

【Special Feature Articles: *Chao Foon Magazine* and the Chinese Publication Network
in East and Southeast Asia during the Cold War】

A Closer Reading of Chang Fu's *Outside the Wall*:
The First Collection of Poems in the Chao Foon Literary Series

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Introduction

Following the launch of *Chao Foon* (《蕉風》) in Singapore in early November 1955, the Chao Foon Literary Series (蕉風文藝叢書)² was launched. Its aim was similar to that of *Chao Foon*, with an emphasis on getting deeply immersed in society and portraying its authentic reality. “A Message from the Editor” on the first page of the series wrote:

In Malaya and Singapore, we Chinese descendants comprise half of the population, and we will be living in harmony with our brethren of Malaya for many years to come. If we do not understand Malaya, where we were born, where we live and where we are buried, then we will be laughed at! Understanding a people is not just a matter of reading a few books on history and geography, or reciting a few propaganda texts. You have to go deep into the heart of society and immerse yourself in real life before you can find the right answers. The mountains and waters of the wilderness, the little things in life, can all be clearly revealed to us through the brush of literature and art. This is perhaps the best way to understand our environment and to live in peace with other peoples.

Chao Foon is a literary publication promoting Malayanisation, and the Chao Foon literary series is also focusing on literary works on Malayanisation. There is no denying that the literary scene in Malaya is still a wilderness that has yet to be cultivated. Let us sow the seeds of fiction, poetry, prose, essays, fairy tales,

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² The Chao Foon literary series was published from 1957 to 1999. Based on my research at the Malaysian Chinese Literature Centre (馬華文學館), Southern University College, 84 titles have been published in total. The publication of the Chao Foon literary series was particularly active between 1960 and 1965; 46 titles were published in these five years, by 25 writers, concentrating on the novel. In the 1970s, a variety of genres was introduced. The editors of *Chao Foon* were very active in promoting the new generation of writers, and most of the authors of the series were important writers in later Malaysian Chinese literature.

travelogues, scripts, literary theories, and literary works from Asian and African countries, all of which are suitable for this fertile field, waiting for them to grow and blossom into a splendid flower of Chinese literature and art of Malaya for everyone to enjoy!

The above declaration is a clear expression of the desire of the series to nurture the seeds of literature and art at a time of national independence in Malaya, and to lend an artistic perspective to the circumstances and ways of life in this culturally diverse society. From January to June 1957, the series published six books at the rate of one per month: Jiang Ling (江陵)'s short story *From Darkness to Dawn* (《從黑夜到天明》), Ma Moxi (馬摩西)'s prose collection *Ji Yu Ji* (《集愚集》), Fang Tian (方天)'s short story *The Whimpering of the Black Nai River* (《爛泥河的嗚咽》), Xiao Yao Tian (蕭遙天)'s prose collection *Essays from the Windy House* (《食風樓隨筆》), Gu Mei (古梅)'s short story *Catching the Road* (《趕路》), and Chang Fu (常夫)'s poetry collection *Outside the Wall* (《牆外集》). These earliest publications became exemplary works, which delved deep into the heart of society, representing the stark realities of the times.

In other words, the writers who published in the first phase of the Chao Foon Literary Series in 1957 and literary journal *Chao Foon* were not only influential literary figures but were also involved in the practice of publishing aesthetic content. Among these early publications in the series, only two were works of poetry: one was *The Spark of Life* (《生命的火花》) by Tang Yong (堂勇)³, and the other was *Outside the Wall* by Chang Fu. Both represent the aesthetic perceptions of socialism and humanism.

Chang Fu's poems are important in the study of *Chao Foon* in its early years. The lyricism and full-bodied irony of his poems show that literature or writing was the way in which *Chao Foon* and its contemporaries attempted to truly break free from arrogant and paranoid ethnocentrism. Comparable to what Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) called "passionate thinking"⁴, Chang Fu's poems can be described as "the hard work of reason attempting to

³ Tang Yong: formerly known as Xie Rui Huai (谢瑞怀), is of Teochew ancestry and a graduate of Nanyang University (南洋大学). His first book of poems, *The Spark of Life*, was published by Sheng Li Bookstore (胜利书局) in Singapore in June 1957, a ninety-page collection of fifteen poems and a preface poem. The themes that run through the book include: freedom and equality, a critique of war, a desire for peace but a celebration of suffering and struggle, a vision of the world as a whole, and a desire to participate in nation-building on a local level but with the priority of fighting for the rights and dignity of the Chinese.

⁴ Arendt writes: "People accept the legend about Hedger as a way of learning to think. What people feel is that thinking as a pure activity can become an emotion, without so many rules and oppressions as other potentials and gifts, and that it is through these that emotions command them or overcome them. We have become so accustomed to the opposition between reason and emotion, spirit, and life, that the idea of thinking with enthusiasm, of merging thinking and vitality into one, comes as a bit of a surprise to us" (Arendt, 1971: 51)

find a path of recognition beyond cynicism and fanaticism" (Wu, 2013: 23).

Through a close reading of *Outside the Wall*, this paper analyses how the book, an exemplary work of *Chao Foon*, impacted the literary milieu in Malaya in the run-up to independence, which was under strong socialist influence, and how it maintained the aesthetic consciousness of pure and enlightened modernist literature.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: Chapter I provides an overview of Chang Fu's career. Born in China in 1923, he moved to Singapore in 1947 where he wrote poems and plays. Chapter II sets the context of the period when Malaya achieved independence, but was still embedded in the Cold War structure. Chapter III presents some poems from *Outside the Walls* to demonstrate the transformation of Chang Fu's social consciousness and the role of intellectuals in the society of the time. In Chapter IV, through a close reading of "The Wall", I suggest that the message in the work is that people can get rid of the walls in their minds at will. Through these discussions, I argue that in Malaya on the eve of independence, breaking away from autochthonism to prevent Malaya from becoming entangled in the Cold War, and that to this end, it was necessary to work on people's perceptions, which required both assertion and aesthetic practice.

I The relationship between Chang Fu and The *Chao Foon*

Chang Fu, alias Fan Timo (范提摩), was born on 21 March 1923 as Fan Jing (范經) in Shaowu County (邵武縣), Fujian Province, China. He graduated from Shaowu High School and Xiehe University (協和大學) in Fujian Province in 1946. He began writing in 1943 and his early works were published in the *Minbei Daily* (《閩北日報》) in China. In 1947, he moved to Singapore and often published his works in *Chao Foon* and *New Poetry Monthly* (《新詩月刊》). In 1957, he was one of the most diligent contributors to the semi-monthly *Chao Foon*. In the same year, *Chao Foon* organised eight round-table talk (座談會) on literature and Chang Fu attended each of them as Fan Timo, offering his views on poetry, novel, drama, and reportage. He was engaged with education for a long time, teaching at the Nanyang Girls' High School (南洋女中) and Catholic High School (公教中學) as well as teacher training schools such as the Teacher Training College (師訓學院) and Institute of Education (教育學院), as lecturer and Head of the Chinese Department, and later, a lecturer at the National Institute of Education, Singapore (新加坡教育學院). He was an enthusiastic theatre director, having directed such famous plays as *The Wilderness* (《原野》), *The Peking Man* (《北京人》), *Wang Zhaojun* (《王昭君》) and *Awakening* (《醒悟》). (Ma, 1984: 264).

Yao Tuo wrote in *Traces of Bygone Days* (《雪泥鴻爪》) :

Shen Qing (申青) initially founded the Chao Foon Publication with writers who had

already been resident in Singapore and Malaya for several years, including Li Rulin (李汝琳, alias Li Hong Ben, 李宏賁), Chen Zhen Ya (陳振亞, alias 白蒂 Bai Ti and 江陵, Jiang Ling), Fan Jing (范經, alias Chang Fu, 常夫), Ma Moxi (formerly Ma Jun Wu, 馬俊武) and Zeng Tie Chen (曾鐵枕), who together formed the editorial board as non-members, including Fang Tian (Yao, 2005: 570).

The British colonial anti-communist policy led to the return of the “expatriate” writers who had been supporting the literary tradition at the time and attracted non-left- or right-leaning literary figures from Hong Kong to the South. In November 1955, Shen Qing and Fang Tian of the Hong Kong’s Union Press (友聯機構), together with the southern cultural figures Ma Moxi, Fan Jing, Li Rulin and Chen Zhenya, began a five-year campaign to “Malayanise” the literature of *Chao Foon* and demonstrated their political stance and cultural awareness (Wen, 1965; Ng, 2022).

It can be seen that Chang Fu, together with Shen Qing and Fang Tian, as members of the first editorial board of the Chao Foon Publication, under the consensus of “Malayanisation” and “pure literature and art”, responded to the crisis caused by the overly subjective leftist ideology that pervaded all literary fields during the decolonisation period in Malaya. At the same time, they also attempted to separate “Malayanisation” and “pure literature and art” from ideas that were overly politicised or exploited racial divisions.

Around 1958-59, the Chao Foon Publication was relocated to Kuala Lumpur, and from issue 78 onwards, the editorial team was revised to include Yao Tuo, Huang Sicheng (黃思騁) and later Huang Ya (黃涯). Under the new editorial team, *Chao Foon* not too eager in emphasize its political stance and cultural awareness, but transformed it into a “giant regional literary journal of Southeast Asia”.

Under these circumstances, Chang Fu published his works in *Chao Foon*, among which were his masterpieces. The following table summarises his works published in *Chao Foon* from 1955 to 1957, when he was involved with the *Chao Foon* Press.

Table 1. List of Chang Fu’s work, from 1955 to 1957

Year. Month	Issue	Modern Poetry	Literary Theory	Talk sessions (speaking under the pseudonym Fan Timo, 范提摩)
1955.12	4	One Faculty 一教員		
1956.8	20	I should learn from you 我該向你學習		Talking about Chinese Literature and Arts in Malaya 漫談馬華文藝

1956.9	22	Written on the night of the moon 寫在月亮的晚上		Talking about Chinese Literature and Arts in Malaya again 再談馬華文藝
1956.10	24			Love and Pornography 愛情與色情
1956.11	25		On Drama Criticism 談戲劇批評	
1956.11	26	The Blind school worker (servant) 盲校工		
1957.12	27	Suspension 懸思		Current Issues in Chinese School Drama 當前華校戲劇問題
1957.1	29	Heart 心		Prospects for the Chinese Literary Scene in Malaya in 1957 一九五七年馬華文壇的展望
1957.1	30	You said 你說		
1957.2	31	Racecourse Horse 馬場馬		On the Problems of Fiction Writing 論小說創作的問題
1957.2	32	Death 死		
1957.3	33	For 給		The Creation of Poetry 詩的創作問題
1957.4	35	Wall 牆		On Newspaper Literature 談報告文學
1957.4	36		Themes and characters of the script 劇本的主題與人物	
1957.6	39		Xu Zhi Mo, the great poet of the Crescent School 新月派大詩人徐志摩	

* Grey cells indicate periods when Chang Fu frequently published his work.

Chang Fu's poetry has been described as distinctive and far superior to that of his predecessors; "...reading his poems is like a challenge to the mind, a natural occurrence of

noble love and far-reaching ideals, and a search for the meaning of life” (Ma, 1984: 264). Five of Chang Fu’s new poems, “Racecourse Horse”, “The Road” (《路》), “I’m Running in the Wilderness of Malaysia” (《我在馬來西亞的原野奔馳》), “Lake Taiping” (《太平湖》), and “Fifteen Years” (《十五年》) are included in the *Encyclopaedia of Singaporean and Malayan Chinese-language Literature, Collection 6: Poetry*, compiled by Zhou Can (周燦) (1971). According to Chang Fu, he was writing only for fifteen years but wrote no more than thirty poems, including twelve old works he wrote in his hometown, Shaowu, Fujian.

II An Overview of Malaya in the 1950s: Contextualising Chang Fu’s Writing

Chang Fu moved to Singapore in 1947 after World War II. He was actively writing during the 1950s, when Malaya and other Southeast Asian countries were fighting for independence from their colonial masters. It can also be described as the first decade after World War II, when intellectuals were passionate about independence of Malaya and the founding of a state in Malaya. In terms of the world landscape, it was the Cold War period when the leftist and right winger were in conflict with each other, and the Third World, which had just gained independence from its colonies, was getting entangled in the Cold War structure. Southeast Asian countries were compelled to encounter the new postcolonial geopolitics⁵.

The currents of thought during this period flowed around the Cold War and modernism. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) described post-World War I thought as ruins – the aesthetics of disillusionment. He urges the metaphorical angel of history to leave what it has gazed at and rise from the ashes, lamenting what the “progress” experienced by scholars at the end of the century meant at that time. The work he cites as an example is the poem “Gruss vom Angelus” by the Jewish scholar Gerhard Scholem (1897-1982): “My wing is ready for flight, / I would like to turn back. / If I stayed timeless time, / I’d still have little luck”. Another example is the artwork “Angelus Novus” by German painter Paul Klee (1879-1940). Benjamin analysed this work as follows:

It [Angelus Novus] shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awoken

⁵ This refers to realpolitik: the formation of the Association of South East Asia (ASA) in late July 1961 and the anti-communist Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in early August 1967, which were both paved over in the 1950s.

the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm (Benjamin, 1969: 257-258).

People involved with the Chao Foon Publication were in the “historical ruins” of the post-World War II reorganisation of the world landscape. Literary intellectuals were facing the storm of progress, realising that the rationality of historical geography and natural science may still need the vision of literary aesthetics to moderate the modernisation process. If one understands the idea of the Malayanisation of *Chao Foon* from 1955-57 and its expansion into a regional mega literary journal of Southeast Asia in 1958-59 in this light, one might say that what they had to face was not the external wings of distorted flesh and humanity, but the challenge of balancing inner emotions (including thoughts, memories, and identity) in the midst of the storm.

Through the experiences of Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) in Southeast Asia—the author of *Imagined Communities*—let us try to understand the inner thoughts of *Chao Foon* intellectuals during the age of ruins and storms. Anderson believed that the duty at the time was to historicise and relativise ethnic identity. In other words, he recognised that the core of the problem of ethnicity and nationalism was not “fact and fiction” but recognition and understanding. All national identities are products of history. Only by objectively understanding the historical processes and mechanisms of the formation of each unique national identity (including the identity of the self and that of “the other”), can we break away from arrogant and paranoid ethnocentrism and pave the way for peaceful coexistence between different imagined communities (Wu, 2013: 22).

Literature, or writing, is the way in which *Chao Foon* and its generation have tried to break free from the ethnocentrism of arrogance and bigotry. The greatest effort must be made to strike a balance between emotion and reason, compassion and caution, and action and knowledge. No matter how intensely the capacity of reason is challenged in the nihilism of “anything goes, no matter how reason is the last resort of the humble, capricious, and passionate man, reason cannot lose emotion. Just as Arendt’s “passionate thinking” quoted in the previous section attempted to find a path to identity through the struggle of reason beyond cynicism and fanaticism, so too did *Chao Foon*, through its emphasis on entering the inner layers of society and immersing itself in the reality of the stormy waters of the left and right conflict.

III Stylistic Expression of Chang Fu's *Outside the Wall*

Despite Zhou's (1971) inclusion of five of Chang Fu's poems in the encyclopaedia, there is no commentary on these five poems in the preface. The earliest and only relatively complete review of *Outside the Wall* is a review by Du Ming (杜明)⁶ in Issue 47 of *Chao Foon* in October 1957. Du Ming identified two distinctive features in Chang Fu's poetry:

The reflection of Chang Fu's writing style is from his personal relationship between friends and family to the actual living in various strata of society, from the expression of purely personal emotions to the exposure and satire of the ugly side of society. The mastery of the writing technique and the sophisticated vocabulary are particularly valuable (Du, 1957: 12).

These two lines are quite apt in stating that Chang Fu is good at using lyrical but powerful forms, and that his emotions penetrate into the inner layers of society and immerse him in real life, infecting the reader with the inner meaning of the life he touches, to produce the effect of expressing inner feelings and generating an allegorical effect, these are of course derived from the refinement of its writing skills and rhetoric.

1. The Opportunity for Chang Fu to Devote Himself to Literary and Artistic Creation

In his postscript of *Outside the Wall*, Chang Fu writes:

During my secondary school years, I was fond of literature and poetry, and I wanted to develop my career in this field, but things did not go as I wished. I studied agriculture at university. After coming to Malaya, I made a career out of writing, but the deadlines gave me no time to catch my breath. The hot and humid climate made me too lazy to write. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I would remember forgotten interests in my dreams, which made me a little sad, but I decided to let it be. Last year, Ru Lin (汝琳) published *Rebirth* (《再生集》), which aroused my interest in writing poetry, so I had the courage to ask him for advice on the poems I had written, and he gave me a lot of guidance and encouragement. He encouraged me at first to write more, and then suggested that my poems be published in June this year as a way to reprimand me so that I would not be lazy again. (Chang, 1957: 119)

⁶ Du Ming is a young writer from Sarawak, East Malaysia. He writes short stories and essays, and in 1986 he published a novel entitled *Love in the Batang Lupar* (《魯巴河之戀》).

In September 1962, he published another collection of poems, *A Handful of Earth* (《一把土》), which summarised the majority of the poems that had been included in *Outside the Wall* and subsequent poems, as a summary of fifteen years. In the postscript, he wrote:

On October 12, 1947, I first set foot in this land of coconut winds and banana rains, where summer is always in full swing, and in the blink of an eye, fifteen years is passing, as fast as a shooting star breaking through the dark sky!

Fifteen years is not a short time, but the number of poems I have written is only twenty something. The hot weather and the busy schedule are certainly obstacles to creativity, but I cannot help but blame myself for my laziness. Looking back on the fifteen years that have passed, I feel sad and ashamed. (Chang, 1962: 123)

As a fellow of the Chao Foon Publication, he agrees with its philosophy and literary strategy; however, as a poet himself, Chang Fu repeatedly emphasises his laziness and distress owing to the hot and humid weather. This is almost the cry of his poetic heart, a sense of powerlessness in the face of the aesthetics of ruin and disillusionment for a short time “as fast as shooting star breaking through the dark sky”. These twenty or so poems are the result of fifteen years of “angel wings’struggling against the ‘storms of heaven”.

2. Closer Reading of *Outside the Wall*

Outside the Wall is divided into three parts. The first part consists of seven pieces, and the second comprises five pieces, all of which were written between 1940 and 1945. The second part is devoted to anti-war themes. The third part includes ten new pieces published in *Chao Foon* in 1957.

Table 2 The component parts of *Outside the Wall*

	First Part (1941-1945)	Second Part (1940-1945)	Third Part (1957)
1	Send 寄	Mourn 悼	A teacher 一教員
2	In Dreams 夢中	Written on a moonlit night 寫在月明的晚上	The Red Headscarf Woman 紅頭巾的女工
3	Autumnal Thirst 秋天的渴念	Sending new warriors 送新戰士	I should learn from you 我該向你學習
4	The Quiet Green House 靜靜的綠屋	Before you leave school 離校之前	The blind school worker 盲校工
5	Suspension 懸思	A night of revelry 狂歡之夜	Heart 心
6	Dusk - A River of Melancholy 黃昏——一道憂鬱的河		You said 你說
7	Star 星		Racecourse Horse 馬場馬
8			Death 死
9			To 給
10			Wall 牆

Du Ming points out that the first poem in the first part of *Outside the Wall*, ‘send’, and the second last poem in the third part, ‘To’, are two contrasting poems. The former poem, written in 1941, is set as a letter from a young student to a beloved teacher; the latter is a new piece written in 1957 and is set as a letter from a teacher to his/her students.

These two pieces reflect the author’s transition from his student years to his middle-aged years as a teacher. In 1945, the author was a confident, vigorous student with high ideals and was very pure and frank towards his favourite teacher. Although he feels emptiness and disappointment in real life, and knows that his youth will never return like a stream down a hill, he is determined to become a useful person, and tells his teacher: “I know that the past is gone, / and that the future can be pursued, / facing the raging winds, / I will press on, / and in pursuit of a brighter ideal, / I will never be discouraged”.

… In his 120-line poem “To”, the author speaks from the heart, of his nine years of teaching, which he has never expressed before. … During these nine long years, he and his young students have been together, working diligently, fearing that they might become delinquent in their studies, and devoutly leading them to “climb the intellectual cliff”. …

“Your joy is my joy, / Your pain is my pain, / For you I’ll stop having fun, / I read tasteless and lifeless reference books for you / I want to be the dirt, / laid out in front

of you / I want to be the road, / leading you to the shining goal, / I want to be an oil lamp, / in darkness, / shining a faint light for you. (Du, 1957: 12).

If one reads 'send', written to a beloved teacher, multiple times, one realises that it matches with what Benjamin's new angel implied. The phrase "I know that the past is gone, / and that the future can be pursued, / facing the raging winds", in 'send', we find a firm will not to falter, recognising that the future is in the storm. This is in line with what Benjamin calls "a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them". This phrase is also in line with the passage from "Gruss vom Angelus", which wrote "My wing is ready for flight, / I would like to turn back. / If I stayed timeless time, / I'd still have little luck". Chang Fu was clearly aware that he was leading his students "over the cliff of intelligence" and that he was "an oil lamp, / in darkness, / shining a faint light" for them.

3. Satire: "I Should Learn from You"

The important works among the poems in *Outside the Wall* are the ten poems published in 1957, compiled in the third part. These poems are both, representative of Chang Fu's work and among the best contemporary poems of the late 1950s; in particular, Du Ming highlights the satirical style of this series of poems:

"I Should Learn from You" is a profound satire on the two-faced people of high social status. The author unmasks them in the briefest of phrases, and hits them like a dagger in the heart; People who denounce porn culture but secretly watch strip theatre, education experts who make money out of education, and the heroes of our time who are good at flattering them. You people should read "I should Learn from You" !

"Racecourse Horse's sympathises with the horse in the racecourse that has become a money-making tool of humanity, revealing the ugly side of the "king's game" and reflecting human cruelty. "What happens when you slip and fall? The bullet pierced the skull. That is your master's reward for your lifetime hard work!". What piece of work strikes a man's heart? (Du, 1957: 13).

"I Should Learn from You" is a 47 -line poem about the heroes of our time in a paradoxical rhetoric. "You" are the defenders of the old morality who watch strips, the devout Christians who sack sick workers, the corruption crackdown officers who accept gifts, the opportunistic education experts, those who seek fairness, freedom and democracy but get

on with the momentum of the moment, the scumbags who behave based on better bend than break spirit. A distortion of humanity in the turbulent world of survival of the fittest pervades the entire poem. When you start reading it, you feel angry, but when you read the last two lines, “In short, you are wonderful, I want to learn from you”, you feel an irresistible sadness and shame. It is truly like a dagger in the heart.

The 83-line poem “Racecourse Horse” has “you” as the protagonist. The narrator is deeply critical of horses. Horses should be running in the wilderness or serving their country on the battlefield, but the horse on the racecourse circles the track without understanding why, stimulating gambling and greed and causing corruption in the human mind. It is an absurdity that if the horse steps out of line, “a bullet will pierce your skull”. The whole poem is a metaphor for the alienation of modern society. The first half of the poem has a consistent tone of blame, while the last part, about a bullet piercing skull, is what Ardent calls a “passionate thought” that combines thought and vitality. Readers learn from their own experience that if you step out of line, you will be pierced by a bullet, that is true to everyone in modern society. The poetic language is explosive, penetrating into our everyday lives and enlightening the reader to wake up from a dream.

In these two poems, for example, one can indeed feel Chang Fu’s shift from the romantic lyricism of the Crescent School of the 1920s (中國二十年代新月派) to the humanism of the Nine Leaves School modern poetry in the 1940s (四十年代九葉派的現代詩的人文主義), with his rhetorical approach being mainly narrative and descriptive. This is very much in line with *Chao Foon’s* philosophy of “reaching out to the inner layers of society and immersing oneself in real life”.

In addition, Chang Fu’s poems demonstrate the wisdom of life and illuminate stereotypes or narrow-minded perspectives, and Du Ming holds these philosophical poems in high esteem:

“Death is an / unpredictable mystery, / mysterious, cold, / but just”. This is the author’s view of death, which is often perceived as an inscrutable mystery, mysterious and cold, but to understand how just it is, one must first have a transcendent concept of life. The author is not an expert the thought of Laozhuang (老莊), but his religious beliefs have made him realize the justice of death. The death of the poor is a permanent rest and liberation, while the death of the rich is the end of sins; death comes from natural disasters, war, epidemics, chance or light life, and cannot be avoided, intimidated, bribed or pleaded for, for it is an extremely just judgment on mankind. (Du, 1957: 13)

There is also a 106-line poem, "You Said", which describes and laments the situation of the humiliated and despised at the bottom of society. The ugliness, cruelty and misery of the real world are all there for us to see: the elderly are trampled on by their young bosses, young girls are willing to sell themselves for money, hard labourers are treated like dogs and pigs, the prostitutes who have lost their youth have to pretend to be little girls, and the poor trishaw drivers, unlicensed hawkers and shoe-shine boys etc., whose miserable lives touch the reader's conscience. By writing about the lives of the lower strata of society in his poems, Chang Fu encourages people to think about their life and inspires them to face life with passion.

IV "Wall": Chang Fu's most meaningful masterpiece of the time

In his review of the 1957 volume, Du Ming comments on the 100-line poem "The Wall" as follows:

["The Wall"] is a poem of the highest quality in terms of consciousness, subject matter, creative technique, and from any point of view. The vocabulary is well-honed, the voice is strong and powerful, the mood is powerful and majestic, and it is particularly rare to find a poem that is deeply observed and correctly themed. In the first twenty-five lines, the author makes the existence of the wall very clear in very simple lines: The wall divides the world into many small circles; walls block vision, obstruct paths, separate bodies and prevent people from communicating with each other; it abandons the poor child, it rejects the worker, it imprisons the cowardly, it encloses the poor; it is a man-made and irrational social system (Du, 1957: 13).

The main theme of "Wall" is clear: a hundred lines of poetry contrasting the inside and outside worlds divided by a wall, ostensibly the wall of external reality, and metaphorically the two poles of human good and evil forming the inside and outside of the human world/hell:

Inside the wall: / there is the feast of luxury, / the shamelessness of debauchery, / the madness of throwing a thousand dollars. / Outside the wall: / the wails of hunger, / the groans of sickness, / the cries of those struggling for life and death.

Behind the wall: / The selfish man, / Weaving beautiful dreams for himself, / The treacherous man, / Carrying out his plots. / Outside the wall: / The mass of people, / working for the happiness of the masses, / the labouring man / sweating for the building of society. / Walls block the sunlight, / and casts a great shadow on the

ground; / Walls will shelter sin, / so that the evil-doer may do what he pleases, / And yet there are more / And more terrible walls in the world, / Which exist between husband and wife, / Between father and son, / Between brothers, / Between friends.

As Du Ming points out: inside the walls of an irrational social system are two different worlds - inside the walls are the shameless, treacherous and selfish; outside the walls are the blood and sweat of countless people struggling to live and die (杜, 1957:13). The shadows of evil people in the shadows of the wall are reflected in sunlight and emerge, and the wall and people become one. It is man's selfish and greedy desires that build the terrible wall. A world with many walls is the result of people's narrow minds. Chang Fu firmly believes that if one can break their own narrow-mindedness, one can break down walls. As Du Ming wrote with honesty and sincerity, man-made walls will cease to exist in this world.

Conclusion

In the 1950s, Chinese literature in Malaya was at a critical point in its post-World War II transformation: the colonial government declared an emergency in June 1948, and the anti-communist policy led to the repatriation of large numbers of literati engaged in Chinese literature in Malaya, and a number of others moved back to China driven by their own decision to return to China. More importantly, the gradual separation of Southeast Asian countries from their colonial masters and the new atmosphere of nation building inspired intellectual enthusiasm. It was at this time that Chang Fu moved south to Singapore, already writing poetry, and became actively involved in the literary strategies and aesthetic ideas that the Chao Foon Press gave to the Chinese community in Malaya. As a poet in his own right, he also practiced his own aesthetic style, demonstrating a poetic language that penetrated deeper into society, folklore, and humanity in response to the strong socialist consciousness of the decade after World War II.

Chang Fu concentrated his work in the period of the 'storm' just before Malaya's independence and the height of the Cold War, depicting the sense of powerlessness in these times of change, but hoping that his work would be a light in the 'storm'. The content of his work depicted the distortions of human beings struggling to survive in times of change, and was close to those who were oppressed in the lower strata of society, in line with Chao Foon's philosophy.

Chang Fu also firmly believed that selfish and greedy human desires create barriers between people, and that by breaking down the narrow-mindedness of the mind, these barriers can be broken down. Such works were also in line with *Chao Foon's* philosophy of the promotion of Malayisation, a society with diverse cultural backgrounds, origins,

political orientations, and ideologies.

It is thus fair to conclude that Chang Fu's work was one of the greatest proponents of *Chao Foon's* philosophy.

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