

Abstract

Thousands of Chinese outside China have been writing in Chinese and other languages since the past century. Some wrote merely to record their personal experiences. Others wrote to express their thoughts and feelings. We are beginning to have some idea of the aspirations and limitations of these writers and their struggles to define their place in their respective communities and countries, and in the larger world of literature. Each writer is a Self with regard to his or her immediate migrant community. As a member of the community, the writer is likely to have a different Self in relation to other ethnic groups in the adopted country, especially toward the dominant majority that has the political power to define national identity for all minorities. An additional Other would be the images of China. Also, some submit themselves to the test of globalization. Their condition can be better understood through the old Chinese dichotomy of *nei* and *wai*, with many dimensions of what is within and what is without. This dichotomy of within-without allows us to recognize the dilemmas of overseas Chinese writers as subjective and dynamic phenomena.