

Living with Xi Dada's China — Making Choices and Cutting Deals

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Political Enchantments:
Aesthetic practices and the Chinese state
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If a man should sleep to a time when time is no more, then his shadow may come and bid him farewell, saying:

人睡到不知道時候的時候，就會有影來告別，說出那些話——

There is something about Heaven that displeases me; I do not wish to go there. There is something about Hell that displeases me; I do not wish to go there. And there is something about your future Golden Age that displeases me too; I do not wish to go there either.

有所不樂意的在天堂里，我不願去；有所不樂意的在地獄里，我不願去；有所不樂意的在你們將來的黃金世界里，我不願去。

What displeases me is you.

然而你就是我所不樂意的。

Friend, I do not wish to go with you. I will not stay.

朋友，我不想跟隨你了，我不願住。

I will not.

我不願意！

Alas! Alas! Let me drift in the land of nothingness.

嗚呼嗚呼，我不願意，我不如徬徨於無地。

These words are from “The Shadow's Farewell” 影的告別, originally published by Lu Xun in 1924. It was included in his 1927 collection *Wild Grass* 野草. In our survey of the alternative cultural world of mainland China and the broader Chinese commonwealth, published in the summer of 1986 as *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, John Minford and I used “The Shadow's Farewell” as the conclusion or envoi to our book. Thirty years later, and eighty years after Lu Xun's death, “The Shadow's Farewell” seems like a good place to start my talk today.

Climacterics, Anniversaries and Return

In 1971, fifteen years before John and I edited *Seeds of Fire*, I was studying at Randwick Boy's High School in Sydney. It was my last year and I was invited to be part of an ABC TV panel discussion titled “Leave Something for Us”. The focus of the programme was on what young people — I was seventeen — thought about the world we would inherit from

our parents and grandparents. We discussed war, social inequalities, cultural change and, above all, the looming environmental catastrophe. At the time, I didn't know the expressions Global Warming or Hothouse Effect, and it would be eight years before the ancient Greek earth goddess Gaia made an appearance. But, since we lived on the driest continent on the plane, we were all aware of the importance of water and the treacherous mutability of the seasons. We knew then, too, that the global weather system would transform the way we all thought about life and how we ourselves would live.

"Leave Something for Us" was about heritage and the future. Over the intervening forty-five years I suppose I haven't really strayed very far from those concerns.

Moving to Canberra the following year, in 1972, to study Sanskrit, Indian history and thought and Chinese, I soon learned that the climate, changing seasons, the birth, growth and flourishing of plants and crops, as well as the unpredictability of the weather, were an integral part of the literary and metaphorical landscapes of the ancient agrarian cultures both of India and of China. As a student in China from 1974, I also realised how deeply ingrained the language of seasonal change is in everyday life. Our modest student stints in people's communes definitely disrupted the planting and harvesting season of hard-working farmers, but they also involved us in the annual cycle of growth, bounty and decay.

Modern Chinese politics too was encoded in weather metaphors and, from the late 1970s, as a frequent traveller to Peking from Hong Kong where I was working, the climate always featured in pre-trip preparations, and not just in regard to what clothing you had to pack for the trip north. The Gang of Four had been detained in October 1976 and the unravelling of many policies of the High Mao era, inaugurated following the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956, unfolded over the following decade.

In those days, communication with China was mostly via mail and before setting off north (at first only by train, but later by plane, then there were direct flights!), friends would alert you to what you could expect in the Chinese capital through vague references to the weather. The political climate was unstable, as it would be throughout much of the 1980s, and epistolary pleasantries were usually couched in language about stormy weather, cloudy skies, rising temperatures, troughs and high-pressure systems. People would speak darkly of: 昏天黑地; 冷暖無常; 黃沙蔽日; 狂風大作; 秋風蕭瑟; 三九嚴寒; 煙雨濛濛; 陰雨連綿; 風雪交加; 風沙走石。

天有不測風雲: the vicissitudes of the climate are unpredictable. To this day, Chinese leaders use climate metaphors when discussing the uncertain global environment, once only political, now also more practically and unavoidably about climate change.

"In China the future is fixed, only the past changes", as one wag put it. Despite the talk of weather and the warming of the planet, in Xi Jinping's China the future has been determined in the Party's strategic goals of achieving the 2021 and 2049 Dual Centennials 兩個一百年 and the statistician's ledger for growth, change and development has fixed the path to the future. There is a constant fear of climactic uncertainty and unforeseen weather conditions, and the forward planning of China's party-state is the dream of numbers-obsessed bureaucrats and economists everywhere. Yet, all the plans of men cannot reflect the fluid shape of humanity, and history itself has no form. It's in the unpredictable, the uncertain and in complexity that the human condition revels and even thrives. For those who believe that in China they have seen the future, and that it works, I would suggest that

if all does indeed go to plan, then all of those who study, engage with and care about the Chinese world need to make plans of their own, and do it now.

Around this time next year, at the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party Xi Jinping will duly be reappointed as party-state-army supremo. That means you will all live through at least six more years of Xi Dada's rule and if, as I have been suggesting since late 2013, he breaks with recent precedent and continues beyond a decade of rule as Party leader, your careers in China will be darkened by his doughy shadow. So this heavily laden anniversary year of 2016 may in fact be just the end of the beginning of a rule that could well see me out (I'd be over seventy, and given my precarious health I doubt I'll see the back of Xi *zhuxi*), and will see you into middle and, in some cases, late-middle or even old age.

It's a sobering thought. Climate change has happened in China; the heat is on; the air is unbreathable; sea levels have risen; people are drowning and there are no clear skies ahead.

New Dawns

It's nearly twenty years since I started work on a second major collaboration with my filmmaker friends at the Long Bow Group in Boston, Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon. We decided that we would try to make something of a "prequel" *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, our account of 1989; it would be a film about the Cultural Revolution. As the project developed we settled on a title that resonated with both the nationalistic as well as with the hyper-socialist messages of the era. We called our film "Morning Sun" or, in Chinese, 八九點鐘的太陽.

The expression comes from a famous speech made by Mao Zedong on the occasion of his 1957 trip to Moscow to attend celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the world's first socialist country. When meeting with Chinese students and trainees in the Soviet capital on the 17th of November that year, Mao said:

The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours. You young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed on you. The world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you. 世界是你们的，也是我们的，但是归根结底是你们的。你们青年人朝气蓬勃，正在兴旺时期，好像早晨八九点钟的太阳。希望寄托在你们身上。

The message was simple: the future does indeed belong to the young, but it might not be a future that the young can foresee. This is no less true today that it was when the Chairman addressed Chinese students in Moscow nearly 60 years ago. After all, people of a certain vintage find, here in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, that we have lived into a vile era of reinvigorated nationalisms, racial discrimination and persecution, strong-man politics, revived ideological and religious confrontation, all added to by the stultifying effect of the industrialisation of knowledge and the blight of managerialist-directed research. It is what the political scientist Yascha Mounk calls the dawning of the age of "illiberal democracy".

And with Xi Jinping, Xi Dada, the man whom I have from early on in his tenure called the "Chairman of Everything" has risen in parhellic imitation (or is it unintended parody?), of the effulgent Mao himself.

Sunrise ushers in the dawn, and over the past century China, as well as many other parts of the world, has celebrated many dawns, most of them false. This year, with the avoidable rise of Donald Trump (pace Bertolt Brecht and Artuo Ui: line from Brecht's play, "Do not rejoice in his defeat, you men. For though the world has stood up and stopped the bastard, the bitch that bore him is in heat again.") and a new era not only in US-China relations, but in the dynamics of global politics, may well be yet another such false dawn.

In an essay published in February this year, I noted the various significant historical Chinese anniversaries that fall in 2016. I won't repeat them here.

In Australia, too, 2016 also marks significant, if lesser, moments of change. After all, thirty years ago we saw the introduction of the Dawkins Reforms of higher education that ushered in industrial scale, commodified education, the results of which affect all of you working in this country. In 1996, Australia witnessed, or rather gave rise of the Liberal Coalition government under John Howard which brought back race-based politics, created Island Australia; has witnessed a rolling back of indigenous rights; the baleful manipulation of terror for political gains and ushered in the Antipodean versions of the surveillance state. Then, after 2006 and the ouster of Howard by Kevin '07 we have witnessed a decade of uncertain politics and rank opportunism.

With each dawn, each spring and new year has come a revolution of the seasons and a repetition, with variation, of the past.

The Harmonious Convergence

The first spring that I experience in China began 40 years ago when my class of foreign students at Liaoning University was undertaking ritualistic "open door schooling" 開門辦學, picking apples on a commune in Jin County, on the Liaodong Peninsula. The apples were exported to the "Soviet Revisionists" to generate hard income for China's stumbling revolutionary economy.

With a shortwave radio we listened in to Radio Australia and, although the official party media was full of oblique references to a power struggle in Beijing, the news from Australia was explicit: Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, and a group of her radical supporters, had been detained. With frequent military flights overhead and threats from our teachers not to say anything — they even locked us in our dorms for a while — we enjoyed a privileged few days knowing what the preening cadres who generally made our lives such a misery didn't: the Mao era was well and truly over.

Soon after China experience what was dubbed a "Beijing Spring". It's an expression used in homage to the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and the Prague Spring over a decade later. In late 1978, I was one of multitude that gathered at the Democracy Wall at Xidan in Beijing to read and copy notes from the big-character posters; an outpouring of pent up frustration, fury and hope by people from all walks of life. They included one poster by a young man called Wei Jingsheng. In it he called for China to realise political modernity by democratising. In March 1979, Wei went further when he criticised Deng Xiaoping as China's new authoritarian. He was soon detained, then arrested and arraigned in court on charges of counterrevolution. As for the Democracy Wall at Xidan, once it had served its purpose in the complex power struggles of court politics unfolding just down the road in Zhongnanhai, it was demolished and big-character posters, supported by Mao twenty years earlier during the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956, were banned.

Also in March 1979, Deng Xiaoping articulated the Four Cardinal Principles 四项基本原则 that had to be adhered to by China under the leadership of the Communist Party. These principles, written into the Chinese constitution, placed Party leadership over all else. They form the core of party rule in China to this day.

Wei Jingsheng's detention, and the promulgation of the Four Principles, marked a crucial moment in the history of Party rule in China; it also marked a turning point in my own life. By then I'd been trained at Maoist universities for years, I'd been interested in Chinese history and politics for 10 years, studying and taking seriously Chinese politics and official discourse for 5 years (I was still only 25) and I realised that, barring unforeseen circumstances, if I were to continue my Chinese life it would be one in which my own political principles and ethical beliefs would constantly confront the harsh realities of Communist Party rule. If Article One of the Chinese constitution, the Four Cardinal Principles, was not overturned, I knew then that I would most likely spend the rest of my days engaged with a country and a culture dominated by a political apparatus based on a confabulated history, media distortions, the suppression of basic freedoms, state violence and an approach to humanity and human value that was at loggerheads with the lessons of the twentieth century, lessons of which I was sorely aware.

But then I knew that I was fortunate to have been introduced into the multiverse of Chinese culture and thought by such mentors as Pierre Ryckmans and Liu Ts'un-yan. Just as the Cultural Revolution ended I was lucky to meet in Beijing the translators Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang who, in turn, introduced me to the members of the Louts' Lodge 二流堂, men and women who profoundly shaped my understanding of things Chinese. I was also fortunate to work for nearly 3 years with the leading Hong Kong editor and political commentator, Lee Yee 李怡, while being trained to write Chinese and appreciate Hong Kong as China's other by such friends as the arts journalist Winnie Yeung (Yeung Lai-kun 楊莉君) and the literary editor Pan Jijiong 潘际迥. This triangulation: the perspective of scholarship from ANU; the latter-day literati of Beijing and the unique perspective of Hong Kong allowed me to engage with what in some respects I knew full well was an "unchanging China" while finding a life-path for myself that allowed me to make my sense of the Chinese world, and to make meaning of a life that would be devoted to scholarship, reading, writing, translating and, when feasible, the instruction of others.

Nonetheless, in 1979-1980 I decided to quit Chinese Studies and I focussed my attention on Japanese, cultural history and Buddhist Studies, a subject that had originally taken me to ANU. It was not long, however, before I was in the thrall of China once more. Despite my Japanese interests, by the late 1970s I had become a frequent columnist writing for the Hong Kong Chinese press and I had a career outside of academia as a satirist and translator. Although the decade of the 1980s gave me scant hope that China would substantially change politically, it was a period of cultural renewal and discovery of the kind not seen in the Chinese world since the 1930s. That's why, when in 1986, John Minford and I edited a book about the burgeoning cultural world of 1980s' China, we dedicated it to Lu Xun's uncompromising spirit. The title itself, *Seeds of Fire* 火種, comes from a line written by Lu Xun not long before his death in 1936:

As long as there shall be stones, the seeds of fire will not die.
石在，火種是不會絕的。

The stones are still there. Some will be used to construct new walls, both great and small. Others are seeds of fire the sparks of which promise a future, one that connects back to

the alternative traditions of the past. Everyone chooses for him or herself, just what the seeds of fire in their possession can be used for: to lie dormant or to light the way for what John Minford calls "warriors of light".

Silent China and Cutting a Deal

You have to indulge a superannuated academic talking about his own choices in living with China. As I said earlier, for me 1980 was a year of some significance, but, although I would launch many small jibes in the Chinese press from 1978, 1983 was when I first spoke out in the English-language media about cultural repression in China. It was during the first post-Cultural Revolution political movement against Spiritual Pollution. That movement passed, although during it Deng and his ideologues such as Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun reinforced their message about Party control; it was a warning for the future that was generally ignored, both in China and internationally. Then there were the student demonstrations of 1986 and the purge of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang in early 1987. After that, for those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, the events of 1989 were all but a foregone conclusion. As I pursued at-arms-length academic work, I also spoke and wrote about these events, more so than ever after 1989. And then, in 1995, we released our controversial film *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, for which I was the main writer and adviser. We garnered much praise, and not a few awards, for the film and accompanying website, but we also attracted the obloquy of some academics and many Chinese dissidents in the US and globally. For those of you who have an interest in such things, you'll also be aware of the long years of litigation with Tiananmen's "Goddess of Democracy", Chai Ling.

Making a decision to take a stand and articulate your views is not a one-off act of braggadocio. In my case it has been a career-long undertaking, and I can look back over these 45 years without either discomfort or embarrassment. During those early years of enchantment with China, that country and the Chinese world has experienced waves of logorrhoea during which amidst the Red Noise of officialdom, other voices have been heard. At times those voices have once more fallen silent, as in the years of High Maoism. Today, you are all faced with the latest version of, to take an expression from Lu Xun, Silent China 無聲的中國.

In recent years, China's clamorous public debate has been gradually corralled. Of course, there is no lack of noise and verbiage in the People's Republic or on its global web of chatter, but it is by and large the stentorian voice of the party-state, a threnody repeating and reverberating like the death-bed message of the emperor in Kafka's 1917 short story, *Great Wall of China*. For me, this new Silent China reached something of a nadir with the closing of Consensus Net in early October this year; that website was supposedly taken offline for "transmitting erroneous ideas" 传递错误思想.

This latest silencing of China began in earnest around the new year of 2013, shortly after Xi Jinping's investiture as party-state-army leader, when *Southern Weekend* was subject to attack as a result of its advocacy of "constitutionalism". As the silence of China's Others has spread, and I would emphasise that the pall of The Silence has been partly enabled by the policies of the US Obama administration, once more I'm taken back to 1971, the year I participated in that ABC panel discussion. For that is also the year when, as part of our high school history class on ancient Rome, I first read Tacitus. That historian, who chronicled the rule of the emperors Tiberius, Claudius and Nero, famously wrote:

Solitudinem faciunt, paced appellat.
They made a desert and they call it peace.

I also rather like the recasting of these words by Lord Byron in his *Bride of Abydos*:

Mark where his carnage and his conquests cease!
He makes a solitude, and calls it — peace.

Today, with the desertification of the Xi Jinping era, all those working in the Chinese world are faced with the dilemma of if and how exactly they will live with Xi Jinping's China and under what circumstances they are prepared to cut a deal with Xi Dada. The artist may well hide from reality in his art; but do you as academics wish to hide from reality in your scholarship?

It is twenty-five years since Zhou Lunyou, a poet of the “Not-not” school in Sichuan, produced a manifesto entitled “A Stance of Rejection”. Written in response to what he saw as the cultural capitulation that followed in the wake of the 4 June 1989 Beijing massacre, in December 1991 Zhou called on his fellow writers and artists to resist the blandishments of the state.

“In the name of history and reality,” he wrote,

in the name of human decency, in the name of the absolute dignity and conscience of the poet, and in the name of pure art, we declare:

We will not cooperate with a phoney value system—

- Reject their magazines and payments.
- Reject their critiques and acceptance.
- Reject their publishers and their censors.
- Reject their lecterns and 'academic' meetings.
- Reject their 'writers' associations', 'artists' associations', 'poets' associations', for they are all sham artistic yamen that corrupt art and repress creativity.[NB]

Perhaps such hauteur seems too much for the career academic today. Some might even feel such a stance of rejection holds equally well for global academia.

I would suggest that a stance of resistance is now more necessary than ever: resistance in regard not only the enticements of a comfortable engagement with China's party-state, but a canny resistance too in regard to the globalised academic system and its forms of knowledge production. Resistance also to phoney theory, overblown hyperbolic language, the verbiage of untruth and the strategies of careerism.

And as for your future, a future that I do hope belongs to you, or at least some of you... . After all, you are engaged with a Chinese world that, despite the best efforts of the Communist party, its propaganda organs and twisted party-state education and indoctrination, is entirely open to you. Contact with a living, complex, contradictory China is in many ways easier than ever before; you can join in fellowship with friends, colleagues and mentors in the Chinese world. China is silent only superficially. It's past and present are in many ways more part of global understanding than at any other point.

Okay, so you just want to have a peaceful life as an aspirational member of middle class, middle of the road, safe cog in the machine kind of mid level academic. China happens to be your subject as much as it might be some other place, some other discipline, some other form of cookie-cutter knowledge production. You have one of those post-colonial treat it as field of research and safe career kinds of approach. Well, that's just fine. Best of luck and enjoy the trip. My advice, my work, my ideas, my website, is probably not for you. Turn off and tune out now.

Six Watchwords when Coping with Xi Dada's China:

1. Surveillance: Remember even in the era before meta or mass data you would have had a dossier or personnel files in the various relevant organisations that was constantly being added to, and that's not only in China. I recommend that you read Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* to prepare yourself psychologically for what is probably going on in your China career now, and what you might find out years down the track.
2. Collaborations: These can come at a cost to all participants. You have to negotiate relationships constantly. The give-and-take of dealing with a field that has a complex political landscape will develop over time and you need to be aware of the ethics of your work, not as crudely determined by mechanistic university committees, but as an individual. China constantly confronts one with issues of values and value judgements.
3. Conflict: The cold war and peaceful evolution: one way or the other thou are involved in a struggle that has gone on since 1917 and was re-articulated in the Chinese context from 1959.
4. Self-censorship: the lie. Always thinking about how your work will be received. 'Impact' and efficaciousness within a system you might not agree with. shaping your research agenda for legitimate intellectual reasons is one thing; but a cynical research life reflects as much on your scholarship as on yourself. I'd recommend you read J.M. Coetzee's book *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship*, published in 1996.
5. Theory: The over-reach of theory and the aesthetics of making the unpalatable edible.
6. The Banquet: of which Lu Xun wrote, "China has played host to one continuous cannibalistic banquet. Some have eaten, some have been eaten. Those eaten have eaten. Those eating shall be eaten". He spoke of foreigners dining at the Chinese banquet. Each of us has to decide, constantly, whether we'll pick up the chopsticks.

At certain moments information buried in my own file would have an effect in real life: as in the 1986 banning of my Chinese book in Beijing. In 1989-1990 in my controversy with the pro-Party intellectual He Xin; in the post-1995 denunciations of *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*; in the legal case with Chai Ling in the 2000s; in creating CIW I had to take a stand and in dealing with CICIR and the question of such writers as Liu Xiaobo and Dai Qing after 2010 impinged not only on me, but also on CIW. The same was true of my personal circumstances, as a result of which I took action first to suggest I give up the directorship of CIW in late 2014 and then by retiring from formal academe in late 2015.

After three and a-half decades of living with China, I had finally articulated with one word the kind of deal I was prepared to cut both with China and with the academic world which I inhabited. I summed it up, first through the voice of another, as being a *zhengyou* 诤友 in relating to China, officially or through one's work, and as an academic in my own surrounds. The idea is simple: rejecting the black-and-white dichotomy of China's (and for that matter the "West's") Cold War approach, *zhengyou* favours a grounding in liberal humanist values that defends independent thought, speech, association and scholarship, while meaningfully, and respectfully engaging with the Chinese world which, as you know, exists on a spectrum from being engaging and embracing, to one of stand-offish unique

aloofness. It also rejects the narrow horizons of the Audit Culture and the limits that neo-liberal model of bureaucratic accountability places on the thinking mind.

The concept of *zhengyou* underpinned the Centre I created and its dealings with China, be it the People's Republic, Taiwan, Hong Kong or the broader Chinese world. I have argued that principled difference and reasoned contrariness are also the basis for independent scholarship. *Zhengyou* is hardly in fashion in the increasingly riven world of Sino-Other politics, nor indeed does it really find a ready purchase in self-interested academia. I still recommend it to you as an approach, and even as a mental disposition.

The writer and reader Clive James sums it up in *Cultural Amnesia: Notes in the Margin of My Time* in the following way:

...to be born and raised in a prosperous liberal democracy not only confers the energy to see the world as it is, but the obligation to make sense of it, on behalf of all those deprived of the opportunity. [Note: *Cultural Amnesia*, p.516]

At this point, returning to the "banquet of China", let me quote a few lines from the poem "Cauldron" by the wonderful, and recently deceased, Hong Kong poet Leung Ping-kwan, as translated by his good friend John Minford:

Creation's aspirations are trussed,
caught tight by the luminous bronze.
In his campaign against the Chu, the southern state,
as the Emperor approached the wilderness beyond the Central Plain,
ten thousand bawled for the rustics beyond the pale,
to make their low bow of homage;
stone and metal engraved; vessels fashioned;
tintinnabulations of history.
The proclamations sit heavy on the stomach,
destroy the appetite;
the table is altogether overdone.
May I abstain from the rich banquet menu,
eat my simple fare, my gruel, my wild vegetables,
cook them, share them with you?

Is there a chance
your pomp and circumstance could ever change,
evolve
slowly
into a new motif,
some new arabesque
of beauty?

In dynastic politics, all too often scholar bureaucrats found themselves working for a corrupt court or during a time of strife and contention. Rather than abandon hard-won official careers, after all they had spent long years studying and taking exams so as to become officials, they chose to submit to court rule, to tolerate the tedium of routine and to survive. They did not actively engage with the politics of the day or take an overt stand over any issue. Rather than retire from the world or 隱退 they took an even more passive route for survival: they became recluses at court. The old word for this is relevant again in

China, and I would suggest in international academia as well. It is known as 朝隱, retirement at court.

The Sunken Ship

I was a teenager when I first read my mother's copy of Lin Yutang's 1937 book *The Importance of Living*. He was a popular writer in English from the 1930s. The year Lu Xun died, 1936, Lin published his translation of Shen Fu's memoir of married life, *Six Chapters on a Floating Life*. In the early 1980s I translated Yang Jiang's *Six Chapters on a Cadre School Life*, the expanded edition with an introduction by Pierre Ryckmans was published in 1989 under the title *Lost in the Crowd*, or 陸沉, literally "to sink into the ground", an expression from *Zhuangzi* meaning to disappear in plain sight.

John Minford, who I will discuss below, taking a title from Shen Fu, called his last six lectures at ANU "Lectures from a Sunken Ship".

In one of my last acts as creator and director of CIW I was fortunate to be able to invite John Minford, who was recovering from a long period of illness and bereavement to offer his course on Chinese literature in translation in the CIW building. Over two semesters John presented 18 lectures covering the culture of written China from oracle bones to the *ci*-lyrics of the Manchu Nalan Šingde and *The Story of the Stone*.

The bounty of Chinese literature, and literature and the arts more generally, provides endless succour and meaning for those wearied by the contemporary, the contingent and the transitory. I encourage all of you, with access to the riches of Chinese through classical Chinese, literary Chinese and even the modern language, to read widely in the great traditions for in them you may find support and meaning as so much of what passes for "China Studies" today, its disciplinary anxieties and passing fads, whither into meaninglessness in your later years. If today's China is all you have to nurture your mind-heart 心, then beware of how you will deal with the weariness of the future.

Throughout *Cultural Amnesia* Clive James speaks about humanism and he says of that:

... Humanism was a particularized but unconfined concern with all the high-quality products of the creative impulse, which could be distinguished from the destructive one by its propensity to increase the variety of the created world rather than reduce it. ... In the connection between all the outlets of the creative impulse in mankind, humanism made itself manifest, and to be concerned with understanding and maintaining that intricate linkage necessarily entailed an opposition to any political order that worked to weaken it.

The CIW was created just to embrace the linkage that James is talking about, and therefore the mantra that I articulated from the Centre's foundation: "based in the humanities, embracing the social sciences, relevant to public policy and engaged with the interested public". I believe more than ever that any order that weakens these links is one that feeds into the deadening approach to holistic scholarship and understanding, something which I had the honour to be heir to during my decades at ANU. As for the future? Things may skip a generation or two, but, let me say, that, while the present may mostly belong to nonentities, the future belongs to you.

China Heritage in the Wairarapa

Today, I am taking advantage of this lecture to announce the launching of a new web-based project. This venture, created with John Minford, is called *China Heritage* (www.chinaheritage.net) and it went live today. It is a continuation of the China Heritage Project that I founded over a decade ago in 2005, as well as a continuation of my work on New Sinology, which formed the basis of that project. I am delighted that Callum Smith, the designer of this site who has worked with me since early this year, is here today.

In the introduction to the site I tell the story of my many years of collaboration with John Minford and the genesis of our Wairarapa Academy for New Sinology. In many ways John is the inspiration for this particular turn in my life and he and other New Zealand friends led me to relocate to the Wairarapa Valley over the Rimutaka Range northeast of Wellington.

Apart from work with a few chosen colleagues and scholars, our Academy is a virtual undertaking. *China Heritage* is the online home of our work and it will be complimented over the next year by three other interconnected sites, also designed by Callum. These are:

- *China Heritage Annual*, a New Series that revives *China Heritage Quarterly*, which went into abeyance in 2012. The first issue of the Annual, which I have been working on with the guest editors Yayun Zhu and Will Sima, focusses on Nanking 南京. [Planned launch March 2017]
- *A New Sinology Reader* will offer a practical guide to New Sinology. [Planned launch September 2017]
- *The Story of the Stone* 石頭記, created under the direction of John Minford, will offer a historically informed treasury about China's most famous novel, also known as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢. [Planned launch December 2017]

The Owl of Minerva

I have spoken in sombre tones about the present, but whereas I might not outlive the reign of Xi Jinping, or that of many of the mediocrities that now crowd the stage, you, at least most of you, probably will. You should prepare now and in the years to come for that future, and it is to that end that I've addressed you in this way.

Hegel famously remarked that: "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk." That is, wisdom — the owl of the goddess — only fully takes flight after the fact. It is still early in the day I have tried to describe in the above; it is a day that for many began with the morning sun of promise. It is a day that now proceeds under the pitiless glare of a scorching sun. Like all others, this day too will come to an end with the lengthening shadows of dusk. What will you all make of it when Minerva's owl is finally able to take wing? The shadow with which I began this talk, will perhaps offer a measure of clarity, or at least meaning.

I was named Geremie after the Jeremiah of the Hebrew Bible. It is said he was called to prophetic ministry by God in the year 626BCE. That makes this also an anniversary year for the man known as the "Weeping Prophet", an anniversary for the Jeremiahs of the world. As this year also marks the passing of one of the great poets and seers of our age, Leonard Cohen, a man steeped in Biblical and Talmudic tradition, as well as mysticism east and west, it seems even more fitting for me to end what is essentially my Jeremiad (that is, a "cautionary harangue") on Cutting a Deal with Xi Dada's China, with something from the Old Testament.

As chance would have it, this anniversary-laden year of 2016, also marks fifty years since I first heard Pete Seeger's song "Turn Turn Turn" as sung by Suzy Collins. The lyrics are taken nearly word-for-word from the Book of Ecclesiastes, perhaps one of the most Taoist works in the Old Testament:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, a time to reap that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.