Narrative Strategy and Cultural-Political Meaning of David Der-wei Wang's Lyrical Theory *

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Abstract The author analyzes narrative strategy of lyrical discourse, referring to David Der-wei Wang's *The Lyrical in Epic Time*. Wang's lyrical discourse is critical to discussions of enlightenment and revolutionary traditions of twentieth-century Chinese literature, and amplifies the logic of "getting beyond differences" to existing discourses on the lyrical. Overall, this paper reads the signification of the lyrical tradition as related to the "modernity" and "modern subjectification" of China, reconstructed by the modern subject and shaped by ideological stances.

The Lyrical in Epic Time outlines Wang's own logic on lyricism, based on texts by three different authors. His central point is that all the texts of three authors bring revolutionary lyricism into lyrical discourse. For example, the revolutionary romanticism of the leftist narrative is described as revolutionary lyricism, while Red Poetics, instrumental in firing the national imagination, is rendered as Mao's lyricism of epic time.

This paper explores the cultural politics of Wang's lyrical discourse, with its aim of checking mainland-centered academic achievement. Wang invokes Bakhtin's dialogic sphere to support his discourse, culminating in the concept of a "Sinophone literature." Described as an "imagined community," his proposed "Sinophone literature" combines Sinophone (*Hua* 华) and Xenophone (*Yi* 夷) works, embracing mainland China. To explain the grounds for this Sinophone concept and nourish his discourse, he additionally proposes "Feng" (风), or "mutual antagonism," comparable to Bakhtin's dialogic heteroglossia.

1 With reference to "Re-reading David Der-wei Wang's 'A History with Feeling'" (*Journal of Modern Chinese Literature*, 54, 2010), and the work was supported by Konkuk University's research support program in 2017.

Key words David Der-wei Wang; The Lyrical in Epic Time; lyrical discourse; narrative strategy; Sinophone/Xenophone literature

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David Der-wei Wang's Lyrical Theory and *The Lyrical in Epic Time*

In the autumn of 2006, David Der-wei Wang, a professor of Chinese Literature at Harvard University, delivered an eight-session lecture series at Peking University on lyrical tradition and Chinese modernity. In the opening lecture, entitled "A History with Feeling," he presented a comprehensive overview of his wider argument. The subsequent lectures were titled "Lyricism and Enlightenment," "Lyricism and Revolution," "Lyricism and Nationalist Composition," "Lyricism and Temporality," and "Lyricism and the Lyrical Subject." As his first work on lyricism following extensive study, the outcome of these lectures at Peking University, published in 2010 as Shuqingchuantong yu zhongguo xiandaxing 抒情传统与中国现代性 : 在北大的八堂课 (*Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity*, 2010)[1], is a compilation of monumental significance. His approach is clearly laid out as he applies lyrical theory to each of the selected authors and intellectuals from mainland China, analyzing them along clearly-defined lines. He emphasizes a new paradigm in Chinese literature, shifting the focus from "revolutionary narrative" to "the lyrical tradition,"also arguing for a reconstruction of the history of literature. That is, Wang asserts that, as a context, the lyrical tradition is a necessary framework to overcome the disconnection of Chinese literature in the twentieth century. Thus, he begins with a critique of the enlightenment and of revolutionary narratives of it.

In 2011, Xiandai shuqingchuantong silun 现代抒情传统四论 (*The Lyrical Tradition in Modern Times: Four Essays*, 2011) was published in Taiwan. The discussion takes the same form as that of the mainland edition, but the volume differs in that the specific cases he considers are from Taiwan. He discusses three intellectuals, all of whom struggled with their political stances after settling in Taiwan, and their artistic texts. In sum, the Taiwanese edition focuses on the

1 *Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity* (SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2010) spans the entire twentieth century, discussing intellectuals from both mainland China and Taiwan. Wang discusses "Red Lyricism" (*hongse shuqing* 红色抒情) with Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 and Chen Ying-zhen 陈映真 . In addition, his book contains analyses of authors Bai Xianyong 白先勇 and Zhong Acheng 钟阿城 , as well as Misty Poets like Hai Zi 海子 , Wen Jie 闻捷 , and Gu Cheng 顾城 .

dilemmas of Taiwan and its political ideology.[1] In 2015, Wang published *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, written in English and more voluminous and broader in scope than the two previous books in Chinese. Although his approach to the lyrical is somewhat similar in each edition, there is an obvious contrast between the American edition and the others. In it, he presents the notion that authors sought not to express their political positions and ideology through their lyrical writings, but rather to allow their lyrical ideas to reveal the diversity of their artistic activities, including calligraphy, drama, and prose, among others.[2]

Although the three books examine quite different case studies from different political and cultural backgrounds, they are identical in terms of format and the underlying premise of lyrical theory. Based on a meta-critical approach to the existing discourse on the lyrical, Wang's lyrical theory amplifies the logic of "getting beyond differences." Where existing theory on the lyrical tradition has mainly centered on synchronic comparisons between classical Chinese and Western literatures, Wang instead builds his theory on research in diachronic aspects of Chinese lyrical tradition. He thus shifts attention from the literature of the May Fourth era and the continuity of the lyrical tradition to the subjectification of modern China and the signification of lyrical tradition; that is to say, he argues that Chinese modernity has developed in tandem with the Chinese lyrical tradition. From Wang's perspective, the signification of the lyrical tradition, as it relates to the "modernity" and "modern subjectification" of China, does not refer to a lyrical tradition that has been passed down through history; rather, it is one that has been reconstructed by the modern subject and shaped by ideological points of view. Wang's point of view, which seems to encompass "history-perception" and "document-interpretation," can draw out a variety of questions about the complexity of the semantic networks involved in understanding the lyrical.

Overall, Wang's discourse on lyricism, supported by an impressive breadth of secondary sources as well as interpretations of lyrical writings of the time, is critical to the discussion of enlightenment and revolutionary traditions of twentieth-century Chinese literature. With keen awareness of issues surrounding twentieth-

1 *The Lyrical Tradition in Modern Times: Four Essays* deals with three writers (Jiang Wenye 江文也 , Hu Lancheng 胡兰成 , Tai Jingnong 台静农). Wang interprets his lyricism as they could seek their political stances and settle in Taiwan through their songwriting, prose, and calligraphy, National Taiwan U P, 2010.

2 *The Lyrical in Epic Time* has been expanding the discussion of lyricism and playing up the cultural field such as calligraphy, drama, and poetry in place of the objects discussed in the political standpoint. It is necessary to be captured significantly in terms of his narrative strategy, which I'll discuss in other papers, Columbia U P, 2015.

century Chinese literary history, he draws meticulously on historical references to develop his own idea and formulation of lyricism. His narrative strategy makes it difficult for the reader to pinpoint the intention of his writing.[1] In his book, he offers divergent writings, theories, and discussions on lyricism as circumstantial supporting evidence, referenced in an extended list of authors. While the works of literature he studies are limited to those from modern China, treatises on lyricism cross the borders of China to include works published by an extensive circle of scholars of Chinese letters from Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, and the Czech Republic. In order to highlight his arguments on the controversies within the discourse, this paper takes up the American edition, which, of the three books, contains the clearest and most comprehensive description of his own approach to lyrical theory, offering a far-reaching analysis of the discourse that extends beyond the literary world. As such, the American edition will be further used here to supplement the contents of the mainland Chinese and Taiwan editions.

Tracking discussions on the lyrical across a comprehensive matrix, Wang submits his thesis: How did the lyrical engage/intervene with subjectification in the twentieth century, and into what modalities of movements did the lyrical develop within literature? How might we revisit the connection between individualistic lyricism and revolutionary romanticism, generally treated as disconnected in discourse on the May Fourth movement and revolutionary literature? Why, during the 1950s, did discussion of lyricism suddenly become so lively, both within and outside of China? To answer these questions, the author seeks to establish an understanding of the discourse by reconfiguring interpretations of lyricism from the 1950s. He also reconstructs the "history of the lyrical" by offering a deconstructive description of revolutionary narrative of the period. The specifics of his method are complex, but the ultimate purpose is to reconstitute history, an intention referenced in the chapter entitled "History of the Lyrical."

With the web of meanings woven into the above matrix, Wang's latest book sets a milepost on themes like "politics and aesthetics" and "history and poetics." His earlier studies on the Chinese modern can be summarized by such thematic keywords and questions as "shaded modernity," "the imaginability of the May Fourth Movement without the Late Qing Dynasty," "how to imagine China," and "fiction in China." Additionally, in studying the *aporia* between "history"

1 Wang leads a wide-ranging discussion while repeatedly emphasizing that his discourse on lyricism is not limited to the genre itself. He broadly defines "the lyrical" as an emotional and enlightening discourse, a way of knowledge, a signal of sensation, and a form of sign for an existential condition (*Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity* 5).

and "historical representation," his approach involves constant exploration of the tension between literature and history. In his 2010 Chinese text, *Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity*, Wang extends these themes and questions by considering history and lyricism throughout the twentieth century as an approach to literary historical studies. He argues for the need to adopt a political point of view towards the lyrical by performatively subverting still another *aporia* implicit in the mechanisms of accepting Western Enlightenment discourse and breaking from Chinese lyrical tradition. Thus, the lyrical can be understood both as Wang's historical and political methodology and as his narrative strategy.

The essential point of *Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity* is to propose a political perspective on the literary history of the twentieth century. An example that demonstrates the author's intention can be found in some of the most contentious pages in the book, those introducing Wang's idea of "Red Lyricism" (*hongse shuqing* 红色抒情) through a re-interpretation of Qu Qiubai's 瞿秋白 (1899-1935) 多余的话 (Superfluous Words, 1935). Wang sees in the work a lyrical aesthetic of hunger that is realized through the themes of "absence" and "wrath" — as in "Xi Song" 惜诵 (Grieving I make my plaint) from *Songs of the South* — and the "great history" of revolution. Here, Wang explains the lyrical as Qu's way of accessing history by both devoting himself to revolution and interrogating the revolution, a new reading of the text which heretofore has been largely understood from the viewpoint of revolutionary narrative. He also discusses lyricism in Hu Lancheng's 胡兰成 (1906-1981) *Shan he sui yue* 山河岁月 (Times of the Earth) and explains how, although not clearly evident in the narrative, it can be seen in the use of rhythm based on the metrics of Chinese classic poems. The work reveals the author's journey through political life and illuminates how rites and music describe a traditional cultural yearning for utopia. Considering that Hu's pro-Japanese attitude formed a political taboo that precluded scholarly discussion, Wang's deployment of this case is a strategic decision. In the deconstruction of the mainland-centered interpretative framework of the twentieth-century literary narrative, such cases can make the historical contextualization of the lyrical subject more incisive.

Another remarkable point is that the book was published in the form of notes from the Peking University lecture series. In the context of Chinese repercussions, it can be said that Wang's cultural and political calculation is presupposed in his publication. In the United States, where mainstream academia examines Chinese media, culture, and thought from within the realm of cultural studies, Wang's fundamentalist approach to literature and literary theory places him in a distinct minority, swimming against the current. (As can be seen in the American edition, he

tries to deal with lyricism as a traditional concept of *wen* 文 , or literary text). While orienting the direction of his own academic practice to the interiority of mainland China rather than the United States, he attempts to broaden his discursive power by extending the collective category of Chinese literature to include Taiwan, his place of origin, thereby creating a competitive discourse. As a practical strategy for this vision, Wang is actively seeking a single discourse of "Sinophone literature,"one that encompasses overseas Chinese literature from places like Taiwan and Hong Kong within the body of mainland literature. The publication of this book can be seen as a product of considerations arising from this process. In China, where there are relatively few direct criticisms of his lyrical theory but a strong political reaction from those holding nationalistic attitudes about culture, there has been an interesting response to this move. The core of the criticism is that Wang's theory, being representative of the orientation of an overseas scholar, relies on dualistic East-West ideas in its approach to Chinese texts and documents. The realities and actualities of mainland China are superseded by a methodology that places Western ideas at the ideological center and treats Chinese counterpoints as cases for comparative analysis. According to these critics, the focus on modernity, above all, is problematic because it involves judgment of the lived reality of Chinese people in the People's Republic of China. The rhetorical logic of his criticism becomes reduced to a nationalistic framework of inside/outside, despite his claim that his argument begins from reflective introspection on this problem, creating a difficult-to-seal existential gap. Wang and his Chinese critics confront each other from the same rhetorical basis directing them to transcend and overcome the Western rationalistic, dualistic perspective, and it could be said that Wang's lyrical theory is situated in the middle of this.

Narrative Strategy of *The Lyrical in Epic Time*

In his introduction, "Inventing the 'Lyrical Tradition'," Wang lays out the framework of his book by presenting three pivotal figures from the 1950s: Chen Shih-hsiang 陈 世 驤 (1912-1971), an American scholar of Chinese poetry; Jaroslav Prusek[1], a Czech scholar of modern Chinese literature; and Shen Congwen 沈 从 文 (1902-1988), a writer from mainland China. Having selected the authors based on their

1 Prusek (1906-1980) is widely known as a first-generation researcher of the Chinese modern literature, along with C. T. Hsia. *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese literature* (1963) is his representative collection of treatises based on historical materialism, often compared with Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1961), both accepted as bibles for American researchers of modern literature.

differing geographical locations and differing genres of literary accomplishment, Wang pays special attention to their discussions of lyrical discourse in the 1950s: Prusek's narrative of the history of modern Chinese literature, Chen Shih-hsiang's delineation of the epistemology of the lyrical tradition, and Shen Congwen's unpublished essay "Chouxiang de shuqing" 抽象的抒情 (Abstract lyricism).[1] The three authors represent different political contexts. Prusek was a Czech leftist literary historian who engaged with Chinese studies in the United States; Chen was a Taiwanese scholar of Chinese literature who settled in the United States; Shen, a writer from the mainland who appears in the texts of Chinese literati, was a writer who distanced himself politically and culturally from the public roar. The differing political implications of the three writers' utterances from the 1950s are reoriented within the cultural-political semantic network of the lyrical, converging into 'one layer' in the political space of Wang's discourse. Through the viewpoints of the three authors, the 'temporal narrative' of the 1950s Cold War is spatially differentiated; simultaneously, from the starting point of the 1950s, the prior literary history of the mainland is retroactively described through "retrodiction."

Above all, Wang establishes his lyrical theory based on concepts found in the writings of Prusek and Chen Shih-hsiang. The two figures comprise the first generation of Chinese literary scholars working from Western ideas, and both took the issue of the lyrical as their central topic. Whereas Prusek was a Marxist historian of modern literature, Chen was a liberalist scholar of classical poetry. As a result, Wang draws both similarities and differences as a means of furthering his discussion of the lyrical with complementary elements. The point of negotiation between Chen and Prusek seems obvious. Although Wang does not address Prusek's influence on the study of Chinese modern literature, the fact that he is the only critic to be critically examined in Wang's book speaks to the cultural and political significance of his lyrical theory. From Prusek's design of "the lyrical and the epic," Wang generates his structural foundation of "history-poetry (*shishi* 史诗) and poetry-history (*shishi* 诗史)." Wang develops Prusek's generic signifiers to formulate a relationship between history and poetry. This concept is not a relationship between epic and lyric; rather, it shifts towards a conceptual network woven between "the musicality of history" and "the historicity of music,"epistemologically taking in Chen's discussion of the rhythmical relationship between poetry and intent, as in "poetry expresses what is intended in the mind" (*shiyanzhi* 诗言志). When his

1 This prose piece is supposed to have been written around the summer of 1961. It was introduced to the public for the first time in April, 1989, in *Long Endless River (*长河流不尽) and was included in *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen* (2002).

aesthetical method is applied to present Shen Congwen's "musicality of the form," Wang is able to facilitate its analytical approach.

As he builds his lyrical theory on Prusek's scholarship, Wang's evaluation of Prusek becomes complex and multi-layered. Among other elements, Wang tries to distinguish Prusek's view of literary history from that of the Chinese revolutionary. For example, Wang points out the fallacy of Prusek's viewpoint, representative of the Marxist view of history, in which the lyrical is seen as evidence of disconnection from the Chinese poetic tradition and of the influence of Western romanticism. Meanwhile, Wang affirms that Prusek, thanks to his attention to the lyrical, was able to go beyond the limits set by leftist literary critics from mainland China. He also appreciates that Prusek, despite his strong inclination towards a materialistic interpretation of traditional poetry, understood Du Fu 杜甫 and Bai Juyi 白居易 in terms of their practice of the lyrical in the age of the epic. Thus, it is undeniable that Wang is influenced heavily by Prusek's discourse of the lyrical. In this sense, Wang's criticism of Prusek's theory cannot but focus on the Western scholar's limits of Orientalism, since he has to maintain some distance from the Marxist viewpoint while criticizing the Chinese revolutionary literary discourse. Furthermore, Wang has no other alternative but to interpret Prusek's discussion of the connection/disconnection of the lyrical tradition as a limitation of a Western scholar dealing with China on a foundation of Western scholarship. This is a necessary stance in order for Wang to associate Prusek's theory of "the lyrical and the epic" with Chen Shih-hsiang's poetics. What is remarkable is the way Wang interpellates them. The "nodus" found in Wang's formulation of lyrical discourse, that is, the modernity of the lyrical, should be understood as a continuation of lyrical tradition. When "A History with Feeling" is understood as a variation of revolutionary discourse, Wang has no cause to point out differences in the political characteristics of Prusek and Chen; instead, the interpellation arises through the illumination of their complementary relationship.

Then how could the position of Shen Congwen be considered next to those of Prusek and Chen Shih-hsiang? As opposed to Wang's theoretical approach to the two scholars, Shen is mediated with reference to his essay "Abstract Lyricism." The two scholars' frameworks — namely "the continuity of the lyrical tradition" and "the historicity of poetry" — take concrete shape with the interpretation of "Abstract Lyricism." Wang has an emotional and academic affinity with Shen and his oeuvre, but this is not the only reason he has placed this little-known piece of literary miscellany side by side with the theories of the other two scholars. In the formulation of Wang's lyrical theory, the importance of "Abstract Lyricism," in its

own right, cannot be overestimated. Wang explains "Abstract Lyricism" in line with "the aesthetics of loss." The aesthetics of loss in the lyrical is to convey a feeling that has been passed down from "the poetics of sorrow" in the *Chuci* 楚辞 (Songs of the South); moreover, this cultural legacy is a tangible asset that runs through the tradition of "sensuous colors of physical things" (*wuse* 物色) and "following from emotion" (*yuanqing* 缘情) from the periods of the Han, the Wei, and the Six Dynasties. Wang wants to demonstrate the style of the aesthetics of loss and its formative elements on the basis of historical-materialism, which is contextualized through relevant glimpses found in "Abstract Lyricism." If the lyricism of loss is a traumatic response to the experience of historical violence, Shen's "Abstract Lyricism," created in the dialectic process of the revolutionary narrative of the 1950s, should be an example of "venting wrath and expressing feelings" (*fafen shuqing* 发愤抒情). That is, this emotion is not an autistic feeling isolated from reality, but rather a text of feeling, a historical record that ironically reveals a "reality without feeling."

Additionally, Wang proposes that the feeling of loss in Shen's essay relies not on ideographic semantics, but is signified by the linguistic form of "the character" itself, which shows the orientation of the lyrical form towards which he aims. Another level of lyrical discourse — one that goes beyond the scheme of deterministic interpretation based on the revolutionary narrative — becomes possible when lyricism is defined as a style in which "sound images" (*yinxiang* 音像), generated from the combination of rhetorical meaning and sound, reveal "images" (*xingxiang* 形象) corresponding to the intrinsic contradictions of the self and the world. The author intends to appreciate the phonetic aspect of language as "a lyrical style," which leads to the rhetoric that mediates "Abstract Lyricism" as an example of aesthetic form. If the symmetry between "the musicality of the poetry" and "the ideography of the character" serves as an instrument for criticizing the existing discourse, the frontier extends beyond the mainland through Prusek and Chen Shih-hsiang, further providing a path of discourse able to negotiate with the narrative of the mainland, overcoming any unilinear political ideology or geographic boundaries.

How does Wang organically explain his main topic of *yuan* 怨 (expression of dissent or pathos), or 'the aesthetics of loss' or discontent, in relation to the flow of xing 兴 (evocation, or creation of feeling)? In this regard, attention must be given to the signifier "feeling" (*youqing* 有情), as distinguished by Wang from "the lyrical" (shuqing 抒情). "A History with Feeling" is described as a continuing process of variation — between "evocation/discontent," "feelings/things," and

"poetry/history" — as a succession of the legacy in which "poetry expresses what the mind means." Wang also emphasizes that the mere restoration of "discontent" would generate political meaning; in modern Chinese literature, from the point where "discontent" slips out of the cracks between the subject and the world, it is represented as "transcendence of poetic power" or "the abstract of the dream words." As a result, "discontent" does not signify the disharmony of the lyrical subject; rather, the concept can be described as "a positive search for identity" or "another way of unity," aimed at bridging the gap of discord with the world. Since the lyricism of evocation/discontent here is determined by their mutual relationship, it would be difficult to explain lyricism based on the different ways in which the subject and world relate to each other, in terms of these two poetic elements. When the relationship between evocation/discontent continually flips, according to the opposing yet complementary movements of *yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳 , evocation should be understood as a vehicle which "inevitably" accompanies discontent as a way of "continuing" evocation.

Against the background of "the identity of feeling," we can more clearly understand Wang's premise of "the existential mode of discontent" in relation to the mechanism of the alternation of *yin* and *yang*, constantly being extinguished and replaced by the other. According to Wang, discontent takes shape when the lyrical subject appropriates reality as a way of avoiding his or her own extinction; here, the reason why Wang notes the alternation mechanism is not because he proposes a normative thesis for the restoration of discontent; rather, he is able to emphasize the existential necessity of discontent. Operating on the same principle as the cyclical alternation of *yin* and *yang*, the existential mode of discontent would not disrupt its unity with evocation; instead, it would fortify "the identity of feeling." The rhetorical function of "discontent" is a narrative strategy to structuralize the historical continuity of feeling; meanwhile, the field of discourse attains self-identification by internalizing discontent as a criticism of evocation.

The rhetorical core for the identity of feeling involves a means of deploying revolutionary lyricism. The author suggests that "from literary revolution to revolutionary literature, if you think about it, imagination, creation, and lyrical theory are not only decisive factors in mainstream discourse, but also the main basis of resistance against it" (*Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Modernity* 33). Here, the discourse of lyricism is named as a mechanism for both fortifying and deconstructing mainstream discourse, a logical transposition or sleight-of-hand which can be read as quite an interesting approach. Lyrical discourse is a mode of discourse that is constructed from and through mainstream discourse; it can

be constantly and flexibly explained as a counter-discourse to the revolutionary narrative, expanding its categories and spectra without any restrictions. The ongoing discussion of lyrical discourse includes the texts of Liang Qichao 梁启超 , Wang Guowei 王国维 , Lu Xun 鲁迅 Zhou Zuoren 周作人 , Guo Moruo 郭沫若 , Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 , Wen Yiduo 闻一多 , Mao Zedong 毛泽东 and Hu Feng 胡风 . While reading them as supplementing and resisting the revolutionary narrative, these examples from lyrical discourse can be located as "other," in opposition to mainstream discourse; at the same time, they become mediators which place the mainstream discourse as "other." In particular, Wang's most essential point involves the problem of the revolutionary lyricism described in the revolutionary narrative being brought into lyrical discourse. For example, as Wang has it, the revolutionary romanticism of the leftist narrative is described as revolutionary lyricism; the Red Poetics of Mao's day, instrumental in firing the national imagination, is rendered as Mao's lyricism of epic time. The hybrid articulations located within revolutionary lyricism are mediated as a rhetorical function that draws romanticism into lyrical theory.

The most dramatic interpretation appears where the Hu Feng incident is concerned. Wang understands the 1950s as a "lyrical period" that bridged the gap between public and private, as well as between host and guest, by way of mobilizing massive poetic imagination; moreover, Wang maximizes the grounds for interpreting lyrical discourse by engaging with the Hu Feng incident. Mao's "Huanxisha" (浣 溪 沙) may be deemed as a poetic and historical statement from the 1950s, proclaiming the advent of a historical period for "uplifting of the joyous dancing" (*shangju huanwu* 上举欢舞): Only a poet can proclaim the unification of the world in a poetic and historical style. Meanwhile, Hu Feng's poem "Shijian kaishi le" 时间开始了 (Time has begun, 1949) can be read as a form of discontent that, necessarily, is associated with historical lyricism. If the Hu Feng incident is interpreted as a rhetorical power struggle, representing history with poetry, the lyricism of Mao's time can be subsumed into the discourse of feeling through the mediation of Hu Feng's lyricism; moreover, the historical power of "history-poetry" in the 1950s can be equally in line with the linguistic power of "poetry-history." Likewise, the effect of interpretation becomes optimized when reading Shen Congwen's "Abstract Lyricism" as an echo of discontent to the epic lyricism of Mao's time, that is, the reverse side of evocation. A re-contextualization of the lyrical that embraces an ideological "counter-narrative" as a "transformed narrative" centered on "tone" (lu 律) would be the rhetorical apex of the "dialogue" envisioned by Wang.

Considering the rhetoric Wang has embedded in the narrative strategy that

constitutes "a history with feeling," his yearning for historical interpretation appears as risky as it is effective. His lyrical discourse should be carefully reviewed; though critical engagement with the mainland-centered revolutionary narrative is unavoidable, his central thesis is problematic. Moreover, a new understanding of the lyrical tradition in twentieth-century literary discourse is needed. The broader the definition of lyricism, the weaker its boundaries become. The more effective the interpretation of the lyrical in his lyrical theory is, the more similar his discourse becomes to the structure of the revolutionary narrative that he criticizes. When the method for deconstructing revolutionary narrative is to re-describe its assimilation and repetition, such attempts at historical representation must consist of a process of continuous challenge. If the lyrical speaks on behalf of the discourse, and if discontent and evocation alternate with each other as in a structure of "unity," it would be impossible to deliberate on and to examine history and time. The historicity of "poetry-history" is able to serve as a driving force in the field of modern literature, not simply as a parameter, insofar as it is presented as a group of incomplete and disparate lyrical elements. Although the author does not articulate an alternative field of discourse, the logical context of his lyricism is liable to perpetuate a reductive framework, and his deconstructive rhetoric also arouses such doubts. This criticism seems all the more well-founded in light of the fact that Wang retrospectively constructs the "time" of the modern and the "event" of the lyrical. After the 1960s, Shen's "Abstract Lyricism" made its way outside the mainland and became associated with Chen Shih-hsiang's lyrical theory, and also, through Prusek's mediation, with C. T. Hsia; David Wang is located at the end of the discourse. Without a critical review of his own logic on lyricism, necessary for constructing his academic genealogy, it would be difficult for his deconstructive criticism to avoid an accusation of arbitrary representation of history.

Cultural-Political Meaning of Wang's Lyrical Theory

The construction of Wang's own academic orientation relative to lyrical theory reflects certain impatience in the face of recent structural changes in American modern Chinese literary studies. In the United States, where the academic foundation of Chinese studies was laid by scholars from Taiwan and Hong Kong, a reshuffle of academic subjects has been taking place in that field as mainland scholars have become involved. In effect, these changes place an "unspoken" pressure on Chinese studies scholars from Hong Kong and Taiwan, creating a situation that can force them to seek fierce routes of discourse development. Moreover, academia itself is demanding that the field of Chinese studies be

transformed into an interdisciplinary field along the lines of cultural or area studies. Notably, such interdisciplinarity is one way of nullifying the particularity of literature as a field, thus threatening the livelihood of literature scholars. In such a situation, the field of literary studies is required to mold itself into a component of area studies, reconstructing and modifying it so as to explain the specificity of an area through local examples of cultural universalism. In light of this structural shift, interpretation of China in America is at a more complex juncture than ever before.

In any case, it would be too rash to conclude that the Cold War structure has vanished from Chinese studies in America. To look at just one example of a branch of literary study that has undergone change, the interpretation of literary history has produced such works as Xiaobing Tang's *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* (2000) and Ban Wang's *Illumination from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China* (2004). Critics have suggested that, by dialectically involving such mediating elements as "memory," "the quotidian," and "sensitivity" into twentieth-century Chinese literary history, these books have critically transcended the revolutionary view of history. The various texts mentioned here are submitted to revaluation of present evidence that had been excluded or denied in the revolutionary narrative. In that they regard the quotidian and memory during the revolution as drivers of history, their method of reconstructing history is considerably similar to Wang's. As a result, the texts in which they apply a reconstruction of history are quite close to Wang's lyrical discourse. However, when it comes to views on the revolutionary historical stance, there is a decisive difference between the perspectives of Wang and the rest. While the others "reinforce" the revolutionary historical viewpoint, the point of departure for Wang's lyrical theory is its "denial." Furthermore, his efforts to involve the new category of "Sinophone Literature" (*Haiwai Huayuxi Wenxue* 海外华语系文学) in the discourse reflects his intention to diversify the channels of Chinese historical interpretation, going beyond a single interpretation that started with the May Fourth movement.[1] The difference between these stances involves differing understandings of any clearly distinct nation-state and ethnic identity. Wang is constantly vigilant

1 [1] Wang continually attempts to reconstruct "the literature of today's China" into the category of "Sinophone literature." *Selected Fictions of Contemporary Writers*, published from1996 to 2002 in Taiwan, contains no mainland writers, but a significant number of Taiwanese authors: Zhu Tianxin 朱天心 , Zhu Tianwen 朱天文 , Li Ang 李昂 , Lu Ping 路平 , Luo Yijun 骆以军 , Su Weizhen 苏伟贞 , Huang Jinshu 黄锦树 , and Zhang Guixing 张贵兴 . In *After Heteroglossia*, a collection of criticism by Wang, the first part discusses Taiwanese works of literature and the second part covers Chinese writings from the mainland, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the US, the UK, France and Germany (Wang, 2001).

against the fallacious representation of the "mainland China" represented by the May Fourth movement as "modern China." To support this, he insists on two different supplementary premises: one is that the origin of modernity can be traced back to the last Qing dynasty, not the May Fourth era, and the other one is that it is possible to discuss the criteria of modernity in terms of both Western rationalism and emotional enlightenment.

The cultural and political roles of scholars from the mainland in American Chinese studies have already become quite clear. As Wang suggests, the question of "who represents (*zaixian* 再现) China" is interpreted as "who is representative (*daibiao* 代表) of China." In fact, it is scholars from the Chinese continent who are mostly called upon to represent Chinese culture, a role that has been solidified by interdisciplinary studies. Wang emphasizes that, when China is represented by someone, what must be elucidated is what he or she represents, the basis of representation, and at the same time, the cultural and political meaning and function this conveys. The core agenda here is a matter of misunderstanding that, in addressing China within post-cultural discourse, the representation he cites is premised upon the distinct psychological mechanisms and ideology of mainland intellectuals, ultimately dredging up the structures of Orientalism and nationalism. Further, the failure to critically recognize this problem creates the danger of generalizing a single Sinitic ethnic community group, or structuring Chinese literary and cultural studies as a minority discourse of the West.

Wang takes postmodernist discussion of China as a failed attempt at negotiating with "post" discourses of the West. The active discourse of postmodernism in China, which was brought to the attention of the First World through the efforts of Fredric Jameson, was concretely shaped by Jameson's student Zhang Xudong 张旭东 unfortunately, as Zhang's exhaustive discussion of the particularities of China was mobilized to see how Jameson's arguments could fit into a "productive" discourse; the analysis became merely a "means" to solidify Jameson's theoretical formulations about the First and Third Worlds. This may have helped in securing a timely foothold to engage Western discourse in "Chinese matters," but the culturally-generated political differences that he depicted for the Western audience failed to produce a mutually-negotiable border zone. Also, as is seen in recent studies by mainland scholars, the power of representation allowed by Western discourse could be a double-edged sword, as constructing a dynamic dialogue with Western discourse occurs at the risk of relegating Chinese studies to a minority subject.

Understanding Chinese intellectuals through a cultural/psychological

mechanism, Wang diagnoses this as the full inheritance of the spiritual "heritage" of the May Fourth era, part and parcel. That is, intellectuals have what C. T. Hsia called an "obsession with China" (*gan shi you guo* 感时忧国), rooted in a self-centered psychological mechanism of the aspiration to be as strong as the West and treated on an equal footing. Whether the speech act comes out of the China of a century ago or the United States of today, the crux of the issue to them is not the West or Imperialism, but ever the Chinese mainland and its immanent development. The pre-existing self-centered desire results in a failure to subjectify their own otherness, creating a psychological mechanism that cannot operate as critical or reactionary momentum against Western or Chinese discourse. Wang considers the a priori assumption of this cultural/psychological mechanism to be a more fundamental problem than Western ideology, in that it immobilizes the discourse.

If this is so, how does one go about finding "a way out" — not structuralized as a tool for cultural discourse or a Western moral safety device — while keeping the inner desire for Sino-centrism in check? Rey Chow, as well, shares Wang's perception that it is vital to actively intervene in the ongoing mainland-centered discourse. According to their perceptions, the sphere of discourse to which they refer approaches Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Rey Chow and Wang insist that the dialogic ontology of Bakhtin can provide a way of thinking about a position of "boundary existence." Bakhtin's focus on ontological differences and pluralism that elicit the involvement of external others prior to structuralization could present a negotiable path of engagement with a discourse for Chinese intellectuals from outside mainland China. Despite the utopian leanings of Bakhtin's ideas on a "culture of boundaries" and the notion of open totality, Chow suggests they would be useful in the current Chinese discourse. She has argued that it will become increasingly important for Chinese intellectuals "to move outside 'Chinese' territory, geographic and cultural" (95). Such willful movement that dismantles China as the center (中国, the central nation or "Middle Kingdom") is an effective path to a discourse enabling the longed-for "'court of law in the people's hearts'[1] — in other words, the communal regulatory power arrived at through negotiation and consensus" (95).

In contrast with Chow, Wang's reference to Bakhtin addresses the process of extending awareness from within the realm of literary discourse. In his lyrical discourse, the context he repeatedly evokes as the historicity of lyricism can be read

1 This expression was used rhetorically by Wei Jingsheng, a leader of the 1979 Beijing Spring, in his article "To Democracyor to a New Dictatorship" in *Contention* (争鸣)(vol. 137, March, 1989) to evoke an alternative form of power. Chow quotes the term in relation to the question of power of discourse and engagement.

more clearly when it is expanding the "ontology of literature" into "philosophical awareness." Bakhtin's view affirming a text as a polyphonic dialogue of multiple systems corresponds to Wang's evocation of the dynamics of "heteroglossia" (*zhong sheng xuan hua* 众声喧哗). To Wang, Bakhtin works here for "heteroglossia" as an open space for dialogue and the "Sinophone" concept works in totality for an imaginative body of discourse integrating literary, historical, and philosophical signs.

However, with "Sinophone literature" potentially being seen as a means of banding together with some in the non-mainland Chinese community in the context of cultural politics, Wang suggests a new strategy, *baokuo zaiwai* (包括在外),[1] "including [China] in" — that is, including mainland China to its exclusion. In other words, he proposes to deconstruct the mainland-centered narrative framework and include mainland China within a post-hierarchical structure. He emphasizes the way that "Sinophone literature" played a key role in including, rather than opposing, mainland literature. This notion appears clearly in his practice, more so than in his discourse.

For instance, a book by Wang summarizing the theory of "Sinophone literature" entitled *Hua Yi Feng Qi* (华夷风起, 2015) was published as part of a subsequent collection of works entitled *Hua Yi Feng* (华 夷 风, *Sinophone/ Xenophone: Contemporary Sinophone Literature Reader*, 2016). In these two books, he reveals his intention and concrete steps to deconstruct the literary power of the mainland. The Sinitic language communities are difficult to define, and the written characters of each cannot be contained only within the categories of "China,""Chinese" or "Chinese language." Consequently, he has opted to represent the web of these meanings through the terms "Sinophone" (*Hua* 华) and "Xenophone" (*Yi* 夷), playing on the traditional Hua/Yi distinction between China and "uncivilized" outsiders. Since, as a concept, the term "China" currently serves to represent a nation-state of the twentieth century, it cannot rise above its image as a modern state structure of the twentieth century if the category of "Sinophone Literature" is regarded simply as a banding together against the political power of

1 Wang asserts that if terms like "overseas Chinese literature" or "world Chinese literature" continue to refer to a limited range of literature produced in regions outside the mainland, reflecting national boundaries and the central narrative, Sinophone literature would be a signifier of resistance that can replace these terms. Other scholars of Chinese literature from the English-speaking world join with him, and like other units based on phonetic language such as Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone, and also Lusophone, "Sinophone" is used with the aim of signifying the decolonized narrative.

China. The conceptual relationship between "Sinophone/Xenophone" is historical and cultural in nature, and owing to blurred cultural boundaries and variegated processes of history, the two cannot be distinguished as dichotomous notions or entities. In particular, when it is assumed that the concept of Sinophone literature is derived from the concept of Western colonial literature, "Sinophone/Xenophone literature" can be seen as implying a postcolonial orientation.

In Wang's book *Hua Yi Feng Qi*, his concept of Sinophone literature is explained as a structural link between "literature of Hua" (华的文学) and — as a variation of "Hua" — "literature of Yi" (夷的文学). The traditional concept of "Hua/Yi" is being reconceived and rewritten into the Sinophone literature community. Unlike the Western concept of "-phone,"which presupposes a colonial master-and-servant relationship in terms of language and history, most of the creative subjects of Sinophone literature have their roots in "immigration" (移民者的殖民行径 settler colonialism), making it conceptually different from the language of the West. That is, the radical difference between these migrants and subjects rooted in colonialism is that their spoken language is their own, and they willingly use it to create written works. Therefore, as suggested in the titles of the two above-mentioned books, in order to grasp the literature of "Yi" as an equal and complementary variant of "Hua,"the communication style of "Feng" (风), or "mutual antagonism,"comes into play towards revealing the juncture where the two are related. Namely, in order to make the field labeled "Hua/Yi" a negotiator of Sinophone literature, "Feng" must be emphasized as a connecting force between the literature produced inside and outside of the mainland, rather than pointing out some linguistic or historic master-and-servant relationship. The way of "Feng" is a cultural and political strategy of Wang's that facilitates an imagined community. In actual effect, *Hua Yi Feng* amounts to a parallel arrangement of the writers from mainland China and Sino-writers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and the United States. In addition, the work of composing the discourse of Sinophone literature is mainly led by scholars of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Among them, Kao Yu-kung 高友工 from Taiwan and Leonard Chan (Chan Kwok-Kou) 陈国球 from Hong Kong support Wang's theory to sustain his idea of "Sinophone literature."

Furthermore, from the mid-to-late nineties, the departments of Sinitic languages and literature in some universities in Taiwan have become an important base for institutionalizing the discourse of "Sinophone literature." As a result of the centrality of "Sinophone literature" in these subjects, it plays a key role in supplementing Wang's discourse, offering greater flexibility and practicality in terms of practicing discourse. This kind of intervention is an important basis for

demonstrating how the cultural and political meaning of Wang's lyrical discourse works. In light of the contrasting overall viewpoints of the mainland and non-mainland, with the former seeking to include or absorb Sinophone literature as part of mainland literature and the latter seeking to unite in resisting such absorption and maintaining an identity separate from the mainland, his lyrical discourse holds a distinctive position in seeking a category that transcends notions of national identity. This cultural and political movement is proceeding apace in parallel with the active participation of mainland intellectuals in "Chinese discourse" in the United States, and its spreading practice is quite effectively serving to check the mainland-centric nature of the discourse. But the path of his work in practice creates doubts as to whether he can continue to play a critical role in the history of the centrality of the mainland upon which Wang's lyrical discourse insists. In the end, it would seem essential to reevaluate the extent to which Wang maintains dialogic tension in composing the discourse of "Sinophone literature."

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