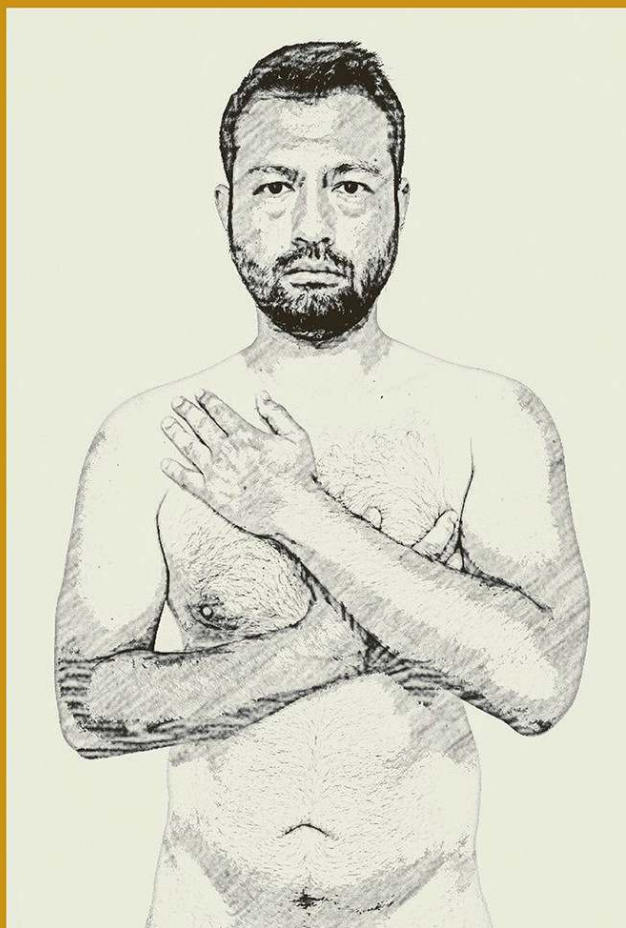


Le corps dans les littératures modernes d'Asie orientale :

discours, représentation, intermédialité



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Narrating Banishment by Means of the Body: Physical Reflections of Han Dong's Cultural Revolution

Martina Codeluppi

Memory and Body

- 1 Any individual is defined by his personal history, as past experiences constitute the landmarks of one's evolution. Therefore, it could be said that identity is essentially shaped in memory. The cognitive skill of remembering is based on the subject's interaction with the environment, which involves the body in both an active and a passive way. Senses allow the individual to perceive the surrounding space and, simultaneously, it is only by being "a body" that one is able to occupy a part of that space, to move and to take action. As a consequence, memory can be considered as an "embodied"¹ entity, emphasizing its interrelation with the subject's physical dimension. This paper aims to explore how the narration of memory conducted by means of the body, which is situated at multiple levels of the process of reminiscing, constitutes the quintessence of the author's self. The analysis of the novel *Banished!* / 扎根² by Han Dong 韩东 (b. 1961) will reveal the central role of the body in the narration of a sombre phase of contemporary Chinese history, that of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).
- 2 The link between memory and body has been explored from many perspectives, among which the phenomenological is particularly relevant for this study. The different phases of the mental procedure necessary for the existence of memory have been acknowledged by Henri Bergson (1896-1941), who distinguished between "pure memory" (*souvenir pur*), "image-memory" (*souvenir-image*), and "perception" (*perception*).³ Later, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) explored the relationship between body and recollection from the perspective of phenomenology, portraying in detail the multiple roles the body implicitly plays while performing the act of perceiving.⁴ Edward S. Casey (b. 1939) developed his contribution based on Bergson's

and Merleau-Ponty's postulation of the existence of different kinds of memory,⁵ further elaborating the difference between "body memory" and "memory of the body".⁶ More recently, Fuchs has investigated the connection between memory, body and mind, drawing on the domain of psychopathology.⁷ Indeed, the Cultural Revolution can be regarded as a traumatic experience. Berry adopted this perspective to provide insight into the literary and cinematic representation of this particular period of Chinese history,⁸ while Kleinman has investigated the reflection of its memory in the recollecting subject's body.⁹

- 3 These works provide the methodological framework for this study, which will explore the memory of the Cultural Revolution as it was carved in the author's body. First, the analysis will address the body as the means of perception of the surrounding environment, which allows the subject to mold his recollections. Next it will move to the level of the body as the object of memory, showing how the depiction of physical features conveys a concretized image of individuality. Finally, the significance of the physical dimension in everyday life during the Cultural Revolution will be examined, as it represents the embodiment of the self in a social system that in fact was founded on the annihilation of the individual. These steps will show how, in Han Dong's narration, the body represents at once the materialization of identity and the stronghold of individuality, in the context of a bewildering phase of contemporary Chinese history.

Han Dong's Memory of Banishment

- 4 Han Dong is regarded as one of the most representative authors of the so-called "late-" or "late-born generation authors" / 晚生代作家 / *wanshengdai zuojia*, who animated the Chinese literary scene at the end of the 20th century. The rejection of the literary tradition, as well as of the current literary system, marked this generation's creative production, which focused particularly on the individual dimension. Han Dong's voice is therefore characterized by a strong individualism and constant yearning for truth, which he expresses through fiction as well as through poetry. The representation of everyday life, carried out through a sapient use of language, constitutes the lifeblood of his poetics, reproducing the essentiality of the individual's experience by means of a "zero-degree narration" / 零度写作 / *lingdu xiezu*.¹⁰
- 5 Set at the time of the Cultural Revolution, *Banished!* tells the story of the Tao family / 陶 who, after being banished to the countryside, engage in an everyday struggle in order to connect with their new social context, and try by all means to "strike root" in the village of Sanyu 三余. The author's personal memories are merged with fictional elaboration, since the novel echoes his own experience of banishment. At the age of eight, Han Dong followed his family to the countryside of Subei / 苏北, where they were sent to be re-educated through labor. The depiction of the Cultural Revolution in *Banished!* is, therefore, a recollection of his memories as a child, and although the novel employs a third-person narrator and the point of view shifts from one character to another, the child Han Dong's eyes remain the primary source of the author's expression. In the act of remembering the daily challenges he had to face during the years of banishment, the body plays a central role, since any child experiences the world first and foremost by means of his body and his body memory.¹¹ So the physical dimension is crucial in both the building of the subject's recollections and in their subsequent narration through the literary text.

- 6 Despite the painful historical period in which it is set, Han Dong's novel is a rather non-traumatic story of fiction and recollection. Several studies, such as those by Wu Congcong and Li Renjie,¹² Gu Haiyang,¹³ and Deng Li,¹⁴ have investigated the relationship between the novel and the author's memory, exploring the intertwining of Han Dong's real experience and his fictional re-elaboration. The novel has also been the object of several studies that focus on the features of the author's language in terms of stylistic nuances¹⁵ or ideological influences.¹⁶ The *naïveté* of the child Han Dong is reflected in the lightness of the tones employed, and a subjacent wit often seeps from the narrated scenes. This peculiarity has been investigated by Gong Ailing, who focuses on the optimistic view that *Banished!* conveys despite the turmoil characterizing the historical background,¹⁷ and by Hunt, who analyzes Han Dong's humor in a comparative perspective.¹⁸ Notwithstanding their interest in the author's wish for individualism, these studies did not address the issue of subjectivity from the most down-to-earth approach, that of the body. The following analysis will investigate the different roles the body plays in reflecting the subject's recollection, showing the importance of the physical dimension in representing the "self" at different stages of the process of reminiscing.

The Body as the Perceiving Subject

- 7 Perception is the first phase of the interaction between the subject and the world. Thanks to one's senses, an individual is able to feel the surrounding environment in all of its manifestations. Merleau-Ponty opened his work *Phénoménologie de la perception* by pointing out the problematic definition of "sensation", which is at the basis of perception.¹⁹ A sensation concerns essentially the qualities of an object, what is there to be sensed, while the perception of those qualities entails an interaction with the perceiving subject, and is therefore related to the individual sphere. The concept of a "pure sensation" (*pur sentir*) which theoretically exists before being actually perceived, is not attainable in the real world.²⁰ Both sensation and perception are influenced by memory, the latter more than the former. This is due to the "association of ideas" the subject makes, bringing back his past experiences when facing a new one.²¹ In other words, memory affects the interaction between the subject and the environment at its very first stage. If perception already carries a strong individual connotation, the recollection of that perception amplifies it further. Bergson pointed out how "my perception [...] adopts my body as a center";²² therefore it is precisely in the description of the subject's bodily perceptions that the epitome of individual memory should be found.
- 8 Han Dong's recollection is based on his own perception of the village of Sanyu during the Cultural Revolution, which he had experienced during his childhood. His young age at the time affects the author's recollection in two ways: first, the relationship Han Dong originally established with the context he describes in the novel was direct, unbiased, and unmediated by any previous knowledge;²³ and second, a child's interaction with the world is based on sensory perception and corporal memory. As a consequence, the author's perspective on the socio-historical background of *Banished!* is characterized by innocence, and the body is the main channel through which he expresses his individuality. The child of the Tao family, Young Tao / 小陶 / Xiao Tao,

can be regarded as a projection of Han Dong himself, and the descriptions offered from his point of view are often rich in physical details:

His feet had not yet developed calluses, and the wheat stubble under foot jabbed his tender soles painfully. He walked with great care, not daring to lift his legs too high. Sometimes his feet touched sludge left by the river, and its coarse grains massaged his insteps pleasantly. Hobbling slowly and gingerly along, he soon got left behind. He asked September and little Dick to walk more slowly, but they paid no attention. In the end, the bright flashlight beam moved so far ahead that he was left to feel his way through the dark paddy fields.²⁴

他的脚很娇嫩，脚底没有老茧，一脚踩上粗硬的麦茬，便会疼得钻心。因此小陶走得十分小心，不敢把腿抬得过高。如果碰上被河水泡软的泥巴，粗糙的颗粒按摩着脚心，倒也非常的舒服。小陶趋利避害，举步维艰，因此落在了后面。他让九月子细巴子走慢一些，他们听而不闻。最后，那明晃晃的手电光移到前面去了，只留下小陶一个人在黑暗的水田里摸索。²⁵

- 9 When following his friends in the fields, young Tao remembers the feeling of the different surfaces he walked on, the pleasant massage of the mud after wheat stubble pierced his feet. In this respect, a further clarification is necessary: one must bear in mind that the relationship between body and memory is very articulated and memory possesses a layered structure entailing different kinds of mnemonic modes.²⁶ In particular, it is important to distinguish between “body memory” and “memory of the body.” The former is “intrinsic to the body, to its own way of remembering”;²⁷ it manifests itself at a physical level. Instead, the latter comprehends the “manifold manners whereby we remember the body as the accusative object of our awareness”,²⁸ and it is situated in the subject’s mind. Here we are dealing with a “memory of perception” that, according to Casey, constitutes a peculiar form of memory of the body.²⁹ Han Dong recalls his bodily sensations and employs them to reproduce young Tao’s perception of the rural environment.
- 10 The sensory details provided by young Tao endow the narrative with an exquisite touch of subjectivity, conveying a rounded image of scenes “filtered” through the child’s body:

They booked into a guesthouse, and Su Qun found an optician. It was only during the test that young Tao began to see his surroundings clearly and realized that Huaiyin was huge and unlike anywhere he had been before, even if it was covered in dust. He could see every tiny detail: a ray of sunlight slanting down to the floor tiles in a shop, specks of dust floating in the air. Young Tao’s head began to swim, but just as he was coming to grips with it, the test glasses were taken off and the world resumed its normal murkiness.³⁰

他们照例在一家旅社登记了房间。然后，苏群便领着陶去了一家眼镜店。只是在试镜时，小陶才看清了周围的景象，觉得偌大的淮阴的确非同一般，尽管尘土遍地。突然之间他变得明察秋毫。一道阳光此时倾泻在店堂里的地砖上，飘浮着丝丝缕缕的灰尘，直看得小陶头晕目眩。正当他试图克服不适看个究竟时，试戴的眼镜被取走了，世界又恢复了原先灰暗的面目。³¹

- 11 In this scene, the accurate depiction of the boy’s first experience of using eyeglasses does not leave anything to the imagination. The shock of seeing properly makes him remember every detail of the scene before him, and their reproduction in the text allows the reader to see through young Tao’s eyes.
- 12 The memory of perceptions and their description constitute the first level of the interaction between body and memory displayed in the narrative text. It allows the reader to empathize with young Tao and, consequently, to get closer to the author’s perspective.

Embodied Individualities

- 13 The role of the body in Han Dong's novel is not limited to the depiction of the subject's perceptions as a means of reminiscing. In fact, the body plays a crucial part as the object of recollection as well. Young Tao not only remembers his perceptions, but he also remembers his body acting in the scenes. In order to move to the next level of the analysis, the body must be conceived as a spatial entity, something that is "in place" and, more precisely, "the center of an oriented space".³² When depicting a scene or describing an action, the author often makes the characters' bodies a feature upon which the narration pivots. Young Tao's consciousness of his own body is one of the few certainties he has; he therefore turns his attention repeatedly to physical details. For example, scatological references are recurrent in *Banished!*,³³ and young Tao frequently associates this theme with the description of his everyday life. For example, in the following excerpt, the author depicts the boy's difficulties in relieving himself, which are the key to the whole scene:

When young Tao wanted to go to the toilet, Tao got Big Head to take him, and seven or eight other children tagged along behind.

Outside, in the brilliant moonlight, it was bitterly cold. Big Head took young Tao to where the night soil crock stood behind the house. It was enclosed by a fence made of maize straw; it was pitch dark inside, and there was a terrible stench. Young Tao was reluctant to go inside, so Big Head got him to squat on the ground outside. Young Tao hesitated. Big Head set an example by pulling down his own trousers. As the boy still wavered, the other children followed suit, revealing bare white buttocks. Then young Tao pulled down his own trousers and squatted, but he just could not get the poop out.³⁴

后来小陶要上厕所，老陶让大头把他带出去，跟出来的还有另外七八个孩子。

外面，月光如水，天寒地冻，大头领着小陶向屋后的粪缸走去。那儿围了一圈玉米秸的篱笆，里面黑胶胶的，一股臭味，扑面而来。小陶不愿进去解手，大头就让他在外面的空地上蹲下。小陶踌躇着，大头于是解了自己的裤子蹲下，以作示范。见小陶还在犹豫，另外那七八个孩子也都脱了裤子蹲下来，露出了白生生的屁股。小陶学他们的样子，脱了裤子就地蹲下，可他怎么也拉不出屎来。³⁵

- 14 Here the description goes beyond the level of perception, and the boy's body is set in a context of interaction with both the environment and the other character. The sensory experience is integrated into the memory of physiological needs, which are narrated in a humorous tone, typical of a child's perspective.
- 15 Nevertheless, young Tao's body is not merely a machine he has to keep in function, but also a cognitive instrument through which he learns how to adapt to country life. Life in Sanyu is difficult for a city boy, and one of the main obstacles is the physical resistance it requires:

Young Tao got chilblains every year. Sometimes they came after the cabbage washing, sometimes before. They became inflamed and went septic, and then Su Qun would bathe the sores with manganese dioxide and bind them carefully with a gauze dressing.

The sight of young Tao's hands covered in chilblains and swollen like steamed buns from constantly washing cabbages in freezing water distressed his grandparents so much that they would gladly have taken his place, but Tao refused to let them. He reasoned that his son was getting chilblains because he had not been sufficiently hardened, so it was all the more necessary that he should carry on.³⁶

小陶的两只手每年都生冻疮。有时候洗完腌菜就生了，有时候生了冻疮还要洗腌

菜。冻疮溃烂，流脓发炎，苏群就用灰锰氧水为小陶清洗疮口，然后再仔细地用纱布包扎好。有了这一后续措施，陶就再无后顾之忧了。一双生满冻疮肿得像馒头的烂手，在冷水里洗腌菜不止，看得陶文江、陶冯氏心疼不已，恨不得取而代之。可老陶不让。他的理论是：小陶之所以会生冻疮是因为缺乏锻炼，因此在冷水里洗腌菜就越发的显得必要了。³⁷

- 16 The iterative narration of the cabbage picking is accompanied by Tao's memory of the pain he suffered. The ache is the symptom of his inadequacy; his nerves tell him that he is still far from reaching the goal of striking root and become a villager. In this case, the recollection of his suffering body is directly related to pain memory. Painful experiences are remembered by the body itself,³⁸ hence "body memory" triggers the "memory of the body," which young Tao employs to express his personal experience of those cold winter days.
- 17 Although young Tao's own perceptions are predominant throughout the text, his body is not the only one used to define the individuality of a character. Han Dong's recollection draws on the corporal level, and this affects not only the depiction of his fictional alter ego young Tao, but also that of another key character, young Tao's grandfather 陶文江 / Grandpa Tao / Tao Wenjiang. He is presented as a maniac for cleaning, who has a tendency however to neglect his personal hygiene.³⁹ Grandpa Tao's faith in defeated nationalistic ideas⁴⁰ is only one of the features that differentiate him from the villagers, as well as from the other members of his family. The time spent in Sanyu changes the Taos' lives, affecting their habits as well as their identities. In the case of Grandpa Tao, the effects of banishment exacerbate the results of the aging process, and his appearance shows a gradual metamorphosis:

After three years in the country, things had changed a bit. [...] His white hair was tousled by the Sanyu winds. His wispy eyebrows had begun to droop, the hairs grew out of his nostrils, his whiskers went untrimmed, and, as the network of wrinkles deepened, his features grew more indistinct. He started to lose his teeth, and Sanyu had no dentist who could fit him with false ones. Grandpa Tao was also a chain-smoker, and the remaining front teeth were stained a tarry black. Nowadays when he laughed, he was just another gap-toothed, shrivel-mouthed old man.⁴¹

下放三年后，情形还是有了一些变化。[...] 他的白发被三余的风吹得有些凌乱，寿眉也开始垂挂下来。还有长出鼻孔的鼻毛以及未经修理的胡须，加上脸上日益深入蜿蜒的皱纹，陶文江的面孔开始有些不清不白了。再就是牙齿也开始脱落，三余也没有牙医可以装上假牙。陶文江日夜抽个不停，没掉的一两颗门牙也被熏得黑黢黢的，张嘴一笑，完全是个瘪嘴的老大爷了。⁴²

- 18 Social rhythm is intertwined with psychobiological rhythm,⁴³ yet the peculiar living conditions in the country do not merely influence this character's mind, they also accelerate the decay of his body. Grandpa Tao's scarce interest in body care reflects his degraded identity, which is forced to mutate according to the imposed change of location. Besides being a canvas on which the consequences of banishment in old age are displayed, the body also determines Grandpa Tao's personality. Scatological references are regularly associated both with his life, which he lives struggling with chronic constipation, and with his death at the hospital, which represents the tragicomic epilogue of his personal war:

Then, in the observation room, the stomach cramps returned. [...] Half an hour passed, and Tao felt something was wrong. He went in and found his father collapsed in the latrine hole. He was dead, mouth wide open, tongue protruding to one side, covered in shit from head to toe. Traces of it had even got into his mouth. [...] Why on earth did they constantly talk about shit in connection with Grandpa Tao? Why was his life story inextricably bound up with his bowel movements right

up until the moment he died? This is something that will no doubt puzzle my readers as much as it puzzles me. Poor Grandpa Tao: compulsively clean while he lived, condemned to die in his own excrement.⁴⁴

后来在观察室里，他再次感到腹中绞痛，于是又进了厕所。[...] 直到半小时后，老陶觉得情形不对，走进厕所，看见陶文江跌坐在粪沟里，人已经死了。他张着嘴，舌头吐向一边，浑身上下都是粪便。一些粪水甚至流进了嘴巴里。

[...] 这是怎么啦？他们总是提到大便，总是把它和陶文江联系在一起。为什么他的故事总是和大便秘缠不休，一直到死？关于这些问题，我和读者朋友们一样，思索至今而不得其解。可怜洁癖一生的陶文江就这么死在了粪便里。⁴⁵

- 19 After attempting suicide by swallowing two bottles of insecticide, Grandpa Tao is rushed to the hospital, where he dies in a rather theatrical way. The detailed description of his final disposition completes the “bodily portrait” of a man who was essentially defined by means of his corporal functions. The reason for this association, made explicit by the narrating voice, is found in body memory. Grandpa Tao’s physiological features shaped his habits and his personality through what Fuchs defines “incorporative memory”.⁴⁶ Hence, the character’s identity becomes, to some extent, subordinated to his body. The fictional reproduction of such a mechanism reflects, once again, the author’s attention towards physical elements, encouraging the identification of the body as the most direct expression of one’s individuality.

Physical Reflections of History

- 20 The depiction of the remembering subject’s sensory perceptions and the identification of the characters’ bodies with their individuality are not the only two results of Han Dong’s attention towards the body. *Banished!* is the product of the entanglement of reality and fiction; it is an example of the author’s tendency to intertwine his own experience with the characters’ stories.⁴⁷ It is based on the memories of his childhood, but the child’s and the adult’s points of view are inevitably superposed. Indeed, the novel represents as well a reflection on the Cultural Revolution from the perspective of a generation that is historically and artistically uprooted. The focus on the individual dimension is reflected on the central role played by the body in the depiction of the historical background. Physical labor, corporal punishment and resistance constituted the *leitmotiv* of banishment, which Han Dong describes in his own distinctive style. For example, when narrating the atmosphere in Sanyu primary school, the author depicts the punishments inflicted on negligent pupils, which terrorize young Tao:

Mr. Jin’s skills were manifested not only in games; he was also ingenious at devising punishments for his students. When students arrived late, he would chalk a wavy line on the blackboard and make them rub it out with their noses. He made the line as wiggly as possible, like the ripples of a stream. The students had to rush along, alternately standing on tiptoe and kneeling on the ground, sneezing as they went.

[...] Even more exciting was the punishment called “Doing Penance before Chairman Mao” on the mud wall above the blackboard hung a portrait of Chairman Mao, and the students being punished were forced to kneel in front of it by the two class monitors. The victims would often wail and beg for mercy and struggle to stand up, but the monitors, robust youths, would hold their hands behind their backs, press on their heads, and force them down. The reason for this pointless resistance was simple: under the victims’ knees was not the usual smooth mud floor but a heap of broken glass and tiles.⁴⁸

靳先生的智慧不仅体现在以上方面，惩罚学生他更是别出心裁。

学生迟到了，他就在黑板上用粉笔画一条曲线，让迟到的学生用鼻子擦掉。曲线

画得尽量弯曲，就像是小河里的波浪。学生忽而踮起脚尖，忽而又蹲下身去，忙得不亦乐乎，中途还得打几个喷嚏。

[...] 另一种惩罚方式更激动人心，叫做“向毛主席请罪”。

黑板上方的泥墙上贴着一张毛主席画像，受罚的学生在两个班干部的扶持下，在毛主席像前跪倒。跪倒的学生往往挣扎着要站起来，一面号陶不已、哭爹喊娘。执法的任务一般由身强力壮的班干部担任，他们反剪着受罚者，使劲地按着他的脑袋，终于又把他按下去了。

受罚的学生为何要做这无谓的顽抗呢？因为他的膝下并非是柔软的泥地，而是一小堆玻璃瓦砾。⁴⁹

- 21 The author's focus on details reproduces the visual shock experienced by young Tao when witnessing these scenes, suggesting a traumatic effect related to his identification with the suffering bodies. The fear of pain is what defines young Tao's memory of his school, and this strategy allows Han Dong to show how corporal punishments, even if not suffered by the remembering subject, affected individuals' memories of that era.
- 22 Another crucial aspect of young Tao's life during the Cultural Revolution is the emphasis his father puts on his physical training. In particular, Han Dong describes Tao's attempts to teach his son to swim, which he held to be a major skill that a boy should have, especially one living in the countryside:

Apart from encouraging his son to grow up brave, Tao also paid a good deal of attention to developing his physique. Young Tao needed to be strong and healthy to survive in Sanyu. It was no good being weak and weedy if he was to be a peasant engaged in manual labor.

[...] In all his years in Sanyu, young Tao never learned to swim, which was odd, considering there were places suitable for swimming everywhere and he had a father who was so keen on swimming. He not only could not swim in the river, but he could not swim in the village streams either. He not only did not know any swimming strokes, but he had not even learned to dog-paddle.⁵⁰

除培养小陶的勇敢品质外，老陶也很注意小陶的身体。小陶需要一副强健的体魄，才能适应以后在三余的生活。尤其是他准备当一个农民，作为一个体力劳动者，如此弱不禁风是不行的。

[...] 在三余的几年里，小陶始终没能学会游泳，这事着实有些奇怪。不仅由于可供游泳的沟渠河道遍地都是，还因为有老陶这样一个热爱游泳的爸爸。到后来，小陶不仅不能在水渠里游了，就是村上的小河沟里也不行。不仅不能游出各种姿势，就是狗刨他也没有学会。⁵¹

- 23 The accent on swimming is a legacy of Mao's teachings, through which he underlined the importance of physical exercise. Particularly significant in this respect was the episode that took place on July 16th 1966, when Mao Zedong celebrated his return to public life with a swim in the Yangtze River. This event triggered a swimming fever, which quickly spread to the whole country.⁵² Tao's predilection for swimming has, therefore, a historical reason, although one not explicitly divulged in the text. Moreover, when mentioning a poem by Tao's friend Hou Jimin / 侯继民, the narrator specifies that Hou's son, unlike young Tao, had learned to swim.⁵³ Han Dong uses this example to demonstrate how the value of an individual was often determined on the basis of his physical strength and skills, consolidating the idea that individual identity was subjugated to the body.

Conclusions

- 24 After reviewing the multiple connections between memory and body, this study has investigated the role of the body in Han Dong's fictional recollection of his experience

of banishment. Although *Banished!* should be considered as an *autonarration*, with the authenticity of its descriptions inevitably affected by the mediation of the literary text, the traces of the author's memory are nonetheless coded in his fictional depiction of the characters' lives during the Cultural Revolution. Han Dong's young age at the time influenced his interaction with the surrounding environment, which was based on his body as the primary source of knowledge, and characterized by the *naïveté* typical of an eight-year-old. The analysis here has been conducted on different levels, moving gradually from the remembering subject's body to the body seen as the object of his reminiscence. First, we have examined how the author's perceptions were reproduced in young Tao's descriptions, emphasizing the individual perspective Han Dong imposed when filtering the narrated scenes through the memory of the subject's body. Second, the study underlines the relationship between identity and body, pointing out the constant association of the characters' individualities with their bodies and bodily functions. Finally, the analysis addresses the issue of the body depicted as a key feature during the time of the Cultural Revolution, being at the center of both subjective impressions and objective value judgements.

- 25 Han Dong's novel *Banished!*, as a fictional elaboration of an autobiographical experience, is the result of a particular form of the reminiscing process, in which the distinction between memory and image, between reality and unreality, is blurred – in the same way that Ricoeur described in his work *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli*,⁵⁴ but to an even greater degree. Nonetheless, recollection is the method used by the author to depict his own portrait of the Cultural Revolution, and many clues related to his personal memories can be found throughout the text. According to Casey, “*there is no memory without body memory*”,⁵⁵ so the body must be the starting point for any kind of recollection. In *Banished!*, the importance of the physical dimension extends throughout the whole novel. The remembering subject's bodily feelings are the author's creative source, and the characters' identities are depicted as indissolubly related to their physical features. Moreover, the memories of a child experiencing the Cultural Revolution are interwoven with the author's portrait of the socio-cultural background of the plot. This accent on the body allows the author to enhance his individualism, while stressing the peculiar position of the subject in the factious society of those times.

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