

Considering the Case of Hong Ying's *K: The Art of Love*: Home, Exile and Reconciliations

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Abstract

This essay initially considers central patterns in Hong Ying's work, including: the aesthetic self in opposition to ideological and cultural identity; and, artistic metamorphosis and its inevitable confrontation with forces underlying the rule of law, which in *Summer of Betrayal* involves protagonist Ling Ying in the events of June 1989 in Tiananmen Square and their aftermath. Part of Beijing's young, liberal artistic elite she finally dances naked in defiance of both privileged fellow students, and the police as representing an overarching patriarchal order. Overall this piece explores themes of home, longing, exile and reconciliation in *K: The Art of Love*, and how its author retrieves a forgotten episode linking China and Bloomsbury—against the backdrop of the Japanese invasion and Chinese Civil War—and sketches a struggle for identity and creativity in the 1930s through her depiction of the illicit love affair between two intellectuals and writers, Englishman Julian Bell and the wife of his Dean at Wuhan University. Both represent aspects of Bohemian avant-garde intellectual movements. Tew reads in detail the novel's opening

describing Bell's death in the Spanish Civil War, and the text's sense of the spectral and traumatic rupture which both haunt the lovers, underpinning the narrative's visceral relationship to Bloomsbury. Also considered are themes of sacrifice, violence and death underlying libidinous desire, ethnic and cultural identity, uncanny doublings, and the maternal. Finally through its depiction of loss, longing, self-discovery and passion, the novel can be regarded as interfusing the exotic and the familiar, reconciling home and exile, and through an intercultural *ars moriendi* it suggests aesthetically larger, universal, humanistic reconciliations.

Key Words: Hong Ying, Anglo-Chinese intercultural relations, Bloomsbury, trauma, spectrality