

## HUALING NIEH ENGLE

Born in Hubei and spending much of her childhood in the shadow of war, Nieh Hualing graduated from National Central University with a degree in English. Following the victory of the Communist Army she moved to Taiwan in 1949. A young editor at the liberal *Free China* magazine, she also taught creative writing at Taipei's two major universities, in courses partly inspired by the Iowa Writers' Workshop model, brought back to Taiwan by two early workshop alumni. During the following decade, she came out with a novel and several story collections; she also translated Henry James, Faulkner and other American prose writers into Chinese.

As the political climate hardened in Taiwan, Hualing Nieh was placed under surveillance and prevented from publishing. She and Paul Engle, then director of the Writers' Workshop, first met during his trip to Asia on a Rockefeller grant to study the contemporary literary scenes in that region. Engle invited Hualing Nieh to come to Iowa City and write. In 1964 she did; she enrolled in the Workshop, worked especially with Nelson Algren, and received her MFA in 1966. Together with Paul they then conceived the idea of the IWP as an international variant of the Writers' Workshop.

From 1967 until 1977 Hualing Nieh Engle and Paul Engle shared the directorship of the IWP; Hualing continued as its director after Paul's retirement, until 1988. Alongside her administrative and editorial work she kept up an active literary career, publishing three more novels and a dozen collections of essays and stories, written in Chinese and widely translated. The best known remains *Mulberry and Peach*, a complex novel of exile and psychological fragmentation, today in its 6th edition. As the active editor she was, she aimed, during her de facto exile from the sinophone world, to introduce little-known literary trends emerging even in the middle of the Cultural Revolution. She and Paul were the first to translate and edit a collection of Mao Zedong's poems; these were followed by a two-volume scholarly collection on *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*. In 1979, Iowa City was the very first place where an encounter between the Mainland and the Taiwanese writers and intellectuals could occur, after three decades of mutual isolation.

Despite her retirement, Hualing Nieh has, the last two decades, been instrumental in recruiting several new generations of top-flight Chinese-language writers for the IWP. Thanks to her efforts, "Iowa" is a privileged name in the world of modern Chinese letters.