

国家美术作品收藏和捐赠系列
牛文

谭平
主编

国家美术作品收藏和捐赠系列
National Artworks Collected & Donated Project

Niu Wen
牛文

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文化藝術出版社
Culture and Art Publishing House

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艺术家简历

Resume of the Artists

牛 文

1922年8月—2009年8月

山西灵石县人。1937年4月参加革命队伍。1938年6月入党，先后参加晋西北反“顽固”斗争、反“扫荡”战斗及百团大战。1940年9月随部队到延安。1941年6月进入延安鲁迅艺术文学院第5期学习。1943年7月毕业，先后在八路军一二〇师“战斗剧社”、晋西北鲁艺文化服务团、晋绥“七月剧社”、晋绥文联等从事专职美术工作，并担任晋绥文联秘书长。1945年12月调晋绥《抗战日报》《人民画报》《晋绥日报》任美术编辑。1949年10月随军南下四川重庆，先后任重庆《新华日报》《新华画报》《大众画报》美术编辑，西南区美协秘书长，中国美术家协会理事，中国版画家协会副主席、顾问，四川省文联常委、顾问，四川省美术家协会秘书长、副主席、名誉主席，四川省第三、四届政协委员，重庆市文联副主席、顾问，重庆市美术家协会主席、名誉主席，重庆市国画院院长，重庆市第八、九、十届人民代表大会代表。享受国务院政府特殊津贴专家。

其版画作品多次参加国内外美术展览并屡获奖项，被国内外美术馆、博物馆、美术院校及个人收藏。版画、国画作品多次进入北京、上海、广州、深圳、成都、重庆大型拍卖会。版画《丈地》被民主德国选作“德中友好月”邮票发行，并被中国革命历史博物馆收藏；《东方红太阳升》被北京人民大会堂选为西藏厅挂画，先后被联合国教科文组织、英国大英博物馆收藏；《朝阳》获“第六届全国美术作品展览”铜奖，并获日本日中艺术研究会金奖；《芳草地》获“第一届全国少数民族美术作品展览”表彰奖；《赛马图》获“第一届中国体育美术作品展览”银奖；《萧何月下追韩信》获“第九届全国版画展”优秀创作奖；《虹》获“第七届全国美术作品展览”铜奖；《藏书票》获“第四届全国藏书票展”荣誉奖。

先后应邀到苏联、捷克斯洛伐克、匈牙利、民主德国、南斯拉夫、越南等国家考察访问。名录《中国美术家辞典》《中国现代美术史》《当代书画篆刻家辞典》《中国现代美术家名鉴》《中华人物大典》等典籍。出版有《晋绥边区儿童活动画册》《牛文作品选集》《雪山红日》《木刻画片》《越南现代美术作品选》《牛文版画选集》等。

1988年被评为国家一级美术师，1991年获中国美术家协会、中国版画家协会联合颁发的“1931—1991年中国新兴版画杰出贡献奖”。

Niu Wen

August, 1922—August, 2009

Born in Lingshi County, Shanxi Province, he joined the revolutionary ranks in April 1937. In June 1938, he joined the Party and successively participated in the counter-diehard campaign, counter-“mopping-up” operation and Hundred-Regiment Campaign in Northwest Shanxi. In September 1940, he moved with the army to Yan'an. In June 1941, he entered the 5th phase of Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature. Graduated in July 1943, he worked in the Battle Theatre Society of 120 Division of the Eighth Route Army, the Lu Yi Cultural Service Group of Northwest Shanxi, the July Theatre Society of Jinsui and the Jinsui Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and served

as secretary-general of the Jinsui Federation of Literary and Art Circles. In December 1945, he was transferred as art editor of the *Counter-Japanese War Daily*, *People's Pictorial* and *Jinsui Daily*. In October 1949, he went south with the army to Chongqing, Sichuan Province. He was successively the art editor of Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*, *Xinhua Pictorial*, *Popular Pictorial*, secretary-general of Southwest China Artists Association, director of China Artists Association, vice-chairman and consultant of China Print Artists Association, standing committee and consultant of Sichuan Federation of Literary and Art Circles, secretary-general, vice-chairman and honorary chairman of Sichuan Artists Association, member of the 3rd and 4th CPPCC of Sichuan Province. Member, vice-chairman and consultant of Chongqing Federation of Literary and Art Circles, chairman and honorary chairman of Chongqing Artists Association, president of Chongqing Traditional Chinese Painting Academy, and the 8th, the 9th and the 10th people's representatives of Chongqing People's Congress as well as experts who enjoy special allowances from the Government of the State Council.

His prints have been displayed in many art exhibitions both at home and abroad and have won many awards. They have been collected by galleries, museums, art academies and individuals domestically and oversea. His prints and traditional Chinese paintings have entered large-scale auctions in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chengdu and Chongqing for many times. The engraving *Measure Land*, was selected as the stamp of "German-Chinese Friendship Month" by German Democratic Republic and collected by the Museum of Chinese Revolutionary History; the *Oriental Red Sun Rising*, was selected as the hanging painting of Tibet hall in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing and was successively collected by UNESCO and British Museum; the *Rising Sun* won the bronze prize of "the 6th National Art Exhibition" and won gold medal in Japan-China Art Research Association; the *Fragrant Grassland* won the award of "the First National Minority Art Exhibition"; *Horse Racing* won the silver prize of "the First Chinese Sports Art Exhibition"; *Xiao He Chases Han Xin under the Moon* won the excellent creation prize of "the 9th National Printmaking Exhibition"; *Rainbow* won the bronze prize of "the 7th National Art Exhibition"; and *Book Collection Ticket* won the honor award of "the 4th National Book Collection Ticket Exhibition".

He was successively invited to visit the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia, Vietnam and so on. The catalogue is included in the *Dictionary of Chinese Artists*, *History of Modern Chinese Art*, *Dictionary of Contemporary Calligraphy and Painting Seal Carvers*, *Famous Almanac of Modern Chinese Artists* and *Chinese Characters Dictionary*. His works *Jinsui Border Region Children's Activity Picture Book*, *Selected Works of Niu Wen*, *Snow Mountain Red Sun*, *Woodcut Pictures*, *Selected Works of Modern Vietnamese Art*, *Selected Prints of Niu Wen* and so on were published.

In 1988, he was awarded the first-class artist of the country. In 1991, he was awarded the "Outstanding Contribution Award of China's New Printmaking from 1931 to 1991" jointly by the China Artists Association and the China Print Artists Association.

版画捐赠作品

Donated Print Works



1946

练兵

Training Soldiers

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

13.8cm × 12cm



1947

保卫延安

Defending Yan'an

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

11.8cm × 14.4cm



1948

领回土地证

Receiving Land Certificate

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

14.8cm × 19cm



1949

军属给前方写信

Military Families Writing Letters to the Front

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

18.4cm × 27.3cm



1949

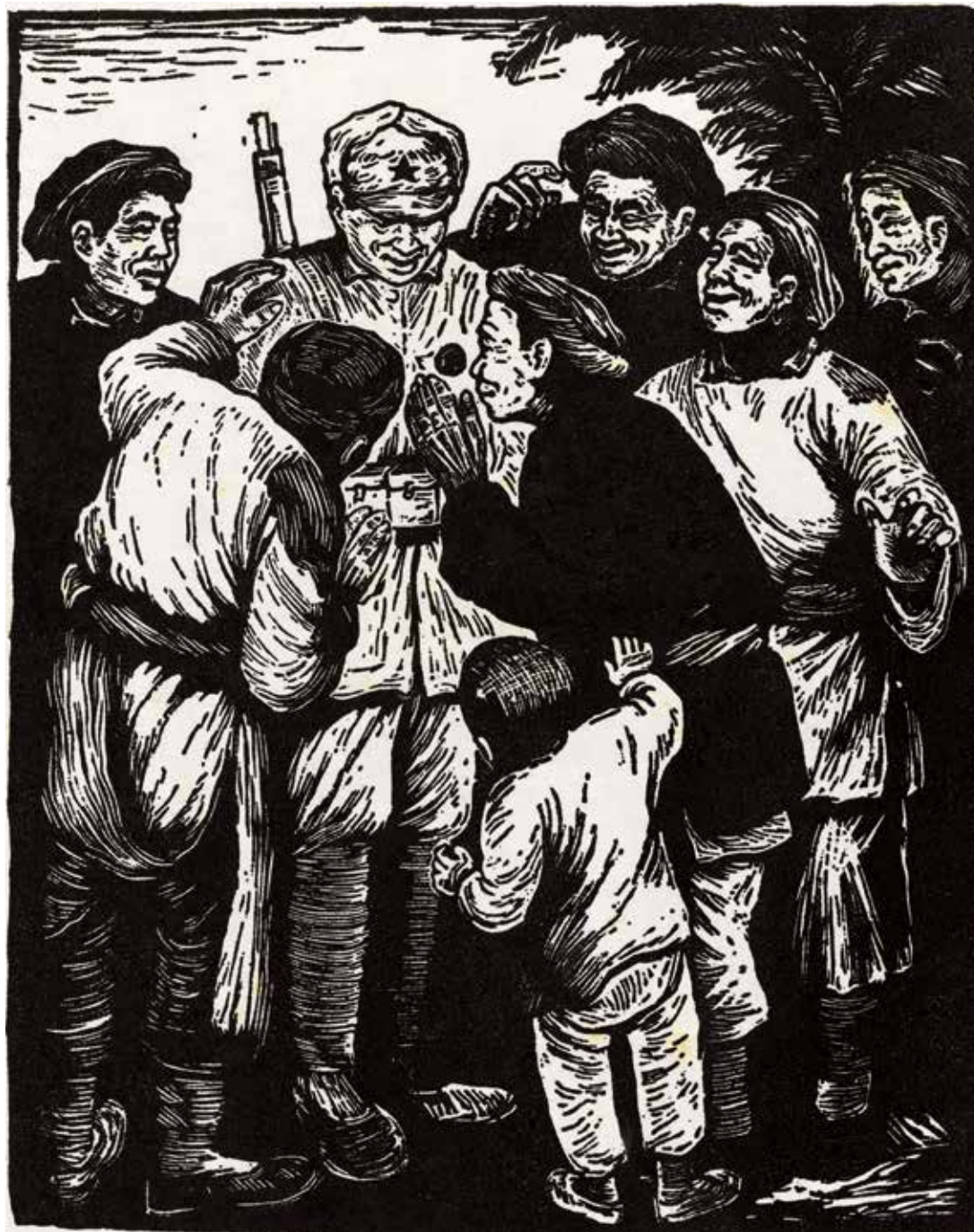
丈地

Measure Land

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

18.5cm × 29cm



1950

争看毛主席像章

To See Chairman Mao's Photo

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

21.1cm × 16.8cm





1954

北京大学的新生

Freshmen of Peking University

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

27.2cm × 46cm

1959

人造湖

Artificial Lake

套色木刻版画

A Colored Woodcut Print

27.7cm × 19.3cm







1959

吉祥如意遍地锦

Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade

套色木刻版画

A Colored Woodcut Print

31cm × 46cm

1959

东方红太阳升（又名《欢乐的藏族儿童》）

Oriental Red Sun Rising (also known as *Happy Tibetan Children*)

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

30.5cm × 32cm





1978

湖畔

Lakeside

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

35.5cm × 50cm



1980

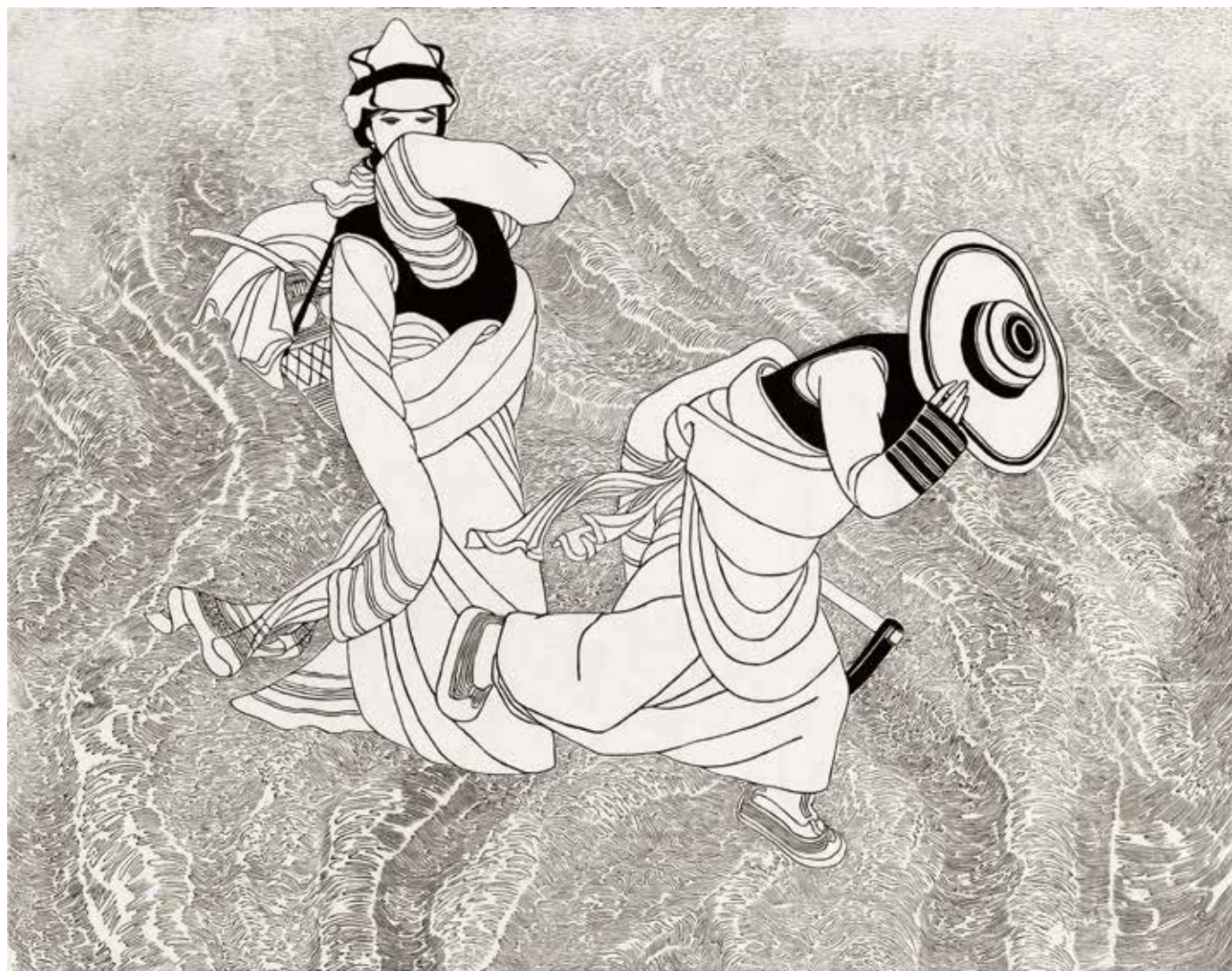
草地新征

New Expedition of Grassland

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

55.5cm × 83.6cm



1984

春雷

Spring Thunder

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

54.7cm × 69.6cm



1984

夏风

Summer Wind

黑白木刻版画

A Black and White Woodcut Print

56.8cm × 79.5cm



1984
朝阳
Rising Sun

套色木刻版画
A Colored Woodcut Print
56cm × 96cm



1985

赛马图

Horse Racing

套色木刻版画

A Colored Woodcut Print

96.8cm × 66.3cm





1989

虹

Rainbow

套色木刻版画

A Colored Woodcut Print

64cm × 99.4cm



家属访谈

Family Members' Interview

采访人：吴士新（中国艺术研究院副研究员）

受访人：牛小牛（牛文之子）

访谈整理：牛柯（牛文之孙）

Interviewer: Wu Shixin (Associate Research Fellow,
Chinese National Academy of Arts)

Interviewee: Niu Xiaoniu (son of Niu Wen)

Interview arrangement: Niu Ke (the grandson of Niu Wen)

吴士新：牛文先生是中国现代版画史上重要的人物之一，他历经了抗日战争时期、解放战争时期、新中国成立后等不同时期，牛文先生既是不同时期版画发展历史的见证者，也是重要的书写者。您能不能就这方面介绍一下牛文先生的版画成就？

牛小牛：牛文先生是伴随着抗战硝烟，以一位冲锋陷阵的战士和艺术家的双重身份一路走来，在被誉为新文艺圣殿的延安“鲁艺”历经三年的陶冶与磨砺，他一经踏出校门、走向抗战前线，便迅速成长为中国新兴版画运动的中坚力量与代表性人物。在长达半个多世纪的历史进程中，他秉承并不断拓展“延安画派”的精髓，用版画书写历史，以鲜明的时代特征、丰富的题材内容、多元的形式风格以及充满个性的版画语言，创作出许多脍炙人口的版画作品，其中不乏载入史册的经典代表作。牛文先生以自己骄人的艺术实践，不但表明了中国新兴版画运动所具有的强大的生命力与无尽的发展空间，同时也定位了他成为中国现代版画史上极具学术研究意义的版画大家。

走现实主义之路，彰显强烈的人民性

坚定地走现实主义的创作道路构成了牛文先生艺术人生的主线，细数牛文的创作经历与取得的成就，无不与他立足现实生活，把握时代的特征，紧扣现实的脉搏，从现实生活中发现、感悟、提炼感人的题材，揭示人与人、人与物之间的关系，充分表达人们的思想情绪与情感体验相关。无论是反映战争年代的作品《练兵》《保卫延安》和描绘土地改革那场社会大变革的《领回土地证》《丈量地》，还是和平建设时期以藏族地区为生活基地创作的反映藏族人民翻身得解放的作品《北京大学的新生》《东方红太阳升》等，以及后来改革开放时期，被誉为“花甲变法”以新的手法表现藏族人民新生活、新气象的《春雷》《朝阳》《赛马图》等，作品所描绘的时空、场景发生了截然不同的变化，但人民大众在他心目中的地位、现实主义的笔触却没有改变，每幅作品背后都有一段故事，都有一段亲历、亲见的感触与感动，因而作品细品起来备感真实、亲切而引起人们认知上的共鸣，为中国新兴版画事业留下了闪光的一页。

审时度势，锐意进取

牛文先生的艺术生涯是丰富多彩且卓有成效的，齐凤阁老师将此总结归纳为三个发展阶段和两次大的变异。三个发展阶段即牛文先生所经历的革命战争时期、新中国成立后的和平建设时期和“文革”后的改革开放时期，而两次大的变异正是战争年代向和平建设时期以及后续递进至改革开放时期，在版画手法风格上与时俱进的两次截然不同的突破。

牛文先生在战争时期，秉承延安画派画风，以鲜明的革命主题和内容，以晋西北所独具的地域文化特色和抗日根据地军民所特有的个性气质与审美习俗，所创作的作品都表现出生活气息浓郁、绘画语言淳朴、时代精神鲜明的特质。这些直接为战争服务，直接为唤起民众，直接反映抗战军民的向往与追求的作品，记录了那段历史并广受欢迎。

1949年中华人民共和国成立，牛文先生随军南下，由农村进入城市，由战争时期进入和平建设时期，深刻的社会变革，使得人民精神追求出现更新、更高的诉求。时代的更迭促成了第一次的风格突变。这时期相继出现的《当和平解放西藏的喜讯传到康藏高原的时候》（与李少言合作）、《金花》、《东方红太阳升》等，这些作品在艺术风格上，除仍然保持了战争年代的那种洗练、明快的特点外，从过去仅限于对现实生活的自然描绘上升到对客观对象的主动把握和创造。作品由叙事转向抒情和表现，画面更生动、更精致，还给予艺术自由想象、浪漫表现的广阔空间。

1976年“文革”结束后，祖国大地迎来改革开放的春天，一个崭新时代的来临，激发了第二次的风格突变。这时期相继出现的《草地新征》《朝阳》《赛马图》等，以一种前所未有的、与时代同步的全新的面目出现，这些作品虽然仍是描绘藏族人民的新生活，但过去那种自然主义成分已荡然无存，取而代之的是，对客观的描绘中融入更多合理的主观向往与追

求，把美的创造上升到更高的境界，从而使浪漫主义思想在现实主义创作中得到极大发挥，使观赏者得到超越视角直观以外的精神陶冶与享受。

每当一个新时代的来临，都能见到牛文先生不辱使命、砥砺前行、求新图变、勇立潮头的身影。可以说每次艺术风格的突变，都意味着是一段否定、放弃过去已完备创作素材的痛苦过程，都是一段承受成败煎熬考验的过程。强烈的忧患、思变意识与勇于进取之志，带来的是更多的独到的艺术感悟与新的价值取向，从而迎来每个时代都有与之相呼应的优秀作品，以此从一个侧面明示与推动中国新兴版画运动的前行与发展。

用民族语言，讲民族故事

牛文先生出生于山西一个偏僻且乡土“情艺”浓郁的小山村，乡间林林总总的民间年画、剪纸、柜贴、门神，无处不在，俯首可得。邻里家的婶婶、大姐们都是心灵手巧的能手，而牛文的母亲更是远近闻名的、人称“一把刀”的剪纸好手，在这五彩七色的民俗民间艺术的熏染、浸润中，打小就萌生了对绘画艺术强烈的喜好与痴情，正如牛文先生所说：“我爱这些画，也爱这些作画的人，他们是我学习做人的启蒙老师。”可见如此深厚的民族民间艺术情结，必定伴随牛文的艺术征程而一路同行。

牛文先生自1937年参加抗日队伍直至1949年南下四川的12年，其中除了两年多在延安“鲁艺”学习，其余近10年是在晋绥抗日根据地度过的，也就是这10年他一直在养育、培植他在那块热土上艺术耕耘，打小的感受和喜爱的民间艺术的形式得到尽情发挥并倾注于作品之中。《木刻组画——新窗花》（4幅）描绘的是边区人民的新生活，其表现形式直接借用民间剪纸样式与西方木刻相融合，使得作品既有朴实、明快、简洁的剪刀味，又有西方木刻的精细、洗练的刀刻美。《庆胜利》表现的是边区军民欢庆胜利的一个场面，作者汲取了民间剪纸与年画淳朴、明朗、饱满、强烈的格调，使得画面新颖，形象突出，主题鲜明、喜庆，富有浓郁的装饰性。在特殊的年代，因为对民间艺术那份特别的感情，以及人民群众的喜闻乐见，牛文所创作的作品都能找到本民族民间艺术的影子。

牛文先生1949年南下四川，即以藏族聚居地区作为生活创作基地，开始长达半个多世纪乐此不疲的历程。随着长期深入藏区，一幅幅从不同角度直面藏区的现实生活，用写实手法描绘藏区淳朴天然的人情风貌，具有强烈民族性、地域性、时代性的版画作品问世，早期的有表现藏族群众新生活的《学医归来》（与李少言合作）、《北京大学的新生》等，多幅描绘藏区风物景象的《山村夕照》《康藏道旁》等，尔后西藏民主改革后，反映藏族人民一步跨千年的新气象、新希望的《吉祥如意遍地锦》《东方红太阳升》，以及改革开放后，牛文在版画风格和形式上发生变异，创作了以明清线刻精细清秀的韵致与现代版画大块黑白强烈对比相融合的新作《朝阳》《赛马图》等。在牛文这一系列的藏区题材作品中，所表现的人物，所讲的故事中有一特别的现况，那就是更多地出现藏族妇女的形象，对藏族妇女给予更多的关注、同情、尊重，这来源于牛文多年来的体察感悟，藏族妇女世代代生活在社会的最底层，成为忍辱负重的弱势群体，但她们在家庭中起着绝对的支撑作用，她们健美的身躯和博大的母爱，哺育繁衍了勤劳勇敢的高原民族，她们相聚而歌、相携且舞的天性，深深感染打动牛文的心，他别无选择地将藏族妇女这种藏文化极为特殊的一个载体，以及这种雪域高原上独特的风情作为长久的命题，足见其意愿深长。牛文先生以长期深入藏区的全新感受与体验，将藏族人民特有的生活状态、特殊的风俗习惯、独特的民族气质，以及对新时代、新生活的向往与追求，真实地嵌入版画作品之中，用民族语言，讲民族故事，从而引发人们的关注与共鸣，得到了广泛的认同与肯定。

博采众长，兼收并蓄

1985年的“八五美术新潮”后，各种西方文艺思潮涌入国门，牛文先生并不以为这是洪水猛兽，他认为，多元化的社会必然产生与之相适应的多元化文化艺术，东西方文化的激烈碰撞与同台打擂，表明它们各自都有受众，都有市场，都有存在的价值，它们唯一的冲突是，

各自练好内功，争取受众，优胜劣汰，同时他还认为门类繁复的西方艺术形式的进入，为我们带来认识、了解以及有选择地借鉴和吸收的千载难逢的机会。

牛文先生这种敞开胸怀拥抱世界、与世界对话兼收并蓄的理念，早在20多年前就已具备并付诸行动。1960年牛文与李少言带领重庆市杂技团赴苏联、匈牙利、捷克斯洛伐克、民主德国等访问演出三个多月，在东欧腹地利用多种机会，第一次直接观摩触碰到西方多种绘画艺术形式以及许多不同风格的作品，着实开阔了眼界，扩大了知识面，特别对抽象派绘画艺术留下了深刻印象，这种艺术完全打破了强调主题写实的局限，把艺术基本要素进行抽象的组合，创造出抽象的形式，因而突破了艺术必须具有可以辨认形象的藩篱，开创了艺术新的发展天地。这次亲身亲历的体验为日后借鉴的举措埋下了伏笔。出国访问回来的1961年，四川版画家李少言、牛文、吴凡、李焕民、宋广训、正威、吴强年、徐匡等八位，接受了为长篇小说《红岩》创作版画插图的任务。牛文是插图作者中唯一与红岩烈士有关系的作者，烈士杨汉秀就是牛文延安“鲁艺”的同班同学。牛文于1949年12月6日南下到达重庆后，听说老同学杨汉秀被关押在“中美合作所”并遭大屠杀，就紧急赶往大屠杀现场寻找老同学，当时重庆市军管会正组织人员在现场对烈士遗体进行清理、登记、收殮、装棺工作。牛文在寻找途中，恰遇杨虎城将军殉难地正在清理杨虎城和小萝卜头一家三口的遗体，当时对年仅八岁的小萝卜头遭杀害且惨不忍睹的境况留下了深刻印象。这就成为牛文创作《红岩》版画插图必然选取的人物原型。《红岩》插图《胜利》描绘的是一名女烈士昂头挺胸高举五星红旗迎接胜利的场面，人物是写实的，她是江姐，她也是杨汉秀，她更是千千万万为人民的事业抛头颅、洒热血的革命先烈。值得注意的是，画面的背景采用了抽象派绘画艺术的形式，以小圆口刀刻成的流动的线条充溢全幅，康宁老师在一篇文章中就此写道：“那灰色的线条和刀痕是什么？是风？是云彩？是火光还是硝烟？或许它们什么都不是，抑或又全都是。正是这种非确定性、非具象的处理使得它有某种抽象的意味，脱离和超越了具体的场景和事件，具体的人和物的描绘，升华了作品的主题，成为一种更为深刻的、涵盖面更为宽广的象征和寓意，这是作者的激情与理想、精神与情怀的迹化。”牛文的另一幅《红岩》插图是《小萝卜头的梦》，康宁老师也有论述：“作品《小萝卜头的梦》就带有更为强烈的主观色彩。今天看来，或许我们可以说它具有某种超现实主义的因素。当然这和作品所表现的主题与内容是相一致的。小萝卜头在狱中梦境的表现，恰好符合了作者个性特征中蕴含的浪漫主义精神和从民间艺术中汲取的大胆夸张的手法和丰富的想象力。黑压压的一片牢房，一把巨大无比的铁锁把大门紧锁，两只象征黑暗势力的秃鹰恶狠狠地盯着一个孤立无援的狱中囚徒……作品深刻地体现了在黑暗笼罩下一个幼小的弱者的绝望与希望的交织，寄予了作者沉重的思考与关注、同情。画面构图同样采用了极其饱满壅塞的方式以增加压抑感。处理手法上，树、房屋等大胆汲取了民间美术的造型方法。”

牛文先生在两幅《红岩》插图作品中，首次大胆尝试将西方绘画艺术形式元素进行嫁接融合，其形成的独特的艺术手法，因有别于其他几位版画家现实主义手法而迥异其趣，就整体而言起到意想不到的效果，正如齐凤阁老师在一篇文章中所言，牛文的两幅《红岩》版画是从艺术手法上丰富了整套作品。

1981年牛文先生赴南斯拉夫卢布尔雅那市，参加“斯洛文尼亚第十四届世界版画展”，并以中国评委的身份与来自南斯拉夫、法国、英国、西班牙、阿根廷等七国代表组成评奖委员会，对展览展出的61个国家共584位版画家的1547件作品进行一、二、三等奖的评选。这是一次难得的全面认识和了解国外版画发展现状、各种流派特色以及发展趋势的绝好机会。牛文在回国述职报告中提及，世界版画艺术形式也与各国人民的艺术欣赏趣味、欣赏习惯相背离，大都丧失了各国的民族艺术特色，成为“世界艺术语言”了！抽象派画家离开生活和具体形象，追求形式美，以抽象的点、线、色块的种种变换组合，表现很难理解的抽象观念……报告还提及，在大量“新”“奇”“怪”的作品中，也确有某些新形式的创造和发现，为满足人们美的欣赏要求，为丰富世界版画艺术形式，做出了自己的贡献。事情总是一分为二的，这些画家献身艺术的事业心，不畏艰难的艺术探索精神以及艺术创新的勇气和毅力，仍是十分感人的，如果善于学习，中国画家应该能从中得到某些有益的启示。牛文在随后的1984年创作的版画《秋月》正好回应了上述报告中表述的观点。《秋月》描绘的是藏族地区

的田园风光，画面借用抽象的绘画语言，依靠单纯的形式组合，以独立的显示形式，极为自由、大胆地将现实物象中的天空、田野、农作物、土堆、土坎、凹地等，虚拟概括为黑、白、灰、点、线、面以及长方形、三角形等形体，形成天、地、物一种和谐、统一的形态，而占据画面中间显见位置的身着藏式服饰、农家所特有的、设计精巧的稻草人与天空中一轮弯月，却做写实的处理，这一实一虚，这以实带虚，生发了一种内在的呼应、烘托与联想，使得生僻、艰涩的抽象绘画语言有了解读的空间，使得审美取向的扭曲化为舒展，在不打破人们欣赏习惯的临界点上，融入点缀外来绘画元素，从而提供一种不一样的新颖别致的艺术体验与感受，这就是《秋月》的成功之处。

同样在 1985 年创作的《赛马图》和在 1987 年创作的《新路》都表现出对外来艺术的接纳与嫁接，都表现出牛文晚期版画不仅在形式上，而且在精神、观念上实现了东方意象艺术的现代转型。

牛文先生在不同时期，注重他山之石，为我所用，博采众长，兼收并蓄，经过取舍、提炼、加工、融合，不断有不同风格的作品问世，不断丰富了自己的绘画形式和手法，也为人们不断提供全新的艺术感受与形式多样的精神食粮。

吴士新： 艺术为工农兵服务，版画成为特殊时期对敌斗争的武器，您对此如何理解？

牛小牛： 版画确是在那非常特殊的战争年代，成为非常特殊且最为有力的文化武器。抗战时期，延安及各个抗日根据地生活条件极为艰苦，物资极为匮乏，能就地取材满足绘画条件的非木刻画莫属，木刻刀、柳木板、土纸、土油墨等都可自制。木刻画的基础学习也较易，只要有点绘画基础，有人指教，上手很快，而版画的复制，可大量印制，能够更快、更广泛行达及众，这种种因素使得木刻成了为革命战争服务的首选艺术形式与重要宣传工具。当年牛文的作品除了木刻画之外，其他如宣传画、年画、漫画、连环画、人像画，报刊书籍插图、报刊美术字刊头题花、报刊上的地图，设计绘制边区钞票广告商标、对敌宣传的传单，以及事无巨细为边区机关刻制公章、饭票、粮票等，无不使用木刻的形式，无所不用其极。这些用木刻版画形式表现多种内容的战争中的人和事，既表明了木刻版画作为一门大众艺术所具有的力量与魅力，也表明了民众对木刻版画所具有的特殊的感情与依附。

山西省长治市武乡县“八路军太行纪念馆”，是一座全面反映八路军抗战历史的革命纪念馆，在展出的珍贵历史资料和革命文物中，有一张纸质传单，尺寸为 25.3 厘米 × 22.5 厘米，由 7 幅连环画构成，名字是《不当顽固投八路，工作回家两自由》，这是牛文和苏光于 1946 年以木刻版画的形式制作的进行统战宣传的传单，内容是八路军与山西的顽固军在受到老百姓拥戴以及衣食住行上的对比，以达到对顽固军的宣传教育和感化，希望他们到八路军的队伍中去。当时传单印制发放数量很大，产生了很好的反响与效果。

牛文先生曾经回忆，1946 年在晋绥边区兴县高家村办的那份通俗性读物——《人民画报》，其内容是以连环画、木刻、漫画、剪纸等形式为主，紧密配合当时的政治动态与任务，及时反映边区各地部队民众的对敌斗争、支援前线、军民团结、抗旱度荒的情况，画报图文并茂、通俗形象，内容都是边区军民身边的事，读起来有一种特别的亲切感，因此深得边区军民的喜爱。画报每半月出一期，因当时条件有限，一般是给边区党政军机关和有关部门以及各村镇人群聚集张贴。画报每期分发完后，总有人堵在门口索取，其中不乏走了几十上百里地、带着干粮赶来的乡亲，因画报确实没有了，总算把一批一批的乡亲劝走了，可第二天一开门，他们又在门口站着等着，说是村里乡亲们托付了的，实在没脸空着手回去。乡亲们在门外冻了一夜，牛文看着他们那期待的目光，不禁潸然泪下，二话没说赶紧加印。当看到远道而来的乡亲拿着画报心满意足快步而归时，牛文说：“我真感觉到心头热乎乎的、肩头担子沉甸甸的。”

2017 年 12 月我曾回访革命老区兴县高家村，只要是村里老人，问起牛文，晋绥报社的，画木刻画的，他们都记得，“是那个大个子吧，人挺和善的，进院就帮忙扫地挑水，还帮我们下地拾掇庄稼”，“我们三三两两经常去看他们用刀子刻画，他们用的木版还是我们帮忙推平修整的”。乡亲们边说边把我带到他们曾经工作和住宿的地方一一指认。当来到村中心的小广

场靠西边一溜墙壁上，挨着画有2米多大的版画，有力群的《送马》《帮助群众修理纺车》，有李少言的《黄河渡伤员》，有牛文的《丈地》《领回土地证》等。乡亲们说：“他们人走了，但这些木刻画却留下来一直陪伴我们，天天来这里转转，心里头踏实。”

当一本通俗读物、一幅版画作品与民众的心紧紧联系在一起，融入他们的生活，并成为他们的一种生活方式与态度时，这种文化现象就充分体现了木刻版画艺术作为一种特殊武器的力量与自信。

吴士新：解放战争时期，牛文先生创作了《丈地》，以及新中国成立后创作的《东方红太阳升》，都产生了巨大社会反响，能否谈一下这两件作品的创作过程及其历史意义？

牛小牛：1947年，中国人民的解放战争发生了历史性的转折，人民解放军由战略防御转入战略反攻，“打倒蒋介石，解放全中国”的奋斗目标已摆在全国人民面前。为达成这一历史性的伟大目标，党中央审时度势及时发出了解决农民土地问题的著名的《五四指示》，借以解放和动员千百万受奴役、受压迫的农民群众，实行耕者有其田，为发展农业生产，支援前线，夺取全国解放而奋斗。由此一场人类历史上史无前例波澜壮阔的土地革命运动，在中国大地上拉开了帷幕。

是年5月，正在晋西北兴县《晋绥日报》担负晋绥《人民画报》采编工作的力群、苏光、牛文，接到上级指示，停办晋绥《人民画报》。力群、牛文参加“晋绥边区崞县代县土改工作团”，苏光分到晋南九分区参加土改。晋绥《人民画报》自1946年1月创办，至停刊历时一年多，出版32期，他们为刊物付出了多少努力，建立了深厚感情，一下停刊，于心不忍不舍，但参加土改这一任务是千载难逢的机会，于是欣然服从命令。

6月，“晋绥边区崞县代县土改工作团”到了崞县，力群分配到前砂城村，牛文分到后砂城村，各自组队的有边区“七月剧社”、公安局等人员。进村后按计划住进老百姓家里，与他们同吃同住同劳动。土改工作大概经历：先期访贫问苦，宣讲政策，发动群众，使得村民阶级觉悟不断提高，政治热情高涨，农民协会、妇女会、民兵队纷纷成立，奠定了土地工作深入发展的坚实基础；随后划分阶级成分，逐户审议，民主评定，厘清阶段阵线；召开控诉斗争地主大会，诉阶级苦，算剥削账，群情激愤的人们因翻身当家做主人而扬眉吐气；紧接着是没收和分配地主土地、财产进行再分配；最后是复查总结和动员生产等。牛文在完成主要工作的同时，还为村里画壁画、写标语，丰富村里的文化生活。

牛文先生亲历一年多的土改工作结束。但置身于这场中国近现代农村最重要的变革的那些日日夜夜中，时时刻刻都沉浸在亢奋中，农民们那解放了的对土地的渴望，对分得土地后发自内心的喜悦，以及积极生产支援前线的高涨热情，这些在视角上的冲击、在心灵上的碰撞，久久无法释怀，正如牛文所言：“我就是闭着眼睛，仅凭默写和记忆，即可将土改中那些场景的细节和人物的音容笑貌刻画出来。”于是，连续创作出以土改为题材的《领回土地证》《军属给前方写信》《听胜利消息》《丈地》等。

《丈地》是以解放区画派传统的现实主义手法，选取大场面的构图、复杂的人物组合，对土改中农民丈量分配土地的情节做直接描述，表现了受益农民对土地分配中实际丈量家庭面积的关注与争议，以及有序的说服与裁判，作品在构思、构图、人物造型、黑白灰韵律以及刀法等环节进行了艺术的整体经营，着力塑造了晋西北农村中的农民在土改中那清新浓郁的乡土气息和质朴淳厚的生动形象，从一个侧面形象典型地再现了中国农村曾经经历的那场开天辟地的社会大变革实况。

《丈地》一经发表，作为中国土地改革时期有影响的版画作品被多种报刊转载。1951年初，国家文教委经民主德国征询画作意见，将古元版画《毛主席像》、牛文版画《丈地》推荐给民主德国。同年6月27日民主德国在中国共产党建党30周年前夕，发行了一套题为“德中友好月”邮票，邮票全套共3枚，第一、第三枚图案采用古元版画《毛主席像》，第二枚图案采用牛文版画《丈地》。这是新中国成立后第一套反映中国共产党活动的外国邮票，也是新中国成立后第一套反映中国题材的外国邮票。版画《丈地》也因此被介绍到国外。

谈到藏族题材版画《东方红太阳升》，牛文对藏族地区的情结，最早还得追溯到抗战时

期在延安“鲁艺”学习期间的1941年的一天，一次偶然的机会，牛文在学校的图书馆中看到一本发黄的地理小册子，在翻阅中一下子被书中对西藏地理风情的介绍所吸引，平生第一次知道，在祖国西南边陲还有这么一个遥远而神秘的地方，壮观的雪域高原、多彩的民族文化深深打动了牛文的心，一种强烈的一探究竟的冲动被深深埋在心底。

1949年中华人民共和国成立，牛文先生随军南下四川，来到西南重镇重庆，新的地方、新的工作稳定后的1951年，得悉人民解放军十八军进军西藏的消息，即申请以《新华日报》记者采访的名义进藏，获批后与同事谭学楷在这年10月第一次踏上进藏征程，终于实现了十年前的约定与夙愿。

牛文第一次进藏，条件异常艰难，翻雪山、蹚冰河，在挑战生命禁区的同时，也为藏区所特有的蓝天白云、神山圣湖所震撼、折服，特别是亲眼见证解放军和平解放西藏，为灾难深重的藏族同胞带来了曙光，带来了希望，在一次次与藏族阿爸阿妈深情拥抱离别之时内心的煎熬，也一次次坚定了用刻刀、画笔来描绘这神奇的土地与在这片土地上千百年来繁衍生息的人们。自打第一次进藏后，一发不可收拾，年年少则三个月，多则半年进入藏区。有人问：“你放着大城市舒坦的日子不过，为啥非要去吃那常人难以承受的苦头呢？”牛文说：“自每次从藏区回来不到一个月就又想阿爸阿妈了，那里有我感情的寄托，那里有艺术创作取之不尽的资源与素材，那里需要把他们闭塞的不为人知的风土人情介绍给外面的世界。”

在进藏初期，牛文有过困惑与纠结。当时解放军虽然和平解放了西藏，党的阳光照到了青藏高原，虽然出现一些新的变化，但黑暗的农奴制并未打破，农奴们仍生活在水深火热之中，此时牛文在连续创作《当和平解放西藏的喜讯传到康藏高原的时候》（与李少言合作）、《北京大学的新生》、《学医归来》（与李少言合作）等表现一些新事物的作品后，似乎有什么难言之隐，人为地将目光转向藏区的风物景象，连续创作了《村头》《日喀则一隅》《山村夕照》《藏族农家》《康藏道旁》等，这些作品以藏区景色景物为主，虽然笔调细腻，明暗层次丰富，有一种浓郁的藏乡气息与黑白交织的韵律美，但难以掩饰画面中些许深沉与凝重。牛文此时的心情是压抑的、沉闷的。

事态的转机发生在1959年，中央人民政府与人民解放军平息了以达赖为首的西藏反动上层集团组织的叛乱，实行民主改革，彻底废除了封建农奴制，奴隶们砸碎了千年锁链，第一次当家做了主人。喜讯传来牛文如释重负，为藏族同胞们从此真正走上幸福之路而欢欣鼓舞。而《东方红太阳升》正是在这喜庆、欢快的气氛中问世的。

据李焕民回忆，牛文与李焕民在阿坝俄尔雅一个藏族寨子体验生活，住了半年，“一天听说寨子里办了一个托儿所，我们就去参观。托儿所在一个古老的藏式房子里，我们上得楼去，只见老师站在中间打拍子，孩子们围着老师边唱边跳，十分有趣，我们画了一些速写。准备走的时候，老师和孩子们送我们出来，在院坝里，孩子们又把我们围在中间，跳了一曲又一曲，我们在中间都站累了，孩子们还未尽兴，并且引来不少藏族老乡围观，气氛热烈”。看着这些可爱的孩子们的欢快、兴奋的面庞，稚拙细腻的舞姿，实在令人感动。当夜牛文失眠了，他想得很多，有“话”要说，又不知怎么说。不久，草图出来了，在石头寨子面前一群儿童在跳舞，虽然真实，但很平淡，最多是幅风情画，引不起读者情感的波澜，牛文很苦恼，“怀了孕”却“生”不出来。美术创作就是这样，如实描写，并不能表达你来自多方面的感受，更无法倾诉你对生活广泛的联想和思考。此时，如实描写反而像一个牢笼，把你关在里面。这时的画家就像笼子里的狮子，焦躁地转着圈，低哮着寻找突破口。牛文从藏区回来后，仍未找到突破口，无可奈何地把素描稿翻刻到木板上，反复修改，越画越没有信心，最后只好放弃。终于有一天，“众里寻他千百度，蓦然回首，那人却在灯火阑珊处”。牛文把全部背景去掉，在跳舞的孩子们中间，加进老师和风琴，从此画稿走上了正路，越画越深入，越深入主题越鲜明，孩子们也越来越生动，作者的激情随着音乐和舞姿跃然纸上。画面的黑白处理、刀法也都有了生命，哪怕是有意无意留下的刀痕都在韵律之中。

主题统率着版画语言，版画语言体现着主题，使得作品从生活真实上升到艺术境界，成为既有审美价值又有时代气息的艺术精品。同时作品的成功，使牛文摆脱了主题及情节性的严格规定和人物造型的分割，在意境的着意烘托和画家个性情感的表现上，开始步入了一个较为自由的境域。这件作品的造型与形式手法，都在全方位突破细节描绘的束缚。牛文给自

己的艺术带来了想象和浪漫主义表现的广阔空间。

作品完成后开始定名为《欢乐的藏族儿童》，但牛文一直耿耿于怀，总觉得意犹未尽，总觉未能完整表达创作的初衷。那时每天早7时，中央人民广播电台都准时播送《东方红》曲目，这一平时天天听到的曲目，今天却有一种异样的感受，特别入心，特别亲切，瞬间心中一亮，嘿！这不是千探万寻的画名吗！“东方红太阳升”这句人们广为熟识且朗朗上口的歌词与作品喻义贴切契合浑然一体，言简意赅地点明了作品主题，意味深长地表达了藏族人民的心声，充分表明了藏族人民的道路越走越宽广，也揭示了藏族人民苦尽甘来的历史必然趋势。《东方红太阳升》与同期完成的《吉祥如意遍地锦》，参加了“第三届全国美术作品展览”，获得与会专家与观众们的认可与好评，随后被北京人民大会堂选作西藏厅挂画，并被联合国教科文组织、英国大英博物馆等收藏。有意思的是，大英博物馆在收藏这幅画时，给出的收藏证填写的画名是《欢乐的藏族儿童》，这表明他们认可这幅画，但不认可改名，这或许是东西方对汉字内涵外延理解上的差异，或者说是一种政治趋向的异同。

吴士新：改革开放后，版画的历史使命发生了改变，牛文先生的创作方向也出现了重大改变，能不能谈一下牛文先生这一时期的变化情况？

牛小牛：牛文先生在“文革”后的改革开放时期，在创作方向及风格方式上，发生了不同于以往且令人耳目一新的变化，他以一种全新的思考与版画形态，完全颠覆了以往的创作模式，颇具震撼与里程碑意义。这一被版画界盛誉，牛文先生花甲之年的“花甲变法”的起因，最早还应追溯到“文革”初期。

“文革”开始，牛文遭受不白之冤身陷囹圄，停止工作与创作。牛文说：“你能停止我的工作，但总不能遏制我的思想。”在这难得的空闲时间，牛文细细反思一路走来的创作之路的坎坷与收获，很快意识到随着时代的推进应该有新的作为、新的突破，但这个突破口选在哪儿呢？前提应该是多种形式的组合，在反复思索比对中，曾想到借助长年熟识的民间美术剪纸、皮影等形式，也曾想到引入曾经驾驭过的西方抽象派技法，与此同时也想到中国传统艺术中以“线”作为绘画语言的形式，对此虽不大熟悉，但有一种莫名的兴奋，有一种久违的似曾相识的感动。这样就有了“文革”后开门第一幅，以线为创作语言悼念周总理的版画作品《哀思》的尝试。凌承伟老师在一篇文章中写到，“十年波折”后牛文的第一件作品《哀思》出现在1976年底，但它的构思却是在1976年初。当缅怀周恩来总理的文艺作品骤然间像雪花满天飞舞而至时，《哀思》不过是其中的一小片而已，不会引起人们的注意，但是当我们追寻牛文所走过的艺术道路时，切不可忽视这件不太起眼的作品，它的出现预示牛文的艺术风貌将发生新的变化。在《哀思》中，画家毅然摒弃了从前惯用的表现手法，他把注意力从黑白色块的经营转向对线条的动用和表现上，画家第一次在他的作品中以严谨的线条塑造人物形象。这些线条或紧或松，或挺或柔，对应比照，形成一种特殊的韵律感。注重以神韵的提炼来传达画家的思想感情，标志着牛文的艺术将步入一个新的里程。

此后，牛文在一次开会中偶遇延安“鲁艺”时期的老同学、安徽版画家周芜，周芜是安徽巢县人，解放后一直在安徽大学任教，多年潜心研究古代徽派版画史。这真是一次千载难逢的好机遇，老同学见面嘘寒问暖后，话题很快转入各自都心仪的古代徽派版画，牛文第一次对古徽派版画有了深入浅出、全面透彻的了解，深切领悟到明代中叶兴起的被誉为中国古版画精髓的古徽派版画，其白描手法造型，富丽精工，秀劲流畅，其艺术风格细密纤巧、典雅静穆，无疑在中国版画史上代表着中国版画的最高成就，成为我国优秀艺术遗产的一部分。一个通宵达旦的神聊交流嫌不够，第二天接着聊，收获满满。随后两地书信、电话联系频繁，周芜主持的“古徽派版画研究会”还聘请牛文为特约研究员，该研究会的各种资料不断邮来，随着对古徽派版画的研究与探索不断深入，也不断坚定了将线的表现力纳入自己的版画创作的初志。

对线的理性认识仅仅是开了个好头，真正的重中之重、真正的考验是，如何掌握运用线的内在形态与千变万化的规律，并在作品中予以充分的表现。为此牛文说，这没有捷径可走，没有顺风船可驶，只有“笨办法”——临摹学习。王伟老师在一篇文章中写道：“牛文

在美术的天地里起步，民间艺术是老师，成为版画家后，仍孜孜以求地向民间艺术学习。他热爱民间艺术，像勤劳的蜜蜂一样到处寻觅花朵，不停地采集花粉酿蜜。有一次，他偶然看到我收藏的绵竹民间木版年画原稿，就像小孩子过年穿新衣、戴新帽那么欢畅。他抽出时间如饥似渴地细看细读，反复品味，后来索性借去十多张，夜以继日地临摹，达到身心迷醉的程度。”牛文在山西的一次座谈会上谈道：“搞创作的人还要临摹，临熟了，造型这一套规律掌握了，我们就可以甩开形，可以搞历史人物，也可以搞现代人物。苏光同志送我一本年画，我这么大年纪，戴着眼镜，熬灯守夜，一笔笔地全给临下来，光赞叹不动手是学不到东西的。”

自“文革”开始，历时十数载的艰辛理论探究与技术储备，一幅幅既不是古代木刻的模仿，也不是西方现代木刻的翻版，而是以一种不同凡响的、全新的版画作品出现，《芳草地》《草地新征》《春雷》《朝阳》《夏风》《秋月》《赛马图》等在20世纪80年代初相继问世。牛文曾经不无感慨地说：“清新、滋润、含蓄、朴茂的东方韵味如何与现代版画的单纯、洗练、强烈、醒目融为一体，以创造既有中国特色又有现代感的版画作品，这是多年来一直思考着的问题。”牛文以自己的作品以及不俗的作为，回答了他在花甲之年能做如此深刻的思考并做如此大胆的实践的初衷与目的。齐凤阁老师在一篇文章中写道：“自1976年的《哀思》开始，推出一幅幅比中国画白描还精到的线刻作品，风格轻柔细腻，线条飘逸洒脱，情调温馨优雅，与那种强烈、粗犷的四川地域风范分流，形成一种样式化的个人风格，从而进入了后期的个性化阶段。……这次风格的变异，在语言方式上，是对古代徽派版画语系的提纯。画家以现代审美意识重新审视、开掘传统艺术的矿藏，尤其对明代徽州汪、黄两姓刻工纤细精美的技巧沉潜探究，一改过去对黑白色块的精心营造，而追求阳刻细线工整雅丽的画风。80年代初的《草地新征》《春雷》《夏风》等作品刀法精细入微，一丝不苟，可看出画家熟练地掌握了刀刻的刚柔轻重、疾缓转承的高精技巧，其抑扬顿挫、起伏离合中呈现出一种节奏感，细密草地的微波拂泛衬托出人物悠然舒缓的动势，其构图、形象、线条都表现出一种韵律美。”齐凤阁老师在另一篇文章中写道：“在新时期，能像牛文这样在创作上有新的突破，并形成艺术高峰的老版画家不多，他的艺术个性也是在此时期的作品中得以显现的。谁也没有想到，搁刀十载之后，他竟毅然放弃了过去的表现手法，由黑白色块转向线刻，在古代徽派版画中找到了营养源，以比国画白描还精细的效果，表现线的韵律美。”

中国传统绘画艺术就是线的艺术，牛文从中国古老的绘画艺术宝库中挖掘、提炼、借鉴为我所用，实现了新时期的华丽转身，取得丰硕成果。正如凌承纬老师所言，牛文和他的同伴在黑白版画被斥为简单、原始、缺乏时代意义之时，以充沛的信心和饱满的热情，力图以现代审美意识开发传统民族文化、民间文化丰富的宝藏。牛文的艺术实践被证明是成功的，它不仅表明了在新时期作为一位老版画家所具备的智慧、责任与担当，彰显了中国新兴版画运动向纵深推进的示范引领意义，同时进一步表明了中国新兴版画运动光明的前景与无限广阔的发展空间。

吴士新： 能不能从牛文先生亲属的角度谈一下牛文先生对你们的影响？

牛小牛： 在我们印象中牛文先生向来都是忙忙碌碌的，总是有做不完的事，平时不是出差、开会，就是蹲在画室里画画，停下来歇一会儿都是奢侈，时间永远都不够使唤，能坐下来聊聊天已是他画不动的耄耋之年了。因此对我而言更多的是身教多于言教。

最为触动我们心境的是他对艺术的痴迷与执着和浑然忘我的敬业精神。牛文出生在有着千年历史底蕴的山西灵石县一个小山村，打小迷恋身边的民间民俗文化。他儿时伙伴说，牛文不仅对剪纸、皮影等爱不释手，对乡间那些庙宇里的泥塑、壁画更是喜爱有加，常常夜半月明时分偷偷跑去一睹为快，有时一待就是半晌，守望至鸡鸣。有一次，牛文还鬼使神差地跟着走村串户的皮影戏班子，一走十来天，跟吃跟住跟着看，后来还是戏班班头送他一个皮影头像，连哄带劝硬把他劝说回来，这些都少不了受他母亲数落，但他总是回答，太喜欢了，看不够。可见他小小年纪对艺术那种朦胧的向往与痴迷已进入走火入魔的境况。

抗战爆发，参加革命队伍，因是小学文化，又喜好文艺，就做了宣传员，平时演戏、唱

歌、画墙画、写标语什么都干，战时参加战斗，牛文多次说：“宣传员、战斗员的双重身份实在不易，战斗打响了上战场，战斗间隙他们就地休整，而我们又忙着连轴转搞宣传。从延安‘鲁艺’毕业回到晋绥根据地，业务能力提高了，涉及的面就更宽了。在那个时期我所见过和我手上的作品资料，诸如版画、宣传画、年画、漫画、连环画、人像画，报刊书籍插图、报刊美术字刊头题花、报刊上的地图，设计绘制边区钞票广告商标、对敌宣传的传单，以及事无巨细为边区机关刻制公章、饭票、粮票，等等，林林总总数不胜数。一个绘画作品，哪怕是一幅小小的刊头题花或者是饭票、粮票，都不是一蹴而就的，都有一个构思、设计、绘图、刻版、印制的过程，麻雀虽小，肝胆俱全。”可见当时工作量之大，付出的精力、体力之大。牛文曾说：“那时只要需要，不讲条件啥都干，当时也没啥参考资料、没啥借鉴，全凭自己摸索着干，天天都在催稿、天天都在赶工期，有的画作想做更多的修改都没有时间，当时就是这样夜以继日一天当几天在用。”

新中国成立，牛文随军南下四川，即以藏族地区作为自己的生活创作基地，每年少则三个月，多则半年有余入藏，现在进藏有飞机、火车、汽车，非常便利，那时就完全不一样，得靠路边搭便车，荒山野岭的司机也怕搭车的人，要搭不上车就只得步行，为此在第二次进藏历尽千难万险用了一个多月才到达目的地。有人议论：“牛文这是硬扛上了，有点拼命了！”人们殊不知的是牛文自1951年第一次进藏，找到了心目中的艺术殿堂，与之结下不解之缘，什么难不难、险不险的，愿为艺术而委身就是认死理了，八匹马也拉不回。牛文曾多次面临调动升迁的机会，因这意味着艺术生命的终结而多次婉拒，50年代调中央宣传部，调令都下了，以当时在藏区，拖着没去。60年代调外交部，调重庆文化局当局长、四川美术学院当院长，都没去。1972年底正是筹划在艺术创作风格上求新求变之时，接到调国务院文化组负责美术工作的指令，先也是拖着不去，之后接到北京来的电话被责备一番，去了。到北京工作，毕竟在仕途上是走到顶点，责任重大，不敢怠慢。牛文在推动面上工作的同时，遍访在京老艺术家征询意愿，并到各地调研，起草了关于恢复美协工作、加强群众性美术工作的开展、恢复老艺术家名誉等十多个方案。遗憾的是在当时那种形势下的会议中，更多关注的是所谓的政治斗争，对牛文提出的工作方案不屑一顾冷落一旁，时间一长因工作不顺心，在多次提出辞职未果的一年后，他毅然不辞而别回到四川。可见他不为功名利禄所动，爱的只有心中那一亩三分地。

常听牛文先生说：“是画家就要拿作品说话。”他是这样告诫人们，也是这样警示自己。牛文一生作品颇丰，我在历经五年收集、整理资料准备编纂画册《牛文绘画七十年》的过程中，经手他各时期创作的版画300余幅、连环画370余幅、漫画200余幅、素描速写近千幅，还有国画、插图、习作等，可谓洋洋大观，目不暇接，其中不乏颇具影响力的经典之作。牛文先生是四川美协的主要组织者、领导者之一，他总是以自己的艺术实践带动和引领身边的人，使得四川版画从20世纪五六十年代起，进入一个新的里程，出作品，出人才，其风格独树一帜，特别是黑白人物版画在全国颇具影响力，成为中国美术史上一颗耀眼的明珠。那时在重庆，四川版画家们就工作、生活在嘉陵江边一处幽静别致的小院子里，每天抬头不见低头见，就像一个温馨、融洽的大家庭。我当时还小，但留下很深印象的是，他们画室紧挨着，闲暇串串门，见有新画稿就坐下来议议，并招呼相邻者都来看看。另外他们还定期召开看稿会，针对每一幅画稿品头论足，因此他们每一幅作品的问世都经过精雕细琢，都凝结着大家的心血，都是集体智慧的结晶。牛文个人和集体的成就是可圈可点的，一分耕耘，一分收获，付出与收获是成正比的，从某种意义上说这种付出也包括个人做出的牺牲，如疏于对家庭的关照等，但作为家庭成员我们是理解、体谅并支持他工作的。

彦涵先生曾为牛文题词“德艺双馨”，这是对牛文中肯的评价，而在我们心目中他的秉性、人品恰似一座仰止的高山。在圈内外有口皆碑的是牛文待人的真诚、热情、随和与率直，没有架子，就是一位慈祥的长者、前辈，来者不拒，有问必答，有求必应，乐此不疲。重庆綦江农民版画的崛起并蜚声海内外之初，就是在这种气氛中，綦江农民版画组织者李毅力等带着新鲜出炉的农民画登门求证，牛文看画后拍案称好，给予赞许、鼓励并多方介绍举荐，促成重庆綦江农民版画一步步走上成功之路。同样原达县地区的民间剪纸艺人苟兴琼，也是在一次偶然接触中认识的，牛文看到了剪纸艺术的希望，于是多方勉励、支持她多

探究，多出作品，并帮助她在四川省美术馆举办个展，作品还参加了全国美展，使一位名不见经传的民间艺人取得骄人的成绩。牛文对他人之事关心备至，对自己的事却不以为意，他的作品参加展览数不胜数，但从未举办过个人展览，这本来是一个很好的总结与展示的机会，但他总说：“没时间，放给后人去办吧。”这也一直成为我心中的一个结。

牛文身上透着一股与生俱来的睿智、诙谐，善言谈，乐调侃，无论会上、会下，往往即事就景，妙语连珠，使人忍俊不禁，圈内人都乐意与他交流，因为都能感受到一种融洽的氛围，其乐融融。牛文生性豁达、开朗，天大的事再难再险处变不惊泰然处之。李焕民曾讲过一段往事，1957年元月他与牛文坐军车从拉萨返回内地，车行至唐古拉山山顶，海拔5600米处车坏了，只得就地等待后援。当晚暴风雪大作，气温降至零下三十几度，他们五个人穿好大衣，挤在一起，盖上被子，仍然冻得发抖，抖得卡车“吱吱”地响。在大家情绪极度沮丧之时，牛文哈哈一笑说：“如果这回完了，后人发现车里有画，说不定还会给我们开个遗作展呢！”“对头的！”大家都呼应起来，低落的情绪一下就振作起来了。

牛文先生最使我们感动且难忘的那一刻是，2006年7月青藏铁路全线通车的消息传来，牛文为之动容。通往世界屋脊之旅，彩虹般的天路瞬间天堑变通途，祖国的强大实现了藏族人民千年的期盼和几代人的梦想。多年来牛文在这条进出藏路上，不知遭遇多少艰辛与磨难，体验到什么是挑战生理、心理极限，尝遍雪域高原绚丽风光背后的阴霾，没有那无数次生与死、希望与绝唱的经历，无论如何也体会不到这条天路的“含金量”，体悟不到这条天路在人们心目中的地位。此时一种强烈的表达欲望与创作冲动在牛文心中涌动，但无情的老年病像一座大山横亘在面前，他幻想着当年与李焕民、其加达瓦谈笑之间一览众山小的豪迈，多么惬意畅快，他幻想着重返“出国容易，进藏难”之路，希望时光倒流，再年少十岁、二十岁，他遥祝那魂牵梦萦的远方幸福、吉祥……

Wu Shixin: **Mr. Niu Wen was one of the most important figures in the history of Chinese modern printmaking. He had gone through different periods, such as the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the War of Liberation and the founding of New China. Mr. Niu Wen was not only the witness of the development history of printmaking in different periods, but also an important writer. Could you introduce Mr. Niu Wen's print-making achievements in this respect?**

Niu Xiaoni: Mr. Niu Wen came all the way as a warrior and artist along with the smoke of the gunpowder the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. After three years of cultivation and polishing in Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature, honored as the sanctuary of China's new printmaking movement, in Yan'an, he stepped out of school and went to the front of the war of resistance, he quickly grew into the backbone and representative figure of the China's new printmaking movement. In the course of more than half a century's history, he inherited and continuously expanded the essence of "Yan'an Painting School", wrote history with prints, and created many well-known printmaking works with distinct characteristics of the times, rich themes, diverse forms and styles, as well as personalized printmaking language, including many classic works recorded in the history books. Niu Wen's proud artistic practice not only shows the strong vitality and endless development space of China's new printmaking movement, but also positioned him as a printmaker of great academic significance in the history of modern Chinese printmaking.

Take the road of realism and highlight the strong popularity

Steadfastly following the path of realism constitutes the main line of Mr. Niu Wen's artistic life. Counting Niu Wen's creative experience and achievements, we must base ourselves on real life, grasp the characteristics of the times, keep abreast of the pulse of reality, discover, understand and refine touching subjects from real life, reveal the relationship between people, people and things, and fully express people's thoughts and emotions and affective experience. Whether in the works reflecting the war years, such as *Training Soldiers*, *Defending Yan'an* and *Receiving Land Certificate* and *Measure Land*, which depicted the great social change of land reform, or in the works reflecting the liberation of Tibetan people in the period of peacebuilding, such as *Freshmen of Peking University*, *Oriental Red Sun Rising*, and later in the period of reform and opening-up, a new technique of expression known as "Huajia Reform" was applied to show Tibetan people's new life and new look, which was depicted in *Spring Thunder*, *Rising Sun* and *Horse Racing*. The position of the masses in his mind has not changed in realism even though the time, space and scenes in the works have changed dramatically. Behind each work, there is always a story, a personal experience and a personal feeling. As a result, the detailed works are realistic and cordial, which always a shining page for China's new printmaking career.

Keep abreast of the situation and keep forging ahead

Mr. Niu Wen's artistic career was colorful and fruitful. Mr. Qi Fengge summarized it into three stages of development and two major changes. The three stages of development are the period of revolutionary war, the period of peacebuilding after the founding of New China and the period of reform and opening-up after the "Cultural Revolution". The two major breakthroughs are the two distinct variations in the style of printmaking that are advancing with the times from the war era to the period of peace-building and from the follow-up to the period of reform and opening-up.

During the war, Mr. Niu Wen inherited the Yan'an painting style, with distinct revolutionary theme and content, with the unique regional cultural characteristics of Northwest Shanxi and the unique personality and aesthetic customs of the soldiers and civilians in the resistance base, and his works all showed the characteristics of strong flavor of life, simple painting language and distinct spirit of the times. These works directly served the war, aroused the people, reflected directly served the war, aroused the people, reflected the aspiration and pursuit of the army and the people during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, recording that period of history which were widely welcomed.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mr. Niu Wen went south with the army, from the countryside to the city, from the war to the period of peacebuilding, profound social changes that led to newer and higher demands. The change of times contributed to his first style change. *When the Good News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Reached the Kang-Tibet Plateau* (in cooperation with Li Shaoyan), *Golden Flower* and *Oriental Red Sun Rising* appeared one after another during this period. These works, in terms of artistic style, not only retained the refined and lively characteristics of the war era, but also rose from the natural description of real life to the grasp and creation of active depiction of objective objects. but also rose from the natural descrip-

tion of real life to the grasp and creation of active depiction of objective objects. The works turn from narrative to lyric and expressive. The pictures are more vivid and exquisite. They also give art a wide space for free imagination and romantic expression.

After the “Cultural Revolution” in 1976, the motherland ushered in the spring of reform and opening-up, and the advent of a new era, which inspired his second style mutation. *New Expedition of Grassland*, *Rising Sun* and *Horse Racing* which appeared successively in this period, sprung up in an unprecedented and new way in keeping with the times. Although these works still depict the new life of the Tibetan people, the former naturalistic elements have vanished. Instead, more reasonable subjective yearning and pursuit have been incorporated into the objective description and beauty has been achieved. Creation rises to a higher level, so that the romantic thought can be brought into full play in the realistic creation, and the viewer can get spiritual edification and enjoyment beyond visual angle and intuition.

Whenever a new era comes, we can see Mr. Niu Wen's image of not disgracing his mission, but moving forward, seeking new ideas and making changes, and standing bravely in the tide. It can be said that every sudden change in artistic style means a painful process of denying and abandoning the past complete creative materials, and a process of enduring the test of success or failure. Strong anxiety, change consciousness and enterprising ambition bring more unique artistic perception and new value orientation, thus ushering in excellent works corresponding to each era, in order to show and promote the advance and development of China's new printmaking movement from one side.

Telling national stories in national language

Mr. Niu Wen was born in a remote mountain village in Shanxi Province, where there are many folk art as New Year paintings, paper-cut, cabinet stickers and door gods in the countryside. Neighborhood aunts and elder sisters were all skilled artists, and Niu Wen's mother was a well-known paper-cut expert, known as “a knife”. In the influence and infiltration of the colorful folk art, he developed a strong love and infatuation for the painting art since his boyhood. As Mr. Niu Wen said: “I love these paintings and the painters, for they enlightened me to be a good man.” It can be seen that such a profound national folk art complex will surely accompany Niu Wen's artistic journey along the way.

Mr. Niu Wen joined the counter-Japanese team in 1937 and went south to Sichuan in 1949 where he stayed for 12 years. He spent the last 10 years in Jinsui resistance base, except for more than two years of study in Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature. That is to say, he has been dedicated to art on the land where he was born and raised, and his childhood feelings and favorite forms of folk art have been fully developed and poured into his works. That is to say, he has been dedicated to art on the land where he was born and raised, and his childhood feelings and favorite forms of folk art have been fully developed and poured into his works. *Woodcut Group Painting—New Window Flowers* (4 pieces) depicts the new life of the people in the border areas. Its form of expression is directly borrowed from the folk paper-cut style and integrated with the western woodcut, making the works both simple, lively and concise scissors flavor, as well as the delicate and refined knife carving beauty of western woodcut. *Celebrating Victory* is a scene of the military and civilian celebration of victory in the border area. The author draws on the simple, clear, full and strong style of folk paper-cut and New Year paintings, making the pictures novel, vivid, distinctive theme, festive and full of rich decorativeness. In that special era, Niu Wen's works can speculate about the shadow of the folk art of his own nation because of his special feelings for folk art and the people's likes and dislikes.

Mr. Niu Wen went south to Sichuan in 1949. That is to say, he took Tibetan areas as the base of life creation, and began to be willing to travel for more than half a century. The print works with strong national, regional and contemporary characteristics came out with the long-term penetration into Tibetan areas, one by one, facing the real life of Tibetan areas from different angles, describing the simple and natural human feelings and features of Tibetan areas with realistic techniques. In the early stage, there were many portrayals of Tibetan scenery, such as *Return of Learning Medicine* (in cooperation with Li Shaoyan), *Freshmen of Peking University*, and works showing the scenery of Tibetan—*Evening Show in the Mountain Village* and *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet*. After the democratic reform in Tibet, such works as *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade* and *Oriental Red Sun Rising* reflected the new climate and new hope of the Tibetan people striding over the Millennium step by step. After the reform and opening-up, Niu Wen changed in style and form of printmaking, and his new works *Rising Sun* and *Horse Racing* combined the delicate and elegant lines of Ming and Qing Dynasties with the intense contrast between Modern Printmaking blocks in black and white, etc. In Niu Wen's series of works on Tibetan themes, there is a special situation in the stories he tells, that is, more images of Tibetan women appeared, and Tibetan women were given more attention, sympathy and respect. This comes from Niu Wen's perception over the years that Ti-

betan women have lived at the bottom of the society for generations and have become a vulnerable group with heavy suffering. They played an absolute supporting role in the family. Their strong body and broad maternal love breed the industrious and brave plateau nation. Their nature of singing, dancing together deeply touched the heart of Niu Wen. He had no choice but to take Tibetan women, a very special carrier of Tibetan culture, as a long-term life to make the special amorous feelings of snow-covered plateau a long-lasting topic, from which we can see Mr Niu's determination and profoundness. Mr. Niu Wen, with his new feelings and experience in Tibet for a long time, embedded the Tibetan people's strange life style, special customs, unique national temperament, yearning for and pursuit of a new era and a new life into his prints, and told national stories in national language, thus arousing people's concern and resonance, which has been widely recognized and affirmed.

Acquisition of all strengths and incorporation

After the "85 Art Trend" in 1985, various western literary and artistic trends of thought poured into the country. Mr. Niu Wen did not think that this was a fierce beast of floods but he believed that a pluralistic society would inevitably produce a pluralistic culture and art suited to it. The fierce collision of eastern and western cultures with the same stage showed that they all had their own audiences, market, and the value of existence. Their only conflict was that they practice their own internal skills, strive for the audience. It was survival of the fittest. At the same time, he also believed that the entry of various complex forms of western art will bring us a golden opportunity to understand, learn and absorb them selectively.

Mr. Niu Wen's idea of embracing the world with an open mind and inclusive dialogue with the world has been put into practice as early as 20 years ago. In 1960 Niu Wen and Li Shaoyan led the Chongqing Acrobatic Troupe to visit and perform in the Soviet Union, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and German Democratic Republic for more than three months. In the hinterland of Eastern Europe, they took advantage of various opportunities to directly observe and touch a variety of western painting art forms and many works of different styles, which really broadened their horizons, broadened their knowledge, and especially left behind abstract painting art. It was impressed that it completely broke the limitation of emphasizing theme realism, combined the basic elements of art in an abstract way, and created an abstract form, thus breaking through the barrier that art must have identifiable images, and creating a new world for the development of art. This personal experience laid a foreshadowing for future initiatives to learn from. In 1961, eight Sichuan printmakers, Li Shaoyan, Niu Wen, Wu Fan, Li Huanmin, Song Guangxun, Zheng Wei, Wu Qiangnian and Xu Kuang, accepted the task of illustrating the prints of the novel *Red Rock*. Niu Wen was the only author of the illustration who was related to the Red Rock Martyrs. Yang Hanxiu, a classmate of Niu Wen in Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature, When he arrived in Chongqing on Dec.6,1949, he rushed to the scene of the massacre to find his old classmates on hearing the news that Yang Hanxiu was detained in SACO and was killed. At that time, the Chongqing Military Regulatory Commission was organizing personnel to the spot. The remains of scholars were cleaned up, registered, and coffined. Niu Wen was on his way to find the body of Yang Hanxiu when he encountered the scene that the bodies of the General Yang Hucheng and the three family members of Little Radish Head were cleared up. At this time, he was deeply impressed by the tragic situation in which the eight-year-old Little Radish Head was killed. This forms the character prototype that Niu Wen inevitably selected in the printmaking illustration of *Red Rock*. The illustration *Victory in Red Rock* depicts a martyr holding her head and chest high to welcome the victory. The characters are realistic. She is Jiang Jie and Yang Hanxiu. She is also a revolutionary martyr who throws her head and blood for the cause of the people. It is noteworthy that the background of the picture, in the form of abstract painting art, the whole picture is filled with flowing lines carved with small rounded knives. In an article, Mr. Kang Ning wrote: "What are the grey lines and knife marks? Is it wind? Is it a cloud? Is it fire or smoke? Maybe they are nothing, or all of them. It is this kind of non-deterministic and non-concrete treatment that makes it abstract, divorced from and transcended specific scenes and events, and the depiction of specific people and objects, which sublimates the theme of the work, becomes a deeper and broader symbol and implication, which is the embodiment of the author's passion and ideals, spirit and feelings." Mr. Kang Ning also commented on another illustration of Niu Wen's *Red Rock—Dream of Little Radish Head* that: "*Dream of Little Radish Head* has a stronger subjective color. Today, we may say that it has some surrealist elements. Of course, this is consistent with the theme and content of the works. The expression of Little Radish Head's dream in prison coincides with the author's personality, romantic spirit and bold exaggerated methods and rich imagination drawn from folk art. In a dark cell, the door is locked by a huge iron lock. Two vultures, symbolizing the dark forces, stare fiercely at an isolated prisoner... The work profoundly embodies the interweaving of despair and hope of the young weak under the shadow of darkness, and places the author's heavy thinking, concern and sympathy on it. The composition of the picture also uses extremely full congestion to increase the sense of depression. In terms of handling techniques, trees, houses

and so on, we have boldly absorbed the modelling methods of folk art.”

Mr. Niu Wen's two works in the illustrations of *Red Rock* were the first bold attempt to graft and merge the elements of western painting art forms. The unique artistic techniques formed by Niu Wen were quite different from those of other printmakers because of their different interests. On the whole, they have unexpected effects. As Mr. Qi Fengge said in an article, Niu Wen's two works of printmaking— *Red Rock*, enriched the whole set of illustrations in terms of artistic techniques.

In 1981, Mr. Niu Wen went to Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, to attend “the 14th World Print Exhibition of Slovenia”. As a Chinese judge, he was in the Award Committee with representatives from Yugoslavia, France, Britain, Spain and Argentina to select 1547 works of printmakers from 61 countries and 584 printmakers. This is a rare opportunity to have a comprehensive understanding of the development status of foreign prints, the characteristics of various schools and the trend of development. Niu Wen mentioned in his report on his work in China that the world printmaking art forms also deviate from the appreciation tastes and habits of the people of all countries. Most of them have lost their national artistic characteristics and become the “world art language”! Abstractionist painters are away life and concrete images to pursue formal beauty, and express abstract concepts that are difficult to understand with various combinations of abstract points, lines and color blocks. It was also mentioned in the report that in a large number of “new”, “strange” and “bewildering” works, there were some new forms of creation and discovery which has made its own contribution to meet people's aesthetic appreciation requirements and enrich the world's printmaking art forms. Things are always divided into two parts. It is quite touching that these painters, with spirit of artistic exploration, the courage and perseverance of artistic innovation, devote themselves to the career of art, not afraid of the difficulties. It is quite touching that these painters, with spirit of artistic exploration, the courage and perseverance of artistic innovation, devote themselves to the career of art, not afraid of the difficulties. If they are good at learning, Chinese painters should be able to get some useful enlightenment from it. Niu Wen's subsequent printmaking *Autumn Moon* in 1984 echoed the views expressed in the above-mentioned report. *Autumn Moon* depicts the pastoral scenery of Tibetan areas. The pictures use abstract painting language, rely on simple form combination, in an independent display form, freely and boldly summarize the sky, fields, crops, mounds, dirt ridges, depressions and so on in real images, virtually summarized as black, white, grey, dots, lines, surfaces, rectangles and triangles to form the sky—a harmonious and unified form of land and objects. In the central part of the picture, the clothes and Tibetan costumes, unique to farmers, delicately designed scarecrows and a round of meniscus in the sky, however, dealt with realistically. This reality is empty, which gives rise to an internal response, contrast and association, thus giving space for interpretation of the remote and difficult abstract painting language, and making the distortion of aesthetic orientation into stretch, and making the distortion of aesthetic orientation into stretch without breaking the critical point of people's appreciation habits, the embellishment of foreign painting elements is blended in, thus providing a different and unique artistic experience and feelings, which is the success of *Autumn Moon*.

Similarly, the *Horse Racing* created in 1985 and the *New Road* created in 1987 both show the acceptance and grafting of foreign art, and both show that the late Niu Wen prints not only in form, but also in spirit and concept which have realized the modern transformation of oriental imagery art.

Mr. Niu Wen pays attention to the merits of foreign countries in different periods and make good use of them. He takes all the advantages of others and integrates them. Through selection, refinement, processing and integration, he has constantly produced works of different styles, constantly enriching his painting forms and techniques, and constantly providing people with new artistic feelings and spiritual food of various forms.

Wu Shixin: **Art serves the workers, peasants and soldiers. Printing had become a warrior weapon against the enemy in a special period. How do you understand this?**

Niu Xiaoniu: Printmaking really became the most special and powerful cultural weapon in that very special war era. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, living conditions in Yan'an and other resistance base were extremely difficult and materials were extremely scarce. Wood carving knives, willow boards, earth paper, earth ink and so on could be self-made. The basic learning of woodcut is also easier. As long as there was a little basic painting, some people gave advice and got started quickly, and woodcut could be reproduced, printed in large quantities, and could reach the masses faster and more widely. These factors made woodcut the preferred art form and important propaganda tool for the revolutionary war. In addition to woodcarving, Niu Wen's works in those years included posters, New Year paintings, cartoons, comic strips, portraits, illustrations of newspapers and books, headlines of newspapers and magazines, maps on newspapers and magazines, designs and draws advertisement trademarks for banknotes in border areas, leaflets for propaganda against enemies, and carving official seals, meal tickets for border authorities in no great detail food stamps and so on. All of these are presented in the form

of woodcut. These woodcut prints are used to express people and events in wars with various contents, which not only shows the strength and charm of woodcut prints as a popular art, but also shows the people's special feelings and dependence on woodcut prints.

The Taihang Memorial Hall of the Eighth Route Army in Wuxiang County, Changzhi City, Shanxi Province, is a revolutionary memorial hall that comprehensively reflects the history of the Eighth Route Army's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Among the precious historical materials and revolutionary cultural relics on display, there is a paper leaflet with a size of 25.3cm × 22.5cm. It is composed of seven comic strips. Its name is *Inappropriate Stubbornness Threw Eighth Route Army, Two Freedoms to Work Home*, a leaflet for the United Front propaganda which Niu Wen and Su Guang created in the form of engraving. It shows the comparison between the Eighth Route Army and the stubborn army in Shanxi Province in terms of popularity, food, clothing, shelter and transportation, in order to achieve the propaganda, education and influence of the stubborn army with the hope that they will come to the ranks of the Eighth Route Army. At that time, there were a large number of flyers printed and distributed, which produced a good response and effect.

Mr. Niu Wen recalled that the popular book—*People's Pictorial*, run in Gaojia Village, Xing County, Jinsui Border Region in 1946, was mainly in the form of continuous painting, woodcut, cartoon and paper-cut. It closely coordinated with the political trends and tasks at that time, and timely reflected the struggle against the enemy, the support of the front line, the unity of the army and the people, and the situation of drought and famine. The newspaper provided vivid textual images, and the content is all about the border area military and civilian affairs. A sense of intimacy could be felt while reading. Therefore, the newspaper was very popular. The pictorial is published every half month. Because of the limited conditions at that time, it is usually posted to the Party, government and military organs and relevant departments in the border areas, as well as to the gathering places of people in villages and towns. After each issue of the pictorial newspaper was distributed, there were always people blocking in the doorway to ask for it. Many of the villagers who had traveled hundreds of miles with solid food are among those people. As a result, due to the fact of no reserves, a batch of villagers were finally persuaded to leave, but the next day when they opened the door, they stood waiting at the doorway, saying that the villagers in the village had entrusted them, and they couldn't go back empty-handed. Niu Wen said, looking at the countrymen outside the door for a night of frozen expectant eyes, he could not stop crying, and decided on additional print without saying a word. When he saw the countrymen coming from a long way back with pictorial newspapers, Niu Wen said: "I really feel warm-hearted, heavy burden on my shoulders."

In December 2017, I visited Gaojia Village in Xing County, an old revolutionary area. As long as the old people in the village asked about Niu Wen, Jinsui Newspaper and the woodcut paintings, they all remembered that: "He was the big man. He was very kind and helped us sweep the floor and carry water when entering the yard. He also helped us pick up crops." "We often went to see them depicted with knives in twos and threes. The woodcut they used was still the one, we helped to push the leveling repair." The villagers took me to where they used to work and live. When they came to the small square in the center of the village, they pointed out one by one. When we got to the wall in the west side of the square in the center of the village, there were a big prints more than 2 meters in size next to the paintings. There were Li Qun's *Sending Horses* and *Helping People Repair Spinning Wheels*, Li Shaoyan's *Transporting Wounded Men on the Yellow River*, Niu Wen's *Measure Land* and *Receiving Land Certificate* and so on. The villagers said that: "They had gone, but these woodcarvings had stayed with us all the time. They came here every day to have a look, and they can feel at ease."

When a popular book and a printmaking work are closely linked with the hearts of the people, integrated into their lives, and become a way of life and attitude for them, this cultural phenomenon fully reflects the strength and self-confidence of woodcut printmaking art as a special weapon.

Wu Shixin:

During the War of Liberation, Mr. Niu Wen created *Measure Land* and the *Oriental Red Sun Rising* after the founding of New China, which produced great social reflection. Can you talk about the creation process and historical significance of these two works?

Niu Xiaoni:

In 1947, the Chinese People's War of Liberation took a historic turn. The PLA's goal of "overthrowing Jiang Jieshi and liberating China" has been put in front of the people of the whole country. In order to achieve this historic great goal, the Central Committee of the Party timely issued the famous *May 4th Directive* to solve the peasant's land problem, in order to liberate and mobilize millions of slaved and oppressed peasant masses, and implement the policy of land ownership by the tillers, so as to develop agricultural production, support the front line and seize the national liberation. Thus, an unprecedented and magnificent agrarian revolution in the history of mankind opened its curtain on the land of China.

In May of the year, *Jinsui Daily*, a newspaper in Xing County, northwest Shanxi Province, was responsible

for the collection and editing of *People's Pictorial* of Jinsui, Su Guang and Niu Wen received instructions from their superiors to suspend the operation of *People's Pictorial* of Jinsui. Li Qun and Niu Wen participated in the "Land Reform Work Group of Guo County, Dai County, Jinsui Border Region", and Su Guang participated in the Land Reform in Nine Districts of South Shanxi. The *People's Pictorial* of Jinsui was founded in January 1946, 32 issues were published in more than year until the suspension of publication. They had made much effort to publish the magazine and built up deep feelings. They were reluctant to stop publishing, but it was a rare opportunity for them to participate in the land reform. So they were glad to obey the orders.

In June, the "Land Reform Working Group of Guo County, Dai County, Jinsui Border Region" arrived in Guo County, and the force group was assigned to Qianshacheng Village, while Niu Wen was assigned to Houshacheng Village. After entering the village, they lived in the families of the people according to the plan. They eat, live and work with the villagers. The work of land reform has probably gone through such a process as visiting the poor and asking for hardship in advance, publicizing policies and mobilizing the masses, which has made the villagers' class consciousness continuously improve, their political enthusiasm soar, and the establishment of peasant associations, women's associations and militias, laying a solid foundation for the further development of land work; then come the dividing the class composition, conducting household-by-household deliberations, democratically assessing and sorting out the stage front; A complaint conference against the landlords. They would complain about class misery and account for exploitation, and the people who are excited by the crowd would hold their head high because they turn over to be masters of their own homes; then they would collect and distribute landlords' land and property for redistribution; finally, they would review and summarize and mobilize production. Niu Wen not only finished his main work, but also painted murals and wrote slogans for the village to enrich the cultural life of the village.

Mr. Niu Wen has experienced the end of land reform for more than a year. But in the day and night of this most important change in modern and contemporary rural areas of China, the farmers are always immersed in excitement. They have liberated their desire for land, their inner joy after land acquisition, and their enthusiasm for active production and supporting the front. These impacts on perspective and collision in mind are long-lasting, as Niu Wen said: "I just closed my eyes, just by writing and remembering, I can depict the details of those scenes and the characters' voices and smiles in the land reform." Consequently, successive works on land reform were created, such as *Receiving Land Certificate*, *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front*, *Hearing the Victory News*, *Measure Land*, etc.

Measure Land is a traditional realism method of the liberated area painting school. It directly describes the plot of farmers' measuring and distributing land in the land reform by choosing the composition of big scenes and the complex combination of characters. It shows the concern and controversy of beneficiary farmers about the actual measurement of family area in the land distribution, as well as the orderly persuasion and judgment. The work is in the conception, composition, character shape, black and white gray rhyme. The law and knife law have carried out the overall management of art, focusing on shaping the fresh and strong local flavor and simple and honest vivid image of the peasants in the rural areas of Northwest Shanxi in the land reform, and reproduced typically from one side of the great social change that the rural areas of China had experienced.

Once published, *Measure Land* was reproduced in various newspapers and periodicals as an influential printmaking work during the period of land reform in China. At the beginning of 1951, the State Commission for Culture and Education, after consulting the German Democratic Republic on painting, recommended Gu Yuan prints *Portrait of Chairman Mao* and Niu Wen prints *Measure Land*, to German Democratic Republic. On the eve of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, German Democratic Republic issued a set of stamps entitled "German-Chinese Friendship Month" on June 27 of the same year. The stamps consisted of three stamps. Gu Yuan printmaking *Portrait of Chairman Mao* was in the first and third stamps, and Niu Wen's printmaking *Measure Land* was in the second. This was the first set of foreign stamps reflecting the activities of the Communist Party of China after the founding of New China. It was also the first set of foreign stamps reflecting the theme of China after the founding of New China. The printmaking *Measure Land*, was also introduced to foreign countries.

Talking about the Tibetan theme printmaking *Oriental Red Sun Rising*, Niu Wen's complex with Tibetan areas can be traced back to a day in 1941 when he was studying Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. With an accidental opportunity, Niu Wen, in the school library, saw a yellowing geographic brochure, in which he was attracted by the introduction of Tibetan geographic customs in the book for a while, and he was the first in his life. Secondly, I know that there is such a remote and mysterious place in the southwestern border of the motherland. The spectacular snow plateau and colorful national culture deeply touched Niu Wen's heart. A strong impulse to explore was deeply buried in his heart.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mr. Niu Wen went south to Sichuan with his

army to Chongqing, a key town in southwest China. In 1951, after new places and new jobs were stabilized, he learned that the 18th PLA Army marched into Tibet in the name of a reporter from *Xinhua Daily*. After being approved, he and his colleague Tan Xuekai embarked on the first Tibetan march in October of this year, and finally the wish they made ten years ago finally came true.

Niu Wen entered Tibet for the first time under extremely difficult conditions. While challenged by the restricted area of life, he was shocked and convinced by the unique blue sky, white clouds and sacred lakes in Tibet. Especially when he witnessed the scene of peaceful liberation of Tibet by the PLA and that dawn and hope was brought to the disaster-stricken Tibetan compatriots, he, after deep embrace with the Tibetan Abba and Mom, despite his inner suffering, once again firmly decided to depict with a knife brush the magic of the land and its people that live on it for generations. Since his first entry into Tibet, it has been irremediable. He spent in Tibet for at least 3 months and as many as more than half a year. Someone asked him: "You have a comfortable life in a big city, but why do you have to eat the hardships that ordinary people can't bear?" Niu Wen said: "Every time I come back from Tibet less than a month, I miss Tibetan Abba and Mom again. My emotional sustenance lies there. There are inexhaustible resources and materials for artistic creation. There is a need to introduce their closed and unknown customs to the outside world."

In the early days of Tibet, Niu Wen had confusion and tangle. At that time, although the PLA peacefully liberated Tibet and the Party's sunshine shone on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and some new changes had taken place, the dark serfdom was broken and the serfs still lived in deep water and heat. At that time, Niu Wen was continuously creating *When the Good News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Reached the Kang-Tibet Plateau* (cooperating with Li Shaoyan), *Freshmen of Peking University* and *Return of Learning Medicine* (cooperating with Li Shaoyan) and other works expressing some new things. Whether there are any unspeakable concealments remains a secret but eyes were artificially turning to the scenery of Tibetan areas, they have continuously created *End of the Village*, *Shigatse Corner*, *Evening Show in the Mountain Village*, *Tibetan Farmer*, *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet* and so on. These works mainly focus on the scenery of Tibetan areas, although they are delicate in style and rich in light and dark levels. There is a strong Tibetan flavor and black and white interwoven rhythm beauty, but it is difficult to conceal the image of a little deep and dignified. Niu Wen's mood at this time was depressed and dreary.

The turning point of events took place in 1959. The Central People's Government and the People's Liberation Army put an end to the rebellion organized by the Tibetan reactionary upper-class group headed by the Dalai Lama, carried out democratic reforms, abolished completely the ownership of feudal serf-owners, and the slaves broke the millennium chain and became independent for the first time. Niu Wen was relieved by the news of happiness and encouraged Tibetan compatriots to truly embark on the road of happiness. The *Oriental Red Sun Rising* came out in this festive and happy atmosphere.

According to Li Huanmin's recollection, Niu Wen and Li Huanmin lived in a Tibetan village in Aba Erya for half a year. "One day we heard that there was a nursery in the village, so we went to visit it. In the old Tibetan house where the nursery was, we went upstairs and saw the teacher standing in the middle beating. The children were singing and dancing around the teacher. It was very interesting. We drew some sketches. When we were ready to leave, the teachers and children sent us out. In the yard dam, the children surrounded us and danced song after song. We were tired in the middle. The children did not enjoy themselves to the full yet. They also attracted a lot of Tibetan villagers to watch and enjoy the atmosphere." Looking at these lovely children's happy, exciting faces, childish and delicate dance posture, it was really touching. When Niu Wen lost sleep that night, he thought a lot. He had "words" to say, but he didn't know how to say it. Soon, the sketch came out—a group of children danced in front of the stone stockade. Although it was real, it was very dull. At most, it was a style painting, which could not arouse the readers' emotions. Niu Wen was very distressed, as a pregnant woman could not give birth. Art creation is like this. Truthful description can not express your feelings from many aspects, let alone talking about your extensive Association and thinking about life. At this point, the true description is like a cage where you are locked in. At that time, the painter, like a lion in a cage, whirled anxiously around in circles, growling for a breakthrough. After Niu Wen came back from Tibet, he still did not find a breakthrough. He helplessly turned the sketch to the wooden carving board and revised it repeatedly. The more he painted, the less confident he was. Finally, he had to give up. Finally, one day, "Just as is said in the word that time and time again, I searched for you in the crowd. Suddenly, I spun round and saw the very you standing amidst thin lights", Niu Wen removed all the background and added teachers and organs to the dancing children. From then on, the drawing went on the right path. The deeper the drawing went, the more distinct the theme became, the more vivid the children became. The author's passion leaped with the music and dance gestures. The black and white processing and knife technique of the picture also have life, even the knife marks left intentionally or unintentionally are in rhythm.

Theme commands the printmaking language. The printmaking language embodies the theme, which makes

the works rise from the real life to the artistic realm, and become the fine works of art with both aesthetic value and the flavor of the times. At the same time, the success of Niu Wen's works is that Niu Wen got rid of the strict regulation of theme and plot and the division of character modeling, and began to enter a more free realm in the artistic conception and the expression of artist's personality and emotion. The shape and form of this work are all breaking through the shackles of detail description in an all-round way. Niu Wen has brought his own art a wide space for imagination and romantic expression.

After the completion of the work, Niu Wen firstly named it *Happy Tibetan Children*, but Niu Wen has always been bitter about it. He always felt that his intention is not exhaustive, and he always felt unable to fully express his original intention of creation. At 7 a.m., every day, the Central People's Broadcasting Station broadcasted the tunes of *Oriental Red* on time. The tunes heard every day on this day, but that day, Niu Wen had a different feeling. It sounds very heartfelt and kind. They shine in the heart of an instant. Hey! Isn't this a painting Title that's been searching for? "Red Sun Rising in the East" is widely known, and the catchy lyrics and the metaphorical meanings of the works fit perfectly. The theme of the works is clearly stated in a concise and concise way, which expresses the Tibetan people's voice in a profound way. It fully demonstrates that the road of the Tibetan people is wider and wider, and also reveals the inevitable trend of the Tibetan people's painstaking and willing history. *Oriental Red Sun Rising* and *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade* completed at the same time participated in "the 3rd National Art Exhibition", which was recognized and praised by experts and audiences. Later, it was selected as a Tibet Hall hanging picture by the Great Hall of the People in Beijing and collected by UNESCO and British Museum. Interestingly, when the British Museum collected the painting, it gave a collection certificate with the title *Happy Tibetan Children*, which indicated that they recognized the painting, but did not accept renaming. This may be the difference in the understanding of the connotation and extension of Chinese characters between the East and the West, or the similarities and differences in a political trend.

Wu Shixin: **After the reform and opening-up, the historical mission of printmaking has changed, and Mr. Niu Wen's creative direction has also changed significantly. Can you talk about the changes of Mr. Niu Wen in this period?**

Niu Xiaoniu: During the period of reform and opening-up after the "Cultural Revolution", Mr. Niu Wen has changed his creative direction and style, which is different from the past and refreshing. With a brand-new thinking and print-making form, he completely overturned the previous creative mode, which is quite shocking and landmark. This is well-known in printmaking circles. The origin of the "Huajia Reform" in the year of Niu Wen's Huajia (60 years old) should be traced back to the early stage of the "Cultural Revolution".

Since the beginning of the "Cultural Revolution", Niu Wen has been put in prison and stopped working and creating. Niu Wen said: "You can stop my work, but you can't stop my thinking." In this rare free time, Niu Wen carefully reflected on the frustrations and harvest of the creative road along the way, and soon realized that with the advancement of the times, there should be new achievements and breakthroughs, but where is the choice of breakthroughs? The premise should be a combination of various forms. In the process of repeated reflection and comparison, I had thought of drawing on the familiar forms of folk art such as paper-cut and shadow play, introducing the techniques of Western abstract school, and at the same time, he also thought of taking "line" as the form of painting language in Chinese traditional art. Although he was not familiar with it, he had an unknown excitement and a long time. In this way, there would be an attempt to open the first picture after the "Cultural Revolution" and mourn Premier Zhou's printmaking work *Mourning* with line as the creative language. Ling Chengwei wrote in an article that Niu Wen's first work, *Mourning*, appeared at the end of 1976 after ten years of twists and turns, but it was conceived at the beginning of 1976. When the literary and artistic works of remembrance to Premier Zhou Enlai's suddenly like snowflakes flying all over the sky, *Mourning* is just a small piece of them, which wouldn't attract people's attention. But when we pursue Niu Wen's artistic path, we must not ignore this minor work. Its appearance indicates that the artistic style of Niu Wen will undergo new changes. In *Mourning*, the painter resolutely abandoned the usual expressive techniques. He shifted his attention from the management of black and white blocks to the use and expression of lines. For the first time, the painter portrayed the characters with strict lines in his works. These lines are either tight or loose, or firm or soft, corresponding to the contrast, forming a special sense of rhythm. Paying attention to the refinement of verve to convey the painter's thoughts and feelings marks that Niu Wen's art will enter a new milestone.

Thereafter, Niu Wen met Zhou Wu, an old classmate and printmaker of Anhui Province during the period of Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature. Zhou Wu, a native of Chao County, Anhui Province, had been teaching in Anhui University after the founding of New China. He had devoted himself to studying the history of ancient Hui school printmaking for many years. This was really a golden opportunity for a thousand years. After the old classmates met and expressed verbal concern, the topic quickly turned to the ancient Hui school prints

that they all wanted. Niu Wen had a thorough understanding of the ancient Hui school prints for the first time. He had a deep understanding of the ancient Hui school prints which rose in the mid-Ming Dynasty and were praised as the essence of Chinese ancient prints. Their white-drawing techniques were modelling, rich and exquisite workmanship, beautiful and fluent. Its fine and delicate artistic style, elegant and quiet, undoubtedly represents the highest achievement of Chinese printmaking in the history of Chinese printmaking, and has become a part of China's outstanding artistic heritage. An all-night chat is not enough, and the next day we talked, and the harvest was full. Subsequently, there were frequent correspondence and telephone contacts between the two places. Zhou Wu's "Ancient Hui School Printing Research Society" also hired Niu Wen as a special researcher. Various materials of the Society were constantly mailed to them. With the deepening of the research and exploration of Ancient Hui School Printing, the preliminary aim of incorporating the expressive force of the line into his own printmaking creation was constantly strengthened.

The rational understanding of the line is only a good beginning. The most important and real test is how to grasp the inherent form and the ever-changing law of using the line and to fully express it in the works. For this reason, Niu Wen said that there was no shortcut to go, there was no downwind boat to sail, only a "dumb way"—copying learning. Mr. Wang Wei wrote in an article: "Niu Wen started in the world of art, folk art is a teacher, after becoming a printmaker, still diligently strive to learn from folk art. He loved folk art just like the industrious bees searching for flowers, and kept collecting pollen to make honey. On one occasion, when he happened to see my collection of Mianzhu Folk Woodcut New Year paintings, he was just like children wearing new clothes and hats for the New Year. He took the time to read carefully and repeatedly, and then borrowed more than ten copies, day after day, night after night, to achieve the degree of physical and mental intoxication." Niu Wen said at a symposium in Shanxi: "Creators have to copy and become familiar with this set of rules. If we grasp this set of rules, we can shake shape, we can make historical figures and we can also make modern figures. Comrade Su Guang gave me a New Year paintings. At my age, I wore glasses, stayed up at night, and copied one by one. I could not learn anything without praising."

Since the "Cultural Revolution", the decades-long arduous theoretical exploration and technical reserve made the emergence of an extraordinary and brand-new printmaking works possible, instead of imitation of ancient woodcut or the modern western woodcut reproduction such as *Fragrant Grassland*, *New Expedition of Grassland*, *Spring Thunder*, *Rising Sun*, *Summer Wind*, *Autumn Moon*, and *Horse Racing*, in the early 1980s. Niu Wen once said with emotion: "How can the fresh, moist, implicit and simple oriental charm merge with the simplicity, washing, intensity and striking of modern prints to create prints with both Chinese characteristics and modern sense? This is a question that has been pondering for many years." Niu Wen answered his original intention and purpose of thinking so deeply and practicing so boldly in the year of Huajia with his own works and uncommon works. Mr. Qi Fengge wrote in an article: "Since the beginning of *Mourning* in 1976, a series of line engraving works which are more exquisite than Chinese white sketches have been launched. The style is gentle and delicate, the lines are elegant and elegant, and the sentiment is warm and elegant. They are diverted from the strong and rough regional style of Sichuan, forming a stylized personal style, thus entering the later stage of personalization... This variation of style, in terms of language style, is the purification of ancient Hui school printmaking language family. With modern aesthetic consciousness, the painter re-examines and excavates the mineral deposits of traditional art, especially the delicate and exquisite techniques of Wang and Huang carving workers in Huizhou in Ming Dynasty, changing the meticulous construction of black and white blocks in the past, and pursuing the neat and elegant style of Yang carving fine lines. In the early 1980s, the knife techniques of *New Expedition of Grassland*, *Spring Thunder* and *Summer Wind* are meticulous and scrupulous. It can be seen that the painter skillfully mastered the rigidity, gentleness and high-quality skills of the knife carving. His cadence and fluctuation show a sense of rhythm. The gentle movement of the characters is reflected by the micro-wave of the fine grassland, whose composition, image and lines are all shown. There is a beauty of rhythm." Mr. Qi Fengge wrote in another article: "In the new era, there are not many old printmakers who can make new breakthroughs in creation like Niu Wen and form the artistic peak. His artistic personality is also reflected in the works of this period. No one thought that after ten years of putting the knife on hold, he had given up the past expressive techniques and turned from black and white blocks to line engraving. He found nutrition sources in ancient Hui school prints to show the rhythmic beauty of lines with more delicate effects than traditional Chinese painting."

Chinese traditional painting art is the art of line. Niu Wen excavated, refined and used for reference from the treasure house of Chinese ancient painting art, and realized the magnificent turn in the new period and achieved fruitful results. As Mr. Ling Chengwei said, Niu Wen and his companions, when black and white prints were denounced as simple, primitive and lacking of the significance of the times, tried to develop rich treasures of traditional national culture and folk culture with modern aesthetic consciousness with abundant confidence

and enthusiasm. Niu Wen's artistic practice has proved to be successful. It not only shows the wisdom, responsibility and responsibility of an old printmaker in the new era, but also demonstrates the guiding significance of the development of the China's new printmaking movement. At the same time, it further demonstrates the bright prospects and infinite development space of the China's new printmaking movement.

Wu Shixin: Can you talk about Mr. Niu Wen's influence on you from the perspective of his families?

Niu Xiaoniu: In our impression, Mr. Niu Wen was always busy, always had endless things to do. Usually, he was either on business or in meetings, or squatting in the studio to draw pictures. He seldom stooped to have a rest for a while. Time was never enough to make him sit down and chat. He had become an octogenarian when he had time to sit down and have a chat. So for me, it's more about teaching by example than by preaching.

What touched us most was his obsession and persistence in art and his devotion to self-neglect. Niu Wen was born in a small mountain village in Lingshi County, Shanxi Province, with a thousand-year history and culture. He was infatuated with the folk culture around him. His childhood companions said that Niu Wen not only loved paper-cut and shadow play, but also loved the clay sculptures and murals in the temples in the countryside. He often slipped out to see them in the middle of the night and at dawn. Sometimes he stayed for a while and watched until chickens crowed. On one occasion, Niu Wen followed the shadow puppet team from village to village in an erratic way. After ten days of walking, he followed the team to eat and watch. Later, the team leader gave him a shadow avatar, coaxed him and persuaded him to go back. His mother scolded several times, but he always answered that he loved the shadow puppet too much and it was never enough to see. All these were indispensable to his mother, but he always answered that he liked it too much and it was always watching without it. It can be seen that his younger yearning and obsession with art has entered a state of fire and enchantment.

When the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression broke out, he joined the revolutionary ranks. And because he had only attended primary school and liked literature and art, he became propagandist. He worked on acting, singing, painting wall paintings and writing slogans and etc. He fought when war came. Niu Wen said many times: "The dual identities of propagandists and combatants are really difficult. When the battle started, they went to the battlefield to rest, and we were busy with propaganda. After graduating from Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature and returning to Jinsui Border Region, the business ability has been improved and the scope involved has been wider. I saw the works at hand of that period during that period, such as prints, posters, New Year paintings, cartoons, comic strips, portraits, illustrations of newspapers, books, textbooks, headlines of newspapers and magazines, maps on newspapers and magazines, leaflets for designing and drawing bills advertising trademarks in border areas to propagandize to enemies, as well as engraving official seals, meal tickets, food stamps for border authorities in great detail, etc. Beyond count. A painting, even if it is a small headline or a meal ticket or food ticket, was not accomplished overnight. It had a process of conception, design, drawing, engraving and printing. Although sparrows are small, they are full of courage and courage." It can be seen that the workload at that time was huge, and the effort and physical strength were great. Niu Wen once said: "At that time, as long as there was need, we would take the job under any conditions. There was no reference material to learn from. We had to work on our own. We were urged to hand in our works, and as a result we had to crash the schedule. Some paintings had no time to make more modifications. That was how we worked night after night and day after day."

Since the founding of New China, Niu Wen went south to Sichuan with his army, that is, taking Tibetan areas as his base of life and creation. Every year, there are less than three months and more than half a year. Now, it is very convenient to enter Tibet with airplanes, trains and cars. At that time, it was totally different. He had to hitch a ride by the roadside. Drivers in the wilderness mountains were afraid of hitchhikers, so they had to walk if they could not get a ride. As a result, It took more than a month to reach his destination when he entered Tibet for the second time. Some people commented: "Niu Wen is a tough fighter, a bit desperate!" What people do not know is that He had found the artistic palace in his mind since he entered Tibet for the first time in 1951, with which he had an indissoluble bond. If he was willing to devote himself to art, he would recognize his reason, and even eight horses will not be able pulled back his decision. Niu Wen had been faced with many opportunities for promotion, which would mean the end of artistic life and therefore he refused many times. In the 1950s, the Central Propaganda Department was transferred and the order was issued, but he was in Tibet at that time and dragged it out. In the 1960s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was transferred to the Chongqing Cultural Bureau and the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the end of 1972, when we were planning to seek innovation and change in the style of artistic creation, we were instructed by the Culture Group of the State Council to take charge of the fine arts work. First, we couldn't go, and then we were blamed and went in response to the telephone call from Beijing. To work in Beijing, we must be at the top of our official career. We shoulder great responsibility and dare not neglect it. Niu Wen visited old artists in Beijing for their willingness to

work on the promotion, and went to various places for investigation. He drafted more than ten plans on restoring the work of the China Artists Association, strengthening the development of mass art work, and restoring the reputation of old artists. Unfortunately, in the conference under that situation, more attention was paid to the so-called political struggle. Niu Wen's proposed work programme was ignored and ignored. For a long time, because of his unsatisfactory work, after many unsuccessful resignations, he resolutely left for Sichuan. It can be seen that he was not affected by fame and wealth, he kept his love for art.

I often heard Mr. Niu Wen said: "A painter is worthy to be called as a painter only when works are made." That's how he warned people, and that's how he warned himself. Niu Wen's works are abundant all his life. In the process of collecting and collating materials for compiling his painting album *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, he has created more than 300 prints, 370 comic strips, 200 cartoons, nearly 1000 sketches, as well as Chinese paintings, illustrations, exercises and so on in various periods, which can be described as a magnificent and endless stream of works, among which there are many influential classics. Niu Wen was one of the main organizers and leaders of Sichuan Artists Association. He always motivated and led the people around him with his own artistic practice, making Sichuan prints enter a new milestone from 1950s to 1960s, producing works and producing talents. His style was unique, especially black and white prints, which had great influence in the whole country and became a dazzling bright pearl in the history of Chinese art. At that time, in Chongqing, Sichuan printmakers worked and lived in a quiet and chic courtyard near the Jialing River. They met each other every day. It was like a warm and harmonious family. I was still young, but I was impressed by the fact that they were close to each other in their studios, and when they were free to visit, they sat down to discuss new drawings and invited their neighbours to come and see them. In addition, they also hold periodic manuscript reading meetings to comment on each painting, so each of their works has been carefully crafted, condensed everyone's efforts, is the crystallization of collective wisdom. Niu Wen's individual and collective achievements are remarkable. No effort, no harvest, pay and harvest are proportional. In a sense, this kind of pay also includes personal sacrifices, such as neglect of family care, but as a member of our family, we understood and supported his work.

Mr. Yan Han once inscribed Niu Wen's inscription "De Yi Shuang Xin", which is a pertinent evaluation of Niu Wen's validity. In our mind, his character and character are just like an upheld mountain. In and out of the circle, Niu Wen is well-known for his sincerity, enthusiasm, easiness and straightforwardness. Modest and unassuming, Niu Wen is a kind elder, who refused nobody, answered questions, responded to requests and enjoyed it. At the beginning of the rise of farmer prints in Qijiang, Chongqing, it was in this atmosphere that Li Yili, the organizer of farmer prints in Qijiang, and others, came to the door with fresh farmer paintings for verification. After seeing the paintings, Niu Wen made a good case, praised them, encouraged them and introduced them in many ways, which helped the farmer prints in Qijiang, Chongqing, step by step embark on the road of success. Also, Gou Xingqiong was a folk paper-cut artist in Yuanda County with whom he made acquaintance in an accidental contact. Niu Wen saw the hope of paper-cut art. He encouraged and supported her to explore more and produce more works. He also helped her hold a solo exhibition in Sichuan Art Museum. His works also participated in the National Art Exhibition, which made an unknown folk artist achieve remarkable results. Niu Wen cared much more about other people's affairs than his own affairs. There were numerous exhibitions of his works, but he had never held a personal exhibition. This could be a good opportunity to summarize and display, but he always said: "I had no time. Let it be done by future generations." This has always been a knot in my heart.

Niu Wen was full of innate wisdom, wit, good-spoken and joking. No matter in the committee or outside the committee, he always spoke, he always spoke with witty words that made people laugh. People in the circle were willing to communicate with him, because they could feel a harmonious atmosphere and its happiness and harmony. Niu Wen was open-minded and magnanimous. No matter how difficult and dangerous things were, he would not be alarmed and calm. Li Huanmin once told a story. In January 1957, he and Niu Wen returned to the mainland in a military car from Lhasa. The car went to the top of Tanggula Mountain. The car broke down at an altitude of 5600 meters and had to wait for backup. The snowstorm hit hard that night and the temperature dropped to below 30 degrees. Five of them put on their overcoats, huddled together and covered their quilts. They were still shivering with cold, and their trucks squeaked. At this time, when everyone was extremely depressed, Niu Wen laughed and said: "If this time is over and later generations find paintings in the car, maybe they will open a legacy Exhibition for us!" "That's exactly right!" everyone echoed, and the feeling of depression ebbed away.

Mr. Niu Wen was most moved and unforgettable by the news of the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway in July 2006. On the journey to the roof of the world, the rainbow-like heavenly road changed its way in an instant, and the powerful motherland realized the Tibetan people's thousand-year expectations and the dreams of generations. Over the years, Niu Wen has encountered many hardships and tribulations on his way to and from Tibet. He has experienced what it means to challenge his physical and psychological limits. He has tasted the

haze behind the splendid scenery of the snowy plateau. But for the countless experiences of life and death, hope and swansong, he would not have realized the “gold content” of this heavenly road, nor the position of this heavenly road in people’s minds. At this time, a strong desire for expression and creative impulse surged in Niu Wen’s heart, but the ruthless geriatric disease was like a big mountain in front of him. He fantasized about the heroism and pleasure at the low mountains when he talked and laughed with Li Huanmin and Qijiadawa. He fantasized about returning to the road of “capacity to go abroad and difficult to go to Tibet”, hoping that time would flow back to the age of ten or twenty. He wished he would be younger. Happiness and auspiciousness in the distant place haunted by dreams...

相关艺术评论

Commentary on the Artworks

牛文的艺术道路

力群

牛文同志多年来担任美术方面的领导工作，但他始终坚持版画创作，固然是他会挤时间，但最根本的还是由于他对版画创作事业的热爱、执着，可谓“锲而不舍，金石可镂”。

牛文同志虽然根基较浅，但他努力，认为热爱就是最好的动力，善于克服这些弱点，从而在版画事业上取得了较大的成绩。

一个人成年后所从事的事业，通常难免和童年时代的环境、习染、爱好有关，但人的命运有时也是无情的，他的爱好有如出土的幼芽，也许气候、雨水适宜，终成大树，也许适逢干旱之年，竟被扼杀在摇篮中。牛文同志童年所处的虽是文化落后的山区，但民间的剪纸、年画、门画以及箱柜上的描金装饰画……却不乏观赏。这些民间美术，无形中影响了他后来从事艺术的兴趣和爱好。更为幸运的是，他在童年时代的这种爱好艺术的幼芽，并未被扼杀在摇篮中，而后来竟能在革命队伍中得到培养和发展，像树木的幼芽遇到了风调雨顺终成大树一样。

牛文同志于1922年诞生在山西灵石县一个贫农的家庭里。1931年九一八事变，日寇占领了东三省，民族危机严重。激于爱国热情，1937年4月，他就结伙投奔了共产党领导的军队，时年不足15岁。他参军后就做了宣传员，演戏、唱歌、画画什么都干，可以说是第一天学画，第一天就以画为革命事业服务，虽然他对于艺术道理还一无所知。现在看来，也许是不可思议的，但在当时却是出于革命的需要。然而这种在革命工作中学习、锻炼的途径，也终于培养出一大批土生土长的革命的文学艺术家。自然，他们一旦有机会进入艺术学校，就会在艺术上迅速提高。

这样的机会终于到来了，1941年牛文同志有幸进入了延安鲁迅艺术文学院（以下简称“鲁艺”）美术系，总算得到了一个坐下来安心学习艺术的良机。虽然这里学习条件还很不完善，课外活动也过多，但对牛文同志来说已经是求之难得的了。他在“鲁艺”学习了素描，接触了木刻画，得到了一些起码的艺术知识。还读了当时所能找到的马列主义哲学、政治经济学著作和中外文学名著。尤其是毛泽东同志《在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话》对他的教育很深。所有这些为他日后从事革命艺术事业，都是必要的修养和准备。

牛文同志正式从事版画艺术，是在解放战争时期的晋绥边区，当时他从山西的崞县、代县，参加土改工作归来，有了较为丰富的、火热的革命斗争生活的体会，他以高度的热情创作了《领回土地证》，接着又创作了《丈地》。从前者到后者，可以看出牛文同志在木刻上的进步，无论是作品的人物形象还是木刻刀法的运用，《丈地》比《领回土地证》都有了显著的提高，虽然还较嫩弱，但可贵的是它洋溢着革命的生活气息，反映了一个翻天覆地的中国农村变革的新时代。

“延安文艺座谈会”之后，解放区的革命艺术家都积极地深入到群众火热的斗争生活中，与群众同呼吸、共欢乐，力求在作品中反映从生活中来的社会新气象，力求表现新时代、新主题。艺术家的创作理应表现他所熟悉的生活、感兴趣的生活和感受最深的生活，这是现实主义的艺术创作的规律。但他为了歌颂人民和新的时代，也有责任把不熟悉的群众的革命斗争生活，变为熟悉的、感兴趣的、感受最深的生活。《丈地》的产生，就是以上艺术思想的具体体现。今天社会主义时代的艺术家，还应把这种艺术上的优良传统继承下去。

一个艺术家的创作生涯，就是不断丰富他的生活经验和创作经验的过程。所谓生活经验，就是在生活中如何同群众打成一片，如何观察生活，如何收集创作素材，如何在平凡的生活中发现不平凡的创作题材的经验；所谓创作经验，就是如何使生活变成艺术，如何集中概括突出主题的经验。而牛文同志在晋绥时期，正是积累生活经验和创作经验的一个开端，它关系着今后的发展。应该说牛文同志在晋绥时期的经历，为后来的创作事业打下了一个良好的基础。

中华人民共和国成立后，牛文同志从晋绥边区调往四川工作，为使作品有所开拓，他立志把藏族地区当作创作的新基地，以木刻作品反映藏族人民解放后的新生活、新命运和新希望。这个想法固然很好，但因此也就又给他提出一个把不熟悉的生活，变为熟悉的生活、感兴趣的生活和感受最深的生活的任务。完成这个任务并不是一件容易的事，因为他对藏族民情不熟，语言不通，加以在民主改革前的各种因素，使他不容易和群众接近。因此完成这一任务难度极大。

但牛文同志在这个艰巨的任务面前，没有知难而退。从20世纪50年代开始，他和李焕民同志一道，十余次往返于西藏地区和四川的藏族自治州，每年少则三个月，多则半年，经历了数年时间，终于熟悉了藏族劳动人民，熟悉了他们的生活习惯和思想感情。

但熟悉是一回事，要把生活感受转化为艺术作品，表现什么？如何表现？又是一回事，是用革命的现实主义和革命的浪漫主义相结合的方法来表现呢？还是用批判现实主义的方法来表现呢？当牛文同志和李焕民同志了解到西藏农奴制社会的黑暗及其无比残酷的大量事实后，他们十分震惊，胸中充满了对藏族人民苦难生活的同情。在这时，牛文同志最初的创作理想碰到了现实的无情巨壁，发生了矛盾。是揭露西藏农奴制的黑暗呢？还是歌颂藏族地区的光明呢？如果要揭露西藏农奴制的黑暗或描绘藏族人民落后的生活，其题材简直俯拾即是，下笔即景；而要是歌颂呢，则有如沙里淘金，难度极大。但他们经过思考还是决定歌颂光明。

牛文同志在《谈李焕民的版画创作》一文中说：“50年代初，就西藏和藏族地区的形势来讲，创作揭露性的作品还不适宜。只能在黑暗中寻求光明，予以歌颂。当时虽然农奴制尚未触动，但毕竟解放军来到了藏区，党的阳光已照射到了康藏高原，必然会对现实生活引起许多新变化，创作颂扬光明的作品，有它的现实依据。”在这神情况下，牛文同志创作了《北京大学的新生》《康藏道旁》《草原上的牧民》等歌颂光明的作品。我认为这样做是对的。

艺术，不管作者是否有意，总是有其宣传作用的，对外国人来说，尤其如此。现实中有光明和黑暗，先进和落后，外国人对我们的艺术，由于政治立场的不同，有的欢迎歌颂光明描绘新事物的作品，有的就喜欢暴露黑暗和描绘落后生活的绘画。作为一个艺术家当然绝不应说谎，但就在这歌颂光明和揭露黑暗的选择上，就关系到作者的政治修养和艺术思想的问题。可我绝不主张在“四人帮”黑暗统治的特殊时期，艺术家也要歌颂所谓光明，那样搞就是说谎。然而作为社会主义中国，在正常的情况下，尤其在党中央的政策实践已证明是正确的时候，难道我们不应歌颂光明吗？不应向国外宣传我国人民的新的生活、新的思想面貌吗？但这目前似乎还是个值得讨论的问题。

牛文同志和李焕民同志，在西藏民主改革前，就是主张歌颂光明的，而且他们也这样做了，并非说谎。待民主改革后，西藏人民在共产党领导下彻底翻身了，由农奴制社会一下子走向了社会主义社会，现实中的光明面扩大了，黑暗面在缩小，藏族人民不论在政治上还是在经济上都得到了解放。牛文同志目睹了这些变化，无比激动，遂以满腔热情歌颂了藏族人民的新生活、新命运和新希望。于是产生了他非常成熟的作品，如《吉祥如意遍地锦》和《东方红太阳升》（又名《欢乐的藏族儿童》）。这两幅木刻构思、描绘新颖，人物形象生动美好，刀法流畅有力，黑白处理舒畅，套色典雅简洁，达到了较高的水平。说实在的，有些人的作品在一定政治气候下，感觉还不坏，但隔了十年、二十年再看，就往往感到站不住脚了。而牛文同志的这两幅作品隔了较长时期也还是经得起推敲的。之所以如此，就因为其不仅有思想性，也有很高的艺术性和审美价值。

艺术不应机械地为政治服务，更不应成为政治的奴隶。但作为一个社会主义时代的艺术家，能够对生活有政治敏感还是可贵的。否则就无法从平凡的生活中看到它内含的时代意义。《吉祥如意遍地锦》是牛文在拉萨街头看到妇女在大地上撒白灰画图案，祝愿来年丰收、万事如意吉祥如意古老风俗而有了形象感受，之后又经过了长期的艺术构思和加工而完成的。作者在这幅图画中赋予古老的风俗以崭新的含义：表现了藏族人民在民主改革后翻身的喜悦；表现了藏族人民在党的领导下，以主人翁的身份开始创造美好生活的感情。它象征着砸碎枷锁的藏族同胞，要在这一穷二白的土地上，画出最新、最美的图画——社会主义的锦绣前景。

《东方红太阳升》是牛文同志在川西阿坝藏族自治州看到托儿所的孩子们唱歌跳舞后得到启发而加工创造的。牛文同志想：阿坝的今天就是整个藏族地区的明天。因此，他能通过这一

平凡的题材，创造出大大超过了仅仅描绘托儿所生活内容的作品。

以上两幅木刻都是有政治含义的，都是在要求艺术为政治服务，艺术从属于政治的“左”的时代产生的，却绝不是从政治出发、图解政治的说教作品，而是作者从生活中有感而发、从生活的土壤中培育出的新的花朵。

“十年动乱”后，牛文同志重新拿起刻刀，耕耘他久已荒芜的版画园地。但这时，艺术上的极“左”思潮虽已在清算，但盲目效仿西欧近代派美术的风气却颇流行，牛文同志在一次会议上说：“咱们不能老是抱着‘金碗’讨饭，自己民族的‘精华’不学，跑去捡人家的‘零碎’。”又说：“如果谁能把中国民族民间艺术和西方的艺术有机地结合起来，创造出既有中国特色，又有时代特征的艺术作品，那就好得很。”他不仅是这样说，近些年来也正是本着这种精神在做的。他没有走版画向素描看齐的路子，这样做很容易削减版画自身的特点，而难以发挥它的创造性。他一头扎进我国民族民间的艺术中，力求创新，近年来创作的《草地新征》《芳草地》《朝阳》《赛马图》等就是这种艺术思想的实践。

我认为一个艺术家对他的创作总应不断探索、不断创新，做到“山重水复疑无路，柳暗花明又一村”，这才会令人感到他在前进、他在发展，而不是故步自封、虽生犹死。探索就是试验，正如科学试验一样，自然不会一次试验就成功。牛文同志说：“试验失败了，不要灰心，坚持干下去，就有成功的希望。”

他的以上作品主要是在形式上的探索试验，虽还不能说已很成功、完美无缺，但令人感到形式的新颖和线条的秀美，其风味是富有民族特色的，整个画面有清新、淡雅之风，明快、秀丽之貌。因此，这些木刻受到了中国群众和国际友人的喜爱。

牛文同志创作的这几幅作品，是向我国明清的徽派木刻学习的结果。徽派版画是一种复制版画，但其刻工之细腻圆润、隽秀婉丽，在中国版画史上享有盛名，可惜一向不为我国从事创作木刻的版画家们所重视。而牛文却能对此感兴趣，为之青睐。他研究了那些版画的黑白关系，也研究了唐代绘画的用线，他的理想是创造出明快、清新、秀丽、高雅之作。为此就必须抛弃形体的光暗感、立体感，在造型上进行改造，并做到一定程度的夸张变形。他去过西双版纳，那里妇女的服装也使他感兴趣，这些都是牛文同志在探索和试验时追求的意境，从而创作出了富有民族特色的、新风格的木刻。这些作品不但令人感到在中国新兴版画大花园中出现了奇葩，而且也说明我们不应“抱着‘金碗’讨饭”。

但令人遗憾的是，直到现在，中国美术界还有不少人存在着不论在认识上、不论在创作实践上，对伟大的中华民族艺术应有的独立性认识不足。

1996年10月江泽民同志指出：“一个民族只有在努力发展经济的同时，保持和发扬自己的民族文化特色，才能真正自立于世界民族之林。”这段话很重要。我想，我们绝不应在学习外国的口号下，做人家的附庸（当然，没有人反对学习外国的好东西，问题是学什么，怎样学）。周总理早就提出：“学外国要以我为主。”因而要有自己的民族特色。我认为这种理论上的认识，是每一个中国的艺术家都应有的。否则，他就难以创造出具有中国作风、中国气派的艺术品。

牛文同志虽已进入老版画家之林，但他尚精力充沛，斗志不衰，相信他在今后创造民族艺术特色的努力中，定会取得新的成就。

（原载《力群美术文学评论集》，北岳文艺出版社2000年版）

现实主义原则与浪漫主义情怀——试谈牛文的版画艺术

康宁

一群藏族儿童手拉着手，踏着稚嫩、舒展而欢快的舞步，褪去了昔日奴隶后代的苦难阴影，露出甜甜的笑脸。他们翩翩起舞，围成一个圆形，中间一位年轻的藏族女教师正弹奏一曲《东方红》。画面轻松、舒展、质朴而富于节奏感，同时充溢着中国民间艺术所特有的浪漫主义情怀。这就是牛文老师于1959年创作的版画《东方红太阳升》。1965年，上海人民美术出版社出版过一套小册子丛书《美术作品介绍》，其中第二集就有牛文老师的这幅作品。那时我还是一个初中学生，刚刚萌发出对绘画的强烈兴趣，在县城的小书店里，我用节约下的二毛四分零花钱买下了这一集画册，其中，这幅《东方红太阳升》给我的印象是非常深的，尽管当时我还并不能真正理解其中全部的艺术内涵。那是我第一次从作品上认识了牛文老师。三十年过去了，现在，这本小小的画册还被珍爱地放在我的书架上。

真正的艺术是超越时空的，经过时间的过滤和积淀，它依然闪光。三十多年后再看这件作品，我们仍然不能不被它饱含着的质朴、自然、温馨、和谐的艺术语言所感动，常规的三度空间透视关系在这里被有意削弱，强化了平面化的构图形式。环形的构图具有极强的装饰效果而又极其自然生动，毫无牵强造作之感。十五个儿童踏着和谐的节拍，而每个人物造型又都有细微的变化和不同的特点，黑白交替变化，更增添了画面的节奏感。弹琴的女教师处于画面的中心视点，造型端庄、自然。全画用刀简洁、明快、流畅，圆口刀的运用显示出画家纯熟的技法，果断、敏捷的智慧以及饱满奔放的艺术热情。完全舍弃了具体背景的刻画，因而使得主题更为集中、凝练，更为典型和具有概括力，使得这一普通的欢乐歌舞场景升华为作者主观情感的直接宣泄和表达。这里我还要特别说到画面的空白处，即中央和左下角几处残刀处理十分精彩。这几处精心处理的刀痕，极大地增加了画面的生动活泼气氛和动势感觉及节奏韵律感。

牛文老师在20世纪30年代投身革命，40年代开始进行木刻创作。早期作品如《领回土地证》《保卫延安》《听胜利消息》《练兵》等，以极其饱满的政治热情，反映了他所投身的那场滚滚洪流中火热的斗争与生活。由于他童年时代生活在山区农村，农村的剪纸、年画、门画等民间美术的熏陶和浸染，使他的作品既有严肃明确的主题，又时时透露出中国民间艺术简洁明快、热情乐观精神的影响。这种中国民间艺术的浪漫精神，一直贯穿于牛文的现实主义艺术创作之中。我们可以从他各个创作时期的作品中明确地感受到。

从50年代到60年代中期，四川的版画创作逐渐形成了一个强有力的团结的创作群体。这一时期，艺术家们创作出一大批优秀的版画作品，把四川版画特别是黑白版画创作推向了一个高峰，产生了全国性的极大影响，与当时黑龙江套色版画、江苏水印版画并列呈三足鼎立之势。而在这个创作群体中，牛文的艺术风格显然是独特而富于个性的。

60年代初，由四川美术家协会组织集体创作的《红岩》小说插图黑白版画在全国产生了很大影响。在这套组画中，牛文所作有两幅，即《胜利》和《小萝卜头的梦》。《胜利》是具有象征和寓意性的。饱满的构图，单纯、简洁、流畅的刀法，质朴中蕴含着高昂的激情。特别应该注意这件作品背景的处理，平面化的、整体而概括的人物造型及飘动的红旗与充溢全幅的以小圆口刀刻成的流动的线条组成的灰色形成很好的对比，协调统一而有强烈的律动感，传递出激越的情绪和气势。那灰色的线条和刀痕是什么？是风？是云彩？是火光还是硝烟？或许它们什么都不是，抑或又全都是。正是这种非确定性、非具象的处理使得它有某种抽象的意味，脱离和超越了具体的场景和事件，具体的人和物的描绘，升华了作品的主题，成为一种更为深刻的、涵盖面更为宽广的象征和寓意，这是作者的激情与理想、精神与情怀的迹化。这种处理方式，在牛文前后期的创作中都时有出现，特别是在80年代的作品中，更成为一种自觉和主动的运用与追求。

牛文为《红岩》插图所作的另一幅作品《小萝卜头的梦》就带有更为强烈的主观色彩。今天看来，或许我们可以说它具有某种超现实主义的因素。当然这和作品所表现的主题与内容是

相一致的。小萝卜头在狱中梦境的表现，恰好符合了作者个性特征中蕴含的浪漫主义精神和从民间艺术中汲取的大胆夸张的手法和丰富的想象力。黑压压的一片牢房，一把巨大无比的铁锁把大门紧锁，两只象征黑暗势力的秃鹰恶狠狠地盯着一个孤立无援的狱中囚徒……作品深刻地体现了在黑暗笼罩下一个幼小的弱者的绝望与希望的交织，寄予了作者沉重的思考与关注、同情。画面构图同样采用了极其饱满壅塞的方式以增加压抑感。处理手法上，树、房屋等大胆汲取了民间美术的造型方法。在整套《红岩》插图中，牛文的两幅作品在风格上是比较独特的。从他所选择的两段内容来看，也可见他是在寻找与自身个性特征与气质相吻合的题材，以使得内容与形式达到和谐统一。

牛文艺术创作的独特个性主要在于他在坚持现实主义创作方法的前提下，融合和保持了自身个性特征中的浪漫主义气质，大胆的夸张和丰富的想象力。在表现手法上，敢于打破具体事件、情节、场景的局限，在写实中又融进了一定的抽象表现因素，因而使其作品具有更深刻的内容含量和独特的人格力量。在同一时期，牛文还有大量的作品，如《吉祥如意遍地锦》《锦花坡》《南方来信》《夺炮》等，也都同样体现着他的创作原则。

“十年动乱”之后，特别是解放思想、改革开放的春风吹遍中国大地，牛文焕发青春，激发起强烈的创作欲望，而且一发不可收拾，创作出一大批崭新的作品。这是他版画创作生涯中又一个高峰时期，有论者称为“花甲变法”。这一时期的作品，从《芳草地》《草地新征》《朝阳》《春雷》到《赛马图》《新路》，一件件地从他的笔端刀尖涌出。在表现形式上，一改前期作品中以黑白明暗对比为主的手法，而更多地强调线的表现，以线为主，辅以局部平面的略带装饰味的黑白变化，给人耳目一新之感。这是牛文长期研究中国民族传统艺术，汲取民族民间美学营养，对自身艺术表现语言的一次突破性创造。画面清新淡雅，明快秀丽。他从明清徽派木版画的线刻艺术中汲取精华，把对中国传统绘画中“线”的研究与体验成果注入自己的艺术创造中，形成了浓郁的民族特色和鲜明的个人风格。关于这一点，许多论者都已经论及。在这里，我想从另外的角度再做一点粗浅的分析。

首先，牛文通过长期的创作实践，对现实主义创作原则有了更深入的理解和更深刻的认识，拓展了现实主义创作方法的表现领域。过去我们对现实主义创作方法“真实地再现典型环境中的典型人物”的理解多局限在对客观具体事件，具体人物、情节的具体叙事性表述上，忽略甚至抹杀了艺术家个性的发挥，这是我国文学艺术创作领域中在一个阶段普遍存在的倾向。牛文早期在晋绥边区创作的《丈地》《听胜利消息》等作品及新中国成立后反映藏族人民生活的《学医归来》《北京大学的新生》《当和平解放西藏的喜讯传到康藏高原的时候》等作品，以饱满的热情讴歌革命的滚滚洪流和火热的生活，表现社会变革过程中的新事物，宣传党的方针政策，团结人民，发挥了很好的社会影响，是那一历史时期产生的优秀作品。但这一时期的作品，还主要侧重于对身边亲身经历的事件、人物及社会问题和现象，通过具体的场景和情节描述来进行表达，还更多地依靠“题材”的选择来确定“主题”。在表现手法上，还较多地追求客观、真实、直接地模拟现实的方式，或者说，还较多地停留在文学式的直观的表达方式上。到了80年代，牛文的一批作品集中地体现了他在美学及艺术形式语言上的探索和思考。这时，他在艺术创造中更深刻地认识了“自我”，发展了“自我”，大胆地强化了艺术家个体在艺术创作中的独特的艺术感受。这一时期的作品，淡化了情节性和叙事性，淡化了具体场景和细节的描写，淡化了对“题材”的挑选，甚至淡化了对人物具体个性特征的典型性描写，而更加侧重于强调画面整体的“情”和“势”，“韵”和“神”。在这里，需要说明的是，“淡化”并非指作品的主题而言。牛文艺术创作的主题始终是非常明确的，那就是：对革命事业的歌颂，对生活的礼赞，对真、善、美的追求和对丑恶的鞭挞。牛文是一位颇具诗人气质的艺术家，对于生活中的美具有非常敏锐的感受力。从50年代初起，他就立志把藏区作为自己创作的根据地。可以说，他的作品记录了藏区人民在解放后经历各个历史时期的形象历程。但他与那些带着猎奇的眼光到藏区去搜寻“蛮荒”“原始”“苦涩”“沉重”感觉的画家不同，他刻刀下的人物都充溢着美，一种理想化的诗意的美。他没有刻意地去强调生活中的贫困和愚昧、艰辛和沉重。他的作品充满了光明与希望，这和他个性气质中的浪漫主义情怀是分不开的，同时也是他豁达的胸怀和充满信心的对生活的热爱以及对藏区人民真挚情感的精神体现。在这一时期的作品中，他避开了直观的叙事性描述，而把重心放在对“美”

的追求与表现上，放在了对艺术语言本体的研究与探索上。通过艺术语言的纯化，使作品的主题得到更深刻的表达。或许可以说，牛文从过去的“使命”式的创作过程逐渐开始转向了“艺术”本身。这是一个追求“内容美与形式美的统一”达到和谐完整的漫长过程。应该说，从早期的创作开始，牛文就一直没有停止过对艺术语言的探索，但这时的探索已经从一种本能的反应转变为一种更为自觉、主动的追求和把握。从学习西方木刻的技能经验，同时对中国民族民间艺术营养的汲取、借鉴，到对中国传统文化艺术精华的深入研究，牛文执着于中华传统艺术与民间艺术天地之中，他以清新、隽永、流畅的线的组合，结合民族民间装饰性的黑白对比，不同的灰色、线、图案、色块以及优美的造型，极富动感和表现力的刀法，营造出一个纯净的世界、美的世界、淳朴的世界。

还值得谈到的一点，就是牛文在这一时期致力于对艺术语言创新探索的过程中，逐渐有意识地、自觉和主动地将一种抽象化的因素提炼成为艺术语言符号使之进入到自己的创作之中。在前面提到过的一些作品如《东方红太阳升》《胜利》中，其对具体环境、背景的虚化和处理，就已经含有这样的倾向。其他还有50年代创作的《吉祥如意遍地锦》中背景的处理，藏族人民用石灰在地上画出的图案被大面积地强化和夸张，其视觉上的张力和冲击力已经不是具体情节的真实所能包容。在这里，图案已经作为语言符号，转变为藏族人民对生活的憧憬和希望的精神象征。在同一时期创作的《锦花坡》中，山坡上的菜畦、田垄、庄稼、沟渠被概括提炼成为变化、流动的不同的线条、点、块及刀法组成的乐章，而具体场景的真实性已经不那么重要了。这与他更早些时候创作的藏区风景版画中竭力追求真实客观、模拟现实的倾向相比，显然是在借鉴民间艺术形式、探索艺术语言上的一大进步。到了80年代，牛文在这方面的探索就更成为一种自觉、主动的追求和把握。在《芳草地》中，天与地浑然一体，冲击我们的视觉的是线的流动和韵律。在《春雷》中充满全幅的用极具动感的刀法精心刻出的线条构成的灰色，是草地，但又不是具体的草地，它与极富情趣和动势特点的人物造型构成非常谐调而又对比的关系，带给欣赏者的是一种无以言说的情感和气势，使人感受到作者心灵深处细腻而丰厚的感情宣泄，也感受到藏区草原的神秘和生活的节奏。在《朝阳》《赛马图》中灰色线条组成的背景已经很难具体地确定它是草地还是天空，它们更多的是与人物身上的线条、服饰、图案形成有机的对比统一，构成画面整体的节奏与韵律。而《新路》背景中的砖铺路面、路标、星光、月色并列，更不是具体场景、地点、环境的真实再现。可以认为，它们是作为一种抽象化的语言符号进入画面的。正是这种抽象和非具体、非客观的处理，才使得欣赏者在欣赏过程中有更多想象的契机和玩味的余地，也使得作品能够超越具体的局限而具有更深刻的精神内涵，使得主题的深化成为可能。它极大地强化了作品整体的节奏和韵律，强化了作者主观情感的抒发和表现，强化了木刻版画中刀法组织的独特的审美价值，更大程度地发挥出刻刀与木版这一特有的艺术形式的感染力，使得艺术语言更为纯净。我认为，这是牛文这一时期艺术创作探索上的一个重要成果。

在创作中，牛文还努力探索版画套色的新的观念。将民族民间绘画中对色彩的处理原则创造性地、极有分寸和恰到好处地运用到黑白构成之中，打破了一般常规的套色版画概念，用色极简、极省，起到画龙点睛的妙用。《朝阳》中的太阳，《赛马图》中的人物服饰上几近原色的红、黄、蓝的处理，极其饱满，丰而不俗，确实是非常独到的传神之笔。

80年代后期，牛文又创作了一批戏曲人物黑白木刻作品，汲取了民间剪纸、年画、皮影的营养，在表现方法和艺术语言上继续进行他执着的探索 and 追求。通过这批作品，我们可以感受到他始终如一地对社会现实的关注和强烈的责任心、使命感，也可以看出他对中国传统戏剧文化的钟情，并且不断从中学习借鉴，用以丰富和创造自己的艺术语言。在他笔下，古代戏曲中的人物是他借以抒发胸中激情，表达理想和精神的一种寄托。

作为一位从革命战争中走过来的新兴版画的先驱，牛文首先是一位现实主义艺术家，始终坚持现实主义的创作原则，坚持生活是创作的源泉，坚持艺术为人民大众的方向，随着时代的发展，随着对艺术的不断探索和体验，他不断发现和完善自我，他自身个性特征中的浪漫主义情怀和从民族民间艺术中获取的营养造就了他大胆和丰富的想象力。这些，逐渐成为他艺术创作的主调，形成了他追求美、创造美的独特的风格和面貌。在艺术语言上，抽象与具象相结合，在具象描绘中注重抽象因素的运用。追求画面整体的“情”和“势”，“神”和“韵”，创

造出了一大批具有民族民间特色，又极具现代精神、时代特征的优秀版画作品。

牛文老师是一个革命者，他始终不忘自己的责任和理想，他又是一个在艺术上从不满足、从不停步的不倦的探索者。牛文老师还是一位宽厚、慈祥、平易近人的长者，对青年后学竭力扶持、关心和帮助。他曾长期担任四川美术家协会的组织领导工作，有许多年轻的画家朋友。他为培养造就年青一代艺术人才付出了许多劳动和心血。几年前，我曾经在一篇文章中谈到四川老一辈版画家为四川版画的发展所做出的贡献时说过，“我们这一代正是在汲取他们营养的基础上得以成长起来的”。牛文老师是我们所尊敬的老一辈版画家。我们衷心地祝愿牛文老师健康长寿，永葆艺术青春。

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异域、家乡和共同体——牛文藏族题材版画的一种解读

邹建林

少数民族题材是新中国美术的一个重要方面，一般用以表达“民族团结”这个主题，但也不限于这一主题。在新中国美术史上，四川和重庆是创作少数民族题材绘画比较集中的地区，其代表性的画家是牛文和李焕民，以及后来的其加达瓦、徐匡、阿鸽等。对少数民族的兴趣甚至延伸到了20世纪80年代的乡土绘画中。可以说，1949—1979年的少数民族题材作品，构成了四川乡土绘画的“史前史”或隐性资源。那么，四川的画家为什么对少数民族题材情有独钟？他们表现的是否仅仅是“民族团结”这一主题？本文尝试以牛文为例来考察少数民族题材绘画与其历史语境的关系。

1. 缘起

牛文是山西人，1949年来重庆。他最早的少数民族题材作品，以藏族为题材的《当和平解放西藏的喜讯传到康藏高原的时候》（与李少言合作，下文简称《喜讯》）创作于1952年。当时他和李少言都是重庆《新华日报》的美术编辑。

从全国范围看，当时重庆画家群体对藏族题材的表现，不但起步时间早，而且持续时间长，创作的作品也多，这跟重庆所处的地理位置有关。新中国成立初期，重庆是中共中央西南局的所在地。由于西南局承担了解放西藏的重任，因此西南局干部系统中的画家表现西藏的解放和建设，不但有其便利，而且是一项严肃的政治任务。

这里所说的重庆画家群体，主要指《新华日报》美术组的几位画家：李少言、牛文、李焕民、谭学楷、安琳等。《新华日报》是西南局的机关报，这份报纸虽然沿用的是抗战时期中国共产党在国统区公开发行的那份著名报纸的名称，但在组织结构和人员构成上有很大区别。抗战时期的《新华日报》1938年创刊于武汉，由周恩来请国民党元老于右任题写报头。同年冬，武汉沦陷，报纸转移到重庆，1947年被国民党当局勒令停刊，报馆人员被迫撤到延安。1949年西南局成立，其机关报也在筹办之中。此前，邓小平在北京开会时，已请毛泽东题写了报头。筹办《新华日报》的人员向西南局报到后，邓小平将毛泽东题写的报头交给他们，命令他们随向重庆挺进的第三兵团赶赴重庆。

重庆《新华日报》创刊初期的干部，主要由三部分人员组成：原《晋绥日报》人员、原《新华日报》人员以及西南服务团新闻出版中队。后者是从上海、南京等地招募到的一批新闻工作人员，其中以原《晋绥日报》的人员较多，牛文、李少言即属于这部分人员。

《晋绥日报》的前身是《抗战日报》，创刊于1940年9月18日，1947年7月1日更名，是中央晋绥分局的机关报。1948年4月2日，毛泽东在晋西北的兴县接见《晋绥日报》编辑人员，就新闻工作发表了重要意见，这就是著名的《对〈晋绥日报〉编辑人员的谈话》，收入《毛泽东选集》。1949年5月1日，《晋绥日报》终刊，报社人员随晋绥分局迁到晋南临汾集中学习，准备南下接管国民党的中央日报社和扫荡报社，开办《新华日报》。10月初，部分人员在原晋绥分局宣传部长张子意、原晋绥日报社社长常芝青的带领下，从临汾出发，途经石家庄、郑州、武汉，赶至湘西，随军奔赴重庆。各分队于12月4日、5日分别抵达重庆长江南岸的海棠溪，6日统一列队入城。

新的《新华日报》创刊于1949年12月10日。创刊后，曾接到中宣部电报，提出南京已有《新华日报》出版，请考虑改用《新西南报》报名。12月11日，西南局宣传部遵照邓小平指示，复电中宣部，说明中宣部电报11日才收到，而报纸已于10日创刊，考虑到《新华日报》原来在重庆读者中印象很深，邓小平同志赴京时曾经请示毛泽东同意并写了报头，“改名恐影响不好”。中宣部12月15日复电，同意报纸不改名。以后这张报纸就称为重庆《新华

日报》。^①

牛文，1922年出生于山西灵石，1937年参军，1941年考入延安鲁迅艺术文学院（以下简称“鲁艺”）美术系第五期学员班。1943年，因战事紧张，提前终止延安“鲁艺”学业，分配到八路军一二〇师“战斗剧社”，编辑《战斗画报》并参加文艺演出。1945年调入晋绥边区《抗战日报》下面的《人民画报》任美术编辑。1946年，《抗战日报》改名《晋绥日报》。《晋绥日报》终刊后，牛文随军到重庆，进入《新华日报》美术组，李少言任美术组组长，牛文任副组长。不久，原四川省立艺术专科学校的教师谭学楷和学生安琳应聘到《新华日报》美术组。1951年2月和8月，从中央美术学院毕业的李焕民和宋广训也先后分配到《新华日报》美术组工作。再加上其他一些应聘、调动过来的美术干部，“《新华日报》美术组实际上成为当时共产党在西南地区美术界开展工作的领导机构”^②。

1953年3月，西南区第一届文代会在重庆召开，西南区美术工作者协会成立，李少言被选为常务副主席并主持日常工作，牛文任秘书长。1954年6月，全国大区行政机构撤销。8月31日，作为大区级报纸的重庆《新华日报》亦完成历史使命，更名为《重庆日报》。《新华日报》美术工作组人员继续留在重庆，专事西南美协的工作。因中华全国美术工作者协会已于1953年10月改名为中国美术家协会，西南区美术工作者协会也改名为中国美术家协会重庆分会，会址由原在市中区的新华日报社迁往市郊华村24号。李少言和牛文的职务不变。^③

在重庆《新华日报》工作期间，李少言、牛文等人的任务是配合政策制作木刻插图。例如，1950年下半年，西南局在农村开展清匪反霸、减租退押运动，《新华日报》于8月至9月连续刊出牛文、苏光合作的长篇连环画《死不着》，揭露封建土地制度的罪恶，后来出版成书。1951年镇反运动期间，《新华日报》刊出了牛文、谭学楷、苏光、李少言合作的连环画《一贯道害了我一家》。1951年2月，抗美援朝期间，《新华日报》连载了牛文、李少言、谭学楷、安琳合作的连环画《我的女儿是怎样受骗的？》；1952年2月，《新华日报》又连载了由李少言、牛文、苏光、谭学楷等合作的组画《美帝侵华史画》。

牛文的藏族题材版画就是在这个背景下产生的。他第一次与谭学楷赴藏区体验生活是在1951年10月。这时，西藏刚刚和平解放。1951年5月23日，《中央人民政府和西藏地方政府关于和平解放西藏办法的协议》（即“十七条协议”）在北京签订。《喜讯》即是这次赴藏之旅的成果。在2008年的一份自述中，牛文回忆说：“《当和平解放西藏的喜讯传到康藏高原的时候》是我和李少言同志1952年合力打造的作品。记得当时我从藏区体验生活回来，少言提议，合作一把，于是一拍即合。我将在藏区体验生活的素材作了整理，拿出画面的构思、草图，我们共同探讨，最后定稿。少言提刀向木，完成此幅作品。”^④

2. 藏区

根据《牛文绘画七十年》一书所附年表统计，从1951年到1979年，牛文共去藏区14次，基本上都是跟李焕民同去的。具体情况如下：

① 参见彭雨、孙霞珍、管纪奋执笔，《西南〈新华日报〉》报史编委会编著《西南〈新华日报〉简史》，重庆出版社1995年版，第1—7页。

② 凌承纬、凌彦：《四川新兴版画发展史》，四川美术出版社1992年版，第131页。

③ 参见凌承纬、凌彦《四川新兴版画发展史》，四川美术出版社1992年版，第131—132页。

④ 《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编：《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第121页。

序号	时间	目的地
1	1951 年 10 月	西藏
2	1952 年春夏	西藏
3	1953 年 3—8 月	甘孜（塔公乡）
4	1954 年 3—6 月	甘孜
5	1955 年 2—8 月	阿坝
6	1956 年 9 月—1957 年 2 月	西藏
7	1957 年 4—9 月	阿坝
8	1958 年 2—8 月	阿坝（马尔康县俄尔雅）
9	1960 年 9—11 月	阿坝（若尔盖）
10	1961 年 5—9 月	阿坝（若尔盖）
11	1962 年 6 月	阿坝（若尔盖）
12	1963 年 9 月	阿坝
13	1964 年 9 月—1965 年 2 月	西藏
14	1979 年 3—6 月	阿坝

从上表可以看出，牛文所去的藏区主要是三个地方：甘孜、阿坝和西藏。按照藏族的传统说法，其所居住的地域分为三块：上部阿里三围，中部卫藏四茹，下部多康六岗。阿里是西藏最靠西边的高山地区。以拉萨为中心向南辐射的地区称为乌斯藏，清以后改称卫藏。东部为卫，也称前藏，以拉萨为中心；西部为藏，也称后藏，以日喀则为中心。多康六岗实际上包括安多（Amdo）、康（Kham）两个方言区。安多指念青唐古拉山以北的大草原区，主要在青海。康，指的是青藏高原东南部的横断山区，包括今四川西部的甘孜、阿坝两个藏族自治州，西藏的昌都地区，云南的迪庆和青海的玉树。康在藏语中是“边地”之意。历代的行政区划也大致以此为基础。如元朝中央在藏地设朵思麻（Mdo Smad，意指“安多下部地区”）、朵甘思（Mdo Kham，即多康，由藏语中的“安多”和“康”两个名词合成）、乌斯藏纳里速古鲁孙（相当于卫藏；乌斯即卫，藏即后藏，纳里即阿里，速古鲁孙意为三部）三路宣慰使司，互不统属，直属宣政院管理。明朝设乌斯藏（相当于卫藏）、朵甘（即多康，相当于安多、康）二都指挥使司。^①

牛文 1953 年、1954 年所去的甘孜，当时叫西康省藏族自治区，也就是说，他去的是一个最早设立的藏族自治区。西康省的建制，尽管在清末即有动议，但直到 1939 年才正式确立。1949 年 12 月 9 日，在进军西南的人民解放军的压力下，省主席刘文辉同邓锡侯、潘文华在彭县发出通电，宣布起义，西康省遂告和平解放。1950 年，西康省由西南军政委员会领导，也属于西南局的管辖范围，驻地康定，分设康定、雅安、西昌三个专区。1950 年 11 月，康定专区改设为西康省藏族自治区。1955 年 7 月，西康省撤销，所属行政区域划归四川省，改设为四川省甘孜藏族自治州。

至于他 1955 年以后去的阿坝，在新中国成立初期叫茂县专区。1949 年 12 月解放军进驻

^① 关于“藏地三区”所指的范围及相关名词的含义，参见任乃强、泽旺奇吉《“朵甘思”考略》，《中国藏学》1989 年第 1 期。

成都，1950年把四川省划分为川东、川南、川西、川北四个行政公署区，隶属于西南局。各行署区辖若干专区，茂县专区即属于川西行署区。1952年四个行署区重新合并为四川省。1953年撤销茂县专区，改设四川省藏族自治区。1955年又改设为阿坝藏族自治州。牛文之所以从1955年开始才去阿坝体验生活，可能跟该地作为藏族自治区域设立的时间较晚有关。为什么要去甘孜、阿坝而不是其他地方呢？1954年出版的一本小册子或许能提供一些线索：

藏族的人数也较多，约在二百万人以上。西康境内藏族人数最多，约一百二十万，几乎比西藏的藏族人还多一倍。金沙江以东和大渡河以西的地区，现在已成立了范围很大的西康省藏族自治区（引者按，即甘孜）；在西昌专区，还有木里藏族自治区；金沙江以西的昌都地区，也是以藏族人民为人口的主体的。在云南西北部，聚集了大约三十万左右的藏族人民……在四川西北部，聚集着将近四十万藏族人民，他们占有四川省藏族自治区（引者按，即阿坝）人口总数的四分之三，成为全国现有的第二个大的藏族自治区。^①

关于西康省的地图，有两种画法，一种包括昌都地区（1949年以前），另一种则不包括昌都地区（1950年以后）。原因可能是昌都地区在民国时期名义上隶属西康省，因而1949年12月西康省和平解放时，就把它算在其管辖范围内。但实际上，直到1950年10月昌都战役结束以后，昌都地区才宣告解放。随后于12月成立的昌都地区人民解放委员会并不隶属于西康省，而是直属中央人民政府政务院管辖。1955年西藏自治区筹备委员会成立后，昌都地区划归自治区筹委会管辖。西康省藏族自治区（原康定专区，今甘孜）、西昌专区、昌都地区的藏族人口共约120万，四川省藏族自治区（今阿坝）的藏族人口约为40万，西藏本土的藏族人口约为60万。这份材料把西康省藏族自治区（今甘孜）和四川省藏族自治区（今阿坝）分别称为全国第一、第二大藏族自治区，可见这两个地区的重要性。

3. 异域与家乡

《喜讯》是牛文第一次赴藏后与李少言合作的成果，表现的主题是西藏和平解放。不过，该画是通过描绘康藏高原的藏族群众，从侧面来表现这一主题的。这一点之所以值得关注，是因为它沿用了牛文先前几件作品的表现手法：《军属给前方写信》（1949）、《听胜利消息》（1949）和《朱总司令家乡解放了》（1950）。

在《晋绥日报》工作后期，牛文被派到崞县、代县参加土改。“土改工作结束后，我们回到山西兴县晋绥日报社驻地。此时正值新中国成立前夕，报纸停办……我的版画《丈地》《军属给前方写信》《领回土地证》就是在这短短的几个月创作出来的。”^②《听胜利消息》最早发表于《晋绥日报》1949年1月18日^③，又以《听广播》为题发表在1950年1月31日的《新华日报》。朱德家乡（今四川省仪陇县）的解放是在1949年12月，《朱总司令家乡解放了》发表在1950年4月10日的《新华日报》。所以前两件作品创作于山西，后一件创作于重庆。这三件作品有一个共同的特点，即有消息从一个地方传到另一个地方。《军属给前方写信》中的消息是从家乡传到前方，《听胜利消息》中的消息是从前方传回来，两件作品之间形成一种隐含的呼应关系。此后，《北京大学的新生》（1954）和《学医归来》（1954）再次构成这种隐含的呼应关系：画面上的主角都是藏族女青年，一个是从家乡出发去北京上学，另一个是从外

① 英谷编著：《伟大祖国的西南》，新知识出版社1954年版，第13页。

② 牛文：《一段往事的回忆》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（下），四川美术出版社2012年版，第274页。

③ 蒙牛文先生哲嗣牛小牛先生告知这一点，并为本文提供图文资料和对初稿提出意见，特致谢意；《牛文绘画七十年》（上）第49页误植为“《晋绥日报》1949年7月18日”。

地学成归来。

《朱总司令家乡解放了》则通过标题中的“家乡”一词来暗示一种异地/家乡结构。画面正中央是一位解放军跟一位老乡亲切地交谈。解放军身后有一匹马，表明他们是从外地来的。右边有人正在把解放军赠送的“慈母之家”匾额挂到朱德家的门上，左边则有女解放军向老乡展示朱德的画像。画像有传递消息的作用，作为一个信物，它表明前来解放“家乡”的是朱德自己的军队。看起来，让老乡们感到兴奋的，除了解放之外，还有一个原因——自己的亲人回来了。

同样，在《喜讯》中，传递消息的是画面中心一位骑马的藏族青年手里拿着的一个纸卷，以及左边藏族妇女正在阅读的一份藏文报纸；在《军属给前方写信》中，传递消息的是信；在《听胜利消息》中，传递消息的是收音机发出的看不见的声音。正是通过文字、声音、图像这些媒介，异地/家乡之间的对应结构得以形成。《志愿军讲战斗故事》（1952）也同样采用了这一表现手法。画中的藏族志愿军战士正在给他的同胞绘声绘色地讲述战斗经历，传递消息的还是声音（或语言）。

1956年，牛文画风一变，创作了一组藏族农村风景题材的版画，包括《村头》《日喀则一隅》《山村夕照》《藏族农家》《康藏道旁》等。这些作品的一个明显的特点是，以风景为主，叙事成分很少，黑白对比强烈。画面的主要元素是一些藏族的农村建筑，在不太起眼的地方点缀着一两个人物。由于不再有消息从远处传来，因此这些作品中似乎也没有明显的异地/家乡之间的对立。但值得注意的是，这些作品并不是纯粹的风景，而是有人物活动。有些作品中的人物（如《村头》《日喀则一隅》）看不出是外地人还是本地人，有些作品中的人物（如《山村夕照》《藏族农家》）可以看出就是本地人。作品中作为“风景”主体因素出现的，有喇嘛的坟墓或藏族群众的住宅。《康藏道旁》中的自行车，则同样是连接本地和外地的交通工具。因此，画面上起点缀作用的人物，跟作为背景的土地、建筑或风景之间，仍然存在着一种关系：他们要么是偶尔途经此地的异乡人，要么是在自己的家乡活动。但不管怎样，在画家和表现对象之间，似乎有某种疏离感。

牛文风格的这一变化，可能跟他在藏区体验到的“生活”有关。李焕民曾回忆他和牛文一道去藏区体验生活的情况，一次是1953年，另一次是1956年。1953年去的是甘孜：

当时公路线以外就是农奴制度，老百姓的上头有土司，土司是“亲汉”的，还是“反汉”的？搞不清楚。有些老百姓见我们来了，把狗拴住，让我们进去休息；有些老百姓却装作没看见，藏獒就扑上来了，简直让你没办法……牛文同志感到这么下去不行，他给上级写信要求挂职。很快批下来了，牛文同志任甘孜县营官区机关党委书记，我任委员。听起来官不小，其实整个区委就只有几个人，主要是宣传民族政策、争取上层、培养积极分子、发展党员。从此我们和地方干部一起骑马下乡，做群众工作，和藏族群众在一起生活，晚上搭个小白布帐篷住下。^①

而1956年的那次，情况却有些不同：

1956年，我们又去西藏，那次是总政画家艾炎组织牛文、马常利和我一起进藏。我们是1956年10月由川藏公路进藏，1957年2月从青藏公路回来的。在西藏五个多月，走遍了藏南藏北，几次与死神擦肩而过。除了遇到泥石流、塌方、饥饿、寒冷、缺氧之外，还有叛乱分子放冷枪。^②

① 唐开奇：《牛文的一生是辉煌的，也是幸福的——著名版画家李焕民先生谈牛文》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（下），四川美术出版社2012年版，第396—397页。

② 唐开奇：《牛文的一生是辉煌的，也是幸福的——著名版画家李焕民先生谈牛文》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（下），四川美术出版社2012年版，第397页。

两次藏区之旅的区别是，1953年的那次去的是甘孜，牛文挂职，可以深入藏族群众的生活；而1956年那次，去的是西藏，“走遍了藏南藏北”。李焕民甚至具体描述了他们的汽车在青藏公路上抛锚，牛文差点遇难的惊险经历。1954年的《北京大学的新生》《学医归来》，可看作1953年甘孜之行的成果。而1956年的西藏之旅，由于只是以外人的身份进入藏区，就更多地以风景为主，不涉及藏族群众生活的具体内容。1964年，牛文在《美术》上发表过一篇谈“深入生活”的文章，应当是经验之谈：

搞创作，最要紧的是深入生活。作家深入生活除了直接体验，还要看材料，作访问笔记，研究省志、县志等，以求掌握大量间接材料，丰富酝酿创作的宝库……拿少数民族地区来说，语言不通，情况复杂，变化又快，这都需要一层层地去了解。例如，先从省、自治区党委了解起，而后到县、公社，等等。多听一些情况介绍，争取看一些社会调查材料，是很有用的。^①

牛文一行在1956年之所以难以深入藏族群众的生活，除了没有挂职的便利条件外，可能跟当时西藏的情况也有关系。这次进藏是由总政的画家艾炎组织的。艾炎是原第二野战军政治部宣传部的画家。二野进驻重庆时，自1950年至1954年，他属于西南军区政治部文化部，1954年西南军区撤销时调离重庆。^②李焕民回忆说：“1957年元旦，西藏叛乱活动猖獗，康藏公路不通车。艾炎乘军用飞机回内地，西藏军区安排我们撤离，给我们一辆卡车，两位司机、两桶汽油、一口袋馒头和数块木板……我们告别拉萨，从青藏公路回内地。起初还好，到了唐古拉山就出问题了……”^③

这次入藏的时间，是在西藏自治区筹委会成立（1956年4月22日）后不久。1956年3月下旬，中央曾派出以陈毅为团长、张经武为副团长的中央代表团共800多人前往西藏，祝贺自治区筹委会成立。1956年9月4日，中央对西藏民主改革做出了重要指示：西藏实行民主改革，肯定不会是第一个五年计划期内的事，也可能不是第二个五年计划内的事，甚至还可能推迟到第三个五年计划之内去。

这就是牛文等人1956年入藏时的背景。可以想象，跟1953年去甘孜不同，这一次他们不太容易融入藏族群众的生活，也不太敢触动西藏的政治现状。后来牛文在介绍李焕民的版画时说过的一段话，可能同样适用于他自己：“当作者（指李焕民）了解到西藏农奴制社会黑暗残酷的大量事实后十分震惊，胸中充满了对藏族人民苦难的同情和怨愤之情……但就20世纪50年代初西藏和藏族地区的形势来讲，创作揭露性的作品还不适宜，只能在黑暗中寻求光明，予以歌颂。”^④牛文1956年的这组版画，黑白对比强烈，有些作品中大面积的黑色占了主导地位，显得忧郁凝重，大约也是这种悲愤情绪的含蓄反映。

4. 共同体

1957年从西藏回来以后，牛文主要去的地方是阿坝。实际上从1955年开始，他去藏区的目的地就由甘孜变为阿坝。据说阿坝是最先实行民主改革的地区，“当地已在牧民中建立了党的组织，有了人民公社。牛文担任区委会的党支部书记，两人（牛文和李焕民）和藏族党员

① 牛文：《深入生活要尽量扩大视野》，《美术》1964年第10期，转引自《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第329页。

② 参见凌承纬、凌彦《四川新兴版画发展史》，四川美术出版社1992年版，第132页。

③ 唐开奇：《牛文的一生是辉煌的，也是幸福的——著名版画家李焕民先生谈牛文》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（下），四川美术出版社2012年版，第397页。

④ 牛文：《金桥——谈李焕民的版画创作》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（下），四川美术出版社2012年版，第104—105页。

编在一个小组，小组长是一个农奴的女儿”^①。在这次体验生活的基础上，1959年，牛文又创作了一件影响很大的版画《东方红太阳升》（也叫《欢乐的藏族儿童》）。关于这件作品，李焕民有过如下回忆：

牛文创作《东方红太阳升》时，我一直和他在一起。1958年，我们在四川阿坝州的一个叫俄尔雅的小寨子里体验生活，住了半年。一天听说寨子里办了一个托儿所，我们就去参观。托儿所在一个古老的藏式房子里，我们上得楼去，只见老师站在中间打拍子，孩子们围着老师边唱边跳，十分有趣，我们画了一些速写。准备走的时候，老师和孩子们送我们出来，在院坝里，孩子们又把我们围在中间，跳了一曲又一曲，我们在中间都站累了，孩子们还未尽兴，并且引来不少藏族老乡围观，气氛热烈。^②

看来阿坝的藏族群众对前来采风的画家是比较友好的。不过据李焕民说，牛文一开始创作并不顺利，构思了好久仍未找到突破口。最后把全部背景去掉，在跳舞的孩子们中间加进老师和风琴，画稿才走上正路。在这件作品中，牛文又从风景转换为人物。画面基调欢快，围成一圈的藏族儿童在重复中形成一种视觉韵律，巧妙地表现了作品试图传达的听觉上的音乐感。其构图同时又带有某种象征意义：少数民族群众围绕一个中心在歌舞。画面中心的风琴，不但暗示了音乐的存在，而且表明这是新式、现代的音乐，与标题《东方红太阳升》很吻合。音乐把藏族人民的新生活和新生的社会主义政权联系起来。这种处理方式，使人想起力群在谈到牛文的版画时说过的一段话：

新中国成立后，牛文离开了山西故土到了四川。显然，他到了新的环境，要在艺术上反映这个新地区人民的生活，总要有一个熟悉的过程……于是牛文选定了藏族人民为歌颂的主要对象，几经到康藏地区深入生活。不久他就刻出了表现藏族人民新生活的《北京大学的新生》《康藏道旁》《草原上的牧民》等作品。^③

前面说到牛文的作品中隐含着一种异地/家乡的结构模式。力群这段话的意思，似乎是把藏族群众的生活看作四川这个“新地区”的特点，一个可以在艺术上加以利用的新资源。既然他的兴趣点一直是藏族群众，正如力群所说，他就需要“熟悉”藏族群众的生活，也就是克服他和藏族人民之间的相异性。在某种意义上，这意味着需要把藏区这一陌生的地方改造为自己的家乡。如何才能做到这一点呢？

解决的办法或许就在那些传递消息的媒介物上——包括《喜讯》中的报纸，《北京大学的新生》中的书包和飞机，《学医归来》中的医药箱子，《康藏道旁》中的自行车，以及《志愿军讲战斗故事》中的声音和《东方红太阳升》中的音乐。从安德森的角度看，这些媒介物之所以能够克服异地与家乡之间的对立，把异地“改造”为家乡，是因为它们可以唤起一种“共同体”的观念，把异地和家乡同时纳入一个更大的共同体。

根据安德森的看法，印刷文字和歌曲是“民族国家”这种“想象的共同体”得以产生的重要媒介。他指出，有一种“同时代的，完全凭借语言——特别是以诗和歌的形式——来暗示其存在的特殊类型的共同体”^④。歌声会使人联想到共同体的存在：“我们知道正当我们在唱这些歌

① 高焰：《开采、提炼和铸造——重庆版画家访问笔记（节录）》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第333页。

② 李焕民：《牛文其人其画》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第167页。

③ 力群：《〈牛文作品选集〉序》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第335页。

④ 本尼迪克特·安德森：《想象的共同体——民族主义的起源与散布》（增订本），吴叡人译，上海人民出版社2016年版，第139页。

的时候有其他的人也在唱同样的歌——我们不知道这些人是谁，也不知道他们身在何处，然而就在我们听不见的地方，他们在唱歌。将我们全体联结起来的，唯有想象的声音。”^①

就牛文来说，隐含在《东方红太阳升》中的想象的共同体，就是“社会主义中国”。作品通过音乐把一群藏族儿童跟社会主义中国联系在一起，暗示出共同体的存在。这个共同体不仅是藏族人民的家乡，也可以成为外来采风画家的家乡。从这个角度看，牛文那些涉及异地/家乡结构的作品，都跟这个共同体有关。《朱总司令家乡解放了》是把一个特定地点跟朱德这位共和国军事领袖联系在一起；《军属给前方写信》《听胜利消息》是把普通人跟解放战争联系在一起；《北京大学的新生》是把一个不知名地方的藏族女青年跟社会主义中国的首都联系在一起；《喜讯》也是把不知名的藏族同胞跟首都北京（西藏和平解放协议的签订地）联系在一起。

5. 转变

当然，并非牛文的所有作品都采取了异地/家乡的结构模式，因此也并非都隐含着这种共同体观念。1976年以后，牛文在版画上又进行了新的探索，尝试引入传统徽派版画的线条，同时吸收剪纸等民间艺术的营养，形成一种黑白灰块面分明、线条匀称而流畅的艺术风格。尽管他继续以藏族人物为表现对象，但装饰性的增强和叙事因素的减少，使画面上的人物不再具有“行动”上的意义。

《哀思》（1976）是体现这种风格变化的第一件作品。在该画中，牛文摒弃了一切背景，用装饰性的线条代替了以前的写实语言——来自延安“鲁艺”的版画语言。画面上，一位藏族女孩手里拿着一朵小白花，表示对周恩来的怀念和哀悼。由于只刻画了一个人，给人的感觉是，这种哀悼更多的是一种个体活动，而难以跟藏族这个群体联系起来，也不涉及这个群体生活面貌的变化。《芳草地》（1979）和《草地新征》（1980）延续了这一创作思路和风格。

1976年之前，牛文是以一名美术工作者的身份创作西藏题材作品的，但这一年之后，他作为个体艺术家的意识逐渐觉醒。1976年，牛文实际上创作了两幅哀悼周恩来的作品，除了前面提到的《哀思》，还有一幅是《春华秋实》，目前只能找到一个草图和相关笔记。在创作笔记中，牛文写道：

1949年进军西南，创作根据地转移到藏区，反复深入生活，创作反映藏族人民生活的作品。我们机关住在红岩村附近，多次组织参观，陪客人参观，去了不知多少次，感慨万千，但我仍不知从何着手表现这个革命圣地。1976年总理逝世，随机关同志送花圈到红岩村，心情激动万分，随后朱总、毛主席又相继逝世……在“四人帮”统治时期，要歌颂总理、红岩村是不行的。打倒“四人帮”后是可以了，我就构思了《春华秋实》这幅画。在无数次参观红岩村，不知怎么的，使我最动心的是看到周总理、朱德、邓大姐等1941年在红岩村搞生产的图片和介绍。

……

为什么我独独对红岩革命圣地搞生产感触特别深呢？这个原因就在于自己1941、1942年在延安参加了大生产运动，劳动中受到锻炼、教育，也获得极大的快乐！^②

牛文意识到，随着周恩来、朱德、毛泽东的去世，一个时代结束了。打倒“四人帮”开启的是另一个时代。从这个意义上说，《春华秋实》既是对周恩来的缅怀，也是对自己过去的

① 本尼迪克特·安德森：《想象的共同体——民族主义的起源与散布》（增订本），吴叡人译，上海人民出版社2016年版，第140页。

② 牛文：《版画〈春华秋实〉题记》，载《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第384页。

怀念。如何面对这个新的时代呢？1979年，他和李少言合写了一篇总结美协工作的文章，发表在《美术》上。文章分为五个小标题：（1）美协要务正业，要保护艺术生产力；（2）美协应独立工作；（3）美协应直接拥有一批创作骨干；（4）要尊重画家的个性；（5）坚持团结，发扬民主。^①综合起来看，都是强调艺术创作的独立性。

牛文藏族题材的版画一直持续到20世纪80年代，此后他的兴趣就逐渐转移到了中国的民间艺术。以1976年的《哀思》为界，他后期的藏族题材版画描绘的内容也不再涉及大的社会背景的主题，而只是藏族群众（主要是藏族女青年）的一些日常活动，如看书、走路。

结语

牛文的版画作品隐含着一种异地/家乡结构模式。这一结构模式的出现，不仅是因为他作为异地人在重庆从事美术创作，而是因为他需要克服自己与藏族同胞之间的相异性。为了做到这一点，他需要求助于自己与藏族群众共同归属的一个政治共同体——社会主义中国。在牛文创作藏族题材的版画时，他作为《新华日报》美术编辑和美术干部的身份发挥了一定的作用。这一身份使他和他的表现对象（藏族群众）都处于这个共同体之中。在这一社会身份结构中，他能够用现实主义手法描绘具有行动能力的藏族人民。但随着市场经济的启动，牛文的兴趣从藏族题材转移到中国民间美术，艺术创作的落脚点也从大的社会时代转移到对具体美学对象的挖掘之中。

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^① 参见牛文、李少言《美协的任务是出作品出人才》，《美术》1979年第12期，转引自《牛文绘画七十年》编委会编《牛文绘画七十年》（上），四川美术出版社2012年版，第385—387页。

Niu Wen's Art Road

Li Qun

Comrade Niu Wen has been a leader in fine arts for many years, but he always insists on printmaking creation. Although he would squeeze time, the most fundamental reason is his love and perseverance for the cause of printmaking creation, which could be described as “perseverance, stone carving”.

Comrade Niu Wen's foundation is relatively shallow. However, he tried hard to believe that love is the best motivation and is good at overcoming these weaknesses, thus making great achievements in printmaking.

A man's career as an adult is usually related to the environment, habits and hobbies of his childhood, but sometimes his fate is ruthless. His hobbies are like unearthed buds. Maybe the climate and rain are suitable, so the trees are finally formed, and maybe the year of drought, and as a result they are strangled in the cradle. Comrade Niu Wen's childhood was in a mountainous area with backward culture, but the folk paper-cut, New Year paintings, door paintings and gold decorative paintings on the cabinets... But there was no lack of appreciation. These folk art, invisibly affected his later interest and hobbies in art. Fortunately, the buds of his childhood love of art were not strangled in the cradle, but were later cultivated and developed in the revolutionary ranks, just as the buds of trees met with the wind and rain and eventually became big trees.

Comrade Niu Wen was born in 1922 in a poor peasant family in Lingshi County, Shanxi Province. During the September 18th Incident, the Japanese invaders occupied the three eastern provinces and the national crisis was serious. Inspired by patriotism, in April 1937, he joined forces under the leadership of the Communist Party, when he was under 15 years old. After joining the army, he became a propagandist, acting, singing, painting and anything else. It can be said that he learned painting on the first day and served the revolutionary cause with painting on the first day, although he knew nothing about the principles of art. It may seem inconceivable now, but at that time it was for the needs of the revolution. However, this way of learning and exercising in revolutionary work has finally brought up a large number of revolutionary literary artists born and bred in China. Naturally, once they have the opportunity to enter art schools, they will rapidly improve their art.

Such an opportunity finally came. In 1941, comrade Niu Wen was lucky enough to enter the Art Department of Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature (hereinafter referred to as “Lu Yi”), and finally got a good opportunity to sit down and study art at ease. Although the learning conditions here were not perfect and there were too many extracurricular activities, it was a rare pursuit for Comrade Niu Wen. He learned sketch in “Lu Yi”, contacted woodcarving, and gained some basic art knowledge. He also read the works of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, political economy and Chinese and foreign literary classics that he could find at that time. In particular, Comrade Mao Zedong's *Speech at the Yan'an Literature and Art Symposium* gave him a profound education. All these are necessary accomplishments and preparations for him to engage in revolutionary art in the future.

Comrade Niu Wen officially engaged in printmaking art in the Jinsui Border Region during the War of Liberation. At that time, he returned from Guo County and Dai County in Shanxi Province to participate in the land reform work. He had rich and hot experience of revolutionary struggle life. He created *Receiving Land Certificate* with high enthusiasm, and then created *Measure Land*. From the former to the latter, we can see Comrade Niu Wen's progress in woodcarving. Whether the characters in his works or the use of woodcarving knife, *Measure Land* has improved significantly compared with *Receiving Land Certificate*. Although it is still tender and weak, it is full of revolutionary breath of life, reflecting a new era of earth-shaking rural reform in China.

After the “Yan'an Literature and Art Symposium”, revolutionary artists in the liberated areas actively penetrated into the fiery struggle of the masses, breathed and shared joy with the masses, striving to reflect the new social climate from life in their works, and striving to express the new era and new themes. The artist's creation should show the life he is familiar with, the life he is interested in and the life he feels most deeply. This is the law of realistic artistic creation. But in order to eulogize the people and the new era, he also has the responsibility to turn the revolutionary struggle life of the unfamiliar masses into a familiar, interesting and deeply felt life. The production of *Measure Land* is the concrete embodiment of the above artistic thoughts. Artists in today's socialist era should also inherit this fine tradition of art.

An artist's creative career is the process of constantly enriching his life experience and creative experience. The so-called life experience is the experience of how to integrate with the masses in life, how to observe life, how

to collect creative materials, and how to find extraordinary creative subjects in ordinary life; The so-called creative experience is how to turn life into art, how to concentrate on summarizing the experience highlighting the theme. Comrade Niu Wen, in the Jinsui period, was the beginning of accumulating life experience and creative experience, which was related to the future development. It should be said that Comrade Niu Wen's experience in Jinsui period laid a good foundation for his later creative career.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Comrade Niu Wen transferred his work from Jinsui Border Region to Sichuan Province. In order to make his works more pioneering, he decided to use Tibetan areas as a new base for creation and to reflect the new life, destiny and hope of the Tibetan people after liberation with his woodcut works. This idea was very good, but it also gave him a task of changing unfamiliar life into familiar life, life of interest and life of the deepest feeling. It was not an easy task to accomplish this task because he was not familiar with Tibetan people's feelings and language. It was not easy for him to get close to the masses because of various factors before the democratic reform. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to accomplish this task.

But Comrade Niu Wen did not retreat from this arduous task. Since the 1950s, he and Comrade Li Huanmin had traveled to and from Tibet and the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Sichuan for more than ten times. Every year, he stayed there for at least 3 months and as long as half a year. After several years, he had finally become familiar with the Tibetan working people and their living habits and thoughts and feelings.

But familiarity is one thing. What should we do to translate life experience into works of art? How to behave? Another thing, is it expressed by the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary Romanticism? Or is it expressed in the way of critical realism? When Comrade Niu Wen and Comrade Li Huanmin learned the darkness of Tibetan serfdom society and its cruel facts, they were shocked and filled with sympathy for Tibetan people's miserable life. At this time, Comrade Niu Wen's original creative ideal met the ruthless wall of reality, and there were contradictions. Is it to expose the darkness of serfdom in Tibet, or eulogize the brightness of the Tibetan region? If we want to expose the darkness of Tibetan serfdom or depict the backward life of the Tibetan people, the subject matter is just a handful of words and scenes, and if we eulogize it, it will be like gold panning in the sand, which is extremely difficult. But after thinking, they decided to eulogize the light.

Comrade Niu Wen said in his article *Talking about Li Huanmin's Print Creation*: "In the early 1950s, in terms of the situation in Tibet and Tibetan areas, it was not appropriate to create exposing works. We could only seek light in darkness and praise it. At that time, although serfdom had not yet been touched, after all, the PLA came to Tibet and the Party's sunshine had shined on the Kang-Tibet Plateau, which would inevitably bring about many new changes in real life. There was a realistic basis for the creation of works praising the bright future." Under this circumstance, Comrade Niu Wen has created such works as *Freshmen of Peking University*, *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet* and *Herdsmen on the Grassland* to praise the light. I think it's right to do so.

Art, whether the author intends to or not, always plays a propaganda role, especially for foreigners. In reality, there are light and darkness, advanced and backward. Because of different political standpoints, some foreigners welcome works that extol light and depict new things, while others like paintings that expose darkness and depict backward life. As an artist, of course, we should never lie, but the choice of eulogizing the light and exposing the darkness is related to the author's political accomplishment and artistic thought. But I would never advocate that in the special period of the "Gang of Four's dark rule", artists should eulogize the so-called light, which means lying. However, as a socialist China, under normal circumstances, especially when the policy practice of the Party Central Committee has proved to be correct, shouldn't we praise the bright? Should we not publicize to foreign countries the new life and new ideological outlook of our people? But it still seems to be a question worth discussing.

Before Tibet's democratic reform, Comrades Niu Wen and Li Huanmin advocated praising the bright future, and they did so, not lying. After the democratic reform, the Tibetan people turned over completely under the leadership of the Communist Party, and went from a serfdom society to a socialist society. In reality, the bright side expanded, the dark side narrowed, and the Tibetan people were liberated politically and economically. Comrade Niu Wen witnessed these changes and was extremely excited. He eulogized with enthusiasm the new life, destiny and hope of the Tibetan people. Thus produced his very mature works, such as *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade* and *Oriental Red Sun Rising* (also known as *Happy Tibetan Children*). These two woodcarvings are novel in conception and description, vivid and beautiful in character, fluent and powerful in knife technique, smooth in black and white processing, elegant and concise in color set, and have reached a higher level. To be honest, some people's works are not bad in a certain political climate, but after ten or twenty years, they become unsustainable. However, Comrade Niu Wen's two works can still withstand deliberation after a long period of time. The reason for this is that it has not only ideological, but also high artistic and aesthetic value.

Art should not serve politics mechanically, let alone become a slave to politics. But as an artist in the socialist

era, it is still valuable to be politically sensitive to life. Otherwise, we can't see the meaning of the times from the ordinary life. *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade* is a work which Niu Wen saw women scattering gray pictures on the ground in the streets of Lhasa. He wished for a good harvest and good luck in the coming year. After that, Niu Wen finished it through a long period of artistic conception and processing. In this picture, the author gives a brand-new meaning to the ancient customs: expressing the joy of the Tibetan people turning over after the democratic reform; expressing the Tibetan people's feelings of creating a better life under the leadership of the Party as the master. It symbolizes the Tibetan compatriots who smashed the shackles and want to draw the latest and most beautiful picture on this poor and white land—the bright prospect of socialism.

The *Oriental Red Sun Rising* was inspired and created by Comrade Niu Wen when he saw children singing and dancing in nurseries in Aba Tibetan Autonomous Region in Western Sichuan. Comrade Niu Wen thought that Aba's today would become the whole Tibetan region's tomorrow. Therefore, through this ordinary theme, he could create works that are much more than just describing the life of nurseries.

The above two woodcuts have political implications. They all require art to serve politics. Art came into being in the "left" era of politics. However, they are not political preaching works that illustrate politics. They are new flowers that the author cultivates from the sense of life and the soil of life.

After "ten-years of turmoil", Comrade Niu Wen picked up his carving knife and plowed his long-deserted woodcut garden. But at that time, the art of extreme "left" trend of thought was already clearing, but blindly following the fashion of modern Western European art was rather popular. Comrade Niu Wen said at a conference: "We can't always beg for food with a golden bowl." He also said: "It would be great if anyone could combine Chinese folk art with Western art organically and create works of art with both Chinese and contemporary characteristics." This is not only what he said, but also what he has been doing in recent years. He did not follow the path of printmaking to sketch, so it is easy to reduce the characteristics of printmaking itself, but difficult to play its creativity. He plunged into the folk art of our nation and tried to innovate. In recent years, he created *New Expedition of Grassland*, *Fragrant Grassland*, *Rising Sun*, *Horse Racing* and so on, which are the practice of this artistic thought.

I think an artist should constantly explore and innovate his creation, so as to realize that "Just as the weary traveler despairs of finding a road, Look! A village appears and the shade of willows and riotous flowers beckon", which will make people feel that he is advancing, he is developing, rather than being self-confident and dead. Exploration is experiment, just like scientific experiment, it will not succeed in one experiment. Comrade Niu Wen said: "If the experiment fails, don't lose heart. If you persist in doing it, you will have the hope of success."

His above works are mainly exploratory experiments in form. Although they can not be said to have been very successful and perfect, they make people feel the novelty of form and the elegance of lines. Their flavor is rich in national characteristics. The whole picture has a fresh, elegant style and a bright and beautiful appearance. Therefore, these woodcuts are loved by Chinese people and international friends.

These works created by Comrade Niu Wen are the result of learning from Hui School woodcut in Ming and Qing Dynasties. Hui school printmaking is a kind of duplicate printmaking, but its delicate, round, meaningful and graceful engraving is well-known in the history of Chinese printmaking. Unfortunately, it has never been valued by Chinese woodcut artists. Niu Wen, however, was interested in it and favored it. He studied the black and white relationship of those prints and the use of lines in Tang Dynasty paintings. His ideal was to create bright, fresh, beautiful and elegant works. For this reason, we must abandon the light and dark sense and stereo sense of the body, transform the shape, and achieve a certain degree of exaggeration and deformation. He has been to Xishuangbanna, where women's clothes are also of interest to him. These are the artistic conceptions that Comrade Niu Wen pursued in exploring and experimenting, thus creating woodcarving with national characteristics and new styles. These works not only make people feel that there are exotic flowers in China's new printmaking garden, but also show that we should not "beg for food with a golden bowl".

Unfortunately, up to now, there are still many people in the Chinese art circle who do not know enough about the independence of the great Chinese nation's art, whether in understanding or in creative practice.

Comrade Jiang Zemin pointed out in October 1996 that: "Only when a nation strives to develop its economy and maintains and develops its own national cultural characteristics, can it truly stand on its own in the world's national forest." This passage is very important. I think we should never be dependent on others under the slogan of learning foreign countries. (Of course, no one opposes learning foreign good things. The question is what to learn and how to learn.) Premier Zhou has long put forward that: "Learning foreign countries should be based on our own." Therefore, we should have our own national characteristics. I think every Chinese artist should have this theoretical understanding. Otherwise, it would be difficult for him to create works of art with Chinese style.

Although Comrade Niu Wen has entered the ranks of the old printmakers, he is still energetic and has an everlasting fighting spirit. He believes that he will make new achievements in his efforts to create national artistic characteristics in the future.

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Realistic Principles and Romantic Feelings—On the Printing Art of Niu Wen

Kang Ning

Hand in hand, a group of Tibetan children took a tender, stretching and happy step, fading the bitter shadow of former slave descendants, showing a sweet smile. They danced in a circle, with a young Tibetan female teacher playing a piece of *Oriental Red*. The pictures are relaxed, stretching, simple and full of rhythm. Meanwhile, they are full of the unique romantic feelings of Chinese folk art. This is Mr. Niu Wen's printmaking *Oriental Red Sun Rising* in 1959. In 1965, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House published a series of pamphlets entitled *Introduction to Fine Arts Works*. In the second volume, there is Mr. Niu Wen's work. At that time, I was a junior high school student. I just had a strong interest in painting. In the small bookstore in the county town, I bought this album with my saved allowance of twenty-four cents. Among them, this picture of the *Oriental Red Sun Rising* impressed me deeply, although I could not really understand all the artistic connotations of it at that time. It was the first time that I known Mr. Niu Wen from his works. Thirty years later, this little picture album is still treasured on my bookshelf.

True art transcends time and space. After filtering and accumulation of time, it still shines. Thirty years later, when we look at this work, we cannot help but be moved by its simple, natural, warm and harmonious artistic language. The conventional three-dimensional perspective relationship is deliberately weakened here, which strengthens the planar composition. The circular composition has a very strong decorative effect and is extremely natural and vivid, without the feeling of far-fetched fabrication. Fifteen children tread on a harmonious rhythm, and each character shape has subtle changes and different characteristics, black and white alternate changes, adding to the rhythm of the picture. The female teachers who play the piano are in the central point of view of the picture, with dignified and natural shapes. The whole painting is succinct, lively and fluent with knife. The use of round-edged knife shows the artist's skilled technique, decisive, agile wisdom and full of unrestrained artistic enthusiasm. It completely abandons the description of the specific background, thus making the theme more concentrated, concise, more typical and generalized, and sublimating this ordinary scene of happy singing and dancing to the direct expression of the author's subjective feelings. Here I also want to talk about the blank area of the picture, that is, the treatment of the residual knives in the center and the lower left corner is very wonderful. These carefully processed knife marks greatly increase the vivid atmosphere and the sense of momentum and rhythm of the picture.

Mr. Niu Wen devoted himself to the revolution in the 1930s and began to create woodcut in the 1940s. His early works, such as *Receiving Land Certificate*, *Defending Yan'an*, *Hearing the Victory News* and *Training Soldiers*, reflect his fiery struggle and life in the torrent with great political enthusiasm. Because he lived in the mountainous countryside in his childhood, the edification and influence of folk art such as paper-cut, New Year paintings and door paintings in the countryside made his works not only have a serious and definite theme, but also reveal the influence of concise, lively, enthusiastic and optimistic spirit of Chinese folk art from time to time. This romantic spirit of Chinese folk art has been running through Niu Wen's realistic artistic creation. We can clearly feel it from his works of various creative periods.

From the 1950s to the mid-1960s, printmaking in Sichuan gradually formed a strong and United creative group. During this period, artists created a large number of excellent prints, which pushed Sichuan printmaking, especially black and white printmaking, to a peak and had a great impact on the whole country. They stood side by side with Heilongjiang set-color printmaking and Jiangsu watermarking printmaking at that time. In this creative group, Niu Wen's artistic style is obviously unique and full of personality.

In the early 1960s, black and white prints of novel illustrations of *Red Rock*, which were collectively created by Sichuan Artists Association, had a great impact on the whole country. In this set of paintings, Niu Wen made two pictures, namely *Victory* and *Dream of Little Radish Head*. *Victory* is symbolic and moral. Full composition, simple, concise, smooth knife method, simple contains high passion. Particular attention should be paid to the handling of the background of this work. The planar, holistic and generalized figure shape and the fluttering red flag are in good contrast with the gray composed of flowing lines carved with small rounded knives. They are harmonized, unified and have a strong sense of rhythm and convey a surging mood and momentum. What are the grey lines and knife marks? Is it wind? Is it a cloud? Is it fire or smoke? Maybe they are nothing, or all of them. It is this kind of non-deterministic and non-concrete treatment that makes it abstract, divorced from and transcend-

ed specific scenes and events, and the depiction of specific people and objects, which sublimates the theme of the work, becomes a deeper and broader symbol and implication, which is the embodiment of the author's passion and ideals, spirit and feelings. This way of handling appeared in Niu Wen's early and late works, especially in later works in the 1980s and it became a conscious and active application and pursuit.

Niu Wen's another work, *Dream of Little Radish Head*, for illustrations of *Red Rock*, has a stronger subjective color. Today, we may say that it has some surrealist elements. Of course, this is consistent with the theme and content of the works. The expression of Little Radish Head's dream in prison coincides with the author's personality, romantic spirit and bold exaggerated methods and rich imagination drawn from folk art. In a dark cell, the door is locked by a huge iron lock. Two vultures, symbolizing the dark forces, stare fiercely at an isolated prisoner... The work profoundly embodies the interweaving of despair and hope of the young weak under the shadow of darkness, and places the author's heavy thinking, concern and sympathy on it. The composition of the picture also uses extremely full congestion to increase the sense of depression. In terms of handling techniques, trees, houses and so on, we have boldly absorbed the modelling methods of folk art. In the whole set of illustrations of *Red Rock*, Niu Wen's two works are quite unique in style. Judging from the two paragraphs he chose, we can also see that he is looking for themes that are consistent with his personality and temperament, so as to achieve harmony and unity between content and form.

The unique character of Niu Wen's artistic creation lies in his integration and maintenance of his own romantic temperament, bold exaggeration and rich imagination under the premise of adhering to the realistic creation method. In the way of expression, he dares to break the limitations of specific events, plots and scenes, and incorporates some abstract expressive factors into realism, thus making his works have more profound content and unique personality strength. In the same period, Niu Wen also had a large number of works, such as *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade*, *Brocade Flower Slope*, *Southern Letter* and *Snatch Gun*, which also reflected his creative principles.

After the "ten-years of turmoil", especially the spring breeze of emancipating the mind and reform and opening up has blown all over China. Niu Wen has rejuvenated and aroused a strong desire for creation, which was beyond control and has created a large number of brand-new works. This is another peak period in his printmaking career. Some critics call it "Huajia Reform". The works of this period, from *Fragrant Grassland*, *New Expedition on Grassland*, *Rising Sun*, *Spring Thunder* to *Horse Racing*, and *New Road*, poured out one by one from the tip of his pen. In the form of expression, we should change the way of contrast between black and white and light and shade in earlier works, and emphasize the expression of lines more, mainly line, supplemented by the slightly decorative black-and-white changes of local plane, which gives people a fresh impression. This is a breakthrough in Niu Wen's long-term study of Chinese traditional art, drawing on the nutrition of national folk aesthetics, and creating his own artistic expression language. The picture is fresh and elegant, bright and beautiful. He drew the essence from the line carving art of Hui Style woodblock print in Ming and Qing Dynasties, and injected himself into the artistic creation of his "line" research and experience results in Chinese traditional painting, thus forming strong national characteristics and distinct personal style. Many scholars have already discussed this point. Here, I want to do a little more superficial analysis from another angle.

First of all, Niu Wen, through his long-term creative practice, has a deeper knowledge and a more profound understanding of the principles of realistic creation, expanding the field of expression of realistic creative methods. In the past, our understanding of the realistic creative method of "truly reproducing the typical characters in the typical environment" was mostly confined to the specific narrative expression of objective events, specific characters and plots, neglecting or even obliterating the exertion of artists' personality, which was a general tendency in the field of literary and artistic creation in China at a certain stage. Niu Wen's early works, such as *Measure Land*, *Hearing the Victory News*, which were created in Jinsui Border Region, and his works, such as *Return of Learning Medicine*, *Freshmen of Peking University*, and *When the Good News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Reached the Kang-Tibet Plateau*, reflect the Tibetan people's life after the founding of New China, in order to eulogize the torrential tide of revolution and the fiery life with full enthusiasm, and express the new events in the process of social change. Material, propaganda of the Party's principles and policies, solidarity with the people, had a very good social impact. His works are acknowledged to be excellent in that historical period. However, the works of this period mainly focus on the events, characters and social problems and phenomena experienced by the people around them. They are expressed through specific scenes and plot descriptions. They also rely more on the choice of "theme" to determine "theme". In terms of expressive techniques, they also pursue more objective, real and direct ways of simulating reality, or stay more on the intuitive expression of literary forms. In the 1980s, Niu Wen's works concentrated on his exploration and Reflection on aesthetics and artistic form language. At this time, he had a deeper understanding of

“self” in artistic creation, developed “self” and boldly strengthened the artist’s unique artistic feelings in artistic creation. The works of this period have diluted the plot and narrative, the description of specific scenes and details, the selection of “subject matter”, and even the typical description of the specific personality characteristics of the characters. They have focused more on emphasizing the overall “emotion” and “momentum”, “rhyme” and “spirit” of the picture. Here, it should be noted that “dilution” does not refer to the theme of the work. The theme of Niu Wen’s artistic creation has always been very clear, that is, eulogizing the revolutionary cause, praising life, pursuing truth, goodness and beauty and criticizing ugliness. Niu Wen is an artist with poetry temperament. He has a keen sense of beauty in life. Since the early 1950s, he determined make Tibetan areas the base of his creation. It can be said that his works record the image course of Tibetan people in various historical periods after liberation. But unlike those painters who go to Tibet with curious eyes to search for “barbarism”, “primitiveness”, “bitterness” and “heavy” feelings, his characters are full of beauty, an idealized poetic beauty. He did not deliberately emphasize poverty and ignorance, hardship and heaviness in life. His works are full of light and hope, which is inseparable from the romantic feelings in his personality. It is also the spiritual expression of his open-minded and confident love for life and the sincere feelings of the Tibetan people. In his works of this period, he avoided the intuitive narrative description and focused on the pursuit and expression of “beauty” and on the research and exploration of the ontology of artistic language. Through the purification of artistic language, the theme of the work can be expressed more profoundly. Perhaps it can be said that Niu Wen has gradually turned from the past “mission” creative process to “art” itself. This is a long process of pursuing the unity of content beauty and form beauty to achieve harmony and integrity. It should be said that Niu Wen has never stopped exploring artistic language since his early creation, but the exploration has changed from an instinctive response to a more conscious and active pursuit and grasp. From learning the skills of Western woodcut, and drawing on the nutrition of Chinese folk art and studying the essence of Chinese traditional culture and art, Niu Wen sticks to the traditional Chinese art and folk art world. He created a pure world, a beautiful world, a simple world with the combination of fresh, meaningful and smooth lines, the national and folk decorative black and white contrast, with different patterns and color blocks as well as highly dynamic and expressive knife method.

It is also worth mentioning that Niu Wen, in the process of devoting himself to the exploration of artistic language innovation in this period, gradually consciously, purposefully and actively refined an abstract factor into artistic language symbols into his own creation. Some of the works mentioned above, such as *Oriental Red Sun Rising*, and *Victory*, have already shown such a tendency in virtualization and treatment of the specific environment and background. Others are the treatment of the background in the *Auspicious and Happy Everywhere Brocade* created in the 1950s. The patterns painted by Tibetan lime on the ground have been intensified and exaggerated in a large area. The visual tension and impact are no longer acceptable to the reality of the specific plot. Here, as a linguistic symbol, patterns have been transformed into spiritual symbols of Tibetan people’s longing and hope for life. In the same period of *Jinhua Slope*, vegetable beds, ridges, crops and ditches on the hillside were summarized and refined into different movements composed of changing and flowing lines, points, blocks and knives, while the authenticity of the specific scene was less important. Compared with his earlier tendency to pursue reality, objectivity and imitation in Tibetan landscape prints, this was obviously a great progress in drawing lessons from folk art forms and exploring artistic language. By the 1980s, Niu Wen’s exploration in this field had become a conscious and active pursuit and grasp. In *Fragrant Grassland*, heaven and earth are integrated, and what impacts our vision is the flow and rhythm of lines. In *Spring Thunder*, the gray, which is full of full-width and with carefully carved lines in highly dynamic knife technique, is grassland, but not concrete grassland. It has a very harmonious and contrastive relationship with the characters with extremely interesting and dynamic characteristics. It brings an unspeakable emotion and momentum to the audience, and makes people feel the author’s delicate and rich emotional declaration in the depth of his heart, and also felt the mystery and rhythm of life of Tibetan grassland. The background of grey lines in *Rising Sun* and *Horse Racing* is difficult to determine whether it is grassland or sky. They are more integrated with the lines, clothing and patterns on the characters, forming the rhyme and rhythm of the whole picture. The brick pavement, road signs, stars and moonlight in the background of *New Road* are juxtaposed, not to mention the real reproduction of specific scenes, locations and environments. It can be considered that they enter the picture as abstract linguistic symbols. It is this abstract, non-specific and non-objective treatment that enables the appreciator to have more opportunities to imagine and play in the process of appreciation. It also enables the work to transcend specific limitations and have a deeper spiritual connotation, making the deepening of the theme possible. It greatly strengthens the rhyme and rhythm of the work as a whole, the expression of the author’s subjective feelings, the unique aesthetic value of knife organization in woodcut printmaking, and the appeal of the unique artistic form of knife and woodcut to a greater extent, which makes the artistic language

more pure. In my opinion, this is an important achievement of Niu Wen's artistic creation exploration in this period.

In his creation, Niu Wen also made great efforts to explore the new concept of printmaking color scheme. The principle of color treatment in national folk painting is creatively, proportionately and appropriately applied to black-and-white composition, breaking the general concept of color-matching printmaking, using simple and economical colors, and playing the wonderful role of finishing the painting. The sun in *Rising Sun* and the treatment of red, yellow and blue in the costumes of the characters in *Horse Racing* are very full, rich and not vulgar. They are really very original and vivid.

In the late 1980s, Niu Wen created a number of black and white woodcut works of opera characters, absorbed the nutrition of folk paper-cut, New Year paintings and shadow play, and continued his persistent exploration and pursuit in expression methods and artistic language. Through these works, we can feel his constant concern for social reality and strong sense of responsibility and mission. We can also see his love for Chinese traditional drama culture, and he learn from it constantly to enrich and create his own artistic language. In his works, the characters in ancient operas are a kind of sustenance for him to express his passion, ideals and spirit.

As a pioneer of new prints from the revolutionary war, Niu Wen is first and foremost a realist artist. He always adheres to the creative principle of realism, insists that life is the source of creation, adheres to the direction of art for the masses of the people. With the development of the times, and with the constant exploration and experience of art, he gradually found and improved himself, in his own personality characteristics. His bold and rich imagination was shaped by his romantic feelings and nutrition gained from national folk art. These gradually became the main theme of his artistic creation, forming his unique style and appearance of pursuing and creating beauty. In artistic language, abstraction and representation are combined, and the use of abstract factors is emphasized in concrete description. Pursuing the overall "feeling" and "momentum", "spirit" and "rhyme" of the picture, a large number of excellent prints with national and folk characteristics, as well as modern spirit and characteristics of the times have been created.

Mr. Niu Wen is a revolutionary. He never forgets his responsibility and ideal. He is also a tireless explorer who never satisfies in art and never stops. Mr. Niu Wen is also a generous, kind and approachable elder, who spares no effort to support, care for and help young people on learning. He has long been the organizational leader of Sichuan Artists Association, and has many young artist friends. He has devoted a lot of labor and effort to training and bringing up young artists. A few years ago, when I talked about the contribution of the older generation of Sichuan printmakers to the development of Sichuan printmaking, I said: "Our generation has grown up on the basis of their nutrition." Mr. Niu Wen is an old printmaker we respect. We sincerely wish Mr. Niu Wen a long and healthy life and keep his artistic youth forever.

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Foreign Countries, Homes and Communities—An Interpretation of Tibetan Prints in Niu Wen

Zou Jianlin

Minority theme is an important aspect of New China's fine arts. It is generally used to express the theme of "national unity", but it is not limited to this theme. In the history of New China's fine arts, Sichuan and Chongqing are the areas where ethnic minority paintings are concentrated. The representative painters are Niu Wen and Li Huanmin, and later Qijiadawa, Xu Kuang and A Ge. Interest in ethnic minorities extends even to local paintings in the 1980s. It can be said that the ethnic minority theme works from 1949 to 1979 constitute the "prehistoric" or hidden resources of Sichuan local painting. So why do painters in Sichuan have a special preference for minority themes? Are they merely expressing the theme of "national unity"? This paper attempts to take Niu Wen as an example to examine the relationship between ethnic minority paintings and their historical context.

1. Origin

Niu Wen is from Shanxi Province, came to Chongqing in 1949. His earliest works on ethnic minorities were written in 1952 *When the Good News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Reached the Kang-Tibet Plateau* (in cooperation with Li Shaoyan; hereinafter referred to as *Good News*). At that time, he and Li Shaoyan were both art editors of Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*.

From a nationwide perspective, the performance of Tibetan theme by Chongqing painters not only started early, lasted a long time, but also created many works, which was related to the geographical location of Chongqing. In the early days of the founding of New China, Chongqing was the seat of the Southwest Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. The Southwest Bureau has undertaken the important task of liberating Tibet. Because the painters in the cadre system of the Southwest Bureau not only had their convenience, but also had a serious political task in expressing the liberation and construction of Tibet.

The group of Chongqing painters mentioned here mainly refers to several painters in the fine arts group of *Xinhua Daily*: Li Shaoyan, Niu Wen, Li Huanmin, Tan Xuekai, An Lin and so on. *Xinhua Daily* is the official newspaper of the Southwest Bureau. Although it follows the name of the famous newspaper published by the Communist Party of China in the Kuomintang-controlled area during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, it differs greatly in organizational structure and personnel composition. The *Xinhua Daily* was first published in Wuhan in 1938 during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Zhou Enlai invited the Kuomintang elder Yu Youren to write a headline. In the winter of the same year, Wuhan was occupied and newspapers were transferred to Chongqing. In 1947, the Kuomintang authorities ordered the suspension of publications. Newspaper staff were forced to evacuate to Yan'an. In 1949, the Southwest Bureau was established, and its organ newspapers were also being prepared. Earlier, Deng Xiaoping had asked Mao Zedong to write a headline at a meeting in Beijing. After the staff of *Xinhua Daily* reported to the Southwest Bureau, Deng Xiaoping gave them the headlines inscribed by Mao Zedong and ordered them to follow the Third Corps marching towards Chongqing.

At the beginning of the publication of Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*, the cadres were mainly composed of three parts: the former *Jinsui Daily*, the former *Xinhua Daily* and the Southwest Service Corps Press and Publishing Squadron. The latter was a group of journalists recruited from Shanghai, Nanjing and other places. Among them, the former *Jinsui Daily* had more staff, and Niu Wen and Li Shaoyan belonged to this group.

The predecessor of *Jinsui Daily* is the *Counter-Japanese War Daily*, which was founded on September 18, 1940 and renamed on July 1, 1947. It was the official newspaper of the Central Jinsui Branch. On April 2, 1948, Mao Zedong met with editors of *Jinsui Daily* in Xing County, northwest Shanxi Province, and made important comments on news work. This is the famous *Talk to the Editors of Jinsui Daily*, which was included in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. On May 1, 1949, the final issue of *Jinsui Daily*, the staff of the newspaper moved to Linfen in Southern Shanxi with the Jinsui Branch Bureau to study intensively, prepare to take over the Kuomintang's Central Daily and mop up the newspaper, and set up *Xinhua Daily*. In early October, under the leadership of Zhang Ziyi, former Minister of Propaganda Department of Jinsui Branch Bureau, and Chang Zhiqing, former president of *Jinsui Daily*, some of the personnel traveled to Western Hunan via Shijiazhuang, Zhengzhou and Wuhan from Linfen to accompany the army to Chongqing. Each unit arrived at Haitangxi on the South Bank of the Yangtze River in

Chongqing on December 4 and 5, and joined the city in a unified formation on December 6.

The new *Xinhua Daily* was first published on December 10, 1949. After the launch of the publication, a telegram was received from the Ministry of Propaganda and Publicity that the *Xinhua Daily* has been published in Nanjing. It was suggested to use the name *New Southwest Daily* instead. On December 11, the Propaganda Department of the Southwest Bureau, in accordance with Deng Xiaoping's instructions, sent a reply to the propaganda department, stating that the telegram of the Propaganda Department of the Southwest Bureau was received only on December 11, and that the newspaper had been published on the 10th. Considering that *Xinhua Daily* had been deeply impressed by Chongqing readers, Comrade Deng Xiaoping had agreed to write the headline when he went to Beijing and "renamed for fear of bad influence". On December 15, the Ministry of Propaganda and Publicity responded and agreed that the newspaper should not be renamed. Later this newspaper was called Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*.^①

Niu Wen, born in 1922 in Lingshi, Shanxi Province, joined the army in 1937 and was admitted to the fifth class of the Art Department of Yan'an Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature (hereinafter referred to as "Lu Yi") in 1941. In 1943, due to the tension of the war, Yan'an "Lu Yi" was terminated in advance and assigned to the Battle Theatre Society of 120 Division of the Eighth Route Army, editing the *Battle Pictorial* and participating in literary and artistic performances. In 1945, he was transferred to the *People's Pictorial* under the *Counter-Japanese War Daily* in Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Region as an art editor. In 1946, the *Counter-Japanese War Daily* was renamed *Jinsui Daily*. After the final issue of *Jinsui Daily*, Niu Wen accompanied the army to Chongqing and joined the fine arts group of *Xinhua Daily*. Li Shaoyan was the head of the fine arts group and Niu Wen was the vice-chairman of the fine arts group. Shortly afterwards, Tan Xuekai, a former teacher of Sichuan Provincial College of Art, and An Lin, a student, were recruited to the Art Group of *Xinhua Daily*. In February and August 1951, Li Huanmin and Song Guangxun, who graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, were also assigned to the Art Group of *Xinhua Daily*. In addition to some other art cadres who were recruited and mobilized, "the Art Group of *Xinhua Daily* actually became the leading body of the Communist Party in the art circle in the southwest region at that time"^②.

In March 1953, the first Cultural Congress of Southwest District was held in Chongqing. The Southwest District Artists Association was established. Li Shaoyan was elected as the executive vice-chairman and presided over daily work. Niu Wen was appointed Secretary-General. In June 1954, the administrative organs of the major regions of the country were abolished. On August 31, Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*, as a large regional newspaper, also completed its historical mission, renamed *Chongqing Daily*. The staff of the fine arts working group of *Xinhua Daily* continued to stay in Chongqing, specializing in the work of the Southwest Artists Association. As the National Association of Artists of China was renamed the China Artists Association in October 1953, the Southwest District Association of Artists was renamed the Chongqing Branch of the China Artists Association. The venue of the Association was relocated from Xinhua Daily House in the city center to No.24 in Huacun, a suburb. The positions of Li Shaoyan and Niu Wen remain unchanged.^③

During the work of Chongqing *Xinhua Daily*, the task of Li Shaoshan and Niu Wen was to cooperate with the policy to produce woodcut illustrations. For example, in the second half of 1950, the Southwest Bureau launched a campaign against banditry and hegemony, rent reduction and remand in the countryside. From August to September, *Xinhua Daily* published Niu Wen and Su Guang's long comic book *Never Die*, which exposed the evils of the feudal land system, and later published a book. During the anti-town movement in 1951, *Xinhua Daily* published Niu Wen, Tan Xuekai, Su Guang and Li Shaoyan's comic strip *Yi Guan Dao Harmed My Family*. In February 1951, during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea (DPRK), *Xinhua Daily* serialized Niu Wen, Li Shaoyan, Tan Xuekai and An Lin's comic strip *How was My Daughter Deceived?*. In February 1952, *Xinhua Daily* serialized the painting *History and Painting of the Emperor's Invasion of China*, which was co-authored by Li Shaoyan, Niu Wen, Su Guang and Tan Xuekai.

Niu Wen's Tibetan prints were produced under this background. His first trip to Tibet with Tan Xuekai on October 1951. At that time, Tibet had just been peacefully liberated. On May 23, 1951, *The Agreement Between the*

① See Peng Yu, Sun Xiazhen, Guan Jifen, *Southwest Xinhua Daily Editorial Board Editor, A Brief History of Southwest Xinhua Daily*, Chongqing Publishing House, 1995, pp.1-7.

② Ling Chengwei, Ling Yan, *History of the Development of Emerging Printing in Sichuan*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 1992, p.131.

③ See Ling Chengwei, Ling Yan, *History of the Development of Emerging Printing in Sichuan*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 1992, pp.131-132.

Central People's Government and the Tibetan Local Government on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (i. e. the 17-Article Agreement) was signed in Beijing. *Good News* is the result of this trip to Tibet. In a 2008 autobiography, Niu Wen recalled that: “*When the Good News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Reached the Kang-Tibet Plateau* was a work created by Comrade Li Shaoyan and me in 1952. I remember that when I came back from the experience of life in Tibet, I made few suggestions and cooperated with each other, so we struck an instant chord with each other. I have sorted out the material of experiencing life in Tibetan areas, put out the conception and sketch of the picture. We discussed together and finalized it. The work was finished with a few words and a knife to the wood.”^①

2. Tibetan areas

According to the chronological statistics attached to the book *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, from 1951 to 1979, Niu Wen went to Tibetan areas 14 times, basically with Li Huanmin. The details are as follows:

Sequence Number	Time	Destination
1	October 1951	Tibet
2	Spring and Summer,1952	Tibet
3	March–August 1953	Garzê (Tagong Township)
4	March–June 1954	Garzê
5	February–August 1955	Aba
6	September 1956–February 1957	Tibet
7	April–September 1957	Aba
8	February–August 1958	Aba (Erya, Barkam County)
9	September–November 1960	Aba (Ruoergai)
10	May–September 1961	Aba (Ruoergai)
11	June 1962	Aba (Ruoergai)
12	September 1963	Aba
13	September 1964–February 1965	Tibet
14	March–June 1979	Aba

As can be seen from the table above, Niu Wen went to Tibetan areas mainly in three places: Garzê, Aba and Tibet. According to the traditional Tibetan saying, the area where they live is divided into three parts: upper Ali Sanwei, central Weizang Siru and lower Duokang Liugang. Ali is the most mountainous area to the west of Tibet. The area with Lhasa as the center radiating southward is called Wusizang, which was renamed Weizang after the Qing Dynasty. The eastern part is Wei, also known as Qianzang, with Lhasa as the center; the western part is Tibet, also known as Houzang, with Shigatse as the center. In fact, Duokang Liugang includes two dialect areas: Amdo and Khams. Amdo pointed out the grassland area north of Nyainqêntanglha Mountain, mainly in Qinghai. Khams refers to the Hengduan Mountains in the southeastern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, including Garzê and Aba autonomous prefectures in Western Sichuan, Changdu in Tibet, Diqing in Yunnan and Yushu in Qinghai. Khams

^① *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting* Editorial Board Editor,*70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House,2012, p.121.

means “frontier” in Tibetan. The administrative divisions of the past dynasties are also roughly based on this. For example, the central government of the Yuan Dynasty set up three routes of propaganda and consolation missions in Tibet: Mdo smad, Mdo Khams, which is composed of two nouns of “Amdo” and “Khams” in Tibetan, and Wusizang Nali Sugulusun (equivalent to Weizang; Wusi is Wei, Tibet is Houzang, Nali is Ali, Sugulusun is three parts), which are not unified with each other. It is under the management of Xuanzheng Yuan. In the Ming Dynasty, the commanders of Wusizang Nali (equivalent to Weizang) and Dogan (equivalent to Duokang, equivalent to Amdo and Khams) were both commanders and envoys.^①

Niu Wen went to Garzê in 1953 and 1954, which was then called Xikang Tibetan Autonomous Region. That is to say, he went to the earliest Tibetan Autonomous Region. The system of Xikang Province was formally established in 1939, although there were motions in the late Qing Dynasty. On December 9, 1949, under the pressure of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marching to the southwest, the provincial chairman Liu Wenhui, Deng Xihou and Pan Wenhua sent a telegram to Peng County to announce the uprising, and Xikang Province declared peaceful liberation. In 1950, Xikang Province was headed by the Southwest Military and Political Commission, which is also under the jurisdiction of the Southwest Bureau. Residents in Kangding are divided into Kangding, Ya'an and Xichang. In November 1950, Kangding District was transformed into Xikang Tibetan Autonomous Region. In July 1955, Xikang Province was abolished and its administrative region was divided into Sichuan Province, which was transformed into Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province.

As for Aba, which he went to after 1955, it was called Maoxian Prefecture in the early days of the founding of New China. In December 1949, the PLA stationed in Chengdu. In 1950, Sichuan Province was divided into four administrative bureau districts: Eastern Sichuan, Southern Sichuan, Western Sichuan and Northern Sichuan, which belonged to the Southwest Bureau. Each Department has several districts under its jurisdiction, and Maoxian district belongs to the West Sichuan Provincial administrative district. In 1952, four administrative districts were merged into Sichuan Province. In 1953, Maoxian Prefecture was abolished and Sichuan Tibetan Autonomous Region was reconstructed. In 1955, it was transformed into Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Niu Wen did not go to Aba until 1955 to experience life, which may be related to the late establishment of the region as a Tibetan autonomous region. Why did he go to Garzê, Aba instead of other places? A pamphlet published in 1954 may offer some clues:

The number of Tibetans is also large, about two million or more. Xikang has the largest Tibetan population, about 1.2 million, almost double the number of Tibetans in Tibet. To the east of Jinsha River and to the west of Dadu River, Xikang Tibetan Autonomous Region (Garzê) has been established with a large scope. In Xichang Special Zone, there are Muli Tibetan Autonomous Region. In Changdu area west of Jinsha River, Tibetan people are the main body of the population. In the northwest of Yunnan, there are about 300000 Tibetan people gathered... In northwest Sichuan, there are nearly 400000 Tibetan people, who account for three-quarters of the total population of the Sichuan Tibetan Autonomous Region (Aba), making it the second largest Tibetan Autonomous Region in the country.^②

There are two kinds of drawing methods for maps of Xikang Province. One includes Changdu area (before 1949) and the other does not include Changdu area (after 1950). The reason may be that the Changdu area was nominally affiliated to Xikang Province during the Republic of China, so when Xikang Province was peacefully liberated in December 1949, it was included in its jurisdiction. But in fact, it was not until the end of the battle of Changdu in October 1950 that the area of Changdu was liberated. The Changdu People's Liberation Commission, which was subsequently established in December, was not subordinate to Xikang Province, but directly under the jurisdiction of the State Council of the Central People's Government. After the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1955, Changdu district was under the jurisdiction of the Preparatory Committee of the autonomous region. Xikang Tibetan Autonomous Region (formerly Kangding Region, now Garzê), Xichang Region and Changdu Region had a total Tibetan population of about 1.2 million, Sichuan Tibetan Autonomous Region (now Aba) had a Tibetan population of about 400000, and Tibetan population in Tibet was

① Refer to Ren Naiqiang and Zewang Duoqi's "Textual Research on 'Duoganshi'", *China Tibetology*, No. 1, 1989.

② Edited by Ying Gu, *Southwest of Great Motherland*, New Knowledge Publishing House, 1954, p.13.

about 600000. This material refers to Xikang Tibetan Autonomous Region (now Garzê) and Sichuan Tibetan Autonomous Region (now Aba) as the first and second largest Tibetan Autonomous Region in China respectively, which shows the importance of these two regions.

3. Foreign Countries and Hometown

Good News is the result of Niu Wen's cooperation with Li Shaoyan after his first trip to Tibet. Its theme is the peaceful liberation of Tibet. However, the painting shows this theme from the side by Tibetans in the Kang-Tibet Plateau. This point deserves attention because it follows the expression of Niu Wen's previous works: *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front* (1949), *Hearing the Victory News* (1949) and *Liberation of Commander-in-chief Zhu's Home* (1950).

In the later period of *Jinsui Daily's* work, Niu Wen was sent to Guo County and Dai County to participate in the land reform. "After the land reform, we returned to *Jinsui Daily* in Xingxian County, Shanxi Province. At this time, just before the founding of New China, newspapers were suspended... My prints *Measure Land*, *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front* and *Receiving Land Certificate* were created in these short months."^① *Hearing the Victory News* was first published in *Jinsui Daily* on January 18, 1949^②, and *Xinhua Daily* on January 31, 1950, with the title of *Hearing the Broadcasting*. The liberation of Zhu De's hometown (now Yilong County, Sichuan Province) was in December 1949. The *Liberation of Commander-in-Chief Zhu's Home* was published in the *Xinhua Daily* on April 10, 1950. So the first two works were created in Shanxi and the second in Chongqing. The three works have a common feature, that is, news is transmitted from one place to another. The news in *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front* is transmitted from their hometown to the front, and the news in *Hearing the Victory News* is transmitted back from the front. There is an implicit echo relationship between the two works. Since then, the *Freshmen of Peking University* (1954) and the *Return of Learning Medicine* (1954) have once again formed this implicit echo relationship: the main characters in the picture are all Tibetan young women, one is to go to Beijing from his hometown to go to school, the other is to return from other places after completing education.

Liberation of Commander-in-Chief Zhu's Home implies a structure of a different place/home through the word "home" in the title. In the center of the picture is a friendly conversation between a PLA and a fellow countryman. There is a horse behind the PLA, which indicates that they are from other places. On the right, someone is hanging the plaque of "Mother's Loving Home" presented by the PLA on the door of Zhu De's family. On the left, there is a portrait of Zhu De displayed by the women's PLA to the villagers. The portrait serves as a messenger. As a token, it shows that it was Zhu De's own army who came to liberate his "hometown". It seems that besides liberation, there is another reason for the excitement of the villagers - the return of their relatives.

Similarly, in *Good News*, the message is delivered by a paper scroll in the hand of a young Tibetan horseman in the center of the picture, and a Tibetan newspaper that Tibetan women on the left are reading; in *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front*, the message is delivered by a letter; in *Hearing the Victory News*, the message is delivered by an invisible voice from the radio. It is through the media of words, sounds and images that the corresponding structures between different places and home towns are formed. *Volunteer Army's Story of Fighting* (1952) also uses this technique. The Tibetan volunteer soldier in the painting is telling his compatriots vividly about the battle experience. It is the voice (or language) that transmits the message.

In 1956, Niu Wen's painting style changed, creating a group of Tibetan rural landscape prints, including *End of the Village*, *Shigatse Corner*, *Evening Show in the Mountain Village*, *Tibetan Farmers*, *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet* and so on. One of the obvious features of these works is that they mainly focus on scenery, with few narrative elements and strong black and white contrast. The main elements of the picture are some Tibetan rural buildings, embellished with one or two characters in less striking places. As there is no longer any news coming from afar, it seems that there is no obvious antagonism between the different places/home towns in these works. It seems that there is no obvious antagonism between the different places/home towns in these works. But it is worth noting

① Niu Wen, "A Memory of Past Events", edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part II)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p. 274.

② Mr. Niu Xiaoniu, son of Niu Wen, informs us of this point, and gives us pictures and texts for this article and comments on the preliminary draft. Page 49 of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)* was mistakenly planted as *Jinsui Daily* on July 18, 1949.

that these works are not purely scenery, but have character activities. Some of the characters in the works (such as *End of the Village* and *Shigatse Corner*) can not see whether they are foreigners or locals, and some of the characters in the works (such as the *Evening Show in the Mountain Village* and *Tibetan Farmers*) can be seen that they are locals. As the main factor of “landscape” in the works, there are tombs of lamas or houses of Tibetans. The bicycle in *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet* is also a means of transportation connecting local and foreign areas. Therefore, there is still a relationship between the embellishing figures in the picture and the land, buildings or scenery as the background: they are either strangers who occasionally pass through the place, or they are active in their own hometown. Nevertheless, there seems to be a sense of alienation between the painter and the object of expression.

This change in Niu Wen's style may be related to the “life” he experienced in Tibet. Li Huanmin recalled that he and Niu Wen went to Tibet to experience life together, one in 1953 and the other in 1956. In 1953, the destination was Garzê:

At that time, the serf system was outside the highway, and there were chiefs above the people, who were “pro-Han” or “anti-Han”? It's not clear. Some people saw us coming, tie the dog and let us go in and rest; some people pretended not to see, Tibetan mastiff jumped up, you can't help it. Comrade Niu Wen felt that it was impossible to go on like this. He wrote to his superiors and asked to be appointed. Quickly approved, Comrade Niu Wen was appointed Secretary of the Party Committee of the Yingguan District Committee of Garzê County, and I was a member. It sounded like a big official. In fact, there are only a few people in the whole district committee, mainly propagating ethnic policies, striving for the upper echelons, cultivating activists and recruiting Party members. From then on, we went to the countryside on horseback with local cadres, did mass work, lived with the Tibetan people, and put up a small white cloth tent in the evening.^①

In 1956, however, the situation was somewhat different:

In 1956, we went to Tibet again. That time, the general political painter Ai Yan organized Niu Wen and Ma Changli to go to Tibet with me. We entered Tibet by Sichuan-Tibet Highway in October 1956 and returned from Qinghai-Tibet Highway in February 1957. In Tibet for more than five months, he traveled all over southern and Northern Tibet, brushing past death several times. we had encountered mudslides, land slides, hunger, cold, and lack of oxygen, rebels fired cold guns.^②

The difference between the two Tibetan tours is that in 1953, Garzê and Niu Wen went to work, which can penetrate into Tibetan life; in 1956, they went to Tibet and “traveled all over southern Tibet and northern Tibet”. Li Huanmin even described in detail that their car breaking down on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, Niu Wen almost died. The *Freshmen of Peking University* in 1954 and the *Return of Learning Medicine* can be regarded as the results of the Ganzi trip in 1953. The journey to Tibet in 1956, however, was mainly about scenery, not about the specific content of Tibetan people's life, because it only entered Tibetan areas as an outsider. In 1964, Niu Wen published an article about “going deep into life” in *Fine Arts*. It should be a talk of experience.

To create, the most important thing is to go deep into life. In order to master a large number of indirect materials and enrich the Treasury of creative works, writers should not only experience directly, but also take notes of interviews and study provincial and county chronicles. Take the minority areas for example, they are not fluent in language, the situation is complex and the change is fast. All these need to be understood layer by layer. For example, we started with the Party committees of provinces and autonomous regions, and then went to counties, communes and so on. It was very useful to listen to more information and try to read some social investigation

① Tang Kaiqi, “Niu Wen's Life is Glorious and Happy—Mr. Li Huanmin, A Famous Printmaker, Talks about Niu Wen”, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part II)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, pp.396–397.

② Tang Kaiqi, “Niu Wen's Life is Glorious and Happy—Mr. Li Huanmin, A Famous Printmaker, Talks about Niu Wen”, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part II)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.397.

materials.^①

The reason why Niu Wen was unable to penetrate into Tibetan life in 1956 may be related to the situation in Tibet at that time as well as the lack of convenient conditions for his posting. This time, Ai Yan, a painter of the general administration, organized the entrance to Tibet. Ai Yan was a painter in the Propaganda Department of the Political Department of the Second Field Army. When they entered Chongqing, from 1950 to 1954, he belonged to the Ministry of culture of the Political Department of the Southwest Military Region. In 1954, when the Southwest Military Region was abolished, he was transferred from Chongqing.^② Li Huanmin recalled: “On New Year’s Day in 1957, Tibetan insurgency was rampant and the Kangzang Highway was closed to traffic. Ai Yan flew back to the mainland by military aircraft. The Tibetan Military Region arranged for us to evacuate and give us a truck, two drivers, two barrels of petrol, a bag of steamed bread and several boards. We said goodbye to Lhasa and returned to the mainland from the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. At first, it was okay. When we got to Tanggula Mountain, something went wrong...”^③

The time of entering Tibet was not long after the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region (22 April, 1956). In late March 1956, the Central Committee sent more than 800 delegations headed by Chen Yi and vice-headed by Zhang Jingwu to Tibet to congratulate the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region. On September 4, 1956, the Central Committee gave important instructions to Tibet’s democratic reform: the implementation of ethnic reform in Tibet will certainly not be within the first Five-Year Plan period, or may not be within the second Five-Year Plan, or may even be postponed to the third Five-Year Plan.

This is the background of Niu Wen and others when they entered Tibet in 1956. It can be imagined that, unlike going to Garzê in 1953, they were not easy to integrate into Tibetan life this time, nor dared to touch the political status in Tibet. Later, when Niu Wen introduced Li Huanmin’s prints, he said something that might also apply to himself: “The author (referring to Li Huanmin) was shocked to learn a lot of dark and cruel facts of Tibetan serfdom society, and his heart was filled with sympathy and resentment for the suffering of the Tibetan people... However, in terms of the situation in Tibet and Tibetan areas in the early 1950s, it is not appropriate to create revealing works. We can only seek light in the dark and praise them.”^④ Niu Wen’s 1956 series of prints, black and white contrast is strong, some works in large areas of black dominated, and it seems melancholy and dignified, which is also about the implicit reflection of this grief and indignation.

4. Community

After returning from Tibet in 1957, Niu Wen mainly went to Aba. In fact, since 1955, his destination in Tibet has changed from Garzê to Aba. It is said that Aba was the first area to carry out democratic reform, “The local people have established Party organizations and people’s communes among herdsmen. Niu Wen Served as secretary of the Party branch of the district committee. Two members (Niu Wen and Li Huanmin) and Tibetan Party members formed a group. The group leader is the daughter of a serf”^⑤. On the basis of this experience of life, in 1959, Niu Wen created a very influential printmaking *Oriental Red Sun Rising* (also known as *Happy Tibetan Children*). Regarding this work, Li Huanmin has the following recollections:

When Niu Wen created Oriental Red Sun Rising, I was with him all the time. In 1958, we lived in a small village called Erya in Aba Prefecture of Sichuan Province for half a year. One day we heard that there was a

① Niu Wen, “In-depth Life to Maximize the Horizon”, *Art*, No. 10, 1964, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, cited from *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012 edition, p.329.

② See Ling Chengwei and Ling Yan, *History of the Development of Emerging Printing in Sichuan*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 1992, p.132.

③ Tang Kaiqi, “Niu Wen’s Life is Glorious and Happy—Mr. Li Huanmin, A Famous Printmaker, Talks about Niu Wen”, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part II)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.397.

④ Niu Wen, “Jinqiao—Talking about Li Huanmin’s Printing Creation”, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part II)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, pp.104–105.

⑤ Gao Yan, “Mining, Refining and Foundry—Notes on the Interview of Chongqing Printers (Excerpts)”, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.333.

nursery in the village, so we went to visit it. In the old Tibetan house where the nursery was, we went upstairs and saw the teacher standing in the middle beating. The children were singing and dancing around the teacher. It was very interesting. We drew some sketches. When we were ready to leave, the teachers and children sent us out. In the yard dam, the children surrounded us and danced one song after another. We were tired in the middle. The children were not happy enough yet. They also attracted a lot of Tibetan villagers to watch and enjoy the atmosphere.^①

It seems that the Tibetans in Aba are more friendly to the painters who come to collect styles. However, according to Li Huanmin, Niu Wen's creation was not smooth at the beginning, and he had not found a breakthrough for a long time. Finally, all the backgrounds were removed and teachers and organs were added among the dancing children. Only then did the drawings get on the right track. In this work, Niu Wen transforms from landscape to character. The tone of the picture is cheerful, and the Tibetan children in a circle form a visual rhythm in repetition, which skillfully expresses the sense of music in the auditory sense that the works are trying to convey. At the same time, its composition has a certain symbolic meaning: the minority people are singing and dancing around a center. The organ in the center of the picture not only implies the existence of music, but also indicates that it is a new and modern music, which coincides well with the title *Oriental Red Sun Rising*. Music links the new life of the Tibetan people with the new socialist regime. In this way, it reminds people of a paragraph Li Qun said when talking about Niu Wen's engraving:

*After the founding of New China, Niu Wen left Shanxi to Sichuan. Obviously, time was needed to adapt to a new environment when he got to a new place to artistically reflect the life of the people in this new area. So Niu Wen chose the Tibetan people as the main object of praise and went to the Kang-Tibet Plateau areas several times to live in depth. Soon after, he carved works such as *Freshmen of Peking University*, *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet* and *Herdsmen on the Grassland*, which showed the Tibetan people's new life.*^②

As mentioned earlier, Niu Wen's works imply a structural model of a different place/home. The meaning of Li Qun's words seems to be that Tibetan life is regarded as a characteristic of Sichuan as a "new area", a new resource that can be used artistically. Since his interest has always been Tibetan, as Li Qun said, he needs to "familiarize" with Tibetan life, that is, to overcome the differences between him and the Tibetan people. In a sense, this means that the unfamiliar Tibetan areas need to be transformed into its own home. How could he make it?

Perhaps the solution lies in the media that deliver the message, including the newspapers in the *Good News*, the schoolbags and airplanes in the *Freshmen of Peking University*, the medical boxes in the *Return of Learning Medicine*, the bicycles in *Beside the Road of Kang-Tibet*, the voices in the *Volunteer Army's Story of Fighting* and the music in the *Oriental Red Sun Rising*. From Anderson's point of view, the reason why these media could overcome the antagonism between different places and their home towns and transformed them into their home towns was that they could arouse the idea of "community" and bring them into a larger community at the same time.

According to Anderson, printed words and songs were important media for the emergence of the "imaginary community" of "nation-state". He pointed out that there was a "contemporary community of special types that hinted at its existence entirely by language, especially in the form of poetry and songs"^③. Singing reminds people of the existence of community: "We know that while we are singing these songs, other people are singing the same songs—we don't know who these people are or where they are, but they are singing where we can't hear them. The only thing that connects us all is the voice of imagination."^④

As far as Niu Wen is concerned, the imaginary community implied in the *Oriental Red Sun Rising* is "Socialist China". The work connects a group of Tibetan children with socialist China through music, suggesting the existence

① Li Huanmin, "Niu Wen, His Person and His Painting", edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.167.

② Li Qun, "Preface to Selected Works of Niu Wen", edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.335.

③ Benedict Anderson, *The Imaged Community—The Origin and Dissemination of Nationalism (Revision)*, translated by Wu Ruiren, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2016, p.139.

④ Benedict Anderson, *The Imaged Community—The Origin and Dissemination of Nationalism (Revision)*, translated by Wu Ruiren, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2016, p.140.

of the community. This community is not only the home of the Tibetan people, but also the home of foreign style painters. From this point of view, Niu Wen's works which involve the structure of different places/home towns are all related to this community. *Liberation of Commander-in-Chief Zhu's Home* is to connect a specific place with Zhu De, the military leader of the Republic; *Military Families Writing Letters to the Front* and *Hearing the Victory News* are to link ordinary people with the war of liberation; *Freshmen of Peking University* is to link a Tibetan young woman in an unknown place with the capital of socialist China; and *Good News* is also to link the unknown place with the capital of socialist China. The well-known Tibetan compatriots are associated with the capital, Beijing, where the peace and liberation agreement for Tibet was signed.

5. Change

Of course, not all Niu Wen's works adopt the structure model of different places/hometown, and therefore not all of them imply the concept of community. Since 1976, Niu Wen has made a new exploration in printmaking, trying to introduce the lines of traditional Huizhou printmaking, while absorbing the nutrition of folk art such as paper-cut, forming a clear black and white gray block surface, symmetrical lines and smooth artistic style. Although he continued to take Tibetan characters as the object of expression, the enhancement of decoration and the reduction of narrative factors make the characters on the screen no longer have the meaning of "action".

Mourning (1976) is the first work of this style change. In the painting, Niu Wen abandoned all the background and replaced the former realistic language with decorative lines - the printmaking language from Yan'an "Lu Yi". In the picture, a Tibetan girl holds a small white flower in her hand, expressing her memory and mourning for Zhou Enlai. Because only one person is depicted, it gives the impression that this kind of mourning is more an individual activity, and it is difficult to connect with the Tibetan group, nor does it involve the changes in the life of this group. *Fragrant Grassland* (1979) and *New Expedition on Grassland* (1980) continue this creative idea and style.

Before 1976, Niu Wen created Tibetan works as an artist, but after that year, his consciousness as an individual artist gradually awakened. In 1976, Niu Wen actually created two pieces of works to mourn Zhou Enlai. In addition to the aforementioned *Mourning*, there is also a piece of *Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruits*. At present, only one sketch and relevant notes can be found. In his notes, Niu Wen wrote:

In 1949, we marched into the southwest of China and transferred his creative base to Tibetan areas. We repeatedly went deep into life and created works reflecting the Tibetan people's lives. Our organ was near Red Rock Village. It organized many visits and accompanied visitors. It has gone to Red Rock Village many times. It was full of emotion, but I still don't know where to begin to show this revolutionary holy place. When the Premier died in 1976, Comrade Guan randomly sent a wreath to Red Rock Village. He was very excited. Then President Zhu and Chairman Mao passed away one after another. During the reign of the "Gang of Four", it was impossible to eulogize the Premier and Red Rock Village. After overthrowing the Gang of Four, I was able to conceive the painting Spring Flowers and autumn Fruits. In numerous visits to Red Rock Village, I somehow was most moved to see the pictures and introductions of Premier Zhou, Zhu De, Deng Yingchao and others who were engaged in production in Hongyan Village in 1941.

...

Why do I feel so deeply about the production of the Red Rock Revolutionary Holy Land alone? The reason is that in 1941 and 1942, I participated in the mass production movement in Yan'an. I was trained and educated in my work, and I also got great happiness!^①

Niu Wen realized that with the death of Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Mao Zedong, an era was over. The "Gang of Four" opened another era. In this sense, *Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruits* is not only the memory of Zhou Enlai, but also the memory of his past. How to face this new era? In 1979, he and Li Shaoyan co-wrote an article summarizing the work of the China Artists Association and published it in *Art*. The article is divided into five sub-headings: first, the main task of China Artists Association is to protect artistic productivity; second, China Artists

^① Niu Wen, "The inscription of spring flowers and autumn fruits", edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, in *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, p.384.

Association should work independently; third, China Artists Association should have a group of creative backbone directly; fourth, to respect the personality of artists; fifth, to adhere to unity and promote democracy.^① Generally speaking, they all emphasize the independence of artistic creation.

Niu Wen's Tibetan prints lasted until the 1980s, after which his interest gradually shifted to Chinese folk art. With the 1976 *Mourning* as the boundary, the content of his later Tibetan prints no longer involves the theme of the big social background, but only some daily activities of Tibetans (mainly Tibetan young women), such as reading and walking.

Epilogue

Niu Wen's prints imply a different place/home structure. The emergence of this structural model is not only because he is engaged in art creation as a foreigner in Chongqing, but also because he needs to overcome the differences between himself and his Tibetan compatriots. In order to achieve this, he needs to turn to socialist China, a political community he belongs to with the Tibetans. When Niu Wen created Tibetan prints, he played a certain role as an art editor and art cadre of *Xinhua Daily*. This identity places him and his subjects (Tibetan people) in this community. In this social identity structure, he can use realism to describe the Tibetan people who have the ability to act. However, with the start of market economy, Niu Wen's interest has shifted from Tibetan theme to Chinese folk art, and the foothold of artistic creation has also shifted from the great social era to the excavation of specific aesthetic objects.

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① See Niu Wen, Li Shaoyan, "The Task of the Association of Fine Arts is to Output Talents from Works", *Art*, No. 12, 1979, edited by the Editorial Board of *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting*, cited from *70 Years of Niu Wen Painting (Part I)*, Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2012, pp.385–387.

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