

WEN YIDUO

RED
CANDLE

and Other Selected Writings

 FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

红烛：闻一多作品选 / 闻一多 著

北京：外文出版社，2009（熊猫丛书）

ISBN 978-7-119-05886-3

I. 红... II. ①闻...②戴... III. ①诗歌—作品集—中国—现代—英文

②散文—作品集—中国—现代—英文 IV. I216.2

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字（2009）第122947号

责任编辑：刘芳念 佟 盟

封面设计：周伟伟

印刷监制：韩少乙

红烛 闻一多作品选

闻一多 著

戴乃迭 等 英译

© 2009 外文出版社

出版人：呼宝民

总编辑：李振国

出版发行：外文出版社

中国北京百万庄大街24号

邮政编码 100037

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

印 制：求是印务中心

开本：850mm×1168mm 1/32 印张：4.25

2009年第1版 第1次印刷

（英）

ISBN 978-7-119-05886-3

04500（平）

版权所有 侵权必究



RED CANDLE

and Other Selected Writings
江苏工业学院图书馆
WENYIDUO
藏书章



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

First Edition 2009

ISBN 978-7-119-05886-3

© Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2009

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

Preface

Literature may reflect the ethos of a country or a nation, while at the same time it can transcend the limits of time and space to most widely resonate a truly universal humanity. Literary works of art that move hearts may even inspire the compassion of strangers toward a people or country...

This "Panda Series" of books, expertly translated into English, compiles the works of well-known modern and contemporary Chinese authors around themes such as the city and the countryside, love and marriage, minority folk stories and historical legends. These works reflect the true spirit and everyday lives of the Chinese people, while widely resonating with their changing spiritual and social horizons.

Published from the 1980s, through more than 100 titles in English, this series continues to open wider the window for readers worldwide to better understand China through its new literature. Many familiar and fond readers await the latest in this "Panda Series." This publication of the "Panda Series" consolidates and looks back at earlier released literary works to draw new readers, while stirring the fond memories of old friends, to let more people share the experiences and views of the Chinese people in recent decades. We express our sincere appreciation to all authors, translators and editors who have engaged in their dedicated and meticulous work over the years to bring out these works. It is their passion and endeavor that have enabled this series to appear now in luminous distinction.

CONTENTS

Introduction — <i>William N. Rogers II</i>	7
---	---

Poems

Red Candle	13
Snow	16
February Hut	17
Retrospection	18
The Tributaries	19
On Spring	20
The Universe	21
After Apology	22
The Sound of the Clock	24
Yellow Bird	25
The Lone Yan	26
Song of the Sun	29
Remembering Chrysanthemums	31
Young Pine	35
Match Sticks	36
Musing	37
Little Creek	38
Rotten Fruit	39
Red Beans (Excerpts)	40
Confession	43
Perhaps	44

The Stagnant Ditch	45
Quiet Night	46
One Concept	48
Discovery	49
One Sentence	50
The Deserted Village	51
Sins	53
The Laundry Song	54

Essays

Historical Trends in Literature	57
The People's Poet — Qu Yuan	67
About Qu Yuan	71
The Metric Structure of Poetry	89
On Confucianism, Taoism, and Banditry	102

Appendix

Letters to Zang Kejia, 1943-44	109
The Poetry of Wen Yiduo — <i>Zang Kejia</i>	116

Acknowledgements	129
------------------	-----

Introduction

OF the writers and thinkers of the May Fourth Movement that began a process of national awakening and regeneration for the Chinese people Wen Yiduo (1899-1946) is both representative and exemplary. As a poet he struggled successfully to create a new kind of Chinese poetry that would not entirely abandon the traditions of the past while remaining open to a new, more emotionally free expression. As a scholar he labored to locate a "usable past" in a Chinese cultural tradition that was beset on all sides by the ideas and ideologies of the West and the doubts of many Chinese themselves. As a man of social responsibility — much like his poetic hero Qu Yuan — he spoke up during intolerable times and thus incurred martyrdom, struck down by assassins' bullets in the streets of Kunming in the summer of 1946.

It was a shocking, brutal death for a famous poet, scholar, and university professor — a scandal of major proportions for a Chinese government apparently implicated in the crime; but it was also exemplary in that it testified in extreme form to the moral courage of and the danger faced by those of Wen's generation — men and women who gave so much of themselves to create a reawakened, strong, just, and proud China.

Wen's life touches all aspects of his transitional generation in modern Chinese intellectual life. Born on

November 24, 1899, in Hubei Province, he was initially educated by tutors in the traditional classics, which he came to know well. By age eleven, however, he was sent to a modern primary school where he began studying English, mathematics, and science. From there it was a natural step for Wen, a brilliant student, to continue his schooling at a place — Qinghua in Beijing — that would prepare him for study abroad. During his years there from 1912-22, he was immersed in a ferment of new ideas and concepts and played a role in the May Fourth demonstrations of 1919.

From 1922 to 1925 he studied in the United States, first in Chicago and then in Colorado. He experienced racial discrimination and longed for his homeland; but he also made friends, met American poets, read widely in English poetry, especially that of the Romantics, wrote poetry of his own, and developed ideas of what modern Chinese poetry should attempt to be. It was clear to him and others that Chinese poets of the twentieth century could not continue uninterruptedly in the line of classical Chinese poetry that extended back to the *Book of Songs*. For all its glories it was a poetry that because of its classical, highly compressed language so remote from ordinary speech, its thematic restrictions, and its preference for short, fixed forms was not attuned to the spirit of "republican" China — churning with new ideas and feelings, populist and egalitarian (if only in expectation). On the other hand, Wen could not accept a newstyle poetry that sprawled formlessly over the page and expressed itself with the clumsiness of day-to-day speech. In "The Metric Structure of Poetry" (1926) he expressed his central idea of the importance of form

in poetry: "No game can be played without rules: no poem can be written without form."

The best of Wen's poems did attain "a sculptured structural beauty," as Kai-yu Hsu has expressed it, through their repetitions and metrical patterns. In content he also at times consciously sought "beauty", much like the English romantic poet he greatly admired — John Keats. In the poems he wrote while in America there was in fact a full range of themes in accord with the thoroughly "romantic" sensibility he possessed at that time — a worship of love, an emphasis on nationalism and rebellion, an attention to color and natural objects, and, quite like Keats, an attraction to death.

A poem like Wen's "Little Creek" ("Trees' shadows, leadgray, / A long sweeping nightmare, / Press across the breast of the little creek / Sound asleep. / The creek struggles, struggles... / To no avail. ") or the more satiric, more famous "The Stagnant Ditch" expresses a "dark" romanticism, as do works by other writers of early modern Chinese literature, such as, for instance, Lu Xun's enigmatic collection *Wild Grass*. Such despair is a recurring romantic theme, although in the English romantic poets it is often made part of a larger poetic structure in which optimistic elements have the final word. For the Chinese writers of the 1920s and 30s, however, "dark" moods and even despair were more than a literary theme or affectation: they were states of mind that came inescapably from the milieu of modern China.

It was that milieu into which Wen was plunged on his return to China in 1925. His personal life stabilized

as he was reunited with his wife and took up responsibilities as a university professor. But the China that he had idealized in "Remembering Chrysanthemums", written while he was in the United States — as having "a noble history and an elegant culture"; "our solemn and splendid motherland" — was in a dreadful state. Warlords fought each other, squeezed the common people, shot down demonstrating students; the Kuomintang moved to reunite the country in the Northern Expedition of the late 1920s. Guns barked; ideas and ideologies jostled each other; people starved and died; there was not much "nobility", "elegance", and "culture" to be seen: what was China? what was to become of China?

It is not surprising that Wen concluded that in these political and social circumstances poetry was not enough — at least for him; national regeneration would need something other than passionate poetry, even if written in revitalized ways. Thus he ended his years of poetry writing in 1931, some fifteen years after his first tentative efforts in 1916. He was to devote the remaining fifteen years of his life to scholarship that attempted to discover what was helpful and what was hurtful in China's traditions. As a letter to Zang Kejia in November 1943 makes clear his was far from an escapist scholarship: "I am planning to have my voice heard outside the campus ... because after living among piles of old books for over ten years, I am confident I have identified the disease afflicting our nation and culture." Essays such as "Historical Trends in Literature" and "On Confucianism, Daoism, and Banditry" grappled with the question of China's traditions, sometimes with scholarly finesse, other times

with a polemical bludgeon.

If he had identified "the disease" of China, he had also identified a quintessential hero in its distant past: the poet-statesman Qu Yuan (343?-290? BC), whom he came to see as China's first "people's poet", speaking for the people and warning the prince of his misdeeds. Giving up "literary elegance" for "literary eloquence", Qu had spoken up and then drowned himself in an assertion of his honor — and as a protest against bad governmental policies; he was ever afterwards honored by the people, through the Dragon Boat Festival, which Wen writes about passionately in his essay "The People's Poet — Qu Yuan". Like this ideal poet-statesman, Wen in his last years also increasingly turned away from "elegance", subtlety, and nuance in favor of direct, passionate social utterance. "I cannot claim," he wrote, "to have any special virtues or talents, but since I have a heart and a mouth, I must tell the truth as I know it whenever I have a chance to talk in front of an audience." Even so, he could never entirely turn away from literary matters and concerns, as his letters to Zang Kejia make clear. As late as 1943 he spoke of putting together an anthology of modern Chinese poetry and suggested that he might even write "a poem (a poem of history) — I don't know."

But history, circumstances, and personal temperament would not allow Wen Yiduo to deviate from the path that was to lead to his assassination on July 15, 1946. He was naturally a poet and scholar in the immemorial mode of the Chinese intellectual, concerned with language, images, and the great cultural and artistic heritage of China; but he was living in violent, unsettled

times without good government, and his ingrained sense of rectitude and justice — also attributes of the traditional Chinese intellectual — forced him regardless of consequences to take public stands, to speak out passionately, and to take the path of a martyr to the cause of “the people”. In today’s China his reputation is quite secure — as an innovative poet, as a creative scholar, and as a fighter for the cause of a China that would be responsive to its people through economic justice and political freedom.

It is hoped that this collection of Wen Yiduo’s work in poetry and prose will bring to English-language readers some sense of his memorable poetic voice and moral urgency. No history of the literature and thought of modern China can be complete without including this cultural hero.

William N. Rogers II

San Diego State University

Poems

Red Candle

In tears of wax the candle melts
— *Li Shangyin* (813-858)

Red candle!
So red a candle!
Ah, poet,
Pour out your heart
And let us see which is brighter.

Red candle,
Who made your wax — gave you form?
Who lit the fire — kindled the soul?
Why must your wax burn away
Before you can give light?
Here is some mistake;
Some contradiction, strife!

Red candle,
There is no mistake;
Your light must come from " burning" ,
This is Nature' s way .

Red candle,
Being made, burn!
Burn on and on
Till men' s dreams are destroyed by your flame,
Till men' s blood seethes in your flame;
And save their souls,
Break down their prison walls!

Red candle,
The day that your heart' s fire gives light
Your tears start flowing .

Red candle,
The craftsman who made you
Made you for burning .
Now that you are burning,
Why shed bitter tears?
Ah, I can guess,
The cruel wind has meddled with your light,
When your flame wavers
You shed tears of anguish .

Red candle,
Weep! Weep on!
Let your wealth of wax
Flow, unstinted, out to men,
To grow flowers of comfort,
To bear fruit of joy .

Red candle,
With each tear shed you lose heart,
Disheartenment and tears are your fruit,
The creation of life your cause.

Red candle,
Never mind the harvest — till the soil!

Translated by Gladys Yang