

# 聶 華 苓

HUALING NIEH ENGLE

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ONE TREE THREE LIVES

*A Celebration of Life*





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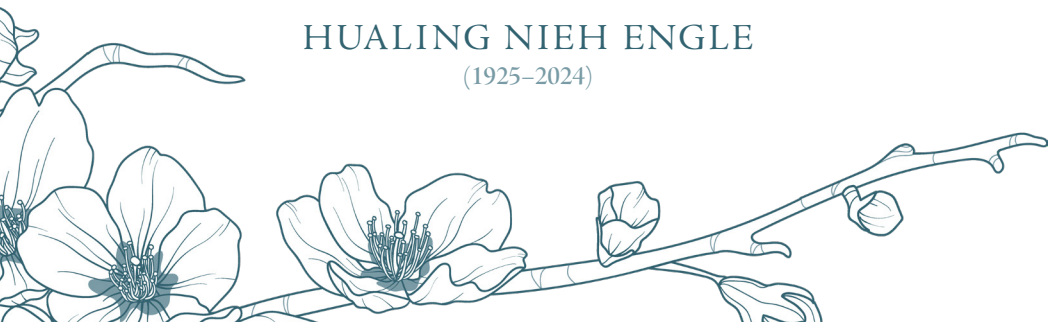




聶華苓

HUALING NIEH ENGLE

(1925–2024)



# ONE TREE THREE LIVES

*A Celebration of Life*

INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

FEBRUARY 28, 2025



## PREFACE

This booklet gathers the remarks and reminiscences of Hualing Nieh Engle's many friends, colleagues, and admirers received after her death in the fall of 2024. Some were written—in Chinese and English—to be read at her funeral at Iowa City's Oakland Cemetery on November 3, 2024; some are transcribed speeches given live or recorded on the occasion of a memorial service marking her unachieved 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was held at University of Iowa's Shambaugh House on February 28, 2025, and many were sent from writers for that same occasion from near and far.

The recording of the memorial event can be found on IWP's [Engle Gallery page](#), alongside other materials pertaining to the Engles. Hualing's literary legacy can be found both in the standing collection of the UI Libraries and in its Special Collections, where some of [her papers are archived](#).

The texts that follow, arranged here in approximate alphabetic order, were compiled and edited by Nataša Ďurovičová and Miharu Yano; credit for translations from the Chinese goes to Angus Zhi Shen and Yun Qin Wang; Kimberly Maher designed the booklet. Technical manager for the February 28, 2025 memorial event was Michael Meginnis.

Special thanks to Hualing Nieh Engle's daughter, Ms. Elena Lan-Lan Wang, for commissioning and arranging many of these contributions.

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FALL 1974, having just returned to Iowa City from teaching African literatures at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I found myself sitting in the lounge of the Mayflower. The large room was overflowing with writers from all over the world. For me, it was amazing and more than a little overwhelming. Standing in front of the assembled group was a large, ebullient man, and seated next to him was a demure-appearing Chinese woman in an elegant suit. That was my introduction to the International Writing Program and to Hualing Nieh Engle and Paul Engle. These two people, so dissimilar on first contact, had together brought the world of literature to a small university town in the center of the United States—known already for its Writers' Workshop, but an unlikely place to encounter this group of writers from so many different literary cultures. Many, many, many readings later, many hours spent sitting talking with international writers, more than two decades later, I once again found myself with Hualing and a group of writers from all over the world, this time in her quite wonderful house overlooking Iowa City. It was now 1999 and much had happened in the interim. Paul Engle had died, Hualing was nurturing their creation, and the International Writing Program was passing through a precarious moment. Faced with budgetary challenges, a University of Iowa administrator had decided that the university could cut

expenses by cutting the IWP. The IWP alumni and the larger community protested vehemently, and their determination to save this program was rewarded. I somehow found myself playing the role of a placeholder and interim director of the IWP while Christopher Merrill was searched for and fortuitously found. In Hualing's living room that fall 1999 day, I had the pleasure of briefly entering her private life, watching her perform a ritual of feeding the deer who passed daily behind her house—watermelon rind that day. The pleasure she took in caring for deer complemented everything else I had learned about her. Among other things, it complemented her strategic actions to bring diverse peoples together to make the world whole. Hualing was an international ambassador. What she and Paul accomplished was to bring together Chinese peoples, Afrikaner and black South Africans, Hindus and Muslims, and so many more. It was soft, impactful cultural diplomacy without being presented that way. In the community Hualing created, peoples just came together naturally. Not always easily, but they did come together. So, on that day, the day we launched the 1999 IWP residency, we ate Hualing's wonderful food, the writers sang or performed music from their countries, and we talked and laughed together. And Hualing, this caring writer, translator, administrator, glued the world together. We must hold on to what she gave us. She will be missed. 🍷

Sandra BARKAN  
USA

**NIEH HUALING** has left us, and sorrow alone cannot begin to convey the depth of my feelings. She has taken an era with her; she has taken with her a life lived to its fullest; she has taken with her love from every corner of the world; she has taken with her a kind of eternity. We will forever miss our teacher Nieh Hualing. Iowa, because of her, has become our own Mount Olympus. 🌹

**BI Feiyu 毕飞宇**

PRC

IWP 2006, 2017

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

## THE TIMELESS ART OF COMPANIONSHIP

Although Nieh Hualing's reputation and contributions are world-class, there are still some aspects of her career that I believe deserve deeper exploration.

First, her role in Taiwan's democracy movement. Founded in 1949, the magazine *Free China* was originally published by Hu Shih in name only. It was one of the most important publications in Taiwan in the 1950s (at the time Taiwan was sometimes called "Free China"). Although the original intention of the magazine was to oppose the Communist Party, its outspokenness soon led to the expulsion of its de facto leader, Lei Chen, from the Kuomintang. In 1960, Chiang Kai-shek violated the constitution and was re-elected president for the third time. The liberals gathered in *Free China* felt that their previous criticism of Chiang Kai-shek's anti-democratic actions such as "no distinction between party and state" was no longer enough to ensure Taiwan's reasonable development, so they prepared to form an opposition party with local Taiwanese politicians. Chiang Kai-shek therefore ordered the closure of "Free China," framing some of its participant and imprisoned them. This was the "Lei Chen Case" during Taiwan's White Terror period. Because the Lei Chen case became such a powerful symbol of political persecution, Nieh Hualing and *Free China's* unwavering commitment to literary pursuits was largely overshadowed by its political implications. Nieh Hualing was not only a unique woman at the time, but also the youngest among them. In the 11 years she worked in this field,

editing the literature column, she also experienced firsthand the dictator's suppression of freedom of association.

After founding IWP, she wrote her most important works—the novel *Mulberry Green and Peach Pink* and, much later, the memoir *Three Lives*. These works are not only dialogues with her life experiences, but also writings that go beyond autobiography. Nieh Hualing, who is well-versed in both Eastern and Western culture, not only gave new life to classical literature, but also, due to her unique choice of form, made works that could be classified as diasporic literature rise at first glance to a new level of “power anatomy.” These works stand as first-class critical documents that unflinchingly reveal a fundamental issue : wherever there is power, there is no truth .

Whether as a novelist or an essayist, Nieh Hualing's importance is no less significant than her visionary role as a promoter of international exchanges. Although the dimension of “gender fluidity” or “sexual politics” didn't become prominent until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, her works, in exploring these themes, were not just groundbreaking and very successful. She was a trailblazer in literature, paving the way for future generations for many years. Nieh Hualing's life was a testament to the timeless art of companionship: companionship is the eternal presence of spirit, poetry, novels, and uninterrupted conversations. Ms. Nieh, we love you because you loved us so deeply so long ago. 🌹

CHANG Nathalie 張亦絢

Taiwan

IWP 2024

*Translated by the author*

## SHE WOULD NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED IN YOU

In the autumn of 1997, I traveled to the University of Iowa in the United States to participate in the International Writing Program (IWP) for a three-month literary exchange. It was then that I came to know Teacher Hualing Nieh more closely.

Teacher Nieh was the founder of IWP. Although she had already retired by then, she continued to care for the writers who came from around the world as if she were a mother to us all, especially those of us from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, who were just beginning to understand each other.

My plan was to complete *Listening to My Father* within those three months. But in all my years of writing, I have never once finished a work on schedule. This was nothing unusual for me. After all, too many things in life are more moving than writing. For example, listening to a blind man play the erhu.

And if I were to describe Teacher Nieh and the motherly figure she was, I would begin with the story of listening to a blind man play the erhu.

One evening, Teacher Nieh invited me to dinner to review the latest manuscript of *Listening to My Father*. As was customary before meals, we had a few glasses of Chinese *jiugui* liquor to warm our stomachs. She casually turned on the tape recorder and said, "Listening to the erhu pairs well with liquor."

And she was right. Perhaps I had been too blind and deaf to notice before, too accustomed to hearing the erhu only as an accompaniment in Peking opera. But that night, the melody was so heartbreakingly beautiful. Ji Kang once said that "sound itself



holds no sorrow or joy,” but at that moment, I could hardly believe it, for my tears had already fallen, and I had even forgotten to drink. I turned to Teacher Nieh and asked, “What is this piece?”

“*Moon Reflected on the Second Spring*, by the blind musician Abing.”

She then told me the story. In the 1950s, a professor from Beijing’s Central Conservatory of Music recorded the piece. The conservatory scholars, knowing that Abing had performed near Hui Spring, the famous “second greatest spring on earth,” named the melody “Moon Reflected on the Second Spring.” From there, it spread far and wide.

I said, “I don’t think ‘Second Spring’ refers to that famous spring at all. I think it speaks of the blind eyes that can open and reflect the moon yet can never see it.”

Upon hearing this, Professor Nieh let out a long sigh. “Ah... Yes, yes! You are absolutely right.”

It was just a casual conversation, but from that night on, whenever I brought her a manuscript, she would deliberately play *Moon Reflected on the Second Spring*, especially if there were other guests present. After five or six minutes of music, she would turn to them and say, “Listen to Dachun explain it. He knows what this song truly means.”

Her joy and anticipation did not stop there. Later, Teacher Nieh went out of her way to find more erhu recordings: *River of Sorrow*, *On Grasslands*, *Yimeng Mountains*, *Sanmen Gorge Rhapsody*, *A Poor Man’s Song*... I don’t even know how many times I listened to them. Each time she played a new piece, she would look at me, her eyes shining, and ask excitedly, “Well?

What do you think?”

To be honest? They all sounded beautiful. But all I could say was “beautiful” because I had nothing else to say. My mind was slow, and my understanding was limited. Beyond imagining Abing’s faint yet powerful gaze, I had no deeper insight to offer.

Yet I must say this: Teacher Nieh was like a mother. No matter what, she always treasured young writers’ rare moments of understanding. She always held on to hope. She never let herself be disappointed in others. ㄉㄞ

February 26, 2025

CHANG Ta-chun [Dachun] 張大春

Taiwan

IWP 1997

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**I HAD THE HONOUR** to document Nieh Hualing's colourful life in my documentary *One Tree Three Lives* (2012). From start to finish, it was a joyous endeavour. I still remember her signature resonant laugh on the phone as she consented to the project.

Now she is reunited with Paul Engle. I will always remember them fondly, often being referred to as their other daughter. Those days in Iowa City were the formative days of my life, being amid these two giants—generous, caring and compassionate, enlightening me and encouraging me to be a better person, with dreams and courage.

Till we meet again, Nieh ah-yi. ㄟ

**Angie CHEN**

Hong Kong/Canada

## THE YEAR WHEN I ENCOUNTERED A LEGEND

From afar, I saw a legendary woman  
 who had lived three lives  
 smile at me, and say, “Welcome. Welcome to this land  
 where you will realize your literary dreams—”

The grasses were green in all directions.  
 The sun didn’t set,  
 floating above the river that flowed across the Iowa campus.  
 I said to myself, “At last,  
 I have arrived at a corner of the world where I can meet myself.  
 I have found the corner from where the world shines clear.”

“And you, who have lived three lives, and beyond,  
 admired by all...”  
 were calm. You pointed out to me  
 this land where many had come, stayed, and departed,  
 departed grandly—back then,  
 you said to me, “Look, how joyful they are,  
 searching for the poetry within their heart,  
 and within the blueprints of their lives  
 an eternal horizon...”

October 21, 2024, Taipei, on hearing Mrs. Hualing Nieh’s passing

CHEN Ko Hua 陳克華

Taiwan

IWP 2016

Translated by AZS 沈至

## DEAR HUALING

Today, you are a bride again, wearing the bright dress you once showed me in the color of sunglow, reuniting with Mr. Engle. I saw from a photograph Lan-Lan sent me, just half a month ago, you were still reading “Iowa Diary” from the fifth issue of Dang Dai, in which I wrote about the warm, moving moments we shared together, days when we drank and talked and laughed together. Twenty years have passed since then, but these memories are vivid. They have never faded from my mind. You were among the first who showed us what the world was like after China’s reform and opening-up. Generations of Chinese writers had formed deep friendship with you. As a writer, you have gifted us volumes of classics; as an organizer in the literary world, you founded the International Writing Program, a lighthouse in the history of world literature. And as a woman, you were forever young and graceful! I have been reading through our letters. In late 2014, you wrote, “I’m doing well, quite healthy, I will be turning 90 next year, King Yan, the god of death, must be thinking: when shall I bring over Nieh Hualing,” I didn’t think King Yan would have been able to take you from us, but perhaps Mr. Engle couldn’t bear the endless separation any longer. Today I can’t be there to witness your return to your love. I can only ask Lan-Lan to offer you your favorite flowers and wines. May your smile, tonight, bloom like a flower, as it always had. May your laughter be hearty! Once again, you and Mr. Engle are holding hands. Don’t let go this time.

Love, always, Zijian. 迟子建

CHI Zijian 迟子建

PRC

IWP 2005

Translated by YQW 王韵沁

**TEACHER HUALING NIEH** lived to the remarkable age of nearly 100 before she left us.

All around the world, many people, not just writers but also those who admired her, are missing her very much.

I participated in the Iowa International Writing Program in 1981. I don't know what 1981 might feel like to many people now, but let me mention two historical events.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of East and West Germany happened in 1989. The Soviet Union collapsed in [1991].

I point to these two events, so you may understand that when I arrived in Iowa for the International Writing Program in 1981, the world was still in the Cold War.

I met writers from all over the world there. Each writer had their own bedroom in the Mayflower Apartments, but two writers shared a kitchen, which connected the two bedrooms.

My "roommate," the writer with whom I shared a kitchen, was from the Soviet Union.

Growing up in Taiwan, I never understood what "the Soviet Union" was. I was eager to talk to him, but he was very cold. Perhaps it was just his personality. He kept his distance.

Whenever I entered the kitchen and greeted him or even tried to invite him to sit down and eat with me, he would pick up his bowl, perhaps borscht, and return to his room.

He would greet me politely, but it was clear he had no intention of continuing the conversation.

The International Writing Program brought together writers from around the world, each carrying the burdens of their nation,

their people, and their culture.

What I remember most about Hualing Nieh was her deep respect for each writer, for where they came from, and for their individuality. Let me give an example.

Back then, Nieh and Paul Engle's home was where writers often gathered to drink, sing, and talk. She always prepared plenty of food and drinks; she took care of everyone but never interfered.

Then, there was an ongoing war between Israel and Arab nations, which might have continued until today. Once, for some reason, an Israeli writer and an Egyptian writer got into a heated argument.

And suddenly, a bottle was smashed against a face, and blood gushed everywhere. Everyone was shocked, frozen, and unsure of what to do.

Hualing Nieh didn't say a word. She calmly walked to the bathroom, wrung out two hot towels, and handed one to the Israeli writer and one to the Egyptian writer.

They wiped the sweat and blood from their faces. Still, Hualing Nieh said nothing and sat beside them and watched. After a while, the two suddenly burst into tears and embraced.

I always remember that moment. It moved me deeply. Hualing Nieh understood that behind every writer, there are sorrows they cannot overcome: the sorrows of their people and their nation.

But a writer is, first and foremost, an individual. Between individuals, even after shouting, fighting, and shedding blood, there can still be reconciliation through tears and heartfelt embraces.

That was the greatest gift Hualing Nieh gave me through the International Writing Program.

That same year, I met a young Indonesian writer. I was just over 30 at the time. I knew that Indonesia was persecuting Chinese people, burning their shops, and even massacring them.

So I asked him, "Why is Indonesia targeting the Chinese?" I had read about it in Taiwan, and it felt wrong.

But he became agitated. He jumped up and yelled, Do you know what the Chinese are doing in Indonesia? I was stunned. Because the truth was—I didn't know.

I suddenly wanted to say, "I'm sorry. I really don't know."

Can conflicts between ethnic groups be resolved through writing and literature? Can we reach a higher level of understanding, where hatred can be let go?

Back then, after the Cultural Revolution, Chinese writers from the mainland started visiting Iowa. In 1981, I met the veteran writer Ding Ling. Branded as a "rightist," they had suffered deeply during the Cultural Revolution.

As a Sinophone writer from Taiwan, what perspective should I take when facing this older writer from mainland China? I didn't know.

One day, I received an urgent phone call from her husband, Chen Ming. He said anxiously, "The old lady slipped in the bathroom while showering."

Falls could be dangerous for elderly people, so I rushed to their apartment in Mayflower. Thankfully, despite the hardships of the Cultural Revolution, she was in good health. She waved me off and said, "It's nothing, it's nothing."

Nonetheless I quickly went out and bought non-slip mats for her bathtub. When I installed them, she was delighted. She



looked at them and said, “Oh! So this thing exists! I never knew!”

That moment touched me deeply. Behind every writer, there is a human being. And the real essence of literature, perhaps, is this: How do we care for one another as human beings? How do we help each other?

That was the greatest lesson that Hualing Nieh and Paul Engle’s International Writing Program gave me.

I have spent my whole life trying to live by their ideals: to hold no hatred toward others, seek understanding and forgiveness, and use literature to bring more peace and kindness into the world.

Blessings to Hualing Nieh and Paul Engle. I believe that in another world, they are living a beautiful life. Thank you. 🍀

February 2025

**CHIANG Hsun 蒋勋**

Taiwan

IWP 1981

*Translated by AZS 沈至*

**I HAD A FEELING THIS DAY WOULD COME SOON**, ever since we parted at her home.

Hualing, Miss Nieh was an author who rose strong from suffering. She did not let pain haunt her, but used it to heal and touch others.

Though her words and integrity will remain etched on this Earthly Plane, my heart aches for the world, now dimmer without her light. Her elegance, wisdom and kindness will be cherished. ♡

Candace CHONG Mui Ngam 莊梅岩

Hong Kong

IWP 2021

*Translated by the author*

## IN MEMORY OF TEACHER HUALING NIEH

Teacher Hualing Nieh is a model figure for generations of Taiwanese writers and intellectuals. As early as the 1960s, she worked as the editor for *Free China Journal*, managing under the authoritarian regime a precious space which allowed dissident views and voices different from the official's, nurturing pure literature. After she left for the United States, she co-founded the International Writing Program with Paul Engle. Since 1967, nearly fifty Taiwanese writers have been invited to participate in the program, where they continued to pass on the belief in freedom.

I was fortunate to be part of the IWP in 2022. I had the chance to visit Teacher Nieh's home several times, getting to know this legendary lady in person. At the age of 97, Teacher Nieh was still elegant and graceful, she loved beautiful things with her whole heart, treated people with great sincerity, and laughed heartily. I admired and loved her even more.

She was a woman who endured hardships with perseverance, a brilliant writer, a great soul whose vast visions influenced countless future generations. I will always be grateful and remember her! 🍷

CHU He-Chih 朱和之

Taiwan

IWP 2022

Translated by YQW 王韵沁

## FOREVER REMEMBERING NIEH HUALING

I had heard of Nieh Hualing long before I met her, she was a legend. Over a decade ago, I visited the University of Chicago and the University of Iowa with the Chinese Writers Association delegation. In Iowa, Hualing invited us Chinese writers to her house for dinner. This was our first meeting. She was dressed beautifully and elegantly, and as a host, warm and enthusiastic. She was always smiling. After dinner, we stood or sat in groups, kept chatting. It was a heartwarming evening and everyone was happy. Before leaving, I had a wish. I wished I could meet her again in the future.

Many years passed in between. I was travelling in Taiwan one year and bought a copy of the Taiwan edition of *One Tree Three Lives* at Eslite Bookstore. There, I encountered a more profound and more sensitive Hualing. She didn't have the superficial formality which is typical for Chinese people; she was straightforward, genuine, and passionate. Her sentiments were deep and optimistic. Her writing was so poetic and beautiful. I was left in awe.

In 2022, the opportunity came. I was invited to the IWP residency, and there she invited us Chinese writers to her home. At that time, she was already 90 years old, but she was still dressed beautifully and was quick in her responses, despite being a little forgetful from time to time. Hearing that I liked Ya Hsien's poetry, she asked her daughter Xiaolan to call Ya Hsien, and said to Ya Hsien over the phone: Guess who I am? She was as naughty as a little girl and had always been humorous.

Her house was a literary harbor. A literary garden which nurtures writers. I even spent a night sleeping in her living room, which made me truly appreciate the wonder of unexpected encounters in life.

I miss Nieh Hualing very much. I will remember her contributions for the Chinese literary community, her endeavors to connect writers from all over the world. I will always be grateful and cherish the memory of Teacher Nieh! 🍷

February 9, 2025 Beijing

**CHUN Sue** 春树

PRC/Germany

IWP 2022

*Translated by* YQW 王韵沁

## THE PRALINES

I am led into a large hall together with the other guests, those with whom I would come to share a hallway, a breakfast room, and many events and trips and this city in the weeks to follow. The odd false alarm would at times send us out our residence. That notorious false alarm. And the sounds of the construction work on the building. The suitcases have been unpacked; we smiled at each other uncertainly, then shook hands. Our English was still clumsy. We had been brought here in vans.

Floor-to-ceiling windows enclose the room as if glass walls. Outside, a dark lake lying in silence. Inside, the arrivals are seated—the dignitaries, the fellow writers.... Many of whom arrived dressed in the costumes of their countries of origin, from Nigeria, India, Macedonia, Palestine, Hungary, Israel, Singapore, China, Japan, Myanmar, Iraq, Egypt, Niger, Germany, Mexico, Morocco, Somalia, Argentina, Korea, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Venezuela, Kazakhstan, New Zealand...I am from Europe, which is small.

The welcome is a ceremony, it will be ceremonial. I feel as if I have been invited to a ball. I have never been to a ball, and certainly not to a United Nations ball, but this is more or less how it's likely to be. I only know balls from TV: the Opera Ball in Vienna or the recent Federal Press Ball in Berlin, to which the climate activist Luisa Neubauer wore a dress with the words HOT HOTTER DEAD. Naomi Klein would have been delighted. Or I look for a description of a ball in literature, in Jane Austen or even better in Honoré de Balzac.

So I'm standing there, in dark blue trousers that button on the side...I don't know anyone and I'm standing there as if a drop of oil had spread on my blouse while I was eating salad. And I'd be aware of that while I was being introduced to someone. I'm standing here—yes—me.

It still wasn't clear to me who my hosts were. Where could I thank someone for the invitation? Unsure, I turned over my little gift in my hands. Who should I give it to? It also seemed as if there were several hosts here, quite a number, perhaps with different roles. The hall was constantly filling up with people. And I only had this one little gift in my hands, I can't really remember anymore what it was: maybe the handmade pralines with an emblem of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on the box. From the picture you couldn't tell whether it was the building before or after the fall of the Wall. It looked as if this gate had always existed, in all times, dictatorship or non-dictatorship or the former empire and then democracy, and after the dictatorship democracy again, and the SED regime and then democracy were all the same to that gate.

Oh, now I remember, yes of course, it was a small box containing four pralines from the Walter Confitserie in Berlin. The larger box with twelve pralines was also very nice. It too had the Brandenburg Gate on the removable wooden lid; this packaging would last longer, but these pralines contained alcohol. But this is the only box with a traditional image. The Berlin bear with BÄRLIN BÄRLIN print is totally hip now—so it's always sold out. As to the box of 12 with the Brandenburg Gate, one couldn't really know whether it

would be the right thing for the recipients, though it really was very nice. Because of the alcohol. I decided for “Sweet Berlin Greetings.” That can’t be right either. They didn’t exist back then. Then it must have been, that was called the four BOOB. Included a donation for Discovering Hands.

I didn’t know what it was called when I came into the shop. I would have probably said it had to be small and light because everything had to fit in the luggage, and they always had such pretty packaging. I knew full well that I had once brought it to a lawyer friend of mine and... No, thanks, without alcohol please, he had been very strict about that.

Now I was standing there with this box in my hand and saw those ladies and gentlemen, all arriving all dressed up, and me in those navy pants with the side buttons...

I was aware that, coming to Iowa City I came to a place where—I’ve never been good at mental arithmetic, but now I’d lost it completely—anyway, my brother-in-law had studied here. His children had given me an almost impossible task. I was supposed to find paintings that he had once painted commissioned by the University of Iowa, and which they feared had been lost or damaged in the great flood of 2008, or maybe they had been packed away and saved, and I needed to find someone who knew something about them. Ideally, I should bring the paintings back.

Harold Bradley Jr. was part of a generation of Black students who were welcomed down here and he had a number of good reasons for why he had preferred, or had to prefer, to study here rather than in his birthplace Chicago. Because



the “racial segregation” was still so strict that Black students had difficulty finding accommodation and common spaces. Helen Lemme, the famous civil rights activist had taken care of this, and was among those he had painted. And here I was now standing with the little box in hand, and was supposed to spend some time here with other writers from all over the world. And find the pictures.

A petite older woman was standing a bit to the side of me. She was dressed in—how should I say—a Buddha stoneshop retro dress, it had a Chinese look, and as she stood there and was silent and looking and delicate, I went over to her and said: “I brought you something.” She thanked me. I went back to the line of those being welcomed as guests from other countries and would soon be called to step forward and introduce myself. A bit like a class photo in motion. That doesn’t really matter, but because of the dark trousers with the side buttons....

I’ll skip the story about my brother-in-law’s pictures and how I found them and why Wally seemed to know something about them. Wally, who had told me how he had always been welcome in Hualing Nieh and Paul Engle’s house. Someone who earned his living as an unskilled worker, was young and full of curiosity and whom the two of them invited to be there when they met with writers from all over the world, and sometimes there was someone who was world famous or would become world famous and Wally was welcome, a guest among guests. Wally, who was a waiter, left Hualing and Paul’s house after these evenings like someone who has received a gift

bigger than himself, took it home, and later with him. It must have been a kind of world cake that he ate from for decades, and later—when we met—he still had some and gave me some of it. Wally was younger and would not have met my brother-in-law, the painter of the pictures, at these gatherings. But the two of them had been visitors in the same house, guests of Hualing and Paul Engle during evenings full of conversation, ideas, and curiosity.

I now know this quite exactly: four years after I met the petite older lady who was wearing—how should I put it—a Budda stone shop retro dress—and after I'd found the paintings I was looking for with Wally's help, my brother-in-law left us. Among the things he left behind I found the poem by Paul Engle about: "Four Paintings of Four Faces By Harold Bradley."

*Letterhead:*

International Writing Program

School of Letters

The University of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa 52242

Emblem: Founded 1847

True, Berlin's Brandenburg Gate is older.

Paul and Harold were friends. Already back then, in Hualing and Paul's house, Harold must have had a taste of this world cake. He left the States and continued his studies in Europe. His paintings—those Four Paintings of Four Faces—are on display in the Iowa Memorial Union. They are part of the building, and I forget about the noise of construction and the notorious false alarms in the very same building, on whose other side I lived.

It must have been the first day, right after my arrival, that I gave Hualing Nieh my small box of pralines, which hopefully did not contain any alcohol: four pralines. From the Berlin confectionery maker Walter, operating its workshop since 1915. 🍫

\*

FOUR PAINTINGS OF FOUR FACES BY HAROLD BRADLEY

A terrible thing it is to live life hard,  
 Bruise on the beaten muscle, broken bone,  
 But still to stand up under the rich sun  
 and softly say—a poor life, but my own.  
 A terrible think it is for us to see  
 Those who endured, endured—but with such grace.  
 Those with their dark skins in their dark lives  
 Who brought a dazzling brilliance to this place.  
 And now, and here, each painted, living face  
 Cries to us—Look! We are all the human race.

— Paul Engle

**Esther DISCHEREIT**

Germany

IWP 2017

*Translated by Nataša Đurovičová*

**HELLO, EVERYBODY.** I'm Dung Kai Cheung from Hong Kong. I joined the IWP in 2009. I remember the day after I arrived, I visited Nieh Hualing at her home with other Chinese writers. I still vividly remember how Hualing greeted me when she first saw me. She set out a copy of my novel, showed me all the papers that she had placed between the pages, and said, "You see I've read all of it very closely." Then, with striking honesty, she added, "I don't like it, it's too intellectual." But without missing a beat, she continued, "But I like you as a writer." That was my first impression of Hualing: straightforward, true to her heart, unafraid to speak her mind. She showed deep respect for writers from different literary backgrounds even when she didn't share their tastes or choices.

Over time I came to understand why she was the perfect person to lead a project like the IWP, which brings together writers from such diverse nationalities and cultures. Hualing was of course a towering figure, yet she was also a mother or even a grandmother to generations of emerging writers. A few days after my arrival, she took me to lunch in her small motor car, chatting and laughing as she drove. I was 42 at that time and she was twice my age, yet she spoke to me as an equal. She listened attentively, curious about the literary scene in Hong Kong and asking me many questions. Throughout her long and eventful life, she must have gained deep insight into what it means to write in changing times and across cultures.

During my time at the IWP, my fellow writers and I visited Hualing at least once a week, sometimes even more. She too visited us a couple of times, sharing meals in our dormitories. She was always so full of energy, warmth, and a love of fun—qualities

one might not expect from such a distinguished literary figure. Beyond her literary legacy, both in her writing and her contributions to the literary world, I believe we benefited just as much from her presence, from the example she set with her generosity and devotion. She wasn't just dedicated to literature—she was dedicated to what makes literature possible: human beings.

Thank you, Hualing, we will always remember you and continue your work in our own ways, using literature to connect people to foster understanding and to push back against the world too often divided by conflict. You don't just have three lives as the title of your memoir suggests; you have countless lives living on in all those who have inherited your spirit and continue to bring it to life through your inspiration. Thank you all. 🌹

February 2025

**DUNG Kai Cheung 董啟章**

Hong Kong

IWP 2009

**MY FATHER WAS SIX DAYS OLDER THAN HUALING**, and on his rare visits to the US, the two of them enjoyed comparing notes about the year 1925 when they both were born, in two vastly different places. After he recently died, someone said: “when a large tree falls, a huge empty space opens up in the forest.” And that is the way it feels now that Hualing, that grand old tree, is gone. Strangely though, the older, smaller and frailer she was as a physical person, the bigger that tree, her stature, grew.

Like any truly old person, she inevitably became something of a historical monument or perhaps a kind of tap root connecting us to the enormous historical events that still shape us today: the emergence of China as a modern power, the brutality of the so-called interwar years, the violent clashes of the fundamental ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—communism and nationalism, the division of the world into two aggressive political camps known as “the cold war,” the emergence of the United States as one of the key protagonists in them, the fraught but not unsuccessful efforts to elevate this country to a truer, less aggressive, racist, and cruel society, and the brief era of the renewed post-1989 optimism that followed, this side of the Pacific at least.

These storms of history recur in Nieh Hualing’s writing, both fiction and essays, and all shaped, I think, her perspective on current events (here is the moment to add that one of the fixtures on her kitchen counter was a signed Christmas card from the Obamas, and that her bedside TV was never not tuned in to CNN Headlines.)

But delicately layered over this vast field of historical memory was the intimate space she and Paul had created and in which,

thanks to her daughter Lan-Lan and the wonderful team of carers the latter coordinated, Hualing lived until her last, peaceful moments. The red house on the absurdly steep hill above the Iowa river that so many writers remember so intensely, was unique. It was a memorial to the life she made there with Paul—his Oxford oar and his indestructible Olympic typewriter still have a pride of place there, as does the large oval dining room table, so famous that a literary museum in Beijing hopes to acquire it. But to me, and I wager to the many other visitor who, like Hualing, had also lived a life of splintered, braided, unreconciled, fused existences of mutually incomprehensible languages and cultures, the life of an exile, the house represented the possibility of “a home after all,” a space where all those otherwise irreconcilable differences were put next to one another, be seen, recognized and acknowledged, providing comfort—an identity even. The Chinese and the American, maybe “the eastern” (think of the masks on the staircase, of the Indonesian puppet above the fireplace or the orchids—not to mention her study, filled with books and files documenting her intense Sinophone life) and “the western” (the Beethoven and Schubert CDs, the fascinating multilingual library in the downstairs study, the stacks of *New York Times*) fused into the unique shape mirroring her. When we entered, we who were her guests left Iowa City and came to what is sometimes called “a third space”—where you didn’t need to be either a Chinese or an American but could be, unapologetically and simply, a mongrel.

Here’s the thing: the space also conveyed another thing about Hualing—the strength of her persona. Never resentful, bitter

or pessimistic, for all the difficulties she must have encountered in the near-century of her life, she had the confidence of someone who has never lost her sense of self. That spine, giving her that elegant posture, must have been what writing provided her. And so, the body may be gone but her voice—in Chinese, in English—is captured in what she wrote, and is with us still. We will miss her, but we do have that voice. 🍷

Iowa City, October 2024

Nataša ĐUROVIČOVÁ  
USA



**SOME OF MY FONDEST MEMORIES** of my years in Iowa are of evenings spent gathered around Hualing Nieh Engle's large dining table. On any given occasion during the IWP residency, you might've found renowned Sinophone authors engaged in a spirited literary debate while pleating dumplings at that table, or belting out a classic Mandarin or Cantonese pop song while plucking a piece of poached chicken topped with ginger and scallions (courtesy of Sushi Popo, of course) from a platter at its center. If you were truly lucky, the host herself would regale you with tales of her extraordinary life, such as serving as the youngest and only female member of the editorial board for the journal *Free China Fortnightly* upon migrating to Taiwan, or the challenges of rendering Faulkner's half-a-page-long sentences into Chinese, or witnessing Ding Ling interact with W.S. Merwin around that very table. Hualing, or Nieh Laoshi, as many of us respectfully and affectionately referred to her in Mandarin, had a way of making you feel welcome, whether you were a writer far from home, an old friend, or in my case, a shy new faculty member. Many times, I found myself marveling at the talent seated around me, gazing in awe at literary figures whose works I'd read and admired as a student, never dreaming I'd one day be clinking glasses and cracking jokes with them in Iowa City, and at Nieh Laoshi's famed "Deer Garden" house no less. Among these luminaries, Nieh Laoshi stood out as a colorful crown jewel, a prolific and pioneering Sinophone writer and literary translator who traversed multiple worlds. She had a gift for bringing people together, perhaps best exemplified by her idea of starting the

IWP with her beloved husband Paul. She was sharp, funny, and full of stories, but most of all, she was generous—with her time, encouragement, and belief in the power of literature to connect people across languages, cultures, borders, and political landscapes. 🍷

Jennifer FEELEY  
USA

## EULOGY FOR MS. HUALING NIEH

The century-old Chinese literature flows like a vast river, surging with shimmering waves. What Ms. Nieh Hualing (1925~2024) has left to the world is undoubtedly a gorgeous, eternal sea of flowers. “I’m a tree, with roots in China, a trunk in Taiwan and branches and leaves in Iowa.” This big tree has long become its own landscape, and what’s more, has grown into a forest.

In the 1950s, Nieh Hualing edited the periodical *Free China Journal* in Taiwan. The journal advocated for liberalism, selecting manuscripts based purely on literary standards. With its rich variety of genres and themes, *Free China Journal* marked a new chapter for the literary scene in Taiwan, and Hualing was hailed as the best literary editor at the time. In 1962, she taught Creative Writing at National Taiwan University and Tunghai University. She became well-known as the legendary lady wore qipao and discussed Western literature.

In 1964, she and poet Paul Engle were invited to the University of Iowa, co-founding the “International Writing Program.” With a global view, they invited renowned writers from around the world to gather, create together, communicate with each other, regardless of their party and nationality. The founding of IWP has broadened the horizons and minds of many writers and largely contributed to international cultural exchanges. Those who have been there still love to talk about it.

Hualing herself writes across genres—novels, essays, translations. Her novels mostly revolve around the memories of war, the situation of Chinese people in turbulent times and their

inner struggles. Through the lively archetypical characters, her stories not only respond to the history, but also richly embody the social environments at that time. Her work has been published in Chinese-speaking regions including Taiwan, the US, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, and has been translated into English, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslav, Japanese, and Korean.

Nieh Hualing's lifetime contributions transcend region, country, ethnicity and gender. As inscribed on the gravestone of Paul Engle who passed away in 1991, "I can't move mountains, but I can make light." ㄖㄞ

FENG Te-ping 封德屏

Taiwan

*Translated by* YQW 王韵沁

**HELLO, MY NAME IS HUGH FERRER.** As many of you know, I had the good fortune to work at the International Writing Program for over twenty years, alongside Nataša and Chris, continuing the work begun by dear Hualing. And by Paul, too, of course.

A regular part of my job was articulating, for grants and so on, the Engles' original vision for the IWP. I was proud of that responsibility, and I loved reflecting on the river of healing diplomacy that had sprung from their big hearts. These two had encircled a deeply divided world and understood how many disparate interests could be aligned through a "United Nations" for writers—how the world's writers and their audiences could year by year be made slightly less alien one to another. The power of their brilliant, joyous insight is never going away. For all the many successes the IWP has claimed to date, beginning with the thousands of visiting writers who've turned the University of Iowa into a crossroads for world letters, and helped Iowa City become a UNESCO City of Literature—that original vision of Paul and Hualing's, that all of us want to gather more than we want to stand apart: it remains forever bountiful. Like a good metaphor, it continues to overflow; like the joy around the Engles' dining room table, there is no exhausting its generosity. And so I trust that the IWP, and the deeply welcoming spirit behind it, will remain one of the many ways in which Nieh Hualing is remembered long into the future.

On a more personal note: Working for the IWP meant that I, too, was welcomed into the Engles' home. And it was always the warmest welcome. And since I kept working for the IWP, I was

invited back, year after year, and always Hualing made me feel special. I treasured those visits.

Now, honored as I am to be standing here paying tribute to Nieh Hualing, I didn't know her up close and intimately like her family and closest friends did. So, I want to say just a word about how I saw her, from my slight remove.

To me, Nieh Hualing was a rock star. For over twenty years, each time I visited the Engles' home, I was basically getting to visit a rock star's home. Her laugh? It was a rock star's laugh. Her fight? Her passion? Her charm? All of them were dialed up to superstar intensity. Her power to bring us all together and *make us each feel special at the same time*? What else does a rock star **do** but bring us all together and make us feel special at the same time?

I didn't meet Hualing until she was already 76 years old. Sometimes I'd try to imagine what she'd been like when she was younger and somehow had even more energy; and the person I pictured was a frightening force of nature: super-human talent, unstoppable willpower, and a laugh that could change the world....Which is exactly what Hualing had done—and with so much joy. If you can't tell already: I was always in awe of her. She was a giant. One of those legends little people like me one day hope to stand on the shoulders of. Her spirit: so much bigger than normal life, like the enormous leaves of the sycamore, which have been falling all week like baseball mitts on this corner of the city of literature.

Four and a half years ago, I visited the neurology ward where Hualing had been admitted after a scare. It was the only time I had ever been alone with her, without a feast going on, without a

celebration, without a rock star's entourage. The giant was sleeping. But also not sleeping. Because she was drumming, rapping in her sleep against the bedding, against her chest. Mostly with her right fist, but sometimes with her left. Rapping as though against a table, about to turn around an argument; or knocking on a door. Rhythmic, demanding, seeking. She may have looked frail, but there was so much fight in her still, even then—an other-worldly amount of insistence. I thought of all the doors we knock on in a lifetime, and how we forever treasure the ones that open and welcome us in. 🍷

October 2024

**Hugh FERRER**  
USA

## REMEMBERING HUALING NIEH

Invited by Hualing Nieh and the International Writing Program, I arrived in Iowa in August 2009 and stayed for nearly three months.

Our first meeting was in the spacious living room on the second floor of her home. Along with Dong Qizhang and me, there was a couple, Han Bo and his wife, from Shanghai. We sat around a long table sipping champagne, immersed in endless conversation. Hualing Nieh was born in 1925, 18 years older than my mother. To me, she should have belonged to the generation of serious elders, like my grandmother, yet in her gestures and expressions, there was a hint of girlish mischief, playfulness, and willfulness. I was immediately drawn to her. Her liveliness, joy, and sincerity quickly were infectious, making everyone around her feel at ease.

How often did we meet during my time in Iowa? Countless times. In addition to our regular chats at her home, Iowa's warm and hospitable friends frequently organized gatherings, and at every event, she was there. On the rare days we didn't see each other, she would appear outside my hotel, bringing me groceries from the supermarket and even "minced pork tofu" she had specially made for me.

Perhaps only when it was just the two of us would she become truly serious. Her passionate admiration for writers' works and sharp, unfiltered critiques left a deep impression on me. Beneath her playful demeanor, I could sense her fierce spirit, deep affection, quiet sorrow, grandmotherly warmth, and, above all, the profound wisdom she shared with the world.



After I returned to Beijing, as Hualing Nieh grew older, our correspondence gradually became infrequent. When I reread her works, I would sometimes recall what Wittgenstein once said about Leo Tolstoy: She was a sincere person; she had the right to write. ❷

**GE Fei 格非**

PRC

IWP 2009

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

## MEMORIES OF NIEH HUALING

In the introduction their co-translation of the poetry of Mao Tse-Tung, Nieh Hualing and Paul Engle call Mao's poetry "an intense political-military autobiography." "Every poem," they affirm, "has its immediate or distant connection with actual events in Mao's share of recent Chinese history." Then, in a simile that I've always felt describes their relationship to each other as much as it does Mao's poetic method, they write, "In Mao, the politics and the poetry are like bands of muscle wrapped around each other; when one is flexed the other moves."

I like this line as a description of Hualing and Paul's relationship, which was surely a marriage of true minds, a professional and personal partnership which sustained them both and enabled them to build Iowa City into a central node in the networks of world literature. But I also see it as a description of Hualing herself, whose writings represent a personal witness to postwar world history unmatched in scale and scope. In her writing and her life she entwined her exilic identity with historical events far and near; she was a true citizen of the world and will be mourned and remembered all around it. 🐾

Loren GLASS  
USA

**BETWEEN THE YANGTZE AND YELLOW RIVERS:  
THE HEART OF CHINA**

Esteemed writers and scholars,

It is with deep reverence that I stand before you today, on this solemn occasion, to honor the life and legacy of the remarkable Nieh Hualing—an extraordinary woman, a literary force, and a passionate advocate for the beauty of Chinese culture and literature. As a literary researcher from Beijing, it is both a privilege and an emotional duty to speak of her.

To encapsulate my understanding of Nieh Hualing in these brief moments feels impossible, yet I find myself compelled to reflect on her profound connection to Chinese literature, and particularly her transformative influence on the literary landscape of China since the 1980s.

Born and raised in mainland China, she first sowed the seeds of her literary journey in Taiwan, and later expanded her reach across the globe, bringing her distinctive voice to the United States. Throughout the turbulence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—through wars, political strife, and the heartache of separation—Nieh's works have been a beacon of love, passion, and grace. Though her life unfolded on foreign shores, her heart remained ever tethered to the soul of China—the language, the culture, the stories that define us.

In partnership with her husband, Paul Engle, Nieh Hualing co-founded the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, a sanctuary for writers from all corners of the world. The IWP is more than a literary organization; it is a living testament to the power of words and the spirit of cross-cultural dialogue—a

“literary home” where voices from diverse backgrounds converge, where literature becomes the bridge that connects humanity.

In 1979, Nieh and Engle orchestrated the first “Chinese Weekend,” an extraordinary gathering that brought together writers from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—marking the first significant reunion of Chinese voices abroad since 1949. Since that pivotal moment, more than a hundred writers from Chinese-speaking regions have crossed paths at IWP, sharing their stories and engaging in the exchange of ideas with writers from all over the world. Through her, the essence of China—the kindness, the resilience, the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness—has been woven into the global literary fabric.

Thanks to Nieh, IWP and her home, the “Red House in Deer Garden,” became more than just a physical place—it became a “spiritual enclave” for Chinese literature and culture. It is here that the echoes of China’s history, its resilience through turmoil, and its enduring beauty found a home in the hearts of writers across the globe.

I cannot help but recall the words of Paul Engle in his collection of poems *Images of China*, where, in the dedication, he writes:

I give you this book because you gave me yourself,  
Because you watched me scratching and muttering  
when I wrote it,  
Because between the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers  
You showed me the heart of China.

Because you are China.

This China, a land of enduring beauty, where even “the birds sing in Chinese,” has lived in Nih’s heart and in her words, and now lives within all of us who have had the honor to encounter her spirit. 🌸

February 2025

**HE Jixian** 何吉贤

PRC

*Translated by author*

**IN 2019**, recommended by the US Consulate General in Shanghai, the delegation to the “Lu Xun and Walt Whitman” symposium visited the IWP at the University of Iowa. During the visit, we were honored to have had multiple meetings and exchanges with the program’s co-founder, Nieh Hualing. Her peaceful, open, wise insights and friendly communication have given us a lot of gains. On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Nieh Hualing, we once again express our deep respect and remembrance through words. We hope that we can jointly inherit co-founder Nieh’s philosophy with IWP and continue to promote literary exchanges between China and the US. 🌹

Tom HUANG Weiming  
PRC

## AUNTIE NIEH, A BED-SHARING BOND

The first time I met Auntie Hualing Nieh was on June 18, 1964. Ping Hsin-tao, the publisher of *Crown Magazine*, had invited the magazine's core writers for a gathering. At the time, she was teaching in the Chinese Department at National Taiwan University, and I respectfully addressed her as Teacher Nieh. That year, I was nineteen, the youngest among the fourteen core writers and the only one from Taiwan.

Each of the thirteen senior writers had significant literary achievements. Teacher Nieh, though, had most works translated into foreign languages. The International Writing Program she pioneered at the University of Iowa became one of the most renowned literary initiatives of our time. These contributions are well-known and need no elaboration. What I wish to recount instead is a more personal and unusual bond, that of bed-sharing.

The second time I met Teacher Nieh was on June 23, 1964, when Mr. Ping took several *Crown* writers on a trip to Yilan. That night, we stayed at the Taiping Mountain Lodge. The men slept on traditional tatami mats in a large shared room, while the three women, Teacher Nieh, Chiung Yao, and I, shared a spring bed in a private suite.

There is an old Chinese saying: "It takes a hundred years of cultivation to earn the blessing of sharing a pillow." This rare and serendipitous moment filled us with excitement, and long after getting into bed, we remained awake, chatting and laughing. It was that night that I learned she and my mother were both born in 1925. From then on, I called her Auntie Nieh.

In Taiwan's literary circles, Chiung Yao was the only other writer who had shared a bed with Hualing Nieh, but I may have been the only one to call her Auntie Nieh. Yet now, Auntie Nieh has passed away on October 21, 2024. Chiung Yao followed on December 4 of the same year.

Sixty-one years ago, we traveled to Yilan together, sharing stories late into the night on that mountain lodge bed. Whenever I think back to that evening, it is as if I can still hear Auntie Nieh's golden-bell-like laughter.

And now, in this vast space between heaven and earth, of the three of us, only I remain. How could my heart not be overwhelmed with sorrow? ㄉㄨ

Ji Ji 季季

Taiwan

IWP 1988

*Translated by* AZS 沈至



**Ms. HUALING NIEH** was one of the most important writers and translators in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Sinophone literature, and a highly distinctive figure in modern and contemporary Chinese literary history, both in her writing experiences and in her unique literary style.

Her works are filled with vivid characters, nuanced and profound emotions, and a deep resonance with the spirit and warmth of her era.

Ms. Nieh was also a pivotal literary organizer. With her husband, Paul Engle, she founded the Iowa International Writing Program, building a bridge between Chinese-language literature from both sides of the strait and the global literary community.

She treated every writer who participated in the program with kindness, offering particular care and support to Sinophone writers.

I deeply cherish the days spent with Ms. Nieh. Her living room was one of the most significant spaces in literary history.

Deer roamed freely beyond the window; orchids bloomed endlessly inside. I miss her laughter and her voice.

Ms. Nieh's greatness will not diminish with her passing. On the contrary, as time goes on, her brilliance will only shine brighter, illuminating the world and all who live within it. 🌹

JIN Renshun 金仁顺

PRC

IWP 2010

Translated by AZS 沈至

**I'M HONORED TO SAY A FEW WORDS** on behalf of the University of Iowa and President Barbara Wilson, who regrets not being able to join us today. The University of Iowa is recognized around the globe as a place that cherishes and nurtures writing and writers. We are fiercely proud of that tradition. It is the foundation of our identity and our distinction as a university. No one cherished and nurtured that tradition more than Hualing Nieh Engle. When Hualing and Paul Engle co-founded the International Writing Program in 1967, they gave us a priceless gift. They showed the world that at this university, in this unlikely place in the middle of the country, writing matters. Writers matter. And perhaps most of all, the *community* of writers matters. We treasure the work visiting writers produce here, and we value the example they set of creative exchange across cultural and political divides.

It is because of Hualing Engle's "crazy idea" almost 60 years ago—followed, of course, by decades of tireless work, and generous friendship to so many—that today there are IWP alumni across the globe who think of Iowa City and the University of Iowa as a treasured home away from home. It is thanks to her vision that so many Iowa writers and students over the years have had the opportunity to engage with and learn from international writers they otherwise might never have encountered. And it is because of Hualing and Paul Engle that people around the world, who may know nothing else at all about Iowa, know it as a place where writers and writing flourish. Through her own writing of fiction and nonfiction, her translation and teaching of translation, her sharing of her extraordinary life story, and her remarkable

energy and generosity, she left a legacy that will continue to resonate through the literary world for generations to come.

In the forward to a 1987 anthology of works by visitors to the International Writing Program, Paul and Hualing Engle wrote, “This writing program, the University of Iowa, the state of Iowa, and these United States are blessed when [international] writers settle here for a while to put their poems on the empty page.” “They are lucky to visit here,” Paul and Hualing wrote. “We are lucky to live here.”

We are all lucky to live here, and we are lucky that Hualing Engle lived here, too. I’m delighted to share this opportunity to express our gratitude for everything she has given to the university, to Iowa, and to the world. 🌱

Kevin KREGEL  
USA

**MY LAST VISIT** to this tomb evoked the memory of the 2017 Iowa solar eclipse. The polished edge of the round, black marble tombstone gleamed, and the epitaph, “I can’t move mountain, but I can make light,” resonated deeply. A profound sense of awe struck me, inspiring a poem, the final stanza of which reads:

Its light, moonlight’s shadow slowly retreats,  
Its corona lingers, hanging above  
Your living room’s marble tabletop,  
Where diverse flowers from around the world  
Gather at its center, free and bright:  
The mountain gradually rises with the sun.

Dear Hualing, my mentor, thank you for allowing IWP to illuminate the mountains in writers’ hearts and dispel their fear of the darkness. 🌸

LAU Stuart 劉偉成  
Hong Kong  
IWP 2017  
*Translated by author*

## MS. HUALING NIEH IN MY EYES

For many people, the first thing that comes to mind when Hualing's name, or her relationship with "literature," is being mentioned, is the International Writing Program with the University of Iowa. Others may vividly recall the delightful, magical evenings she brought writers from all over the world around her dining table. However, for me, none of these are my first impression of her. My earliest memory of Ms. Hualing Nieh comes from her work, her novel *The Lost Golden Bell*.

At that time I was 13, a rather troubling age. It was the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence. Fortunately, I encountered the protagonist in *The Lost Golden Bell*, who was only a few years above me. Although the story took place during the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War, I didn't find it distant. Instead, I lived in that beautiful village with her, hiding from the war. We together experienced the confusions unique to that age. I was very lonely. But reading the novel, I found a friend. During that winter break, I read the novel three or four times—spending almost the whole vacation with my friend. I especially enjoyed the part near the end of the novel. On the night of the winter storm, she showed me her courage. I knew it was something I still hadn't attained by then, but I felt happy for my friend. She had gone through so much, and truly gained something.

The perseverance and sincerity pervaded in the novel were exactly what Ms. Hualing Nieh was like herself.

The thirteen-year-old me didn't know yet I would one day, have the honor to be invited to the International Writing Program.

Like many others have said, I spent the most joyful time with Hualing at the Deer Garden along with other writers, mentors, friends. We shared simple meals and laughed together. We talked about life under the dim light. I told her I enjoyed *The Lost Golden Bell*, but was too shy to say what I really wanted to say.

The pain of a child at that troubling age is easily ridiculed by adults. I am grateful that Hualing and her novel, did not laugh at me. 🐼

February 10, 2025

LI Di'an 李笛安

PRC

IWP visitor 2017

Translated by YQW 王韵沁

## BEYOND LITERATURE—IN MEMORY OF NIEH HUALING

Nieh Hualing once summed up her life in a single sentence. She said, “I am a tree, with roots in the Mainland, the trunk in Taiwan, and branches and leaves in Iowa.”

These words are sincere, heartfelt, and profoundly moving. Her unique life is itself a book: a vast, sweeping epic.

2007 marked the fortieth anniversary of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, which Hualing co-founded with her husband, poet Paul Engle. I was invited to the celebration that autumn. But what gift could we bring to the occasion? My wife Jiang Yun and I pondered this for some time. Finally, she blurted out, “Why not bring a single phrase?” So, at the evening reception, in front of writers from around the world, poet Xi Chuan and I unveiled the phrase. It was a meticulously framed calligraphy scroll. On the clean white rice paper, the calligrapher had used Han Li—a script popular on bamboo slips over 2,000 years ago in China—to write seven characters:

“Iowa of the World.”

Perhaps it was fate: our whole family—my wife, daughter, and I, two generations, three writers—all found ourselves drawn to Iowa, to the warmth of Hualing’s Luyuan, her Deer Park, because of the International Writing Program and her invitation.

Nieh Hualing left us at a hundred years of age, in the autumn. Autumn is the season of falling leaves and ripening fruits. Perhaps we might add a line to her moving words:

“I am a tree, with roots in the Mainland, the trunk in Taiwan, branches and leaves in Iowa, and fruits all over the world.”

Fruit ripens, leaves fall. Life is without end.

In memory of the eternal Nieh Hualing. 至

Evening of October 27, 2024: the golden ginkgo leaves outside my window fall like snow.

LI Rui 李銳

PRC

IWP 2002

*Translated by* AZS 沈至



**“COME QUICK!** I just made a big pot of beef stew!” you’d shout over the phone.

Or, “Tomorrow night, the IWP writers are coming over for dinner. Get here early!”

Great foods and wines: the dining table in your living room has hosted over a thousand writers from around the world.

Writers of every race, with every belief, would gather around that table, raising glasses and toasting, or diving into lively debates. In the snowy, frozen winters, the warmth inside was like spring, and the voices continued to buzz long past midnight.

Your laughter, and Paul’s, was always the loudest.

Before the Berlin Wall even fell, you and Paul had already dismantled it—right there in Iowa.

What I don’t understand is how you managed it all: working every day, looking after so many people, and still finding time to write such wonderful novels. You listened to everyone’s problems as if you had none of your own.

You always laughed off life’s troubles. You always walked in the direction of the sun.

You haven’t gone far, Hualing. We will always remember your boundless, generous laughter.

And we are comforted. Paul is there, calling out in the sunlight, “Hualing, Hualing,” welcoming you, embracing you—like the beautiful, fulfilling ending of so many great novels.

The weather’s getting cold, Hualing. You and Paul, take good care of each other. ㄉㄨ

LIN Hwai-min 林懷民

Taiwan

IWP 1970

Translated by AZS 沈至

## ELEGY FOR HUALING NIEH

Teacher Hualing Nieh, your presence illuminated the literary landscapes of Hubei, China, and the world. Unlike many writers, your influence extended beyond the brilliance of your works. You devoted decades to making Iowa a home for writers from across the globe, turning it into an irreplaceable bridge in the literary world. For this, you rightfully earned the title “Mother of International Literary Organizations.”

It has been more than thirty years since our only meeting. It was the autumn of 1987. I was a graduate student at Hubei University, and I had the great fortune of attending your lecture on campus. You had traveled from afar, dressed in an elegant blue gown, poised and graceful. You carried both the charm of the Republic era and the spirit of America. That image remains etched in my memory.

Your friendship with Professor Li Kailing was forged in the tumultuous years of wartime exile. Bound by your shared hometown and student days, you found each other amid hardship and became lifelong friends. Because of this connection, the bond between Hubei University and you grew ever deeper. Professor Li often spoke of your past together, and Hubei University has held numerous academic events dedicated to the study of your works, publishing one of the earliest research collections on Hualing Nieh in China.

In January 2019, the School of Chinese Language and Literature at Hubei University initiated the establishment of the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum and Research Center. By then, you were already 94 years old, yet you remained deeply engaged, showing

unwavering dedication to the cultural development of your homeland. It is regretful that the pandemic disrupted our plans, preventing us from holding academic symposia and delaying research efforts. Yet, we never wavered. Your fellow townsman, my friend, and student Yang Jianzhong, persevered in advancing and promoting the Hualing Nieh Research Project. Finally, in the winter of 2023, the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum was completed: you returned home forever, to Guangshui.

The esteemed writer Xu Chi once described you as “President of the International Writers’ Association,” a title that was both the most precise and highest recognition of your contributions and an honor that you surely deserved. The world may gain or lose a writer, a book may be written or left unwritten, and life will continue. But if the Iowa International Writing Program had never existed, the journeys and worldviews of countless writers, the history of global literary exchanges, and perhaps even the course of world literature itself would have been irreversibly altered and left with immeasurable voids.

You were the pride of Guangshui and a towering figure in world literature. Though you are no longer with us, your spirit lives on: in Guangshui, in Iowa, in the literary world, and in the hearts of every scholar and student of Hubei University. Your story will continue to be told in literary circles, and your literary legacy will endure through time. 20

Wuhan, February 28, 2025

LIU Chuan'e 刘川鄂

PRC

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**HUALING ENDURED** no shortage of hardships in her life, yet she always reached out her arms to hug you. Even if you were this befuddled kiddo fresh off the boat from the new world, she greeted you with warmth and innocence. To her, every poet and novelist was her children.

The living room in her home—a legend passed down through generations of writers—was lined with masks from around the world. You’d casually spot a painting by Huang Yongyu on the wall or a playful photo of Paul Engle biting his pen with a mischievous smile. In this house, even the faintest stir brings the flowing whispers of literary history. Bei Dao, Chen Yingzhen, Yang Kui, Ya Xian, Wang Anyi and her mother, Yu Hua, Zhang Dachun... so many monumental names in literary history, leftist, rightist, from the Mainland or Taiwan—all gathered in this living room, during the Cold War, raising glasses, spilling wine, and sharing their literature.

When I left Iowa, I told Hualing that I’d be back the next year to see her. But she seemed accustomed to hearing this from every writer-child parting ways. She replied, “Take good care of yourself. I am getting old; we may not meet again.” Eighteen years have flown by, and I haven’t returned to the fairytale-like Iowa. But “having been to Iowa that year” has given me the courage to reach out and embrace young people whose eyes are filled with literary dreams, and who bear the marks of bruises of reality. When faced with the feeling of “Ah, is this civilization about to enter a cold and alien realm?” or feeling adrift in life’s hardships, I softly remind myself: Don’t panic, don’t fear. If Hualing were here, she would say, “No one is more noble, more worthy of

standing tall than a creator.” Iowa, echoing with Hualing’s bright laughter, could truly turn novelists trapped in cold darkness into poets warmed by romance. 🍷

**LO Yi-chin 骆以军**

Taiwan

IWP 2007

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**OUR BELOVED ADVISOR**, the mother of the literary world, Hualing Nieh Engle, has set an example for countless young people to pursue their dreams throughout her life, and has left readers with praiseworthy literary works. We miss her deeply. 怀念

LU Hong 吕红  
PRC

## HUALING NIEH ENGLE: ONE TREE, THREE LIVES

In late August 2000, Hualing Nieh Engle threw a dinner party for the first cohort of writers I hosted in the International Writing Program (IWP). I had assumed the reins of the IWP just weeks before, charged with the complex task of rebuilding this storied institution, and the irony is not lost on me that we are celebrating Hualing's life and work at the very moment that our nearly six-decade-long partnership with the US Department of State may be ending—a serious blow to the community of world-renowned writers that Hualing helped to create. What I remember most vividly of that summer evening was the sight of African and Asian masks hung from the wall along the stairway leading to the kitchen and living room of a house, which would come to stand in my imagination for all that is good in our literary community. The visiting writers, whose voices rose and fell as they drank and mingled on the deck, were wearing their own masks, which would inevitably drop sometime during the residency, revealing brighter and darker truths about themselves. Nor was I exempt from such revelations of character. Hualing knew this better than anyone, having hosted countless dinner parties during her long sojourn in Iowa, which represented for her the leaves of the tree that defined her extraordinary life. More than 1600 IWP writers from over 160 countries, including three Nobel Laureates in Literature, live and write in the shade of that tree.

My next encounter with Hualing was at a lunch she organized to introduce me to Sandy Boyd, the former president of the

University of Iowa. We had just sat down when Hualing said, “I read your letter asking us to donate our estates to the university. Why don’t you donate yours to the IWP?” I was taken aback by her forthrightness, and when I mentioned this to Sandy at another social event later that week, he replied, “How do you think she created the IWP? Not by holding her tongue. And you will notice how I deflected her demand.” Lesson learned. This was the first of many in the art of the possible—Hualing’s special province—and introductions to figures who would prove to be key to the success of the IWP. After her retirement in 1987, she had been advised to refrain from offering her counsel to the new leadership—a mistake she vowed not to repeat when I came on board. And I am very grateful to her for her willingness not only to share what she knew about the world of letters but also for her truth telling; if she disapproved of a decision I had taken, she did not hesitate to let me know—which made all the difference.

Hualing and I were supposed to travel to Taiwan the week of 9/11; hence many years would pass before I visited the island she called the trunk of the tree of her life. Thus it was to mainland China, the roots of her figurative tree, that I made my first journey to Asia, in the company of Hualing and her granddaughter, Anthea. It was a memorable trip, not least because at every turn I saw with my own eyes how several generations of Chinese writers revered her. Asked at one meeting with younger writers the secret of her life, Hualing replied, “I only do what I want to do when I want to do it”—which inspired one writer to present her the next day with a scroll inscribed with the most



beautiful calligraphy of that line. But what I recall most vividly was the delight she took in seeing old friends, sharing jokes, discovering new dishes to try, including pepper fish, perhaps the spiciest thing I have ever eaten—and one of the best. The chef in that Beijing restaurant fried the fish in oil thick with chili peppers, and Hualing could not get enough of it. Me neither. And I can still hear her peals of laughter the night the novelist Chi Zijian explained how a certain Party official managed to find a wife: “Noodles marry noodles.” Hualing loved that.

Hualing’s love for her family; her fierce commitment to literary excellence; her gift of hospitality; her resourcefulness; her sense of humor—these are what I treasure from having had the good fortune be in her orbit for nearly a quarter of a century. Hualing shaped my life and my directorship of the IWP with uncommon generosity, zeal, and love, and if my remarks have a valedictory air, thanks to the uncertainty about our relationship to the Department of State, I hope you will also hear my gratitude not only for everything that Hualing gave to me and to so many others, in person and on the page (she was, after all, the author of nearly forty books), but also for the fact that when she died at the age of 99, just before the end of our fall residency, she was secure in the knowledge that the IWP was thriving, as it will again, regardless of what transpires in Washington. Hualing always had the writers’ interests at heart, as tonight’s speakers will attest. Online viewers will find biographical notes for them in the chat. And a compendium of their remarks will be available next week, for which I thank Nataša Đurovičová and Miharu Yano. Thanks, too, to

Hualing's daughter, Lan-Lan Wang, who was instrumental in lining up our Chinese speakers; to Cate Dicharry, Kim Maher, Mike Meginnis, and Monique Galpin, who coordinated the logistics of this hybrid event; and to all of you who have gathered here and online to celebrate Hualing's life.

Finally, let me note that on one of the Nobel laureate Mo Yan's return visits to Iowa City to pay his respects to Hualing we took him to lunch at a Chinese restaurant, where the waiters, busboys, and cooks kept sneaking peaks at the celebrity in their midst—a fact that Mo Yan made light of in his resolve to honor Hualing. Here was a lesson in perspective, which is critically important for writers to cultivate. Hualing knew who she was and what was what. She lived her three lives, in China, Taiwan, and Iowa, to the fullest, and we are all the richer for it. 🐼

February 2025

Christopher MERRILL  
USA

**HELLO EVERYONE**, I am really sorry I can't attend Hualing Nieh Engle's memorial in person.

Due to the time difference, it's not convenient to connect online, so I can only express my remembrance of Teacher Nieh and my support for this event, through this recorded video.

After Teacher Nieh's passing, I felt a profound sadness, and I wrote a poem, which was later published on the public WeChat account Two Bricks Ink News, co-run by Mr. Wang Zhen and me.

The poem is titled: "Quiet is the Red Mansion." I can't fully recall it, so I have written it down and will read it aloud. I hope it can be translated so that those attending the memorial can better understand my words.

\* \* \*

There is so much that can be said about Ms. Nieh. In the past, I have written articles about my interactions with her, as well as my memories from my time visiting the Iowa International Writing Program. Back then, Ms. Nieh was still so young, so full of energy.

In 2014, my daughter and I visited Iowa again to see her. By then, the *Red Mansion* had become much lonelier. Teacher Nieh was nearly ninety, but still in good health, though her memory had begun to fade slightly.

She spent two days with us, reminiscing and sharing many stories. Some of them I had heard before, while others were new to me.

Even now, every word she spoke remains vivid in my mind, resurfacing in my thoughts often.

With this, I wish to once again express my deep respect for Teacher Nieh. May the Iowa International Writing Program she

founded continue to thrive and make even greater contributions to world literature.

# QUIET IS THE RED MANSION

Inspiration struck, and you said

*Iowa.*

Lotus flowers bloomed in the small town

Writers and poets arrived as promised,

Deer wandered in, uninvited.

Following the heart always yields results,

Waves of poetry surged with the tides of passion.

The red mansion on the hill gained worldwide renown.

Holding their breath, people listened

Through the rhythm of literature

To the distant calls of the deer outside the window

Here, language was no barrier,

Hatred could be dissolved.

In resounding laughter,

Through the lens of literature,

One could see the deer's reflection lingering on the glass.

After Engle left, the deer no longer came.

After Ms. Nieh took her final bow, the lotus ceased to bloom.

The bright moon no longer shines.

Old friends never return.

Quiet is the red mansion.

Thank you. 沈至

MO Yan 莫言

PRC

IWP 2004

Translated by AZS 沈至

**MS HUALING NIEH'S CONNECTION** with People's Literature Publishing House began in the 1970s. In 1979, the third issue of *Contemporary* magazine featured her representative work *Shanshan, Where Are You?* In the section "Selections of Hong Kong and Taiwan Literary Works." The editorial note introduced her major works, including the novels *The Lost Golden Bell* and *Mulberry and Peach*, the novella *Creeper*, the short story collections *A Small White Flower* and *Jade Cat*, as well as the prose collection *The Valley of Dreams*. As the introduction noted, "These works depict the experiences of ordinary individuals who left mainland China for Taiwan in 1948, as well as their nostalgia for their homeland."

In 1980, People's Literature Publishing House published her novel *The Lost Golden Bell*. Later, *Contemporary* magazine featured her essays *The Rainbow of My Home* (Issue 3, 2006) and *The Two of Us and Our Daughters* (Issue 3, 2007). Hualing Nieh was an outstanding novelist. Her works, such as *The Lost Golden Bell* and *Mulberry and Peach*, seamlessly blended Chinese and Western narrative techniques while telling distinctly Chinese stories. She explored the struggles and the fates of women, offering poignant reflections on human nature. Her contributions helped bring Chinese culture to the global stage. She held a revered place in the Chinese literary world and international literary circles. The International Writing Program, which she co-founded and nurtured, profoundly influenced and supported generations of writers, opening new pathways for Chinese writers to engage with the world while introducing the richness of Chinese to an

international audience. “She was like a great tree—its roots in mainland China, its trunk in Taiwan, its branches and leaves in Iowa, and its fruits spread across the world.” Though she has passed, we wish her a peaceful journey. Ms. Hualing Nieh will always be remembered. 沈至

People's Literature Publishing House

PRC

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**I ONCE WROTE** that you single-handedly held up a blue sky for international literary exchange in Iowa City, in the heart of America's Midwest! You are the mother to writers from different nations, regions, and cultures, offering motherly care and boundless attention, soothing the wounded hearts of writers who, in darkness and in struggle, defend light and truth through their craft! After participating in the IWP in the fall of 1983, I stayed another year to study English at the University of Iowa in preparation for New York University's publishing and magazine management program. You helped me obtain a position as an IWP assistant researcher to help cover my daily expenses. Later, I sent both of my daughters to study at the University of Iowa, where they, too, received your kind care. Your kindness to my family is as deep as the ocean!

Our compassionate and great mother, your life was filled with unceasing effort. Though you have quietly left us, your spirit of dedication, your moral integrity, and your legacy stand tall like mountains and flow like rivers, inspiring awe. You are like a radiant light streaking across the sky, illuminating the hearts of countless writers. We will forever carry with us your guidance and warm care, striving to fulfill our duties and bring light and warmth to the literary world.

Our great mother, rest in peace! We will forever remember you!

In tearful tribute, Poon Yiu-ming. 至

POON Yiu Ming 潘耀明

Hong Kong

IWP 1983, 2017

Translated by AZS 沈至

## IN MEMORY OF HUALING NIEH

In the autumn of 2022, during my residency at the Iowa International Writing Program, I had the privilege of visiting “the place” at the kind invitation of Professor Wang Xiaolan. The cemetery lay atop a gentle hill, where tall wingnut trees stood among the soft grass, their branches swaying in the wind, whispering like falling rain. Winding paths wove through the landscape like a labyrinth. After some search, Professor Wang finally stopped before a rounded tombstone. On the back of the black marble, an inscription read:

**“I can’t move mountains. But I can make light~Paul Engle.”**

We stood there for a long time as if we had found an island in a sea of the departed. “Mother has already had her name engraved,” Professor Wang said, her gaze resting on the inscription in the lower-left corner:

**“HUALING NIEH 1925–”**

Here, where all journeys come to rest, a bouquet of flowers leaned against the tombstone, still fresh. It was as if those who had passed were merely resting for an afternoon in the golden light. Everything was fleeting, yet everything was eternal.

Now, as autumn fades into winter, across twelve time zones, we mourn this literary giant who lived nearly a century. She once distilled the sorrow of the exiled into the richest of wines, and across distant mountains, endless water still flows. Ninety-nine years: the life of a writer. I cannot help but think that at last, Teacher Nieh and Paul Engle have reunited in that garden. I am grateful for the International Writing Program they founded, a



literary garden where generations of writers have gathered in the name of literature. And in a fleeting moment, I suddenly realize that this world still needs literature, for it is humanity's oldest amber. Only in literature can the moments of our existence, our memories, our imagination, and our stories be preserved. Only in literature do all seasons and all roads remain unending.

Teacher Nieh lives on. 致

QI Jin Nian 七堇年

PRC

IWP 2022

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

## RED MANSION, FULL MOON, AND OLD FRIENDS

Teacher Hualing Nieh's home, a red house with a terrace, stood on a hillside outside Iowa City. I visited there in the fall of 2023, during the Mid-Autumn Festival. Professor Wang Xiaolan cooked, and by then, Teacher Nieh could no longer move around easily.

But she still loved to talk. "Where are you from? How old are you this year? I got the book you sent through Xiaolan." The elderly tend to repeat themselves. She would ask, "Before coming here, whom did you meet?" By "whom," she meant those who had once been to Iowa. I would name a few, and she would respond, "Oh, old friends." A little while later, she would ask again, "Whom did you meet?" I would list them once more, adding that they had asked about her. Again, she would say, "Oh, old friends." This happened over and over. In a way, it meant those friends had sent their regards many times. Later, Professor Wang Xiaolan told me, "You were very patient." I said, "Well, she's an old friend."

I had a small hope: that one day, someone else would visit Iowa, and when Teacher Nieh asked, "Whom did you meet?" my name would be among those mentioned. And she would say, "Oh, old friends."

But I remained an "old friend" for only a year. The following year, when Professor Wang Xiaolan came to Beijing, Teacher Nieh was gone.

I still remember that night. After eating mooncakes, we said our goodbyes. Professor Wang Xiaolan drove us home. Standing on the steps of the red house, Teacher Nieh and Aunt Qi watched us go. As we drove away, I turned back, and they were still there.

Farther down the road, I turned back again, and they were still there. The old lady and the younger old lady, their figures wrapped in light. Above the house, the full moon hung in the sky. It was a farewell. It was also a perfect moment.

I have read many of Teacher Nieh's books and heard many stories about her. There is no need to repeat them here. But when I think of her, it is always this: the Red Mansion, the full moon, and her standing there, saying, "Old friends." ❷

**SHI Yifeng** 石一枫

PRC

IWP 2023

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**It's 1987.** I've been in Iowa City about seven years and I'm browsing at a bookstore in town—maybe you can guess which store it was. But in any case, I come across this book right here, and the title really intrigued me: *The World Comes to Iowa*. Little did I know that year was the twentieth anniversary of the world-famous International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Of course, I knew about the Writer's Workshop, but being sequestered over in the Health Sciences area, I really wasn't too knowledgeable about the International Writing Program. The book, this wonderful anthology, was an introduction to this magical world created in large part by Hualing Nieh Engle. The idea of bringing writers together in the American Heartland every fall to share their craft, to share their ideas, to learn from each other, and to teach us so much. Yes, the world did come to Iowa, Hualing, because of you. Hualing, how much we miss you, and how dearly your memories fill our hearts and our spirits. You and Paul did such a service not only to Iowa City and the University of Iowa, and to those hundreds and hundreds of fabulous writers from around the world, but to our world and to a connection among nations, among cultures, among peoples. We miss you so much, Hualing. We think about you often, and we thank you for your great, great gifts. We miss you, Hualing. 🍷

February 2025

David SKORTON  
USA

**MY MEMORIES OF HUALING ARE VERY WARM.** Given the fact that we were both busy young women at the time, we didn't really have a great deal of time to be friends, but I think we both looked forward to a time where we could go beyond the fact of working together as allies for the Comparative Literature Program on my side, which I directed, and the International Writing Program on hers, within the bosom of English Department tenure and all of that stuff. So, you can call us friendly and admiring co-conspirators. I think that's my memory of Nieh Hualing. 🌹

February 2025

Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK  
USA

## DEAR HUALING, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO COOL

Whenever I sat in Hualing's passenger seat, watching her maneuver her massive four-wheel drive car, up a 70-degree steep hill or slowly down an S-slope, I couldn't help but marvel—this petite lady in the driver's seat, already in her eighties, how elegant, how brave, how graceful she is! It was the most beautiful sight I had seen during my time in Iowa.

I was honored to be part of the International Writing Program in 2004. Since then, I came back to Iowa City several times, paying my visit to Hualing at the Engle House. We rode together in her car, driving up those steep hills. I saw her gripping the steering wheel, controlling the pedals, making turns, accelerating up the slopes. In those moments, I felt close to her.

We all know Hualing's accomplishments, as a significant female Chinese writer, as the co-founder with writer Paul Engle of the International Writing Program which benefited thousands of writers from all over the world, and as the bridge between the once-isolated literary community in China and the rest of the world. And yet, despite all the glamor and achievement, it was those moments in the car that moved me most deeply. I think about them often.

And Hualing was a woman—I felt the strength, courage, passion, loyalty, and romance required for a woman to live a life as extraordinary as hers burst forth beside me, as Hualing steered, her foot on the pedal, charging up the hill.

Dear Hualing, in my memory, you have always been so cool. 20

TANG Ying 唐颖

PRC

IWP 2004

Translated by YQW 王韵沁

**“THANK YOU, LITTLE TONG!”:  
ON MRS. HUALING NIEH ENGLE**

Aunt Nieh might have favored me because both her brother and I share the character “Tong” in our names. I have visited her for more than forty years now and she has thanked me every time. When I left most recently she did not wave goodbye from inside her window (the sight of her doing this alone inspired a poem by some famous poet), waiting for me to back down her driveway, only rising a little from her dining table before I helped her back down with care. I felt as if it were just yesterday that she laughed hearty laughs, tilting her head back and wiping tears from her eyes! My mother speaks of her as “overtired from those years,” in a mixture of admiration and sympathy. Mother urged me to write something, intuiting that I knew things.

Only Nieh Hualing relies almost entirely on instinct and charisma to travel and shake up the world! To learn about her, it is best to read her *Three Lives and Births* or its new version *Three Lives*, which start with this foreword: “I am a tree, its roots on the Mainland, trunk in Taiwan, and branches and leaves in Iowa.” After Taiwan, her fame on the Mainland might have begun with my father Xiao Qian’s essay “Nieh Hualing of Hubei.” With his reputation restored, my father went in 1979 as China’s first writer to America and participated in the International Writing Program run by the Engles at the University of Iowa. He encountered writers from HK, Taiwan and other countries for the first time, ending, in so doing, Mainland’s 30-year isolation from the outside world. My father and Hualing met like old chums; with

Paul having been at Oxford as a Rhode Scholar, the men also found much in common, so my father often wrote them directly in English. Later on, he visited again, accompanied by my mother, their connections continuing till Paul and my father died.

Many people—from China, Southeast Asia to other countries—praise Nieh Hualing's warm character, but her literary prizes have often been overlooked, or her clear, pithy, and enchanting writing style. Try this: "I am at the point of disappointment when a sound comes, intermittent as if to end at anytime, out of nowhere, low but clear, like a thread of gold, loop upon loop, over the fields, tree branches and my heart, stretching long as it unfurls, and brightening, a thin, nearly visible golden glimmer. Something is in that sound, perhaps cheerful, but I detect sorrow, no, not quite, not the common type associated with birth, aging, sickness and death anyway, but different, which lasts so long as life is present, something deep, thin and formless, within reach, auditable even, but ungraspable, driving one to despair. Never ever have I heard such a bewildering sound."

A standing joke among writers' gatherings is that Hualing is "Mrs. Engle" in America while Paul found himself turned into a luggage-hauling "Hualing's husband" in China. I remember how they receive their guests: Paul bends his height a bit, laughing in a low register, his arms stretched open, like a giant, dignified and endearing eagle. Under his shoulders stands Hualing in all her spring air and dark hair, laughing like a silver bell, seizing hands and hugging. It is as if the pair "shares the same nostrils," as the saying goes, that one of them could leave a sentence incomplete for the other to continue, or substitute verbal language with glances,



gestures, and even coughs, to understand one another, looking into each other's faces with all smiles! No need to say how excellent Aunt Nieh's English is, but Paul, with his command of German and English, strangely kept pace with the thrusts of Hualing's conversation with others (often in mobs) in Chinese, with his ears, eyes and the few English words from his wife, and interjected now and then with jests! Whenever Hualing blossomed in joy, Paul's booming explosions were to follow, resulting in guffawing by all: truly the best sight at the Engle's house! Seeing how happy they were, understanding and loving one another thus, how could anyone be unmoved, not find their horizons widened, or discover new windows opening in their lives?

The couple shared a love for flowers and deer. She enjoys beauty while to him beauty was what he took in with his eyes. Aunt Nieh did not watch ball games nor listens much to music, but is keen on movies from Hollywood's golden era and current news. Once she brought some folk singer's record from China, which she played over and over again. What one hears cannot be shared. When writing her "Water Flows on Beyond a Thousand Hills," she eagerly sought out mainlanders like me to go over their past.

Under her sunny character I sense a melancholy, maybe a nod to fate, a fear of spirits and ghosts. Among her best friends were a fortune-teller, a "spur-of-moment singer," a noted scholar of medieval languages, a chemistry professor, a devoted calligrapher and a world-class artist with a voice commanding enough to match her own. Friendships come by luck, instinct, inner quality and mutual respect; a glance, adding one tease or two, lead to decades of comings and goings.

When addressing Hualing, one must not leave out Paul. It might be fitting to call him a poet of the farmland. He made *The New York Times* headlines as a “new voice of America,” took over the University of Iowa’s Writers’ Workshop in 1942, began first poetry Master’s program in the country, and made into reality his new Taiwanese wife’s idea in 1967 to start the International Writing Program. With his eloquence and tireless pen, Paul called up and wrote daily to major American corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals to keep their programs alive and growing, gaining for the small town its world reputation gradually. The couple read many works all year round. The books that Aunt Nieh read stacked into small hills, often thickened by too many post-its to close. Inviting writers involved many complications: visa application, flights, schedules, lodge and board, enabling them to rest, write and interact on Iowa’s unspoiled soil before heading to big coastal cities and lecterns. Luckily there were assistants to help. Those who visited the Engle Residence and took turns along their deer path might not know the amount of hard work done in their interest. How many creators were willing to sacrifice time for others? No wonder some say that the Engles deserve the Nobel Prize for promoting this world’s literary exchanges!

It was very easy to assume how easily my parents were immediately embraced by the Engles for what they shared in common in life experiences as well as writing careers. Paul, two years senior to my father, was a Rhode scholar in Morton college of Oxford whereas my father spent years as post-graduate research student at King’s College, Cambridge. The Engles proudly hang a photo

of Paul chewing a pen by the side of Robert Frost, and my father mingled with the Bloomsbury group of British cream in Russell Square and at Kings, and attended T.S. Eliot's reading and reflected about it with his older friend E. M. Forster during War, after literary upbringing and mentorship in Beijing and later in Wuhan from veteran writers Shen Congwen, Ba Qin, and Ling Huiyin—the last mentioned a literary salon hostess, famous poet, architect and aunt to artist Maya Lin.

In my first winter in Iowa, Paul gave me a pair of winter boots and a typewriter, the most practical and meaningful presents ever received in my life! Back then I could not quite tell “elevator music” from classical music, preferred all soothing songs to noisy ones, and envied my old schoolmates who had arrived in the US after I did for quickly picking up current pop songs. Paul only played Bach and Schubert when reading his morning papers. I asked him once why he ignored the stuff my American schoolmates were keen on. His reply was “classical music has more variety.” Then he was one to introduce me to (his friend!) Lotta Lenya's off-tune rendition of Brecht, an angle into expressionist subjectivity.... Because I had done farm work, it was no big deal to help him chop firewood or mow the lawn every now and then, incomparable to toiling in endless soil. I enjoyed his description of himself as walking on Oxford's green turf with manure in his sole. I treasured what he said about his neighbor's grass: “a lawn is a mirror to a property owner.” His account of braving the currents in the English Channel filled me with awe; only Jane, the elder daughter of Bill Shuttleworth—his attorney pal and my benefactor—dared to question if the reef that saved his life was the “last, farthest

rock out in the channel.” Who knows, he might have rolled out “Normandy looming on the horizon” in that gleeful moment!

I must underscore the fact that my own life’s trajectory owed to my father Xiao Qian’s participation as the first mainland Chinese writer in Iowa’s International Writers’ Program and to the Engles, directly (much like the now world-famous, if somehow forgetful, Ai Weiwei whose father Ai Qing came through IWP in fall of 1980, a year after my father and two months after me...). Paul was a celebrated graduate from Coe College which offered me a rare scholarship, and many friends including the Shuttleworths, the Knapps and Chadman, helped raise another half of my tuition for me to transfer from my third year as an English major in Beijing Normal University.

Coe’s other distinguished literary graduate was William Shirer who wrote an immense history of WWII titled *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which I had read in my father’s Chinese translation which he team-worked with others in 1972 for China’s party leadership, as his (and our whole family’s) ticket back to Beijing from the May 7<sup>th</sup> Cadre School or labor reform farm in Hupei! More glory to Coe, I am sure, but the irony of decades of ordeals that my father had suffered in his home country after serving as the glamorous single Chinese war correspondent on the European during the same war, must be the bitterest and most keenly aware of to him!

The year Coe College expanded its library, Paul was invited to write a poem, which gave me a chance to see how he worked. He paced back and forth before the fireplace mumbling softly, oblivious to the darkening hour, the need to switch on the lights,

or my presence in the room. I grew up familiar with my father's absent look when he "wrote in the tummy." The scene before my eyes then impressed me strongly: the sunset over the Iowa River outside those French windows, this room where writers gathered annually amid the sound of laughter and glasses clinking. It was after all "half of the world's platform for Chinese literature." The man at the heart of this clamor was in a secret hiding place, most calm and quiet. Needless to say, the fruit was a fine poem, translated into Chinese at some point, I think, which praises books' power to change the world. In the poem an ordinary stone, which warns the passers-by against disregarding or treading on it. It is unjust to use words other than in the poem, but its lines cry out in sympathy for the world's literary souls.

Like Li Bai, Paul clung to his bottle. Even Aunt Nieh cherished her sip in the afternoon, "the best." I liked seeing her wrap up a slim piece of marinated fine beef in aluminum foil, bake it, bring it to her husband, and sit down to watch him eat. Paul was all concentration working with his knife and fork. What followed often was corn on the cob, "all Iowan grown, the freshest!" I never tired of watching Paul working the corncob, his eyes screwed into a line—let alone Aunt Nieh! In her study are ink portraits of them by Yang Zhiguang who caught their personalities so well, Mao Dun's calligraphy and Huang Yongyu's most beautiful painting of water lilies which only after years or admiration did I realize was gifted to her after Paul's death. My own effort to portray Paul was dismissed by her after a quick glance: "Surely not this ugly?" I was at a loss: didn't he narrow his eyes and put out his lips so? To me Paul was always a Byron in

workman's clothes, eyes shining, witticism endless, and drama at any moment.

Su Tong saw it well: "Of all women Nieh Hualing possessed the richest love, so that even if she forgets the whole world, she cannot forget love—" I wonder if Su Tong had seen Paul doing his free-style laps twice daily in the swimming pool below their garage? I saw Aunt Nieh once joining her husband at the pool-side, a book in her hand to keep company of him. She must have reached the zenith of happiness in her "third life" spent daily in his company, unmatched by her "second life" of suffering political prosecution in Taiwan and escaping from it to America, let alone the "first life" when she was chased about by war and lost her father and a brother! Paul loved her two daughters and grandchildren, who returned their affections. I remember my last time of seeing Paul about mid-March, 1991. He looked red in the face, eager to return to Europe with his beloved wife, and his ancestors' black forest, not knowing what awaited him instead. After Paul's sudden death Aunt Nieh nearly collapsed. She pulled herself up by completing his autobiography *A Lucky American Childhood*, a title that seems to have some Chinese flavor, to signal her union with Paul perhaps?

Apart from appreciating their output, what made Paul and Hualing equally warmly embrace my cautious father Xiao Qian, Ding Ling, Shen Congwen, Zhang Dachun, or Ya Xuan, Bai Xianyong, Chang Ailing, and those colorful writers from Europe, South America and Africa? What were their ties across personal traits, national boundaries, social systems and ideological divides? Aunt Nieh would say the human condition, that is, human

nature, relationship, and their commonly shared ways to adapt to or triumph over their circumstance. Their sorrow, happiness, coming together and drifting apart, all captured in Wang Meng's "literary words still, books that are written;" what Yu Hua lists as "history and life, intellect and sentiment, turbulence and serenity, vehemence and gentleness, laughter and tears;" or praises by Aunt Nieh of Zhang Dachun as "reflections on life out of history's fathomless heaviness, treated with a lightness, in anger, laugh, and curse. He is actually full in sorrow, as are all best comedians..." "Silkworms of spring" put out their best silks, for themselves and for all, including you and me, till the end of time.

Two years ago Aunt Nieh told us excitedly that some Chinese publisher promised to reprint seven of her works. When asked about it later on, her reply was: "No idea which publisher it was. Not a single book came." Some anonymous donor gave the University a million dollars for her to select Chinese writers each year, one from the Mainland and the other overseas. This she used to bring up too, in full pride. On the bright side, she looks much better than she did last year, not as thin as then—thanks to her daughter Lan-Lan taking care of all the details in her life.

Next time I go I must not forget to tell Hualing Nieh that my wife and I had recently visited Stone City, the setting for her "Water Flows on Beyond a Thousand Hills," and best known for America's famous regionalist painter Grant Wood. I first went there before finishing college. I was driven there by a girlfriend and we stood transfixed in front of the Greene Mansion, home to the Woods and Engles in turn, in its black charred half-height on a hilltop overlooking the turn of the river with trees and billowy

farmlands depicted by Wood in his famous painting “Stone City.” The fact that the mansion caught fire when the Engles lived here, and the former Mrs. Engle, a beautiful and gifted draftsman, was said not to be right in her head, gave these stones a mystery, evoking “Jane Eyre” in my English major’s mind.

The ruins are gone now, only a water tower nearby shows its round tip atop green trees when one drives by. Might Aunt Nieh sigh when she hears this, I wonder? 🍷

First written 2021, expanded 2025

Peter XIAO 萧桐  
USA



**TEACHER NIEH WAS MY NOBLE GUIDE.** The word I wanted to use in Chinese, is “贵人,” which literally means “noble person,” and yet what it entails is much richer than that. There is probably no equivalent translation for it in foreign languages. In English, it can mean a “tour guide,” a “helper,” a “supporter,” a “lucky star,” or a “backing person,” etc. In the fall of 2002, it was Teacher Nieh who guided me to Iowa, to the International Writing Program (IWP), and to the United States.

Teacher Nieh was a guide not just to me. She and poet Paul Engle co-founded IWP as a gift to the world. Today, we see institutions that mimic IWP in different parts of the world. The University of Iowa’s IWP has benefited writers and poets across culture, across language. I encountered poet Gozo Yoshimasu in Japan, poet Kiwahihiro Nomura in China, poet Anastassis Vistonitis and Dimitris Lyacos in Greece, and the bond between us has all been IWP. We didn’t know each other before, but the moment we met, we felt close to each other. In October 2014, I unexpectedly received an email from the Singaporean poet Alvin Pang, who found a poem I wrote in Chinese on the wall of a restaurant in Madrid in 2013. He was my classmate at IWP. In November 2019, poet Eddin Khoo called me to the George Town Literary Festival in Penang, Malaysia. He was also among my IWP cohort.

In the summer of 2024, Yu Hua, Su Tong and I participated in a documentary project in Crete, Greece. As we chatted, we realized we were all alumni of the IWP; in 2002, Li Rui, Jiang Yun, Meng Jinghui and I, as well as Liao Yimei and Jiang Jie, participated in IWP together, and we have maintained our friendship

since then. I am a poet, but this connection also led me to participate in Meng's theatre activities later, many times.

The global literary world is a big community, and there is a special community within it, that is IWP. Teacher Nieh is the soul of this community. She is a lighthouse. She is especially meaningful for Chinese writers. She went from the mainland to Taiwan, from Taiwan to the United States. She climbed over and pushed down fences after fences, carrying with her the memory of history, the winds of hardship, her suffering, her ambitions and dreams, and her language. She chiseled out a door on the high walls, letting the world unfold before us. She allowed us to step outside ourselves, to reflect on and express ourselves in a multilingual context.

The fall and winter of 2002 in Iowa are still vivid in my mind. Teacher Nieh's home became the home of several of us Chinese writers. I remember her house on the hill—the lights and laughter inside, the calligraphy of Mao Dun on her desk, the ink paintings by Huang Yongyu, Zhao Shaoang, and Wang Zengqi hanging on the wall, and the masks from Japan and Africa, as well as the food in her refrigerator. In October 2011, I was on a reading tour in the States with poet Zhou Zan. As soon as I arrived in Iowa, I dropped off my luggage and followed the path as I remembered, along the Iowa River, running to her house; I didn't even bother to call her in advance. I rang the door bell, and she was there. She was very surprised and delighted to see me. I remember our warm hug.

Thanks to Teacher Nieh, I have also made many friends in Iowa. Dr. Ramon Lim still sends me Christmas emails every year. In 2024, I reunited with Christopher Merrill, the director of IWP,

writer and poet, in Beijing after having not seen him for years. We talked about Nataša Ďurovičová from the IWP office, Hugh, and other friends. Ever since I established a relationship with IWP, I felt I have gained a lifelong relationship and a lifelong friendship. And it was Teacher Nieh who made all of this possible.

Teacher Nieh passed away at a high age. She lived a life filled with ups and downs and was the very embodiment of a legend. In this world full of uncertainty, she lived into a sage. Teacher Nieh will live forever! 🌹

February 13, 2025

**XI Chuan 西川**

PRC

IWP 2002

*Translated by YQW 王韵沁*

## A TREE WITH A HEART

Last autumn, one evening in a light rain, I received a message from Xiaolan in Taiwan, telling me that the beloved Ms. Hualing Nieh had peacefully passed away in Iowa. The autumn wind was bleak. As I remembered Hualing, a greater sense of grief came to me.

I met Hualing 40 years ago, in the autumn of 1985. I was invited, along with novelist Yang Qingchu, to attend the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. We spent three months in Iowa, saw the red maples and the first snow. It was the most beautiful literary journey of my life. Every Thursday afternoon, writers gathered to read their work in their own language. We were surrounded by voices that were not harmonious but vibrant and distinct. It was a United Nations of Literature. Hualing was like a tree, offering shades and a vast plain for us writers from different countries to explore the many landscapes of world literature.

What remains most vivid in my memory is the affectionate laughter of Hualing and poet Paul Engle. With their laughter, Hualing and Paul broke the cultural barriers and connected outstanding writers from around the world. For Taiwan, which had been abandoned by the international literary community at that time, her yearly invitations of Taiwanese writers not only brought Taiwanese literature back to the stage, but also allowed writers across the Taiwan Strait who had been in a tense relationship to better understand one another.

Hualing once described herself as a tree, “roots in China, a trunk in Taiwan and branches and leaves in Iowa.” She

experienced war and exile when she was a girl. After moving to Taiwan, she resisted the authoritarian rule of the Kuomintang, and after arriving at the United States, she engaged herself with Paul Engle in international literary exchanges. Her life was beautiful and without regret. She was a tree with a heart, tall under the stars, on an open plain. She will forever be remembered. 🌳

**XIANG Yang 向阳 [Hsiang Yang]**

Taiwan

IWP 1985

*Translated by YQW 王韵沁*

## FOREVER REMEMBERING HUALING WITH GRATITUDE

How strong must one's belief in literature be  
to create, together with Mr. Paul Engle, in Iowa  
the International Writing Program;  
How broad must one's mind be  
to bring together, year after year,  
writers from all over the world with distinct cultural backgrounds;  
What kind of passion and genuineness it must take  
to carefully plan every event, visit, talk, to keep us company,  
fostering mutual understanding among all the writers;  
How much love it must take  
to tend to each uniquely talented writer  
like a mother, like a sister, for decades  
bringing us warmth and comfort!

Thank you, Hualing! My regard and endless gratitude for you. ㄖㄞ

WU Sheng 吳晟

Taiwan

*Translated by* YQW 韵沁

## MY CONNECTION TO HUALING NIEH'S HOMETOWN GUANGSHUI AND THE HUALING NIEH LITERARY MUSEUM

The eleventh day of the first lunar month in the year of Yisi marks the centennial birth anniversary of the literary giant Hualing Nieh.

This is a day that must be remembered.

Hualing Nieh was born in Guangshui City (formerly Yingshan County), Hubei Province, into a distinguished family of scholars. Her grandfather, a renowned Confucian scholar of Hubei, was honored as a filial and upright scholar in the late Qing dynasty and later became a university professor during the Republic of China. Her father was a revolutionary who took part in the Wuchang Uprising during the Xinhai Revolution and was a distinguished officer in the Northern Expedition. Her mother was well-educated, virtuous, and deeply respected by the local community. Hualing Nieh frequently spoke of her hometown Guangshui. In letters to her cousin, she expressed profound nostalgia and love for her birthplace and kin.

I first learned about Hualing Nieh in 1983 when I took part in a correspondence course in Chinese at Hubei University. While assisting Professor Li Kailing, I discovered she was Hualing Nieh's close friend and classmate. She shared many stories about her with me. I also had the privilege of hearing the esteemed writer Xu Chi speak about Hualing Nieh's influence on world literature and her literary contributions. He urged us, "You should invite Hualing Nieh back home."

In February 2018, I proposed the "Hualing Nieh Literary Research and Promotion Project" to the Guangshui Municipal

Committee and Government, aiming to establish the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum. This brought me closer to Teacher Hualing Nieh's extraordinary life and literary legacy, allowing me to truly appreciate the vast scope of her vision and her profound contributions to literature and the world.

In March of that year, Professor Xiaolan Wang endorsed the project, and Teacher Hualing Nieh granted me authorization to proceed with the museum's establishment. In October, Professor Xiaolan Wang, entrusted by her mother, returned to Guangshui to pay tribute to their ancestors. She also visited Hubei University and Wuchang Shouyi University. When Professor Xiaolan Wang and I updated Hualing Nieh on our progress, she remarked, "Hearing my hometown's dialect feels so dear to me."

Over the following years, under the guidance of Professor Xiaolan Wang, with the support of Dr. Wang Yaqin, and with the dedicated efforts of Guangshui's city leaders, scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from institutions such as Hubei University, the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum was finally completed on July 16, 2022. The renowned writer and former Minister of Culture, Wang Meng, inscribed the museum's name.

On November 6, 2023, the museum held a grand unveiling ceremony. Many distinguished writers, including Wang Meng, Mo Yan, Chi Zijian, and Ge Fei, sent video messages in celebration, while Bi Feiyu traveled to Guangshui to attend the event in person.

Today, our vision has become a reality. The Hualing Nieh Literary Museum has become a new landmark on the global literary landscape. The Hualing Nieh Literary Research and



Promotion Project continues to gain momentum, with the first-ever international symposium on Hualing Nieh successfully held in Wuhan. Scholars, writers, and visitors from around the world frequently visit the museum for exchanges, research, and appreciation.

Although Teacher Hualing Nieh has passed away, her spirit has returned home. The radiant literary sanctuary that is the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum will carry forward her legacy for generations to come. 🌹

February 8, 2025, at the Hualing Nieh Literary Museum

**YANG Jianzhong 扬建忠**

PRC

*Translated by* AZS 沈至

**I ARRIVED IN IOWA CITY** in the late summer of 2016 and met Teacher Hualing for the first time at the reception in a hall. After a glass of wine, Hualing invited the writers from mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore to her home. From that day on, we visited the Red Mansion halfway up the hill many times. We met the wandering deer, talked about history and literature from the 80s till today. There were many moving memories and love.

I read Teacher Hualing's *One Tree Three Lives* many times since I came back from Iowa and recommended the book to many friends. To me, the love and energy of Hualing have driven progress and communications in the world. She carried within her a clarity and brightness, which I felt nine years ago and still benefits me today.

I am grateful to Hualing and Paul for co-founding the International Writing Program. Over the years, generations of Chinese writers have come to visit Iowa, they lived in different historical period, and were facing different problems. My three months in Iowa was a turning point in my life, dividing my understanding of the world into "before" and "after". I still remember near the end of program, thirty of us writers flew to Washington together, and then visited New York. For the three days in New York, I almost didn't sleep, trying to visit as many places as possible, to see as much as I can. When it came to the last morning, I felt exhausted, we bid farewell to each other. On my flight back to China, it was the night of the presidential election. The American passengers around me were paying close attention to the voting process, and as I landed, I received

grieving and angry messages from friends in the States—Trump was elected. Now the world undergoes change again. Teacher Hualing, and many of my friends in the States, we never saw each other again. 20

February 13, 2025

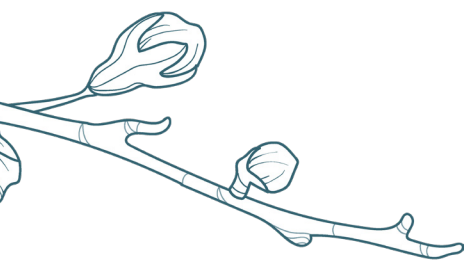
**ZHOU Jianing 周嘉宁**

PRC

IWP 2016

*Translated by* YQW 王韵沁





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## CONTRIBUTORS

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Sandra BARKAN served as Interim Director of the International Writing Program during the academic year 1999–2000. She simultaneously taught in the University of Iowa Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature and was a Dean in the Graduate College. Her primary scholarly focus was on African literatures. Upon retiring from the University of Iowa she accepted a position with the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program in Washington, DC, from which she now has retired as well.

BI Feiyu 毕飞宇 teaches at the School of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University. His representative works include the short story collection *Diqiu shang de wangjiazhuang* [Wang Family Village, The World], novellas *The Moon Opera* and *Three Sisters*, and the novel *Massage*. He has received prestigious awards including the Mao Dun Literature Prize, the Lu Xun Literary Prize, and the Man Asian Literary Prize. In 2017, he was awarded the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. His works have been translated and published in more than 20 languages.

Nathalie CHANG 張亦絢 (fiction writer, film critic; Taiwan) is author of the novels *愛的不久時：南特/巴黎回憶錄* [A Short Time in Love: Memoirs of Nantes / Paris] (2011); *永別書* [The Book of Farewells] (2015), and *性意思史* [Herstory of Sex] (2019), which won the Openbook Award and was the Mirror Weekly's Book of the Year. She has won the Golden Tripod Award for Excellence in Columns and Commentary, and writes the "Unexpected Taiwanese Films" column for the National Film Center's *FA: Film Appreciation*.

CHANG Ta-chun 張大春 is a Taiwanese writer, literary critic, and media personality. His works span genres, including novels, essays, and critiques and often blend historical, mythological, and martial arts elements. Notable works include [The Violent Gang of the City-State], [Four Joys and One Sorrow], and [The Chaff of Fiction]. He has had a significant impact in the media and cultural commentary spheres, having hosted radio programs and written newspaper columns for many years.

Angie CHEN was born in Shanghai and educated in Taiwan before earning a BA and a MA in Communications at the University of Iowa and an MFA in Filmmaking at UCLA. After graduating, she returned to Hong Kong where she directed several feature films *Maybe It's Love* (1984), *My Name Ain't Suzie* (1985), and *Chaos By Design* (1988), and later commercials and publicity shorts before re-emerging as a documentary with the intimate portrait *This Darling Life* (2008) and the acclaimed biographical work *One Tree Three Lives* (2012).

CHEN Ko Hua 陳克華 (poet, fiction writer, painter; Taiwan) studied at Tapei Medical University and Harvard Medical School, and now practices as an ophthalmologist at the Taipei General Veterans' Hospital. He is the author of more than twenty volumes of poetry; his collection [Tears of Ignorance] was recently translated into Japanese and published. Ko Hua Chen is also a seminal figure in sci-fi poetry in Taiwan. As a practicing ophthalmologist and writer, he pioneered imagery drawing from the cosmos and extrapolations from scientific literacy, while imbuing Buddhist motifs into his poems. His recent works also address LGBTQ issues.

CHI Zijian 迟子建 A graduate of the Lu Xun Academy in Beijing, she has published over 30 books. In novels such as [Silver Plates], [The River Rolls By] and [Beloved Potatoes], she weaves fragments of the old and new to show a rapidly changing country. Little of her writing has been translated into English, beyond a short story collection, *Figments of the Supernatural*, which won the 2004 Suspense-Sentence Fellowship from the James Joyce Foundation in Australia. A novella [All Nights in the World] won the Lu Xun Literature Award for the third time in October 2007. In 2008, [Right Bank of River Argun] won the seventh Mao Dun Literature Award. She has also won the Australian "Suspended Sentence Award" and many other literary awards.

Candace CHONG Mui Ngam 莊梅岩 (playwright, screenwriter, translator; Hong Kong) has beyond writing drama, also collaborated in musical theatre and opera as writer and librettist. She is a six-times winner of the Hong Kong Drama Awards, the recipient of a Best Artist Award (Drama) by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, and of a number of international honors. Her plays have been translated, and performed on European and American stages.

CHU He-Chih 朱和之 is the author of eight novels, largely concerned with history and Taiwan's colonial legacies, Chu He-Chih is the first recipient of the Romain Rolland Prize for his novel 南光 [Aura of the South] (2021), given by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture. He has also been twice awarded the Hsing Yun Award for Global Chinese Literature, for 樂土 [The Land of Paradise] (2016) and for 風神的玩笑 [Chiang Wen-Ye, the Singer of No Homeland] (2020).

CHUN Sue 春樹 became known with her iconic 2002 novel *Beijing Doll*, translated into many languages. She has since published five additional novels—most recently the autobiographical [Milk Teeth] (2019)—three poetry collections, and books of essays. A frequent presence at literary festivals and arts residencies in Europe, she also publishes in Chinese literary magazines.

Esther DISCHEREIT is the author, among many other works, of *Blumen für Otello* and *Über die Verbrechen von Jena* and the editor of *Havel, Hunde, Katzen, Tulpen, Garz erzählt*. Her work spans multiple genres and often reflects the post-Holocaust landscape in Germany, e.g. *Joëmis Tisch* [Joëmis Table] and *Übungen jüdisch zu sein* [Exercises in Being Jewish]. In 2009 Dischereit received the Erich Fried Prize; she has given lectures and readings around the world. She teaches at the University for Applied Arts in Vienna.

DUNG Kai-cheung is an award-winning Hong Kong fiction writer, playwright and essayist; he teaches creative writing and literature at various universities in Hong Kong. Among his books in Chinese are [Androgyny: Evolution of a Nonexistent Species], [The Double Body], [The Rose of the Name], [A Brief History of the Silverfish], [Histories of Time] and [The Age of Learning]. Columbia University Press published Bonnie McDougall and Anders Hansson's English translation of *Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City*, which won the Science Fiction and Fantasy Translation Award in 2013; *Cantonese Love Stories* is a selection of stories written after the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Recent works include the novels [Posthuman Comedy], [Hong Kong Type] and essay collections [The Fox Reads] and [The Hedgehog Reads].



Nataša ĐUROVIČOVÁ was for 22 years IWP's house editor, including the program's book series 91stM Books and its literary journal *91st Meridian*.

Jennifer FEELEY's original writings and translations from Chinese have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Two Lines*, PEN America's *Glossolalia*, *Cha*, *Mekong Review*, *Chinese Literature Today*, *World Literature Today*, and *Creating Across Cultures: Women in the Arts from China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan*, among others. She is the translator of *Not Written Words: Selected Poetry of Xi Xi* (Zephyr Press), winner of the 2017 Lucien Stryk Asian Translation Prize and a 2017 Hong Kong Publishing Biennial Award in Literature and Fiction. She holds a PhD in East Asian Languages and Literatures from Yale.

FENG Te-ping serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Wenhsun Magazine*, Chairperson of the Taiwan Literature Development Foundation, where she has overseen the compilation of *Taiwan Literary Yearbook*, *Directory of Taiwanese Writers and Their Work*, among others. She has received the Chinese Literary and Artistic Association's Literary Contribution Award, the Taipei Culture Award. Her published essay collections include [Beautiful Burdens] and [The Light in the Thorns: Stories].

Hugh FERRER worked as the coordinator of the Fall Residency and, for more than fifteen years, as the IWP's associate director. He lives in Iowa City and teaches at the Iowa Summer Writing Festival.

GE Fei 格非 is a professor at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Tsinghua University, where he also directs the Center for Literary Writing and Research. He has published numerous novels, novellas, and short stories, including *Yuwang de qizhi* [Banner of Desire], *Shanhe ru meng* [Rivers and Mountains Fall Asleep] and *Chunjin Jiangnan* [Spring Comes to the South] and others. His scholarly essays include *Boerhesi de miankong* [The Face of Borges]. His honors including the Mao Dun Literature Prize and the Lu Xun Literary Prize.

Loren GLASS is Professor of English at the University of Iowa, currently chairing that department, with a joint appointment in the Center for the Book. He is the author of *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States*, *Counter-Culture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (2013), and co-editor of the Post45 series. He has edited the collection *After the Program Era: The Past, Present, and Future of Creative Writing in the University* (2017) and is now at work on an institutional history of creative writing at Iowa to be called *University of Literature*.

HE Jixian 何吉贤 is a researcher at the Institute of Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and senior editor for twentieth-century Chinese literature at *Literary Review*. He has published a dozen books in translation, and papers in both Chinese and English.

Tom HUANG Weiming serves at the Shanghai Zhou Tong Culture & Charity Foundation. As its VP, he has planned and executed cultural events such as “Dialogue: Lu Xun and Walt Whitman,” “Victor Hugo: His Chinese Image,” “Tagore and His China View” and “Cultural Influences: Lev Tolstoy’s Works in China.”

Ji Ji 季季 became a professional writer in 1977. She has authored over 30 novels, essays, biographies, and memoirs. Between 1978 and 2010, she had a distinguished career as editor at the literary supplement of *United Daily News*, as director of the literary supplement department, as editor-in-chief of the *Renjian* [The Human World] supplement at *China Times*, and as editorial director of *INK Literary Monthly*.

JIN Renshun 金仁顺 is a member of the Presidium of the Chinese Writers’ Association and the chairperson of the Jilin Writers’ Association. She has written novels, short stories, and essay collections and been a screenwriter for three films and several stage plays. Her major works include the novel [Spring Fragrance] and the short story collections [Each Other], [The Cold Front of Love] and [Moonlight Oh Moonlight], and the play [Others]. She has received several prestigious awards, including the *People’s Literature* Short Story Award, October Literary Award and others. Her works have been widely translated.

LAU Stuart 劉偉成 is a Hong Kong poet, essayist, and critic. An Editorial Director at Oxford University Press (China), Lau holds a PhD from the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing at the Hong Kong Baptist University and participated in the International Writers Program at the University of Iowa in 2017. He has published five poetry collections, most recently [How Broad Are the Plan Roads of Sunshine], which won the 13<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Biennial Award for Chinese Literature. He has two new collections forthcoming in 2025, a collection of poetry [Modest Heat in Fruits], and a prose collection, [Alpine Forgetting of Shadow].

LI Dī'an 李笛安 has an M.A. in Sociology from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. She started writing in 2002, with her first work [The Sister's Forest] appearing in *Harvest* magazine. In 2005, she published her first novel [Farewell to Heaven]. Her short story "Yuanji" won a China Novel Biennale prize. Her bestseller [City of the Dragon I] earned her a Most Promising Newcomer at the Chinese Literature Media awards. She currently edits the bimonthly magazine *ZUI Found*.

LI Rui 李锐 has published nearly three million words. His notable literary works include the short story collection *Houtu* [Thick Earth] and novels such as *Trees Without Wind* and *Silver City*. *Thick Earth* has won numerous literary awards. The novel *Jiu zhi* [Old Sites] was selected by Hong Kong's Asia Weekly as one of the 100 Best Chinese Novels of the 20th century. His works have been translated into many languages. He was been awarded France's Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2004 and, in 2007, a D.Litt. *honoris causa* from the Open University of Hong Kong.

LIN Hwai-min 林懷民 left Taiwan to study journalism in the US, joined the IWP in 1970, then worked toward a MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. In 1973 he founded Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, from which he retired in 2019, having created a repertoire of 90+ original choreographic pieces for it. Among his honors are the American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, a Rockefeller grant, a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters (France); and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Movimentos Dance Festival (Germany).

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LO Yi-Chin 駱以軍 is a Taiwanese novelist, whose notable publications include [The Scarlet Letter Society], [We Left the Tavern of Darkness], [Wife, Dream, Dog], [The Third Dancer], [The Surname of the Moon] and others. He has also written a children's story collection and the poetry collection [The Story of Abandonment], and is recipient of a number of literary awards.

LU Hong 吕红 is the President of the Chinese Literature & Art Association, as well as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Chinese Literature of the Americas*.

Christopher MERRILL has published eight collections of poetry; many edited volumes and translations, and six books of nonfiction. His writings have been translated into nearly forty languages; his journalism appears widely; his honors include numerous translation awards, and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial and Ingram Merrill Foundations. As director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa since 2000, Merrill has conducted cultural diplomacy missions to more than fifty countries.

MO Yan 莫言 gained recognition in 1985 with his breakthrough work "The Transparent Carrot," followed by the *Red Sorghum Family* series in 1986. He has authored 11 novels, among them *The Garlic Ballads*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, *Frog* and *The Republic of Wine*, over 20 novellas, and more than 100 short stories, along with plays, operas, film and television scripts, essays, and poetry. In 2011, he won the Mao Dun Literature Prize; in 2012, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. The recipient of many honorary doctorates, he is a professor at Beijing Normal University, serving as the Director of its International Writing Center. He is also the Vice Chair of the Chinese Writers' Association.

People's Literature Publishing House 人民文学出版社, a member of China Publishing Group Corporation, is China's first and the largest professional publishing institution specializing in literature. Founded in 1951, PLPH has published a vast number of quality literary works, from all time classics to the latest titles, by domestic writers and translated from other languages.

POON Yiu Ming 潘耀明 is the Honorary Chief Editor of *Ming Pao Monthly*, President of *Hong Kong Writers*, and Chief Editor of *Wen Zong* [Literature in Chinese]. He serves as President of the Hong Kong Writers' Association, of the World Chinese Literature Association, and of the International Association of Travel Literature in Chinese.

QI Jin Nian 七堇年 (fiction writer, non-fiction writer, translator, PRC) has published a dozen titles, ranging from travel literature to speculative fiction, most recently *无梦之境* [The Eye Phone Age] (2018). Her 2013 novel *平生欢* [The Ember of Time] won the People's Literature Award for Best Novel; her stories have appeared in China's top literary magazines. She has also edited literary journals and translated from the English.

SHI Yifeng 石一枫 (novelist, editor; PRC) has authored the novels *Fruit under the Red Flag*, *In Love with Beijing*, and *An Unofficial History of the Heart* as well as the story collections *Chen Jinfang Is Gone* and *Itching for a Fight*. Among his many awards are the Hunan New Talent Award, the Hundred Flowers Award, the People's Literature New Author Award, and the Yu Dafu Novella Award. He is also an editor at *Dangdai* magazine.

David SKORTON has been president and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) since 2019. Prior, he led the Smithsonian Institution (2015–2019) and was president of Cornell University (2006–2015). Before arriving at Cornell, he served as the 19<sup>th</sup> president of the University of Iowa (2003–2006), where he had been a longtime professor and then vice president. He began his career as a professor of medicine and engineering.

Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK is University Professor at the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. In 1965, she was appointed Assistant Professor in English at the University of Iowa, where she in 1974 co-founded the MFA in Translation in the Department of Comparative Literature with Daniel Weissbort. After Iowa, she taught widely in the US, Asia, and Europe. A recipient of many academic distinctions, she is the author of central essays and books on issues in philosophy, post-coloniality, feminism and pedagogy, and a translator of literary and philosophical texts from the French and the Hindi.

TANG Ying 唐颖 has published over fifty novels and stories, many focusing on the unique charm and modernity of ordinary people in Shanghai. Her numerous publications include the novels [Dissipation], *Meiguo lai de qizi* [The Wife from America] and *Afei Jie nüsheng* [The A Fei Street] alongside the story collection *Wuxing banlü* [Asexual Partners]. Her novella *Hongyan* [Beauty] was made into the film [Hands in the Hair].

Peter Tong XIAO 萧桐 was born in Beijing to Xiao Qian 萧乾, the first mainland Chinese participant in the 1979 IWP and Wen Jieruo (who collaborated with him on the translation of Joyce's *Ulysses*). He came to the to study at Paul Engle's alma mater Coe College. Having earned an MFA in Painting at Temple University, Peter has since 1989 been a professor of drawing and painting at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL, where he is the Anderson Endowed Chair for the Arts.

XI Chuan 西川 is considered among the best-known poets affiliated with the avant-garde literary scene in China. He is professor of English literature and Dean of Arts of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and on the board of directors of the Chinese Poets' Association. He has published several collections of poems in addition to a play and translations. His poetry has been widely anthologized and translated into more than ten languages.

XIANG Yang 向陽 chairs the National Culture and Arts Foundation and is a honorary professor at the National Taipei University of Education. Since the mid-1970s, Xiang Yang has been active on the poetry scene, and was among the first to write modern poetry in Taiwanese. He helped establish the Taiwanese PEN in 1987, and served as its vice president in 1990. His most significant publications are [Ten-line Poems], a collection of formalist verse; [Songs of the Soil], a book of poems written in Taiwanese, and [Chaos], representing the chaos of contemporary Taiwan.

WU Sheng 吳晟 is an essayist and poet from Taiwan. A middle school teacher and farmer who writes mostly about village life, in 1975 he received the Modern Chinese Poetry Award of the Epoch Poetry Society. His published poetry collections include *Wuxiang yinxiang*, published as *My Village: Selected Poems 1972–2014* (Zephyr Press), *Yuzhi shujian* [Letters of Foolish Honesty] and *Xiang haizimen shuo* [Words for Children].

YANG Jianzhong 楊建忠 is a retired civil servant from Hubei Province, PRC, where he spearheaded the establishment of the Nieh Hualing Literary Museum in Guangshui, Hubei Province, the ancestral home of the Nieh family. He also leads the Nieh Hualing Literary Research and Promotion Project there.

ZHOU Jianing 周嘉宁 has published seven novels and nine short story and novelle collections, as well as Chinese translations of English-language writers such as Flannery O'Connor, Joyce Carol Oates, J. M. Coetzee and Alice Munro.

#### TRANSLATORS:

AZS = Angus Zhi SHEN 沈至 is a bilingual writer and translator from Chengdu, China. He is the author of the poetry collection *Xunzhao tashuicun zhinan* [In Search of Tashui Village: A Guide] and co-translator of Lü Peng, *Emergence of the Patriarch: The Mao Xuhui Story* (2025). He is currently pursuing an MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

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