

# Concepts and Categories of Emotion in East Asia

Edited by Giusi Tamburello



Carocci editore

# Re-Creating Emotions in Chinese Poetry of the 1960s and 1970s\*

by Giusi Tamburello

Peculiar patterns of a culture somehow seem to be so deeply rooted in it that they tend to constantly reappear, though under different features. It seems to be the case of poetry in China where poetry, which is prior to narrative, appears throughout the whole cultural development of Chinese society, depicting nature and the universe, praising the rulers, or denouncing shortcomings and misuse of power.

Whether poetry persists in China due to the intrinsic nature of the Chinese language or whether the Chinese people's nature can be better represented by poetry is not too important an issue, so far as poetry keeps its own status as well as its capacity of progressive re-assessment.

Already in 1994, Henry Y. H. Zhao proposed the idea that the strength of a culture is to be found in its suppleness when meeting new challenges and changes, and in its capability at adapting<sup>1</sup>.

To read the poems included in the *Shi jing*<sup>2</sup> is like participating in the stupor of the ancient Chinese people when shown the beauty of nature. It is like looking at the world with the same amused eyes of the one who discovers something alive and full of energy, and is confronted with it for the first time. Li Bai (701-762), the great Tang dynasty poet, expresses the multifaceted aspect of the soul while

\* I would like to thank Sarah Scott for kindly helping me with the English language revisions for this paper.

1. Y. H. Zhao Henry, *Sensing the Shift. New Wave Literature and Chinese Culture, Under-Sky Underground Chinese Writing*, in Y. H. Zhao Henry, J. Cayley (eds.), *Today 1*, Wellsleep, London 1994, pp. 155-68.

2. At the beginning of Chinese poetry was the *Shi jing* (*Book of Odes*). It is an anthology dating from the Zhou Dynasty (1027-771 BC) to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) that includes songs, poems, and hymns.



making use of the device of alcohol to obtain a greater distance of observation. Other poets in China, such as Qu Yuan (ca. 340-278 BC, Warring States period) or Su Dongpo (1037-1101, Song dynasty), are best known and remembered for their sense of responsibility towards State affairs. In 1919, Chinese poets also joined the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement aiming at a modernization of the Chinese culture.

Chairman Mao, in 1942, includes both literature and art in his plan, as described in the *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*<sup>3</sup>, to take advantage of the influence of the cultural establishment in contributing to the development of socialism among the masses; absolutely aware, as he was, of the pedagogical role traditionally given in China to intellectuals.

Chinese poetry of the 1950s is of a kind that seems sincerely involved in the construction of socialism, as many poets declaim powerful images of factories with smoking chimneys, or of strong farmers harvesting a bumper harvest. Everything in the poems of the period seems consistent with the realization of a collective dream of enormous proportions. Also the rhetoric of emotions is of a collective kind, and it takes into account the emotional approach of the masses.

The Chinese debate about poetry, as it was during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focuses on the form that poetry must have, and on the extent to which free verse can take over the traditional poetic style:

A picture of the topics being discussed is provided in detail by Kai-yu Hsu who carefully explains the difficulty of absorbing into a poetry that has to be new since it refers to a new order of the Chinese society, the fixed patterns of the classical style; the free-verse that derives from Western influence, and the folk song style that is much closer to the people's taste. The issue remains of «how to make poetry popular (belonging to the common people) and how to retain a national character in poetry»<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The text of the Yan'an Forum on literature and art can be found in Mao Tse-tung, *On Literature and Art*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1967, pp. 1-43.

<sup>4</sup> Kai-yu Hsu, *Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Its Search for an Ideal Form*, in B. S. McDougall (ed.), *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of 1949-1979*, The University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1984, pp. 244-66.

What remains outside the whole project is the individual, or it is better to say that the interests of the individual are put aside to better promote the interests of society. Chinese poets are quick to become aware of the issues at stake.

Besides orthodox poetry celebrating the progress made in political discourse, another kind of poetry, one more centered on the individual, begins to circulate, especially in Beijing, throughout the 1960s, and then the 1970s, in underground circuits.

Here follows a quote that provides a description of the atmosphere of the period:

Ironically, members of the earliest identifiable group of underground poets in Beijing had in 1958 started writing at the request of officialdom, during the Great Leap Forward and the concomitant poetry drive. Zhang Langlang (b. 1943) became acquainted with CCP demands for orthodox literature as a teenager: he was lectured for "youthism" [...], since in one of his poems he had failed to mention the Party, the Chairman and the Three Red Banners. For the thrill of secrecy among other things, Zhang continued writing in fashions other than those prescribed by superior order. In 1959 he got to know Guo Shiyang (b. 1942), son of Guo Moruo and said to belong to a literary club which "of course met secretly". This was Zhang's first, casual acquaintance with a phenomenon soon to be known as underground salons (*shalong*)<sup>5</sup>.

The situation was such that writing poetry which did not include praise of what Chinese society was achieving under the leadership of the Communist Party was punishable. Many of the poets of the underground scene were imprisoned. Many of the poems written in those years were taken and kept by the police as, for instance, in the case of Zhang Langlang who could not get hold of his poems anymore.

No definition better than "youthism" could have been made, given from the very young age of these poets at that time. Guo Lusheng (b. 1948)<sup>6</sup>, whose pen name is Shi Zhi (meaning: index finger), was also very young during the mid-Sixties when it was possible to meet

<sup>5</sup> M. Van Cnevel, *Language Shattered. Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duo-duo*, Research School CNWS, Leiden 1996, pp. 25-6.

<sup>6</sup> A short biography of Guo Lusheng can be found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guo\\_Lusheng](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guo_Lusheng) (accessed 06/12/2011).



him in the *shalong*. He quickly became well-known, especially among the young students who were sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. His poetic style was especially attractive to them despite being rather classical in its form. Trying to give a description of Guo Lusheng's style, Van Crevel writes that «Guo's poetry is arranged in four-line stanzas and mostly employs end rhyme. It is strictly organized on the formal plane and at times song-like, sounding like the lyrics to popular ditties».<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it would seem that Guo Lusheng's poetry is not particularly innovative in terms of the form of its poetry. On the other hand, Guo's poetry becomes extremely popular among the young students sent, like him, to the countryside, and they copy his verses by hand. Van Crevel comments:

Using conventional language, trimmed into stanzas of equal length to tell rhyming, song-like stories, he stayed well within the bounds of orthodoxy where form was concerned. At the same time he made personal feelings the content of his poems and eschewed sanctioned or mandatory subject matter like the glorification of Chairman Mao. In short, he made use of a well-known medium to deliver an unknown message – unknown, that is, to “the revolutionary masses”, but not to Guo's actual readers. The latter were city youths with serious objections to the hackneyed heroism they had been told to worship, and with a strong interest in personal feelings.<sup>8</sup>

In the winter of 1968, in December, Shi Zhi had to go to the countryside too. Around the moment of departure, he wrote the poem *Zhe shi si dian ling ba fen de Beijing* (*This is Beijing at 4.08*):

This is Beijing at 4.08  
A sea of hands waving  
This is Beijing at 4.08  
A long, sharp steam whistle  
The high buildings at Beijing railway station  
Suddenly begin to tremble  
Afraid, I look outside the window  
Not knowing what has happened

7. Van Crevel, *Language Scattered*, cit., p. 29.

8. *Ivi.*, p. 33.

All of a sudden, my heart aches, that must be  
Mum's button needle stitching through my chest  
At this moment, my heart becomes a kite  
Its string in mum's hand  
Stretched too tight, the kite string is going to break  
I can't help exploring through the wagon window  
Only at this moment, at this very moment  
I understand what has happened  
– Waves of farewell sounds  
It's going to roll over the station  
Beijing is under my feet  
It's already slowly moving

Again, I wave my arm towards Beijing  
Thinking to grab her collar  
Then, shouting warmly at her:  
Remember me for ever, oh mum, oh Beijing

Grabbing something at the end  
Somebody's hand, unable to release  
Because this is my Beijing  
This is my last time Beijing.<sup>9</sup>

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to render in translation the Chinese rhyming of this poem with stresses on syllables that end mostly in *-ing* or in *-ong*, and seem to reproduce the lullaby-like rhythm of the slow-motion departure of the train. It is interesting to observe that, in the original version in Chinese, the last word of the first verse of this poem is: *Beijing*, just like it is in the last verse, as if giving the poem a circular structure.

The moment caught by the poet is when the train leaves the station, and the train is the one carrying the students who are being sent to the countryside, a frequent occurrence during the Cultural Revolution (1966-69, and its further developments until 1976).

9. The poem, written on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1968, is to be found in the original Chinese version in Zhang Ming, Liao Yiwu (eds.), *Chentian de shengdian. Zhongguo 20 shiji 70 niandai daxia shige yi zhao* (*The Same Holy Building. A Retrospective Look at Chinese Underground Poetry of the 70s in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*), Xinjiang qing-shaonian chubanshe, Urumqi 1999, pp. 57-8 (the translation into English is my own).



The metaphor of the sea waves, which occurs twice, enhances the idea of the movement of a train that is going to leave. The movement makes the high building "tremble", while the rolling of the train along the railways makes the city "moving under the feet" in a kind of "reverse" perception.

The movement of the train activates the motions of the soul that are expressed also in dynamic terms: the sudden aching of the heart, the stitching of a needle through it (that recalls the sharpness of the whistle), the transformation of the heart into a kite, the stretching of the kite string (that recalls the thread of the needle) and its foreseen breaking, the waving of the arm, the grabbing.

The activation of the soul motions happens all of a sudden, as if unexpected. Therefore, it has to go through a process of focalization before turning into consciousness. That is probably also the reason for the "reverse" perception of the city moving under the feet: whereas the train is going to leave the station and passengers are supposed to be moving away, since the main character is engaged in the process of becoming aware, s/he somehow stands still in concentration and, therefore, it is the ground of the city that seems to move instead. Some film sequences of *The Matrix*, the film by the Wachowski brothers, could render the idea.

According to Daniel Goleman, in trying to define primary emotions, it is possible to consider fundamental emotional families that can be grouped under the following categories: anger, sadness, fear, joy, love, surprise, disgust and shame<sup>10</sup>. Shi Zhi's poem recalls most by the two categories of sadness and fear. Fear for the unknown, sadness for the separation from the beloved city that is so dear to be conjugated in a parallelism with the idea of the mother.

After years of enthusiastic poetry celebrating the successes of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Shi Zhi instead reveals a more intimate dimension. This is done primarily by the use of the personal pronoun "I" which immediately defines a clear cut from anything collective. Furthermore, "I" is "afraid", and the heart "aches". From the external scene that describes what happens on the platform, the attention is quickly brought to the ground of the personal feelings by mention-

ing the "poetic *locus*" of all emotions, the heart. The reference to the mother is also very intimate, in all the associations that it recalls.

The shifting in Shi Zhi's poetry from collective issues to personal ones results in a departure from the basic principle, expressed by Mao Zedong in his *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, which considers literature and the art at the service of the political project of the CCP.

Guo Lusheng was later to be interned in a psychiatric hospital, but his poems went on to influence a later generation of poets.

Just like Guo Lusheng, in China many other young people had to go to the countryside. During the Cultural Revolution, they left school and were sent to rural areas, at varying distances from their hometown, to become acquainted with the living conditions of the people who were to be the object of that acquisition of knowledge that was to lead to a better approach for the political aims of the Party. Apart from the enormous damage inflicted on the actual state of the Chinese school system in those years, the chaotic development of the Cultural Revolution had on one hand a deep impact on the quality of the inter-personal relationships, and on the other hand a long lasting effect in the process of definition of the "self" within a society dominated by the Party control.

The sessions of public political criticism encouraged by the Party, could even lead to complaints by children about their parents. When the political engagement went so far as to reach this extreme, the nature of the inter-personal relationships itself was seriously at a stake, as nobody could trust anybody anymore. Besides, whereas the whole of the society was supposed to be involved in the transformation towards communism, among the young people the need arises for a definition of the "self" within the process: is there, in fact, any room for the "self"? And in which way can this "self" find expression?

In literary criticism, the issue is taken into consideration by Liu Zaihu<sup>11</sup> whose works on subjectivity caused a resounding echo in Chinese literary and political circles.

In poetry, the extensive use of the pronoun 我 (I) is the first element that drives the attention onto the self. It is the form of the singular that seems to oppose any kind of reference to a plurality, to a

10. D. Goleman, *Intelligenza emotiva. Che cos'è. Perché può rendere felici*, Rizzoli, Milano 1996, p. 333.

11. See: Liu Zaihu, *Len wensue de zhuxing (About Subjectivity in Literature)*, in "Wenxue pinglun", 6, 1985, pp. 11-26 and 1, 1986, pp. 3-19, also at [http://contemporary\\_chinese\\_culture.academic.ru/469/Liu\\_Zaihu](http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/469/Liu_Zaihu) (accessed 29/11/2011).



collective assumption of experience. Therefore, the whole set of emotions that comes into play, as already observed in the poem by Guo Lusheng, refers to an "I" not necessarily better defined, and also expresses the emotions of this "I".

In his research into emotions in Chinese culture, in defining them Paolo Santangelo adopts the general scheme proposed in Western literature. He writes:

Let us take Ekman (1992) as an example. He examines and classifies the emotions beginning with the "display rules" in order to identify those that may be considered fundamental. The five main classes in which emotions and states of mind are grouped here are:

- fear (anxiety/anguish/worry)
- love (trust/affection/friendship)
- sorrow (melancholy/depression/shame)
- joy (aesthetic perception/pleasure)
- anger (hate/resentment/jealousy)

Obviously there are also intermediate zones and a certain amount of overlapping".

If emotions in Chinese poetry are to be described as in the above scheme, it is then evident that in the Chinese poetry of the 1970s the categories bound to love and/or joy are scarcely present, whereas emotions that concern anxiety, melancholy and hate are quite broadly represented.

When considering, for instance, the two long poems still available from the production of Genzi<sup>13</sup>, *Sanyue ya mori* (*March and the End*) and *Batuyangdan*<sup>14</sup>, both written in 1971, or the first poems written by Duo Duo<sup>15</sup> during the 1970s, it is possible to notice the rather sad at-

12. P. Santangelo, *A Research on Emotions and States of Mind in Late Imperial China*, in "Ming Qing Yanjiu", 1995, p. 114.

13. Genzi (real name: Yue Zhong), together with Duo Duo and Mang Ke is among the poets who, during the late 60s and the beginning of the 70s, contributed to a renewal of the Chinese poetic language. See: G. Tamburello, *Mang Ke, Genzi e Duo Duo: i "re moschettieri" del rinnovamento della poesia cinese contemporanea*, in "Poesia", 181, March 2004, pp. 31-46. In December 2004 this paper was to be found at <http://www.poesia.it/logs/servizi/TRE%20POETI%20CINQUESTI%.pdf>.

14. The Chinese texts can be found in Genzi, *Marzo e la fine, Batuyangdan*, edited and translated by G. Tamburello, Scheiwiller, Milano 2001, pp. 8-18 and 22-28.

15. A short biography of Duo Duo can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duo\\_Duo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duo_Duo) (accessed 15/10/2011).

mosphere common to all the poems. In Genzi's poems, a heart seems to be the main character, but it is a dried up heart. Or, else, a body becomes the main character, but it is a body full of wounds. No matter who the main character is, in Genzi's poems a diffuse sense of death appears constantly and with strong evidence.

Death is also to be found in Duo Duo's poems of the 1970s. In these poems a sense of discouragement prevails, intensified by descriptions of uncomfortable atmospheres. "I" is the pronoun, here too, mostly used. It is perceived as representative of a strong personality that, when confronted with the uncertainty of life, never gives in. The impression derived from reading Chinese poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s is that, in terms of the topic, the focus shift from the collective to the individual is very strong. In addition to this the background atmosphere has become somewhat gloomy.

In the *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, Mao Zedong had defined the main aim of literary production as being that of supporting CCP policy. However, the changes in Chinese poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s seem to be in direct contrast to this aim and this leads one to ask the question: what happened in the Chinese context that might have provoked the changes observed in this poetry?

Most probably, the removal of large numbers of young people from the schools towards the rural areas had not produced a higher consciousness and knowledge of the style of life of the common people. Or, it would be better to say, that a higher consciousness and knowledge were created, but at the expense of a higher level of education. The situation of the schooling system, including the universities, after the Cultural Revolution was so bad as to produce a delay of many years in the cultural development of the Country including in its scientific and technological aspects. A whole generation of young people was left practically without education, and it was not easy for most of them to re-establish contacts with their place of origin. Many, after the experience in the countryside, often one which lasted quite a few years, remained without a job and without the possibility of creating any kind of satisfactory planning of their personal lives.

While the young people were away from their families and away from school, their consciousness of the limits of their actual experi-



ence began to take shape, and to be characterized by a generalized sense of uncertainty.

Furthermore, due to the political campaigns of criticism, the family ties as well as the ties of friendship were shaken to their very core. The possibility of denouncing, or informing on – for political reasons – parents, relatives and/or friends contributed to the breaking of the very basic component of the Chinese society based on mutual assistance as members of the same family or of the same community.

A sense of uncertainty, therefore, developed not only on a social level, but also on a personal level. Supposedly, this might have been quite a cultural shock within the Chinese society until then so strongly defined in each single component role.

Seen from this angle, the prevalence of a sense of despair in Chinese poetry of those years does not come as a surprise.

Furthermore, it is necessary to stress that Chinese poetry of the 1960s and 1970s is written by very young people who put into it all the energy that is characteristic of their age. When taking into consideration the poems of Genzi, for instance, it must be specified that they were composed in the space of a single year, starting in March 1971. At that time, Genzi was not even twenty years old, since he was born in September 1951. In fact, in *Sanyue yu mori* where his subject is a rather peculiar Spring, a reference to his age can be found when he writes: «I've already seen nineteen Springs»<sup>16</sup> and also: «for the twentieth time she takes out the ground – my only friend / from under my feet»<sup>17</sup>. Duo Duo is also very young (born in 1951) when he writes his first poem *Zaibai* (*Farewell*) in 1972.

The list could be very long. These poets must have felt the originality of their concern for the “self”, and they tried to give voice, a new voice, to its expression.

Song Haiquan, who was among the young people living in Baiyangdian, when describing the background that produced the poetry of those years, he points out four topics:

16. The translations into English of the verses by Genzi in this text are my own. The original verses in Chinese can be found in Genzi, *Marzo e la fine*, cit. This verse is on p. 8.

17. *Ibid.*

Change of subjects and values. The poet becomes aware of his own consciousness by which he is led to consider himself from an individual point of view therefore changing the subjects and the values of his own poetry: reconstruction of human dignity, development of one's individuality, considering Man as master of his virtue.

Need to focus on the perceptions and knowledge through personal experience. When starting from the philosophical division of the real world in subjective and objective, the theoretical basis consequently changes. The true and full nature of perceptions is being stressed, and it will help enriching the poetry of the following years with an extraordinary variety.

Skepticism and imagination. Caused by the contradictions of real life, skepticism manifests itself not only against the rational nature of policy and doctrine of virtue, but also to the rational nature of man and his existential condition. The absurd existential condition of man is the source of perplexity, anxiety and feelings of loneliness.

Exploration of language forms. The study of foreign texts shows the great influence, after Baudelaire, of symbolism. Poets make use of wonderful nonsense, bizarre shapes and gaudy colors, showing a strongly marked individuality, refined feelings and the manifestation of an indomitable life force.<sup>18</sup>

If it is possible to observe the recurrence of the afore-mentioned characteristics in the poetry of the 1960s and 1970s, it is also necessary to state that each poet presents them according to a very personal and original way of dealing with poetic creation. The verses follow one another as is normal in poetry, and, even if it is possible to observe a structure of the verses, this seems to be more fluent if compared to the strictness of classical Chinese poetry. But it is on the level of the expression of the content that Chinese poetry of those years offers a broad variety of solutions.

In *Sanyue yu mori*, Genzi presents *Chuntian/Spring* as something really negative against which any kind of opposition is doomed to failure. Images of violence, deprivation, pain, disillusionment are scattered throughout the poem. Starting with the first line in which, by just changing one word, the title dramatically changes meaning: *Sanyue shi*

18. Zhang Ming, Liao Yiwu (eds.), *Chentian de shengqian*, cit., pp. 260-1 (the Spanish thesis is mine).



*mori* (*March is the End*)<sup>19</sup>, in the following lines, it is possible to read: *yaoye de jianiang* («flirtatious wives»<sup>20</sup>, *chunlian, guojian zhe guntang de fense de buisba* («Spring, enveloping burning hot pink sands»)<sup>21</sup>, *jiaoxia er lai* («arrives being crafty, evasives»)<sup>22</sup>, *xuexing de jiaoxiao* («fake bloody smiles»)<sup>23</sup>, and so on, practically at every line as if in a continuum of words or images of uneasiness<sup>24</sup>. Considering that the whole poem *Sanyue yu mori* counts 99 verses, the “density” of the poem becomes immediately apparent, meaning by this that the frequency with which words or images of uneasiness appear in it becomes evident.

The first characteristic of the poem is the “confrontation” between a “Spring” and an “I”. The words connected to the first are: «burning hot pink sands» (as above), «fake bloody smiles» (as above), «the menstruation of this bitch»<sup>25</sup>, «the waves of Spring with grimaces and smiles»<sup>26</sup>, «this whore with snake’s poison»<sup>27</sup>, «this insensitive scammer»<sup>28</sup>, that all convey a discouraging idea of Spring with connotations of falsity and prostitution. The “I” is a person and has a heart, the words to describe which are: «an ancient rocks»<sup>29</sup>, «a dark brown heart as a piece of steel»<sup>30</sup>, «an anchor of steel and iron the heart»<sup>31</sup>, «my heart – an apple of stone»<sup>32</sup>, conveying an idea of hardness that leads to the concept of resistance.

The verbs that describe the actions of Spring are also showing her<sup>33</sup> toughness: «she easily removes the soil from under my feet»<sup>34</sup>,

19. Genzi, *Marzo e la fine*, cit., p. 8.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. I should list in the original language with relevant translation the words to which I refer, but this would make the text too long and unwieldy. Therefore, I just mention a few examples.

25. Genzi, *Marzo e la fine*, cit., p. 8.

26. *Ivi*, p. 14.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ivi*, p. 16.

29. *Ivi*, p. 10.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ivi*, p. 14.

32. *Ivi*, p. 18.

33. When referring to Spring, the poet uses “she” 她, the feminine form of the pronoun.

34. Genzi, *Marzo e la fine*, cit., p. 8.

«as if she wants me to try the taste of defeat and jealousy»<sup>35</sup>, «above all she threatens me»<sup>36</sup>. On the contrary, of the heart the strength of its steadiness is shown: «it does not melt, it does not crack, it does not move»<sup>37</sup>, and, at the same time, the inevitability of its succumbing: «it will never shine again»<sup>38</sup>, «the heart quietly sinks»<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, the heart will bring its opposition forward as: «the heart is already ripe»<sup>40</sup>, «Spring, you will never succeed again in cooking my heart»<sup>41</sup>.

The narrative aspect of *Baiyangdian*, the other poem by Genzi, is also full of very strong images, but it presents a recurrent metaphor that refers to a no better defined “I”, and that opens and concludes the poem in a circular structure, and this is the metaphor of the “wound”. The poem’s first line reads:

我伤得不轻

I am wounded in a non-light way<sup>42</sup>

and the last two:

伤口、却象眼睛一样大睁着。

疼痛。

The open wound is open wide just like an eye.

It aches<sup>43</sup>.

The image of a wound is proposed throughout the whole poem:

我伤成这样、

I am wounded so<sup>44</sup>,

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ivi*, p. 10.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ivi*, p. 14.

40. *Ivi*, p. 16.

41. *Ivi*, p. 18.

42. *Ivi*, p. 22.

43. *Ivi*, p. 38.

44. *Ivi*, p. 24.



伤口大张着  
The wound opens wide<sup>45</sup>

伤口嘶哑地咳嗽  
The wound coughs hoarse<sup>46</sup>

我到处是创伤  
I have wounds all over the body<sup>47</sup>

无论作为致命的负伤人  
Whether I behave so to be wounded to death<sup>48</sup>

我永远合上了伤口一样的  
眼睛  
I have closed for ever my wound-like  
eyes<sup>49</sup>

The “wound” becomes the unifying element of the poem, and it fixes at the same time an image and a feeling.

When shifting to the poems of the 1970s of Duo Duo, it is possible to remark that in those poems too the image of the heart is present. It is a *huangliang de xin*<sup>50</sup>, a bleak and desolate heart, as well as the image of the wound is to be found: *shangkou jin zheng kaile*<sup>51</sup>, the wound is forced open. But what strikes one’s attention in the poems of Duo Duo is rather the abundance of very tough images such as those in *Dang renmin cong ganlao shang zhangqi*, where the first verse is:

The sound of songs ignores the smell of blood of the revolution.<sup>52</sup>

45. *Ivi*, p. 28.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ivi*, p. 30.

48. *Ivi*, p. 34.

49. *Ivi*, p. 38.

50. *Zaibai*, in Duo Duo, *Carta*, edited and translated by G. Tamburello, Schei-willer, Milano 1998, p. 8.

51. *Jaobai*, *ivi*, p. 44.

52. *Ivi*, p. 10.

and, towards the end of the poem at line 6, it is possible to read: similar to bulging drums, blackening corpses dangling from their buttocks<sup>53</sup>.

The examples could be arranged in a long list, and they could also be drawn from poems of other poets of the same period.

When attempting a taxonomy of the emotions in Chinese poetry of the 1960s and 1970s, it might be possible to have a clearer picture of both the kind of emotions that prevail and the kind of words used to express them. When underlining the constant appearance of a feeling of dissatisfaction and despair, as well as a feeling of resistance, it might be possible to suggest that they are components of the poetry of that period.

The presence of such components is in itself a sign that shows the engagement of Chinese poets in re-creating emotions long forgotten, or not mentioned in poetry anymore. The expression: “re-creating”, means then “creating” anew, bringing into existence again emotions that were not supposed to appear in poetry.

Maurizio Marinelli writes:

In the post-Mao period, the propaganda apparatus has continued to use a more or less identical, highly codified and stereotyped “Confucian-socialist” style language. Nevertheless, along with the decline of the Party’s symbolic capital, this formalized language has proven to be more and more detached from reality as it pretends to operate a priori through ideological channels within a highly de-ideologized and multifaceted society. Therefore, today the more political leaders and the media perpetuate the use of the ficial language, the more, inadvertently, they increase the perception of the gap existing between the politically constructed representation of the world and the real one that, in the last twenty-five years, has gone through enormous socio-economic changes<sup>54</sup>.

The use of a stereotyped language was necessary to the CCP in order to bring forward the political aim of constructing a socialist society. Within this project, the *Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and*

53. *Ibid.*

54. M. Marinelli, *The Desire for Power and the Annihilation of Emotions in Chinese Political Language*, in “Ming Qing Yanjiu”, 2003-04, p. 150.



Art define the task of the intellectuals and their functionality. Therefore also poetic production is aimed at "serving the Party". On the other hand, the very conflictual political developments within the Party throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, while producing the rise of a more critical consciousness not only among the intellectuals, but also among the masses, at the same time reveal the distance that is growing between the Party and society. According to Marinelli:

Political language, which in China has interiorized the main characteristics of Chinese classical language, is an example of how words can be used as an instrument of control and manipulation, because words can be used to distort the significance of a certain thing or event in the service of specific interests, in order to achieve a pre-determined result<sup>55</sup>.

In this context, re-creating emotions by the use of a language which is unexpected in Chinese poetry, a language that is a long way from the concept of "harmony" as meant in Confucian philosophy and that brings to the foreground a very crude description of a feeling of "dis-orientation", produces the effect of breaking through a manipulated and manipulating language, and of pulling back to surface a level of reality long denied and ignored. This is done by openly mentioning, as shown above, the details of suffering, even when they sound disturbing.

That is why poetry of the 1960s and 1970s takes everybody by surprise, the Party apparatus for censorship as well as the audience, worrying the first and impressing the second.

Genzi, for instance, stopped composing poetry for good after his poems were taken by the police to undergo evaluation.

The process of re-creating emotions has its roots in the poetry of those years when young poets are, as a matter of fact, left alone in the rural areas. The Cultural Revolution, that had among its aims the increase of a deeper socio-political consciousness by sending young people to live together with the masses in order to better know them, produced also, and most probably unexpectedly, a rise in, and expression of, a sense of criticism. This is an achievement that also found its way through the years that followed:

The deconstruction of any possible foundation for "dialogue" between the official and the unofficial language became particularly evident after June 4<sup>th</sup> 1989 [...], a date representing a linguistic dead end and the second point of no return, a historical moment of no way out [...]. The nineties saw an impulse and pressure coming from the top [...] towards a standardization imposed and maintained by the central propaganda apparatus by means of centripetal forces and tendencies, and, at the same time, an urge toward diversification and polyphony emerged from the bottom. The subjective side of the devolution of the language was demonstrated by the progressive emergence, in the post-Mao era and in the nineties in particular, of new forms and styles of expression in the artistic and cultural field, which often originated from the need of the artists to give vent to their personal emotions. These phenomena can be interpreted as signs of the urge for denysification of the formalized language that is characterized by a widening and unsolvable gap between the name [...] and the actuality<sup>56</sup>.

It seems clear that any kind of field of analysis related to Chinese poetry shows the complexity of the elements that are intertwined with it. Defining a taxonomy of the kind of emotions expressed by Chinese poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s could better demonstrate whether poets have succeeded, as it would seem, in re-creating emotions. They started from fear and despair, but the fundamental emotional families also include others. Have they come into use in contemporary Chinese poetry?

### Bibliography

- DUO DUO (1998), *Canto*, ed. and trans. by G. Tamburello, Scheiwiller, Milano.  
 GENZI (2001), *Marzo e la fine, Baiyangdian*, ed. and trans. by G. Tamburello, Scheiwiller, Milano.  
 GOLEMAN D. (1996), *Intelligenza emotiva. Che cos'è. Perché può rendere felici*, Rizzoli, Milano.  
 HSU KAI-YU (1984), *Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Its Search for an Ideal Form*, in B. S. McDougall (ed.), *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of 1949-1979*, The University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles.  
 LIU ZARU (1985/1986), *Lun wensue de zhuixing (About Subjectivity in Literature)*, in "Wenxue pinglun", 6, 1985, pp. 11-26; 1, 1986, pp. 3-19.

55. Ivi, p. 144.

56. Ivi, p. 148.



- MAO TSETUNG (1967), *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, in Id., *On Literature and Art*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, pp. 1-43.
- MARINELLI M. (2003-04), *The Desire for Power and the Annihilation of Emotions in Chinese Political Language*, in "Ming Qing Yanjiu", pp. 143-59.
- SANTANGELO P. (1995), *A Research on Emotions and States of Mind in Late Imperial China*, in "Ming Qing Yanjiu", pp. 101-209.
- TAMBURELLO G. (2004), *Mang Ke, Genzi e Duo Duo: i "tre moschettieri" del rinnovamento della poesia cinese contemporanea*, in "Poesia", 181, March.
- VAN CREVEL M. (1996), *Language Shattered. Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duoduo*, Research School CNWS, Leiden.
- ZHANG MING, LIAO YIWU (eds.) (1999), *Chenlun de shengdian. Zhongguo 20 shiji 70 niandai dixia shige yi zhao (The Sunk Holy Building. A Retrospective Look at Chinese Underground Poetry of the 70s in the 20th Century)*, Xinjiang qing-shaonian chubanshe, Urumqi.
- ZHAO Y. H. HENRY (1994), *Sensing the Shift. New Wave Literature and Chinese Culture, Under-Sky Underground Chinese Writing*, in Y. H. Henry Zhao, J. Cayley (eds.), *Today 1*, Wellsleep, London, pp. 155-68.



Volume sottoposto al giudizio di *referees* anonimi.

This volume was published thanks also to the contribution kindly offered by the Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy, and by the DIPLI – Dipartimento di Scienze Filologiche e Linguistiche of the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia of the same university.



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI PALERMO

1<sup>a</sup> edizione, giugno 2012

© copyright 2012 by Carocci editore S.p.A., Roma

Realizzazione editoriale: Omnibook, Bari

Finito di stampare nel giugno 2012  
dalla Litografia Varo (Pisa)

ISBN 978-88-430-6376-5

Riproduzione vietata ai sensi di legge  
(art. 171 della legge 22 aprile 1941, n. 633)

Senza regolare autorizzazione,  
è vietato riprodurre questo volume  
anche parzialmente e con qualsiasi mezzo,  
compresa la fotocopia, anche per uso interno  
o didattico.