the supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution. But the artist cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art.

In the present period of the death agony of capitalism, democratic as well as fascist, the artist sees himself threatened with the loss of his right to live and continue working. He sees all avenues of communication choked with the debris of capitalist collapse. Only naturally, he turns to the Stalinist organizations, which hold out the possibility of escaping from his isolation. But if he is to avoid complete demoralization, he cannot remain there, because of the impossibility of delivering his own message and the degrading servility which these organizations exact from him in exchange for certain material advantages. He must understand that his place is elsewhere, not among those who betray the cause of the revolution and of mankind, but among those who with unshaken fidelity bear witness to this revolution, among those who, for this reason, are alone able to bring it to fruition, and along with it the ultimate free expression of all forms of human genius.

The aim of this appeal is to find a common ground on which may be reunited all revolutionary writers and artists, the better to serve the revolution by their art and to defend the liberty of that art itself against the usurpers of the revolution. We believe that aesthetic, philosophical, and political tendencies of the most varied sort can find here a common ground. Marxists can march here hand in hand with anarchists, provided both parties uncompromisingly reject the reactionary police-patriot spirit represented by Joseph Stalin and by his henchman, Garcia Oliver.3

We know very well that thousands on thousands of isolated thinkers and artists are today scattered throughout the world, their voices drowned out by the loud chores of well-disciplined liars. Hundreds of small local magazines are trying to gather youthful forces about them, seeking new paths and not subsidies. Every progressive tendency in art is destroyed by fascism as "degenerate." Every free creation is called "fascist" by the Stalinists. Independent revolutionary art must now gather its forces for the struggle against reactionary persecution. It must proclaim aloud its right to exist. Such a union of forces is the aim of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art which we believe is now necessary to form.

We by no means insist on every idea put forth in this manifesto, which we ourselves consider only a first step in the new direction. We urge every friend and defender of art, who cannot but realize the necessity for this appeal, to make himself heard at once. We address the same appeal to all those publications of the left-wing which are ready to participate in the creation of the International Federation and to consider its task and its methods of action.

When a preliminary international contact has been established through the press and by correspondence, we will proceed to the organization of local and national congresses on a modest scale. The final step will be the assembling of a world congress which will officially mark the foundation of the International Federation.

Our aims:
The independence of art—for the revolution;
The revolution—for the complete liberation of art!


Hu Shi
1891–1962

Hu Shi was a writer, scholar, and diplomat who in the early twentieth century participated in the so-called May Fourth Movement, a broad-based rebellion against traditional Chinese values, and particularly against Confucian ethics, which were perceived to perpetuate rigidly authoritarian political and social structures. The origins of this movement can be traced back to the foundation of the journal New Youth in 1915, where a generation of young and often Western-trained scholars and intellectuals published their ideas. The movement reached its peak in 1919 in protests against the Chinese signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which would have ceded Chinese territory to the Japanese.

Reform of the classical Chinese literary language was considered a crucial part of the changes that would lead to a different culture and society. Hu Shi's essay "Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature," was published in New Youth in 1917, the year in which Hu returned to China after completing a doctorate at Columbia University in New York, where he studied under the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. Hu's essay vigorously advocates a dynamic, vernacular literature as an alternative to what he perceived as the ossified forms of expression of the literary tradition. But implicitly, what is at stake is more than a change in literary expression. Some of these implications became visible in 1927, when Hu helped to establish a modernized, simplified Chinese as the official written language. Since classical Chinese, which had been used before, was far removed from the spoken language of the day, it was very difficult to learn and contributed to the persistence of illiteracy among the population. The change in official language opened up writing to a far broader public.

from Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature

Those engaged in the present discourse on literary reform are myriad. How am I, unlearned and unlettered, qualified to speak on the subject? Yet I have over the past few years, with the benefit of my friends' argumentation, pondered and studied this matter a fair degree and the results achieved are perhaps not unworthy of discussion. So I summarize the opinions I hold and list them in eight points; I have divided them in this fashion for the investigation of those interested in literary reform.

It is my belief that those wishing to discuss literary reform today should begin with eight matters, which are as follows:

I. Writing should have substance
II. Do not imitate the ancients
III. Emphasize the technique of writing
IV. Do not mean without an illness
V. Eliminate hackneyed and formal language
VI. Do not use allusions
VII. Do not use parallels
VIII. Do not avoid vulgar diction

1. Translated by Kirk A. Dovin.
I. WRITING SHOULD HAVE SUBSTANCE

The greatest malady of letters in our nation today is language without substance. All one ever hears is “If writing is without form, it will not travel far.” But nothing is said about language without substance, nor what function form should serve. What I mean by substance is not the literature covers the Deo [a] of the ancients. What I mean by substance is the two following points:

A. Feeling. In the “Great Preface” to the Book of Songs is written: “Feelings come from within and are shaped through language. If language is insufficient to express one’s feelings, then one may sigh; if sighing is insufficient, then one may chant or sing; if chanting or singing is insufficient, then one may dance with one’s hands and feet.” This is what I mean by feeling. Feeling is the soil of literature. Literature without feeling is like a man without a soul, nothing but a wooden puppet, a walking corpse. (What people call aesthetic feeling is only one kind of feeling.)

B. Thought. By “thought” I mean one’s views, perceptions, and ideals. Thought need not depend on literature for transmission, but literature is enriched by thought and enriched by the value of literature. This is why the prose of Zhuangzi, the poetry of Tao Yuanming and Du Fu, the lyric meters of Xin Qi and the fictional narratives of Shi Naian are eternal. As the brain is to man’s body, so is thought to literature. If a man cannot think, though he be attractive in appearance and capable of laughter, tears, and feelings, is this really sufficient for him? Such is the case with literature.

Without these two kinds of substance, literature is like a beauty without a soul or a brain; though she have a lovely and ample exterior, she is nonetheless inferior. The greatest reason for the deterioration of literature is that the literati have become mired in poems and are without any kind of far-reaching thought or sincere feeling. The bane of an overly formalist literature lies in this so-called language without substance and should we wish to solve this, it will suffice, we must save it with substance, by which I mean only feeling and thought.

II. DO NOT IMITATE THE ANCIENTS

Literature has changed from dynasty to dynasty, each dynasty having its own literature. The Zhou and Qin dynasties had their literatures, the Wei and Jin had theirs, as did the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming. This is not just a personal opinion held by me alone, but a truth of the progress of civilization. As for prose, there are the styles of the Book of History, the philosophers of the pre-Qin period, the Han historiars Sima Qian and Ban Gu, the essayists Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Ouyang Xiu, and Su Shi, the dialogues of Zhu Xi, and the fictional narratives of Shi Naian and Cao Qian. This is the progression of literature. To turn our atention to verse, poems such as “The Pashuin Song” and “Song of Five Sons” constitute the earliest period. Then follow the poems in the Book of Songs, Qu Yuan’s suo, and Xunzi’s rhyme-prose. From Su Wu and Li Liang of the Western Han to the Wei-Jin period, and the poShi parallel style of the Southern dynasties, to the flourishing regular verse in the Tang and Du Fu and Bai Juyi’s “realism” (as in Du Fu’s “Recovering Officer of Shihou” and “Jiang Village” or Bai Juyi’s “New Ballads”). The regulated verse form flourished in the Tang, but was later replaced by the lyric meter and the dramatic song (qin). From the Tang and Five Dynasties period to the short form in the Song marks one period of the lyric meter. The lyrics of Su Shi, Liu Yong, Xin Qi, and Jiang Xie form another period. The wajie and changmei dramas of the Yuan are another. All these periods have changed with the times, and each has its own characteristics. Our generation, looking back with a historical, progressive perspective, is most certainly unable to say that the literature of the ancients is superior to that of the present. The prose of the Zuo Commentary and Records of the Grand Historian is magnificent indeed, but do they come close to that of Shi Naian’s Water Margin? And the rhyme-prose of the “Three Capitals” and “Two Capitals” is but dregs in comparison to the Tang regulated verse and the Song lyric meter. We see from the above that literature develops and does not stand still. Tang people should not write poems of the Shang and Zhou, and Song people should not write rhyme-prose like Sima Xiangru or Yang Xiong. Were they to do so, their results would certainly not be fine. One cannot be skilled if one go against Heaven, turns one’s back on one’s age, and defies the footsteps of progress.

Since we understand the principle of literary development, I can proceed to a discussion of what I mean by “not imitating the ancients.” In contemporary China, in creating a literature for today, one must not imitate the Tang, Song, Zhou, or the Qin. I once saw the “Inaugural Remarks of the National Assembly” and read: “Most glorious is the National Assembly, the end of the penumbras of times is nigh.” This is evidence that to day is a desire to model literature after the Three Dynasties of antiquity. When we look at today’s “great writers,” the lesser writers model themselves after Tao Nai and Zeng Guofan of the Tongzhi School; the greater writers take the Tang Song essayists Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu as their masters, while the greatest follow the prose of the Qin-Han or Wei-Jin periods and feel that there is no literature to speak of after the Six Dynasties. But the difference between these is like the difference between one hundred steps and fifty steps; they all belong literature. Even if it resembles the ancients in spirit, it still amounts to nothing more than adding some “realistic counterfeits” to a museum. Is this literature? Yesterday I saw a poem by Chen Boyan[6] that reads as follows:

In the Garden of Waves I copied lines from Du Fu.
Half a year passed, many brushes worn thin.

[6] Assumably Xi songs that probably wasn’t actually written by the Book of Songs, as generally compiled by the first century B.C., and one of the Five Classics.
[7] Qu Yuan (343-278 B.C.) is said to have committed suicide, because, according to popular belief, he attempted to drown himself in the River Jang after the kingdom of Chu was conquered by the state of Qin (221 A.D.)
[8] A highly influential philosopher of the late 4th century B.C. who later taught at the University of Chou. His greatest contributions were in logic, which he developed into what is known as “logic.” His work is considered to be the first systematic philosophical work of China, and his ideas are still studied today.
[9] This passage is a quote from the Book of Songs, which directly translates to “In the Garden of Waves I copied lines from Du Fu. Half a year passed, many brushes worn thin.”

In the Garden of Waves I copied lines from Du Fu.
Half a year passed, many brushes worn thin.
All I have to show for myself are tears. Though friends passed by commenting on my "skillful creations." The mystical souls are all silent. The more I look up to Du Fu the higher he becomes. I turn these feelings over in my bosom and leisurely read Qiu Yuan's tragic suan.

This amply represents the imitative psychology of today's "poets of the first rank." The root of their sickness lies in spending "half a year passed with many brushes worn thin" in being slaves of slovenly standards to the ancients, resulting in sighs about "the more I look up to him the higher he becomes." If we free ourselves from this kind of slavery and no longer write poems of the ancients and only write our own poems, we will not end with this sort of deception.

Whenever I mention contemporary literature, only vernacular fiction (Wu Woyao, Li Baoguo, and Liao Yiwu) can be compared without shame to the world's literary "first rank." This is for no other reason than that they do not imitate the ancients (although they owe much to The Scholar, The Waver Margin, and The Story of the Stone; they are not imitative works). And it is only because they faithfully write about the contemporary situation that they can become true literature. All other poets or ancient-style essayists who study this or that style have no literary value. Those today with a determination to pursue literature should understand precisely the nature of that in which they are engaged.

III. EMPHASIZE THE TECHNIQUE OF WRITING

Many poets and essayists today neglect syntactic structure. Examples are legion and not worth raising; they are especially numerous in writings of parallel prose and regulated verse. Neglecting syntactic structure means there will be an absence of "communication." This is clear enough, and there is no need to go into further detail.

IV. DO NOT MOAN WITHOUT AN ILLNESS

This is not easy to discuss. Today's youth often affect a tragic view of the world. When they adopt a sobriquet it is most often something like "Cold Ashes," "Dead Ashes," or "Lifeliness." In their poems and prose they write of such things as old age before the setting sun, desolation facing the autumn winds. When spring arrives, they dread its swift departure, and when flowers bloom, they fear their premature withering. These are the tragic voices of a fallen country. The old should not act thus—how much more so the young! The long-term effect of this is to foster a sense of despondency, which leads to a lack of regard for action or service to one's country, and which only knowing the voice of lamentation or the literature of despair. This kind of literature will hasten writers to their grave and sap the will of its readers. This is what I mean by moaning without an illness. I am perfectly aware of the ills facing our nation today, but what effect can sobbing and tears have on a sick nation in such a perilous state? I only wish that contemporary writers become Fiches and Mazzinios and not the likes of Jia Yi, Wang Can, Qu Yuan, or Xie Ao. That they are unable to actually be like Jia Yi, Wang Can, Qu Yuan, or Xie Ao but instead write poems and essays about women, fine wine, depression, and discouragement makes them beneath contempt.

V. ELIMINATE HACKNEYED AND FORMAL LANGUAGE

Today one is called a poet if one can summon up from memory a few literary clichés. Poetry and prose are filled with stale and hackneyed diction, like "time waits for no man," "slings and arrows," "desolation," "solitary drifting," "the common man," "poor scholar," "winking sun," "fragrant flowers," "spring broodoir," "sadness and melancholy soul," "home is where the heart is," "cry of the cuckoo," "lonely as a solitary shadow," "words formed by merging peace," "jade pavilion," "elixir of love," "gray-eyed men," and the like, an endless and most undesirable habit. The long-term effect of this malady on our nation will be to give birth to poetry and prose that have the appearance of literature but really are not. Now I will demonstrate this tendency with a lyric:

Like tiny peas, the twinkling flames of an evening lamp Cast a flickering shadow on a solitary figure, Herter's skater and adrift. Beneath his kingfisher-blue covers Under his roof of interlocking butterfly-tile, How can he ward off the cold of an autumn's night? The tiny strings of the pipa instrument Early or Dingzi Liana, Heavy frost frolicked about. Enchanting notes lifted above After lingering momentarily round the columns.

Glancing quickly at this piece we sense that its words and lines do form a lyric, when in point of fact it is but a list of clichés. "Kingfisher-blue covers" and "butterfly-tile" may be appropriate for Bai Juyi's "Song of Eternal Sorrow," but there they refer to the emperor's covers and the tiles of the imperial palace. "Dingzi Liana" and "tiny strings" are stock phrases. This lyric was written in America, so the poet's "evening lamp" could not have "twinkled" "like little peas" and his abode had no "columns." What I mean by the necessity of eliminating hackneyed and formulaic language can only be achieved through the creation of new phrases to describe and portray what people see and hear with their own eyes and ears or personally live through. It is indeed a great talent in writing to be able to mesh with reality and arrive at the goal of describing your object or conveying meaning. Those who employ hackneyed and formulaic language are inept and unwilling to create new phrases to describe their objects.

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7. Wu Woyao (1866-1930) and Li Baoguo (1907-1956) were provincial and revealing beards in Shanghai whose satirical and sentimental writings captured the political and social collapse of late Qing dynasty China. The novel The Travels of Liu Can by Liu E (1857-1909) similarly exposes the old regime's decline (see Volume I).

8. A novel by Wu Jue (1951-1994), ranked 1st in its critique of traditional Chinese society, with a focus on the civil service examination system.

9. Jia Yi (220-280, n.d., n.r.), politician and poet of the Western Han, was banned for criticizing the government and was beheaded later. His lamenting the death of Qu Yuan, as early and influential sdid for similar voices. Wang Xizhi, as early and influential, sometimes was known as a patriotic poet, but criticized life under the Bloomberg Corporation of China.

1. In later versions of this essay, Shi Shi indicates that his poem was written by "his friend" Yi Xiaoan, who studied in the United States at the same time as Shi Shi and later became a member of the conservative Chinese Rare Group. Dingzi Liana was thus short for his precious quarter in Ming dynasty Nanjing. (Translator's note.)
VI. DO NOT USE ALLUSIONS

Among the eight propositions that I have proffered, that which has been most singled out for attack is the one most misunderstood. My friend Jiang Kanghuí dispatched a letter in which he writes:

The term "allusion" has both a broad and narrow sense. Ornateness and grudgemonence have since days of yore been raised by the ancients as something to be strictly prohibited. If idiomatic expressions and anecdotes are eliminated, this will not only be a loss in terms of style, but a disaster for the function of writing. The most wonderful mood that writing can evoke is through simple words with broad and varied connotations. I could not succeed in writing this present passage without allusions. Not only can poetry not be written without allusions, neither can letters nor even speeches. The letters I receive are replete with such allusions as "a second self," "broadness of mind," "fail to get to the root of the problem," "miss the forest for the trees," "calamity of nature," "make the deaf hear and the dumb speak," "join forces and forge ahead," "I'm pleased to humbly submit," "Parnassian world," "an honorable retreat of a hundred leagues," "fill the firmament," "sharp instruments of power," and "nonclad proof." If we try to extricate them all and replace them with vulgar language and vulgar words, how will we be able to speak? Whether one uses ornate or simple diction is ultimately a trivial matter. What I fear is that if we change these allusions into other words, though we might have five times as many words, the connotations cannot be at an end be as precise. What then?

I am proposing that allusions in the narrow definition of the word not be employed. What I mean by this is that when men of letters are inclined to create their own words and expressions to write about what is before their eyes or in their hearts and instead borrow, in part or wholly inappropriate, anecdotes and hackneyed language to do it for them, allowing them to muddle along. The allusions in the "bread" definition discussed above are, excluding the fifth category, all metaphors or similes. But they use one thing as a metaphor for another, not as a substitute for it. The narrow definition of allusion, on the other hand, sees allusion as substituting for language; because they are unable to directly express themselves, they can only let allusion speak for them. This is what I mean by the distinction between what is and what is not allusion. And yet we still must distinguish between the skilled use of allusion and its crude or clumsy use. Skilled use is occasionally acceptable. Crude use should be eliminated altogether.

The problem in using allusion is that it causes people to lose the original meaning behind the metaphor.Crudely used allusion are when the host and guest are reversed, so to speak, and the reader becomes lost in the complexity of historical fact and allusion and ends up forgetting the object the writer set out to compare. When the ancients wrote long poems, they only used a handful of allusions (Du Fu's "Journey North" and Bai Juyi's "Temple of Truth Realized") do not make use of a single allusion. Men today cannot write long poems without using allusion. I once read a poem with eighty-four couples which made over one hundred allusions, none of which was used skillfully.

2. Jiang Kanghuí founded the Chinese Socialist Party in 1911. When it was banned in 1912, Jiang went into exile in the United States, where he was at the time Hsü Hsi wrote this essay. He later returned to China to teach at Peiping University. [Translator's note]

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This reflects not only an indolence beyond salvation, but a self-deception and a deception of others. Men of letters devote much time and energy to all these various sorts of allusions. Once you are stung with their poison, there is no recovery. This is why I have advocated not employing allusions.

VII. DO NOT USE PARALLELISM

Parallelism is a characteristic of human language. For this reason we find occasional parallel lines even in such ancient texts as those by Confucius and Lao-tzu. For example:

- The path that can be spoken is not the constant way;
- The name that can be named is not the constant name.
- The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;
- The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.
- Let there forever be non-being so we may see their subtlety;
- Let there forever be being so we may see their outcome.

Or the following parallel lines from the Analects:

- In food (the gentleman) does not seek satiety,
  Nor in his dwelling does he seek ease and comfort.
- Poverty without scrupulosity
  Wealth without arrogance.
- You love his goods,
  I love his rites.

Yet these are all not far from natural language, without a trace of being forced or artificially constructed, especially since rules had yet to be established as to the length of lines, tunes, or diction. As for the decedent literature of subsequent generations, it was without substance and showy to such a degree that it led to the advent of parallel prose, regulated verse, and extended regulated verse. There are some excellent works written in parallel prose and in regulated verse, but these are rare in the final analysis. Why is this? Is it not because they constrain man's freedom to such an extent? (Not a single excellent work of long regulated verse can be mentioned.) Now, in our discussion of literary reform, we must "stand fast on what is of greater importance" and not waste our useful talents on minute detail and subtle technique. This is why I have proposed the elimination of parallel prose and regulated verse. Even if they cannot be eliminated, we should nonetheless look upon them as mere literary tricks, not something to be undertaken with any urgency.

Today people still look down upon vernacular fiction as the lesser tradition and are not aware that Shi Nai'an, Cao Xueqin, and Wu Yuyao are the truly canonical and that parallel prose and regulated verse are the lesser tradition. I know that when you hear this there will certainly be some among you who simply cannot bear it.

3. From the Duke Ai's play attributed to Lao-tzu, ch. 65 (see Volume A5).
4. These passages can be found in the Analects, 1.14, 15, and 3.17 (one volume A5).
5. From the work of Confucius's disciple, Mencius, 8A.53.
VIII. DO NOT AVOID VULGAR DICTIO

Since my literary canon is composed only of Shi Nai’an, Cao Xueqin, and Wu Yong, I have the theory of “do not avoid vulgar dictio.” (Refer to Section II above.) And yet for a long time the spoken and literary languages in our country have been turning their backs on each other. Ever since the importation of Buddhist scriptures, translators have been aware of the fact that the classical language is deficient in conveying meaning, so they have used in their translations an ordinary and simple language, whose style verged on the vernacular. Later, Buddhist lectures and catechisms mostly made use of the vernacular, which gave rise to the dialogue form. When the Song neo-Confucians used the vernacular in the scholarly lectures of their dialogues, this form became the standard in scholarship. (Ming scholars later followed this style.) By this time, the vernacular had already long since entered rhymed prose, as can be seen in the vernacular poetry and lyrics of the Tang and Song. By the end of the Yuan dynasty, northern China had already been under the occupation of a foreign race for more than three hundred years (Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties). In these three hundred years, China developed an incipient popular literature, out of which emerged the novels The Water Margin, The Journey to the West, and The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and innumerable dramas (Guan Hanqing et al. each produced more than ten different dramas; no period in the history of Chinese literature exceeded this in terms of wealth of productivity). Looking back from our contemporary perspective, the Yuan should without doubt be seen as the most vigorous period of Chinese literature, producing the greatest number of immortal works. At that time, Chinese literature came closest to a union of spoken and written languages, and the vernacular itself had nearly become a literary language. If this tendency had not been arrested, then a “living literature” might have appeared in China and the great endeavor of Dante and Luther might have developed in old Cathay. In the Middle Ages in Europe, each country had its own vulgar spoken language and Latin was the literary language. All written works used Latin, just as the classical language was used in China. Later, in Italy appeared Dante and other literary giants who first used their own vulgar language to write. Other countries followed suit, and national languages began to replace Latin. When Luther created Protestantism, he began by translating the Old Testament and the New Testament into German, which ushered in German literature. England, France, and other countries followed this pattern. Today the most widely circulated English Bible is a translation dating from 1611, only 300 years ago. Hence, all contemporary literature in the various European nations developed from the vulgar languages of that time. The rise of literary giants began with a “living literature” replacing a dead literature in Latin. When there is a living literature, there will be a national language based on the unity of the spoken and written languages.) Unexpectedly, this tendency was suddenly arrested during the Ming. The government had already been using the “eight-legged essay” to select its civil servants, and scholars like Li Mengyang [1472–1529] and the followers of the “former seven masters” raised “archaism” as the most lofty of literary goals. So the once-in-a-millennium opportunity to effect the unity of the spoken and written languages died a premature death, midway in the process. Yet, from today’s perspective of historical evolution, we can say with complete certainty that vernacular literature is really the canonical and will be a useful tool for developing future literature. (My “certainty” is only my opinion, one shared by few of my contemporaries.) For this reason, I propose the appropriate use of vulgar dictio in the writing of prose and poetry. It is preferable to use the living words of the twentieth century than the dead words of three millennia past (like “Most glorious National Assembly, the end of penumbrous times is nigh”); it is preferable to use the language of The Water Margin and The Journey to the West, which is known in every household, than the language of the Qin, Han, and Six Dynasties, which is limited and not universally understood.

CONCLUSION

The eight points related above are the result of my recent investigation and contemplation of this important question. Since I am studying in a far-off foreign land, I have little leisure for reading, so I must ask my learned elders back home for their scrutiny and circumspection, for there may well be places in need of severe rectification. These eight points are all fundamental to literature and merit investigation. So I have drafted this essay and hope that it elicits some response from those who care about this issue, both here and in China. I have called them “modest proposals” to underscore the sense of their incompleteness and to respectfully seek the reduction of my compatriots.

CROSSCURRENTS: THE ART OF THE MANIFESTO

- These manifestos beg the question of the relationship between ideological proclamation and literary performance. What declarations of these manifestos make themselves felt in the literary works of the twentieth century, in particular modernist writers from Conrad through Akhmatova to those included in the Perspectives section on “Poetry About Poetry”? In what way does the literature realize or enact the manifestos? In what way can we regard the manifestos themselves as a form of modernist literature?
- The art of the manifesto is not unique to the early twentieth century. Consider, for example, the earlier Perspectives sections “What Is Literature?” (Volumes A and B), “Lyric Sequences and Self-Definition” (Volume C), and “The National Poet” (Volume E). To what degree does the impulse to proclaim one’s own generation, or one’s own literary and artistic calling as a turning point in the history of literary culture manifest itself in other historical periods covered by this anthology?
- How does the international nature of the art of the manifesto correlate with the cosmopolitan writers in the Perspectives section “Cosmopolitan Exiles” and with postcolonial writings in the second half of the twentieth century?

--- END OF PERSPECTIVES: THE ART OF THE MANIFESTO ---

Joseph Conrad
1857–1924

One of the greatest English novelists, Joseph Conrad didn't seriously begin to learn English until the age of twenty-one. He was already embarked on decades of world travel that would shape his fiction once he was finally decided, in 1894, to become a full-time writer. By then, he had long lived in exile from his native Poland—a country no longer even present on the map at that time, carved up between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian empire. Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, he was the son of a noble-born Polish poet and patriot, Apolks, whose ardent