**The End of Travel**

**Zhu Ti**

XX:[[1]](#footnote-1)

Don’t come for a long time. I remember when I left Beijing, that was the early spring of this year when the spring breeze was still cold. After getting on the northbound train, I had a foreboding that some unfortunate rift must develop between us. I continually held this feeling travelling through the Mountain-Sea Pass (Shanhai guan) as I once again returned to the dreary and hazy blizzards of the Manchurian mainland.

After coming back, I was laid up with a rather serious sickness. When I was ill, I received your book. I can manage to tell you clearly: your book maligned me. Naturally, you can be this suspicious of me because during this period there are certainly many unexplainable doubts that bother you. I clearly know the whole story of this fact, but I still cannot shed my tradition of self-respect. In this way I replied to your letter: I criticized you, I ridiculed you and I also recounted my defense and my proposition.

Sure enough, after that, news of each other was severed. This is something that I have imagined for a long time, and I thought it would be good if it were just like this. If each other can still dare to believe in their adversary’s own continuous writing, this is also ok, it will be more meaningful than correspondence made in vain. For a writer, good times in friendship often form a kind of waste of work, therefore, I also indulge in my silence.

This is how this year was delivered. In a year, I read your “Japanese Pagoda Tree Chapter,” “The Loneliness of the Forest,” “The Story of the Pig,” “Buddha,” and “My Indiscretion.” These, I love to read the same as before with your earliest collection of fiction, *Quagmire*. In addition, I also know that your novel called *Shell* has been published. This is your confident work! Although I have not had the good luck to look through it, however, I have actually read quite a few articles on it, especially from the introduction by Shangguan Zheng, so I know in more detail what is written in *Shell*. I think about Shangguan Zheng’s general critical opinion of you: “The existence of XX in the northern literary world is naturally a kind of glory.” Such an exaggeration - although it has a bit of a sense of excess - can be said to have established your position in the northern literary world!

Moreover, I forgot that I should extend my congratulations to you. *Shell* honorably won the literary award at this year’s Greater East Asia Writers’ Congress. Saying this, you might think that I am flattering you for getting a large amount of “respectful money.” This is wrong thinking. This time the money award is conferred to you not only to honor your writing but also for the bounty itself, because the bounty has properly found a commensurate piece of writing. This is because several of your short stories that I have read make me fully know that your “creative life” has indeed “reached a situation of a low rate of success.”

In the fall, I read the first published instalment of “Buddha.” I quite love this historical subject and your method of handling of it but, at the same time, I feel that this thing will give one the greatest slow convulsions. I read it, read it over and over again, every minute and everywhere it made me gradually feel that your pen could not hold tightly onto this story and that the underneath of the story gets less and less smooth. Later, “My Indiscretion” was published instead of “Buddha.” While I celebrate for you, I really agree with your literary spirit, which is hard to see in this year’s northern literary arena. Countless novels’ serialized installments have been gagged, with the result that even half were detained and ended up giving up halfway. However, “gritting your teeth” and writing it down makes it neither a donkey nor a horse, and there are so many jokes about it. I really feel that the way for our writers is lamentable.

In fact, publishing writings is certainly the greatest joy of writers, however the constant forging of a person is very important to not ignore! Like now, you call this literature’s totally dark era. How should a writer cultivate their own strength and prepare for this era? I think it should not be a case of overwriting, and it is not something that can be endured by receding. It is still necessary to firmly grasp onto a belief in writing, cherish your pen and cherish your experience. In this way, from start to finish, I firmly hold to my belief, and walk my own way.

Here in my hometown everything is as it was in former days. It seems as if there is no better way to summarize this to you - a villager sojourning in the old capital - than to say it to you in this way. Because as long as you open your eyes and analyze every corner of reality that exists here, you will be able to contain your yearning for the distant native soil. In this way, for you there is no benefit. I think like this.

That is enough. I wish you happiness.

“Jieshule de xinglū” (The End of Travel)

*Daban Huawen meiri* (*Chinese Osaka Daily*), 1 September 1944

Translated by Norman Smith, uploaded January 2022

1. The writer to whom this essay is directed to is Yuan Xi (1920-1979). He was also an activist who fled to Beijing in 1937. For further information, see Annika Culver and Norman Smith, eds., *Manchukuo Perspectives: Transnational Approaches to Literary Production*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)