

A few days ago, Muzi over in Turkey came up with the far-fetched notion of setting up a blog for me on a blog Web site called “daq.com.” Ignorant and ill-informed as I am, I had never heard of daqi.com. Unable to deflect Muzi’s enthusiasm, I had a quick look at the other Daqi blogs, which seemed to be written mostly by media people, but I wasn’t familiar with any of them. Okay, set up a space first and then we’ll see: my second blog is called “Woeser Blog” (<http://blog.daqi.com/weise/>), retaining the subtitle “Maroon Map.” The arrangement of columns is much simpler, using the titles of my four books. There are just a few links, just those of some of my good friends and I especially included those from the wonderful

Tibet blog, Sonam’s¹² “New Tibet,” Tseten’s “Spiritual Pasture”¹³ and Dongsai’s “There, Shepherd in Snowy Pasture.”¹⁴

Ah, the template of this blog is lovely—I chose a color I liked. There is one shortcoming: the space for photos is too small, so when I want to paste one in, I have to keep reducing the size, smaller and smaller, which is annoying.

Ah, but there was one micro-second of . . . how can I put it? I’m attaching here a comment left by the Web master as an example: “Woeser, I really like seeing the Tibet you write about, your photos; it’s a place I don’t know. I’d like to have you tell me more about the vast beauty of Tibet and the lives of the people there, a record of what you have gained from

An Interview with He Zhong

BY XU LINLING, SOUTHERN PEOPLE’S WEEKLY

He Zhong, born in a village in Gansu’s Qilian Mountains, arrived in Tibet at the age of 21. Along with Ma Yuan¹ and Tashi Dawa,² he became part of the Lhasa School of literature in the 1980s. In the 1990s, Lhasa’s relatively freewheeling environment came under tighter control. Many of the Lhasa School writers left, but He Zhong remained in Tibet.

Southern People’s Weekly (SPW): You have Han, Tibetan and Mongolian blood—what affect has this had on your writing?

He Zhong (HZ): It definitely has an effect. I speak Chinese, Tibetan, the Amdo and Lhasa dialects and Mongolian. But in my personal writings I seldom set out to break through these regional or ethnic boundaries. I occasionally use regional expressions, but for the most part I write in Chinese because I already identify with it and I consider it the most enjoyable to work with.

SPW: What do you think of mainland poetry these days? Do you have much contact with mainland poets?

HZ: Mainland poetry has always come down one continuous line, but not at such high quality as in the past. I’ve maintained a more self-contained writing style. I was marginalized from the outset: they’ve always tried to pull me in, but I couldn’t be enlisted. I’ve stayed here the whole time, following my own inclinations.

SPW: What do you think of the modernization of Tibet? Lhasa is starting to resemble a mainland city more and more.

HZ: Modernization is inevitable. No one can or should direct it. Opposing modernization is a selfish attitude of mainland and foreign literati. There are so many people in Tibet who need to resolve basic survival issues; an affluent life requires material goods to sustain it.

Those so-called environmentalists living the good life in major urban areas are wasting more resources than any Tibetan. Their talk about of rivers and mountains is a farce.

SPW: The obsession with commerce scattered the “Lhasa School” to the winds. Do you feel bad about that? What do you see as the role of the poet in a materialistic age?

HZ: In the eyes of a thinker or poet, an era characterized by materialism will inevitably lead to degeneracy. But I believe a poet has no responsibility in this regard; poets after all are the weakest of groups. In fact, there’s no need to make poets take on this kind of responsibility; this is not an age of prophets, or even a time for a “voice of the people” like 20 or 30 years ago. This is an era of extreme diversity. Nowadays, a poet is just another kind of professional, no different from an ear cleaner, a pedicurist or a public servant. Changing the world should be left to the politicians and sociologists. In poetry, I believe the first thing is to provide people with a healthy and enjoyable reading experience and the beauty of words. I don’t like to pointlessly write sick stuff. The past will never return, and I feel I should calmly face the present.

Translated by Stacy Mosher

The original Chinese article from which this interview was excerpted can be read at <http://news.163.com/06/0711/15/2LOQJTBM00011E7T.html>.

NOTES

1. Ma Yuan, born in 1953 in Liaoning Province, went to Tibet after graduating with a degree in Chinese from Liaoning University. His experimental novellas and short stories reflect the experiences of a Han national in Tibet and are imbued with religious mysticism.
2. Tashi Dawa, born in Kham in 1959 of mixed Chinese and Tibetan parentage, used magical realism to challenge official history with fictional genealogies. Some Tibetans feel his writings sustain the Chinese view of Tibet as backward and mystical. See Yangdon Dhondup, “In Search for Their Ancestors: Contemporary Writing from Tibet,” *TibetWrites.org*, http://www.tibetwrites.org/articles/yangdon_dhondup/index.html.