Politics of Language and Discourse in *One Man's Bible* by Gao Xingjian

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Abstract

Drawing on the power of discourse in Foucault's concept of panopticism, of language in the Deleuzean concept of territorialisation, and Althusser's interpellation, my study focuses on how Gao Xingjian dismantles the grand narrative of the Cultural Revolution in his second novel One Man's Bible. Deploying textual, critical discourse and stylistic analyses as key tools to analyse selected data, this paper highlights the way a panoptic political order 'hails' and 'recruits' an intellectual hence marginal subject to participate in a culture of violence that comes to dominate the Chinese street politics during 1966-76. So pervasive is the hold of its 'command-words' that it transforms the very nature of his subjectivity, rendering him 'docile and serviceable'; not only harmless to the state but also pliantly serving the cause, interest and ideology of the Party in power. To shake off the power-effects, one needs a new form of 'deterritorialised' or 'counter' subjectivity evoked by Deleuze and Foucault respectively, and symbolically represented in the physical act of 'flight' from home. By absconding from the scene of violence, the self-exile thwarts the forces of oppression in their attempt to subjectify him, and takes charge of his own subjectivity. This is an area which has not stirred any debate in the critical circles yet, hence the study has potential to be an important addition to literature on Gao.

Key words: discourse, order-words, hail, territorialise, de-territorialise

1. Introduction

This paper conducts an in-depth investigation into the troubled relationship the subject in exile comes to have with the home-state in *One Man's Bible* (hence *OMB*) by Gao Xingjian, (b. 1940), a Chinese self-exile writer now based in France. It is here that Gao dismantles the grand narrative of the great Proletariat Cultural Revolution (1966-76) in China by presenting his own micro narrative of history. The dominant political order of one-party, one-man's rule converts the whole country into a police state. After outliving its mass popularity, the communist party resorts to street activism to keep itself in power. With its repressive state machinery, it unleashes a wave of psycho-physical violence to 'hail' and territorialise people into submission. Its panoptic gaze penetrates into the most private and secret corners of a person's life. It is this tyrannical use of power that turns the narrator 'he' into an exile at home and then triggers his self-exile to the West. This study intends to focus on the uncanny skill with which the ruling party manipulates language and discourse in order to hold the country captive at both individual and collective levels.

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1.1 Rationale

Exile, according to Edward Said, is one who has picked up a quarrel with the home/country. Need for subjective autonomy turns an artist into an exile even at home. To Gao, the 10-year reign of terror under the state controlled Cultural Revolution was an experiential reality. That the novel extensively deals with political oppression is a truism which has so far been subject to simplistic reading and summary dismissal in critical debates on Gao. There seems no serious attempt to define the subtlety of psycho-linguistic violence with which the whole population is held in abeyance. How the ruling party manipulates discourse to construct its own version of truths, and how it reproduces its structure of power by recruiting a new generation of passive receivers of those truths requires a re-reading of the novel from an alternative perspective. And that accounts for my reliance on Foucault's concept of power and subjectivity, Deleuze and Guattari's concern with language in the 'territorialisation' of the subjects, and Louis Althusser's 'interpellation' as key theoretical sources for discussion here. Following the advice of Vincent Leitch to the 21st century researchers to go for critical fusions (2014), I have improvised an eclectic model to help generate meaning in my primary text. Though all the above theories have been formulated in the capitalist West, they are, as Nick Mansfield suggests, equally relevant to the socio-cultural or political scenario elsewhere in the world (51). This is an entirely original angle from which to view the deadly power politics in the novel. This paper, as such, is bound to be an important addition not only to literature on Gao's fiction but also a point of reference for social philosophy, political theory and area studies.

2. Theoretical Template

In *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (1975), Michel Foucault conceives modern Western society as a 'carceral' after the image of a prison-tower proposed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), a British social reformer and father of modern utilitarianism. In his utilitarian theory of punishment, Bentham envisaged a restructuring of the prison system to ensure the socio-economic serviceability and productivity of the reformed criminals after their return to normal life. 'Panopticon', the proposed prison, was a circular building with a central watch-tower surrounded on all sides by tiers of separate prison cells all of which came under direct observation of the guard above who himself remained unseen. Since the prisoners were to know that the guard was constantly watching them, they could become responsible for their behavior and try to be penitent and reformed. Seen from the perspective of modern Surveillance Studies, Bentham's panoptic model could be an effective monitoring tool to maximize civic discipline and security. However, on the basis of care/control paradox of intention behind its use, it acquires an ambiguous status; and that's what makes it especially relevant to Foucault's theory of power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault relates panopticon to the invisibility and optimum efficiency with which modern capitalist society exercises coercion to discipline, punish and 'normalise' its subjects. This it does through an over-organized, sophisticated network of institutions which Foucault calls "the carceral archipelago" (1493). These invisible yet physically present and perennially watchful agencies arrange the subjects spatially, allot them individual slots and 'save' them in their separate data files, thus keeping them all permanently visible. Aware thus of their visibility, the subjects remain within the bounds of normality. As for the norm, it is established through an inter-discursive relay of knowledge which terms even a slight difference as an

aberration, to be normalised through punishment. Bentham's panoptic schema, thus, symbolizes the most cost-and-energy effective mechanism of modern society with which to keep a whole population under control and each subject "docile and useful" (1499) to the 'normal' social order.

In their politics of 'subjectification' of individuals as enunciated in their joint venture *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari stress how every ordering authority uses linguistic force to territorialise or indoctrinate individuals to the reigning ideology. They look at language as the "main instrument to transmit power functions and to impose power relations" (Aurora 7), so a rule of grammar is first a power marker and then a syntactical marker. This is how "[l]anguage is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience" (Deleuze & Guattari 75). They further opine: "The elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order-word. … Every order word, even a father's to his son, carries a little death sentence" in that it inflicts immediate death to the subjects, "or potential death if they do not obey, or a death they must themselves inflict" (107). However, the critics believe that the same order-word acts "like a warning cry or a message to flee" (107).

The option to flee is inherent in the order as they quote Elias Canetti's invocation of "the lion's roar which enunciates flight and death simultaneously" (107). The compulsive force of this command and control system could also be related to Louis Althusser's 'interpellation' through which a power structure not only 'hails' and 'recruits' individuals but is also able to reproduce itself over time. More of this shall come during textual analysis. The power-play manifest in all these concepts underpins my present concern in Gao's novel in a communist context: the 'subjectification' process at the hands of socio-political forces at home, and exile's ultimate dislocation therefrom.

3. Methodology and Research Design

This paper works under a qualitative research paradigm and an inductive approach. The research design deployed is that of qualitative literary study which aims at production of meaning in a literary text. Data collection tool is close reading of the primary source, while textual and critical discourse analyses, and analysis of 'order-words' in Deleuze form the key instruments to analyse data and generate meaning.

As a historical document, *OMB* joins a whole body of exile literature written on communist excesses in the Near, Central and Far East at different times. Compared to *The Animal Farm* by a non-exile writer which deploys parodic element and fable mode to record the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Gao's is a more direct and open record of experiential history. Its definite frames of references generate little poetic possibility of an alternative reading. As such it offers hardly any relief from gloom and horror that power-politics at the top causes for those below. Through a textual and critical discourse analyses of selected segments of the novel, this study highlights the way a panoptic political order 'hails' and 'recruits' an intellectual hence marginalised subject to participate in a culture of violence that comes to dominate the Chinese street politics during the "anti-cultural Cultural Revolution" (*OMB* 143) in 1966-76. So pervasive is the hold of its command-words that it transforms the very nature of his subjectivity, rendering him 'docile and serviceable'; not only harmless to the state but also pliantly

serving the cause, interest and ideology of the Party in power. To shake off the power-effects, one needs a new form of 'deterritorialised' or 'counter' subjectivity evoked by Deleuze and Foucault, and symbolically represented in the physical act of 'flight' from home.

4. Discussion: Exile under arrest

In Foucault's theory, power centres round various social institutions which operate through an inter-discursive production of knowledge. Human subject is the dominant object of analysis in scholarly debates of various disciplines which divide human population according to their fixed categories of normal and abnormal behavior. These disciplines thus help power to evolve strategies to discipline and normalize the dissidents. In Gao's text, power concentrates in the hands of the collective body of the state. Through a trickery of the official discourse, the state becomes synonymous with the ruling party. The Party, spelled with a capital 'P', has absolute authority to determine the construction of political and ideological norms. It as such equates loyalty to the state with the unquestioning loyalty to the Party, to socialism and to Chairman Mao. Through a chain of bitter memories narrated by 'he', we learn that the Cultural Revolution is in fact an oppressive move to 'hail' and 'territorialize' the subject within narrow monologic bounds. It closes down all ideological borders for negotiations with 'others' in the name of homogeneity and national unity. Since unity means complete unanimity, it forcibly pre-empts any possibility of difference or disagreement. The novel is a graphic account of how after remaining long in power since 1949, the ruling party succeeds in reproducing its structure of power by interpellating a new generation of docile 'consumers' of its myths of greatness. Notice the 'bang' of rhetoric hammered from public platforms: "The great, glorious, correct party, more glorious, greater than God! Forever correct! Forever glorious! Forever great!" (49). To this effect, it manipulates almost all the ideological state apparatuses contained in Althusser's list of ISAs (1341).

The Party virtually takes over the parental, pedagogical or judicial responsibilities to teach, train, discipline or to punish individuals to serve its cause, rendering null and void the working of all civic institutions such as home, school, police, law, and public media. What in Foucault is an interdisciplinary network for knowledge production shrinks into a single discipline of political criminology relayed through the public platform in Gao. The Party Centre initiates an endless series of public debates, discussions, reports and opinions to identify, define and categorise new subjectivities of the criminal and the innocent, guilty or not guilty on the basis of how one stands in the eyes of the Party. The inter-discursive production of 'truth' leads to irreconcilable binaries, loaded with ideological baggage— us/them, communist/capitalist, revolutionary/reactionary, leftist/ rightist, loyalist/traitor, comrade/enemy etc. The constructed identities are reversible for political convenience: "… the word 'comrade' assumed extreme importance, and everyone used all means to ensure that the word would remain attached to his or her name" (148-9). Otherwise, "a whole series of crimes could be listed for anyone" to be declared an enemy, and be purged or exterminated (104). As in Foucault's theory of inter-discursive constitution of the subject by society, power needs to constitute enemy in bulk; the larger the production, the greater the chance for it to intervene and exercise control: "The enemies had to be found; without enemies how could the authorities sustain their dictatorship?" (79). This criminological discourse acquires horrific proportions

when it comes to purging the Party of the opponents, the so-called impure and the unclean. The term becomes wider, and more aggressively militant in description as those in power get increasingly apprehensive of possible counter-moves. Notice the degrading and sub/de-humanising variety of invectives gaining currency in the Party's exclusionary discourse: scoundrel capitalists, scheming careerists, despicable worms, Ox Demons and Snake Spirits etc. Also notice the evocative range of psychological violence that a Party leader is capable of inflicting on the audience to harass it into subjection and subjugation. It is in one of the public meetings, where the narrator notices the entrance being guarded by soldiers and Party security personnel:

> I warn comrades to note that they want to restore capitalism. I am talking about the Ox Demons and Snake Spirits; high up and down below, from the Party Centre down to provincial cadres! … we must relentlessly drag them out, we must safeguard the purity of the Party and not let the glory of the Party be sullied! Are there any here among you? I would not dare to vouch that there are not. Aha, you thousand gathered at this meeting, are all of you so pure and clean? Are there none groping to fish in muddy waters, colluding with higher ups and jumping down below? They want to confuse the battle lines of our class struggle; I urge all comrades to be on the alert and to sharpen their eyes. All who oppose Chairman Mao, all who oppose the Party Centre and all who oppose socialism must be dragged out!
>
> As the voice of the official on the platform died down, everyone started shouting slogans. "Exterminate all Ox Demons and Snake Spirits!"
>
> "I swear to protect Chairman Mao with my life!"
>
> "I swear to protect the Party Centre with my life!"
>
> "If enemy refuses to capitulate, it must be destroyed". (35-36)

I have taken a longer piece from *OMB* for an Althusserian-cum-Deleuzean analysis of the text, integrating some of the elements of critical discourse analysis. The textual density generates the need to draw on the ideas of "subjectification" (Deleuze 78) and "interpellation" (Althusser 1355). It shows how the demagogue establishes the power positions and relations between the two parties, he as the sole speaker and his audience as the responsive listener, so each statement made by him becomes an order-word, meant "not to be believed but to be obeyed, to compel obedience" (Deleuze 97). I shall focus first on the individual responses of the audience at the end of the speech above and then that of the narrator's beyond the quoted text. Both their responses demonstrate how the discursive intrusion of a hegemonic order interpellates and territorializes the people collectively as well as individually, converting each from their usually neutral to a Party-line position, from concrete individual human beings to an obsequious 'non-corporeal' mass (Deleuze). The fact that each slogan repeats the contents of the leader's speech testifies how complete this "incorporeal transformation" (80) of the audience is in the Deleuzian sense of the word.

Loaded with performative utterances, the speech shows how power generates false consciousness by controlling the discourse. In terms of establishing the power positions and relations, it validates the observation that "A rule of grammar is a power marker before it is a syntactical marker" (Deleuze 76). The speaker uses language to perform multiple functions: to simultaneously assure, warn, coax, intimidate, threaten and order.

The opening statement “I warn comrades to note” is an illocutionary speech act even though its base is a fear of reactionaries. The self-referentiality in the theme positions the speaker as the speaking subject, hailing the audience as the recruited subjects, the receivers of the orders in the rheme of the statement. Notice how the speaker addresses the listeners as ‘comrades’ rather than ‘you’. That way he keeps them in a third person common noun object position so they do not demand any share in the power of speech which is due to ‘you’ the direct addressee. He grants them such a position only when he has psychologically subjugated them with a number of very unsettling questions such as

“Are there any here among you?” and “Are all of you so pure and clean?” Such ‘perlocutionary’ speech acts must force the audience to look around intimidated; trapped into the role of listeners. The word ‘comrade’ also problematizes their position and relation to the Party. ‘They’ as comrades are a separate entity vis-à-vis ‘I’ who is an individual representing the Party elite. Where the term gives them a sense of assurance and belonging to the Party, there it also causes their alienation as a group to work on. They are thus a part as well as apart from the Party. In view of the political nuance of the term, when the leader calls them ‘comrades’, he assures them an equal status of acceptability to the Party. But he also reduces them all to a common, uniform subjectivity which is their greatest vulnerability.

As for the death-inflicting power of the ‘order-word’, we need to pick up just a couple of examples from the given text. While pointing out the presence of the ‘Ox Demons and Snake Spirits’ among them and condemning them to a political death, the demagogue issues two ‘statements’. First, he warns his audience to be alert and open-eyed to note such demonic elements around. Since according to him they are everywhere, the audience cannot ‘not’ note them. He needs their help to rid the Party of the enemy, so he tactfully uses the collective ‘we’ to project it as a common cause—it is “our class struggle”— to be undertaken jointly in the name of the purity and the glory of the Party. Prompt action is what he needs: “We must relentlessly drag them out”. The deliberate choice of the auxiliary ‘must’ augments the ruthlessness of language. It enforces his order as a law, compulsorily obligatory, and having high probability factor in terms of results. The audience is compelled to obey, to do his bidding. Between the first and the last command, there seems a dramatic interlude, as mentioned earlier, when the speaker places them in the line of fire with his disturbing questions, setting the moral and ethical norm of the pure as against the impure, clean vs. unclean. Assured now of his complete authority, he changes the voice of the order-word: from an active speaking voice ‘we must drag them out’ to a passive speech structure minus the subject: “[T]hey must be dragged out”. This is what Deleuze stresses when he comments on the way power permeates the linguistic expressions: “... it must be observed how thoroughly politics works from within, causing not only the vocabulary but also the structure and all of the phrasal elements to vary as the order-words change” (83). Once both their position is clearly established, there is no need to be specific about who is to carry out his command. The speaker has pitched the audience to an extent where it has no choice but to obey. By making varied use of the order-words, the demagogue has linked “non-corporeal attributes” (83) to the crowd. He has ‘extracted’ from them a mass of Party workers and activists before they exist as a body of comrades, thus transforming their roles and “effectuating immanent acts” of violence (ibid). The last command has the ring of an ultimatum, a ‘Get it done’ sort of a finality in tone. In case of non-compliance, the death-warrant is implied and enclosed

therein. This is how Deleuze characterizes "the very short phrases that command life and [that] are inseparable from enterprises and large scale projects: "Ready?", "Yes.", "Go ahead." (76). Notice how as the voice of the speaker 'dies' down, that of the audience rises up. They have to acknowledge the receipt of the order. And how complete is the deadly force of the command they receive is evident through the evocation of death that they are willing now to and do inflict on subsequent occasions.

With the help of the order-words, the leader has thus executed power to "transform" the meeting place into a prison hall and the public into captives or hostages (83). Turning for a close-up view of the narrator's response, we find him a solitary individual surrounded by his 'imagined community' of fellow workers. He feels so completely overwhelmed by what he hears that there is little possibility of any resistance from him. Both the public speaker and the audience take over as the speaking subjects, overpowering him completely. The absence of the reporting parts of both their speeches shows his complete withdrawal from narration. This is a perfect example of Althusserean 'interpellation', or hailing into subjectivity of a common man in the street. Let's visit the critic's famous 'policeman' quote:

> Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in a street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else). (1356 emphasis in the original)

Now Gao's narrator in the street is tremendously under pressure of his peers as well as the leader. Notice his response to both their rhetoric, neither of which directly or particularly addresses him. Still he becomes the constituted object of their discourses. Althusser calls it a strange phenomenon for the hailed one to always recognize himself to be the addressee, "one which cannot be explained solely by 'guilt feeling' …" (1356). A young man who has recently graduated from the university, Gao's narrator as an incipient intellectual has only wanted to have a room of his own where he could live, dream and be able to "groan or howl as he made wild love with a woman" (17). What magnifies his fear on hearing the public denunciation of the dissidents is his non-committal personal stance in a volatile socio-political scenario. In an environment of ideological extremism and blackmailing where 'either you are with us or against us' is the norm, he has the "political error" (54) of being an "an alien class element" (78). He is neither a proletariat nor a capitalist, neither a revolutionary nor a rebel (211). Where subjectivity is located within narrow group binaries, his irreducibility to either problematizes his position as a subject: "Prior to that he had truly never thought to oppose the Party. He had no need to oppose anyone and simply hoped that people wouldn't disrupt him from dreaming" (55). Now hearing the speech, he can't help getting scared however much he may try to mitigate the compulsive sense of himself being the 'hailed' by using the adverb of uncertainty:

> All around him, people took the lead in shouting, and he too *had to* shout out loudly so that he could be heard; … he knew at this meeting that anyone who behaved differently from others would be noticed and he could sense that he was being observed. Arrows were pointed at his back and he was sweating. He felt

> for the first time that, *maybe*, he was the enemy and that very likely he, too, would be destroyed. (36 my emphasis)

The dominant order has thus recruited and territorialised him as a subject compliant to its orders. His sense of entrapment increases each day as the Party's move to subjugate the masses gains momentum: "… the slogans rose and subsided in waves"; he feels them becoming "more forceful and uniform … like an all-engulfing wave … an unstoppable tide that instilled terror in people's heart. … He had to keep up with shouting and he had to shout clearly and moreover absolutely without any hesitation" (50-51). The political agencies execute their power with such an uncanny skill that they spare no room for a coherent thinking, let alone a "meaningful resistance or independent agency" (Foucault 1473). The narrator has no choice but to repress his self, and to assume a different role; in short, to let the Party 'subjectify' him with its discursive control. By doing this he is ironically assisting the hegemonic order in raising a new generation of 'normal' subjects, as Foucault has put it, compliant and useful to the Party:

> [A] political storm was raging everywhere, and if he were to preserve himself, he had to lose himself among the common people. He had to say what everyone else said and be able to show that he was the same as everyone else, say whatever was stipulated by the Party, extinguish all doubts and keep to the slogans to avoid being labeled anti-Party. (55)

Power has thus transformed him into a pro-Party element. Not that the narrator has not tried to disengage himself from the culture of violence the Party is fanning in the country. He and a few like-minded youths once get together in a secret bid to de-territorialise themselves from the dominant ethos: "All of us refused to take part in any movement, refused to commit to any ideology, and refused to join any group" (145). The thrice repeated refusal affirms the seriousness of the resolve, yet he is caught and trapped in spite of himself, territorialised in the trash-can of politics. What he could not forget is a horrific street scene he once witnessed, the brutal killing of an old "REACTIONARY LANDOWNER'S WIFE" (70) at the hands of a crowd of teenaged Red Guards. What is important to note here is that it is "Mao's public letter to the youths" (73), and his exhortation to exterminate the enemy which incite the teens to violence. While the people watch helplessly from a distance, and a civilian policeman seems to look with unseeing eyes, the Guards cycle off, raising slogans: "Long live the Red Terror!" (70). Even then the narrator could have stayed aloof but for the compulsive interpellation from the Party which 'recruits' him as a revolutionary subject of the State. It is Danian the leader of the Red Guards, a youth "who played table tennis with him and the two got on well" (78) who inducts him among his "revolutionary fellow travellers, confront[ing] him by calling out his name—'of course that includes you!' to let him know that it referred to him as well" (78). What appears to be a simple 'assertive' statement made by Danian comes to acquire an additional 'directive' category of speech act. On the receiving end, the narrator dares not challenge this ideological arrest and imprisonment.

Foucault contends the position of prison as an institution located on the margins of the social circle. Instead, he relocates it in the centre, a symbolic representation of the dominant system of a society which operates through prison-like institutions. In Gao, the communist state as the most dominant of social forces becomes a prison-tower which

keeps the population under strict surveillance, arrests anybody at the slightest suspicion, deports them to far off "reform through labour" (104) camps and accepts them back only when they return 'purged' and 'reformed', i.e., normalised. Foucault underlines the stress Bentham laid on Panopticon's function of reforming and 'normalizing' rather than punishing deviants and law-breakers. The new name for prisons in the 19th century—'reformatory' or 'penitentiary'—clearly exhibited this modern focus on reform (Mansfield 60). We watch the narrator in *OMB*, forced against his will to follow the norm in an increasingly helpless position of a subject becoming an object of scrutiny, closely monitored as if under a surveillance camera.

The panoptic mechanism of the State works on hard, military lines. We learn, for example, that "The Cultural Revolution had just begun and senior cadres still in power from Mao Zedong himself … all wore military uniform" (49). Everything at labour camp "was organized in military formation—squad, platoon, company, battalion— and everyone came under the leadership of the commanding officer" (103). This is reminiscent of Foucault's description of the military-like regimentation at Mettray prison in "*Discipline and Punish*" which serves as a trope for modern society (1490). Even at work places, there are surveillance units, keeping an eye on who is doing what. Frantic search operations by the Red Guards indicate the Party's insecurity verging on paranoia. On one such occasion, as they ransack the narrator's room "for reactionary criminal evidence" (76) against his roommate, they discover love poems from the drawer of the suspect and take them as "irrefutable evidence of anti-party anti-socialist longings for the paradise of the past" (77). To save himself from a possible incrimination, the narrator is compelled to give a helping hand in the search. Not that he was safe from intrusion or investigation. Notice the scare of being intercepted on the road:

> They also interrogated him.
> "Get off."
> He braked suddenly, and almost fell off his bicycle. (70)

The Party's reign thus is the proverbial reign of terror: "The very first time he was confronted … he was so frightened that he made a confession on the spot" (103). Inside or outside, nowhere could he escape the gaze of the Party. At the labour camp he is sent to, "[i]t turned out that even when he went to the lavatory, he was being spied on" (105). The Party keeps on screen-testing people, forcing them to own their 'mental' crimes against the state, i.e., harbouring anti-communist thoughts. It uses husbands, wives, friends, co-workers as spy for a leak of any clue, real or fabricated, to implicate anyone. It holds children answerable for the 'sins' of ancestors. Old pictures of the narrator's parents in up-to-date dresses could prove their capitalist background; hence he burns them to avoid being caught (73). Dress, hair and shaving style, job description, all become tell-tale semiotics, rendering one vulnerable before the vigilant authorities. List of 'crimes' thus gathered have their entry in personal files maintained separately for each individual. Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye: "wrong words and actions, general political and moral conduct, a person's written thought-reports and confessions, verdicts and judgments of the work unit were collected together and placed under confidential supervision by special personnel" (149). This takes us back to Foucault's concept of power interfering in public life through a network of reporting institutions which keep a separate data-file of each subject. As Mansfield puts it: "each one is individualized,

separate from one another all in fear of tax audit we must face alone, or glancing nervously at the security camera that may or may not be filming us at the ATM" (62).

The panoptic power base offers little possibility of any 'centrifugal dispersion'. Rather it sucks everyone in: "The Party gave him no choice and was intent on making him conform to a pattern, and his failure to conform meant that he was the enemy of the Party" (211).The imperative to save himself thus transforms him from a non-committal, politically disengaged person, dreaming only of drinking and love-making, to becoming the leader of a rebel faction of the Party; "a mean, wily fox, capable of baring its sharp fangs" with which to bite back (103). As he chairs a meeting he must appear harsh and unsparing to all, young and old alike: "He had to find enough evidence to get Wu branded as an enemy [because] if reinstated, the old scoundrel would have sent him to hell straight away" (188). He knows "he was acting out a repulsive role, but it was better to be the judge than being judged by others" (229). However, it is soon evident that he is not cut out for the role. Saving his own skin does not carry him through for long. "A chess-piece wanting to have its own way" (221), he shows signs of departing from the Party norms. While publicly cross-examining a case on the charge of changing loyalty, he notices that the 'culprit' is "older than his father" (231) and a heart patient, too: "He felt sorry for him now that his own faith in revolution had been destroyed and he had dispensed with the myths that the perfect new people and the glorious revolution had created" (231). It is then that in spite of the threat from the crowd, he lets the old man get a seat and a glass of water and sends him home even if to write a confession there. The Party faction he is heading has already accused him of being "too soft" on enemies (190). Now is the act of dislocation. It is the move of the subject towards counter-subjectivity.

4.1 Resistance and Counter-discourse

Though Mansfield places Foucault in the 'anti-subjective' camp of critics, he realizes that Foucault after all implies that one can counter power's 'subjectivation' only at the subjective level (63). With an increasing awareness of being caught in a reeking quagmire (*OMB* 248), Gao's narrator starts asserting his right to an independent subjectivity. In contrast to the earlier occasion when he along with the audience fails to resist the construction of binaries and the subsequent violence, he comes under a strong impulse to deterritorialise. Notice the number of negatives and interrogatives in his counter discourse:

> Can't a person's faith change? Once aboard a Party ship, does it have to be the whole of a person's life? Is it possible not to be a loyal subject of the Party? Then what if one has no faith? By jumping out of the rigid choice of being either one or the other, you will be without an ideology, but will you be allowed to exist? When your mother gave birth to you, you did not have an ideology. …, can't you live outside ideology? Is not to be revolutionary the same as counter-revolutionary? Is not to be a hatchet man the same as being a victim of revolution? If you don't die for revolution, will you still have the right to exist? And how will you be able to escape from the shadow of revolution? (232)

The internal debate is powerful enough to trigger a physical and ideological dislocation. It is symptomatic of a progression from compliance to defiance. Sick of the fixity and rootedness to isms and ideologies, the speaker in the passage has started exploring

alternative routes and territories. For example: change of faith as against staying loyal, right to exist in contrast to dying for the party, jumping out of the Party ship and absconding vs. remaining aboard etc. From here stem an ideological 'no-ism' articulated in the desire to 'escape'. It is also related to the Foucauldean notion of 'counter-subjectivity' and the Deleuzian 'deterritorialisation' or 'flight'. 'You' in the text quoted above mentions his mother having given him birth and rooted him down to a particular family. However, he denies having received from her any political 'ism' in his genes. The tropes of mother and family refer to the mother-country and the imagined community or nation to which one's birth roots one down. The speaker rejects the nationalistic constructs as well as totalizing constants like latent, inborn or given. In the infighting and the heated scuffle for power within the Party, he realizes that he is not made for politics; he has never been interested in "the art of empire making" (216). What interests him is to create space for his repressed artistic self which is impossible if he stays there and contests power: "He saw no future in the total chaos of the time so it was best for him to get out of danger" (202), "to bravely retreat while he still could" (203). And retreat he does by slipping out first to the countryside and then out of the country. The adverb 'bravely' gives a positive valence to the conventionally despised expression 'retreat'. By turning his back, he has set himself free, thereby defeating the power nexus of Mao and his Party. He is going to take charge of his own subjectivity.

5. Research Findings

Gao's anti-ideological stance of 'no-ism' is an intellectual's drive for subjective freedom. In view of a constriction of space, I deem it sufficient to revisit the critical premises mentioned earlier. The 'panopticon' in Foucault enunciates 'counter' subjectivity; the lion's roar in Canetti flight, order-word in Deleuze de-territorialisation. Gao's 'no-ism' or what he calls 'the third-ness' of the artist is a form of exilic fluidity against the fixity of home-centred, territory-bound beliefs. By absconding from the scene of oppression, his protagonist dodges the surveillance mechanism of the carceral. No longer at the receiving end of the order, he has thwarted power's attempt to hold him in detention. Faced with the traditional options of either to die or live as a subject under subjugation, he creates a third option and flees, thus is empowered in both.

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