father is the one who uses the weapon in his hand to teach and lead his children and make them know what they should and should not do. If the child does not follow his order, he can use the weapon to punish him. This meaning coincides with Lacan's the name (no) of the father, which indicates the status of the father in Western culture. Therefore, no matter in China or Western culture, the father plays the most significant role in a home. With this cultural background, "I" is naturally internalized the patriarchal way of thinking and views "my" father as the center in "my" home. In the meantime, the meaning of the weapon also coincides with Lacan's interpretation of the phallus. In "The Signification of the Phallus," Lacan claims, "The phallus is not the penis." It should not be identical to the penis, the organ, but the signifier of the intrinsic power that men have in family and society. If the father loses his weapon (the phallus) and cannot protect his home, he will be identified as the castrated and the home under his control and protection will be in danger of collapse. What "I" pursues in "my" Electra complex is the phallus. As the political other in China, "I" lacks the power which can make "me" and "my" family maintain a decent life. Originally, "I" supposed that "my" father's soul is strong and he at least can give "me" a decent spiritual life. But in the event of the article, "I" realizes that "my" father has been castrated by his homeland and lost his weapon (the phallus). "My" home in his name is not safe. In other words, if "I" wants to maintain a decent life, "I" will need a father whose weapon is holden tightly in his hand.

When the natural father falls down, the ideal father comes into play. In "my" impression, Uncle He is the ideal father and "the sun in her life."[83] At first, he is "my" father's and "my" savior. He not only relieves "me" from the anxiety of the breakdown of "my" sky, but also replaces "my" father to be "my" new sky. After the first meeting, Uncle He saves "my" father from being identified as the rightist. In "my" words, it is Uncle He that raids the execution ground to rescue "my" condemned father.[84] He is in charge of the party propaganda in the provincial government. One of his jobs is to censor the intellectuals' writings. He can read and check all the writers' writings and decide whether they have proper political attitudes and stances. When "my" father's article is sent to the provincial government, it is Uncle He who deals with his case. It is also Uncle He who lays his case aside, intentionally forgets it, and makes "us" live in peace.[85] If Uncle He did not help "my" father, he, like other rightists, would have been carrying mud in the fields or setting the explosives on the mountains. In a better situation, he would have been teaching the students in Grade one from seven to sixteen in an adobe cabin. Even in the best situation, he would have been a clerk in the local cultural center in a remote town and in charge of the people's weddings and funerals.[86] "My" father now works in the red building, has a stable salary and enough food stamps, and holds a reputation in the province. Uncle He is the hero. It is he who saves "my" father, saves "me," and saves "my" home. The appearance of the savior-like figure let "me" believe that if "I" has him, "I" will regain the lost phallus and "I" and "my" family will not be identified as the political others.

Second, Uncle He is the one who holds a real weapon (having the phallus). He is one of the members of the dominant class in China and the perfect example of the revolutionary intellectuals in the new age. Different from "my" father, a son of the capitalist intellectual, Uncle He has a good family origin: a son of the most impoverished peasants. His experiences make him feel proud of himself: participating in the revolution at twelve; at fourteen, becoming a soldier in

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[83] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 13.

[84] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 11.

[85] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 14.

[86] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 34.

the People's Liberation Army; after that, learning how to read and write and becoming a writer at twenty.[87] His poems are selected into the official textbooks. His success justifies the government's propaganda: the proletariat has stood up and been the master in the new country. He is the ideal father for "my" Electra complex and family romance, who can guide "me" in spirit and change "my" current social status. That is why at "my" six, "I" has been attracted to Uncle He and fallen in love with him. In "my" words,

> How could I not love him? Thirty-one years ago, he, riding his red horse and singing Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Points For Attention, came into the city with his troops. Their shabby uniforms brought fresh air into the city. A quarter of the crowd standing on both sides of the street were female students. When they saw the young officer's bronze skin and eyes, the victor's eyes, their aesthetics derived from ancient times (appreciating beautiful young men) was changed immediately. The man they loved was not Zhang Sheng (the hero in *Romance of the Western Chamber*), Liang Shanbo (the hero in *Butterfly Lovers*), and Jia Baoyu (the hero in *Dream of the Red Chamber*) but the rider on the red horse. His skin was dark, his body was muscled, and his brows and eyes were clear. He was the perfect example of the "man." All of them were obsessed with him and also feared him. When they found that he was not only a military officer but also a famous writer, they could not help falling in love with him. Maybe he was not handsome, but he had the handsomeness they desired, including his accent, shabby uniform, and straw sandals. I hadn't been born yet at that time, but I was one of them. I loved the idol from a distance. My love for him appeared earlier, earlier than my birth.[88]

However, the appearance of the ideal father, even though temporarily releasing me from the anxiety of the lack of the phallus, never helps "me" get rid of it. "I" knows that He loves "me," but "I" cannot have him and get the phallus "I" needs from him. "We" cannot integrate with each other. In the summer, when "I" is eleven years old, "I" first experiences the love from the man. When she takes the train with Uncle He, she witnesses how Uncle He touches her body like touching an adult woman's body. In Uncle He's private booth, she falls on the ground when falling asleep, as she says, maybe intentionally. When Uncle He comes back to the booth, he notices the young girl lying on the ground. He holds her body and tries to put her on the bed. But during the process, she feels that Uncle He stops and his holding becomes an embracement. She

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[87] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 12.

[88] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 156.

sees that Uncle He is watching her and appreciating her. After he puts her on the bed, Uncle He uses his hands to caress her inch to inch. She discovers the obsession in his eyes, which comes from an addict to the youth spreading from her body.[89] But this time is the only and last time that she and Uncle He are close to each other. Uncle He is forever "my" uncle, "my" father's close friend, and "my" ideal father. The taboo of incest stifles his erotic desire. Even though in her eighteen and thirty, she as an adult woman attempts to seduce Uncle He. He restrains his natural desire and never crosses over the uncle-niece line between them. This failure of integration between "I" and Uncle He makes "me" continue to experience the pain of lacking.

In the meantime, with "my" growth, "I" starts to understand what the "friendship" between "my" father and Uncle He means and what "my" love for Uncle He consists of. In "my" words, the friendship between them is one of the most thought-provoking relationships. It is the best and worst way of people's co-existence.[90] They are not ordinary friends. Their friendship is based on the exchange of benefits, which makes their relationship not as pure as what "I" expects. As "I" comments, "My father and Uncle He are inseparable friends. Inseparability is the essence of their relationship, like the relationship in symbiosis. They are much more intimate than ordinary good or close friends. According to Darwin's evolution, human beings and other beings are in this mutually dependent relationship, which is based on mutual interests and benefits. Every life is valuable because it is potential to be used and invested. Friendship and love relationships are both guided by utility and investment."[91] The reason why "my" father invites Uncle He to have dinner at home is that Uncle He is the one who holds his life and fate in his hands. The reason why Uncle He accepts the invitation is that he knows "my" father's talents in writing. He may take advantage of "my" father someday in the future.

Later, "I" gets to know the truth of Uncle He's novel. Even though both Uncle He and "my" father never tell "me" who the author of the novel is, "I" still reveals the truth by "my" observation. The event of the novel begins after Uncle He's saving. One day, Uncle He tells

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[89] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 181-182.

[90] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 2.

[91] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 53.

"my" father that he is trying to find someone to edit and polish the draft of his novel. "My" father replies immediately, "I can do it."[92] It looks like he fears losing the opportunity to pay back what Uncle He does for him. Since then, for almost four years, "I" has gotten to know that the most important thing in "my" home is Uncle He's novel. "My" father, in his study shaped by two bookshelves, concentrates on "editing and polishing" Uncle He's novel days and nights. After the draft is finished, Uncle He reads "his" great novel in public proudly and confidently. But "I" is aware of how complicated "my" father's feelings are. He is both sad and excited. When "my" father notices that his writing is in Uncle He's hands and prepared for reading, he stops his smile. There is an unspoken expression on his face, like the expression when some part of his body hurts. This pain is something that cannot be spoken to other people. He is also happy. When he listens to the words coming from Uncle He's mouth, he cannot help but laugh loudly. "I" says, at that moment, he is the only one at the site who knows all the hidden triggers in the novel. When noticing that all the word tricks work well, he feels proud of himself as the original designer. But after the laughs, he returns into frustration and resentment: even though he is the writer, he has no right to claim his authority.[93] The complicated feeling "my" father has is observed and experienced by "me." "I" as his daughter sympathizes with him. How can the heroic Uncle He rob his friend's achievement and say nothing about his robbery? "I" tries to use "my" ideal father, Uncle He, to help "me" out of the lack in "me" and "my" home. But this ideal father deepens "my" lack. "My" father has been castrated by the homeland, China, and lost his fearlessness. Uncle He takes advantage of his power to castrate him for the second time. In their relationship, "my" father loses his dignity of being a man. Even though Uncle He is by "my" side, "I" and "my" father are still the political other without the phallus. In front of Uncle He, "I" (the beggar) and "my" father (the slave) are much lower than him, no matter socially or spiritually.

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[92] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 34.

[93] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 40.

That is why "I" analyzes that Uncle He is, indeed, "my" enemy and a part of "my" love for him comes from hostility.[94] He destroys "my" father and his life and "me" and "my" life also. In "my" recognition of Uncle He and "my" love for him, the images of Uncle He and "my" homeland are overlapped. With "my" growth, "I" realizes that "my" hostility towards Uncle He originates from "my" hostility towards the homeland, China. The falling of the myth of the ideal father indicates the falling of the myth of the fatherland. In Chinese, the word "country" is constituted by two characters: "*国*" (*guo*, country) and "*家*" (*jia*, home). It also can be called the home country. For the Chinese, the country they live in is also their home. It is a place in which they can feel safe and free. But at the dinner party, "I" has been aware that the homeland is the origin of the danger and confinement in "my" life. It is "my" home country that separates "me" and "my" family from its people. It is the home country that classified "me" and "my" family as the political other. It is the home country that causes the fallings of "my" father and "me": to be the slave and the beggar. The appearance of Uncle He superficially releases "me" from the anxiety of being isolated by "my" country, but his reactions in the event of the novel make "me" realize that the split between "me" and "my" country is permanent and irreversible. Uncle He is a cadre of the party and works for the government. In ordinary people's eyes, he is a representative of the party and the country. He, as a member of the dominant class, has the privileges that ordinary people cannot have. For instance, the privileges are called "*dai yu*" (*待遇*, deserved privileges) in Chinese, which only the officials could have and the civilians could not.[95] He can have his own booth when taking trains. He can ask the chef in the commune canteen to cook for him when he is hungry. He can also ask his best friend to write novels for him. He, as the class of the authorities, is the master of the country. In fact, the dominance of the elites has lasted in China for thousands of years. The hierarchy between the officials and the civilians has become a common phenomenon. "I" should not feel surprised about the phenomenon. But because of the internalization of the Western concepts, such as freedom and democracy, coming to China at the beginning of the twentieth century, "I" believes that all the

[94] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 158.

[95] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 24.

people in the country should be equal. The master of China should be a collective term, which represents all the people in the country. Ironically, why can only the people in power have the privileges belonging to the master? Why can a party cadre have the right to own the achievement that another person spends four years making? Then who is or are the master(s) in the country? The people or only the officials? The falling of Uncle He, the ideal father, is not the falling of the father figure, but the falling of the country and its culture empowering the father.

Since then, "I" has started to separate "myself" from the country. This separation is not passive but active. Later, the separation goes more and more evident. In the end, it pushes "me" to decide to leave China. In the Cultural Revolution, Uncle He is slapped by "my" father in public for his robbery of the novel. "My" father is forced to do so. But this slap becomes a sign of guilt for "my" father and makes him trap himself in his debt to Uncle He. After the Cultural Revolution, "my" father is still writing for Uncle He. To finish the new novel, he gives up the opportunity to go to America. When "I" questions him why he gives up this opportunity, he replies, "He is a good friend. And how can I represent Chinese writers? If someone asks me what works I finished within these decades, how can I answer the question? I need to finish He's book, and then I can start to write my own. I still have time and energy."[96] At this moment, "I" no longer bears what "my" homeland does to "my" father. It and its representative, Uncle He, endlessly castrate "my" father and strip down his dignity of being a man time after time. Finally, he is changed into a slave who has given up his pursuit of absolute freedom and forgotten his hatred towards the authorities. Even though there are no visible fetters on his body, he is still locked by the invisible fetters on his spirit. As his daughter, "I," in his relation to Uncle He, also becomes a beggar no matter in front of Uncle He or "my" homeland. "I" is trapped in the suffering of "my" own falling. The home in the name of a powerful father seems to be a mirage for "me." The natural father is castrated and the ideal father is polluted. It is the homeland that makes the fallings of the two fathers. To get out of this situation, "I" decides to leave China, "my" homeland. "I" needs another country where "I" is no longer the other, can live like other people, and can get rid of spiritual slavery in "my" nature inherited from "my" father.[97]

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[96] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 172.

[97] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 148.

“I” and “My” Disillusioned Dream of Home in America

Because of “my” homeland, China, “my” Electra complex has no place to be discharged. Both fathers make “me” disappointed. “My” dream of home is impossible to fulfill. Therefore, “I” leaves China and looks for “my” home in another land. Different from China, this land should be nice to “me.” It should receive, embrace, and welcome “me.” In it, “I” should no longer be the powerless other. “I” will be the self and the master, who does not need to bend down herself for survival. “I” can be safe and free and can have a decent life. America, for “me,” is a proper choice. Freedom and individualism are the foundation of its dominant ideology, which, in “my” eyes, China does not have. It respects the individual and her freedom. From this perspective, “I” and it match with each other perfectly. Moreover, after “my” leaving China, it is America that opens its arms to receive me. It seems that no matter in spirit or body “I” and America have integrated with each other. It should be “my” dreamland.

More fortunately, in “my” dreamland, America, “I” meets another ideal father in “my” life. Schultz’s appearance draws “me” out of the desperation of homelessness. He gives “me” the hope that “I” can have a home again. “I,” a forty-five-year-old woman, is a teaching assistant in a university. Dr. Schultz, a seventy-year-old man, is the dean of the department “I” works in. This old man always takes care of and helps “me,” like what Uncle He does in China. Even though he has a good wife who loves him and accompanies him for decades, he cannot help falling in love with “me” when seeing “me” at first sight. It is “my” otherness—Oriental femininity and communist rebellion—that attracts him and makes his happy marriage a bitter one. Facing his love, “I” is hard to say “no.” On the one hand, “I” knows that “I” cannot love him. Uncle He is still in “my” deep heart. The relationship between “me” and Schultz also does not allow this love: he is “my” advisor. In Chinese traditions, the teacher is like the father for the student. On the other hand, “I” am unwilling not to love him. “Our” relationship always reminds “me” of “my” relation to Uncle He. “My” obsession with the father makes “me” unwilling to lose the chance of having an ideal father. “I” have lost an ideal father, Uncle He, in my life. Schultz is a perfect figure replacing Uncle He to be “my” ideal father. He is at Uncle He’s age and, like Uncle He, treats “me” as a little girl, even though “I” is forty-five years old. To live with “me,” he divorces his wife, who tries her best to persuade him to come back. He tolerates “my”

unstable moods (sometimes warm and sometimes cold) and loves me by his heart. He also has the power to protect "me" and give "me" a stable life. He can offer "me" a position in the department. He also can help "me" in "my" career: "I" and he work together and finish a book named *The Non-Circulation of the Modern Chinese Language*.[98] He is an acknowledged intellectual who is much better to be "my" father than Uncle He, a revolutionary intellectual, who does not even know how to write a novel. In contrast to Uncle He, Schultz is much more proper to be the one who is able to give "me" a home. "My" integration with him will let "me" have the phallus "I" has desired for a long time.

But the white man's fetishism of the Oriental woman interrupts "my" imagination of the new father. One night, after "I" and Dean Schultz finish the draft of the book written by "us," he tells "me" that he needs to talk with "me." In his office, "we" drink wine and cheer for the success of "our" cooperation. When "I" says, "Hope our cooperation has a good result," he misunderstands it and starts to seduce "me." His grey eyes begin to change into blue. He takes off the mask he wears at ordinary times and talks with "me" about the things "I" is interested in. When the time is ready, he forces "me" to have a relationship with him.[99] Everything seems to happen naturally and quickly. But it is not from "my" will. When recounting how "I" feels when Schultz is lying on "me", "I" says, "The light and shade shaped the whole figure: the two holes in the eyes, the hollows on the cheeks, and the slightly prominent gum. The image of death was there. I tried to push him away."[100] In "my" memory, Schultz, "my" American lover, is not the handsome and gentle hero but a symbol of death, which indicates that in "my" unconscious, staying with Schultz is like dancing with the god of Death. "I" has no right to refuse the invitation from the god of Death. Even though "I" still hesitates about Schultz's love, "I" has no right to say no and also fears to say no. The love based on such an unequal relationship will not have a good ending. In the meantime, when memorizing the event of Schultz's office, "I" puts it side by side with the event on the train which happened in China. In the previous sentence, "I"

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[98] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 48.

[99] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 51-52.

[100] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 51.

says, “Leaving the train, I hadn’t seen Uncle He until the fall. When we met each other, he was the same, rubbing my head as usual. We were as close as before. But something disappeared in the whole process of coming and going between me and Uncle He. I was not sure what happened that night was real.”[101] Without any stop, “I” continues, “Definitely, he arranged everything in advance. When midnight was coming, he said that he must talk with me. The stupid old print machine in our department postponed us. Until 11 pm, all the 400 pages were bound together into a book. It was the book, *The Non-Circulation of the Modern Chinese Language*, which was written by him and me and cost us two years.”[102] In the latter part of “my” narration, “he” is Schultz. It is easy to notice that there is no clear line between the two events and the two male figures. The former part tells what happens between “me” and Uncle He after the event of the train booth. The latter one tells what happens between “me” and Schultz in the school office. This arrangement indicates that in “my” unconscious, the two events are the same. Both the Chinese man and the American man commit the crime of sexual harassment. Both demonstrate how “I” as the other who is unable to control “my” own life and love. In China, “I” is the political other and has to depend on the one from the authorities. In America, even if having integrated with Schultz, “I” does not get the phallus. “I” is still the ethnic and cultural other, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s subaltern without the right to say no, and has to fawn over the one in the mainstream.

The unequal relationship between “me” and Schultz wakes “me” up from “my” Electra complex: getting the penis from the father does not mean getting the phallus (power) which can change “my” social status. In the memory of “my” first time with Schultz, “I” views Schultz as the god of Death, of whom “I” cannot get rid. In “my” American life, Schultz, indeed, plays the role of God. He is so obsessed with “me,” the Chinese woman, that he tries his best to hold “me” in his hands. He asks “me” to rent a better apartment, rather than living in a plastic house. He gives “me” a schedule: every week they will go to the cinema once and have sex three or four

[101] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 48.

[102] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 48.

times; "I" should cook three dinners and he will cook another three.[103] Whenever "I" goes outside or hangs around with friends, he will interrogate "me." For instance, when "I" explains why "I" does not come to see "my" doctor, "I" says, "Something happened. Professor Schultz and I got into a huge fight. It was fierce rather than intensive. … He shouted, and his head moved like a conductor's head moving when he led his orchestra. His voice returned to the voice in his thirties. It was sonorous and had the sound of the metal. How incredible an old man could have such a voice when he believed that he was cheated!"[104] The cause of the conflict between "me" and Schultz is that "I" hangs around with "my" friend, York. When Schultz asks "me" where "I" was and what I did last night, "I" only replies, "Walking around." Because "I" does not tell him who "I" meets with, he believes that "I" is not faithful to him. In "my" words, to Schultz, there is one truth: that is, "I" is out of his control for a while. Much worse, "I" lies to him. "My" reply, "Walking around," becomes the evidence of "my" crimes of telling lies and betrayal. To punish "my" disloyalty, he prints out the recommendation letter written by him, which is four-page compliments about how hard-working and talented "I" is. He shows it in front of "me" and tears it apart into pieces.[105] "I," a single foreign woman, comes to the country. "I" has nothing with "me," except for the pain of homelessness and the hope for having a new home. The man should be the one bringing "me" home. "My" integration with him should fill "my" lack of the phallus. Now he let "me" understand that the lack is permanent and the dream of having a home in America is impossible. In China, for "my" home, "I" is a beggar in "my" relation to Uncle He.[106] The reason why "I" leaves is that "I" attempts to get out of the unequal relationship and to be a "normal" person, a person who does not need to give up her dignity for survival. As "I" tells her doctor, "I want to be a normal person."[107] Unfortunately, in America, for the new home, "I" falls into another unequal relationship, and "I" still cannot be "normal."

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[103] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 144.

[104] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 18.

[105] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 18.

[106] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 160.

[107] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 179.

As a matter of fact, even though “I” is forty-five years old, “I” is still like the “I” in childhood who overlaps the ideal father with the land where “I” lives. “I” still believes that once “I” integrates with the father, the land represented by the man will accept and recognize “me.” That is why, even though being unwilling to live with Schultz, “I” still accepts his love and says nothing about his dominance over “me.” And despite "my" repugnance to have sex with Schultz, “I” still lets him do what he wants to do. “I” hopes to get acceptance and recognition from the dreamland, which can make me “normal.” “I” imagines that if “I” gets the phallus from Schultz, the typical American middle class, “I” will be identified as one of Americans and America will naturally become "my" home. But when “I” does what “I” plans to do, “I” realizes that all the hopes and expectations are only “my” own imagination. The shattering of the myth of Schultz breaks “my” dream of home and also “my” dream of America. America is not the land in “my” imagination. If “I” wants to stay in it, “I” needs to pay the price for “my” stay. The hospitality the dreamland shows is only what Jacques Derrida called conditional hospitality. As the dean of the department, Schultz can decide whether “I” can stay in the department. Only when “I” accept his proposal can he give me the position. “I” tells “my” doctor,

> I need to think about some problems. For example? For example, whether should I accept Schultz’s proposal? No, I will not sue him. He and I began with sexual harassment. But, honestly, suing him will not be good to me and also to him. He is holding the position of a lectureship in his hands. But he will give it to me after I completely accept him. If he gives me the position that dozens of people care about, the people in the department will be disappointed in him. He will also lose his reputation and dignity. I have gotten the suggestion from him that his sacrifice should deserve payback.[108]

At the same time, the dreamland, America, has no difference from China. The people are still manipulated by politics and social relations. For instance, “I” says, “Like other places, the department has its own politics and cults. I need to be careful. Schultz is always cautious.”[109] The land is also not heaven for women, particularly for female scholars. “I” quotes the data from the newspaper, “According to the survey, on average, there are fifteen persons competing in a

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[108] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 164.

[109] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 164.

position with thirty thousand dollars per year. Another survey reveals, in every ten female students, there are three or more who choose not to report their experiences of sexual harassment to get a higher grade."[110] In China, "I" is a beggar, but in America, "I" has no difference. For survival, "I" begs Schultz to write the recommendation letter for me and writes hundreds of letters to beg other people to give me a job. What "I" begs is not only a salary but also the three meals a day, housing rent, a car, and health insurance. In America, everyone is begging for survival. They might be a person who calls you and asks you to buy some lottery, presses your doorbell and sells his or her religious beliefs, gives you the free health food or shampoo sample on the streets, or stops you and begs you to save the children in Africa.[111] This is America, which is an ordinary country in the world. It is not a land of miracles and not better than China. In the country, "I" is not only the beggar but also the kidnapped. "I" mentions Polly Klaas, who was kidnapped and murdered in 1993.[112] In fact, "I" uses Polly's case to illustrate the predicament in "my" life. Schultz kidnaps "me" in the name of love. "I" becomes a victim of the West's obsession with the East and its misunderstandings of the East. The new land has no difference from the old one. In some aspects, it is even worse than the old one. The dream of having a home for which "I" gives up "my" homeland, China, and comes to the dreamland, America, is still an unapproachable mirage. It is only the result of "my" illusion about the dreamland.

The Consulting Room: The Confrontation between the Chinese "I" and the American "I"

Inspired by Freud and his psychoanalysis and her own experiences in psychoanalytic treatments, Yan designs the setting of the story in a private space, the consulting room of a psychiatrist. Everything in the story starts from the room. In the room, most of the story is presented in the form of the conversations between the protagonist, "I," and her doctor. Since, in psychoanalytic treatments, the psychiatrists always hide themselves behind their patients, in the story, the doctor's questions and responses are intentionally erased by the writer. In their

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[110] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 164.

[111] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 160.

[112] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 100.

conversations, there are only the protagonist's responses and narrations. Under this circumstance, the whole novel seems to be a woman's monologue constituted by the fragments of her words and memory. Due to the invisibility of the doctor, the consulting room becomes a secret space for "I" in which the two fragmented "I's" in "my" body meet with each other. In the meantime, the "I" in the consulting room, as the narrator, has the opportunity to see her life in China and America from the third person's perspective and get to know the origin of her mental suffering.

In the consulting room, the protagonist figures out the cause of her neurosis: the double homelessness. It is in the room that she puts her two homelands: China and America together and compares them side by side. In the two lands, she is split into two fragments: the Chinese "I" and the American "I." The "I" in the consulting room plays the role of the mediator between the two fragmented "I's." Initially, the two "I's" are not related to each other. One is the "I" in China before the 1990s. The other is the "I" in America after the 1990s. The Chinese "I" is young but has the maturity and sophistication which girls of "my" age should not have. "I" is sensitive enough to be aware of the segregation between her and her homeland, the pain her father experiences, and the complicatedness of her love for Uncle He. "I" is good at observation, which makes "me" able to discover every small change in "my" father's expressions and moods. On the contrary, the American "I," even though in her middle age, is still naive and simple-minded and believes that she can depend on an American man to fulfill her desire for an ideal home and homeland. The mature "I" in China reveals the truth of the original homeland, but the childish "I" in America blinds herself in the dream of the new homeland. It is the "I" in the consulting room that combines the two fragmented "I's" together and makes herself understand who she is, what the lack in her selfhood is, and what causes the lack. "I" is a Chinese and American woman having two homelands, just like having two lovers. Although she has two homelands, "I" is homeless. "I" hopes to get love from the two lands and asks for their recognition. That is why, no matter in China or America, she tries her best to search for the sense of belonging and complete integrations with the men she loves. But "I" cannot really merge into both homelands. Even after "I" is in the land and has integrated with the ideal father, "I," particularly "my" soul, is still outside. This failure is not only brought by the hostility from the homelands towards "me," but also from the duality in "my" nature. "I" cannot integrate with them spiritually. The Chineseness

and Americanness in me do not allow "me" to integrate completely. "I" loves Uncle He (China), but the concepts of individualism and freedom, the Western thoughts, draw "me" away from him. "I" loves Schultz (America), but "my" Chinese personality (Communist rebellion) prevents "me" from becoming his prisoner. That is why neither of the love stories has a good ending. Whether she is in China or America, "I" is a homeless person who cannot find her emotional and spiritual dwelling.

The duality in "my" nature is like the duality in "my" language: the conflict between Chinese and English always makes "me" not know how to speak. When "I" explains why she does not want to speak and tries to cancel the meeting with her doctor, she says,

> Yes. I planned to cancel our meeting. I don't know. Sometimes my expression is poor, so I don't want to talk. Particularly when I speak English, the half in the native language becomes overly fussy and mean. When the half in English speaks out half of the sentence, it picks up the faults and blames me. Every time I organize a sentence in English, I will hear criticisms from the half in Chinese on the half in English. For instance, it criticizes that its structure is too complicated and the selection of words is not proper. How fragmented the sentence is. Then the half in English becomes the isolated other in my selfhood. At this moment, I only want to shut down my mouth. Sometimes, I like the half in English. It is young. It is—I always believe—innocent. It is also rude, childish, and straightforward. My half language, English, is only eighteen years old. But my Chinese, my native language, reflects my sophistication. It is in my age: flexible, changeable, and capricious. It demonstrates what maturity is. Whenever the conflict between the two halves happens, the only thing I can do is to keep silent.[113]

The roles of the Chinese "I" and American "I" in "me" are like the roles of two languages. They interrupt each other in their integrations into the homelands. In the end, "I" have no idea of who "I" should be and where my home is. But the consulting room gives "me" an opportunity to draw the two fragmented "I's" together and makes them communicate with each other. The image of "I" becomes more and more clear in the confrontation between the Chinese "I" and the American "I." The "I" is not only incomplete (the segregation between "me" and "my" homelands), but also contradictory (the conflicts between the West and East and America and China). That is why, after the last treatment, "I" leaves Schultz, the man who gives up everything for owning "me," without saying goodbye. At the end of the novel, "I" asks the waiter to give Schultz's

[113] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 29.

glasses and umbrella back to him. "I" does not leave any message to him, either in words or writing, and takes a taxi to the airport.[114] No one knows where she goes. Leaving the dreamland and finding another one? Or staying in the country and making it a home? Or coming back to China and returning to the arms of the original homeland? No one knows. Maybe at this moment home is no longer significant for "me." "I" has known that homelessness is in "my" blood. Homeland is only a physical place that is too limited to be the dwelling of "my" soul. The best medicine for the illness of homelessness might be to forget the home(land). As Yan says, "I often speak to myself that I have no home, and my home is where my heart dwells peacefully."[115]

Displacement: The Origin of Double Homelessness

Indeed, the narrator, "I", is the incarnation of the writer, Yan Geling. Like "I," leaving China in her thirties, Yan, also in her thirties, went to America as an international student in 1989. Like "I," who is loved by Schultz, she was loved by an American man and later on became his wife. Like "I," who suffers from insomnia, Yan also suffered from the same psychological neurosis. When explaining the reason why she wrote *The Human Realm* in the psychoanalytical form, she said, "Since April in 1996, I have suffered from insomnia and going to see the therapist has become a part of my life."[116] Even though the story is fictional, the pain, struggle, and emotions presented in the story are real. Like "I," Yan is a new immigrant who is confused about the duality in her nature. She was a Chinese, but now she is an American. She was born in China, but now she lives in America. Because of her pursuit of freedom and individualism, she left her original homeland and moved into the new one. The pain of the split from the motherland cannot be erased by the new life in the new land. Tragically, she has another pain, which is given by her inability to merge into the new society and take roots in the new land. White supremacy and Orientalism stand like walls between her and the country. Both countries are her homes, but she belongs to neither of them. No matter she or the homeland is not the one before. She has not

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[114] Yan, *The Human Realm*, 186.

[115] Shi Jianfeng, "Yan Geling: Being the One Living outside," accessed November 18, 2020, http://www.Chinawriter.com.cn/2009/2009-03-30/70118.html.

[116] Yan Geling, "Why I wrote *The Human Realm*," *The Human Realm*, 187.

been the Chinese who has only one homeland, and China has not been the China in her memory. She has been an American, but America has not been the America in her imagination. That is why when she talks about immigration, she uses the term "displacement" to describe the movement from one country to another:

> "Displacement" means migration. For us, those going abroad in adulthood, "displacement" is not only geographic but also psychological and emotional. After leaving Russia at nineteen, Nabokov never owned any house property. There was no house or place which was like the homeland in his childhood. None of the houses or places he lived could help him build up his emotional "home." None of them could give him the sense of belonging. He became the person who has homes everywhere and has no home to return. … In my perspective, "displacement" cannot be finished. Look at those old Chinese Americans on the No.30 Bus in San Francisco, who have peculiar sensibility, vigilance, humility, and defensiveness. Their features justify my argument. They and I are the same, the permanent sojourner. Even though we have been the citizens of the country and owned the land, we cannot be recognized by the country and its culture. Ironically, we also cannot belong to our native country and culture. At first, we missed its development and changes. Second, we have been influenced profoundly by the foreign culture and alienated by it from the native culture. Even if we return to the motherland and return to the womb of the mother culture, this return is only a displacement after the first displacement, which indicates the return of our body rather than the return of our spirit. Therefore, I will add another meaning to "displacement": that is, no-placement. It also can be called "misplacement." … Because of the "misplacement," even the destined lovers, like the Flower and the Youth (the protagonists in her novel, *The Flower and the Youth*), cannot return to their original relation. Their love is there, but the people are not the people anymore. The displacement of the soul is much slower than the displacement of the body.[117]

Since Yan herself suffers from the pain of displacement brought by the duality in her nature, she intends to translate the psychological and emotional conflicts that the new immigrants face in their life into physical words.

She demonstrates the pain of displacement not only in *The Human Realm* but also in *The Flower and the Youth* (2004). In the novel, she depicts the love story of a Chinese couple, Xu Wanjiang and Hong Min. In order to have a better life, they get divorced. Wanjiang marries an American and emigrates to America. This marriage is not the result of love, but the result of the American dream, which both Wanjiang and Hong Min have. They believe that once Wanjiang

[117] Yan Geling, "The Displacement," *The Bohemian Building* (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Publishing House, 2015), 284-285.

gets the legal identity in America, Hong Min can come and their family can be reunited again. Due to their dissatisfaction with China, their original homeland, they view America as their dreamland, in which they believe that their love can continue and their life can become much better. But when Wanjiang arrives in America and lives with her American husband, she realizes that reality is forever not what she expects. Her husband treats her like his prisoner and does not allow her to be out of his sight. Because her American husband does not like her son, her and Hong Min's son, when she wants to see him, she needs to meet with him secretly, like a woman meeting with her secret lover. Due to her American husband's education, her daughter speaks and behaves like an American, who looks down upon her Chinese father, Hong Min. Furthermore, Hong Min, the man she loves, has not been the man anymore. For their reunion, Hong Min also comes to America. But within several years, he has changed. He asks Wanjiang to give him the money, which is used to buy a house in America, to make an investment, which turns out to be a scam. When he realizes that he cannot pay that money back, he flees back to China and asks Wanjiang to wait for him for a few more years. The couple, "the Flower and the Youth," in the end, becomes the pair of peacocks flying in opposite directions. Their dream of having a home becomes only a mirage. Finally, the flower and the youth, no matter in China or America, are homeless. This story demonstrates what Yan calls "misplacement" brought in by displacement. At first, the person whom one loves is there, but he has not been the person in her imagination. Second, the homeland, like the person she loves, is there, but it has not been the homeland in her mind.

Yan, in her other two short stories, also presents this pain of displacement. In "The Marriage under Surveillance by FBI," when "I" hears the words, "American diplomats are not allowed to marry the people from the Communist countries," from the American who dates with her, "I" believe that he is talking a joke and creating excitement in his peaceful life.[118] For her, America is a country that respects freedom and individual rights. It is impossible to do anything that China often does. But when the FBI agent comes to the department, talks with her professors and classmates, and interrogates her, she realizes that it is not a joke. At this moment, the myth

[118] Yan Geling, "The Marriage Monitored by FBI," *The Bohemian Building* (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Publishing House, 2015), 51.

of America and the land of freedom fall apart. She says, "I got to know the term, 'human right,' in America, but now I need to give up this sacred right. Maybe, their human right is racially conditioned. Facing a foreigner like me, they can tread on my right without any hesitation only under the cover of hypocrisy."[119] In the end, she recognizes that even though she is in the country, she has not landed on it. The country does not allow her to land. In "Return," Yan tells a story of a return journey (coming back to China). "I" brings "my" American husband back to China to see "my" parents. Since "my" parents have divorced, "my" mom arranges "us" to live in Xiaoming's father-in-law's apartment. Xiaoming is "my" mom's stepson. When "I" and "my" husband are surprised by the modernity of China and prepare to go to bed after a long journey, three policemen knock on the door. Some neighbors in the community report to them that "I" is a prostitute who offers sexual service to foreigners. When "I" shows them the marriage certificate issued by California, signed by the governor, and notarized by the Chinese Consulate, they feel disappointed and tell "me" that the foreigner cannot live in an apartment owned by a Chinese. One of the policemen says, "Do you know who the owner of the apartment is?... It is the country."[120] They even do not allow "us" to live a night and do not care about whether "we" can find a place to live. When "I" asks them whether there is a hotel in the community, the police replies, "I don't know. … You know that you should leave this place immediately. You must live in a hotel which is assigned to receive foreigners. The foreigners cannot live in a place where they want to live."[121] After this experience, "I," the Chinese, does not want to talk about her motherland. In her words, "Unfortunately, the country is my country because my home is there. I have to come back. I often tell other people who do not understand China that it becomes better day by day and they should go and see. When the words come out of my mouth, I try my best to smile sincerely and proudly."[122] In the two stories, be it America or China, neither of the countries seems to be "my" home. Yan translates the unspoken pain of double homelessness and

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[119] Yan, "The Marriage Monitored by FBI," 55-56.

[120] Yan Geling, "Return," *The Bohemian Building* (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Publishing House, 2015), 68.

[121] Yan Geling, "Return," 68.

[122] Yan Geling, "Return," 69.

the double misplacement into visible words and makes her readers understand the predicament in the new immigrants' existence.

In her works, Yan not only writes about the pain of displacement, but also tries to heal the wounds on the new immigrants' body and soul made by the pain. In *The Human Realm,* the setting of the story is in the American psychiatrist's consulting room and the language used by the narrator is English. There are two invisible translations: one is the translation from Chinese to English; the other one is from English to Chinese. The narrator, "I," is a Chinese, whose first language is Chinese. When she talks with her doctor in the consulting room, she needs to translate her native language into the acquired language. More interesting, the novel is written in Chinese, which means that there is an invisible translator translating the English meeting records into Chinese. Indeed, the writer, Yan, is the translator who hides herself behind the narrator and targets the people in both countries as her potential readers. On the one hand, she tries to use English as the speaking language to change her American listeners' attitudes towards China. On the other hand, she attempts to use Chinese as the writing language to change her Chinese readers' views about America.

This double translation movement is the result of the pain of displacement. Since the Chinese half and the American half in her selfhood always conflict with each other, the only way to resolve their conflict is to let the two parts understand each other. Yan's unconscious desire to integrate Chinese culture with American culture is also reflected by her intentional design of the love between the Chinese women and the American men. No matter in *The Human Realm*, *The Flower and the Youth*, "The Marriage under the Surveillance of FBI," or "Return," the Chinese women are loved by the American men. Except for those works, *The Last Daughter of Happiness* is also a story that demonstrates Yan's hope for integrating Chinese culture with American culture. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is a love story between a Chinese prostitute and an American white boy. Even though their love is a failure and the white boy participates in the event of raping the Chinese woman, Fusang, in the end, he gradually understands the Chinese woman and memorizes her in his lifetime. Yan knows clearly that the conflict between the two parts of her selfhood comes from the conflict between two different cultures and two different ideologies, particularly from Western misunderstandings about China and Chinese culture. If she

can reconcile the conflict and change the misunderstanding, the two parts of her selfhood can integrate into each other. Furthermore, the two cultures can learn from each other, which makes the integrations between the immigrants and the two lands possible. She and her people can get inner peace, which can bring them back home spiritually. That is why she insists on writing most of her works in Chinese. Maybe she is waiting for the day, the day of convergence, when Chinese is no longer a foreign language, but one of the official languages in America.

CHAPTER 4

HOME AND HOMELAND FOR TIBETAN CHINESE WRITERS: THE CALL FROM THE MUSE

Chinese American writers' obsession with home and homeland comes from their identity anxiety, which is caused by the cultural and ideological conflicts between the West and China. For them, the home(land) is the origin of pain and plays a role of a ghost which constantly haunts them in their self-identification. Their obsession with home(land) in their writings is in many ways a therapeutic process (Freud's catharsis), through which they can write themselves out of the pain of homelessness and the uncertainty of their identity. Does home(land) play a similar role in Tibetan Chinese writers' writing career? In this chapter, I will show how the four Tibetan writers, Zhaxi Dawa, Alai, Pema Tsedan, and Takbum Gyel,[1] write about their home and homeland, Tibet. Through their writings and thinking of Tibet, the answer will come into being.

Tibet, the Unique Homeland

Maxime Vivas writes in his book, *Behind the Simile: The Hidden Side of the Dalai Lama*, "Tibet, it is a harsh mountain region, dotted with monasteries and governed by serenity, brotherly love, spirituality, and harmony."[2] It is in the West of China. According to the dialects, the Tibetan community is divided into three regions: Ü-Tsang (the region of the Dharma), Amdo (the region of the horse), and Kham (the region of the human).[3] The formation of Tibetan culture is closely related to its geographic position. Dan Zhencao calls Tibetan culture the culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.[4] In her interpretation, Tibetan culture originated from the Qinghai-Tibet

[1] Because using different writing languages, the Sinophonic writers and their characters' names are pronounced in Chinese phonetic alphabets (Chinese *pinyin*), and the Tibetophonic writers and their characters' names are pronounced in Tibetan phonetic alphabets.

[2] Maxime Vivas, *Behind the Simile: The Hidden Side of the Dalai Lama*, San Francisco: Long River Press, 2012, 10.

[3] Qiabai Cidanpingcuo, *Tibetan History—The Calaite Bracelet* (Lhasa: Tibetan Classics Press, 1996), 2.

[4] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creatio*n *of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers* (Beijing:

Plateau and depends on the snow mountains, lakes, and prairies on the plateau. For thousands of years, the nature of the plateau has not had a large change. The stability of the geographic and ecological environment determines the stability of Tibetan culture. Of course, it also demonstrates a resistance to change in the nature of the unique culture. For the Tibetans, the plateau is the holiest place, the root of their soul, and the home of their being. It is the highest point of the world and the origin of the rivers in the East of the world. The water coming from the plateau brings life to China and India and cultivates the civilizations in these areas.[5] Due to the uniqueness of its geographic and ecological environment, the economy in Tibet is dominated by the farming-pastoral economy. It is the result of the adaptation of the Tibetans to their natural environment. As Dan Zhencao mentions, Tibetan people seldom make efforts to accumulate wealth. On the contrary, they feel content with three meals per day and a simple place to sleep. What they pursue is only warmth and food. They are unwilling to destroy their natural environment for economic profit. This kind of life philosophy restricts the engendering of desires which haunt the people in modern cities.[6]

The Tibetans' life philosophy is supported by their religious beliefs. Before the coming of Buddhism (in 600AD), the Tibetans believed in Bonism (Bon), pantheistic in nature, the Tibetan native religion. It promotes that everything has a spirit and should be respected. The disciples viewed the sky, earth, water, fire, snow mountains, lakes, rivers as their gods. The appearance of the religion is related to the farming-pastoral economy in Tibet, which has been discussed above. Since the Tibetans heavily rely on nature, it is natural for them to believe in the pantheistic Bon. Around 600AD, Buddhism from China and India came into Tibet. When Buddhism became the dominant religion, its religious ideology was gradually accepted by the Tibetan people and guided them in all aspects of their life. Because of Buddhism, they believe that what they suffer is what they should experience and life should be full of sufferings and pains. Therefore, the Tibetans always search for the meaning of their life and the essence of their being. What they try

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The Ethnic Publishing House, 2008), 17.

[5] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 18.

[6] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 22.

to get through their searching is the enlightenment (Bodhi in Buddhism), which can accumulate in this life and benefit them in the afterlife. With the secularization and Tibetanization of Buddhism, Bon and Buddhism fused into one and Tibetan Buddhism came into being. This peculiar religion makes the Tibetans, on the one hand, follow the teachings of the Buddha and, on the other hand, respect whatever appears around them and in their life. In other words, compared with the Chinese in other ethnic groups, particularly the Hans, the Tibetans view the spiritual pursuit much higher than the material pursuit.

Sinophonic Writers' Thinking of Homeland: What should the Homeland be?

Like Chinese American writers, Tibetan Chinese writers are also divided into two groups: the Sinophonic writers and the Tibetophonic writers. When doing their literary creations, the two groups demonstrate different concerns and thoughts about their homeland, Tibet. In this dissertation, Tibet not only names the Tibet Autonomous Region (Ü-Tsang), whose capital city is Lhasa, but also names the regions where the Tibetans dwell, including the parts of Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces (Kham) and the whole Qinghai Province and a part of Gansu Province (Amdo).[7] The Sinophonic writers were usually born in Tibet and grew up in the cities where most of the citizens are the Hans. Like Chinese for the American-born writers, Tibetan is a language that those writers can speak, but might not read and write. In this situation, Mandarin becomes the only and primary language in their literary creations. They write as the Hans and think as the Tibetans. This hybrid background makes them view Tibet and its relations to the center culture and its modernity different from the Tibetophonic writers. They know clearly that the integration between Tibetan culture and the center culture is unavoidable. Therefore, they are concerned more about what Tibet will become, how Tibet can integrate with the outside world in the future, and how to redefine Tibet and its people in the coming age. Confronting the overwhelming power of the center culture and its modernity, they attempt to find a way for their homeland and culture, through which Tibet and Tibetan culture can survive in the flood of globalization and modernization.

[7] The definition of Tibet comes from the definition given by the 14th Dala Lama and originates from the definition of Tibet given by the Kashag, the governing council of Tibet during the rule of the Qing dynasty and post-Qing period until the 1950s.

Homeland in Zhaxi Dawa's Works: The Land of Hybridity

In Zhaxi Dawa's works, Tibet is the land of hybridity and the result of combination between Tibetan culture and the center culture. The phenomenon of hybridity is not a modern phenomenon. It happened a thousand years ago. In Zhaxi Dawa's novella, "The Pilgrim," he depicts, "The light black Tang stone monument stands there. There are numerous shallow and deep pits on it, made by the pilgrims through thousands of years. They touched the monument with their fingers covered by butter (to get the blessing from it). Zhuma, standing in front of the monument, looks around with confusion. She sees a crowd of men and women rushing into Dazhao Temple. There are full of money, butter, and treasures prepared to devote to the Buddha in their hands and arms. The yellow fences at the gate of the temple are twisted and squeezed by the pious crowd."[8] Dazhao Temple (Jokhang Temple) is located in the center of the Old City of Lhasa. At the gate of the temple (the center of the center of Tibet), there is a monument, The Monument of the Tang-Tubo (ancient Tibet) Alliance (also called The Tang-Tibetan Treaty Inscription). It has been standing there for thousands of years to memorize the Changqing Alliance in 821. In the alliance, the emperors from Tang and Tubo claimed that they were the uncle and the nephew and came from the same family. The treaty of the alliance is carved on the monument. Half of the treaty is in Tibetan, and the other half is in Han language. From the Tibetans' worship toward it as described by Zhaxi Dawa, it is not hard to tell that the Tibetans, in the past and at present, have viewed the monument as one of their sacred relics and it has become a part of their life. Hybridity has been one of the Tibetans' natural features.

Tibet's relationship with the center culture is mainly manifested in its hybridity with the modernity brought by the center culture. In "The Pilgrim," after writing about how pious the pilgrims are to the Buddha, Zhaxi Dawa turns to write about how modern the citizens in Lhasa are and how modern their life becomes. "The busy Tibetan and Han workers and cadres, pressing the bells on their bicycles, try their best to ride through the crowd. The tall foreign tourists, carrying cameras, watch the city with curiosity. A light blue Japanese car is stopped by the

[8] Zhaxi Dawa, "The Pilgrim," *Tibet, the Soul on a String* (Tianjin: Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986), 1. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, except "Notes on the Pekingese," all the translations of the quotations from the Tibetan novels and novellas are translated by me.

crowd. The young Tibetan driver, pressing the horn, shouts at the people around his car. Everything is noisy and chaotic."[9] In the passage, the writer demonstrates the hybridity between modernity and primitivity. On the one hand, the Buddhist disciples are still obsessed with traditional beliefs. From the twisted yellow fences outside of Dazhao Temple, it is easy to notice how popular the temple in Lhasa is and how important it is for the pilgrims from Lhasa or other places in Tibet. In their deep heart, Buddhism is still the one on which the Tibetans' spirit dwells. On the other hand, the modern lifestyle (the morning rush hour) and the coming of the foreign tourists indicate that the Tibetans' life is open to the outside world and influenced by it. They are the workers working in the modern factories or the cadres working in the government offices. Their transportation has not been by feet or horses. They are like the people living in other cities in the world, riding bicycles or driving cars. The last sentence in this passage suggests the current situation of hybridity between Tibet and the outside world in Lhasa: that is, modernity has merged with the nature of Tibet, and it is hard to tell what is still Tibetan and what is not. Everything is noisy and chaotic.

However, the hybridization between modernity and primitivity is not always a pleasant process. It brings the self-splitting to the Tibetans. In the process, the Tibetans are torn into two: the modern body and the primitive soul. In *Tibet, the Soul on a String*, Zhaxi Dawa demonstrates the magic hybridity in Tibet,

> Now it is hard to hear the blunt and pure Peruvian folk song, *The Eagle.* I recorded it on a cassette. Whenever playing it, I will see the valley on the plateau: the flock of sheep on the rocks, the divided field at the bottom of the mountains, the sparse crops, the watermill at the creek, the little cottages built by stones, the overloaded peasants, the bells stringed on the yaks' necks, the lonely wind, and the bright sunlight. But they are not the parts of the landscape of the plateau in the middle of the Peruvian Andes but the Pabu Naigang Mountain area in the south of Tibet.[10]

In this passage, the narrator depicts the homeland in his memory, which is original, primitive, serene, and out of the influence of technology. The animals or the people there live naturally and

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[9] Zhaxi Dawa, "The Pilgrim," 1.

[10]Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," *Tibet, the Soul on a String* (Tianjin: Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986), 174.

peacefully. But in the following, he directly points out that this landscape of his homeland only comes from his illusion:

> Once when coming to the Pabu Naigang Mountain area, I realized that the mountain area in my memory is just the 19-century landscape painting drawn by Constable.
>
> Even though it is still a quiet valley, the people there have quietly had a modern life. It has a small airport, in which there are five helicopters regularly flying to the city every week. In the neighborhood, there is a solar power station. In the small restaurant near the self-service gas station at the entrance of Zhelu Village, the talkative man with a beard who is sitting with me is a chairman of a famous company, Himalaya Transportation. He was the first one in Tibet to own the fleet of container trucks imported from Germany. When I visited a local carpet factory, the designer was using the computer to design the pattern. The TV station broadcasts five channels through its satellite receiver and offers its audience 38-hour programs every day.[11]

From this passage, the modernity of the remoted valley is fully revealed. The airport, the helicopters, the solar power station, the self-service gas station, the transportation company, the container trucks, the computer used in the local factory, and the TV station, all demonstrate that the life in the valley has not been the life before. It looks like other places in China which have been dominated by modern technology. But those changes in life are not the result of the progress made by their own community but the byproducts of the development of the whole country. Therefore, the modernity in the valley, even though making the villagers have a more convenient life, has a feature of passivity. This passive modernity brings only the modernization in materials and ignores the modernization in spirit.

Thus, Zhaxi Dawa continues, "No matter how the modern civilization pushes people to get out of the traditional values and perspectives, the people in the mountain area still have some primitive expressions."[12] When the village head, having a doctor's degree in agriculture, talks with the protagonist, he still makes some special noises that only the old Tibetans will make in communication. When the villagers ask for help, they still move their fingers and make the traditional noises of begging. Some old men still take off their hats and hold them in their arms

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[11] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 174-175. The 38-hour program is not a translational mistake. It is what the writer says in the work.

[12] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 175.

to show their respect to the people from the city. Even though the country has set up the law of measure for years, they still use their arms and palms to show the length.[13] More interestingly, the coming of technology does not end the people's belief in Tibetan Buddhism. The living Buddha Sangjie Dapu is the twenty-third living Buddha in Zhatuo Temple. He is ninety-eight years old. After him, there will be no reincarnation ceremony for the Buddha. When the narrator expresses that Buddhism and its belief will end after the ending of the system of reincarnation, the living Buddha has a different view. In his mind, the religion and its beliefs will not end. The coming of technology is the sign of a catastrophe. This catastrophe will bring the current world to its end. But the Buddha (Guru Padmasambhava) will save some people, and the chosen ones will protect the belief and revive it after the coming of the new world.[14] The chosen ones in the story are two young Khams: a man and a woman. In such a modern society, the essence of their existence is still piousness, and what they do in their life is nothing but pilgriming. They fall down in adoration before the Buddhas whenever there is a temple. The destination of their pilgrimage trip is not the capital city, Lhasa, but the Utopia, Shambhala, appearing only in the Buddhist scripts. It is the Pure Land, which one can arrive at after getting the Buddhist enlightenment. Except for them, there are other Buddhist disciples who will finish their pilgrimage trip to Lhasa with hundreds and thousands of kowtows. They fall down on the ground for praying every step. Their canvas aprons are worn out. Their faces are full of dust. Their foreheads have sarcomas covered with blood and dust and caused by their numerous kowtows. This is Tibet, a place of magic. It is a place of convergence and integration. In it, modernity and primitivity coexist. The Tibetans live a modern life but believe in traditional beliefs. Their body lives in modern society, but their mind still wanders in the primitive time and space.

Indeed, Zhaxi Dawa is not anxious about the hybridity between Tibet and the center culture, which, in his eyes, is historically unavoidable. He himself is a product of hybridity. He was born in Batang County in Sichuan Province in February 1959. His father is a Tibetan from Batang County and an official working in Tibet. His mother is a Han named Zhang Fan from

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[13] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 175.

[14] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 175-176.

Chongqing. Living in the Han culture, he has a Han name, Zhang Niansheng, whose surname, Zhang, is named after his mother but in a different character. Even though being born in Tibet, he spent his childhood in Chongqing, which was the second biggest city in Sichuan Province and now is the Fourth Direct-Administered Municipality of China. When he was young, he went with his mother moving between Chongqing and Nyingchi, Chongqing and Shigatse, and Chongqing and Lhasa. Although he graduated from Tibet Middle School, the novels he read were the classic works in modern and contemporary Chinese literature (dominated by the Han literature) and Soviet literature (popular in the Hans).[15] His familiarity with the Han culture and literature decided that Mandarin became the dominant language in his writing. After graduating from Tibet Middle School, Zhaxi Dawa returned to Tibet and worked in Tibetan Drama Troupe as a stage designer and scriptwriter. This return let him recognize the distance between him and his homeland, Tibet. It was like the most familiar stranger: his root was in it and he was identified as one of its sons, but he did not get to know the land and its culture comprehensively. Unlike the American-born writers, who were easily influenced by the distance between them and Chinese culture and unwilling to go deeper into their original culture, Zhaxi Dawa knew clearly that Tibet, rather than the modern city he lived in, was his land. It should be the muse of his literary creation. What he needed to do was to re-explore his homeland and demonstrate its beauty, which had not been discovered. Therefore, he told himself, "Go! I order myself. Go to the land without footprints and open my own field."[16] For this reason, all his works tell stories set in Tibet, and all the protagonists in his stories are the Tibetans.

When getting closer to his homeland, he discovered that the land of snow was so different from other places in China, especially the modern cities. It was natural and peaceful. Its people were innocent and faithful to their traditional beliefs. They seem to live in the past. But under its primitivity, he discovered the signs of modernity, which appeared in every aspect of their life. In the cities in Tibet, there are "well-maintained roads, a reliable water supply, electricity, beautiful

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[15] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 258.

[16] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 259.

school campuses, modern buildings, hospitals, and lively business centers."[17] In the countryside of Tibet, they receive and practice the policies given by the central government and take advantage of modern technology to plow the land and open new farmlands. In 1980, Zhaxi Dawa studied at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts for a year. During the year, he focused on Western literature, such as the works written by Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Ernest Miller Hemingway, and William Cuthbert Faulkner. The influence of Latin American magic realism made him develop Tibetan magic realism. For him, Tibet in the 1980s was definitely a place of magic, in which primitivity and modernity intertwined with each other and turned the land of snow from the original simple and pure land into a complicated and contradictory land. As he says, "Tibetan culture and traditions are able to provide a writer with all reality and magic s/he wants; we do not need to look for them abroad; we just need to look outside the window."[18] Encountering the change, the Tibetan writers, at that time, seemed not to notice the complexity of the land. Even though some of them, such as Raojie Basang, Yindan Cairang, Jiangbian Jiacuo, and Yixi Danzeng, wrote influential works, their works were not related to the phenomenon of hybridity. Influenced by Tibetan classic literature and the Cultural Revolution, either they followed the steps of the writers in the mainstream and were enthusiastic in writing how the party changed Tibetan people's life and mind and brought them from a primitive and barbarian life into a modern and civilized one, or they insisted on demonstrating the beauty of the mysterious Tibet and its classic literature, taking its traditional writing styles, and using hadas, prayer flags (the flags written with Buddhist scriptures for blessing), and buttered tea (a traditional Tibetan food) as its cultural signs.[19] The contributions made by those predecessors did not get enough attention from the center world of China. In the meantime, those writings gave the readers in the center culture an impression that Tibet was a place unrelated to modernity (the future). That was why when the root-searching movement happened, Zhaxi Dawa

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[17] Rika J. Virtanen, "Development and Urban Space in Contemporary Tibetan Literature," *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social* Change, Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Achiaffini-Vedani, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 236.

[18] Patricia Achiaffini-Vedani, "The "Condor" Flies over Tibet: Zhaxi Dawa and the Significance of Tibetan Magical Realism," *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social* Change, Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Achiaffini-Vedani, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 209.

[19] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 2.

took the opportunity to express his interpretation of his homeland, the hybrid Tibet. He writes the reality of the coexistence of the primitive Tibet and modern Tibet and also the magic brought by the hybridity between the two parts. How the Tibetans come into the modern age, how they keep the balance between tradition and modernity in their life, and what Tibet should be in modern times are his major concerns.

For him, neither conservativism (looking back on the past) nor radicalism (focusing on the future) will bring Tibet and its people a promising future. In the modern age, no one can live in a vacuum and be not impacted by the progress of technology. Facing traditions and modernization and standing between the past and the future, Tibetan people cannot choose only one of them. The hybridity between the two opposites needs a balance, which calls for the coming of the "new" man. For instance, in "A Night without Stars" and "The Glory of the Wind Horse," Zhaxi Dawa writes about the tragedy of the people living for the old beliefs. In both short stories, the sons are forced to kill the assassins of their fathers, trapped in the fate of revenge. The dialogue from "A Night without Stars" illustrates their tragic life:

> [Agebu.] … So you came to avenge your father.
> [Vagabond.] I have finally found you, after ten years. Look at me, I have nothing on me, just the knife my father left me for revenge.
> [Agebu.] And …, what happens if tonight you die under my knife?
> [Vagabond.] Oh! When my son grows up, he will come looking for you, and if you are already dead, he will look for your son. We are both Khamba men; you know well our traditions.
> [Agebu.] One generation after another, an enemy that cannot be defeated.[20]

For Zhaxi Dawa, insisting on traditions and looking back on the past does not mean embracing everything given by the ancestors. People should open their eyes to choose what is beneficial for their existence. The vagabond in the story is a good example. In his life, he does nothing but revenge. Due to the Khampa tradition of revenge, he devotes his whole life to finding the target of revenge and kill him. Yes. It is classic and old-school and sounds quite heroic and sacred. The vagabond is similar to the martyr in religious legendries who sacrifices himself for his belief. But his mind is too outdated in modern society. Is this sacrifice worthy and

[20] Patricia Achiaffini-Vedani, "The "Condor" Flies over Tibet: Zhaxi Dawa and the Significance of Tibetan Magical Realism," 211.

meaningful? At first, the protagonist, Agebu, is not the man who killed the vagabond's father. Is it fair for him to be the scapegoat of his father? Second, what will the vagabond get after the death of Agebu? Can he really get inner peace? Whether will he be haunted by the murder made by himself? Moreover, this story happens after the Revolution in the 1950s, which means that killing people will break the law set up by the government. In such a modern society, the aftermath of this murder is not what the vagabond expects. In "The Glory of the Wind Horse," the son, Wujin, is a good example. He is dead for his murder of the man whom he does not know. At the end of his life, he has no idea why he must kill the man and why he should use his whole life to find the man and kill him. As Zhaxi Dawa says, the most tragic point is not failure or death. For him (Wujin), it is the confusion mentioned above that endlessly haunts him. In "A Night without Stars," Zhaxi Dawa tries to give the vagabond a different fate: Agebu kowtows in front of the vagabond and decides not to fight with him; the vagabond gives up his revenge plan and views Agebu as his friend. Tragically, the tradition rooted in the people's minds does not allow his betrayal. When Agebu's wife gets to know that the vagabond comes for revenge and calls for a duel, she encourages Agebu to accept his invitation and fight as a Khampa man. But when she knows that her husband kowtows in front of the vagabond, she views this kowtow as a sign of defeat. To redeem the shame, she stabs the vagabond to death. In the stories, the characters who insist on traditions and living for the past do not have a happy ending. The original killer, in the end, becomes the dead one. Here, Zhaxi Dawa tries to convey the idea that the negative part of tradition also goes to its end and cannot bring a future to Tibet and its people.

In "Tibet: The Soul on a String," Zhaxi Dawa also creates a similar character. Tabei, a pious Buddhist, does nothing in his life except searching for the legendary Buddhist paradise. He kowtows in front of the Buddhas he meets in his journey. He is not touched by modern technology and lifestyle in the cities and villages he passes by. What he does is to concentrate on his pilgrimage to the paradise. But, in the end, he does not arrive at his destination. He dies on his way to paradise. In "Tibet, the Mysterious life," the tragedy of Ciren Jimu is also related to the past beliefs. Since her birth, there have been some signs which indicate that she is different from other people. She was born by an old woman who carried her for only two months. When she is two years old, she can draw Buddhist graphic patterns, which only senior lamas can draw.

What she steps randomly on the sands is the map of the stars in the sky. She also can dance an ancient religious dance that has been lost for years. Since then, her fate has been determined. For her parents, she is born for Buddhism. They do not allow her to date and marry a man living in their neighborhood, and force her to deliver food for a master living in a cave. Even they are not sure whether there is a master in the cave or not. Growing up in such a background, Ciren Jimu insists on doing what her parents tell her to do, even after their deaths. Because she and her family live in a village on the top of the mountain abandoned by other villagers, she has no chance to access the outside world. Living in such a place, she refuses to accept new things and refuses to accept the invitation to go with the man she loves. Year after year, she lives on the top village alone and never gives up delivering food for the imagined master. She hopes the Buddha she believes in can help her out of the loneliness in her life, but he never gives her any response. She, in the end, dies on her own. Zhaxi Dawa never gives those characters who confine themselves in the past a good ending because he knows the truth: they cannot survive in this age. As he writes, "If someone asks me why I permit their (Tabei and Qiong's) existence in such a great age, how can I answer this question?"[21] Through his works, he reveals the truth that their time has gone and cannot come back. Only looking back will take Tibet nowhere. As the narrator corrects Tabei before his death, the sound of the bells Tabei hears is not from the temple but the microphone, broadcasting the opening ceremony of the 23rd Olympic Games in Los Angles.[22] What he believes as the sign of the Buddha is only a presentation of modern technology.

However, even though criticizing what is given by the past, Zhaxi Dawa does not encourage his people to forget it and cast it away. In his works, no one can totally abandon the past (primitivity) to embrace the future (modernity). In "Tibet: The Soul on a String," the heroine, Qiong, is the one who opens herself to what is new and also knows what she should follow. In the beginning, to escape from the hopelessness in her life, she gives up her home and her father and elopes with Tabei, the man she comes across. Then, on the way to paradise, she is attracted to modern technology. She steals an introduction of a tractor, is interested in the calculator given by an accountant, and learns how to drive a tractor in the village she passes by.

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[21] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 196.

[22] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 197.

Before Tabei's death, she seems to decide to stay in the village where she learns how to drive a tractor. But, in the end, she still follows Tabei. When the narrator asks her why she does not stay in the village, she replies, "Why should I stay in the village? … I never think about it. He (Tabei) never asks me to stay in any place. He knots my heart on his waist. I cannot live without him."[23] As a matter of fact, Tabei signifies the traditional Tibet, which has knotted its people's hearts on its waist. No matter where they go, they never live without it. Zhaxi Dawa believes that Tibet needs Qiong and the people like her, who do not refuse the coming of the future and also knows where their emotional and spiritual dwelling is. No matter what kind of new things they see, hear, feel, taste, smell, they cannot cut off their ethnic root which stretches into the soil of Tibet. Maybe they are ignorant and have no idea about what the outside world is. They are still qualified to be the new Tibetans who can integrate the past with the future and keep the balance between them. That is why the narrator says, "You will not die. Qiong, you have finished the painful journey. I will write you into a new man."[24] What the narrator says is what Zhaxi Dawa tries his best to convey in his works: modern Tibet needs the new men.

The new men come not only from the past but also from the future. In "Tibet: The Soul on a String," Zhaxi Dawa indicates the reformation of a traditional Tibetan woman. In "Harmonics," he depicts the new men as the urbanized young men. The protagonist, Ciba, is a chief violin in an orchestra whose growth seems not to be related to Tibet. He gets his bachelor's degree in Shanghai Conservatory of Music and has no difference from the young men living in modern cities. But he never forgets who he is. When he decides to be a composer, he is inspired by his homeland, Tibet. He wants to write a violin concerto to depict the Khampa people's pilgrimage trip from their hometown to Lhasa. After he finishes this concerto, he takes it to a master of Tibetan music. But the result is unpleasant. The master points out that Ciba never gets the essence of Khampa music and his music is only a patchwork that collages Tibetan music with Western instruments. Even though Ciba is unwilling to accept his criticism, he knows clearly that he is too ignorant about his native culture. The relationship between him and his homeland is like the relationship between him and the Buddha in the temple. As he jokes, when he is praying in

[23] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 195.

[24] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 198.

front of the Buddha in a temple, the Buddha asks him whether he knows what he is praying for and whether he knows how to pray. He has no idea how to answer those questions. Ciba is another type of Tibetans whom Zhaxi Dawa tries to wake up. They are modernized and Westernized Tibetans. They seem to come from the future. But the tragedy is that they are rootless, having no history and no past. They know that they are Tibetans, but who the Tibetans were and are is what they do not know. Their root has left the soil of Tibet for a long time. Like the writer himself, they need to spend time replanting their root in the soil. That is why he designs the magic encounter: in a marketplace, Ciba suddenly hears the melody played by an old Khampa street artist and believes that it is the voice of the ancestors.[25] In the music, he, as a musician, cannot figure out its structure. It brings him to an unknown and remote world. In the story, Ciba is not the only one who searches for his origin. The trumpeter, Zhaluo, is another one. Once he wears the suit written with music score, he cannot help but remember his childhood and hometown and tell other people about the stories of his hometown. The drummer, Danlang, is obsessed with the sounds in Lhasa. He rides his bicycle to record the various sounds in the city, the sounds of chanting, praying, kowtowing, claps, steps, dogs, and so forth. In the end, he cuts and collages those fragmented sounds into his music work, *No.1 Work of Lhasa*.[26] From those characters, it is easy to figure out that the coming of modernity should and will not take away the glory of Tibet in the past. Even though those young men live as modern citizens, they will and should not forget who they are and where they come from. Tibetanness is forever in their blood. If the society can give them more time and let them have more opportunities to approach and understand their homeland, Tibet will be brought into a promising future by them. They are the new men. Of course, the balance between past and future and the ratio between primitivity and modernity should be paid attention to. Once being too obsessed with the past and the primitive, they will trap into the abyss of pain, the pain of being unable to return. Once being too forgetful and following the mobs of modernity, they will also fall into the trap of uncertainty (confused about who they are).

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[25] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 208.

[26] Zhaxi Dawa, "Tibet, the Soul on a String," 216.

Homeland in Alai's Work: The Land with Universality

In his lecture, "There are Always Some Problems in Literature," Alai stated his thought about the intellectual after he read Said's *Representation of the Intellectual*, "… so the intellectual, going beyond state, nation, and politics, writes the individual suffering to echo across the whole group of human beings. That is universality."[27] For him, an excellent literary work should have three factors: the individual, the state or nation, the human beings.[28] In his thinking, the problem in Chinese literature and Tibetan literature is that the writers and critics pay too much attention to the topics related to the state and nation. Therefore, Chinese writers, including Tibetan writers, are always unable to go to a higher level in their thought, and only write the works that are impossible go beyond the limit of state and nation. Based on this thought, in his writings, Alai focuses on writing the people in his ethnic group and describing the universal emotions and anxieties that the people in other places in the world also have. Therefore, the homeland in his works has the feature of universality.

For Alai, with the changes happening in Tibet for years, the people should change their old view about Tibet. The myth of Tibet and its "aura" imagined by both Tibetans and non-Tibetans might not be true. It might be the illusion created by them. In modern times, Tibet is no longer mysterious. It should be both unique and universal. It should hold its unique "aura," but the "aura" should not be mystified. Tibet needs to present its characteristics shared with the rest of the world. At first, Tibet is never a utopian place that is unrelated to change and can make the people forget about the secular world. It also participates in the movement of history. Even though Tibet is viewed by the Westerners, the Hans, and the Tibetans themselves as a place of purity and sacredness, it cannot escape from the fate of being changed and modernized. In other words, Alai tries to demonstrate a universal truth, that is, the inevitability of history. In his most well-known work, *Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet*, he writes the vicissitude of the Tibetan chieftain system. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist, "I," states, "My father was the chieftain assigned by the emperor and governed thousands of people… Along the valley, there

[27] Alai, "The Problems in Literature," *What We are Talking When Discussing Literature: Alai' Speeches on Literature* (Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University Press, 2017), 38.

[28] Alai, "The Problems in Literature," 39.

were tens of stockades. The people there lived on farming and feeding livestock. Every stockade had a headman who governed the stockade. The chieftain controlled the headmen, who controlled the people living in the stockades, namely, the civilians. … The servants were animals, who could be transacted between the masters and ordered to do what the masters wanted them to do."[29] In the society of his hometown, the social structure is based on the chieftain system. Before the outside power comes, all the people in the classes play their own roles and live on the land peacefully and orderly. But when the outsiders come, everything begins to change. The fields in the area use to be planted with wheat for years, and the people there depend on this plant of life. Since the demand for opium increases in the Chinese inland, the chieftains and headmen in the area cannot avoid the attraction from the high profit brought by the opium business. They ask their people to plant poppies instead of wheat. When they are happy with the red flowers of the poppies in their fields, the great famine comes. Without the plant of life, the people leave their hometowns and search for another place for survival. The protagonist, even though being viewed as a fool when he was young, is smart enough to predict the danger in the change of the survival plant and order his people to continue planting wheat. The territory under his control becomes a promising option, which the people are happy to choose, when other territories go down. He seems to have the talent to become the new chieftain. But no matter how smart and talented he is, he, as dust in the air of history, cannot stop the progress of time and the falling of the old world. The coming of the Liberation Army breaks down his home, the fortress of the chieftain, and also breaks down his system, the chieftain system. As Dan Zhencao says, "No matter how talented the individual in the minor culture is, once the social system he relies on is rotten, he cannot escape from the fate of being the dust in the tide of history."[30] As a matter of fact, the name of the novel in Chinese predicts the fate of the characters in the novel. In Chinese, it is named *尘埃落定* (*chen ai luo ding*), which means the settlement of the dust. As Alai explains in an interview, the dust refers to human beings. Everyone, confronting time, is dust. The dust also indicates the dust after the falling of the old

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[29] Alai, *Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet* (Beijing, People's Literature Publishing House, 1998), 4-13.

[30] Dan Zhencao, *The Literary Creation of the Contemporary Sinophonic Tibetan Writers*, 127.

world. When the dust of the old world settles down, the world will return to its original state and everything will begin again. The new world will come.

In his *The Epic of Root Village I-VI,* Alai demonstrates that Tibet, like other places in China, also experiences social and spiritual instability when the country is in its significant historical time. What he writes down in the story is the history of the village in China, through which he tries to demonstrate the destiny of human beings. In the novel, Root Village (*机村*, *ji cun*) represents the villages in Tibet and the villages in the country and other countries in the world. He expresses a truism about the village in modern society: "Conservation causes ignorance, while openness brings the double loss in material and spirit. The development of the village is the demonstration of contradiction, instability, and suffering. It might be changed, eliminated, or renewed. It also has numbness, helplessness, and emptiness."[31] In modern society, Tibet cannot be preserved as a utopia, which is isolated from the development of the country. It is unfair for the people living there. In modernization, the people must experience the conflicts between the traditional and modern, barbarian and civilized, and old and new. The traditional lifestyle will be replaced by the new one. But the development will make the people lose their original beliefs and make the culture lose its original order and essence. This is human beings' destiny. Alai records the confrontations and losses in the history of Root Village. He does not give a solution to the uncertain fate of the village and the villagers in modern times. He only directly depicts how the village changes its image, how the villagers change their minds, and how they make mistakes and realize their mistakes on their way to modernization. From his writing, the readers can know how their homelands were changed by time and technology, no matter in Tibet, inland China, or other countries in the world. In *The Epic of Root Village I: Gone with The Wind*, he, through a teenager's perspective, depicts the villagers' spiritual and moral degeneration. In *The Epic of Root Village II: The Fire*, he highlights the conflict between the old and new worlds. In Tibet, the people always burn the grass on the wasteland in winter. But when the government set up the law that burning grass on the mountains is illegal, the villagers only secretly burn the grass. This is the first conflict. The second is the conflict between

[31] Yan Wu, "The Restoration of the Authentic Tibet in Alai's New Novel, King Gesar," *Xinmin Weekly*, no. 36 (2009), 50.

the old and new generations in the Tibetans. The new generation always tries to catch up with the progress of the modernization of the country. The old generation still insists on and believes in what was given by their ancestors. The fire burning on the mountains indicates the fire in the people's hearts. In that age, the fire from the sky (the order from the government) burns down what buries in their deep heart. In *The Epic of Root Village III: Dase and Dage*, Alai writes down the confusion in the young generation's mind. The coming of modern thoughts influences their life. Between the old and new worlds, they do not know where they should go. Dase always tells other people that everything will be fine. But in the end, he withdraws his words and knows that everything will not come back to its original state.

In *The Epic of Root Village IV: The Deserted*, Alai turns his eyes to the peasants' life. Within the reform of the society, the traditional agriculture still experiences a major change. Due to the increase of the demand for wood in the city, the forest on the mountains is cut off. But the aftermath of deforestation is overwhelming. It directly causes the fields in the village to be destroyed by the debris flow. The peasants lose their fields and are forced to change their traditional lifestyle. Where is their future? This is a question for the peasants in the village. In *The Epic of Root Village V: The Light Thunder*, he puts his eyes on the young men and their life in such an age when the old world is replaced by the new one. Lajia Zeli, the one growing up in the new country, is not a traditional Tibetan. The old beliefs and moralities in his eyes are outdated. For him, money is the only god in his life. To earn money, he smuggles woods from Root Village to the city. The previous book, *The Deserted*, demonstrates how the villagers view the deforestation from a bystander's perspective. This book presents how the villagers become participants in the deforestation. The young generation has lost respect for and fear of nature. In the last book of *The Epic of Root Village*, *The Empty Mountain*, Alai draws a whole picture of Root Village after the modernization: The village is not mysterious anymore; even the mysterious heavenly funeral ceremony becomes a tourist attraction which is watched and observed by the tourists; the original village is covered by water and becomes a lake; the villagers move to the top of the mountain near the lake and their new hometown becomes a tourist spot. The history of Root Village shows us how a traditional village is forced to merge into the tide of the development of a modern country. As Alai questions, "It is confusing. The

plants in the fields are cultivated as usual, the four seasons come and go as usual, and the birth and death happen as usual. Why is there an invisible hand, like a hand from an impatient man, which pushes us to go forward? It reminds us, 'You are outdated, you are outdated!' This impatient hand makes everyone restless and exhausted. The hand let the people's experience useless."[32]

In his trilogy of mountain delicacies, *Mushroom Circle*, *Three Cordyceps*, and *The Cypresses*, Alai intends to illustrate that Tibet, as rural areas in other countries, is also a victim of modern consumerism. Because the Tibetans live on farming and pasturing, most areas of Tibet are the countryside and pasturelands. Alai depicts how the Tibetan countryside is exploited by the inland cities and how the people in the countryside are polluted by the ideas brought by the city consumers. No matter what the city demands, the countryside supplies. It seems that the existence of the countryside is inferior to the existence of the city and cannot go on without it. The hierarchy between the city and the countryside makes the countryside loses the meaning of its existence. For instance, in *Mushroom Circle*, Alai depicts how the matsutake from an ordinary mushroom becomes a luxurious commodity. Ahma Sijiong discovers a secret mushroom circle, where she can dig out mushrooms at the time when she needs. In the great famine, it is the mushroom circle that saves her and her family. Ahma Sijiong and the villagers in Root Village always show their respect to the circle. In their eyes, both the mushrooms and the animals eating the mushrooms are beings with life. Respect for life is the essence of their existence, which teaches them how to live with nature. Ahma Sijiong talks with the mushrooms, like talking with her own children, and does not dig out the mushrooms which are still babies. But when the government working team comes, the villagers know that the mushroom can be a commodity that can bring them wealth. They forget how they got along with nature in the past and start to view the mushroom as a tool to earn money. To get the commodity, people even destroy the environment where the mushrooms depend on. Even the temples build fences around the forests in which the mushrooms grow and do mushroom business. Danya, the daughter of Ahma Sijiong's secret lover, puts GPS in Ahma Sijiong's pocket and finally finds out the

[32] Alai, *The Epic of Root Village IV: The Empty Mountain* (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2005), 186.

location of the Mushroom Circle. She uses the camera to record the circle and tries to deceive her customers that those mushrooms are the products of her company. In the end, Danba, Ahma Sijiong's son, persuades his mother not to feel sad about the Mushroom Circle. Ahma Sijiong says, "Son, I am not sad for my aging. I am sad for the loss of my Mushroom Circle."[33] This sadness comes from her inability to protect the Mushroom Circle and also from her witnessing of how the city changes the traditional life that she and her people have insisted on preserving for years.

Similarly, in *Three Cordyceps,* Alai tells another story of a luxurious commodity, the cordyceps, a plant constituted by a plant and a worm. The people in the city believe that it is good for their health. Then it is transferred from a natural plant into a commodity. In the story, the protagonist, Sangji, is a student in an elementary school. One day, the teacher finds that he is absent. After asking his classmates, the teacher discovers that Sangji is absent for digging cordyceps. Regularly, in every May, there is a two-week break for digging cordyceps. This month is the harvest month for the people living on the grassland. Sangji and his family, even though being happy with the profit brought by cordyceps, clearly know that this kind of exploitation may bring a disaster to the grassland where they live. That is why whenever Sangji's father digs out a cordyceps, he will say sorry to the god of the mountain. He feels sorry for stealing the treasure from the god. Sangji also has this kind of confusion. When he digs out the small plant and holds it in his hand, he notices how beautiful this tiny being is. He struggles with how he treats the plant, whether he should view it as a beautiful creature or a sum of money. What he does is killing a being or having the money? That is a question.[34] In *The Cypresses*, Alai also depicts how the people in the countryside change their natural resources into luxurious commodities because of the demand of the city people. Once a kind of tree is rare, the people in the city will commercialize it and exaggerate its value. Those city people consume the tree and make it into different kinds of products. The large part will be made into furniture, the small part into jewelry, and even the root will be dug out and made into decorations. Facing such great

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[33] Alai, *The Mushroom Circle* (Wuhan: Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 2015), 116.

[34] Alai, *The Mushroom Circle,* 125-126.

demands, everyone in the countryside goes to the forest, cuts off the trees, and digs out their roots. Soon this kind of tree disappears. In Alai's words, this phenomenon of the exploitation of the countryside by the city is caused by modern consumerism. Because of the city's consumption, the traditional values in the countryside, such as the original way of living with nature, are forgotten and ignored. In the end, the beneficiaries are not the people in the countryside, but those city consumers and businessmen. Everyone in the city believes that they are much more civilized than the people in the countryside. However, *they* are the barbarians.

Not only has the place universal characteristics, but the people have the common features that people in other places also have. In *The Epic of Root Village* I*: Gone with the Wind*, Alai turns his eyes to the people. In his writing, the Tibetans are never the chosen people featured with Bodhichitta (Buddhist nature): naturally and morally kind and generous. The universal truth here is that they, like the people in other ethnic groups, are both kind and unkind by nature. Gela, the protagonist, is an illegitimate child in the village. His mother, Sangdan, is called the woman with the loose waistband by the villagers. Because of his origin, he is bullied by the villagers, both young and old. He usually speaks to himself that he feels sad and sad to death. He knows that his sadness never brings any response from the villagers. He hates them and the village where he was born. No one likes him and is kind to him. The tragedy in the story is not the hostility from the villager. It is in their attitude towards Gela in the event of the firework. Enbo's son, Bunny, is Gela's friend. In the village, only Enbo's family treats him kindly. Gela likes Bunny and views him as his little brother. But when he is nine years old, he is bombed by a firework. After the New Year, he dies from the infected wound. The death of Bunny becomes a nightmare for Gela. All the people in the village blame him and believe that he is the one who caused Bunny's death. It is rumored that the firework bombing Bunny was thrown by Gela. "The characteristic of the rumor is that everyone hears about the rumor. Everyone tells it to other people. But nobody knows who spreads the rumor. It spreads person by person, mouth by mouth, and heart by heart."[35] The truth is that Gela has no fireworks. He has no father and brother who give him the fireworks. In the village, nobody believes him. Even Enbo, the ex-

[35] Alai, *The Epic of Root Village: With the Wind* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 2018), 170.

lama, tries to kill Gela to avenge his son. Even though Buddhism has been practiced by the Tibetans for hundreds of years, nobody can say that they are much more kind than the people in other places in the world. Kindness, sympathy, and compassion, which Buddhist doctrines teach, are not the only terms to describe them. They are still complicated human beings. No matter at which age, there were, are, and will be some people who bully other people in Tibet. The Tibetans are not the Buddhas, whose spirit is above the men's and who can be nice to everyone appearing in their life.

Alai's intention to highlight the universality of his homeland is caused by a common phenomenon: mystery, primitiveness, uncivilization, sacredness, simpleness, and purity have become the terms frequently used to describe Tibet. Alai asks a question: What is Tibet for the whole world? The Westerners and the people from inland China always view Tibet as the Tibet Autonomous Region. Can the Tibet Autonomous Region represent Tibet? In the outsiders' eyes, Tibet should be the opposite of their world and should be a primitive, barbarian, and uncivilized land that escapes from the fate of being modernized. They always believe that the Tibetans be more mysterious, more sacred, simpler, and purer than them. Once they are not what they expect, they will be disappointed. For Alai, the connection of Tibet with those terms is actually what Said calls Orientalism. He believes that even today the orientalization of Tibet still exists. He concludes that the Orientalism of Tibet has two features: one is the bias (without coming to the place, one believes that this place is dark, barbaric, ignorant, and backward); the other is the romantic (the fetishism of the center culture on the peripheral culture).[36] His thoughts on Orientalism is similar to Frank Chin's thoughts about the whites' hatred and love for the Chinese immigrants, which have been discussed in Chapter 2 ("racist hatred and love"). For Alai, Tibet and its people experience a double Orientalism: The Westerners orientalize Tibet and the people in other ethnic groups in China orientalize Tibet. To figure out the origin of the Orientalism of Tibet, Alai finds out evidence to support his argument from the ancient Western books. In the book written by Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, he used over one hundred words to depict Tibet, and the words convey two things about Tibet. He heard that there was a place called Tubo where

[36] Alai, "The Problems about Literary Ideas and Writing," *What We are Talking When Discussing Literature: Alai' Speeches on Literature* (Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University Press, 2017), 13.

the people were barbarians. They did not bury their family members' dead bodies. They gathered the relatives and friends together and held a party in which they would eat the dead body. The second thing was that the men there had no beard. They held iron tongs every day, which was used to pull out the beard.[37] This kind of depiction of Tibet originates from what Alai calls Orientalist bias. After decades, there was another Italian, Marco Polo. In his writing, Tibet had romantic features. He wrote that when the foreigners came to the village, the old women in the village would devote their virgins to the distinguished guests. If they were happy with the girls, they could take them away.[38] This depiction of Tibet comes from what Alai calls Orientalist romance.

In the meantime, Orientalism is not a one-sided movement. The Tibetans are also engaged in their own self-orientalization. There is a misunderstanding in the Tibetans themselves: that is, they should play the role of "authentic" Tibetans in other people's eyes. To cater to the outsiders' taste, the Tibetans start to create Tibetan characteristics. Some of the characteristics are what they naturally have, but some are created according to the outsiders' imagination, or those that initially are not important in their life are highlighted because the outsiders believe they are important. Tibet gradually becomes a sightseeing spot and a commodity in the consumer society. In Tibetan literature, there is a similar phenomenon. When the readers from the West and inland China believe that Tibet is a place of mysticism, the writers intentionally highlight and create the Tibetan mysteries in their works. When the readers believe that Tibet is pious and religious, the writers will demonstrate all aspects of the Tibetans' life related to Buddhism. Here Alai raises questions. Is there any mystery in the Tibetans' daily life? Does the Tibetans' life only consist of spiritual and religious activities? Are the Tibetans pious every minute of their life? His answer is No.[39] Life for the Tibetans is like that of the people in other ethnic groups. The motive of their existence and the way of their existence are both for one purpose, that is, "Tomorrow will be better than today."[40] The Tibetans are also like the people in other ethnic groups. They are both

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[37] Alai, "The Problems about Literary Ideas and Writing," 18.

[38] Alai, "The Problems about Literary Ideas and Writing," 19.

[39] Alai, "The Problems about Literary Ideas and Writing," 10.

[40] Alai, "The Problems about Literary Ideas and Writing," 10.

kind and selfish. The belief in Buddhism does not bring them more divinity than the other people. Therefore, Alai focuses on the commonness of Tibet. For him, it is a way through which Tibet can get rid of those stereotypical tags. He believes that the purpose of literature is to write the people as the people who and whose life can resonate with the people in other places in the world and their lives. To shape the Tibetans into the different people is only the result of Orientalism, making Tibet isolated from the world and excluded from the progress of the society.

The reason Alai focuses on writing the commonality of Tibet is also that it comes from his own experience. Like Zhaxi Dawa, he is also not a "pure" Tibetan. His father is a Hui businessman who did business in the Tibetan area in Sichuan Province. His mother is a Tibetan. He was born in Jiarong, a border area between Tibet and Sichuan. Later he became a teacher of Chinese and married a Han woman who taught English. Because of his origin and family, his identity is multiple and the cultures he approaches are diverse. He is a Tibetan and also a Hui. He grew up in the Tibetan culture and also got influences from the Hui culture. He was educated in the Han culture and became versed in the Western culture. He is obsessed with Tibetan folk stories, legendries, epics, parables, and mythologies, believes the Confucian theory of the harmony between nature and human beings and the Taoist theory of naturalness and non-action, and also likes reading Whitman's poems and the Western scholars' works, such as Said's *Orientalism.* With this background, he is naturally different from other ethnic writers. His eyes are much more open, and his mind is much broader. His works are not the depiction of a single ethnic group and its culture but the ethnic writing of the universal truth. Moreover, Alai's multi-cultural background brings more confusion about identity. He has identified himself as a Tibetan. But his Tibetanness is questioned by his own people. Who is Tibetan? Should the Tibetans have the outstanding features which must distinguish them from other groups? If he is not a Tibetan, who is he? Those questions become the motives that encourage him to write his homeland and people endlessly. He gives his own answers to those questions in his works. That is why in *Red Poppies* the protagonist is a hybrid of Tibetan and Han. No matter who his mother is or what kind of blood he has, he is qualified to be the best chieftain in this area and the best son of Tibet. Had the Liberation Army not come, he would have been the best leader for his people. That is why in *The Epic of Root Village IV: The Deserted*, he creates a Han peasant who has migrated in

Root Village for years. He cherishes the fields in the village as his own land. Who can tell that he is not a Tibetan? He has been lived in the Tibetan village and lived like a Tibetan for years. Of course, he is qualified to be a Tibetan.

Even though highlighting the commonality of Tibet, Alai never abandons and eliminates Tibetan features in his works. On the contrary, he tells the commonality through writing the unique ethnicity, the Tibetanness. His works demonstrate the unique history of Tibetan society. In his first novel, *Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet*, he writes about the history of the chieftain system, which was a unique social and political system set up by the central government in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. It lets the native govern the native. Its purpose was to control the ethnic minority groups in the margins of China. After the middle of the Qing Dynasty (the Yongzheng period), the system gradually collapsed. But in Tibet, especially in the border areas between Tibet and the inland, it lasted for a long time (until the 1950s). In *The Epic of Root Village*, he writes about the changes happening in Tibetan society. Even though he tells a universal truth about the fate of the village in the age of modernization, Root Village is a traditional Tibetan village. The history of Root Village is also the manifestation of the history of Tibet. Moreover, no matter the characters or the words they speak, his books are full of Tibetan features. In *The Epic of Root Village*, the people need the wizard to lead them in the ceremony of burning grass. When the lake is exploded by the bomb, they believe that the golden duck, the god of the lake, flies away. That is why the water in the lake leaks from the bottom. When the debris flow comes, they know that it is the god of the mountain who comes to punish them for their crime of cutting off his trees. In *Red Poppies,* the protagonist, "I," is created based on the image of Agu Dunba. Alai recommends his readers to read this man's folklore. He says, "Agu Dunba is a wise man in Tibetan oral folklores, like Ah Fanti (in Uyghur folklores). I am the first one who draws his image in words. But what I like is not his wisdom which the ordinary people can see but his 'awkwardness,' which demonstrates his wisdom. The fool son of the chieftain is the transformation of the image of Agu Dunba."[41] In his trilogy of mountain delicacies, the mushroom (matsutake), the cordyceps, and the cypress are all Tibetan specialties. Not only is the

[41] Shen Feng, "The Ten Years After *Red Poppies" Beijing Evening News,* March 2004, accessed February 9, 2021, http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/2004/2004-03-18/12622.html.

content of his works Tibetan, but also the way of his writing is Tibetan. As a Sinophonic writer, Alai does not follow the Han writers' writing style. He borrows the language structure in the Tibetan spoken language and makes the Han language in his works more vivid and vigorous. In the meantime, he also borrows the Tibetan way of expression and uses various metaphors in his works. Some of them are similes and metaphors, and some other metonymies. They intertwine with each other and consist of a comprehensive metaphor system. As a Tibetan writer, Alai also likes using personification borrowed from the traditional Tibetan parables. For instance, in *Red Poppies*, the personification of animals appears thirty-one times. Not only does it make the works much livelier, but also demonstrates the harmonious relationship between the Tibetans and nature. Every being in their eyes has a life. In brief, Alai writes ethnic stories to express the universal truth, using a small and partial view to represent the larger picture of the world, depicting the microcosm to demonstrate the macrocosm.

Tibetophonic Writers' Thinking of Homeland: Where Should the Homeland Go?

In the following, the two writers are the writers writing their works in their native language, the Tibetan language. The Sinophonic writers care more about how Tibet adjusts itself to the modern age: how Tibet integrates into the development of the society and the country, how to reinterpret Tibet and its people with modern terms, and how to bring new meanings to Tibet to justify its changes. Unlike them, the Tibetophonic writers focus on what Tibet faces and loses in the modern age: the conflicts between tradition and modernity, the changes in Tibet brought by modernity, and the disappearance of the essences of their ethnicity. In their eyes, the coming of modernity brings about the changes in the nature of their people, which, in some aspect, might not bring Tibet a brighter future. Whether modernity is positive in the development of Tibet, whether the Tibetans will still be the Tibetans after their integration with modernity, and where Tibet will go are the main concerns and the major topics of their works.

Homeland in Pema Tseden's works: The Land in Incompatibility

Tibet for Pema Tseden is a holy place. Its holiness is not the holiness depicted by the narrations of the holiness and mystery of its culture and landscape, like what some Tibetan

writers do in their works. Pema Tseden, as a writer, uses most of his time to tell the stories of the people. His focus is the men in Tibet. The holiness of the land is conveyed by the holiness of the people living there. They are reverent people. For instance, in "Orgyan's Teeth," the narrator tells a story of his classmate in the elementary school. This classmate is not an ordinary child. He is identified as a living Buddha at eighteen years old. The holiness in his nature is manifested in his reverence demonstrated by the event of a fish. When "I" and Orgyan see a fish lying on the sand, what "I" says is to sell it to the people who build the road. What Orgyan says is to send it back to the water. No matter how far the distance is, he carefully holds the fish in his hands and sends it back into the river. The Tibetans are the people of trustworthiness. In "The Mani Stones," the old man still remembers his promise and insists on carving the Buddhist six-word mantra (Om mane padme hum) on the stone for an old woman after his death. The Tibetans are faithful people. In "The Stranger," the big tree at the entrance of the village is hung with numerous hadas, and the villagers believe that it is a spiritual guardian who can protect them and their village. In "The Artist," the old lama and the young lama concentrate on their pilgrimage. Even though there are many cars passing by on their way to Lhasa, they still kowtow to finish their trip and refuse the help offered by modern technology. The Tibetans are sympathetic people. In "The Eight Sheep," the Tibetan boy, a shepherd, even though not understanding what the American tourist says, still understands his grievance (when the American sees the picture of the falling of the Twin Tower in New York). He lets the foreigner hold his body and cry and gives his food to the man. The Tibetans are people of purity and sincerity. In "Tharlo," the protagonist trusts what the books write and what the people say. He can recite "To Serve the People" written by Chairman Mao and believes that all the people in the society should follow what Mao says in his article. He also believes a strange girl's words. She asks him to sell his sheep and elope with her. He does what she asks. The Tibetans are people of divinity who can know what other people do not know. In "Enticement," Jiayan Danzeng is naturally endowed with the nature of divinity. He is obsessed with a Buddhist sutra, which, in his eyes, has mysterious golden light. Even risking his life, he tries to get it and read it. In "The Death of the Shepherd," the shepherd always says something other people do not believe. For instance, he says that he was a butcher who killed five hundred yaks and a thousand sheep in his last life. His

words are proved to be true by a living Buddha in a temple. Later, he tells his father that the sheep which cannot have babies is his grandmother and his father cannot kill it. In the end, he sacrifices himself for his family's killing of the sheep.

But the coming of modernity changes the land of holiness. The land gradually loses its holiness and is riddled with incompatibility. The incompatibility, at first, is the incompatibility between the native and the outsiders: the misunderstanding of Tibet and Tibetans by the outsiders, especially the people from inland China. In "The Artist," when the outsiders see how the old lama kowtows on his way to Lhasa, they sigh, "Indeed, he is the great artist! He uses his body to measure the land, uses his flesh to touch the earth, and uses his heart to close to the temple in his belief! Is there any performance artist who is more sacred and greater than him?"[42] When they see the young lama whose neck is hung with a radio, one of them compliments, "I think the young lama is also very interesting. Do you see the radio hung on his neck? In such a wildland, he never forgets to have a connection with the modern civilized world. It is so interesting that I believe he is also a great performance artist. We should write him into our book in the future."[43] But when those people tell the young lama that he and his master are both great artists, the young lama questions, "May I ask, what is the artist?"[44] They feel angry about the lamas' ignorance of the modern term. They reply, "What? You do not know what the artist is?"[45] Those people from the modern cities and civilization view those Tibetans as the people whose spiritual level is much higher than theirs. However, the starting point of their thinking of the native Tibetans is based on the misunderstanding of Tibetan culture. In their mind, Tibet is an uncivilized place, which is unrelated to anything modern. Therefore, they can say that they want to connect the closed Tibet with the open Beijing through their performance and are surprised by the radio hung on the young lama's neck. This misunderstanding is the Orientalist thinking of Tibet in Alai's terms. Ironically, even though they hope that Tibet is an uncivilized place, they

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[42] Pema Tseden, "The Artist," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 101.

[43] Pema Tseden, "The Artist," 101.

[44] Pema Tseden, "The Artist," 103.

[45] Pema Tseden, "The Artist," 103.

have the preconceived notion that the people in this place should understand the "modern" concepts, which, in their mind, should be understood by everyone in the world. They naturally conceive that what they understand should be what the people in Tibet understand. Through his writings, Pema Tseden shows the failure in the communication between the outsiders and the lamas. In the meantime, the Tibetans' religious belief in the outsiders' eyes becomes a performance rather than a spontaneous behavior, which is inseparable in their life. That is why they can say those words: "Precisely, like you, we are also the performance artists. We need help from the people, like you, who finish their pilgrimage to Lhasa with kowtows. We find you for a long time. It is difficult to find the pilgrims, like you. Could you help us finish such a great artistic achievement?"[46] When the lamas refuse their request, they conclude that those lamas are not the great people they believe. They are not great artists. The paradox in the logic of those outsiders is in their thinking of Tibet: It should be a place keeping a distance from modernity, but they interpret it in terms of modernity.

In "Tharlo," when the university students see Tharlo, they ask him, "We are the students from inland China and travel here. We feel that you are so special. Are you an artist?"[47] One of the students says, "You see his eyes. They are quite deep. He is absolutely an intelligent artist."[48] When Tharlo replies, "Actually, I am a shepherd." Another student says, "Wow, his words are very philosophical. He must be an artist."[49] A similar incompatibility happens here. When Tharlo explains that he is a shepherd, the students from the modern world read his words in a modern way. "Shepherd" in the Western culture is related to the sacred and the pastoral. In the Judeo-Christian tradition (e.g., Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34) and Christianity, Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd.[50] Even though the concept is not modern, the influence of the Western culture started from the 1911 Revolution, which was the start of the modernization of China. When Tharlo says

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[46] Pema Tseden, "The Artist," 104.

[47] Pema Tseden, "Tharlo," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 155.

[48] Pema Tseden, "Tharlo," 156.

[49] Pema Tseden, "Tharlo," 156.

[50] *Gospel of John* 10:11.

that he is a shepherd, he means that his profession is to herd, feed, and guard sheep. But when the students say that his words are very philosophical, their understanding is that Tharlo is not only the shepherd of the sheep but also the shepherd of human beings. In their eyes, Tharlo becomes the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus views his disciples as the "flock." That is why he gives his injunction to Peter, "Feed my sheep." Indeed, the modern never understands the native in the land of Tibet, and it always uses its own way to read and interpret the land, which is different from it. That is why the meeting between the modern and the native in Tibet is not pleasant. Between them, there are full of distortions and misunderstandings. Once the misunderstandings are there, the compatible integration of modernity and nativity becomes impossible.

The incompatibility of the homeland in Pema Tseden's works is manifested not only by the outsiders' misunderstandings but also by the Tibetans' misunderstandings about themselves and modernity. As discussed at the beginning of this section, the holiness of Tibet is demonstrated by the holiness of the Tibetans. They are reverent, trustworthy, religious, pious, sympathetic, pure, and sincere, and divine. Those virtues and merits are what the people living in modern cities are hard to have. But with the influence of modernity, both the physical world and the spiritual world in Tibet have been changed. The Tibetans start to abandon the native qualities in their nature to embrace modernity, which, in their mind, is much better than traditions. Those ethnic features (the aura of the land) gradually disappear from the Tibetans. Pema Tseden uses a metaphor to describe the changes in "Balloon," He writes, "… Within these two years, my sheep are degenerating and needs to be improved."[51] In the sentence, he uses "sheep" as the metaphor for people. In "The Bare-Foot Doctor," he writes, "The people nowadays cannot compare with the people in the past."[52] At first, the people are not like the people in the past who had no doubt and questions about their traditional beliefs. The influence of Buddhism has been decreasing in Tibet in such a modern age. Because life becomes easier and easier, the Tibetans will not need to depend on the Buddha to save them from the suffering in their life, particularly the suffering in their material life. The Tibetans are not as pious as before. They start to know that the distance

[51] Pema Tseden, "Balloon," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 227.

[52] Pema Tseden, "The Bare-Foot Doctor," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 336.

between the Buddha and the ordinary people is not as far as they thought. In "Orgyan's Teeth," when the narrator talks about Orgyan's death, he feels upset about how other people talk about his death. They use the term "parinirvana" (a Buddhist term to describe the death of an eminent lama) to describe his death.[53] But this term makes him feel unconformable. Orgyan was his classmate, and they sat together in the same classroom in the past. How can the death of a young man at his age be called parinirvana? Moreover, the narrator's parents bring him to his classmate, the living Buddha, and ask him to kowtow in front of him. He is unwilling to do so. He admits that it may be Orgyan's merits and blessings are more than his, so he should kowtow to Orgyan. But he never admits that Orgyan is more intelligent than him. In Tibet, the living Buddhas are always the most intelligent people in society. Since they were classmates, the narrator knows clearly about Orgyan and his performance in mathematics. He is sure that Orgyan never passed the exams in their math class. From Grade One to Grade Six, Orgyan always copied his math assignments.[54] In the narrator's mind, how can such a loser in mathematics be the living Buddha and be viewed as one of the most intelligent people in his hometown? In other words, in the modern people's eyes, the Buddha is not different from the ordinary people and maybe inferior to the ordinary people in some aspect. The sacredness of the religion and the Buddha gradually fades away. More interestingly, the lamas in Orgyan's temple build a tower for him and need his teeth to bury under the tower. But his parents find fifty-eight teeth in their home and give all of them to the lamas. They cannot figure out which ones belong to their son. In the end, they only bury all the teeth under the tower and let the disciples kowtow to them. The narrator explains that, in the teeth, there is one of his. He loses his deciduous tooth in Orgyan's home and throws it on the roof of the house. In the end, the narrator tells in a satirical tone that his tooth is also in the magnificent tower and worshiped by hundreds and thousands of people. Here Pema Tseden does not intend to persuade his people to return to their original beliefs. What he intends to do is to make his people notice the disappearance of their ability to believe. The loss of this ability might bring some unexpected aftermath.

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[53] Pema Tseden, "Orgyan's Teeth," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 3.

[54] Pema Tseden, "Orgyan's Teeth,"4.

Due to the loss of the ability to believe, their belief in Animism based on their religious beliefs becomes unbelievable. In "The Mani Stones," when the protagonist, Luosang, says that he hears the sounds of carving the Mani stone, nobody believes him. His wife, Sangmu, his close friend, Danzeng, and the villagers do not believe that the old man died several days ago comes back and carves the stone. They say that the body has been burned into ashes and thrown around the Mani stones. How can the old man return to life and continue his work? Their attitude makes Luosang sigh that even the animals do not respect the Buddhist Dharma and dare to peel on the Mani stone in the Dharma Ending Period.[55] Similarly, in "The Death of the Shepherd," no matter how seriously the boy explains that the old ewe is the reincarnation of his grandmother. His family members do not believe his words and think that he just tries to save the useless old ewe, which cannot give birth to lambs and bring financial benefits for the family.

In the past, it is Animism that makes the Tibetans keep the balance between themselves and nature. But now the balance is broken down. Everything they do starts from their own interests. They can no longer be called the people with reverence for nature and life. It is the loss of the ability to believe that causes the loss of the spirit of reverence. For instance, in "Orgyan's Teeth," when the narrator sees the fish on the sand, he says, "How big the fish is! We can sell it to the workers building the road. They eat fish."[56] In the south and east of Tibet, the people never eat fish. For them, fish is an incarnation of the god in water, named "*Lu*." All the fishes in the water are related to the god. Furthermore, in Tibetan traditions, when one is dead, his body will be buried in the water and the fishes will eat it. If the Tibetans eat the fish, they may eat their ancestors. Therefore, the fish for the Tibetans has both religious and cultural meanings. But in the words spoken by the narrator, "I," it is hard to notice his reverence for nature and life. Even though he still remembers that he is a Tibetan and cannot eat fish, his recommendation indicates the falling of the traditional beliefs in the group of the Tibetans. In "The Death of the Shepherd," the father, the mother, the sister, and the brother also never show their respect for life. The father asks the protagonist to kill the old ewe and cook it for the guests. The protagonist begs his father

[55] Pema Tseden, "The Mani Stones," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 37.

[56] Pema Tseden, "Orgyan's Teeth," 12.

not to kill it because it is his grandmother's reincarnation. But his father disdains him, "Nobody believes those bullshits! I order you to kill it!"[57] The protagonist refuses to do it. He is drawn by his father outside of their tent and forced to kill it. At the same time, his mother shouts at him, "You said that you were a butcher in your previous life? Then you should kill the useless old ewe!"[58] His sister and brother also come to him at this moment. The brother holds a sharp knife, and the sister brings a big basin used to carry the blood. Both are much younger than the protagonist. They, as the adults, persuade their big brother: "Kill it! Kill it!"[59] In the depiction, the four people seem to be charmed by something unknown. It seems that if the protagonist does not kill the ewe, they will kill him. Later on, when the sister and brother find that the protagonist is dead, there is no sad expression on their faces. Their father shows his coldness to the death of his own son. He says, "Then let him die!" Respect and reverence for nature and life have gone from the Tibetans' nature. Nature and life have not reminded them of how their ancestors negotiated with nature in the past.

The collapse of the traditional beliefs directly brings some Tibetans' demoralization, which makes them untrustworthy. In "Tharlo," the short-hair girl tells Tharlo, "I can bring you to the place you want to go to. We can go to Lhasa, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hongkong. Any place you want to go." Tharlo replies, "I have no idea where I want to go." She says, "If you choose the place, where do you want to go?" He answers, "Of course, Lhasa." She says, "Let's go to Lhasa." He replies, "I heard that going to Lhasa costs lots of money. I do not have money." The girl says, "You can sell your sheep. You will have money." Tharlo replies, "Those sheep not only belong to me but also belong to other people."[60] Even though Tharlo's reply seems to indicate that he is refusing the girl's invitation, in the end, he sells all the sheep and gives ninety thousand yuan to the girl he comes across. In the story, we can see two cases of the degeneration of the Tibetans. The first case is the girl, and the second is Tharlo. Living in a small town, the

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[57] Pema Tseden, "The Death of the Shepherd," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 214.

[58] Pema Tseden, "The Death of the Shepherd," 215.

[59] Pema Tseden, "The Death of the Shepherd," 217.

[60] Pema Tseden, "Tharlo," 159.

girl has not been a traditional Tibetan girl. Firstly, she has no long hair. When Tharlo meets her for the first time, he says, "If I did not notice your earrings, I would have believed that you was a man when I entered the door."[61] The girl replies that it is a fashion trend. Short hair is popular in cities. Tharlo questions, she is a Tibetan girl and how she can cut her hair so short. Pema Tseden here does not indicate that the Tibetan girl should have long hair. What he tries to convey is the change of the people in the modernization of the society, both in their appearance and their thoughts. Since the influence of modernity, the Tibetan girl is not the Tibetan girl in a traditional sense. In the end, when Tharlo sells his and other people's sheep and gives the money to her, she elopes with another man and disappears. Even though she asks Tharlo to take her away, what she says is just a hook to make Tharlo fall into her trap. In the meantime, Tharlo also degenerates. He used to be a man who knows what he should and should not do. But he cannot hold himself when facing the girl's seduction. He sells his sheep and also other people's sheep. The change in spirit is reflected by the change in his appearance. In the beginning, he has a little braid in the back of his head, and his nickname is Little Braid. When the girl asks him to cut his braid, he cuts it. That is why when he tries to confess his crime to the police, he asks the police, "Sir, do you think that I am a bad guy now?" His words have two meanings. The first one is that he wants to know whether the change of his appearance will influence other people's impression on him. The second is whether the crime he comitted will have changed him into a bad guy in nature. He knows that he has not been the guy who can recite Chairman Mao's "Serve for the People" and understand the difference between death as light as the feather and death as heavy as Tai Mountain. The villagers in his village trust him and let him herd their sheep. But he breaks their trust because of his erotic desire.

Furthermore, the collapse of traditional beliefs also brings the loss of divinity in the nature of the Tibetans, which is significant for their religious beliefs. The Tibetans have become the people who seem to have no difference from the people in the outside world. They are spiritually blindless, numb, and blunt. In 'Enticement," there is no one who notices the difference between the teenager, Jamyang Tenzing, and the other people in the village. No one tries to figure out why the boy is obsessed with the Buddhist sutra. Even the readers who are not Tibetans can

[61] Pema Tseden, "Tharlo," 154.

notice the mysterious connection between the boy and the Buddhist sutra. But the people in the Tibetan village are blind to the phenomenon. When Jamyang Tenzing sees the sutra at seven, he becomes attracted to it. He can see the golden light emitting from the sutra, and the light with the sunshine gives him a familiar and comfortable feeling.[62] But when he wants to approach the sutra, the girl's father, who owns it, forbids him close to the sutra and thinks that he will steal it. Later, the father locks the sutra in a box, and he cannot approach it anymore. When he is fifteen years old and the girl's father is dead, he wants to read the sutra. Unfortunately, before the father's death, the father tells the girl, "Do not let the bad boy have the sutra. One day, its master will bring it back. He will come. At that time, give it to him."[63] In his eyes, Jamyang Tenzing is only a bad guy who will pollute the sacred sutra. Neither the father nor the girl think about the mysterious connection between Jamyang Tenzing and the sutra. After her father's death, the girl seduces the boy. If he wants to have the sutra, he should marry her in exchange. She will give him the sutra the night of their wedding. Only when Jamyang Tenzing almost dies for the sutra, one of the old men in his village realizes that he is a living Buddha. He says, "All blame us, the ignoramus and mortals. We cannot recognize the real Buddha in us."[64] The saint in Jamyang Tenzing's dream scolds the father and the girl, "Beasts! You are the ignoramus and mortals! The Buddha is in front of you, and you should kowtow to him! The real master of the sutra is Jamyang Tenzing, the living Buddha."[65] The thing should go in a good direction when the boy is recognized as the living Buddha. But the sutra he desires is still not given to him. The old lama serving him does not allow him to read it. He insists on giving it to Jamyang Tenzing when he is twenty years old. Tragically, the living Buddha is dead in the year when he is twenty. The old lama cries, "The Buddha, you are the god of the prophets! All blame us, the guilty and the ignoramus. We do not let you make your dream come true. I have brought the sutra to you. It belongs to you now. You can read it as many as you can!"[66] In the past, the Tibetans were proud

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[62] Pema Tseden, "Enticement," *Orgyan's Teeth* (Beijing: Citic Publishing Group, 2019), 174.

[63] Pema Tseden, "Enticement," 176.

[64] Pema Tseden, "Enticement,"190.

[65] Pema Tseden, "Enticement," 192.

[66] Pema Tseden, "Enticement," 199.

of their divinity, which made them close to the Buddha and able to communicate with him. Unfortunately, in modern times, they gradually lose their unique ability.

Indeed, the changes of his people convey Pema Tseden's pessimistic view about the relationship between modernity and his homeland. He knows clearly that his homeland cannot return to the homeland of the past. Neither can the people be the people of the past. The disappearing "aura" (the uniqueness of Tibet) will never come back again. The eternal loss is what the Tibetans should face in such a modern age. As he says, "Searching and finally losing. The loss is the main topic of my writings."[67] The change of his homeland and his people in modern times allows him to know that the things in the world always result in incompleteness.[68] The modernization of the homeland must base on the loss of its native essence. The confrontation between modernity and tradition cannot be pleasant and compatible. It usually ends with the failure of tradition. As he says, the difference between the people in the world is less and less. The sadness conveyed by his works does not warn his people to stop social and economic development, but reminds them what they have lost on the way to their modern life. He comments, "Now, there are more tragedies, like 'Tharlo,' which are not so intense but can make people feel sad. 'The Mani Stones' is similar. It brings a little sadness, but the sadness will go with the wind soon. What you lost will not come back."[69] Therefore, in his works, a happy ending rarely occurs. In "Enticement," no matter how hard the protagonist tries to get the sutra, he cannot get it in the end. In "The Dream of a Wander Singer," the singer's dream lover is dead and forces him to wake up and face reality. In "The Stranger," the outsider does not find Drolma, whom he searches for. In Pema Tseden's movie, *The Mani Stones*, the young lama does not find his father but only has his DVD box. In *Searching Drime Kunden*, Pema Tseden does not let the protagonist find out Drime Kunden. The boss and the girl in the story also are unable to find the love they expect.

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[67] Pema Tseden, "An Interview about Novel Writing," *The Death of a Sheep* (Guangzhou: Huacheng Publishing House, 2018), 210.

[68] Pema Tseden, "An Interview about Novel Writing," 211.

[69] Pema Tseden, "An Interview about Novel Writing," 211.

Pema Tseden, through writing about the loss brought by the incompatibility between modernity and tradition and the sadness brought by this loss, also writes about his identity anxiety. In the past, all his traditional beliefs were the unique features of his identity. Now, he is aware that there is a voice questioning those beliefs in his mind. Because of the development of society, he has become more and more rational and modern. His emotional connection to those old beliefs is not as pure as before.[70] If let the changes happen, then who will he be? Whom will the Tibetans be? What can define him and his people? The certainty of identity gradually disappears. Moreover, the outside world also interrupts the certainty of identity. In the past time, the lamas and the living Buddhas were intellectuals. However, when the government set up the standards used to distinguish the illiterates from the literates, the lamas and the living Buddhas, the most intelligent people in Tibet, became the illiterates. The reason for this classification is because they did not understand Mandarin. Who are the people having wisdom in their group? The answer to the question was undoubted for the Tibetans in the past. Now it becomes a puzzle for them. Furthermore, some Tibetans learn Tibetan, write in Tibetan, and publish articles in Tibetan. But at the end of a year, when they take their articles to the officials who record the annual academic achievements, the officials tell them that their articles are not achievements. The only reason is that they cannot read those articles written in Tibetan. The language they have been using for hundreds of years suddenly becomes a useless tool in their life. What should they speak in their daily life? They have no idea about the answer. Those principles given by the outside world change the definition of the Tibetans and make the people living in Tibet for years do not know how to live in their homeland and who they will become in the future. The confusion about their identity results from the failure in the interaction between Tibetan culture and the mainstream culture (in other words, the confrontation between tradition and modernity). As he says, this barrier of communication is the phenomenon of the Babel Tower.[71] In the confrontation between different cultures, the weaker one will lose something precious if it tries to communicate with the stronger one. That is why Pema Tseden insists on writing in Tibetan,

[70] Pema Tseden, "An Interview about Novel Writing," 206.

[71] Pema Tseden, "An Interview about Novel Writing," 229.

translating Tibetan literary works into Mandarin, and directing movies in Tibetan. It seems that now only the language can justify his identity as a Tibetan.

Pema Tseden's writing of the incompatibility between his homeland, Tibet, and modernity and the negative changes brought by the incompatibility originates from the incompatibility in his own nature. In his own experience, one cannot be both traditional and modern. He was born in a pastoral family in a small village in the Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province. To become a participant in modern society, he gave up his naiveness. He was a family deserter who tried his best to escape from his homeland, which, at that time, for him, was a land of hopelessness. He went to the middle school in the town and then to a normal university in the prefecture. After graduation, he worked as an elementary school teacher for several years in his hometown. He could live in his homeland and stay with his people. But he chose to leave the place where he was born and went abroad. He took the College Entrance Exam and went to the university in Lanzhou, majoring in Tibetan. Later, he continued his studies and got a master's degree in Translation (Chinese-Tibetan). He also got a chance to participate in a film program at Beijing Film Academy. When he started to write novels and direct films, he got to know that modernity could not bring him what he expected. Then he returned to his native roots, which could give him what he wanted. His first writing was a novella, "The Man and the Dog," published in *Tibetan Literature*. He told a story of a dog, which is aware of the danger around the place where its masters live. Within the first family there is a wedding, in the second there is someone sick, and in the last family, there is a baby coming into the world. The people are busy with their businesses. When the wolves come, the dog barks at and chases them. It tries its best to warn the people living in the place. However, the people feel that the dog's bark is a bad sign and beat it when it barks. In the morning, they find that the dog is dead, and so are their sheep. In my opinion, when the writer wrote about the dog, he wrote about himself. He believed that he was the dog, which was sensitive to the danger around his people and homeland and he had the duty to warn them about the potential loss they may experience. Pema Tseden spent his youth escaping from the land and abandoned what it gave him, but when he lived in Beijing for fourteen years, he started to escape from the modern world and return to the place he ran away from. His return is manifested by his return to his native language, Tibetan. He sent his son to

Tibet and let him live in a temple to learn Tibetan.[72] As a Tibetan, he feared that his son could not speak, read, and write their own language. The language is like the culture, which is beautiful and mysterious. As he says, "Tibetan has thirty letters, including male, female, neutral, and asexual letters. Its grammar is complicated, its tense is changeable, and its structure is intricate. If you want to read the Tibetan writings, you should understand the language."[73] He also knows deeply that this language and this culture, once leaving the land where they were born, will lose their glory and beauty. The term, "return," for him, is not only a spiritual return, but also a physical return.[74] As Liang Shao comments, Tibetanness, as conveyed by Pema Tseden, is not the reflection of religion, tradition, and landscape.[75] It is in the Tibetans' daily life, their psychology, and the language they use in their everyday life.

Homeland in Takbum Gyel's Works: The Land of Transitionality

As a writer writing in his native language, Takbum Gyel is different from Zhaxi Dawa and Alai, who use the dominant language, Mandarin, and focus on redefining their homeland, Tibet, with modern terms. He, like Pema Tseden, concentrates on describing the Tibetans and their life and the changes happening to them in the modern age. However, different from Pema Tseden, who returns to Tibet and its culture after his escape, Takbum Gyel never leaves his homeland and its soil. He went to a normal university in Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, where he was born, and majored in Tibetan and Tibetan literature. His Chinese was not good at that time (and is still not good now). He could not read and write Chinese. When he wanted to read the Han classics, he needed to ask his classmate to translate them word by word and sentence by sentence.[76] His classmate, Zhaba, commented that he was a reader of his native literature and a listener of the Han literature when he was a student. His lack of ability in the dominant language

[72] Chen Lili, "Pema Tseden, The Escaper," *South Reviews*, no. 17 (2017), 3.

[73] Chen Lili, "Pema Tseden, The Escaper," 3.

[74] Chen Lili, "Pema Tseden, The Escaper," 3.

[75] Chen Lili, "Pema Tseden, The Escaper," 3.

[76] Zhaba, "Takbum Gyel, The Writer and His Works," *The Ballad of Life*, Takbum Gyel, (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 298.

allows him to get less influence from the mainstream culture and makes his works maintain more ethnic characteristics. His writing style is much more Tibetan. He cares more about the relationship between men and nature. For instance, almost half of his works are about or related to dogs, which are called the dog serial. He inherits the writing style from Tibetan animal parables which are a significant part of Tibetan literature. For him, human beings can learn lessons from other sentient beings. His focus is more native. In his works, there are fewer depictions of the conflicts between Tibet and the outside world. What he concentrates on is all about Tibet, the Tibetans, and their inner changes.

In Takbum Gyel's writings, since the coming of modernization, Tibet has become a land of transition from the old era to the new one. But this transitionality is different from the transitionality in Ha Jin's works. Ha Jin's transitional homeland is brought by the writer's move from one land to another. Takbum Gyel's transitional homeland is the same land that is experiencing its transition (from its death to rebirth and from its past to future). In other words, Ha Jin's transitional homeland is more related to geographic transition, and Takbum Gyel's homeland is more related to temporal transition. In his works, the transitionality is characterized by Tibet's inner changes in its modernization. At first, it is shown by the gradual passing of the old era. Facing the end of the old era, the Tibetans do not try to stop its disappearance. On the contrary, they peacefully accept the fact and prepare for its end. In "The Ballad of Life," Takbum Gyel writes about of the old era: "Uncle Nyima feels that he is getting old."[77] In the first sentence of the story, Takbum Gyel gives the readers a hint that Uncle Nyima is aware of his death. Indeed, Uncle Nyima represents the last generation of the old era, who experiences the end of the old era and the coming of the new one. They are tired of the traditional way of life, but they still cannot get along well with the lifestyle brought by the new era. Like the Tibetans in the old era, they cannot entirely give up the old and embrace the new. As Uncle Nyima says, he knows that he cannot escape from the traditional way of life.[78] Even though he shows disdain for his father's way of life: flattering women he met, singing meaningless ballads when feeling

[77] Takbum Gyel, "The Ballad of Life," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 3.

[78] Takbum Gyel, "The Ballad of Life," 3.

lonely, and riding horses to show his masculinity, he still counts the beads of his Buddhist rosary every day and never forgets to invite the lamas and ask them to perform the Buddhist rite in the Tibetan Spring Festival. He is still a traditional Tibetan, who is not different from his father. The old man, in the last days of his life, prepares for his own death. He remembers the ballad sung by his father, which sings that only in the living world is there horse racing and in the nether world there is nothing.[79] He asks his wife to invite the lamas to their home. He falls into meditation when listening to the ballad sung by his son. In the ballad, it sings that only in the living world can one sing and in the nether world there is no "sing," the word.[80] He teaches his grandson that he should not bully even a rat for it will ask him to pay an eye for an eye in the nether world.[81] He also tells his grandson that everyone will come to the place controlled by the King of Hell after their deaths. At the night before his death, he teaches a ballad of death to his grandson word by word, in which he persuades his grandson to cherish the time he has. After finishing all these tasks mentioned above, he passes away in the morning quietly and peacefully. His death symbolizes the passing of the old era. When the old era goes to its end, of course, the people will feel sad and be unwilling to see its passing. But the development of society and the moving of time do not allow anyone or any era to stop his or its death. That is life. That is history. No matter where the Tibetans should go in the future, they must accept the passing of the old days, the days only belonging to them. But as Fredrich Hölderlin sings in his "In Lovely Blue," "Life is death, and death is a kind of life." Death does not mean the ending of life. Instead, it indicates the coming of the new life.

Similar characters representing the old era also appear in Takbum Gyel's other works. For instance, in "The Dead Leaf," Tha Ritsho, the narrator's lover, is also dead for the old era. She should have a bright life. Because of having good academic performance in school, she is predicted to be a cadre in the future. But after she graduates from middle school, she is arranged to marry a man by her mother rather than going to high school. Later on, the narrator hears that she escapes from the arranged marriage and leaves her home. He meets her several times in the

[79] Takbum Gyel, "The Ballad of Life," 3.

[80] Takbum Gyel, "The Ballad of Life," 6.

[81] Takbum Gyel, "The Ballad of Life," 7.

town where he goes to school. Without her mother's support, Tha Ritsho is unable to go to high school and continue her studies. The narrator gradually looks down upon her and never keeps contact with her. After over ten years, he becomes a cadre and visits the village where Tha Ritsho's family live. He meets her again. She is not the girl in his memory. The harsh life tortures her and makes her lose the beautiful and graceful appearance. The narrator says that he vaguely recognizes her according to the content of her words. Now she has two children. She tells the narrator that she came back home after disconnecting with him and married the man arranged by her mother. At that time, she believes that she should listen to what her mother says. Her filial piety does not bring a happy life to her. At the end of the story, she is dead due to a mistake in the sterilization surgery. Her death is like Uncle Nyima's death: quiet and peaceful. Like Uncle Nyima, who peacefully faces the signs of death appearing in his life, she peacefully accepts the sign of death appearing in her body. Tha Ritsho, even though her age is not old and she also pursued a new way of life in her youth, still adopts the old way of life. In such a modern age, there is no room for her existence—she knows this fact. That is why she does not see the doctor when there is something wrong with her body. The reason is not only that she does not have the money, but also that she has no hope in her current life. Compared with the narrator, Duojie, the man living in the new way of life, she belongs to the old, which has arrived at its end. In "At Sunset," Ahma Story, the landowner's maid, has a similar end. At sunset before her death, she tells her story to the children in the village and lets them know who she is and where she is from. At the end of the story, Takbum Gyel writes, "The sun withdraws its last light and falls into the back of the mountain. Then the legendary story happening in the village ends forever…"[82] It is time for the old era to set with the sun. In "A Dim Dusk," Uncle Story is also dead at the end of the story. The legendary stories in his mind also go with him and disappear. His death is also like the other characters' deaths, quiet and peaceful. No matter how regretful the narrator feels about his death and how hard he tries his best to collect stories listened from Uncle Story and organize them into a book, the narrator, the young generation, cannot stop his death. His time has come. The time for the old era is up. It is time to leave and say goodbye. As

[82] Takbum Gyel, "At Sunset," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 102.

Takbum Gyel writes at the end of "I Need to Find the Rat Poison," "On the second day when the sun rises from the east side of the mountain, Delung Village disappears from the earth. No trace. From then on, on the earth, there is no second Delung Village. It is destiny. No one can change."[83]

The transitionality is manifested not only by the end of the old era, but also by the coming of the new one. The coming of the new era in Takbum Gyel's works is demonstrated by spiritual and psychological changes in Tibetan people. Influenced by the Western interpretation of the concept of humanity, the Tibetan people, especially the young generation, do not have the traditional view about themselves and their nature. In the Tibetan traditions, the man is kept in a relatively lower profile. Bonismo (Bon), the native religion in Tibet, is a pantheistic religion. It promotes that everything has a spirit and should be respected. The disciples view the sky, earth, water, fire, snow mountains, lakes, rivers as the gods, all of whom are much more powerful than men. Men are not the masters of the world. Nature is. They are only a part of nature. The disciples believe that the men should keep a good relationship with those things and beings around them and only by doing so can they survive in such a harsh environment. Buddhism, the foreign belief and the dominant religion in Tibet, tells the people that the origin of the suffering is men themselves. Only cultivating themselves and giving up their desires will relieve them from all suffering. In the meantime, they need to do good deeds to accumulate merits for their afterlife. The Buddhist doctrines teach them to be benevolent and compassionate. They should be kind to all the beings in the world. Only in this way can they be far away from suffering in their afterlife. In brief, according to Buddhist interpretation, men are born into suffering and should learn how to live with it in this life. Confronting nature and life, they should put themselves down. Neither in Bon nor in Buddhism is the man given a high status. But in the modern age, men's status is changed. They are not characterized by passivity and powerlessness anymore. Men equipped with the term "I" become the masters of the world, who use technology to conquer nature and change the world to meet their needs. Their dependence on technology makes them more self-centered and start to forget the inability and weakness in their nature.

[83] Takbum Gyel, "I Need to Find the Rat Poison," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 222.

Everything in their eyes can be thingified, can be used, and becomes the tool to satisfy their "I." Tragically, in the process of self-centeredness, they are gradually dominated by material possessions. They forget who they are in the world and society.

To describe the process of alienation, Takbum Gyel adopts a style of writing which blends realism with allegory. In "The Manual of 'Tools'," Takbum Gyel creates the world of men, which is also the world of tools. In the world, everyone pursues power which can help them strengthen and consolidate their "I." But in their pursuit of the power of the "I," they forget that they are only human beings: the human being is only one of the beings in nature and he/she is both human and being. They not only utilize other beings but also turn their own being—other humans—into tools. In the process, they are also turned into tools by other people they utilize. Every character in the story is named by the names of tools. For instance, the protagonist, Rinchen, is named by himself Candy Paper, named by his girlfriend Lottery which cannot win a prize, named by the township head a part of the superior leader's body, named by the principal Monkey Wrench, and named by the superior leader as Nail Clipper. Except for Rinchen, his girlfriend is named Bus, whom everyone can get on. The principal is named Hammer, the township leader is named Pocket, and the village head is named Awl. All the characters, except Rinchen, do not have real names, which indicate their origins, families, and history. Their desire for power has changed them into tools. They do not need other people to know who they are. What they are and what their functions are should be the focal points of their value in society. That is why Takbum Gyel does not give them real names (human names) or depicts their appearance. The readers can tell who they are according to their nicknames, demonstrating their functions in society. The modern interpretation of men as the center of the world makes the Tibetan people gradually lose their original intention given by their traditional beliefs: that man is so tiny that he should not bond himself with too many desires and should be satisfied with what he has at hand. Nowadays, they spend their whole life pursuing what is beyond their needs to establish a powerful "I." But, in the end, they will find that they have lost their essence of being men: humanity. They exploit nature and other beings and also exploit the members of their own group. This exploitation makes them forget how to be men.

The protagonist, Rinchen, is the one gradually losing his humanity. At the beginning of the new semester and after his first class, Rinchen finds out that being a teacher is being a tool forever. "The teachers are the same as a pair of pliers, a besom, a spoon, and a pair of nail clippers. They are like the tools depicted in the Western fairytales, which can change themselves into human beings and change back into the tools after finishing their jobs. Those parents of the students use the teachers as the stairs to make their children go to a higher social status and make their children become the cadres having a stable salary."[84] Soon, Rinchen recognizes that having power is much better than being a tool if he desires to be himself. Having power means being the master of the tools. He plans to change his profession. When the principal declines his application and indicates that if he works hard, he will promote him, Rinchen understands immediately that power is social status, and social status is power.[85] Later on, he gives up his original intention of escaping from the fate of being a tool and becomes Hammer's (the principal) tool. For promotion, he offers bribes to the township head, Pocket, and becomes his tool. When he becomes the vice-principal of the school, to highlight his political achievement, he exaggerates the influence of the event of the louse.[86] To attain power, he competes with the principal, Hammer, and shows who is the one having the real power in the school. In the end, for having more power, he not only bribes the superior leader but also changes himself into his tool. That is the world of men and men's life: from one desire to another and from one tool to another. In the modern age, men are no longer men. Takbum Gyel writes, "In the new semester, the superior leader visits every school and also visits this school (Rinchen's school). There is a key ring carried by the leader. It looks like a garland, on which there is a pair of nail clippers. The people get together and watch the nail clippers. Someone says, 'You see, is it Rinchen?' The

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[84] Takbum Gyel, "The Manuel of 'Tools'," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 14-15.

[85] Takbum Gyel, "The Manuel of 'Tools'," 15.

[86] In his school, there is a student on whose head there is a louse. Rinchen tells his colleagues that he has reported this event to the town government. The township head has a serious talk with the officials in the government and him. The head believes that this event demonstrates the inability of management in his school. Therefore, to eliminate the bad influence of the event, Rinchen asks every student in his school to wash their hair at noon.

people answer, 'Yes, it is. It is him.' After sending off the leader, the new principal, Gourd Ladle, looks at the people and says, "Yes. The leader has various 'tools.'"[87]

The spiritual and psychological changes are also shown by the Tibetans' attitudes toward animals. The naturally intimate connection between the creatures in Tibet and the Tibetan people is gradually abandoned by them. In his dog serial, the protagonists are all dogs, some of whom speak, think, and behave like human beings. In "The Watchdog," the old dog, "I," tells the story of its death. It wants to figure out the cause of its death and the reason why its master does not like it. When it licks the wound made by its master, it says, "Suddenly, I felt sad. I rarely felt sad. At that time, I believed that my lifetime duty was to try my best to protect the family. But when the master observed the guest's face carefully, his face changed into the earthy yellow. When he cursed me and hit me with a wood stick, I had a similar mood. The first sadness started at this resident place and happened in the last summer."[88] Because of the reaction of its master, the old dog is confused about its duty. At its birth, a domestic dog knows its duty clearly: that is, to protect the person it views as its master. But in the story, the old dog's loyalty is not recognized by its master. It perceives the guest's behavior of taking sheep and yaks away from its master's home as the behavior of stealing. That is why it attacks the guest. But its master does not think so. When the guest (the cadre) shouts at him for the dog's attack, the master is pale and nervous. When the dog notices that the guest does not take away the sheep and yaks, it feels that it does a good job. Ironically, its master is angry. He curses and kicks it. When the old dog does the same thing for the second time, its master throws a stone that hits its shoulder. When the old dog tries to do the same thing for the third time, its master throws something (maybe a wood stick or a stone) that hits its head. It dies for its loyalty. In the story, Takbum Gyel questions the modern interpretation of men. The change in the men's self-understanding destroys the original relationship between men and nature. In the past, men and animals are viewed as spiritually equal by the Tibetans. In traditional beliefs, animals sometimes might be higher than men. Now the Tibetans seem to be like the people in other places in the modern world, who are human-

[87] Takbum Gyel, "The Manuel of 'Tools'," 27.

[88] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog'," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 31-32.

centric. Humanity, used to describe men's unique essence: kindness, sympathy, and benevolence, now cannot be used to define them anymore. In the story, the master seems to be less humane than the dog. Who is the man, and who is the dog? The dog is dead for its loyalty, while the man kills his dog for his own interests.

Similarly, in "The Old Dog," the protagonist, Jabe, in the beginning, has no doubt about the crime of theft happening in his home. He believes that the old dog steals the lamb thigh, the copper cauldron, the butter buns, the meat on the plate, the biscuits, and the dessert. Jabe carries the sharp knife given by his father and plans to kill the old dog. But he fails. The old dog discovers his intention and hides itself somewhere. Jabe changes his plan. He buys the poison which is used to poison the fox and puts it in the meat. The old dog seems to be aware of his intention again. It never touches the meat. For the third time, Jabe digs a big pit on the ground at the door of his home, puts a trap in the pit, and covers it with grass and soil. But the old dog does not fall into the trap. Ironically, the dog is dead that night. A yak attacks it. Looking at the dead body, Jabe is satisfied. The old dog's death makes him feel relieved, happy, and honorable. It looks like that he kills the dog. He says to himself, "This is the so-called retribution."[89] The story seems to have a "happy" ending. The "criminal" finally gets what it deserves. But the truth is beyond Jabe's expectation. In the end, the trap set up at the door catches the real criminal, who is the accountant of the village. At this moment, Jabe has not been aware of the mistake he makes in the stealing incident. He still asks the accountant that why he does not call him from outside of his tent and enters his home without his permission. The answer from the accountant reveals the truth: "No. I, I was just worried about being discovered by your dog."[90] Not only is the old dog not the criminal, but it is also Jabe's guardian. It always appears around Jabe's home because it tries to threaten the accountant, the real thief, and makes him unable to close his tent. But Jabe bites the hand that feeds him and tries to kill the dog who protects him. Even though he is not the one who kills the dog, he is the one who discards its body and makes it unable to rest in peace. The most significant essence of human beings, humanity, is depicted by the term "humane,"

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[89] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 70.

[90] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 76.

which makes human beings more kind, merciful, and sympathetic and less animal. But, in the story, humanity is demonstrated not by the human characters but by the dog, like what is demonstrated in "The Watchdog." What the men do is incomparable to what the dog does. The dog understands that stealing is not a humane behavior, but the accountant does not understand or does not want to understand this truth. The dog witnesses the stealing and knows that it should stop it, but Jabe never makes any investigation and believes that the dog is the thief. Where is his humanity? In the past, the Tibetans viewed the dogs as their partners, who were essential for their survival on the plateau. They protected their livestock from being eaten by wild animals. They protected their families and properties from being threatened and stolen by strangers. But in this era, the tradition has changed. The loyalty is abused and discarded. The dog becomes an animal that is much lower than human beings. Therefore, there is no need for the men to show any mercy to its death. That is the modern interpretation of men and dogs.

Of course, the dog does not always play the good characters in Takbum Gyel's works. The doghood is also influenced by the changes in humanity. In "Notes on the Pekingese," he introduces another kind of dog, different from the dogs appearing in the stories mentioned above. As Takbum Gyel writes in the first sentence of the story,

> In some place, *hapa* is a generic term for dogs. But where I come from, the word *hapa* refers not to the wild, ferocious Tibetan mastiffs kept by nomads, but to a Pekingese: one of those squat, fluffy, snub-nosed, flat-faced, stout-legged little Chinese dogs that shuffles about the house and the yard. Though Pekingese have neither the ability of the mastiff to fight off wolves and jackals nor the courage to stop a burglar, they're very good at notifying you when a visitor arrives and keeping you company during your leisure hours, and they're skilled at entertaining important dignitaries and high officials too. They really are adorable little things.[91]

In this story, the protagonist is a Pekingese, which characterizes itself with more "humanity." For promotion, it serves its master, does chores for him, and flatters him with words. It praises itself that it is a dog whose "humanity" is much more than its doghood. Since it has more "humanity," it can do what only the men can do: serving the authorities, asking the beautiful secretary to marry it, and being the director of the office in the government. In this story, Takbum Gyel,

[91] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," Christopher Peacock trans., *Ploughshares Solos,* vol. 7, no. 7 (2019), Kindle edition, 72.

indeed, questions modern humanity by writing the story of the dog. At first, humanity is not the feature only owned by men. In the story, the Pekingese says, "Generally speaking, half of a dog's nature is human. If a dog loses the half that's human, then it becomes a wolf, right? Of course, there's a certain distance between human nature and dog nature, but when I think about it, I sometimes feel like half of human nature is dog nature as well. When people say a dog is good, it's because that dog has more human nature in it. When you say a person is bad, it's because that person has too much dog nature in them."[92] Therefore, it is not the man that decides who he is and who the dog is but the humanity that decides. Men without humanity are even much lower than the dogs with humanity.

Second, humanity cannot be interpreted by power and desire with which men are obsessed. The Pekingese in the story actually represents of a kind of man in society, who, like the tool men in "The 'Manuel' of Tools," live for power and desire and can do everything for them. They say that they are human beings and have humanity, but they never get to know the truth of humanity. For Takbum Gyel, there is no difference between this kind of man and the Pekingese. Even the dog, in some aspect, are much higher than them. When the old era and its morality are coming to the end and the new era and its morality are still waiting to be established and consolidated, there is a transitional period. This transitional period in Tibetan Buddhism is named *Zhong Yin,* which is the intermediate existence between death and reincarnation. In this period, the body has died, and the spirit is waiting for its reincarnation. In this moment, the spirit is close to its original state and its authentic selfhood.[93] In Takbum Gyel's works, Tibet is in this state. But the changes in the Tibetans' spirit and psychology brought by the new era, for Takbum Gyel, seem not to bring them positive influence and make them close to their authentic selfhood. On the contrary, the changes draw the Tibetans down and make them degrade in humanity. Who will the Tibetans become in the future? In his works, Takbum Gyel does not give his answer. Even though we can read the hope in his writings, the future image of Tibet is missing and absent. The writer himself is still confused about it. In "The Bachelor, Jiaba's Drolma," Takbum Gyel writes a story of

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[92] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 124.

[93] Sogal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying,* Zheng Zhenhuang, trans. (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2011), 13.

searching. The protagonist, Dawa, searches for his lover Drolma, who disappears with a bachelor named Jiaba in her pilgrimage to Lhasa. He quits his job and goes to Lhasa to find Drolma. Later on, he goes to Guangzhou, because he hears that Drolma goes with Jiaba to Guangzhou. He goes every place they go. Whenever Dawa arrives at the place, they are gone. He feels frustrated for this endless searching and shouts, "Where are you? Drolma!"[94] But he never stops his searching. As he says to the woman, who is also named Drolma and searches for his husband, Jiaba, "Don't cry. We must find him by all means. It is not your business. It is mine. It is related to the whole group of human beings."[95] In the end, Dawa still does not find his Drolma. In this story, Takbum Gyel writes about Dawa's sadness in searching for his lover, but actually he writes about his confusion about the Tibetans' future. His homeland, Tibet, like Drolma in the story, is easy to be deceived by the outside world and fragile when facing the various attractions. It is too innocent and naïve to maintain its original essence. After the death of the old era, it changes. Where should it go in the future and where should its people go in the future? No one knows. In order to prevent it from going too far away from its original image, the Tibetans should try their best to draw it back to the right track. Therefore, Dawa says that searching for the person is an event related to all the people in the world. It is not only the Tibetans' business but also other ethnic minorities' business.

Takbum Gyel, as a writer, does not get enough attention from the academic world. Since he does not write in Mandarin and most of his works do not have an opportunity to be translated into the dominant language, his works are not well-known to the mainstream society. This inaccessibility in language prevents most scholars and readers in the mainstream culture from approaching his works and understanding his thinking in writing the Tibetan stories. Consequently, his works are rarely studied by scholars in China or the Western world. When I searched for the scholarship related to him and his works on the largest Chinese academic website, CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), there were only fifteen articles and essays writing about him and his works. Some of them are written in Tibetan. When I searched

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[94] Takbum Gyel, "The Bachelor, Jiaba's Drolma," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 237.

[95] Takbum Gyel, "The Bachelor, Jiaba's Drolma," 245.

on JSTOR, there were only two books related to him: one is *Old Demons, New Deities: 21 Short Stories from Tibet* and the other is *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change*. Some of the articles have been mentioned in this chapter. Tibetan literature has been ethnic minority literature which is outside of the mainstream literature. The literary works written in Tibetan makes their writers become the outsiders on the fringe of the literary world. It is not because his works are meaningless and unworthy. If one reads his works, one will find that the limit of his language does not limit his thinking. He is not confined by ethnic essentialism, which has become a common phenomenon in Tibetan literature, especially in the works written by the Tibetan overseas or exiles. What he is concerned about is to remind his people of the transition happening in their homeland and their life and remind his people that some of the changes in their life and spirit are dangerous signs for the development of their group. How to deal with the coming of the new era and its modernity is a problem that needs to be solved.

To draw his people back and prevent them from abandoning their ethnic qualities, he writes his anxiety in his works. There are two main topics in his works: one is the conflict between ideal and reality, and the other is the conflict between humanity and non-humanity.[96] Indeed, these two topics of his writings come from his anxiety about the future of his ethnic group. The conflict between ideal and reality is demonstrated by the human being's inability to confront time, life, and destiny. In Takbum Gyel's works, for instance, "Like the Thing Happening in a Day," "The Dead Leave," and "At the Sunset," all the characters cannot change their life within their lifetime. Tibet, like those characters, has no ability to control the direction of its own development. Its old days have ended. What it dreamed about in the past is not what it has and faces at present. Confronting with reality, it should let its past go and refresh itself to go into the new life. That is life. What one dreams is always not what one has at hand. At this point, Takbum Gyel conveys his thinking of fatalism. The conflict between humanity and non-humanity is much more direct to demonstrate his anxiety about the future of the Tibetans. In works such as "The Manuel of 'Tools'" and "Notes on the Pekingese," he writes about tools and dogs. As a matter of fact, he writes about the people. He writes of human beings as non-human beings. In the modern world, the interpretation of men has been changed. What humanity is

[96] Zhaba, "Takbum Gyel, the Writer and his Works," 303.

originally has been forgotten by the modern people. The loss of humanity makes men disqualified to be men. Some of them are even much lower than the animals in spirit. This degradation of the people makes Takbum Gyel nervous and anxious about the future of his homeland. That is why he persists on writing about dogs. From the dogs, he seems to see the original image of his homeland and its people. In "The Watchdog," "The Old Dog," and "The Dog, the Master and his Relatives," he writes the dogs as the men. As he answers the question from Pema Tseden, "I think if I can write the dogs' stories well, I can demonstrate the past and present of my homeland."[97] He criticizes modern people from a postmodernist perspective: Why do men not have humanity when dogs still have it? Why do people accept everything given by the modern world without thinking about whether it is good or evil? For him, being told by other people that he is a dog is a compliment. He will not feel offended by such a comment. At least, the dogs within their long history with men never changed their nature and the humanity in their nature. Due to his anxiety about his people, he does not know which way can bring his people a brighter future. For him, to solve the problems in their spirit at present is what his people should do now.

Homeland in Tibetan Chinese Literature: The Changing Muse

After the analyses of the writing of homeland in the four Tibetan writers' works, the answer to the question—Does homeland play a similar role in Tibetan Chinese writers' writing career?—comes out. It is no. In the writers' eyes, Tibet is too sacred and pure to be a haunting ghost. Except for the four writers mentioned above, other Tibetan writers also have the same point of view about their homeland. For instance, when Baima Nazhen, a Tibetan female writer, depicts her feeling of returning to Lhasa (the capital city of Tibet) in her "108 Types of Love and Missing (*108 般情与念*) (VII)," she writes,

> Is it real that I will return? Many times, I missed its clean sky, its nights, and the melodies from the banks of its rivers. Even in the small yard of my home, I can listen to the whispers of the wet birches brought by the wind outside of the wall, which make me think a lot. Every morning, the birds, like the rain dropping on the eaves, sing happy songs, which makes me feel warm and cozy. On the meadows, the water in the pits sparkles in the sunlight. How fascinated the view is!

[97] Pema Tseden, "Takbum Gyel: I was a Dog in My Last Life," *Qinghai Lake,* no. 2 (2016), 125.

> In the city, every wisp of hair flows in the air, like the clouds in the sky and the waves in the river.[98]

When writing about Tibet, Meizhuo, another Tibetan female writer and poet, states, "I was born on the plateau. On the mountains, the most beautiful view is the combination of the blue sky, the green meadows, the red and gold temples, and the winding paths to the serene retreats. Its peace and harmony constantly alert and comfort me that this is the land bonded with me."[99] The two writers, when depicting Tibet, use the terms like clean, melodies, whispers, happy, warm, cozy, fascinated, beautiful, blue, green, red, gold, serene, comfort, and so forth. Those terms bring a pleasant tone to the words they write. They indicate that in the Tibetan writers' eyes, Tibet, their homeland, is a place which can give them the sense of happiness. In their writings, home is sweet home. Thus, in their deep heart, Tibet is the most sacred and pure place in the world. It likes a holy virgin who can wash off the dirt on their body and in their mind and help them find physical and spiritual peace and security. The persistence in writing of it is their natural reaction, but this reaction comes from their deep and pure love for it rather than Chinese American writers' paradoxical emotion—love and hatred. This persistence also has a cathartic function, but it is a catharsis of love rather than Chinese American writers' catharsis of both love and hatred.

Comparing with Chinese American writers who care more about their people, Tibetan Chinese writers are more concerned about the land. Their writing of the people is for the place they love. Their persistence is more spatial and geographic. The place is the center of their concern. Their writing of the place is their active response to the calling from the place rather than Chinese American writers' passive reaction to the haunting of their home(land). Ciren Weise, a female Tibetan writer and poet, poetizes her nostalgia with the verses in her "Khampa! Khampa!": "All my words are the words of searching/All my journeys are the journeys of searching/What am I searching for?/I cherish your name by heart/I hope to see you in my dream/I memorize every word you whisper to me/They bring me your breath, your heart

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[98] Since there is no English version of those proses and poems, the translations are done by me. See Xuqin, *The Construction and Writing of the Cultural Identity: The Study of the Contemporary Tibetan Female Literature* (Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press, 2017), 156-157.

[99] Xuqin, *The Construction and Writing of the Cultural Identity: The Study of the Contemporary Tibetan Female Literature,* 163.

beats/Like home and family/Like another me/They will live with me in my lifetime."[100] When talking about her hometown, Sangdan, a female poet, says, "Blessed and loved by the Buddha, I was born and grew up in the small town named Kangding, famous for its moon and melodious love songs. My people and the pure land my people live on offer me the journey to my soul and make me know the beauty of life and virtue. Writing is a way to approach this beauty and makes me an observer of the beauty of my homeland."[101] That is why she writes down the verses in her "Love Song: Homeland": "Homeland is the motive for my existence/ Singing it for hundreds and thousands of times/The blood flowing in my vessels/is the blood of Khampa Tibetans/It flows like the rivers/being as pure as the snow mountains/and as hot as the sun."[102] [103] It is not hard to get to know the motive of their writing is all related to the place where they were born and grew up through their words.

Of course, it is easy to find in their works that Tibetan writers also have identity anxiety and the pain of homelessness. However, their anxiety and pain come from the changes of the homeland rather than the homeland itself. In other words, they are satisfied with their homeland. It is the changes happening in their homeland that make them anxious and painful and bring them the questions about their identity. Those writers' love for Tibet is from the uniqueness of Tibet based on its unique history (time) and geographic position (space), which makes it different from other places in the world and turns its existence into a work of art. In a word, their

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[100] Weise, The Notes of Tibet (Guangzhou: Huacheng Publishing House, 2003), 354.

[101] "Sangdan," see "Tibetan Culture," accessed December 7, 2020, https://www.tibetcul.com/wx/zuojia/zzzj/28290.htm.

[102] Xu Qin, *The Construction and Writing of the Cultural Identity: The Study of the Contemporary Tibetan Female Literature,* 180.

[103] Here I mainly quote the works written by Tibetan female writers and poets. Because the writers I discussed in the previous sections were all male writers, whose works, in my opinion, demonstrated the variety of Tibetan writers' thoughts about home and homeland more comprehensively. In order to keep the balance in gender and avoid the one-sided view in the study targets, I show here how the female writers describe their home and homeland after the detailed analyses of the male writers' works. What I try to prove is that both female and male writers express their deep love for the place where they were born and grow up. When they talk about their home and homeland, their emotions are quite similar.

love comes from the "aura", which Walter Benjamin raises in his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." He says, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: Its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[104] He refers to this unique cultural context— "its presence in time and space"— as its "aura." For Tibetan writers, Tibet is the muse with the unique "aura." However, the time and space in which Tibet presents itself begin to change with the modernization of China. The "aura" originating from Tibet's unique time and space gradually disappears from the muse. For Tibet, it is unavoidable to be modernized and changed into a place that might have no difference from other places in the world. All the essences of its "aura" have gradually gone with the disappearance of its original physical and spiritual landscapes. Without the "aura," the muse is no longer the muse. The land of purity seems to be not as pure as before anymore. The place of holiness seems to be not as sacred as before. The people living on the land are not as simple and pious as before. Are those changes good for the development of Tibet and its people? Should Tibet merge into the process of modernization? What will Tibet, the muse, become after its modernization? Can it be still Tibet? If it loses its previous "aura," what will be its aura in the future? Whom will the Tibetans become after the integration between Tibet and modernity? Can they be called the Tibetans like before? Indeed, the origin of their anxiety and pain comes from the problematic integration between Tibet and modernity, rather than the cultural and ideological conflicts between Tibet and inland China. Tibetan writers' persistent writing of Tibet is not only the expression of their love. Most importantly, it comes from the calling from the changing Tibet—"Who will I become in the modern age?" Writing about it is those writers' ethnic mission. In the mission, they take the responsibility to give solutions to the aporia between Tibet and modernity.

In Zhaxi Dawa and Alai's works, both writers take an open mind to the integration between modernity and Tibet. Their attitude towards the integration is positive. They believe that the changes of Tibet are the results of history and the necessary process of the development of the society. What the Tibetans should pay attention to is how to redefine Tibet in the modern age

[104] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *The Continental Aesthetics Reader,* Clive Cazeaux, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2000), 324.

and bring new meanings to the changing muse. Even though it might lose something precious in the integration, it also gets something in the process. When the old "aura" disappears, the new one will come out. What makes them anxious and painful is the stereotype of Tibet in the outsiders' eyes: Tibet is the land of poverty and backwardness. Therefore, in their writings, Zhaxi Dawa and Alai attempt to show that Tibet, like other places in China, enjoys and suffers from the development of modern society. More importantly, the integration between modernity and Tibet creates new existential forms for Tibet. For Zhai Dawa, the new form is the hybridity between Tibetan tradition and modernity. For Alai, modernity makes the Tibetans realize that they are not the chosen people who can escape from being changed. They are simply human beings. Their homeland, Tibet, cannot be excluded from China and the world. It is itself and also a part of the country and the world.

The Tibetophonic writers' concern is not the same as the Sinophonic writers'. Yes, they also accept the fact of the changes of their homeland and their people, but their attitude towards those changes is not as positive as the Sinophonic writers'. In their mind, the disappearance of the "aura" has changed the nature of Tibet and its people. What it is and who they are have become unanswerable questions for themselves. That is why they focus more on depicting the essences of their ethnicity, their Tibetanness, and try to draw the disappearing "aura" back to the muse. What they care about is not how to redefine Tibet with new meanings but how to integrate with modernity. In their observations, the Tibetans gradually lose their uniqueness and fall into the trap of modernization. What they cherish in the past has become worthless and been forgotten. If the beliefs and features, which can define who they are, disappear, who will they be in the future? Will the muse be the muse without her "aura"? Where should Tibet go in the future? Therefore, Pema Tseden is obsessed with demonstrating the complex relationship between modernity and tradition in Tibet and tries to demonstrate the existential dilemma in the Tibetans' life. Takbum Gyel pushes himself to demonstrate the distance between the traditional Tibet and the modern Tibet and tries to remind his people who they are naturally.

CHAPTER 5

HOMELAND IN SINOPHONIC WRITERS' WORKS: ZHAXI DAWA'S *THE RESTLESS SHAMBHALA* AND ALAI'S *THE EPIC OF ROOT VILLAGE*

In the previous chapter, I discussed the four writers' writing of their homeland, Tibet, and the reason for their persistence in writing of it. This chapter will mainly analyze how Sinophonic writers think about their homeland and write about it. *The Restless Shambhala* and *The Epic of Root Village* will be the target texts.

Zhaxi Dawa: Homeland as the Restless Shambhala

When talking about Zhaxi Dawa, the critics always connect him and his works with the root-seeking literary movement in the 1980s in China. It focused on "forgotten traditions and returning to the authenticity of the primitive of nature." In other words, it was a movement of nostalgic return to the cultural origin. Those critics, who give their applauds to Zhaxi Dawa, believe that the Tibetan writer's achievement mainly relies on his literary nostalgia of the original Tibet, the land of the past: he "draws on the technique of ancient Tibetan chronicles, a genre replete with both mythical elements and factual details."[1] In his historical writing of the magical Tibet, his people can return to their ethnic origin. His novella "Tibet: The Mysterious Years" is viewed as the beginning of the Tibetans' root-seeking after the establishment of the new China. It reveals the history of how the old Tibet was changed by the outside world. In his following works, he also takes similar methods to describe his homeland. However, there is another voice. For some critics, Zhaxi Dawa's root-seeking is not successful. For instance, Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani suggests that he plays with time and history to avoid political and ethnic responsibility.[2] The feminist critic Lu Tonglin believes that Zhaxi Dawa "renounces his

[1] Herbert J. Batt, *Tales of Tibet* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2001), 264.

[2] Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, The "Condor" Flies over Tibet: Zhaxi Dawa and the Significance of Tibetan Magical Realism, *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change*, Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia

Tibetan identity" and "because of the lack of resistance, his marginality mainly serves as a decoration for the Chinese cultural center."[3] In other words, the home of the Tibetans is not presented authentically by the writer.[4] This inauthenticity is derived from his ambiguous attitude toward the changes made to his homeland by the new government. Therefore, for these critics, he is not the one who can bring the Tibetan people back home.

In my view, both criticisms only partially explain Zhaxi Dawa's writing intention. His historical writing of homeland does not mean that the original Tibet is the home his people should return to. His ambiguous attitude toward the changes of Tibet does not mean that the changed Tibet is the home his people should dwell in. For the writer, visions of the homeland in general should not be too idealistic and simplistic, particularly in the modern age. Homeland will not remain unchanged for its people to return to. It constantly changes through time. Nowadays, its meaning has gone beyond the meaning of the dreamland in our minds. He takes his own homeland as an example to illustrate the complexity of the vision about homeland. In his writing, the features of femininity, primitivity, and pastness have not been enough for defining his homeland, Tibet. When coming into the modern time, it gradually becomes the hybrid of the opposites, such as the feminine and masculine, the primitive and modern, and the past and future. In *The Restless Shambhala*, the writer abandons his previous way of naming. In his two well-known novellas ("Tibet: The Mysterious Years" and "Tibet: A Soul Knotted on a String"), he starts the titles with "Tibet." But in this novel, this common name disappears. Instead, Shambhala becomes the name of his homeland, which can remind his readers of the past land and its erstwhile charm. In the meantime, he also brings the word "restless" (*sao don*g in Chinese) to describe the current state of the land. The combination of the original name and the

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Schiaffini-Vedani, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 205.

[3] Lu Tonglin, "Quest in Time and Space at a New History of Ancient and Modern Tibet," *Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism, and Oppositional Politics: Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 128.

[4] In his works, the old Tibet is always wild, violent, uncivilized, and primitive. For instance, in "Tibet: The Mysterious years," the female protagonist Ciren Jimu is forced to spend her whole life lonely in the remoted and barren village, Guokang, to serve the imagined (by her parents) Buddhist master. In the meantime, the attempt to return to the original Tibet is always unsuccessful. For instance, in "Tibet: A Soul Knotted on a String," the two protagonists, Tabei and Qiong, spend many years to search for the pure land, Shambhala. In the end, neither of them arrives at this dreamland.

current state indicates that the writer attempts to reject idealism and oversimplification in thinking of homeland.

The Restless Shambhala (1993) is the last literary work before Zhaxi Dawa shifted from literature to TV shows and films. In this work, he focuses on the fates of multiple characters in the history of Tibet's Democratic Reform and China's Cultural Revolution. Caiwang Namu and the Kaixi family represent the group of Tibetan noble class, who have economic, spiritual, and political dominance in Tibet before and after the reform. Lunzhu Nuobu and his Kaixi People's Commune represent the Tibetan laboring class, who runs Tibet by following the Han people's model of management after the reform. Dawa Ciren and his friends represent the new urban class, who will become the future master of Tibet. In the restless Shambhala (Tibet) which swings between the feminine and masculine, the primitive and modern, and the past and future, all the people are busy with searching for a home they can dwell in spiritually. When gradually losing their original power, the old ruling class (Caiwang Namu) attempts to restore the glory of the past. After having power, the new ruling class (Lunzhu Nuobu) is preoccupied with building up a new homeland, totally different from the past one. The new men (Dawa Ciren), born in the new Tibet, wonder where they should go (going back or moving forward) and whom they should become (the old or new Tibetans).

The Hybridity in Gender

In Zhaxi Dawa's writing about the homeland of ethnic minorities, gender plays a crucial role in his vision of Tibet. As a result, it has shaped both the thematic and formal aspects of the novel. In terms of form, the novel is structured on the hybridity of femininity and masculinity. In his thematic conception of his homeland, Tibet is like a bodhisattva who is both male and female. The shaping influence of gender is manifested in his creation of the double protagonists in *The Restless Shambhala*. The female protagonist is Caiwang Namu, and the male protagonist is Dawa Ciren. The story devotes roughly equal narrative space to the female and male protagonists. They are independent of each other. It appears the narrator tells two Tibetans' stories. The two protagonists are in different classes. She is the mistress of Kaixi Manors, born

with the noble title, worshiped by her people, and viewed as the "Lucky Goddess."[5] He is the son of the housekeeper of the Kaixi family, born with the title of the descendent of the reactionary in Kaixi Commune and disdained by the villagers as the "Little Monster."[6] In the narration about the female protagonist, she always traps herself in her memory of the old days and her uncontrollable imagination of the restoration of the old social system. In the narration about the male protagonist, he suffers from childhood memory and is lost in confusion about his present and future life. However, the connection between them is intimate. Caiwang Namu is the master who has power, and Dawa Ciren is the servant who depends on her. She brings him from Kaixi Village to Lhasa. It seems that it is she who brings him from the primitive life to the modern way of living and from the past to the future. Interestingly, he gives her the hope that the old days in which her family was powerful and prosperous can come back. The power owned by the female protagonist is easy to read as Zhaxi Dawa's objection to the patriarchal system in Tibet. But this reading is too narrow to describe the writer's delicate design in his characters. As a matter of fact, both protagonists symbolize the writer's homeland, Tibet.

At first, the homeland is feminine. In the common recognition, Tibet should be a virgin and attract people with her purity and holiness. In the episode in which the male protagonist Dawa Ciren sees the secret painting drawn on a sheepskin, Zhaxi Dawa depicts how his homeland looks like. It says, in the Khampas' tent, Dawa Ciren notices a worn-out sheepskin on a wood box. No one in the native tribe can recognize what is drawn on the skin. But the protagonist, without any hesitation, reveals the truth: it is a naked woman. After he figures out the woman's head, neck, body, arms, and legs, an old Khampa man says that he finally knows what the painting is. It is a map of Tibet.[7] At this moment, all the people at the site naturally connect it with Shambhala. In their words, Shambhala is "the land of hope" and "the last virgin land in the world," which they search for in their lifetime.[8] Yes, the woman in the painting is

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[5] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala* (Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 1993), 17.

[6] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 27.

[7] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala*, 300-301.

[8] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 301.

Tibet. Back in the Tang Dynasty, the map of Tibet is depicted in the image of a rakshasa. In Tibetan myths, there are two significant rakshasas. One is the mother of the Tibetans, who fell in love with the macaque enlightened by Avalokitesvara Boddhisattva and gave birth to the Tibetans. The other is the mother of the land of Tibet, who fed the Tibetans with the foods grown from her soil. On the map, the naked rakshasa, opening her arms and legs, is lying on the green land.[9] This ancient map of Tibet carries all the secrets of the modern interpretation of the ethnic origin of the Tibetans: coming from the past, the raw land of Buddhism spiritually attracts the people with its unspeakable feminine charm demonstrated by its body and body language.

Interestingly, we can see the features of the virgin land in the female protagonist Caiwang Namu. She was born with the aura of holiness. When narrating Caiwang Namu's first return to Kaixi Manor, the narrator says, "At seven, Caiwang Namu, due to her beautiful face and elegant …, the characteristics other noble girls do not have, is viewed as the 'Lucky Goddess.'"[10] All of the serfs and landlords never see this kind of beauty in their life. Many of them believe that she is the incarnation of Tara, a goddess in Tibetan Buddhism.[11] In her second return, her family has lost its original power in society. The people in Kaixi Village still remember her and her beauty. The old villagers scramble to memorize the old days when she returned and introduce themselves to the distinguished mistress of the Kaixi Family. They ask,

> Could you recognize me, Miss? I used to be the dismounting servant who helped the master got off the horse. … Miss, I never forgot you. I washed your dresses. How beautiful the tiny dresses were! … I know, you could not remember us, the crowd of the vulgar. … Miss, I served you with cheese. Later, I found that it was a little bit moldy. I almost faint away. Fortunately, you did not touch the cheese. … Miss, my younger brother offered fresh yogurt for you every day. It was your favorite food. … Idiot, you are not lucky enough to witness the first return. Isn't it, my dear wife? It looked like a welcoming ceremony for the king. … Miss, we are too old, like the ugly ghosts, but you are blessed by the Boddhisattva and still as beautiful as Tara.[12]

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[9] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 300.

[10] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 16.

[11] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 17.

[12] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 24.

Caiwang Namu is surrounded by the villagers, who view her as their goddess. They tell her about what has happened in those years. From this passage, it is not hard to tell the emotion of the people for her. When seeing her, they seem to see the dreamland, Shambhala. Representing the land in their memory, she is permanently holy and characterized with unspeakable beauty and elegance.

Second, Caiwang Namu never loses her purity in her lifetime. She has a lover whose family is also reputable in Tibet. But her father does not like him. To cut off her emotional bond with her lover, the father arranges her to marry another man whose family is much lower than hers. In her marriage, she does not allow her husband, Jinmei Wangjie, to sleep with her. Magically, they have three children: two girls and one boy. The husband believes that the three children are his, even though he never has real sex with his wife. Only Caiwang Namu knows that three children come from her dreams (the dreams about return) and she is pregnant in her dreams. She likes Virgin Mary having Jesus with a pure body. Her purity and holiness are never tainted by anyone appearing in her life, even her lover. Since then, her image and the image of the virgin land, Shambhala, have overlapped. She is the mother of the Tibetans and the virgin with Tibetan pure and holy blood. As the Khampas shout out spontaneously, "Shambhala," when they see the map of Tibet,[13] both the homeland and its signifier should be permanently pure and holy.

In the work, the writer creates another virgin to consolidate the image of the virgin land. She is Qiongji, who grows up in a Khampa tribe and is educated as a noblewoman. She has a similar family background which Caiwang Namu has. She also comes from a noble family. After the falling of her family, the Enlan Family (a noble family in Tibet), and the death of her mother, she is adopted by a Khampa tribe. Through her mother's last words, the Khampas know that she is the last member of the noble family. When she is fifteen years old, the Khampas should find the person who can recognize the emblem of the family left by her mother. Luckily, the Khampas find the woman whose ancestor served her family on her fifteen-year-birthday.[14] She

[13] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 301.

[14] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 66-69.

sponsors her and gives her enough money to go to school. At the first sight, when Dawa Ciren sees her in Kaixi Village, she is one of the members of the Khampa tribe. At that time, she is wild, uncivilized, and spiritually free. But several years later, when she reappears in front of Dawa Ciren, she becomes a knowledgeable, mysterious, and attractive female scholar. Dawa Ciren cannot help falling in love with her. In my reading of the novel, she also stands for the virgin land, whose purity and holiness should not be destroyed. According to the novel, *The Queen of Mosquito*, written by a male character, Bela, she cannot have a relationship with any man.[15] Although she loves Dawa Ciren, she knows that she cannot have any physical relationship with him.

Furthermore, since the virgin land comes from the past, its relationship with the past is intimate. The writer intentionally gives the female protagonist Caiwang Namu the addiction to the past. In his writing, she cannot help going back to the old days repeatedly and tries her best to return. When Dawa Ciren does not understand why it is him that his mistress brings from Kaixi Village, the guardian ghost of the Kaixi Family, Beiji Quzhen, answers that she tries to find a housekeeper for her family. The mistress intends to train him into an excellent housekeeper. When her daughter, Deyang, asks why Caiwang Namu keeps Dawa Ciren in her house, she remains silent. She knows that Dawa Ciren's appearance at the parties in her house makes her feel that Tibet is still the Tibet in her mind.[16] Therefore, he is educated with rigid manners, forced to give up his rural accent, and taught how to use the Tibetan honorifics. The mistress also has the patience to teach him Tibetan culture and history.[17] She believes that the Tibetans, especially her class, should not forget their ethnic history. When looking at the mountains in her homeland, she cannot help remembering how her ancestors built the city. She feels sad about her people's forgetfulness about their history. For her, the forgetfulness makes her people lost and disconnected from their ancestors.[18] All of the efforts and anxieties made and had by Caiwang

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[15] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 376. The reason why Qiongji cannot have a relationship with men will be discussed later.

[16] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 127-128.

[17] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 62.

[18] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 89.

Namu come from her obsession with the past. This obsession, indeed, dwells in the nature of the Tibetans and is the most typical feature of the traditional Tibetans. As the writer writes, "The ethnic group, until now, still eternally repeats the fate of their ancestors and is unable to go outside of the land of Tibet."[19] They endlessly and tirelessly circle around the holy snow mountains and temples in Tibet. If they go forward, they might have circled the earth several times. However, they never step outside of Tibet. Eternal return seems to be their name. Tibet, like its people, is also "eternally come and go between brightness and darkness, wisdom and ignorance, truth and lies."[20] For Zhaixi Dawa, Caiwang Namu represents the lost traditional Tibet. She never gets out of the aporia of eternal return. Even though she is a modern woman, her fate is still traditional. The past Shambhala drawn on the worn-out sheepskin is the land where she tries her best to return.

When restoring the feminine Shambhala, Zhaxi Dawa also uses a male character to present another Tibet, the masculine one. The male protagonist Dawa Ciren is its representation. He was born after the Tibetan Democratic Reform and the collapse of the old Tibet. After his birth, he lives in the ruins of Kaixi Manor in Kaixi Village. As he says, "I never saw the magnificent Kaixi Manor. Since I was born, it had collapsed. We live under its ruins."[21] At the bottom of Kaixi Manor, there is a basement that used to be the arsenal and barn. In the limited space, Dawa Ciren, his father, three sisters, four brothers, and nine nephews and nieces live together. Kaixi Manor in Kaixi Village in this novel symbolizes the old Tibetan social system. Its collapse indicates the collapse of the old Tibet. Dawa Ciren was born in the ruins of Kaixi Manor, and his birth symbolizes the birth of the new Tibet in the ruins of the old one. The male protagonist has the characteristics which the female protagonist does not have. At first, he is a boy and will become a man. Femininity and passivity have not been the terms to describe him. In his miserable life, he has his own philosophy of living. When he is mistreated by the villagers, he never shut himself down. Dawa Ciren's family is labeled the No.1 Enemy of the Kaixi

[19] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 371.

[20] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 370.

[21] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 28.

Commune.[22] The head of the village, Lunzhu Nuobu, calls him the "Little Monster" and believes that he is, by his nature, capable of destroying the new regime. In this situation, he turns to communicate with nature. For instance, he talks with the sheep he attends to and gets the secret that the three goats in the herd are the incarnations of the lamas. He makes friends with the wolf who kills his sheep and understands that its ferocity comes from its desire for survival. He also cares about the social other in the village, for instance, the Khampas, the vagabonds, and the demigod, Beiji Quzhen. He is the other in the village, and his isolation never stops him from noticing the beings who have a similar fate. At the same time, he is not overcome by the physical suffering in his life. Even though he, his three sisters, and four brothers work for the commune, the cadres in the village always embezzle their wages.[23] What they earn is not enough for their survival. Dawa Ciren always feels hungry and has to rob the food from his nieces and other kids in the village who are younger than him. Under these circumstances, he never complains about his life. Like his sisters and brothers, he silently tries his best to survive.[24] This positiveness and fearlessness are the essential qualities that will make Dawa Ciren become a man in the future. They are also the necessary features that the new Tibet has in the modern age.

Furthermore, Dawa Ciren never refuses to accept new things and grasp the opportunity to see the new world. He actively faces the coming of the foreignness in his life. When the Khampas arrive at the village, unlike the villagers, who ask them to leave within two hours, Dawa Ciren treats them friendly. He observes how they live in their camp. When he gets the chance, he does not hesitate to talk with them. For instance, when a Khampa young man sees him outside his tent, he shows him a mini tape recorder. Although Dawa Ciren is a bit fearful of talking with the stranger, he does not run away. He says, "I saw this before."[25] He is excited at the modern thing he never sees. In Caiwang Namu's second return, he does not give up the opportunity to get her attention. He uses his sheep to stand in her way to Kaixi Manor, and then

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[22] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 101.

[23] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 31.

[24] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 46.

[25] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 36.

the mistress notices him. When he talks with her for the first time, he directly says, "Madam, this way, please."[26] When the mistress asks him why he seems to be familiar with her, he tells her: "When they, the adults, lifted my ear, I could see what you were doing in Lhasa."[27] In his illusion, there is a car, a house, and Madam Caiwang Namu, getting in a car with a beautiful girl.[28] His unconscious desire for a new and modern life is conveyed by his illusion. Therefore, when the mistress asks him whether he is willing to come with her to Lhasa, he accepts her invitation. In this event, everything seems to be accidental, but everything is intentional. If Dawa Ciren did not open himself, his fate would not have been changed. Thus, we can say that if Shambhala did not open itself to the outside world, it would not have become the new Tibet we see at present. In the modern age, the land is like the boy created by Zhaxi Dawa.

In Zhaxi Dawa's depictions, it seems that Caiwang Namu represents the traditional Tibet and Dawa Ciren represents the modern Tibet. She is the past, and he is the present and future. However, at the end of the story, the feminine Tibet and the masculine Tibet merge into each other. In the kiss scene, the male protagonist is obsessed with the voice of a female singer. Once listening to her voice, "he feels that there are hundreds and thousands of ants getting into his brain."[29] When he closes his eyes, he can see that the ants are sipping his brain and biting his skull. He feels numb, itchy, painful, and bloat. … If he does not listen to her voice, his heart will be stolen, empty and chokey. Interestingly, after he kisses the singer, Yangjin Namu, the magic of her voice disappears. He becomes normal when listening to her voice.[30] Since then, the singer's voice has never returned to its original state. Its magic is transferred to Dawa Ciren. When the band is embarrassed at their singer's absence, Dawa Ciren introduces himself to them. On the stage, when he sings the song that used to be sung by Yangjin Namu, all the people are attracted by his voice. The narrator says, "The voice which can touch the soul appears as the

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[26] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 28.

[27] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 29.

[28] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 29.

[29] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 116.

[30] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 218.

rising of the shiny sun. Fresh and new. One cannot tell whether it comes from a man or woman. It is both masculine and feminine. …"[31] In addition to the event of the kiss, the giant green mosquito episode also shows integration. Dawa Ciren's lover, Qiongji, is unable to have a relationship with the men from the mundane world. It is Dawa Ciren who gets her virginity.[32] After they have sex, Qiongji disappears and transfers into a giant green mosquito, flying away. In this episode, Dawa Ciren is the one who inherits the purity and holiness of the old Tibet, the feminine characteristics of the old Tibet. Indeed, Dawa Ciren's love for Yangjin Namu and Qiongji comes from his Oedipus complex towards his mistress, Caiwang Namu. For him, she is the perfect mother who is absent in his life. He was born without a mother and raised by his siblings. When he sees Caiwang Namu for the first time, the narrator says, "Suddenly he sees Caiwang Namu guarded by several persons at the wall. In his eyes, she is like the sun with shining lights. How attractive and bright she is! She is the sun he is familiar with. … he stares at Caiwang Namu across over the shoulders of Lunzhu Nuobu. Yes, it is her."[33] At this moment, the tone of the relationship between Dawa Ciren and Caiwang Namu is settled down. He, as the son of her previous housekeeper, views her as the master. In the meantime, he lacks a mother in his childhood. The mistress gradually replaces the biological mother to play the role of the mother in his life. There is an invisible connection between him and her. The imaginative mother saves him from the sufferings in his life. Here, Freud's family romance plays a role. However, the gap between him and her in social status prevents him from going further in their relationship. For this reason, he does not have the guts to have sexual fantasies about her. The appearances of Yangjin Namu and Qiongji timely saves him from the pain of the Oedipus complex. Both the female characters are, indeed, the incarnations of Caiwang Namu, the mother and the figure representing the motherland. The integrations between the male protagonist and the female characters indicate the integration between the male Tibet and the female Tibet: Tibet, which we see at present, is the hybrid of the feminine and masculine.

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[31] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 259.

[32] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 273-274.

[33] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 27.

The Hybridity in Space

Apart from the shaping influence of gender, space also plays a significant role in the conception and description of the homeland in Zhaxi Dawa's novel. The spatiality in the novel is also hybrid in theme and form. The setting of the story is located both in a village and a city. At first sight, Kaixi Village is a space characterized by primitivity, and Lhasa is a space characterized by modernity. When depicting the landscape of Kaixi Village, the author writes,

> The smell of the fried barley dough enters her nostrils, and the sound of the fireworks flies into her ears. … in the light, the image of the world appeared, like the music arriving from far to near. She finally arrives at the wild and romantic kingdom she dreams of: the hot and bright valley is as quiet as death, and the desert is filled with the hot air. The sun in the afternoon is too bright to see. On the horizon, there is the magic skyline of the mirage-like kingdom. The plateau is baked by the sun as white as the shocked sheep herd, running with the wind. The whole wasteland is floating, vague and indistinct. … When they drive the car to a slope, the horizon becomes broader. A plateau covered with rocks appears. The mountain around it is magnificent. The straight cliff is up to a hundred meters high. Its top, as flat as the man-made, goes along to the far. This natural wall is much more sublime than the world-known Great Wall.[34]

Kaixi Village is behind the natural wall. The mountain described in the passage is Gong Pala Mountain which protects the village. Due to the geographical location, it seems that the village escapes from the influence of time and permanently lives in its own world. In this passage, the readers can easily see the landscape of Caiwang Namu's dreamland: the valley, desert, wasteland, plateau, and mountain. It is an excellent artwork created by nature. In Caiwang Namu's three returns, the land remains the same: natural and wild. There is no modern technology that can create the view. For Caiwang Namu, that is what the land of the home should be. The writer continues, "Caiwang Namu in her mind has arrived her spiritual home, Kaixi Manor, which carries the last dream in her life. The car, passing through the wild valley of the Tibetan Plataea, sends her back to the home of her ancestors."[35] Only the naturalness of her homeland can make her have the sense of being at home.

When showing the image of the city, Zhaxi Dawa's depiction goes in a different direction:

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[34] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 3-8.

[35] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 9-10.

> Kaixi Manor is in the green forest near to Lhasa River. This beautiful and quiet place is the residence of the Tibetan nobles. The various white buildings are like the white mushrooms rising from the forest. Every afternoon, the servants, holding the umbrellas and carrying briefcases, follow their masters, who ride on the horses, on their way from the Gasha government to home. When the red iron doors open, the door watchers and servants bend down and welcome their masters. The mistresses fly on the swings in their gardens. The servants at the sites play the records from Bin Cruz Company with the gramophones. The young masters play with mahjong game under the awnings. … At nights, the low class living nearby believe that it is the heaven in the world, both far from and close to them, when hearing the music and laughs and smelling the fragrance of the meat and foreign foods.[36]

In this passage, even though the writer uses natural terms, such as "green forest," "mushrooms," and "river," to describe the view, it is far from nature. The Western white buildings are its landmarks. Everything and everyone in the landscape have their roles and stand in their positions. The space described in the passage is an orderly and civilized world, the miniature of a modern city in the early modern period. The modernity of the land is also demonstrated in the narration of how Qiongji loves her life in Lhasa. The writer writes, "The most prosperous city in the Tibetan plateau is like the heaven, which attracts her."[37] She likes to watch the giant yellow excavator lifting the tons of mud with its iron arm at the construction site, watch the elementary school students rushing out of the gate of the school, listen to the noise made by various languages and accents in Bakuo market, and walk on the hot, flat, and wide cement roads. She also likes to watch the people riding on the bicycles, bargaining in the market, and fighting on the streets. She loves the energy demonstrated in the city's modernity.[38] In this depiction, the writer uses his words to draw out the landscape of the city in the modern period. Technology is represented by the excavator, the cement roads, and the bicycles; knowledge is demonstrated by the elementary school and students; cultural diversity is shown by the noise in the market are its landmarks. This is Lhasa, the center of Tibet, which seems to be Shambhala for the modern Tibetans, especially the new generation.

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[36] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 56-57.

[37] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 71.

[38] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 71.

When describing the life in the two spaces, the author also writes about their difference. The life in the village is traditional. Its traditionality is demonstrated by the guardian of Gong Pala Mountain and Kaixi Manor, Beiji Quzhen, living in the village. The living goddess, Beiji Quzhen, is the survivor of a natural disaster. After the disaster, the villagers believe that she, as the demigod, is the guardian of the mountain and the manor. The host of Kaixi Manor sends her to watch the watermill in the village. From then on, the Kaixi people have a conviction: if the couple cannot have children in their marriage, they should go to the watermill and visit Beiji Quzhen. She will give them the specific day and time when they can have sex in the watermill.[39] For this reason, her watermill becomes the secret garden for the villagers. In Caiwang Namu's second return, which happens after Tibet's Democratic Reform and the Cultural Revolution, Beiji Quzhen is still there, and her watermill is still the secret garden. In the meantime, after the coming of a Han official, another secret garden appears. In the reform, Kaixi Manor becomes the official building of the Kaixi People's Commune. The Han official, Li Yonghua, changes its living room into a "club." According to its pronunciation in Mandarin, like the pronunciation of the summer radish in Tibetan, the villagers call the room "the Summer Radish Chamber." Li initially plans to teach the young men and women in the village the "revolutionary" songs and dances. Later, the function of the chamber is gradually changed. It becomes the place where the young men and women freely express their love for each other and the site where the male villagers indulge themselves in dissipation.[40] Thus, it seems that all the things brought into the land will be changed into native and primitive ones. As Dawa Ciren sees, "On the cliff of Gong Pala Mountain, there were several Han characters: The People's Commune is Good! At dust, when the shadow of the peak covers the characters, they are magically transferred into the "six-word mantra" in Tibetan: Om mane padme hum."[41] The powerful modernity, which successfully wipes out all the primitive and traditional things in other places in the world, does not work well in the village far from the madding crowd.

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[39] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 43-44.

[40] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 94.

[41] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 51.

The life in the city is modern. Through the passage quoted above, it is easy to notice that the nobles enjoy themselves in the Western way of life. Caiwang Namu, the representative of the traditional Tibet, is one of them. In her Kaixi Manor in Lhasa, there are full of modern appliances and equipment. After living in Lhasa for three years, Dawa Ciren has been familiar with this life. He can operate the appliances and equipment in his mistress's modern manor and hangs out with the gangsters on the streets every day. Going to the coffee shops, cinema, and clubs become a part of his everyday life. Meiduo, Caiwang Namu's second daughter, is a telegraph operator working for the office of the People's Liberation Army in Lhasa. Her elder sister, Deyang, is a student from Lhasa University and occupied with studying. The mistress's son, Cidan Renqing, graduating from Shanghai Conservatory of Music, likes to hang out with the band, "The Boy," who are the musicians majoring in Western music and working in the clubs. Because of him, Dawa Ciren becomes one of them. The young Tibetans are busy with organizing their rock and roll band and hope that it becomes the top band in Tibet. All of them are crazy with pop culture: having long and curved hair and wearing the fit suit and leather shoes, the standard outfit of the pop stars on TV.[42] In the daytime, they are sleepy. At night, they become energetic. Alcohol is the only necessity for them. In the meantime, the relationship between the girls and boys in the group is natural and unlimited. They never bind themselves with loyalty or marriage. They are like the Hippies living in the 1970s in America, fallen and romantic.

It seems that the landscapes and lives of the two spaces are totally different and there is no connection between them. Through the depictions, the readers may have the impression that the opposites (the primitive and modern) characterizing the two spaces will eternally keep the distance from each other. However, they are trying to integrate with each other. At first, the primitive village attempts to become modern. The story of the village happens between 1945 to 1980, when Tibet is in its early modern period. Since Caiwang Namu's first return, Kaixi Village has not been as wild and primitive as before. The mistress of Kaixi, Caiwang Namu, is a cultural and spatial hybrid. She is a Tibetan noble and was born in a noble family whose power spreads throughout Tibet. Ordinarily, with such a noble family background, she should be raised and grow up in her homeland, which should be the best place for her growth. Ironically, she was born

[42] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 116-117.

in England, spent her first seven years in India, and never saw her homeland before seven.[43] The woman coming from the West becomes the mistress of the primitive Kaixi Village. After her return, her father adds a new building, Kaixi Sakang, in Kaixi Manor, which is styled in the modern and Western way and decorated with Western furniture. As the author writes, "All the things in the building were changed into the foreign style. The thick carpet covered the floor made of Tibetan pine wood. Several heavy and big sofas made by cattle hide, a Western tea table, a console radio, a phonograph (Those things could not be used at that time because Kaixi did not have electric power) are placed in the living room. The building was filled with a Victorian grandfather clock, a European locker, red velvet curtains, bright gas lamps, …"[44]

In her second return, even though her people's emotions for her and her family have not changed and their way of life seems to be still traditional, we should not forget that Kaixi Manor has collapsed and Kaixi Village has been the Kaixi People's Commune. The villagers cannot escape from the influence of the outside world. For instance, when the head of the Kaixi commune sees how his members cry with the mistress of Kaixi Caiwang Namu, he asks himself, "What happens? Does Caiwang Namu's return mean that the old Tibet will come back? Will the sky change its color? How about the dictatorship of the proletariat? Where are the militias? Have they surrendered?" He cannot help shouting at Caiwang Namu, "Turn over the Three Feudal Lords! Fight against the enemy of the proletarian! Hooray, the Communism!"[45] Although some parts of the people's minds remain traditional, the other parts have been changed and modernized. They know clearly that the old social system has been destroyed and ended. In the new age, the past servants and serfs have become the masters of the land.

While the village is not as primitive as the people imagine, the city is not as modern as they believe. At first, Caiwang Namu's Kaixi Manor in Lhasa is a hybrid of modernity and tradition. It is in the area where the Tibetan nobles reside. All the manors there are in Western styles. The people living there enjoy their modern way of life. But, in the manors, the people

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[43] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 13-14.

[44] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 16.

[45] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 25.

never forget their traditions. Caiwang Namu designs her manor in a hybrid style. She maintains the Tibetan style in this manor: She asks the workers to open a window on the roof of the manor, which represents the gate to heaven, and build a Western fireplace in the living room, which represents the gate to earth. In Tibetan traditions, the house is the miniature of the universe. It should have the gate to heaven and the gate to earth.[46] She moves the Western furniture brought from India by her father to the living room and never forgets to decorate another living room with traditional Tibetan style for her husband. The stairs in the manor are changed from the narrow wooden stairs into the wide steel stairs to connect the gate to heaven and the gate to earth. Therefore, the city never confines its people within modernity. Living with the traditions in modern life is the major style of the life there.

At the same time, the young generation growing up in Lhasa never forgets to define themselves with their ethnicity. Even though they are lost in modern life, their love for cultural traditions is in their blood. When the violinist of the band, Ciba, sees an old Khampa man in Bakuo Market, he is obsessed with the music played by the man. For him, the melody does not belong to the mundane world. In his search for the sound of the old Tibet, he follows the Khampas and leaves Lhasa. The female singer of the band, Yangjin Namu, is attracted by the old feeling in Dawa Ciren. In her words, her generation gets the fragmented knowledge of Tibet from the books given by schools and the old scripts inherited from their ancestors. But she can see the old Tibet in Dawa Ciren, in whom there is an old and historical feeling. The history of Tibet seems to transfer into a feeling dwelling in him. It is familiar and obscure.[47] Therefore, Zhaxi Dawa gives Dawa Ciren the ability to communicate with the past beliefs. In Kaixi Village, he is the one who recognizes that the three goats are the incarnations of three lamas. In Lhasa, he is the one who first discovers the ghost in Kaixi Manor. When he enters the manor, he discovers the light green liquid-like air flowing from the storeroom. It has the smell of sulphur and disappears when coming out of the room. When he opens the door, he sees a familiar figure behind the tall closet. It is the old witch whose body swells like the body soaking the seawater for several centuries. When it sings the song, he recognizes that it is Beiji Quzhen. In the family,

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[46] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 58.

[47] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 118-119.

only he can see and communicate with her. She tells him about the significance of the silver saddle for the Kaixi Family and hopes he protects it for the mistress.[48] Furthermore, Zhaxi Dawa ends his story with the magnificent scene of the Tibetan people's worshipping of the Buddha of the Future in Lhasa. In the crowd, Dawa Ciren is one of them. They call, "The Buddha must win!"[49] Dawa Ciren, merging into the people, calls the name of the Buddha. The tears are full of his eyes.[50] This ending indicates that the modern space never takes the soul of the Tibetans away. It tries its best to be traditional again. The modernization of the primitive village and the traditionalization of the modern city vividly demonstrates that the homeland, Tibet, is the hybrid of the primitive and modern.

The Hybridity in Time

In Zhaxi Dawa's fictional aesthetics, time in Tibet takes the hybrid form of the three elements. At first, Caiwang Namu's temporality is mixed. She comes and goes among the past, the present, and the future. In her first return, she comes from Western countries, representing the present and future, and returns to Kaixi Village, representing the past. In her second return, she comes from Lhasa, which is in its transition from the present to the future, but her return to the Kaixi Commune transiting from the past to the present. In her third return, she loses herself in her imagination of the future (The third return happens in her dream). Similarly, the male protagonist, Dawa Ciren's temporality is characterized by the same pattern of time. He represents the new generation. He was born after the falling of the old Tibet. However, he is from Kaixi Village, which is in its transition from the past to the present. His father is the representative of the old social system. Later, he is brought to Lhasa, which is in its modernization and gets close to the future. He himself is one of the new generation who carries the future of Tibet. Ironically, he is raised and cultivated by the symbolic figure of the traditional Tibet, Caiwang Namu. She tends to come back to the past through him. In her dreams, he

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[48] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 59-60.

[49] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 384.

[50] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 384.

represents the old days. The past, the present, and the future are all parts of his essence. Qiongji is another example of the hybrid time. In her childhood, she lives as a Khampa. The Khampa tribe is the oldest tribe in Tibet, who are permanently on their way to Shambhala and eternally circle the holy snow mountains and temples in Tibet. For hundreds of years, they live like their ancestors and never change their lifestyle. But, in her youth, she lives as a city girl. As quoted above, she likes urban life and enjoys the noise of modernity. In the end, she is sent back to her original form, a giant green mosquito, by Dawa Ciren. Her life demonstrates the process: from the past to the present and future and from the present and future to the past. They are the Tibetans, whose life is a hybrid of the past, the present, and the future.

Furthermore, Zhaxi Dawa shows this hybrid temporality in his intention to break down the regular timeline in the narration. The narrations of the past, present, and future of Tibet do not appear in turns. When reading the story, the readers cannot tell which part of the narration belongs to the past, the present, or the future. The whole story begins with Caiwang Namu's dream about her third return to the Kaixi Commune, which will happen in the future. In the depiction, when she asks her lover, Suolang Yundan, to wake her up, she hears her daughter calling her in Kaixi Manor in Lhasa. When she opens her eyes, what she sees is not her daughter but the view of the wild plateau: the dry riverbed, the stones, and the wild antelopes. In the scene, the past, the present, and the future come together. The third return represents the future, the wild landscape represents the past, and the daughter represents the present. In the future, she is brought back to the past by the present. What is the time she is in? Nobody can give a definite answer. More interestingly, the writer does not set up any transition in the narration in which the different time elements mix with each other. In her dream of the future, she wakes up in the present and immediately returns to the past. The absence of the transition in time indicates that time in Tibet should not be identified as the time in the modern interpretation, having clear lines among the past which never comes back, the present which is in its progress, and the future which is waiting there. The three elements of time are mixed and present the image of Tibet in time together. The intentional disorder of time also appears in other places in the novel.

The narration about Dawa Ciren starts in Caiwang Namu's second return. It tells the readers about the difficulties he and his family face in their life in the Kaixi Commune. When the

narrator depicts how Dawa Ciren gets lost in Beiji Quzhen's magic singing, he turns to tell the first meeting between Dawa Ciren and Qiongji in Lhasa. He narrates,

> When Dawa Ciren screams, there is a sound talking to him, "Don't worry. She is happy to death. She never wants to hold her legs tight." The murmurs of the curses come over there. He sees the lawless guy lifting his pants and going to him. He throws a cigarette to him. Dawa Ciren squeezes it into powder. In the moonlight, he sees the girl putting her legs down. She is motionless and seems to fall into sleeping.[51]

In the quotation, the narrator tells of the rape happening between Dawa Ciren's brother and a village girl. After the quotation marks, he draws the picture of the unsuccessful rape happening between a Tibetan gangster and Qiongji. Again, the past and the present combine with each other. The chaotic arrangement of time indicates that the writer attempts to deconstruct the people's thinking of the temporality of the homeland. In the narration of the rapes, it seems that the past is the present and the present shows up as the past. Is there any difference between the past and the present? Will the past not appear in the future? The writer's answers seem to be no. Even though Zhaxi Dawa criticizes the Tibetan traditional thinking of time—eternal return, which might not bring his people outside of their existential confinement, as a Tibetan, he cannot agree with the modern interpretation of time, which uses the clear lines to divide time into three separatable parts. For him, Tibet should be like its people, "eternally coming and going between brightness and darkness, wisdom and ignorance, truth and lies." The past will be the present and future, and the present and future will become the past, too. Therefore, at the end of the novel, Zhaxi Dawa intentionally arranges an episode in which the past, present, and future mingle and interact to demonstrate the complex temporality of modern Tibet: it is the magnificent scene of the Tibetan people's worshipping of the Buddha of the Future. This event happens in the modern city, Lhasa. The crowd is the Tibetans living in the land. They are the present. But they sing for the Buddha, which represents their traditional past. However, this symbol of the past is in its image of the future. The past, present, and future appear at the same time and in the same space. This is indeed the epitome of the restless Shambhala, a land you cannot use simple terms to describe. It is always in its restless hybridity between the opposites in its nature.

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[51] Zhaxi Dawa, *The Restless Shambhala,* 52.

Alai: The Trinity of the Unhistorical, Historical, and Superhistorical: A Nietzschean Interpretation of Homeland

Since 1998 when he published his first novel *Red Poppies*, Alai has been viewed as the leading writer in Tibetan literature. Even in the context of contemporary Chinese literature, he is recognized as one of the most prestigious writers. The wide recognition comes from not only his ethnic writing of his homeland, Tibet, but also his writing of the history of Tibet as a part of the history of China. However, there is some misunderstanding about him and his works in the scholarship. Like Zhaxi Dawa, Alai is also half Tibetan. Thus, he is labeled as the inauthentic Tibetan whose writing of Tibet is not accurate. For some critics, his depiction of Tibet follows the image of "Old Tibet" (*jiu Xizang*) created by the Chinese government. The Tibetan writer and filmmaker Tenzing Sonam, who lives in exile in India, suggests that Alai is "a victim of his Chinese upbringing, faithfully spewing out the party line, unable to distinguish truths from lies."[52] Alai's depiction of "Old Tibet" can be said to "have rolled straight off the presses of the Communist Party's propaganda machine."[53] In "Literary Liberation of the Tibet Past: The Alternative Voice in Alai's *Red Poppies*," even though Nimrod Baranovitch attempts to change a similar attitude in Western academia towards Alai, his argument is based on the same recognition: the Communist Party's hegemony over Tibet. He believes that even if the writer writes about the dark side of "Old Tibet," he does not demonstrate it as the "Hell on Earth" and the Tibetan people as inhuman. His Tibet is different from the Tibet in the Communist Party's propaganda. Interestingly, in Chinese scholarship, there is also a critical response to Alai and his works. But the criticism goes in a different direction. In "The Dilemma of 'Pure Literature' and Epic Narratives," Shao Yanjun criticizes,

> Even though the structure of *The Empty Mountain* is broken into six parts, its narrative logic is consistent: The "old days" before the revolution are good, and the "new days" after it are bad; the people memorizing the "old days" are good, and the people welcoming the "new days" are bad or not good; the "revolutionaries" from the outside world are bureaucratic, the activists in the village are ambitious, the men are barbaric, the women are ugly, … even the machines in the novel are

[52] Nimrod Baranovitch, "Literary Liberation of the Tibetan Past: The Alterative Voice in Alai's *Red Poppies*," *Modern China,* vol. 36, no. 2 (2010), 171.

[53] Tenzing Sonam, "Grotesque Caricature," *The Hindu* (Nov. 27, 2002), accessed December 20, 2021. www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/mag/2002/11/17stories/2002111700600300.htm.

> destructive, for instance, the electronic saw cutting off the forests and the dynamite exploding the lake. The double-face modernity only shows its harmful influence.[54]

Although Shao, in her comments, leads her readers to notice Alai's writing of the negative influence of modernity, she intends to let them see political incorrectness in Alai's work, which does not conform to the mainstream discourse about Tibet in China. In this circumstance, even if Alai wins acclaim from his readers, he is in an awkward situation. Both in the West and China, he seems not to be the one who can demonstrate the "proper" Tibet through his words.

For me, those criticisms are too one-sided to represent Alai's thinking of his homeland, Tibet. The political-oriented view makes the scholars and critics unable to open their eyes in their interpretations of the writer's representation of Tibet. Both in the Western and Chinese criticisms, Tibet constantly plays a passive role in its own development. It is permanently dominated or saved. However, Tibet in Alai's writings is neither a victim nor a beneficiary. Its changes are not only the results of the global modernization but also the results of its own will. Confronting the coming of modernity, it reacts like other places in the world: it is anxious about the coming and suffers from the pain of the loss caused by modernization, while simultaneously being happy to see the coming and enjoying the benefits brought by it. In this circumstance, the writer believes that the writing of the homeland, especially the writing of the ethnic minorities' homeland, should not cater to the taste of the outsiders: only writing about its uniqueness and the pain of loss or only writing about its backwardness and the pleasure of its change. Demonstrating the common features which the homeland shares with other places is one of the missions the ethnic minority writers should take. Therefore, in his writing, his homeland is neither "Shambhala," the Tibetan utopia, nor "Old Tibet," the living hell. Instead, it is familiar and universal. Through his writing of Tibet, we can see and understand how our homelands were changed and changed through time.

In *The Epic of Root Village*, Alai, basing himself on Friedrich Nietzsche's view of history, narrates the vicissitude of a Tibetan village to illustrate a sense of history which not only reflects

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[54] Shao Yanjun, "The Dilemma of 'Pure Literature' and Epic Narratives," *Literary and Artistic Contention*, no. 2 (2009), 21.

the changes of Tibet in modern history but also demonstrates a universality of homeland. In "History and Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Time," Carl E. Pletsch concludes Nietzsche's thinking of human beings' relationship with history into three categories: the unhistorical, historical, and superhistorical. In his reading, Nietzsche believes that the general reactions of human beings to their history can be demonstrated by the three categories. In *On the Use and Abuse of History*, the philosopher mentions, "the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a community, and a system of culture."[55] With the unhistorical, men are good at being able to forget and living for the present. In the following, he continues, with the historical, men believe that the future featured with justice and happiness is the meaning of their existence. It is the result of the evolution of history. With the super-historical, men recognize that the world is complete and fulfills its aims in every single moment. There is no bad past or good future in history. The past is the present.[56] In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche raises three metamorphoses of spirit: the camel (the burden-carrying animal), the lion (the powerful beast), and the child (the innocent creature), which are used to describe the spiritual state of human beings in their development. In my point of view, the three metamorphoses are closely related to the three attitudes towards history. In some aspects, the child shows the unhistorical, who is innocent and forgetful and will not be confined by history; the camel demonstrates the historical, who is eager for carrying the burden of history and is waiting for the coming of the future, and the lion indicates the coming of the superhistorical, who has the ability to look back to what he believed and is believing in and dares to say "no" to "Thou shalt." Therefore, we can say that the human being is a trinity of the three metamorphoses, coming and going among the camel, the lion, and the child and human history is a trinity of the three attitudes, coming and going among the unhistorical, the historical, and superhistorical.

Like other places in the world, Tibet is also the trinity of the unhistorical, historical, and superhistorical, and the Tibetans are the trinity of the child, the camel, and the lion. *The Epic of*

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[55] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History,* Adrian Collins trans. (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1977), 8.

[56] Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History,* 10.

Root Village consists of six independent stories which are also related to each other. It tells the fate of a remote Tibetan village, Root Village, located between Tibet and inland China, from the 1950s to the 1990s. Its structure is presented as a flower whose petals go from the same root and in different directions. The three stories, *Gone with the Wind*, *Dase and Dage*, and *The Light Thunder,* demonstrate human relationships: the first one tells the story of two young children, Gela and Bunny; the middle one shows the friendship between two eccentric men, Dase and Dage; the last one writes about the relationship between the villagers and the outsiders. The other three stories, *The Fire, The Deserted,* and *The Empty Mountain*, target the natural landscape: the first one shows the destructions of the forests and lake; the middle one writes about the gradual loss of the farmland; the last one depicts the disappearance of the village. In the work as a whole, Alai cares about two topics: human society and natural environment, whose changes reflect the metamorphoses in the Tibetans' spirit and also reflect the changes in their attitude towards history. Like the people living in other places in the world, they are the child who forgets the past, the camel who is eager to carry the burden of history, and the lion who dares to say no to injustice given by the burden. The universality of the homeland is manifested by the three metamorphoses in the Tibetans' spirit.

The Unhistorical Tibet

At first, Tibet is the unhistorical land, and forgetfulness is its name. In Nietzsche's words, the unhistorical demonstrates "the art and strength of being able to forget" which makes human beings live in the immediate present. The unhistorical man will not be terrified by eternal becoming, named by Nietzsche as eternal return, because he is unaware of it. His forgetfulness does not allow him to live at present for the future based on the past.[57] The unhistorical Tibet is characterized by its people's collective forgetfulness. The time when the stories of forgetfulness in the work happen is between the 1950s to the 1970s, when Old Tibet came to its end and New Tibet came into being. In this period, Tibet and its people, like us, tried to get rid of their past and prepared for the coming of the future. Therefore, when Alai writes about the unhistorical

[57] Carl E. Pletsch, "History and Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Time," *History and Theory* (Middletown: Wiley for Wesleyan University, 1977), 33.

Tibet, he mainly focuses on writing how the people in Root Village live like the child, the last metamorphose mentioned by Zarathustra in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. They forget who they were and what they believed in the past and behave like the child, "innocent and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes."[58] They are too innocent and forgetful to recognize the influence of the past and the changes at present on their future. Confronting the coming of the new life, they say "Yes" without any doubt.

In the first two books, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Fire,* Alai mainly demonstrates how Root Village (the root of the Tibetans) is changed by forgetfulness into a rootless place.[59] In *Gone with the Wind,* the writer tells the story of two kids, but he also tells the story of an ex-monk, Enbo. The physical and spiritual secularization of the ex-monk predicts the start of the forgetfulness in the land. The unhistorical Tibet comes into being through his writing of the changes happening in Enbo's life. At the beginning of the book, Alai says, "Several years after the accident, Gela was grown up. Enbo, keeping his head down, came to him. When they met, he glared at Gela with his bloodshot eyes. … The strong body as a monster rose from the ground and came to him. …The meetings between the man and the boy were always silent and violent. …"[60] In this passage, the writer uses "glare," "bloodshot eyes," "strong body," "monster," and "violent" to show the hostility from the adult, Enbo, to the teenager, Gela. In the following, Alai writes Gela's memory of his first meeting with Enbo after the accident: "The man (Enbo) came to him. His strong body was bent by sadness, his handsome face was twisted by hatred, and his eyes were bloodshot. His gaze was as cold as the blade and as hot as fire."[61] Once again, he uses the words, such as "hatred," "bloodshot," "cold," "blade," "hot," and "fire,"

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[58] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 55.

[59] Alai names the village with the Chinese word, *ji,* which means the root in Tibetan. This naming indicates that for Alai the village represents the root of the Tibetans and the stories happening in the village are the stories demonstrate how the ethnic root is changed in the modern time. Since the root is a village, which is also an agricultural land, the writer also tries to depict how the root of the people living in countryside is changed by time. Therefore, *The Epic of Root Village* is not only the stories of the Tibetans but also the stories of the Chinese peasants.

[60] Alai, *Gone with the Wind* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 3.

[61] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 5.

to highlight the hostility from the adult. Through the depictions, no one can imagine that the man was a lama. His hostility toward the teenager draws the readers away from the ideal image of Buddhist monks, which should be kind, generous, and detached. They should have gotten out of the confinement of the secular moods. Ironically, Enbo is different. In the depictions above, it is easy to notice that the man like us is dominated by the moods, such as hatred, rage, and sadness. Interestingly, before the tragic accident mentioned by the writer, he was characterized by the goodness in his eyes and on his smiling face.[62] Why is he changed into the one we see at the beginning?

Enbo is forced to resume a secular life. Because of the new government, Enbo and his uncle, Jiangcun Gongbu, leave the temple and return to Root village. In the beginning, he remembers that he was a lama who should have a heart of mercy and kindness. Therefore, he treats the wild kid Gela and his mother Sangdan nicely, the vagrants in the village. Once they come to his yard, he will treat them with food. Gela even imagines that Enbo may be his father. Soon, everything starts to change. The ex-monk falls in love with a village girl, Le'er Jincuo. The love between them indicates the start of the forgetfulness in him. Enbo is forced to forget his original identity and beliefs. But when the love begins, the passive forgetfulness is internalized into the active forgetfulness. When his lover cries to him, "Enbo, your mother likes me so much. Please marry me and take me home!"[63] Even though he struggles within himself, he chooses to forget who he was. He comes to see his uncle, a Buddhist master, Jiangcun Gongbu, and says, "Master, please, beat me!" When he speaks out the words, he has decided to marry the woman he loves and start a new life. Indeed, Alai uses the changes happening in Enbo and his life to demonstrate the changes of his homeland, Tibet. Enbo's spiritual and physical secularization not only presents the passive forgetfulness brought by the political movements happening in the land but also the active forgetfulness in the Tibetans' spirit. As Jiangcun Gongbu murmurs, "Take it easy, the Buddha has gone to other places in recent years."[64] What the master tries to convey is

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[62] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 5.

[63] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 9.

[64] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 10.

the gradual loss of the influence of Buddhism on the whole group of the Tibetans. Because of the interruption of modernity, the traditional beliefs they believed in the past have become what they try to forget. Now they only care about the physical life, a life entirely different from the past one.

After the birth of Enbo's son, Bunny, the ex-monk's changes go to extremes and his disconnection with the past enters a new stage. Becoming a father means that he has been impossible to return to his original identity. The change in his relationship with Gela begins at this moment. Alai intentionally gives his son Bunny the sign of death. He depicts Bunny's birth like this: "The people said that the son's cries were weak. He was unable to sip her mother's nipples. He might not live long. In the winter, the snow went down several times. The message went down all over the village."[65] Moreover, "when Bunny was born, he was slim and fragile. The children born in the village were strong and healthy. Even when they were slim and weak at birth, if they ate food, they would become stronger. But Bunny was different. Once he ate more, the nutrition would go away with diarrhea. He was sick and spiritless all the time. Even when speaking, he was like a shy girl with a weak voice."[66] Due to Bunny's poor health, Enbo cares too much about him. He does not allow Bunny to play with Gela, who, in his eyes, will bring danger to his son. Much worse, in the incident of the firework, he believes the villagers' words and views Gela as the killer who causes the death of Bunny. The silent and violent meetings between him and Gela start from his son's death. Since then, Enbo has been dominated by negative moods full of hatred, rage, and sadness, which change him into the one we see at the beginning of the story.

When writing about Enbo's changes, Alai attempts to remind his readers that Tibet, even though having a long history, has a propensity for forgetfulness. As Enbo believed in Buddhism and was guided by the Buddhist teachings in the past, Tibet was a land of Buddhism. Its people viewed this belief as the light of their life. Therefore, the villagers can accept Gela and his mother, Sangdan, and let them live in the village. But in the 1950s, when the political movements wiped out the past beliefs, the people started to forget what they believed and who

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[65] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 12.

[66] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 21.

they were (the disciples of the Buddha). The land of Buddhism has not been the holy and pious land anymore. In the first book, there is no writing of the scenes about praying, chanting, and counting rosary beads. The absence of religious depictions indicates that the land has been secularized. What it pursues at that time is not spiritual enlightenment but physical gratification. The people living in the village become more and more selfish, cold, and vicious. They are the ones who spread the rumor: Gela threw the firework and killed Bunny. They are the ones who push Enbo to hate Gela. They are the ones who witness how Enbo mistreats Gela and do nothing. They have not been the disciples with the heart of mercy and kindness. In the meantime, in the book, working hard in the field and getting the food from the soil are not the primary tasks for the villagers. What they are waiting for is the convenience brought by technology. Therefore, in this book, Alai demonstrates two types of forgetfulness: spiritual forgetfulness (giving up the identity as the Buddhist disciples) and physical forgetfulness (giving up the identity as the traditional peasants). Alai sets up the death of Bunny on the day when the villagers celebrate the construction of the first road in Root Village. The inauguration ceremony of the road brings the trucks and marks the year as the Year of the Road, which is the most significant year in the history of Root Village.[67] Everything is changed on this historic day. It is the line that cuts off the connection between the past and the present. On the day, Bunny dies due to the firework brought by the outsiders. The villagers, both the children and adults, accuse Gela of killing Bunny, even though he does not. Enbo is blinded by hatred and rage and views Gela as his foe. Gela dies spiritually with his little brother, Bunny. Also, on the day, the relationship between the villagers and their land is changed. All the things happening on the day foreshadow the beginning of the collective forgetfulness in the village. Since then, the villagers have not been the Tibetans, the people of Buddhism and the traditional peasants. Forgetting the past belief changes their nature (kindness and mercy), and forgetting the past identity changes their essence (the reverence for nature).

Although the child in Nietzsche's thinking will bring human beings the ultimate freedom, for Alai, it may bring something dangerous to his people. Because of it, Enbo and the villagers are changed into the people we read in the story. Because of it, Root Village cannot escape from

[67] Alai, *Gone with the Wind*, 76.

the fate of being changed into a rootless land. In the first book, Alai tells how the people forget their past and become the unhistorical men. In the second book, *The Fire,* he tells how the village destroys its history and becomes the unhistorical land. In the beginning, the writer mentions a fire coming from the sky, which will burn up the whole village. It says, "It was nineteen sixty-seven. The death of Gela happened several years ago. Therefore, the story starts without the intention to write about the stories of Root Village as a chronicle, when I mention the dead boy who wandered in the forests of the village after his death. The reason for mentioning him is that the unprecedented fire is predicted by Gela's mother, Sangdan. The catastrophic fire burned in the village for thirteen days."[68] At first, the writer gives us the specific time when the fire happens. It is 1967, the year when the Cultural Revolution began. The setting of the time is not random. Alai intentionally chooses the year as the time when the fire happens. Only this year can give the fire a proper environment to burn. In the year, all the people living in China, behaving like the child, tried their best to forget their history and destroy all the things given by the past. After the Anti-Japanese War and the Civil War, the Chinese were still infused with a fighting spirit. When the foreign enemies had been driven away, they started to find the enemies within themselves. In this circumstance, the past and its morals and values guiding the country for thousands of years became the targets of their fighting. The overwhelming enthusiasm of turning over the past value system became the fire burning up all the old things inherited from the past. The fire coming from the sky seems to be natural, but it is, in effect, man-made. The natural catastrophe in the real world reflects the spiritual catastrophe in the mental world of the Chinese people in the Cultural Revolution. For the writer, the fire in the village is actually the materialization of the fire in the people's minds.[69] It is frantic and destructive, reflecting the people's spiritual state at that time. Acting like the child, the people are obsessed with forgetting

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[68] Alai, *The Fire* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 26.

[69] In the story, Alai conveys his thinking about the fire, which is spoken out by the wizard, Duoji, who is the only one trying to extinguish the fire and insisting on believing in the traditional conventions. He says, "The fire can be extinguished. If the men do not make it dead, the sky will. But how about the fire in the people's heart?" See Alai, *The Fire,* 92

and destroying. The fire, even though coming as a natural fire, is set up by the people themselves.

Confronting the signs of the fire, the child-like villagers choose to ignore them and let the destruction happen under their eyes. Before the coming of the fire, the writer designs an unprecedented drought happening in the spring of the year. Unfortunately, there is no one in the village to care about the first sign, which silently prophesies the coming of the disaster. Therefore, Alai designs the plot, in which the second sign is given through words. In the plot, the mad woman, Sangdan, predicts the disaster. She murmurs, "Listen. The two golden ducks in Semo Cuo Lake are flying away."[70] The story of the golden ducks comes from the village's oral myth, in which they are the guardians of the forests surrounding the village. The disappearance of the ducks indicates that the forests protecting the village face the danger of being destroyed. Tragically, there is no one believing the words coming from the mad woman. Like the mad man in the marketplace in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* she is despised and laughed by other people. In the following, the third sign comes visibly. Alai writes,

> At the time, the people noticed the dark cloud in the sky. It was still there. On the top, the cloud was silver, reflecting the light of the moon, and at the bottom, the cloud was bright red.
> … Therefore, the villagers chose to forget it as it was not there. It seems that through this way it will not happen.[71]

In this depiction, Alai uses "the dark cloud," "silver," and "bright red" to demonstrate how visible the sign is. He also uses "forget," "not there," and "will not happen" to demonstrate how forgetful and ignorant the villagers are. Through the signs, it seems that the past shouts at the people that they should be aware of the coming of disaster. But unfortunately, its warnings conveyed by the three signs do not wake the people up from their collective forgetfulness. Without any difficulty, the fire comes.

When the fire arrives, it sings, "I have warned you before I came. Nobody listened to me," "Do not fear for me. What I bring to you are just the reflections of your mind," "All the things that should be destroyed, no matter life, moral, rule, happiness, suffering, hatred, or love, will be

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[70] Alai, *The Fire*, 32.

[71] Alai, *The Fire,* 47.

destroyed," and "Listen, confronting such a catastrophe, you should learn to accept. Death is birth, and birth is also death. The light from death is the light from the new birth. You can create a new world based on the pure mind."[72] Through the sing of the fire, Alai attempts to convey the concept of eternal return, a Buddhist concept, which is also the core concept in Nietzsche's thinking of human history. Even though the child is the last metamorphose of the spirit of human beings, it is also the beginning one. In Nietzsche's thinking, human beings eternally come and go among the camel, the lion, and the child and live with the attitudes: the unhistorical, historical, and superhistorical. The beginning can be the end, and the end can be the beginning. In other words, the child can be the last metamorphose and also the first one. Its appearance in Root Village manifests that the land is in its unhistorical stage. Without the burden of the past, the people are free, destructive, and forgetful. Thus, in the end, the fire burns up almost ten percent of the forests surrounding the village. In the following ten years, the villagers cut all the forests left in the fire with their own hands.[73] The powerful fire of forgetfulness brings the men to a new stage, in which the history of Tibet will be rewritten.

The Historical Tibet

After the fire, the village enters its next decade (The Cultural Revolution). In this period, Alai writes about how the people, behaving like the camel (one of the three metamorphoses of the spirit), hurry to equip themselves with the new values and morals after getting rid of the spiritual burden of the past. As Zarathustra says in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "There are many heavy things for the spirit, for the strong, weight-bearing spirit in which dwell respect and awe: its strength longs for the heavy, for the heaviest. … The weight-bearing spirit takes up itself all these heaviest things: like a camel hurrying laden into the desert, thus it hurries into its desert."[74] In this stage, the people's attitude toward history is demonstrated as the historical, which is the

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[72] Alai, *The Fire,* 139. In the singing of the fire, Alai uses the ancient language, which is entirely different from the language used by the villagers, to demonstrate the origin of the fire. Through its words, it is easy to know that it comes from the past.

[73] Alai, *The Fire,* 220.

[74] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 54.

second attitude mentioned by Nietzsche. With this attitude, the men recognize eternal becoming, but they choose to ignore it by seeing the present only as "a hyphen between the past and the future."[75] In other words, they know that what they are carrying might bring them pain and suffering, but they still believe that the history created by themselves will give them a bright and prosperous future.

In *The Fire,* when writing about how the people live as the child who tries its best to forget the past and start a new life, Alai reveals that those child-like men still live as the camel in their spirit. Before the Cultural Revolution, the people moved away the statues of the Buddha from the niches in their houses, which existed with them for hundreds of years. For several years, the niches have been empty. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, a new figure is filled in the niches. As the writer depicts, "There are blessing words on the sides of the niches. On the left, it writes, 'A long life for the great leader.' On the right, it writes, 'A good health for Lin, the Deputy Commander.' In the middle, there is a bust of Chairman Mao."[76] The villagers also learn a set of observations to worship the new god in their life. This replacement indicates the appearance of the camel. After getting rid of the burden of the past, the child-like people hurry to create the new history which is manifested by the reappearance of the burden, the burden of the new moral and value system. In the process, the camel gradually replaces the child in the spirit of the Tibetans. That is why when the mad woman Sangdan predicts the coming of the fire, the activists, Suobo and Yangjin, accuse her of propagating feudal superstitions, which go against what they believe now. Yangjin also warns her mother, "Ah ma, you should not believe the bullshit," "Our poor and lower-middle peasants should not believe in superstitions, and the members of the Communist Youth League should fight against them," and "The Communist Party is our savior!"[77] Since then, the camel has become the major form of the villagers' spirit.

Alai also depicts how the camel-like people create the desert where they hurry to enter. When the fire comes, what the people try to do is not to extinguish it. The guideline in the

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[75] Pletsch, "History and Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Time," 33.

[76] Alai, *The Fire,* 44.

[77] Alai, *The Fire,* 33.

Cultural Revolution is class struggle, which aims at capturing the class enemies in the country. Therefore, all the conferences related to the fire are based on a common recognition: It is caused by the class enemies! It is ignited by the enemies![78] Therefore, they display a red flag of the slogans: It is joyous to fight with the sky! It is joyous to fight with the earth!"[79] Nature becomes the target of their fighting in the fire. In Bonist teachings, all the creatures in nature are the gods or goddesses the people need to respect in their life. With the enthusiasm of the revolution, the villagers do not fear the power of nature. They take their axes to cut the forests which live with them for thousands of years. With the spirit of fighting, they do not fear that the golden ducks in the lake will fly away. For them, the new god sitting in their niches is much more powerful than the past ones. They need to cut the forests down and send the wood to the capital to build a palace for him. As Suobo says, "Bullshit! If the golden ducks are powerful enough, whether they do not know that those wood will send to the capital of Tibet and build the palace?"[80] The destruction of the natural environment allows the camel to create the physical desert. What comes next is that the villagers commit the massacre of monkeys after the fire burns up the forests. In order to prevent the hungry monkeys living in the forests from eating the crops left in the fields, the villagers shoot them with their rifles. In the third book, *Dase and Dage,* when retelling the massacre, the narrator asks, "The thousand-year contract was broken. Dase, the sky was cracking. But nobody in the village noticed the crack. Did you see it? Or had you felt the pain brought by it, like the pain when the lightning went through your body?"[81] The breaking of the contract between the Tibetans and nature indicates that the desert is physically ready for the camel-like people. Therefore, Alai names the fourth book *The Deserted*, which reveals the aftermath of living as the camel. The village in the book becomes a desert that is unsuitable for living.

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[78] Alai, *The Fire,* 79.

[79] Alai, *The Fire,* 82.

[80] Alai, *The Fire,* 103.

[81] Alai, *Dase and Dage* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 136.

The village is not only a physical desert but also a spiritual desert. In *Dase and Dage,* Alai writes about how two types of books are treated differently by the people. He writes, "At that time, the trucks of the paper mill just left. They would come back again and carry the books of thoughts and knowledge back to the mill. The books would pour into a pool in which they would be softened by chemicals and smashed by the machine. Originally, there was a silent, thoughtful, and intelligent person hiding in every book. But when coming out of the pool, the paper starch had nothing left except water and alkali."[82] Several years after Dase returns to Root Village, he goes to the town and visits the only bookstore on the street. When depicting the bookstore, Alai writes, "There were four red characters made by iron above the door of the bookstore: Xin Hua Book Store. … He knew that they were written by Chairman Mao. … Most of the shelves in the store were empty. There were forty or fifty kinds of books on the rest of the shelves. The chairman's books were in red. Marx and Engels' books were in gold and brown."[83] When seeing through the hole on the back wall of the store, Dase finds more books. "He saw numerous new books. In the sunlight penetrating through the window, he noticed the gold light from the covers of the books. They had no difference from the books on the shelves."[84] In the depictions, it is easy to notice the different fates of the two kinds of books. One is sent to the paper mill waiting to be destroyed. The other is brand new and decorated, sitting on the shelves and waiting for reading. This classification reveals that the camel-like men do not carry everything on their backs. What conforms to the ideology of the new age is what they are willing to carry. If not, it will be abandoned without any hesitation. In other words, the comparison of the abandoned books and the cherished books indicates the camel-like men not only hurry to carry the burden they believe but also hurry to get rid of the burden which goes against their beliefs. When the thought or the way of thinking loses its variety, the spiritual desert of the camel appears.

To physicalize the camel in the spirit, in *Dase and Dage* and *The Deserted*, Alai intentionally creates three characters whose images correspond to the image of the burden

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[82] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 40.

[83] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 181.

[84] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 181.

animal. In *Dase and Dage*, the narrator, "I," has a camel-like body. When the people talk about him, one says, "Look. Such a little boy. Why can he walk like carrying too many things on his back?" The other replies, "It is not on his back but in his mind. He is like Dase."[85] Indeed, the writer writes about "I" to reveal the current state in which his people are. When they enter the new age, they hurry to carry the new burden on their backs and use the new concepts and thoughts to equip themselves. The burden in their mind makes the kid walk like an old man. From the conversation between the villagers, we know that even though the people can notice the impact of the spiritual burden on the kid, they are still unaware that they are also the camel, the burden-carrying animal, and carry the burden on their backs. In the following, the writer, through his writing of "my" reaction, demonstrates how heavy the burden is in their spirit. When depicting "my" reaction after reading Dase's books, the writer writes, "I found for a while (finding the words he recognized). There were a "one," two "woods," a "flower," and numerous "ofs." There were some words familiar, but I was not sure about them. I said innocently, 'There is no Chairman Mao, the Communist Party, and Hooray.' He (Dase) smiled. I continued, 'There is no overthrow, too.'"[86] "I," at that time, is still a little boy who is in his age of learning. What he points out are only the simplest words in Chinese. But the political terms coming from his mouth are the most complicated ones. How can an illiterate boy who lives in a remote village get to know those modern political words? It is the ideology believed at that time that makes the kid spiritually and politically premature. He not only walks like an old man but also thinks like an adult. He is young, but he is also old. His deformity vividly shows how the camel-like people look like under the heavy burden.

There is another camel-like character in *Dase and Dage.* The activist, Suobo, in the Cultural Revolution, has become the head of the village. One day, he brings a Han carpenter back to the village. His surname is Luo, which in Chinese means "the camel" (*luo tuo*). When the villagers ask the meaning of his surname, he replies, "Come on. It means the camel. A kind of

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[85] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 135.

[86] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 84-85.

animal, bigger than the yak."[87] But the villagers still have no idea what this animal looks like. The carpenter explains, "Do you know the hunchback?" The people laugh that the hunchback is the poor one who carries a flesh bag on his back. Luo claps his hands and says, "Yes. Yes."[88] The animal is born with two flesh bags. When Suobo asks, "So you are the animal?" He replies, "Yes, the head. I am what you say. …"[89] The camel hidden in him is presented by his name and also his role in the village. No one in the village knows where he is from. But everybody knows that he is not a nobody. Whenever he comes, the cadres in the commune will ask the village head to treat him well. For the villagers, he comes from above and represents the authorities. In *The Deserted,* Alai writes, in the Cultural Revolution, Luo never leaves the village. In the years of his stay, he gradually views himself as one of the locals. He, like the teachers at the village school, has his own room in the school. The villagers treat him as an outsider, but for him, he is not. He seems to be the spokesman of the commune leaders whose appearance guarantees the villagers to live like the camel in their daily life. For instance, Suobo questions his identity and says, "Oh, now I realize that you are not the native in Root Village. How could you speak like a leader when not having a household register?"[90] Luo replies immediately, "I am Chinese. Once I am in China, I can stay where I want to stay. If you can say that Root Village is not in China, I will leave as soon as possible. Moreover, the leadership is not a natural ability. You can be the head, which does not mean that other people cannot."[91] Through his words, it is easy to recognize that Luo tries to induce Suobo to give an improper answer, which might bring him the danger of political incorrectness. If Suobo asks him to leave the village, he should admit that Root Village, the Tibetan village, does not belong to China and is not under the management of the government. The mistake in words will bring about the mistake in politics, which will physically

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[87] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 96.

[88] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 97.

[89] Alai, *Dase and Dage,* 97.

[90] Alai, *The Deserted* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 60.

[91] Alai, *The Deserted,* 60.

and spiritually destroy Suobo. The danger hidden in Luo's words makes Suobo nervous. Since then, he never expresses his feelings about the Han in public.

Meanwhile, when the folk singer, Xiela Qiongba, expresses his confusion about the activists in the village, he also feels the danger in Luo's reply. The Tibetan folk singer is confused about why the activists in the village always give the people an unpleasant impression: "The progressive young men are not bad guys, but they seem not to be the good ones."[92] When he tells Luo about his thought, Luo thinks about it and waves his head, "I don't think so."[93] A few minutes later, Luo looks at Xiela Qiongba and smiles at him. In his eyes and smile, there is something unspeakable. It seems that he gets to know Xiela Qiongba's secrets. At this moment, the singer fears the carpenter, whom he looks down upon. As a matter of fact, the appearance of the carpenter in Root Village endlessly reminds the villagers of the burden (the ideology of the Cultural Revolution) carried on their backs. Once they question the authority of the ideology and their thoughts deviate from the guideline of the ideology, Luo will draw them back to the right track, no matter through his words or his facial expressions. He is the one who makes the villagers know what the camel is. He is also the one who keeps them in the form of the camel. Everything he sees and listens will be naturally connected to the burden. That is why no one in the village can defeat Luo in speaking.[94]

In *The Deserted*, Alai creates a hunchback whose life directly shows how the camel lives in its desert. In the beginning, the writer introduces, "At the beginning of the liberation (of Tibet), the hunchback became the secretary of the party branch of Root Village, because he was a Red Army soldier."[95] His name is Lin Dengquan, but no one in the village calls his Han name. For convenience, the villagers call him Hunchback and gradually forget his original name. His

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[92] Alai, *The Deserted,* 55.

[93] Alai, *The Deserted,* 55.

[94] More interestingly, when the working team assigned to Root Village discovers that Luo has no household register, he is exiled. But he does not leave too far. He becomes the carpenter who makes wooden boxes for the workers in the logging camp nearby. Once the workers leave, they will find that there are too many things they gather through these years. Only Luo can give them the boxes which can carry their stuff. His role in the logging camp is still the one who helps the people carry the burden.

[95] Alai, *The Deserted,* 3.

hunchback is not in-born but caused by the injury in the Long March. When he arrives at the village, he is an innocent peasant, like other peasants in other villages in China, only caring about the field and crops growing up in the field. At that time, the pain of his back seldom bothers him in his life. In order to have the field, he works for the headman in the village as a groom. When the headman promises to give the wasteland to him, he cries to his wife, "I attended the Red Army for the field. They said that the land would be distributed to the poor people. If I knew that there was much land here, I would have come and have not experienced the pain of the war."[96] At this moment, he is still the peasant who believes that only the field can save him and give him the life he pursues. As he says, "Don't worry. For the peasants, the land is their life. Once having the land, they will have everything."[97]

But when the liberation begins, everything changes. The writer writes, "When the Communist Party was coming, the world was upside down. The nethermost was dug out and on the top, and the uppermost was buried in the soil and at the bottom."[98] The hunchback becomes the secretary at this point. With the start of the political movements in the Great Leap Forward, he gradually feels the pain of his hunchback, which he cannot bear anymore. After attending the meeting in the county, he brings back two songs. One sings, "Fighting for General Line! Fighting for thirty thousand *jin* per acre!"[99] The other sings, "Rat-a-tat! Rat-a-tat! Working harder and harder, everyone collects manure for six hundred thousand *jin*!"[100] The hunchback, even though having doubts about the lyrics, still believes that they sing the truth. As Alai writes, "It was scientific. The Communist Party believed in science. The hunchback was the secretary of the party brunch who should believe the science believed by the party."[101] Therefore, when the honest peasant, Xiela Dunzhu, says that he does not believe the lyrics, the hunchback views the

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[96] Alai, *The Deserted,* 9.

[97] Alai, *The Deserted,* 12.

[98] Alai, *The Deserted,* 19.

[99] Alai, *The Deserted,* 26.

[100] Alai, *The Deserted,* 26.

[101] Alai, *The Deserted,* 28.

poor peasant as his and the whole village's enemy and organizes the villagers to fight against him. In one of the struggle meetings, he slaps Xiela Dunzhu (it is the first time in his life that he slaps a person) and accuses him of the crime of going against the party. He says, "You, the saboteur. You want us to have the meetings to fight against you. You, the conspirator. You want to prevent us from working in the fields and stopping our production in this way."[102] In the guide of the lyrics, the hunchback organizes the villagers to collect manure and send them to the fields. The result of their incredible feat is that Root Village is clean and its smell is fresh. Unfortunately, the following year becomes the most difficult year in the history of Root Village. All the seeds planted in the soil are burned up by manure. Even though the weather in the year is good, there is no shoot growing from the land. Although the hunchback carries numerous bags of sand to the fields, no miracle appears. Facing his failure, he starts to cry from the pain in his back every night. He cries, "I regret, I regret! I am guilty, I am guilty, and I commit the crime!"[103] His crying is so loud that the whole village can hear it. After this incident, the hunchback holds a stick in his hand and tells the people he meets that he is useless and unable to work in the field.[104] Indeed, the tragic change of the hunchback is not caused by the physical hunchback carried by him. The pain he feels and the inability he experiences are brought by the spiritual burden carried in his mind. It is the ideology in the movements that changes him into a real hunchback who cannot have a normal walk. More tragically, as the camel, he is blinded by the burden carried in his mind and still believes that he is the one who makes such a big mistake. For him, the future promised by the government will be bright and prosperous. He is the one who misunderstands its policies and brings about the result.

The Superhistorical Tibet

In the process of modernization, Root Village experiences the pain brought by its forgetfulness and obsession with the burden. With the pain, the villagers gradually wake up and

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[102] Alai, *The Deserted,* 29.

[103] Alai, *The Deserted,* 36.

[104] Alai, *The Deserted,* 36-37.

reconsider what they did in the past. Therefore, the lion appears in the spirit of the people. In this metamorphosis, the people dare to say no to the established value system and pursue the life they live at their will. Zarathustra says, "To create new values—even the lion is incapable of that: but to create itself freedom for new creation—that the might of the lion can do. To create freedom for itself and a sacred No even to duty: the lion is needed for that, my brother."[105] In this stage, the lion-like people get to know the truth of their relationship with history. They start to question the burden in their minds. Once the values confine their existence, they will say no to them. Through "the sacred No," Tibet gradually becomes superhistorical. The people get to know what was believed in the past and is believed at present might not guarantee a bright future. History always comes and goes again and again. Eternal return is its name. As Nietzsche interprets, the man with the superhistorical attitude, different from the historical man who is aware of eternal return and attempts to avoid it, recognizes eternal return and never tries to shy away from it. He knows that "history is the most recent and only very small segment of the past 'infinity.'"[106] "It is what mankind remembers, and continues to the present along the lane leading to the gateway named 'moment.' At the end of the future infinity, it will be repeated and then, too, not as history itself, but again as a small portion of a recurring infinity."[107] In other words, the superhistorical man knows clearly that what he had in the past and creates at present are only tiny parts of the whole history of human beings. The past has gone, which does not mean that it will not come back in the future. The present is here, which does not mean it will not become the past. No matter how bright and prosperous the future is imagined, it might not show itself in the way he imagines. What he cares about is not the present cared by the unhistorical man or the future cared by the historical man but time as the whole of the three time elements. What one did in the past impacts the present and future, what he does at present should be for and toward the future, and what the future shows may be the return of the past. After the Cultural Revolution, the camel in

[105] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 55.

[106] Pletsch, "History and Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Time," 37.

[107] Pletsch, "History and Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Time," 37.

the villagers' spirit turns to the lion, which shows the people's will to power and allows them to be the bystanders of their own history.

At first, the lion comes when the camel is still the major form of their spirit. In *The Deserted,* after the manure collected by the villagers burns up the seeds in the fields, the village head, Suobo, recommends that the whole village should move to another place where their ancestors dwelled. In the past, for survival, Root Village transferred from one place to another multiple times.[108] Suobo and his team find the place, which is one of the original dwellings of their ancestors. Although the leader of the work team assigned to Root Village tells Suobo that the relief food is on its way and he does not agree with Suobo, Suobo still insists on returning to the past land. When the leader of the work team blames that it is the villagers who are incapable of planting crops in their fields, Suobo replies, "The problem is not caused by our inability but by the debris flow. If we did not destroy the forests, it would not have taken away the soil from our land."[109] In Alai's depiction, Suobo is always the activist in the village, whose mind constantly follows the ideology dominating the land. But now what he says reveals he seems to wake up and see the truth. The truth coming out of his mouth indicates the exchange between the camel and the lion in the spirit of the villagers. When the work team leader asks him who will migrate, Suobo replies directly, "Not me. It is us, me and the whole village!"[110] Since Suobo leaves for the new home, he has become the hero only existing in the myths and legends in the villagers' eyes. Alai writes, "His tall and slim figure gradually disappeared. The shaky figure was slightly overburdened, but it had a sense of responsibility and took an unknown mission. … Seeing Suobo's figure, the people who felt that they got something from his leave had tears in their eyes."[111] Suobo's change predicts the change happening in the village. At the end of *The Deserted,* the writer writes that after the memorial meeting of the great leader, the villagers spontaneously return to their fields and do what the peasants did in the past. Soon, the logging

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[108] Alai, *The Deserted,* 89.

[109] Alai, *The Deserted,* 92.

[110] Alai, *The Deserted,* 92.

[111] Alai, *The Deserted,* 94-95.

camp is closed, and the work team leaves. In the next spring, even though the debris flow comes back again, it is much milder than before. The grass and bushes cover the mountains again. It seems that Root Village has started to return to its original state.

Ironically, after the burden of the Cultural Revolution has gotten off the backs of the people, the new one appears. In the period of the Opening Reform (1978), China concentrated on its economic development, which directly made money the only standard to judge people in the society. In the fifth book, *The Light Thunder,* Alai writes how his people wake up from their dream of a money-oriented life. The protagonist, Lajia Zeli, is a lion-like character. He is the beast who knows how to fight for survival. His father was dead before his birth. But he was never upset about the absence of his father. He believed that once he studied hard, he could give a better life to his family in the future. However, when the Opening Reform starts, the college diploma does not mean a better life. He loses the hope of changing his and his family's fates. As he writes in his last essay, "The future will be beautiful and prosperous, but the reality is crucial and cold."[112] To earn money, he drops out of high school. Even though he is a good student in school, he never feels sad about his dropping. During the summer vacation, he decides not to return to school. The eighteen-year-old young man uses the waste wood from the abandoned houses to build a cabin on the street of Shuanjiangkou (The Mouth of the Double Rivers) Town. On the first day, he builds up the frame of his cabin; on the second day, he covers his cabin with the roof; on the third day, the door is ready. At the night of the third day, he gives his cabin the windows. Within three days, he finishes the construction of his cabin. When his girlfriend tries to persuade him to come back to school, he never changes his mind. Boss Li, the tea house owner in the town, asks him, "Young man, do you want to stop? Maybe you should stop. You see how sad the girl was."[113] He smiles, "If I had a father who could take care of my family, I would have

[112] Alai, *The Light Thunder* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 9.

[113] Alai, *The Light Thunder,* 5.

come back with her."[114] Lajia Zeli is such a young man who never lowers his head to life. No matter how hard life is, he always tells himself, "You should be strong."[115]

After two years, he finally gets the chance he waits for. Within the two years, he becomes the boss of the smallest store in the town, who lives on pumping up and repairing tires for the passing-by trucks. Even though he is the boss, he has not had access to the business, which can make him rich. Fortunately, Boss Li, the secret boss of the business, admires his "heroic" performance in the interrogations and gives him an official approval for cutting five-cubic-meter timber. (For transporting the timber, one of the villagers in Root Village hit the head of the checkpoint in the town with his truck. Lajia Zheli knows who the driver is, but he does not report him to the police who tortures him in the interrogations.) He sees the hope for having a better life. In the past, the forests in the mountains were the collective property, which only the national logging camps had the right to exploit. In the period of the Opening Reform, the individual who has official approvals can have the right to cut trees in the forests.[116] Root Village now lives on the business of timber. After the interrogations, Lajia Zheli becomes one of the people obsessed with the golden light of money. Even when Boss Li asks him whether he dares to cut a larch tree, a rare species, he promises to get it for him. In this age, money is above the law. It seems that the people can break or ignore every norm or convention in their way to getting rich. Therefore, when an old man in the village warns Lajia Zheli, "Son, be careful when you walk. Do not miss your step," he thinks, "Once the real life starts, no epigram is useful."[117] Even though the slogan "Protecting the Forests! No Causal Felling is Allowed!" is painted on the walls, no one follows and obeys it. Over ten days, Lajia Zheli becomes the businessman who has over ten thousand yuan in his pocket. Later on, to earn more money, he, sponsored by the local forestry bureau, opens a woodworking factory. He is changed from an unofficial logger into the official one. Within two or three months, he becomes a millionaire. With the increase of his fortune, the

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[114] Alai, *The Light Thunder,* 5.

[115] Alai, *The Light Thunder,* 10.

[116] Alai, *The Light Thunder,* 24.

[117] Alai, *The Light Thunder,* 77.

young man does not get the happiness which he pursues. Even though he gives his family a better life, he always has a sense of guilt. He, like his villagers, is a lion in his life and fights for money. However, he seems not to be the lion that dares to say no to "the great dragon"—"Thou shalt."[118] Everything he does in his life still follows the orders of "Thou shalt." Because money is the only social standard, he should have it. Because a better life means more money, he should earn more by no means. Because cutting trees can bring money, he should take his axe and enter the forests. Because other people in the village and town live off cutting trees, he should live off it, too. Although he and his people try to get rid of the fate of being the slaves of life, they never get out of it. They are still the camel, the lion-like camel.

At the end of the book, Lajia Zheli finally gets out of his obsession with money. He finally becomes the lion he wishes to be. He not only says no to "Thou shalt" (closing his woodworking factory), but also faces up to the wrong doings he did in the past. After the death of Boss Li, he reports his crime of cutting the rare tree to the police and is sentenced to fifteen-year imprisonment. After fifteen years, when he comes back to Root Village, he opens a company that aims at planting the trees in the forests he destroyed in the past. Lajia Zheli's return implies that Root Village truly enters the phase of the superhistorical, in which it has the time to look back its own history and ravel out the relationship between itself and its history. When Lajia Zheli comes back, one thing he does is to open the company for the forest and the other thing is to open a bar for the villagers. In the bar, everyone can have the opportunity to talk about the history of the village. As the narrator says,

> For me, the appearance of the bar, the place of memorization, is the reconstruction of the intimacy between the villagers and the history of the village. Decades ago, Root Village, such a historical village hidden in the cracks of the mountains, was the village whose history had been lost and become a fragmented legend. The people living there did not look back generation after generation. Not looking back was because the history was still in its sleep. Now the people talk about their past because the village experienced the changes in these years which might take a thousand years in the past.[119]

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[118] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 55.

[119] Alai, *The Empty Mountain* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Arts Publishing House, 2018), 23.

Therefore, they need a place where alcohol and memory stimulate and interact with each other. When the villagers turn their eyes back to their history, the superhistorical Tibet comes into being through their reminiscent language.

In the superhistorical Tibet, the villagers shy away from being the participants of the development of the village. Instead, they become the observers and bystanders of its changes. Confronting the changes, they are more and more calm, relaxed, and detached. In the bar, they chat about what happened, what is happening, and what will happen in the village. Through their chatting, they realize how tiny the human being is in history made by himself. Therefore, no single character stands out in the last book, *The Empty Mountain*. In *Gone with the Wind,* Gela is the protagonist. In *The Fire,* Duoji, the wizard, is the protagonist. In *Dase and Dage,* the two eccentric men are the protagonists. In *The Deserted,* the hunchback is the protagonist. In *The Light Thunder,* Lajia Zheli is the protagonist. In *The Empty Mountain,* Alai never tries to create a leading character. The hunchback, Suobo, Dase, and Lajia Zheli, all appear equally in the story. Moreover, even the invisible narrator "I" returns to the village. He and his villagers are all the tellers of history in the book. The gathering of the characters at the same spot indicates that the writer tries to give the history of Root Village within the decades a conclusion. When they chat with each other, they reshape the history made by themselves. When they chat with each other about their mistakes, it reveals that they finally know that history is never under their control. As Lajia Zheli gets from the conversations among the villagers, he feels that he is a pile of ashes. "When the light comes and brings a wind, the ashes gradually disappear."[120] Under the wheels of history, the people are pushed to move on. The hunchback cannot stop the villagers from leaving the fields, Suobo cannot permanently stay in the past land he found in the Cultural Revolution, Dase cannot prevent the people, including his sons, from doing the wrong things to their natural environment, and Lajia Zheli cannot finish his tasks of replanting trees in the forests and rebuilding the lake destroyed by the villagers. In the end, all the villagers witness how their homeland, Root Village, is covered by the water. The original site of the village becomes the site of a dam. Everything that happened in and is given by the past is under the water, the flood of history. It is the fate of Root Village, the fate of the traditional village, the fate of Tibet, and the

[120] Alai, *The Empty Mountain,* 205.

fate of human beings. They grow from history and disappear in history. The building of the dam and the coming of the water predict the end of the village and also the beginning of the village. Root Village moves to the location of Suomo Cuo Lake destroyed in the Great Leap Forward, and history will start again. As the poem written by Dase and sung by the villagers at the end of the story goes:

> The rain is falling, falling on the ground!
> It wet the heart, wet the face!
> The face of the yak, the face of the sheep, the face of the people!
> The rain is falling, falling in the heart—out the heart!
> God, your rain is falling![121]

[121] Alai, *The Empty Mountain,* 211-212.

CHAPTER 6

HOME AND HOMELAND IN TIBETOPHONIC WRITERS' WORKS: PEMA TSEDEN'S *BALLOON* AND TAKBUM GYEL'S DOG STORIES

In the discussion of Chapter 5, Sinophonic writers in their literary creation are engaged in redefining their homeland, Tibet, with new meanings and aim to show how Tibet presents itself to the outside world. The language they use is Mandarin, which naturally makes the Chinese all over China and the world their readers. The main target audience of their writing is from the outside world. Therefore, their writing can be described as the export-oriented writing, which aims at showing the real image of Tibet to the outsiders. In this chapter, I will discuss Tibetophonic writers and their writing. Compared with Sinophonic writers, they are more conservative and inward-oriented in their literary writing of Tibet. At first, the native language, Tibetan, is the first language they choose in their literary creation. Pema Tseden is a bilingual writer who writes both in Mandarin and Tibetan. But Tibetan is the only language he adopts in his film script writings. Takbum Gyel is a Tibetan writer who writes only in Tibetan. Thus, their main target audience are the Tibetans. They write for their own people. Therefore, their writing can be described as the domestic-oriented writing, which aims at reminding the Tibetans what they gain and lose in the development of their society. The writers are concerned about the inner society of Tibet and the ethnic psychology of the Tibetans in modernization. Unlike the Sinophonic writers who prefer to present Tibet in history and demonstrate its vicissitudes through time, the Tibetophonic writers like to present Tibet by writing the ordinary people's everyday life and demonstrating its predicament through depicting the problems the people face in their life.

Pema Tseden: Home(land) as a Bi-Polar World of Tradition and Modernity

As discussed in Chapter 4, the homeland in Pema Tseden's works demonstrates seeming mismatch between modernity and Tibetan tradition. In *Balloon*, his latest novel, the writer still focuses on this topic. In recent scholarship, the critics try to draw his audience away from a misunderstanding about him: he attempts to show the conflict between modernity and tradition

and the resistance from tradition against modernity. In their criticisms, his depiction of the relationship between the two should not be defined by conflicts. For him, the two are not opposed to each other. In her "The Coexistence of Ethnicity and Modernity: The Space in Pema Tseden's Films," Hu You explains that in Pema Tseden's depictions, Tibet is a place of the coexistence of ethnicity and modernity. She quotes the writer's words to support her reading: "Some critics believe that my works demonstrate the conflicts between tradition and modernity. It is a misunderstanding: my works also depict their mixture."[1] Similarly, in an interview, the interviewer, Suo Yabing, concludes, "Theoretically, the film (*Balloon*) is easily interpreted as the demonstration of the conflict between the traditional way of thinking represented by the religious thoughts, such as reincarnation, and the modern rules and norms represented by the modern technology of birth control and abortion. In other words, it presents the conflict between tradition and modernity. However, I watched your interviews and noticed that you strongly dislike this rigid interpretation, in which everything is read in binarism. The open ending of *Balloon* may be a reflection of your thinking."[2] In "Contested Tibetan Landscapes in the Films of Pema Tseden," Anup Grewal also points out that the director gives the Tibetans the third space, in which they will not be pushed to take side between tradition and modernity.[3] However, their criticism only partially demonstrates Pema Tseden's thinking of the relationship between tradition and modernity in Tibet. Indeed, the writer and director never view the two as opposites. The coexistence of tradition and modernity seems to enrich the Tibetans' life and give them more options in their existence. Even though he frequently writes and records the negative influence of modernity on traditional Tibet, he never denies the necessity of modernization. He refutes the binary opposition in his own words, "It is a misunderstanding: my works also depict their mixture." However, showing their coexistence is not the only purpose of the writer and director's

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[1] Hu You, "The Coexistence of Ethnicity and Modernity: The Space in Pema Tseden's Films," *Movie Literature,* 2021(20), 105.

[2] Pema Tseden and Suo Yabing, "*Balloon*: The Image, the Story, and the Dilemma," *Balloon,* Pema Tseden (Taiyuan: Beiyue Literature & Arts Publishing House, 2021), 162.

[3] Anup Grewal, "Contested Tibetan landscapes in the films of Pema Tseden," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2016(02), 137 - 138.

literary and artistic creations. There is another meaning in his words: that is, "my works depict their conflicts, too." Tradition and modernity are not enemies, though there are conflicts between the two. If they matched perfectly, Pema Tseden would not have demonstrated the spiritual and emotional dilemma the Tibetans face in his works. Therefore, for him, their coexistence in Tibet is not as pleasant and peaceful as what those critics lead us to see. The open ending of *Balloon* not only indicates the integration between tradition and modernity in Tibet but also reflects the fundamental conflict between the two, which directly makes the homeland, Tibet, the land of incompatibility.

Balloon tells a story set in the 1990s. It depicts the life of an ordinary Tibetan pastoral family: Dargye, a husband and father, Drolkar, his wife and a mother, Dargye's father, and three sons. In the family, the two central figures have their own responsibilities: Dargye does what a man should do: working on finding a ram which can increase the number of the sheep he owns; Drolkar stays at home and does what a woman should do: serving the whole family. Their home seems harmonious and peaceful because of the division of labor according to gender. Initially, there should be no drama happening in the ordinary family. But the coming of the fourth child breaks the balance in the home. Things start to go beyond their control. After the death of his father, Dargye gets to know that Drolkar is pregnant. This news relieves him from the grievance of losing his father because a Buddhist master tells him that the fourth child in his wife's womb is the reincarnation of his father. However, Drolkar has a different attitude towards the baby in her. Due to having three sons (the birth control policy) and the poor economy of the family, she wants to get an abortion. Will the fourth child come into the world? The writer never gives his readers the answer. He leaves the ending open. No one knows the result. Superficially, this fiction tells a very simple story demonstrating the domestic conflict between the husband and wife. Nevertheless, the writer reveals a universal aporia Tibet faces at present: "To be more traditional or modern?" Through his writing of the family issue, Pema Tseden writes about the dilemma his homeland, Tibet, encounters: where should it go? In 2019, the film *Balloon* adapted from the novel, was released. Soon, it got attention both from the West and China. It was nominated the best film of Horizons in the 76th Venice International Film Festival. It received a series of awards: the best film in the 20th Tokyo FILMeX International Film Festival, the best

screenplay in the 55th Chicago International Film Festival, the best film in the 2nd Hainan Island International Film Festival, among others. In the following section, I will discuss the home(land) in the novella in relation to the re-presentation of the home(land) in the film.

In *Balloon,* Pema Tseden uses literary and visual languages to depict a Tibetan world in terms of Foucauldian heterotopia. In Chapter 2, I discussed that home(land) in Amy Tan's works is a heterotopia, in which two opposite worlds (the mother's world and the daughter's world) coexist. In *The Balloon,* Pema Tseden takes a similar method to demonstrate his heterotopic home(land), in which two spaces (the *yang*: the space of the father and the *yin*: the space of the mother) coexist. But what they pursue are different. Tan aims to draw Chinese culture and American culture together and let them negotiate with and understand each other. She writes about the conflicts first and then turns to reconciliation. She pursues the balance between the two cultures, which brings harmony to the home(land). Her emphasis is on the harmonious "juxtaposition" of the two. By contrast, Pema Tseden aims to demonstrate the problems caused by the juxtaposition between tradition and modernity. The discordance in their relationship is what he sets his eyes on, and he always makes his readers and audience aware of the distance between them. He writes about the compatibility first and then turns to their imperfect match between tradition and modernity. The incompatible juxtaposition of the "T" and "M" is what he tries to show to his readers and audience.

Home as a Space of *Yin* and *Yang* in Complementarity

In *Balloon,* Pema Tseden first demonstrates the Tibetan home as an ideal heterotopia in which *yin* and *yang,* represented by the mother and the father respectively, coexist in peace and match perfectly with each other. The division of the home into *yin* (the space of the mother) and *yang* (the space of the father), indeed, comes from the gaze of the unborn child. In the novel, the gaze seems to come from the readers, who observe the Tibetan family's life behind the literary words. In the film, however, the gaze seems to come from the audience, who observe the Tibetan family's life behind the camera in the artist's hands. However, there is another gaze, which is easy to ignore and frequently appears in the film: the secret and invisible gaze of the unborn baby. Indeed, the story is his story, a story about and for him.

The opening scene in the film tells us who, except for the audience, observes the life of the Tibetan family. It opens with the scene of the pasture, in which the grandfather and two sons are herding the sheep. This scene is seen through a transparent balloon in a son's hand. A son says, "Our clouds. Our Sheep. Grandpa. Here comes Dad."[4] The camera moves from the sky to the sheep on the pasture, from the sheep to the grandpa, sitting on the grass, and from the grandpa to the father, driving his motorcycle. It seems that the son tries to introduce the family to the audience behind the camera. But the word "our" used by him indicates that he is also introducing the family to the one who has a close relationship with him. The mysterious one, in my opinion, is the unborn fourth child. The gaze comes from the unborn baby, whose fate is in uncertainty at the moment. Through the gaze, he gets to know how he comes to the world or why he fails to do so. In his gaze, the space of the father, the *yang* of the home, is shaped. At first, the father, Dargye, is the one who supports the whole family. When the father Dargye gets off from the motorcycle, the old man (the grandpa) counts the beads of his Buddhist rosary and asks the father, "Will you borrow the ram in the neighboring village?" Dargye replies, "Yes. I will borrow a good one." The old man smiles. After their conversation, Dargye drives his old motorcycle to the neighbor village.[5] Almost forty scenes out of the seventy-four scenes in the film depict the sheep business: borrowing a ram, bringing back the ram, letting the ram mate with the ewes, and returning the ram. The sheep business the father does is not for himself but the whole family. In the pastoral areas, more sheep means more money and a better life. He is the one who makes a livelihood for the family and gives them a stable life.

Due to being the bread-earner, the father is on the top of the power system in the home. He is the one who gives orders and makes decisions. He is the sky of the whole family, under which his family live. For his son's tuition, he decides to sell the ewe. When the mother Drolkar notices that Dargye tries to capture the ewe in the sheep pen, she asks, "Why did you grab that ewe?" Dargye answers, "I think she's barren." Drolkar replies, "She's quite docile." Dargye answers

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[4] Pema Tseden, *Balloon* (Taiyuan: Beiyue Literature & Arts Publishing House, 2021), 57.

[5] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 6-7.

seriously, "So what, if she's barren."[6] Then he asks her to bring some food to the ewe. Drolkar silently enters the storeroom and prepares food for the ewe. Even though unwilling to see the ewe being sent to the slaughterhouse, the mother is unable to change the father's mind. In the nineteenth scene in the film, when the whole family get together and have dinner, the TV broadcasts the news about the first test tube baby. The grandpa sighs, "Om mani padme hum. Pooh. Living long enough, you'll see everything. Like scriptures say, the end of the world might be coming."[7] Dargye replies, "Dad, that's nonsense. This is scientific. Science makes progress. And you still talk about doomsday. Science is making the world better."[8] When his son wants to quit school to relieve the family of a financial burden, Dargye asks the son to abandon the idea. At the school gate, Jamyang is unwilling to accept the money, which Dargye gets from selling the ewe to the slaughterhouse. He says, "Dad, I want to go back with you. I don't want to study." Dargye stares at him, "Bullshit! Say that again, and I'll be angry!" He continues, "Don't worry about the family. Just study hard."[9] When the father gets to know the death of his father, he is the one who decides how to hold his funeral. He is also the one who asks the Buddhist master to predict when and where his father's soul will come back, even though the mother does not believe the master's words.

The father's power in the home decides his position in the relationship with the mother: Dargye is the one above Drolkar. The assignment of their positions is demonstrated by the couple's positions in their sexual life. At first, Dargye is always the active one in sex. In the relationship with his wife, he is like the ram he borrows, obsessed with occupying the female body. When he brings the ram back home, Drolkar comments, "It looks a bit like you."[10] Her words indicate that the ram is like Dargye in its body (strong and powerful) and its natural desire (sexual desire). In the scene of the mating between the ram and the ewes, Pema Tseden depicts the positions of the ram and ewe. He writes, "Dargye, the grandpa, and Jamyang watch the ram

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[6] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 69-70.

[7] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 84-85.

[8] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 85.

[9] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 52-53.

[10] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 69-70.

entering in the sheep herd. At first, the Dzakya ram follows the ewes and smells their butts. Later, it chooses an ewe and chases it. Several times, it tries to put its former legs on the ewe's body. But it fails. Finally, it succeeds and shows its masculine power."[11] When Pema Tseden depicts the reaction of the ram in the mating process, he actually tries to demonstrate the relationship between Dargye and Drolkar in their sexes. He is the one who is upper and aggressive, and she is the one who is lower and obedient. In the twenty-ninth scene in the film, the director shows their positions visually. The scene begins with the shot in which Drolkar is lying on the bed and Dargye is upon her. The whole conversation about where the condom is happens in the up and down frame. She asks, "What are you looking for?" He replies, "You know what I'm looking for. Wasn't it under the pillow?" She says, "It's there. Shangchu Drolma saw it today. She asked me what it was. How embarrassing." The man looks at her and say, "You didn't hide it very well. How could you let her see it?" She smiles. The man continues, "It must be those two devils." She replies, "It is too embarrassing if anyone sees it." The man says, "Never mind."[12] After the conversation, he continues to do what he wants to do and ignores whether Drolkar is willing to do it or not. Furthermore, the work done by Drolkar in the home is not what he should do. In the home, Dargye never offers Drolkar a hand in the housework. He is the man who is responsible for working outside. Doing housework at home is a mission for the woman. He should be the one who enjoys her service. Therefore, in the home, the men, including him, his father, and three sons, are waiting for the mother's service.

Because of his role as the bread-earner, Dargye is the one who faces the outside world for the family. His movements in the story are always between the home and the outside world. At first, the father comes from the home. The beginning of the novel, which is deleted in the film, indicates where he comes from. It says, "Dargye searches in the drawer, under the pillow, and other places in home, and cannot find it out in the end. He asks his wife Drolkar about it. She says that she never sees it. After that, he drives his old motorcycle and leaves."[13] When he

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[11] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 32.

[12] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 100.

[13] Pema Tseden, *Balloon*, 3.

arrives at the pasture, the conversation between him and the grandpa quoted above indicates where he will go. The old man asks, "Will you borrow the ram in the neighboring village?" Dargye says yes and leaves for the neighbor village. In the fifth scene in the film, the shot shows that Dargye is driving his motorcycle and a ram is fixed on it. He is on the way home. In the sixth scene, the shot shows that he arrives home with the ram he borrows from his friend in the neighboring village. Everyone in the home welcomes him and the ram. When he returns the ram to his friend, he gets to know the death of his father. He rushes to come back home. After finishing the Buddhist ceremony of the funeral in the home, he is the one who sends the grandpa's body from the home to the temple. Through the depictions about the father Dargye's daily life, it is easy to notice that his space, the world of the *yang,* can be defined by the terms, "masculine," "powerful," "up," and "outward."

Comparing with the *yang* force of the home, the *yin* force of the home takes up the other space. Pema Tseden shapes the *yin* of the home through his depictions of the mother Drolkar's space. The mother is the servant and nanny who offers her service to the whole family. Domestic affairs are her job. Her movement is limited within the home. Compared with the Dargye, who moves between the home and the outside world, she belongs to the home. In the story, Drolkar always moves within or around the home and feeds her family and animals. When Dargye decides to sell the ewe, she is the one who prepares food for it. Her fourth appearance happens when her oldest son comes back from school. She prepares mutton to welcome her son. The narrator says, "In the evening, Drolkar cooks a pot of mutton. She gets the mutton out of the pot, puts it on the table, and says, 'Jamyang, you, your brothers, and grandpa enjoy yourselves.'"[14] In the twenty-sixth scene in the film, she holds a teapot in her hand and appears in the picture. She seems to have something in her mind. When Dargye asks her about it, she replies that there is nothing. Then Dargye asks her to come in and pour the tea for him. When she sees her eldest son and the grandpa sitting in the sheep pen, she naturally goes to them and pours the tea for them.[15] Feeding the family is her daily job. It seems that except her, no one in the home should do those domestic things.

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[14] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 24.

[15] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 96.

The bedroom in the home is also her stage where she fulfills her duty to entertain her husband. At the beginning of the novel, she appears on the bed and waits for her husband. As quoted above, "Dargye searches in the drawer, under the pillow, and other places in home, and cannot find it out in the end. He asks his wife Drolkar about it. She says that she never saw it."[16] The unnamed "it" is the condom, and the action of searching for it is the prelude of the sex between her and Dargye. In the twenty-fifth scene in the film, she appears again in the bedroom. In this scene, her secret duty is demonstrated by the conversation between her and her younger sister. When her sister tries to find the book given by her ex-lover, she finds a condom under the pillow. Drolkar shyly tells her what it is and puts it back to the original place immediately.[17] In the twenty-ninth scene mentioned above, she shows up in the bedroom for the third time. She lies on the bed and is under Dargye. When Dargye guesses that the condom has been stolen by his sons, he never feels that the little gadget matters. He smiles, touches Drolkar's body, and takes off his shirt. Drolkar asks him, "Can't you wait?" He replies, "No. I can't."[18] In the screenplay, the director depicts Drolkar's unwillingness to have sex through visual images. He writes, "Drolkar sees the Tibetan painting, *The Harmonious Four Brothers,* on the wall. She looks at it and ignores Dargye. Dargye is busy with his business. Drolkar's face. The painting on the wall."[19] Those shots written in the screenplay and deleted in the film suggest that Drolkar's role in the home makes her powerless in her relationship with Dargye. For this role, she seldom expresses what she thinks in her communications with Dargye. For her, no matter what she says or expresses, Dargye will not changes his mind. Therefore, in her conversations with Dargye, she always keeps silent. In the opening scene of the story, when Dargye asks her whether she knows where the condom is, she replies with one word, "no." In the conversation about the ewe, she only says, "She is quite docile." Even though, in the twenty-ninth scene, she talks about her

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[16] Pema Tseden, *Balloon*, 3.

[17] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 93.

[18] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 101.

[19] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 101.

embarrassment for the condom, when Dargye expresses that he cannot wait, she returns to silence.

According to the depictions of her, we can know that Drolkar is this kind of Tibetan woman: industrious, responsible, conservative, and docile. She is like the ewe Dargye sells living for the family without any complaint. She plays the role of the mother (the *yin*) in the home well. Her image represents the typical image of mothers in Tibet's history. They use their hands and breasts to feed all the people on the plateau and their bodies to give birth to the people. They are either busy with housework or fulfill their duty to entertain their husbands. The home is their whole world within which they prove the meaning of their existence. No matter how the world is changed, the mother is always there, staying in the world of the *yin*. Therefore, the mother's space—the *yin* of the home—can be defined by the terms, "feminine," "powerless," "down," and "inward."

In the Tibetan home depicted by Pema Tseden's literary and visual languages, everything seems to be compatible and complementary. The *yang* of the home represented by Dargye and the *yin* of the home represented by Drolkar coexist and work together well in the home. The home is an ideal heterotopia in which everyone enjoys the benefits given by the cooperation between *yin* and *yang*. The bed is the sacred site (Foucault's sacred site of the basin and water fountain in the garden) where the two spaces can be connected. The frequent sexes happening between them give the readers and audience an impression that *yin* and *yang* have a perfect physical and spiritual match with each other in the home. However, the compatibility of the two spaces presented by the complementarity of the two spaces is only an illusion. There is a fundamental conflict between the two spaces, which makes the perfect match impossible.

Home as the Place of *Yin* and *Yang* in Conflict

As Foucault says, "The heterotopia can juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."[20] If we only put our eyes on the term "juxtapose," we may easily ignore the word "incompatible." In this situation, we might believe

[20] Foucault, Michel, "Of Other Spaces," *The Visual Culture Reader*, Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 233.

that there will be no conflict in the other world and the things different from each other can get along well with each other in the world. Unfortunately, the last word, "incompatible," reveals the other side of the world. "Juxtapose" does not mean the perfect match among the different spaces and sites. The incompatibility is always there and makes the different spaces separate from each other. If one tries to cross over the border, the conflict will appear. The superficial compatibility will disappear. In the story, the *yin* force is unsatisfied with the given space and unwilling to stay in it. It takes efforts to cross over the border between it and the *yang* force. The compatibility of the Tibetan home gradually disappears in the *yin*'s active opposition, which is demonstrated by the mother's unwillingness to be obedient. Drolkar's first disobedience happens in the sixth scene in the film when Dargye brings back the ram.[21] After Dargye changes the rag wrapping the ram's balls with a new red rag, she appears. She stands with Dargye and watches the ram with a smile. In the conversation between her and Dargye, the atmosphere is harmonious at the beginning. The woman plays her role of the wife well: welcoming her husband and appreciating his efforts in supporting the family. But with the coming and going of their words about the ewe, the divergence between the couple appears. Drolkar starts to question Dargye's decision. "Why did you grab that ewe" and "She's quite docile" are her resistance against the man's masculine power. For her, the ewe's barrenness cannot be the reason for sending it to the slaughterhouse. Even though her resistance is weak and unsuccessful, she demonstrates her efforts to change her role of being the powerless one in the home. The man's words have not been the orders she should follow without any doubt. Since then, the couple have gone to different directions in their thoughts. Pema Tseden shows their conflict with an interesting frame in the film. After Drolkar comes out of the storeroom where she prepares food for the ewe, the picture in the shot is split into two parts. In the middle, there is a small tower-like building standing between her and Dargye. It seems that there is someone behind the tower-like building that is looking at them. For me, it is the gaze from the unborn child. For the child, the home, consisting of the father and the mother's spaces (*yang* and *yin*), is split. The father is standing at the left side of the screen and watching, staying in the space of the *yang,* and the mother is feeding the ewe at the right side of

[21] See page 256.

the screen, staying in the space of the *yin*. But the gap between them is huge. The tower-like building becomes the wall blocking their harmonious relationship.

Drolkar's second disobedience happens after the conversation about the ewe. It makes the gap between her and Dargye wider. At the end of their conversation, when she sees a doctor driving his motorcycle and passing by their house, she runs to him. She asks, "Sodra, is Dr. Druktso around? Why did I not see her these days?" The doctor replies that she is busy and asks whether Drolkar is sick. She replies, "I'm just asking." After the doctor's leave, Dargye asks her why she asked about Dr. Druktso. She replies, "Nothing."[22] This scene in the film is shown from a distance and recorded by a full-length shot. Drolkar is running to the doctor who is outside of the yard. Her running leaves Dargye behind and makes him hidden by the tower-like building and invisible in the picture. In the conversation between her and the doctor, Dargye is visually absent. This design indicates that she tries to do something that she is unwilling to let her husband know. Her ambiguous reply to Dargye shows that she needs to do something alone. In this scene, she is the one who makes decisions.

The third resistance happens in the next scene, in which she drives the motorcycle and visits Dr. Druktso. In this scene, she tries to put into action what she has decided to do. It is the first time in the story that she leaves home and has access to the outside world. The last two scenes of resistance aim at breaking the limit of the term, "powerless," defining her space. The third one is to break the limits of both the terms: "powerless" and "inward." After preparing breakfast for the whole family, she goes to the public health clinic. When she enters the office, Dr. Druktso, a female doctor, is not there. Dr. Sodra asks what the matter is and expresses that he can help her. But Drolkar says, "No, you can't. It is a woman's problem."[23] Her reply, of course, indicates how conservative she is. However, her unwillingness to talk her privacy with a man also suggests that she does not trust the man, who, like her husband, cannot understand what is in her mind. Therefore, when Druktso returns, she creates a secret female space between herself and the female doctor through her body language. In the same scene in the film, the female doctor asks what the matter is. Drolkar's eyes move to the male doctor. Immediately, Druktso

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[22] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 69-70.

[23] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 14.

understands what she means. The doctor replies, "Oh. I see." Then she invites Drolkar to go outside of the office. At the office door, they talk under their voice. But Drolkar does not believe that the space is private enough. She turns her head and looks back at the male doctor again. Druktso recognizes her embarrassment and draws her to the other side of the corridor. In this shot, the private female space is shaped. There are no other characters in the picture. Only the two women talk with each other about the unnamed "it."

Interestingly, the director uses a similar technique (the secret gaze) to demonstrate the private conversation. At first, the office wall occupies a half part of the screen, and Dr. Druktso's half body is behind the wall and absent in the screen. It seems that someone is looking at them in the office. Later, the director turns the camera around. The gaze is from the office on the other side of the corridor and through the windows. The frame of the windows appears in the middle of the screen. The two women are behind the windows and chatting with each other. Once again, the gaze of the fourth child appears. This intentional design is to let the unborn child know why his mother is unwilling to bring him to the world. The conversation between them goes like this:

> Drolkar: "I want to have my tubes tied."
> Druktso: "I thought it was serious. Why do you want to do it now?"
> Drolkar: "It makes things simple. No more worries."
> Druktso: "You're not using the condoms I gave you? They are easy to use."
> Drolkar: "We used them up. The kids took the last two. They thought they were balloons. It's so embarrassing!"[24]

In this part of their conversation, the director offers two pieces of information to his audience. One piece is that Drolkar tries to have her tube tied. The other is that she wants to get the condoms. They are the reasons which make her come outside of the home. Here, the woman crosses two lines. The first one is that she leaves the home, which should be her space, and has access to the outside world. The second one is that she decides to protect herself in her relationship with Dargye. Having the tubes tied and using the condoms are the decisions made by herself. She is no longer the passive one and the powerless one who is under her husband. As a Tibetan woman, she, like the father, also faces the outside world and takes power in her own

[24] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 81.

hands in life. She no longer wants to shut herself within the home and follows the orders given by her man. In the following, their conversation continues:

> Druktso: "You've used up so many? That man of yours is quite a ram."
> Drolkar: "It's like he was young again. He can't get enough. He really is like a ram. I don't know what to do."
> …
> Drolkar: "He loves liquor and mutton. What can I do? When can you tie my tubes?"
> Druktso: "Next month. Some other local women are coming for the same procedure."
> Drolkar: "OK."
> Druktso: "If you're worried, let me give you a ring now. It's safe."
> Drolkar: "A ring? No, thanks. Wanggyal's wife lost hers. Her little girl wore it like a ring. The whole village was laughing! It's so embarrassing! You still say it's safe?"[25]

In this part of the conversation, even though the content is calm and humorous, its information is not as light as their words and facial expressions. In their pleasant words and laughing, Pema Tseden reveals the common phenomenon in the Tibetan families: the ignorance of the Tibetan men about the health of the Tibetan women. For their own entertainment, they do not care about the potentially harmful consequences of accidental pregnancy for the female body. Drolkar is not the only woman in Tibet who suffers from the birth of the child. The dilemma she meets is what most Tibetan women face daily. The third resistance is her attempt to break the existential limits, which confine her and other Tibetan women in their life.

In the following, her resistance becomes more and more visible. The second time she leaves home is another visit to the clinic. This time she comes to the clinic for the pregnancy test. Because of the coming of the fourth child, Drolkar becomes more and more self-determined. When getting to know Drolkar is pregnant again, Druktso reminds her, "Drolkar, you have three sons. Still not enough? Our Tibetan women come to the world not to have babies! In the past, women always had five or six kids. How tough their life was! You see me. I have only one child. I am relaxed, and my child can get a good education. At this age, why should you have so many kids?"[26] In the communications with the female doctor, Drolkar recognizes who she should be and what she wants to pursue in her life. The enlightenment from the doctor encourages her to

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[25] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 81-82.

[26] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 44-45.

show her resistance in front of Dargye. In the third depiction of the couple lying on the bed, there is no sex between them. The atmosphere is uncomfortable and depressed. Before Dargye acts, Drolkar uses her words to cut off his desire. She directly tells her decision to Dargye: "I want to get rid of this baby inside me."[27] Dargye cannot believe what he hears. He asks, "What did you say?"[28] Drolkar repeats the words. After that, he throws a fit immediately. He shouts at Drolkar, "You're such an evil woman. You have no conscience. You say this, even though Dad was so good to you."[29] Drolkar replies that it is not what she wants either. After Drolkar explains that she is thinking of the family and its future (the birth control policy and financial burden), Dargye still cannot accept her decision to give up the baby. He slaps her in the face. This slap makes the conflict between the father and mother (the *yang* and the *yin*) come into the open. Now, the inharmonious home is visually shown to the readers and audience.

The Root of the Incompatibility in the Home

Representation of the conflict between *yin* and *yang* is Pema Tseden's way to write about the conflict between modernity and tradition. The conflict between the father and the mother is actually the mirror image of the incompatibility between tradition and modernity. The visible juxtaposition in the heterotopic home is the coexistence of *yin* and *yang,* while the invisible juxtaposition is the coexistence of modernity and tradition. We need to pay attention to the time of the story, which is the 1990s. Tibet is on its way of modernization. The Tibetans' life has been changed by modern technology. It consists of modern technology and traditional beliefs. In other words, modernity takes charge of their physical life, and tradition takes charge of their spiritual life. On the surface, like *yin* and *yang,* they have their own spaces and match perfectly with each other.

At first, the Tibetan family enjoy their modern life. In the opening scene of the story, the writer writes that Dargye is busy with finding the unnamed "it," the condom, a modern gadget

[27] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 48.

[28] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 48.

[29] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 48.

used for birth control. Before having sex with Drolkar, he tries to find it. The Tibetan couple's sexual life is closely related to it. In the following, the writer writes, "After that, he drives his old motorcycle and leaves. On the way, he sees that his two sons hold two balloon-like things in their hands. When he gets close, he finds what they are. He stares at his sons, 'Where did you get those things?'"[30] After he argues with his father about whether the things are balloons or not, he lightens a cigarette and burns up the things in his sons' hands. In the depictions, the writer demonstrates the new generation's life, in which modernity plays an important role in life, in which the unnamed "it" (the condom), the motorcycle, and the cigarette are modern things. Apart from those gadgets, the Tibetan family use scientific knowledge to help themselves in their sheep business. Dargye's leaving for borrowing a Dzakya ram (bought from Xinjiang) from the neighboring village indicates that the Tibetans have known the disadvantage of inbreeding, which is common knowledge in the modern world. In the same scene in the film, Pema Tseden adds a new topic in the conversation between the grandpa and the father. When Dargye arrives at the pasture, the old man asks him, "How many years have you driven the motorcycle?"[31] He replies that it has been over five years and has lots of problems. The old man signs, "Now all the people ride the thing. How could it compare with the horse?" Dargye answers, "Yes. The horses have been sold out and replaced by motorcycles. There is no horse anymore."[32] A similar conversation also happens in the nineteenth scene in the film, which has been quoted above. When the family see the news of the first test tube baby, Dargye explains how modern technology changes their life in a better way.[33] Except for the topic of the horse, Pema Tseden adds a new episode into the opening scene of the film. After Dargye promises to buy new balloons for his sons, a flight appears in the sky. "The four all look up at the flight in the sky. Soon, it disappears in the clouds."[34] Without any comments about the flight, Dargye continues

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[30] Pema Tseden, *Balloon*, 3.

[31] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 58.

[32] Pema Tseden, *Balloon*, 58.

[33] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 85.

[34] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 61.

his conversations with his sons and father. The giant mechanic bird in their eyes has become a normal thing frequently appearing in their life. At the beginning of the story, the writer and director has told us how modern the family is.

The family is traditional, too. In their spiritual life, the people live like their ancestors. The traditional religious beliefs are what support them spiritually. In the nineteenth scene, the whole family get together and watch the news of the first test tube baby on TV. On one hand, Dargye explains how advanced technology is and how it changes people's life to his father. On the other hand, when his father asks him to make a generous donation to the temple, he replies, "Of course, Dad. It goes without saying. If we give more, so will others."[35] The paradox in his words demonstrates that even though he prefers the changes brought by modern technology, he never gives up traditional beliefs which his people have believed in for hundreds and thousands of years. He and his family are still the pious Buddhist disciples. In this circumstance, after his father's death, he gives him a traditional Buddhist funeral. The lamas are invited to his house and chant for the soul of his father. The villagers are together and sing the six words, "Om mane padme hum." In the forty-second scene in the film, he rushes to come back home with his son, Jamyang. When he enters the room, the first thing he does is to koutou in front of his father's body and lighten a butter lamp for his father's soul. Even when his father's funeral will start is decided by the Buddhist master. When he asks about the time, he bends down and show his respect to the master. After the full-length shot of his actions of coming back home, the camera moves to a Thangka in the niche. In it, the Buddha is sitting in the middle. In the background, the sound is from the bells holden in the lamas' hands. When the funeral starts, Dargye, Jamyang, and the men in the village carry his father's body outside his house. The two younger sons follow them and send their grandpa outside. In the forty-seventh scene, the old man's body is put in the fire and burned on the platform outside the temple.[36] Dargye and Jamyang stand there and chant the six words.[37]

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[35] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 86.

[36] In the film, because of the censorship in China, the open platform is changed into a cinerator, whose doors are close. The audience only can see the fire inside through the crack between the doors.

[37] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 114-118.

After the funeral, he and Jamyang go to the temple. In this scene, the similar gaze appears again. When the camera records how Dargye and Jamyang enter the master's room and knee on the ground, the view becomes narrow. In the picture, the margins of the screen are in dark and blocked by the frame of the door. Dargye and his son are sitting in the middle and in the light. Both figures only occupy one third of the screen. It seems that there is someone seeing them through the door. For me, it is the fourth child. This intentional design of the gaze is to let the unborn child know the necessity of its coming. In the gaze, Dargye asks about when and where his father will return to the world. When Dargye gives a golden hada to the Buddhist master, the master asks, "Why have you come?" He replies, "We want to know where my father's departed spirit will reincarnate." The master asks about his father's birth sign. He answers, "Horse." The master counts the beads of his rosary and says, "He will reincarnate soon. When you go home, invite a few monks to chant 'Sutra of Confession and Atonement' and 'Six Sacred Syllables.' This will help him reincarnate into his family."[38] Because of the master's words, Dargye tries his best to persuade Drolkar to give birth to the child.

In the coexistence of modernity and tradition, everything seems harmonious and complementary. Like *yin* and *yang,* the two work together well in the home. However, they are incompatible at their roots. The modern interpretations of the role of the female and religious beliefs are opposite to the traditional interpretations. If you choose one side, you will naturally object to the other. From the modern perspective, the woman should have her own subjectivity and live for her own will. It means that the traditional division of *yin* and *yang* is improper here. The *yin* is never under the *yang*. In the meantime, science has turned over the foundation of religious beliefs: the Buddha and his magic power do not exist. In this circumstance, what he claims, such as reincarnation, are superstitious and untrustworthy. But, from the traditional perspective, the mother and wife should play her role in the family: serving the husband and children and fulfilling the duty of giving birth. Religious beliefs are what the people should center their life around. Whatever they do in this life will influence them in next life. The person who passed away will come back to the world in some ways. The female body becomes one of the major ways through which the soul of the dead person comes back. Those beliefs have

[38] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 118-119.

supported the Tibetans for hundreds and thousands of years, so they are unquestionable. The distance between the two kinds of thoughts means that if the Tibetans choose one of them, they cannot have the other.

If modernity stays in the Tibetans' material life, everything will be fine. But it is unsatisfied with the given space. It tries its best to enter the spiritual world of the Tibetans controlled by tradition. The incursion of modernity into spiritual life gives rise to the disobediences of the female protagonist in the story. Drolkar becomes its weapon to break the limit of its space. The compatibility between modernity and tradition in the home is broken. In her disobedience, Drolkar first questions the traditional role of the female and the traditional definition of the *yin*. She does not believe that the female's duty should be defined only by giving birth to the child. Her conversations with Dargye about the ewe and the condom indicate how modern thoughts influence her thinking of the female, including herself. Second, she questions traditional beliefs she and her family believe in. She is the one in the home who questions the words from the Buddhist master. When she gets to know the master's prediction about the grandpa's reincarnation from Dargye, she thinks that the master's words are unbelievable. She says, "It is impossible. The three kids are still young. There is no other woman in the family. How could it be?"[39] "How could it be" means how the fourth child could come to the home and also how the grandpa could come back home through the child. Her family cannot afford to have another child, and the sayings of reincarnation are unbelievable. When she meets her younger sister and tells her about the pregnancy, her sister is excited about the news. The nun says, "How accurate the master's words! The master is the master who has the eyes to see the future. Our ordinary people cannot imagine his world. We sometimes still doubt his power. How sinful we are!"[40] Drolkar feels surprised by her words and asks, "Really? You think in this way?"[41] What she is surprised at is not how pious her sister is but how silly her words are. Even though she is a Buddhist nun, who should believe in the religion, she is also a young Tibetan

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[39] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 42.

[40] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 46.

[41] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 46.

woman born in the modern age. How could she be so spiritually traditional? Indeed, Pema Tseden also shows the incredibility of reincarnation in the film. In the twenty-first scene, he depicts a dream. In the dream, the first shot is Jamyang's back, on which there is a dark mole. The two younger brothers are behind his back, and one of them takes off the mole from his back by hand. In the grandpa's words, Jamyang is the reincarnation of the grandma, and the mole on his back is the sign of her reincarnation. Ironically, it is not a natural mole but a fake one in the dream. Therefore, how could Drolkar give her body to this belief?

The gradual formation of the modern female consciousness in Drolkar brings about the most dramatic episode in the story. In the episode, the conflict between her and Dargye (the conflict between modernity and tradition) comes to a head. The destination of her third trip out of her home is still the clinic. Without telling anyone, she goes to the clinic alone and prepares for an abortion. In the sixty-second scene in the film, Drolkar is lying on the operating table and opening her legs. The doctor, Druksto, is taking on the gloves and disinfecting the scissors. All the things are ready for the abortion. At this moment, the camera moves outside. Dargye and Jamyang are rushing to the operating room. The father is so desperate and angry that he bumps into a person on his way. Without any word, he pushes the door of the room. When he opens the door, Drolkar and he confront each other. The son says, "Mom! Give birth to the baby in your belly. Grandpa always took great care of me. I want Grandpa's soul to come home."[42] After his words, the camera moves to Drolkar. She is crying. The tears fall from her eyes. Interestingly, Pema Tseden stops and does not tell his readers and audience the final outcome—Whether the fourth child comes or not, and which one gets to win, modernity or tradition. Nobody knows. The conflict between Drolkar and Dargye, embodying the fundamental conflict between modernity and tradition, seems to have no clear results.

Indeed, the open ending is a ploy used by the writer and director to present the existential dilemma of the Tibetans in modern age. Living with both tradition and modernity, where should they go? Yes, the coexistence between the two gives the people more options. However, in their spiritual world, whatever they choose will bring them a sense of guilt. If they choose modernity (getting an abortion), they will be guilty of betraying their tradition (the reincarnation of the

[42] Pema Tseden, *Balloon,* 130-131.

grandpa). If they choose tradition (giving birth to the child), they will be guilty of their incomplete modernization (depriving the woman of her rights). Neither of the options will bring them spiritual peace. That is the modern Tibetans' existential dilemma. In *Balloon,* Pema Tseden tries to adjust his thinking of the relationship between modernity and tradition (modernity as the intruder and tradition as the victim). This time modernity might be the victim, too. In the scene of the operating room, both Drolkar and Jamyang cry. Dargye, as a Tibetan man, is unwilling to show his sorrow by shedding tears. Jamyang's tears represent his mood. In the scene, both the mother and father deserve our sympathy. But only the unborn child can give a more objective view. It has not come to the world. Without the impact of the moral systems of the modern and traditional societies, it can give an impartial judgment on the decisions made by the father and mother. For the child, the father and the mother are both right. For the sake of tradition, Dargye is not wrong. He works hard for the whole family and tries his best to give his wife and sons a better life. He is a responsible husband and father. In the meantime, he also plays the role of a good son who attempts to lead his father's soul back home. Furthermore, his insistence on believing in Tibetan Buddhism demonstrates that he is a qualified Buddhist disciple. His existence in the home(land) is necessary. Without him, the home cannot be named the Tibetan home. But, for the sake of modernity, Drolkar is also not wrong. She plays the role of a good wife and mother in the home and sacrifices herself for the family. As a modern woman, she has the right to pursue the life she wants. In her life, she always lives for other people. But in the birth of the fourth child, she decides to live for herself. It is a reasonable decision. Both the man and woman are not wrong. Then who or what is wrong? This is an unanswerable question which entails an unresolvable dilemma.

The dilemma reveals the root cause of the incompatibility between tradition and modernity in the Tibetans' spiritual world. If the idea of the reincarnation is not accepted, Dargye would not have asked Drolkar to give birth to the extra child. If there was no enlightenment of modern thoughts (feminism), Drolkar would not have been anxious about the coming of the fourth child. Even though Pema Tseden says, "Maybe the audience from different cultures will have different interpretations about the open ending. The audience from Tibet may believe that Drolkar will give birth to the baby. The audience who know Tibetan culture, religion, history, and society

well may also believe that she will compromise. The audience from the Han areas and other areas may believe that Drolkar will fight against her destiny and get an abortion. But I hope it is not an either-or ending…,"[43] the ending still has two possibilities: either tradition wins (the fourth child finally comes to the world), or modernity wins (the fourth child is aborted). Its coming means incomplete modernization, while its abortion means the falling of the traditional beliefs. No matter which ending the Tibetan family choose, they all experience the suffering of losing something significant and meaningful. It is the dilemma the modern Tibetans face in their life. It is also the predicament that Tibet encounters in its development. As Pema Tseden depicts at the end of the film, Dargye brings two red balloons to his sons. One is exploded in one son's hand, and another one flies away from another son's hand. Every character in the film reappears in the following shots. They do the same action: looking at the sky where the red balloon gradually disappears. The red balloons indicate the Tibetans' hope: modernity and traditionality can match perfectly with each other in them and in their homeland, Tibet. Their disappearance indicates how slim the hope is. The red balloons are beautiful, but they are too fragile to hold in hand. The incompatibility has rooted in the Tibetans and will stay in their homeland for generations to come.

Takbum Gyel: Homeland as the Land between Authenticity and Inauthenticity

Takbum Gyel is a Tibetan writer who has been overlooked and underestimated by scholars in China and the West. Existing studies of him and his works are both rare and shallow. In China, scholars usually focus on studying his realistic writing of the Tibetans and their life. As Yumei Yang says, Takbum Gyel seldom presents the mysterious part of Tibetan culture or focuses on the religious life in Tibet. Nor is he interested in using new narrative methods to catch the readers' eyes. His literary creation is based on reality, and the method he adopts is traditional: realistic writing.[44] Because Takbum Gyel is interested in writing the stories of dogs, his dog

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[43] Pema Tseden and Suo Yabing, "The Balloon: The Image, the Story, and the Dilemma," 162-163.

[44] Yang Yumei, "The Realistic and Cultural Reflection on De Bejia's Novels," *Journal of Lanzhou University of Arts and Science (Social Science),* vol. 31, no. 2 (2015), 79.

stories become the major object of studies related to him. In his master dissertation, Zha Xijia comments that the dogs in Takbum Gyel's writing are, indeed, the reflections of the people. Through the dogs, the people can see how they live in the world.[45] In other words, Takbum Gyel's writing of the dogs is also his realistic writing of the Tibetan people. In Western critic studies of him, the scholars usually put their eyes on his insistence on writing in Tibetan. In their eyes, this insistence can be recognized as a sign of authenticity. Compared with Zhaxi Dawa and Alai, he is the authentic Tibetan writer who writes real Tibetan stories and presents real Tibetan people. As a result, Sangye Gyatso identifies him as a member of the "Immortal Eternal-Youths" in modern Tibetan literature, who "refuse to abide by social norms" and are impressive for their "unflagging commitment to literary courage and practice."[46] He "faced a great deal of social and familial pressures to discontinue his literary endeavors."[47] However, he "courageously insisted on pursuing writing and opposed more conventional and prosaic ways of life."[48] His achievement mainly relies on his excellence in describing the Tibetan way of life.[49] The subtextual meaning of the words is that, as a Tibetophonic writer in China, he is brave enough to go against the mainstream culture. The scholars care more about the outer form of his works rather than the inner content. Therefore, the Chinese criticism makes him an ordinary writer who lacks literary uniqueness and creativity in his writing. On the other hand, the Western criticism praises him as a Tibetan warrior who tries his best to write about the authentic Tibet. This easily makes us forget his original identity as a writer. In both China and the West, he is regarded as the Tibetan writer whose works are not worth studying deeply.

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[45] Zha Xijia, *Takbum Gyel and His Dog Stories* (D), Minzu University of China, 2012, x.

[46] Sangye Gyatso, "Modern Tibetan Literature and the Rise of Writer Coteries," Lauren R. Hartley trans., *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change,* Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 275.

[47] Sangye Gyatso, "Modern Tibetan Literature and the Rise of Writer Coteries," 275.

[48] Sangye Gyatso, "Modern Tibetan Literature and the Rise of Writer Coteries," 275.

[49] Sangye Gyatso, "Modern Tibetan Literature and the Rise of Writer Coteries," 276.

Takbum Gyel likes to write about the daily life of his people and his works tend to be short and simple. Most of his well-known works are presented as short stories. This feature easily makes us think that the literary value of his works is not as high as Zhaxi Dawa, Alai, and Pema Tseden's. Both scholars and readers, however, overlook the fact that he is a master of allegorical writing. What he conveys through his stories are common themes, which make his works seem less complex and profound than other Tibetan writers'. Furthermore, his insistence on writing in Tibetan language makes it harder for him to gain recognition from the mainstream culture.

Although his works are short, simple, and monolingual, we should not read his literary creations as isolated works independent of each other. Instead, we should view them as a whole. The dog serial is a typical case in point. On the surface, they tell different stories about different dogs which are unrelated to each other. But we should notice what the writer attempts to convey under the surface. Is it real that he only tries to show how the dogs are morally and naturally superior to humans? If we think so, we will underestimate the writer's ambition. Rather, Takbum Gyel attempts to draw a larger picture. His writing of the dogs is his attempt at a restoration of the original Tibet. Each of the dogs in the stories presents a feature or some features that originally characterize his homeland, Tibet. When depicting the human characters in the stories, he shows his readers another side of Tibet. The features the characters have characterize the present Tibet. In his writing of Tibet as the land of both the dog and the man, he presents what Heideggerian authenticity and inauthenticity are and how they are related to his homeland.

In the following section, I will select seven stories from his dog serial to demonstrate the writer's thinking of his homeland. The first one is "The Watchdog," which tells us how the dog is loyal to its master and the master betrays it. The second is "The Old Dog," which tells how a righteous dog is misunderstood by the man it helps. The third one is "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," which tells a story of the campaign of eradicating the dogs. The fourth one is "The Mad Dog," in which the writer narrates how the people become insane because of an imagined mad dog. The fifth one is "The Drunk Dog," which tells how an old dog is drunk and accidentally becomes a present to the County Governor. The sixth one is "The Mother and the Female Dog," in which the dead mother comes back to see his son through the red female dog.

The last one is "Notes on the Pekingese," which shows how a dog changes from an ordinary dog into a human-like dog.

In the dog stories, Tibet is depicted as two types of land: the land of the dog and the land of the man. In *Being and Time*, when interpreting the essence of Dasein and explaining the relationship between the human being and his surroundings, Martin Heidegger raises the concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity. He explains that "Da" means there, "Sein" means being, the existence. The existence of human beings thus means being there. Where is "there"? There is the world where human beings live. In that as it is, Dasein has always already referred itself to an encounter with a "world." This dependency upon being referred to the encounter with the world belongs essentially to its being (Sein).[50] In his interpretation, Dasein includes the human being, the surroundings where he lives, and his relationship with the things and people in the surroundings. Dasein is the totality of all. He figures out that we, human beings, always misunderstand ourselves and always cannot be ourselves because of the misunderstanding of being in the world. Most of the time, we are the they-self, defined and formed by the outside world. The they-self is the inauthentic self which we always identify with ourselves. Because of the inauthentic self, we are blinded to see the authentic self in our being. The self should be both the authentic self and the inauthentic self. We, being the unhomely, are always on the way to the homely. In other words, through understanding human beings as the unhomely, we get closer and closer to the homely. By understanding being the they-self, we can realize where our authentic self is. For Takbum Gyel, his homeland, Tibet, also has two sides: the authentic Tibet and the inauthentic Tibet. His writing about Tibet as the land of the dog is his writing of the authentic Tibet, and his writing about Tibet as the land of the man is his writing of the inauthentic Tibet. In the age of the transition from the old age to the new one, Tibet is characterized by transitionality, which means the dying of the old and the coming of the new. The tragic fates of the dogs in the stories indicate the transitional change happening in Tibet: the authentic Tibet gradually disappears and is replaced by the inauthentic one. The land of the dog is gradually changed into the land of the man. In this transition, the writer raises questions to his people: Is the land of the

[50] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Joan Stambaugh, trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 85-86.

man the authentic Tibet? Is it better than the land of the dog? At the crossroad of time, facing the past, present, and future, should we forget the past and move to the future? If the answers are "no," how should we deal with the doghood (authenticity) and humanity (inauthenticity) in our nature and what is the proper way for us to be modern Tibetans?

The Authentic Tibet: The Land of Dog

When the writer creates the images of the dogs in the stories, he tries to restore the original image of Tibet and the original features characterizing it. At first, Tibet is a land characterized by loyalty, which is demonstrated by the dog's loyalty to its master. It is the essence of the Tibetans' nature that guides them in their relationship with other people. In "The Watchdog," the protagonist, the watchdog, shows the readers what loyalty is. At the beginning of the story, the dog, "I," has shown who it is in the Tibetan family. When the dog thinks about its relationship with the master, it believes that it should protect him and his family no matter how the master treats it. It is its lifelong duty.[51] To protect the people and their property is what it should do. In the following, we can know how loyal it is to the master. Firstly, it never shows its teeth to the master and his family, and it is a docile puppy in front of the family. When the master's son rides on it and makes it painful, it never complains about his rough actions and never attempts to bite the child with its sharp teeth.[52] However, when it faces strangers, it changes into another dog, a ferocious and violent watchdog. The writer writes,

> Later, someone arrived, and my partner got off from my body. His voice was unfamiliar to me. Therefore, I ran outside with my agile legs and feet. The guest was the big shot who took away a yak last year, a sheep the year before the last, and a bundle of fleece three years ago. Those pictures, like lightning, reappeared in my mind. I pounced on the guy without any hesitation, and he dodged and screamed. When he retreated, he tripped over the horse rein and fell on the ground with an 'Ah.' The master shouted at me, and I withdrew my anger immediately. His wife pulled my hair, and I waved my tail and returned to peace.[53]

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[51] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 31.

[52] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 32.

[53] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 32.

When the dog sees the guest for the second time, he comes with an official. It attacks him again. It says,

> Yesterday he came with an official. He rode a light-yellow horse with a tied tail. When he passed by, I felt uncomfortable. Suddenly, a thought came into my mind: I wanted to attack him. … I lied on the ground and tried to find some food. He sat at the fireplace and bit a bulk of fat meat, one bite, two bites, four bites. The leftover belonged to me was given his horse, one mouth, three mouths, five mouths. Those pictures reappeared in my mind. I jumped and bit the horse's tail. … The horse was shocked, which made him fall from the horseback—I made my dream come true.[54]

In the passages, we can notice the two faces the dog has: one is obedient and gentle, and the other is aggressive and violent. With these two faces, the dog can be one of the most qualified watchdogs in Tibet.

Later, its loyalty is demonstrated by its reactions to the master's abuses against it. After it attacks the big shot, its master feels angry. He curses the dog and kicks it with his foot. But this punishment is not enough. The master throws a wood pin at it, and the pin hits its shoulder. In the second attack, the master throws a stone at the dog. It hits the dog's shoulder for the second time. At the last time, when the dog notices that the two guests bring a sheep away from the family, it chases the horses ridden by them and bears the pain on its shoulder. It says, "Who could share the pain with me? Whenever I stepped forward, the pain of my shoulder made me cry. When I bit the tail, the horse's foot hit my chest and I fell on the ground."[55] At this moment, it still tries its best to stand up and chase the two men who take the family's property away. But the master throws a stone or a wood pin at it. This time it is not so lucky. The stone or the pin hits somewhere on its head. Then the dog falls into unconsciousness. In the end, the writer uses a sentence to describe the dog's ending: "In the sunset, there is nothing but a dog's body at the creek."[56] How loyal the creature is! It devotes itself to fighting against the bad guys who cheat its master and use their power to bully him. No matter how the master treats it, it is still his watchdog and never forgets its duty until its death. That is the spirit of loyalty.

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[54] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 34.

[55] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 34.

[56] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 35.

In "The Old Dog," Takbum Gyel depicts another feature: integrity, which teaches the Tibetans how to be a decent man in society. In the beginning, the writer presents the old dog as a thief, which the protagonist, Jabe, tries his best to capture. He writes,

> In fact, the old dog never gave up until its death. Jabe's tent was located at the center of the village, where the dog was unable to close. However, it was like a skillful thief, approaching his tent and doing its deals. In the beginning, Jabe found that the copper cauldron had disappeared. In the following, the thigh of the sheep disappeared. Later, the butter buns in the box were gone. There were more and more weird things happening in the next. Before dinner, he put the cooked meat on the plate and went to the bathroom. When he came back, the plate was empty. The biscuits in the bag were only half left. The desserts prepared for the new year were eaten up. Even the folded feather coat was messed up. The fastened bag was unleashed. … Suddenly, he saw the claw prints of the old dog on the wet ground near the tent.[57]

All the clues demonstrated in the passage point to the dog. As a street dog, it wanders in the village and searches for food. It is reasonable that Jabe believes that it is the thief who steals his property. However, at the end of the story, the writer reveals the truth: the old dog is the one who prevents the thief from entering Jabe's tent. As a dog, it cannot speak for itself and tell Jabe who the thief is. The real thief himself tells Jabe the truth. One night after the dog's death, Jabe is awakened by a noise that sounds like something captured by the iron trap. When he discovers that it is the village accountant, he asks him why he cannot wake him up from outside. The accountant replies, "No. I, I was just worried about being discovered by your dog."[58] In this story, even though the depiction of the dog is short and most of the information about the dog is given by the character Jabe, who it is and what feature it has are clear. It is homeless, but its homelessness never becomes an excuse to break into the people's homes and steal things. It refuses to be a thief and prevents people from being thieves. The accountant's words indicate that the dog watches Jabe's tent at night before its death. In the meantime, the old dog also has another feature: gratefulness. Before the stealing incident, Jabe always gives his leftovers to the dog, so the dog naturally believes that Jabe is a kind person who wants to save its life. Therefore, the magic relationship between it and Jabe is shaped. The man wants to kill the dog, but it views

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[57] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 69.

[58] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 76.

him as its savior. For this reason, it spontaneously plays the role of Jabe's watchdog at night. In an old Chinese saying, it is said that one should repay a drip of kindness with a torrent of gratitude.

In "The Dog, the Master, and his Relatives," the writer depicts a red female dog with responsibility, which makes the Tibetans know how to deal with their duties. The red female dog is a street dog. When it arrives at the village, it settles down at the uncle's tent. It knows that a stable life cannot be for free. It spontaneously sleeps at the sheep pen and takes the job of protecting the sheep and yaks. However, the happy life is short. Before the Cultural Revolution, the county government organizes an eradication campaign to kill all the dogs in the county. At this moment, its master, Kontho's uncle, brings the dog out of the village and sends it to the mountain. He tells the dog, "Poor dog, you cannot return home from now on. I bring you to the mountain, which does not mean that I do not care about you anymore. I just want you to live longer. …"[59] Since then, the dog has been separated from its master. However, it never forgets its duty. Even though it lives in the mountain, it still protects the uncle's sheep and yaks. When the dogs in the village are dead, the wolves have no enemies. They bite the sheep and yaks in the pens and eat their meat at night. The dead bodies of the animals are everywhere. Fortunately, the uncle's yak and sheep remain intact. There is no dead or injured. When he checks his sheep pen at night, he finds a dark thing, maybe a wolf or person, crouching at the pen. He is frightened to death. Then the dark thing jumps out, runs back and forth outside the pen, and barks at him. He recognizes that it is the red female dog. Now he understands why his sheep and yaks can remain intact. It is the red female dog that protects them every single night.[60] In the meantime, from this red female dog, the readers also can learn what the old Chinese saying about repayment of kindness means again. Since the uncle gives the street dog a home, the dog pays back a safe home to the uncle.

In "The Mad Dog," the writer reminds the readers of another feature: innocence. It is a merit but also a weakness. With it, life will be easy and simple. Also with it, people are easily

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[59] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," *The Ballad of Life*, Pema Tseden, trans., (Xining: Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, 2012), 175.

[60] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," 182.

mistreated and bullied. The dog in the story is a typical example. It has no idea about how complex the human society is. In the beginning, Takbum Gyel depicts the scene in which Abayah (Uncle Handsome) tells the story of the mad dog. In Abayah's depiction, the mad dog seems to come from hell. He says, "The mad dog was terrifying. Its eyes were as bright as the stars and as big as the trays; its mouth was as large as the valley, and the teeth were as sharp as the snow mountains; its paws were as strong as iron, stained with blood; it came from a dark ditch and pounced on me…"[61] In the following excerpt, Abayah continues to describe how terrifying the mad dog is. He tells the children surrounding him,

> I heard from the old men that if the dog had rabies, it would become an invulnerable demon. It will bite people silently and appear day and night at the sites where the tents are built. Even the sleeping children will be swallowed by it. If someone is bit by it, he will become a dog or bark at people. It never stops to find its prey. Therefore, if a mad dog comes to the village, the old, the young, and the women should get together and hide somewhere. The men should take weapons and fight against the dog. Otherwise, the mad dog will change all into dogs.[62]

To exaggerate the terrifying image of the mad dog, Abayah adds, "The mad dog came to me and said, 'Rabies is a disease that comes along once every 100 years. It was originated from a village. This year is the one-hundredth year. The village is Naksha Village."[63] In Abayah's description, the dog is a monster-like creature. Its existence threatens the people's life. Ironically, when a real mad dog appears in the village, its image is entirely different from what he depicts. Takbum Gyel writes that the so-called mad dog is not what Abayah describes. It is a normal old dog. But it is like a stud in the rutting season, running around with a dangling tongue and a watering mouth. Sometimes, it is like a wild yak with a bad temper and bloody eyes. It will bite the people it sees.[64] If the rumor of the mad dog did not spread around the village before it came,

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[61] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," *Tibetan Mastiff: Takbum Gyel's Dog Stories* (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 2019), 6. This book is written in Tibetan, and the translations of "The Mad Dog" "The Drunk Dog," and "The Mother and the Female Dog" are translated by me and Fde Leks, a Tibetan translator.

[62] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 7.

[63] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 8.

[64] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 22.

it would not have scared off the people and been frightened by the people's reactions. But it has no idea about the rumor and walks around in the village as usual. It is too innocent to notice the fear in the people's eyes and on their faces. When it enters the village head's tent, the head shouts at it and says, "The mad dog is coming! Run!"[65] At the moment, his wife screams. Her sharp voice stimulates the dog. Consequently, it bites her. Since then, the rumor of the mad dog has become a fact. Later, when Abayah meets the dog, which is following the children, he also shouts, "Run!"[66] When it hears the children's screams, it barks at them. When it barks, Abayah seems to see the terrifying mad dog described by himself. He kills the dog with his rifle without a doubt. In the story, everything happens because of the dog. However, the men are the origin of the incident of the mad dog. They are the ones who create the rumor of the mad dog and spread it. They are the ones who stimulate the dog to attack them. Takbum Gyel, in his writing, never directly points out that the dog running around in the village is the mad dog that threatens the people's lives. It is the people's imagination about it that creates the mad dog. The dog entering the tent and meeting with Abayah is too innocent and naïve to enter the traps made by the people. It is the only victim of the incident about it.

The land of the dog is also characterized by lightheartedness, which makes it possible for the Tibetans to have some joy in their tough life on the remote plateau. In "The Drunk Dog," with its little master, the brown mastiff lives a free life. At first, it is its little master's playmate in his truancy. When its master goes to school, it follows him to the school. Once arriving at the hill in front of the school, the little master will ask it to fight with the homeless dogs living on the hill. It is so brave that the little master always feels that he cannot compare with the dog. As he says, with the dog, he will not go to school on time. It will find a way that helps him be absent from school.[67] Second, the dog indulges itself in doing something out of line sometimes. The funniest thing it does is that it gets drunk. At the beginning of the story, "I," the little master,

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[65] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 22.

[66] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 50.

[67] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," *Tibetan Mastiff: Takbum Gyel's Dog Stories* (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 2019), 67.

says, "In fact, the brown mastiff did not drink to be drunk. It only licked my father's vomitus. … When drunk, it was not like my father (who was always angry and shouted at my mother). It was so weak and funny. Its tail hung down, and its steps were shaky. It was like a newborn lamb that could not stand up. The dog seemed quite regretful about what it did and escaped my sight. I told it, 'It is all your fault. You are too greedy.' The dog could not reply. It turned its head and looked at me. It seemed to ask me, 'why do you laugh at me?'"[68] Third, being a dog who has a home, it never bullies the street dogs. Even though its little master always asks it to fight with the street dogs on the hill, it has made friends with those dogs secretly. The day when it is drunk, it sleeps somewhere for a whole day and leaves its little master alone. The next day when the little master is anxious about its safety, it appears on the hill.

> Surprisingly, the street dogs were back and sitting or standing on the hill in front of the school. I recognized that the strongest dog in them was my brown mastiff. It was more surprising that my dog and those dogs, lining as an army, were not fighting with each other. They were standing together and facing difficulties together. When I went close to them, it was so excited and ran to me. But the street dogs misunderstood that I was its enemy, following it and running to me together. I was so nervous that I could not help but shout out. The dog felt my fear and waved its tail to me. The street dogs were shocked by what they saw, stopping their steps and looking at us. A moment later, they played with each other again.[69]

Even though its living condition is not as good as the dogs living in cities, the mastiff, the Tibetan dog, has a free life, in which it can live for its own will. Although it eats the leftovers and sleeps outdoors, it never bothers itself with how harsh its life is. It can go wherever it wants to go and play with whomever it likes, which is enough for it. As an old Chinese saying goes, contentment brings happiness.

The last feature described by the writer is love, which tightens the relationship between the people in Tibet. In "The Mother and the Female Dog," the female dog is characterized by love, piety, and mercy. In the story, the protagonist, Toldan, has a dream about his mother. In the dream, he sees a woman he does not recognize at first sight. When he looks at her face, he realizes that she is his mother, who has been dead for years. He calls her and runs to her. But she

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[68] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 64.

[69] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 82.

changes into a rainbow and disappears. At the time, he wakes up and hears the barks of his dog, a female dog.[70] Since then, he has had the same dream every night. His mother is always there and looking at him. When he calls her and tries to get close to her, she will disappear. Then he will wake up and hear the barks of the female dog. In his dreams, the images of the mother and the female dog are connected. Toldan doubts that the female dog is the reincarnation of his mother. Therefore, he visits the Buddhist master and asks him about his dreams. After the greetings, the master asks him, "How about your mother recently?" Toldan is surprised at his words and replies, "She was dead years ago…" The master asks him again, "How about the female dog in your home?"[71] The master's words prove what Toldan believes: the female dog is his mother. The images of the two females overlap with each other. Whenever Toldan talks about the mother, he talks about the dog. In his memories, his mother, the dog's previous incarnation, is a qualified mother, a pious Buddhist disciple, and a merciful woman who uses her love to treat everything and everyone appearing in her life. As a mother, she is worried about his son's future. As Toldan remembers, his mother is guilty of not giving Toldan a brother. She constantly says, "'If one has difficulties, he should have wisdom. If one encounters the enemy, he should have a brother.' How wonderful it would be if he had a brother. But I do not have this fortune."[72] When Toldan asks the Buddhist master what his mother's wishes are, the master replies that one of her wishes is to see him having children. However, Toldan's wife, Lamo, cannot have a baby again because of an abortion surgery. When he feels sad about the honorific title awarded to him, "The Exemplary Person Who Practices Birth Control," the female dog accompanies and comforts him. The mother understands why he suffers. As a pious Buddhist disciple, the mother wishes to go to Lhasa and give the Buddha miniature she cherished to the temple. They are the other two wishes she has before her death. In the meantime, in the Cultural Revolution, she swallows the Buddha miniature to protect it from being destroyed. When the Red Guards leave, she drinks the noodle

[70] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 108.

[71] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 112.

[72] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 114.

soup and discharges it from her body. Then she cleans it up and puts it back in the niche.[73] As a Buddhist disciple, the old woman has a heart of mercy. When she knows that the Buddhist master is tortured by the Red Guards, she tries her best to save him. When he is brought by the Red Guards to a fighting meeting, the mother appears. She takes a bowl of "urine" and forces the master to drink it. She tells the Red Guards that the master is the exploiter who has cheated her for a long time. She will not feel angry if he drinks the bowl of urine.[74] Then she opens the master's mouth and pours the liquid into his mouth. When he drinks it for the second time, the master realizes that the bowl of urine is a bowl of water with black sugar. The master tells Toldan, "If I did not drink the black sugar water given by your mother, I would not have been here. Later, she continued feeding me secretly."[75] From his words, it is easy to notice that the woman (the female dog) is a woman with love.

Tibet, the land of dog, in Tabum Gyel's words, is a land full of merits and virtues. Its material life might not be as advanced and convenient as the life in modern cities, but its spiritual life is much richer. Those dogs in the stories are never changed by their surroundings—the world they live in. They insist on doing what they believe is right. They are so natural, simple, and straightforward that they might spend their whole life on finishing one duty or achieving one goal. Yes, their life is short, but it is meaningful. They do not need to give up the essence of their being to satisfy any unreasonable desire. Like the Tibetans in the old age, they live a simple life, desiring few and easily satisfied. Unfortunately, in the transition from the old age to the new one, the land of dog gradually disappears. The falling of the land of dog is presented by the tragic endings of the dogs in the stories. In "The Watchdog," the loyal dog dies for its loyalty. In "The Old Dog," the dog is mistreated for its integrity. In "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," the red female dog sacrifices itself for its responsibility. In "The Mad Dog," the dog loses its life for its innocence. In "The Drunk Dog," the brown mastiff's fate is almost changed by its lightheartedness: When it plays with the street dogs, the County Governor sees it and wants it to

[73] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 114.

[74] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 128.

[75] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Female Dog," 129.

be his dog. In "The Mother and the Female Dog," the female dog and its love for the son have been forgotten. The tragic endings of those dogs are the writer's intentional designs, which aim to demonstrate the ending of the old age and the gradual disappearance of the authentic self in the Tibetans' being.

The Inauthentic Tibet: The Land of Man

When Takbum Gyel writes about his homeland, Tibet, as the land of dog, which demonstrates the original image of Tibet, he also writes about another side of its image: the land of man, demonstrating how Tibet merges into the world and lives as the they.[76] His writing of the land of man is his writing of the present Tibet. In the dog stories, the human characters always play negative roles. They are too forgetful to remember who they are. In "The Watchdog," the master is an adulatory, coward, utilitarian, brutal, and ungrateful man. When the dog attacks the guests, the master is immediately angry with the dog. He fears that the dog will irritate the guests, whom he has no guts to go against. Therefore, he abuses the dog and uses the wood pin to hit it in front of the guests. When being with the guests, he shows another face. He uses his hands to dust off the guest and apologizes to him for his dog's violence. When the guest points at the master and curses him, the master's face turns pale. He lowers his head in front of the guest and accepts his curses at him.[77] In the meantime, the master prepares gifts for the guests every year. Even though the writer does not tell us why he gives the guests the gifts, we know that he tries to flatter them and make them happy with him. Then he might get some benefits from the "good" relationship with them. As a Tibetan man, he never shows his courage to go against injustice in his life. What he does is to bow to the unreasonable social norms to flatter the authorities. Facing the robberies done by the officials every year, he feels angry, too. Tragically, his anger is not shown to the authorities but his dog. Second, the master is a self-profiteering person. His life philosophy is that the one who can be used will be nicely treated, while the one he cannot use will be abandoned. His different attitudes towards the powerful guests and the old dog

[76] The they or the they-self (*Das man* in German) is a term appearing in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which is used to describe the inauthentic mode of existence.

[77] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 32.

demonstrate this philosophy vividly. The reason why he lets the dog live with him and his family is that he wants the dog to protect his property. However, the dog's duty now conflicts with his goal to build a "good" relationship with the local authorities. For him, the dog becomes a roadblock on his way to a "better" life. Even though the dog feels pain when seeing the guests taking its master's property away, the master is blinded to see its loyalty. It has lost the meaning of its existence. Therefore, he hits the dog's head with a stone or wood pin and kills it. Even its body is left by him at the site of the killing. His utilitarianism makes the master brutal and ungrateful. Facing the dog's loyalty, he does not show any understanding about the dog and its duty. On the contrary, he pays back the dog's service with anger and violence. He hates the dog, because it attacks the guest and bites the tail of the horse he rides. For him, it is the dog that damages the relationship between him and the local authorities. When the dog tries its best to retrieve the sheep taken by the guest, he never shows his gratefulness to the dog and its loyalty. What waits the dog is the death given by the master.

Furthermore, the guests in the story are not positive characters. They are too greedy and hypocritical to be compared with the dog. Once "the big shot" comes, the master will lose something he owns. As the dog says, "The guest was the big shot who took away a yak last year, a sheep the year before the last, and a bundle of fleece three years ago."[78] But those gifts are not enough for the guest. This year he comes again. His greed makes the dog mad with him and view him as the enemy of the family. In the meantime, the guests are not the persons who try to help the master with all their hearts. In the dog's eyes, the "good" relationship between his master and the guests is built on benefits. "I" observes, "The master's face is full of fake smiles, and the guests wear hypocritic expressions, too. The similarity between them is that they all pretend that nothing happens between them, sitting together and having tea."[79] After they reach an agreement on the issue about the gift, the guests smile sincerely. Later, when the master brings a sheep to them, they laugh loudly. The dog says, "It is like the special way with which the people solve the

[78] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 32.

[79] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 33.

conflict between each other in ancient time."[80] The defeated party needs to pay tributes to the winning party to settle their dispute. Depending on the power they have, the guests exploit the people whose social status is lower than theirs. They are the hypocritical bureaucrats who aim to bully the people rather than serve them.

In "The Old Dog," the human character, Jabe, is ignorant, timid, and overcautious. At first, he never questions whether the thief stealing things from his tent is a dog. When he sees the paw prints outside his tent, he concludes that the dog is the thief. However, some of the things disappearing in his tent are obviously not stolen by the dog. It does not have such an ability to steal those things. For instance, Jabe first finds that the copper cauldron is gone. If one has wisdom, he will ask why a dog steals a copper cauldron and what its purpose is. He also says that the butter buns in the box disappear, too. If one has common sense, he will ask how the dog opens the box and steals the butter buns. Moreover, a fastened bag is open.[81] If the bag is tied with a rope, how can the dog unbind the rope with its paws? Indeed, Takbum Gyel has given the clues about the thief at the beginning of the story. He has pointed out that the thief is not a dog. Ironically, the protagonist Jabe only sees what he wants to see and ignores the important clues that point to the real thief. Since then, the old dog has become his enemy, whom he tries his best to kill. He uses meat to induce the dog and tries to poison it. He digs a deep pit in his yard to trap the dog. But the dog is never taken in. In their conflict, Jabe is the losing one and also the lucky one. One night, the dog is killed by a yak. Its death releases Jabe from his failures. To vent his spleen, he throws the dog's body in the pasture. He believes that the people will not discover the dog's body. His improper disposal of the body, in his words, is "the dog's retribution."[82] Beyond his thinking, the news of the dog's body is spread in the village the next day. An old man asks him, "Jabe, do you know the news? The village head said that the street dog living in his home was killed by someone and thrown at the entrance of the pasture. Your tent is close to the entrance? How brainless the guy is! Why throw the dog's body on the road on which the people

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[80] Takbum Gyel, "The Watchdog," 34.

[81] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 69.

[82] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 70.

walk every day? As the saying goes: one kills a yak and displays its tail to its master. If the dog were yours, you would have been angry now?"[83] When Jabe listens to the old man, his reaction demonstrates how timid and overcautious he is. The writer writes, "Even though Jabe did not focus on what the old man said, he knew what he was talking about. His brain was full of noises, and his body went hot. The sweat covered his nose. His throat was stuffed up. Then he saw numerous lips and eyes moving and guessing. The noises made him blind and deaf. In the end, his mind could not work well."[84] Since then, his life has been no longer peaceful. After he secretly moves the dog's body from the entrance of the pasture to the pit behind the wall of the school, its body is discovered by the school principal. He is frightened to death when knowing that the principal will report it to the county government. He asks himself, "What did I do? Did I make such a big mistake? … My life is over now. There is someone who knows that it is me. What should I do now?"[85] When he moves the dog's body for the third time, he seems to make a bigger mistake: he throws the body on the tomb of the Buddhist master's mother. On the day, Jabe never eats anything and hides in his tent because he hears that the master has cursed the person who throws the body. In the end, he finally finds a "proper" place for disposing of the dog's body: the sheep dunghill. He gives his secret guardian such a "proper" dwelling.

In "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," the human characters are submissive and subservient. At the beginning of the story, they show their kindness in the event of Kontho's mother. Kontho marries a beautiful woman in the spring and refuses to support his mother. After the wedding, he turns his mother out of his home. When the villagers get to know the incident, they persuade Kontho to change his mind. But when he says that he is the reincarnation of the red female dog, nobody wants to take the responsibility to persuade him. The red female dog reminds them of the eradication campaign and the incident of the red female dog happening decades ago. Their kindness demonstrated in the incident of Kontho's mother cannot erase their collective violence in the incident of the red female dog. A cadre in the neighboring village

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[83] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 71-72.

[84] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 71.

[85] Takbum Gyel, "The Old Dog," 74.

disappears before the Cultural Revolution. Through the investigation, the county government believes that he is eaten by a mad dog. Then the secretary of the county asks the whole county to participate in "the Eradication Campaign" to kill all the dogs in the county.[86] The official assigned to their village tells them, "Comrades, I come to your village for a very important task. It is Secretary Zhao who sent me here. Therefore, it is not an ordinary task but a quite important one. My mission is to finish the task given by Secretary Zhao. Nobody is allowed to say no. If one refuses to do so, he will go against Secret Zhao and our revolutionary achievements!"[87] When the villagers hear what he says, they are frightened to death and wonder what will happen next. The official continues, "All the people listen to me. Recently, we face a terrible threat, which is from rabies!" In his words, Secretary Zhao orders them to prevent the disease. With this order, they need to root out all the dogs in their village. What they should do is to poison their own dogs or use other methods to kill the dogs. The official gives them the deadline. He says, "Today is the first day, tomorrow is the second day, the day after tomorrow is the third day. I will give you three days. If there is any dog alive after three days, we will shoot it to death."[88] After he finishes his words, no one dare to ask questions. Since then, the eradication campaign has started. Because the Tibetans blindly follow the order given above, they gradually lose the heart of mercy, which the Buddhist disciples should have. From that day, a massacre begins. No matter whether they are street dogs, or the dogs have homes, all of them are killed. The work team kill several street dogs, peel off their skin, and eat their meat. Some villagers are unwilling to see their dogs beaten by the work team to death. They poison the dogs with their own hands. Some believe that the poison will make the dogs' death more painful, so they let them go and be killed by the team. Those days the village is full of gunshots and the dogs' barks.

Kontho's uncle should be an exception in this incident. But he cannot escape from the influence of the collective submissiveness. Indeed, he loves the red female dog, which protects his sheep and yaks. He tries all possible means to rescue the dog. At first, he talks to his brother-

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[86] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," 170-171.

[87] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," 172.

[88] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," 172.

in-law, Kontho's father, who is the leader of the campaign. He asks him not to talk about the red female dog to anybody in the village. Then he brings the dog to the mountains and gives it freedom. However, after the eradication campaign, the wolves come. They bite and kill the sheep and yaks in the village. The dead bodies of the animals are everywhere in the village. It is ironic that the villagers get the negative "benefits" from the coming of the wolves. They can take back the bodies left by the wolves and eat the meat. Kontho's uncle also wants to eat the meat. Unfortunately, his sheep and yaks remain intact in the pens. He only kills one of them by himself. When he goes to his sheep pen, he finds why his animals are intact. The red female dog protects them from being killed by the wolves every night. In order to reward the dog, he gives the sheep's guts to it. But when the dog comes back to the mountain, someone sees it and the guts in its mouth. The guts become the evidence that it is the killer of the sheep and yaks in the village. The officer views it as the enemy of the people and organizes a team to kill it in the mountain. Kontho's uncle is one of them. Later, the uncle finds that the red female dog is slaughtered by the wolves. To flatter the official, he and Kontho's father bring its body to the work team's office. The official touches the dog's fur and tells Kontho's father, "The fur can be my mattress. Today we can celebrate our victory and eat the dog's meat. I will help you to be the leader!"[89] At the moment, Kontho's uncle and father never say a word to stop the officer from blaspheming the dog's body. The red female dog devotes itself to protecting the uncle's property. In the end, what it gets is that its fur becomes the mattress and its meat becomes the food.

In "The Mad Dog," the human characters are featured with untruthfulness. They like to make rumors and ignore the impacts of the rumors on their or other people's life. Abayah is the first one who creates the rumor of the mad dog. Before he tells the story of the mad dog to the children, he asks them whether they see a mad dog. The children say "no." When the children ask him whether he sees a mad dog before, he replies, "No, I didn't." The children question him, "So you cheated us?" He replies that he sees the mad dog in his dream and it is pretty terrifying.[90] Abayah believes that the horrible appearance of the mad dog he depicts is not enough to threaten the children. He adds more information about the dog and makes the children

[89] Takbum Gyel, "The Dog, the Master, and His Relatives," 194.

[90] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 6.

believe that what he sees in his dream is true. For instance, he says that if the dog bites someone, he or she will become a dog and bark at other people. In addition, he exaggerates the evilness of the mad dog. In his words, the mad dog not only has a terrifying appearance and carries a horrible disease but also has magic power. In his depiction, the mad dog comes to him and says, "Rabies is a disease that comes along once every 100 years. It was originated from a village. This year is just the one-hundredth year. The village is Naksha Village."[91] Abayah's imaginative depiction of the mad dog becomes the origin of the rumor of the mad dog in the village.

Since the children believe that the story of the mad dog told by Abayah is real, they spread his words in the village. They fear going outside and herding the sheep and yaks during the day. Even some of them are sick and sent to the hospital. From then on, the adults start to believe the rumor of the mad dog. Some of them believe that it is the oracle from the Buddha. In this circumstance, the Buddhist master comes to their village. Ironically, his coming does not release the people from their panic but makes them trapped in it more deeply. The master asks the villagers to chant Buddhist scriptures and devote their sheep or yaks to the temple.[92] If they do those things, they can get rid of the haunting of the mad dog. Abayah is assigned with three-thousand chanting of the scriptures and asked to devote two yaks to the temple, which become his spiritual and financial burdens. After the ritual activities, the village returns to its original peace. At this moment, the mad dog comes. If the people did not view it as a monster, they would not have been anxious about its coming. They call the clinic center and ask them to send people to their village. In day and night, they close their doors and stay at home. Abayah, the rumor creator, also has a taste of his own medicine. The peace in his life is broken, too. The rumor of the mad dog begins from him and is also ended by him. To save the children, he shoots the dog with his rifle. His heroic feat not only brings him the honorable title, "The Dog Killer," but also brings him to jail. His crime is the illegal possession of a rifle.[93]

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[91] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 8.

[92] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 18.

[93] Takbum Gyel, "The Mad Dog," 51.

In "The Drunk Dog," the father is selfish and ignorant. He is a famous drunkard in the village. After being drunk, he always curses and bullies his wife and child. The protagonist, "I," is grown up in this family. The worse thing is that the father asks his son to drop out. The reason he gives is that if the son becomes a shepherd, it will be no need to spend money and time on studying.[94] When the school principal comes to his home and drinks with him, he says directly, "It is him. He is my only son. From now on, he will not go to school. I, on behalf of him, ask for an absence. He needs to herd the sheep and inherits my property. If not, how about the sheep? Right?"[95] When the son says that he wants to go to school, the mother replies, "But… your father has used the dog to exchange you."[96] To relieve himself from the burden of work, the father does not care about his son, who is too young to leave school. At the same time, he is ignorant about the significance of education and knowledge to the young generation. In his mind, a shepherd does not need to know how to read and write. Life should drift along. His son will be like him: working with the sheep, having a wife and children, and entertaining himself with alcohol. Knowledge is not a necessity in his and his son's life.

In the story, the school principal is characterized with obsequiousness. He is the principal who only cares about the County Governor's preference rather than the students' studies. When he knows that the governor will visit the school, he decides to drive away the street dogs settling down on the hill in front of the school. At the night, he lights firecrackers to bomb the dogs. As he wants, all the dogs disappear the next day.[97] Interestingly, when the governor visits the school, those dogs are back and play with the brown mastiff on the hill. When the principal sees the dogs, he orders the students to drive those dogs away with stones. He says, "The school is a place for studying rather than feeding dogs. What will the County Governor say if he sees those dogs? They will bring a negative influence on our school. You drive them away with stones as

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[94] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 101.

[95] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 101.

[96] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 102.

[97] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 82.

far as possible."[98] But his flattery does not work. When the governor comes, the dogs come back again. When he asks the principal whether the dogs are street dogs, the principal falters, "Yes. Yes. The school is for the students. How could it be the place of the dogs?"[99] At this moment, the governor says, "It is because of our outdated minds, we cannot catch up with other places. What is wrong with feeding the dogs in the school? Nowadays, the dog's value is increasing. In the future, the dog business might enter the international market. The dog resource is relatively abundant in this place, and there are leftovers in the canteen. The students cannot eat them all. But throwing them away is a waste. Using the leftovers to feed the dogs and selling the dogs in the market will save the food and also create income for the school?"[100] Since then, the principal has changed his attitude towards the dogs. He tells the students that no one should drive the dogs away. This order is from above and what they want them to do. The dogs can protect the school's property, prevent the phenomenon of wasting food, and show the Tibetan traditional virtue: helping the weak.[101] Furthermore, to flatter the governor, who likes the brown mastiff, he comes to the protagonist's home and drinks with the father. To get the dog, he promises the father that the narrator "I" can drop out. As he says, "Of course, no worries. I am the principal. I have the power to decide who can come and go."[102] Later, he continues, "I promise that I am not telling a lie. The County Governor told his thought to the township head, and the township head told it to me, the principal. Your dog gets affection from three leaders. How honorable it is!"[103]

In "The Mother and the Female Dog," the protagonist Toldan is characterized by forgetfulness. If he did not see the red female dog suffering in the mating process, he would not have had the dream of his mother. If he did not have the dream of his mother, he would not have remembered the three wishes his mother had before her death. His mother has been gone for

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[98] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 83.

[99] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 86.

[100] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 86.

[101] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 88.

[102] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 101.

[103] Takbum Gyel, "The Drunk Dog," 101.

years, and he has forgotten who his mother was when she was still alive. When he comes to see the Buddhist master, he asks him why he always sees his mother in his dreams. The master comforts him that it is normal for a son to dream about his mother, who passed away. He continues to ask, "But she is unwilling to speak to me. When I come to her, she will disappear." The master asks him, "Did your mother fail to fulfill her wishes before her death?" Toldan thinks about it and replies, "Yes. She didn't come to Lhasa." The master continues to ask, "Were there other wishes?" Toldan answers, "No." The master feels angry about Toldan's words. He says, "Oh, you need to think about it. It is not what I should remind you of. You should remember it by yourself. If so, you will not have the dream tonight."[104] From their conversation, it is easy to notice that after his mother's death, Toldan has been too obsessed with his own business to remember his responsibility of being a son. Since then, Toldan has started to remember who his mother was. In his memory, the image of the mother is shaped. She is the one who swallows the Buddha miniature to prevent it from being destroyed by the Red Guards. She is the one who dreams to come to Lhasa, the holy land of the Buddha. She is the one who takes the risk to save the master's life in the Cultural Revolution. She is also the one who is worried about Toldan. When Toldan is young, she is worried that Toldan has no brothers and no one will help him in the future. When Toldan gets married, she is worried that Toldan has no children and no one will support him when he is old. She is such a great Buddhist disciple and Tibetan mother. Unfortunately, the son forgets her after her death. For this reason, the red female dog becomes the reincarnation of his mother, which comes to his home to remind him of his mother. Because of the female dog, Toldan has time and mind to care about where his mother comes after her death and what she wanted before her death. In the end, the master tells him the truth. Because his mother swallows the miniature of the Buddha and discharges it from her body, which blasphemes the miniature, she should be a dog in her next life. Since she has three wishes that fail to be fulfilled, she is born in her son's home.[105] As the master says, the mother fails to go to Lhasa, fails to have a grandson or granddaughter, and fails to donate the miniature to the temple.

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[104] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Red Female Dog," 113.

[105] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Red Female Dog," 130.

But the first wish she hopes to fulfill is to see Toldan and his wife have a child. That is why she is born at the door of Toldan's tent.[106] In the end, when the female dog comes back to Toldan's tent after leaving for several days, Toldan cries to it, "I will fulfill your wishes. It is my duty and responsibility."[107]

In Takbum Gyel's writing of the land of man in his dog stories, it is easy to notice the change in the life of the Tibetans. The features characterizing the Tibetans in the past have disappeared and been replaced by those new features demonstrated by the human characters. The land of dog has become the land of man. In the stories, the final winners in the conflicts between the dogs and the men are always the men. The new era finally replaces the old one. Life on the plateau has not been simple and natural anymore. The Tibetans have started to face the problems which the people in other places face. With the development of society, they are too busy to remember who they were in the past. For a "better" life, they start to give up the essence of their being. They have not been the people who detached themselves from the mundane world and are becoming more and more worldly. In the new era, they are obsessed with playing the they and using the inauthentic self to characterize their being. The authentic self, which, in their eyes, has been outdated. However, Takbum Gyel keeps a clear mind on this change in his homeland and people. He never questions the necessity of the modernization of Tibet. But he knows clearly that forgetting authenticity is a dangerous sign for the land, culture, and people. What will happen next if his people's being is defined only by inauthenticity? To answer the question, the writer intentionally writes the story, "Notes on the Pekingese."

What Should We do: To be the Dog or the Man?

As Takbum Gyel answers the question from Pema Tseden in an interview, "I think if I can write the dogs' stories well, I can demonstrate the past and present of my homeland."[108] In his dog stories, the land of dog is the authentic Tibet, and the land of man is the inauthentic Tibet.

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[106] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Red Female Dog," 130.

[107] Takbum Gyel, "The Mother and the Red Female Dog," 132.

[108] Pema Tseden, "Takbum Gyel: I was a Dog in My Last Life," *Qinghai Lake,* No. 2, 2016, 125.

When he depicts the dogs, he tells his readers about Tibet's past. When he depicts the people, he tells them about its present. Even though Heidegger believes that Dasein is the combination of the authentic self and the inauthentic self, he also believes that the inauthentic self is used to help the human being recognize his authentic self and the inauthentic self cannot replace the authentic self to define the being of the human being. Takbum Gyel has a similar view about the being of his people. In the transition from the old era to the new one, if his people give up all the features characterizing them as the Tibetans, they will have no right to call themselves Tibetans. They are only the they who have no difference from the people in other places in the world. Why Tibet is called Tibet and why his people can be called the Tibetans will become aporias for themselves. Therefore, his "Notes on the Pekingese" is used to reflect the transitions of Tibet and the Tibetans and makes his people consider whether the modern humanity is really better than the past doghood—whether inauthenticity is better than authenticity. If they are more and more "human," whether they are qualified to be human beings? In "Notes on the Pekingese," he depicts the transition of a dog. This time the dog is no longer the dog in the previous stories that has the features of the traditional Tibet. Like the modern Tibetans who trying their best to fit in the modern world, the dog tries to get rid of its doghood and fit into the human world. The writer shows his readers what they will be if Tibet becomes the land of man (the land of inauthenticity).

In the beginning, the Pekingese is an ordinary dog. As the protagonist, "I," describes, "Though the Pekingese have neither the ability of the mastiff to fight off wolves and jackals nor the courage to stop a burglar, they're very good at notifying you when a visitor arrives and keeping you company during your leisure hours, and they're skilled at entertaining important dignitaries and high officials too. They really are adorable little things."[109] Although the Pekingese cannot compare with the mastiffs described in the previous dog stories, it is a lovely and simple-minded dog. However, the dog decides to change its social status and desires something that does not belong to it. At first, it flatters the protagonist, "I," a high official living in the apartment right across the hall. What it does is to clean up "my" shoes secretly. "I" says, "Incredibly, the next morning, the shoes had, as before, been cleaned and polished to a perfect,

[109] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," Christopher Peacock trans., *Ploughshares Solos,* vol. 7, no. 7 (2019), Kindle edition, 72.

gleaming black. When I took a closer look, I saw that they had been cleaned with truly outstanding skill. Not even a whiff of dirt or grime was left between the fine cracks of the leather."[110] "I" tries to find out who cleans up his shoes, but he fails. A month later, when it is snowing, "I" intentionally smears some mud on his shoes and waits for the mystery man's coming. In the end, he finds that it is the neighbor's Pekingese. Having a brush and shoe polish, the dog is polishing his shoes. When seeing the protagonist, it quickly gets to its feet, wrinkling its nose and wagging its tail courteously. It asks, "Director, sir, you're still up at this hour?"[111] After the conversation between "I" and the Pekingese, "I" praises, "What a considerate dog!"[112] In his eyes, it is "so kind, so likable—a thoroughly decent guy."[113] Then he asks the dog whether it wants to be his dog. The Pekingese, wrinkling his nose and wagging his tail, replies, "It would be my honor to be your dog!"[114] At this moment, the dog finishes its first transition: from a retired high official's dog to a young high official's dog.

When being the dog of the high official, the Pekingese sets its next plan: being the dog working in the office. It begs the protagonist to bring it to his office and visit the County Governor. After the County Governor approves "my" application for bringing the Pekingese to the office, it becomes "my" personal assistant, called by the other people "the Director's tail." It takes care of the protagonist and does everything for him, such as cleaning his shoes, putting away his clothes, lighting the stove, making the tea, filing documents, cleaning the house, closing the front door, and opening the bathroom door. In the latter part of the story, it tries to cross over the line between dog and man. It tells the protagonist that it wants to marry his secretary, the most beautiful woman in the office. When "I" asks him how a human gets married to a dog, it replies, "I'm not being ridiculous. Is anything really impossible in this world?

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[110] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 95.

[111] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 108.

[112] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 116.

[113] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 116.

[114] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 131.

Absolutely not! And don't they say that dogs are man's best friend? We work in the same office and we're the best of friends, so what difference in status is there? Do you mean because she's a secretary? Then why don't you give me a bit more authority and we'll be equal?"[115] Then the dog is assigned to be the office manager. Since then, it has changed its face and becomes more and more human:

> And so the Pekingese was no longer fixated on me alone; now he was always to be found insinuating himself into the employees' ranks, chatting with them, trotting along behind them after work, and doing his best to ingratiate himself. At the same time, he also did whatever he could show off his skills in front of the secretary. When it came to me, however, there was a sharp contrast to his previously obsequious demeanor, and he now acted as though any and every item of business was open to discussion.[116]

Even though its life is much better and more hopeful than before, the dog never stops its movement forward and upward. When it gets the news that the governor will come back, it asks the protagonist to visit him and bring it together. Even though "I" is aware of its ambition, "I" takes it to see the governor. When entering the governor's home, "I" removes the liquor and *khata* from his bag. Then, the dog pulls two top shelf liter bottles of Maotai and a *khata* from its bag. The Pekingese's gift is much better and more expensive than the protagonist's. When it introduces itself to the governor, it says, "I'm a new arrival. I am an outstanding example of the Pekingese breed. This is because I consider it a pleasure to take on responsibilities and to help others. I am especially attentive to my master's commands and I wait on him loyally hand and foot. In sum, everyone says that I am an exceptional dog, and I am inclined to agree with them."[117] In its introduction, even though it calls itself a dog, the words it uses never give us the impression that it is a dog. It is more human than us, knowing how to communicate with the higher-ups. In the meantime, the dog cranes its neck, wrinkles its nose, and wags its tail in a show of great love and affection for the governor. It, just as it has when "I" first takes him in, sniffs the governor all over his shiny black nose, nuzzling him from his ears and cheeks and

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[115] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 237-244.

[116] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 260.

[117] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 440.

forehead to his nose and his lips.[118] Since then, the Pekingese has not returned to the protagonist's home.

The next plan the dog sets for itself is to be the governor's dog. Because of it, the governor kills his mastiff and cooks it. When he puts a cube of meat into the Pekingese's mouth, it says, "I haven't had meat this good since I popped out of my mother's belly!"[119] It does not mind that it is forced to practice cannibalism. The governor is so happy with the Pekingese's reaction that he asks "I" whether he can take it off his hands. The protagonist, "I," now realizes that he cannot be the dog's master. He notices the governor's shoes as clean and polished as his shoes used to be. Now his shoes have lost their former luster. Then he replies, "Of course, no problem. Since the Country Governor hasn't been in good health of late, it's especially necessary to have a companion. How about this: you can consider the Pekingese my get-well gift to you."[120] The next day the beautiful secretary comes to his office and tells him that she accepts the Pekingese's proposal. She says, "I-I-he wouldn't leave me alone. So I-I said yes." When "I" asks her what she says Yes to, she replies, "To-to marrying the Pekingese. So I-I-came to ask for your forgiveness. I have my faults too. I'm sorry…"[121] Now the Pekingese becomes the winner, who gains both power and beauty it desires. As an old Chinese saying goes, you cannot have both the fish and the bear paw. It means that you cannot have your cake and eat it too. But the Pekingese can have both.

"Notes on the Pekingese" is, indeed, a revelation given by Takbum Gyel to his people. In the transitional Tibet, he and his people are at the crossroad where the past, present, and future confront each other. If they forget their past featured with the essences, such as loyalty, integrity, responsibility, benevolence, lightheartedness, and love, they will turn away from their authenticity. The Pekingese is a typical example. Being a dog, the Pekingese is unlike the mastiff, which is loyal to its master and works wholeheartedly. It betrays its master to pursue

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[118] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 447-454.

[119] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 525.

[120] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 532-539.

[121] Takbum Gyel, "Notes on the Pekingese," 560.

power and flatters the authorities to increase its influence and satisfy its lusts. There is no sincerity, true emotions, and real friends in its world. Only interest, desire, and mutual exploitation can define it. Yes, it is a common phenomenon in modern society. However, whether can the Tibetans be an exception? Due to their unique culture and geographical location, can they escape from the spiritual degeneration haunting modern society? Can they be less greedy and lustful than other people? To pursue wealth and power has become the common goal of the modern people. As the members of the modern people, the Tibetans are also pushed to merge into the society and become the participants of the collective chase. They become more and more the they and forget the original image they had. In this connection, through creating the dog stories, Takbum Gyel compels them to think about who they were before being "the they." At the crossroad, facing the authentic self and the inauthentic self, the Tibetans, standing at the present, should throw themselves into the future, based on the past they had. To be modern Tibetans, they should not forget who they were and what the essence of their being is. If they do so, they will not become the Pekingese, who never knows who it really is in the end.

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I have shown the home(land) in the selected works to exhibit its features as diverse as nostalgia: disharmony, estrangement, spatial transitionality, duality, hybridity, universality, incompatibility, and temporal transitionality. For the American-born writers, the home appears disharmonious due to the cultural conflicts between the older and younger generations. For the new immigrant writers, the homeland serves as a place full of conflicting ideas and images because of the ideological conflicts between the native land and the new land. For the Sinophonic writers, the homeland is a changing place and not the last virgin land on earth. For the Tibetophonic writers, the home(land) remains paradoxical. The oppositions within it make its people feel directionless. The different thinking of home and homeland in their works have given rise to conflicting inspirations, motives, and ways of representations. The American-born writers attempt to figure out what the home is and what its meaning is for them. The new immigrant writers try to get to know where their home is in both material and psychological terms. The Sinophonic Tibetan writers tend to imagine what the homeland should be in modern times. The Tibetophonic writers set their mind on where the home(land) should go in the future.

Through the comparative study of the writings about home(land) in Chinese American literature and Tibetan Chinese literature, I have explored how Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers think about their home(land)s. The home(land) in their works is neither the ancestral home nor the past home as the current scholarship reveals. For Chinese American writers, it should be the combination of the ancestral and current homes. For Tibetan Chinese writers, it should be the combination of the past, present, and future homes. Clearly, the two groups are similar to each other. Both are preoccupied with writing about their homelands and cultures and portraying their distinctive features in their writings. Both view their homelands and cultures as the source of their inspiration, even as their homes have different features and their literary pursuits in their writings of home are different. In the meantime, both are dissatisfied with their homelands. They share a preoccupation with home(land) in their works, writing about the pains and sufferings brought by its pervasive presence. From this perspective, it is reasonable

to believe that both groups have a similar perception of home(land). But their similarities are only up to a certain point. The differences between the two groups should not be ignored.

As we saw in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, the home plays different roles in Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers' writing career, serving as the source of their inspiration. But more often than not, it evokes a negative creative source in Chinese American literature: a haunting ghost. For Amy Tan and her American daughters, the home is always the nightmare that haunts them in childhood and harasses them in adulthood. For Frank Chin and his Chinaman sons, the home becomes the last place they want to return. For Ha Jin and his Chinese male immigrants, the homeland functions as the force that pushes them away from their home physically and spiritually. For Yan Geling and her Chinese female immigrants, the homeland, the place where they can dwell physically and spiritually, does not exist. But the home, in Tibetan Chinese literature, is presented in a positive image, becoming the sacred and pure muse far removed from the ghost haunting Chinese American writers. For Zhaxi Dawa and his new men, although the homeland is changed, it may offer them a new life, entirely different from the past one. For Alai and his Root Villagers, the homeland shows them what human history is and what human beings should be. For Pema Tseden and his Tibetan family, even if there are conflicts and struggles in the home, it is still the dwelling of their souls. For Takbum Gyel and his dogs, even though the people seem to have forgotten what the homeland used to be, they still cherish the chance to save it from being forgotten. In other words, Chinese Americans' home seems to be the one standing in their way towards home (their self-identification). If they want to live in peace, they need to fight against it. Tibetan Chinese's home seems to be waiting for its rejuvenation. If they try to get their spiritual peace, they need to take efforts to make it better.

The difference in the images of home and homeland in Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese literary works then suggests that the two groups have different existential anxieties. Chinese Americans' identity consists of two parts: natural identity and national identity. Their natural identity, which plays the role of the dominant variant in a gene featured in their yellow skin, is decided by their original homeland, China. This dominant variant makes Chinese Americans visually distinguishable from other Americans. Whether they were born as Americans or have lived in America for decades, they are often misidentified as foreigners from Asia. The

visibility of their natural identity masks and overrides the information given by their national identity (American identity) and makes it a recessive variant in a gene, which cannot be seen and recognized. Moreover, the widespread Orientalism that pervades American culture lets Chinese Americans believe that it is because of the dominant variant in their gene, the Chineseness, that they are unable to be accepted and welcomed and recognized by the country they live in. In this circumstance, the explicit and implicit hatred towards their original country and culture comes into being. Even though they have learned from African Americans and the Civil Rights movement that their ancestral culture is essential for their existence in America, conscious or unconscious hatred cannot be easily erased. That is why, in the works written by the four writers discussed in the previous chapters, we can easily discover the common truth hidden in their words: that is, "I am/want to be an American." No matter how hard Amy Tan or Frank Chin deals with the conflicts between the two generations of Chinese Americans in forming their identity, the foundation of their literary creation is that they are Americans. Despite the fact that Tan or Chin consciously recognize that Chinese culture is significant to Chinese Americans, they admit that they are Americans at the very beginning of their writings. Similarly, in their criticism of the original homeland from the Westerners' perspectives, Ha Jin or Yan Geling have evinced their open and tacit purpose to become Americans. Although Ha Jin or Yan Geling express a sense of nostalgia for the original country and objective views about American society, their works are filled with their conscious and unconscious desires to merge into American society. Through Chinese American writers' writing, we can see how Chinese Americans' collective consciousness is centripetally oriented. The center is America. The epithet of their identity, Chinese American, has indicated the nature of their identity. "Chinese" appears as an adjective of the central noun of "American." No matter what they do, they cannot hide their eagerness to enter or come close to the center. Being the other for a long time, Chinese Americans long for changing their current social status. The desire for being the self in American society brings them peripheral-phobic anxiety, which has exerted a strong impact on their largely negative attitude towards their native land and culture.

The structure of Tibetan Chinese's identity, however, is just opposites to this. Their identity also consists of two parts: natural identity and national identity. However, unlike

Chinese Americans, whose dominant variant is their natural identity, Tibetans' natural identity in their identity structure is the recessive variant, which cannot be easily seen and recognized. Having lived in the same geographic area with the Hans and other ethnic groups for thousands of years, Tibetan Chinese do not have an apparent feature in their appearance that distinguishes them from the Hans and other ethnic groups. They also belong to the yellow race. When the natural identity is not visible, the national identity comes into play and becomes the dominant variant of their identity. If they do not claim their Tibetan identity, they are Chinese, who appear as if they have no difference from the Hans constituting 91.51% of the Chinese population. In the meantime, China is glad to have all the Tibetans can identify themselves as Chinese, whether in China or overseas. To facilitate the Tibetans in merging into the mainstream society, the government adopts various policies to encourage them to participate in social, political, economic activities. Unlike the situation in America, in which some people are aware of the cultural others, China opens its arms to those ethnic others. When the entrance to the mainstream society is open and there is no one standing in the way to single out the Tibetans' ethnic features, national identity will mask and override natural identity and make it the recessive variant of Tibetan Chinese's identity. Similar to the periphery-center relationship between Chinese and American cultures in America, the relationship between Tibetan culture and the mainstream culture in China is also manifested in the periphery-center dynamics. In the case of Chinese Americans, the mainstream culture, which is Western-centric, occupies a strong position, consciously or unconsciously discriminates against ethnic cultures, and attempts to exclude them from its domain. In the case of Tibetan Chinese, the mainstream culture, the Han culture, welcomes other cultures and does not fear that it will be influenced by them. Hence, for the Tibetans, their anxiety is not the periphery-phobic anxiety that Chinese Americans have, but center-phobic anxiety, which spells out as their fear of being assimilated by the powerful center culture and its modernity. In this sense, their collective unconscious shows the tendency to move away from the center or try to keep a distance from it. Tibetan Chinese writers' literary movement is peripherally oriented. They are more concerned with how to protect their homeland and its culture and prevent it from losing its unique aura than with how to enter the mainstream as Chinese American writers do in their works. The subtext of their literary consciousness is

conveyed in the expression: "I am/want to be a Tibetan." In their identity, "Tibetan" is the real center, while "Chinese" is the one which decorates the central word.

As I wrote in the Introduction, their writing of home is not only a discursive practice but also a therapeutic practice in which the writers can mitigate their ethnic anxieties. The writing of home, for those ethnic minorities writers, serves a process of catharsis and a self-psychotherapy to heal the pain of collective homelessness. The word "catharsis" means purification or cleansing. Chinese American and Tibetan Chinese writers discharge their negative emotions for the homeland and seek to make peace with their homelands by writing about the pains and sufferings brought by their homes and homelands. In the literary works discussed in the previous chapters, we can see that the characters finally reconcile with their homes and homelands at the end of the works. For example, in *The Joy Luck Club,* Jing-mei starts to stand in her mother's shoes and reconsider the relationship between her and her native culture. In *Gunga Din Highway*, Ulysses finds the way—being the Chinaman—through which he can live in his home happily and freely. In *A Free Life: A Novel,* Nan Wu returns to his original identity, a poet, and can be himself in the new homeland. In *The Human Realm,* the narrator ceases to struggle with herself about where her homeland is and gives up her attempt to find a physical home. In *The Restless Shambhala*, Dawa Ciren, living in the modern city, calls for the name of the Buddha. In *The Epic of Root Village*, the Root Villagers sing the eulogy of the rain for the disappearance and rebirth of their homeland. In *Balloon*, the flying red balloon, even though disappearing in the sky, indicates that the hope might be somewhere in the future. In "Notes on the Pekingese," the last picture appearing in the narrator's mind is that those ferocious purebred mastiffs fight to the death with wolves and jackals in the deep dark of night. All the hopeful endings point to the writers' reconciliation with their homelands. Yes, their homes and homelands are not the ideal home in their minds. But their writings of the pains and sufferings brought by their homes and homelands release their repressed anxiety. In the meantime, through their reconciliation with their homes and homelands, they also offer their people the ways in which they have the chance to come back home spiritually. The mission of being the writers who write for their people is also accomplished in this process.

Although this dissertation allows for a glance at the existence of Chinese Americans in America and Tibetan Chinese in China and to learn some knowledge of ethnic minorities in the two countries, the current study is limited in scope with a focus on two ethnic groups and cannot give a complete picture of the ethnic minorities and their existence in the two countries. Moreover, America and China are naturally different. One is an immigrant country, and the other is the opposite: the fifty-six ethnic groups are almost the natives. With this background, it seems that it is impossible to compare the two countries and their ethnic minorities. Recently there have been a good deal of news and reports that present a bleak and even tragic picture of some ethnic minorities in China. The Tibetans frequently appear in those discourses and have served to justify criticisms and condemnation of the Chinese government. My study may give the world an insider's view through writings by the best writers of that ethnic minority.

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