The Problematic of Home in Exile

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ABSTRACT: *In the contemporary world of cross-cultural intermingling, this paper addresses the problematic of native home in diaspora in the fiction of Gao Xingjian. Gao subverts the politically circulated myth of home as a fixed centre by evoking in exile a dual response of longing as well as aversion. The duality inherent in the family photograph on the first page of One Man's Bible generates a dialogic tension which helps the protagonist re-negotiate his relationship with the lost home. And that accounts for my choosing it as key datum for a Bakhtinean discourse analysis in the light of theories of exile with Edward Said as the main critical source. I also draw on Roland Barthes' "Reflections on Photography" to demonstrate how at the surface level home symbolises all that is best in life—love, affection, intimacy, warmth, unity, security and shelter etc. At the deeper level, however, multiple other voices emerge to subvert the dominant construct of a single, stable, homogeneous home which demands unmixed loyalty from even from those who go out. The 'chronotope' of the photograph stirs up a whole series of foreign invasions, civil wars, colonial exploitation and domestic tyranny, all of which in turn open up the hidden structures of patriarchal power and hegemony at home which have been rendering the gender, sexual or generational other silent and invisible. A dialogic re-engagement with the past thus grants Gao's subject a Saidian double vision with which to dismantle the grand narrative of home as a site of Confucian order and harmony, and re-frame it as a complex, heterogeneous construct, which is responsible for ambivalence in exile's response to it.*

Keywords: home, exile, Gao Xingjian, chronotope, problematic

Introduction

This paper explores the duality inherent in the structure of a Chinese home which generates ambivalence in a self-exile in the fiction of Gao Xingjian. In the light of the exile theories mainly of Edward Said, and with Bakhtinean discourse analysis as the key tool, the argument traces a subtle shift in response to home in exile, from a sentimental attachment with it to a critical detachment therefrom.

As the first recipient of Nobel Prize in literature in Chinese in 2000, Gao has since attracted much critical attention across the world academia. His narrative technique in using pronouns for characters has intrigued many a critic to read it as a trope for subjectivity which is multiple hence polyphonic (Mabel Lee; Kam Louis 2001; Ming Tian 2009), gendered (Gary Gang Xu; Rojas 2002), or self-transcendent (Kwok-kan). Gao himself has explained it as a distancing device to allow objectivity and greater psychological space to the characters (Nobel Lecture 2000). His personal stance of 'no-ism' has also been a recurrent subject for criticism, affirming his own brand of 'third-ness' or marginality of the artist (Freedom and Literature 2014). Liu Zaifu and Lin Gang have discussed it with particular reference to the Buddhist and Daoist inspired individualism and autonomy. Julia Lovell has voiced the controversies regarding the Nobel Award, and the question whether to place Gao in China, the dominant location in his fiction, or the West, his adopted home since post-Tiananmen self-exile in 1989. This has led to viewing his oeuvre as cross-cultural translation that a writer in a marginalized, non-Western language has been able to achieve (Lorbjorn Loden 2005; Jessica Yeung 2008). Interestingly, though Gao now disclaims his belonging to the country of his birth, his fiction is replete with an exile's memories of the past home. Not that the topos of exile/home has remained out of critical focus. Lily Li, for example, has explored the process of disentanglement with home that an exilic mind undergoes in both the novels. This necessitates the probing of an area that still remains under-explored: what is it in home that drives an artist's dispersion therefrom? There certainly lies something deeper than the simplistic explanation of political oppression under the communists since 1949. The present study identifies this as tyranny which inheres in the very structure of home/land. Thus addressing the existing gap in research, it hopes to become a significant addition to the body of literature in the field.

Another relevance of this study is the emergent theoretical context of diaspora underpinning it, which aligns it with the geo-political and socio-cultural scene of the contemporary world. Leitch (2014) has inventoried diaspora among the major theories of the 21st Century. A highly fertile site, it has generated a whole range of literature by exile/migrant writers from across the world. The cross-cultural ambivalence inherent in the concept may add a multi-perspectival dimension to the debate by relating it to other sister-fields like immigration, trans/multiculturalism and globalisation. Equally relevant to contemporary debates is the position of home which becomes problematic by the act of self-exile. Like diaspora, home too is a dense site, ranging from personal signifiers like one's place of birth and residence, family and ancestral roots to the collective identifiers like one's home-land, nation, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality etc. This study intends to explore how Gao's subjects re-negotiate their relationship with their lost home in exile. Taking home mainly in its geo-physical sense, it opens up other possible dimensions of home for future researchers on Gao's fiction.

Home is a private territory with its own geographically bound and bordered space that houses those who belong to it and keeps all others out. "Beyond the frontier between us and outsiders," writes Edward Said, "is the territory of not belonging—of refugees and displaced persons" (139). One such category of displacement is exile which Said defines as a painful state of being torn from one's tradition, family and geography (140), and JanMohamed as 'a rupture' between an individual and her cultural matrix (223). However, its creative potential has drawn critical attention from Said onwards. Michael Seidel, for example, theorizes the condition of exile as an "enabling fiction", emphasizing a flowering of literary imagination which makes an "artistic virtue of exilic necessity" (5). Said also talks about the critical detachment and plurality of vision an exile acquires while negotiating a relationship with both the native and the adopted homes. Another conceptual variation is the dialectic of rootedness and transcendence in Claudio Guillèn's theory of 'exile' and 'counter-exile' literatures (272). The first is a personal "direct expression of sorrow", while the latter offers "wide dimensions of meaning" by transcending the earlier attachments to native home (ibid). That Gao subscribes to this progressive move contends the general impression of diasporic literature of China as laden with an obsession with home, which Leo Lee complains, has deprived overseas Chinese writers of their "rare privilege of being truly on the periphery of China…" (232). My premise is that by "moving between centre and periphery" (Hall 234),

Gao's subjects learn to re-adjust their relationship with home which an exile needs in order to cope with times and places other than past and home/land. Thus un-rooted from any centre (Lee), they are capable of what Gao calls 'margin-al' thinking, a stance rooted as mentioned above, in some of the Chinese philosophies.

The three teachings to shape the Chinese cultural contours are Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. The first is an urban-based, elitist ethical order which locates home in a firmly rooted, patrilinear family structure, binding the individuals in a hierarchical order of affection and loyalty (Schuman; Lithrup). The other two are spiritual orders which call for breaking free from the worldly shackles such as moral concepts, socio-political institutions and social relationships (Lin 133-134). This must account for the diasporic tendency discernible in all ages across China. However, the fact that ethical roots happen to be stronger than the spiritual ones is evident from the predominantly sedentary norm of life in China which is built round marriage, home and family. Like their political forbears since ancient times, the communists under Mao Zedong (1893-1976) cashed on the Confucian ethics to launch their official discourse of home as the home country which had a fixed 'monologic' location behind the 'iron curtain'. In the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature in 1942, Mao himself had laid down social realism and revolutionary romanticism as the only norms for his Marxist driven cultural theory. Home thus appears in the officially approved diaspora literature[1] in China as the ultimate fixed centre. At micro level, it houses a well-knit family that is hierarchically structured with filial piety as an absolute virtue, and the same values are reflected at macro level where each subject owes an uncompromisingly constant and deep allegiance to the home-state and society. In such a context, any departure from the norm is tantamount to revolt which incurs the displeasure of those in authority. Gao's construct of home as an ambiguous site challenges the Mao-ist discourse, hence the threat to his survival which acts as an immediate impetus for his dispersal as well as of his subjects whom he has conceived after his own image. However, once uprooted from home, they cannot help being regressive. Simultaneously pushed out and pulled back, they are thus driven by contradictory impulses of revulsion from and fascination for home. This constant push-and-pull becomes a source of dialogic tension, resulting in multiple discourses and counter discourses which accounts for my choosing Bakhtinean discourse analysis as the key tool for analyzing the data here. Though selected randomly from both the novels, the first chapter of *One Man's Bible*

(hence *OMB*) is a particularly rich datum for an in-depth discussion of the subject under study. The excerpts from the first page especially call for a close scrutiny in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of fictional discourse which centres round the concept of "heteroglossia" or multiplicity of languages or voices (1073). Bakhtin conceives novel as polyphonic in form. Through an "internal stratification of language" (ibid) it allows a number of 'regional' dialects or voices to emerge and contend the hegemony of the structures of power embedded in the dominant discourse. This multi-layered language is liberating in that it de-centres power through a "centrifugal dispersion of form" (1074). The dialogic form thus becomes an argument against the monologic discourse such as the nationalistic construct of home as a uniform object of desire demanding unequivocal allegiance. Bakhtin's dialogic method would prove helpful in exploring this multi-discursive, problematic site which keeps an exile engaged in a constant process of negotiation and renegotiation with its meaning. The multiple narrators who crisscross each other in both the novels may represent the dialectically opposed views of home at different times. I draw on Gao's use of "tripartite" pattern of pronouns (Nobel Lecture 2000) for shifting perspectives to bring out the fluidity in the protagonists' attitude towards home in the present context. To use Guillen's term with a slight modification, the shift is from a state of 'exile' to 'counter-exile', from a sentimental attachment and longing for to a Saidian critical detachment from lost home/country. The discussion to ensue seeks to answer the following research questions: What is 'originary' home like in Gao's fiction? How does it become a problematic site? How do exiles negotiate a relationship with it?

Home in Exile

What problematizes the location of native home in Gao's fiction is the subjects' act of self-exile. Continuously set and re-set in the perspective of other times and places, the multi-layered signification of home lends it a certain mobility of its own. We find the 'I-you' duo in their parallel narratives in *SM* suffering from a Saidian-cum-JanMohamedan sense of loss and rupture with their home which is what defines the initial response of exile towards the lost home. As an object of desire, longing and craving, home becomes fascinating for both because of its emotional association with the past and memories of people and places one held dear. Interestingly, home keeps changing its geographical location as one's family is driven from place to place, thus revealing the non-fixity

and unreliability of its construct. As they wander from place to place, they start 'vernacularizing' (Jacob 3) streets, lanes and houses. Stirred by something familiar in the present, each is carried down the memory lane to a home which has a definitely Chinese location as suggested by the recurrent images of courtyards and cobblestone streets in both the novels[2]. *SM* is replete with many a sad evocation of such architectural remnants of the bygone days: "Within a half closed door is a damp courtyard … you recall the back courtyard with the crumbling wall of your childhood home" (17-18). Then later in the novel: "Once again you see the black cobblestone street … Again just like the one in your childhood, it is a small lane with mud-splashed cobblestones" (75). The frequency with which the memory of their childhood homes haunts them makes these look like loose fragments cobbled together across the text: "… you want to visit each of the places you had stayed... the houses, the courtyards, streets and lanes of your memory as a child" (325). While memories of 'you' pertain to the places where home was located, those of 'I', in comparison, are marked by the association of his parents and other members of the family who peopled those places—"I no longer seem to be walking forward while confronting an old house but am returning to my childhood, moving backward on my heels… it is as if my parents are not dead…" (131). A little later in another chunk of memory: "Street endlessly long… My deceased maternal grandmother seems to have brought me here …" (132-133).

The details like the "mud-splashed" earthiness of a stone-paved street, or the rooted, grounded, raised structure of an old house point to the fact that home, whether recalled through memory or re-created in imagination, is a construct. As already stated, both 'you' and 'I' differ from each other in their re-construction of home. 'You' being more open and less private is haunted by a sense of loss of places. It is always the peculiar construction of a street housing his home—lanes, streets and such larger structures—that haunts him. 'I', in comparison, appears less social and more family-oriented. He is sensitive to the 'Bachelardian poetics' of the interior spaces of the houses he inhabited along with his people. They seem two aspects of the same individual, one providing a near and the other a slightly distant imaginary version of home in its "architectural materiality" (Jacob 5). Together they both come up to the earlier definition of Gao's subjects as split, complex characters: simultaneously rooted to the Confucian paradigm and rootless in the Buddhist-Daoist tradition; lonely yet not reclusive; part of the society yet staying apart. That accounts for their ambivalence toward home.

Exile's Home

We now need to have a close-up view of a house Gao's exile once lived in. The group photograph with which *OMB* opens reveals a close-knit, multi-generational family structure set in a typical Confucian context. While it releases a number of silent, hitherto unheard voices suppressed beneath the dominant discourse, it also decentres home as a fixed object of exile's dreams and desires. Hong Zeng includes photograph among the key semiotics of exile in literature (10), hence the first paragraph of the novel (1-2) needs to be taken out of its context and studied as an independent text in itself. A close reading for Bakhtinean discourse analysis of this word-picture captures the duality of home and an exile's ambivalence towards it. It lays bare a whole range of discourses such as geo-historical, political, gender and sexual, racial, and class, to name just a few. "In music", writes Jessica Yeung, "polyphony refers to a composition structure in which different voices perform variations on the same theme" (66). So here multiple voices heard through the main discourse of photography cohere to re-write the history of original home as a dubious site where tyrannical structures are hidden beneath the warm exterior of a happy family. The picture resists the oppressively dominant view of home as the ultimate centre in China. Instead it appears as a multi-faceted, ambiguous site that defies any single simple definition in the same way as emotional association with it defies a simple categorisation.

The technique of describing home through the lenses of a camera takes us to Roland Barthes' reflections in *Camera Lucida* (1981). Barthes points out "the co-presence of two elements" (21) in a photograph: the 'studium' and the 'punctum', which can easily be related to the fascination-revulsion dialectics of home in exile here. 'Studium' is the obvious meaning of a photograph open to all whereas 'punctum' is "an intensively private meaning that is suddenly and unexpectedly recognized and consequently remembered" (23). Barthes moves on to explain that "it breaks or punctuates the studium" which rises from the scene, "shoots out like an arrow and pierces me" (26). The photograph in the beginning of *OMB* gives a very dense picture of the past home that the narrator at present is re-visiting through memory. At the level of studium, it captures the celebratory aspects of home; its warmth, intimacy, affection. Seeming to uphold unity, togetherness and cohesiveness of the family, this home is built on Confucian lines, where the one and only child, the narrator himself, enjoys a secure centric

position in the midst of his parents, grandparents and other members of the extended family. It seems to contain all the seven dimensions of home for exile Somerville has theorised: shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and paradise. Of these, Wang and Wong have stressed the particular relevance of roots, heart and abode for Chinese migrants (182). These three are sufficiently highlighted in the photograph. The family is pictured outside, with full view of their abode or residence. The presence of multiple generations together gives evidence of not only their roots but also the deep attachment and bond among them all. Seen from this angle, there seems no place in the world like home. At other places, the subject tends to idealise it for its close association with his childhood when all members of the family were together, giving him a sense of security and belonging. Absence of relatives from those places renders them unhomely. For example the narrator 'I' in *SM* recalls how "Shanghai no longer interests me. The distant uncle I would have liked to have visited died even earlier than my father" (472). It is the sense of loss, the disruption of family ties and the discontinuity of tradition that give an additional sharpness to the sense of loss. However, at the level of punctum, we hear a number of other, alternative voices, speaking their own micro-languages that unravel hidden tensions and contradictions. One becomes aware of the presence of binaries, of tyranny and subservience which rise from the text suddenly, puncturing the celebrated harmony and emotional security that home seemed to epitomize.

Gao seems quite deliberate in shifting to the use of a particular pronoun. Most of his work tends to be autobiographical. Unlike *SM* where home haunts both 'you' and 'I' with equal force, *OMB*, quite significantly, opens with the 'he' narrative. The third person narration means to dissolve the subjective centricity of the autobiographer and creates the distance and detachment required particularly in case of an exile remembering past home. Nostalgia could drive him to lose control and to exaggerate. So an emotional restraint is needful and evident from the beginning. However, the litotes that starts the passage ironically subverts the effect of detachment as pretended— "It was not that he did not remember…" (1). Just where the narrator attempts to deny, he reveals his strong attachment with home. The fact that the narration grammatically starts with negation rather than assertion keeps off the closure. It opens up past wounds, reviving the sense of rupture between the exile and his cultural matrix that define his past self. Nostalgia dislocates him from his present placement and relocates him in other temporal and spatial zones

of experience. The house along with those who peopled it may have vanished from the earth's surface but certainly not from memory. The old photograph may be yellowing and discoloured, yet it is kept resiliently alive. So home located in memory "may have been displaced but not replaced" (Gabriel 42).

Home and its referents keep on recurring in quick succession within a short space of just a few sentences. Family, house, garden etc. are nostalgically evoked and described. From now and here to the "Beijing home" (1) of earlier years, the shift in time and space helps the narrator to enter into a dialogue with the past. As we move on, we find further dispersion in time reinforced by a dispersion of form. This results in a multi-layered version of reality; many other languages start emerging simultaneously, vying for dominance yet none remaining so for long. There is no absolute truth about home in Gao. It is multiple and inter-discursive in construction. The present-past dialectic lends the photograph a breadth and a complexity of its own.

The 'chronotope' of the photograph becomes a source of territorial and temporal expansion. It allows an inter-discursive fluidity in which the personal and the individual liquidate into the collective and the national. From the narrator's Beijing home to the American cultural penetration into China, there is a whole series of historical discourses set in multiple times and places which stir the memory of tyranny, aggression and foreign intrusions commenting on the hidden sources of 'domestic' violence. This long history of political hegemony and exploitation that perpetuated a binary-based culture in China punctures the proverbial peace and harmony associated with home and propels an exilic dispersion. The first forces of oppression identified are the Communists who after coming to power in 1949 started usurping the rights of the people to own private property in the name of equality and homogeneity within the nation. The scene then expands to include other similar narratives of violence and war that overlap each other—the Japanese invasion and occupation of the Chinese soil and the War of Resistance (1935-47), the militant engagements of the warlords (1916-28), the Civil Wars (1945-49), and behind them the British colonial usurpation of China in the previous century. To add to it all is the growing cultural penetration of America up to the ordinary Chinese homes. This densely variegated geo-historical narrative dissolves the fixed binaries of oppressor/oppressed, aggressor/victim, public/private, and Western/Chinese. It gives a sense of transnational construction of home

and its culture on the one hand, and on the other, the fluidity of the power positions there in the Foucauldian sense. For the colonial victims turn aggressors in their private, domestic domain, perpetuating the culture of hierarchy and discrimination. This is counter to the construct of home as a traditionally recognised place of shelter, security, peace and endearment. In its breadth and complexity, private home comes to reflect and represent national politics as much as the national politics seems to shape and govern the political makeup of the family structure. Home is far from being simple, fixed, uncontaminated and virginal.

The 'studium' of the photograph celebrates home as a source of family orientation. Everyone seems to have gathered round the oldest couple as guardian of domestic peace, unity and stability. Its punctum, however, reveals it as a well-guarded, fenced and fully-barricaded fortress. Its gated, walled structure implies a fear of the outside world which results in a politics of inclusion and exclusion. The picture is taken outside the built-in area yet inside the gate which keeps the insiders in and outsiders out. A well-to-do family such as this does not think of giving space to others; i.e., any other class, community or family. It includes only the members of the house. Friends, neighbours, servants or pets do not exist for them. The family is exclusive also in acknowledging only paternal lineage. There is a total absence of maternal relatives. In what appears a predominantly male, all-adult cast on the centre stage, women and children form a minority group of actors, almost invisible and without agency. Thus a culture of hierarchy on the basis of family, gender, class and age is visible in this patrilineal, patriarchal set-up of home. Males and elders enjoy precedence by right. A textual analysis of vocabulary and syntax all confirm the overwhelming majority of men in the house. Notice the order of introducing the members of the family. It starts with the grandfather. The space given to his introduction is larger than to anyone else, which affirms his power both as the head and the patriarch of the family even though he is paralysed and unable to speak. He is reclining on a rocking chair: a visual reminder of the comfortably-positioned, restfully-grounded patriarchal order under which the house is run. The invisibility of the grandmother or mother is held in sharp contrast with the visibility of the fathers of both generations. The presence of both the ladies is hinted only in the collective noun 'grandparents' and 'parents'. Others present besides them are "his paternal uncles and aunts and also the wife of one of the uncles"; the last one appears having been added as the farthest in the periphery. This 'wife' of the uncle has entered the family from outside through marriage

and is known by her referent, a male and a paternal relative of the narrator. Similarly, both his uncles precede his aunt here as on the next page: "[h]is third uncle, youngest uncle and youngest aunt…" (2). In this traditional set-up, there is no question of any sexual deviance. Men and women are paired together in a culturally approved, heterosexual relationship. Apart from gender marginalization, minors too have an ambiguous position. The only child, though a male, is overshadowed by the elders. As the first 'son' to his parents and first 'grandson' to the eldest sire of the family, he enjoys a privilege not to be shared by any of his siblings. Notice the ring of pride in the gendered description of the child on both occasions. As in other Asian societies such as the Arab and the sub-continental, a son in a Chinese household becomes the centre of family expectations and dreams. In *SM*, whenever the male-conscious, heterosexual 'you' dreams of settling down and fathering children, it is always the male he allows to precede: "You would have married a beautiful woman like one of these, who would long have borne you sons and daughters" (17). So here too, a first born male child is the proud inheritor of the family traditions and the source of continuing the bloodline. After all, he is expected to one day "take the seat of his grandfather" (4). However in spite of this privileged position, the child appears to be quite oppressed by the overwhelming majority of his elders: "He the eldest son and eldest grandson of the family, the only child in the photo, was squashed between his grandparents" (1). The body discourse also reinforces his disempowerment even though he seems timidly conscious of his masculinity: "He was wearing slit trousers that showed his little dick…" (1). The deliberate use of a vulgar slang for a universal object of male pride creates an important downsizing effect. A little later, however, the sartorial image of "a boat-shaped American cap on his head" (1) restores a little the dignity of his centric position in the family as it connects the politics of inter-generational positions with the world power politics. The child seems to assert his power, resisting the hegemony of adults as later during his grandfather's funeral rites he "adamantly refused to tie white cloth around his head" (4). He seems to assert his presence the way America is making its cultural presence felt as the emerging power of the 20th century. It has intruded into the so-called close cultural and domestic space of China.

The big house, in short, is a configuration of power and dominance. Its solid British structure is a text in itself that narrates the history of colonial intrusion and encroachment on the Chinese soil: "Behind the

rounded gateway was a two-story English-style building with a winding walkway below and a balustrade upstairs. It was the big house he had lived in" (1-2). The nation was denied space within its own geography in the same way as the little child is 'squashed' between his elders. The fact that the house was later confiscated by the State again connects the personal with the national. The communists, too, like the earlier colonial masters, usurped the rights of the people and perpetuated the same tradition of oppression as reflected in the household. Home, thus, resonates with a whole range of other, polyphonic discourses. It is the tyranny inherent in its structure as well as the political order of the country that makes an exile of the narrator. Whether during self-rule or rule by others in the past, tyranny has been a hallmark of the Chinese politics as of the cultural scene at home. As mentioned earlier, the elders of the clan, so powerful inside their gated residence, become politically disempowered in the larger power-games at national and international levels. Though the family is said to have been "decimated for being too gentle and fragile for the time" (2), the only one to survive was "a bastard like him" (2). That might be because he showed signs of resistance from an early age. Examples of his departure from norms and rituals such as the one mentioned earlier multiply as the narrative moves on. His past defiance heralds his future dislocation. It was this exilic resilience that carried him through 'the reign of terror' that *OMB* exposes in 'his' autobiographical discourse.

Home, captured in a single photograph steps out of its literal frame and attains a semiotic duality. Barthes has placed photography among those art forms which are not easy to classify. This problematic slipperiness is a subtle comment on the position of home for an exile. It directs the readers' gaze towards its slippery construct as a photographically represented object. The photograph is simultaneously mobile as well as static, alive as well as dead, mechanical as well as emotionally evocative. Just where it has preserved a single moment in personal history, there it has also allowed other times, places and peoples to enter into its symbolic frame. Exile, indeed, becomes an 'enabling' state. The diasporic position of the narrator enables him to negotiate meaningfully with his past home. Seen in a broader perspective, it is stripped of its conventional glory and romance. A dialogic re-engagement with the past thus has made it possible for him to subvert the grand narrative of home as a pure, unific and homogenous site representing complete peace, security and stability amidst its Confucian fixity, order and protocol. It emerges now as a complex, changeable and heterogeneous construct. A

product of this diversified cultural matrix, the subject has inherited all the clashes and contradictions which prevent him from settling down at one place, keeping him always on the move. Hence the boat-shaped American cap worn by the child in the photograph, which because of its implicit association with water, suggests not only the transnationality of home and fluidity of culture but also the exilic mobility of the narrator, all three elements which the State was bent on denying through its repressive policies. This is what the central preoccupation in *OMB* is and this is what enhances the functional indexicality of the photograph on the first page of the novel.

This is how change in the status of home in exile prevents it from becoming an obsession for Gao's subject. Transcending his obsessive craving for it in *SM*, he learns to march ahead with an adult's association with it in *OMB*.

Notes

1. For example, in the story “An Offering Gathered from that Cherished Homeland” by a contemporary fictionist Jia Baoquan (1993), the suffering and bereavements of the poor cause grief to the returnee rather than anger. The hard labour the farmers are subjected to is made to appear heroic in the dazzling light of the revolution rhetoric. Similarly, Wu Qing lets his diasporic narrator sing of China as a land of wonders” (360) from a stereotyped, collective ‘country’ of Africa in “The Civilization of Straw Hats and Cloth Shoes”. He romanticizes the native land as “a veritable giant-sized treasure bowl… resplendent to a dazzling extent” (363). The editor of the collection comments: “No matter how westernized [the diasporists] might seem to become, they inevitably revert back to being Chinese, they are Chinese at heart. For all the “suffering they had endured”, they cannot forget China, because they are the children of the land. They are rooted there. Nobody who is brought up in this “ancient Asiatic” civilization can completely tear himself away from it. (Chen 321)
2. Since ancient times the courtyard houses have been a prominent feature of Chinese culture across the country, particularly in Beijing. Initially meant as residences for large or extended families of the elite-class, they usually comprise a main house and a number of side houses opening into a common compound (Li 2009; Liu & Awotona 2005). Now fast replaced by the modern high rise apartment buildings to cope with the pressure of a huge population, the courtyard houses still survive, mostly serving as housing complexes noted for poor living conditions.

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