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**The Crescent Moon School:
The Poets, Poetry, and Poetics
of a Modern Conservative Intellectual Group in
Republican China**



Xuecong Ma

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

The Crescent Moon School (新月派 *Xinyue pai*) is a Chinese intellectual group that was active from 1923 to 1934. Its members include Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931), Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋 (1903-1987), Wen Yiduo 闻一多 (1899-1946), Luo Longji 罗隆基 (1896-1965), and many other Anglo-American educated scholars in the Republican era. Although the group was engaged in various activities, poetry was their primary concern and their most notable practice.

This thesis intends to solve two problems: 1) what common values or core spirit guided the various cultural practices of the group? 2) what are the poetic features and underlying poetics of the group as a whole?

To answer the two questions, this thesis firstly examines the core spirit of the group by reviewing their activities and historical development. It argues that underlying the various activities and facts, there was a core spirit shared by the group. This core spirit, which I refer to as the “modern conservative spirit”, reflected a unique understanding of modernity that was different from that of the May Fourth discourse. They understood modernity not as a negation of tradition, but as a critical synthesis and mutual conformity between the old and the new, the local and the global. I show how the Crescent Moon intellectuals acquired this core spirit, and how it was displayed in their various activities.

Secondly, this thesis provides detailed textual analysis of several Crescent Moon poems and reconstructs their poetics. It argues that their poetics demonstrated three faces, i.e. a romantic temperament, a classic ideal, and a modern consciousness. The three faces coexisted throughout the poetic practice of the group, although a certain face might have dominated in a certain period. I demonstrate how the three faces were unified under the guidance of the modern conservative spirit, and I argue that the simultaneousness of the three faces embodied the modern conservative intellectuals’ pursuit of literary modernity.

By discussing the core spirit and poetics of the Crescent Moon School, this thesis concludes that the group was a missing link in Republican modern conservative trend, linking the late 1910s and early 1920s neotraditionalist thinkers with the mid-1930s Beijing School writers. The modern conservative intellectuals represented a dissenting voice in the Republican era, but they were also committed pursuers of modernity and cosmopolitanism.

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Introduction

The Crescent Moon School (新月派 *Xinyue pai*) refers to a Chinese intellectual group that appeared in the early Republican era. Their activities started with a group of young students who, upon completion of their studies in Britain or America, returned to China and began to meet regularly in Beijing in 1923. The group emerged in the form of a social club for upper-middle class people in Beijing, flourished in Shanghai in the early 1930s as one of the “three most influential schools of thought in contemporary China”,¹ and gradually faded away and dissolved into other intellectual groups in Beiping (Beijing)² after 1934. The group derived the name from their official organ, *Crescent Moon Monthly* (《新月》月刊 *Xinyue yuekan*), an influential magazine they established in Shanghai in 1928.

The Crescent Moon School was never a fixed group with fixed members carrying out the same activities. It was more a casual gathering of a group of friends who shared identical values and temperaments but did not have to see eye to eye with each other on every aspect. These friends include a list of cultural icons of the early 20th century, Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931), Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋 (1903-1987), Wen Yiduo 闻一多 (1899-1946), Luo Longji 罗隆基 (1896-1965), Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902-1988), Pan Guangdan 潘光旦 (1899-1967), to name but a few. Engaged in various professions and fields of interest, many of them became founders of their respective subjects and are worthy of a separate study. With these people joining the group one after another, as I will show in Chapter One, the Crescent Moon School expanded its scope of activities. As Constantine Tung notes, it might therefore be a mistake to view the group as merely a literary organisation, because their “interests and concerns” extended “from literature to freedom of speech,

¹ On 3rd May 1931, *Minbao* (民报 *People's News*) published an article listing the *Crescent Moon School* as one of the three most influential schools of thought in contemporary China, together with Communism and the “Three People's Principles”. cf: “罗隆基致胡适(1931.5.5.)” *Luo Longji zhi Hu Shi 1931.5.5.* (“Letter from Luo Longji to Hu Shi (5th May 1931)”). 《胡适来往书信选(中)》 *Hu Shi laiwang shuxin xuan zhong* (*Selected Collection of Hu Shi's Correspondence 2*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1979, p. 64.

² The Nanjing Nationalist Government changed the name of Beijing (北京) to Beiping (北平) in June 1928.

from national independence to introducing good taste, and from human rights to eugenics”.³

But among the various activities and interests, poetry is the primary concern of the group,⁴ and the poetic practice is the only activity that persisted throughout its entire existence. Lawrence Wang-chi Wong notes that of the three “most prominent poets” in Republican China, two of them, Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo, belonged to the Crescent Moon School.⁵ Moreover, it was their poetic reform, the Formalisation Movement of new poetry (新诗格律化运动 *xinshi gelühua yundong*), that initially made them well known to the outside world. In this movement launched in 1926, the Crescent Moon poets published articles to criticise several popular trends in new poetry development since its emergence in 1917,⁶ including what they considered the excessive liberation of poetic forms, the straightforward expression of emotion, and the anti-traditional stance of new poets.⁷ The group joined together to experiment with a kind of new regulated poetry, and, in opposition to the emotional indulgence or even sentimentalism of new poetry, they championed the ideas of reason, order, and restraint. This poetic reform attracted many followers and also stirred up controversy at the time, and earned the group a perennial place in modern literary history.

³ Constantine Tung, *The Search for Order and Form: the Crescent Moon Society and the Literary Movement of Modern China, 1928-1933*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation of Claremont Graduate School, 1970, p. 4.

⁴ Bonnie S. McDougall, *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories Into Modern China: 1919-1925*, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1971, p. 51.

⁵ Quoted from: Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, “Lions and Tigers in Groups: The Crescent Moon School in Modern Chinese Literary History”. *Literary Societies of Republican China*, edited by Kirk A. Denton and Michel Hockx, Lexington Books, 2008, p. 283.

⁶ For the emergence of new poetry, see Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917*, Yale University Press, 1991, p. 10.

⁷ See articles such as 1) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “现代中国文学之浪漫的趋势” *Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue zhi langman de qushi* (“The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”). Serialised on 《晨报副刊》 *Chenbao fukan* (*Morning Post Supplement*) from 25th March to 31st March, 1926. 2) Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “诗的格律” *Shide Gelü* (“The Form of Poetry”). 《闻一多全集 2·文艺评论·散文杂文》 *Wen Yiduo quanji er, wenyi pinglun, sanwen zawen* (*Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays*), edited by Tang Dahui 唐达晖, Hubei People’s Press, 1994, pp. 137-144. 3) Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “感伤主义与‘创造社’” *Ganshang zhuyi yu “Chuangzao she”* (“Sentimentalism and the ‘Creation Society’”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》11号, *Chenbao fukan shijuan Shiyi hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 11*), 1926.

Although there have been some studies on the history of the group in English and French, there is no Western scholarship focusing on their collective poetic practice.⁸ Considering the significant role the group played in modern poetry, I believe it necessary to conduct a specialised study into this respect. This thesis, therefore, examines the poets, poetry, and poetics of the Crescent Moon School. I firstly conduct a historical overview of the development of the group as a background for the further discussion of their poetic practice. By reviewing various activities of the group, I find that there was a consistent core spirit that was guiding these activities, especially the poetic practice. Then I conduct a textual analysis of their poems in an attempt to find out their underlying poetics. By analysing the Crescent Moon poems of diverse styles produced in various periods, I intend to show their poetic practice and contribution other than the Formalisation reform, and to discuss how their core spirit is expressed in their poetry and poetics.

1. Research Objectives and Scope

The thesis investigates the poets, poetry, and poetics of the Crescent Moon School. I intend not only to demonstrate their different poetic styles and performance, but also to explore what fundamental value or outlook has bound this group of poets together and guided their poetic practice. I would refer to this fundamental value as the “core spirit” of the group. In this section, I intend to delineate the research scope by introducing four aspects, i.e. poets, poetry, poetics, and core spirit.

1) Poets

The Crescent Moon School, as mentioned earlier, is not to be viewed as merely a poetic group, as their activities and interests are not confined to poetry, and not all its members write poetry. In this study, the “Crescent Moon poets” refer to a loose group of friends who regularly write poetry, exchange their poetic views, and contribute to the same literary publications. These publications, which I would call

⁸ There are some studies on the group’s individual poets and their works in Western scholarship, but no study on the poetry of the group as a whole. I will discuss this in the section of “Literature Review”.

the “Crescent Moon publications”, refer to the journals and newspapers run by the Crescent Moon School, including the *Poetry Supplement to Morning Post* (《晨报诗镌》 *Chenbao shijuan*), *Drama Supplement to Morning Post* (《晨报剧刊》 *Chenbao jukan*), *Crescent Moon Monthly*, *Poetry Magazine* (《诗刊》 *Shikan*), and *Xuwen Monthly* (《学文月刊》 *Xuwen yuekan*). I will discuss the establishment and major concerns of these publications in Chapter One.

Aside from this vague description, however, the “Crescent Moon poets” can be defined in a more precise way. Chen Mengjia 陈梦家 (1911-1966), one of the major Crescent Moon poets, edited a *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology* (《新月诗选》 *Xinyue Shixuan*) in 1931,⁹ collecting eighty poems written by eighteen poets. In the preface to the anthology, Chen elaborated the shared poetic values of the eighteen poets and claimed them to be “a group of people working toward the same direction”.¹⁰ Soon after the publication of the anthology, the term “Crescent Moon poetic school” first appeared,¹¹ and the eighteen poets could be seen as the officially recognised “Crescent Moon poets”.¹²

In this thesis, ten of the eighteen poets’ works have been discussed. The ten poets are: Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃 (1902-1967), Sun Dayu 孙大雨 (1905-1997), Zhu Xiang 朱湘 (1904-1933), Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-1968), Lin Huiyin 林徽因 (1904-1955), Chen Mengjia, Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910-2000), and Liu Mengwei 刘梦苇 (1900-1926). Their works are selected for two reasons.

⁹ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, ed., 《新月诗选》 *Xinyue shixuan* (*Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*), PLA Literature and Art Press, 2000.

¹⁰ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “序言” *Xuyan* (“Preface”). 《新月诗选》 *Xinyue shixuan* (*Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*), edited by Chen Mengjia, PLA Literature and Art Press, 2000, p. 3.

¹¹ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 297.

¹² When re-editing the Crescent Moon poetry anthology in 1989, Lan Dizhi selected more poems from these eighteen poets and considered them the “Crescent Moon poets”. Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “前言” *Qianyan* (“Preface”). 《新月派诗选》 *Xinyue pai shixuan* (*Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*), edited by Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, People’s Literature Publishing House, 2002, pp. 56-57.

1) The ten poets are relatively more influential and representative of the group.¹³ By “influential” and “representative”, I mean: A) they contributed more poems to the Crescent Moon publications, or B) they proposed representative poetic theories that influenced other poets, or C) they published individual poetry collections and therefore are better known to the public readers.

2) They started writing poetry at different time points so their works may represent the diverse features and aspects of the Crescent Moon poetry produced in different periods. Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, and Zhu Xiang are among the earliest who wrote new poetry. Rao Mengkan, Sun Dayu,¹⁴ and Liu Mengwei represent the poets active in the Formalisation Movement. Lin Huiyin, Shao Xunmei, Chen Mengjia, and Bian Zhilin started their creative career relatively late and so they represent the major force of the latter Crescent Moon School. By selecting poets and works of different times, I intend to show the diversity of the Crescent Moon poetry and the development of their poetics.

2) Poetry

This thesis analyses 49 Crescent Moon poems or poetry excerpts. Since the earliest Crescent Moon poets started experimenting with vernacular verse in early 1920s, most poems discussed in this study were created between the years from 1920 to 1934, before the final closure of the Crescent Moon School. But there are four poems (or excerpts) that were composed after 1934 and no later than January 1937.

Although the Crescent Moon activities have already ended at the time, these poems were still collected in *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School* by Lan Dizhi. In my study, I choose these post-1934 poems when I intend to show some qualities or

¹³ Many critics and scholars would discuss these poets as representatives of the Crescent Moon School. Shi Ling, a contemporary critic, introduced seven of the ten poets as representative Crescent Moon poets. Lan Dizhi also mainly discusses these poets in the long preface to the newly edited Crescent Moon poetry anthology. 1) Ibid. pp. 24-45. 2) Shi Ling 石灵, “新月诗派” *Xinyue shipai* (“The Crescent Moon Poetic School”). 《中国现代诗论》上编 *Zhongguo xiandai shilun· Shangbian* (*Chinese Modern Poetic Criticisms, Volume 1*), edited by Yang Kuanghan and Liu Fuchun, Guangzhou: Flower City Publishing House, 1985 [1936], pp. 297-300.

¹⁴ Sun Dayu did not join Wen Yiduo and the others to run the *Poetry Supplement* during the Formalisation Movement. But he started conceiving his formalist theory during that period. Moreover, Sun’s poetic interest seems to be wide and various, so he also represents the latter-stage Crescent Moon poets.

features that have remained throughout the lives of the poets. So the time of composition supports my argument.

The development of the Crescent Moon poetic school can be divided into three stages from a chronological perspective.¹⁵

Stage One: from 1920 to 1926. The poets started experimenting with vernacular poetry and various verse forms, but they have not yet met each other and form a coherent group. This is the period for the preparation of the Crescent Moon poetic school, and the poets were learning, experimenting, and slowly developing their poetic ideas.

Stage Two: from 1926 to 1930. This period witnessed the meeting of the Crescent Moon poets and their Formalisation reform based in *Poetry Supplement* and *Crescent Moon Monthly*. The poets at the time were mainly concerned with the form and metre of new poetry. They criticised the vernacular poetry to be overly emancipated and prosified after Hu Shi's advocacy of the "liberation of poetic form",¹⁶ and proposed their poetic theories aiming to restore order and form to new poetry. Because of their effort to bring back the poetic form and metre, they were also termed by the contemporary critic as the "Regulated Poetic School" (格律诗派 *Gelü shipai*).¹⁷

Stage Three: from 1931 to 1934. A new poetry magazine was established, and many young poets, most of whom were students or followers of the veteran Crescent Moon poets, started their poetic career and contributed to the Crescent Moon publications.

¹⁵ Here I am indebted to the Chinese scholar Huang Changyong, who argues that the Crescent Moon poetic school can be divided into former and latter stages, with 1931 as the watershed. But Huang only discusses the poetic group from 1926 to 1933. I believe, however, it is also necessary to include the pre-1926 poetic experimentations because these early years also helped shape the poets' ideas and concepts of poetry. Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, "新月诗派论" *Xinyue shipai lun* ("Study on the Crescent Moon Poetic School"). 《文学评论》 *Wenxue pinglun* (*Literary Review*), 1997 (3).

¹⁶ See the introduction of Hu Shi's poetic views in Julia C. Lin, *Modern Chinese Poetry: An Introduction*, University of Washington Press, 1973, p. 36.

¹⁷ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, "《诗集》导言" *Shiji daoyan* ("Introduction to the Poetry Volume"). 《1917-1927 中国新文学大系导言集》 *1917-1927 Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi daoyan ji* (*Collection of Introductions to <A General Overview of the Chinese New Literature> 1917-1927*), edited by Liu Yunfeng 刘运峰, Tianjin People's Publishing House, 2009 [1935]. p. 151.

They were aware of the importance of form, but their experimentations were no longer confined to the strict rules set up by the elder poets. The aesthetic values and tastes of the Crescent Moon School were slowly changing.

3) Poetics

“Poetics” refers to the “general principles of poetry or of literature in general”.¹⁸ It is concerned with the distinctive features of poetry, with “its languages, forms, genres, and modes of composition”.¹⁹

In this study, I analyse the Crescent Moon poems and their distinctive features in an attempt to reconstruct their underlying poetics. I will show that the formal theories put forward in the 1926 Formalisation Movement is only one aspect of the Crescent Moon poetics, and there are far more diverse faces of their poetry. So in this study I will discuss why and how the Crescent Moon poetics are different from the other contemporary poets and poetic groups. I am also interested in what elements in their poetics have changed over time and what remained unchanged.

Since the beginning of the New Literature Movement in 1917, the Chinese new poets adopted a distinctly anti-traditional position. They had “rejected not only the literary language, *wen-yen*, as their poetic medium, but all the conventional verse forms and prosodic rules as well”.²⁰ Many pioneering new poets, educated abroad, naturally resorted to foreign literary traditions for fresh inspirations.²¹ A wide variety of Western literary movements and theories, such as romanticism, realism, naturalism, and avant-gardism, were introduced to China,²² and helped shape the norms of new poetry.

The Crescent Moon poets were particularly familiar with Euro-American literary traditions, because most of them were educated in the West or in the English

¹⁸ Chris Baldick, “Poetics”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (Fourth Edition)*, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 282.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

²¹ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 11.

²² Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*

department of Chinese universities. One easily discerns their interest in Western poetry and poets in their poetic diction, formalist prosody, themes, and moods. Some Chinese scholars investigate the Crescent Moon School's debt to Western literary traditions, suggesting that the Crescent Moon poetics experienced two stages of development. The former stage before 1931 demonstrates an aesthetic influence of Western classicism, and the latter stage an influence of Western modernism.²³

Although these studies give very indistinct definition of the terms and features of “classicism” and “modernism”, and almost no textual analysis is provided to support their arguments, they have greatly inspired my thought on the Crescent Moon poetics. After a comprehensive reading of almost every poem of the group, I find that they can roughly be divided into three categories based on the difference in style, technique, and content, i.e. the romantic, classic, and modernist categories. The categories both show the diversity of their works and confirm their interest in Western literature and poetic values. But unlike the Chinese studies, I do not believe that there was a clear-cut divide between the classic and modernist “stages”. As I will show in this study, the three styles have coexisted throughout the poetic practice of the group, although a certain style might have dominated in a certain period. So I would not refer to them as three “stages” but three “faces” of the Crescent Moon poetics, i.e., the romantic temperament, the classic ideal, and the modern consciousness.

A. The “romantic temperament” refers to the temperament of the poets, and this temperament, as I will show in Chapter Three, had persisted throughout the lives

²³ As far as I can find, Huang Changyong first puts forward this idea. It is then accepted by many later researchers in China and becomes a common assumption about the Crescent Moon poetic school. 1) Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.* 2) Cheng Guojun 程国君, “浪漫诗人的古典寻求——新月派审美观念的主要形态及其古典寻求的诗学意义” *Langman shiren de gudian xunqiu: Xinyue pai shenmei guannian de zhuyao xingtai jiqi gudian xunqiu de shixue yiyi* (“The Classical Pursuit of the Romantic Poets: The Main Form of the Aesthetic Ideas of the Crescent Moon School and the Poetic Significance of its Classical Pursuit”). 《天津师范大学学报》(社会科学版) *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao (Journal of Tianjin Normal University, Social Science)*. 2003 (1). 3) Liu Qun 刘群, 《饭局·书局·时局——新月社研究》 *Fanju, shuju, shiju: Xinyue she yanjiu (Dinner, Book and the Time: Study on the Crescent Moon Society)*. Wuhan Publishing House, 2011. 4) Ye Hong 叶红, “生成与走势——新月诗派研究” *Shengcheng yu zoushi: Xinyue shipai yanjiu* (“Formation and Trend: The Research on the Crescent Moon Poetry”). Unpublished doctoral dissertation of Northeast Normal University, 2010.

of the poets. It was manifested in their poems created in later times when the classic and modernist values are supposed to be the dominant faces.

- B. The “classic ideal” refers to the Western Classicist aesthetic values that the Crescent Moon poets received and observed during their Formalisation Movement. I suggest that the formalist theories reflected not only their poetic views but also their cultural position.
- C. The “modern consciousness” refers to a range of modernist sensibilities, insight, and outlook developed mainly in the third stage after the 1930s. But I will demonstrate that this consciousness also existed in the earlier stages.

Although there seems to be a chronological sequence from the romantic through the classic to the modernist styles, I would suggest that the three faces always coexisted in each stage of their poetic practice. When discussing each poetic face, therefore, I have intentionally selected poems produced in different stages to demonstrate this non-temporalised simultaneousness and diversity.

4) Core spirit

The Crescent Moon poets, despite their Western educational experience and clear indebtedness to Western literary traditions, were not radical iconoclasts like most of their contemporaries in the May Fourth era.²⁴ As I will discuss in the thesis, one important feature of the Crescent Moon poetry is their organic synthesis of the Chinese and Western poetic traditions, or in McDougall’s words, they “tried to draw

²⁴ Critics have different opinions with regard to the term and length of “May Fourth era”. It was named after the political demonstration taken place on May Fourth 1919, but its ramifications are usually considered to have lasted until 1925. In the field of literature, critics tend to assign an even longer lease of life. Some believes that the era began in 1915 with the initiation of the New Culture Movement and ended around 1926. Some suggests that the era refers to the period from 1917-1927. In my study, the “May Fourth era” is a general term that covers the period from 1917-1927. See Michel Hockx’s discussion on the term “May Fourth”, “May Fourth period”, and “May Fourth literature”. 1) Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937*, Brill, 2011, p. 3. 2) Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*. University of California Press, 2001, p. 49. 3) Nuan Gao, *Constructing China’s Public Sphere: The “Three Big Newspaper Supplements” of the May Fourth Era, 1915-1926*. Doctoral dissertation of University of California, Irvine, 2012, p. 1.

on the latest artistic techniques of the West as well as on classical Chinese poetry”.²⁵ Therefore, unlike many May Fourth iconoclasts who tried to sever themselves from the Chinese tradition and reform new poetry solely based on Western models, the Crescent Moon poets championed a critical synthesis between different cultures without blindly throwing away any poetic traditions. They made a conscious effort to integrate and “localise” Western poetic techniques, views, and concepts, instead of “Westernising” Chinese poetry.

This eclectic and syncretic poetic outlook reflects what I would refer to as the “modern conservative spirit”. After a survey of the historical development and activities of the Crescent Moon School, I find that the variety of activities of the group — from poetry, to drama, to literary criticism, to political ideas, to academic pursuits — have all reflected such a spirit. So I suggest that this is the core spirit that has bound the group of people together and guided their various activities. But this short thesis will only discuss what this core spirit is and how it is expressed in the poetic practice of the group. The other aspects, such as drama or politics, will only be briefly mentioned. I also suggest that this core spirit demonstrates the Crescent Moon members’ understanding of modernity, an understanding that was distinctly different from the dominant voice in the May Fourth era. Seen in this light, the poetic practice of the Crescent Moon School represents the Republican modern conservatives’ pursuit for literary modernity.

2. Literature Review

This study examines the poetry of the Crescent Moon School. But to better understand the poems and the evolvement of poetics, I will also take into consideration the development of the group, the experience of the poets, and the historical context where the poetry was produced. So basically two types of literature

²⁵ Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

have been consulted, i.e. the historical studies and the poetic studies of the Crescent Moon School.

1) Historical Studies

The Crescent Moon School used to be a controversial group in the modern literary history. With most of its members born into upper-middle class families and educated in Western universities, this group was generally considered as being influenced by the bourgeois ideas,²⁶ and therefore was targeted by the Communist-leftist critics as a negative force in its own time.²⁷ The label “Crescent Moon School”, according to Wong, first appeared in a speech made by Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) at the inaugural ceremony of the Chinese League of Left Wing Writers (中国左翼作家联盟 *Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*) in early 1930. In the speech, Lu Xun “warned League members of the threat from the bourgeois writers, ‘the various writers of the Crescent Moon School’”.²⁸ So for a long period of time, the group left an anti-Communist and anti-revolutionary impression in China,²⁹ and drew historical attention mainly because of their “opposition to the leftist-Communist literary stand”.³⁰

Since the very beginning of its establishment, the Crescent Moon members were engaged in the polemic battles with Left-wing writers. Many discussions in the Republican era were therefore coloured by the political or class viewpoint. In a study on “recent Chinese literary movements” published in 1939, the Crescent Moon writers were criticised as revived “defenders of the old culture” under the cloak of “Europeanisation”.³¹

²⁶ Jaroslav Průšek, “Introduction to *Studies in Modern Chinese Literature*”. *The Lyrical and the Epic, Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*, edited by Leo Ou-fan Lee, Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 54.

²⁷ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 299.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 290.

²⁹ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-2.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 239-240.

³¹ Li Helin 李何林, “近二十年中国文艺思潮论: 第五章 ‘新月派’及其他反对者的论调(节选)” *Jin ershi nian Zhongguo wenyi sichao lun: di 5 zhang Xinyue pai ji qita fandui zhe de lundiao jiexuan* (“On the Chinese Literary and Artistic Trends in the Last Two Decades: Chapter 5 The Views of the ‘Crescent Moon School’ and Other Opponents (Excerpt)”). 《新月派评论资料选》 *Xinyue pai pinglun ziliao xuan* (*Selected Collection of Critical*

After the establishment of the PRC Communist government in 1949, Chinese mainland research continued this class viewpoint, interpreting the Crescent Moon members as representatives of bourgeois literati and their activities as part of a reactionary “counter-current”.³² From the 1980s onward, mainland literary studies strove to return to a more objective track, and evaluations on the previously “demonised” Crescent Moon School began to get rid of the political influence and concentrate more on its literary and artistic aspects.³³ The recent two decades witness a research boom on the group and its members in China. Many of them are only of a biographical nature,³⁴ and some are valuable reference sources that will be discussed later.

On the other hand, Western scholarship was drawn to this topic as early as 1970s, when the Crescent Moon School was still repressed in mainland China. Aside from studying the group as a whole, these scholars, mostly coming from Taiwan or Hong Kong, also conducted specialised research on the two most important members, i.e. Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo. In recent two decades, many researchers became interested in the interaction between the Crescent Moon School and the Western world, and they studied the group from a cross-cultural perspective. So this section will be divided into three parts: studies on the Crescent Moon School, studies on the individual members, and studies from the comparative and cross-cultural perspective.

Articles of the Crescent Moon School), edited by Fang Rennian 方仁念, East China Normal University Press, 1993 (1939), pp. 9-10.

³² The textbook for institutions of higher learning edited by Liu Shousong in 1956 represents this view. Liu Shousong 刘绶松, 《中国新文学史初稿》 *Zhongguo xinwenxueshi chugao* (*The First Draft of Chinese New Literary History*). People's Literature Publishing House, 1979.

³³ For example, Zhou Liangpei edited a Chinese new poetry collection that includes works of most Crescent Moon poets in 1988. Studies on the liberal ideas of Hu Shi started to appear in the late 1980s. 1) Zhou Liangpei 周良沛 ed., 《中国新诗库》 *Zhongguo xinshi ku* (*The Collection of Chinese New Poetry*). Changjiang Literary and Art Press, 1988. 2) Li Ao 李敖, “播种者胡适” *Bozhong zhe Hu Shi* (“Hu Shi the Sower”). 《当代青年研究》 *Dangdai qingnian yanjiu* (*Contemporary Youth Research*). 1989 (3) [1961].

³⁴ An example of this biographical type of work is Wang Yixin 王一心, Li Lingling 李伶俐, 《徐志摩·新月社》 *Xu Zhimo Xinyue she* (*Xu Zhimo and The Crescent Moon Society*). Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 2009.

1.1) Studies on the Crescent Moon School

Studies on the Crescent Moon School as a whole could be traced back to the doctoral dissertation of Constantine Tung in 1970 and his journal article in 1972.³⁵ I discuss them together because they are very similar in content. Tung examines the representative members and major activities of the group during the period from 1928 to 1933,³⁶ the years that Tung believes the group began to attract wider recognition as a literary force.³⁷ Both theses are centred on individual members. By discussing the different personalities and thoughts of the key members such as Chen Xiying 陈西滢 (1896-1970), Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Liang Shiqiu, Hu Shi, and Luo Longji, Tung studies the activities and attitudes of the group in literature, politics, literary criticism, and general outlook. The theses also analyse the manifesto of the group, “Crescent Moon Attitude” (“《新月》的态度” *Xinyue de taidu*), and discuss the establishment of *Crescent Moon Monthly*. Tung argues that the group is not only to be viewed as an opposite side of the Leftist literary cause, but also represent the precursors of a “democratic and liberal tradition of modern China”.³⁸ He believes that the group’s lasting contributions lie in its stand for literary quality, struggle for literary independence, and stress on restraint, balance, and reason.³⁹ Tung studies the group in a relatively objective manner, free from the ideological prejudice. He also provides his private correspondence with some Crescent Moon members who were still alive at the time, thus becoming a valuable source for my study. But the theses are not chronologically ordered but individual-centred, so there is no discussion of how the group developed over time.

Lawrence Wang-chi Wong published an article in 2008,⁴⁰ studying the group from a historical viewpoint. He not only provides some newly unearthed historical materials, but also discusses the Crescent Moon activities before 1928. Wong’s article fills the

³⁵ 1) Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.* 2) Constantine Tung, “The Crescent Moon Society: the Minority’s Challenge in the Literary Movement of Modern China”, *Council on International Studies*, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1972.

³⁶ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

³⁷ Constantine Tung, 1972, *op.cit.* p. 1.

³⁸ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*

gap left by Tung by tracing the origin of the group to 1923 when Xu Zhimo held dinner gatherings in Beijing, thus establishing a developmental timeline of the group from 1923 to 1933. Following Tung's central idea that the group was searching for "order and form", Wong further attributes the group's literary activities to this idea.⁴¹

Jacqueline Estran conducts research on the group's official organ, *Crescent Moon Monthly*, in French in 2010.⁴² It is clearly focused on the journal and is divided into two parts. The first is factual and historical, briefly introducing the group members and activities similar to the above two works. But it is more descriptive than analytical. The second part claims to be focused on the "literary contribution of the magazine",⁴³ and discusses the drama, fiction, and poetry published on it. But like the first part, it is very descriptive. With many tables and lists, it demonstrates various types of texts over time. Most of these texts are discussed under each topic, but only with short commentary or summary. The author concludes in the end that the journal provided a space for freedom of thought and expression in a time when it was under threat due to political and ideological restrictions.⁴⁴ The book benefits researchers with its information of various types of texts from the journal. But it could have been a more thorough study had the author conducted more in-depth textual analysis rather than only describing a few themes or motifs.

In China, the fullest study on the group is conducted by Liu Qun 刘群 in 2011.⁴⁵ Contextualising the group in the entire liberal discourse of the post-May Fourth era, this monograph shows a remarkable effort of studying literary groups from historical and sociological perspectives. It examines the group history in a more detailed way (including looking into the letter papers and advertising posters of the group), and it focuses on the group's internal development. But its main conclusion, which is to

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 294-299.

⁴² Jacqueline Estran, *Poésie et liberté dans la Chine républicaine: la revue Xinyue (1928-1933)*, Harrassowitz Verlag • Wiesbaden, 2010.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 213.

⁴⁵ Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*

define the Crescent Moon School as a liberal intellectual group searching for order and form, is not much different from that of Tung and Wong.

1.2) Studies on the Individual Members

Gaylord Kai-loh Leung conducted a comprehensive study on Xu Zhimo in 1972.⁴⁶ Following a chronological order, it examines Xu's life experience with emphasis on the literary side. Leung discloses many of Xu's previously unpublished letters, prose, and diaries, and quotes a number of Western scholars' reminiscence of and correspondence with Xu, correcting some inaccurate impressions Xu had left to the public. Since Xu was the founder of the Crescent Moon School, there were some overlaps between his life and the history of the group. So this study also discusses some activities of the group, although Leung mainly focuses on the role Xu played in these activities. Leung also intends to examine the poetic works of Xu. Dividing Xu's poems into three types, namely, love poems, social poems, and reflective poems, he analyses the three aspects of poetry, i.e. forms, language, and imagery. But due to the limited scope of the thesis, Leung only deals with some salient features of Xu's poetry, without detailed textual analysis.⁴⁷ So in my view it is more of a study on the individual rather than poetry.

In Leo Ou-fan Lee's study on the Chinese romantic writers in the 1920s, Lee examines Xu Zhimo's life and literature along with six other writers.⁴⁸ Lee argues that the 1920s was a romantic decade in the Chinese literary scene, and Xu was one of the Chinese writers whose literary mind was greatly inspired by Western romantic literary tradition. Lee discusses the romantic temperament of Xu by analysing the dynamism of life and love in Xu's literary works, his hero worship, and his desire for a total freedom and transcendence at the expense of life. I am inspired by this work when writing the chapter on romantic temperament, because Lee analyses how the

⁴⁶ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo: A Literary Biography*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation of University of London, 1972.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 127.

⁴⁸ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*, Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 124-174.

different types and aspects of romanticism was accepted by the Chinese writers, and how the Chinese classical tradition had predisposed the modern intellectuals toward the Western romantic values.

Kai-yu Hsu (Kai-yü Hsü) published an article in 1958 studying the life and poetry of Wen Yiduo,⁴⁹ and turned it to a book form in 1980.⁵⁰ Similar to Leung's approach to study Xu Zhimo, Hsu also adopts the approach of "literary biography", discussing Wen's life path with emphasis on his literature and scholarship. Hsu demonstrates that underlying the many changes of Wen's thought over time, he remained to the very end a romanticist.⁵¹ Hsu also believes that Wen's life path represents many Chinese intellectuals of his days, that they fused Western "Romantic ideal of individual fulfillment with the Confucian ideal of the world order".⁵² Hsu's studies supports my argument that the romantic temperament of many Crescent Moon poets did not change over time, but has remained throughout their lives.

As a prominent modern literary critic in China, Liang Shiqiu and his thought also drew academic attention. Marián Gálík discusses Liang's New Humanist thought in 1980,⁵³ analysing how Liang understands and interprets a number of concepts such as nature and human nature, imagination and reason, humanitarianism and proletarian literature, revolution and class. Gálík also points out the limitations of Liang's thought, which makes his study particularly insightful. I agree with Gálík that Liang failed to adequately define his basic idea of "human nature",⁵⁴ and that Liang's inimical attitude toward proletarian and revolutionary literature made him unable to evaluate modern Chinese literature in an objective way.⁵⁵

Another study on Liang Shiqiu is conducted by a Hongkong scholar in 2004. Bai Liping studies Liang's New Humanist thought from the perspective of translation

⁴⁹ Kai-yü Hsü, "The Life and Poetry of Wen I-to". *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 21, Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1958, pp. 134-179.

⁵⁰ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, Twayne Publishers, 1980.

⁵¹ Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

⁵² Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

⁵³ Marián Gálík, "Liang Shih-ch'iu and Chinese New Humanism", *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism (1917-1930)*, Curzon Press, 1980, pp. 285-307.

⁵⁴ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.* p. 292.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 303.

practice.⁵⁶ Bai argues that Liang's reading and translation of Western classic literature, such as works of Shakespeare, shows the influence of the pro-Classicist New Humanism. Both studies affirm that the New Humanist position of Liang Shiqiu had influenced the general attitude of the Crescent Moon School. Gálík suggests that the closure of *Crescent Moon Monthly* in 1933 marked the end of "Chinese New Humanism".⁵⁷ In my thesis, I establish a relationship between the Formalisation Movement of the Crescent Moon School with the classic-oriented thought of Liang Shiqiu and New Humanism. The two studies inspire my thought in this respect.

1.3) Studies from the Comparative and Cross-cultural Perspective

The above studies on the individual members of the group have all to a certain extent contained a cross-cultural angle, because these members more or less had some contacts with Western writers and scholars. But in the recent two decades, some studies seek to place the entire group in the global context, discussing their cultural and political practice from a cross-cultural perspective.

Zhou Xiaoming 周晓明 studies the Crescent Moon School in 2001 by looking into their overseas educational experience and how this experience affected their later practice.⁵⁸ Zhou's work is divided into two parts. The first part studies the overseas-study phenomenon in China from the very ancient times, tracing the history of such a practice. The second part examines the history and cultural activities of the Crescent Moon School. Zhou argues that the cultural groups consisting of returned students from abroad will naturally bear the deep imprint of the countries they were sent to, and will differentiate themselves from the other groups in their later cultural and political practice. Placing the Crescent Moon School in the context of Chinese overseas-study phenomenon, this research offers a new angle of understanding the

⁵⁶ Bai Liping, "Babbitt's Impact in China: The Case of Liang Shiqiu". *Humanitas*. Volume 17, Nos. 1 and 2, 2004, pp. 46-68.

⁵⁷ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

⁵⁸ Zhou Xiaoming 周晓明, 《多源与多元: 从中国留学族到新月派》 *Duoyuan yu duoyuan: cong Zhongguo liuxue zu dao Xinyue pai (Multi-origin and Pluralism: From Chinese Overseas-student Groups to Crescent Moon School)*, Central China Normal University Press, 2001.

cultural practice of the group. But although it is set in the global context, the study only examines the one-way influence of Western cultures on the formation of the Crescent Moon School.

The study of Patricia Laurence fills Zhou's gap.⁵⁹ Laurence investigates the two-way dialogue between the Crescent Moon School and the Bloomsbury Group. The Bloomsbury, a prominent intellectual group established in Britain in the early 20th century, shares much in common with the Crescent Moon School, from its loose organising form, high-brow taste, apolitical stance, to the diversified identities and interests of its members. So it is not surprising for researchers to associate one with the other. What differentiates the work of Laurence is her reciprocal viewpoint. She not only studies how the Bloomsbury members influenced the Crescent Moon writers, but also the other way around. While the Chinese writers were attracted by the Western ideas of individualism, freedom, and creativity, the British artists also found the Chinese sensibility and aesthetic tastes charming. Laurence argues that there was "aesthetic reciprocity between England and China" with the importation of "Chinese ideas, aesthetics, and goods".⁶⁰ The study aims to create an "international map of modernism", eschewing "Anglo- and Eurocentric contributions alone".⁶¹ Aside from Laurence, there are some other scholars studying the interrelationship between the Crescent Moon and the Bloomsbury, including Wenying Zhang⁶² and Yu Xiaoxia.⁶³ These doctoral dissertations mainly focus on the human relationship between the two groups, and discuss the literary affinities such as their common interest in modernist techniques.

⁵⁹ Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 389.

⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 29-30.

⁶² Wenying Zhang, *Bloomsbury Group and Crescent School: Contact and Comparison*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation of University of Minnesota. 2001.

⁶³ Yu Xiaoxia 俞晓霞, "精神契合与文化对话——布鲁姆斯伯里集团在中国" *Jingshen qihe yu wenhua duihua: Bulumu siboli jituan zai Zhongguo (Spiritual Identity and Cultural Dialogue: The Bloomsbury Group in China)*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation of Fudan University. 2012.

The work of Laurence discusses the development of “cross-cultural modernism” from a relativistic, non-static, and reciprocal perspective,⁶⁴ tracing how modernism travels from one culture to another, and how its definition and implication is transformed, expanded, and accepted. This non-Eurocentric and transcultural discussion of modernism and modernity is reminiscent of the work of Shu-mei Shih,⁶⁵ the work that greatly inspired my thought on the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School. In this study on Chinese literary modernism from 1917 to 1937, one of the three parts is devoted to the discussion of the writing of the Beijing School (京派 *Jingpai*), the cultural group that is closely related to the Crescent Moon School.⁶⁶ Shih contextualises the rise of the Beijing School writing in the larger intellectual trend called “neotraditionalism”, whose representatives include Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929), the New Confucianists (新儒家 *Xin rujia*), and the *Critical Review* (学衡 *Xueheng*) group.⁶⁷ Shih seeks to explore the diverse ways taken by the Republican intellectuals toward modernity, and neotraditionalists and the Beijing School writers, according to Shih, pursued modernity by returning to tradition and the local culture.⁶⁸ Their cultural position appeared to be conservative and anti-modern, but as Shih eloquently shows, they were in essence seeking to “*extend the scope of what constituted modernity*”,⁶⁹ and therefore represented a genuine commitment to modernity and cosmopolitanism.

Considering the close relationship between the Crescent Moon group and the Beijing School, as well as the Crescent Moon group and the *Critical Review* group,⁷⁰ I began to reflect whether Shih’s argument of the Beijing School writing is applicable to the Crescent Moon School. I am indebted to Shih’s work for forming my own argument

⁶⁴ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

⁶⁵ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*

⁶⁶ Charles A. Laughlin argues that the Beijing school evolved largely from the remnants of the Crescent Moon group. I will discuss the relationship between the two groups in Chapters One and Two. Charles A. Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity*, University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008, p. 141.

⁶⁷ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 151-189.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 153.

⁷⁰ The *Critical Review* members, like Liang Shiqiu, are also loyal disciples of Irving Babbitt and his New Humanist thought. So they shared some common beliefs. See Marián Gálik, *op.cit.*, pp. 285-286.

of the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School, and I am able to explain many seemingly contradictory features in the Crescent Moon poetry with this core spirit.

2) Poetic Studies

Studies on the Crescent Moon poetry and poetics can also be divided into three sections, i.e. on the poetry of the group, on the poetry of the individual poets, and comparative or influence studies between Crescent Moon and Western poetry.

2.1) Studies on the Poetry of the Group

Discussions of the Crescent Moon poetry can also be traced back to the Republican era. But many of these discussions, mixing the criticism of the poets with that of their poems, were usually coloured by personal prejudice. Two articles, both appearing in the 1930s, discussed the poetry and contribution of the group in a less subjective manner. The first one, written by Shi Ling 石灵 in 1936,⁷¹ focuses on the poetic features and achievements made by the Crescent Moon School. Shi analysed the poetic features of the group in various aspects, such as the use of rhyme, diction, form, and syntactic organisation, and also discussed the formal theories of the group. Another article, written by Zhu Ziqing 朱自清,⁷² is a report summarising the general achievement of New Poetry from 1917-1927. Zhu devoted almost half of the article to the Crescent Moon poetic practice, testifying to the important role the group had played during the first decade of New Poetry development. In this article, Zhu labeled the group not by the poets' affiliation but by their poetic features, referring to them as "Regulated Poetic School"⁷³ rather than the "Crescent Moon Poetic School".

There were not many discussions in Mainland China on the Crescent Moon poetry after 1949 because of political reasons. Until the 1980s, the Mainland academic studies were still coloured by ideological prejudice, describing the Crescent Moon

⁷¹ Shi Ling 石灵, *op.cit.*, pp. 283-301.

⁷² Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.*, pp. 146-178.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 151.

poets and poetry with such epithets as bourgeois, individualists, naïve, fickleness, counter-revolutionary, etc.⁷⁴

In 1989, Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之 edited a new collection of Crescent Moon poetry based on the old *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology* edited by Chen Mengjia in 1931.⁷⁵ Lan collected the same eighteen poets as selected by Chen, but more works were selected for each poet. In the long preface to the anthology, Lan examines the Crescent Moon poetic school in four aspects, i.e. the origin and development of the group, the artistic features of their poetry, the representative poets, and the role and contribution it played in the literary history.⁷⁶ Lan's preface has mostly got rid of the ideological influence, focusing on the language, techniques, artistry, and thought of the poetry itself. It provides a comprehensive and fairly objective review of the group for the first time after 1949.

Another study that has inspired my thought is Huang Changyong's 黄昌勇 research on the Crescent Moon poetic school in 1997.⁷⁷ Huang not only examines the poetic features and techniques of the group, but also links these features with Western literary movements. He divides the poetic school into two stages, arguing that the poetry in the earlier stage was influenced by Western Classicism and the latter stage influenced by Modernism. But he did not clearly define these literary traditions and terms, and did not support his argument with textual analysis. My research will identify, with close reading of poetic texts, which elements in these traditions have affected the creation of the Crescent Moon poets and how the different traditions were blended together.

There are also some studies of the Crescent Moon poetry in China, mostly doctoral and master's theses. The doctoral thesis of Ye Hong⁷⁸ discusses how the poetic

⁷⁴ Zhou Liangpei edited a collection of Chinese new poetry in the 1980s, collecting many Crescent Moon poets and works and describing them with these epithets. Zhou Liangpei 周良沛 ed., *op.cit.*

⁷⁵ Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之 ed., 《新月派诗选》 *Xinyue pai shixuan (Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School)*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2002.

⁷⁶ Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "Preface", *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, pp. 1-58.

⁷⁷ Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-86.

⁷⁸ Ye Hong 叶红, *op.cit.*

group was formed, developed, and made distinction among other groups by employing Harold Bloom's theory of "the anxiety of influence".⁷⁹ This work shows the author's effort to combine literary study with a sociological perspective, but it lacks detailed analysis of specific poems. Another doctoral thesis by Cheng Guojun focuses on the aesthetic pursuit of the Crescent Moon poetry,⁸⁰ discussing some of its characteristic features, such as the "Three Beauty theory", the formal experimentation, the imagery, diction, and figurative language, etc. But the author attaches more importance to the theories. There are not many textual analyses of whole poems and the author interprets the poems in a rather impressionistic way.

Although there is no study on the poetry of the Crescent Moon School as a whole in Western scholarship, some studies on modern Chinese poetry benefit my research. Julia C. Lin examines some important modern Chinese poets and poetry in 1973,⁸¹ and she categorises Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo into the group of "the Formalists". Lin's approach to poetry is the traditional way of textual analysis combined with a historical perspective. She introduces the poets' life experience on the one hand and analyses their poetic texts by looking into the technical aspects such as imagery, poetic diction, rhythmic features, etc. Lin's interpretation of specific poems of Xu and Wen and her research approach are both inspiring to me. But Lin mainly discusses the romantic and lyrical aspects in Xu and Wen's poetry. As I will show in my research, however, their poetry is far more diverse in techniques, themes, moods, and aesthetic ideals.

Michelle Yeh also studies modern Chinese poetry in 1991.⁸² Unlike that of Lin, Yeh's work is not centred on poets but on different aspects in the study of poetry from "theoretical conceptions to actual expressions".⁸³ One of Yeh's aims is to discover the "unique, revolutionary nature" of modern Chinese poetry, understanding

⁷⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁸⁰ Cheng Guojun 程国君, "诗美的探寻——“新月”诗派诗歌艺术美研究" *Shimei de tanxun: Xinyue shipai shige yishumei yanjiu* ("Search for the Poetic Beauty: Study on the Artistic Beauty of Crescent Moon Poetry"). Doctoral thesis of Wuhan University, 2002.

⁸¹ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*

⁸² Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 2.

how it is “fundamentally distinct from the classical norm”.⁸⁴ Yeh’s discussions of the modern poets’ self-image, the modern poetics of discontinuity, the modern way of using metaphor, and the characteristic form of circularity have inspired my study in various ways. It prompts me to reflect which parts of the Crescent Moon poetics have fundamentally deviated from the classical norms and which parts have largely inherited the traditional assumptions.

Michel Hockx’s study on the eight early Chinese new poets and their poetics provides another angle of interpreting the modernity of modern Chinese poetry.⁸⁵ The study examines eight new poets who were active from 1917 to 1922 and who collectively published a poetry collection entitled *A Snowy Morning* in 1922. Centring on the individual poets, Hockx discusses their poetic features and the development of their poetics, showing the pluriformity of poetics in the early years when Chinese poetry was moving from tradition to modernity. Hockx argues that in 1922 the eight poets under discussion have mostly acquiesced the marginal position of poetry and chose free individual expression over widespread acceptance, and this signals the beginning of the transition from anti-traditional to modern poetry.⁸⁶ Aside from Hockx’s insightful interpretation of the idea of poetic modernity, this research also differentiates itself from the above-mentioned studies in its methodology. In order to avoid personal and cultural prejudices, Hockx approaches the poetry and poets by studying the contemporary response and reception of them. Thus he made use of the “aesthetics of reception”, investigating how the poems were received before presenting his own view of the eight poets’ work and poetics.⁸⁷

2.2) Studies on the Poetry of Individual Poets

Despite the lack of studies on the Crescent Moon poetry as a whole, there are some discussions of the poetry of individual poets in this group. Cyril Birch examines the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Michel Hockx, *A Snowy Morning: Eight Chinese Poets on the Road to Modernity*, Research School CNWS: Leiden, The Netherlands, 1994.

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 186-194.

⁸⁷ Ibid. pp. 24-26.

poetic metres of Xu Zhimo as early as 1959.⁸⁸ Birch argues that Xu's metrical experiments can be divided into two different types, one is indebted to the metres of the English romantic poets, and the other is dictated by the nature of modern Chinese prosody. He also analyses the syntactic features of Xu's poems. Despite the pioneering value of this article, I cannot fully agree with Birch's view that Xu's poems could be scanned on the basis of stress, as the scansion in English prosody. I will discuss this point in Chapter 4.

More scholars are interested in the metrical theories and practice of Wen Yiduo because of Wen's contribution in building up the formal theory for modern Chinese poetry. Patricia Uberoi studies the rhythmic techniques of Wen's poetry in 1967.⁸⁹ The article focuses on how the "harmonious rhythm" was achieved and to what extent Wen's poetic forms were influenced by Western example. Uberoi argues that Wen "showed no interest in adapting or adopting typical Western metres" for Chinese vernacular poems. Rather, Wen devised distinctively Chinese metres to "accord with the peculiar rhythmic qualities of colloquial Mandarin".⁹⁰ By textual analysis of a few Wen's representative works, Uberoi demonstrates "the complexity and the subtlety" of the rhythms of Wen's poetry.⁹¹

In like manner, T. M. McClellan conducts a detailed research on Wen's metrical theory.⁹² By analysing Wen's poems, the author demonstrates how Wen has applied his theory to practice and how he has adjusted his theory according to different circumstances. The two articles show an admirable effort to explore Wen's theory by metrical analysis of his poems, and they help with my discussion of the formal theories of the group. But my research will demonstrate not only Wen's theory, but also the other Crescent Moon poets' responses, either supplementary or challenging,

⁸⁸ Cyril Birch, "English and Chinese Metres in Hsü Chih-Mo". *Asia Major*, 7, 1959, pp. 258-293.

⁸⁹ Patricia Uberoi, "Rhythmic Techniques in the Poetry of Wen I-to", *United College Journal 聯合書院學報*, Vol 6, 1967, pp. 1-25.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 22.

⁹² T. M. McClellan, "Wen Yiduo's *Sishui* Metre: Themes, Variations and a Classic Variation". *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*: 21, 1999, pp. 151-167.

to it. By discussing the various theories put forward by the Crescent Moon poets, I intend to show the contribution of a group instead of an individual.

In his monograph on Wen Yiduo, Kai-yu Hsu also spent two chapters discussing Wen's poetic theories and translating many of his poems.⁹³ But like Gaylord Leung's study on Xu Zhimo, Hsu mainly discusses some salient features and themes of Wen's poems without much textual analysis.

Lloyd Haft studies the poetry of Bian Zhilin in 1983.⁹⁴ Similar to the approach of Julia C. Lin, Haft claims to have adopted a "chronological-biographical approach",⁹⁵ tracing Bian's life experience and literary values on the one hand, and analysing his poems on the other hand. The first three chapters, where Haft discusses Bian's pre-war poetry, are most relevant to my study, and are also, according to Bonnie McDougall, the stronger part of the book.⁹⁶ Haft discusses Bian's pre-war poetry in two aspects, i.e. "formal qualities" and "thematics and imagery". Haft also examines Bian's poetic affinities with Western poetry by looking into his translation practice. He discusses Bian's collection of translated works published in 1936 entitled *Windows on the West*, and demonstrates Bian's literary affinities with French Symbolism and T. S. Eliot (1888-1965). But Haft also stresses that despite these traces of Western affinities, Bian preferred to place the image "in a general context suggestive of Buddhism, Taoism, or familiar elements of classical Chinese poetry".⁹⁷ Combining the historical and textual perspectives, this work provides many insightful observations of Bian's poetic features. The discussion of Bian's frequently used images and themes are particularly inspiring to my study.

⁹³ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, pp. 49-121.

⁹⁴ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin: A Study in Modern Chinese Poetry*, Foris Publications, 1983.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 2.

⁹⁶ Bonnie S. McDougall, Review of *Pien Chih-lin: A Study in Modern Chinese Poetry*, by Lloyd Haft, *Modern Chinese Literature*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1985, p. 269.

⁹⁷ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

2.3) Comparative and Influence Studies

The Crescent Moon poets' indebtedness to Western poetry and poets has drawn much scholarly attention. Because of their Western educational experience, these poets had more access to Western literature and literati. Kai-yu Hsu explores Wen Yiduo's contact with Western poets, and discusses traces of Western influence expressed in some of his poems.⁹⁸ According to Hsu, Wen took two courses in poetry in America, one in "modern poetry", which dealt with late 19th and early 20th century poets, and another in "Tennyson and Browning".⁹⁹ Hsu believes that Wen's "critical and analytical reading of modern Western poetry elevated the art of his own *pai-hua* poetry".¹⁰⁰

In his master's thesis, Marc Michel Whitacre explores Wen's indebtedness to Western poets in a more specific way.¹⁰¹ He compared Wen's poems with six English writers' works, including Keats (1795-1821), Shelley (1792-1822), Tennyson (1809-1892), Robert Browning (1812-1889), Arnold (1822-1888), and A. E. Housman (1859-1936), and argues that the six poets had influenced over one tenth of Wen's poems.¹⁰² The influence includes vague similarities both in broader themes and in specific images, rhythm, or forms. Although some of the parallelism seems too vague to reveal a source relationship, some have been confirmed by many other scholars. Wen's debt to Keats and the nineteenth-century Romantic poets, for example, has also been pointed out by Kai-yu Hsu,¹⁰³ Julia C. Lin,¹⁰⁴ and Tao Tao Liu Sanders.¹⁰⁵

Xu Zhimo's close contact with and indebtedness to Western poets and poetry has also been the subject of some scholarly attention. Gaylord Leung discusses Xu's

⁹⁸ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 81

¹⁰¹ Marc Michel Whitacre, "The English Influence in the Poetry of Wen I-to (1899-1946)", Master's thesis of the University of Arizona, 1974.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 67.

¹⁰³ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁴ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰⁵ Tao Tao Liu Sanders, "Hongzhu 红烛 Red Candle". *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature, 1900-1949, Volume III, The Poem*, edited by Lloyd Haft, E. J. Brill, 1989, p. 236.

friendship with many Western men of letters,¹⁰⁶ and in another article, he suggests that Xu's poetry collection *The Tiger* is reminiscent of "the mysticism of Blake's work".¹⁰⁷ Leonid Cherkassky points out many possible sources of Xu's poetry and life philosophy, including "Hardy's fatalistic conception of universal evil", "Swinburne's eroticism and the motif of a haven from the complexities and difficulties of life", "Rossetti's mystical exaltations and his attempts to reconcile mysticism and eroticism through a deification of the flesh", and the "idealistic philosophy of Thomas Carlyle".¹⁰⁸ Julia C. Lin also suggests that some images in Xu's poetry could be traced to the influence of Shelley.¹⁰⁹

Among Xu's many possible sources from the West, scholars are most interested in the influence of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Xu paid a visit to Hardy in England in 1925, and was fascinated by Hardy's poetry and philosophy. Cyril Birch conducts a comparative study between the two poets in 1977.¹¹⁰ After comparing some "fairly casual borrowings" in specific images, incidents, or moods, Birch suggests that Hardy's real influence on Xu lies in a philosophical thinking, or "an air of wry wisdom tinged with melancholy".¹¹¹ Based on this assumption, Birch disagrees with some left-wing criticism, which maintained that Xu's melancholy mirrored the "inevitable decline of the whole bourgeois literary movement".¹¹² Birch argues that, considering Xu's apolitical stance and distaste for the class theory, the melancholy in Xu's poetry exhibits "a purely literary melancholy", or the poet's awareness of the reality of "pain and death in the mortal world".¹¹³ Although Birch's comparative approach is very insightful, I do not fully agree with his argument. I believe that, although Xu basically held an apolitical stance, he did desire a life of order, reason,

¹⁰⁶ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo*, pp. 31-42.

¹⁰⁷ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, "Menghu ji 猛虎集 The Tiger". *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

¹⁰⁸ Leonid Cherkassky, "Zhimo de shi 志摩的诗 Poems of Zhimo", *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, *op.cit.*, pp. 249-250.

¹⁰⁹ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

¹¹⁰ Cyril Birch, "Hsü Chih-mo's Debt to Thomas Hardy", *Tamkang Review* 8, no. 1, 1977, 1-24.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

¹¹² *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 16.

and stability,¹¹⁴ which perhaps reflects the shared values of liberal intellectuals.¹¹⁵ Therefore, in a time of chaos and violence, Xu's melancholy was not only to be interpreted as a philosophical awareness of pain and death as Birch suggests, but also because of a sense anxiety, inefficacy, and alienation in face of the deteriorating national situation. So I believe it is necessary to include a historical perspective when looking into the Crescent Moon poets' changing mood and mental state.

Lu Weiping conducts a more comprehensive study on the influence of Hardy on Xu Zhimo in 1995.¹¹⁶ Employing the influence theories of Harold Bloom and Göran Hermerén,¹¹⁷ Lu examines both the positive and negative influence of the "precursor" on the "ephebe".¹¹⁸ Lu illustrates the "positive influence" by looking into the two poets' similar philosophical belief, cosmic outlook, and poetic form and technique, and demonstrates the "negative influence" by showing their different use of genres (one prefers prose poem and the other prefers narrative poetry) and temperaments (one's poems show simple idealism and the other's show satirical pessimism).¹¹⁹ Although it is a very detailed and well-structured study on poetic influence, I do not fully agree with the author's attempt to attribute almost every aspect of Xu's poetic practice to a single source of influence. Using the theory of "anxiety of influence", for example, Lu tries to explain the reason why Xu abruptly stopped writing "prose poems" after September 1924. Lu suggests that a possible reason is because Xu felt that he had "swerved away from his precursor" (i.e. Hardy) too far so that he needed to "rein in immediately at the brink of the precipice".¹²⁰ But as I will show in my research, Xu's change of style at this time might demonstrate his changing mood and

¹¹⁴ See Constantine Tung's discussion of Xu's personality and attitude. Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 106-109.

¹¹⁵ Grieder suggests that liberalism requires order and reason, which is why liberal intellectuals failed in China in the violent time. Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937*. Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 345.

¹¹⁶ Lu Weiping, "Thomas Hardy and Xu Zhimo: A Study of Poetic Influence". Unpublished doctoral dissertation of York University, North York, Ontario. 1995.

¹¹⁷ 1) Harold Bloom, *op.cit.* 2) Göran Hermerén, *Influence in Art and Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1975.

¹¹⁸ "Positive influence" and "negative influence" are the terms used by Göran Hermerén. Positive influence means the literary similarities or attractions between a previous work of art and a later work of art. Negative influence means the later artist's reaction or protest against the precursor, causing him to make a work which in certain respects "is markedly different from" the precursor's work. Göran Hermerén, *op.cit.*, pp. 42-49.

¹¹⁹ Lu Weiping, *op.cit.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 413.

taste from the formless, exuberant expression to the classic restraint and discipline. This change coincides with the general direction of development of the Crescent Moon poetics, and is not necessarily the result of a specific Western precursor's influence.

3. Research Gaps and Research Questions

The secondary literature listed above has inspired my thought in various aspects. But after a critical reading of them, I find that there are still a few limitations and questions that need to be addressed.

1) Limitations and Questions in Historical Studies

There are some studies discussing the history and development of the Crescent Moon School in Chinese, English, and French, and they covered most of the group's activities. But in my view, these studies have mostly focused on the various activities of the group, the experience of its members, the group's relationship with other contemporary groups (especially with the Left-wing writers), and the group's attitude toward some events and ideologies. But underlying these facts and phenomena — that the Crescent Moon members were open-minded, Western educated intellectuals, that they stood opposite to the Leftist literary cause, that they were anti-Communist and against violent revolution, that they promoted regulated poetry, that they advocated human rights and freedom of expression, that they sought for order and form — what core spirit had bound these firm believers in individualism together and prompted them to make certain choice and take certain positions? What common mode of thinking and outlook on life, literature, and the world were generated by their overseas experience?

2) Limitations and Questions in Poetic Studies

2.1) There lacks systematic study on the poetry of the Crescent Moon School as a whole in Western scholarship. Researchers mostly focus on the major poets in the group, such as Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, and Bian Zhilin. Some other poets I am looking have been pretty much overlooked by Western scholarship, but they are

worth studying because of their contribution to the new poetry development. Moreover, studies on the individual poets need to be put into context. When these individual poets are incorporated into a group and observed from a viewpoint of group development, one might be able to understand their practice in a different way and draw different conclusions. The group's common poetic values and direction of development reveal the shared cultural pursuits and collective influence of a type of intellectuals who represented a dissenting voice in the May Fourth and post-May Fourth discourse.

2.2) Although studies on the poetry of the group exist in Chinese, there are at least two limitations. Firstly, their definition and characterisation of terms are not clear enough. They tend to attach vague and generalised labels to the poetry and poets, without explaining and analysing the labels in a definitive way. Secondly, there lacks in-depth textual analysis to support their arguments. Current Chinese studies tend to pay more attention to the biography and theory of the poets. When it comes to textual analysis, they mostly illustrate a few poetic lines, words, or images, and describe the features in an impressionistic way.

2.3) There are two questions in the Crescent Moon poetic practice that I particularly wish to address.

A. The conflict between theory and practice. In their poetic theory, they were strongly opposed to the May Fourth romantic trend, seeking to restrain excessive emotion and imagination by reason. But in practice they produced large amount of lyrical poems vibrating with a romantic pulse. The two leading poets, Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo, are mostly regarded as typical "romantic" poets by Western researchers.¹²¹ I don't think this ambivalence comes from the inconsistency between theory and practice, nor do I think the two styles simply represent different poetic values in different stages/periods. How did this gap between theory and practice come from, and how were the two seemingly divergent and even conflicting poetic

¹²¹ 1) Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.* 2) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*

values reconciled? What specific device did they use to achieve the balance between restraint and emotion?

B. The conflict between the poets' Westernised appearance and generally conservative outlook. With their Western educational experience, the Crescent Moon poets are supposed to be open-minded intellectuals seeking for the new and the modern, and trying to break with the past. But why did they choose a cautious and even conservative stance in face of the new poetry revolution? Why did Xu Zhimo claim themselves to be the "old-school conservatives"?¹²²

4. Research Methodology

1) General Statement of Methodology

The survey of previous literature reveals that the following approaches are mostly employed by current Western studies on modern Chinese poetry:

- 1) Discussing the main features and themes of poetry without much textual analysis. This approach is mostly used in studies on poets, with an emphasis on their literary aspect. Examples are Gaylord Leung's study on Xu Zhimo and Kai-yu Hsu's study on Wen Yiduo.
- 2) Studying the contemporary response and reception of poetry in order to form an objective view of the poetry and poetics. Michel Hockx's study is an example.
- 3) Explore the influence of Western poets on Chinese poets by comparing the parallelism in poetic texts.
- 4) Close textual analysis combined with an investigation into the historical context. Researchers usually discuss the various aspects in poetic expression, such as imagery, form, theme, figurative language, etc. But the historical

¹²² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, "《诗刊》放假" *Shikan fangjia* ("Poetry Supplement On Holiday"). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》11号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan shiyi hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 11*), 10th June 1926.

context is also taken into consideration when interpreting a poem. Examples include Lloyd Haft's study on Bian Zhilin, Julia C. Lin and Michelle Yeh's studies on modern Chinese poetry.

In this study I adopt the fourth approach, analysing the Crescent Moon poems and poetics by combining the textual and contextual perspectives. So I will review the historical context in the first chapter prior to the close textual analysis of specific poems. In their study on theory of literature, René Wellek and Austin Warren divide literary analysis into two approaches, i.e. the extrinsic and intrinsic approaches.¹²³ The "extrinsic approach" deals with the non-literary factors, such as the setting, environment, and external causes of a literary work.¹²⁴ It investigates such aspects as "literature and biography", "literature and society", "literature and ideas", etc.¹²⁵ The "intrinsic approach", on the other hand, focuses on the features and elements that are internal to literary texts, including such aspects as rhythm, metre, image, metaphor, symbol, myth, etc.¹²⁶ Regarding the extrinsic approach as the "deterministic causal methods" that are helpless in understanding the literary texts,¹²⁷ Wellek and Warren encourage the intrinsic approach that concentrates on the description, analysis, and evaluation of the actual works of literature.¹²⁸ But in my view, the study of the Crescent Moon poetry and poetics requires both the extrinsic and intrinsic approaches.

Chinese writers in the Republican era, as some scholars have noted, were mostly conscious of the role of the artist in society, and they were the "natural heirs" of the Confucian literati who bore a strong sense of social responsibility.¹²⁹ Their works, therefore, were in most cases rooted in a "socio-political nexus" and their feelings

¹²³ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Penguin Books Ltd, 1982.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 73.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 75-135.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 142-237.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 74.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 139-141.

¹²⁹ 1) Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, pp. 258-259. 2) Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Literary Trends I: The Quest for Modernity, 1895-1927". *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 12*, edited by John K. Fairbank and Denis Twitchett, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 501-502.

and moods were naturally connected with China's historical situation.¹³⁰ The Crescent Moon poets, although they championed the idea of literary autonomy and rejected the political intrusions into literature, were not totally unaffected by the external reality. McDougall points out that even the seemingly "apoliticals" such as Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo showed in their poetry a strong sense of political involvement, and Liang Shiqiu also indulged in political debates.¹³¹ Their mood, thought, and mental state fluctuated with the change of historical situation and the importation of foreign ideas. This changing mentality finds its expression in their poems, and also in their diaries, letters, prose, and criticisms. So an investigation into the "external" factors of poetic texts, including the historical context, the non-literary texts, and the other literature produced in the same period, will provide an insightful angle to interpret the poems.

But I do not intend to interpret the meaning of a poem by merely looking into its social context and the poet's biography. I am aware that to attribute the meaning of a poem to a single cause, such as the poet's experience or some external source of influence, will easily "reduce it to its origins", or the "fallacy of origins".¹³² I am convinced that the meaning of a poem comes firstly from the evidence found between the lines, such as the poetic diction, aural devices, and figurative language. So I will conduct a text-centred close reading as well, which is to "read slowly and attentively in order to explain, analyze, explicate, and argue for [my] reading from the evidence of the text itself".¹³³ Close reading focuses particularly on the "language of poetry" and "how it works", that is, how the poem "achieves its effects through employing poetic conventions and techniques which exploit specific cultural connotations".¹³⁴ By the close reading of poetry, one is able to "move away from the rather vague personal impressions" and analyse precisely why and how a poetic text

¹³⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Literary Trends I", *op.cit.*, pp. 501-502.

¹³¹ Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 259.

¹³² René Wellek and Austin Warren, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

¹³³ Annette Federico, *Engagements with Close Reading*, Routledge, 2016, p. 31.

¹³⁴ Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *Reading Poetry: An Introduction*, second edition, Pearson Education Limited, 2007, p. 13.

generates certain effect.¹³⁵ Close reading is, as Barbara Johnson observes, to “read what the language is doing, not guess what the author was thinking”, and to “take in evidence from a page, not seek a reality to substitute for it”.¹³⁶

The practice of close reading is usually considered to be associated with the formalism of the New Criticism.¹³⁷ But although I borrowed from them the formalist strategies to analyse a poem, I do not repudiate extrinsic criteria as the New Critics did.¹³⁸ I am interested in two matters, i.e. what the poem says and how it is said. The former requires appropriate contextual knowledge of the poem, because “all meaning is historically and culturally specific rather than universal”.¹³⁹ And the latter is achieved mainly by formalist close reading of texts, to understand “how the actual language of the poem generates effects and meanings”.¹⁴⁰

2) My Approach to Poetry

This thesis does not study the Crescent Moon poetry in a chronological order following its three stages of development. Rather, it examines the three “faces” of the Crescent Moon poetics, i.e. the romantic temperament, the classic ideal, and the modern consciousness. Although the three faces to a certain extent coincide with the three stages of development and therefore reflect the evolvement of its poetics over time, the poems are not sorted and analysed in a chronological way. My approach to poetry basically follows the steps below.

To begin with, I read almost every poem of the group and get a general impression. I find that these poems can be roughly divided into the three faces or categories mentioned above, so I sort the poems into these categories based on their content, technique, and general way of expression. To avoid the problem of generalisation or labeling, I identify a few commonly accepted features or attributes from each of the

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Cited from Jonathan Culler, “The Closeness of Close Reading”, *ADE Bulletin*, No. 149, 2010, p. 23.

¹³⁷ Jonathan Culler, 2010, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

¹³⁸ Chris Baldick, “New Criticism”, *Oxford Dictionary*, *op.cit.*, p. 244.

¹³⁹ Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 13-14.

three literary traditions, and analyse how these features are expressed in the Crescent Moon poems. I am aware that in Western scholarship the romantic, classic, and modernist traditions are full of varieties and complexities, because their literary “paradigms” are related to the larger historical context under which these movements took place.¹⁴¹ It is even more complicated when these traditions were transplanted to an entirely different cultural context such as China. I am just using some common features and assumptions related to these literary traditions to sort the Crescent Moon poetry and find out their underlying poetics. I do not assume that there was a predetermined idea in the poet’s mind of writing a romantic, classic, or modernist piece of work. Nor do I assume that any individual text could comply neatly with these predetermined notions.¹⁴²

When analysing a specific poem, as suggested earlier, I adopt the approach of close reading combined with an investigation into the literary and non-literary contexts. More specifically, I made use of the terms and framework introduced by Tom Furniss and Michael Bath in *Reading Poetry: An Introduction*.¹⁴³ Throughout the book, the two authors keep stressing that “close reading cannot be divorced from literary theory or from history”.¹⁴⁴ But at the same time, they assert that particular kinds of close reading are fundamental to the study of literature.¹⁴⁵ So they suggest that a poem can be interpreted in three aspects, i.e. the formal devices, the textual strategies, and the contextual factors.¹⁴⁶ When analysing a poem, I mainly look at its features in the three aspects, in order to understand what the poem says and how it is said.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 309.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 311.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. xii.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

2.1) Formal Devices

Poetic Form, according to Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, is a general term for a range of features that concerns the way a poem presents its material.¹⁴⁷ The two authors mainly introduce three kinds of formal features:¹⁴⁸

- A. The shape of the poem on the page, including how many lines the poem has, the arrangement of lines (enjambment or end-stopped sentences), whether or not it is divided into stanzas.
- B. The patterns of sound, including the commonly used aural devices, such as metre, rhyme pattern, alliteration, etc.
- C. The poem's style, including the kind of language it uses, its word-choice or diction, and the syntactic deviation.

Although these are formal elements of English prosody, I believe they can also be used to analyse the Crescent Moon poetry because, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, the metrical theory of the Crescent Moon School was largely inspired by English prosody. Only a few aural devices, such as “assonance” and “consonance”, are not discussed because they are rarely used in Chinese poetry. On the other hand, the traditional poetic elements also exist in the Crescent Moon poetry because the poets made a conscious effort to synthesise the Western prosody with Chinese classical poetics. So some formal features typical of the traditional poetry, such as the classical diction and aural devices, will also be discussed.

One of the major contributions of the Crescent Moon School to the new poetry development is their formal theories and the Formalisation reform. The Crescent Moon poets, like the Anglo-American New Critics, championed the idea of the “organic unity” between form and content, sound and meaning.¹⁴⁹ So I will not only discuss the formal theories put forward by different Crescent Moon poets, but also

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 71.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 71-72.

¹⁴⁹ 1) Chris Baldick, “New Criticism”, *op.cit.* 2) Annette Federico, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.

analyse with specific texts how the formal features organically embody the content and theme.

2.2) Textual Strategies

Textual strategies, in *Reading Poetry*, include a range of literary devices that is directly related to the production of the meaning of the text. The book presents various types of textual strategies:

- A. Figurative language. It is a general term for a group of linguistic devices called “figures of speech”, including metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, conceit, allegory, apostrophe, etc.¹⁵⁰
- B. Voice. Discussing voice is to work out who is speaking in the text and the speech situation of the poem. The book introduces different situations such as voices in lyric, narrative poetry, and dramatic poetry.¹⁵¹
- C. Tone. Discussing tone in poetry is to work out the “nature of the speaker’s attitude”.¹⁵² The book mainly introduces irony in various situations.

In this thesis, most of the textual strategies listed above are discussed in different poems to show how they have worked and what effects they have achieved to convey the meaning. By comparing the different uses of metaphor, symbol, and conceit, I demonstrate the progression of the Crescent Moon poetics from the classic restraint to the modernist obscurity and complexity. The other elements, such as voices in dramatic poetry and irony in lyrics, are also discussed to understand the poet’s attitude and mood. I also demonstrate how these textual strategies work with the formal devices to act out the subtlety of meanings.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, pp. 145-204.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 209-237.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p. 241.

2.3) Contextual Factors

The above two aspects deal with the skills used in the close reading of texts, or what Wellek and Warren have termed “the intrinsic approach” to literature.¹⁵³ Contextual factors, on the other hand, involve a range of “external factors which formed a ‘background’ at the time when a text was written and can be shown to have had some kind of impact on its writing or meaning”.¹⁵⁴ In *Reading Poetry*, the two authors discuss various kinds of contexts, including “historical, political, social and cultural factors, as well as various literary and discursive elements”.¹⁵⁵ So the contexts of a poem mainly include two aspects, i.e. the literary and non-literary factors.

A. Literary contexts:

When analysing poems, I conduct a parallel reading of the diaries, letters, prose, criticisms, memoirs, and biographies written at (or about) the same historical period to better understand the poet’s possible mood and mental state when the poem was produced. Moreover, translation is also a type of literary context.¹⁵⁶ The translation practice of the poets may affect their creative writing, and in a few cases one may find the translated verses in the poets’ creative works. So an investigation into the sources of translation, imitation, and allusion could be helpful to understand certain poems.

B. Non-literary contexts:

Non-literary contexts are also factors that might affect the poet’s attitude and be reflected in the mood or tone of the poems. So in Chapter One I begin the thesis by tracing the historical development of the Crescent Moon School, looking at the historical period, political events, cultural movements, and social relationship that might have had certain impact on the creation of the poems. In fact, as I will demonstrate in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, their changing poetic values show

¹⁵³ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁴ Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, p. 297.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 298.

¹⁵⁶ Chris Baldick, “Intertextuality”, *Oxford Dictionary, op.cit.*, p. 184.

the interaction between literature and history. The Crescent Moon School changed over time, and the change was reflected in their poetry and poetics.

My analysis of poems is basically conducted from the three perspectives, i.e. the formal, textual, and contextual. In this short doctoral thesis, however, not every above-mentioned device or strategy is discussed in each poem. In most cases I only discuss the major devices used in the poem. But generally the two basic issues will be addressed, i.e. what the poem says and the way it is said.

3) My Selection of Primary Materials

This thesis analyses poems from both intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives, so the primary materials can be divided into two types, i.e. poems and the non-poetic texts.

3.1) Selection of Poems

Poetry selected for analysis comes mostly from *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School* edited by Lan Dizhi. But I also select works from the individual poetry collections of the major poets. In selecting poems, I observe the following principles:

- A. Time of composition or publication. As suggested earlier, I select poems produced mainly from 1920 to 1934. I choose poems of different styles produced in different periods of time to show: 1) the changing poetics of the group across a span of years, and 2) the simultaneousness and diversity of poetic faces in the same period of time.
- B. Representativeness. I choose poems that best represent the three poetic faces and their specific features/attributes. A poem is selected because of its representativeness in either what it says (its content, or theme, or major idea, or emotion), or its way of expression (its form, or technique, or tone, or genre). Because they are relatively more “representative”, a few of the selected poems are better known and discussed by previous studies. But when incorporated into my framework of the three faces, they can be interpreted in new ways and shed new light on the poetics of the group and the individual poet.

- C. Less studied poets and poetry. Aside from a few very famous poems, I mostly select works that have not been discussed elsewhere. I pay special attention to those less studied poets in the group and show their different theories and styles of writing. I intend to demonstrate the shared features and literary tendency of a group rather than those of one or two leading poets.

3.2) Selection of Non-poetic Texts

The non-poetic sources are selected based on a comprehensive and critical reading of the poets' diaries, letters, prose writings, criticisms, translation, memoirs, and biographies. Moreover, articles from the Crescent Moon publications, including those non-literary texts such as the preface, afterword, and editor's note are all helpful to reconstruct the historical and literary contexts. I pay special attention to the following kinds of texts:

- A. Those created at the time (or about the time) when the poem under discussion was written;
- B. Those that are related with the various activities of the Crescent Moon School;
- C. Those that disclose the poets' thought or feeling during the time when they worked together as a group;
- D. Those that disclose the poets' social contacts, reading interest, and translation activities, from which one learns the poets' possible source of influence.

5. Structure Overview

The thesis looks into three aspects of the Crescent Moon School: its history (Chapter One), its core spirit (Chapter Two), and its poetry and poetics (Chapters Three, Four, and Five).

Chapter One is a discussion of the historical development of the Crescent Moon School. Since some studies on the history of the group have already existed, I only conduct a brief overview of their activities in a chronological way. My focus is less

on the events but more on the values and attitudes behind these events. This chapter provides a background for the further discussion of the core spirit and poetics of the group.

Chapter Two explores the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School. I argue that the various activities of the group have all demonstrated a consistent core spirit that I would refer to as the “modern conservative spirit”. This core spirit further reflected the Crescent Moon members’ unique understanding and pursuit of modernity. Inspired by Shu-mei Shih,¹⁵⁷ I suggest that the Crescent Moon School is a missing link in the long chain of the Republican modern conservative trend, linking the neotraditionalist thinkers in the early 1920s and the Beijing School writers in the mid-1930s. In this chapter I discuss what the spirit is, how it evolved, and how it was expressed in the activities, especially the poetic practice, of the Crescent Moon School.

Chapter Three focuses on the romantic face of the Crescent Moon poetics. By analysing the romantic elements expressed in the poems, I demonstrate the romantic temperament of the poets, the temperament that had remained throughout the lives of the poets. Since the term “romantic” is a complicated and overly generalised label, I mainly discuss four popular assumptions of the romantic literature that are expressed in the Crescent Moon poetry, i.e. the romantic assertion of the self, lyricism as the major way of expression, the subjective way of treating reality, and the romantic quest for an elusive and infinite ideal.

Chapter Four examines the classic ideal of the Crescent Moon poetics. The Formalisation Movement of the group is discussed, not merely as an isolated poetic event, but is also associated with the poets’ reception of the philosophy and aesthetic attitude of Classicism. After looking into the influence of the New Humanist theory as the theoretical background, I demonstrate the poets’ pursuit of the regulated poetic forms and their advocacy of reason, restraint, and proportion. I also discuss why the two seemingly contradictory aesthetic pursuits, i.e. the romantic elevation of the

¹⁵⁷ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*

powerful feelings and the classic ideal of restraining emotion with reason, could have coexisted in the Crescent Moon poetics. I also illustrate what specific devices are utilised to achieve this disciplined expression of emotion.

Chapter Five investigates the modernist aspect of the Crescent Moon poetics. With the poets feeling increasingly alienated from the radicalised literary scene, there appeared a growing modern consciousness in the Crescent Moon poetry. I analyse the modern consciousness in four aspects, which include the poets' fascination for the idea of "depth" and the suggestiveness of symbols, the typical modernist sensibilities expressed in their poetry, the modernist self-consciousness and self-positioning, and the modernist way of understanding tradition and modernity. This understanding, as is discussed in the chapter, well illustrates the modern conservative spirit of the Crescent Moon School.

Chapter 1 Historical Background of the Crescent Moon School

Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to conduct a historical overview of the origin, development, and closure of the Crescent Moon School. The group gathered in Beijing in 1923, but it was not until 1928 when their official organ, *Crescent Moon Monthly*, was published in Shanghai that their influence spread afar. Some studies on the history of the group already existed in English and French.¹⁵⁸ So I would like to treat the historical part only in a brief manner, in order to provide a general context for the later analysis.

I have two justifications for the examination of the group history in the very beginning. Firstly, it provides the contextual knowledge in the historical, cultural, and social aspects for the further discussion of the Crescent Moon poetic practice. As contextual factor is one of the three aspects that will be looked into when analysing poetic texts, there is a need to conduct a general overview of the historical context to better understand the poets' change of mood and mental state over time. Moreover, I will look into the activities related to literature and art in more detail, including the poetic and theatrical reforms based in *Morning Post Supplement*, *Crescent Moon Monthly* under Ye Gongchao's editorship, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Xuewen Monthly*. Most of these activities have not been the subject of much scholarly attention,¹⁵⁹ but they are closely related to the literary minds of the group and help with my analysis of their poetry in later chapters.

¹⁵⁸ cf: 1) Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.* 2) Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.* 3) Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, pp. 279-312.

¹⁵⁹ Previous studies have mostly focused on the journal *Crescent Moon Monthly*, and some have discussed the poetic and drama reforms based in *Morning Post Supplement*. But *Crescent Moon* under Ye Gongchao's editorship, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Xuewen* have mostly been neglected. In fact, previous Western studies consider the Crescent Moon activity to be ended in 1933 with the closure of *Crescent Moon Monthly*. But I believe *Xuewen* is also part of its activities, and I would refer to it as "the post-Crescent Moon era".

Secondly, the historical overview provides a basis on which I could analyse the consistent core spirit of the group. My discussion therefore focuses less on the description of historical events and activities (though some newly unearthed historical materials will be added to this part), but more on the analysis of the Crescent Moon members' cultural position and state of mind as displayed in these events. I argue that the various activities of the group were guided by the modern conservative spirit of the members. I will show how this core spirit was expressed in the different aspects. By discussing their initial activities in the "Crescent Moon Society" and their final dissolving into the Beijing School, I am able to demonstrate the group's relationship with other modern conservative groups and its position in this intellectual trend.

Basically following a chronological order, this chapter is divided into five sections or stages, namely, the stages of Crescent Moon Society, *Morning Post Supplement*, *Crescent Moon Monthly*, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Xuewen Monthly*. Aside from the first stage, the other four are marked by the different publications of the Crescent Moon School. I also intend to analyse the role that each stage had played in the formation of the group and the core spirit. The chronological way of study is employed in an effort to show the change of the people's mind and the unchanged core spirit with the development of the historical situation.

1. Crescent Moon Society: the Discovery and Gathering of the Spirit

1) Xu Zhimo and His Crescent Moon Society

The year 1923 was relatively uneventful. The climax of the great May Fourth Movement had almost passed, though its ramifications in the cultural sphere still persisted. The even greater revolution that would change modern Chinese history had not yet arrived. A wide variety of Western ideologies, thoughts, and fashions flooded into China, influencing and gradually shaping a diversified cultural field. Still in the euphoria of the New Culture movement, passionate young people searched and pursued their own beliefs and eagerly expecting like-minded companions. Literary

societies mushroomed, gathering new intellectuals with similar tastes and ideological beliefs in the same camps.

The Crescent Moon Society (新月社 *Xinyue she*) was established in this uneventful year in Beijing as a social club for the fashionable upper-middle class people. It was initiated by Xu Zhimo, a returned student from America and Britain. Xu was born into a wealthy merchant family in Zhejiang province, and was sent to the United States in 1918 to study history and economics at Clark College and Columbia University. Upon graduation in the U.S. he went on to Britain in the hope of studying with Bertrand Russell. It was in Britain that Xu found his lifelong interest in literature and made friends with some literary figures of repute such as G. L. Dickinson (1862-1932), Roger Fry (1866-1934), E.M. Forster (1879-1970), Arthur Waley (1889-1966), and I. A. Richards (1893-1979). These people's influence on Xu can be found in various aspects from literature to social and political ideas.¹⁶⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee would describe Cambridge as an "intellectual break" in Xu's life.¹⁶¹ He returned to China in October 1922 and decided to devote himself to the career of literature.

Among the mushrooming literary societies in the early 1920s China, the two most influential groups were the Realistic-oriented "Literary Association" (文学研究会 *Wenxue yanjiu hui*), and its newly established rival group, the romantic-oriented "Creation Society" (创造社 *Chuangzao she*).¹⁶² As a newly returned student, Xu Zhimo tried to establish good relationships with both groups,¹⁶³ but unintentionally he offended both sides. While it was nothing but some personal misunderstandings,¹⁶⁴ his incompatibility with the two groups reflected different

¹⁶⁰ See Gaylord Leung's discussion of Xu Zhimo's early life. Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo*, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-51.

¹⁶¹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.* p. 132.

¹⁶² See Constantine Tung's discussion of the literary scene before the formation of the Crescent Moon School. Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-26.

¹⁶³ Xu Zhimo was a registered member of the Literary Association, with registration No.93, in the name of Xu Zhangxu (徐章埏). At the same time Xu also had close contact with members of the Creation Society, having many articles published on its official organs. cf: Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁴ Xu Zhimo offended Guo Moruo and his Creation Society because Xu criticised Guo's poem, "Passing By My Old Home Again" (重过旧居 *Chongguo jiuju*), in which Guo expressed his profound sadness when he returned

worldviews and different tastes and understandings of life, which were largely due to their different living conditions and educational experiences. Realizing his poor fit in the two groups, Xu was eager to establish his own platform.

With the financial support of his father, Xu was able to frequently hold dinner gatherings from 1923, and there gradually emerged a social group centring round him.¹⁶⁵ Xu's original intention was to gather people with the shared interest in drama to write up and perform plays. The gatherings mainly attracted people with the same Western educational experiences and therefore were tinted with a strong Anglo-American flavour. Members of the group included high officials, military officers, bankers, businessmen, intellectuals, and wives and girlfriends of these people. Hu Shi, Chen Xiying, Lin Huiyin, Lin Changmin 林长民 (1876-1925), Zhang Junmai 张君勱 (1887-1969), Ding Xilin 丁西林 (1893-1974), Zhang Xiruo 张奚若 (1889-1973), Ling Shuhua 凌叔华 (1900-1990), were a few of the big names attending the gatherings, most of whom became members of the later Crescent Moon School.

Activities in the Crescent Moon Society were similar to those of the meetings of the ancient Chinese literati:

There were New Year's gatherings in Spring Festivals, lantern shows in Lantern Festivals, and there were gatherings for enjoying music, practicing calligraphy and paintings, and readings and poetry recitals.¹⁶⁶

to his old home in Japan and found his wife and children moved away because of poverty and debt. Xu criticised that Guo's emotion, expressed in the poetic words "torrential tears" (泪浪滔滔 *leilang taotao*), was too much exaggerated and thus, unnatural and fake. The Creation members attacked Xu Zhimo in response, saying he was a hypocrite, because Xu once tried to "please" the Creationists by mocking at the translation works of the Literary Association. Considering the hostilities between Literary Association and Creation Society, no wonder that the Creationists took offence when Xu Zhimo, their assumed friend and comrade, "betrayed" them and criticised their leader, Guo Moruo. Xu Zhimo thus wrote the essay "There Is No Big Deal in the World" ("天下本无事" *Tianxia ben wushi*) to explain to both sides that he did not belong to any of them and hated the "petty party bias", and apologised if he had hurt anyone's feeling. But it seemed that neither group accepted his explanation and apology. cf: Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, "天下本无事" *Tianxia ben wushi* ("There Is No Big Deal in the World"). 《徐志摩全集·第一卷·散文 1》*Xu Zhimo quanji, diyijuan, sanwen 1 (The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 1, Prose 1)*, edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Tianjin People's Press, 2005. pp. 278-285.

¹⁶⁵ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 103-105.

¹⁶⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, "给新月" *Gei Xinyue* ("To the Crescent Moon"). 《徐志摩全集·第二卷·散文 2》*Xu Zhimo quanji, dierjuan, sanwen 2 (The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Two, Prose 2)*, edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Tianjin People's Press, 2005, p. 61.

Xu Zhimo was apparently not content with these activities. Especially with the expansion of the club, more and more non-intellectuals joined in, and the Crescent Moon Society had become to him “an old-fashioned new world or a new-style old world” that smacked of the “unbearable petty bourgeois odour”.¹⁶⁷ The ideal Crescent Moon Society in Xu’s imagination should be, like the gatherings around Dante Gabriel Rossetti and George Bernard Shaw, a gathering of a few friends that could “open up a new path” in the artistic, political and ideological fields.¹⁶⁸ What Xu wanted was to make distinction (露棱角 *lu lengjiao*),¹⁶⁹ promoting his artistic ideals and influencing society, culture, and even politics. Disappointed with the Crescent Moon Society in reality, he gradually lost interest in it and seldom brought friends there. The signboard of the Crescent Moon Society was taken off in 1927,¹⁷⁰ marking the official closure of this social club.

2) Crescent Moon Spirit: the First Gathering and Display

Previous studies on the Crescent Moon School tend to treat this initial stage as a background of the group history, thus only recording its basic facts.¹⁷¹ I would consider this Society stage, however, as marking the first convergence of a group of intellectuals with similar values and temperament, and displaying for the first time their collective cultural position. This cultural position, as I shall discuss in more detail in the next chapter, was acquired mainly through their long-time educational experience in Britain or America, and ran through the entire existence of the group, forming a core spirit that bound these people together.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 62.

¹⁶⁹ In the open letter to his fellow friends in the Crescent Moon Society, Xu said: “To make distinction (if we have our distinction to make) is an obligation we commit to ourselves and others.” Ibid. p. 61.

¹⁷⁰ Liang Xihua 梁锡华, “且道阴晴圆缺——新月的问题” *Qiedao yinqing yuanque: Xinyue de wenti* (“Let’s Talk About Waxing and Waning: the Crescent Moon Issues”). 《港台·国外谈中国现代文学作家》 *Gangtai guowai tan Zhongguo xiandai wenxue zuojia* (*On Modern Chinese Writers: Recollections from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Overseas Sources*), edited by Cheng Xin 程新, Sichuan Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986 [1980]. p. 182.

¹⁷¹ The two monographs on the Crescent Moon School only briefly mentioned this initial stage. Gaylord Leung’s study on Xu Zhimo discussed this stage in more detail, but mostly focusing on its people and activities. See: 1) Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-46. 2) Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-32. 3) Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 103-115.

This cultural position was best displayed in their reception of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the 1913 Nobel Laureate who visited China in 1924 under the invitation of the Chinese Lecture Association (讲学社 *Jiangxue she*). The Chinese Lecture Association was established by Liang Qichao with a mission of inviting one international celebrity each year to give lectures in China. As the founder of the Association, Liang Qichao had his personal preference in inviting celebrities. One might find that the invitees of the Lecture Association — John Dewey (1859-1952), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Hans Driesch (1867-1941), and Tagore — all brought to China a more or less similar message, which was to promote the “superior” Chinese spiritual culture, in order to save and cure the bankrupt Western material culture.¹⁷²

This strand of thought mainly grew out of a worldwide fear of and revolt against the catastrophic World War I, during which people witnessed the tragic consequences brought about by materialism and militarism and began to be disillusioned with Western civilisation.¹⁷³ Liang Qichao was one of the earliest Chinese scholars who realised this changing trend in the West and brought this message back to China after his European trip. Convinced that “the West was morally corrupt and degenerate”, he cried out to the Chinese youths that: “Millions of people across the ocean are bewailing the bankruptcy of [their] material civilisation. They are desperately crying out for help, waiting for you to save them!”¹⁷⁴ The message Tagore spread out in his 1924 visit, which was to appeal to “Asia’s intellectual leaders” to unite together “for

¹⁷² John Dewey was invited to China in 1919 and stayed there for two years. He promoted a step-by-step social reform rather than violent revolution. Russell went to China in 1920 and stayed for a year. His idea was reflected in his book, *The Problem of China*, in which he wrote: “The Great War showed that something is wrong with our civilization;... The Chinese have discovered, and have practiced for many centuries, a way of life which, if it could be adopted by all the world, would make all the world happy. We Europeans have not. Our way of life demands strife, exploitation, restless change, discontent and destruction...”. Driesch visited China from 1922 to 1923, and during his trip he advocated “the need to hold steadfastly to the humanistic values of China’s Buddhist and Confucian heritages” and to fight against scientism. His lectures drew much attention and triggered the well-known polemic of science versus metaphysics. cf: Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. pp. 67-68. Also cf: Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁷³ Shu-mei Shih discusses this “soul-searching rethinking of Western civilisation in the West”. Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁷⁴ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

the revitalization of their common heritage of spirituality, peace giving light and love”,¹⁷⁵ just echoed the newly turned position of Liang Qichao.

This position, however, was not welcomed by everyone in 1920s China. A major legacy of the May Fourth movement was an iconoclastic belief of attributing the weakness of China to the backwardness of its own tradition, and a renewed understanding that modernity could only be achieved by copying Western models.¹⁷⁶ The visit of Tagore and his main message that Eastern culture was superior to Western one, therefore, triggered much controversy in the cultural arena.¹⁷⁷ Opponents handed out leaflets in Tagore’s lectures in an attempt to drive him back to his home country, and he was disheartened in the end of his stay.¹⁷⁸ Lu Xun, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), and many other writers shared the opponents’ position.¹⁷⁹

As a student of Liang Qichao, Xu Zhimo admired Tagore to a “fanatic” extent,¹⁸⁰ and acted as his tour guide and interpreter throughout his visit in China. It was generally believed that the name “Crescent Moon” was taken from the poetry anthology of Tagore, *Crescent Moon*.¹⁸¹ Apart from Xu Zhimo, other members of the Society, including Hu Shi, Zhang Junmai, Chen Xiying, Lin Huiyin, Lin Changmin

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 71

¹⁷⁶ Y.C.Wang discusses this predominant thought of disparaging traditional Chinese culture and advocating Westernisation of the generation. Y.C.Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949*. The University of North Carolina Press. 1966. p. 394.

¹⁷⁷ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 118.

¹⁷⁹ Whenever spoke of the visit of Tagore, Lu Xun would show a satirical tone, viewing Tagore as bearing a “metaphysical and mysterious temperament” (“玄气” *Xuanqi*). Guo Moruo also ridiculed that Tagore was “a sage of the noble class” and himself a “cheap mediocrity”, and believed that “all the ‘Buddhist’ teaching, dignity of the ‘individual’, gospel of ‘love’ are nothing but the morphine and coconut wine of the leisurely bourgeoisie”. cf: 1) Lu Xun 鲁迅, “论照相之类” *Lun zhaoxiang zhilei* (“On the Types of Photography”). 《鲁迅全集·第1卷》 *Lu Xun quanji-di 1 juan* (*Complete Works of Lu Xun, Volume 1*), People’s Literature Publishing House, 2005. p. 195. 2) Guo Moruo 郭沫若, “太戈尔来华的我见” *Taige'er laihua de wojian* (“My Opinion on Tagore’s Visit to China”). 《创造周报》 *Chuangzao zhoubao* (*Creation Weekly*) no. 23, 14th October 1923.

¹⁸⁰ Chen Xiying 陈西滢, “关于新月社: 复董保中先生的一封信” *Guanyu Xinyue she: Fu Dong Baozhong xiansheng de yifengxin* (“About the Crescent Moon Society: A Letter in Reply to Mr. Constantine Tung”). 《难忘徐志摩》 *Nanwang Xu Zhimo* (*In Memory of Xu Zhimo*), edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Kunlun Publishing House, 2001. p. 79.

¹⁸¹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “忆《新月》” *Yi Xinyue* (“Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*”). 《梁实秋文学回忆录》 *Liang Shiqiu wenxue huiyi lu* (*Literary Memoirs of Liang Shiqiu*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Hunan: Yuelu Publishing House, 1989. p. 107.

and Ding Xilin, also welcomed the guest enthusiastically. The most conspicuous event held by the Society was the performance of Tagore's drama, *Chitra*. In celebrating Tagore's birthday, the Crescent Moon members staged his favourite play, which not only impressed Tagore himself but also made a splash in the Beijing cultural arena.¹⁸²

The comparatively positive attitude toward the visit of Tagore betrayed the Crescent Moon members' cultural position for the first time. As returned students from the West, most of them had a more comprehensive understanding of Western culture and a more rational and critical vision of East-West culture encounters. Unlike the iconoclastic voices prevalent in the May Fourth era, Xu and his fellow friends shared the position with Liang Qichao, calling for a re-assessment of Chinese tradition and a rational and critical evaluation of Western culture.¹⁸³ This cultural position, though not displayed to the full at this initial stage, had a delayed influence and guided various activities of the Crescent Moon School in the future.

As an important, if not a founding member of the Crescent Moon Society, Hu Shi's attitude is particularly worth noting. Hu Shi was one of the leaders in the New Culture Movement in the May Fourth era, and a pioneering advocate of the vernacular language and Western civilisation. His attitude to Tagore, however, was different from the other May Fourth iconoclasts. While not necessarily agreeing with Tagore's view of Eastern and Western cultures, he appealed to the Chinese youths to show their tolerance and courtesy to the guest. What he praised was the humanitarian and peace-loving messages presented by Tagore. Perhaps from the reception of Tagore, Hu Shi had already displayed his preference for the "middle way". Jonathan D. Spence has an insightful remark about the ambiguity of Hu Shi's cultural position, explaining clearly the foundation on which Hu Shi could fit into the generally conservative Crescent Moon School:

¹⁸² Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 106-107.

¹⁸³ See Constantine Tung's discussion of Xu Zhimo's attitude to Chinese tradition, especially Confucianism. Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-98.

[Hu Shi felt] that he was a member of a transitional generation that had obligations both to the past and to the future, and was doomed to make sacrifices for both. His boldness in some cultural and historical matters existed side by side with his caution over speedy solutions...He grew more politically conservative in the early 1920s, however, and tried to find a democratic middle way between competing factions.¹⁸⁴

With “the only achievement” of welcoming Tagore,¹⁸⁵ the Crescent Moon Society did not draw much attention from the public. Both its beginning and closure were quiet and unnoticeable. But on the other hand, this society stage saw the first discovery and display of the Crescent Moon spirit. With activities carried out under a collective name,¹⁸⁶ this society stage can be regarded as the beginning of these people forming their group consciousness.

2. Poetry and Drama: Formation of the Literary Crescent Moon School

1) The Meeting of Two Groups

The year 1926 was meaningful in the Crescent Moon history. It was in this year that two groups with similar educational and cultural backgrounds met, running publications together, forming a *tongren* group (同人)¹⁸⁷ that was to become the rudiment of the future Crescent Moon School. Moreover, this group of people, having publications of their own, was to spread out their distinctive literary values and lead a poetic trend in mid-1920s. A literary Crescent Moon was taking shape.

One of the two groups was the above-mentioned Crescent Moon Society led by Xu Zhimo. In October 1925, Xu was invited to be the editor-in-chief of the *Morning*

¹⁸⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. p. 316.

¹⁸⁵ In the open letter to his Crescent Moon fellows, Xu Zhimo noted with regret that “*Chitra* we played last April was the only achievement we made during this year, and it was largely thanks to the birthday of Mr. Tagore”. Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “To the Crescent Moon”, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁶ Michel Hockx considers “usage of the name of the society” as the indicator for a literary society to function as an institution. Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁷ *Tongren* (同人), a term derives from Japanese, meaning people with shared interests or ideals. According to Michel Hockx, the term refers to “ties of friendship or comradeship, rather than to official membership of some organisation”. Michel Hockx, “Playing the Field”. *The Literary Field of Twentieth-century China*, edited by Michel Hockx, University of Hawai'i Press. 1999. p. 74.

Post Supplement (《晨报副刊》 *Chenbao fukan*), one of the “Four Big Supplements”¹⁸⁸ established in the New Culture Movement. Xu and his friends from the Crescent Moon Society, who had been loosely bound by the social club, eventually found a platform of expressing their own opinions.¹⁸⁹ The Supplement soon gathered a group of writers and artists with Western educational background, and many of them played a crucial role in the later activities of the Crescent Moon group.

Apart from literature and art, Xu Zhimo also contributed a few political articles during this period, demonstrating his non-radical political position. His distaste for violent revolution, opposition to Communism and Marxist class theory, admiration for the “liberal and yet conservative” British politics, and belief in individualism and independent thought were shared by his Crescent Moon friends.¹⁹⁰ Taking the Supplement as a forum, these liberal intellectuals had several polemic debates with those in support of the Communist cause.¹⁹¹ Their political ideals were to be fully displayed later in Shanghai when they published the more influential *Crescent Moon Monthly*.

At the same time, another group, consisted mainly of graduates from the Qinghua School (清华学校 *Qinghua xuexiao*), was gathering in the United States, developing their interests in poetry and drama, and looking for like-minded companions.

As a preparatory school for students later to be sent abroad to study in the U.S., the Qinghua School adopted a complete American-style curriculum, and students were acquainted with Western culture at a young age and had a good command of the English language.¹⁹² The Qinghua Literature Society (清华文学社 *Qinghua wenxue she*), established in November 1921, was one of the most prominent student societies

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 69.

¹⁸⁹ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 191-194.

¹⁹⁰ For Xu Zhimo’s views on society and politics, see 1) Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 195-203. 2) Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 96-108.

¹⁹¹ Gaylord Leung studies the “anti-Communist discussion” based in *Morning Post Supplement* in detail. Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, pp. 195-197.

¹⁹² For details about Qinghua School and the ramifications of this educational system, see Y.C. Wang, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-116.

at the school, attracting many students who later became important figures in modern literary history.

Founding members of the Qinghua Literature Society included Wen Yiduo, Liang Shiqiu, Gu Yuxiu 顾毓秀 (1902-2002), Yang Shi'en 杨世恩 (?-1926), Rao Mengkan, Zhu Xiang, Sun Dayu, etc.¹⁹³ These people, joined later by Xu Zhimo, launched a poetic reform on the *Morning Post Supplement* in 1926, and were considered key figures of the Crescent Moon poetic school.

Activities of the Qinghua Literature Society included lectures and book report seminars. It was from this student literary society that the most important literary thought of the Crescent Moon School took shape. Out of their collective concern about poetic artistry and literariness, the Society discussed many topics on new literature, especially new poetry. Wen Yiduo, the leader and “big brother”¹⁹⁴ of the group of friends, reported on the topic of “A Study of Rhythm in Poetry” (“诗底音节的研究” *Shi di yinjie de yanjiu*), “foreshadowing his 1926 study on ‘The Form of Poetry’” (“诗的格律” *Shide Gelü*).¹⁹⁵

Wen Yiduo was born into an old-fashioned gentry family in a small town in Hubei in 1899. He was brought up in the traditional way of education, immersed in Chinese classical art and literature and growing in his mind a deep affection for it. The thought of Wen Yiduo seems to have changed several times. He used to be a radical student in the May Fourth demonstration, writing stirring propaganda and handing out announcements to motivate the others. In the United States, he turned more and more conservative and after taking classes on English poetry, he discovered his strong interest in poetry rather than his original major in painting.¹⁹⁶ Upon returning to China, he led the formalisation experimentation of new poetry, and as one of the

¹⁹³ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “谈闻一多” *Tan Wen Yiduo* (“On Wen Yiduo”). 《梁实秋文学回忆录》 *Liang Shiqiu wenzue huiyi lu* (*Literary Memoirs of Liang Shiqiu*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Hunan: Yuelu Publishing House, 1989. p. 259

¹⁹⁴ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Wen Yiduo”, *op.cit.*, p. 259.

¹⁹⁵ Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

most influential poets of the time, he stopped writing new poetry and buried himself in studying classical literature. The most dramatic change occurred after the breakout of the Sino-Japanese War, during which Wen became a well-known fighter and was assassinated in 1946. Despite his many changes, as Kai-yu Hsu analyses, there remained something constant in his intellectual outlook, which was “a belief in the beauty of Beauty and in the beauty of China’s cultural traditions”.¹⁹⁷ His tradition-oriented view on new poetry reform, his dedication to the ancient classical scholarship, and his final eruption of political passion to die for his country and fellow people were all out of this romantic pursuit of “beauty”.

Back to their school days, Wen Yiduo and Liang Shiqiu used to be on close terms with Guo Moruo and his Creation Society. Wen’s affection for Guo was mainly due to the latter’s brilliant poetic artistry and creativity. Liang Shiqiu commented on Wen’s poetic outlook:

He [Wen Yiduo] disliked the poetry and poetic views of Mr. Hu Shizhi 胡适之, and he was particularly scornful of the so-called ‘poetry of the ordinary people’ preached by Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990) and the others. What he emphasised was the artistry, imagination and emotion of poetry, rather than the relation between poetry and the ordinary people.¹⁹⁸

Upon arriving the U.S., however, Wen soon realised his incompatibility with the Creation Society because of the “Westernised poetic style”¹⁹⁹ and “extreme Aestheticism”²⁰⁰ preached by Guo Moruo. Liang Shiqiu also came to be aware of his different taste and view of life from those of the Creation members. After visiting

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 180.

¹⁹⁸ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Wen Yiduo”, *op.cit.*, p. 262.

¹⁹⁹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “致亲爱的朋友们” *Zhi qinai de pengyou men* (“To Dear Friends”), 27th Aug. 1922. 《闻一多全集 12·书信日记附录》 *Wen Yiduo quanji shier, shuxin riji fulu* (*Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 12: Letters, Diary, Appendix*), edited by Wen Lidiao 闻立雕, Wen Ming 闻铭, Wang Kesi 王克私, Hubei People’s Press, 1994, p. 62.

²⁰⁰ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “致梁实秋、吴景超” *Zhi Liang Shiqiu, Wu Jingchao* (“A Letter to Liang Shiqiu and Wu Jingchao”), 29th September 1922. *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 12: Letters, Diary, Appendix, op.cit.*, p. 81.

Guo in 1921, he concluded, “a tough life [of the Creation members] nurtured a kind of very rough behaviour and rebellious spirit, which was a pity indeed”.²⁰¹

It was the different literary views, life attitudes, and temperaments slowly cultivated through family background and educational experience that distanced these Qinghua graduates from the Creation Society. It was also the reason why the Qinghua group felt familiar with the Crescent Moon members, who were brought up in a similar background and educated in a similar Western atmosphere.²⁰² In a letter to his Qinghua friends, Wen Yiduo disclosed his ambition of “leading a literary trend or a literary school” in China.²⁰³ The familiarity with the Anglo-American-trained Crescent Moon Society led them to join hands together, building up literary theories based on their Western academic trainings.

2) *Poetry Supplement: Opening Up a New Era of New Poetry Development*

In June 1925, Wen Yiduo, Yu Shangyuan 余上沅(1897-1970), and Zhao Taimou 赵太侗(1889-1968) returned to China from the U.S. They chose Beijing as the first stop of their career and lived with their old friends from the Qinghua Literature Society. With a shared interest in poetry, they came together to discuss the development of new poetry, and their residence soon became a “paradise of the new poets”.²⁰⁴ They came to be aware of the importance of having a publication of their own. To solve the financial difficulty and avoid the censorship from the government,

²⁰¹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “谈徐志摩” *Tan Xu zhimo* (“On Xu Zhimo”). 《梁实秋文学回忆录》 *Liang Shiqiu wenxue huiyi lu* (*Literary Memoirs of Liang Shiqiu*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Hunan: Yuelu Publishing House, 1989. p. 186.

²⁰² The Crescent Moon School and Creation Society represent two types of intellectuals that Y.C. Wang characterises as “the refined, erudite specialists” who were mostly Anglo-American-trained, and “the crude, often abusive men of letters” who were mainly Japanese-trained. The division was “almost entirely along educational lines”. Y.C. Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 406.

²⁰³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “A Letter to Liang Shiqiu and Wu Jingchao”, 29th September 1922, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

²⁰⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “诗刊弁言” *Shikan bianyan* (“Preface to *Poetry Supplement*”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》1号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan yihao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 1*), 1st April 1926.

they decided to seek cooperation with Xu Zhimo, the editor-in-chief of the *Morning Post Supplement*.²⁰⁵

As an enthusiastic poet, Xu was also looking forward to companions with the same literary aspirations. He was invited to attend the meeting at the “paradise of the new poets” on 27th March 1926, during which the decision to launch *Poetry Supplement* (*Shijuan*), a poetry weekly on the *Morning Post Supplement*, was made.

Poetry Supplement was launched on 1st April 1926, and lasted for eleven issues until 10th June the same year. Its main contributors constituted a *tongren* group that was later to be known as the “Crescent Moon Poetic School”, including Wen Yiduo, Xu Zhimo, the “four *Zi* of Qinghua”,²⁰⁶ Yu Gengyu 于赓虞 (1902-1963), Jian Xian'ai 蹇先艾 (1906-1994), Shen Congwen, etc. It was not a fixed group since some people, such as Zhu Xiang and Yu Gengyu, left the group earlier due to personal conflicts. But there was no doubt that their literary fame as a poet was established during the *Poetry Supplement* period.

The editorship of *Poetry Supplement* was at first on a rotating basis, with each member editing two issues. But after the sixth issue, Xu Zhimo became the sole editor.²⁰⁷ These friends would meet up every two weeks to submit their articles and poetry works, and exchange their views on poetry. Shen Congwen had a detailed depiction of these meetings:

To run the *Poetry Supplement*, we gathered in the small dark room of Mr. Wen and recited our poetry with delight... We were not only happy, but very serious... [Many poems] were completed in this reading-and-chanting experimentation. Such experimentation led to a principle of our own. Unlike the so-called ‘May Fourth poetry’, we corrected the previously unbridled ‘liberty’ and became a little concerned about the form and

²⁰⁵ Jian Xian'ai 蹇先艾, “《晨报诗刊》的始终” *Chenbao Shikan de shizhong* (“The Whole Story of *Poetry Supplement to Morning Post*”). 《新文学史料》 *Xin wenxue shiliao* (*Historical Materials of New Literature*), 1979 (3).

²⁰⁶ “Four *Zi* of Qinghua” (“清华四子”) refers to Zhu Xiang (*Ziyuan*) 朱湘(子沅), Sun Dayu (*Ziqian*) 孙大雨(子潜), Rao Mengkan (*Zili*) 饶孟侃(子离), and Yang Shi'en (*Zihui*) 杨世恩(子惠). Their courtesy names (“字” *Zi*, included in parenthesis) all contained the character of “*Zi*” (“子”). Moreover, in ancient Chinese, the character “子” *Zi* is also an honorific title to refer to the knowledgeable and learned men of letters. So the “four *Zi* of Qinghua” also means the four learned poets in Qinghua.

²⁰⁷ Jian Xian'ai 蹇先艾, *op.cit.*

diction of poetry. As far as the literary revolution is concerned, it seems that we were going a little bit backward.²⁰⁸

“Correcting the previously unbridled liberty” was the main spirit of the poetic reform launched in *Poetry Supplement*. New poetry, echoing the spirit of the New Culture Movement, appeared initially as a token of resolute revolt against tradition.²⁰⁹ Hu Shi envisaged the Literary Revolution as essentially an “emancipation”,²¹⁰ and Guo Moruo further practiced a romantic-style poetry that celebrated “an effusive, unfettered ‘I’”.²¹¹ The new poetry was, to the Crescent Moon members, heading to “unbridled liberty” in both form and content. Dissatisfied with the straightforward expression of the “exuberant egotism”²¹² and the unrestrained use of foreign expressions and themes,²¹³ the Crescent Moon poets launched a Formalisation Movement in an effort to restore order, form, and a sense of “Chineseness” back to the overly emancipated new poetry.

This spirit was first displayed in an article written by Liang Shiqiu, entitled “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature” (“现代中国文学之浪漫的趋势” *Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue zhi langman de qushi*). Published in *Morning Post* right one week before the launch of *Poetry Supplement*, it was said to have foreshadowed the beginning of the poetic reform. The article was a critical reflection on the current state and trends of modern Chinese literature after the New Culture Movement, and by categorizing new literature into two groups, namely, “the classic” and “the romantic”, it criticised the overly sentimental and romantic trend of new literature, which was influenced by “foreign literatures” and sought nothing but “the new and the peculiar”.²¹⁴ Guided by the New Humanist theory of Irving Babbitt (1865-

²⁰⁸ Shen Congwen 沈从文, “谈朗诵诗” *Tan langsong shi* (“On Poetry Reciting”). 《沈从文全集·第17卷·文论》 *Shen Congwen quanji, di 17 juan, wenlun* (*The Complete Works of Shen Congwen, Volume 17, Literary Criticism*). Taiyuan: Beiyue Literary and Art Publishing House, 2002. pp. 244-245.

²⁰⁹ For details about new poetry revolution, see Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 31-36. See also John A. Crespi, “Form and Reform: New Poetry and the Crescent Moon Society”. *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, edited by Kirk A. Denton, Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 121-127.

²¹⁰ Patricia Uberoi, “Rhythmic Techniques in the Poetry of Wen I-to”, *United College Journal 聯合書院學報*, Vol 6 (1967), p. 1.

²¹¹ John A. Crespi, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “To Dear Friends”, 27th Aug. 1922. *Op.cit.*, p. 62.

²¹⁴ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*

1933),²¹⁵ Liang's mentor when he was studying at Harvard University, the article opposed the "romantic chaos" in modern Chinese literature with the spirit of reason and restraint,²¹⁶ and criticised the vernacular literature advocated by the romantics for "sacrificing literature to language".²¹⁷

The following poetic reform led by Wen Yiduo and the "four *Zi*" echoed this article in both theory and practice. Wen put forward his theory of "form" (格律 *Gelü*), believing that "one can no more dispense with rules when playing chess than one can dispense with form when writing poetry".²¹⁸ He argued that poetry can only be "composed" "after a process of editing and selection",²¹⁹ and opposed the romantic advocacy of "Return to Nature" because Nature "exists in an imperfect state, and only Art can remedy Nature's deficiencies".²²⁰ Not only discussing these general principles, Wen also put forward a set of practical rules of how to write poetry in "*Gelü*". His *Gelü* theory was adapted from English prosodic rules, but took into consideration Chinese linguistic features. Disappointed with the current poetic trend that tended to fill the works with "a hedious [*sic*] confusion of foreing [*sic*] terms, foreign expressions, foreign allusions, foreign themes and foreign thoughts",²²¹ Wen sought to find a solution that could truly synthesise the elements from Chinese and Western poetics. Moreover, Rao Mengkan and Sun Dayu also presented their own theories on poetic form, namely, the theory of Rhythm ("音节" *yinjie*) from Rao and the theory of "Metrical Groups" (音组 *yinzū*) from Sun. Based in *Poetry Supplement*,

²¹⁵ New Humanism was a literary and cultural theory put forward by Irving Babbitt in the early 20th century. This strand of thought seeks to re-establish the past moral and ethical order in an age of industrialisation and materialism, and strongly opposes the romantic literary trend opened up by Rousseau. It advocates a classical aesthetic value, stressing order, reason, balance, harmony, reconciliation, self-restraint and self-education. It has been usually regarded as a strand of conservative thought in the United States. I will discuss this theory and its influence on Liang Shiqiu and the Crescent Moon members in Chapter 4. cf: Russell Kirk, "Critical Conservatism: Babbitt, More, Santayana". *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, BN Publishing, 2008, pp. 366-369.

²¹⁶ Marián Gálík observes that seeing the literary development "from the visual angle of dichotomy of classicism and romanticism" is an evidence of Liang's inheritance from Babbitt. Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 302.

²¹⁷ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature". *op.cit.*

²¹⁸ Wen Yiduo, "Form in Poetry", translated by Randy Trumbull. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*, edited by Kirk A. Denton, Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 318.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 321.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 319.

²²¹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, "To Dear Friends", 27th Aug. 1922. *Op.cit.*, p. 62.

these friends came together to “promote the study and refinement of vernacular poetic styles and forms”.²²²

By establishing rules and forms in new poetry, the poetic reform attracted more and more readers and followers, establishing a new trend in the development of vernacular poetry. “I believe new poetry will definitely enter into a new era of construction very soon,”²²³ as Wen Yiduo asserted. With a systematic theory of their own, the friends gathered in *Poetry Supplement* were considered a coherent poetic group. Zhu Ziqing advisedly termed the group “Regulated Poetic School”,²²⁴ and commented that “although there were only 11 issues of *Poetry Supplement* published, it had a significant influence. Everyone at that time wrote regulated poems. Even those who did not care about form previously would write in form.”²²⁵

While attracting many followers, however, there were also voices that opposed the formalistic experimentation. Opponents criticised the excessively rigid form and the lack of flexibility and vitality in poetic content.²²⁶ The term “Dry bean-curd verse” (“豆腐干诗” *Doufugan shi*)²²⁷ reflected their disdain of the regulated new poetry advocated in *Poetry Supplement*.

The poetic reform ended after the 11th issue, where Xu Zhimo declared that “*Poetry Supplement* would go on holiday”, and its place was given to *Drama Supplement* (*Jukan*).²²⁸ Despite its short existence, no one can ignore the role it played in new poetry history. Apart from the poetic theories and works produced in this period, “the seriousness of the Crescent poets toward their work, toward every word and every line they wrote, has left a lasting influence on modern Chinese poetry”.²²⁹

²²² Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

²²³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 144.

²²⁴ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 149-150.

²²⁶ Tianxin 天心, “随便谈谈译诗与作诗” *Suibian tantan yishi yu zuoshi* (“A Casual Talk about Poetry Translation and Creation”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》8号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan bahao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 8*), 20th May 1926.

²²⁷ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.* p. 150.

²²⁸ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “*Poetry Supplement On Holiday*”, *op.cit.*

²²⁹ Kai-yu Hsu, “Introduction”, *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry: An Anthology*. Anchor Books, 1964, p. xxv.

3) *Drama Supplement*: “A Half-broken Dream”²³⁰

As a successor to *Poetry Supplement*, *Drama Supplement* was another cooperation between the Crescent Moon Society and the Qinghua graduates who had studied in the U.S. The leader of this group of drama enthusiasts was Yu Shangyuan. Yu came to be interested in drama when he was very young, and he studied Theatrical Literature and Art at Carnegie University and Columbia University respectively.²³¹ It was in the U.S. that Yu not only received academic trainings in drama, but also gathered around him a group of friends sharing the same passion in performing plays. This was a group of students majoring in the art, technique, or theory of drama, including Zhao Taimou and Lin Huiyin in stage designing, Zhang Jiazhu 张嘉铸 in art criticism, Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 (1900-1965) in drama and literature, and some amateurs such as Wen Yiduo in painting, Liang Shiqiu in English literature, etc. They established a “Chinese Drama Reform Society” (中华戏剧改进社 *Zhonghua xiju gaijin she*) in the U.S. and put forward an idea of “National Drama Movement” (国剧运动 *Guoju yundong*).²³² In 1924, their adaptation and public performance of the traditional Chinese drama “Imperial Consort Yang” (“杨贵妃” *Yang Guifei*) in New York was well received by the American audience, boosting their confidence in modernising the traditional drama according to the expertise they had learnt in the U.S.

The “National Drama” proposed by this group of students was “spoken drama” (话剧 *Huaju*), a new theatrical form appeared in China in 1900s under the influence of Western-style play. Unlike traditional Chinese opera, it takes the form of spoken

²³⁰ “A half-broken dream” (一个半破的梦 *Yige banpo de meng*) was the title of a letter from Yu Shangyuan to Zhang Jiazhu. The letter was also published on *Drama Supplement* as a kind of closing remark, so it seems that this phrase was the conclusion made by Yu Shangyuan about their drama movement based in *Drama Supplement*. cf: Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “一个半破的梦——致张嘉铸君书” *Yige banpo de meng: zhi Zhang Jiazhu jun shu* (“A Half-Broken Dream: A Letter to Zhang Jiazhu”). 《晨报副刊·剧刊》15号 *Chenbao fukan jukan shiwu hao* (*Drama Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 15*), 23rd September 1926.

²³¹ Chen Hengcui 陈衡粹, “余上沅小传” *Yu Shangyuan xiaozhuan* (“Brief Biography of Yu Shangyuan”). 《余上沅戏剧论文集》 *Yu Shangyuan xiju lunwen ji* (*Collected Works on Drama Studies of Yu Shangyuan*), Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986. pp. 538-539.

²³² Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “致胡适” *Zhi Hu Shi* (“A Letter to Hu Shi”), 18th January 1925. *Collected Works on Drama Studies of Yu Shangyuan, op.cit.*, pp. 134-135.

dialogue instead of singing and music. Initiated by a group of overseas students in Japan,²³³ early spoken drama was introduced to China mainly as a medium of propagandising various new ideas, and as a result, it dealt with such topics as rebellion against oppression, fight for national sovereignty, reform and revolution, female emancipation, etc. with materials from both China and abroad.²³⁴ May Fourth Movement and the following intellectual developments brought about an increasing number of plays with an anti-traditional note, echoing the iconoclastic zeitgeist. Advocates of spoken drama were mostly “young intellectuals strongly influenced by Western education”,²³⁵ and they were also the most active social reformers. “By background, by aspiration and by the nature of predominant literary and political trends it was fairly natural for many of these young intellectuals to oppose traditional drama”.²³⁶

There were many debates on theatrical reform after the New Culture Movement. Qian Xuantong 钱玄同 (1887-1939) represented the radicals who totally negated the value of old drama and claimed that “the only real drama is the Western-styled one”. Liu Fu 刘复 (1891-1934) was more conservative, believing that old drama should be reformed without total negation. Song Chunfang 宋春舫 (1892-1938) was the only one who advocated a preservation of old drama, in the belief that traditional opera and spoken drama had their separate values and therefore could coexist.²³⁷ Among these heated debates, “a general consensus emerged that spoken dramas should be realistic and reflect contemporary society”.²³⁸

It was not surprising that the Crescent Moon members, as Western-educated intellectuals, would devote themselves to drama reform. As ambitious as their contemporaries, they endeavoured to launch a “National Drama Movement”, with

²³³ Colin Mackerras, *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey*. New World Press, 1990, p. 105.

²³⁴ William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama*, Elek Books Limited, 1976, p. 201.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 205.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 206.

²³⁷ Hong Shen 洪深, “《戏剧集》导言” *Xijuji daoyan* (“Introduction to the Drama Volume”). 《1917-1927 中国新文学大系导言集》 *1917-1927 Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi daoyan ji* (*Collection of Introductions to <A General Overview of the Chinese New Literature> 1917-1927*), edited by Liu Yunfeng 刘运峰, Tianjin People’s Publishing House, 2009 [1935], pp. 191-194.

²³⁸ Colin Mackerras, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

specific plans including “promoting the concept of new drama, introducing, discussing, and criticizing Chinese and Western plays, studying theatrical theories and techniques, and creating new play scripts”.²³⁹ Taking *Drama Supplement* as a forum, they published many theoretical and critical articles, translation of Western drama theories, and studies on lighting, setting, stage designing, etc. But no creative play script was published due to the limited space of newspaper supplement. The lack of play scripts and practical performance was the main reason why “few people would say that a ‘Crescent Moon Drama school’ ever existed”.²⁴⁰

But it doesn’t mean that the Crescent Moon members contributed little to modern drama movement. First of all, as Hong Shen 洪深 (1894-1955) concluded, for the Chinese drama movement, the “establishment of the Drama Department in Peking Special College of Arts” was one of the two crucial events taking place in 1925.²⁴¹ The Drama Department was established by Wen Yiduo, Yu Shangyuan, and Zhao Taimou, under the help of the friends from Crescent Moon Society. “It marked the first time when drama, the most disdained art in traditional Chinese society, was associated with the national educational organs”.²⁴²

Secondly, some of the ideas promoted in *Drama Supplement* were quite different from, if not opposed to, the popular understandings about spoken drama at the time, and therefore, they enriched the theatrical debate in the Republican era. Because these ideas well demonstrated the core spirit of the Crescent Moon intellectuals, I will discuss them in more detail.

In 1927, Yu Shangyuan compiled the articles published in *Drama Supplement* into a book, and in the “Preface” of the book Yu regretted that Chinese drama movement

²³⁹ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “剧刊始业” *Jukan shiye* (“Opening Editorial of *Drama Supplement*”). 《晨报副刊·剧刊》1号 *Chenbao fukan jukan yihao* (*Drama Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 1*), 17th June 1926.

²⁴⁰ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.* p. 288.

²⁴¹ Hong Shen 洪深, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

²⁴² Xiong Foxi 熊佛西, 《佛西论剧》 *Foxi lunju* (*Foxi Talks on Drama*). Cited from Hong Shen 洪深, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

taking place in recent years was a complete failure.²⁴³ In the few reasons he listed for the failure, one can find the major artistic principles of the Crescent Moon group.

The first reason Yu listed was the “wrong mission” of the Chinese drama movement. Spoken drama had all along been regarded as a medium of propagandizing ideologies, or in Yu’s words, “art was utilised to correct human mind and improve human life”.²⁴⁴ The original mission of art was to Yu “to delve into the depth of human mind and reveal the original vitality of life”.²⁴⁵ This non-utilitarian view of drama was also shared by other Crescent Moon members. Xu Zhimo, for instance, claimed that “drama was the art of art”,²⁴⁶ and Wen Yiduo believed that “pure art” should not be contaminated by “the various moral, philosophical, or social problems”.²⁴⁷ Opposing the popular “problem plays”,²⁴⁸ drama was for them “a pure form of art” and its highest goal was to achieve a “pure form”.²⁴⁹ Their advocacy of artistic autonomy and stress on the “form” of art seemed untimely and unpopular, because “the conscious use of the spoken drama for progressive political purposes was a fairly constant feature in the history of Chinese theatre from the very beginning”.²⁵⁰ Like their poetic reform, their view of drama was also against the prevalent trend, and a bit distanced from the demand of the time.

The second reason Yu pointed out was a lack of methodology in reforming drama. New drama advocates had been blindly attacking old drama, without properly learning from Western experiences.²⁵¹ Yu believed that modern spoken drama had to learn from Western methodology while at the same time preserving the artistic elements in old drama. He argued for the preservation of old drama, because it was to

²⁴³ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “《国剧运动》序” *Guoju yundong xu* (“Preface to *National Drama Movement*”). 《国剧运动》 *Guoju Yundong (National Drama Movement)*, edited by Yu Shangyuan, Shanghai Bookstore, 1992 (1927), p. 2.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Opening Editorial of *Drama Supplement*”, *op.cit.*

²⁴⁷ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “戏剧的歧途” *Xiju de qitu* (“Drama on the Wrong Track”). 《晨报副刊·剧刊》2号 *Chenbao fukan jukan erhao (Drama Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 2)*, 24th June 1926.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.* p. 298.

²⁵⁰ Colin Mackerras, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

²⁵¹ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “Preface to *National Drama Movement*”, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

him closer to “pure art”.²⁵² “When establishing our National Drama, we have to build a bridge between the two artistic peaks of [Chinese] ‘impressionism’ (写意 *xieyi*) and [Western] ‘realism’ (写实 *xieshi*)”.²⁵³

This synthetic and conservative view was also expressed in *Drama Supplement*. Zhao Taimou praised the “impressionistic style” (形意 *xingyi*) in old Chinese drama,²⁵⁴ advocating a combination between Chinese and Western techniques. As Hong Shen observed, “their National Drama was built upon the foundation of old drama”.²⁵⁵ Such a synthesizing and eclectic vision shows the Crescent Moon members’ slightly conservative mentality that was against the radical subversion of old tradition. But unlike the stubborn supporters of old drama, their preservation of native culture was not premised on a rejection of foreign culture.²⁵⁶ They had an open and modernised vision.

Aside from the two internal reasons, Yu also listed a third, external reason for the failure of the Chinese drama movement, which was the lack of funding and public support. Unlike literary creation, Yu noted that the performance of a play required extra financial support, which relied mainly on the funding and enthusiasm of the public.²⁵⁷ But Beijing in the late 1920s was fragmented by warlord regimes and endless wars. Harsh social reality rendered the drama movement, especially the movement of “pure art” advocated by the Crescent Moon group, almost a failure. As Yu Shangyuan lamented, “How could you impose the concept of drama to a society that does not want it?”²⁵⁸

²⁵² Ibid. p. 6.

²⁵³ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “National Drama”. Cited from Hong Shen 洪深, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

²⁵⁴ Zhao argued that old drama, and traditional Chinese art at large, was characterised by this “impressionistic style”, or “Conventionalisation”. He gave examples such as waving a horsewhip to suggest riding, pushing and knocking in the air as if there was a door, piling up chairs to indicate a mountain, four soldiers to represent an army, etc. In contrast, Western art was realistic, directly describing life as it was. Zhao Taimou 赵太侗, “国剧” *Guoju* (“The National Drama”). 《晨报副刊·剧刊》1号 *Chenbao fukan jukan yi hao* (*Drama Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 1*), 17th June 1926.

²⁵⁵ Hong Shen 洪深, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

²⁵⁶ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “Preface to *National Drama Movement*”, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 4-8.

²⁵⁸ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, “A Half-Broken Dream: A Letter to Zhang Jiazhu”. *op.cit.*

Yu's analysis of the failure of Chinese drama movement revealed some artistic principles of the Crescent Moon group, including a non-utilitarian, non-propagandistic view of art, and a syncretic and eclectic vision aiming to combine old and new, Chinese and Western artistic elements. These artistic principles were also expressed in their poetic reform and other cultural pursuits, demonstrating a consistent core spirit of the group.

Drama Supplement lasted for only 15 issues until September 1926, when Xu Zhimo resigned his editorship in *Morning Post Supplement* and left the war-stricken capital for his hometown in Zhejiang. Most friends gathering around *Poetry* and *Drama Supplements* chose to leave Beijing during 1926-1927 because of the unfavorable political and economic situation there.²⁵⁹ The closure of *Drama Supplement* marked the end of the first stage of the Crescent Moon School based in Beijing.

3. Crescent Moon Bookstore and *Crescent Moon Monthly*: Making Distinction

1) Establishment of the Crescent Moon Bookstore and Journal

The year 1927 witnessed two opposing moving trends in China, namely, the northward expedition of the National Revolutionary Army, and the southward migration of intellectuals from Beijing to Shanghai. Beijing, the previous "hub of humanist ideals",²⁶⁰ became a turbulent battlefield of the civil war. Both due to financial difficulties and cultural repression of the Warlord regime, intellectuals in Beijing were forced to seek refuge in other cities. As China's largest harbour and treaty port, Shanghai became a cosmopolitan metropolis with a unique urban culture in late 1920s.²⁶¹ With material conveniences, protection of foreign concessions,

²⁵⁹ For detailed depiction of the members' migration, see Constanting Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-61.

²⁶⁰ Yu Shangyuan 余上沅, "A Half-Broken Dream: A Letter to Zhang Jiazhu". *op.cit.*

²⁶¹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: the Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*. Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 3.

burgeoning print culture, and frequent exchanges with the Western world,²⁶² Shanghai seemed to be an ideal haven of refuge for intellectuals. It was particularly ideal for the Crescent Moon friends because many of them were natives of neighbouring cities and towns.²⁶³ By mid-1927, these friends found themselves gathering together in Shanghai.²⁶⁴ This reunion opened up the most active stage of the Crescent Moon School.

Unlike their activities in the Beijing stage when they focused only on literature and art, in Shanghai they opened a share-holding bookstore and ran a *tongren* magazine, the *Crescent Moon Monthly*, involving themselves in commercial business and political debates. The group presented a distinctive image in Shanghai cultural arena through, on the one hand, their polemic debates with the Left-wing writers on the nature of literature, and on the other hand their outspoken protest against the Nationalist government for human rights and freedom of speech. It was also during this period that they got the derogatory name of “Crescent Moon School” from the Left-wing writers.²⁶⁵ Neither “Left” nor “Right”, their independently liberal position earned them a place as one of “the three most important schools of thought” in China in early 1930s, the other two being “Communism” and “the Three People’s Principles”.²⁶⁶ The Shanghai period, in my opinion, was an important stage for the Crescent Moon group to make distinction, or to take positions in the contemporary literary field.

The Crescent Moon bookstore was officially opened on 1st July 1927. An announcement published on *Shenbao* (申报) three days before its opening briefly provided the founding details of the bookstore:

Many of our friends, after finishing their writings, find no proper publishing house; or some others have already stopped writing for a long

²⁶² Leo Ou-fan Lee discussed these unique features of Shanghai at the time as a cultural matrix of Chinese modernity. *Ibid*, pp. 32-36, 43-47, 120-130, 308.

²⁶³ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.* p. 290.

²⁶⁴ Constantine Tung showed how these people reunited in Shanghai in detail. Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-61.

²⁶⁵ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 290.

²⁶⁶ Luo Longji 罗隆基, “A Letter from Luo Longji to Hu Shi”, 5th May 1931, *op.cit.*

time. To boost the publishing industry, we hereby initiate this Crescent Moon Bookstore to print books on the one hand and on the other hand, to undertake the resale. All books to be published will be closely examined, and all books for resale will be under our serious consideration. It would be our great honor if some contributions to education and culture could be made.

Founders:

Hu Shi Song Chunfang Zhang Xinhai 张歆海 Zhang Yujiu 张禹九

Xu Zhimo Xu Xinliu 徐新六 Wu Desheng 吴德生 Yu Shangyuan²⁶⁷

The announcement listed eight founding members, and as Chen Zishan observes, at least five of them used to be members of the Beijing Crescent Moon Society, reflecting the inheritance between the previous Society and the current bookstore.²⁶⁸ The mission of the bookstore, according to the announcement, was to “boost the publishing industry” and to establish a proper platform for “our friends” to speak out their ideas. In this sense, the bookstore was a *tongren* platform in nature.

As for its scope of business, the bookstore was an all-encompassing business that was responsible for the whole process of book production, including buying and editing manuscripts, printing, publishing, distributing and resale. The bookstore took a shareholding system, with 100 *yuan* as big shares and 50 *yuan* as small ones.²⁶⁹ “All the funds required came from the investment of ‘our friends’ (*tongren*)”.²⁷⁰

From 1927 to 1933, the Crescent Moon Bookstore existed as one of the “most prominent small bookstores”²⁷¹ in Shanghai. It published books mainly of the Crescent Moon members, featuring in literature, art, and scholarly research. Despite

²⁶⁷ Chen Zishan 陈子善, “关于新月派的新史料” *Guanyu Xinyue pai de xin shiliao* (“New Historical Materials about the Crescent Moon School”). 《二十世纪中国文学史论·第二卷》 *Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenxue shilun dier juan* (*Study on the 20th century Chinese Literary History, Volume 2*), edited by Wang Xiaoming 王晓明, Oriental Publishing Centre, 1997. pp. 211-212.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 212.

²⁶⁹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*”. *Op.cit.* p. 113.

²⁷⁰ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “关于新月” *Guanyu xinyue* (“About the Crescent Moon”). 《港台·国外谈中国现代文学作家》 *Gangtai guowai tan Zhongguo xiandai wenxue zuojia* (*On Modern Chinese Writers: Recollections from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Overseas Sources*), edited by Cheng Xin 程新, Sichuan Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986 [1980]. p. 162.

²⁷¹ Wang Yintong 汪荫桐, “小书店的发展与后期文化运动” *Xiao shudian de fazhan yu houqi wenhua yundong* (“The Development of Small Bookstores and the Post Culture Movement”). Cited from Kuang Xinnian 旷新年, 《1928 革命文学》 *1928 Geming wenxue* (*1928 Revolutionary Literature*), Shandong Education Press, 1998. p. 36.

its *tongren* character, the bookstore also published a few works of the Left-wing writers.²⁷² Some ambitious plans of publishing large-scale book collections (丛书 *Congshu*) were also made, but not fully realised due to limited budget and unstable social conditions.²⁷³

Eight months after the opening of the bookstore, on 10th March 1928, the first issue of *Crescent Moon Monthly* was published. It is hard now to trace back who exactly raised the idea of running the magazine, but it seems that the decision was made on the “casual talks” after one of the dinner gatherings of these friends.²⁷⁴ Xu Zhimo and Yu Shangyuan were the most enthusiastic about the idea, whereas Liang Shiqiu, Wen Yiduo, and the other Qinghua graduates “agreed to join because it would be better to run a magazine collectively, than to waste time gathering and talking nonsense everyday”.²⁷⁵ It was Xu who named the journal “Crescent Moon”,²⁷⁶ and he disclosed his reason of choosing the name in the opening issue:

We cannot forsake the name because, although it is not such a powerful symbol, the seemingly fragile crescent is implying and embracing a full hope in the future.²⁷⁷

Contributors to the opening issue included almost entirely Western-educated scholars, and from the titles of articles, which covered translations of English poetry, introduction of Western literary and drama theories, a portrait of the English writer Thomas Hardy, etc., one again finds distinct Anglo-American imprints.²⁷⁸

²⁷² The Crescent Moon Bookstore published two fiction collections of Ding Ling 丁玲 and Hu Yepin 胡也频, namely, *Saint* (《圣徒》 *Shengtū*), the first short story collection of Hu Yepin, and *The Birth of A Man* (《一个人的诞生》 *Yige ren de dansheng*), the collaborated fiction collection of Ding Ling and Hu Yepin. cf: Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, pp. 242-243.

²⁷³ For titles of published book collections, see Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, pp. 237-239.

²⁷⁴ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “About the Crescent Moon”. *op.cit.*, p. 161.

²⁷⁵ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*”. *op.cit.*, p. 107.

²⁷⁶ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.* p. 291.

²⁷⁷ “《新月》的态度” *Xinyue de taidu* (“Crescent Moon Attitude”). 《新月月刊创刊号》 (*Crescent Moon: Opening Issue*), 1928.

²⁷⁸ For introduction of the contents and writers of the opening issue, see Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67.

Perhaps due to their Western educational experience, people who founded the journal were all firm believers in individualism and no one would follow other's lead.²⁷⁹ As Jacqueline Estran observes, most of the founders had rich experience and separate dreams in the field of publishing, bringing to the journal a wealth of experience as well as strong personality. Enrichment and conflict marked the birth and history of Crescent Moon,²⁸⁰ foreshadowing its later divisions.

2) "Crescent Moon Attitude"

Aside from the literary, artistic and scholarly articles in the opening issue, "Crescent Moon Attitude", the leading article and manifesto of the Crescent Moon School,²⁸¹ appeared as one that "had not only intellectual and literary significance, but also profound political implications".²⁸² While it was generally believed to be written by Xu Zhimo, its ideas and values were closer to the New Humanist thinking of Liang Shiqiu.²⁸³ The article begins with a general criticism of the entire literary scene at the time, which reminds us of Liang's criticism of modern Chinese literature two years ago.²⁸⁴ Similar to Liang's idea of "Romantic chaos", the manifesto depicts the current literary scene as in a state of "anarchical chaos" because the "market of thinking" was lost in an "absolute freedom".²⁸⁵ It lists thirteen contemporary literary trends that were deemed to be intolerable: the sentimentalists (感伤派 *Ganshang pai*),

²⁷⁹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "《新月》前后" *Xinyue qianhou* ("The Whole Story of *Crescent Moon*"). 《梁实秋文学回忆录》 *Liang Shiqiu wenxue huiyi lu* (*Literary Memoirs of Liang Shiqiu*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Hunan: Yuelu Publishing House, 1989. p. 125.

²⁸⁰ Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, p. 62. For conflicts within the group, see Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.* pp. 291-294.

²⁸¹ Constantine Tung, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

²⁸² *Ibid.* p. 11.

²⁸³ The article was not signed. According to the memoirs of Liang Shiqiu and Ye Gongchao, the article was written by Xu Zhimo. But in a letter to Constantine Tung, Liang recalled that Xu had consulted him in the final writing. Bai Liping also argues that "in all probability, the central principle was put forward by Liang". The article is now included in Xu Zhimo's work collections. cf: 1) Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, 《徐志摩全集·第三卷·散文3》 *Xu Zhimo quanji, disanjuan, sanwen 3* (*The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3*), edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Tianjin People's Press, 2005. pp. 193-199. 2) Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, p. 49. 3) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*", *op.cit.*, p. 109; "The Whole Story of *Crescent Moon*", *op.cit.*, p. 126. 4) Ye Gongchao 叶公超, "About the Crescent Moon", *op.cit.*, p. 161. 5) Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

²⁸⁴ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature", *op.cit.*

²⁸⁵ "Crescent Moon Attitude", *op.cit.*

the decadents (颓废派 *Tuifei pai*), the aestheticists (唯美派 *Weimei pai*), the utilitarianists (功利派 *Gongli pai*), the moralists (训世派 *Xunshi pai*), the aggressors (攻击派 *Gongji pai*), the extremists (偏激派 *Pianji pai*), the refined (纤巧派 *Xianqiao pai*), the pornographers (淫秽派 *Yinhui pai*), the fanatics (热狂派 *Rekuang pai*), the charlatans (稗贩派 *Baifan pai*), the motto-ists (标语派 *Biaoyu pai*), and the ism-ists (主义派 *Zhuyi pai*).²⁸⁶ According to Michel Hockx, this sweeping accusation “is a classical case of ‘position-taking’ by literary producers”.²⁸⁷ By carrying out “a thirteen-fold disavowal”,²⁸⁸ the Crescent Moon members were trying to clear the way and create a new position for themselves in the literary field. The two quotations in the beginning of the article — one from the Bible, “And God said, let there be light: and there was light”, and the other from Shelley, “if winter comes, can Spring be far behind” — was a similar strategy aiming to leave an impression that it was *Crescent Moon* that could bring in light and spring, “penetrat[ing] the dark chaos of China’s literary scene”.²⁸⁹

The “new position” created was represented by the Crescent Moon ideals of literature, characterised by two slogans, “Health” (健康 *Jiankang*) and “Dignity” (尊严 *Zunyan*):

Dignity, for its voice can call back the life that is wandering at the crossroad; health, for its power can eradicate all the bacteria that are eroding our life and thought.

We will see life as a whole. The fragmented or extreme vision, no matter how beautiful or smart it looks like, is not our vision... We seek for the moderate, rather than the extreme or bizarre.²⁹⁰

The above elaboration, though very vague and general, was again resonant with Liang’s understanding of New Humanist thought.²⁹¹ “The premise of ‘restraint’ is an

²⁸⁶ Ibid. The literary trends are translated by Michel Hockx. Michel Hockx, “Playing the Field”, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

²⁸⁷ Michel Hockx, “Playing the Field”. *op.cit.*, p. 69.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

²⁹⁰ “Crescent Moon Attitude”, *op.cit.*

indispensable component” of Liang’s New Humanist vision,²⁹² and “Dignity” and “Health”, as defined in the above passages, both exercise a restraining power to life and literature. Even the phrase — “see life as a whole” — was reminiscent of the English classical critic Matthew Arnold, “s[ee] life steadily and s[ee] it whole”.²⁹³ The manifesto reveals the New Humanist influence, which stresses restraint, order, and moderation, as opposed to extremism, bizarreness, and spur-of-the-moment feelings.²⁹⁴ As Constantine Tung concludes, this search for order, normality, and restraint were the main concerns of the Crescent Moon School.²⁹⁵

At a time when radical revolution was the main zeitgeist, this comparatively conservative position distinguished the Crescent Moon School from most of the other trends in the literary field. This distinction, however, easily invited fierce challenges and attacks, especially from the literary trends that had been criticised in “Crescent Moon Attitude”. Among the thirteen “intolerable” literary forces, at least seven were linked to the popular revolutionary ideas of the Left-wing writers, including utilitarianism, didacticism, detracticism, extremism, fanaticism, sloganism, and ism-ism. It was not surprising that the Leftists responded almost immediately after the article was published.

I do not intend to elaborate on the polemic debates between the Leftists and the Crescent Moon group, as these have been discussed elsewhere.²⁹⁶ It was obvious that, with the manifesto, the Crescent Moon School created a new position in the literary scene, or from the perspective of the Field Theory, they created a new “sub-field”

²⁹¹ The two slogans is also how Liang Shiqiu would praise his mentor, Irving Babbitt, when Liang said “Babbitt does not sermonize, he does not have dogmas, but only sticks to one attitude—that of sanity and dignity”. See Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

²⁹² Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

²⁹³ “Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole” was a line from a poem of Matthew Arnold, entitled “To A Friend”. The phrase was frequently quoted by Liang Shiqiu, reflecting his preference for Arnold and the classical aesthetics.

²⁹⁴ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, pp. 293-298, and p. 302.

²⁹⁵ Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 234-239.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 82-85.

within the field of “new literature”.²⁹⁷ An article in 1933 from Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935, in the name of “何凝” He Ning) demonstrated this process:

From the May Fourth Movement to the May Thirtieth Incident, the Chinese intellectual field is preparing for a second “Great Division”. It is no longer the division between the old and new cultures, but a division within the field of the new culture. There is the camp of the proletariat on the one side, and on the other side there is the camp of the bourgeoisie who were attached to the residue of the old feudalism. This new reactionary thought was concealed under the cloak of Europeanisation, or under the new clothes of the so-called May Fourth spirit... Indeed, defenders of the old culture are declining, and they are in urgent need of injecting some fresh blood of the ‘Europeanised’ tradition and ‘pedanticism’ acquired from Oxford, Cambridge, and Columbia into their dying bodies to seek a temporary revival...²⁹⁸

Qu was very sensitive to the emergence of the new “sub-field” brought about by the “Europeanised gentlemen”.²⁹⁹ Unlike Lu Xun or Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896-1981), who were critical of revolutionary literature mainly because of its lack of artistry and ideological depth,³⁰⁰ the Crescent Moon School was concerned about its “pan-political-ism”,³⁰¹ and “posed the threat of an alternative theory of literature”.³⁰² They offered the “familiar Anglo-American notion of the autonomy of literature”, considering literature to be individual, elitist, and non-utilitarian.³⁰³ “Crescent Moon Attitude” and its criticism of the radical and utilitarian attitude toward life and literature demonstrated what John Fairbank has called the division in the 1930s intellectual scene between the “academically inclined reformist” and the “activist-

²⁹⁷ Michel Hockx demonstrates how “new literature” entered into the literary field and created a new sub-field in early 1920s through a “double disavowal” of classical *Wenyan* writing and of popular fiction. I argue that the Crescent Moon group was creating a new sub-field within “new literature” through their “thirteen-fold disavowal”. Michel Hockx, “Playing the Field”, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-62.

²⁹⁸ He Ning (Qu Qiubai) 何凝 (瞿秋白), “鲁迅杂感选集序” *Lu Xun zagan xuanji xu* (“Preface to *Selected Works of Random Thought Prose of Lu Xun*”). Cited from Li Helin 李何林, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10.

²⁹⁹ Li Helin 李何林, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

³⁰⁰ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-79.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.79.

³⁰² Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends: The Road to Revolution 1927-1949”. *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13*, edited by John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, Cambridge University Press, 1986. pp. 430-431.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 431.

minded revolutionist”, although both are “intellectual inheritors of the May Fourth period”.³⁰⁴

3) Four Faces of Crescent Moon Monthly

From March 1928 to June 1933, a total of 43 issues of *Crescent Moon Monthly* were published. A collective editorship was introduced at first in order to ensure a “democratic” way of management,³⁰⁵ but then the editorial board experienced several reorganisations. With the change of editors, the journal focused on different fields and presented different styles. Because previous scholarship has discussed the content of the journal in much detail,³⁰⁶ in this section I will only briefly present the four “faces” of the journal brought about by the three changes of its editorship.

Crescent Moon Monthly was launched at the beginning as a “pure literary” journal. The first thirteen issues³⁰⁷ under the editorship of Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo and Rao Mengkan, the three editors of the previous *Poetry Supplement*, naturally took on a literary and artistic style. The centre of editing was based in Beiping rather than Shanghai during this initial period, “and the edited journals would be posted to Shanghai for printing and distributing”.³⁰⁸ Articles were mostly literary and scholarly, including poetry, essay, fiction, drama theory, literary criticism, eugenic studies, and some classical studies carried out by Hu Shi. As the most valued tradition, poetry occupied a prominent position in every issue. Even when the magazine turned political later, there had always been a certain amount of poetic works published.³⁰⁹ Most contributors in this period were the old friends in the *Poetry Supplement* era, and their experimentation with regulated new poetry proved a continuation with the previous newspaper supplement. In terms of fiction writing, Shen Congwen, Lin

³⁰⁴ John K. Fairbank, “The Rise of the Chinese Republic”. *East Asia: the Modern Transformation*, edited by John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, Albert M. Craig, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965. p. 701.

³⁰⁵ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*”. *op.cit.*, pp. 107-108.

³⁰⁶ cf: Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, and Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*

³⁰⁷ From Issue 1 Volume 1 to Issue 1 Volume 2, the thirteen issues were published during the period from March 1928 to March 1929.

³⁰⁸ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “About the *Crescent Moon*”. *op.cit.*, p. 162.

³⁰⁹ According to Jacqueline Estran, poetry remained the central position throughout the existence of the journal, and therefore poetry was a unifying element of the group. Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

Huiyin, and Ling Shuhua demonstrated their creative talent and started their literary career in the magazine. Their later position as important Beijing School writers indicated an inheritance between the Crescent Moon group and the Beijing School.³¹⁰

This pure literary stance did not last long, as literature and art began to be increasingly enmeshed in politics from 1929.³¹¹ As a growing number of social-political articles appeared, the journal deviated from its original literary track. Dissatisfied with this “political turn”, Xu Zhimo resigned from the editorial post, and revealed in a private letter his wish to “run another pure literary magazine”, because “everyone in *Crescent Moon* seemed to be enthusiastic about politics and disdained working on literature and art”.³¹²

The conflicts between those who were interested in literature and those who wanted to talk politics caused the first editorial reorganisation, and the editing centre of the magazine was moved to Shanghai. From Issue 2, Volume 2, Liang Shiqiu took the lead of the editorial board, and from Issue 6/7, Volume 2 he took over the full editorship until Issue 1 Volume 3.³¹³ Under Liang’s editorship, *Crescent Moon Monthly* took on a sharp and critical face, getting involved in heated polemical battles with the Leftist writers.³¹⁴

Liang Shiqiu became a loyal disciple of Irving Babbitt after taking the latter’s literary criticism class at Harvard University from 1924-1925, during which his “previously

³¹⁰ I will discuss this inheritance in later sections.

³¹¹ Michel Hockx, “Theory As Practice: Modern Chinese Literature and Bourdieu”. *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory*. Edited by Michel Hockx and Ivo Smits, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003, p. 225.

³¹² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “致李祁” *Zhi Li Qi* (“A Letter to Li Qi”), 21st July 1929. 《徐志摩全集·第六卷·书信》 *Xu Zhimo quanji, diliujuan, shuxin* (*The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Six, Letters*), edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Tianjin People’s Press, 2005. pp. 58-59.

³¹³ From Issue 2 Volume 2 to Issue 1 Volume 3, the eleven issues were published during the period from April 1929 to March 1930. But this is the information printed on the colophon of the journals. The actual publication dates were different from the printed information. There had been many delays and combined issues. Especially from Issue 3 Volume 3, there were no publication dates printed on the colophon, and the journal became an irregular publication.

³¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of Liang’s thought and his debate with the Leftists on *Crescent Moon Monthly*, see Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 162-196.

extreme romantic belief” was turned into “a classical position”.³¹⁵ It was with Babbitt and his New Humanist theory that Liang fought against the Leftist writers, especially Lu Xun. Liang’s relatively conservative view³¹⁶ was “intolerable to the Leftists” in the iconoclastic era,³¹⁷ which was the reason why the Leftists would take the Crescent Moon group as a main target of attack.³¹⁸

The basic literary views and concepts of Liang Shiqiu were diametrically opposed to those held by the Leftist writers. The latter’s stirring writing style and unchecked “universal sympathy” was to Liang “a lack of emotional restraint”, and he advocated a literature that was disciplined by reason.³¹⁹ He not only opposed the utilitarian view of the leftist literature, but he simply denied the existence of “revolutionary literature”,³²⁰ because “revolution is something outside literature and...cannot be characterised by it”.³²¹ He rejected the “class character” of literature that was upheld by the Leftists,³²² declaring “human nature” to be “the only standard for a knowledge and determination of literary value”.³²³ In this sense, the term “proletarian literature” was in itself a paradox, since literature was neither created nor evaluated by its class nature. He held an “elitist” literary view, regarding literature as always a privilege of the minority and a product of a few talented elites.³²⁴ “Literature of the masses” was

³¹⁵ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “关于白璧德先生及其思想” *Guanyu Baibide xiansheng jiqi sixiang* (“On Mr. Babbitt and His Thought”). 《梁实秋批评文集》 *Liang Shiqiu piping wenji* (*Criticisms of Liang Shiqiu*), edited by Xu Jingbo 徐静波, Zhuhai Press, 1998. p. 213.

³¹⁶ Both Liang Shiqiu and his mentor Babbitt were considered as “conservatives” by critics. Babbitt’s thought was described as “critical conservatism”, representing “the maturity of American conservatism” cf: 1) Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 306. 2) Russell Kirk, *op.cit.*, p. 366.

³¹⁷ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “About the Crescent Moon”, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

³¹⁸ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 299.

³¹⁹ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-297. Also: Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “文学的纪律” *Wenxue de jilü* (“The Discipline of Literature”). 《新月》月刊 1 卷 1 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 1 Volume 1, Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore, 1928.3.

³²⁰ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “文学与革命” *Wenxue yu geming* (“Literature and Revolution”). 《新月》月刊 1 卷 4 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 4 Volume 1, Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore, 1928.6.

³²¹ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 306.

³²² Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “文学是有阶级性的吗?” *Wenxue shi you jieji xing de ma?* (“Is Literature Conditioned by Class?”). 《新月》月刊 2 卷 6/7 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 6/7 Volume 2, Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore, 1929.9.

³²³ Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

³²⁴ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “文学与大众” *Wenxue yu dazhong* (“Literature and the Masses”). 《新月》月刊 2 卷 12 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 12 Volume 2, Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore, 1930.2.

again a paradox, since good literature could only be the “individualistic literature” created by the “keen-sighted few”.³²⁵

The debate between Liang and the Leftists was a part of a larger debate on revolutionary literature taking place in the early spring of 1928, in which many prominent writers including Lu Xun and Mao Dun were involved.³²⁶ But “unlike Lu Xun’s and Mao Dun’s defensive positions”, Liang was totally rejecting “the emergent, class-based view of literature that lay at the heart of the debate”,³²⁷ thus standing on the opposite side of revolution. The conservative, anti-leftist image of the Crescent Moon School was further strengthened. Despite Liang’s claim that “none of my *Crescent Moon* friends openly supported me [when fighting with the Leftists]”,³²⁸ he apparently had their support and sympathy.³²⁹ The Crescent Moon writers’ adherence to literary autonomy, their stress on order and restraint, and their aloofness from the people and social reality, as was displayed in their poetic and drama reforms, general literary views, and political elitism in later years, were all supporting Liang’s position in various manners.

While Liang was fighting with the Leftists, the other members “enthusiastic about politics”³³⁰ were involved in another battle with the Nationalist government, discussing sensitive political issues. The political discussions in *Crescent Moon Monthly* started from Issue 2 Volume 2 when Hu Shi and Luo Longji began to publish a few political commentaries. But it was only with the publication of Issue 2 Volume 3 when Luo Longji took over the full editorship from Liang Shiqiu that the political campaign entered into its climax.³³¹

³²⁵ Marián Gálik, *op.cit.*, p. 306.

³²⁶ Charles Laughlin, “The Debate on Revolutionary Literature”. *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, edited by Kirk A. Denton, Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 160-161.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³²⁸ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “Reminiscence of *Crescent Moon*”, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

³²⁹ Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 170.

³³⁰ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “A Letter to Li Qi”, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

³³¹ The journal under Luo Longji’s editorship from Issue 2 Volume 3 to Issue 1 Volume 4 was published during the period from April 1930 to January 1932.

It was not surprising to find that the political discussions in *Crescent Moon Monthly* were coloured with liberal thought, considering they were led by Hu Shi and Luo Longji. Hu Shi had raised the “first systematic summary of opinions that can be identified as ‘liberal’” as early as 1922 in the manifesto of the *Endeavour Weekly* (《努力周报》 *Nuli zhoubao*).³³² Luo Longji, as a Ph.D. in politics from Columbia University, had studied under Harold Laski in 1925 and was influenced by Laski’s liberal thought.³³³ Led by the two liberal-minded members, the Crescent Moon intellectuals came together to discuss political issues modelled on the Fabian Tracts.³³⁴ This informal study group, “the Moderate Society” (平社 *Ping she*), was established to “express some moderate opinions [on current affairs] in moderate words”.³³⁵ Most topics discussed in the Moderate Society meetings were published as political commentaries in *Crescent Moon Monthly*.³³⁶

Topics discussed during this period included the demand for democracy, human rights, the provisional constitution, the rule of law, the freedom of thinking and speech, as well as the protest against one-party dictatorship of the Nationalist government, the authoritarian dictates of Sun Yat-sen, and the militaristic politics, etc., most of which were of the common concerns of the liberal intellectuals.³³⁷ From 1929 to 1931, the politicised *Crescent Moon*, fighting the Leftist Proletarian literature on the one hand and criticising the corrupt Nationalist government on the other hand, demonstrated an independent manner that supported neither the Left nor the Right. The Crescent Moon intellectuals sought to explore “a third way” other than the Nationalists and the Communists, a way that was constructed by modern

³³² Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

³³³ George Orwell described Laski as “A socialist by allegiance, and a liberal by temperament”. See Arthur M., Jr. Schlesinger, “Harold Laski: A Life on the Left”, *Washington Monthly*, Nov.1 1993.

³³⁴ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 236.

³³⁵ “编辑后言” *Bianji houyan* (“Editors’ Afterword”), 《新月》月刊 2 卷 1 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 1 Volume 2. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1929.3.10.

³³⁶ cf: Hu Shi’s Diary on 21st, 27th April, and 11th May 1929. Hu Shi 胡适, 《胡适日记全编 5 (1928-1930)》 *Hu Shi riji quanbian 5* (*Complete Collection of Hu Shi’s Diary 5:1928-1930*), edited by Cao Boyan 曹伯言, Anhui Education Press, 2001. pp. 403, 417-418.

³³⁷ For a detailed discussion about the political campaign launched by the Crescent Moon members, see Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 197-229.

science and intellectual expertise.³³⁸ They stressed on “administrative competence” and “government by experts”,³³⁹ believing that the nation should be “ruled by the most outstanding group of people”,³⁴⁰ those “experts in political science who were selected through exams and elections”.³⁴¹

These elitist political ideas were in effect contradictory to the democratic pursuit of these Western returned intellectuals,³⁴² as Grieder observes, they were “speaking for the people rather than to them”.³⁴³ Their understandings of Chinese society and problems were always abstract and detached,³⁴⁴ thus far removed from the people and the time. “The lack of mass support and the absence of coherent political ideas” made “the whole Western-educated elite” politically weak.³⁴⁵ The liberal elitists were described as “neither conservative nor radical but largely irrelevant” in the context of “the total crisis of Chinese society”.³⁴⁶ It was this irrelevance and ineffectiveness that made the Crescent Moon group, and Chinese liberals at large, unfit for their time, as Grieder remarks:

Liberalism failed in China in its time...Liberalism failed because China was in chaos, and liberalism requires order...It failed because the lives of the Chinese were shaped by force, while liberalism requires that men should live by reason. Liberalism failed in China, in short, because Chinese life was steeped in violence and revolution, and liberalism offers no answers to the great problems of violence and revolution.³⁴⁷

³³⁸ Hu Shi 胡适, “知难, 行亦不易” *Zhinan xing yi buyi* (“Knowledge is Difficult. But Action Is Not Easy Either”). 《新月》月刊 2 卷 4 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 4, Volume 2. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1929.6.10.

³³⁹ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 237.

³⁴⁰ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “亚里士多克拉西” *Yalishiduokelaxi* (“Aristocracy”). 《新月》月刊 1 卷 9 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 9, Volume 1. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1928.11.10.

³⁴¹ Luo Longji 罗隆基, “专家政治” *Zhuanjia zhengzhi* (“Expert Politics”). 《新月》月刊 2 卷 2 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 2, Volume 2. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1929.4.10.

³⁴² Constantine Tung also points out that “the Crescentists adhered to democratic ideals, but they had little confidence in the masses”. Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

³⁴³ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 344.

³⁴⁴ For example, instead of feudalism and imperialism, Hu Shi believed that “the real enemies of China were poverty, disease, ignorance, corruption, and disorder”, which could be gradually conquered with the aid of modern science rather than violent revolution. Hu Shi 胡适, “我们走哪条路?” *Women zou naticao lu?* (“Which Road Shall We Follow?”). 《新月》月刊 2 卷 10 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 10, Volume 2. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1929.12.10.

³⁴⁵ Y.C.Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 421.

³⁴⁶ Meisner, *Li Ta-chao*. Cited from: Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 323.

³⁴⁷ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 345.

The political campaign left the bookstore and journal at high political risks. The bookstore was raided several times by the police, and the monthly, listed as a banned magazine, was confiscated and destroyed many times as well.³⁴⁸ Moreover, the “political turn” of the journal led to a division within the Crescent Moon School since most of the members were more of an intellectual temper. Even Hu Shi gradually felt bored with the unproductive political engagement and withdrew into his scholarship again. The lack of contribution from the old friends made it particularly difficult for Luo Longji to run the magazine by himself.³⁴⁹ The last straw was Xu Zhimo, who suddenly died in an airplane crash on his way from Shanghai to Beijing on 19th November 1931. Xu’s untimely death delivered a crushing blow to his Crescent Moon friends. After publishing Issue 1 Volume 4, “the Memorial Issue of Zhimo”, the publication of *Crescent Moon Monthly* was temporarily suspended.

It was Ye Gongchao who revived the suspended journal in September 1932 in Beijing and led it till its final closure in June 1933. Ye was sent to Britain and America from the age of 9, and he built up close connections with many writers and poets there, including Robert Frost (1874-1963) and T.S. Eliot.³⁵⁰ Ye was particularly interested in recent literary theories and criticisms in the West, especially the modernist poetics. The *Crescent Moon Monthly* in its last stage, under the main editorship of Ye, returned to its original track of literature and scholarship, and concentrated particularly on the introduction and criticism of Western literary trends.

Ye adopted a solemn and moderate editorial style. He seldom got involved in the quarrels and polemics in the literary scene, believing that a good publication should “keep a proper distance from reality” and maintain “dignity and moderation” in the

³⁴⁸ cf: Hu Shi’s diary on 21st January, 15th February, and 17th March, 1930. Hu Shi 胡适, *Complete Collection of Hu Shi’s Diary 5:1928-1930*, *op.cit.*, p. 601, p. 671, and p. 687.

³⁴⁹ Luo Longji 罗隆基, “罗隆基致胡适” *Luo Longji zhi Hu Shi* (“A Letter from Luo Longji to Hu Shi”), 20th May 1931. *Selected Collection of Hu Shi’s Correspondence 2*, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

³⁵⁰ Ye studied under Robert Frost at Amherst College, and after graduation from Harvard University, he went on to Cambridge to pursue his Master’s degree. He met with T.S. Eliot in Britain, building a close friendship with the latter. Wang Xindi 王辛笛, “叶公超先生十年祭” *Ye Gongchao xiansheng shinian ji* (“On the Tenth Anniversary of the Death of Mr. Ye Gongchao”). 《回忆叶公超》 *Huiyi Ye Gongchao (Reminiscence of Ye Gongchao)*, edited by Ye Chongde 叶崇德, Xuelin Publishing House, 1993. p. 31.

tides of life.³⁵¹ Ye's definition of "dignity", which was far more explicit than that of Xu Zhimo in the earlier manifesto, involved a "classic-mindedness", arguing that "dignity means you have to examine everything in the historical eyes, to recognise the continuation of tradition in the modern life, and to acknowledge the value of tradition".³⁵²

This idea, in my opinion, is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's concept of "the historical sense", which requires the modern writers to have in mind the presence of history and tradition. Tradition, according to Eliot, exists not only in the past but also in the present, and is what "makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity".³⁵³ It was probably this "awareness of tradition as the basis for the awareness of one's contemporaneity" that had most influenced Ye's classic-minded view on literature and editorship.³⁵⁴ This classic-mindedness was shared by many Crescent Moon members, and was displayed in their poetry and drama reform as well as general literary ideas.

Under Ye's editorship, *Crescent Moon* at the last stage kept aloof from politics and reality, focusing on serious academic issues.³⁵⁵ Poetry was again given the top priority. A younger generation of poets, who were mostly students of Ye Gongchao and influenced by his preference for Western Modernist poetics, began to experiment on modernist techniques and artistry. Literary essay was another characteristic genre introduced at this stage.³⁵⁶ Shen Congwen, Fei Ming 废名 (1901-1967), Chu Anping 储安平(1909-1966), Chang Feng 常风(1910-2002), He Jiahui 何家槐 (1911-1969),

³⁵¹ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, "施望尼评论 (Sewanee Review)四十周年" *Shiwangni pinglun sishi zhounian* ("Fortieth Anniversary of Sewanee Review"). 《新月》月刊 4 卷 3 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 3, Volume 4. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1932.11.1.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *Selected Essays*. Faber and Faber, 1999. p. 14.

³⁵⁴ See Shu-mei Shih's discussion of Ye's interest in Eliot. Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-187.

³⁵⁵ From Issue 2 to 7 of Volume 4, only one translated article with a political theme was published. It was written by F.S. Marvin, entitled "Is Communism Inevitable?". Translated by 杨季康 Yang Jikang (杨绛 Yang Jiang) into "共产主义是不可避免的么" *Gongchan zhuyi shi buke bimian de me*. Published on 《新月》月刊 4 卷 7 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 7, Volume 4. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1933.6.1.

³⁵⁶ Charles A. Laughlin observes that, except for Xu Zhimo, the other Crescent Moon members "began to take writing artistic essays seriously relatively late, in the mid-1930s". This genre was largely introduced in the last stage of *Crescent Moon Monthly*. Charles A. Laughlin, 2008, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

and others produced “Crescent Moon characteristic” prose writings that “crossed genres and in some cases blurred the boundary between fiction and essays”.³⁵⁷

Despite all the efforts made by Ye, he only managed to sustain the journal for six issues, and *Crescent Moon Monthly* closed due to a lack of contributions. According to Ye, most articles in the last three or four issues were written by him alone, in various pseudonyms.³⁵⁸ Three months later, in September 1933, the Crescent Moon Bookstore was taken over by the Commercial Press. The demise of the Crescent Moon bookstore and journal was, to my mind, the result of the changed environment for literary production. Upon entering the 1930s, the nation as a whole was on the verge of a greater wave of war and revolution, and literature was increasingly linked up with business and politics.³⁵⁹ Intellectual in nature, the Crescent Moon members were sensitive neither to commercial laws nor to political rules. Their pure literary stance clashed with the generally commercialised and politicised literary field, demonstrating what Hockx describes “the tension between an autonomous principle of literary value and a heteronomous principle of political usefulness”.³⁶⁰

But another important reason lies in that the Crescent Moon members, as Western-educated intellectuals, were more of an “academic group” than a “literary company”,³⁶¹ as Constantine Tung remarks:

For such writers...of the Creation Society,...the novelist Mao Tun and the polemicist Lu Hsün, literature was their life, writing was their profession and the royalties...were the major sources providing them rice and noodles...For the Crescentists, literature was their major interest, writing was their hobby, but college and university teaching were their professions.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 141.

³⁵⁸ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “我与《学文》” *Wo yu Xuewen (Xuewen and I)*. 《新月怀旧：叶公超文艺杂谈》 *Xinyue huaijiu: Ye Gongchao wenyi zatan (Reminiscence of Crescent Moon: Random Talks on Literature and Art by Ye Gongchao)*, edited by Guan Hong 关鸿, Wei Ping 魏平. Xuelin Publishing House. 1997. p. 159.

³⁵⁹ Michel Hockx, 2003, *op.cit.*, p. 225.

³⁶⁰ Michel Hockx, “Introduction”, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-century China*, edited by Michel Hockx, University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 9.

³⁶¹ After a careful study on returned students from abroad, Y.C. Wang observes that “the Western-educated men predominated in the academic group, while the Japanese-educated stood out in the literary company”. Y.C. Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 379.

³⁶² Constantine Tung 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 233.

For these academicians, literary creation and running a literary journal was one of their idealistic interests, rather than a livelihood. When the general environment deteriorated and polemic battles exhausted their creative passion, they would return to their academic world to maintain detachment. Perhaps the five reasons Ye Gongchao offered best explains the closure of “Crescent Moon”, including the group’s bad organisation and naïve views, a lack of money, a lack of contributions, the sudden death of Xu Zhimo, and the profession of members as none of them was a professional writer who could devote himself completely to *Crescent Moon*.³⁶³

4. Poetry Magazine and Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology: the Poetic School in Transition

The political turn of *Crescent Moon Monthly* led to a division within the group, and Xu Zhimo attempted to “run another pure literary monthly” as early as mid-1929.³⁶⁴ This idea, however, was not put into practice until the end of 1930 when Chen Mengjia proposed running a separate poetry magazine. Xu was “extremely happy” with the suggestion and immediately called for contributions from his old friends.³⁶⁵ The opening issue of *Poetry Magazine (Shikan)* was published on 20th January 1931. In its preface, Xu confirmed the previous *Poetry Supplement* in Beijing to be the predecessor of the current *Poetry Magazine*.³⁶⁶

While carrying on the old poetic ideals of the Crescent Moon group, *Poetry Magazine* marked a new era of poetry experimentation with the rise of a younger generation of poets. Among the 28 contributors, only 7 were “old friends” who had participated in the previous *Poetry Supplement*, and they contributed only 29 poems as compared with the total number of 123. It is obvious that the younger generation of poets played a pivotal role in this new round of poetry campaign, and there seems

³⁶³ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “About the Crescent Moon”, *op.cit.*, pp. 165-166.

³⁶⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “A Letter to Li Qi”, *op.cit.*

³⁶⁵ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “纪念志摩” *Jinian Zhimo* (“In Memory of Zhimo”). 《新月》月刊 4 卷 5 期 *Xinyue yuekan (Crescent Moon Monthly)*, Issue 5, Volume 4. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1932.

³⁶⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “《诗刊》序语” *Shikan xuyu* (“Preface to *Poetry Magazine*”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3, op.cit.*, p. 367.

to be a conscious handover and transition between the two generations of Crescent Moon poets.

Most of these young poets were students of the elder generation of Crescent Moon members such as Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, and Ye Gongchao. They were directly taught and guided by these veteran poets in their college days, but they had their own understandings of poetry echoing the changed taste of the time. It was their inheritance and development of their teachers' poetics that diversified the Crescent Moon poetic tradition, expanding its influence and infusing it with new life and possibilities.

Among these young poets, Chen Mengjia was the most active and the central figure. As a student of Wen Yiduo and Xu Zhimo when the two were teaching at the Central University of Nanjing, Chen was able to combine the spirit of his two teachers, skilfully arranging the poetic lines according to rhythm and rhyme while at the same time displaying a light and dreamy quality typical of the poetry of Xu. After reading Chen's poems, Hu Shi admitted that modern Chinese poetry had gone much farther than he had dared to expect.³⁶⁷

Bian Zhilin was another eminent young poet whose poetic life was inspired by the Crescent Moon veterans.³⁶⁸ Bian's poetic talent attracted the attention of Xu Zhimo when the latter was teaching at Peking University, and Xu immediately sent Bian's poems to his friend for magazine publication.³⁶⁹ But I believe it was Ye Gongchao who exerted a greater influence on Bian's poetic mind. After taking Ye's English Poetry course, Bian found his "eyes re-opened by Mr. Ye", as the latter brought him to Western modernist poets and poetry.³⁷⁰ With a sensitive perception, an ingenious use of symbols and metaphors, and an intricate expression with philosophical depth, Bian Zhilin is mostly regarded as a representative modernist poet in China.

³⁶⁷ Kai-yu Hsu, "Ch'en Meng-chia (1911-)", *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

³⁶⁸ Lloyd Haft mentions how Xu's first poetry collection published in 1925 had inspired Bian Zhilin when the latter was only a lower-middle school student. Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 18.

³⁷⁰ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "纪念叶公超先生" *Jinian Ye Gongchao Xiansheng* ("In Memory of Mr. Ye Gongchao"). 《回忆叶公超》 *Huiyi Ye Gongchao (Reminiscence of Ye Gongchao)*, edited by Ye Chongde 叶崇德, Xuelin Publishing House, 1993. p. 20.

Apparently it was Ye's introduction to Western modernist poetry that opened up a new world to him.

Bian Zhilin was by no means the only one who received this modernist influence from Ye Gongchao. In fact, quite a few poets who were later considered major modernist representatives had their earlier poetic careers started with the Crescent Moon publications. They were mostly students at Tsinghua and Peking Universities in the early 1930s when Ye Gongchao was teaching at the two institutions.³⁷¹ With Ye's introduction, they started to translate works of Baudelaire (1821-1867), Mallarmé (1842-1898), and Verlaine (1844-1896).³⁷² Making use of the artistic techniques such as symbolic imagery, dramatic monologue and dialogue, and the skill of collage, they were exploring a more exotic, obscure, aestheticist realm. Their names, such as Cao Baohua 曹葆华 (1906-1978), Fei Ming, Sun Yutang 孙毓棠 (1911-1985), Li Guangtian 李广田 (1906-1968), and Zhao Luorui 赵萝蕤 (1912-1998), were related both to the Crescent Moon and Modernist groups. This connection seems to suggest that a new aesthetic taste was taking shape in the latter stage of the Crescent Moon poetic movement. No wonder that some scholars believed that the mid-1930s Modernist group evolved largely from the Crescent Moon and the Symbolist Poetic Schools.³⁷³

From January 1931 to July 1932, a total of four issues of *Poetry Magazine* were published. It incorporated poetry related works only, including 112 original poems, 11 translated works, and 3 pieces of poetry commentaries. Wen Yiduo's theory of form put forward in the *Poetry Supplement* era was challenged by both new and old

³⁷¹ Ye Gongchao taught at both universities from 1929 until the breakout of the second Sino-Japanese War.

³⁷² Bian Zhilin translated 10 poems from Baudelaire, and were published in *Crescent Moon*. Liang Zhen 梁镇 translated one poem from Henri de Régnier, and another from Verlaine, published in *Crescent Moon*. Bian Zhilin translated one poem from Mallarmé, published in *Poetry Magazine*. Bian also published an essay on "Verlaine and Symbolism", published in *Crescent Moon*. Jacqueline Estran makes tables to show the translation, introduction, and book reviews of Western literature published in *Crescent Moon*. Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, pp. 193, 194, 202.

³⁷³ cf: Ai Qing 艾青, "中国新诗六十年" *Zhongguo xinshi liushi nian* ("The Six Decades of Chinese New Poetry"), 《文艺研究》 *Wenyi yanjiu (Literature & Art Studies)*, 1980, Issue 5. Besides, another critic, Zhou Cezong 周策纵, also noted that "*Poetry Magazine* edited by Xu Zhimo was the pioneer of Chinese Symbolist Poetic School". Cited from Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "前言" *Qianyan* ("Preface"). 《现代派诗选》 *Xiandai pai shixuan (Modernist Poetry Anthology)*, edited by Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, People's Literature Publishing House, 2002. p. 7.

poets in this period. Chen Mengjia, for example, studied *Gelü* from Wen, but was not confined by his strict rules. Chen pursued a “natural rhythm of emotion” because “a piece of poem is an integrated and intricate whole”.³⁷⁴ While acknowledging that rules and forms would be helpful in building up an exquisite piece of art, Chen also stated that “we will not rigidly stick to *Gelü*. When *Gelü* impedes the expression of our natural emotion, we will have to follow the emotion”.³⁷⁵

The elder generation of Crescent Moon poets had also updated their understandings of poetry in this period. Even Wen Yiduo himself was not strictly insistent about his own *Gelü* theory, as Sun Dayu once noted, “Miracle” (奇迹 *Qiji*),³⁷⁶ the last poem of Wen, “did not entirely follow the rule of metrical symmetry”.³⁷⁷

Apart from the breakthrough in poetic forms, *Poetry Magazine* also recorded a changed poetic mood of the Crescent Moon poets because of the increasingly unfavourable political environment. Times had changed and the Crescent Moon members could no longer enjoy the simple and leisurely ivory-towered life as they had done in the 1920s. Their poetic mood, as Xu Zhimo described, had “degenerated from holding a simple faith to the sceptical decadence”.³⁷⁸ Some sentiments characteristic of the 20th century modernist trend — the sense of disillusionment, scepticism, fragmentation, and nihilism — repeatedly appeared in their poems in this latter stage. The poems of Xu Zhimo, instead of the earlier “rosy idylls”,³⁷⁹ were tinted with a touch of darkness, weariness, and nihilism. As a leading “aesthete and decadent”,³⁸⁰ Shao Xunmei was enchanted by modernist elements of sensual ecstasy

³⁷⁴ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “《梦家存诗》自序” *Mengjia cunshi zixu* (“Preface to *Poetry Anthology of Mengjia*”). 《梦家诗集》 *Mengjia shiji* (*Mengjia’s Poetry Anthology*). Zhonghua Book Company, 2007 [1935]. p. 224.

³⁷⁵ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

³⁷⁶ “奇迹” *Qiji* (“Miracle”) was published on the opening issue of *Poetry Magazine*. Wen Yiduo wrote this poem after three years of classical research, and it was Wen’s last poem. cf: 《诗刊》 *Shikan* (*Poetry Magazine*), Opening Issue. Published by Poetry Society (诗社 *Shishe*), 1931.1.20.

³⁷⁷ cf: Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “诗歌的格律” *Shige de gelü* (“The Form and Metre of Poetry”). 《孙大雨诗文集》 *Sun Dayu shiwen ji* (*Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu*), edited by Sun Jinren 孙近仁, Hebei Education Press, 1996. p. 146.

³⁷⁸ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “《猛虎集》序” *Menghu ji xu* (“Preface to *The Ferocious Tiger*”). *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3*, *op.cit.*, p. 394.

³⁷⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends: The Road to Revolution 1927-1949”, *op.cit.*, p. 458.

³⁸⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

and the beauty of grotesque.³⁸¹ His poetry anthology, entitled *The Flowery Sin* (《花一般的罪恶》 *Hua yiban de zuie*), was reminiscent of the trademark Symbolist poetry volume of Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*. Sun Dayu produced his hundred-line masterpiece, “A Portrait of the Self” (“自己的写照” *Ziji de xiezhao*),³⁸² with its background setting in the 20th century city of New York and “reflected the intricate consciousness of a modern human”.³⁸³ With new terms, images, and structure, the poem reveals the fickleness, emptiness, and alienated humanity in the modern industrialised metropolis.

The new poetic era opened up by *Poetry Magazine* was further defined by the publication of *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology* in September 1931. As mentioned earlier, the anthology was edited by Chen Mengjia and collects eighty poems written by eighteen poets, all of whom were regular contributors to the *Crescent Moon* publications. It was from this anthology that the eighteen poets, including Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Rao Mengkan, Sun Dayu, Zhu Xiang, Shao Xunmei, Fang Lingru 方令孺 (1897-1976), Lin Huiyin, Chen Mengjia, Fang Weide 方玮德 (1908-1935), Liang Zhen 梁镇, Bian Zhilin, Yu Dagang 俞大纲 (1908-1978), Shen Zumou 沈祖牟 (1909-1947), Shen Congwen, Yang Zihui 杨子惠 (Yang Shi'en), Zhu Da'nian 朱大桢 (1903-1932), and Liu Mengwei, were formally considered a coherent group known as the “Crescent Moon poetic school”. As a summary and display of the *Crescent Moon* poetic achievement, the anthology explicitly defines the poetic group.³⁸⁴

In the “Preface” to *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, Chen Mengjia articulated the aesthetic tenets of the group:

We believe we are a group of people working towards the same direction... We will stick to the dignity and purity of the poetic nature, the

³⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 250-254.

³⁸² Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “自己的写照” *Ziji de xiezhao* (“A Portrait of the Self”). 《诗刊》 *Shikan* (*Poetry Magazine*), serialised on Issue 2 and 3. Published by Poetry Society (诗社 *Shishe*), 1931.4.30 and 1931.10.5.

³⁸³ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

³⁸⁴ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 297.

refinement of techniques, and the strict form and metre... Besides, the seriousness of attitude is our common confidence.³⁸⁵

The death of Xu Zhimo was a fatal blow to *Poetry Magazine* as it was to *Crescent Moon Monthly*.³⁸⁶ The fourth and last issue was published nine months after the previous publication, in the theme of the “Memorial Issue of Zhimo”. Though only four issues were published, *Poetry Magazine* witnessed the meeting, cooperation and transition of the two generations of Crescent Moon poets, carrying on the poetic ideals of the group when *Crescent Moon Monthly* was politicised. Soon after its demise in July 1932, Ye Gongchao revived the *Crescent Moon Monthly*, continuing the poetic exploration in *Poetry Magazine*. Even after the final bankruptcy of the Crescent Moon bookstore and journal, the efforts of the Crescent Moon poets persisted, with a new platform established and some new faces joined in. I would refer to this period as the “post Crescent Moon era”.

5. Post Crescent Moon Era: *Xuewen* and *Jingpai*

The new platform established to take over the *Crescent Moon Monthly* was *Xuewen Monthly*, published in May 1934 in Beijing. As the politicised *Crescent Moon* provoked the Nationalist government in Shanghai, and as the situation in the north had become stabilized, the Crescent Moon members began to return to Beijing one after another from early 1930 onward.³⁸⁷ The main force of the Crescent Moon School, before the bankruptcy of its business, had already moved back to Beijing. These old friends gathered again, establishing a new monthly journal aiming to “reproduce the glory of *Crescent Moon*”.³⁸⁸ It was only with the closure of this new

³⁸⁵ Ibid. pp. 3-6.

³⁸⁶ The four issues of *Poetry Magazine* were published on 30th January, 30th April, 5th October, 1931, and 30th July 1932 respectively. Apparently the death of Xu Zhimo on 19th November 1931 affected the normal publication period of the magazine.

³⁸⁷ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

³⁸⁸ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “About the Crescent Moon”, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

journal that Ye Gongchao stated with regret: “Now the Crescent Moon activities completely end”.³⁸⁹

The name of the journal, *Xuewen* 学文 (meaning “study literature”), came from the ancient words of Confucius to suggest “a modest attitude”.³⁹⁰ It was basically a continuation of the last volume of *Crescent Moon Monthly*, with Ye Gongchao as the editor and Yu Shangyuan the distributor. Wen Yiduo was also an active participant in collecting and editing contributions. Both Hu Shi and Ye Gongchao confirmed clearly that *Xuewen* was established as “a successor to *Crescent Moon Monthly*”,³⁹¹ and that it “carried our literary and artistic views and hopes after *Crescent Moon*”.³⁹² As for the mission of the journal, Ye recalled:

Both the European and American literatures attach great importance to the discovery of the so-called ‘poetical language’. We believe that our efforts must also be exerted to discover the rhythm of language if we were to make impressive achievements for Chinese vernacular poetry. In other words, ‘vernacular poetry’ does not simply mean poetry written in vernacular language. Rather, it must display to the full the distinctive rhythm of the Chinese language.³⁹³

It was out of this pursuit for the discovery of “poetical language” that *Xuewen* gave priority to poetry and poetic criticisms, which occupied the very front position in each issue of the journal. Continuing the modernist experimentation on *Poetry Magazine*, the Crescent Moon poets translated many Western modernist poems and

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ In Chapter 1 of *Analects of Confucius*, the Master remarked: “A young man, when at home, should be a good son; when out in the world, a good citizen. He should be circumspect and truthful. He should be in sympathy with all men, but intimate with men of moral character. If he has time and opportunity to spare, after the performance of those duties, he should then employ them in literary pursuits.” In this context, “*Xuewen*” means to “study literature only when one has extra time and energy after performing other duties”. Wen Yiduo believed that this name suggested a modest attitude. Cf: Confucius 孔子, 《论语》 *Lunyu* (*The Analects of Confucius*), Chapter 1:6. Translated by Gu Hongming 辜鸿铭, “《论语》英译” *Lunyu yingyi* (“English Translation of *The Analects of Confucius*”). 《辜鸿铭文集·下卷》 *Gu Hongming wenji xiajuan* (*The Collected Works of Gu Hongming, Volume 2*). Hainan Publishing House, 2000. p. 349. Also see Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “致饶孟侃” *Zhi Rao Mengkan* (“A Letter to Rao Mengkan”), 1st March 1934. *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 12: Letters, Diary, Appendix*, *op.cit.*, p. 274

³⁹¹ cf: Hu Shi’s diary on 13th Feb. 1934, “Yu Shangyuan invited Liang Shiqiu for dinner...discussing running a monthly journal as the successor to *Crescent Moon*”. Hu Shi 胡适, 《胡适日记全编 6 (1931-1937)》 *Hu Shi riji quanbian 6: 1931-1937* (*Complete Collection of Hu Shi’s Diary 6:1931-1937*), 13th February 1934, edited by Cao Boyan 曹伯言, Anhui Education Press, 2001. p. 324.

³⁹² Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “*Xuewen* and I”. *op.cit.*, p. 158.

³⁹³ Ibid.

essays, including the modernist manifesto³⁹⁴ “Tradition and the Individual Talent” written by T.S. Eliot.³⁹⁵

Literary works published in *Xuewen* demonstrated a higher level of technical maturity and philosophical depth.³⁹⁶ It seems that the writers’ creative powers and understanding of life reached their height in the 1930s. The journal incorporated some of the most influential works of the Crescent Moon writers, such as Fei Ming’s fiction “The Bridge” (“桥” *Qiao*),³⁹⁷ Shen Congwen’s lyric essay “Notes on a Journey through Hunan” (“湘行散记” *Xiangxing sanji*),³⁹⁸ and Lin Huiyin’s fiction “In Ninety-Nine Degree Heat” (“九十九度中” *Jiushijiudu zhong*),³⁹⁹ which was hailed as “the first Chinese piece of self-consciously Virginia Woolf-like stream-of-consciousness fiction”.⁴⁰⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee once observes, “inheriting the May Fourth legacy, writers of the thirties were able to attain a depth of vision and a sophisticated technique which the early May Fourth practitioners of New Literature failed to achieve.”⁴⁰¹ *Xuewen* literature, in this sense, might be seen as representing some of the prime works of the “Thirties Literature”.

The lifespan of *Xuewen* was even shorter than *Poetry Magazine*, lasting only four months from May to August 1934, publishing four issues. Following the same fate of *Crescent Moon Monthly*, *Xuewen* again fell into the predicament of lacking money and contributions, and disappeared without a closing remark. But *Xuewen* constituted

³⁹⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

³⁹⁵ The article was translated by Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, in the title of “传统与个人的才能” *Chuantong yu geren de caineng*. 《学文》月刊 *Xuewen yuekan* (*Xuewen Monthly*), Issue 1, 1934.5.1.

³⁹⁶ A Taiwan critic remarks that, in terms of literary quality, *Xuewen* provided higher-standard literary works than its predecessor *Crescent Moon*. Qin Xianci 秦贤次, 《叶公超其人其文其事》*Ye Gongchao qiren qiwen qishi* (*Ye Gongchao: the Person, the Article, and the Life*). Taipei: Biographical Literature Publishing House. 1986.4. p. 322. Cited from Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, p. 451.

³⁹⁷ “The Bridge” was also serialised in *Crescent Moon Monthly*, on Issue 5 and 7, Volume 4. Fei Ming 废名, “桥” *Qiao* (“The Bridge”). *Xuewen Monthly*, Issue 2, 1934.6.1.

³⁹⁸ Shen Congwen 沈从文, “湘行散记” *Xiangxing sanji* (“Notes on a Journey through Hunan”). *Xuewen Monthly*, Issue 4, 1934.8.

³⁹⁹ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “九十九度中” *Jiushijiudu zhong* (“In Ninety-Nine Degree Heat”). *Xuewen Monthly*, Issue 1, 1934.5.1.

⁴⁰⁰ Wang Zengqi, *Evening Green Essays* (*Wancui wentan*). Cited from Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

⁴⁰¹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends: The Road to Revolution 1927-1949”. *op.cit.*, p. 421.

an important platform that witnessed the transition from the Crescent Moon group to the Beijing School.

The Beijing School is notoriously difficult to define, not only because there had never been such a formal organisation under this name, but also because its apparent label, “Beijing”, was not a regional reference. As Charles A. Laughlin notes, “the Shanghai/Beijing split is not geographic in the sense of origin, since Beijing school writers were not generally from Beijing, and Shanghai school writers were not from Shanghai”.⁴⁰² There have been many attempts to define the Beijing School. Laughlin tries to define it in terms of its affiliation with various universities in Beijing:

[T]he various ways of defining the Beijing school all share some form of affiliation with institutions of higher learning in Beijing. This category includes writers from a number of different groupings, by virtue of the fact that they were attracted as students or as faculty to the premier educational institutions in the land. Higher education affiliations in Beijing characterize the group around Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren (the Threads of Conversation group); the Anglo-American-oriented writers of the Crescent Moon and Contemporary Review groups were also made up mainly of university faculty...⁴⁰³

A mainland scholar defines the Beijing School in a more specific way:

[The Beijing School] refers particularly to a marginalised intellectual group appeared in the 1930s. Evolved from the ‘Thread of Talk Society’ (语丝 *Yusi*) and the ‘Crescent Moon School’, it has been active in Beijing, Tianjin (天津), Shandong (山东), and other Northern areas of China when the revolutionary and political centre had been moved to the South. Taking the *Literary Art* supplement of *L’Impartial* (《大公报·文艺副刊》 *Dagong Bao Wenyi fukan*) as the main platform, it emerged as a widely associated cultural group centring around the Salon at Lin Huiyin’s house and the Reading club at Zhu Guangqian’s home. It might be the most influential intellectual group for literary creation and criticism outside the mainstream literary trend.⁴⁰⁴

Both definitions confirm the inheriting relationship between the Crescent Moon group and the Beijing School. First of all, many writers who were generally considered as belonging to the Beijing School, such as Shen Congwen, Ye Gongchao,

⁴⁰² Charles A. Laughlin, 2008, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Li Shengbin 李生滨, 《沈从文与京派文人的魅力》 *Shen Congwen yu Jingpai wenren de meili (The Charisma of Shen Congwen and the Beijing School Literati)*. Ningxia People’s Publishing House. 2008. pp. 1-2.

Lin Huiyin, Ling Shuhua, Fei Ming, Li Jianwu 李健吾(1906-1982), and Li Guangtian, used to be active contributors to the Crescent Moon magazines, which is why Laughlin asserts that “the Beijing school would evolve largely from the remnants of the Crescent Moon group”.⁴⁰⁵

Secondly, literature published in Crescent Moon publications (especially those edited in Beijing/Beiping, including the first and last volumes of *Crescent Moon Monthly* and *Xuewen*) shared the similar aesthetic values and cultural positions with the Beijing School. The geopolitical situation in Beijing may partly explain this similarity. According to Shu-mei Shih, with the departure of many May Fourth cultural and literary leaders in 1927, and with the establishment of Nanjing as the new Chinese capital, Beijing lost its cultural, political, and economic status and became “a time and space much altered from being the fervid center of May Fourth controversy”.⁴⁰⁶ The economic mode in Beijing was “largely preindustrial”, as “the powerful invasion of Western technological culture did not engulf Beijing as it did Shanghai”.⁴⁰⁷ In opposition to the “highly Westernised sign” represented by the treaty-port Shanghai, Beijing came to be a symbol of the local and the rather conservative sensibility.⁴⁰⁸

It is worth noting that the Crescent Moon activities in Beijing were sharply different from those in Shanghai. While in Shanghai they were involved in the ideological battles and political campaigns, in Beijing, be it the period of *Morning Post Supplement*, the first and last volumes of *Crescent Moon*, or *Xuewen*, they always focused on the scholarly and artistic issues, maintaining an intellectual distance from the political and commercial affairs. The generally pre-modern and pre-industrial environment in Beijing, and the relatively slow-paced and ivory-towered life as university faculty would easily nurture a non-utilitarian, self-restrained, and tradition-oriented temperament. Patricia Laurence describes the group in Beijing as

⁴⁰⁵ Charles A. Laughlin, 2008, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

⁴⁰⁶ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 175-177.

“more academic and intellectual than modernist literary counterparts in Shanghai, drawn to the cosmopolitan glitter of that city”.⁴⁰⁹

Such a temperament echoes the “nonutilitarian aesthetics” of the Beijing School writers, which features “restraint, concision, leisure, mildness, traditionalism, and lyricism”.⁴¹⁰ Viewing the Crescent Moon group as belonging to the larger-scale Beijing School activities, Zhu Guangqian noted “the Beijing School reached its prime time in the ‘Crescent Moon’ era, and started to go downhill after the poet Xu Zhimo died in the air crash.”⁴¹¹ In my opinion, however, it might be more accurate to say that the closure of *Xuewen* marked the end of the “Post Crescent Moon era”, and opened up a new era of the Beijing School. The Crescent Moon spirit, rather than vanishing with the closure of Crescent Moon activities, dissolved into and developed with the essential spirit of the Beijing school, gradually forming a new tradition of the Beijing/Beijing cultural temperament.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced the historical development of the Crescent Moon School from 1923-1934. Looking back on the trajectory of the group, one finds that with the frequent flow of its membership, the fields of activity it engaged in shifted accordingly. With the members coming and going, the group changed its focus of attention from poetry to drama to literary criticism to politics and to academics. It was a loosely-organised and highly mobile group, and accordingly, some critics would even doubt the justification for it.⁴¹²

But underlying the surface looseness and mobility and despite the many differences between individual members, I believe that there was a core spirit that bound these

⁴⁰⁹ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁴¹⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

⁴¹¹ Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜, 《朱光潜自传》 *Zhu Guangqian zizhuan (Autobiography of Zhu Guangqian)*, edited by Shang Jinlin 商金林, Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House. 1998.9. p. 6. Cited from Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.*, p. 453.

⁴¹² Liang Xihua 梁锡华, *op.cit.* Also see Lawrence Wang-chi Wong’s discussion on this question, Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, pp. 305-306.

people with “strong individualistic inclinations”⁴¹³ together. As I have shown in the chapter, their poetic and theatrical views, literary criticism, political ideals, and the “Crescent Moon Attitude” have shared a common opposition to extreme and radical ideas. Their objections to violence and revolution, to the political and commercial intervention in literature, and to indiscriminate iconoclasm placed them on the opposite side of the mainstream Leftist literary movement. They appeared to be conservative, anachronistic, and even reactionary in a turbulent era when tradition was rapidly disintegrating. But I would argue that it is this conservative mentality that distinguished them from most other contemporary intellectual groups. This conservatism, featuring a “modernizing outlook and reflective double consciousness”, distinguishes itself from traditionalism and traditional conservatism and is what Edmund Fung has termed “modern conservatism”.⁴¹⁴ I will analyse this core spirit of the Crescent Moon School in the next chapter.

⁴¹³ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, p. 306

⁴¹⁴ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

Chapter 2 The Core Spirit of the Crescent Moon School

Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to discuss the modern conservative spirit of the Crescent Moon School. Critics tend to have different, if not opposing, views with regard to the cultural position of the group. Some would describe it as a totally Westernised or Western-oriented group,⁴¹⁵ while others would criticise it as “defenders of the old culture”.⁴¹⁶ As I have shown in the last chapter, the Crescent Moon School has indeed presented itself in two diametrically opposed images. On the one hand, with most of its members educated in the West, its activities bore a strong Anglo-American imprint. They translated Western literary works and criticisms in their journals, introduced Western research methodologies for literary and social studies,⁴¹⁷ promoted Western political systems and values such as democracy and the rule of law, and popularised a set of Western ideas including individualism, human rights, freedom of thinking and speech, and intellectualism. But on the other hand, they openly opposed the radically iconoclastic May Fourth discourse and affirmed certain aspects in Chinese tradition. Liang Shiqiu, for instance, in opposition to the May Fourth slogan of “Down with the ‘Confucian shop’”, asserted that “the ethical theories of Confucianism is still valid in today’s society”.⁴¹⁸ Wen Yiduo was also worried that “the literary revolution had gone too far in its imitation of the West”.⁴¹⁹ Even Xu Zhimo, the reputedly most “Westernised” poet whose “personality and

⁴¹⁵ Patricia Laurence describes the group as “Eurocentric” and “Western identified”. Lu Weiping also claims that it is “a major literary school advocating wholesale Westernization”. Cf: 1) Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 131 and p. 104. 2) Lu Weiping, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁴¹⁶ He Ning (Qu Qiubai) 何凝 (瞿秋白), *op.cit.*

⁴¹⁷ Y.C. Wang discusses how Hu Shi’s advocacy of Western methodology contributed to the literary and historical research in China. Pan Guangdan played the same role in the modern eugenic study. Cf: Y.C. Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 398.

⁴¹⁸ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “现代文学论” *Xiandai wenxue lun* (“On Modern Literature”). *Criticisms of Liang Shiqiu*, *op.cit.*, p. 160.

⁴¹⁹ Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

outlook on life contain few elements that can be clearly traced in Chinese tradition”,⁴²⁰ spoke for tradition because “the best part of it was the result of the accumulated efforts of human intelligence and reason and should not be cast away indiscriminately”.⁴²¹

This seemingly ambivalent image, I suggest, is not a result of the inconsistency of their thought, but rather reveals the Crescent Moon members’ understanding of modernity, an understanding that is clearly distinct from that of the “mainstream” May Fourth discourse.⁴²² This understanding of modernity reflects the modern conservative cultural position of the group. So in this chapter I will firstly try to make clear of the concept and characteristics of “modern conservatism”. I borrowed the term from Edmund Fung,⁴²³ and was inspired by Shu-mei Shih’s analysis of the neotraditional thinkers and the Beijing School writers.⁴²⁴ I will discuss the theories of Shih and Fung, and explain why I think their theories applicable to the Crescent Moon writers. So this chapter is divided into four sections: 1) the mainstream understanding of modernity in the May Fourth discourse, 2) the Chinese modern conservative thought, 3) the Crescent Moon School as a link in the modern conservative trend, 4) the modern conservative spirit expressed in the Crescent Moon poetry.

1. Occidentalism: How Modernity was Understood in the May Fourth Discourse

Before looking into the concept of modern conservatism, I have to discuss how modernity was mostly understood in the May Fourth discourse, because modern conservatism is defined as an alternative to this understanding. Modernity has been a

⁴²⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

⁴²¹ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁴²² Although the understanding of modernity in this period is far more diversified, Shu-mei Shih suggests that there was a “dominant strand of May Fourth subjectivity” or “May Fourth discursive hegemony”. I will discuss this point later. Shu-mei Shih, p. 50, p. 165.

⁴²³ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-95.

⁴²⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-189.

complicated and contested notion in recent scholarship, and the concept of Chinese “modernity” is inseparable from the social and historical conditions in the late 19th and early 20th century.⁴²⁵ In a time when traditional social structure was rapidly breaking down and the dynastic history was moving to an end, the concept of modernity was “self-consciously defined against that old imperial system and the entire traditional apparatus that sustained its political and cultural edifice”.⁴²⁶ Leo Ou-fan Lee has defined modernity in China based on “a new mode of historical consciousness” developed since the turn of the twentieth century:

“modernity” in China was loosely defined as a mode of consciousness of time and history as unilinear progress, moving in a continuous “stream” or “tide” from the past to the present; it also contained the valorized notion of the present as a new “epoch,” not only unprecedented and qualitatively different from previous eras but better, which leads prophetically to a purposeful future. The influence of Darwinian strains of evolutionary thought in China led to the emergence of this new perception.⁴²⁷

Influenced by this evolutionary, teleological notion of time and history, many May Fourth intellectuals viewed the modern “to be ‘new’ (*xin*), to be consciously opposed to the ‘old’ (*jiu*)”.⁴²⁸ This ideology of linear temporality produced, as Shu-mei Shih outlines, “‘tradition’ in order to repudiate it as old and out-dated, and celebrated ‘modernity’ as discontinuity from the past, in order to create a new subjectivity that prioritized the present and the future”.⁴²⁹

This progressive and temporalised way of understanding modernity led to what Shih has referred to as “Occidentalism”, a radical and iconoclastic ideology that in its extremist expression called for “complete Westernization” of Chinese culture.⁴³⁰ This ideology simplifies and temporalises the relationship between China and the West. Frank Dikötter considers “a process of polarization” as the first characteristic

⁴²⁵ Zhang Longxi, “Literary Modernity in Perspective”. *A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, edited by Yingjin Zhang. Wiley Blackwell, 2016, p. 41.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature”. *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, edited by Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 122.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 110.

⁴²⁹ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 55. See Shih’s discussion of “Occidentalism”, *ibid.*, pp. 49-72, 128-148.

of Occidentalism, through which “the West was forced into an artificial relationship of opposites with Confucianism”.⁴³¹ In this polarised, binary vision of China-West relationship, “all the properties of the West corresponded to the new and modern, while those of China corresponded to the old and traditional”.⁴³² The two cultures were no longer different in kind, but rather in time, or in the degree of development. Western culture was constructed as the “modern culture” that had universal applicability to non-Western countries, while Chinese culture, as a “particular” one born into and applicable only to a particular society, was incorporated into the unilinear development of world history and constructed as “the past of the West”.⁴³³ Shih defines the discourse of Occidentalism in May Fourth China as “a particularization of Chinese culture and a universalization of Western culture”.⁴³⁴ China in this discourse was obliged to catch up with the West if it was to enter into the “modern”, and therefore, “modernisation” was simplified as “Westernisation”. Although this understanding of modernity might be seen as a dominant trend in the May Fourth era,⁴³⁵ it was by no means the only understanding. Edmund Fung and Shu-mei Shih have demonstrated more diversified ways of understanding and pursuing modernity by the Republican intellectuals. What interests me in the works of Shih and Fung is that, not confined by the dominating “May Fourth perspective on modernity as...a Western property obliging the Chinese both to emulate it belatedly and to reject tradition wholeheartedly”,⁴³⁶ both scholars seek to reveal a more complex May Fourth intellectual field with diverse ideologies coexisting with each other. Fung focuses his study on “cultural radicalism”, “modern conservatism”, “liberalism”, and “reformist socialism”,⁴³⁷ and Shih discusses “May Fourth Occidentalism”, “neotraditionalism” (and “*Jingpai*” or “Beijing School” in its

⁴³¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Hong Kong University Press, 1992, p. 127.

⁴³² Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

⁴³³ *Ibid.* p. 50.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 131.

⁴³⁵ Shih has referred to this ideology variously as “the dominant strand of May Fourth subjectivity”, “May Fourth discursive hegemony”, or “May Fourth hegemony”. *Ibid.* p. 50, p. 165, p. 172.

⁴³⁶ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

⁴³⁷ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*

literary manifestation), and “Shanghai modernism”.⁴³⁸ I am particularly drawn to their discussions of the so-called “modern conservative” thought (or in Shih’s work, the “neotraditionalist” thought), because in these discussions I am able to contextualise the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School.

It is worth mentioning that, despite using different terms, the “neotraditionalists” in Shih’s work refer to the same group of intellectuals that Fung has described as “modern conservatives”. So in this thesis the two terms are interchangeable. In most cases, I choose to use the term “modern conservatism” because I think the term better indicates the constituent ideas of the concept, i.e. “modern” and “conservative”. It also emphasises its difference from the “traditional conservatism” or “traditionalism”.⁴³⁹ My hypothesis is that the Crescent Moon members are a group of modern conservatives. Their core spirit inherited from the 1910s and early 1920s neotraditionalist thinkers, and ushered in the 1930s Beijing School thought, constituting an important link in the long chain of the modern conservative trend in China. In the next section, I will discuss the Republican modern conservative trend and its difference from the Occidentalism ideology.

2. Modern Conservative Thought: An Alternative Pursuit of Modernity

Shu-mei Shih defines the “post-May Fourth neotraditional cultural formation” as follows:

[It] consisted of a distinct contingency of intellectuals with diverse cultural and intellectual positions, loosely unified through their shared opposition to Occidentalism ideology.⁴⁴⁰

As a reaction to the Occidentalism discourse, modern conservative (or neotraditionalist) intellectuals shared an opposition to the radical ideology of

⁴³⁸ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*

⁴³⁹ Fung discusses the difference among these terms in his book, and I will also elaborate on this issue later. Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

⁴⁴⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

“totalistic rejection of tradition and assertion of complete Westernization”.⁴⁴¹ This was a group of intellectuals with an eclectic vision that advocated China-West cultural synthesis, including Liang Qichao, the New Confucianists, and the *Critical Review* group.⁴⁴² Their modern conservative position was mostly adopted in the late 1910s and early 1920s, or to put it in a global context, after the First World War. As Fung observes, “the conservative reaction to cultural radicalism, although internally driven, had a fitting European context as well”.⁴⁴³ This “European context” refers to the “soul-search rethinking of Western civilization in the West” that had taken place a century prior to World War I and gained momentum during the two world wars.⁴⁴⁴

Shocked by the atrocities of World War I, some Western intellectuals began to question “the Enlightenment’s overweening belief in scientific rationality and progress”, and even put forward “a cyclical theory of the rise and decline of civilizations”⁴⁴⁵ to challenge the Enlightenment belief in unilinear progress. Among them include Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926), Hans Driesch, Bertrand Russell, and Irving Babbitt,⁴⁴⁶ who not only championed a critical re-evaluation of the Enlightenment values, but also turned their eyes to Eastern civilisations for food for thought. Many of them were invited by Liang Qichao and the Chinese Lecture Association to give lectures in China during the early 1920s.⁴⁴⁷ This is what Shih has termed the “civilizational discourse” that was popular in the West in the 1920s, which sought to “reinvigorate the now bankrupt Western culture through its synthesis with Eastern culture”.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid. p. 153. Also Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-72.

⁴⁴³ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 154. And Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁵ The German historian Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) expressed anxiety about progress in the West in *The Decline of the West* (1918), putting forward the cyclical theory of development of civilizations. cf. Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁶ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

⁴⁴⁷ See my discussion on “Crescent Moon Society” in the last chapter.

⁴⁴⁸ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-155.

For a variety of reasons, Chinese modern conservatives had all spent some time in the West after World War I,⁴⁴⁹ making the acquaintance of Western intellectuals and learning the latest intellectual trends in the West. Some of them used to be advocates of Westernisation, but became disillusioned with the West after close contact with it. Witnessing the devastating results of the world war, and hearing those desperate voices of Western intellectuals crying for help from Eastern cultures,⁴⁵⁰ they began to reflect on the crisis that had been lurking in the so-called “modern” Western culture.

One can always find in the works of modern conservative intellectuals their description of Western culture as excessively materialistic, militaristic, individualistic, and scientific. Liang Qichao even attributed the world war to the development of evolutionism and individualism. He saw in the evolutionist “survival of the fittest” the root of people’s power worshipping, and therefore the root of militarism and imperialism.⁴⁵¹ In questioning the evolutionary, progressive notion of history, the modern conservatives became suspicious of the Occidental agenda of totalistic Westernisation. The world war exposed the crisis and limitation of Western culture, and “the West’s experience of modernity” was seen as merely “a particular one arising from a specific sociocultural context, and not universally beneficial to mankind”.⁴⁵² Chinese culture, though different from the West, was only different in kind rather than in degree of development. It was no longer viewed as “backward” along the unilinear timeline of world history, lagging far behind and painstakingly catching up with the West in an effort to arrive to a destination of “modernity”. It was rather seen as a culture with a unique value because of its local characteristics, a culture that “could be revitalized and harnessed to the purposes of modernization”.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ Some were studying in the West, and some, like Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai, were on a governmental tour to the Europe to attend the Paris Peace Conference in 1918-1919.

⁴⁵⁰ Liang Qichao 梁启超, 《欧游心影录》 *Ouyou xinying lu (Impressions of Travels in the West)*. Quoted from Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

⁴⁵¹ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 160-161.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.* p. 153.

⁴⁵³ Edmund Fung points out that the modern conservative thought was defined “not by the conservatives’ deriving their categories of thought from the cultural heritage but by a faith in traditional values that could be revitalized and harnessed to the purposes of modernization”. This differentiated the modern conservatism from late Qing traditionalism and traditional conservatism. Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

Tradition, therefore, was no longer the opposite of modernity, but a complement and enrichment to it.

So here comes the first characteristic of the modern conservative thought: they became suspicious of May Fourth understanding of modernity, the “mode of consciousness of time and history as unilinear progress”.⁴⁵⁴ To be modern was no longer considered to be “new” or “Western”, discontinued from tradition or the “Chineseness”. The present was seen as a continuity of the past, and affirming the contemporary was not to negate tradition. History could develop in a “multidirectional” and “multi-linear” way,⁴⁵⁵ and modernity was no longer to be defined merely in Western frameworks. Traditional and local culture contains elements that may well serve the modern world and contribute to the project of modernity. So instead of rejecting Western culture or modernity, the modern conservatives were as well committed to modernity, only with a different, if not expanded, understanding of it.

It was based on this expanded understanding of modernity that they emphasised the modern use and global value of Chinese tradition, which is in my view the second characteristic of the modern conservatives. The New Confucianists such as Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893-1988) and Zhang Junmai both affirmed the importance of “cultural specificity, difference, and multiplicity”,⁴⁵⁶ and claimed the universal applicability and global significance of a reinvigorated Chinese tradition (as represented by Confucianism).⁴⁵⁷ Members of the *Critical Review* group, as loyal disciples of Irving Babbitt, followed in their mentor’s footsteps in believing that a truly global wisdom could only be achieved by combining the virtues of Confucius, Buddha, and Aristotle.⁴⁵⁸ Chinese modern conservatives, therefore, aimed not only to revitalise Chinese tradition, but also to emphasise the “global significance” of this

⁴⁵⁴ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity”. *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁴⁵⁵ Liang Shuming and Zhang Junmai both discussed this “multidirectional or multi-linear history”. See Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 166-167.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ Liang Shuming put forth a concept of “Easternisation”, claiming the universalism of a reinvigorated Confucianism. Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, pp. 72-76.

⁴⁵⁸ Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau & Romanticism*, University of Texas Press, 1977, pp. 11-13. For *Critical Review* group’s debt to Babbitt, see Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 170-171.

revitalisation.⁴⁵⁹ Their sympathy to and reaffirmation of Chinese traditional culture was not because it was “Chinese” or “traditional”, but because certain aspects of it was still valid in the modern era and could be beneficial not only to the Chinese but to people around the world. They were not evaluating the two cultures in the dichotomous framework of old or new, China or the West, traditional or contemporary. As Fung observes:

The conservatives deconstructed tradition in a modern context rather than abstractly inherited it. For them, tradition was reproduced not for its own sake but to explore new possibilities, and as such, it was a rich resource on which to draw for a cultural construction of modernity.⁴⁶⁰

This non-dichotomous thinking led to the third characteristic of modern conservatism. They attempted to criticise and appreciate both Chinese and Western cultures at the same time, placing them within the same framework of evaluation. This is what Shih has termed “critical modernity” or what Fung has termed “critical conservatism”.⁴⁶¹ Their assertion of China-West synthesis was not from the standpoint of defending the Chinese or the Western, but of defending what they considered to be of modern use and global value. In my opinion, the fundamental difference between the modern conservatives and the late Qing traditional conservatives who advocated a similar model of cultural combination between Chinese essence (体 *ti*) and Western utility (用 *yong*) lies in that the former were not insisting on an unchanging “essence” of Chineseness, which inevitably contains elements that contradict major ideas that define a modern society, such as human rights and gender equality.⁴⁶² On the other hand, they differentiated themselves from the Occidentalists in that they repudiated the notion that the West was superior in every aspect to China and that Chinese tradition had to be emptied out before learning from the West. To the modern conservatives, the Western experience of modernity was not the only valid pattern,

⁴⁵⁹ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

⁴⁶⁰ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

⁴⁶¹ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 157; and Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

⁴⁶² Zhang Longxi observes that the conservative nature of Zhang Zhidong’s doctrine of “Chinese *ti* and Western *yong*” lies in that he had tried to retain what he thought to be the foundation of Chinese moral and political system, and yet this foundation itself contained ideas that contradicted the major ideas in a modern society. Zhang Longxi, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

and modernisation was not to be simplified as Westernisation. By “particularising” both China and the West, neither culture represents universality, but at the same time both contain elements that have claims to the universal. As Shu-mei Shih points out:

When the universal is released from the grip of the West, it is open to inclusions from the non-West. In this conception, then, the local is not opposed to the global, but becomes the site of potential for the universal.⁴⁶³

Behind the seemingly clichéd China-West synthesis, therefore, there was a critical way of thinking that transcended the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, the local and the global. Compared with the “exclusively Westernized vision of the May Fourth intellectual who conflated cosmopolitanism with Occidentalism”, the modern conservative way of thinking “is perhaps a more egalitarian form of cosmopolitanism”.⁴⁶⁴

The modern conservatives, therefore, were different from both the Occidentalists and the traditional conservatives. While on the surface they were defending Chinese tradition and rejecting complete Westernisation, making them a target of attack in the “May Fourth discursive hegemony”,⁴⁶⁵ they were in essence neither anti-Western nor anti-modern. They discredited the West “in terms of contemporary and universal human values, rather than the values of a uniquely Chinese tradition”.⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, their cultural position was constructed exactly on their Western experiences and the encouragement and inspiration of Western intellectuals. As Grieder observes, they relied on “European self-criticism to substantiate their own claims”, which “posed an unfamiliar challenge to the sponsors of a ‘new culture’ founded on modern — and Western — example”.⁴⁶⁷ The West’s interest in Eastern cultures boosted their confidence in Chinese tradition. They critically examined the Western definition of modernity, and sought to “extend the scope of what constituted modernity”⁴⁶⁸ with aspects of Chinese culture that best served the modern world. I agree with Fung that

⁴⁶³ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 174

⁴⁶⁵ Shu-mei Shih describes the “all-out Occidental position of the May Fourth movement” as “May Fourth discursive hegemony”. *Ibid.* p. 165.

⁴⁶⁶ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

Chinese modern conservative thought was not “part of an antimodernization tide that had risen in the non-West”, but “part of a worldwide revolt against the so-called ‘rational consensus’”.⁴⁶⁹ And in recent years, the academic interest in the non-Eurocentric way of understanding modernity, which argued that “Western patterns of modernity are not the only authentic modernities”,⁴⁷⁰ and that the starting point of “early modern” could be dated back to the “late Song dynasty China in the year 1100”,⁴⁷¹ coincides with the modern conservative arguments made in the early 1920s China. This again proves that their cultural position, instead of being anti-modern, is ahead of their time and fundamentally committed to modernity.

3. Crescent Moon School as a Link in the Modern Conservative Trend

In the previous section I introduced the characteristics of Chinese modern conservative thought and its difference from the Occidental and traditional conservative thought. Shu-mei Shi contextualises the rise of the Beijing School writing in mid-1930s in this intellectual trend, noting that the Beijing School writers’ assertion of Chinese culture and critique of Western industrial civilisation was a literary manifestation of this modern conservative (neotraditional) philosophy.⁴⁷² Inspired by Shih’s theory, I suggest that the Crescent Moon group displayed a modern conservative tendency from the very beginning of their activities, thus being a link between the early 1920s neotraditional thinkers and 1930s Beijing School writers. It is not accurate, therefore, to identify them as either a totally Westernised group or “defenders of the old culture”.

⁴⁶⁹ Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁷⁰ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Some Observations on Multiple Modernities”. *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and Other Interpretations*, edited by Dominic Sachsenmaier and Jens Riedel with Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Brill: Leiden. Boston. Köln, 2002, p. 27.

⁴⁷¹ David Porter, “Introduction”. *Comparative Early Modernities: 1100-1800*, edited by David Porter, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷² Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-189.

Seen from the activities I have discussed in the last chapter, the conservative aspect of the Crescent Moon thought finds its expression in almost every cultural practice. In the Crescent Moon Society stage, Xu Zhimo and other members showed great sympathy to and warmly welcomed Tagore, in contrast to the generally cold reception to his visit by the May Fourth iconoclasts. Xu interpreted with great enthusiasm for Tagore and his speeches advocating a reinvigoration of Eastern cultures. In the *Poetry Supplement* stage, Wen Yiduo and his Qinghua group launched the formalisation movement, in an effort to restore order and form to the “overly emancipated” new poetry after the New Culture movement. Wen sought to correct the “increasingly Westernised tendency” of new poetry, and to preserve “the unique essence of Chinese art”.⁴⁷³ In the *Drama Supplement* stage, they based their theatrical theories on a syncretic vision of combining Chinese “impressionism” with Western “realism”, building “National Drama” on the foundation of old drama instead of completely negating tradition. In the *Crescent Moon Monthly* stage, their manifesto critically examined the radical and iconoclastic May Fourth discourse. By attacking the thirteen popular literary trends that they considered to have been “opportunistic business imported from foreign countries”, they criticised the post-May Fourth literary scene as “in a fragmented and extremist state” that “all standards of value were upset”.⁴⁷⁴ Liang Shiqiu fought polemic battles against the Leftists with Babbitt’s New Humanist theories, criticising the Leftists’ utilitarian literary views. Hu Shi championed step-by-step reform, opposing violent revolution and seeking intellectual ways of improving political situation. Finally in the *Xuewen* stage, Ye Gongchao adopted a classic-minded editorial policy that gave a prominent place to the tradition-oriented, local-flavoured literature. The Crescent Moon group, sharing with the Beijing School the traditional and local consciousness, differentiated itself from the highly Westernised Shanghai modernists.

⁴⁷³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “律诗底研究” *Lüshi di yanjiu* (“The Study of Regulated Poetry”). 《闻一多全集 10》*Wen Yiduo quanji shi* (*Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 10*), edited by Yuan Jianzheng 袁睿正, Hubei People’s Press, 2004, p. 166.

⁴⁷⁴ “Crescent Moon Attitude”, *op.cit.*

The conservative mentality distanced the Crescent Moon School from the radical Leftist writers and the iconoclastic Occidentalists that were dominating the post-May Fourth cultural discourse, so C.T. Hsia would describe it as an “especially isolated” group.⁴⁷⁵ But the members were on close terms with the neotraditional thinkers that I have discussed in the previous section. Xu Zhimo was a favorite student of Liang Qichao’s,⁴⁷⁶ and a good friend of Zhang Junmai’s (also Zhang’s brother-in-law). Liang Shiqiu shared with the *Critical Review* group a belief in Babbitt’s New Humanism. Adopting a cultural position similar to these neotraditional philosophers, they initiated a sustained critique of the Occidentalists’ enthusiasm for the “new” and the “modern”, as well as their effort of emptying out Chinese tradition and complete Westernisation. When Liang Shiqiu criticised the “romantic chaos” in modern Chinese literature, for example, he pointed out that “the romantics are fanatical about ‘being modern’, and it is always considered good as long as it is modern”.⁴⁷⁷ Wen Yiduo satirised in the same vein that “the standard of our time is to turn against our ancestors, and this is the so-called ‘zeitgeist’”.⁴⁷⁸ He insisted that “the old literature should be given an equal place after the rise of the new literature”.⁴⁷⁹ Xu Zhimo traced Western history from Rousseau’s *Confessions*, to the French revolution, to the romantic movement, to Nietzsche, to Thomas Hardy, and saw in this process “human’s impulse to break away from the restraint of reason,...brewing up a ‘modern consciousness’ that is pathological, self-confessed, sceptical, weary,...until in the end a sense of disillusionment disintegrates all the vigorous endeavours. The human beings find themselves walking on the edge of despair”.⁴⁸⁰

The critique of Western culture and the “modern culture” defined in Western frameworks, as well as the effort to assert the traditional and old culture were easily interpreted as “anti-modern” in the May Fourth discourse, since they repudiated the

⁴⁷⁵ C.T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction (Third Edition)*, Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 121.

⁴⁷⁶ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

⁴⁷⁷ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*

⁴⁷⁸ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “《现代英国诗人》序” *Xiandai yingguo shiren xu* (“Preface to *Modern British Poets*”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays*, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

⁴⁷⁹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Study of Regulated Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

⁴⁸⁰ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “汤麦士哈代” *Tangmaishi hadai* (“Thomas Hardy”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3*, *op.cit.* pp. 204-205.

unilinear, progressive notion of time and history, and negated the May Fourth agenda of anti-traditionalism. But instead of rejecting modernity or Western learning, these Crescent Moon members represented a different way of imagining Chinese modernity. They understood modernity and cosmopolitanism from a perspective similar to the neotraditional philosophers, that modernity allowed for the interaction and expression of multiple cultures instead of being a unilinear progress of time and history. Chinese and Western cultures, both as constituents of a truly modern and globalised culture, were different but not oppositional, coexistent but not mutually exclusive. Wen Yiduo was such a cosmopolitan when he said:

Now that we live in the twentieth century, our literature is particularly supposed to bear a cosmopolitan flavour. I genuinely admire those who reform new poetry by learning from the West. But to reform is not to replace Chinese poetry with a Western one. So change that which needs to be changed, and preserve the unique characteristics of Chinese art.⁴⁸¹

What Wen represented was a critical modernity, or what Fung has referred to as “a modernity of counter-modernity”.⁴⁸² Like the other modern conservative thinkers, the Crescent Moon members were also “rejecting the East-West and old-new dichotomies”, showing a “dualism in their thinking about Enlightenment modernity” by simultaneously affirming and criticising it.⁴⁸³ They accepted some modern ideas such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, but they remained cautious about some problematic aspects related to the concept of “modern”. Xu Zhimo, for instance, expressed his discontent with “modern life” in this way:

Materialism dominates every corner of our experience today. Our eyes are filled with aircrafts, automobiles, movies, radios, densely arranged electric wires, and rows of chimney-stacks ... The spiritual life has almost gone in the hustle and bustle of modern life. What I saw in New York everyday were those tall advertising boards instead of clear moonlight. What I heard were the noises of cars, trains and trams instead of wind and songs. Anyone who ever lived in the West would be fed up with it.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Study of Regulated Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

⁴⁸² Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “未来派的诗” *Weilai pai de shi* (“On the Futurist Poetry”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume One, Prose 1, op.cit.*, p. 333.

Xu was criticising the excessive materialism and philistinism in the modern industrial society from a position similar to Western aesthetic modernity.⁴⁸⁵

According to Matei Calinescu, “during the first half of the nineteenth century an irreversible split occurred between modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization — a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism — and modernity as an aesthetic concept”.⁴⁸⁶ The latter type of modernity, or “aesthetic modernity”, expresses itself in an “outright rejection of bourgeois modernity”,⁴⁸⁷ whose ideas include “the doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time, ...the orientation toward pragmatism and the cult of action and success...”⁴⁸⁸

As Leo Ou-fan Lee observes, however, such a split between the two modes of modernity in the West did not occur in the May Fourth China when Chinese writers were eagerly embracing Western type of modernity.⁴⁸⁹ To be more specific, few Chinese writers would develop a hostile attitude toward the bourgeois ideas of modernity in art and literature like Western aesthetic modernity. Lee explains this difference by putting the two societies in their historical contexts, noting that in the West, starting in the first half of the nineteenth century, “the benefits and the evils of the industrial civilization were fully manifested in the urban middle class, with its taste of philistine vulgarity due to the accumulation of money”.⁴⁹⁰ While in China in the 1920s and 1930s, “modernity was more largely an unrealized idea than a tangible reality”.⁴⁹¹ So the enthusiasm of May Fourth writers for bourgeois modernity was exactly a result of their distance from and unfamiliarity with it. That is to say, there is a “time lag” between the “progressive orientation of the Chinese conception of

⁴⁸⁵ Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. Duke University Press, 1987. pp. 41-42.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 41.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 42.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 41.

⁴⁸⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity”, *op.cit.*, pp. 125-127.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 126-127.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 127.

modernity” and “Western modernists’ distrust of scientific modernism”,⁴⁹² a time lag that rendered “China’s participation in ‘universal’ modernity as always already ‘late’”.⁴⁹³ Unlike the May Fourth mainstream voices, the Crescent Moon members’ critical examination of materialism, scientific progress, philistinism, and other problematic aspects brought about by bourgeois modernity, as illustrated in Xu Zhimo’s writing quoted above, was a result of their closer contact with Western society and echoed the latest ideas of Western aesthetic modernity. Though seemingly they were more conservative than their Occidentalist contemporaries, their cautious attitude ironically revealed their better familiarity with and understanding of Western narrative of modernity.

So it is necessary to look into the life and educational experience of the Crescent Moon members and its influence on the formation of their modern conservative spirit. The Crescent Moon School gathered a group of people who were mostly born into upper-middle class families in the transitional period from the late Qing Dynasty to the early Republican era; many had been sent abroad at a young age to receive a British or American education. Chinese classical learning in their childhood and a full exposure to the Western world later enabled them to reflect on both cultures at the same time, and personal meetings with Western intellectuals as well as hearing their perceptions of China inspired them to look back onto their own tradition. I would like to call this process a “double culture shock”, during which they not only discovered a new culture in the West but also re-discovered an unfamiliar Chinese culture in the eyes of the Westerners. It was a China constructed in the imagination of the West, tinted with a sense of Orientalist ideology,⁴⁹⁴ but nevertheless it shed new light on the rethinking of Chinese culture for these overseas young students.

⁴⁹² Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 63.

⁴⁹⁴ Shu-mei Shih discusses the Westerners’ disillusionment with Western culture after World War I and their interest in Chinese culture, considering the latter could serve as a remedy to “cure Western ills”. This civilisational discourse actually “produced ‘the East’ in order to project the Western self into ‘some object and to try to discover itself in the contemplation of the object’.” So, it is a “strategy in which the supposed Western universal consolidates itself by incorporating, managing, and controlling the non-Western, particular Other”. It “serves the West and hides within itself a hierarchy of importance between West and East”. cf: Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 131, 154, 155.

The Crescent Moon members, therefore, were endowed with a cosmopolitan vision that saw not only the need of the Chinese but also the demand of the Westerners. Aware of the mutual attraction of the two cultures, they were able to re-evaluate modernity “in terms of intersubjective, or rather intercultural, communication and rationality”.⁴⁹⁵ Encouraged by their Western friends and mentors, their perception of the China-West cultural relations was not hierarchical or dualistic, but based on a concept of intersubjectivity and mutual complementarity. Xu Zhimo, for instance, had close contact with a number of Western scholars who were obsessed with Chinese traditional art and literature, and, aside from being influenced by the British culture, Xu also became “a Chinese influence” on the Western “intellectual life in the post-war period”.⁴⁹⁶ Wen Yiduo enjoyed the friendship of Mr. Winter, a translator of Baudelaire and professor at the Art Institute of Chicago with a “China fever”, and they planned to work together to translate classical Chinese poetry in the U.S.⁴⁹⁷ Ling Shuhua had frequent correspondence with Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), and the latter encouraged Ling “to write and to represent herself and the Chinese society she knew”, and advised her “to keep the Chinese flavour” in her English writing.⁴⁹⁸ Liang Shiqiu, like the *Critical Review* members, must have been attracted and encouraged by Irving Babbitt’s admiration for Confucian philosophy, and he commented with delight that “Babbitt’s thought is very close to that of our Confucianism”.⁴⁹⁹ Instead of constructing a dichotomous vision with China and the West at polar opposites, they found crossover and affinity between them.

Based on this non-dichotomous value orientation, these intellectuals would naturally develop a syncretic and eclectic cultural position. Instead of universalising Western culture and “constructing China as the past of the West”,⁵⁰⁰ they viewed Chinese and Western cultures as equally particularised subjectivities, the combination of which

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 153.

⁴⁹⁶ This is how Arthur Waley spoke of Xu. He acknowledged the debt the West owed to Xu, saying “I have spoken of Xu as a Chinese influence on our own intellectual life in the post-war period”. So Gaylord Leung concludes that Xu in England not only received but also gave. Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo, op.cit.*, p. 38.

⁴⁹⁷ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.*, p. 52.

⁴⁹⁸ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, pp. 250-251.

⁴⁹⁹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Mr. Babbitt and His Thought”, *op.cit.*, p. 215

⁵⁰⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

would produce a truly globalized and modern form of culture. They negated the linear, temporal way of imagining modernity and the approach of “complete Westernisation” that would always leave China in a “belated” position of catching up with the West. Rather, they asserted the value of the local and the traditional. Shen Congwen, for example, was considered to have taken “a different route to modernism by resisting Western modernism”, because he “was never convinced that China needed to follow the cultural models of the West”.⁵⁰¹ Shen was a representative writer in repudiating the universalism of Western models.

Sharing the same understanding of the local-global relationship with the other modern conservative thinkers, the Crescent Moon members considered the local as a constituent of the global instead of something that needed to be emptied out before entering the global. Modernity was a result of the multi-cultural interaction and integration, rather than a pattern defined solely by the West. This imagination of and approach to modernity has been condemned as reactionary, anti-revolutionary, “defender of the old culture”, and therefore an obstacle to Chinese progress, but it was born out of a deeper insight into Western civilisation and ironically represented a “more egalitarian” understanding of cosmopolitanism by these returned scholars. The core spirit of the Crescent Moon School, I suggest, lies in this modern conservative cultural position and the non-dichotomous worldview. And I believe this core spirit is what this group of people fundamentally gained from their overseas experience, and is what differentiated them from most other contemporary intellectuals.

4. A Literary Manifestation: the Modern Conservative Spirit in Crescent Moon Poetry

The modern conservative spirit finds its expression in various activities of the Crescent Moon group, especially in their new poetry experimentation. Well-versed in

⁵⁰¹ Lin Lidan, “The Hybrid Matrix of Modernism: Bloomsbury and the (Chinese) Crescent Moon Group”. Review of *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China*, by Patricia Laurence. *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 12, No. 4, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. p. 708.

both the Chinese classics and Western literature, the Crescent Moon poets developed their own understanding of literary modernity.

New poets had been groping for the ways of modernising Chinese poetry since Hu Shi listed the “eight matters” of literary reform in 1917.⁵⁰² The Literary Movement in China, as Julia C. Lin observes, was more sociopolitical than literary.⁵⁰³ Most new poets, eagerly attempting to sever themselves from the past and establish an iconoclastic image, began to experiment with a wide range of Western forms.⁵⁰⁴ As with the revolution in the wider sociopolitical fields, new poets tended to equate modernisation with “Westernisation”. In their determination to create “poetry of a modern temper”, they often “indiscriminately incorporated scientific terms, foreign words, and new ‘bold’ imagery in their works”.⁵⁰⁵ One easily finds in the poetry of Guo Moruo the massive insertion of Western images and words. Some people even began to wonder if the new poetry could persist on “raw spontaneity, undigested foreignisms, and bristling exclamation marks”.⁵⁰⁶

But there were still a few new poets who insisted on drawing inspiration from the traditional poetic diction, rhyme, and metres. Despite the slogan of anti-traditionalism championed by the new poetic revolutionaries, tradition did persist. Michel Hockx analyses the “traces of tradition” found in the poetry of Yu Pingbo and, by demonstrating the contemporary criticism of his poetry, observes that Yu has never been criticised for showing “traditional” influences.⁵⁰⁷ Instead, it seems that Yu’s “traditionally inspired works” have made the most lasting impression and received the most positive responses.⁵⁰⁸ As Hockx points out, some of the early pioneers of new poetry, such as Yu Pingbo and Zhu Ziqing, attempted to find many of their rhythms in traditional examples, and seldom were they blamed for that by

⁵⁰² Hu Shi, “Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature”, translated by Kirk A. Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*, edited by Kirk A. Denton, Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 123-139.

⁵⁰³ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ John A. Crespi, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

⁵⁰⁷ Michel Hockx, *A Snowy Morning, op.cit.*, pp. 106-108.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 114-115.

contemporary critics. This, according to Hockx, proves “the relativity of the label of ‘totalistic anti-traditionalism’”.⁵⁰⁹

Despite their Western educational experience, the Crescent Moon poets have mostly rejected the May Fourth iconoclastic way of modernisation. Their familiarity with Western literature and association with Western men of letters, as I have discussed, have offered them a deeper insight into the difference and mutual complementarity between Chinese and Western cultures. With this insight, they were able to critically reflect on the applicability of Western literary practice in China, instead of passively accepting it. Wen Yiduo was an example in this respect. Wen witnessed the New Movement of American poetry when he was studying in Chicago in 1922 and sent letters to his friends in China to introduce this movement. Impressed by the talented and daring new poets at the time, such as Amy Lowell (1874-1925), Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), and Harriet Monroe (1860-1936), Wen called this movement “really an epoch-making period in the history of American literature” and praised the American new poets as “national mouthpiece [*sic*]” who were “rallying around thier [*sic*] national art”.⁵¹⁰ Though extremely excited by the spirit of New Movement in America, however, Wen objected the Chinese new poets’ imitation of American new poetry. In a belief that “poetry is but life echoed in words”, he analysed the different cultures and life between China and America, and concluded that because of this difference the Chinese new poets should not “ape” the American poetic diction and manner.⁵¹¹ Rather, Wen called on the Chinese poets to keep the “very vitality of our being, the personality as a people”.⁵¹² He severely condemned the Chinese new poetry which was to him “a hedious [*sic*] confusion of foreing [*sic*] terms, foreign expressions, foreign allusions, foreign themes and foreign thoughts”.⁵¹³

Obviously, Wen rejected modernising Chinese poetry through indiscriminate Westernisation; but this rejection came from a re-assessment of Chinese tradition

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 138.

⁵¹⁰ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “To Dear Friends”, 27th Aug. 1922, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-61.

⁵¹¹ Ibid. pp. 60-61.

⁵¹² Ibid. p. 61.

⁵¹³ Ibid. p. 62.

after a full exposure to Western culture. It was just because of this exposure that the Crescent Moon poets were able to rethink the difference, rather than hierarchy, between the two cultures and literatures. They tended to keep certain traditional elements in their poetry and draw inspiration from the conventions, and in this sense, they were closer to the position of Yu Pingbo who championed the second way of modernisation. But unlike Yu's incorporation of classical elements that mainly took place "on an unconscious level",⁵¹⁴ I believe the Crescent Moon poets' return to tradition was largely a conscious act. Gaylord Leung's analysis of the change of language style of Xu Zhimo sheds much light in this respect. When Xu newly returned to China in 1922, as Leung observes, he was yet unable to "disentangle himself from the classical tradition".⁵¹⁵ In some of his poems produced in this early period, such as "Farewell, Cambridge" (康桥再会罢 *Kangqiao zaihui ba*) that I will discuss in Chapter Four,⁵¹⁶ one still finds his use of many classical *wenyan* (文言) phrases, mainly the "four-character clichés".⁵¹⁷ But according to Leung, Xu seemed to have made a conscious effort to "purify" his diction in two ways. Firstly Xu managed to shake off the "undesirable" *wenyan* elements. Secondly, he "salvag[ed] usable" *wenyan* expressions, especially those "two-character nouns or verbs", and "assimilat[ed] English expressions".⁵¹⁸ So instead of being "unable" to break with the old convention, Xu's incorporation of classical elements was filtered through a process of conscious selection and mixture. This blending of the vernacular language, classical Chinese, and Westernised diction is a major characteristic of Xu's language style.⁵¹⁹ As I will demonstrate in the next few chapters, some other Crescent Moon poets, such as Wen Yiduo, Zhu Xiang, Chen Mengjia, and Bian Zhilin, are also adept in "salvaging" and blending the desirable classical elements into new poetry, and juxtaposing them with Westernised images and diction. Although it is largely a matter of personal taste as to which *wenyan* phrase or classical image is more

⁵¹⁴ Michel Hockx, *A Snowy Morning*, *op.cit.*, p. 107

⁵¹⁵ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo*, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

⁵¹⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, "康桥再会罢" *Kangqiao zaihui ba* ("Farewell, Cambridge"). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry*, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-65.

⁵¹⁷ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo*, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 141-142.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 142.

“desirable”, the selection and preservation of certain traditional elements has no doubt helped produce a more refined and elegant aesthetic state in vernacular poetry. This return to tradition, I suggest, is not an unconscious inheritance, but a conscious refinement and adaptation, and a conscious effort to establish a style.

So the Crescent Moon poets were not preserving tradition on nativist and traditionalist grounds, but were salvaging certain aspects in tradition that were still considered valid and desirable to enrich the vernacular expression. The aesthetic values of the Crescent Moon poets, in my view, were quite similar to the philosophy of the New Confucianists and *Critical Review* thinkers who sought to revitalise the “universal” aspects in Chinese tradition to enrich the world culture and serve the cause of modernity. They chose to return to tradition after a full exposure to Western culture, so that this tradition, as Shu-mei Shih observes, is “not construed in a nativist fashion, but is filtered through a bicultural and multilingual awareness of Chinese tradition and Western modernism”.⁵²⁰

The Crescent Moon poets, therefore, chose a way of modernisation that was different from both the iconoclasts and traditionalists; rather, they were walking on an eclectic middle way, or in Kai-yü Hsü’s words, they championed “calculated but not total Westernization of Chinese poetry”.⁵²¹ Both their preservation of tradition and importation of Western elements bespeak their understanding of literary modernity, and I think this understanding is best illustrated in an analogy drawn by Wen Yiduo.

Wen believes that poetry, like any form of art, is “a brocade fabric woven with time as its warp and space as its weft”.⁵²² This metaphor is meaningful, because in my view it reflects Wen’s modern conservative way of understanding literary modernity. Wen puts forward two dimensions of value of poetry, i.e. time and space, or poetry as an imprint of time and poetry as a mark of locality. Unlike the May Fourth dominant trend of thought that “privileged temporal over spatial modes of

⁵²⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

⁵²¹ Hsü was talking about Wen Yiduo’s attitude, but I think it applies to many Crescent Moon poets. Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 153

⁵²² Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “《女神》之地方色彩” *Nüshen zhi difang seci* (“The Local Colour of Goddess”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays, op.cit.*, p. 118.

thinking”,⁵²³ Wen takes “space” into consideration and therefore, like other modern conservative thinkers, opposes the evolutionary, unilinear concept of history and stresses spatial difference and coexistence.⁵²⁴ The May Fourth literary revolutionaries were required to represent the spirit of the time, but in most of their discussions they chose to play down the value of traditional Chinese literature as a local experience.⁵²⁵ By contrast, Wen’s metaphor asserts that the “local colour”, or space, is also an essential element that determines the literary value.

Wen made a specific distinction between the nationalist “love of country” and the intellectual “love of national culture”, and stated that “it is a matter of *emotion* to love one’s country, but it is a matter of *reason* to love a culture”.⁵²⁶ So his emphasis on the “local colour” was not from a nationalist standpoint. In fact, Wen was able to review the traditional culture and literature in a rational manner. He criticised the classical poetry to be overly static, lacking in the change of form and spirit with the passage of time.⁵²⁷ So he affirmed the “fluctuation of new thoughts” brought about by the new literary movement, because it “represented our consciousness to seek for the spirit of a new time”.⁵²⁸

Seen in this light, I believe Wen’s assertion of the value of the local is neither a rejection of the new spirit nor a defence of an essentialised tradition. Rather, he was simultaneously criticising and appreciating the Chinese and the Western, the traditional and the modern, demonstrating his critical and non-partisan reception of diverse literary traditions. He defended the local and the traditional with an ultimate aim to promote a “world literature” in a wider sense:

Only with each country developing their local colour to the full and with
all countries sharing a common spirit of the age can a real world literature

⁵²³ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

⁵²⁴ See Shu-mei Shih’s discussion of the New Confucianist thinking of the relation between time and space, and their understanding of modernity. *Ibid.* pp. 165-167.

⁵²⁵ Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

⁵²⁶ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Local Colour of *Goddess*”, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 119.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

be built up...All colours exist in a harmonious diversity. This accords with the principle of “unity in variety”, the golden rule of art.⁵²⁹

In Wen’s literary values, therefore, tradition is not opposed to the modern, and the local is not opposed to the global. Rather, both the traditional and the local represent an independent colour that may enrich the world literature and expand the definition of cosmopolitanism. Wen’s re-assertion of tradition, I suggest, much like the neotraditionalist aesthetics of the Beijing School writers as discussed by Shu-mei Shih, was “not a nativist ‘return’ to an essentialized Chinese tradition, but in effect a valorization of locality based on a new conception of the relationship between the local and the global in nonessentialist, noncontradictory terms”.⁵³⁰

Based on this non-dichotomous mode of thinking, Wen put forward his understanding of the “newness” in new poetry:

I believe new poetry, if it is to be “new”, should not only be newer than the existent Chinese poetry, but also be newer than the existent Western poetry. In other words, one should not produce the purely local poetry but should preserve the local colour, nor should one produce the purely foreign poetry but the advantages in foreign poetry should be assimilated as much as possible. [New poetry] should be the happy hybrid of the marriage of Chinese and Western arts.⁵³¹

This new understanding of “newness” has clearly transcended the temporal mode of thinking in the May Fourth discourse, and denied the equation of “the new/modern” with “the Western”. So the seemingly “clichéd” expression of syncretism is in fact indicative of Wen’s extended understanding of modernity that, aside from the unilinear progress of time, being modern/new should also allow for spatial considerations, or spatial multiplicity and cultural specificity. Wen’s endeavour to blur the dichotomous distinctions between the East and the West, the old and the new fully demonstrates the modern conservative/neotraditionalist vision described by Shu-mei Shih, in which:

modernity was a fact to be reckoned with, to be debated, to be better defined and delineated, all with an eye towards the native cultural tradition,

⁵²⁹ Ibid. p. 123.

⁵³⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 177-178.

⁵³¹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Local Colour of *Goddess*”, *op.cit.*, p. 118.

so that modernity would no longer remain the sole property of the West, but would rather be hybridized, revised, and rewritten, and able to be claimed by the Chinese as well... The Chinese tradition... would no longer remain the sole property of China but rather be hybridized, revised, and rewritten for larger purposes extending to the world. In such imagining, the tradition/modernity and China/West dyads become irrelevant, because what is local becomes at the same time global and vice versa.⁵³²

Aside from Wen, the other Crescent Moon writers were also reflecting on the issue of literary modernity and world literature from a modern conservative perspective. Liang Shiqiu, for example, pointed out that “there is no old/new distinction in literature, only the distinction of the Chinese and the foreign”.⁵³³ Rao Mengkan took a step further and stated that “not only that there is no old/new distinction in poetry, there is not necessarily a distinction between the Chinese and the foreign”.⁵³⁴ Eventually, this non-dichotomous, eclectic, and seemingly-conservative-but-essentially-cosmopolitan poetic value was proposed metaphorically as the common ideal of the Crescent Moon poets by Chen Mengjia when he was editing the *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*:

We believe we have never forgotten the long river of the three-thousand-year spiritual culture of China... and in our blood we still adhere to the soul of the entire Chinese nation... But we have arrived at this century when the cultures of different nations are brought together and naturally dissolving into each other... In our white rose garden there used to be only snow-white flowers. Then the birds scattered seeds of diverse colours by chance. The gardener could never expect how many different roses with exotic and gorgeous colours grow out in the next spring. All these are beautiful, because all are flowers.⁵³⁵

The literary impact of different countries was compared to the seeds scattered by birds, bringing in diversely coloured flowers that are as equally beautiful as the indigenous ones. This non-partisan reception of both the local and the foreign no doubt bespeaks an open-minded and cosmopolitan literary value that challenges “the narrative of unilinear cultural development”.⁵³⁶ When the dichotomous distinctions

⁵³² Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 172-173.

⁵³³ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*

⁵³⁴ Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “再论新诗的音节” *Zailun xinshi de yinjie* (“On the Rhythm of New Poetry Again”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》6号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan Liu hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 6*), 1926.

⁵³⁵ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

⁵³⁶ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

are blurred, the local and the traditional would no longer be the obstacle of modern development, but an element that constitutes modernity. So like the other modern conservative thinkers and writers, the Crescent Moon poets were seeking to extend the understanding of poetic modernity, rescuing it from the May Fourth discourse of evolutionary developmentalism.⁵³⁷

Based on this understanding of literary modernity, the Crescent Moon poetry shows an eclectic and syncretic tendency that can be described in two aspects.

Firstly, the Crescent Moon poets tended to synthesise or juxtapose the Chinese and Western, the traditional and modern poetic elements in their works in an attempt to dissolve the binaries. In terms of poetic language, they didn't believe that *wenyan* had to be discarded before the vernacular language can develop, and they showed little enthusiasm for the crude insertion of foreign words. What they were experimenting with was, as I have discussed in Xu Zhimo's case, a vernacular language that naturally blends the classical and Westernised Chinese. In terms of images and allusions, they preferred juxtaposing Chinese and Western cultural elements, rather than borrowing Western images and abandoning the traditional ones as many poets did at the time. One easily finds in their poems the allusion to Chinese mythology, folklore, and Buddhist or Daoist ideas and symbols.⁵³⁸ In terms of the poetic form, they passionately experimented with a variety of Western metres, rhyme schemes, and stanzaic patterns. But as I will discuss in Chapter 4, their poetic theories are specially designed for and appropriate to the "inherent rhythm" of Chinese vernacular language. Despite their familiarity with and obvious debt to Western poetry and theories, they have made a conscious effort to "localise" these Western impacts. So I believe Cyril Birch's comment on Xu Zhimo's poetry also applies to most of the Crescent Moon poems, that their importation of Western

⁵³⁷ Shu-mei Shih discusses how the neotraditionalist thinkers have tried to extend the scope of what constituted modernity and rescue modernity from evolutionary progressivism and developmentalism. Ibid. p. 153.

⁵³⁸ Kai-yu Hsu and Lloyd Haft have discussed the juxtaposition of Chinese and Western images in the poetry of Wen Yiduo and Bian Zhilin. And I will show more examples in the following chapters. 1) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.*, p. 60. 2) Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin, op.cit.*, p. 57.

metres did not result in Westernised Chinese.⁵³⁹ The poetic practice guided by the modern conservative spirit has not only preserved part of the Chinese tradition, but also established new traditions by absorbing diverse modern literary endeavours.

Secondly, the Crescent Moon poets tended to find affinity or correspondence between Chinese and Western poetics. As I will show in the next few chapters, they would explain Western poetics by alluding to Chinese traditional theories, and justify Chinese traditions with Western criticisms. Wen Yiduo and Liang Shiqiu saw the affinity between Sonnet and Chinese *lüshi* (律诗 regulated verse), believing that both genres embody a progression of thought that can be described by Chinese classical poetics as “introduction, follow-up, turning, and closing” (起承转合 *Qi, cheng, zhuan, he*).⁵⁴⁰ Bian Zhilin established a relationship between the Chinese traditional concept of “aesthetic state” (意境 *Yijing*) and the Western technique of “dramatic situation”.⁵⁴¹ Ye Gongchao employed T. S. Eliot’s concept of “historical sense” to justify the continuity and coexistence between tradition and modernity.⁵⁴² Bonnie McDougall observes that Wen Yiduo and Xu Zhimo “revived traditional ideas on the artistic values of literature”.⁵⁴³ And these traditional ideas, I suggest, are what they considered the best part of Chinese tradition, which is old and yet still could find correspondence in Western literature, and thus having universal applicability and global significance.

The two tendencies displayed in the Crescent Moon poetry and poetics under the guidance of the modern conservative spirit, i.e. the critical syncretism and correspondence, also find expression in the aesthetics of the Beijing School writers. Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), for instance, advocated the notion of

⁵³⁹ Cyril Birch, 1959, *op.cit.*, p. 268.

⁵⁴⁰ 1) Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “谈商籁体” *Tan Shanglai ti* (“On Sonnet”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays*, *op.cit.*, p. 168. 2) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “谈十四行诗” *Tan Shisihang shi* (“On Fourteen-line Poetry”). *Criticisms of Liang Shiqiu*, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

⁵⁴¹ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “《雕虫纪历》自序” *Diaochong jili zixu* (“Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”). 《卞之琳作品新编》 *Bian Zhilin zuopin xinbian* (*New Edited Collection of Works of Bian Zhilin*), edited by Gao Hengwen 高恒文, People’s Literature Publishing House, 2009, p. 256.

⁵⁴² Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-187.

⁵⁴³ Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 267.

“Ancient/modern/Chinese/foreign school” (古今中外派 *Gujin zhongwai pai*),⁵⁴⁴ echoing the Crescent Moon poets’ understanding that there was no old/new, Chinese/foreign distinctions. Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜 (1897-1986) championed a “harmonious middle way”, in which Zhu questioned the boundary between the vernacular and classical languages, calling for a synthesis of the classical, vernacular, and Europeanised language.⁵⁴⁵ Aside from this syncretism, Zhu also put forward an “aesthetics of correspondence”, defending traditional Chinese aesthetics with Western modernist concepts.⁵⁴⁶ So I would argue that the Crescent Moon group shared with the Beijing School a common intellectual foundation, which is the modern conservative cultural position. The modern conservative understanding of modernity, which is based not only on the unilinear progress of time but also on the multiplicity and diversity of localities, has resulted in an aesthetic value of the Crescent Moon School that is distinct from both the Westernised and traditionalist ones. It is this cultural position and aesthetic value, I suggest, that links the Crescent Moon group with the early 1920s New Confucianists and *Critical Review* members, and the 1930s Beijing School writers.

5. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the modern conservative cultural position as the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School. To Shu-mei Shih’s argument that the Beijing School literature is an aesthetic manifestation of the neotraditionalist philosophy of Liang Qichao, the New Confucianists, and the *Critical Review* members,⁵⁴⁷ I add that the Crescent Moon group displayed a similar mode of thinking and thus constitutes a missing link between the neotraditionalists and the Beijing School writers. I would suggest that there was a modern conservative intellectual trend in Republican China that runs from the philosophy of the late 1910s and early 1920s neotraditionalists, through the poetics of the mid-1920s Crescent Moon School, and to the fiction of the

⁵⁴⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 183-184.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 185.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 151-189.

mid-1930s Beijing School. These modern conservative intellectuals shared an eclectic, non-radical, and critically syncretic attitude in their cultural and aesthetic undertakings. This attitude finds its expression in their understanding of the relationship between China and the West, the old and the new, and tradition and modernity. They questioned the popular way of understanding modernity in the May Fourth era as a unilinear progress of time, and asserted a multi-linear cultural development that took into consideration the diversity and coexistence of localities. This mode of thinking has “rescued modernity from evolutionary progressivism and developmentalism”,⁵⁴⁸ and represents an expanded understanding of cosmopolitanism.

The poetic theory and practice of the Crescent Moon School, as I have discussed in the chapter, were guided under this modern conservative spirit. Their understanding of the “newness” of new poetry was not based on a negation and rupture of the old tradition, but on a mutual conformity and organic integration between the old and the new. So the Crescent Moon poets had on the one hand kept experimenting with a wide variety of Western forms and familiarising themselves with the latest Western literary tendencies, and on the other hand clung firmly to the literary past and asserted the cultural specificity and identity of China.

When discussing the popular concept of literary evolutionism in the Republican China, Bonnie McDougall remarks:

The shallowness of the evolutionary approach is revealed by the remarkable ease with which some of the Chinese writers identified themselves with the mainstream of Western literature and history. In discussing the course of literary movements, they talk of the progress from classicism through romanticism to realism as if this were the only possible course of literary development in any country. In most of their discussions, there is no appeal made to traditional Chinese literary experience...⁵⁴⁹

The poetics of the Crescent Moon group, in my view, is not confined by this literary evolutionism. They not only take into consideration their own traditional literary experience, but in their poetry there is a simultaneous display of different literary

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 153.

⁵⁴⁹ Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

tendencies including romanticism, classicism, and modernism. Instead of understanding literary modernity in an evolutionary and temporalised way, the Crescent Moon poets took an eclectic and syncretic stance, allowing different literary traditions to coexist and interact. This is the modern conservative spirit expressed in the Crescent Moon poetics.

Chapter 3 The Romantic Temperament

Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse the romantic elements in the Crescent Moon poems, so as to demonstrate the romantic temperament of these poets. The romantic temperament of Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo has been studied by other scholars. As early as 1973, Leo Ou-fan Lee has discussed the romantic life and temperament of Xu Zhimo, along with six other “romantic” writers of the May Fourth generation.⁵⁵⁰ Lee categorises Xu as a representative of the “Promethean type of personality”, one of the two “prototypical models” or “hero-types” emerged in the May Fourth era under the impact of Western romanticism.⁵⁵¹ Kai-yu Hsu’s studies on Wen Yiduo are also centred on Wen’s romantic temperament, stating that the two main currents in Wen’s intellectual development are “romantic new poetry and scholarly research in Chinese classical literature, particularly poetry, pursued in a romantic spirit”.⁵⁵² As Lee has eloquently shown, literary development in the 1920s were “dominated” by the impact of Western romanticism.⁵⁵³ European romantic writers and works rushed into China and gained immediate popularity, and “even those who do not summarily fit into the romantic category...were worshiped by their adulators in a romantic perspective”.⁵⁵⁴ So Lee concludes that, while cognizant of some exceptions, the May Fourth generation of Chinese writers could be viewed as a “romantic generation”, and the 1920s could be seen as a “romantic decade”.⁵⁵⁵

It is true that in the decade after the May Fourth and New Culture movements, young intellectuals in China were entering into an ebullient and iconoclastic “romantic era” with the awakening of the individual self, the questioning and defiance of the old

⁵⁵⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*

⁵⁵¹ The two prototypes are “Wertherian (passive-sentimental) and Promethean (dynamic-heroic)” personalities, named after the “two most popular protagonists of Western romanticism”. *Ibid.* pp. 279-282.

⁵⁵² Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

⁵⁵³ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 279.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 278.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 294-295.

conventions, and an increasing sense of nationalism. The poets of the Crescent Moon School were no exception. One can always find those Western romantic literary names such as Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth in the works and biographies of the Crescent Moon poets.⁵⁵⁶ Also in their creative works, they expressed their intense emotion and free-soaring imagination, in an effort to assert their individual ego and pursue their infinite ideals.

In Western scholarship, the term “Romanticism” has been “a disputed but still necessary generalization”.⁵⁵⁷ Varying opinions on the periodising, beginning and end dates, representative figures, and spirit of the age and the movement have emerged since the 20th century.⁵⁵⁸ As early as 1924, Arthur O. Lovejoy, after listing the diverse descriptions and understanding of the term and its origins, stated that “[t]he word ‘romantic’ has come to mean so many things that , by itself, it means nothing”.⁵⁵⁹ Many scholars agree on “diversity” as the leading characteristic of Romanticism,⁵⁶⁰ and therefore the definability of the term has been open to dispute.⁵⁶¹ I cannot and do not attempt to provide an exhaustive inquiry into the term in its historical and literary senses, but I will use some of the “most enduring ideas and popular perceptions of Romanticism”⁵⁶² emerged mostly in the post-war period as a general framework of my study on the romantic characteristics displayed in the Crescent Moon poems. These “popular perceptions” include: the idea of romantic poetry as an expression of the poet’s subjective mind, coming from the “impulse

⁵⁵⁶ 1) For Xu Zhimo’s “Pantheon” of romantic masters, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 169-170. 2) For Wen Yiduo’s, see Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-61. 3) For Sun Dayu’s, see Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “我与诗” *Wo yu shi* (“Poetry and I”). *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu*, *op.cit.*, p. 313. 4) For Lin Huiyin’s, see Wilma Fairbank, *Liang and Lin: Partners in Exploring China’s Architectural Past*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, pp. 12-13. 5) For Liang Shiqiu’s initial interest in romantic literature (as he later turns “classical”), see Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁵⁷ Raymond Williams, “Romantic”, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (Revised edition)*, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 276.

⁵⁵⁸ Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History*, Routledge, 2016. pp. 4-12.

⁵⁵⁹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms”, *PMLA*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1924, p. 232.

⁵⁶⁰ See 1) Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *op.cit.*, p. 3. 2) Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, Phoenix, 2011, p. 6. 3) M. H. Abrams, “Neoclassic and Romantic”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms (Sixth Edition)*, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993, p. 125.

⁵⁶¹ For example, Arthur Lovejoy and René Wellek had a learned dispute about the definability of Romanticism in the 1940s. Paul Hamilton, “Introduction”, *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, Oxford University Press, 2015. p. 1.

⁵⁶² Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

within the poet of feelings and desires seeking expression”;⁵⁶³ the idea that lyric poetry is the representative form of expression of romanticism;⁵⁶⁴ the idea that “the poet stands apart from the rest of society because he is ‘possessed of more than usual organic sensibility’”;⁵⁶⁵ the belief in the “creative and solitary Romantic genius”;⁵⁶⁶ and the emphasis on a liberated imagination, and on the “sense of liberation from rules and conventional forms”.⁵⁶⁷ Based on these general perceptions of romanticism, I will discuss the Crescent Moon poems from four perspectives: 1) romantic assertion of the self; 2) two modes of lyric poetry; 3) romantic treatment of reality 4) romantic quest for an elusive and infinite ideal.

1. Romantic Assertion of the Self

When Leo Ou-fan Lee compares the Literary Revolution in China to the 19th century Romantic Movement in Europe, he argues that both movements “ushered in a new emphasis on sincerity, spontaneity, passion, imagination, and the release of individual energies — in short, the primacy of subjective human sentiments and energies”.⁵⁶⁸ The emphasis on and assertion of the individual was one of the defining characteristics of romanticism. As Anne Janowitz points out, Romanticism is “the literary form of a struggle taking place on many levels of society between the claims of *individualism* and the claims of *communitarianism*”.⁵⁶⁹

“Individualism”, according to Patricia Laurence, was not a concept familiar to the Chinese, because the traditional philosophy of Confucianism and Daoism as well as the newly emerged ideology of socialism have “promoted the value of collectivity, responsibility to others, and social obligation”.⁵⁷⁰ Although the expression of

⁵⁶³ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁴ Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 49.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁵⁶⁷ Raymond Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 275.

⁵⁶⁸ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

⁵⁶⁹ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 13.

⁵⁷⁰ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

personal feelings and thoughts has been traditionally regarded as one of the major functions of poetry in China, the expression seldom emphasises individual creativity, imagination, intense emotion, or passion, which are key concepts in Western expressive theories.⁵⁷¹ Laurence observes that in the period under study, “the consciousness of the terms ‘self,’ ‘self-expression,’ and ‘individualism’ developed and was articulated” initially among “Chinese writers in England and America, and then later in China”.⁵⁷² So it is reasonable to assume that the explicit assertion of the self, the intense expression of personal feelings and emotions, and the uninhibited praise of individual creativity in May Fourth literature was largely an influence of Western expressive theories.

The Crescent Moon poets are among the earliest Chinese who championed the notion of “individualism”. Xu Zhimo claimed himself to be an “incurable individualist” who “knows only the individual, understands only the individual, and believes only in the individual”. He even believed that “the only meaning of democracy is the spirit of universal individualism”.⁵⁷³ With such a strong sense of self-consciousness, his first vernacular poem is brimming with an exuberant praise and assertion of the individual creativity of poets:

Dewdrops on the Grass

Each drop is as clear as crystal.

Newly returned swallows

Chatters ceaselessly in their old nests.

Oh, poet! Isn't it the advent of Spring

Why don't you open up your

⁵⁷¹ James J. Y. Liu elaborates on the six kinds of theories in Chinese literary tradition, one of which is “expressive theory”. He also compared Chinese and Western expressive theories, arguing that in contrast to Western theories, Chinese expressive theorists seldom emphasise creativity and imagination, and “do not value intense emotion or passion as a prerequisite for artistic writing”. James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, The University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 87.

⁵⁷² Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, pp. 138-139.

⁵⁷³ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “列宁忌日: 谈革命” *Liening jiri: tan geming* (“On the Anniversary of Lenin’s Death: Talking about Revolution”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Two, Prose 2, op.cit.*, p. 358.

Fountain of creation,
 Chi-chi! Spitting out the precious jade on southern and northern mountains,
 Splashing the fine jewels in eastern and western seas,
 Fusing the melody of all kinds of instruments,
 Enjoying the brightness of the sun, the moon and the stars!
 Oh, poet! Isn't it the presence of Spring
 Why don't you open up your
 Fountain of creation!
 The sound of the thunderbolt
 Shakes away the cloud all over the sky,
 The brilliant brand new sun
 Rises to his golden throne again;
 The soft southern wind
 Wrinkles the generous face of the sea,
 The pure white sea gulls
 Wanders freely by thrusting up to the cloud and submerging to the waves;
 ...
 Oh, poet!
 You are the prophet of the spirit of the time!
 You are the epitome of wisdom and art!
 You are the creator between heaven and human!
 ...
 You are the Charitarian saving us from spiritual poverty,
 You display the wide span of rainbow of truth, kindness, and beauty,
 You reside in the very peak of true life!
 —“Dewdrops On the Grass” by Xu Zhimo (1921)⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “草上的露珠儿” *Caoshang de luzhuer* (“Dewdrops On the Grass”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 7-9.

This poem was written in 1921 when Xu was in Cambridge, a place where he described as having opened up his eyes, stirred up his desire for knowledge, and nurtured his self-consciousness.⁵⁷⁵ With fluent vernacular language, the poet creates a dense set of dazzling and dynamic images to praise the irresistible outburst of creativity of poets. Completely casting off the conventional forms of classical poetry, the poem impresses the readers with a crushing rhythm and a frequent use of exclamation marks, overflowing with the young poet's burning passion and ambition.⁵⁷⁶ Despite the new form and new spirit of the age, however, the poem abounds in classical-flavoured images and phrases, for example, 燕子还巢 *yanzi huanchao* (swallows newly returned to their old nests),⁵⁷⁷ 璠瑜 *fanyu* (precious jade), 琼珠 *qiongzhu* (fine jewels), 吹绉 *chuizhou* (wrinkles), etc. The “customary use of classical or stock poetic words”, although not in tune with the general anti-traditional climate in the May Fourth era, “is an important element of [Xu's] style, without which his poetry would lose a part of its classical flavor”.⁵⁷⁸

In this “psalm of the poet”, Xu elevated the role of poets to the level of the nearly omnipotent creator, prophet, and embodiment of beauty, kindness and truth. This understanding of poets is clearly reminiscent of the self-positioning of Western romantic poets. Shelley, for instance, glorified poets as “the unacknowledged legislators of the world”.⁵⁷⁹ Wordsworth, in his “manifesto” of Romanticism, believed poet to be “endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more

⁵⁷⁵ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “吸烟与文化” *Xiyan yu wenhua* (“Smoking and Culture”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Two, Prose 2, op.cit.*, p. 331.

⁵⁷⁶ One typical characteristic of the May Fourth era new poetry is the frequent use of exclamation marks, making the poems always high in spirit. Leo Ou-fan Lee cites an observation of a contemporary critic, that “in the current vernacular poetry in China there appears on the average one exclamation mark in every four lines or 232 exclamation marks in every thousand lines”. Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation, op.cit.*, p. 263.

⁵⁷⁷ “Swallow” in China was “the harbinger of spring”, so the image “swallows returning to the nests” usually symbolises the return/advent of spring in Chinese classical poetry. Wolfram Eberhard, “Swallow 燕”, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*, translated by G. L. Campbell, Routledge, 1986, p. 280.

⁵⁷⁸ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

⁵⁷⁹ P. B. Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry”. *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2002. p. 660.

comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind”.⁵⁸⁰ One characteristic, if not the most prominent one, of romanticism is “the prestige, even glory, which it confers on the poet. He acquires the stature of prophet, priest, and preacher, of hero, law-giver, and creator; he grows almost into a god”.⁵⁸¹ Behind this glorification and elevation of poets, I suggest, lies the romantic assertion of the “self” and individual creativity. “In exalting the poet,” as Leo Ou-fan Lee remarks, “[Xu] was also celebrating his new role in life...he had also discovered himself...it was also a spiritual rebirth”.⁵⁸²

Roughly at the same time, Wen Yiduo also composed his “psalm of the poet” in the United States. Using “red candle” as a symbol, he praised the spirit of creation, dedication, and sacrifice of poets:

Ah, red candle!
Such a red candle!
Ah, poet!
Spit out your heart and compare,
Is it as bright as the candle?
...
Ah, red candle!
Since you are made, just burn!
Burn! Burn!
Break the dreams of the people,
Let their blood seethe in your flame —
And save their souls,
And smash down their prison wall!

⁵⁸⁰ William Wordsworth, “Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800/1802)”. *Wordsworth & Coleridge: Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*. Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2003, p. 13.

⁵⁸¹ Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 32.

⁵⁸² Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation, op.cit.*, p. 135.

Ah, red candle!
The day your heart gives off light,
The day you start shedding tears.
...
Ah, red candle!
Weep! Why can't you weep tears?
Let your greasy wax,
Flow on and on to the human world,
To cultivate flowers of comfort,
To bear fruits of happiness.

Ah, red candle!
Every teardrop you shed has ashened a part of your heart,
From the ashes and tears,
Comes the creation of light.

Ah, red candle!
“Just plough the land, and don't mind the harvest!”

—“Red Candle” by Wen Yiduo (1923)⁵⁸³

In this poem, the “poet” is compared to the “red candle” which burns itself to ashes in an attempt to create light and bring in liberation. Kai-yu Hsu finds the “central motif” of Wen’s poetic imagination in this “prefatory poem for the first collection” of his creative works, that is the total dedication to one’s self-chosen task, or even to die in pursuit of it.⁵⁸⁴ Quite similar to Xu Zhimo’s eulogy, poets are again placed on the position of creators, leaders, and liberators.

⁵⁸³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “红烛” *Hongzhu* (“Red Candle”). 《闻一多全集 1·诗》 *Wen Yiduo quanji yi, shi* (*Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry*), edited by Sun Dangbo 孙党伯, Hubei People’s Press, 1994. pp. 7-9.

⁵⁸⁴ See Kai-yu Hsu’s interpretation of the poem, which also alludes to Keats and Li Shangyin. Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.*, pp. 53-55.

It is no coincidence that the two very influential poets in modern literary history, when they took up writing vernacular poems, had selected a similar theme: the psalm of poets, or more specifically, the praise of the creative, enlightening, and leading role of poets. It marks their initial discovery and assertion of the self. Laurence argues that “Xu Zhimo’s articulation of the ‘self’ emerged from the British romantic poets who advanced a new kind of individualism considered revolutionary in China”.⁵⁸⁵ These poems are best illustrations of their confidence and exuberance when the “prison wall” of the old prosodic conventions was smashed down, leaving a new world for them to create. In effect, the two poems are strongly reminiscent of *Goddess* (女神 *Nüshen*), the very first collection of romantic new poetry of Guo Moruo, in theme, emotion, and diction, as can be seen in the following lines: “To allow your new heat and new light, I will create a brand new sun!”.⁵⁸⁶

From these early poems one finds a mood permeated through the May Fourth era, that is, an eagerness for creation and an obsession with “newness”.⁵⁸⁷ It also reflects that the new poets, losing their traditional role and position in society as scholar-officials, were searching a new identity for themselves. The roles in Xu and Wen’s poems — the creator, liberator, prophet, charitarian, and epitome of wisdom and art — are nothing but the new self-images of the perplexed new intellectuals. Michelle Yeh casts much light on this issue when she elaborates on the two types of response of new poets in face of the marginalization and alienation in the new age. For the new poets with a “negative” mentality, their self-image takes “the form of the superfluous man”; while for those with a “positive” outlook, they seek “to establish a new self-identity that describes, if not justifies, his new position in society”.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Patricia Laurence, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

⁵⁸⁶ Guo Moruo 郭沫若, “女神之再生” *Nüshen zhi zaisheng* (“Rebirth of the Goddess”). 《郭沫若诗选》 *Guo Moruo shixuan* (*Selected Poetry of Guo Moruo*), Zhejiang Art and Literature Press, 2001. p. 9.

⁵⁸⁷ Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses the May Fourth obsession with “newness”. Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity”. *op.cit.*, pp. 110-111.

⁵⁸⁸ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

Both Xu and Wen are among the “positive” type of new poets who identified themselves as men of mission, rather than the “superfluous men”.⁵⁸⁹ Despite the realisation that new poetry was in a difficult position and may not be recognised by the public for a long time, they would still undertake their mission and identify themselves with the creator, enlightener, and prophet. The Crescent Moon poetic school, led by the two positive leaders, had collectively demonstrated a positive and constructive attitude. They had been actively experimenting on new forms for new poetry, and they strongly rejected the melancholic and remorseful tone of sentimentalism that was prevalent at the time.

Zhu Xiang is another Crescent Moon poet who started writing poetry in this early stage.⁵⁹⁰ Unlike Xu and Wen, the self-image of Zhu Xiang, or his idea of the role of the new poet, is reflected in his poem “To Yiduo and Jixiang” (寄一多基相 *Ji Yiduo Jixiang*):

I am an exhausted traveller,
Staggering in the solitary and boundless desert.
I walked on my own, struggling to move ahead,
Accompanied only by the bitter autumn wind.

Your heart is a thatched hut,
Sending out warm red light of friendship from your window;
Ah, my soul, rest by the fire,

⁵⁸⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee describes Xu Zhimo as filled with “Promethean aspirations” and “Dionysian madness”. Kai-yü Hsü portrays Wen Yiduo as “enthusiastic, imaginative, eager for new knowledge, full of vigor and intense feeling”. Both poets are described as “men of mission”. cf: 1) Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 281 and p. 158. 2) Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 137 3) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

⁵⁹⁰ It remains in dispute whether Zhu Xiang belongs to Crescent Moon poetic school. Some critics disagree with this classification because Zhu Xiang declared to retreat from the *Poetry Supplement* group due to personal conflicts with Wen Yiduo and Xu Zhimo. But both his poetic ideas and practice bore the typical Crescent Moon features, such as the effort in experimenting with “various techniques for developing a new prosody for the vernacular language”, and the preference for capturing some delicate emotion and mood. I take the side that Zhu belongs to the Crescent Moon poetic school, not only because his poetic views were closer to the group, but also because Chen Mengjia included him as one of the 18 Crescent Moon poets when he edited the *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*. Kai-yu Hsu also considers Zhu as a Crescent Moon poet. Kai-yu Hsu, *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

This is where you may rest in peace.

—“To Yiduo and Jixiang” by Zhu Xiang (1925?)⁵⁹¹

The self-image of Zhu Xiang, as shown in this poem, may belong to what Michelle Yeh has described as the “superfluous man”.⁵⁹² The poet imagined himself as a solitary and exhausted traveller, struggling in the alienated world of desert. He could only seek comfort and rest from his good friends (those who can understand him), and were mentally isolated from the rest of the world. He could even die peacefully if he finds sympathisers (“rest by the fire”). Unlike the poems of Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo, which display the poets’ ambitions of leading and creating in the most ebullient and confident way, the tone of Zhu’s poem reveals his more closed and introverted world of personality. His self-image is more of an isolated poet who sings to himself and if luckily, to his sympathisers, without seeking understandings from the outside, leaving the entire secular world behind him. This is another side of the romantic mentality. As Michael Ferber rightly points out, just as Shelley who qualified his “legislators of the world” by the adjective “unacknowledged”, “it was characteristic of Romanticism to exalt the poet, it was equally distinctive to lament his neglect, rejection, and suffering in the modern world”.⁵⁹³ And largely because of the “marginal status of poetry and the poet”, “the self in modern Chinese poetry is more often tragic than triumphant”.⁵⁹⁴

Zhu Xiang is able to create a solemn and elegant poetic realm for his tragic hero by using such traditional compounds as 蹒跚 *panshan* (staggering), 旷漠 *kuangmo* (boundless desert), 悲风 *beifeng* (bitter wind), 惫殆 *beidai* (exhausted), and 形影孤单 *xinying gudan* (solitarily on one’s own). Like Xu Zhimo, Zhu Xiang is also attempting to salvage some of the *wenyan* elements, blending them into fluent vernacular language. Being more careful about the diction, rhythm, and rhyme, his

⁵⁹¹ Zhu Xiang 朱湘, “寄一多基相” *Ji Yiduo Jixiang* (“To Yiduo and Jixiang”). 《中国新诗库·朱湘卷》 *Zhongguo xinshi ku: Zhu Xiang juan* (*The Collection of Chinese New Poetry: Volume of Zhu Xiang*), edited by Zhou Liangpei 周良沛, Changjiang Literary and Art Press, 1988. p. 4.

⁵⁹² Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

⁵⁹³ Michael Ferber, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

⁵⁹⁴ Michelle Yeh, “Introduction: From the Margin”, *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, Yale University Press, 1992, p. xxvi.

poem possesses a sense of reserved and implicit beauty and finer musical quality that is rarely found in modern Chinese poetry, especially in this early period. The finer artistic pursuit of Zhu Xiang drew him close to the Crescent Moon School, which has attached great importance to the artistic refinement. But it might be his introverted and “superfluous” personality that distanced him from the group soon after.⁵⁹⁵

Another result of the May Fourth assertion of individualism is women’s discovery and articulation of the self, proud of their increasingly independent roles. Lin Huiyin’s poem, “Lotus Lantern” (莲灯 *Liandeng*), reveals the new-age women writers’ search for their independent meanings of life:

If my heart were a lotus flower,
Holding a glowing candle in its centre,
Though only a gleam of faint light it emits,
I will have it shine with pride and glory.
I do not care it is only my personal lotus lantern,
Unable to light up the entire tough life —
In ups and downs it drifts along the waves of people,
Dim or bright it bears its inner enigma.
With a single flash of light and a tiny flower —
Like a leaf of canoe gliding out of the river —
In twists and turns, it floats with the waves of destiny,
Waiting for the wind pushing it further away.
I am no one but a passer-by in the universe,
Just to experience the exquisite life and the serene death,
Such a vague and floating trip is nothing—
But a beautiful, beautiful dream.

⁵⁹⁵ Wen Yiduo’s letter to Liang Shiqiu reveals Wen’s dissatisfaction with Zhu Xiang’s sentimentalism, aside from his incompatibility with Zhu’s personality. Wen considers Zhu’s poetry as “basically sweet sentimentality”, with “dull acrobatics as his poetic techniques”. cf: Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Wen Yiduo”, *op.cit.*, pp. 302-303.

In this poem, Lin identifies herself with a lotus lantern giving off a faint light. The poem is beautifully rhymed, and the elegant diction reinforces its musical quality. It fully reveals the poet’s unique understanding of life which, based on a non-teleological vision, sees the meaning of life lying in its rich experience rather than the fulfilment of a certain purpose. It is the poet herself, rather than social conventions or moral preferences, that determines her life.

Women poets have traditionally “occupied a peripheral place in the literary canon” because of the marginal position of women in Chinese society.⁵⁹⁷ As Michelle Yeh observes, women poets in the past worked mostly along the “*wanyue*, or ‘feminine,’ tradition in Chinese poetry, in which typically a woman sits alone in her boudoir, ...pines for her absent lover or husband or wallows in melancholy over lost love”.⁵⁹⁸ Lin’s poem, by treating herself as an independent ego and seeking to determine her own life, clearly voiced the expanded vision of an enlightened woman. Through the image of a lotus lantern giving off “a gleam of faint light”, she acknowledges the position of women at the time, which was weak, powerless, voiceless, “drifting along the waves of people”. But taking a radical turn, the poet stresses, “Though only a gleam of faint light it emits, / I will have it shine with pride and glory”, and though “it drifts along the waves of people”, “it bears its inner enigma”. Being conscious of her independent value, the poet is in more control of her own life and proud of it. It reflects, in the words of Michelle Yeh, “the burgeoning individualism of the 1920s, the May Fourth era, and specifically relates to the new definition of womanhood in the whole modern period”.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁶ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “莲灯” *Liandeng* (“Lotus Lantern”). 《林徽因诗文集》 *Lin Huiyin shiwen ji* (Collected Poetry and Prose of Lin Huiyin). Yilin Press, 2011, p. 14.

⁵⁹⁷ Michelle Yeh, “Introduction: From the Margin”, *op.cit.*, p. xlv.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. xlvi.

2. Two Modes of Lyric Poetry

The romantic assertion of the “self” and individualism in the May Fourth era led to an increasing interest in the lyric form, the poetic genre “consisting of the utterance by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling”.⁶⁰⁰ Lyric poetry is one of the three major genres in Western literary history (the other two being epic/narrative and drama), and it was not until the romantic period that lyric replaced epic and tragedy as the quintessentially poetic type.⁶⁰¹ “In the romantic period, then,” according to M. H. Abrams, “much of the major poetry, like almost all the major criticism, circles out from the poet as center. Late in this period, some critics came to believe that in all ages, the long poetic forms had been not only expressive but self-expressive”.⁶⁰² Lyricism, as an effective means of self-expression, becomes a representative quality of romantic poetry.

Classical Chinese poetry, on the other hand, “is predominantly lyrical (i.e., non-narrative and nondramatic)”.⁶⁰³ In his study on Chinese poetic art, James J. Y. Liu observes that the view that “poetry is mainly an expression of personal emotions” is as old as, or even older than, the didactic view, the supposedly “orthodox” Confucian views of poetry.⁶⁰⁴ The flourishing of the lyric poetry in the May Fourth era, therefore, is both a “continuation of the classical tradition”⁶⁰⁵ and a result of the romantic emphasis on individualism. When Western romantic lyrics were introduced to China, as Leo Ou-fan Lee argues, “the sentimental tradition in classical literature...may have predisposed some modern men of letters toward these romantic values.”⁶⁰⁶

It is not surprising that, at the time of self-expression and self-assertion, the Crescent Moon poets produced a large number of lyric poems that mainly voiced their

⁶⁰⁰ M. H. Abrams, “Lyric”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

⁶⁰¹ M. H. Abrams, “Genre”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

⁶⁰² M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

⁶⁰³ James J. Y. Liu, *Essentials of Chinese Literary Art*, Duxbury Press, 1979, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁴ James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, the University of Chicago Press, 1966. p. 65 and p. 70.

⁶⁰⁵ Jaroslav Průšek believed that the pervasive lyrical quality in the writings of the May Fourth era “was to a large extent a continuation of the classical tradition”. Cited from Bonnie S. McDougall, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 261.

⁶⁰⁶ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

personal feelings and thoughts. Chen Mengjia, after editing the *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, noticed that “lyric poems are in the vast majority in this anthology”.⁶⁰⁷ It is not only the quantity of lyric poems that is worth mentioning here, but the quality and nature. The bulk of Crescent Moon poetry may be termed the “Pure Lyric”,⁶⁰⁸ the purely personal poems that each “turns on a single thought, feeling or situation”.⁶⁰⁹ Mao Dun’s comment on the poetry of Xu Zhimo demonstrates this pure lyrical quality of Xu’s poems, and is equally applicable to most of the Crescent Moon works:

Within the elaborately constructed form, the content is so light and empty that has almost vanished. And even this nearly vanished content is nothing but some sentimental mood — the light sorrow like a wisp of smoke, or the mysterious and symbolic love, sigh, and quest.⁶¹⁰

In this section, I will discuss the lyricism of the Crescent Moon poems. I would like to show that rather than “devoid of content” as Mao Dun criticised, the Crescent Moon poems abound in emotional content, or in the rich expression of the poet’s ego.

Two lyrical modes are identified in the analysis of the Crescent Moon poems, namely, the dynamic and enthusiastic songs that express the poet’s intense emotion and strong will in a straightforward way, and the tender and soft tunes that reveal the poet’s feelings and thoughts in a meditative manner. The first type of lyrics is mostly produced before 1926, when the poets were exuberant and hopeful youths with a creative ambition. These lyrical songs bear the *Sturm und Drang* characteristics typical in the May Fourth era, full of vigour, passion, unbridled imagination, and the desire to destruction as well as re-construction. The poets at this period exhibited themselves without restraint, showing their hopes and faith, and screaming out their anger and discontent. After 1926, however, most of them turned more and more

⁶⁰⁷ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁰⁸ Bliss Perry defines “Pure Lyric” as “the expression of the Ego in song”, which is the most subjective and personal poetry. Starting with Pure Lyric, there are more developments of lyrics, from dramatic lyric, to dramatic monologue and eventually to the non-lyric, or Drama. The poet’s vision becomes more objectified with this development. cf: Bliss Perry, *A Study of Poetry*, BiblioBazaar, 2007, p. 158.

⁶⁰⁹ Francis T. Palgrave gave this definition of lyric poetry in the Preface to the *Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics*. Cited from Bliss Perry, *op.cit.*, p. 160.

⁶¹⁰ Mao Dun 茅盾, “徐志摩论” *Xu Zhimo lun* (“On Xu Zhimo”). *Selected Collection of Critical Articles of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

conservative, partly because of the influence of the classical aesthetics,⁶¹¹ and partly due to their changed mood with the ever-gloomier reality. They controlled their bold and uninhibited lyrical abandon in the early years, and their lyric poems display more formal and emotional restraint.

1) Dynamic and Enthusiastic Songs

Many of Xu Zhimo's early poems fall in the first lyric mode in their unstructured forms, loose and convoluted sentences, intense emotion, and free-soaring imagination. In a typical romantic manner, for example, he imagines himself as a solitary hero standing alone on a high mountain of infinity, singing out loudly his strong will to break the illusions and face the harsh reality:

Go, the mortal world, go!

I stand alone on the peak of the high mountain;

Go, the mortal world, go!

I face the infinite heaven.

Go, young man, go!

Go bury with the fragrant grasses of the deep valley;

Go, young man, go!

Leave your melancholy with the crows on the evening sky.

Go, dreams, go!

I shatter the jade cup of illusion;

Go, dreams, go!

I embrace the mountain wind and roaring waves with a smile.

⁶¹¹ I will discuss this classical influence in the next chapter.

Go, everything, go!
Before us is the peak piercing the sky!
Go, everything, go!
Before us is the infinite infinity!

—“Go” by Xu Zhimo (1924)⁶¹²

He denounces the world full of conventions and prejudice, and like a Western romantic lover, seeks absolute freedom in love.⁶¹³

This is a Coward's World,
Love is not permitted, love is not permitted!
Loose down all your hair,
And bare your feet;
Follow me, my love,
Cast the world away,
And die for our love!
...
Come along with me,
My love!
The human world is left behind us —
Look, isn't it the vast expanse of the white ocean?
The vast expanse of the white ocean,
The vast expanse of the white ocean,
The boundless freedom, you and I in love!

—“This is a Coward's World” by Xu Zhimo (1925)⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “去罢” *Quba* (“Go”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 151-152.

⁶¹³ James J. Y. Liu differentiates the “Chinese conception of love” from the “Romantic European one”, arguing that the former “does not exalt love as something absolute that frees the person in love from all moral responsibilities”. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 57.

⁶¹⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “这是一个懦怯的世界” *Zheshi yige nuoqie de shijie* (“This is a Coward's World”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 212-213.

He writes prose poems with a forward-rushing rhythm, as if the words are poured out irrationally without control. Using grotesque images, he exposes his warm heart and intense emotion in the most shocking way:

It is not the day for me to sing today, and a vicious grin flows out of my lips. It is not the day for me to talk and smile, I hide in my chest a sharp blade with piercingly cold light.

Believe me, my thought is vicious because the world is vicious. My soul is dark because the sunlight has gone into extinction. My voice is like a night owl in the graveyard because the human world has slaughtered all the harmony. My accent is like a wronged ghost questioning his foe because all the kindness has given way to resentment.

But believe me there is truth in my words although they sound like poison. Truth is never ambiguous, although there seems to be in my words the tongue of a two-headed snake, the tail-tip of a scorpion, and the palps of a centipede. It is just because my heart is filled with mercy and sympathy and love that are stronger than poison, crueller than a curse, more intense than flame, and deeper than death, that my words are poisonous, cursing, flaming, and void.

—“Poison” by Xu Zhimo (1924)⁶¹⁵

He also expresses his intense yearning for a liberated life and his awareness of the disappointing reality:

I want — I want to release my coarse and roaring voices, to sing a barbaric, bold and appalling new song;

I want to rip open my robe, my neat and tidy robe, to bare my chest, belly, ribs, muscles and veins;

I want to let loose my full hair, hanging down the tousled hair like a travelling monk;

I also want to bare my feet, bare my feet, walking happily and fearlessly over the abrupt cliff.

...

I stride forward, and forward in wild ecstasy, singing loudly the violent, rough, and fragmentary song;

Come, I invite you to the seaside, hearing the roaring wind shaking the infinite sky;

Come, I invite you to the mountain, hearing the clear sound of the sharp axe cutting an old tree;

⁶¹⁵ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “毒药” *Duyao* (“Poison”). Ibid. p. 167.

Come, I invite you to a secret chamber, hearing the groans of the maimed, lonely souls;

Come, I invite you to go beyond the clouds, hearing the solitary cry of the odd huge bird;

Come, I invite you to the world of the common people, hearing the voices of the old and decrepit, the sick and suffering, the impoverished, the mangled, the oppressed, the depressed, the servile, the cowardly, the ugly, the sinful, the suicidal — harmonising with the sound of winds and rains in the late autumn — all constituting a symphony of “this grey life”.

—“The Grey Life” by Xu Zhimo (1923)⁶¹⁶

Most poems of this style are products of Xu’s early experimentation on various poetic forms. The long and free-flowing sentences, as Julia C. Lin has noted, is reminiscent of Li Bai and Walt Whitman, though the rhetorical tone of Xu “lacks both the control and the spontaneous lyrical abandon of the Tang master”.⁶¹⁷ These early poems portray an image of a typical May Fourth youth who, discontent with the chaotic and suffocative reality, seeks to face the challenges, destroy the old conventions, and open up a new, liberated world. But Xu the rebel is not Xu the cynic, who doubts everything and becomes disillusioned with his faith.⁶¹⁸ While cursing the world of evil and violence, as Leonid Cherkassky observes, “the general tone of the poems leaves room for hope” and his search for “the pure ideal” continued.⁶¹⁹ He cherishes the utmost human kindness such as “mercy, sympathy, and love”, and he embraces a hope for the “infinite infinity”. He longs to stride forward to the darkest corners of society, releasing his personal energy to make an improvement. This is what Leo Ou-fan Lee has called the “Promethean aspirations” of Xu,⁶²⁰ whose “ultimate desire is to ‘impose his personality on the world, to shape the world — even to create it, to be a new Prometheus.’”⁶²¹ In the study on Hardy’s influence on Xu Zhimo, Lu Weiping believes that “The Grey Life” is a product “deeply impressed by Hardy’s ‘gray’ philosophy of life”, which portrays life as

⁶¹⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “灰色的人生” *Huise de rensheng* (“The Grey Life”). Ibid. pp. 122-123.

⁶¹⁷ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

⁶¹⁸ I will discuss this side of Xu in Chapter 5.

⁶¹⁹ Leonid Cherkassky, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

⁶²⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 281.

⁶²¹ Ibid. p. 280.

“dismal, gloomy, sad, and depressing”.⁶²² But in my opinion, despite using Hardy’s image of “grey”, this poem strikes more of a note of rebellion, dynamism, and bohemian abandon of Xu, demonstrating his early Promethean ambition and enthusiasm.

Published in 1923, the first poetry anthology of Wen Yiduo, *Red Candle* (《红烛》 *Hongzhu*), also abounds in poems of this style. Wen, the “master of the poetic line” in the late 1920s, was in this early period still experimenting with different forms and subjects and demonstrating his “youthful impulsiveness” and strong feelings.⁶²³ The well-received patriotic poem, “Chant of the Sun” (太阳吟 *Taiyang yin*), for instance, is created in a time when Wen was studying in the U.S. and is characteristic of his bold imagination and intense emotion. The poet expresses his yearning desire for his home country:

Ah sun, the sun that stabs my heart in pain!
Again it disperses the wandering young man’s homesick dream,
And brings forth another twelve hours’ yearning and suffering!

Ah sun, the sun that burns like fire!
It dries off the dewdrops on the tips of the grass,
But can it dry off the cold teardrops in the wanderer’s eyes?

Ah sun, the sun driven by six dragons!
Please relieve me of this endless torture day after day,
Why don’t you finish your five years’ travel in one day?

Ah sun — the golden crow with amazing speed — the sun!⁶²⁴

⁶²² Lu Weiping, *op.cit.*, pp. 323-327.

⁶²³ Tao Tao Liu Sanders, *op.cit.*, pp. 234-236.

⁶²⁴ In ancient Chinese mythology, the sun is sometimes imagined as a golden crow, a fairy bird with golden feathers and three feet. It flies from the *Fusang* tree (扶桑树) in the East to the *Ruomu* tree (若木树) in the West,

Let me ride on you to travel around the earth everyday,
So that I can see my hometown each single day!

Ah sun, the sun newly rises from the corner of the roof!
Isn't it newly coming from our Eastern land?
Is my hometown safe and sound as usual at the moment?

Ah sun, the sun from my hometown!
Have the willows in Beijing been covered by the golden autumn?
Alas! I am as withered and haggard as the late autumn!

Ah sun, the sun that keeps running around!
You look as if homeless as well.
Ah! You and I share the same unbearably tragic fate!

Ah sun, the sun that keeps itself strong!
The macrocosm might be your hometown.
Can you point to me the direction of my hometown?

Ah sun, this is nothing like my own landscape, sun!
The cloud and wind here bear different shades of colour,
The tunes of the birds here sound exceptionally sad and desolate.

Ah sun, the sun as the fire of life!
But who doesn't know that you are the passionate heat of the Eastern hemisphere,

representing the early Chinese people's primitive imagination about the sun rising from East and descending in the West. Therefore, the golden crow is a metonym of the sun. cf: Harry T. Morgan, "The Crow", *Chinese Symbols and Superstitions*, P. D. and Ione Perkins, 1942. pp. 127-128. And Wolfram Eberhard, "Sun 日", *op.cit.*, p. 279.

And the intellectual light of the Western hemisphere?

Ah sun, the sun of my hometown as well!

While I cannot return to my hometown at the moment,

I ask you to be my hometown as a substitute.

Ah sun, the sun illuminates all with its merciful light!

Whenever I see you from now on, I shall feel at home;

My hometown is not on the earth, but in the sky.

—“Chant of the Sun” by Wen Yiduo (1922)⁶²⁵

The poem, when collected to the *Red Candle*, is categorised into the subgroup of “the Lone Swan”, symbolising the poet’s loneliness and homesickness in a foreign country.⁶²⁶ In a letter to his friend, Wen discloses his original intention of writing the poem:

“You cannot feel the taste of homesickness without leaving the country”...After reading my poems, you shall not mistake that I have been missing “home” in the narrow sense. No! What I am missing is the mountains and rivers, grasses and woods, birds and beasts, houses and buildings in China — and people in China.⁶²⁷

The most striking feature of this poem is the use of apostrophe, a rhetorical figure in which “the poetic speaker addresses something non-human or abstract, or someone who is either absent or dead”.⁶²⁸ Apostrophe is a very common feature of lyric, and Jonathan Culler even believes that it is possible to “identify apostrophe with lyric itself”.⁶²⁹ Apostrophe is mostly used in poetry as “intensifiers” to intensify the poet’s “invested passion”.⁶³⁰ In this poem, each stanza begins with Wen directly addressing the sun. He personifies the sun and bares to it his intense yearning for his home and

⁶²⁵ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “太阳吟” *Taiyang yin* (“Chant of the Sun”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry*, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-94.

⁶²⁶ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁶²⁷ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “致吴景超” *Zhi Wu Jingchao* (“A Letter to Wu Jingchao”), 24th September 1922. *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 12: Letters, Diary, Appendix*, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

⁶²⁸ Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

⁶²⁹ Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Routledge, 2001, p. 151

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 152.

hometown in a straightforward manner. He firstly complains that the sun has intruded into his homesick dream, shedding tears of loneliness. Then he imagines to ride on it to travel around the earth so that he may visit his hometown each day. Then realising that the sun comes from his home country, he inquires the welfare of his hometown. Identifying the sun as an envoy of his hometown, he shares his feelings and seeks empathy with it. The moods of the poet vary quickly, with each stanza changing a mood, typical of the dynamism and intense emotion of this type of lyricism. Like Western romantics who exercise “the imaginative faculty... to transcend the material world”,⁶³¹ Wen seeks to escape from the suffering reality to his wildly imaginative world.

One of Wen’s major poetic features — the extensive references to Chinese mythology and folklore — is also notable here, adding to the imaginative power of the poem. As I have discussed in the last chapter, Wen criticised the overly Westernised tendency in modern Chinese poetry, condemning that new poems were full of Western allusions such as “Apollo, Venus, Cupid, Bacchus, Prometheus, Hygeia”, but nowhere can one find “the four-thousand-year Chinese culture”.⁶³² So in this poem, he imagines the sun as driving a six-dragon-carriage travelling around the world in a day, and as a fairy bird that flies swiftly and broadly from East to West, both images having their mythological sources. “Wen believed that the Chinese poet could cull from his own culture rich images to fit new poetic forms with selected Western features”.⁶³³ This preference is also displayed in his other poems, such as “The Sword Box” (劍匣 *Jianxia*) and “Autumn Colours” (秋色 *Qiuse*).⁶³⁴

“A Song over the Sea” (海上歌 *Haishang ge*) written by Sun Dayu is another representative poem of the first lyric mode. Here are the last two stanzas of the poem:

I am going to the sea,

Ha-ha!

⁶³¹ Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁶³² Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Local Colour of *Goddess*”, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

⁶³³ Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁶³⁴ See interpretations from Kai-yu Hsu. Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, 56-60.

I will visit the underwater palace.
The Dragon King has thick hairs all over his body,
And the sandfish are equipped with silver armour,
The starfish holds a silver lamp,
Seashells and mussels play the flutes under the rock.

I am going to the sea,
Ha-ha!
I will meet with the immortal gods over the sea.
I have no idea where to find them,
Maybe over the sea;
Maybe far away beyond the horizon, —
I search over and over again until to the land of illusion.

—“A Song over the Sea” by Sun Dayu (1926)⁶³⁵

Each of the four stanzas of the poem starts with the same line, “I am going to the sea”, followed by an onomatopoeia of the wild laughter, “Ha-ha”, setting the robust, abandoned and masculine tone for the poem. The poet elaborates in each stanza what he aspires to do over the sea, such as visiting the dragon palace and meeting with the immortal gods, brimming with the bold and absurd fantasies. Unbridled imagination, overflowing vitality, dynamic images and rhythm, and straightforward expression of the intense emotion are a few key features of this type of lyricism, which more frequently appeared in the early works of the Crescent Moon poets. One may easily find in these lyrics the poets’ youthful ambition and strong faith in their ideals, no matter how vague and remote they are.

⁶³⁵ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “海上歌” *Haishang ge* (“A Song over the Sea”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, pp. 182-183.

2) Tender and Soft Tunes

The second lyric mode — the tender, sentimental, and soft-voiced tunes — is perhaps the most characteristic type of poetry of the Crescent Moon School. These are mostly small and introverted lyrics, usually humming to the poet himself, recording his light and indistinct joy or sorrow, slightly detached observation, and simple and transient ideas or inspiration. It seems to be the most favoured style of the Crescent Moon poets, and remains a major mode of expression in both early and latter periods of their creation. But as the reality turned increasingly gloomy and depressing, and as the poets became disciplined by the classical aesthetics of decorum and restraint, they gradually hide away their straightforward expression of intense emotion in the early years. The youthful ambition and enthusiasm gave way to the quiet and introverted contemplation. Instead of directly speaking out their emotions, they would project their feelings and thoughts on a simple image or situation:

If I were a snowflake,
That lightly dances in the mid-air,
I will clearly find my direction,
Fly, fly, fly, —
I have my direction on the earth.

I will not go to the cold and solitary valley,
Nor will I to the desolate foothill,
Nor to breathe a sigh on the deserted street,
Fly, fly, fly, —
Look, I have my direction!

Gracefully dancing in the mid-air,
Making clear of her place in serenity,
Waiting for her visit to the garden,
Fly, fly, fly, —

Ah, the delicate fragrance of red plum blossom on her body!

Then with my lightweight body,
Blithely and tenderly I stick to her dress,
Approaching the soft waves of her bosom,
Melt, melt, melt, —
Dissolving into the soft waves of her bosom!

—“The Joy of A Snowflake” by Xu Zhimo (1924)⁶³⁶

Julia C. Lin discusses Xu’s preference for “empathy”, a skill Lin would trace to the influence of Keats and Shelley.⁶³⁷ Lin also notes Xu’s possible “empathic inheritance from the traditional Chinese poets, especially the nature poets”.⁶³⁸ But she regards Xu’s characteristic feature of empathy lies in his “use of a mobile image, especially flying”.⁶³⁹ This poem is a perfect illustration of such a flying image.

By employing the empathic skill, Xu projects himself onto the snowflake. Like Wen Yiduo’s treatment of the “sun”, the snowflake here is internalised by the poet as if Xu himself turns a snowflake. The quality of the snowflake, as expressed in words like 翩翩 *Pianpian* (lightly), 娟娟 *Juanjuan* (gracefully), 盈盈 *Yingying* (blithely and tenderly), reflects the poet’s own ideal of life. “The poetic world of [Xu]”, as Julia C. Lin aptly points out, “is of the celestial realm, translucent, ethereal, and abstract”.⁶⁴⁰ The poet always looks for the light-weighted, the tender, the delicate, and the free-flowing, demonstrating his strong desire for freedom, or for a purely spiritual and otherworldly state of life.

This poem also shows Xu’s preference for appropriating the classical diction and linguistic skills. 翩翩 *Pianpian*, 娟娟 *Juanjuan*, and 盈盈 *Yingying*, are reduplicated compounds, a linguistic device familiar in the classical poetry to reinforce a certain

⁶³⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “雪花的快乐” *Xuehua de kuaile* (“The Joy of A Snowflake”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 193-194.

⁶³⁷ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 112-113.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 113.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 107.

poetic effect — in this poem the light and airy tone.⁶⁴¹ Other devices like the alliterative (双声 *Shuangsheng*) and rhyming (or slant rhyme) (叠韵 *Dieyun*) compounds are also widely applied,⁶⁴² such as 凄清 *Qiqing* (cold and solitary), 惆怅 *Chouchang* (sigh or melancholy), 住处 *Zhuchu* (living place), and 幽谷 *Yougu* (solitary valley). Unlike the plain and blunt vernacular words, these phrases bear strong classical flavours, leaving an aftertaste of elegance and refinement. Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉 (1921-2008), a poet of *Jiuye* School (九叶派 *Jiuye pai*), accurately pointed out the lyric features of Xu Zhimo, which is equally applicable to many Crescent Moon poems of this lyric style:

The typical quality of Xu's poetry lies in the light touch in poetic tone, thick and intense emotion, dazzling imagery, harmonious rhythm, repetition of the central mood, and the creation of a lyric aura. In other words, they are good romantic poems.⁶⁴³

Another example of Xu's adroit use of the flying image is "By Accident" (偶然 *Ouran*):

I am a patch of cloud in the sky
Accidentally projecting my shadow onto the wave of your heart —
No need to be surprised,
Nor to be delighted —
In a flash my trace will disappear.

You and I meet on the sea in a dark night,
You have your direction, and I have mine;
You might remember,
You'd better forget,

⁶⁴¹ James J. Y. Liu distinguishes three types of "reduplication", one of them is "words repeated for emphasis". James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

⁶⁴² See James J. Y. Liu's explanation on these classical linguistic skills. *Ibid.* pp. 34-38.

⁶⁴³ Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉, 《论新诗现代化》 *Lun Xinshi xiandaihua* (*On the Modernisation of New Poetry*). Cited from Cheng Guojun 程国君, 《新诗美学范畴与诗美艺术》 *Xinshi meixue fanchou yu shimei yishu* (*Aesthetic Framework of the New Poetry and Its Aesthetic Art*), China Social Sciences Press, 2013. p. 158.

The sudden sparkle we exchanged in our encounter!

—“By Accident” by Xu Zhimo (1925)⁶⁴⁴

Julia C. Lin discusses this poem’s formal resemblance to the “English limerick form”, which demonstrates Xu’s adaptation and modification of English stanzaic patterns. But Lin also notes that Xu only “adapted... the external frame of the limerick and its rhyme arrangement”, without adhering to its stress patterns, or “anapaestic feet”.⁶⁴⁵ The central image “cloud”, usually connoting a sense of “rootlessness and uncertainty” in classical poems,⁶⁴⁶ is employed in this poem to symbolise the momentary encounter and love, and hides within it the poet’s meditation on the dialectical relationship between transience and permanence.

The vision of love and life expressed in the poem is reminiscent of Christina Rossetti’s “Song”, especially with regard to the relationship between “remember and forget”:

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale

⁶⁴⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “偶然” *Ouran* (“By Accident”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 308.

⁶⁴⁵ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-104.

⁶⁴⁶ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

—“Song” by Christina Rossetti (1848)⁶⁴⁷

“Song” is the only poem of C. Rossetti that was translated by Xu Zhimo,⁶⁴⁸ so it is reasonable to assume that the poem has exerted some unconscious influence on Xu. While Rossetti was talking about death, Xu portrays lovers’ parting without any hope to meet again. Both poems describe love and parting in a subdued and detached manner. And similar to Rossetti’s poem, Xu also employs the device of irony, i.e. to speak in understatement,⁶⁴⁹ to express the depth and intensity of love. According to M. H. Abrams,

The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation.⁶⁵⁰

In this poem, the speaker expresses the attitude that “No need to be surprised, nor to be delighted”. But the image of “the sudden sparkle in a dark night” implies ironically the dazzling impact of the “encounter”. Then the speaker expresses his expectation of “forgetting” in “You might remember, you’d better forget”. But the deliberate emphasis on “forget” ironically betrays his deep memory and incapability of forgetting. Through “an ironic reversal of the surface statement”,⁶⁵¹ the poet conveys the seriousness and impressiveness of the accidental love in a light-hearted and inadvertent tone.

⁶⁴⁷ Christina Rossetti, “Song”. *Selected Poems of Christina Rossetti*. Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001. pp. 136-137.

⁶⁴⁸ The translation is published on *Crescent Moon Monthly*, Issue 4 Volume 1. See the list of translated poems on *Crescent Moon Monthly*. Jacqueline Estran, *op.cit.*, p. 202.

⁶⁴⁹ M. H. Abrams, “Irony”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Both poems involve the theme of “by accident”. While Rossetti includes the theme in the word “haply” (meaning “by hap, by accident”), Xu includes the theme in his title. Xu expresses his thought on the dialectical relationship between the “accidental meeting” and the “unforgettable memory”, indicating that “accident” or “transience” does not mean “easily forgettable”. A momentary love can be permanent. This meditation on transience and permanence vaguely echoes the romantic quest to “turn one instant into eternity”.⁶⁵²

As a student of Xu Zhimo, Chen Mengjia demonstrates his inheritance of Xu’s lyric style in “A Wild Flower” (一朵野花 *Yiduo yehua*):

A wild flower blooms and falls in the wild land,
No one notices the little creature smiling to the sun,
He knows his smartness was a gift of God,
His joy, his verse, are slightly swaying in the breeze.

A wild flower blooms and falls in the wild land,
He sees the azure sky, seeing not his own tininess,
Accustomed to the tenderness and roaring of the wind,
Even his own dreams are easily lost.

—“A Wild Flower” by Chen Mengjia (1929)⁶⁵³

Both Hu Shi and Wen Yiduo spoke highly of the second stanza of this poem, considering the “aesthetic state (意境 *Yijing*) and style (作风 *Zuofeng*) of the four lines are of the first class”.⁶⁵⁴ Chen Mengjia is particularly adroit at integrating a simple image into a poetic state of rich and profound meanings. He prefers those tiny, trivial, and simple objects, onto which his momentary thought or sentiment is

⁶⁵² Kai-yu Hsu, “Introduction”, *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. xxvi.

⁶⁵³ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “一朵野花” *Yeduo yehua* (“A Wild Flower”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 258.

⁶⁵⁴ cf: Hu Shi 胡适, “评《梦家诗集》” *Ping Mengjia Shiji* (“Review of *Mengjia’s Poetry Anthology*”). 《新月》月刊 3 卷 5/6 期 *Xinyue yuekan* (*Crescent Moon Monthly*), Issue 5/6, Volume 3. Shanghai Crescent Moon Bookstore. 1930.

projected. Zhao Luorui, Chen's wife and herself a translator of T.S. Eliot, commented that, as compared with those Western modernist poets, Chen Mengjia was writing poetry with emotion rather than intellect. His poems were spontaneous overflow of feelings, which were pure and lyrical, but sometimes too light and simple and lacked the intellectual weight.⁶⁵⁵ This comment aptly captures some features of this mode of lyric verse, which usually stems from the poet's casual reflections on life. The poets observe their own lives and inner world in full particulars, and reveal them fully in musical diction and rhythm.

But intellect is not lacking in this mode of lyric. In "A Wild Flower", for instance, the poet is certainly not merely depicting the blooming and falling of a flower. He tries to convey his meditation on the meaning of life. This is what M. H. Abrams has called the "poems of feelingful meditation", the "representative romantic poems", which, "though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with central human experiences and problems".⁶⁵⁶ The first stanza describes the simple happiness of a wild flower, which enjoys its natural ease, smartness, and freedom as no one notices or interrupts its existence. But in the second stanza, changing his tone of self-content, the poet expresses a slight sense of pity and regret for the flower exactly because of its self-contented ignorance and unconsciousness of its own fragility and incapability. The wild flower is tiny, and what's worse, unconscious of its tininess ("He sees the azure sky, seeing not his own tininess"). Enjoying its current situation, it easily forgets its own dream and meaning of life ("Even his own dreams are easily lost"). Such a perspective is indicative of the young poet's conscious reflections on life, in contradistinction to the ignorant wild flower. As Lan Dizhi rightly points out:

While observing the wild flower, the poet keeps a distance from it and reflects on his own past. The poem shows the initial awakening of the poet's self-consciousness... Since the poet is conscious of his own limitation, he turns ambitious, energetic and full of courage...⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁵ Cited from Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "前言" *Qianyan* ("Preface"). *Mengjia's Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

⁶⁵⁶ M. H. Abrams, "Neoclassic and Romantic", *op.cit.*, p. 128.

⁶⁵⁷ Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "Preface", *Mengjia's Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

While Chen meditates on the meaning of life in this poem, Zhu Xiang, in “Waste Garden” (废园 *Feiyuan*), reflects on the meaninglessness of life:

The white poplar rustles when the wind passes through,
The white poplar rustles when no wind passes through;
No sound is heard aside from the rustling:

The wild flower blooms quietly,
The wild flower falls quietly;
Nothing exists in the garden aside from the quietness.

—“Waste Garden” by Zhu Xiang (1922)⁶⁵⁸

At first glance, the tone, diction, and imagery of the poem quite resemble “A Wild Flower”. But unlike Chen’s expression of his ambition and self-consciousness, “Waste Garden” demonstrates again Zhu Xiang’s mentality of “superfluous man”. The two images in this poem, the “white poplar” and the “wild flower”, represent two types of life in the natural world: one being big and strong, the other trivial and fragile. Both lives, however, are lonely, insignificant, unaffected by and unhelpful to the world, or in other words, they are waste lives. The structure of the poem is paralleled, with every three lines constituting a self-contained aesthetic state and depicting an independent kind of life. The overly repetitive language not only reinforces the dull and dreary sentiment the poet intends to convey, but also draws the readers to further associations about more lives of this kind. There seems to be an implied analogy: the analogy between the waste garden and the poet’s state of mind. The natural object corresponds with the state of mind of the poet, and therefore the plain depiction of the natural scene bears strong subjective mood. The poet is writing a garden as well as his own life, both being isolated, undramatic, and ineffectual existence.

⁶⁵⁸ Zhu Xiang 朱湘, “废园” *Feiyuan* (“Waste Garden”). *The Collection of Chinese New Poetry: Volume of Zhu Xiang, op.cit.*, p. 2.

In this section, I analysed two lyric modes of the Crescent Moon poetry. The first mode is dynamic, imaginative, directly expressing the poet's ambition and intense emotion. The second mode, being more tender, sentimental, and introverted, usually projects the poet's feelings and thoughts on simple imagery or situations. The first type of lyricism gradually diminishes with the poets' changed mood and aesthetic tastes. The growing number of the second type of lyrics indicates the Crescent Moon poets' reception of the classical aesthetics of restraint and discipline. I will discuss this aesthetic turn in the next chapter.

3. Romantic Treatment of Reality

Despite the fact that most Crescent Moon poems are lyric and subjective, the poets were not entirely immune to the degeneration of social reality. They also extended their vision out to the external world, writing poems for the nation and people in agony. But their treatment of reality is largely subjective and expressive, and as M. H. Abrams observes, if "aspects of the external world" become "the primary source and subject matter of a poem", the expressive poets would only treat them as "they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind".⁶⁵⁹ In this section I will discuss the Crescent Moon poets' concern about and treatment of reality. I suggest that their poems dealing with reality, despite depicting the commonplace or even the ugly in detail, are still expressive of the poet's subjective mind.

Many critics of Wen Yiduo have noticed the inner conflict within Wen's intellectual pursuit.⁶⁶⁰ On the one hand, as a romantic singer, Wen pursued pure love and beauty and admitted that "to appreciate art one must sever oneself from reality".⁶⁶¹ But on the other hand, keenly aware of the depressing reality, he "could not close his eyes to

⁶⁵⁹ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

⁶⁶⁰ 1) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-103 2) Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, pp. 156-158. 3) Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

⁶⁶¹ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

reality”⁶⁶² but to lament and even fight for his nation and his fellow people. “Like other romantics”, as Julia C. Lin notes, “Wen seems torn between an imaginative realm of art and the real world of suffering and pain”.⁶⁶³ This conflict is particularly expressed in Wen’s second poetry anthology, *Dead Water* (《死水》 *Sishui*),⁶⁶⁴ and one of the most representative poems is “Heart-beat” (“心跳” *Xintiao*):

This light, and the light-bleached four walls,
The kind table and chair, intimate as friends,
The scent of old books, reaching me in whiffs,
My favorite teacup as serene as a meditating nun,
The baby sucking contentedly at his mother’s breast,
A snore reporting the healthy slumber of my big son...
This mysterious quiet night, this calm peace.
In my throat quiver songs of gratitude,
But the songs soon become ugly curses.
Quiet night, I cannot accept your bribe.
Who treasures this walled-in square foot of peace?
My world has a much wider horizon.
As the four walls cannot silence the clamor of war,
How can you stop the violent beat of my heart?
Better that my mouth be filled with mud and sand,
Than to sing the joy and sorrow of one man alone;
Better that moles dig holes in this head of mine,
And vermin feed on my flesh and blood,
Than to live only for a cup of wine and a book of verse,
Or for an evening of serenity brought by the ticking clock,

⁶⁶² Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

⁶⁶³ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

⁶⁶⁴ Kai-yü Hsu finds that poems in this anthology “fall generally into four groups”, one of which deals with the conflict between art and reality. Kai-yü Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.*, p. 115.

Hearing not the groans and sighs from all my neighbors,
Seeing not the shivering shadows of the widows and orphans,
And the convulsion in battle trenches, mad men biting their sickbeds,
And all the tragedies ground out under the millstone of life.
Happiness, I cannot accept your bribe now.
My world is not within this walled-in square foot.
Listen, here goes another cannon-report, another roar of Death.
Quiet night, how can you stop the violent beat of my heart?

—“Heart-beat” by Wen Yiduo (1927?)⁶⁶⁵

This poem describes in a realistic vein the serene scene in a quiet night at the house of the poet. The description is as detailed as possible, presenting the serene night in full particular from the table and chair, to four walls, to books and teacups, to snores of his son. Then the poet’s imagination reaches afar, to a bigger world where there are clamour of war, groans of neighbours, shivering shadows of the widows and orphans, and convulsion in battle trenches. Blending the objective description and subjective imagination, the poem forms a radical contrast to convey the poet’s inner struggle between “his love of art and his awareness of the depressing reality around him”.⁶⁶⁶ But unlike the realists who “strove for truth through the exclusion of subjective detail”,⁶⁶⁷ the description of reality in this poem is filtered through the poet’s subjective eyes and imagination, and fundamentally serves to project the poet’s subjective mind.

This profound awareness of reality is not unique to Wen Yiduo. Many Crescent Moon poets, while probing into their individual life and inner world, were also pondering on bigger issues such as the fate of the nation and its people. In face of the deteriorating political reality in the 1930s, Chen Mengjia looks back on the history of

⁶⁶⁵ Translated by Kai-yu Hsu. Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.*, pp. 115-116. The original see: Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “心跳” *Xintiao* (“Heart-beat”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 151-152.

⁶⁶⁶ Kai-yu Hsu, “Sishui 死水 Dead Water”, *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature, op.cit.*, p. 239.

⁶⁶⁷ Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern*, The University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 104.

Chinese nation, to encourage the people in agony to carry forward the precious national characters:

The grand torrent of Yellow River comes not from the Heaven,
It is the ditch where our father farms, and the stream where our mother does the washing;
Running from the ancient mountain to the great ocean,
It is the ditch where our father farms, and the stream where our mother does the washing;
Along its two banks rose the twenty-four dynasties of our ancestors,
It hears the laborious lament of our father and the deep sorrow of our mother.

The grand torrent of Yellow River never stops running,
It carries the gallantry of our father, and the benevolence of our mother;
Rushing rapidly like the burning flame, and flowing quietly like the breath in sleeping,
It carries the majesty of our father, and the tender heart of our mother;
For five thousand years this ancient voice has been asking:
Have you forgotten the ambition of your father, and the endurance of your mother?

—“Ballad of the Yellow River”
by Chen Mengjia (1933)⁶⁶⁸

The opening line of the poem is reminiscent of Li Bai’s well known work, “Propose a Toast” (将进酒 *Qiang jin jiu*), both in style and meaning:

Have you not seen the Yellow River’s waters coming from Heaven,
Rushing to the sea without return.
Have you not seen your aged parents grieving before the bright mirror,
Where their silken-black hair in the morning turns to snow by night.
Seize your time and enjoy your golden age to the full,

⁶⁶⁸ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “黄河谣” *Huanghe yao* (“Ballad of the Yellow River”). *Mengjia’s Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

Never leave your golden cup empty to the moon...

—“Propose a Toast”
by Li Bai⁶⁶⁹

Both associating the Yellow River with the aged parents, there is obvious affinity between the two poems. But the two poets see different meanings and draw different analogies between the two images. At the sight of the Yellow River running to the ocean without return, Li Bai was obsessed with the philosophical questions that parents were aging, time never came back, life was fleeting and nothing was permanent. Chen Mengjia, on the other hand, sees not only the aging parents but also the ancestors of the Chinese nation. He vividly portrays the traditional images of Chinese people, generation by generation, that men farmed in the field and women washed clothes in the stream. And he thinks of the national character nurtured by the Yellow River: the gallantry, majesty, and ambition of men, and the benevolence, tender heart and endurance of women.

Both poems employ parallelism but with different flavours. In his habitual bohemian abandon, Li Bai produces long-running and free-flowing sentences paralleled to gain more strength and fluidity. He laments on the one hand for the ruthless passage of time, while on the other hand he indulges and comforts himself: “Seize your time and enjoy your golden age to the full, / never leave your golden cup empty to the moon.” Chen Mengjia’s parallelism is rather restrained, with end-stopped lines, ponderous rhythm, and heavy stresses. The diction bears strong classical flavour, such as 浩浩 *Haohao* (grand and torrential), 田渠 *Tianqu* (ditch in the farm field), 浣溪 *Huanxi* (streams used for the laundry),⁶⁷⁰ and 呼劳 *Hulao* (laborious lament), adding the historical weight to this poem. The carefully chosen diction, pregnant pause and ponderous rhythm are indicative of the suffering of the nation and the tough and enduring character of its people. Ending with a rhetorical question, the poem is left

⁶⁶⁹ Li Bai 李白, “将进酒” *Qiang jin jiu* (“Propose a Toast”). 《唐诗三百首新注》 *Tangshi sanbai shou xinzhū* (New Annotated 300 Tang Poems). Annotated by Jin Xingyao (金性尧), Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1993, pp. 153-154.

⁶⁷⁰ 浣溪 *Huanxi* is derived from 浣溪沙 *Huanxi sha* (silk-washing stream), a famous tune pattern for lyric-poetry (词 *Ci*). The word therefore evokes strong classical association.

with lingering aftertaste, and the readers are encouraged to reflect on the past, present, and future of the nation.

I incorporate these reality-grounded poems into the romantic category because, although focusing on the real life, the poets were not “[representing] life as it really is”,⁶⁷¹ but expressing their subjective minds through the representation of reality. Jacques Barzun also confirmed the realistic quality of the romantic art. After proposing the bold idea that “romanticism *is* realism”, Barzun further elucidated:

...what the romanticists...sought and found was not a dream world into which to escape, but a real world in which to live. The exploration of reality was the fundamental intention of romantic art.⁶⁷²

This way of equating romanticism with realism is particularly insightful to understand the realistic side of the Crescent Moon poets, who, to many critics, are anything but realism. As Barzun noted in a later chapter, “every school of art pretends to capture reality and every successful school does it”.⁶⁷³ Both romantics and realists care about reality and harbour the ideal of unfolding reality in their writings. But they do hold different perspectives of observation and expression. In most cases, the external reality in the romantics’ eyes is the object onto which their subjective feelings are projected, and therefore is “no more than a projected equivalent...for the poet’s inner state of mind”.⁶⁷⁴ In other words, the romantics see reality through their subjective temperaments,⁶⁷⁵ and these poems are still romantic works that fundamentally express their individual emotions and thoughts.

This realistic romanticism is best illustrated in “A Glimmer of Light” (微光 *Weiguang*), written by Lin Huiyin:

There is no lamp or light on the street,

⁶⁷¹ M. H. Abrams, “Realism and Naturalism”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁶⁷² Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 112.

⁶⁷⁴ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁷⁵ Barzun, in defence of the romantics, put forward an original view on “subjective and objective”. He repudiates the views that “subjective” meaning “false”, and “objective” meaning “true”. He believes that “experiences that are shared should accordingly be called inter-subjective. What we usually think of when we use ‘objective’ is simply those very common (subjective) experiences”. Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

Only a lamp hanging over the corner of the corridor's roof;
He and she leave the fate of the whole family
Unknowingly, to this dimness.

There is no lamp or light on the street,
Only half of a lamp reflected from the corner of the window;
Big and little, the plain heads of the whole family,
Side by side, fall into sound sleep on the *kang*.⁶⁷⁶

There is snowy evening outside, and the muddiness;
There is little food in the pot, hardly sustaining tomorrow;
This little hut, stays silently in this glimmering light,
Lacking every basic necessity of life.

Lacking a bundle of firewood, a cup of water, and wheaten flour...
Lacking food and drink, not to mention faith, —
Life is already fixed, with muscular strength alone,
On the arms and shoulders, to sustain the courage of living.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow...
All are fixed, and who expects hope, —
Even in the dream, in the dream, flickering,
Is still this glimmer of lonely brave light?

There is a lamp and a little light on the street corner,
Hanging over the roof, reflecting through the window,
He and she, leave the fate of the whole family

⁶⁷⁶ “*Kang*” (炕 bed-stove) is a kind of brick bed usually used in northern part of China.

Knowingly, to this misery.

—“A Glimmer of Light”
by Lin Huiyin (1933)⁶⁷⁷

The diction and rhyme of the poem in its Chinese original are carefully selected. The nasal sounding characters are used throughout the poem as the end rhymes, such as 灯 *deng* (light), 盏 *zhan* (the classifier of the lamp), 命 *ming* (fate), 淡 *dan* (dim), 上 *shang* (on), 泞 *ning* (muddiness), 粮 *liang* (food), 光 *guang* (light), 样 *yang* (kind), 望 *wang* (hope), etc. As the pronunciation of nasal consonants requires more muscular strength, the rhyming characters of the poem produce a slow-moving rhythm and lingeringly depressive mood, suggesting the difficult condition of the impoverished family. The imagery of the poem, unlike the sensuously appealing images in most romantic works, is plain and unadorned, all relating to the real life, such as 土炕 *tukang* (brick bed), 沙锅 *shaguo* (earthen pot), 麦面 *maimian* (wheaten flour), and 干柴 *ganchai* (dry firewood). Commas are frequently inserted into a line to separate several semantic units, cutting sentences into disjunctive short phrases. The use of inversion and enjambment further reinforce the discontinuity and ambiguity of the syntactic meanings. The reading experience is thus severely impeded from pronunciation, to imagery, to syntactic structure, and to the meanings. The poet is deliberately setting up obstacles using linguistic tricks, leading the readers to a world with heavy burdens, dim hopes, and leaden and sluggish cadence of life.

One may notice that, while focusing on a common impoverished family, the poet does not end with the naturalistic depiction of the suffering life itself. She mentions “faith” (信仰 *xinyang*), immediately adding a spiritual touch to the poem. Light, a symbol of hope, future, and enlightenment, is used as a central image throughout the poem. From the first stanza where there is no light on the street, to the last where there is “a little light”, the poet seems to be suggesting hope and a better future. But

⁶⁷⁷ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “微光” *Weiguang* (“A Glimmer of Light”). *Collected Poetry and Prose of Lin Huiyin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20.

the last two lines deny this assumption: life is as miserable, if not more miserable, as ever. In the beginning, the man and woman leave the fate of the whole family to the dimness, “unknowingly”. While in the end, they leave it to the misery, “knowingly”, implying their realisation of the incapability of changing the life and their eventual yielding to fate. Which is more miserable, ignorance and unconsciousness or the conscious surrender? The answer involves, as the poet suggests, the issue of faith. In other words, in the poet’s eyes it is not the lack of food or life necessities that is miserable, but the lack of faith. It is the fixed life sustained by “muscular strength alone” and repeating itself day by day that is most disappointing and helpless.

It is in this sense that the poem escapes the banality of the common humanitarian theme in literature, and probes into the nature and meaning of life. The poem was written in September 1933 when the poet, as an architect, was on a field trip to Yungang Buddhist caves in Shanxi Province.⁶⁷⁸ This unusually reality-grounded poem, which is quite different in theme, style, tone, and imagery from the poet’s other works, might have been inspired by the scenery and people she saw *en route*. But instead of showing her sympathy to the impoverished family or indignation at social injustice, the poet is expressing her insistent defence of faith. Perhaps on the spiritual level, even the poet herself felt like a poor people because faith barely existed and survived in the dark and turbulent era. The poet was not so much speaking for the kind of people she described, who would never have thought of, or even heard of, the concept of “faith”. Although casting her eyes to reality, therefore, the poet was still thinking as intellectuals. Xu Zhimo expresses a similar vision more clearly in “Serves You Right, Beggar” (叫化活该 *Jiaohua huogai*):

“Kind-hearted madams and sirs”,
The cold northwest wind pierces his face like a sharp knife,
“Please give me some of your leftovers!”
A blurred lump of black shadow presses close to the gate.
...

⁶⁷⁸ Wilma Fairbank, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

I am also a heap of trembling black shadow,
 Wriggling on the front street of humanity,
Like him, I want nothing but a little warmth of sympathy,
 To cover the rest of my maimed body —
But there is only the closed heavy gate: who cares;
Only the sneers of the cold wind left on the street, “Serves you right, Beggar!”

—“Serves You Right, Beggar”
by Xu Zhimo (1923)⁶⁷⁹

Like Lin Huiyin who considers “faith” at the thought of the poor family, Xu considers “humanity” at the sight of the beggar. He identifies with the beggar in that he feels he is also begging for sympathy and warmth. He tries to empathise with and internalise the reality he has captured. As Julia C. Lin notes, “it is the abstract theme of the suffering of humanity, not of any one particular person, that [Xu] attempts to elucidate.”⁶⁸⁰ This abstract treatment of reality is indicative of the Crescent Moon poets’ concern for the general human condition rather than specific social problems, which further demonstrates their detached and remote observation and perception of the suffering of real life. As Lin Huiyin herself consciously admitted later:

Wherever you go, you are always sitting within the window. Indeed, many fashionable scholars are proudly doing this in the name of “research and investigation”. Wearing their scientific glasses, they randomly travel to a remote place to explore it. But the invisible window still exists. If you doubt this, you may check their luggage to see who didn't take with them canned food, canvas bed, and other living goods testifying to the fact that they are still sitting within the window. Or you may check their briefcases, and you always find some cash. Wherever you go, you always have your portable little world. In whichever direction you look out, it is most likely that you only see something outside your window, separated by the glass, or even the wire gauze! You distantly see some colours and hear some voices. It is fine if you feel satisfied with yourself. But do never say that

⁶⁷⁹ Adapted translation based on Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 129-130. The original see: Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “叫化活该” *Jiaohua huogai* (“Serves You Right, Beggar”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

⁶⁸⁰ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

you've come into contact with reality, or you've learnt so many facts and humanity...⁶⁸¹

Using “window” as a metaphor, Lin vividly describes the limitation of many intellectuals at the time, including herself, who observes reality not directly but through a window, and thus gaining only a detached perception of society. The Confucian background of the Crescent Moon poets urges them to keep an eye on the social wrongs and life's suffering. But their family background and generally conservative mentality hinder them from breaking the window and entering into the real reality. But such a detached description has its own poetic power. The juxtaposition of faith with food reinforces the poverty and misery of the poor family, not only in the physical sense, but also in the spiritual one. It is not only the cold and hunger that is miserable, but the dying of hope and the “mechanical way of survival”.⁶⁸² This state of living is unbearable to the romantics, whose greatest fear is “to be born mediocre and die mediocre, ... unable to exert their possible nature to the full throughout their lives”.⁶⁸³

4. Romantic Temperament: Complete Expressiveness and the Search for Infinity

Xu Zhimo expresses his ideals of life in an essay, “话” *Hua* (“Word”):

Our ideal is to live the life into a conscious life, instead of a mechanical way of survival. Our ideal is to allow our heart and soul...to constantly and actively move forward, toward production and creation, and toward the state of liveliness and dynamism without constraint.⁶⁸⁴

In order to achieve these ideals, he is convinced, drawing inspiration from the lesson of nature, that “all things must exert their nature to the full”:

⁶⁸¹ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “窗子以外” *Chuangzi yiwai* (“Outside the Window”). *Collected Poetry and Prose of Lin Huiyin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 112-113.

⁶⁸² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “话” *Hua* (“Word”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3*, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 101.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 99.

Life is nothing but the manifestation of one's nature. As long as we exert our innate nature as fully as possible within our limited life, the Creator's intention is fulfilled.⁶⁸⁵

This expression is strongly reminiscent of Barzun's understanding of the "romantic idealisation", which to him means the "complete expressiveness".⁶⁸⁶ When talking about the romantic art, Barzun argued that the romantic idealisation is "the desire to make each object disclose itself as fully as possible under the most favourable conditions".⁶⁸⁷ Considering Xu Zhimo's belief that "life and art are one",⁶⁸⁸ it is not surprising to find that this artistic principle has become Xu's idealisation of life, which is "the realisation of the fullest human potential".⁶⁸⁹

This romantic idealisation of life and art is illustrated in Lin Huiyin's poem:

I shall say the tender April days in the world are you,
Whose laughter brightens the breeze around, lightly
And swiftly changing its dance steps in the glowing spring.

You are the hazy cloud in early April mornings,
When soft wind passes through the twilight, when stars
Sparkle casually, and gentle showers of rain moisten flowers.

Lightsome and delicate are you, a crown
Of fresh flowers you're wearing. Innocence
And grace are you. You are the brilliant moon waxing in each night.

The soft yellow of newly thawing snow are you, or
The verdant sprout freshly in bud. Tenderly and joyously,
The white lotus floats over the clear water in your dream.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 101.

⁶⁸⁶ Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, "Art and Life". *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo, Volume One, Prose I, op.cit.* p. 192.

⁶⁸⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation, op.cit.*, p. 159.

You are trees of flowers blooming in succession. You are a swallow
Whispering over the beam of my roof. — Love and warmth,
And sweet hope are you. The tender April days in the world are you!

—“The Tender April Days In the World Are You: Ode to Love”
by Lin Huiyin (1934)⁶⁹⁰

As the subtitle suggests, the poem is an ode in celebration of the birth of the poet’s son.⁶⁹¹ But the “you” in the poem can be a specific person, and can also be a personified ideal, or an ideal state of life. Using extended metaphor,⁶⁹² the poet creates a dazzling set of images to describe this ideal, which is ebullient and productive, full of hope and aspiration, and always pressed onward. These are the features of Barzun’s understanding of “romantic life”.⁶⁹³

“Energy”, according to Barzun, is “the distinguishing mark of romantic life”.⁶⁹⁴ This idea is further confirmed by Leo Ou-fan Lee, who argues that, although the subjective tendency in the May Fourth era can be traced back to “the sentimental tradition in classical literature”, it is “a marked and increasing degree of dynamism” that “distinguishes this romantic tendency inspired by the West from the sentimental strains in traditional Chinese literature — a distinction that renders the word ‘sentimental’ insufficient as a keynote to the temper of this era”.⁶⁹⁵ In a praise of and aspiration for the ideal state of “dynamism and productiveness”, Lin’s poem distinguishes itself from the classical sentimental works, bearing the romantic features of the new age.

⁶⁹⁰ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “你是人间的四月天——一句爱的赞颂” *Nishi renjian de siyue tian: yiju aide zansong* (“The Tender April Days In the World Are You: Ode to Love”). *Collected Poetry and Prose of Lin Huiyin, op.cit.*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁹¹ cf. Liang Congjie 梁从诫, “倏忽人间四月天——回忆我的母亲林徽因” *Shuhu renjian siyuetian: Huiyi wode muqin Lin Huiyin* (“Suddenly It Comes to April Again: In Memory of My Mother Lin Huiyin”). Lin Huiyin 林徽因, 《此去经年——林徽因自传式独家心灵告白》 *Ciqu jingnian: Lin Huiyin zizhuan shi dujia xinling gaobai* (*Years Have Passed Since You Left: Exclusive Autobiographical Confession by Lin Huiyin*), China International Culture Press, 2014. p. 21

⁶⁹² “Extended metaphor” means to use a series of related metaphors, rather than a single pairing of vehicle and tenor, so that each of the metaphors develops or extends the notion the poet wants to express. Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

⁶⁹³ Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁵ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation, op.cit.*, p. 292.

Employing devices such as personification, simile, metaphor and synaesthesia, the poet is able to fuse different orders of sensations and transfer the abstract concepts into sensuous feelings and images. The poem opens with a synaesthetic image that the “laughter brightens the breeze around, / lightly and swiftly changing its dance steps in the glowing spring”, which immediately transfers the auditory image (sound of laughter) into a visual one, and captures the sense of colour of the breeze. The effect is further strengthened by a kinaesthetic image — the “change of dance steps”, which adds more dynamic quality to the sound of laughter.

One important rhetorical feature of the poem is the use of extensive metaphor. The poet establishes a prime image, the “tender April days”, under which she further creates a number of smaller images to form an imagery cluster, thereby depicting the “April days” in a more detailed and rounded manner. These smaller images are all dynamic and full of life force, such as the hazy cloud flowing in the early morning, the moon waxing in each night, the thawing snow, the budding sprout, the blooming flowers on the trees, and the whispering swallow as the “the harbinger of spring”.⁶⁹⁶ Not only full of life, these images invariably represent a creative or growing process of life, suggesting a course of productiveness from nothing to something, and from incomplete to complete. The imagery in the last stanza, the “trees of flowers blooming in succession” (一树一树的花开 *Yishu yishu de huakai*), best illustrates the poet’s aspiration for a state of life of complete expressiveness, complete realisation, and ever-growing vitality. Such an idealisation echoes exactly what Xu Zhimo has described as “constantly and actively moving forward, toward production and creation, and toward the state of liveliness and dynamism without constraint”.⁶⁹⁷

This longing for a fully expressed and fully realised life demonstrates the romantic poet’s longing for infinity and ultimacy. Western Romantic Movement, despite the controversy over its starting dates,⁶⁹⁸ was born out of a series of revolutions: the American Revolution (1776), the French Revolution (1789), the industrial revolution,

⁶⁹⁶ See the symbol of “swallow” in Chinese culture in: Wolfram Eberhard, “Swallow 燕”, *op.cit.*, p. 280.

⁶⁹⁷ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Word”, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

⁶⁹⁸ Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

and some other revolutions such as “the agrarian revolution”, “the commercial revolution”, “the communications revolution”, etc.⁶⁹⁹ Romanticism itself also brought about “a cultural revolution comparable in its radicalism and effects with the roughly contemporary American, French and industrial revolutions”.⁷⁰⁰ Writers of the early Romantic period, with a sense that they were living in “a great age of new beginnings and high possibilities”, viewed human beings as “endowed with limitless aspiration toward the infinite good envisioned by the faculty of imagination”.⁷⁰¹ So Barzun confirmed that one important aim of romantic life is, “the search for the infinite reality that corresponds to man’s infinite longing.”⁷⁰²

Such a context and spirit in the Romantic Movement — the revolutionary era with an aspiration and preference for the new age and “newness”, an assertion of man’s infinite abilities, and rebellion against the conventional, the fixed, and the mechanical — highly resembles that of the May Fourth China. So it is not surprising that Chinese new poets, in a similar romantic temperament, shared a faith with Western romantics that “the highest art consists in an endeavour beyond finite human possibility”.⁷⁰³ It is in this sense that Kai-yu Hsu has described the experience of modern Chinese poets as “an unrelenting search — a search for man’s emotional identity, for a rational explanation of life, and for a new and more effective medium of expression”.⁷⁰⁴ This “desperate search” is also “the breath and spirit of the intellectual life of twentieth century China”.⁷⁰⁵

This “unrelenting search” is metaphorically expressed in “Miracle” (奇迹 *Qiji*), the last vernacular poem of Wen Yiduo. Wen opens this long poem with a set of exquisite images, and claims that none of these is the “miracle” he is searching for:

What I want is not the flaming red, nor the pitch black

⁶⁹⁹ Tim Blanning, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

⁷⁰⁰ As Ernst Troeltsch says, “Romanticism too is a revolution, a thorough and genuine revolution: a revolution against the respectability of the bourgeois temper and against a universal equalitarian ethic: a revolution, above all, against the whole of the mathematico-mechanical spirit of science in western Europe...”. *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

⁷⁰¹ M. H. Abrams, “Neoclassic and Romantic”, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

⁷⁰² Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

⁷⁰³ M. H. Abrams, “Neoclassic and Romantic”, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

⁷⁰⁴ Kai-yu Hsu, “Introduction”, *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. xliv.

⁷⁰⁵ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

Of the peach flower pool in the midnight, nor the bitter sobbing of *Pipa*,
 Nor the fragrance of roses; I have never genuinely admired the majesty of a leopard,
 Nor can I find the beauty and grace I want from any white doves.
 What I want is nothing like these, but a crystallisation of them all,
 A miracle tens of thousands of times more amazing than all above!
 But, in the desperate hunger of my soul, I cannot
 Leave it without sustenance. So, even the husk and chaff
 I have to beg for, don't I? Heaven knows, I am not
 Willing to do so, I am not stubborn, nor am I fool,
 I just can't wait, can't wait for the arrival of the miracle!
 I dare not starve my soul. Everybody knows,
 A tree of singing cicadas, a bottle of turbid wine, what do they matter?
 Even the misty mountains, the gorge at dawn, or even the more splendid starry sky,
 They are all ordinary, the most ordinary that doesn't matter at all...

—“Miracle”
 by Wen Yiduo (1931)⁷⁰⁶

The poet avoids direct treatment of what he is looking for. But by contrasting it with several beautiful and poetical images, he effectively shows the extreme extraordinariness of the “miracle”. What the poet lists — the sobbing of *Pipa*, the turbid wine, the singing cicadas, the misty mountain, etc. — have been favoured images in classical Chinese poetry,⁷⁰⁷ therefore are poetical and not ordinary at all. But as compared with the “miracle”, they become “the most ordinary” in the eyes of the poet, who has to compromise with his “starving soul” by taking them as a substitute before the advent of the hard-won miracle. The poet is so longing for the

⁷⁰⁶ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “奇迹” *Qiji* (“Miracle”), *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 260.

⁷⁰⁷ These images frequently appear in classical Chinese poetry. From an online database of classical Chinese Poetry (including *Shi* and *Ci*), I collected 55 thousand Tang poems, 260 thousand Song poems, and 21 thousand Song lyrics/*ci*. Using search function on computer, “*Pipa*” (琵琶) appears 623 times, “turbid wine” (浊酒) appears 439 times, “singing cicadas” (蝉鸣) appears 163 times, “misty mountain” (烟峦) appears 12 times in different poems. There could be more poems with similar images but not using the exact keywords. This collection of poems can be obtained online from <https://github.com/jackeyGao/chinese-poetry>, retrieved on 17th June 2017.

miracle that he further states, “I will discard these ordinaries as soon as the miracle shows up”.⁷⁰⁸

Yet the poet refrains from explaining what kind of miracle he is expecting throughout the poem, only in the last part expressing his faith and determination in waiting for the miracle:

...

Then

I will wait, no matter how many cycles of life it may take —
Since the wish was made long long ago, I don't remember how many
Cycles of life ago — I will wait, I will not complain, just wait quietly
For the advent of a miracle. That day will arrive sooner or later,
Let me be struck by lightning, be burnt by volcano, let the hell
Boil me...Frightened? Rest assured, no strong wind can
Blow out the light of our souls, I wish the skin be burnt to ashes,
Never mind: because that — that is the very instant of me,
The instant of permanence: — a whiff of exotic fragrance, the most mysterious
Silence, (the sun, the moon, the rotation of all the planets had long been
Stopped, the time goes no further either,) the perfectly rounded peace...
I hear the sound of the bolt of the heavenly gate, high in the cloud
Comes a rustle of dress — that is the miracle —
In the half-opened golden door, you wear a halo!⁷⁰⁹

The “miracle” in the poem metaphorically embodies an ideal, which could be interpreted in many ways. It could be viewed as the poet’s pursuit for love, for art, for truth, for an ethical belief, or for an ideal of social improvement.⁷¹⁰ It represents

⁷⁰⁸ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “Miracle”, *op.cit.*, p. 261.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 261.

⁷¹⁰ Liang Shiqiu revealed that Wen wrote this poem because some unexpected emotion “rippled on his heart”. Kai-yu Hsu confirmed again that it was the “emotional static in his otherwise tranquil academic life in Tsingtao” that inspired Wen to write this poem. But as a metaphorical image, the “miracle” can still be interpreted in many ways. Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Wen Yiduo”, *op.cit.*, p. 313. Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 127 and p. 208.

the spiritual fulfilment that can only be achieved after one's long-standing strenuous effort. The ideal transcends time since "time goes no further", and transcends the secular life since it shows up only when "the skin is burnt to ashes". It was not until the last several lines that the "miracle" appears — still in a mysterious, transient and even illusory way — in the form of the "instant of permanence", "a whiff of exotic fragrance", "the most mysterious silence" and "the perfectly rounded peace". In the very end, the "miracle" shows up in an image vaguely associated with something eternal, heavenly immortal, or something crueler, death.

Kai-yu Hsu has pointed out Wen's "fascination with death" as a theme of his poetry.⁷¹¹ In many of Wen's poems, he describes "death in ecstasy", "to die at the moment of supreme joy", or to die in perfect beauty.⁷¹² From such poems as "The Death of Li Bai" (李白之死 *Li Bai zhisi*), "The Sword Box", "Death" (死 *Si*), "The Last Day" (末日 *Mori*), etc.,⁷¹³ one finds Wen's concept of death, that death is associated with the utmost pursuit of and dedication to one's ideal, and therefore is a heroic act of sacrifice and fulfilment. Julia C. Lin also notes that "[to] Wen, ... death has an aura of mystery that he finds hard to resist. Perhaps Wen's concept of death is akin to that of Keats — a 'luxury' so 'easeful' and seductive".⁷¹⁴

The "miracle" in the end of the poem, which appears on the "heavenly cloud" (紫霄 *zixiao*),⁷¹⁵ wearing a "halo" and coming through a "golden door", evokes an image associated with angel or the Immortals. This suggests that the "miracle", for which the poet is willing to wait for "no matter how many cycles of life" and pay whatever prices, will only appear on the poet's death. This metaphor is strongly reminiscent of

⁷¹¹ 1) Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, pp. 142-143. 2) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-45 and pp. 55-58.

⁷¹² Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 56. Wen's fascination with death is also reflected, as Kai-yu Hsu remarks, in the cover design of the *Dead Water* collection. Black, the symbol of death, is glorified with the streak of gold, a symbol of light, showing the poet's "conceptual juxtaposition" of death with light or glory. Kai-yu Hsu, "Sishui 死水 *Dead Water*", *op.cit.*, p. 240.

⁷¹³ See Kai-yu Hsu's and Julia C. Lin's translation and interpretation of the above poems. 1) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-46 and pp. 55-57. 2) Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-94.

⁷¹⁴ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

⁷¹⁵ "Purple" in Chinese culture is frequently associated with "heaven" or the "Emperor". In the context, "紫霄 *Zixiao*" literally means "purple cloud or heavenly cloud". Wolfram Eberhard, "Purple 紫", *op.cit.*, pp. 242-243.

the “solitary horseman” who “rides on a lame blind horse in search of a bright star”
in Xu Zhimo’s poem:

I ride on a lame blind horse,
Whipping and spurring it on in the dark night; —
Whipping and spurring it on in the dark night,
I ride on a lame blind horse.

I rush into this endless dark night,
In search of a bright star; —
In search of a bright star,
I rush into this boundless darkness of the wild.

Exhausted, exhausted the animal I am riding,
While the bright star remains out of sight; —
While the bright star remains out of sight,
Exhausted, exhausted the rider on the saddle.

At last the crystal brightness pierces the sky,
An animal falls in the wilderness,
A dead body lies in the dark night. —
At last the crystal brightness pierces the sky.

—“In Search of A Bright Star” by Xu Zhimo (1924)⁷¹⁶

This poem is a vivid allegory of the romantic quest for the infinite. The “bright star”, like the “miracle”, embodies the poet’s ultimate ideal, which will only be achieved at the cost of the death of its pursuers. This unremitting pursuit of a remote, elusive and

⁷¹⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “为要寻一个明星” *Weiyao xun yige mingxing* (“In Search of A Bright Star”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry*, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-187.

abstract ideal regardless of the cost, the juxtaposition of an awareness of impermanence and the quest for permanence, and the search of the infinite in the finite reality, are in fact expressed in various ways in the Crescent Moon poetry, for example:

Love, I will express it in a brighter way:

A firefly in the lawn

Is longing for the stars in the sky:

I wish our love higher than the sky!

—“Do Not Blame My Pouty Face Any More” by Xu Zhimo (1926)⁷¹⁷

My breath casting on your body,

Like tens of thousands of fireflies fling themselves to the flame.

—“The Rebirth of Spring” by Xu Zhimo (1929)⁷¹⁸

It is my footsteps that keep forward without control —

Forward, stride forward to the mountain of Ideal

To search for the dream that never has been found:

A twig of flower, a whiff of fragrance...

—“Faith in the Red Autumn Leaves” by Lin Huiyin (1937?)⁷¹⁹

I see you again. The shooting star in November

Falling down, people point to the sky and sigh;

But the star just waits for his own fate,

Without thinking about the next moment

⁷¹⁷ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “再休怪我的脸沉” *Zai xiuguai wode lianchen* (“Do Not Blame My Pouty Face Any More”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Four, Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 299.

⁷¹⁸ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “春的投生” *Chunde tousheng* (“The Rebirth of Spring”). *Ibid.* p. 359.

⁷¹⁹ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “红叶里的信念” *Hongye lide xinnian* (“Faith in the Red Autumn Leaves”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, p. 250.

The elusive and simple fate.
Exhausting his last brightness in the last flash and fly
Carrying his pride, never ask in which
Moment he will perish, and appears
No more. With his faith and dream
He indulges himself in the moment of liberation, glory
Sparkles on his heart. He is not aware
That he will turn to sand and stone, the death
Opens up the beginning of a change in life, —
Who says an instant cannot be permanent?

—“I See You Again” by Chen Mengjia (1935?)⁷²⁰

The romantic longing for the “miracle” in Wen Yiduo’s poem is repeated in the above excerpts, in various forms such as the longing for the star, for the mountain of Ideal, or for the enjoyment of liberation. These metaphors, invariably evoking an image of death (the fireflies fling themselves to the flame, the never-found dream, the shooting star falling down into sand and stone), have all embodied man’s unrelenting quest for and dedication to an infinite ideal. Many scholars have noticed the possible kindred relationship between one of Xu Zhimo’s favourite images,⁷²¹ “the firefly longing for the stars in the sky”, and the metaphor of Shelley: “The desire of the moth for the star”.⁷²² Both images demonstrate that “one’s love is for something infinitely remote,” which are, as Irving Babbitt remarked, “the most perfect expression of romantic longing.”⁷²³

⁷²⁰ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “再看见你” *Zai kanjian ni* (“I See You Again”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

⁷²¹ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 119. Also see: Yue Daiyun 乐黛云, 《比较文学简明教程》 *Bijiao wenxue jianming jiaocheng* (*A Brief Introduction to Comparative Literature*), Peking University Press, 2009, p. 212.

⁷²² P. B. Shelley, “To—One Word Is Too Often Profaned”. *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, *op.cit.*, p. 525.

⁷²³ Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, University of Texas Press, Austin & London, 1977, pp. 179-180.

5. Conclusion

I have in this chapter discussed the romantic elements in the Crescent Moon poems from four perspectives including the romantic assertion of the self, the two lyrical modes, the romantic treatment of reality, and the romantic quest for an infinite ideal. At the same time, I seek to demonstrate the romantic temperament of the Crescent Moon poets. Just as Barzun who seeks to distinguish between “romanticism as an historical movement” and “romanticism as a characteristic of human beings”,⁷²⁴ I also attempt to make a distinction between the “romantic stage” of the Crescent Moon poetic school and the “romantic elements” that have remained as a temperament of the Crescent Moon poets.

From a historical point of view, the years before 1926 could be regarded as the “romantic stage” of the Crescent Moon poetic school. The poets were young and ambitious, bearing the distinct *Sturm und Drang* characteristics typical of the May Fourth era. They asserted their individual ego and ability, cried out their defiance of the established conventions, and wrote poems with burning passion, wild abandon, free-soaring imagination, and unrestricted forms. After 1926, as I will show in the next chapter, they grew more and more conservative under the influence of the classical aesthetics, writing poems with regulated forms and subdued emotion. It seems that the romanticism as a historical age has passed.⁷²⁵

But as I have shown in this chapter, the Crescent Moon poets are romantic in temperament, and this romantic temperament remained throughout the existence of the group. It is manifested in their ceaseless pursuit of a dynamic and completely expressed life, and in their unrelenting quest for a remote, abstract, non-utilitarian ideal. For Xu Zhimo, this “simple ideal” is expressed as “love, freedom, and beauty”.⁷²⁶ For Wen Yiduo, it is “a belief in the beauty of Beauty and in the beauty

⁷²⁴ Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

⁷²⁵ Leonid Cherkassky also comments that after writing “The Baby” (婴儿 *Yinger*) in around late 1924, Xu Zhimo’s “first, Romantic stage was over”, and “in the area of form he was moving from free verse (in many works) to a strict metre”. Leonid Cherkassky, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

⁷²⁶ Hu Shi 胡适, “追悼志摩” *zhuidao Zhimo* (“Mourning For Zhimo”). 《难忘徐志摩》*Nanwang Xu Zhimo (In Memory of Xu Zhimo)*, edited by Han Shishan 韩石山, Kunlun Publishing House, 2001. p. 255.

of China's cultural traditions".⁷²⁷ As Kai-yu Hsu has suggested, there was a deepening sense of urgency in the early 20th Century because of the deteriorating national reality.⁷²⁸ The new poets of the 1920s strove to "live intensely" within limited time,⁷²⁹ to fully realise their possible potentials, and to search for something infinitely remote. Death, as the highest possible dedication to this ideal, became a favoured theme of their poetry.

And this "fascination with death", or with the spirit of dedication and sacrifice, had found expression in the poet's real life. Zhu Xiang drowned himself at the age of 29 because, failed to strike a balance between being "a bookworm" and "a person adjusted to this world",⁷³⁰ he found his poetic dignity and faith were shattered into pieces.⁷³¹ Lin Huiyin, in face of the threat of Japanese encroachment in the 1940s, told her son her readiness to sacrifice her life in defence of her poetic faith.⁷³² Chen Mengjia committed suicide in the Culture Revolution, "not because he had lost his courage to live, but because of his severe doubt about the ultimate meaning of life".⁷³³ The most dramatic example is still Wen Yiduo. Kai-yu Hsu has convincingly demonstrated Wen's quest for "ideal beauty" throughout his life. This quest first led him to pursue "the perfection of color, form, and imagery in poetic and graphic expression",⁷³⁴ then to the beauty of "classical Chinese literature",⁷³⁵ and in the end to the beauty of his motherland and a "political utopia".⁷³⁶ In the last days of his life, Wen found "the meaning of his life only in giving life to his fellow men".⁷³⁷ He

⁷²⁷ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 180.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 182.

⁷²⁹ Kai-yu Hsu considers this as a characteristic of "Byronic romanticist". Kai-yu Hsu, "Introduction", *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. xlv.

⁷³⁰ Kai-yu Hsu, "Chu Hsiang (1904-33)", *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

⁷³¹ According to Zhou Liangpei, an important reason for Zhu Xiang's suicide was that his poetry was ridiculed as "cheaper than opera tickets". Zhu was very proud of his poetry and attempted to live solely on writing and translating poems. But he eventually realised that he could not survive solely on that and his child died of starvation at the age of 1. So in my opinion Zhu committed suicide not because of the difficulty of life, but because of his disillusionment with his poetic belief. Zhou Liangpei 周良沛, "卷首" *Juanshou* ("Preface"). *The Collection of Chinese New Poetry: Volume of Zhu Xiang*, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

⁷³² Liang Congjie 梁从诫, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

⁷³³ Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "Preface", *Mengjia's Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

⁷³⁴ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 180.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁶ Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

⁷³⁷ Kai-yu Hsu, "Introduction", *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. xlv.

delivered his last public speech in Kunming in 1946 before he was assassinated by the Nationalist government. His last few words have been brimming with a heroic and even religious passion and faith:

We do not fear death. We are prepared for the sacrifice. We are fully ready to follow Mr. Li that while striding out of this door, we do not expect to return!⁷³⁸

With his dramatic death, he eventually fulfilled his quest for the ultimate beauty, truth, and the “miracle”.

It is in this sense that I consider the romantic temperament to have persisted throughout the lives of the Crescent Moon poets. In a belief that “all things should exert their nature to the full”,⁷³⁹ they have completely expressed and realised their meaning of life. There might have been a change in their poetic face, but even the most regulated verse is still vibrating with their romantic pulse. This romantic temperament ensures an ever-onward dynamism and a genuinely touching power of their poetry.

⁷³⁸ Wen Yiduo delivered the speech to criticise the Nationalist government because Li Gongpu 李公朴, a patriotic scholar, had been assassinated a few days before for his outspoken criticism of the government. “Mr. Li” refers to Li Gongpu. Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “最后一次的演讲” *Zuihou yici de yanjiang* (“The Last Speech”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays*, *op.cit.*, pp. 450-451.

⁷³⁹ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Word”, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

Chapter 4 The Classic Ideal

Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse the classic face of the Crescent Moon poetry, which is manifested in their pursuit of the regulated poetic form and their advocacy of reason and restraint. I will discuss Wen Yiduo's theory of form and the Formalisation Movement of the Crescent Moon School. Although some studies on the formalist theory and practice of Wen Yiduo already exist in English, they have more often than not regarded Wen as a "formalist" and focused on the discussion of his poetic techniques.⁷⁴⁰ My main divergence from these discussions is that I don't believe Wen's interest in form could be interpreted from a purely formalist or artistic perspective. By reading many poetic statements of the different Crescent Moon writers, I think the Formalisation Movement of the Crescent Moon School, rather than an isolated poetic event, is indicative of the Crescent Moon poets' conversion to the philosophy and aesthetic attitude of Classicism. In Western scholarship, classicism as an attitude to literature is "guided by admiration of the qualities of formal balance, proportion, decorum, and restraint".⁷⁴¹ After the end of the 18th century, "classical" became a generalised term in opposition to "romantic". The classicists "condemned romantic self-expression as eccentric self-indulgence, in the name of classical sanity and order".⁷⁴²

In the Formalisation Movement, the Crescent Moon poets explicitly expressed their opposition to the excessive self-exhibition and sentimentalism of the romantics, and asserted the classic ideals of health, balance, restraint, and proportion. I would

⁷⁴⁰ Julia C. Lin categorises Wen Yiduo and Xu Zhimo as "the Formalists". Patricia Uberoi and T. M. McClellan focus on the discussion of Wen's poetic techniques. Other critics, such as Kai-yu Hsu, Tao Tao Liu Sanders, and Marc Michel Whitacre, mainly discuss Wen's romantic temperament, patriotic sentiments, and poetic indebtedness to Western poets. See: 1) Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-100. 2) Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.* 3) T. M. McClellan, *op.cit.* 4) Kai-yu Hsu, "Sishui 死水 Dead Water", *op.cit.*, pp. 237-240. 5) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to, op.cit.* pp. 83-121. 6) Tao Tao Liu Sanders, *op.cit.*, 234-237. 7) Marc Michel Whitacre, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴¹ Chris Baldick, "Classicism", *Oxford Dictionary, op.cit.*, p. 62.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.* p. 63.

suggest that this classic conversion could be traced to an indirect influence of Irving Babbitt's New Humanist thought through the introduction of Liang Shiqiu. So I will start this chapter by discussing the classic tendency displayed in the various statements of the Crescent Moon poets, and the influence of Irving Babbitt as a theoretical background. Then I proceed to illustrate the classic ideals demonstrated in the specific poems by analysing the formal techniques and ways of expression.

1. The Classic Influence: Theory and Background

1) The Poetic Formalisation Movement and an Aesthetic Turn

In a conversation with Zang Kejia 臧克家 (1905-2004) in the early 1930s, Wen Yiduo completely denied the value of his first poetry anthology, *Red Candle*, claiming to disown this “unworthy son”.⁷⁴³ Almost at the same time in 1931, Xu Zhimo expressed a similar attitude, confessing that nearly all his early poems “are not worthy of being shown to the public”, because “most of them were nothing but unbridled outpouring of sentiments, never considering the art or techniques of poetry”.⁷⁴⁴ It is not merely an interesting coincidence that the two leading poets of the Crescent Moon School had by the 1930s repudiated their earlier works; it also, in my view, suggests a tendency.

I have already mentioned that the year 1926 is a year of historic significance for the Crescent Moon School, for it was in this year that the poets gathered at *Poetry Supplement* and launched a “Formalisation Movement” that exerted a far-reaching impact on modern Chinese poetry. This movement has become a milestone not only within the Crescent Moon poetic school, but also for the new poetry history. As early as 1932, a contemporary critic, Yu Guanying, already noted that new poetry development could be divided into two phases with the publication of *Poetry*

⁷⁴³ Zang Kejia 臧克家, “海——回忆一多先生” *Hai: Huiyi Yiduo xiansheng* (“The Sea: Reminiscence of My Teacher Mr. Yiduo”). 《臧克家代表作——烙印》 *Zang Kejia daibiao zuo: Laoyin (The Representative Works of Zang Kejia: The Imprint)*, Huaxia Publishing House, 2011. p. 151.

⁷⁴⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *The Ferocious Tiger*”, *op.cit.*, p. 393.

Supplement as a watershed, “with the earlier poetic works largely influenced by Hu Shizhi, and the later works influenced by *Poetry Supplement*.”⁷⁴⁵

It is in this sense that many scholars would consider the year 1926 as a landmark in the Crescent Moon history.⁷⁴⁶ It was in this year that the Crescent Moon poetic school, or the “Regulated Poetic School” in Zhu Ziqing’s term,⁷⁴⁷ was established. A list of important articles were published in *Poetry Supplement*, including Wen Yiduo’s well-known poetic theory, “The Form of Poetry”,⁷⁴⁸ which puts forward new requirements for the new poets; Liang Shiqiu’s “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”,⁷⁴⁹ which questions and criticises the generally “romantic” trend of new literature after the May Fourth Movement; and Xu Zhimo’s “Preface to *Poetry Supplement*”,⁷⁵⁰ in which Xu proudly announced that “we will take it as a serious business to create new forms for new poetry”.⁷⁵¹ It is obvious that a new value orientation came to be adopted by the Crescent Moon members, and an aesthetic turn from the so-called “romantic chaos” to the classic ideals of order and restraint was taking shape.

In historical hindsight, the Formalisation Movement taking place in 1926 was not an isolated poetic event. It reflects, I suggest, an increasingly conservative, or pro-classic, cultural position taken by the Crescent Moon members. In the initial years after the new poetry revolution in 1917, new poets discussed the problem of form and metre largely out of their concern over the artistic quality of new poetry. Back to his Qinghua School days, for example, Wen Yiduo reported on the topic of “A Study

⁷⁴⁵ Yu Guanying 余冠英, “新诗的前后两期” *Xinshi de qianhou liangqi* (“The Two Phases of New Poetry Development”). 《中国现代诗论》上编 *Zhongguo xiandai shilun· Shangbian (Chinese Modern Poetic Criticisms, Volume 1)*, edited by Yang Kuanghan and Liu Fuchun, Guangzhou: Flower City Publishing House, 1985 [1932]. p. 155.

⁷⁴⁶ Lan Dizhi, Huang Changyong, and Ye Hong believe that the Crescent Moon poetic school was formed in this year with the publication of *Poetry Supplement*. Patricia Uberoi considers this year as the start of the “Formalist School”, which refers to the Crescent Moon group. 1) Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “Preface”, *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 2. 2) Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.* 3) Ye Hong 叶红, *op.cit.*, p. 28. 4) Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

⁷⁴⁷ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

⁷⁴⁸ “The Form of Poetry” was published in 《晨报副刊·诗镌》7号, *Chenbao fukan shijuan Qi hao (Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 7)*, 1926. Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴⁹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁵⁰ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *Poetry Supplement*”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

of Rhythm in Poetry” in 1921.⁷⁵² From the outline of the report one finds that Wen’s focus of attention was placed on the artistic or technical issues, such as how to produce rhythm in vernacular poetry by the use of rhyme, metre, and stanzaic patterns. His discontent with free verse was because this genre was to him “banal, unrefined, and feeble in expression”.⁷⁵³ He advocated the rhythm of poetry from a purely aesthetic point of view, regarding it as “a means to achieve beauty, to express emotion, and to idealise one’s imagination”.⁷⁵⁴ In like manner, Liang Shiqiu at this time also encouraged the study of rhythm and rhyme, simply because “only when we write vernacular poetry according to the artistic arrangement and in a musical way that the most perfect tunes can be produced”.⁷⁵⁵

But by the time when Wen published his well-known article “The Form of Poetry” in 1926, I suggest, his discussion of poetic forms had borne a deeper philosophical concern. He based his discussion on the classic ideals of order and harmony rather than merely pursuing artistic beauty. In this manifesto of the Formalisation Movement, Wen not only put forward a few artistic principles, but also looked into the dialectical relationships between freedom and discipline (the rules), the beauty of nature and the beauty of art, the natural overflow of emotion and the artistic selection and processing.⁷⁵⁶ He criticised the romantic poets who cried out for the “Return to Nature” and who indulged themselves in the drooping self-pity and sentimentalism.⁷⁵⁷ So more than a purely artistic discussion on the poetic techniques, “The Form of Poetry”, in my opinion, also shows Wen’s newly adopted life attitude and cultural position. It seems that he came to be more interested in the classic values of discipline, restraint, and order, and disapproved of the romantic self-expansion

⁷⁵² Kai-yü Hsü, 1958, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

⁷⁵³ Wen Yiduo’s original report was in English, and the title was in both English and Chinese, with the English title “A Study of Rhythm in Poetry” and the Chinese one as “诗底音节的研究 *Shi di yinjie de yanjiu*”. When the report was translated and collected into *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo*, the translator changed the title as “诗歌节奏的研究 *Shige jiezou de yanjiu*”, because the word “rhythm” is now generally translated as “节奏 *jiezou*” rather than “音节 *Yinjie*”. Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “诗歌节奏的研究” *Shige jiezou de yanjiu* (“A Study of Rhythm in Poetry”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays, op.cit.*, pp. 54-61.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “诗的音韵” *Shi de yinyun* (“The Rhythm and Rhyme of Poetry”). *Criticisms of Liang Shiqiu, op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁶ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, pp. 137-140.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 138-139.

and emotional indulgence. Wen's change of attitude is reminiscent of the change of Liang Shiqiu, who claimed that his "previously extreme romantic belief" had been converted to "a classic position" after taking Irving Babbitt's classes.⁷⁵⁸

The significance of "The Form of Poetry", therefore, lies not only in its specific prosodic rules which is said to have set the tone for the Crescent Moon poetry practice thereafter, but also in the fact that Wen has elucidated his new understanding of the form and content of poetry from a classic position. In terms of form, Wen believes that form is as necessary to poetry as rules are to chess games. Negating the "romantic" way of free expression, he argues that artistic selection and processing is indispensable for composing poetry because "nature is not always beautiful".⁷⁵⁹ Adapting a statement of Bliss Perry, he says, "Few poets will admit that they are really in bondage to form. They love to dance in fetters, and even dance in the fetters of other poets".⁷⁶⁰ This objection to "the Romantic cult of nature" and assertion of hard working and artistry, in my view, demonstrate both the New Humanist spirit⁷⁶¹ and the traditional Chinese poetics.⁷⁶²

In terms of content, on the other hand, Wen strongly rejects the expansive and straightforward way of self-exhibition of the romantics. He mocks those who "attack form in the name of romanticism":

They take no notice of literature itself, and all they want is the exhibition of their own selves...What they have found is merely the raw materials of art. They fail to recognise the tool that transforms the raw materials into art...What they want most is to disclose the so-called 'Ego', showing to the world what a smart and sensitive young man 'I' am...This is the Romanticism in their minds, which has nothing to do with the school of literary thought...Technically speaking, these pseudo-romantic works...can in no way count as poetry.⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁸ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "On Mr. Babbitt and His Thought", *op.cit.*, p. 213.

⁷⁵⁹ Wen Yiduo, "Form in Poetry", translated by Randy Trumbull, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.* For the original statement of Bliss Perry, see Bliss Perry, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

⁷⁶¹ Chris Baldick, "New Humanism", *Oxford Dictionary, op.cit.*, p. 246.

⁷⁶² James J.Y. Liu argues that one difference between Western and Chinese expressive theories lies in that the former tends to "identify intuition with expression", while the latter also stresses "conscious artistry" and "hard work". James J.Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature, op.cit.*, p. 87.

⁷⁶³ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, "The Form of Poetry", *op.cit.*, pp. 139-140.

Seen from this article, therefore, Wen stands diametrically opposed to what he referred to as the “pseudo-romantics”. He denounces the formless and disorderly free verse on the one hand, and the unrestrained self-pity and self-expansion on the other hand. This understanding of form and content reflects Wen’s pro-classic mental attitude and cultural position, rather than merely artistic views.

Such a conservative and classic position finds more expression in Xu Zhimo’s concluding remarks for the Formalisation Movement:

We have discussed the rhythm and metre of new poetry. We would rather admit that we are the “old-school conservatives” — if the meaning of ‘newness’ cannot be separated from the meaning of ‘anarchism’. Perhaps we are not gifted enough, or perhaps we are too ‘low and cheap’. While the time has bestowed us abundant freedom, we would rather be chained with fetters created by ourselves.⁷⁶⁴

It is worth noting that many Crescent Moon members at the time discussed the issues of form and content from the classic point of view. Deng Yizhe 邓以蛰 (1892-1973), for instance, believes that poetry will die when it is “degenerated into a tool merely describing sentiments”:

If poetry is lost in a swirl of emotion and revolves only around one’s sentiment... it will be reduced to either drooping self-pity or meaningless empty talk.⁷⁶⁵

Rao Mengkan bluntly asserts that the “very great danger of new poetry” is “Sentimentalism”. While acknowledging that emotion is the core of poetry, Rao considers the emotion must be “universal” and “absolutely natural”.⁷⁶⁶ It will degenerate into “eccentricity” if “the poet indulges his nature and exerts no certain amount of restraint on his life”.⁷⁶⁷ Rao’s view is reminiscent of Liang Shiqiu’s New Humanist understanding of literature, which emphasises the restraining and filtering role of reason over emotion:

⁷⁶⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Poetry Supplement On Holiday”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁶⁵ Deng Yizhe 邓以蛰, “诗与历史” *Shi yu lishi* (“Poetry and History”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》2号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan Er hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 2*), 1926.

⁷⁶⁶ This emphasis on “natural” emotion is closer to traditional Chinese literary theories that stress “sincere” or “genuine” emotion or feelings. As a contrast, Western romantic theory would praise “intense” emotion and “powerful feelings”. See James J. Y. Liu’s comparison between Chinese and Western theories. James J.Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

⁷⁶⁷ Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “Sentimentalism and the ‘Creation Society’”, *op.cit.*

The true self lies not in the state of feelings but in the life of reason. So one has to exert his faculty of reasoning if he tries to exhibit his ego...The greatness of literature lies not in the exhibition of one's self, but in the expression of the universal humanity.⁷⁶⁸

With the publication of these articles, *Poetry Supplement* came to be the central platform for the Formalisation Movement, from which a classic trend of thought spread outwards. Of course one cannot simply equal the pursuit of form with the classic intellectual trend. But when the concept of form is associated with a range of abstract ideas such as “the spirit of standard, order, reason, and restraint”,⁷⁶⁹ it gains more profound philosophical meanings and reflects the poets' outlook on life. From 1926 to 1930, I suggest, is the “classic age” of the Crescent Moon poetic school, during which the classic ideals dominate its poetic practice, although some of the romantic and modernist elements also persist in a less prominent manner.

2) New Humanism and Confucian Background: Origins of the Classic Ideals

It used to be a controversial issue as to whether Western classic trend of thought ever had any influence on the early Republican literary scene. Chinese scholars in recent years tend to acknowledge the existence of a classic trend in modern Chinese literature, and would associate this trend with the New Humanist thought in the U.S. Wen Rumin 温儒敏, for instance, points out in 1993 that the classic literary trend in the May Fourth era “was an integral part of the New Humanist legacy”.⁷⁷⁰ Huang Changyong suggests that the early stage of the Crescent Moon poetic values represent the classic aesthetics in a broad sense.⁷⁷¹ Yu Zhaoping 俞兆平 takes a step further and argues that the classic trend was represented by the *Critical Review* group (*Xueheng*) in theory, and the Crescent Moon group in literary practice, both groups

⁷⁶⁸ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁶⁹ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “文学的纪律” *Wenxue de jilü* (“The Discipline of Literature”). *Criticisms of Liang Shiqiu, op.cit.*, p. 97.

⁷⁷⁰ Wen Rumin 温儒敏, 《中国现代文学批评史》 *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue piping shi* (*History of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*). Peking University Press, 2013. p. 60.

⁷⁷¹ Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

being led by students of Irving Babbitt.⁷⁷² Yu also relates the Formalisation Movement launched by the Crescent Moon group to Babbitt's classic theory.⁷⁷³

On the other hand, Western scholars have also paid attention to Babbitt's intellectual influence in China. Both Shu-mei Shih and Edmund Fung see Babbitt as one of the Western scholars who, after witnessing the atrocities of World War I, sought to re-evaluate the Enlightenment ideals and cure the modern Western ills by absorbing Eastern culture.⁷⁷⁴ Both scholars focus their attention on Babbitt's influence on the *Critical Review* group, believing that it was in New Humanism that the *Critical Review* intellectuals saw the validation of Confucianism,⁷⁷⁵ thus forming their modern conservative stance. I have discussed this point in Chapter Two.

Moreover, Bai Liping and Marián Gálik have discussed Babbitt's influence on Liang Shiqiu from the perspectives of Liang's translation practice and literary criticism respectively. Both scholars agree that Babbitt's classic position have not only influenced Liang, but also the Crescent Moon group indirectly.⁷⁷⁶ The Crescent Moon slogan of "health and dignity" and their pursuit of an ideal of "harmony and prudence" echoed the New Humanist spirit championed by Babbitt.⁷⁷⁷

Though no direct link is established between Irving Babbitt and the poetic practice of the Crescent Moon group, Constantine Tung relates Wen Yiduo's "sense of proportion and balance" to Liang Shiqiu's "humanist advocacy of control and restraint".⁷⁷⁸ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong also contextualises their poetic practice in the group's general search for order and form, which is related to Liang's thought as well.⁷⁷⁹ Therefore, it is not farfetched to say that the Crescent Moon poetic practice

⁷⁷² Yu Zhaoping 俞兆平, 《中国现代三大文学思潮新论》 *Zhongguo xiandai sanda wenxue sichao xinlun* (*New Studies on the Three Intellectual Trends in Modern Chinese Literature*), People's Literature Publishing House, 2006, p. 295.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 318.

⁷⁷⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 153-155. Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-72.

⁷⁷⁵ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, p. 170.

⁷⁷⁶ Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, p. 49. Marián Gálik, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

⁷⁷⁷ Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

⁷⁷⁸ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

⁷⁷⁹ Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-299.

has at least received an indirect influence of Babbitt's classic theories through the introduction of Liang Shiqiu.⁷⁸⁰

All these studies have inspired my understanding of the classic face of the Crescent Moon poetics. I agree with Yu Zhaoping that the Formalisation Movement is a poetic manifestation of the classic intellectual trend under the influence of Babbitt's thought. I also suggest that Babbitt's influence further strengthened the modern conservative spirit of the group with its non-radical and non-contradictory theories. So before going into detailed textual analysis of poetry, I would like to briefly introduce New Humanism as a theoretical background.

New Humanism is a small but influential school of thought that was active in America in the 1920s and 1930s, with its theoretical framework primarily built up by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More.⁷⁸¹ It derived many of its literary principles from the critical writings of Matthew Arnold, "upholding an ethical doctrine of self-restraint in place of formal religious doctrine and opposing the excessive individualism of the Romantic tradition in the name of classical order and harmony".⁷⁸² Babbitt has his own interpretation of "humanism". By tracing it back to its Latin origin, he believes that the term implies "doctrine and discipline" of a select few.⁷⁸³ Unlike "humanitarianism" which indicates "a universal philanthropy",⁷⁸⁴ a true humanist maintains "a just balance between sympathy and selection".⁷⁸⁵ Humanism emphasises on the individual's self-restraint and discipline on the one hand,⁷⁸⁶ and on the other hand allows for a disciplined sympathy. From this

⁷⁸⁰ Hermerén defines "indirect influence" as follows: "to say that a work of art X indirectly influenced another work of art Y means that there is at least one person P such that X influenced P directly and that P influenced Y directly". Here, Liang Shiqiu is the person P who received a direct influence from Babbitt and influenced Wen Yiduo's poetic theory. Göran Hermerén, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

⁷⁸¹ Chris Baldick, "New Humanism", *op.cit.*, p. 246.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1972, p. 6.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁷⁸⁶ So it implies the "perfecting of the individual rather than...the elevation of mankind as a whole". *Ibid.* p. 8.

definition one might understand Babbitt's assertion of the spirit of balance and proportion, or "the law of measure".⁷⁸⁷

Such a balanced and mediatory way of thinking has been applied to discussions of nearly all kinds of dualistic questions by Babbitt, such as the questions of judgment and imagination, reason and emotion, social order and individualism, discipline and free expression, didacticism and aestheticism, tradition and the modern, the East and the West, the unity and the change, the One and the Many, etc.,⁷⁸⁸ the last question according to Babbitt being the very question that has constituted the history of philosophy.⁷⁸⁹ Babbitt aims to stay between these dualistic extremes.

In this spirit of balance and proportion, Babbitt accuses both neo-classicism and romanticism as extremist views, with one over-emphasising the power of judgment and the other the power of imagination,⁷⁹⁰ and both are far from the genuine classic spirit.⁷⁹¹ He makes a distinction between "classicism" and "neo-classicism", believing the latter to be "pseudoclassical" only imitating the external appearances of the ancient sages and a dogmatic view of classic values.⁷⁹² In the eyes of Babbitt, "extremes are barbarous" and "the law of measure is the supreme law of life".⁷⁹³ It is obvious that Babbitt has been seeking a spirit of reconciliation and proportion, which is reminiscent of the ancient Chinese philosophy represented by Confucius and his Doctrine of the Mean (中庸 *Zhongyong*). No wonder that Liang Shiqiu would comment that, "Babbitt's thought is very close to that of our Confucianism".⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁷ Babbitt sees the "insistence on restraint and proportion", or "the law of measure" as the genuine classic spirit. Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

⁷⁸⁸ Babbitt discussed the dialectic relationships of these pairs of questions throughout his books. cf: 1) Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.* 2) Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, *op.cit.*

⁷⁸⁹ The original words of Babbitt are: "The history of philosophy since the Greeks is to a great extent the history of the clashes of the metaphysicians of the One and the metaphysicians of the Many." Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁰ Marián Gálík thinks that Babbitt has his own unique theory of imagination, which is core to Babbitt's system. This uniqueness lies exactly in a balanced understanding of imagination, which emphasises a "restrained and disciplined imagination", rather than denying or over-emphasising it. Marián Gálík, *op.cit.*, pp. 293-294.

⁷⁹¹ Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 28-31.

⁷⁹³ Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁹⁴ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, "On Mr. Babbitt and His Thought", *op. cit.*, p. 215.

It is precisely this part of New Humanist thought, I suggest, that appealed to and exerted most influence on Liang Shiqiu and his friends in the Crescent Moon School. In his theory of artistic influence, Hermerén discusses some conditions for influence, one of which is that the influenced writers should “have a disposition to become influenced”.⁷⁹⁵ I would suggest that the Crescent Moon poets’ acceptance of New Humanism was largely due to their conservative mindset as I have discussed in previous chapters. In face of the increasingly radicalised social conditions and the chaos and turbulence after the mid-1920s, these conservative intellectuals felt even more powerless and desired a life of order and stability.⁷⁹⁶ Their conservative mentality might have predisposed them toward a Western theory that resembles the Confucian value of moderation, and this Western theory in turn strengthened their conservative mentality.

Although the classic ideals dominated in this period, the romantic temperament of the Crescent Moon poets did not vanish into thin air. The influence of New Humanism lies rightly in the eclectic and mediatory virtues, or “the law of measure”, and it is in this spirit that Liang Shiqiu argues that classicism is not in opposition to romanticism. Rather, classicism is supposed to be a “proper proportion” of reason and emotion, of the neo-classic power of concentration and the romantic power of expansion.⁷⁹⁷ Liang and his Crescent Moon friends shared with Babbitt the distaste for extreme and radical ideas. While championing the classic values of reason and restraint facing the general atmosphere of radical emancipation, they did not fully negate emotion and imagination:

⁷⁹⁵ Göran Hermerén, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁹⁶ In a personal letter from Xu Zhimo to Leonard Elmhirst, dated on 1st April 1927, Xu complained that “the whole country is fast tumbling into a nightmare of hideous passion and bestiality... The intellectuals are absolutely helpless and powerless against the turbulent flood of catch words and mob movements. All standards are turned upside down, all measures are reversed”. I think this letter clearly demonstrates Xu’s increasingly conservative mentality with the deterioration of social conditions. Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “致恩厚之” *Zhi Enhouzhi* (“To Leonard Elmhirst”), 1st April 1927. *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Six, Letters and Correspondence, op.cit.*, pp. 329-330.

⁷⁹⁷ To support his argument, Liang quoted the ideas of Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938), a British poet and literary critic. Abercrombie had a unique understanding of the relationship between classicism and romanticism, that the two were not in opposition but in a hierarchical relationship. While romanticism is an “element”, classicism is on a higher order of things as a mode of combining all the elements including romanticism. Based on this understanding, Liang believed that reason and emotion were not in opposition but should maintain a “just proportion”. 1) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “The Discipline of Literature”, *op.cit.* 2) Lascelles Abercrombie, *Romanticism (Second Impression)*, London: Martin Secker (Ltd), 1927, pp. 31-34.

We are of course not opposed to the emancipation of emotion. But to the back of this pretty wild horse, we have to cautiously add the saddle of reason.⁷⁹⁸

It is rightly because of this mediatory and eclectic understanding of emotion and reason that the romantic temperament is able to coexist with the classic ideals in the Crescent Moon poetry. One easily finds in the most regulated poetic forms the tender and touching lyricism and imagination. The so-called “anti-romanticism” preached by the Crescent Moon poets is nothing but a revolt against the excessive sentimentality of the early new poetry, which has in their eyes lost measure and proportion. That Wen Yiduo calls the self-pitying and self-expansive romanticism “pseudo-romanticism”⁷⁹⁹ is precisely in the same spirit with Irving Babbitt when the latter calls the mechanic, dogmatic, and formalistic classicism “pseudo-classicism”.⁸⁰⁰ Both are a rebuke to excess and extremes.

Although it seems that the Crescent Moon poets abruptly abandoned their romantic passion in 1926, seeking to restore order and discipline to poetry, I would suggest that this classic spirit had always been lurking in their nature. It stems from the Confucian upbringing they received in their childhood, and was rediscovered and strengthened through their contact with New Humanism in the West. This classic ideal does not conflict with their romantic temperament, because the true classicist “does not establish any hard and fast opposition between judgment and imagination”.⁸⁰¹ This eclectic and non-contradictory mode of thinking well demonstrates their modern conservative spirit.

In the following sections, I will discuss the classic face of the Crescent Moon poetry. The influence of the classic spirit, I suggest, could be found primarily in two aspects, namely, the conscious experimentation with regulated poetic forms and the pursuit of a restrained way of expression. I will also analyse the two devices the Crescent Moon poets have employed to achieve the balance between emotion and restraint.

⁷⁹⁸ “Crescent Moon Attitude”, *op.cit.*

⁷⁹⁹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

⁸⁰⁰ Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 29-32.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 28.

2. Regulated Forms: A Restoration of Metre and Order

1) Wen Yiduo, “Dead Water”, and the Theory of *Gelü*

The one result of the Formalisation Movement is the production of the kind of regulated verse, or in a more derisive epithet, the “Dry Bean-curd Verse”. Critics have accused the Crescent Moon poetry of its over-regular form that has emptied out the emotion and content. But in effect from the very beginning of the movement the Crescent Moon poets have paid much attention to the issue of harmony between form and content. The first theoretical article discussing poetic forms published in *Poetry Supplement*, “The Rhythm of New Poetry” (“新诗的音节” *Xinshi de yinjie*) by Rao Mengkan, explicitly put forward the question of sound and meaning:

The sound and meaning in a perfect poem should always be properly and skillfully mediated. So while on the surface these are two separated elements, in essence it is one integrated whole, which is the rhythm of poetry we are going to talk about.⁸⁰²

So the rhythm of poetry in the eyes of Rao is not a predetermined form extrinsic to the content. Rather it is an integrated concept mediating the sound and meaning, the outside and the inside. Such a mediatory ideal of harmonising the form and content in poetry can be found in the theoretical articles of many Crescent Moon poets. Xu Zhimo compares a poem to “an organic whole”, with “the words and sentences as its external figure, the rhythm as its blood vessels, and the ‘poetic sense’ or the original impulse as the heartbeat”.⁸⁰³ Chen Mengjia compares the form of poetry to the golden frame of a picture, that “we need the form and metre just like a picture does not reject a suitable golden frame”, and that “the tone and even the atmosphere of poetry should be in harmony with its emotion”.⁸⁰⁴ Sun Dayu defines poetry as the

⁸⁰² Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “新诗的音节” *Xinshi de yinjie* (“The Rhythm of New Poetry”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》4号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan Si hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 4*), 1926.

⁸⁰³ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “*Poetry Supplement On Holiday*”, *op.cit.*

⁸⁰⁴ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

integration of the “poetic sense” with the “verse form”.⁸⁰⁵ Perhaps borrowing a metaphor from Bliss Perry again,⁸⁰⁶ Wen Yiduo compares writing poetry to tailor-craft because, just like “the clothes must be cut to fit the body” (相体裁衣 *xiangti caiyi*), the form of new poetry must be specially created for the spirit of the content.⁸⁰⁷

It was Rao Mengkan and Wen Yiduo together that founded the theory of form of the Crescent Moon School, although Wen’s article “The Form of Poetry” is better known to the public today. In the fourth and sixth issues of *Poetry Supplement*, Rao Mengkan published his two essays on the rhythm of new poetry, elaborating on the four poetic elements that he considered as constituting “rhythm”, namely, the stanzaic pattern (格调 *gediao*), the end rhyme (韵脚 *yunjiao*), the rhythm or metre (节奏 *jiezou*), and the patterning of tones (平仄 *pingze*).⁸⁰⁸ It was based on the articles of Rao that Wen Yiduo further contributed his own understanding of form, hence the well-known article, “The Form of Poetry”.

The concept of form or *Gelü* (格律), according to Wen’s definition, involves two parts of meaning, the visual and the auditory.⁸⁰⁹ While the auditory part refers to the stanzaic patterns, rhythm and metre, patterning of tones, and end rhyme as Rao Mengkan has already discussed in detail, the visual part is what Wen Yiduo intends to elaborate, including the “symmetrical stanzas and uniform verse lines” (节的匀称, 句的均齐 *jiede yunchen, jude junqi*).⁸¹⁰ Following this definition, Wen Yiduo further proposed the ideal of “Three Beauties” (三美 *sanmei*):

⁸⁰⁵ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “诗歌的格律” *Shige de gelü* (“The Form and Metre of Poetry”). *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu*, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-97.

⁸⁰⁶ When discussing the harmony between form and emotion, Bliss Perry says, “even as in humble tailor-craft, this many-colored coat of poetry must be cut according to the cloth as well as according to the pattern”. Considering Wen’s familiarity with Perry’s work, I think Wen adapted this metaphor to express his understanding of form and content. Bliss Perry, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

⁸⁰⁷ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁸⁰⁸ Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “The Rhythm of New Poetry” and “On the Rhythm of New Poetry Again”, *op.cit.*

⁸⁰⁹ The Chinese word 格律 (*Gelü*) consists of two characters, with 格 (*Ge*) literally referring to regulations on the external shape or visual shape; while 律 (*Lü*) referring to regulations on the musical or auditory effect.

⁸¹⁰ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

We realise that the power of poetry lies not only in its musical beauty (the rhythm) and pictorial beauty (the diction and vocabulary), but also in its architectural beauty (the symmetry of stanzas and the balance of verse lines)...If anyone asks what the feature of new poetry is, we should reply: the possibility of having the architectural beauty is one of the features of new poetry.⁸¹¹

I would like to take “Dead Water” (死水 *Sishui*), the poem that Wen views as his “first most successful piece of experimentation on rhythm and form”,⁸¹² as an example to demonstrate his theory of architectural beauty:

This is a ditch of hopelessly dead water,
Where no clear wind can raise half a ripple on it.
Why not throw in more junk metal scraps,
Or rather pour your leftover food.

Perhaps the copper will turn into green jade,
Iron tin may rust into peach petals;
Allow the grease to weave a silken veil,
And the mould may brew up some rosy clouds.

Let the dead water ferment into a ditch of green wine,
Where the pearl-like foam floats over;
The laughter of tiny pearls turns into bigger ones,
Only to be bitten broken by mosquitoes stealing the wine.

Then such a ditch of hopelessly dead water,
May boast a sense of distinction.
If frogs cannot bear the loneliness,
Their songs may enliven the dead water.

⁸¹¹ Ibid. p. 141.

⁸¹² Ibid. p. 144.

This is a ditch of hopelessly dead water,
Where beauty never stays,
Why not leave it to ugliness,
And see what kind of world it can create.

—“Dead Water” by Wen Yiduo (1926)⁸¹³

Here is the Chinese original with the notation of rhythm:⁸¹⁴

这是 / 一沟 / 绝望的 / 死水，
清风 / 吹不起 / 半点 / 漪沦。
不如 / 多扔些 / 破铜 / 烂铁，
爽性 / 泼你的 / 剩菜 / 残羹。

也许 / 铜的 / 要绿成 / 翡翠，
铁罐上 / 锈出 / 几瓣 / 桃花；
再让 / 油腻 / 织一层 / 罗绮，
霉菌 / 给他 / 蒸出些 / 云霞。

让死水 / 酵成 / 一沟 / 绿酒，
飘满了 / 珍珠 / 似的 / 白沫；
小珠们 / 笑声 / 变成 / 大珠，
又被 / 偷酒的 / 花蚊 / 咬破。

那么 / 一沟 / 绝望的 / 死水，
也就 / 夸得上 / 几分 / 鲜明。

⁸¹³ I adapted the translation of Julia C. Lin. cf: Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-86. The original poem see Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “死水” *Sishui* (“Dead Water”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 146-147.

⁸¹⁴ I use Slash (“/”) as the mark of scansion in this paper. And in the discussion of this poem, “three-character feet” are underlined.

如果 / 青蛙 / 耐不住 / 寂寞,
又算 / 死水 / 叫出了 / 歌声。

这是 / 一沟 / 绝望的 / 死水,
这里 / 断不是 / 美的 / 所在,
不如 / 让给 / 丑恶 / 来开垦,
看他 / 造出个 / 什么 / 世界。

There are five stanzas in the poem, each stanza having four lines and each line nine characters. The same number of characters in a line and same number of lines in a stanza secure the visual regularity of the poem, producing a rectangular shape which is how the derisive epithet “Dry Bean-curd verse” comes. This visual regularity leads to part of the effect of the architectural beauty that Wen has advocated, and another part of the effect comes from the orderliness in “metrical feet” (音尺 *yinchi*).

My scansion of the Chinese original shows that the nine characters in each line can be divided into four metrical feet (marked by Slash), each foot containing different numbers of syllables varying from two to three characters.⁸¹⁵ The two types of feet are named by Wen as “two-character foot” (两字尺 *liangzi chi*) and “three-character foot” (三字尺 *sanzi chi*) respectively.⁸¹⁶ Every verse line contains three two-character feet and one three-character foot, and the position of the three-character foot varies in each line.⁸¹⁷ In Wen’s words:

The order of different types of feet is arranged in an irregular way, but each line must contain a total of three two-character feet and one three-character foot. Writing in this way, the poem will possess the harmony and

⁸¹⁵ Since Chinese characters are mostly monosyllabic in articulation, each character occupies one syllable in time length. So the number of “characters” equals the number of “syllables” in most cases. See James J. Y. Liu’s explanation on the characteristic auditory qualities of Chinese. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

⁸¹⁶ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

⁸¹⁷ Three-character feet are underlined throughout the Chinese original to indicate its varying positions in different lines.

force in rhythm and at the same time the orderliness in the number of characters.⁸¹⁸

By varying the arrangement of the order, Wen claims to be able to vary the monotony while at the same time secure the regularity because the total number of feet and characters remain the same, thus creating an effect of unity in variety.

It is obvious that while building up this theoretical system Wen has had English prosody in mind. His terminologies such as 音尺 *yinchi* sounds like a literal translation of “metrical foot”.⁸¹⁹ He also copies the way of notating the rhythm by breaking down the verse line into smaller units, and securing the structure by counting the number of metrical units. The only difference is the principle of scansion. While the English poets generally obey the “principles of Stress”,⁸²⁰ dividing metrical feet by counting the “stressed” and “unstressed” syllables, the Chinese poets obey a different set of principle. But neither Wen Yiduo nor Rao Mengkan has bothered to elaborate on this principle, and they just implicitly agreed on this scansion.

Critics have different opinions with regard to Wen’s principle of scansion. Some, like Kai-yu Hsu, maintain that although Wen did not use the term “stress”, he was unconsciously using the concept because there is natural stress pattern in vernacular language. Hsu also believes that the concept of “*yi-yang*” (抑扬) in traditional Chinese poetics is similar to the “unstressed-stressed pattern” in English.⁸²¹ Some others, such as Patricia Uberoi and Lloyd Haft, hold a different opinion. Uberoi argues that nowhere does Wen mention the fundamental concept of “stress”, and she explains the reason why the “two-stress system” is unsuited to analysis of vernacular Chinese poetry.⁸²² In Chinese vernacular language, according to Uberoi, there are “three levels of stress which can be contrasted effectively for rhythmic purposes”, which are the fully stressed, semi-stressed, and truly unstressed units. And she

⁸¹⁸ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

⁸¹⁹ Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet: Meanings of a Form*, Research School CNWS, Leiden University, 2000, pp. 21-22.

⁸²⁰ Bliss Perry, *A Study of Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

⁸²¹ Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 202.

⁸²² Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

elaborates on how unnatural it can be should one attempt scansion on the basis of a two-stress categorisation.⁸²³ Lloyd Haft also denies that Wen has based his theory of “metrical foot” on the element of strong or weak stress. Rather than providing any “hard-and-fast definition of what did or did not constitute a ‘foot’”, Wen based his theory more intuitively on varying elements.⁸²⁴

I agree with the latter opinion that the element of stress is not a major concern when Wen and Rao built their theories. Rather, as Uberoi observes, Wen’s metres were “distinctively Chinese, specifically devised to accord with the peculiar rhythmic qualities of colloquial Mandarin”.⁸²⁵ From the examples cited in their articles, a native Chinese speaker immediately understands that their scansion is based on the principle of meaning or “sense group” (意群 *yiqun*), which is the minimum syntactical phrase containing at least one stressed syllable.⁸²⁶ Such a sense group in Chinese, usually containing two or three characters,⁸²⁷ conveys a complete meaning as a “word” does in English. So Wen’s principle of scansion, though only implicitly illustrated by examples, was particularly designed for and appropriate to the “inherent rhythm” of Chinese vernacular language.⁸²⁸

Wen’s theory of form, especially the concept of “line subdivision”, had a lasting influence.⁸²⁹ Many Crescent Moon members contributed to this issue later. Sun Dayu, for instance, specifies how a sense group is formed and how it contributes to the

⁸²³ Ibid. pp. 5-6.

⁸²⁴ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

⁸²⁵ Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁸²⁶ 1) Cyril Birch, 1959, *op.cit.*, p. 274. 2) Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁸²⁷ A sense group may contain different numbers of characters, varying from one to five. But in most cases, the numbers are limited to two or three characters, because one-character unit could be added to a two-character unit to form a three-character unit; while the four or five-character unit can be broken down into smaller units. cf: 1) Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”, *op.cit.*, p. 264. 2) Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “论新诗” *Lun xinshi* (“On New Poetry”). *Reminiscence of Crescent Moon: Random Talks on Literature and Art by Ye Gongchao*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

⁸²⁸ Wen believed that each language had its “inherent rhythm”, and to write good poetry in that language required the poets to produce rhythm that conformed to the inherent features of the language. Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “《冬夜》评论” *Dongye pinglun* (“Criticism of *Winter Night*”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays*, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-64.

⁸²⁹ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

scansion of poetry. He defines “metrical section” (音节 *yinjie*),⁸³⁰ his own term for “sense group”, as “those phonetic units with the identical or similar duration of time in articulation, and is formed basically by semantic or grammatical relationships”.⁸³¹ Ling Shuhua uses the term “sense group” in the 1950s, and asserts that the units of prosody come from the habits of natural speech of different races and nations. Therefore one needs not to pay special attention to it because “the more natural, the more rhythmical”.⁸³² Ye Gongchao and Bian Zhilin also elaborated on this issue and their views are similar to that of Ling Shuhua, agreeing that it is the rhythm in natural speech that produces the pause between metrical feet.⁸³³

The sense groups⁸³⁴ in Chinese prosody, therefore, are divided largely by the instinctive rhythmic pause in people’s natural speech. As people have different habits and rhythm of speaking, sense groups may be divided in varying ways. So this type of scansion is very arbitrary and intuitive. Especially the vernacular Chinese, unlike the classic language, is characterised by the abundant use of particles (such as 的 *de*, 了 *le*, which can be added to either a previous or a latter word to form a sense group), localisers (such as 上 *shang* up, 下 *xia* down, 中 *zhong* middle), words and phrases consist of three or more characters,⁸³⁵ semantic pause, and drawn-out of sounds, adding the flexibility and arbitrariness of the scansion. As Lloyd Haft observes, “the intuitive reality of the ‘feet’ or segments did not seem equally obvious to all readers”.⁸³⁶ Wen’s theory then seems too rigid in this sense, as it requires people to divide the sense groups (feet) in a definitive way, which has contradicted the

⁸³⁰ Instead of using the term “sense group”, Sun Dayu called it 音节 *yinjie*, which can be translated in different ways. It could mean “rhythm”, or “metrical section”, or even “syllables”. But it refers to a sense group in practice. I choose not to use his term because of this ambiguity.

⁸³¹ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “The Form and Metre of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁸³² Ling Shuhua 凌叔华, “新诗的未来” *Xinshi de weilai* (“The Future of New Poetry”). 《凌叔华散文选集》 *Ling Shuhua sanwen xuanji* (*Selected Essays of Ling Shuhua*), Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986. p. 125.

⁸³³ 1) Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”, pp. 266-267. 2) Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “On New Poetry”, pp. 56-60.

⁸³⁴ Different people coined different terms. Sun Dayu calls it “音节 *yinjie*” (metrical section). Bian Zhilin calls it “顿 *dun*” (pause). Ye Gongchao calls it “音组 *yinzu*” (metrical group). Wen Yiduo calls it “音尺 *yinchi*” (metrical foot). But they all refer to the same thing, which is “sense group” termed by Ling Shuhua.

⁸³⁵ Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁸³⁶ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16.

flexibility of sense groups and the basic nature of the vernacular language. It is just in this respect that his theory is severely challenged and criticised. Poems composed by less expert hands under the strict guidance of this theory would easily reduce to formalistic works, leaving an impression of monotony and “dryness”.

But this rigid form, when applied to the specific poem of “Dead Water”, seems to fit the emotion and theme particularly well. Critics have provided different interpretations of the poem. Liang Shiqiu, for instance, points out the “obvious” Western influence in the poem, including that of A. E Housman (with the tidy form and perfectly modulated rhythm), Robert Browning (with the description of the ugly and the grotesque), and Alfred Tennyson (with the ornate method). Liang believes that Wen was expressing the inner conflict between his artistic ideals and the ugly reality, but considers it too “far-fetched” to interpret the poem as one with a patriotic theme.⁸³⁷

Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 Henry Zhao) provides another possible source of influence discovered by his mentor, Cyril Birch. Birch noticed that the images and diction in “Dead Water” strongly resemble those of a sonnet written by the American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950).⁸³⁸ Both using images such as fungus, frog, leftover food, ditch and bog, rusty iron tin, oily water surface, etc., and both employing the device of irony, the two poems are indeed strikingly alike.⁸³⁹ While

⁸³⁷ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Wen Yiduo”, *op.cit.*, p. 278.

⁸³⁸ Zhao Yiheng 赵毅衡 (Henry Zhao), 《对岸的诱惑》 *Dui'an de youhuo (The Lure of the Other Shore)*, Zhishi Press, 2003, p. 24.

⁸³⁹ Here is the original sonnet of Millay:

Still I harvest beauty where it grows:
In coloured fungus and the spotted fog
Surprised on foods forgotten; in ditch and bog
Filmed brilliant with irregular rainbows
Of rust and oil, where half a city throws
Its empty tins; and in some spongy log
Whence headlong leaps the oozy emerald frog....
And a black pupil in the green scum shows.
Her the inhabiter of divers places
Surmising at all doors, I push them all.
Oh, you that fearful of a creaking hinge
Turn back forevermore with craven faces,
I tell you Beauty bears an ultra fringe
Ungessed of you upon her gossamer shawl!

Millay's sonnet expresses her perception of beauty in what seems to be ugly, Constantine Tung thinks that Wen was communicating to the readers that "in the midst of ugliness, beauty is still possible".⁸⁴⁰

But more critics still interpret the poem as expressing the poet's profound grief and indignation at the depressing reality of the nation.⁸⁴¹ Considering the time and social context when Wen produced the poem and his strong sense of patriotism,⁸⁴² I agree that Wen had his nation in mind when writing "Dead Water", though he might have drawn formal and textual inspiration, consciously or unconsciously, from the above Western sources. This poem was composed when Wen newly returned from the U.S., and his previous idealisation of his own nation was shattered after witnessing the gloomy reality of Chinese society.⁸⁴³ China was in a dark age stricken with endless wars and struggles, and yet most Chinese people were indifferent and unaware of what had happened to their country. The poet compares Chinese society to a ditch of stagnant dead water, and describes it in the most ironic way. He employs the most beautiful images to contrast with the stink, ugliness and hopelessness of the dead water. The readers on the one hand are impressed by the beautiful words and pleasant associations evoked by these images, and on the other hand are painfully aware of the fact that the "green wine" refers to the mouldy water covered with moss, the "silken veil" is weaved by grease of the leftover food, and the "peach petals" and "green jade" are nothing but rusty junk metal scraps. The more beautiful and pleasant

Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Still will I harvest beauty where it grows", *Collected Sonnets of Edna St. Vincent Millay (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, Harper & Row, 1988, p. 43.

⁸⁴⁰ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁸⁴¹ Su Xuelin, Wen's contemporary, believes that "dead water" symbolises the corrupt and decadent modern China. Zang Kejia, one of Wen's favourite students, argues that what is more important in the poem than the experimentation of form is the poet's deep love and devotion to his country, and his disappointment and anger because of this love. Marc Whitacre believes that the poem is concerned with China's social and political situation. Lloyd Haft notes that the "obvious" interpretation is that "the ditch of hopelessly dead water" stands for China in the 1920s. Kai-yu Hsu also argues that the poem is a "bitter, satirical protest" against the chaos and corruption of the national scene. 1) Su Xuelin 苏雪林, "论闻一多的诗" *Lun Wen Yiduo de shi* ("On Wen Yiduo's Poetry"). *Selected Collection of Critical Articles of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 73-74. 2) Zang Kejia 臧克家, "The Sea", *op.cit.*, p. 152. 3) Marc Michel Whitacre, *op.cit.*, p. 7. 4) Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet*, *op.cit.*, p. 22. 5) Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

⁸⁴² Zhu Ziqing considers Wen as the "only true patriotic poet" at the time. Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

⁸⁴³ According to Rao Mengkan, the poem was touched off by the sight of a ditch of putrid water, an open sewer, in Beijing. Kai-yu Hsu discusses Wen's over-idealisation of his nation in the U.S., and disillusionment with the reality upon his return to China. Kai-yu Hsu, *Wen I-to*, *op.cit.*, p. 61, pp. 99-103, pp. 204-205.

the images are, the more repulsive the association becomes, and the stronger the mournful effect achieves.

Thus interpreting the poem, I think the rigidly constructed form well embodies the grave theme and tone. The rhythm of the poem is strong, definitive, and heavy-stressed. The orderly and uniform lines and stanzas not only produce a visual effect of rigidity and gravity, but also strengthen the rhythm because there is no variation in speed or tension or force, and the readers are pushed to read through the characters one by one with equal stress and weight. Using end-stopped lines and imperative sentences, the poet depicts the dead water in a matter-of-fact manner, adding the definiteness of the bitter reality.⁸⁴⁴ The stiff and rigid form cramps the expression of the burning grief and indignation, producing a tension that gives rise to the depressive atmosphere of the poem. The enveloping structure of the entire poem, with the opening line repeating itself in the last stanza, further compresses the emotion into a closed space. It resembles the form of “circularity” that Michelle Yeh has explored, that the circulated structure seems to indicate “self-perpetuation or cyclicity”.⁸⁴⁵ The form of the poem is in itself imitative of a closed ditch of dead water, where there is no hope, no solution, and no way of escape.

2) Rao Mengkan and his Application of the *Gelü* Theory

While “Dead Water” represents a happy integration between form and content, it does not necessarily mean that the metre used in “Dead Water” fits all types of themes and contents. The strong, rigid, and heavy tread of the rhythm might not suit poems with light, mild and intimate sentiments. Rao Mengkan offers his solution in this respect in the poem “Hometown” (家乡 *Jiexiang*):

⁸⁴⁴ Cyril Birch views this poem as having used a “trochaic” metre, which means in each metrical foot the first character is stressed and the second unstressed. This feature, according to Birch, has produced the heavy tread effect. But as Patricia Uberoi observes, this “trochaic” impression is merely illustration of the fact that “a basic unit of colloquial Mandarin is the disyllabic compound, in which the strong stress very often falls on the first syllable”. I think aside from the “trochaic” metre, the heavy tread effect of the poem has been produced more by the use of end-stopped lines. Cyril Birch, 1959, *op.cit.*, p. 279. Patricia Uberoi, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁸⁴⁵ Michelle Yeh, “Circularity: Emergence of a Form in Modern Chinese Poetry”, *Modern Chinese Literature*, Vol 3, No. 1/2, 1987, p. 43.

This time I come back to my hometown,
Right over there it is my hometown;
A cloud of verdant green gathers in the distance;
A few flagpoles sway right before my eyes.
Taking a turn the trolley is pushed beside the stream,
Hissing and rushing over the bridge;
Right before me comes some familiar smiles,
Hastily I step into the village.
Ah my hometown is as fresh as ever,
Although your wandering son has long been weather-bitten!
Lo and behold, lotus blooms are dancing over the stream with fragrance,
The sweet song is floating across the golden field.
Beside the stream are the weeping willows as usual,
Under the willow shade a fisher boat rows by.
Ah listen to the puffing sound of the washing beside the well curb,
And in the curling smoke the voices are calling me back.
The sound of the fortune-teller's gong travels across the rice field,
The song of the flute whistles over the backs of the water buffalo.
This time I come back to my hometown,
Right over there it is my hometown.

—“Hometown” by Rao Mengkan (1925)⁸⁴⁶

这回我又到了家乡，
前面就是我的家乡；
远远的凝着青翠一团；
眼前乱晃着几根旗杆。
转个弯小车推到溪旁，

⁸⁴⁶ Rao Mengkan 饶孟侃, “家乡” *Jiexiang* (“Hometown”). 《晨报副刊·诗镌》4号 *Chenbao fukan shijuan Si hao* (*Poetry Supplement to Morning Post: Issue 4*), 1926.

嘶的一声奔上了桥梁；
面前迎出些熟的笑容，
我连忙踏步走入村中。
故乡啊仍旧一般新鲜，
虽然游子是风尘满面！
你瞧溪荷还飘着香风，
歌声响遍澄黄的田垌，
溪流边依旧垂着杨柳，
柳荫下摇过一只渔舟。
听呀井栏边噗噗洗衣，
炊烟中远远一片呼归，
算命的锣儿敲过稻场，
笛声悠扬在水牛背上。

这回我又到了家乡，
前面就是我的家乡。

As a lyric expressing the poet's homesick emotion, the general tone and atmosphere is one of nostalgia, of simple delight mixed with light sorrow. Despite the vivid depiction of the hometown, the poem reads more like an ideal dream than reality. The initial two lines are repeated in the end, forming a pair of refrain. It sounds like the poet's soliloquy, repeatedly comforting or persuading himself of the genuineness of the dream.

The "‘Dead Water’ metre" is observed throughout the main poem (except for the four lines of refrain part), with nine characters and four metrical feet in a line. But the tone and rhythm of this poem is entirely different from the "marching" cadences of "Dead Water". Several devices are employed by Rao to soften the movement of the rhythm:

A. The use of interjection (such as “啊” *Ah*) in the middle of a sentence rather than in the very beginning, which softens the rhythm and strengthens the lyrical tone without causing too much melodramatic effect:⁸⁴⁷

故乡啊仍旧一般新鲜，虽然游子是风尘满面！

Ah my hometown is as fresh as ever,

Although your wandering son has long been weather-bitten!

听呀井栏边噗洗衣，炊烟中远远一片呼归，

Ah listen to the puffing sound of the washing beside the well curb,

And in the curling smoke the voices are calling me back.

B. The use of retroflex “r-ending” sounds (儿化音 *er hua yin*), separating the two metrical feet with a soft transitional sound, rather than pushing the readers to read through the line in one breath:

算命的锣儿敲过稻场，笛声悠扬在水牛背上。⁸⁴⁸

The sound of the fortune-teller’s gong travels across the rice field,

The song of the flute whistles over the backs of the water buffalo.

C. The use of onomatopoeia evokes vivid associations of what is happening on the scene:

转个弯小车推到溪旁，嘶的一声奔上了桥梁；

Taking a turn the trolley is pushed beside the stream,

Hissing and rushing over the bridge;

听呀井栏边噗洗衣，

Ah listen to the puffing sound of the washing beside the well curb,

D. Directly addressing readers, calling their attention and varying the possible monotony caused by the descriptive tone:

⁸⁴⁷ Compared with the earlier works, such as Wen Yiduo’s “Chant of the Sun” (“太阳吟” *Taiyang yin*), which uses apostrophe and opens a line with the interjection (“Ah, sun, the sun that pierces my heart in pain!”), Rao’s treatment of the exclamation is lyrical but far more restrained.

⁸⁴⁸ Although the word “悠扬” *youyang* is not a retroflex r-ending sound, the alliteration of “y-” [j] gives an aural impression quite similar with r-ending sound.

你瞧溪荷还飘着香风，歌声响遍澄黄的田垌。

Lo and behold, lotus blooms are dancing over the stream with fragrance,
The sweet song is floating across the golden field.

听呀井栏边噗噗洗衣，

Ah listen to the puffing sound of the washing beside the well curb,

These rhythmic devices, together with the mild and tender images, slow down the movement, creating a general impression of ease, warmth and leisure, which echoes the half-dreamy and half-real homesick theme of this poem.

3) Sun Dayu and his Challenge to the *Gelü* Theory

The “‘Dead Water’ metre”, while attracting many followers, has also engendered much controversy. Even Wen Yiduo himself has not strictly followed through his own theory in later works.⁸⁴⁹ The strongest objection within the Crescent Moon poetic school comes from Sun Dayu who, in opposition to Wen’s theory, proposed his own theory of form and metre. He recalled in his later years:

Aside from his [Wen Yiduo’s] idea of keeping the orderliness of the total number of feet in each line, I cannot agree with him in all the other points of his theory. So I have never adhered to his rules in any of my composed or translated poems.⁸⁵⁰

As a complement to Wen Yiduo’s theory of form, Sun Dayu’s theory is particularly worthy of investigation.

Sun’s theory of form, or in his words, theory of “metrical groups” (*yinzu*), was said to have been put forward in the early 1930s on *Poetry Magazine* (《诗刊》

Shikan).⁸⁵¹ But the systematic theory was completed in the late 1930s and

⁸⁴⁹ According to T.M. McClellan’s research, out of the 28 poems in Wen Yiduo’s second poetry collection *Dead Water*, the only collection published after he had proposed the theory of *Gelü*, only 15 observed the “‘Dead Water’ metre”. And of the 15 poems with the metre, only 5 strictly adhered to the rules put forward in the theory. cf: T. M. McClellan, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

⁸⁵⁰ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “The Form and Metre of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

⁸⁵¹ According to Sun’s recollection, he first put forward the idea of “metrical groups” (音组 *yinzu*) in 1930, as a translator’s note published in the translation of “King Lear” on the second issue of *Poetry Magazine* (诗刊 *Shikan*). I have not found the translator’s note on that issue (and Issue Two of *Poetry Magazine* was actually

unfortunately the manuscript was destroyed in the war.⁸⁵² It was only after the 1950s that he revised and included his early theories in the paper “The Form and Metre of Poetry” (“诗歌的格律” *Shige de gelü*).

Sun is strongly opposed to the theory of Wen Yiduo because Wen tried to limit a fixed number of characters in a metrical foot. According to Sun, since poetry is an art of time, the principle of scansion should not be based on the counting of characters, but on the length of sounds (音长 *yinchang*), or the duration of time when articulating a group of sounds. The “metrical group” (音组 *yinzu*), therefore, refers to “the orderly progress of linguistic units that possess the identical or similar duration of time in articulation”.⁸⁵³ Such “linguistic units” are called “metrical sections” (音节 *yinjie*), which “are usually composed of one to four characters based on the semantic and grammatical structures”.⁸⁵⁴

It is obvious that the “metrical section” of Sun Dayu equals what Wen Yiduo has called “foot” and what Ling Shuhua later termed “sense group”. The three systems of theory in essence have the similar principle of scansion, which is based on the habit of Chinese vernacular speech. But Sun based his theory on the duration of time of articulation, and thus, as compared with Wen’s character-counting way of scansion, taking into full consideration the variation and flexibility of different habits of speech. Sun Dayu only requires that the duration of articulating a group of sounds remains the same between different metrical sections, without setting limits for the specific number of characters. There could then be one to four characters in a metrical section, with or without pause, rest, caesura, and long-drawn-out of sounds, as long as the time length of articulation remains the same. People may speed up the articulation

published in 1931), so it might be Sun’s memory error. But it seems true that the term “metrical group” has never been put forward before Sun. cf: Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “格律体新诗的起源” *Gelü ti xinshi de qiyuan* (“The Origin of the Regulated New Poetry”). *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu, op.cit.*, p. 318.

⁸⁵² Sun Dayu completed the theory in his paper “On Metrical Groups” (“论音组” *Lun yinzu*) in the 1930s, which was planned to be published as the preface to his translation of *King Lear*. But the manuscript was destroyed by fire during the war before it was published. After the establishment of the P.R.C., he revised his ideas in his paper “The Form and Metre of Poetry” (“诗歌的格律” *Shige de gelü*). cf: Sun Dayu 孙大雨, the Endnote of “论音组” *Lun yinzu* (“On Metrical Groups”). *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu, op.cit.*, p. 91.

⁸⁵³ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “The Form and Metre of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 157.

when there are more characters in a metrical section, and have them drawn out when there are fewer, thus allowing the variation in speed, tone and mood. Rhythm is produced in a poem when the number of metrical sections in each line remains the same, without rigid requirement for the number of characters in a metrical section. And the ideal form of poetry, according to Sun, is a poem consisting of five metrical sections in a line,⁸⁵⁵ although the number of metrical sections may vary from two to six.⁸⁵⁶

Based on this theory of metrical groups, Sun experimented with sonnet in Chinese, which is the most distinctive achievement for him as a poet. He requires that a sonnet must be composed of five metrical sections in a line, with one to four characters in a section. The rhyming scheme should also be considered. Here is an example of his sonnet:

How decrepit and ramshackle the universe turns!
I am afraid that the world is going to exhale
Its last breath. No wonder that the heaven turns dilapidated,
Alas! The white cloud put away its previous splendour,
The sun is so dim like the white eyes of the dead body.
The luxuriant forested mountain turns like a range of burnt lump,
With neither woods nor the monkeys that sing for spring.
Nor is there the mountain spring whispering to the sweet birds.

Heavy wind holds and strokes a few stones and bones.
The ocean tide covers his back and shoulders with grey hairs,
Quietly receding from the sand-beach and sighing
Alone: its roaring sounding through the ages ends by now,
Ushering into the eternal suffering of the heaven, earth and all.

⁸⁵⁵ This requirement seems to be echoing the traditional form of “Pentameter” in English prosody.

⁸⁵⁶ cf: Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “The Form and Metre of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, pp. 108-118 and 141-158.

All for she has bade me break up!

—“Breaking Up” by Sun Dayu (1931)⁸⁵⁷

天地 / 竟然 / 老朽得 / 这么 / 不堪 !

我怕 / 世界 / 就要 / 吐出 / 他最后

一口 / 气息。 / 无怪 / 老天 / 要破旧，

唉， / 白云 / 收尽了 / 向来的 / 灿烂，

太阳 / 暗得像 / 死尸的 / 白眼 / 一般，

肥圆的 / 山岭 / 变幻得 / 像一列 / 焦瘤，

没有了 / 林木 / 和林中 / 啼绿的 / 猿猴，

也不再 / 山泉 / 对着 / 好鸟 / 清谈。

大风 / 抱着 / 几根 / 石骨 / 在摩娑，

海潮 / 披散了 / 满头 / 满背的 / 白发，

悄悄 / 退到 / 沙滩下 / 独自 / 叹息

去了： / 就此 / 结束了 / 她千古的 / 喧哗，

就此 / 也开始 / 天地 / 和万有的 / 永劫。

为的 / 都是她 / 向我 / 道了一声 / 决绝！

Many Crescent Moon poets showed great interest in the form of sonnet. In his admirable study on the Chinese sonnet, Lloyd Haft believes that it was the publication of the first issue of *Crescent Moon Monthly* (in which Wen Yiduo translated a selection of Elizabeth Browning’s Sonnets) and Wen Yiduo’s *Dead Water* anthology that initiated the “first ‘sonnet rage’ in China”, and their publication made 1928 a “red-letter year” in the development of the Chinese sonnet.⁸⁵⁸ Their interest in sonnets, I suggest, is on the one hand due to their enthusiasm in

⁸⁵⁷ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “决绝” *Juejue* (“Breaking Up”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

⁸⁵⁸ According to Haft, there were two periods of “sonnet rage” in China, the other being in the 1940s. Haft also mentions how the publication of *Crescent Moon* and *Dead Water* has influenced the leaders of the second sonnet rage. Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet*, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.

experimenting with strictly constructed forms, and on the other hand because of their belief in the affinity between the sonnet and Chinese *lüshi* (regulated verses), the most prestigious classical Chinese poetic form.⁸⁵⁹ Sun Dayu claimed that he was the person who consciously created the first sonnet in Chinese vernacular language, and it was written in the Petrarchan form.⁸⁶⁰ Sun wrote many sonnets, and “Breaking Up” is one of his three most frequently mentioned sonnets.⁸⁶¹ Xu Zhimo listed it as the first poem in the opening issue of *Poetry Magazine*, and praised Sun’s sonnets as an “important contribution that might have initiated a brand new poetic form in China”.⁸⁶²

From my scansion of the poem in its Chinese original,⁸⁶³ one easily discerns the difference between this sonnet and “Dead Water” in rhythmic movement. The number of characters is much more flexible, varying from eleven to thirteen in a line, and one to four in a metrical section. The one-character metrical section is composed of one character and a punctuation mark (Line 4: “Alas!” “唉,” *Ai*). Clearly this character occupies a long beat (with long duration of time) in articulation, imitative of someone breathing a long sigh. The four-character metrical sections, on the other hand, speed up the tempo of articulation because each character must be uttered in a shorter duration of time. The varying speed and tension effectively avoid monotony. The number of metrical sections is evenly distributed between lines, with five sections in a line, securing the unified structure despite the variety in smaller units.

⁸⁵⁹ Both Wen Yiduo and Liang Shiqiu discussed the affinity between sonnet and *lüshi*. Lloyd Haft also shed much light on this issue. 1) Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “On Sonnet”, *op.cit.*, p. 168. 2) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Fourteen-line Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 190. 3) Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet*, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

⁸⁶⁰ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “Poetry and I”, *op.cit.*, p. 314.

⁸⁶¹ The three sonnets are “Breaking Up” (决绝 *Juejue*), “An Answer” (回答 *Huida*), and “An Old Word” (老话 *Laohua*). The three are published in the opening issue of *Poetry Magazine*, and Xu Zhimo, Chen Mengjia, Lan Dizhi always mention them together as “the three sonnets of Dayu”. 1) Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *Poetry Magazine*”, *op.cit.*, p. 368. 2) Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “Preface”, *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 9. 3) Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “前言” *Qianyan* (“Preface”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

⁸⁶² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *Poetry Magazine*”, *op.cit.*, p. 368.

⁸⁶³ The scansion is only based on my habit and linguistic sensibility. The lines in this poem are much looser than those in “Dead Water” as they have more particles, localisers and enjambment, so there may be varying ways of scansion. But Sun Dayu has basically followed the “five metrical sections” rule.

One of the most striking features of this poem is the use of enjambment and dependent lines.⁸⁶⁴ Enjambment is used twice, in lines 2 and 11 respectively. The use of enjambment itself embodies the theme: in Line 2 the poet is depicting the “heaven” that is going to exhaust its last breath, and in Line 11 he is trying to imitate the long sigh the “ocean tide” has uttered. The enjambment cuts off the normal flow of the meaning, creating a suspended effect that echoes the two images. Unlike in the case of “Dead Water”, end-stopped lines are rarely used in this poem. Rather, dependent lines flow from lines 2 to 7 and again from 9 to 12. There is a sense of dependence and protraction in these run-on sentences, drawing the readers to go on to the following lines. Thus the rhythm of the poem, unlike that of “Dead Water” which is somber, definitive, and heavy-stressed, is urgent, fast-flowing, full of force and variation, connoting a sense of disordered fluster and panic of a young man who has lost his love.

Except for the beginning and closing lines, the only end-stopped line is used in line 8. Sun Dayu has paid special attention to the integrated structure of the whole sonnet, as he once noted that “there should be a pause in meaning between the first eight lines and the last six lines”.⁸⁶⁵ This view was supported by Wen Yiduo and Liang Shiqiu who, using traditional Chinese poetic terms of *liushi*, described that a genuine piece of sonnet should be “a rounded circle” with four sections of “introduction, follow-up, turning, and closing” (起承转合 *Qi, cheng, zhuan, he*).⁸⁶⁶ The three Crescent Moon poets believed that the most distinctive feature of sonnet is that there should be a turning in meaning and emotion between the octave and the sestet. This is what Lloyd Haft has described as an important feature of the Chinese concept of sonnet, that sonnet, like *liushi*, is supposed to embody “a characteristic progression of thought

⁸⁶⁴ By “dependent lines” I refer to those lines without a full stop mark in the end. These lines are not enjambment because they are complete sentences carrying a complete meaning in themselves. But their meanings are dependent upon the following lines, and readers’ eyes are “dragged” to go on to the following lines. Putting these dependent lines together will constitute a more complete meaning or aesthetic state for the whole poem. In other words, they are not as incomplete as enjambment lines, but are not as complete as end-stopped lines as well. In this poem, for instance, Lines 2-7 and 9-12 are dependent lines.

⁸⁶⁵ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “The Form and Metre of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-155.

⁸⁶⁶ 1) Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “On Sonnet”, *op.cit.*, p. 168. 2) Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “On Fourteen-line Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

during the course of the poem”.⁸⁶⁷ Wen Yiduo even argued that “fourteen lines and a rhyme scheme” were “necessary but unimportant” conditions for an acceptable sonnet; more important was the “formal divide between the octave and the sestet”.⁸⁶⁸ “Breaking Up” is a vivid illustration in this sense. There is a formal divide and emotional turning between the octave and sestet, and the end-stopped line in line 8 closes the first part and suggests the beginning of a new section. Accordingly, the sestet part witnesses a gradual diminuendo, turning from the strong and intense tone of the first part to an image of solitude, quietness, and gradual fading away.

In terms of the rhyming scheme, this poem seems not to be a regular sonnet, with the first eight lines observing the rhyme pattern of the Petrarchan form (*abba abba*) and the last six lines observing a slightly modified Shakespearean pattern (*cded ff*). As Lloyd Haft has noted, it is a common technical approach for Chinese sonnetteers to observe “the overall shape of the sonnet while not strictly following all requirements of any one traditional sonnet form”.⁸⁶⁹ But I think Sun was intentionally turning to a Shakespearean pattern in the sestet part. Unlike the Petrarchan sonnet, which is divided into a “three plus three” line-pattern in the sestet, the Shakespearean sonnet falls into a quatrain and a concluding couplet.⁸⁷⁰ By taking this pattern, the last two lines are constructed as a rhyming pair, with not only the same end rhyme but also the same rhythmic patterning (both lines scan in the same way). The last two lines also occupy the climatic part. Line 13 closes the previous twelve lines of depiction and enters the “eternal suffering of the heaven, earth and all”. The poem is supposed to end in this way, gradually vanishing into the eternal suffering and eternal quietness. But Line 14 suddenly reveals the reason of such an “eternal suffering”, and initiates a new climax. The poem ends in this sudden revelation and sudden climax, leaving lingering aftertaste for the readers. The two paralleled lines serve not only as a closing, but also a forceful culmination.

⁸⁶⁷ Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet*, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 206.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁸⁷⁰ M. H. Abrams, “Sonnet”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

This theory of metrical groups has also been applied to Sun Dayu's translation of Shakespearean drama, which is another important undertaking he has involved in. Sun is able to translate Shakespeare into the form of blank verse with five metrical sections in a line, which is the most faithful translation in terms of form.⁸⁷¹

In this section I discussed the Crescent Moon poets' conscious effort in building up the formal theories for new poetry. I have shown how the Crescent Moon poets, through their experimentation with various forms, sought to mediate between form and content of poetry so as to achieve the integration between the two. Despite a few limitations, Wen Yiduo's theory provides a "plausible, reasonably practical concept of line subdivision that would continue to influence Chinese poets...for decades to come".⁸⁷² Some Crescent Moon poets, such as Rao Mengkan, happily apply Wen's theory to different themes. Some, like Sun Dayu, poses severe challenge to Wen and experiments with his own theory of metre. And some others, such as Xu Zhimo, never follow closely in Wen's footsteps,⁸⁷³ but create rhythm and musicality rather intuitively.⁸⁷⁴ But this does not mean that this last type of poets were immune to the classic influence of order and discipline, because they equally came to realise the necessity of form and artistic selection. The real significance of the Formalisation Movement, in my opinion, lies not in the specific rules and principles, but in the new poets' growing awareness and recognition of the artistic nature of poetry, as Xu aptly concluded:

⁸⁷¹ Sun Dayu believes that Shakespeare's poetic drama is in essence poetry rather than drama, because it was written in iambic pentameter blank verse. So he has tried to translate them in the form of blank verse with five metrical sections in a line. Other contemporary translators have all regarded Shakespeare's drama as prose poetry, thus translating them in the prose form. So Sun's translation can be regarded as the closest in terms of form. cf: Sun Dayu 孙大雨, "莎士比亚戏剧是话剧还是诗剧?" *Shashibiya xiju shi huaju haishi shiju?* ("Is Shakespeare's Drama Prose Drama or Poetic Drama?"). *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu, op.cit.*, pp. 228-254.

⁸⁷² Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin, op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁸⁷³ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, "Menghu ji 猛虎集 The Tiger", *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature, op.cit.*, p. 252.

⁸⁷⁴ See Cyril Birch's study on the English and Chinese metres in Xu Zhimo's poetry. Cyril Birch, 1959, *op.cit.*, pp. 258-293.

We come to realise that poetry is art, and art requires the artists to make conscious use of certain themes, rather than casually and carelessly allowing the themes to run wild.⁸⁷⁵

With this new awareness, writing poetry became a “serious business” and cannot be treated in a careless manner. Form and rules became not the “chains and fetters that restricted talents”,⁸⁷⁶ but effective tools that can produce refined works with lasting artistic values. Liang Shiqiu perceptively pointed out the change of attitudes of new poets during this period:

In the initial years of new poetry movement, what people concerned most was the “vernacular language” rather than “poetry”. People were making every effort to break the fetters of old poetry, without considering how to lay a foundation for new poetry... But most poems published in *Poetry Supplement* have been experimentations on poetry rather than vernacular language.⁸⁷⁷

The experimentation with forms marked the change of focus of new poets from “vernacular language” to “poetry”. And it is in this sense that Wen Yiduo’s prediction that “new poetry will enter into a new era of construction very soon”⁸⁷⁸ was not an empty dream.

3. Subdued Emotion: A Pursuit of Reason and Restraint

1) A Change of Style and Expression under the Classic Ideals

The Formalisation Movement has not only led to the improvement and perfection on poetic artistry, but also to a restrained way of thinking and expression. The carefully constructed forms and regulated number of characters will naturally keep the unbridled passion and poetic thought under control. Like two sides of a coin, form and content depend on and interact with each other, both demonstrating the classic ideals of reason, restraint, order, and the law of measure. The wildly abandoned temper and the straightforward way of expression that used to prevail in the

⁸⁷⁵ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “*Poetry Supplement On Holiday*”, *op.cit.*

⁸⁷⁶ Constantine Tung, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

⁸⁷⁷ Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, “新诗的格调及其他” *Xinshi de gediao ji qita* (“The Form of New Poetry and Other Issues”). 《诗刊》创刊号 *Shikan chuangkan hao* (*Poetry Magazine: Opening Issue*), 20th January 1931.

⁸⁷⁸ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “The Form of Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 144.

“romantic age” were no longer in fashion after 1926. Xu Zhimo is one of those who acutely felt the difference:

I believe in the recent five or six years, the few friends of us who kept writing poetry have all been influenced by the author of “Dead Water”. My pen used to be the most unbridled wild horse. It was only until I read the elaborately composed works of Yiduo that I came to realise the wild nature of myself.⁸⁷⁹

The Crescent Moon poets in this stage were strongly opposed to the sentimentalism and unrestrained self-exhibition of the so-called “pseudo-romanticism”. It seems that they have been trying to keep a proper distance and detached posture from the increasingly troublesome time and difficult life. Their aesthetic pursuit of “health and dignity”, though having a Western source,⁸⁸⁰ is also in accordance with the Chinese traditional poetic ideals based on the Confucian value of “the golden mean”. An important part of the traditional Chinese poetics, according to James J. Y. Liu, is the pursuit of “*ya*” 雅 (elegant, refined), a word originally meaning “correct”. “Vulgar and inordinate feelings, seditious thoughts, and extravagant language” are equally abhorrent to those seeking “correctness” in poetry.⁸⁸¹ It was based on this standard that Confucius commended the first song in *The Book of Poetry* (诗经 *Shijing*) for being “happiness but not without restraint, melancholy but not excessively morbid” (乐而不淫，哀而不伤 *Le er buyin, ai er bushang*).⁸⁸² Carrying on this traditional aesthetic value, the Crescent Moon poets in this “classic age” tended to devalue the intense emotion and powerful feelings that had been championed by the romantic poets. Rather, they emphasised natural and universal human emotions expressed in a subdued way.

From Xu Zhimo’s two poems of leaving Cambridge, one may easily discern his change of styles and aesthetic values under the influence of the classic ideal. The

⁸⁷⁹ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *The Ferocious Tiger*”, *op.cit.*, p. 394.

⁸⁸⁰ Bai Liping believes that this slogan was put forward under the influence of Irving Babbitt. Bai Liping, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

⁸⁸¹ James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁸² Confucius 孔子, 《论语》 *Lunyu* (*The Analects of Confucius*), Chapter 3:20. In 《论语译注》 *Lunyu yizhu* (*Translation and Annotation of The Analects of Confucius*), annotated by Yang Bojun 杨伯峻. Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局, 1980. p. 30.

following is an excerpt from Xu's first poem of bidding farewell to Cambridge, written in 1922:

Farewell, Cambridge;
My heart is brimming with the sentiment of parting,
You are a hard-won friend of mine who understands me most, that year I
Took leave of my parents and hometown, heading to the Pacific Ocean,
(Let me count, one autumn, two autumns, a total of four
Springs and autumns have passed, wandering overseas, America and Europe)
Exotic sights of Central America,⁸⁸³ the flavour of bananas in Honolulu,
And the calm and smooth ocean that opened my eyes and broadened my mind,
Have all turned to the scenery in my dreams only,
...
Farewell, Cambridge!
Despite our late encounter, during the year
The raging tide of revolution of my mind has all rushed
Along your graceful banks, hereafter
In every evening with clear breeze and bright moon, my old traces of passion
And wild abandon will be revealed under the grass and by the bridges,
Next year when the swallows return, the rhythm of my
Faint sighs and the voices of my singing will be remembered, the gorgeous cloud
And rosy sunset, will reflect my thought and emotion,
Today I splash my poetic heart and nostalgia onto the sky,
To praise the solemn and glorious evening scene, and the tenderness
And splendour of the early morning; listen! The gentle bell
Explains the sorrow of parting of the traveller in this cool early autumn,

⁸⁸³ The Chinese original of this sentence is “扶桑风色” (*Fusang fengse*). “扶桑 *Fusang*” is a place-name occurring in ancient Chinese history and geography books. According to modern research, *Fusang* may either refer to Japan, or Central America, most possibly Mexico. Considering Xu Zhimo had never been to Japan by the time he wrote this poem, I translate it as “Central America”.

My spirit is awakened and leaps high, attempting to dissolve into the sound,
To shake heaven and earth, and cover my beloved Cambridge,
Like a loving mother faces her sleeping son, with tender cuddling and soft kiss;
Cambridge! Ever shalt thou be my spiritual home!⁸⁸⁴
Though tens of thousands of miles away, I will always be
With you in my dreams, regardless of the gusty wind in the Mediterranean Sea,
I shall come back to the West however far away, to visit you again;
If upon my return, my mother asks about my best friend overseas,
You are the top one on my list; ...

—“Farewell, Cambridge” by Xu Zhimo (1922)⁸⁸⁵

The second poem, “Farewell Again, Cambridge” (再别康桥 *Zaibie kangqiao*) written in 1928, is far better-received and considered “one of the few immortal lyrics in modern Chinese poetry”.⁸⁸⁶

Lightly I am leaving,
As lightly I came;
Lightly I wave my hand,
Bidding farewell to the western clouds.

The golden willow by the riverside,
Is a bride in the setting sun;
Her graceful reflection in the water,
Is rippling my heart.

Green waterweeds growing in the ooze,
Are tenderly swaying in grace;

⁸⁸⁴ I borrowed the translation of this sentence from Cyril Birch. Cyril Birch, 1959, *op.cit.*, p. 274.

⁸⁸⁵ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “康桥再会罢” *Kangqiao zaihui ba* (“Farewell, Cambridge”), *op.cit.*, pp. 61-65.

⁸⁸⁶ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, “*Menghu ji* 猛虎集 The Tiger”, *op.cit.*, p. 253.

In the tender waves of River Cam,
I'd rather be a leaf of grass!

There under the elm shade,
Is no water, but a pool of rainbow from the sky;
Shattered among the floating algae,
Leaving a rainbow-like dream.

Seeking a dream? Holding a long pole,
Search deeper into the greener grass;
Loading the punt with starlight,
Sing aloud among the brilliant stars.

But I cannot sing aloud,
Silence is the song of my farewell flute;
Summer insects remain silent for me,
Silent is Cambridge tonight!

Silently I am leaving,
As silently I came;
I wave my sleeves,
Not bringing away a single cloud.

—“Farewell Again, Cambridge” by Xu Zhimo (1928)⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁷ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “再别康桥” *Zaibie Kangqiao* (“Farewell Again, Cambridge”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 352-353. The translation of the beginning and closing stanzas is inspired by that of Michelle Yeh. But the translation is basically my own. See translation of Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

Both poems were written when Xu was leaving Cambridge, the place that inspired his poetic temperament and was regarded by him as his “spiritual home”. Expressing the similar sentiments such as the sorrow of parting and the sense of loss, the two poems show different aspects: the former showing romantic abandon, and latter showing classic discipline. In terms of diction and syntax, the loose and involved sentence structure, some of the unnecessary use of enjambment, and the overuse of classical *wenyan* phrases, especially the “four-character clichés”,⁸⁸⁸ in the first poem produce a semi-archaic and semi-vernacular flavour that sounds a bit unnatural as compared with the language in the second poem. “Farewell Again, Cambridge” is widely admired for its refined diction, controlled movement of rhythm,⁸⁸⁹ orderly distributed stanzas, and well-considered rhyme patterning. Although Xu did not strictly follow Wen Yiduo’s theory of metre,⁸⁹⁰ the classic influence manifests itself in Xu’s conscious pursuit of form and discipline.

In terms of the way of expression, the first poem features a straightforward expression of emotion. It is like an autobiographical monologue in which the poet recalls every detail from the moment he left his hometown to study abroad, to his perplexity when studying in America, to his encounter with Cambridge and rediscovery of the meaning of life, to the serene and inspiring everyday life in Cambridge, and to his reluctance to leave and determination to return. The images are densely arranged, and the detailed depiction of the unselective, trivial facts has watered down the force and effectiveness of expression. In the second poem, on the other hand, the poet has carefully selected a few images, such as the drifting cloud, willows, rainbow, floating algae, etc. These images have been classic symbols of leaving or parting in Chinese poetic tradition, largely because of their intrinsic quality of fragility and rootlessness.⁸⁹¹ The use of these images naturally evokes in the reader’s mind a sense of loss, impermanence, and nostalgia, and the poet needs

⁸⁸⁸ Gaylord Kai-loh Leung, *Hsü Chih-mo*, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

⁸⁸⁹ Though not strictly following Wen Yiduo’s theory of metre, the poem features four lines in a stanza, and each line can be scanned into two to three sense groups.

⁸⁹⁰ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, “*Menghu ji* 猛虎集 The Tiger”, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

⁸⁹¹ See Michelle Yeh’s discussion of the structure and images of traditional farewell poems. Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 99. Also see Julie Landau, “Introduction to Symbols and Allusions”, *Beyond Spring: Tz’u Poems of the Sung Dynasty*, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 18.

not to directly describe his emotion and experience as he did in the first poem. The expression in the second poem, therefore, is rather subdued, indirect, and elegant.

In terms of the entire structure, the first poem is written in a half-narrative and half-lyric way, directly recording the poet's immediate thought and experience. In my opinion, it is what Cyril Birch has described as the kind of poems with no "recollection in tranquility" but "a direct transcription of raw emotion".⁸⁹² By contrast, the second poem shows the poet's elaborately designed structure by the use of some formal and textual devices. First of all, the poet paid much attention to the rhyming scheme of the poem. Most stanzas rhyme as *abcb*, with Lines 2 and 4 rhyming each other and the end rhyming sounds change every stanza. The only exception appears in Stanza 5, where no end rhyme is found. The absence of rhyme breaks the regularity and seems to be suggesting a process of self-breakthrough, an urgent and intense desire of self-exploration. This is also the liveliest stanza of the whole poem, considering the other stanzas have all been describing a sense of quietness and gentleness. Stanza 5, I suggest, is the climactic part of the poem, because it is only in this stanza that the poet takes real action to look into his inner self, trying to search and capture his romantic dream. The disruption of the rhyming scheme is indicative of the disrupted and urgent mood of the poet, which is brought about by his passionate desire of the dream and his awareness of its inaccessibility and fragility.

The fragility of the dream has already been suggested in the previous stanza, Stanza 4. Dream is compared to the reflection of the rainbow in the water, an image mixing the real with unreal, closeness with distance, and beauty with fragility. The rainbow appears initially as "rainbow from the sky" and ends as a "shattered rainbow-like dream", foreshadowing a change of mood and tone in the following stanzas. I think Stanza 4 is a transitional part, with the poem turning from the pure description of the natural scene to the exploration of the inner self, and the mood turning from the simple praise and admiration to some negative sensations of loss, disillusionment and

⁸⁹² Cyril Birch, "Hsü Chih-mo's Debt to Thomas Hardy", *op.cit.*, p. 22.

melancholy. And it is interesting to note that the poet uses in this stanza “alternate rhymes” (*abab*),⁸⁹³ consciously or unconsciously suggesting this transitional position.

Secondly, the poet employs repeated words and images, especially in the second half of the poem, to produce an effect of refrain and form a “circular structure”.⁸⁹⁴ The image appearing in the latter half of a line is repeated in the first half of the next line, creating a sense of recurrence and continuation that allows the poem to naturally flow forward by itself, for example:

Loading the punt with starlight,
Sing aloud among the brilliant stars.
But I cannot sing aloud...

Summer insects remain silent for me,
Silent is Cambridge tonight!

Silence is the song of my farewell flute;
Silently I am leaving,
As silently I came;

Repeated images and sounds produce an effect of familiarity, and reinforce the aesthetic state the poet intends to create. In the last two stanzas, the image of “silence” is repeated so many times that the readers are well prepared for the ending of the poem. So the last stanza ending with “silence” is on the one hand a gratification of the readers’ expectation, and on the other hand a return to the very beginning because of the nearly identical structure with the first stanza. The entire poem thus constitutes

⁸⁹³ Technically speaking, the end rhymes of this stanza, 潭 *Tan* and 间 *Jian*, 虹 *Hong* and 梦 *Meng*, are slant rhymes instead of strictly rhyming each other. But as compared with other stanzas that have only one pair of rhyme or slant rhyme, the alternate slant rhymes in this stanza undoubtedly bring about more regularity and musicality.

⁸⁹⁴ Michelle Yeh distinguishes “circular structure” from “refrains”. The former refers to “the beginning and the ending of a poem with the same image or motif”, and the image or motif “is used only in these two specified positions and nowhere else in the poem”. So in Xu’s poem “Farewell Again, Cambridge”, he was using both refrains and circular structure. Michelle Yeh, “Circularity”, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

a rounded circle, with the last stanza closing the curve and initiating a new beginning. The endless circle embodies the poet's endless sorrow, melancholy, nostalgia, and reluctance to leave. As Michelle Yeh observes, the absence of a "final resolution" that is implied in circular form is "effective in conveying the feeling of frustration or futility".⁸⁹⁵

As compared with the first poem, "Farewell Again, Cambridge" thus demonstrates a spirit of restraint and selection with the exquisite pattern of organisation, the highly selected imagery and phrasing, and the natural musicality brought about by the well-controlled rhythmic movement and rhyming scheme. This spirit is reminiscent of what Irving Babbitt requires of a true humanist or classicist, that "he is tested not only by what he does, but equally perhaps by what he refrains from doing".⁸⁹⁶ Written under this "true principle of restraint",⁸⁹⁷ the subjective sentiments such as melancholy, nostalgia, and disillusionment are all held under proper control without calling too much attention. So in my view this poem strikes a proper balance between the rich and subtle emotion of romanticism and the selected and restrained spirit of classicism. It is, I suggest, a telling illustration of the Crescent Moon classic ideals of "health and dignity".

2) Two Devices to Achieve the Restrained Way of Expression

In this section, I will analyse the two devices the Crescent Moon poets have used to achieve this restrained way of expression, namely, the use of imagery to project the poet's emotion, and the descriptive and dramatic technique to depersonalise the poet's emotion.

2.1) Imagery and Metaphor as a Device of the Restrained Expression

Imagery and metaphor were frequently used in this classic age, not only as a stylistic device of transferring the abstract into the concrete, but also as a means of restraining

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 43.

⁸⁹⁶ Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

or hiding the poet's excessive passion and energy. By projecting their subjective emotion onto an objective image, the poets were able to avoid the direct and plain expression and achieve the sense of reserved and implicit beauty. This pursuit is in accordance with the traditional Chinese aesthetic ideal to evoke "meaning beyond words" and "to suggest more than what is said".⁸⁹⁸ And it seems to me that the metaphor employed by the Crescent Moon poets at this "classic age" was very traditional, not only in that the poets were fond of borrowing traditional images or symbols from classical poetry (such as using willow to symbolise parting, and drifting cloud to symbolise rootlessness), but also in that the images, be they borrowed from the ancient classics or invented by new poets, were used in a conventional way. The association between tenor and vehicle is generally logical, consistent with the context, and comprehensible to the imagination of common people. Very seldom have they used images and symbols in the modernist sense, such as juxtaposing several unrelated images without providing necessary connection or transition, or transferring a symbol from its usual meaning and context to an unexpected new one.⁸⁹⁹ Their use of metaphor is more like the traditional "comparison" (比 *bi*), which is to compare the two basically similar or connected things, usually one abstract and one concrete, so that the abstract emotion, quality, or concept may be conveyed through a concrete and familiar image. On the other hand, metaphor in the modern sense, according to Michelle Yeh, aims to identify affinities from the two essentially different and even conflicting images, thus producing a sense of "tension and disjunction".⁹⁰⁰ Seeing likeness in differences enables the poets to gain a more profound insight into a world of truth and depth, and therefore the modern metaphor usually has a cognitive significance.⁹⁰¹ But the Crescent Moon

⁸⁹⁸ James J. Y. Liu, *Essentials of Chinese Literary Art*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁹⁹ Since all forms of art use symbols, Jacques Barzun considers Symbolism as either the "new combinations of symbols", or the "unexpected transfer of a symbol from its usual meaning and context to a new one". cf: Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

⁹⁰⁰ Michelle Yeh argues that the difference between the Western concept of metaphor and the Chinese concept of "*bi*" lies in that metaphor emphasises "tension and disjunction", and "*bi*" presumes "affinity and complementarity". Yeh also discusses the different cosmic principles underlying the two concepts. Michelle Yeh, "Metaphor and *Bi*: Western and Chinese Poetics", *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Summer, 1987), Duke University Press p. 250.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp. 237-254.

poets at this stage have more often than not employed metaphor or comparison only as a device of self-expression, and the metaphorical image as an embodiment of the poet's emotion or attitude, thus being quite different from metaphor in the modern sense. Liu Mengwei's "Walking on the Rail Tracks" (铁路行 *Tielu xing*) is illustrative of this traditional way of using metaphor:

We are walking on the rail tracks,
Our love is like the two tracks parallel with each other.
Many railway sleepers are connecting them,
But are also having them alienated.

It appears to be very promising ahead,
With our parallel love tracks extending faraway:
In the far distance they seem to be hugging each other,
So we strive to run forward.

We run to the place where they used to hug,
But aren't the tracks remaining the same?
Look ahead and they cross again,
So we take our courage to advance ahead.

As long as there is a hope my love,
As long as our love extends like the hope:
I shall always run forward with you,
Until the end of the parallel love tracks.

—"Walking on the Rail Tracks" by Liu Mengwei (1926)⁹⁰²

⁹⁰² Liu Mengwei 刘梦苇, "铁路行" *Tielu xing* ("Walking on the Rail Tracks"). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 355-356.

The theme of this poem, like that of many early new poems created in and after the May fourth era, is nothing but a simple praise of love and a lament of its unattainability. Despite its simple theme, however, the image used in this poem is novel and expressive. Comparing love with rail tracks is no doubt an innovative metaphor at that time, considering the railway itself belongs to the modern age. And the poet's understanding of love is also innovative enough. The parallel rail tracks stand for a relationship that is always bonded together but never meets, which is a seemingly promising but in reality most hopeless situation. But neither hope nor despair is expressed intensely or directly, and the poet has remained in most of the poem a very poised and restrained tone. It is only until the last stanza that the poet expresses his feelings in a straightforward way, stating explicitly his determination to defend love. The poet's intense emotion is tempered by the use of the metaphorical image, thus maintaining a reserved style in most of the poem without degenerating into the sentimental or self-exhibitory "pseudo-romantic" poetry. It is worth noting that the form of the poem is strictly regulated, with ten characters and four metrical feet in a line, suitable for the theme of restricted love.⁹⁰³

Associating love with rail tracks, though unfamiliar to the readers, is not without logic and therefore not incomprehensible. The "parallel" structure is a feature inherent in rail tracks,⁹⁰⁴ and therefore the always-connecting-but-never-crossing relationship is a natural association on the part of the readers. The poet did not impose any unexpected hidden meaning or illogical association on it. This is why Huang Changyong considers images appeared in the Crescent Moon poetry in this period as generally "ingenious and exquisite comparison" rather than "the comprehensive use of symbols in the modern sense".⁹⁰⁵ The use of imagery helps the poet keep a reserved manner, but has not gone too far to the modernist obscurity or ambiguity.

⁹⁰³ The creation of the poem has predated the theory of Wen Yiduo, so the theory of metrical foot has not been put forward when the poem was written. But Liu Mengwei has already experimented on this theory.

⁹⁰⁴ Michelle Yeh, when comparing imagery in traditional and modern poems, makes a perceptive observation that in traditional poetry it is the "intrinsic quality" of an image that makes it a symbol, while in modern poetry images are not only used in its natural, inherent sense. This becomes a distinction between the traditional and modern use of imagery. cf: Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, op.ci., pp. 7-8.

⁹⁰⁵ Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

Reservedness without obscurity is a classic aesthetic value, echoing the classic emphasis on the “law of measure”. A favourite method employed by the Crescent Moon poets, therefore, is the combined use of both the “indirect imagery” and the direct interpretation of it, thus forming a sharp contrast with the symbolist use of “unexplained symbols”.⁹⁰⁶ “Swan Goose” (雁子 *Yanzi*) by Chen Mengjia is an excellent lyric written in this way:

I love the swan goose in autumn,
That flies tirelessly overnight;
(As if advising, as if replying,)
Honks, flying far away.

Never asks in which patch of cloud
That his song may stay?
Just sings, just flies,
The dark sky, the light wings.

I would rather be a swan goose,
Let everything be forgotten —
When it is mentioned, when it comes to my mind:
No resentment, no delight.

—“Swan Goose” by Chen Mengjia (1930)⁹⁰⁷

In Chinese tradition, swan geese are symbol of married bliss because the Chinese believe that they never mate a second time and they always fly in pairs.⁹⁰⁸ But because of its migratory nature, it can also be seen as a harbinger of separation or

⁹⁰⁶ Charles Chadwick defines Symbolism as the art of expressing ideas and emotions by the use of “unexplained symbols”. He also discusses how Symbolist poets such as Mallarmé managed to avoid interpreting the imagery or symbol, leaving it virtually unexplained. I will discuss the use of symbols in the next chapter. Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism*, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971. pp. 2-3.

⁹⁰⁷ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “雁子” *Yanzi* (“Swan Goose”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 258-259.

⁹⁰⁸ Harry T. Morgan, “The Goose”, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

messenger of a spouse far away in northern lands.⁹⁰⁹ In fact, in many classical poems it is an image that evokes some negative emotions in the poet's mind, such as the sorrow of parting (for example, "The sky full of emerald clouds / the ground covered with fallen flowers / the biting western wind / the northern swan geese flying south / ...all turn to tears of the parting couple");⁹¹⁰ loneliness (for example, "The lonely goose does not eat or drink / just flies and honks longing for its flock");⁹¹¹ homesick nostalgia or rootlessness (for example, "The scenery by the frontier fortress changes in autumn / the swan geese fly south to *Hengyang* without any intention of staying");⁹¹² and love-sickness (for example, "Who will bring me the silk letter from the clouds / When the swan geese return in flock / and moonlight fills my western chamber").⁹¹³

But Chen Mengjia infuses new meanings into this image of sadness. What conjures up in the poet's mind at the sight of the flying goose is the light-heartedness of the creature, who just keeps flying and singing without thinking too much about why he flies or what can be left. Apparently this is the ideal life attitude that the poet praises or longs for. He is calling on people and himself to do and to live without bearing too much burden or caring too much for the result. But the poem has not degenerated into a didactic tone. The poet hides his emotion and aspiration in the metaphorical image, so the poem on the whole is presented in a light and detached manner.

⁹⁰⁹ Wolfram Eberhard, "Goose 鹅", *op.cit.*, p. 132. Also see Julie Landau's discussion of the images of "swallows" and "wild geese". Julie Landau, "Introduction to Symbols and Allusions", *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁹¹⁰ The Chinese original is "碧云天, 黄花地, 西风紧, 北雁南飞.....总是离人泪". Wang Shifu 王实甫, "西厢记: 第四本第三折" *Xixiang ji: disi ben disan zhe* ("Romance of the West Chamber: Act Three, Part Four"). 《元曲鉴赏辞典》 *Yuanqu jianshang cidian (Lexicon for the Appreciation of Yuan Qu Poetry)*, edited by Jiang Xingyu 蒋星煜, Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 1997. p. 343.

⁹¹¹ The Chinese original is "孤雁不饮啄, 飞鸣声念群". Dufu 杜甫, "孤雁" *Guyan* ("A Lonely Swan Goose"). 《全唐诗》卷 231 杜甫 16 *Quan tang shi (Complete Collection of Tang Poetry: Volume 231, Du Fu No.16)*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1960. pp. 2550-2551.

⁹¹² The Chinese original is "塞下秋来风景异, 衡阳雁去无留意". Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹, "渔家傲" *Yujia ao* ("Pride of the Fisherman"). 《唐宋词鉴赏辞典》 *Tang song ci jianshang cidian (Lexicon for the Appreciation of Tang and Song Ci Poetry)*, edited by Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House, 2000. p. 186.

⁹¹³ The Chinese original is "云中谁寄锦书来? 雁字回时, 月满西楼". Li Qingzhao 李清照, "一剪梅" *Yijian mei* ("A Twig of Plum Blossoms"). 《唐宋词鉴赏辞典》 *Tang song ci jianshang cidian (Lexicon for the Appreciation of Tang and Song Ci Poetry)*, edited by Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House, 2000. p. 636.

The poem gains in depth because of the new meaning imparted into this ancient image. But the new meaning is still conveyed in the traditional way. The qualities inherent in the image of swan goose, such as its lightweight, tireless flying, and carefree liberty, are in concord with the life attitude the poet praises. Therefore, there is in the reader's mind a natural association and logical transference from the flying bird to the carefree life. Moreover, like in the previous example "Walking on the Rail Tracks", the poet intrudes himself into the last stanza and directly indicates his ideal of life and his interpretation of the image. Combining the metaphorical image with the direct statement of the poet, the poem is clear to understand and at the same time avoids possible shallowness or straightforwardness.

Apart from the use of imagery, the form and expression of the poem is equally worth noting. The poem is not written in the rigid "Dry Bean-curd form", but every stanza is arranged in a similar structure, thus securing the unity in variety. The verse lines are frequently cut off into shorter phrases by punctuation marks (commas), producing a fast moving, light-footed rhythm that is imitative of the tireless and carefree flying bird. It is interesting to note that personal pronouns are omitted in all the descriptive sentences of the swan goose, thus blurring the boundary between the objective description and subjective experience. It seems that the swan goose and the poet become one, and that description is at the same time self-expression. Using everyday words, simple imagery, and short and brisk sentences, the poet is able to create a natural and relaxed atmosphere that fits the theme particularly well. The poem is neither sentimental nor passionate, but remains light, distanced, and reserved.

2.2) Descriptive and Impersonal Lyricism

The descriptive tone of the first two stanzas of "Swan Goose" is indicative of the poet's intention of expressing his feelings and aspirations in a detached and objective way. It suggests a new tendency gradually emerged in this classic phase of the Crescent Moon poetry, which is the tendency toward the impersonal and objective lyricism. This is the second device I have mentioned to achieve the restrained way of expression. The transition from the intense and straightforward expression to the light and detached lyricism well reflects the change of taste under the classic

influence of decorum and dignity. Wen Yiduo created three poems for the tragic death of his baby daughter, all written in a calm, restrained, and even impersonal tone.⁹¹⁴ I would like to take one of them, namely, “Forget Her” (忘掉她 *Wangdiao ta*), as an example to show Wen Yiduo’s “depersonalised” treatment of his intense mournful feeling:

Forget her, as a forgotten flower, —
The rosy morning cloud is on the petals,
The whiff of fragrance emanates from the heart —
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
Like a dream in the spring breeze,
Like a bell in the dream,
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
Listen to the nice song of the cricket,
Look at the lush grass grown around the tomb,
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
She has already forgotten you,
Nothing will she remember;
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

⁹¹⁴ The three poems are “Perhaps” (也许 *Yexu*), “I Must Return” (我要回来 *Woyao huilai*), and “Forget Her” (忘掉她 *Wangdiao ta*), all collected in his second poetry collection *Dead Water* (死水 *Sishui*). cf: *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 140, p. 142, and p. 149 respectively.

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
Time is truly a kind friend,
He makes you old overnight;
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
If anyone asks,
Say she's never existed;
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

Forget her, as a forgotten flower!
Like a dream in the spring breeze,
Like a bell in the dream,
Forget her, as a forgotten flower!

—“Forget Her” by Wen Yiduo (1927?)⁹¹⁵

Henry Zhao notes the strong affinities between this poem and a poem written by the American poet Sara Teasdale (1884-1933), entitled “Let It Be Forgotten”:⁹¹⁶

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold,
Let it be forgotten for ever and ever,
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten
Long and long ago,
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall

⁹¹⁵ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “忘掉她” *Wangdiao ta* (“Forget Her”). *Complete Works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 142-144.

⁹¹⁶ Zhao Yiheng 赵毅衡, *The Lure of the Other Shore*, p. 23.

In a long forgotten snow.

—“Let It Be Forgotten” by Sara Teasdale (1924?)⁹¹⁷

The diction, tone, imagery, and emotion involved in Wen’s poem show notable resemblance to those of Teasdale’s work; especially Stanzas 5 and 6 could even be seen as a translation. Though no clear evidence is found with regard to the direct influence of Teasdale’s poem on Wen, I do find from one of Wen’s personal letters evidence of his interest in this American new poet. In his English-written letter dated in 1922, Wen talked about his excitement in witnessing the “new poetry movement” in America and listed a few “new” poets that he found to be “daring, brilliant, clear-throated also great”.⁹¹⁸ Sara Teasdale is one on the list, along with other important “new” poets at the time including Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, Harriet Monroe, etc.⁹¹⁹ It is highly possible, therefore, that Wen had read Teasdale’s poem when he was studying abroad in the U.S., and was inspired by it when he was overwhelmed with a similar grief at his daughter’s death.

Both poems are written in a calm, light, and even indifferent tone, under which there lurks a bitter feeling of poignancy and remorse. Wen’s poem is in its form more regulated with a repetitive structure, forming a tune of refrain. The images Wen selects are more delicate and elusive, especially the two images in the repeated stanzas (Stanzas 2 and 7). Both “a dream in the spring breeze” and “a bell in the dream” are vague and remote images with a half-real and half-illusory association, suggesting the fleeting life of the little girl that had left no trace of existence. The transience of life (the whiff of fragrance, dream, bell in the dream, tomb, and time that makes you old) and the permanence of nature (the morning cloud, spring breeze, cricket, and wild grass around the tomb) are juxtaposed as contrasting images, reinforcing the poet’s poignant sorrow over the death of his daughter and his sombre questioning of the meaning of life.

⁹¹⁷ Sara Teasdale, “Let It Be Forgotten”. *The Collected Poems of Sara Teasdale*. Milton Keynes: Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2012. p. 164.

⁹¹⁸ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “To Dear Friends”, 27th Aug. 1922, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

But the profound grief and reflection have been expressed in an unusually impersonal and even indifferent tone. Of the three elegies written for his dead daughter, this is perhaps the one with the lightest and most subdued mood. One sees not the poet's inner thoughts or emotions on the surface of the poem. It is like a monologue of the poet, but entirely in a descriptive and narrative tone rather than a direct self-confession. He simply sets up a few images and scenes, by which a woeful atmosphere is created. The poet himself does not intrude into the poem (no "I" is found in the text), but the readers hear his voices, feel his presence, and sympathise with his emotion throughout the poem. Subjective expression of feelings is fully replaced by the objective description, leaving an impression of repose and detachment.

The relation between form and content of the poem is equally noteworthy. The repetitive structure and refrain sentences constitute a melodious tune with a lingering and never-ending effect. But what has been repeated is just what the poet intends to forget: "Forget her, as a forgotten flower". Semantically this sentence implies a cold and resolute breaking away with the past, but formally it is constantly repeated which suggests a sense of hesitation. This contradiction between the meaning and form constitutes an irony and tension that is most touching and appealing, and is indicative of the poet's inner struggles. One needs not to repeatedly remind himself to forget if it is easy to forget. So the apparent indifference is nothing but further proof of the poet's never-ending love for his daughter. The profound love and grief is well-controlled in the seemingly light and poised sentences, best illustrating the classic ideal of "melancholy but not excessively morbid".

The "descriptive monologue" used in this poem vaguely produces a dramatic and distancing effect. Taking a step further, the dramatic monologue, dialogue, or even dramatic poetry began to emerge. The Crescent Moon poets began to experiment with more objective and impersonal way of expression. Lloyd Haft points out that the influence of Wen's *Dead Water* collection on later poets (especially on Bian Zhilin) was not only in the area of poetic forms, but also in the dramatic tone or

dramatic technique.⁹²⁰ The descriptive, narrative, and dramatised treatment of subjects suggests a further change of poetic face. The reserved and restrained style came to be increasingly depersonalised and obscure, and the classic ideals gradually gave way to the modern consciousness.

4. Conclusion: Health and Dignity as a Classic Ideal

I have in this chapter shown the classic face of the Crescent Moon poetic practice in both form and content. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, two sources of influence may be identified for the classic value orientation in this period. From the global perspective, the New Humanist thought put forward by Irving Babbitt may serve as a theoretical background for the formation of their more conservative and pro-classic cultural stance and literary taste. From the local perspective, on the other hand, their Confucian upbringing and preference for the traditional culture might to a certain extent have predisposed them to the New Humanist thought and Western Classic literary values. The Crescent Moon members, as I have discussed in Chapter Two, have on the whole displayed a conservative mentality and tended to identify themselves with traditional culture and poetics. But unlike the traditionalists, they conducted a conscious selection and critical synthesis between the Chinese and Western poetic elements. This modern conservative spirit was further strengthened in the classic age under the influence of New Humanism.

The Crescent Moon poetics in the Formalisation Movement is just formulated under the combined influence of both Chinese and Western classic aesthetics. They rejected both the romantic elements of sentimentality and self-expansion, and the modernist elements of decadence and obscurity. At the same time, they were fairly conscious of the possible defects of the “pseudo-classic” poetics, such as formalism, didacticism, and dogmatism. They have been trying to escape any extreme mode of thinking so as to achieve the balanced and mediatory ideal, or the “law of measure”.

⁹²⁰ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin, op.cit.*, p. 16.

This explains, I suggest, why their romantic temperament could have coexisted with their classic ideals of reason and restraint. “Health and dignity”, the two principles proposed in their manifesto “Crescent Moon Attitude”, best illustrate this classic ideal:

We will see life as a whole. The fragmented or extreme vision, no matter how beautiful or smart it looks like, is not our vision. We will walk on the main road along the right way. We will work hard for the fundamental improvements. We seek for the moderate, rather than the extreme or bizarre.”⁹²¹

Poetry created under this classic ideal demonstrates two features, namely, regulated forms and restrained expression of emotion. The Crescent Moon poetic practice in this classic period had a far-reaching impact. It led some new poets, who had engaged in the fervent passion of revolution and destruction, to come back to the track of artistic construction, thus initiating a new era for new poetry development. And what’s more, the classic taste of restraint and reservedness resulted in a gradual transition from the subjective expression to the impersonal and objective one. Taking a step further, the classic ideal was to be merged with the modernist consciousness, with restraint developing into obscurity, reservedness into a focus on the inner self, and “objective lyricism” into what T.S. Eliot has termed the “impersonal theory of poetry”.⁹²² I will discuss this new tendency in the next chapter.

⁹²¹ “《新月》的态度” *Xinyue de taidu* (“Crescent Moon Attitude”). *Op.cit.*

⁹²² T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *Selected Essays*. Faber and Faber, 1999 [1919]. p. 18.

Chapter 5 The Modern Consciousness

Introduction

This chapter will be a discussion of the modernist face of the Crescent Moon poetics. The term “modernism” in Western scholarship has been used to “cover a wide variety of movements subversive of the realist or the romantic impulse”.⁹²³ Though the specific characteristics of modernism may vary with the user, many critics agree that it involves a thorough and conscious break with some of the traditional bases of Western culture in general.⁹²⁴ Similar to the case of “romanticism”, there has been no unifying opinions on the periodising, dominant spirit, overall style or mannerism of modernism. But some common devices and ideas could still be found, such as:

the recurrent act of fragmenting unities (unities of character or plot or pictorial space or lyric form), the use of mythic paradigms, the refusal of norms of beauty, the willingness to make radical linguistic experiment...⁹²⁵

All these modernist characteristics, according to Michael Levenson, have been inspired by the resolve to “startle and disturb the public”.⁹²⁶

The rise of Western modernism could be traced to the late 19th and early 20th century when society was rapidly changing under the impact of technological revolution, economic development, and political tension.⁹²⁷ The sensitive young artists, under the press of events, felt ever greater “oscillations of the spirit”, and “a new shrillness of tone” began to manifest itself.⁹²⁸ What used to be fixed, unified, and absolute was now felt fluid, fragmentary, and relative, and the idea of “a Great Divide between past and present, art before and art now” emerged and gained increasing

⁹²³ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, “The Name and Nature of Modernism”, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 23.

⁹²⁴ M. H. Abrams, “Modernism and Postmodernism”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

⁹²⁵ Michael Levenson, “Introduction”, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Second Edition, edited by Michael Levenson, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 3.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁷ Alan Bullock, “The Double Image”, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 69.

⁹²⁸ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 78.

acceptance.⁹²⁹ This feeling of rupture of Western civilisation was further intensified by the catastrophe of the World War I. Disillusioned with the Enlightenment ideas of progress and rationality, artists felt a sense of despair of human history.⁹³⁰ As traditional forms of literature could no longer “represent the harsh and dissonant realities of the postwar world”,⁹³¹ the new forms of art, or the modernist art, under which various new trends such as symbolism, imagism, expressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, and the like were brought into being, flourished and launched a rebellion against the “empty romantic humanitarianism” and “the human content of nineteenth century life”.⁹³² The new modernist art was, according to Leo Ou-fan Lee, anti-traditional, anti-utilitarian, anti-humanist, anti-rationalistic, and anti-historical.⁹³³

Chinese writers in the 1930s experienced a situation similar to that of their Western counterparts. The deepening national crisis brought about by the foreign invasion and internal corruption, the disintegration of the old value system and the devoid of a new one, the disillusionment with the unfinished cultural ideals after the New Culture Movement, and the growing contact and interaction with foreign countries and cultures have all contributed to the “oscillations” of the intellectual spirit. A few Chinese writers became fascinated by Western modernist poetry, although in Chinese modernism there has never been the same degree of repulsion and dismissal of reality, reason, and the “human content” as those in Western modernist works.⁹³⁴

It was against this background that the Crescent Moon writers were given more access to and showed greater interest in Western modernism. Compared with other contemporary Chinese writers, one more reason might have aggravated their mood of instability and anxiety: with the gradual radicalisation of the mainstream literary scene and the ever stronger nationalist mood in society, their individualistic and liberal-oriented cultural pursuit — expressed in literary views as an emphasis on the

⁹²⁹ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

⁹³⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature: A Study (Somewhat Comparative) in Literary History”, *Tamkang Review* 10, Issue 3, 1980, p. 282.

⁹³¹ M. H. Abrams, “Modernism and Postmodernism”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

⁹³² Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, p. 282.

⁹³³ *Ibid.* pp. 282-283.

⁹³⁴ See Leo Ou-fan Lee’s discussion of the differences between Chinese and European modernism and the underlying causes. *Ibid.* pp. 281-286.

autonomy of art and independence of writers, and a rejection of the class nature of literature — was condemned as a vision of retreat and conservatism, no longer being the inspiring mode of thought that used to excite the nation and its people in the early 1920s. Even Hu Shi began to feel a deepened sense of loss as he no longer “appear[ed] so luminous an embodiment of what was modern in intellect and hopeful in spirit”.⁹³⁵ “Subjectivism and individualism”, the two varieties of the modern temper in the May Fourth era, were brought to an end upon entering the 1930s.⁹³⁶ The Crescent Moon members as a whole felt a growing sense of flux and inefficacy, and became painfully aware of their marginalisation and alienation. In their creative writings a stronger modernist impact could be felt.

In this chapter, I will discuss the modern consciousness expressed in the Crescent Moon poetry. The Crescent Moon School as a whole cannot be viewed as a modernist group, for it closed too early to allow its modernism to develop to the full. But one could still find in their works the use of modernist techniques and the expression of modernist sensibilities. Some critics have studied the modernist aspects of the individual poets in the group. Gaylord Leung, for example, mentioned in passing Xu Zhimo’s experiment in symbolist writing.⁹³⁷ Leo Ou-fan Lee briefly discussed a few poems of Shao Xunmei to show his decadent style.⁹³⁸ Lloyd Haft studied Bian Zhilin’s indebtedness to Eliot’s and the Symbolist poetics.⁹³⁹ Aside from Haft’s study, the others lack detailed analysis of poems. While benefitting a lot from these studies, I will show a more comprehensive picture of the modernist turn of the entire group. I choose poems that have not been discussed in previous studies, and I seek to place their modernist patterns of expression in a systematic framework.

The framework is divided into four sections. In “modernist insight”, I will discuss the Crescent Moon poets’ preoccupation with an insight to explore the deeper level of reality as “poet-seers” and their interest in the Symbolist poetics. In “modernist

⁹³⁵ Jerome B. Grieder, *op.cit.*, p. 217.

⁹³⁶ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends I”, *op.cit.*, p. 503.

⁹³⁷ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, “*Menghu ji* 猛虎集 The Tiger”, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-252.

⁹³⁸ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, *op.cit.*, pp. 250-254.

⁹³⁹ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-64.

sensibilities”, I will look into decadence, disillusionment, ennui, and nihilism, the sensibilities that are frequently seen in modernist poetry. The modernist insight and sensibilities have combined to shape a “modern ego”, which will be analysed in the third section. I will draw a comparison between two poems written by Wen Yiduo and Bian Zhilin respectively to show the poet’s changed concept of his own role in the modern era. In the last section I will demonstrate this modern ego’s understanding of tradition and modernity by discussing a long poem created by Sun Dayu. The poem was well-received when it was published in the early 1930s and was viewed as the “earliest prophecy of the modernist tendency of Chinese new poetry”.⁹⁴⁰ But it did not draw attention in Western scholarship. I will discuss the modernist features of the poem and show its affinity with Eliot’s poetics. I argue that the Crescent Moon poets’ affinity with Eliot lies not only in the modernist techniques or themes, but more importantly, in their understanding of the notion of “modern”. The modern conservative spirit of the Crescent Moon School finds its expression in this understanding.

1. The Modernist Insight: A Preoccupation with Depth

1) “Poet-seer” and A Pursuit of Depth

Modernist writers, according to some critics, are entranced with the ideas of depth and sincerity, or the deeper truth underlying the surface reality.⁹⁴¹ Virginia Woolf suggested that around the year 1910 there was a “frightening discontinuity between the traditional past and the shaken present”, accompanying which the modernist

⁹⁴⁰ Ya Xian 痲弦, “未完工的纪念碑” *Wei wangong de jinian bei* (“An Unfinished Monument”). Cited from “前言” *Qianyan* (“Preface”), *Collected Poems and Essays of Sun Dayu*, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

⁹⁴¹ Irving Howe regards the “entrancement with depths” as a feature of the Modernist writers, be it the “depths of the city, or the self, or the underground, or the slums, or the extremes of sensation induced by sex, liquor, drugs, or the shadowed half-people crawling through the interstices or society: lumpens, criminals, hipsters; or the drives at the base of consciousness”. James McFarlane expressed a similar idea in a different way. It is especially considered a feature of the Symbolist poets because they believe themselves to be endowed with the power to see the truth “behind and beyond the objects of the real world”. 1) Irving Howe, “Introduction: The Idea of the Modern”. *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts*, edited by Irving Howe, Horizon Press, New York, 1967. p. 19 and p. 31. 2) James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-82. 3) Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism*, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971. p. 3.

writers felt a growing sense of flux, uncertainty, and powerlessness.⁹⁴² The “classical balances and resolutions” were disturbed, and the modern culture could no longer present itself with a “Goethian serenity and wholeness”.⁹⁴³ This “break-up of the traditional unity and continuity” and the loss of belief in absolute standards and truth had caused modernist writers to move increasingly inward, seeking “sincerity” instead of truth, and faithfulness to the self instead of objective law.⁹⁴⁴ Wen Yiduo’s poem “Confession” (口供 *Kougong*) illustrates such a modernist search for the deeper level of reality:

I am not lying that I am no poet,
Though I love the loyalty and firmness of white rocks,
The green pines and the sea, the setting sun on the back of a crow,
And the wings of bats weaving into the dusk.
You know I love heroes and high mountains,
I love the national flag fluttering in the breeze,
And chrysanthemums from tender yellow to antique bronze.
Do remember that my food is nothing but a pot of bitter tea!

But there is another me, are you afraid or not? —

Whose thoughts like flies are crawling in the rubbish bin.

—“Confession” by Wen Yiduo (1927)⁹⁴⁵

Created in 1927, this poem was born in a time when Wen and his Crescent Moon friends were promoting the classic ideals of Health and Dignity. The form of the poem is well regulated with Wen’s theory of metre. But the spirit clearly deviates from the classic aesthetics in three aspects, and it is in these three aspects that I consider it a work with a modernist note.

⁹⁴² Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 16.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 15-19.

⁹⁴⁵ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “口供” *Kougong* (“Confession”). *Complete works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 126.

Firstly, the poet uses some ugly and startling diction and imagery, such as “thoughts like flies are crawling in the rubbish bin”, to shock and disturb social conventions and create a sense of decay and horror. This aesthetic of decadence and incoherence clearly conflicts with the classic taste of decorum and balance, as Wen later acknowledged that when writing the last sentence he “gave little consideration to decency and dignity”.⁹⁴⁶

Secondly, as a poem of self-examination, the juxtaposition of the beautiful with the ugly and the healthy with the corrupt bespeaks the extremely ambivalent personality of Wen. On the one hand, he possesses all the qualities that are required of an ideal poet in the traditional sense, such as integrity, loyalty, dignity, patriotism, heroism, the classic taste, and the pursuit of spiritual nobility at the cost of the high quality of material life. While on the other hand, he is acutely, if not painfully, aware of his another self, who is desperately craving for a disordered, irrational, and yet liberated life. This other side of Wen is anti-traditional, anti-rational, and even anti-cultural, explicitly presenting a modernist pose.

Thirdly, this ambivalent personality further reflects Wen’s modernist way of perceiving the world. Like the Western modernists, Wen perceives the world as a discordant and heterogeneous existence instead of a “Goethian serenity and wholeness”.⁹⁴⁷ Underlying all the admirable qualities as an upright poet, he feels his inner impulse to disturb the cultural order. He perceptively feels that underlying the surface serenity there is a deeper layer of reality, which might be shocking but much more real. By acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of the self and the world, Wen demonstrates a modernist vision, which is fluid rather than fixed, relative rather than absolute, ambiguous rather than unified and definite in contradistinction to the traditionally “holistic, organic Chinese *Weltanschauung*”.⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴⁶ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “论《悔与回》” *Lun Hui yu hui* (“On ‘Regret and Return’”). *Complete works of Wen Yiduo 2: Literary Criticism and Essays, op.cit.*, p. 165.

⁹⁴⁷ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

⁹⁴⁸ Michelle Yeh discusses the two types of worldview of China and the West, with the former monistic, holistic, and organic, and the latter dualistic and discordant. cf: Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 63-64.

Critics in China tend to agree that the “modernist turn” of the Crescent Moon poetic school started from the early 1930s, especially with the publication of *Poetry Magazine*.⁹⁴⁹ But the Crescent Moon poets have paid attention to Western modernist schools and tendencies back to the early 1920s. In other words, some modernist characteristics have been coexisting with their romantic and classic pursuits. Some of Xu Zhimo’s early poems, for instance, are tinted with a modernist colour with the use of symbolic imagery and the gothic and cursing tone.⁹⁵⁰ He gave a lecture on the Futurist poetry as early as 1923, in which he expressed his admiration for the “revolutionary spirit” of Futurism:

With infinite variety, mysterious and unpredictable, [the Futurist poets] produce the extremely incoherent poems in an extremely natural manner. This is the spirit of the Futurist poets.⁹⁵¹

Moreover, Xu showed interest in T. S. Eliot in 1928 when he created the poem “The West Window” (西窗 *Xichuang*), which he claimed to have imitated Eliot’s poetry.⁹⁵² Many poems in Wen Yiduo’s *Dead Water* collection also bear modernist features such as the theme of death and darkness, the use of startling and mysterious images, the creation of a gothic aura, and a focus on the ugly and the decay.⁹⁵³ As the prologue of the collection, “Confession” well demonstrates Wen’s modernist consciousness alongside his pursuit of the classic ideals.

But it is true that upon entering the 1930s, especially with Xu Zhimo running *Poetry Magazine* and, after his death, Ye Gongchao taking over the editorship of *Crescent Moon* and *Xuewen Monthly*, the modernist tendency in the Crescent Moon poetry became increasingly evident. Two reasons might explain the modernist interest in this period. Firstly, the 1920s literary scene, as Leo Ou-fan Lee observes, was

⁹⁴⁹ cf. 1) Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, *op.cit.* 2) Liu Qun 刘群, *op.cit.* 3) Ye Hong 叶红, *op.cit.*

⁹⁵⁰ See Xu’s 1924 poems such as “毒药” *Duyao* (“Poison”), “白旗” *Baiqi* (“White Flag”), and “婴儿” *Yinger* (“The Baby”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 167-172. Also see Leonid Cherkassky’s interpretation of the Symbolic characteristics of “The Baby”. Leonid Cherkassky, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

⁹⁵¹ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “On the Futurist Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 334.

⁹⁵² Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, “*Menghu ji* 猛虎集 The Tiger”, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

⁹⁵³ Such poems include “Last Day” (末日 *Mori*), “Deserted Village” (荒村 *Huangcun*), “Night Song” (夜歌 *Yege*), “Perhaps” (也许 *Yexu*), “What is the dream?” (什么梦? *Shenme meng*), etc. cf. *Complete works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*

dominated by the impact of Western romanticism, and it was not until the 1930s that the influence of Western modernist poets and critics came to be felt among a small coterie of Chinese writers.⁹⁵⁴ The Crescent Moon poets, especially the younger generation, were given more access to Western modernism in this context. Organised by Ye Gongchao, these young poets, mostly Ye's students, translated and introduced Western modernist poets and poetry in the Crescent Moon journals. Bian Zhilin translated 10 poems from Baudelaire, one from Mallarmé, an essay from T. S. Eliot, and wrote an essay on "Verlaine and Symbolism". Lloyd Haft has convincingly shown how Bian benefitted from this translation practice and his debts to Western symbolism and Eliot's poetics.⁹⁵⁵ Liang Zhen 梁镇, another student of Ye Gongchao, translated one poem from Henri de Régnier (1864-1936), and another from Verlaine, both published in *Crescent Moon*. Shao Xunmei confirmed his modernist idols including Algernon Swinburne (1837-1909), Baudelaire, and Verlaine, and Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses Shao's indebtedness to the Western decadent tradition.⁹⁵⁶ Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱 (1903-1983), the "first serious Chinese student of French Symbolism",⁹⁵⁷ offered his views on new poetry in *Poetry Magazine*. Although in the essay Liang refrained from mentioning too much symbolist poetics, he did show his admiration for the French Symbolist poets such as Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891).⁹⁵⁸ With these translation and introduction articles published, some critic even regards *Poetry Magazine* as "the pioneer of Chinese Symbolist Poetic School".⁹⁵⁹

But another reason, perhaps a more profound one, for this modernist turn lies in the change of times and situation and its impact on the minds of the poets. Chinese literature came to be increasingly enmeshed with politics and commercial interests

⁹⁵⁴ 1) Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 278-279. 2) Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature", *op.cit.*, p. 281.

⁹⁵⁵ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, pp. 54-64.

⁹⁵⁶ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, *op.cit.*, pp. 247-254.

⁹⁵⁷ Harry Allan Kaplan, *The Symbolist Movement in Modern Chinese Poetry*. Doctoral dissertation of Harvard University, 1983, p. 3.

⁹⁵⁸ Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱, "论诗" *Lun shi* ("On Poetry"). 《诗刊》 *Shikan* (*Poetry Magazine*), Issue 2, Poetry Society (诗社 *Shishe*), 1931.4.20.

⁹⁵⁹ Zhou Cezong 周策纵. Cited from Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "Preface", *Modernist Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

upon entering the 1930s. But the Crescent Moon poets, as I mentioned earlier, went against this trend and increasingly withdrew from reality, retreating into their palace of art. The growing sense of anxiety, inefficacy, and alienation had caused them to lose their interest in the external world, turning to the salvation of art, of the inner world, and of the purely aesthetic value. This is not merely a political and cultural choice, but is indicative of a change in their mentality. A similar trend might be found in Western modernist culture, described by Irving Howe as “the middle stages” of the development of modernism, where:

[T]he self begins to recoil from externality and devotes itself, almost as if it were the world's body, to a minute examination of its own inner dynamics: freedom, compulsion, caprice.⁹⁶⁰

The differentiation between the “externality” and the “self” leads to an awareness of the heterogeneity and discordance of the modern world, where the outside and the inside, surface layer and deep layer, reality and idea are divided. Seen in this light, the Crescent Moon poets are approaching Western symbolist poetics in viewing themselves as a kind of “poet-seer”, “endowed with the power to see behind and beyond the objects of the real world to the essences concealed in the ideal world”.⁹⁶¹ Michelle Yeh would associate the Symbolist revolution in poetic sensibility with the theories of the unconscious in contemporary philosophy and psychology, because “they share underlying assumptions about reality and meaning”.⁹⁶² It is this self-identity as a “poet-seer” and the preoccupation with “depth” and the “unconscious” — with the deeper truth underlying the surface reality — that drives Wen Yiduo to delve into the deeper side of himself in “Confession”, the self that inhabits the unconscious level and disturbs and challenges the conventional requirements of an ideal poet.

⁹⁶⁰ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁶¹ Charles Chadwick, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁹⁶² Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 60-62.

2) The Experimentation with Symbolist Techniques

The preoccupation with depth and the “attempt to penetrate beyond reality to a world of ideas”⁹⁶³ is much akin to Symbolist poetics, which, according to Michelle Yeh, reflects the poet’s effort, when “alienated from the modern world”, to “validate his existence by his unique insight into reality masked by habitual forms of thought and articulation”.⁹⁶⁴ The possible meanings of the term “Symbolist” are notoriously broad,⁹⁶⁵ and, although some Crescent Moon poets began to experiment with the symbolist techniques in the early 1930s, the group as a whole is not regarded as a symbolist school.⁹⁶⁶ Compared with the more “serious” symbolist poets in China, such as Li Jinfa 李金发 (1900-1976), Wang Duqing 王独清 (1898-1940),⁹⁶⁷ or even the later Bian Zhilin,⁹⁶⁸ the Crescent Moon poems are more lyrical and clearer in meaning. My discussion of their symbolist features would focus on two aspects, namely, their use of symbol and their attempt to create an autonomous world non-referential to reality.

2.1) The Use of Symbol

Michelle Yeh employs a metaphor to elaborate on the Symbolist view of the poet as the perceiver and nature as the perceived:

The perceived world does not present the complete picture; its true meaning lies beneath the surface, waiting to be discovered by and accessible only to the keenly perceptive...

⁹⁶³ Charles Chadwick, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁹⁶⁴ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁹⁶⁵ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁹⁶⁶ According to Harry Allan Kaplan, there are three phases of symbolist rage in the Republican China. The first phase was initiated by Li Jinfa 李金发, the second by three of the latter Creation Society poets (Wang Duqing 王独清, Mu Mutian 穆木天, and Feng Naichao 冯乃超), and the third by the journal *Xiandai* (*Les Contemporains*) under the leadership of Dai Wangshu 戴望舒. Harry Allan Kaplan, *op.cit.*, pp. iii-iv.

⁹⁶⁷ See the discussion of these Chinese Symbolist poets, including Li Jinfa, Wang Duqing, and Dai Wangshu, and their debts to French Symbolism in Vincent Yang, “From French Symbolism to Chinese Symbolism: A Literary Influence”, *Tamkang Review* 17, Issue 3, 1987.

⁹⁶⁸ Although Bian Zhilin is not usually regarded as a symbolist poet because he explicitly disclaimed membership in any particular “school” of prewar Chinese poetry, his affinity with Western symbolist poetry is evident. Lloyd Haft considers Bian as “more legitimately Symbolist” than Li Jinfa. Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 61

If nature is a temple, the poet is its high priest who alone holds the key to the esoteric icons and the enigmatic oracles found there. In the final analysis, the Symbolist temple of nature is a *paradis artificielle*.⁹⁶⁹

The two passages reveal two characteristics of the symbolist worldview. Firstly, it assumes the existence of a deeper and “realer” level of reality, which is accessible only to the “keenly perceptive”, or the poets. Secondly, the poet accesses this deeper truth with a “key”, which, I suggest, is what “symbol” does. Nature is “artificial” because it is to be perceived and then re-created and re-presented through the subjective mind of the poet. The symbol, or the symbolic imagery, is the key of “encoding and decoding” this artificial nature.

In discussing literature, the term “symbol” is applied to “a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself”.⁹⁷⁰ Symbol differentiates itself from simile, metaphor or allegory in that it lacks the tenor, or the “paired subject”, in simile and metaphor, and it lacks an “obvious double order of correlated references, one literal and the second allegorical, in which the allegorical... reference of the [image] is made determinate by its role within the literal narrative”.⁹⁷¹ In simile, metaphor, and allegory, there is always a pair of subjects (an image and a concept), and the concept is always bounded in the image, thus the image having a relatively specific and determinate reference. On the other hand, symbol only presents the image alone, and therefore it only suggests “a direction or a broad area of significance”. Symbol “remains indefinite, but richly — even infinitely — suggestive in its significance”.⁹⁷²

In “Two Moons” (两个月亮 *Liangge yueliang*), I suggest, Xu Zhimo creates a mysterious “artificial nature” by the use of symbol:

Two moons I can see:

With the same appearance, but different characters.

⁹⁶⁹ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁹⁷⁰ M. H. Abrams, “Symbol”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 206-207.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.* pp. 206-208.

One moon is in the sky right at the moment,
Wearing a gown of peacock feathers;
She is generous in offering her kindness,
Scattering her gold and silver all over the earth.
She does not miss out the glazed tiles of the Imperial Palace,
Leaving her natural elegance across the three lakes.
She leaps out of the cloud, over to the tree,
Hiding herself into the verdant creeping vine.
So delicately beautiful she is,
That even the fish under the water are enchanted!
Yet she has but one flaw,
That she tends to exhaust herself into the small;
Sometimes only twinkling stars are visible,
Without her fascinating round face in the sky.
Although she returns as usual in due course,
What a torture it is in missing her!

And another moon you cannot see,
Although no need to mention her gorgeous beauty!
She also has her dimpled smile,
And the ethereal charm while dancing;
She is no less generous than others,
What a pity that you cannot see through my garden!
Best of all is her boundless magic power,
That would always elevate the waves of my soul:
I love the surge of the silver billows,
From which rises silver music;
Even the white foams like ponytails,
Are more polished and exquisite than jewels.

A perfect bright moon,

Who never wanes!
Whenever I close my eyes,
She ascends into the sky in tender grace.

—“Two Moons” by Xu Zhimo (1931)⁹⁷³

The poet inscribes in the end of the poem, “Late night, 2nd of April. Full moon”. Apparently he was inspired by the full round moon overhead in an April night, and therefore the first moon in the poem, the one “in the sky right at the moment”, refers to the moon in the natural world. The second moon, on the other hand, is symbolic. Existing only in the private “garden” of the poet, the second moon never wanes and possesses a magic power that is able to uplift the soul and spirit of the poet. This moon is suggestive, with no determinate concept bounded in it. It might represent many things, such as love, beauty, hope, faith, art, etc., all the archetypal, transcendental ideals that might inspire the poet. In other words, it is a symbol of the world of ideas.

But what charges the poem with a strong sense of opacity and ambiguity, I suggest, is the symbolic power of the first moon. A closer examination of the poem and the context in which it is created might reveal that the first moon, the moon in nature, is not completely “natural”. In “Preface to ‘The Ferocious Tiger’”, an important essay in which Xu sums up his works throughout his life (it was written three months before his death), the poet expresses his depressive mood by alluding to the poem:

My life over the last few years has been really boring and I have almost dried up. The output of my poetry, as a result, has also been shrinking and “exhausting into the small” (向瘦小里耗 *Xiang shouxiao li hao*).⁹⁷⁴

The quotation mark implies that the poet was deliberately associating his current mood and situation with “Two Moons”, the poem he wrote a few months ago, in which he describes the first moon as “she tends to exhaust herself into the small”. Seen in this light, the first moon in the nature, the moon that is beautiful, lively,

⁹⁷³ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “两个月亮” *Liangge yueliang* (“Two Moons”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 403-404.

⁹⁷⁴ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “Preface to *The Ferocious Tiger*”, *op.cit.*, p. 394.

generous, and yet tends to wane and “exhaust herself”, might also be a symbolic image rather than a purely natural description. While creating the image, the poet was thinking of his own state of mind and life, which is sometimes brimming with energy, faith, and hope, and sometimes, especially under the current pressure of the gloomy reality, inclined to escape, retreat, and withdraw. The two moons in the poem, therefore, might both be “*paradis artificielle*” re-created by the poet, with one referring to the poet’s state of mind in the real world, and the other to that in the world of the ideal. Like the two selves of Wen Yiduo reflected in “Confession”, the two moons represent the two selves of Xu Zhimo, with one inspiring and ideal, and the other flawed but more real. But unlike Wen’s simple juxtaposition of the two separate egos, Xu establishes a relationship between them, that they share “the same appearance”, but display different temperaments. In contradistinction to the struggling and conflicting tone in “Confession”, “Two Moons” demonstrates a sense of union, harmony, and mutual complementation.

In this poem, image is not used to achieve a restrained way of expression as I have discussed in the last chapter. Rather, the poet seeks to explore and reveal the essences concealed in the ideal world beneath the surface reality in a suggestive, deliberately ambiguous way. He does not explain what the “two moons” stand for, but only creates an elusive and mysterious atmosphere in the mind of the reader, leaving the poem open to various ways of interpretation. It is this infinite suggestiveness that differentiates “Two Moons”, which to my mind is a symbolist poem, from the traditional works that employ metaphorical images. Chadwick defines “Symbolism” as:

the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing them directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by re-creating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.⁹⁷⁵

Zhu Ziqing defines the “French Symbolist technique” in a similar way when commenting on the poems of Li Jinfa:

⁹⁷⁵ Charles Chadwick, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3. Underlined by myself.

He [Li] prefers to use metaphor...but does not use metaphor in a clear and definitive way...What he intends to express is not meaning, but feeling or emotion. It seems like that he presents a string of beads with different colours and shapes, but hides the string away so that you have to sort them out by yourself. This is the typical technique of French Symbolist poets.⁹⁷⁶

Zhu's metaphor of "presenting a string of beads with the string hiding away" is a vivid representation of Chadwick's "unexplained symbols". Both two critics are emphasising the suggestiveness and indirectness of the symbolist image. As compared with the image used in metaphor or comparison, symbols are more implicit, more difficult because the "string" that connects tenor and vehicle is missing. The symbol is in itself suggestive and is not to be explained by the poet, as Henri de Régnier, the disciple of Mallarmé, points out:

because the symbol thus frequently stands alone, with the reader being given little or no indication as to what is being symbolised, Symbolist poetry inevitably has a certain built-in obscurity.⁹⁷⁷

Obscurity is viewed by Shao Xunmei as a defining feature of poetry because "when a poem becomes clear and evident, it enters the realm of prose essay".⁹⁷⁸ Shao divides poetry into two categories, "the distinct" (明显的 *mingxian de*) and "the indistinct" (曲折的 *quzhe de*), and he further points out:

Poems that express emotions, depict sceneries, narrate stories, and explain an argument fall to the category of "explanatory poems" (说明的诗 *shuoming de shi*). They use "metaphor" at most. As long as the words and diction turn "symbolic", the poem becomes "indistinct".⁹⁷⁹

Shao's argument, I suggest, captures not only the basic nature of the Symbolist poetics, but also one of the basic differences between traditional and modernist poetry. Modernist poets are preoccupied with the idea of uncertainty, ambiguity, and indistinctness.⁹⁸⁰ They do not accept the direct treatment of objects, be it expressions of emotion, or reasoning, or description, or even the interpretation of the

⁹⁷⁶ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

⁹⁷⁷ Henri de Régnier, cited from Charles Chadwick, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁸ Shao Xunmei 邵洵美, "《诗二十五首》自序" *Shi ershiwu shou zixu* ("Preface to *Twenty-five Poems*"). 《洵美文存》 *Xunmei wencun* (*Collected Works of Xunmei*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Liaoning Education Press, 2006. p. 370.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁰ James McFarlane, "The Mind of Modernism", *op.cit.*, pp. 81-86.

metaphorical image. One might find the difference between the symbolic image and the metaphorical image when comparing “Two Moons” with, for example, “Swan Goose” (雁子 *Yanzi*) or “Walking on the Rail Tracks” (铁路行 *Tielu xing*) I have discussed in the previous chapter. While the latter two poems also employ images (“swan goose” and “rail tracks” respectively) to carry the weight of the subjective emotion, both of them end with a stanza of interpreting the images. The images are therefore not “standing alone” but explained, and the meaning is determinate, unambiguous, and easy to understand. It is not the case in “Two Moons”. Although the poet is also associating his thought and emotion with an external image, he has left the image alone and “unexplained”. The meaning of the image, therefore, is opaque, mysterious, open to many possibilities. It’s even uncertain whether the “first moon” is realistic or symbolic. The poem is more suggestive, more obscure, and therefore, more symbolist.

2.2) The Self-sufficiency of Poetry⁹⁸¹

In the Crescent Moon poetics, I suggest, there is an obvious continuity and inheritance between the classic ideals of restraint and reservedness and the modernist taste for obscurity and indistinctness. Both have stemmed from a revolt against the plain and straightforward romantic way of expression, and both prefer the use of imagery, or the “objective correlative” in Eliot’s term,⁹⁸² to convey their ideas in an indirect manner. But unlike the classic values of reason and restraint, what the Crescent Moon poets pursued in the “modernist age” after the 1930s is the exploration of depth, an insight into a deeper level of experience underlying the surface reality. Feeling alienated from the modern world and losing their interest in externality, they devoted themselves to the minute examination of the deeper and

⁹⁸¹ Irving Howe argues that “a central direction in Modernist literature is toward the self-sufficiency of the work”, and this is especially the case in that of symbolist poetry. Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

⁹⁸² T. S. Eliot makes the point that “the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion.” Many Crescent Moon writers are familiar with this statement. T. S. Eliot, “Hamlet”, *Selected Essays*. Faber and Faber, 1999. p. 145.

inner world — the unconscious, the ideal, or the dreams. They began to experiment with the symbolist poetry that is totally autonomous with a minimum of references to the external world.⁹⁸³ The following poem by Lin Huiyin demonstrates such an effort:

Daytime dream
Covered by a veil,
Nowhere to trace the beginning of the mood
Which has not yet bloomed;
As soft and supple as a
Milky white stem, it is entangled
Under the gauze curtain; the silver light
Glimmering occasionally, comes and goes at intervals;
Winding up like a coil of silk,
Half of it has been lost outside the dream.

Fancy that flowers start to bloom, bloom;
Sporadically they appear and gather,
Leisurely stretching out
One flower, with hundreds and thousands of petals!
They inspire the ineffable
Momentary mood,
On the peak of grandeur and solemnity —
There is a star in the sky...
 Hazy violet, dark red,
And wild azure blue beyond the sky,
A wide array of colours blend, drift, overflow, and soar into the air...
Deepening,

⁹⁸³ This is, according to Irving Howe, one of the ultimate aims of Symbolists. Irving Howe, "Introduction", *op.cit.*, p. 29.

And condensing —
Quietly fragrant,
Leaving only the tender and soft silence.

Daytime dream
Covered by a veil,
The untraceable mood
Has finally bloomed;
A profound fragrance permeates through the air,
Surrounded by a sense of meditating peace,
Now and then it sways like a floating gossamer,
In the twinkling of an eye its shadow passes by;
Sorrow or not,
All turns to the void,
A flash of grace.

—“Daytime Dream” by Lin Huiyin (1936)⁹⁸⁴

T. S. Eliot divides human experience into two kinds: “emotions and feelings”.⁹⁸⁵ And he further argues that “great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely”.⁹⁸⁶ While Eliot did not distinguish the two categories of experience in detail, Charles Altieri discusses this point in his study on the aesthetics of the affects.⁹⁸⁷ According to Altieri, “feelings” are:

elemental affective states characterized by an imaginative engagement in the immediate processes of sensation.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁴ Lin Huiyin 林徽因, “昼梦” *Zhoumeng* (“Daytime Dream”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 247-248.

⁹⁸⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁷ Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects*, Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 272.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 2.

And “emotions” are:

affects involving the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification.⁹⁸⁹

Based on this definition, Clare Gerlach further distinguishes the two concepts as “emotions” having more “purposeful design (they construct attitudes, establish causes, situate agents, and generate action)”, whereas “feelings” being more “experiential (they are elemental, immediate, and engage sensations)”.⁹⁹⁰ Since Eliot made this distinction when he was elaborating on his “Impersonal theory of poetry”, I think he preferred using feelings to emotions because the former less refers to the subjective attitude, action, or identification, and therefore, is less “personalised”. As Altieri observes, “[b]ecause of that closeness to sensation, he [Eliot] thought feelings afforded intensities and attachments much less bound than emotions to the illusory project of constructing individual egos”.⁹⁹¹ Feelings are more independent of the personality, so they are more suggestive and indirect in expression.

“Daytime Dream” is a poem composed purely out of feelings. The poet uses the “objective correlative” of the feelings to recreate in the reader’s mind an experience of a daytime dream, which is vague, fragmentary, flowing, and illogical. The three stanzas of the poem describe the three stages of the dream. The first stanza depicts the arrival of the dream, or the process that the poet enters the dream. She is not fully prepared for the mood of the dream, so “the flower of the mood” has not yet bloomed. The images in this stanza, the soft white stem under the gauze curtain, the silver light that flickers occasionally, and a coil of silk lost outside the dream, all suggest a sense of fragility, uncertainty, and a mixed sensation of dream and reality.

The second stanza witnesses the deepening of the dream. Beginning with “fancy that” (竟 *Jing*), the poet expresses her feelings of surprise and delight at the sight of the scene in the dream. The flower of the mood finally blooms, and the feelings are so

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁰ Clare Louis Gerlach, *Sensory Imagery and Aesthetic Affect in the Poetry of Keats, Hopkins, and Eliot*, Doctoral dissertation of University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2009, p. 79

⁹⁹¹ Charles Altieri, *op.cit.*, p. 272.

subtly complicated that the poet has to employ a set of fragmentary images to convey her “ineffable momentary mood”: one flower stretching out hundreds and thousands of petals, a star turning from the colour of hazy violet to dark red, different colours blend, drift, overflow, and soar into the air. With single image being multiplied, light colour turning dark and bright, and static image becoming dynamic, the feelings of the poet are intensified, and the reader is led deeper and deeper into the world of the dream. In the end of the stanza, the dream gradually returns to a state of serenity, foreshadowing the end of the dream.

The third stanza begins with a similar structure of the first one, but the flower of the mood has bloomed, indicating the passage of time. This stanza shows the process of the awakening, with everything still being surrounded in a misty and mysterious aura. The mood floats like a gossamer, flimsy, fragile, unclear, and elusive. The poet wipes away the last trace of “emotion” in the end of the poem by stating that any emotions, be it sorrow or delight, has all turned into “the void”, leaving only “a flash of grace” — the poet’s subtle and rich impression about the dream. The reader finds no attitude, action, or identification of the poet in the poem, only experiencing a dream with rich feelings with her.

“Daytime Dream” is a symbolist poem, not only in that the images in the poem are suggestive and indefinite in meanings, but also in that the poet creates an autonomous world of dreams entirely unrelated and non-referential to the world of reality. The entire poem is a re-presentation of a dream, without containing any meaning or referring to any subject matter of the conventional world. It is “purer” and thus closer to the Symbolist aesthetic vision than “Two Moons” is. In “Two Moons”, Xu Zhimo is trying to delve into a world where the reality and the ideal form a contrast so that the poet’s emotions, such as regret or loss or redemption or earnest belief, are revealed. But what Lin Huiyin enters is a dream of pure feelings and impressions, without carrying the weight of meaning. Instead of conveying her subjective thought or emotion, the poet is simply re-constructing her dream, and re-experiencing the sudden illumination brought about by the dream. Marcel Raymon makes a point of the Symbolist vision which is in my view applicable to this poem:

The soul engages in a kind of game, but aspires to an activity that is more elevated than any game — aspires to recreate its lost happiness by means of the *word*. And the function of these images, whose elements are borrowed from the dust of sensation, is not to describe external objects, but to prolong or revive the original ecstasy. “In this state of illusion,” says Novalis, “it is less the subject who perceives the object than conversely, the objects which come to perceive themselves in the subject”... Words are no longer signs; they participate in the objects, in the psychic realities they evoke.⁹⁹²

It is less, therefore, that the poet experiences a daytime dream than that the dream perceives or manifests itself through the mind of the poet. The poet here, as Irving Howe says, “does not transmit as much as [she] engages in a revelation”.⁹⁹³ The poet is not describing her dream but is re-entering and feeling her dream. This is not only a matter of artistic vision but also of the *Weltanschauung* of the poet influenced by the Symbolist poetics. The ultimate aim of Symbolism is to “disintegrate the traditional duality between the world and its representation”, as Irving Howe acutely observes:

It [Symbolism] finds intolerable the commonly accepted distance between subject and act of representation; it wishes to destroy the very program of representation, either as objective *mimesis* or subjective expression... Passionately monistic, symbolism wishes finally that the symbol cease being symbolic and that it become an act or object without “reference,” sufficient in its own right.⁹⁹⁴

Image does not carry the meaning; it is the meaning itself. It is the creation of the poem, rather than the meaning it contains, that communicates and connects the poet with the world. In “Daytime Dream”, therefore, the poet re-experiences her dream as she creates the poem, so her writing style follows the logic of the dream: fragmentary, incoherent, and highly personal. Inversion and omission of words are frequently used to reinforce a sense of incoherence and disconnectedness. The imagery is intuitive, contingent, impressionistic, and sometimes against the conventional cognitive experience. Enjambment sentences keep the feelings, or the mood, running on freely and smoothly so as to produce an effect similar to that of the stream-of-consciousness technique. These linguistic devices help the poet catch the most

⁹⁹² Marcel Raymond. Cited from Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁹⁹³ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 27-28.

immediate, “moment-to-moment workings of the mind”,⁹⁹⁵ so as to restore the dream as “real” as possible. The more fragmentary the language and the more flowing the consciousness is, the closer and realer the poem is able to re-present the dream. “In modernist literature”, again Irving Howe says:

there is a turn from truth to sincerity, from the search for objective law to a desire for authentic response...Sincerity of feeling and exact faithfulness of language — which often means a language of fragments, violence, and exasperation — becomes a ruling passion.⁹⁹⁶

The poet, using language faithful to her feelings and imagery sincere to her flowing consciousness, creates an “autotelic realm of experience”, with “a minimum of references back or correspondence to the external world”,⁹⁹⁷ thus delving into a world of deeper reality removed from the actualities of the conventional life and approaching the state of the Symbolist pure poetry.

I have in this section shown a newly developed insight of the Crescent Moon poets under the impact of the complexity and instability of the modern world. Viewing the world as an increasingly heterogeneous and sophisticated existence, the poets felt a sense of alienation, which led to a separation between the externality and the self, the surface layer and the deeper layer, the reality and the ideal. During this process, the Crescent Moon poets have been increasingly moving inwards, retreating to the deeper, ideal world devoid of the materialistic and utilitarian views of modern Chinese society. In this sense, they share with Western Symbolist poetics in an attempt to create an autonomous artistic realm with a minimum reference to the external reality. This preoccupation with depth and the inside, and the pursuit of faithfulness to the self have been a result of the marginalised position of the Crescent Moon poets in the increasingly politicised and commercialised literary scene. Another result of this marginalisation and alienation is, as I shall discuss in the next

⁹⁹⁵ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁹⁹⁶ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 29.

section, a sense of disillusionment, powerlessness, decadence, and even nihilism — the typical sensibilities of modernist literature.

2. Modernist Sensibilities: Decadence, Disillusionment, and Nihilism

1) Shao Xunmei and the Decadent Style

The term “decadence”, according to David Der-wei Wang, contains at least two dimensions of meanings. The first is related to its pejorative connotations, referring to “the decay and disintegration of an overripe civilization, together with artificial and even morbid expression of its decay and disintegration”.⁹⁹⁸ This interpretation could be traced back to its original religious meanings, which, according to Matei Calinescu, is closely linked with “the view of time and history brought about by the Judeo-Christian tradition”, in which the progression of time is considered “linear and irreversible”, and leads eventually to an end of history, or the Last Day.⁹⁹⁹ The idea of decadence is an awareness of the continuous and irreversible decline and corruption of everything with the ruthless passage of time, and therefore, an opposition to the progressive worldview. In this Christian eschatological vision, the idea of decadence “is felt, with an intensity unknown before, as a unique crisis”.¹⁰⁰⁰

The Western concepts of time and history were introduced to China in the Late Qing period, constituting what Leo Ou-fan Lee terms “a new mode of historical consciousness”.¹⁰⁰¹ The traditional cyclical view of time and “the Confucian notions of dynastic cycle” were replaced by a “unilinear thinking about time and history”¹⁰⁰² and a concomitant “mystical faith in progress”.¹⁰⁰³ Lee considers this change in Chinese concept of time to be the “greatest impact of Western Enlightenment idea on

⁹⁹⁸ David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 25.

⁹⁹⁹ Matei Calinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁰¹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity”. *op.cit.*, p. 110.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰³ James Reeve Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*. Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1983. p. 15.

the Chinese intellectual scene”.¹⁰⁰⁴ As a result, the ideas of progress and development and the opposite notion of decadence, the two poles of vision brought about by the unilinear concept of time, both arrived in China. But the idea of decadence, while cognizant of a few exceptions, had always been suppressed as “the opposite side of the mainstream May Fourth spirit” in the twenties and thirties China.¹⁰⁰⁵

On the other hand, David Der-wei Wang argues that “decadent” also takes on another dimension, that of “de-cadence”, which means:

a falling away of the established order, a displacement of that which has been taken for granted, and an uncanny “falling together” of conceptual and formal elements that would not have come together at a time of high culture.¹⁰⁰⁶

Decadence in this sense connotes “the abnormalization of the normal”,¹⁰⁰⁷ which could be seen as what Calinescu has noted the cultural modernity’s “outright rejection of bourgeois modernity”.¹⁰⁰⁸ So “decadence” in Western modernism becomes “the hidden presupposition of every discourse on behalf of modernity”.¹⁰⁰⁹

Although “the mainstream of modern Chinese literature remains on a social-realistic plane dominated by an overall ‘obsession with China’”,¹⁰¹⁰ a small number of Chinese poets fascinated by Western modernist poetry began to experiment with the decadent style as their “outright rejection” of this socio-political obsession. Some Crescent Moon poets, feeling increasingly alienated in the radicalised literary scene in the 1930s, came to feel a sense of “crisis” with an intensity unknown before. The following poem of Shao Xunmei displays the spirit of decadence on both dimensions of meanings stated above:

¹⁰⁰⁴ Li Oufan 李欧梵 [Leo Ou-fan Lee], “漫谈中国现代文学中的‘颓废’” *Mantan Zhongguo xiandai wenxue zhong de tuifei* (“Some Casual Thoughts on the Idea of ‘Decadence’ in Modern Chinese Literature”). Li Oufan 李欧梵, 《现代性的追求》 *Xiandaixing de zhuiqiu (The Quest for Modernity)*. People’s Literature Publishing House, 2010. p. 142.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid. Lee also explains the reason for this mentality in Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, pp. 285-286.

¹⁰⁰⁶ David Der-wei Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Matei Calinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁰⁹ David Der-wei Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁰¹⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, p. 287.

Ah, May of desire is burning again,
The virgin's kiss has given birth to the sin;
The sweet tears have been seducing me
To press my quivering lips to her cleavage.

Here life is as endless as death,
Like the exciting panic in the wedding night;
If she is not a white rose,
She must be redder than blood.

Ah, this fire-like, flesh-like
Bright darkness and laughing weep,
Is the soul of the soul of my love;
And the foe of the foe of my resentment.

The gate of Heaven is open,
And God frightens me that I am not the one elected.
I have gained comfort in Hell,
And have dreamed of the awakening in the short night.

—“May” by Shao Xunmei (1926)¹⁰¹¹

As a “flamboyant literary dandy”,¹⁰¹² Shao Xunmei was a representative poet of decadentism and aestheticism both in literary style and personality. Seldom does Shao focus his writings on the subject matters of serious social meanings, and his poems are mainly about his experiences and impressions of the leisurely pursuits or intimate love affairs. He is adept at portraying those love or erotic desire and feelings with sensuous details in daring and dazzling words, and he does not conceal his

¹⁰¹¹ Shao Xunmei 邵洵美, “五月” *Wuyue* (“May”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-206.

¹⁰¹² Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, *op.cit.*, p. 242.

praise and longing for the sensuous enjoyment and leisurely lifestyle. He tries to explore the sensory limits of human beings: sex, death, darkness, beauty in the ugly and corrupted, or the extreme ecstasy in horror or decay. As a typical poem of Shao, “May” depicts the poet’s subtle and intense feelings in an erotic relationship. Directly treating the erotic scene, the poet employs graphic images and daring words to portray the feelings of perplexity and ambivalence. Such a work, shocking enough to a culture cultivated in the Confucian tradition, no doubt represents “a falling away of the established order, a displacement of that which has been taken for granted”.¹⁰¹³ I think this is exactly the effect Shao attempts to achieve, as Zhang Kebiao 章克标 (1900-2007), a friend and colleague of Shao, recalls:

The few friends of us have all been some sort of “neurotic”, revelling in Aestheticism, one of the most fashionable artistic and literary schools at that time. We loved the style of the absurd and grotesque, of the self-conflicting, defying the ordinary human conventions, and seeking to shock and startle the public.¹⁰¹⁴

“May” perfectly demonstrates the few features mentioned by Zhang: the style of the absurd and the diction of the self-conflicting, defying the ordinary human conventions, and is shocking and startling to society. Not only does the erotic subject challenge social conventions, but the feelings it portrays are beyond the understanding of ordinary people. Rather than the common feelings of happiness or suffering, the poet depicts his complicated emotion as one of extreme paradox. The sexual experience is described as a life that is “as endless as death” — some sort of a “deathly life”, representing an irrational and even unreal level of experience. The poet is able to reach beyond the realm of ordinary experience to another world of numerous paradoxes, where happiness and panic, rose (a symbol of love) and blood (a symbol of killing or death), light and darkness, laughter and weep, love and resentment, transience and permanence, dream and awakening are coexisting. These incongruous combinations, though incomprehensible in the daily cognitive world, are

¹⁰¹³ David Der-wei Wang, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁰¹⁴ Zhang Kebiao 章克标, “回忆邵洵美” *Huiyi Shao Xunmei* (“Reminiscence of Shao Xunmei”). Cited from Li Oufan 李欧梵 [Leo Ou-fan Lee], “Some Casual Thoughts on the Idea of ‘Decadence’ in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

“forming new wholes”¹⁰¹⁵ due to the poetic sensibility of the poet, and is echoing what Zhang Kebiao has described as “a language that pulls in the opposites and dissolves the contradictions”.¹⁰¹⁶ Linking the two contradictory ideas or feelings together and even to fuse them to “the point of indistinguishability”¹⁰¹⁷ is in effect a core feature of the modernist poetics. In opposition to the traditional concept that poetry is “the *best* words in the best order”,¹⁰¹⁸ modernist poetics emphasises wit, tension, conflict, discontinuity, or as James McFarlane observes, it becomes “an ‘intolerable wrestle with words and meanings’, a hauling and straining, a racking of the mind’s powers of comprehension”.¹⁰¹⁹

The element of decadence in this poem, however, lies not only in the erotic subject or the praise of a purely aesthetic and hedonistic life which challenges “the prevalent temper of socio-political commitment”.¹⁰²⁰ Nor is it because the poet deliberately creates numerous paradoxes and ambiguities to shock the public and defy the convention. It lies also in a sense of crisis — the sense that the world is moving to an end immediately — and the choice the poet makes under this pressure. In this sense the poem fits the original religious understanding of decadence as well. In the Christian eschatological worldview, as Calinescu says, time is running short and ends in the Last Judgement, after which:

the elect will enjoy the eternal felicity for which Man was created, while the sinful will forever suffer the tortures of hell. The approach of the Day of Doom is announced by the unmistakable sign of profound decay — untold corruption...Decadence thus becomes the anguishing prelude to the end of the world. The deeper the decadence, the closer the Last Judgment.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁵ This is the feature of the “metaphysical poets” in Eliot’s opinion, that poets should be able to amalgamate disparate experience, allowing these experiences to form new wholes. McFarlane believes that Eliot’s idea has defined the role of the poet in the modern age. 1) T. S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets”, *Selected Essays*. Faber and Faber, 1999 [1921]. p. 287. 2) James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁰¹⁶ Cited from Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁰¹⁷ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

¹⁰¹⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, second edition. London: John Murray, 1836. p. 45.

¹⁰¹⁹ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

¹⁰²⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, p. 287.

¹⁰²¹ Matei Calinescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-153.

Decadence therefore presages the end of the progression of time, and implies a reaction against the idea of progress. It is highly possible that Shao Xunmei, educated in a missionary school and started writing new poetry after “reading many foreign poems in the missionary school”,¹⁰²² was familiar with this Christian vision. Seen in this light, the last stanza of the poem is nothing but an allegory of the approaching of the Last Day. “The gate of Heaven is open” suggests the imminence of the Final Judgement, with which the world, time, and everything progressive will be brought to an end. The poet revels in erotic decay, the “sin” in his mind, and enjoys a temporary clearer vision with which he is able to see the paradoxical existence beyond the actuality of the conventional world. It seems that these “sinful” enjoyments appeal to him more than the promised “eternal felicity” in Heaven. So while he is rejected by Heaven (“God frightens me that I am not the one elected”), he also turns his back on Heaven because “I have gained comfort in Hell, and have dreamed of the awakening in the short night.” If “Heaven” represents goodness, sanctity, beauty, and everything positive in the orthodox value system, then the poet is intentionally challenging this orthodoxy, and the poem reaches the climax of decadence during this challenging: decadence here not only presages the passive end of everything, but also implies a proactive and voluntary “Fall” on the part of the poet. This is the real sense of decadence in the view of Nietzsche, who interprets decadence as “a question of ‘will’ and an ‘ideal’, not decline as such...but *acceptance and promotion of decline*”.¹⁰²³

That the poet chooses Hell instead of Heaven (both passively and actively) is not merely a gesture of defiance, but is closely related with his notion that opposites coexist and even interpenetrate each other. As is suggested throughout the poem, the seemingly opposite phenomena, such as light and darkness, laughter and weep, happiness and horror, the soul of love and the foe of resentment, are not only coexisting but also interdependent, interpenetrating, and mutually transformable. Things will turn to their opposite when going to extremes, an ancient idea in Chinese

¹⁰²² Shao Xunmei 邵洵美, “Preface to *Twenty-five Poems*”, *op.cit.*, p. 364.

¹⁰²³ Matei Calinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

Daoism and Buddhism was widely adopted by Western intellectual arena at the turn of the century, illustrated in such fields as the Theory of Relativity in physics, modern psychological theories of Freud and Carl Jung, the philosophical framework established by Henri Bergson, and modernist literary works such as “The Waste Land” of T. S. Eliot.¹⁰²⁴ Matei Calinescu also asserts on many occasions that “progress *is* decadence and, conversely, decadence *is* progress”.¹⁰²⁵ This renewed insight in the West is a result of a shared sense of flux and uncertainty of intellectuals in the modern time, where everything is felt fluid, impermanent, and indefinite, as Nietzsche says, “Truth has never yet hung on the arm of an absolute”, and that “everything absolute belongs to pathology”.¹⁰²⁶ By blurring the absolute boundaries between Heaven and Hell, good and evil, Shao conveys a message with a clear modernist note that nothing is absolute and all old values are subjected to questioning and reevaluation.

2) Modernist Sensibilities Prevalent in the Crescent Moon Poetry

Although Shao Xunmei is included in *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology* as one of the eighteen Crescent Moon poets, his dandyish sensibility and bold writing style is not typical of the Crescent Moon poetic school, which on the whole stresses the seriousness and decency of literature. But his consciousness of crisis in a continuously declining time, his spirit of constant questioning, and the theme of futility and powerlessness have been expressed by other Crescent Moon poets in other ways. Bian Zhilin, for example, creates such a meaningless and decadent world in the following poems:

A Cold Night

A stove of fire. A room of light.

¹⁰²⁴ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, pp. 84-93.

¹⁰²⁵ Matei Calinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁰²⁶ Nietzsche. Cited from Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

Old Chen holds a teacup in his hands,
Opposite to him sits Old Zhang.
Old Zhang holds a cigarette between his lips.
Old Chen drinks up his warm water.
They (with their eyelids half-closed)
Look at the blue smoke flowing
And dissipating, and (as if slightly drunk)
Look at the coals burning
With a golden glow, they are dizzy
And drowsy, as if half-sleeping...
Where does this bell sound come from?
One stroke, two strokes...
What, someone is in the courtyard
Running: "It's snowing, so heavy!"

—"A Cold Night" by Bian Zhilin (1932?)¹⁰²⁷

At Dusk

Leaning against the setting sun on the Western Hills,
Standing before the collapsing wall of the temple,
Looking at each other: what are we going to say?
Why not say it?

The lean donkey that carries the old man
Is hurrying back home,
Its hooves are tapping on the ground—

¹⁰²⁷ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "寒夜" *Hanye* ("A Cold Night"). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 309-310.

A dry and dull tune!

A harsh caw pierces the air,
As a crow rises from
The treetop, but nothing else,
And it rests again.

—“At Dusk” by Bian Zhilin (1932?)¹⁰²⁸

Lost

—*A Conversation between Dusk and a Person*

“I saw you at a loose end and idling around,
I saw you sitting on the dust-laden seat of the Bodhisattva,
And you have leaned your body against the bed
For ages, now what are you going to do?”

“Indeed, what am I going to do?”

“You must have known, at first I stayed by the road,
And don't know why and how, I returned to the chillier and quieter courtyard,
And returned into the room, pressing close to the wall again,
Please help me think, where shall I go?”

“Indeed, where shall you go?”

—“Lost” by Bian Zhilin (1932?)¹⁰²⁹

As one of the eighteen poets listed in *Crescent Moon Poetry Anthology*, Bian Zhilin started his poetic career by publishing in the Crescent Moon journals, and he

¹⁰²⁸ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “傍晚” *Bangwan* (“At Dusk”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, pp. 308-309.

¹⁰²⁹ The poem was initially published on the 3rd issue of *Poetry Magazine*, under the title of “Dusk” (黄昏 *Huanghun*). Later the poet changes the title to the current one, which is “Lost” (奈何 *Naihe*). Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “奈何” *Naihe* (“Lost”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, pp. 315-316.

acknowledged his debt to the encouragement and influence of the Crescent Moon veteran poets such as Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, and Ye Gongchao.¹⁰³⁰ But he is also considered a representative modernist poet,¹⁰³¹ and as Lan Dizhi points out, “it seems that from the year 1935, an abrupt change occurs to the voice of Bian Zhilin”.¹⁰³² The “abrupt change” refers to Bian’s transition from a poet mainly influenced by the Crescent Moon poetics to one who demonstrates distinct modernist characteristics, and Lan argues that the “decisive reason” for this change lies in Bian’s translation of “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, one of the most important essays of T. S. Eliot, in 1934.¹⁰³³ Eliot’s main argument in this modernist manifesto is the “Impersonal theory of poetry”.¹⁰³⁴ As a student of Irving Babbitt, Eliot shared Babbitt’s distaste for romanticism, especially the romantic view that poetry takes its origin from “emotion recollected in tranquility”.¹⁰³⁵ Eliot believes that “the poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium, ... in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways”,¹⁰³⁶ and that poetry is not a direct expression of personal emotions, but “a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation”.¹⁰³⁷

Bian Zhilin acknowledged his indebtedness to Eliot, especially during the years from 1933 to 1935,¹⁰³⁸ and he recalled that he felt “a strong personal response” to this

¹⁰³⁰ cf: 1) Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”, *op.cit.*, pp. 255-257. 2) Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “In Memory of Mr. Ye Gongchao”, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁰³¹ Lloyd Haft, for example, considers Bian to be a more legitimately Symbolist poet than Li Jinfa. And Lan Dizhi includes part of Bian’s works into *Modernist Poetry Anthology* as well. 1) Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 63. 2) Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, *Modernist Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-21.

¹⁰³² Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “若干重要诗集创作与评价上的理论问题” *Ruogan zhongyao shiji chuanguo yu pingjia shang de lilun wenti* (“Some Theoretical Issues on the Creation and Criticism of Several Important Poetic Anthologies”). 《安徽师范大学学报》(人文社会科学版) *Anhui shifan daxue xuebao · renwen shehui kexue ban* (Journal of Anhui Normal University·Hum & Soc Sci). Volume 30 No. 2, March 2002. p. 156.

¹⁰³³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁴ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁰³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹⁰³⁸ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

famous essay of Eliot's views on poetry.¹⁰³⁹ His poems written during this period tend to be less personalised and less direct in expression, and therefore, more esoteric. Bonnie McDougall would consider 1935 as the year of Bian's early maturity in poetic style, and the several poems dated from that year may be regarded as a "summit" of his early poetic career.¹⁰⁴⁰ As compared with his post-1935 poetry, the three poems cited above, all taken from *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*,¹⁰⁴¹ show more of the influence of the Crescent Moon poetics of clear meanings and regulated forms. But even in these early poems he has already displayed his sensibilities as a modernist poet, who is acutely conscious of the loneliness, ennui, and aimlessness of life in a dry, desolate, and inhuman modern world, as Bian recalls:

During this period¹⁰⁴² I mostly focused my poems on the trivialities of social reality, and I paid much attention to those ordinary individuals, those nobodies of the lower class. Perhaps in this sense I have been influenced (among the modern Chinese writers) by my teacher Wen Yiduo who wrote "Dead Water" earlier. I mainly used colloquial language and regulated forms to describe the streets and the countryside, the rooms and the courtyards of Beiping in my eyes. What I presented is an entire state of desolation of the Northern world.¹⁰⁴³

"Desolation" (荒凉 *Huangliang*) is a key theme of Bian's early poems during this period, and also, according to Anne Cheng, a characteristic feeling of French Symbolism coincided with a more specifically Chinese state of mind.¹⁰⁴⁴ Despite the different stories, settings, and characters, the three poems I show above share a common theme, which is the desolate state of life and state of mind of the ordinary, insignificant people in the modern world. In "A Cold Night", the poet depicts the trifles of two old men in great detail. The two men, one is drinking water and the

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid. p. 23.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Bonnie S. McDougall, "Yumu ji 鱼目集 Fish Eyes", *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, op.cit., p. 45.

¹⁰⁴¹ When editing the anthology, Lan Dizhi notes that he has "only included Bian's poems written during the period when he was publishing in the Crescent Moon journals". So this ensures the poems are written by Bian the Crescentist rather than Bian the modernist. Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, "Preface" to *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, op.cit., p. 44.

¹⁰⁴² "This period" refers to the years from 1930 to 1932. Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "Author's Preface to *Insect-carving Records*", op.cit., p. 257.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Anne Cheng, "Sanqiu cao 三秋草 Leaves of Three Autumns", *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, op.cit., p. 42.

other smoking, stayed together without saying a word, only looking vacantly at the flowing blue smoke and the dim glow of the burning coals, images that are hazy and dreamy like their “half-sleeping” state of mind. Everything in the room is dull, murky, and insignificant, and in this state of drowsiness, the sound of a bell arrives. It is supposed to be an image that breaks this dull and boring atmosphere and brings in some refreshing change. But the poem ends in an equally insignificant scene, that someone runs in the courtyard and says it’s snowing, a common scene in the winter and a common response of the people (“It’s snowing, so heavy!”). The poem begins with a detailed description of trivial matters and ends in an equally plain and common scene without surprise or climax. It seems that the characters in the poem are leading a dull and drowsy life without change or intention of change, weary of communication, of surprise, of everything in the life.

“At Dusk” is composed of three separate vignettes: two people standing before the collapsing wall of the temple, looking at each other without knowing how to communicate; the donkey taps on the ground in a repeated and mechanical way, producing “a dry and dull tune”; a crow rising from the treetop, an image of vitality and hope, turns out to be a senseless scene as “nothing else” happens and “it rests again”. Similar to “A Cold Night”, the poem fails the reader’s expectation of a climax or change. The meaning of life, the relationship between people, and the activities of animals have all been trapped in the impasse of fatigue, emptiness and mechanical repetition.

This sense of fatigue, meaninglessness, emptiness, and the failure of communication come to an extreme state in “Lost”. Whereas in “At Dusk”, two people are looking at each other without knowing what to say, in “Lost” there is only one person. The poem takes the form of a “dialogue” between the person and “dusk”, and the dialogue contains a repeated questioning of the meaning and purpose of life: “What are you going to do?” “What am I going to do?”, “Where shall I go?”, and “Where shall you go?”. The person is “at a loose end and idling around”, walking up and down without a specific purpose or direction. He is completely at a loss and he has nobody to talk with, and his mind is filled with questions and doubts. The route he passes by, from the roadside to the courtyard, to the room, and to “press close to the wall”, might be seen as symbolic of the person’s psychic route. He gradually, though

“don't know why and how”, retreats from the outside to the inside, from the observation of the externality to the examination of his inner self. He becomes more and more self-conscious and confused of the meaning of his existence, so he raises the ultimate questions of humanity: what shall I do and where shall I go. But there is no answer to these questions, as Irving Howe perceptively observes, “the past was devoted to answers; the modern period confines itself to questions”, and it is the “dynamism of asking and learning not to reply” that defines the modern temper.¹⁰⁴⁵ The question “what shall I do” is reminiscent of the recurring question raised in “The Waste Land”,¹⁰⁴⁶ in which T. S. Eliot creates a landscape that is “desolate and empty”.¹⁰⁴⁷ Bian Zhilin is, I suggest, in the three poems weaving quite a similar landscape, a “Chinese Waste Land” of desolation, loneliness, fatigue, dryness, and the loss of connection and communication.

Bian described himself as “sensitive to trivial matters, and dazed and confused about the overall situation”.¹⁰⁴⁸ He might have been too cautious in the self-assessment. Indeed, he is acutely sensitive to trivial matters and small figures, but he is not “lacking the ability to express [his] response” to the general situation.¹⁰⁴⁹ He is adept at capturing the little scenes and images, and finding out through them the problem of the time. He is not only portraying a specific person or scene, but is exploring the shared experiences and state of mind of modern human beings.

Another poem that expresses the emotions of fatigue and loss through the depiction of small figures and trivial scenes is “Spring Scenery of A Small Temple” (小庙春景 *Xiaomiao chunjing*) by Chen Mengjia:

Let the sun shine
Over the little grass on my roof tiles,
Let the favourable weather

¹⁰⁴⁵ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴⁶ T. S. Eliot, “The Waste Land”, *The Complete Poems & Plays of T. S. Eliot*, Faber and Faber, 2004. p. 65.

¹⁰⁴⁷ The original of this phrase is in German, “Oed' und leer das Meer” (“Desolate and empty the sea”). *Ibid.* p. 62.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Benefit all seasons of the year.

Let the flagpole
Fall on the dilapidated wall and sleep,
Let the creeping vines twine
Around its back, one after another...

I want to wear a ragged monk robe
Catching lice in it, basking in the sunshine;
I was a Bodhisattva in my past life,
And become a monk in the present one.

—“Spring Scenery of A Small Temple” by Chen Mengjia (1935)¹⁰⁵⁰

This is the last poem of Chen Mengjia. According to the interpretation of Lan Dizhi, this poem reflects the “profound anguish” of Chen, because “underlying his gentle and quiet appearance, he has been so aspiring to contribute to the nation and the time”.¹⁰⁵¹ This “profound anguish” comes from a contrast between the speaker’s current state of life and his past experience. “I”, the speaker of the poem, claims to be a Bodhisattva — a divine spirit — in his past life, and now only a monk, basking in the sunshine, catching lice in the ragged robe, looking at the fallen flagpole, counting the creeping vines. He no longer possesses the divine power to bring in good weather to human beings, nor is he able to protect the little grass with the warmth of the sunshine. What he can do is nothing but the empty pray, in a languid and feeble tone. This monk is clearly not a symbol of transcendental wisdom or spiritual detachment. The image of the monk is reminiscent of that in a poem of Bian Zhilin, “A Monk” (一个和尚 *Yige heshang*):

Another day has passed with the tolling of the bell,

¹⁰⁵⁰ Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, “小庙春景” *Xiaomiao chunjing* (“Spring Scenery of A Small Temple”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, pp. 268-269.

¹⁰⁵¹ Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “Preface” to *Mengjia’s Poetry Anthology*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

The monk is lost in the pale, deep dream:
 The elusive trails that are left over the past several years
 Become nothing in his memory but
 The heavy smoke of incense permeating through the dilapidated temple,
 The debris of sadness is left in the incense burner
 Along with the grievances of loyal believers,
 Weariness always wriggles throughout the Buddhist sutras.

Drowsily, the dream-talk oozes out of his mouth,
 His head is once again knocking on the wooden fish,
 The head and the wooden fish are equally empty and equally heavy;
 One knock after another, the mountains and waters are hypnotised,
 Mountains and waters fall asleep lazily in the twilight mist,
 Once again he finishes tolling the death bell of the day.

—“A Monk” by Bian Zhilin (1930)¹⁰⁵²

As Bonnie McDougall remarks, this poem, despite its seemingly religious and metaphysical topic, invokes only “a sense of desolation”, much like Bian’s previously cited works.¹⁰⁵³ So does Chen’s poem. Both monks are leading a senseless and purposeless life of loss and ennui, and both are trapped in dreams: Chen’s monk is lost in the dream of the “past life”, and Bian’s monk lost in the “pale, deep” dream of emptiness. They are conscious of the futility and illusory nature of life, and in disillusionment they pass their days in dreams without aim or action. This sense of disillusionment is particularly felt in Chen’s poem. The speaker, “I”, used to possess both the aim and capability (a Bodhisattva in the past life) and represents “a

¹⁰⁵² Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “一个和尚” *Yige heshang* (“A Monk”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁰⁵³ Bonnie S. McDougall, “*Hanyuan ji* 汉园集 The Han Garden”, *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

union of value and power”.¹⁰⁵⁴ Now as a monk he has no power and even no intention to act, but only a nostalgia and lament over the past dream and glory. This is a typical modernist character in Irving Howe’s terms, that “value and power are taken to be radically dissociated”.¹⁰⁵⁵ The monk aspires to be the hero (or “Bodhisattva” in this poem) and to be of use in some way, but he lacks the power, the opportunity, and courage to act it out. This is the “profound anguish” that Lan Dizhi points out. Seen in this light, the monk is also a decadent image: unlike in Shao Xunmei’s poem where the decadent “I” gets lost in erotic enjoyment and even in “Hell”, the monk gets lost in his old dream of the past glory.

The conflict or gap between the heroic ideal and the futile reality is also expressed in a poem of Xu Zhimo, “Golden Oriole” (黄鹂 *Huangli*):

A streak of colour soars onto the tree.
“Look, a golden oriole!” someone says.
Raising the tail tip, it remains silent,
The gorgeous splendour lights up the density —
Like the light of spring, the flame of fire, like passion.

Waiting for its singing, we watch in silence,
For fear of startling it. But with its wings spread,
It pierces the density, merging into a coloured cloud;
It has flown away, disappeared, gone —
Like the light of spring, the flame of fire, like passion.

—“Golden Oriole” by Xu Zhimo (1930)¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁵⁴ Irving Howe points out that in “ancient or traditional heroes there was a union of value and power, a sense of the good and the capacity to act it out”, whereas in modernist literature, “value and power are taken to be radically dissociated”. Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “黄鹂” *Huangli* (“Golden Oriole”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 371.

This poem is abundant in romantic elements. The singing of birds, be it the skylark of Shelley, the nightingale of Keats, or the golden oriole here, is a typical romantic image of lyrical inspiration. Besides, “the light of spring”, “the flame of fire”, and “passion” are also familiar imagery in romantic poems. The golden oriole in the poem, therefore, is a symbol of romantic ideals of extreme beauty (“the gorgeous splendour”), enlightenment (“lights up the density”), freedom (“soar onto the tree”), and lyrical inspiration. “We”, the human beings, are holding our breath and waiting for the singing of the bird, representing human’s longing for the romantic ideals. The golden oriole, however, “has flown away, disappeared, gone” without uttering a sound, failing the expectation of spectators. The disappearance of the golden oriole seems to be implying the failure of romantic ideals and the disillusionment of Chinese romantic poets in the 1930s. As Mao Dun observes, social upheavals and changes had a considerable influence on Xu’s views and emotional states. While in Xu’s early works he showed “faith in the future”, later vacillations plunged him into the “maelstrom of doubts”.¹⁰⁵⁷ Cyril Birch, though disagreeing with Mao Dun’s “Marxist-type” analysis, also believes that there are in Xu’s poetry “shades varying from a lively grey to dullest black”.¹⁰⁵⁸ Birch argues that this change comes from Xu’s growing awareness of life’s darker side: “his own life, rich and full as it has been, has known its moment of utter hopelessness”.¹⁰⁵⁹ The romantic singer in the twenties had eventually fallen into the abyss of decadence and nihilism upon entering the new decade, as Xu sings in various poems:

But I am no sunshine, nor am I dew,
 What’s left in me is only the broken breath,
 Like the mass of mice locked up among the walls and beams,
 Chasing each other, chasing after darkness and nothingness!

—“Broken” by Xu Zhimo (1931)¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁷ Leonid Cherkassky, *op.cit.*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cyril Birch, “Hsü Chih-mo’s Debt to Thomas Hardy”, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 20.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “残破” *Canpo* (“Broken”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 400.

Lowliness, lowliness, lowliness,
The wind is blowing,
The resistless residual reed:

Withered its appearance,
Hollow its heart,
How to play a tune?

—“Lowliness” by Xu Zhimo (1931)¹⁰⁶¹

Widely open the eyes, to make clear of everything,
But how could I dominate the destiny?

Talk no more about the light, the beauty of wisdom and eternity,
We are all suffering on the same track;

—“The Train Clutches the Track” by Xu Zhimo (1931)¹⁰⁶²

The essential elements of romanticism, represented in these poems by the sunshine, music, the light, wisdom, eternity, and beauty, have all “flown away, disappeared, gone” like the golden oriole, demonstrating the sense of futility, emptiness, and disillusionment of Xu in his later life. These sensibilities are shared by many Crescent Moon poets in the 1930s and are what I called “modernist sensibilities” in this section. Like Western modernist works, the Crescent Moon poems have in this period displayed a strong sense of doubt and questioning about the previous romantic ideals and shown a collective tendency toward modernist decadence and nihilism. “Golden Oriole”, therefore, seems to be on the one hand foreshadowing the destiny

¹⁰⁶¹ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “卑微” *Beiwei* (“Lowliness”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, p. 412.

¹⁰⁶² Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “火车禽住轨” *Huochē qīnzhu guǐ* (“The Train Clutches the Track”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume 4, Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 415-416.

of Xu Zhimo, who “flies away” and disappears abruptly from the sight of people in his prime time,¹⁰⁶³ and on the other hand also an allegory of the failed romantic ideals of the Crescent Moon School as a whole. One no longer hears in the Crescent Moon poems of this period the youthful ambition of the 1920s, such as Wen Yiduo’s ideal of “leading a literary trend”¹⁰⁶⁴ or Xu Zhimo’s aspiration of “making distinction”.¹⁰⁶⁵ They have mostly retreated from the big ideas of leading or influencing others to the examination and even disintegration of the self. “The modern world”, as Irving Howe observes:

has lost the belief in a collective destiny. Hence, the hero finds it hard to be certain that he possesses — or that anyone can possess — the kind of powers that might transform human existence.¹⁰⁶⁶

Heroes burn themselves out, and the romantic ideals and ambitions disappear like the golden oriole. The golden oriole, like the crow in Bian Zhilin’s “At Dusk”, highly flies onto the treetop and disappears abruptly (or rests quietly), irrespective of the expectation of the people. Both images represent the poet’s ironic questioning of the human fate:¹⁰⁶⁷ What will happen after the hope and preparation? Will all expectations be met? Will the value of life be achieved completely? Will the development of human civilisation definitely lead to a better tomorrow? And, all in all, are human society and history definitely progressing? This is a deeper level of decadence, stemming from a doubt and hesitation about the linear progression of time and human history, and leading to a reflection on the enlightenment ideals and the nature of modernity. From a firm believer of the romantic ideals to a cautious sceptic confused and uncertain of modern society and progress, Xu Zhimo, along

¹⁰⁶³ Leo Ou-fan Lee thinks that among the great number of memorial poems for Xu Zhimo, none is more fitting to the memory of Xu than this poem. Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Romantic Generation*, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, “A Letter to Liang Shiqiu and Wu Jingchao”, 29th September 1922, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “To the Crescent Moon”, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶⁷ According to D. C. Muecke, describing the incongruity between the expectation and the event is a major form to express irony of fate. It is ironic when, after we have more or less explicitly or confidently expressed reliance in the way things go, some subsequent unforeseen turn of events reverses and frustrates our expectation or designs. D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969, p. 102.

with other Crescent Moon members, is experiencing a spiritual transition from a “Voltairean ‘I’” to a “Modern ‘I’”.¹⁰⁶⁸

3. From the “Voltairean ‘I’” to the “Modern ‘I’”

To illustrate the Crescent Moon poets’ spiritual transition, I would like to compare two poems, one written by Wen Yiduo, entitled “Sin” (罪过 *Zuiguo*), and the other by Bian Zhilin, entitled “Several Individuals” (几个人 *Jige ren*):

Sin

The old man tumbles down with his load,
With white apricots and red cherries scattering everywhere.

The old man struggles to get up and trembles:

“I know it is my sin today!”

“Look, old man, you hurt your hands.”

“Alas! All have been crushed, all these nice cherries!”

“Are you not feeling well, old man?

Why are you stunned there without saying a word?”

“I know it is my sin today,

My son kept urging me all through the morning.

He lay in bed getting mad,

Scolding me for not leaving for the town.

“I knew it was not early,

And I didn't expect that I could oversleep so late.

¹⁰⁶⁸ I borrowed the two terms, “Voltairean ‘I’” and “Modern ‘I’”, from Stephen Spender. I will discuss the two types of intellectuals in detail in the next section. cf: Stephen Spender, “Moderns and Contemporaries”. *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts*, edited by Irving Howe, Horizon Press, New York, 1967. pp. 43-49.

What can I do now, what can I do?
What are the whole family going to have for dinner?"
The old man picks up the fruits and they drop again,
With white apricots and red cherries scattering everywhere.

—"Sin" by Wen Yiduo (1927?)¹⁰⁶⁹

Several Individuals

The peddler cries, "Sugar-coated haws",
Not caring at all about the dust and dirt he swallows;
The birdcage-carrier looks at the white doves in the sky,
Passing the sandy river with leisurely footsteps,
When a young man meditates on the desolate street.
The carrot seller waves his polished knife empty,
Loads of carrots grin foolishly in the sunset,
When a young man meditates on the desolate street.
The short beggar stares at his long shadow,
When a young man meditates on the desolate street:
Some people hold a bowl of rice and give a sigh,
Some people listen to the dream-talk of others in the mid-night,
Some people wear a red flower in the white hair,
Like the setting sun against the fringe of a snowy field...

—"Several Individuals" by Bian Zhilin (1932)¹⁰⁷⁰

Both poems are written in a dramatic form in Beijing dialect, and reflect the state of life of the ordinary, lower-class people in the Northern city of China. By creating a dramatic scene, the poets are able to withdraw from the poems and keep an aesthetic

¹⁰⁶⁹ Wen Yiduo 闻一多, "罪过" *Zuiguo* ("Sin"), *Complete works of Wen Yiduo 1: Poetry, op.cit.*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "几个人" *Jige ren* ("Several Individuals"). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School, op.cit.*, pp. 314-315.

distance so as to achieve an impersonal effect, avoiding an overly sentimental or didactic tone. This impersonal method, as I have mentioned in the last chapter, has been a favoured way of writing of the Crescent Moon poets as early as in the “*Poetry Supplement* era”. In this section, however, I would like to demonstrate two types of impersonal or dramatic poetry, through which one might find two types of poets displaying different mentalities.

The first poem, “Sin”, was written during the period of the “Formalisation Movement” in the mid-1920s. As a product of Wen’s theory of *Geliu*, it observes the “Dead Water Metre” with nine characters in a line and six lines in a stanza. Mainly composed of a dialogue between an old man and a stranger, especially through the monologue of the old man, the poem depicts the miserable life of the lower-class people in a realistic manner. The trembling old man fell down with a heavy load of apricots and cherries, and despite his injured hands, he is only concerned about the crushed fruits and the livelihood of the whole family. The stranger is worried about his wounds, but instead of replying to the stranger, the old man only blames himself and mumbles mechanically about his family, his experience, his anxiety and sense of guilt. His response, almost a kind of neurotic, involuntary soliloquy, is abnormal, reflecting his overwhelming sense of fear, stress, and helplessness in face of the trivial accident. The old man keeps accusing himself (he repeats it twice that “I know it is my sin today”), but according to his statement, he is the last to be accused of. He should not have come out to make a living at this age, and his son, lying in bed and doing nothing but scolding him, is the real one to blame. But the old man never thinks of changing his circumstances. He has been accustomed to the hardship of life without thinking about the real root of his suffering. The poem, therefore, is not merely describing a miserable state of life of the old man, but also his distorted mentality caused by a miserable life. He positions himself as a “sinful” man and is trapped in the passive acceptance of what is given by life. It is this spiritual passivity, numbness, and ignorance, rather than poverty or the physical suffering, that the poet attempts to reveal and draw attention to. The poem ends with a dramatic scene that the old man picks up the fruits and they drop off again, the bright-coloured fruits forming a sharp contrast and irony to the gloomy prospect of life of the old man.

This poem represents the first type of dramatic poetry I would like to discuss, and is also the type that is usually seen in the Crescent Moon poems produced in the “*Poetry Supplement* era” before 1930. The poets would create a typical character and narrate a complete story in a logical way to convey his thoughts or emotions, thus avoiding the sentimental or didactic tone brought about by the straightforward expression. It echoes the classic aesthetic values pursued by the Crescent Moon poets in this period, that wild emotion is to be controlled by reason and that literature should reflect universal humanity rather than exhibiting the poet’s ego. The characters and stories in dramatic poetry could be seen as the “objective correlative” similar to the use of imagery, which is to convey the poet’s subjective ideas and emotions in an objective, subdued, and impersonal way.

In the poem “Sin”, the poet does not intrude into the scene. He does not directly show his feelings or make a moral judgement, although his stance is quite clear. He is indirectly criticising the dark and unjust society that has caused so much suffering and distortion to the physical and mental state of the ordinary hard-working people. He sympathises with the old man and at the same time he feels concerned about the old man’s passivity and ignorance. The title of the poem, “Sin”, a keyword in the old man’s monologue that bespeaks his absurd self-positioning, is in itself an irony and an indication of the poet’s stance. The poet is intentionally using this ironic word to draw the readers’ attention and inspire their thoughts: who is the really “sinful” party, and who is to blame for this miserable situation? The poet obviously holds the answer; but instead of directly giving the answer, he creates a dramatic scene to “induce” readers to raise the question and find the answer by themselves. Behind this dramatic scene, therefore, there stands an “inducer”, a man who suggests and leads people to think, a sober-minded and rational man of intellect who stands above the scene he creates. He is conscious of the problem of society, and he tries to awaken those ignorant and indifferent people, and to lead them to live, to fight, and to

contribute to the betterment of the world. He is, in Stephen Spender's terms, a contemporary intellectual with a "Voltairean 'I'" in mind.¹⁰⁷¹

In his essay "Moderns and Contemporaries", Spender discusses two types of intellectuals who both lived in the late 19th and early 20th century but who had diametrically opposed mindsets. Spender would call them "the contemporary" and "the modern" respectively.¹⁰⁷² Writers such as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) are "contemporaries without being...moderns",¹⁰⁷³ because although they were aware of the effects of science, and "most contemporary in their interest", they "remained within the tradition of rationalism" and "stood outside a world of injustices and irrationality which they judged clearly with their powers of reason and imagination".¹⁰⁷⁴ Spender would term "the contemporaries" the "Voltairean individualists" because, "influenced by socialist ideas, and believers in progress", they regarded contemporary society from a viewpoint stemming from "the French Revolution".¹⁰⁷⁵ They attempt to enlighten the people, and therefore when they criticise, satirise, and attack, they do so "in order to influence, to direct, to oppose, to activate existing forces". They believe that they could "direct the powers of the surrounding world from evil into better courses through the exercise of the superior social or cultural intelligence of the creative genius".¹⁰⁷⁶ They are rational, responsible, self-affirmative, or in other words, they regard themselves as "clear-sighted social prophets".¹⁰⁷⁷

The May Fourth Movement has been compared to the Enlightenment of 18th century Europe,¹⁰⁷⁸ and the May Fourth intellectuals have cherished "enlightenment" as their

¹⁰⁷¹ Stephen Spender, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.* p. 48.

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 44.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 43.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 44.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ Michael Y. L. Luk, Review of *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, by Vera Schwarcz, *The China Quarterly*, No. 117, 1989, p. 155.

distinctive cultural mission.¹⁰⁷⁹ So it is not far-fetched to regard the Crescent Moon writers, especially the elder generation who were cultivated in the May Fourth Movement, as intellectuals of “the Chinese Enlightenment”, or the “Voltairean individualists”. Chinese intellectuals in the early 20th century were exposed to a massive variety of Western thoughts, from the European Enlightenment ideals to the modernist mindsets.¹⁰⁸⁰ So similar to the Western cases as Spender analyses, I think the Chinese intellectuals at the time could equally be divided into two types, “the contemporaries” and “the moderns”, although they both lived in the modern age. This is why I consider Spender’s theory applicable to the Chinese condition in the early 20th century. The poet of “Sin”, I suggest, belongs to the category of “the contemporary”, or the “Chinese Voltairean ‘I’”, with his eager consciousness to enlighten the people. He positioned himself as a “writer-prophet” like the European Enlightenment thinkers, and he expresses his rational attitude or stance, either directly or indirectly, in his works in an effort to influence, to direct, and to be responsible to his readers.

But Bian Zhilin’s poem is entirely different. “Several Individuals” strikes a characteristic modernist note in that it does not contain a complete dramatic scene, a logical story, a fully developed character, or a clear meaning. It is more of a “collage”, a juxtaposition of several vignettes of individuals and their states of life. There lacks connection among these vignettes, and there seems to be no relationship between the images of these individuals, thus producing an effect of abruptness, incoherence, and tension. Underlying these seemingly unrelated vignettes and images, however, there is some sort of connection and logic, but it requires the reader to take an active part in the interpretation of the poem and even in the completion of its meaning. Unlike in the case of “Sin”, there is no definite authorial intent in “Several Individuals”. The poet “presents” but not “expresses”: he does not show his ideas or attitudes and makes no personal judgement, literally or suggestively. He does not

¹⁰⁷⁹ But Vera Schwarcz also discusses the different understanding of “enlightenment” between Chinese and European thinkers. Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, University of California Press, 1986, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses the Chinese writers’ eager absorption of various Western ideas in the May Fourth period. Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Literary Trends I”, *op.cit.*, pp. 489-499.

intend to influence or direct the reader's understanding, nor does he take sides. He maintains a proper distance from both his poem and the reader.

The poem, therefore, opens to various interpretations on the part of the reader, which gives rise to its ambiguity and obscurity. In my view it could be divided into two parts from the tenth line ("when a young man meditates on the desolate street:"), and each image appeared in the former part — those specific individuals on the street — echoes an abstract "some people" in the latter part. It presents three states of life by depicting three pairs of images: the peddler of sugar-coated haws on the street and the "some people" who "hold a bowl of rice and give a sigh" indicate the hardship of life and people's passive acceptance of the suffering; the "birdcage-carrier" who looks at those white doves that do not belong to him, and the "some people" who "listen to the dream-talk of others in the mid-night", represent the remote and illusory nature of dreams and the emptiness and frustration of reality; the carrot seller who "emptily waves his knife" with loads of "foolishly grinning" carrots (implying that there is no business and thus no livelihood for the seller), and the "some people" who "wear a red flower in the white hair" (implying the aged people's longing for youth) are both set against the background of the "setting sun" (a melancholic image of the ruthless passage and impending end of time in Chinese tradition),¹⁰⁸¹ symbolising the last beauty and euphoria before the sad and despairing approach of the end. From life's hardship and suffering, to the disillusionment of dreams, and to the sense of despair and ending, the poem moves toward an ever darker and emptier state of nihilism. Another pair of imagery, the short beggar who "stares at his long shadow" and the young man who "meditates on the desolate street", are in my view both symbols of spiritual isolation. Both lost in their own thoughts and separated from the outside world, the young man, as a thoughtful intellectual, is as lonely and alienated as the beggar, a daydreamer. Lloyd Haft observes that in Bian's poems, "the setting sun is often combined with the idea of a shadow or shadow-like presence", through which the poetic subject experiences feelings of nostalgia and

¹⁰⁸¹ See Lloyd Haft's discussion of Bian's preference for using the image of sunset as representing the feeling of weariness, downheartedness, futility, and inexpressible melancholy. Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin, op.cit.*, p. 24 and p. 38.

separation which accentuate its “metaphysical isolation”.¹⁰⁸² The collage of these individuals and their states of living and ways of thinking constitutes a dramatic world that lacks hope, meaning, and connection, which further mirrors the “desolate” modern space where the poet inhabits.

The “meditating young man” is a central character in the poem as each of his appearance advances the poem to the next scene. The “colon” used in the end of the tenth line (“when a young man meditates on the desolate street:”) suggests that the following four lines will be something that the young man “meditates upon”. This is the reason why I divide the poem this way, that the former part before the tenth line shows the individuals that the young man has seen on the street, and the latter part is what he thinks of at the sight of them. The poem is therefore advanced, if not created, by what the young man sees and thinks of. This young man, as Michelle Yeh points out, “may well be the poet, who intentionally detaches himself from the scene”.¹⁰⁸³ The entire poem is composed of the observation and reflection of the “young man”, or the poet, and therefore, it is extremely subjective. But the poet employs the most objective way of writing by creating a dramatic world from which he is absent. The poet does not appear or speak in the dramatic world, nor does he “induce” the reader to think as Wen Yiduo does in “Sin”. He represents the other type of intellectuals discussed by Stephen Spender, namely, “the moderns”, or the “Modern ‘I’”.¹⁰⁸⁴

The moderns/“Modern ‘I’” is defined in contrast to the contemporaries/ “Voltairean ‘I’”. While the Voltairean “I” acts upon events, the modern “I” is acted upon by them. While the Voltairean “I” attempts to influence, the modern “I” through receptiveness, suffering, passivity, transforms the world to which it is exposed.¹⁰⁸⁵ And finally, the Voltairean “I” is a “partisan” in reflecting the events and values of the modern world, because he will be “taking sides” and “seeing and supporting partial attitudes” as a rational individual who stands *outside* the world he judges.¹⁰⁸⁶ But the modern “I”,

¹⁰⁸² Ibid. p. 38.

¹⁰⁸³ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Stephen Spender, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-49.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 44.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 43 and p. 48.

standing *in* the world and “[seeing] life as a whole”, would condemn the modern conditions as a whole instead of taking sides.¹⁰⁸⁷ He is acutely conscious of the contemporary scene, but, unlike the Voltairean “I” who accepts the “values [of the modern world] of science and progress”, the modern “I” does not accept its values.¹⁰⁸⁸

Seen in this light, the poet of “Several Individuals”, or the “young man” in the poem, fits perfectly to the category of the “modern ‘I’”. He sees and condemns the world he lives as a whole, unlike Wen Yiduo who “takes sides” and supports partial values (by obviously sympathising with “the old man”). He does not intend to influence or lead his readers, possibly because he does not consider himself as holding the key to the correct value or answer. Just like the “young man” who stands *on* the desolate street in the poem, the “Modern ‘I’” also exists *in* the desolate modern world. He does not consider himself as standing “outside” or “above” the modern world, but rather he observes it from within, tortured by it, lost in it, and feeling confused about its problems and values. That is why the poem has no logical story, rational narration, or formal coherence and unity; it is rather a collage of several vignettes, expressed in a fragmented and disconnected way. This modernist writing style is closely linked with the mentality of the “Modern ‘I’”, as Irving Howe points out:

The expectation of formal unity implies an intellectual and emotional, indeed a philosophic composure; it assumes that the artist stands above his material, controlling it and aware of an impending resolution; it assumes that the artist has answers to his questions or that answers can be had. But for the modern writer none of these assumptions holds, or at least none of them can simply be taken for granted. He presents dilemmas; he cannot and soon does not wish to resolve them; he offers his *struggle* with them as the substance of his testimony...¹⁰⁸⁹

The “Modern ‘I’”, therefore, perceives and re-presents the world that he inhabits and belongs to, but he does not judge or take sides. He hides himself behind the dramatic scenes and characters, not because of the classic value of restraining emotion with reason, but because of his self-doubt and self-questioning. “The modern ego”, as

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 48.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid. pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

Jacques Barzun argues, “begins its career with self-contempt”.¹⁰⁹⁰ He feels uncertain of the time, of the ideal, and of himself, and this is “a symptom of an organic ill, which is: the systematic distrust of one’s perceptions and desires”.¹⁰⁹¹ Such a “modern ego” would appear in the poem as a vague and ambiguous image (as is illustrated by the “young man”): he is sometimes the creator and sometimes a spectator; he is both at the centre and on the periphery. He is not intentionally hiding his attitude, but his attitude is in itself indefinite, ambiguous, and even ambivalent. The “Modern ‘I’” is on the one hand the acute “poet-seer” who perceives, if not foresees, the problems of the time, the subtle change of human nature, and the footsteps of history, while on the other hand, largely out of his self-doubt, he cannot and does not intend to express what he sees and feels in a definitive, confident, and heroic way like the enlightenment individuals, or the “Voltairean ‘I’”. In their minds, no one can lead or change the world, but everyone can create a world of himself.

Therefore, the rationalist “Voltairean ‘I’” who enlightens, influences, and shapes the values of the public becomes the “Modern ‘I’” who “meditates on the desolate street”. He observes and ruminates, but he “would not like to express and explain [his thoughts] to others”;¹⁰⁹² he is extremely subjective, as the entire poetic world is constructed by his consciousness, but he tries to detach himself from the world he has created by the use of the impersonal, objective way of writing; he is outside his poetic world and at the same time in it, so he raises questions and at the same time is trapped by them, unable to provide an answer. The dramatic method seems to be a proper way of expression for such a diffident, ambiguous, and self-conflicting ego, as it maintains an aesthetic distance between the poet and his work, and the poet and his reader. The self-examination of Bian Zhilin helps explain this mentality of the Modern “I”:

But I have always been afraid of exposing myself to the public. I am very comfortable to be a “nobody”, and afraid of having my private emotion open to others. During this time, I have mostly expressed my feelings by

¹⁰⁹⁰ Jacques Barzun, *op.cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹² Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, “Author’s Preface to *Insect-carving Records*”, *op.cit.*, p. 255.

depicting a scenery or an object, portraying a character, or narrating a story. I would not have written poetry had there been no genuine emotions or feelings. But very rarely did I write about the real persons or true stories at that time. I like to express the so-called “aesthetic state” (意境 *yijing*) in Chinese traditional criticism, or the so-called “dramatic situation” in Western criticism. My writing tended to be fictionalised, typified, depersonalised, and sometimes I would even use parody.¹⁰⁹³

I have in this section shown two types of dramatic poetry created by the Crescent Moon poets, represented by “Sin” and “Several Individuals” respectively. Although both have used the depersonalised, dramatised method, the two poems reflect two types of mentality of the poets. Behind the dramatic world of “Sin”, there stands a “Voltairean ‘I’” who employs the impersonal way of writing to achieve the classic aesthetic value of reason and restraint. Behind the dramatic world of “Several Individuals”, on the other hand, there stands a “Modern ‘I’”, who hides himself because he is sceptical of everything including himself. He is intentionally bringing in a touch of ambiguity and obscurity to his poem so as to keep a distance from the reader, and therefore his works possess a distinctive modernist tone.

There seems to be an affinity or continuity between the classic value of restraint and the modernist idea of obscurity of the Crescent Moon poetics: both demonstrate the poet’s effort to play down the role of the subjective ego in poetry, and therefore, both are reaction against the romantic value of self-expansion. This de-emphasis of the self or the ego is achieved artistically by the use of the depersonalised, fictionalised and dramatised method. From here, there is only one small step toward the “Impersonal theory” put forward by T. S. Eliot.¹⁰⁹⁴ The impact of this theory can be felt in a long poem written by Sun Dayu, “A Portrait of the Self” (自己的写照 *Ziji de xiezhao*).

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid. p. 256.

¹⁰⁹⁴ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

4. Tradition and Modernity

1) “A Portrait of the Self”: A Modernist Prophecy

Ya Xian (痲弦 1932-), a modernist poet in Taiwan in the 1960s, speaks highly of Sun Dayu’s poem, “A Portrait of the Self”:

It is indeed an unfinished giant monument in the early new poetic scene of China. The poet’s grand vision, forceful spirit, and vigorous style is diametrically opposed to the Crescent Moon poems which, focusing merely on the private emotions and romantic love stories, are frivolously sentimental, showy, and shallow (although the poet belongs to the Crescent Moon School)...By portraying the intricate consciousness of the modern people, the poem is the earliest prophecy of the modernist tendency of Chinese new poetry.¹⁰⁹⁵

“A Portrait of the Self” is indeed distinctly different from the other Crescent Moon poems. The poet does not confine his vision to one person, one specific event, one place, or one historical moment. His observation and reflection are extended to all human races throughout the history, and therefore, the expression of personal emotions and thoughts are replaced by a more comprehensive, complex concern for all human kind. But instead of viewing the poem as “diametrically opposed to the Crescent Moon poems”, I would rather view it as representing an aspect of the Crescent Moon poetry, or suggesting a new tendency. The depersonalised vision of the poem is soon echoed by Bian Zhilin’s translation of “Tradition and the Individual Talent”,¹⁰⁹⁶ Ye Gongchao’s poetic criticism such as “On New Poetry” (论新诗 *Lun xinshi*),¹⁰⁹⁷ “On the Poetry of T. S. Eliot” (艾略特的诗 *Ailüete de shi*),¹⁰⁹⁸ “On the Poetry of T. S. Eliot Again” (再论艾略特的诗 *Zailun Ailüete de shi*),¹⁰⁹⁹ and many Crescent Moon poets’ practice based on the impersonal theory. This poem is

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ya Xian 痲弦, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁹⁶ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 trans., “传统与个人的才能” *Chuantong yu geren de caineng* (“Tradition and the Individual Talent”), 学文月刊 *Xuewen yuekan* (*Xuewen Monthly*), Issue 1, 1934.5.1. The original text was published in *The Egoist* in 1919 and was later collected in various books of T. S. Eliot. cf: T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-22.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “On New Poetry”, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-69.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “艾略特的诗” *Ailüete de shi* (“On the Poetry of T. S. Eliot”). 《叶公超批评文集》 *Ye Gongchao piping wenji* (*Collection of Literary Criticism of Ye Gongchao*), edited by Chen Zishan 陈子善, Zhuhai Publishing House, 1998, pp. 111-120.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “再论艾略特的诗” *Zailun Ailüete de shi* (“On Poetry of T. S. Eliot Again”). *Collection of Literary Criticism of Ye Gongchao*, *op.cit.*, pp. 121-126.

therefore predicting not only the modernist tendency of Chinese new poetry, but also that of the Crescent Moon poetic school.

“A Portrait of the Self” is a long poem created by Sun Dayu in the early 1930s.¹¹⁰⁰ Sun was planning a poem of a thousand lines long, but there are only 380 lines completed in the end. This poem, according to Sun’s account in the 1980s, “is a portrait of my feelings, imaginations, and memories within 24 hours, hence the title ‘A Portrait of the Self’.”¹¹⁰¹ And the poet states with regret:

Due to the sudden change of circumstance, I didn't finish the poem...If I had the chance to revisit New York City fifty years later, despite the ebb and flow over these years, I believe I can still complete the poem within a year.¹¹⁰²

The poem is set against the background of New York City, and is composed of what “I”, the speaker of the poem, sees, hears, and thinks in a morning when traversing the city. There are two threads that are advancing the poem: on the one hand, the speaker passes through different places in New York City — from the morning street, to the subway train, to the Fifth Avenue, to the East River and Hudson River, and to the bay — and meets with different groups of people; and on the other hand, he conjures up various memories and thoughts about these people and their history and culture. What he sees and thinks of constitute a grand picture of the civilisation and modernisation of different ethnic groups.

The available part of the poem can be divided into eight sections.¹¹⁰³ The first section begins with “my” general feelings of New York City when “I” walk on the street in a morning:

Strict order and restless chaos.

Early in the morning today, the clouds in the sky

¹¹⁰⁰ The poem was serialised on the 2nd and 3rd issues of *Poetry Magazine* (诗刊 *Shikan*) in 1931 and then on the 39th issue of the *Supplement to Ta Kung Pao* (大公报 *Dagong bao*) in 1935.

¹¹⁰¹ Sun Dayu 孙大雨. An unpublished letter from Sun Dayu to Lan Dizhi. Cited from Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “Some Theoretical Issues”, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

¹¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰³ I borrowed Lan Dizhi’s way of dividing the poem. Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之, “Some Theoretical Issues”, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

Display a dove-grey colour, everyone's face
Is tinted with an inconceivable dark blue.
You, the great metropolis, I say, the great metropolis!
(The sun is crawling in and out of the clouds,
Which is a giant bag that no light leaks out.)
With countless huge rocks upon huge rocks, you build
Lonely and intimidating mountains of constructions...¹¹⁰⁴

This beginning set the tone for the entire poem, which is a generally gloomy, stressful, and intimidating atmosphere tinted with a sense of mystery — the “inconceivable dark blue” on human faces. The shade of colour, which is neither black nor white, but a mysterious and ambiguous “dark blue”, seems to be suggesting the complicated feeling and attitude of “I” toward the metropolis. The poem goes on to describe the “mountain-like” metropolis, with wheels and axles working ceaselessly, wheels of vehicles pressing on the streets, and subway trains “singing” overnight. The hectic rhythm of life, the hustle and bustle of the crowds, and the pressure of industrialisation are interlaced with a sense of dynamism and passion.

In the second section the speaker expresses his feeling and understanding of life in the metropolis with an equally ambiguous and even ambivalent tone. He claims to be “the nucleus of agony of all residents in New York”,¹¹⁰⁵ as he feels “the grief and suffering of immigrants”¹¹⁰⁶ from all countries and races. But at the same time, “I” feel much freer than the “Statue of Liberty” and much happier than the millionaires in New York, because although “the millionaires have won the gold, they have lost to me the sparkling dream of the soul”.¹¹⁰⁷ Then the speaker describes the happiness and suffering of the lower-class labourers in New York: the electricians, ironworkers, subway drivers, the Chinese laundry workers, and the female typists — some of these people will appear in later sections. These people, according to the speaker, are

¹¹⁰⁴ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “自己的写照” *Ziji de xiezhao* (“A Portrait of the Self”). *Selected Poetry of the Crescent Moon School*, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 190.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

creating miracles of industry and therefore are happy and high-spirited. But he continues to express his confusion and hesitation about this conclusion:

...But —
If my desire and ideals can only be expressed by
These numerous songs of industry;
What can express clearly
My grand frustration?

Oh! I do not know.¹¹⁰⁸

This section demonstrates the speaker's ambivalent attitude toward the modernised and industrialised metropolis. Ordinary people in the metropolis, working and constructing, having dreams and fulfilling dreams, are leading a busy life filled with a sense of achievement. But underlying all the hustle and bustle of the industrialised life, "I", along with other labour workers of various walks of life, is experiencing a greater sense of frustration and emptiness. This is the end of the introductory part of the poem, following which the speaker goes on to observe and meditate upon the different groups of people living in the metropolis, and display their frustration and emptiness underlying the apparently happy and hectic life.

The first group of people the speaker meets is the "black people" on the morning subway trains. They are, according to the speaker, "warriors without beating battle drums or singing battle songs".¹¹⁰⁹ The speaker thinks of the ancestors of the black people, who had fought with wild animals and the primitive world:

Those black men who charged forward
In the flames of wars of life,
Despite their ragged clothes,
And burnt complexions; their
Willpower was as strong and unbreakable as red copper, underlying which

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 191.

¹¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

There was always a sense of admirably tragic grandeur.¹¹¹⁰

By contrast, the black people on the train today have lost “the wild abandon and liberty” and “dignity” of their ancestors.¹¹¹¹ But the speaker thinks not only of the past glory of the black people at the sight of these “desolate and silent” “dark-skinned friends”.¹¹¹² He also looks forward, that “I can foresee your overall triumph at last in the future”.¹¹¹³ Apparently the speaker sympathises with the black people, concerned about their current suffering and inaction, and cherishing a hope of the future revival of their race. It is very likely that this sympathy comes from the poet’s concern for the fate of his own country, as the Chinese nation at that time shares much with the black race, and the poet is expressing his faith and expectation for the revival of his own nation.

Another group of people that draws “my” attention on the subway train is the white people (“the girl with blue eyes and blond hair”¹¹¹⁴). They lead a poor, messy, licentious life that lacks dignity as the black people do. In this section the speaker directly presents what he sees and hears on the train in a dramatic way, especially in dramatic dialogue/monologue, for example:

My sister told me, if I got sick,
I can make a call, now the damn blood
Has not come for two months, William,
The starry night, the damn ghost last
Morning, it was you again
Playing a prank on the shopkeeper! Mother says
She will come from California, I have to
Walk the streets in the night to earn extra money, how the hell
Can I raise you boy, but wait another

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 192.

¹¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹¹³ Ibid. p. 193.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 195.

Two years, she smiles with one eye

Half-closed...¹¹¹⁵

This is a fragment of a dialogue the speaker overhears on the train. He presents the fragment as it is so that the reader feels like overhearing it directly on the scene. The reader is able to feel the same sense of astonishment, discomfort, or pity as the speaker feels, and this adds the actuality, intensity, and immediacy to the poem. Although there is no context for the dialogue, it is not difficult to identify the chaotic, messy, impoverished state of life the woman-speaker leads. And this kind of dialogue or story happens everyday everywhere, as the speaker says, “I feel like seeing the scripts of the drama of life unfolding before me one after another”: some people is grumbling about the late payment of the wage, some is thinking back the love affair of last night, some is looking forward to another hangover in the next evening...¹¹¹⁶ This is the life of this group of people, busy and yet empty. The speaker, like the “young man” in “Several Individuals”, is a spectator, who takes record without giving his personal judgement.

The poem proceeds to the fifth section as the speaker moves out of the subway train and enters the Fifth Avenue. The section opens with

The sun shines over the Fifth Avenue;
The morning clouds have dispersed
Without leaving a trail. Healthy women and men
Over twenty and under thirty years old,
Each one of them is neatly dressed,
Glittering on the thoroughfare that is
Overflowing with the sunshine...¹¹¹⁷

In this picture of hope and vitality, the poet focuses on the group of female typists. They wear flowers and silky dresses, their eyes glittering and their bodies full of the

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 196.

¹¹¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 195-196.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 197.

youthful vigour. But the poet reveals in the end of the section the cruel, “realer” state of life underlying their decent appearances, that they are mindless puppets without free will of their own:

But their healthy white matter in the brains
Has outgrown, and the grey brain marrow is squeezed
Between the skull and the white matter, gradually
Diminishing, — thus apart from typing
And intercourse, they are nothing but
Many top-class puppets.¹¹¹⁸

This stereotyped depiction of the female typist is clearly reminiscent of the image of “typist” in “The Waste Land”, who is equally full of physical attraction and yet is leading a boring and depraved life with nothing on her mind.¹¹¹⁹

In the sixth section, the speaker passes through the Fifth Avenue to the two rivers, the East River and the Hudson River, where he thinks of the “Red man” — the Indians, because the riverside of the Hudson River used to be the land where the native Indians inhabit.¹¹²⁰ The speaker recalls how the Redman used to dance, worship, hunt, and fight on this land, and now there is only the river that flows as usual. But unlike in the section of the black people, the speaker here is not lamenting over the tragic fate of the Indian natives, but rather he is thinking of the relationship between the past, the present, and the future. He reminds the “poets who meditate on the past and mourn over the present”:

Although the two
Rivers see off the predecessors
And usher in the successors, you
Don't have to lament or ridicule
The transience of the fate of human beings! The eternity

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 198.

¹¹¹⁹ T. S. Eliot, “The Waste Land”, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-69.

¹¹²⁰ E. M. Rutenber, *History of the Indian Tribes of Hudson's River: Their Origin, Manners and Customs, Tribal and sub-tribal organizations, Wars, Treaties, etc., etc.*, Albany, N. Y.: J. Munsell, 1872.

Of human life is different from that of
Mountains and rivers: some of our flaming experiences
In an instant, (some deep sorrows,
Some overwhelming ecstasy, some brilliant meditations
On the universe from the hundreds of
Capable brains throughout the ages,) are much better than
The thousand years of silence of mountain rocks or the eternal
Roaring beside capes of the seas.¹¹²¹

And then he continues to present his understanding about the past and the present:

Alas! The grey “past” is nothing but
The shadow of the “present”, the verdant “future”
Is nothing but the tentacle on the head of
The consciousness: if we stop the exploration, pursuit,
And moulding of every moment of the “present”,
Not allowing the consciousness to light up
Our surroundings, ...
The whole spirit of our good fortune
Will disappear in an instant!¹¹²²

By looking back into the history of the Indians, the speaker is demonstrating his view of time and history: both the past and the future are illusory, and the only salvation for the human destiny is to seize every single moment in the present to explore more possibilities. Permanence is also to the speaker an illusory or arbitrary concept, because the momentary sparkle of human life is much more meaningful than the thousand years of silence and inaction. This view of time and history, by seeing both

¹¹²¹ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “A Portrait of the Self”, *op.cit.*, pp. 199-200.

¹¹²² *Ibid.* p. 200.

the past and the future as void and illusory, is closer to the Buddhist teaching that attaches great importance to the “present”.¹¹²³

The speaker then focuses his attention on the bridges of the two rivers, and the poem enters the seventh section. He compares the iron bridges to bows, and the sunlight reflected on the river to arrows that are fitted to the bowstrings and waiting for the order from the heaven. This analogy leads to the speaker’s further contemplation:

...— Ah,
Are you going to shoot the arrows of
New York citizens’ general approval of
Life, or the sharp doubts and questioning
Of the millions of people? Or perhaps there are
No bows, no arrows, and no meanings
Or symbols, all these have been merely one person’s
Imagination in the rain, coming from nothing?¹¹²⁴

These few lines are to my mind intimating the theme of the entire poem (although the poem is not completed). The image of “bow and arrow” is used to convey the poet’s meditation on the impact of modernisation on human beings. The speaker is reflecting on the meaning of life of the people living in one of the most modernised metropolises, that whether they are happy and content with their current state, or they are sceptical of it, or, perhaps the worst condition is, the people have lost the ability to think and question in the hectic and restless rhythm of the modernised life. Sun Dayu once interprets this poem and its relation to the title:

As for this unfinished long poem, the key relation between its title and the phenomena it presents lies in the great idea put forward by Descartes (1596-1650), the French philosopher living in the end of the 16th century and the mid-17th century, that: “I think, therefore I am”.¹¹²⁵

¹¹²³ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Our Appointment with Life: the Buddha’s Teaching on Living in the Present*, Parallax Press, 1990, pp. 41-46, 53-54.

¹¹²⁴ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “A Portrait of the Self”, *op.cit.*, pp. 200-201.

¹¹²⁵ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “Poetry and I”, *op.cit.*, pp. 314-315.

The poet seems to be suggesting that the poem, the entire world of the metropolis, is not real but merely comes from his own consciousness or “thinking”. This is echoed by the above quoted poetic lines in which the speaker questions whether all these have come from “merely one person’s imagination in the rain,¹¹²⁶ coming from nothing”. The speaker is uncertain about his thoughts, and he is as hesitant and sceptical as a typical “Modern ‘I’”. So he raises three questions pointing to three possibilities, and he finally concludes:

The bridges are grinning, and none of the bridge architects
Or builders would give me an answer.
Everyone, everyone, everyone in the city,
Is frowning and exploring his own resource,
Or hastily digging his own grave,
The waves of doubt are rolling on the beach of
My consciousness: — row by row.¹¹²⁷

Though full of doubts, the poet actually gives his answer, that everyone in the modernised city cares only about his own future, either leading to the better resource or the grave, and no one bothers to stop a moment and think about the questions raised by the speaker. The speaker, much akin to the “young man” in “Several Individuals”, is the only one who is ruminating in the desolate and meaningless modern world.

The eighth section is the last available part of the poem, and it is again the speaker’s random thought. The speaker arrives at the bay and, at the sight of the ships, he thinks of Christopher Columbus (1450/1451-1506) and the Western nations’ exploration of the world. He criticises these colonisers on the one hand, and on the other hand he admits that New York, this “modern Babylon and sleepless Chang’an

¹¹²⁶ It is interesting to note that this sentence is a pun. “One person’s imagination in the rain” can also be translated as “The personal imagination of Dayu (the name of the poet)” (the original text being: “一切都是大雨/一人底憧憬” *Yiqie doushi dayu yiren di chongjing*). So the poet may be playing on words to suggest that the whole poem is purely out of his own imagination, thus intimating the theme “I think, therefore I am”.

¹¹²⁷ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “A Portrait of the Self”, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

(长安)”,¹¹²⁸ with “the meeting and interaction of different people and the communication of diverse ideas”,¹¹²⁹ is a place “fully loaded with the rich dreams of life and being alive”.¹¹³⁰ The poem ends with the speaker’s praise of the great metropolis, believing that, like the “glorious ancient city of Athens”, it will “wear the divine light that illuminates hundreds of generations”.¹¹³¹

2) Modernist Features of “A Portrait of the Self” and Affinity with T. S. Eliot

Although “A Portrait of the Self” was well-received when it was published in the early 1930s,¹¹³² it has not been the subject of much attention in scholarship. There is no Western study on this poem, and only a few Chinese-language critical essays mention it in passing. The few critics have noticed the relationship between this poem and T. S. Eliot’s theory and poetry. Huang Changyong, for instance, argues that the poem was created under the influence of Eliot’s “impersonal theory”, and displayed the “emptiness, absurdity, and degradation of the modern metropolitan life”.¹¹³³ Cao Wansheng believes it was modeled on “The Waste Land”, Eliot’s poem composed in 1922, and represented the “waste-land feeling” of a modern man toward the metropolis.¹¹³⁴ I agree that certain affinity could be found between Eliot and this poem, but the affinity is not confined to the urban theme, the “waste-land feeling”, or the modernist techniques such as the “impersonal theory”. I think the poet shared with Eliot the understanding of the concept of “being modern”. In this section, I will

¹¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 202.

¹¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 204.

¹¹³¹ Ibid.

¹¹³² Xu Zhimo described the poem in the early 1930s as “the most elaborately constructed poem over the decade (which means ever since the emergence of the new poetry)”. Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, “《诗刊》前言” *Shikan qianyan* (“Preface to *Poetry Magazine*”). *The Complete works of Xu Zhimo, Volume Three, Prose 3, op.cit.*, p. 373.

¹¹³³ Huang Changyong 黄昌勇, “Study on the Crescent Moon Poetic School”, *op.cit.*, pp. 83-84.

¹¹³⁴ Cao Wansheng 曹万生, 《30年代现代派诗学与中西诗学》 *30 niandai xiandai pai shixue yu zhongxi shixue* (*The Modernist Poetics in the 1930s and the Sino-West Poetics*), Showwe Information Co., Ltd (Taiwan), 2013, p. 108.

discuss the modernist characteristics of this poem and its possible relationship with Eliot's poetics.

The modernist feature of the poem lies firstly in the nature of the themes of the poem. This poem differentiates itself from all the other poems discussed in this study in that underlying its subject matter of the "metropolitan life and scenery", there is no unified and definite theme. It displays the metropolitan life and scenery from varying perspectives and in different aspects. The poet is pondering on problems of various themes, for example, racial problems (the different suffering of different races), industrialisation (the stress and convenience it brings about), time problems (the dialectical relationship between permanence and transience, the relation between the past, present, and future), life in the modern metropolis (the dream and opportunity, as well as the oppression and alienation), the change of human nature (the failure of love, the loss of free will, the emptiness and meaninglessness of life), etc. Apparently the poet holds an ambiguous and complex attitude toward the modernised and industrialised metropolis, mixing the sense of shock and horror, admiration and concern, expectation and hesitation, gratitude and repulsion. This is the familiar and typical feeling of a modern man when he enjoys the modern achievements, and therefore, this poem has, as Shao Xunmei perceptively notes, "captured the complexity of machinery civilisation".¹¹³⁵

The complexity of modern civilisation acted upon the poet's mind, bringing in the second modernist feature of the poem, which is the employment of modernist techniques. The development of art, according to Eliot, is "refinement perhaps, complication certainly", and it is "in the end based on a complication in economics and machinery".¹¹³⁶ It is based on this hypothesis that Eliot further proposes the difficult situation a poet of the modern era faces and the technical effort he is supposed to make:

We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great

¹¹³⁵ Shao Xunmei 邵洵美, "Preface to *Twenty-five Poems*", *op.cit.*, p. 366.

¹¹³⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *op.cit.*, p. 16.

variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.¹¹³⁷

In this paragraph, I think Eliot reveals the two necessary conditions for the emergence of modernist poetry: it is a result when the difficult, complex civilisation in the modern era acts upon a “refined sensibility”. Eliot then provides some sort of “solution” or requirement for a poet with such a refined sensibility, that he must become “more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect” in face of this varying and complex modern situation.

Ye Gongchao believed that “the technical contribution of T. S. Eliot is entirely based on the theory expressed in this paragraph”, because it explains the “symbolist effect” produced by “metaphor”.¹¹³⁸ Metaphor in modernist poetry is not only used to suggest the poet’s meaning in an implicit way; it also serves as the poet’s “main instrument” to “[mark] the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension”.¹¹³⁹ In this sense, metaphor bears the meaning similar to that of the “metaphysical conceit”,¹¹⁴⁰ or in Eliot’s words, “to force, to dislocate... language into its meaning”. The term “conceit” was used in the 16th and 17th centuries to describe “elaborate metaphor” in English metaphysical poetry. The forcefulness of a conceit, according to Michelle Yeh, is in direct proportion to the distance between the tenor and the vehicle.¹¹⁴¹ It establishes a striking parallel, usually an elaborate parallel, between “two very dissimilar things or situations” in order to achieve an effect of novelty, wit, startling effectiveness,¹¹⁴² and in the end to generate great tension.¹¹⁴³ The early decades of the 20th century witnessed a great revival of interest in metaphysical poetry,¹¹⁴⁴ and many modernist poets would make conscious use of “conceit” to connect the seemingly unrelated and compare the seemingly dissimilar

¹¹³⁷ T. S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets”, *op.cit.*, p. 289.

¹¹³⁸ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “On the Poetry of T. S. Eliot”, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

¹¹³⁹ James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

¹¹⁴⁰ See the discussion of “Metaphysical Conceit” in Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *op.cit.*, pp. 180-184.

¹¹⁴¹ Michelle Yeh, “Metaphor and *Bi*”, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

¹¹⁴² M. H. Abrams, “Conceit”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁴³ Michelle Yeh, “Metaphor and *Bi*”, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

¹¹⁴⁴ M. H. Abrams, “Conceit”, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

images so as to shock the public and deliver his peculiar, intricate, and even inexpressible feelings and ideas of the modern “variety and complexity”.

This technique is widely used in “A Portrait of the Self”. The remote association and the collage of disconnected images allow the poet’s imagination to soar freely, unconstrained by time and space in the conventional logic, so that the poem shows a grand and comprehensive vision. In the subway train, for instance, the thought of “I” suddenly soars when the train starts to move:

I think of an extraordinarily brave ship
Ploughing through the sea wind and waves,
Facing the dark night, advancing forward and forward;
I think of the dozens of arrows of lightning
Following a crash of thunder, piercing a pair of
Lions of dark clouds; I think that,
From the earth forming its crust
To the sun vanishing into thin air,
The wisdom of human civilisation accounts for
Only a moment of existence, but at least it breaks
The aeons of silence in the universe.¹¹⁴⁵

From the subway train moving forward in the darkness, the speaker thinks of the ship that braves the dark night and keeps advancing, and then of the “arrows of lightning” that pierce the dark clouds, and then of the human civilisation that, although only existing for an instant as compared with the life of the earth, has at least pierces the darkness of ignorance and shakes the silence of the universe. The imagination of the poet soars from the land to the sea, to the sky, and then to the universe, and his meditation spans from the spatial to the temporal dimensions. This kind of far-ranging association has been widely used throughout the poem, that the speaker would conjure up a remote historical period, an ethnic group, or a literary text of the

¹¹⁴⁵ Sun Dayu 孙大雨, “A Portrait of the Self”, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

past (such as the Bible) at the sight of an object or scenery, but there is no obvious relationship between these images. This demonstrates what Michelle Yeh has described as the “disjunctive mode of imagery” prevalent in modern Chinese poetry under the influence of modernist poetics.¹¹⁴⁶ It also echoes Eliot’s understanding of a poet’s mind:

When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary...in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.¹¹⁴⁷

The third modernist characteristic of the poem, which is closely related to the above two, lies in the poet’s grand vision of the universe and strong sense of history. The poem is made “impersonal” not because the poet tries to hide himself behind a mask like Bian Zhilin does in “Several Individuals”, nor is it because he wants to restrain his emotion and avoid the sentimental tone. It is made “impersonal” because the poet possesses such a grand and comprehensive vision that he cannot and does not want to focus on a single person, a single event, or a single historical moment. Through the far-ranging association and allusion, the poet is able to juxtapose the past and the present, and draw together the unrelated individuals, cultures, and historical moments to “form new wholes”. I think it is in this sense that the poem could be seen as a true heir to the spirit of “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, the essay that Eliot expounds his understanding of tradition and modernity.

According to Eliot, the poet must continually remove his personality from his poem because his poem, and any poem, is a component of “a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written”,¹¹⁴⁸ and therefore, the poem is not a “turning loose of emotion”¹¹⁴⁹ or “the expression of personality”,¹¹⁵⁰ but rather the expression of the mind of the entire civilisation of both the past and the present. Eliot repeatedly asserts that the poet should neither ignore the past tradition nor try to passively and

¹¹⁴⁶ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry*, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

¹¹⁴⁷ T. S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets”, *op.cit.*, p. 285.

¹¹⁴⁸ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

one-sidedly conform to tradition. Rather, he should continually develop a “historical sense”,¹¹⁵¹ so as to join the tradition, interact with tradition, and even to form a new tradition:

...and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.¹¹⁵²

It is based on this theory that Eliot has created his great long poem “The Waste Land”, which is successful not only for its wide and daring use of modernist techniques, such as the symbolic imagery, disconnected language, dramatic dialogue and monologue, allusion and quotation, the collage of fragmentary vignettes, etc., but also for the “historical sense” the poem possesses. “Eliot is attempting”, as James Longenbach observes, “(especially through his highly developed use of allusion) to ‘form new wholes’ throughout the poem, merging not only individuals but different cultures and different moments in history”.¹¹⁵³ And “The Waste Land” could be understood as “a sequence of attempts to unify the world through the unifications of individuals”.¹¹⁵⁴

In “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, Eliot tries to convey a message that only when a poet is conscious of and bears in mind his place in history that he can properly position himself in his own time, and the true relation between the present and the past is neither a conformity nor a rupture, but a kind of coexistence, mutually influencing and illuminating. In another essay, Eliot made this point even more clearly:

¹¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 14.

¹¹⁵² Ibid.

¹¹⁵³ James Longenbach, “Modern Poetry”, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Second Edition, edited by Michael Levenson, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 119.

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

We do not imitate, we are changed; and our work is the work of the changed man; we have not borrowed, we have been quickened, and we become bearers of a tradition.¹¹⁵⁵

This is, in my opinion, the most striking affinity between the Crescent Moon poets and Eliot. It lies not only in the technical aspect or the modernist sensibilities such as the sense of desolation, futility, and dryness, but more importantly in the perspective of understanding the concept of the “modern”: being modern does not entail an entire overthrow of tradition, nor does it mean a passive conformity and coherence with tradition. Being modern requires a fusion, subversion, and creation at the same time, based on the “conformity between the old and the new”.¹¹⁵⁶

3) Tradition and Modernity: The Core Spirit of Crescent Moon Poetry

In 1934, T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” was translated by Bian Zhilin and published in the Crescent Moon journal, *Xuwen Monthly*.¹¹⁵⁷ Eliot’s view in this essay gained acceptance among many Crescent Moon writers. But I agree with Lloyd Haft that “affinity does not necessarily imply influence”, because it is hard to tell whether the Crescent Moon writers actively drew inspiration from Eliot or merely selected for translation the theories and works that best agreed with their own predisposition.¹¹⁵⁸ In fact the Crescent Moon poets’ interest in Eliot’s poetics is quite understandable. Eliot’s ambiguous attitude toward the literary past, the attitude that on the one hand tries to respect, preserve, and inherit tradition, and on the other hand attempts to “disturb the universe”¹¹⁵⁹ with the extremely innovative and even subversive way of writing, seems to be remotely echoing the core spirit of the Crescent Moon School. Guided by the modern conservative spirit, the Crescent

¹¹⁵⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Reflections on Contemporary Poetry [IV]”, *Egoist*, Vol. 6, no. 3, July 1919, p. 39. See also James Longenbach, “Modern Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

¹¹⁵⁶ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁵⁷ Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 trans., “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁵⁸ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

¹¹⁵⁹ In Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, the hero Prufrock repeatedly asks himself this question, “Do I dare/ disturb the universe”. I think this question shows Eliot’s ambiguous attitude toward tradition. T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, *The Complete Poems & Plays of T. S. Eliot*, Faber and Faber, 2004 [1915]. p. 14.

Moon members have also been trying to absorb the new culture, including Western culture, without abandoning Chinese tradition *en route*. Past and present, the East and the West, have never been an “either-or” option for them, but are forming “new wholes” and mutual conformity with each other.

When talking about the literary tendency of T. S. Eliot, Ye Gongchao makes an interesting point:

If one defines him [Eliot] as a Classicist because he had been influenced by the Elizabethan drama and the “metaphysical poets”, then why can’t we say that he is a modern metaphysical poet? If [one calls him Classicist] because he tries to restore tradition, it will be against his own theory because his “historical sense” is a concept encompassing both the past and the present.¹¹⁶⁰

Apparently Ye refuses to view Eliot as a “Classicist”, although this is how Eliot viewed himself.¹¹⁶¹ By calling Eliot a “modern metaphysical poet”, Ye actually blurred the boundary between the classicist and the modernist. This statement, I suggest, in fact betrays the self-positioning of Ye Gongchao and many Crescent Moon poets. They were at the same time classicists and modernists, because the two ideas can both be enlarged and interpenetrating in some circumstances, and there was no clear boundary between the two in their minds. The ultimate aim of their writing is, as Ye says again, to “add the voice of our time to the living whole of all the Chinese poetry of the past, and to readjust the existing order, making the old and the new mutually conform with each other”.¹¹⁶² The poet, as Eliot suggested, shall not be bounded by one specific literary period, style, or figure, but absorb and interact with what is available in the past, and form a new tradition of the present.¹¹⁶³

In historical hindsight, the Crescent Moon poets have to some extent fulfilled this aim and shaped new literary traditions with their theory and practice. The poetry of Xu Zhimo, for instance, represents a kind of romantic tradition today. His name, as

¹¹⁶⁰ Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “On the Poetry of T. S. Eliot”, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

¹¹⁶¹ The original quotation is: “The general point of view may be described as classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion.” T. S. Eliot, “Preface”, *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order*. Faber and Faber, 1970. p. 7.

¹¹⁶² Ye Gongchao 叶公超, “On New Poetry”, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

¹¹⁶³ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

Julia C. Lin says, “is almost synonymous with modern Chinese poetry”.¹¹⁶⁴ His romanticism has combined the dynamism of Western romantic poetry and the sentimental and lyrical tradition in Chinese classics. His peculiar amalgamation of the vernacular language, classical Chinese, and Westernised diction and even syntax, though not completely successful, has “considerable reference value” for younger poets.¹¹⁶⁵ In the early 1920s when the vernacular language was only a newly-accepted and immature instrument for many Chinese poets,¹¹⁶⁶ Xu was able to appropriate the classical poetic idioms and images to create a refined aesthetic state, demonstrating a style clearly distinct from most other Westernised Chinese poets.

Wen Yiduo, by combining English prosody and Chinese poetic tradition, formulates his own theory of poetic metre or *Geliu*, constituting a new tradition for modern Chinese poetry. Despite a few limitations, his metrical theory laid a foundation for later poets’ exploration of poetic forms. More importantly, his emphasis on the artistic nature of poetry and his differentiation of poetry from prose has to a certain extent corrected the overly emancipated and careless attitude of some early new poets in China, thus establishing a classic tradition that stresses order, discipline, and restraint.

Bian Zhilin represents another tradition, the modernist tradition, of new poetry. But as Lloyd Haft has pointed out, Bian’s poetry is by no means purely derived from European models. Rather, he frequently places his images in a general context “suggestive of Buddhism, Taoism, or familiar elements of classical Chinese poetry”.¹¹⁶⁷ The mixture or juxtaposition of Chinese and Western elements could also be found in many poems of Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Chen Mengjia, Sun Dayu, etc.

Bian Zhilin’s increasing interest in Western modernism, in my opinion, is a sign or a prelude to the modernist turn of the Crescent Moon School in general. The Crescent

¹¹⁶⁴ Julia C. Lin, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

¹¹⁶⁵ Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, “Yunyou 云游 Wandering in the Clouds”, *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 255.

¹¹⁶⁶ Lloyd Haft, *Pien Chih-lin*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 61.

Moon School closed all its activities in 1934, and it is hard to say today what would have happened had it persisted for a longer time. It seems highly possible, however, that its members would have moved toward the modernist camp. Apart from those who had died earlier and who had stopped writing poetry in the 1930s, most representative Crescent Moon poets, such as Chen Mengjia, Lin Huiyin, Shao Xunmei, Sun Dayu, and Bian Zhilin, started experimenting with modernist poems,¹¹⁶⁸ and later became active contributors to the modernist magazine *New Poetry* 新诗 (*Xinshi*).¹¹⁶⁹ Ye Gongchao also kept introducing, translating, and criticising Western modernist trend in Crescent Moon journals. This testifies to the statement of Ai Qing 艾青 (1910-1996) that “the modernist poetic school in modern Chinese literary history has evolved largely from the Crescent Moon group and the Symbolist Poetic School”.¹¹⁷⁰

5. Conclusion

I have in this chapter discussed the modernist face of the Crescent Moon poetics. Technically speaking, the Crescent Moon poets could not be seen as modernists because they have only demonstrated a few modernist characteristics and experimented with some modernist techniques. As compared with Western modernism that seeks to go against reality by “deforming reality, shattering its human aspect, dehumanizing it”,¹¹⁷¹ the Crescent Moon School in general has maintained a worldview of wholeness and order, and sought to explore the meanings of human reality and poetry.

But the Crescent Moon poets indeed have shown increasing interest in modernism, and the modernist elements became more and more evident in their poetry, especially

¹¹⁶⁸ Shi Ling 石灵, *op.cit.*, pp. 299-300.

¹¹⁶⁹ The magazine was founded in 1936 by Dai Wangshu and a few other poets interested in Western modernist poetry. Bian Zhilin and Sun Dayu are on its editorial board, and Lin Huiyin is also a regular contributor. Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Modernism in Modern Chinese Literature”, *op.cit.*, pp. 292-293.

¹¹⁷⁰ Ai Qing 艾青, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁷¹ José Ortega Y Gasset, “The Dehumanization of Art”, *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts*, edited by Irving Howe, Horizon Press, New York, 1967, p. 88.

after 1930. Feeling increasingly alienated from the mainstream revolutionary discourse in China, the Crescent Moon poets were on the one hand preoccupied with the exploration of a deeper reality and enjoyed unique insights as “poet-seers”, and on the other hand, they came to be more uncertain of the notions of progress, demonstrating the typical modernist sensibilities such as disillusionment, decadence, and nihilism. This ambivalent mentality helped shape a “Modern I”, who was acutely conscious of the modern situation but at the same time extremely doubtful of himself. He was no longer the romantic enlightener, leader, and creator, but a “modern I” who meditates on the desolate modern world without making judgements or taking sides.

In the end, the modern conservative mind of the Crescent Moon poets drew them closer to Eliot’s theories. Their poetry became more and more comprehensive, allusive, and indirect, and their vision depersonalised and profoundly historical. They blurred the boundary between the past and the present, the old and the new, the romantic, classic, and modernist. Like Eliot, they made every effort to develop a “historical sense”, embracing new cultures without abandoning the tradition. This is the most striking affinity between the Crescent Moon poets and Eliot, and this is the Crescent Moon understanding of the “modern” guided by their modern conservative spirit.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the poets, poetry, and poetics of the Crescent Moon School. Although poetry is the most conspicuous practice of the group, there are some limitations in extant literature. Firstly, studies on the group history mainly discussed the historical development, major activities, and key members of the group. This type of research has two limitations. In the historical aspect, there lacks an analysis of the underlying values shared by the group of intellectuals behind the various activities and facts. In the poetic aspect, they mostly include poetry as a part of the Crescent Moon history, and focus only on the discussion of the Formalisation Movement

Secondly, Chinese studies on the poetry of the group mainly examined the historical background, poetic theories, and poets' biographies and thought. Some of them tend to attach generalised labels to describe the poetic features, without clearly explaining the labels or analysing specific texts. The above two ways of studies, in my view, both fall under what Wellek and Warren have termed the "extrinsic approach" of literary study. Although they are helpful to understanding literature, they cannot dispose of problems of "description, analysis, and evaluation of an object such as a work of literary art".¹¹⁷²

Thirdly, some Western studies focusing on the major poets of the group have looked into the intrinsic elements of literature by conducting textual analysis. But from the investigation of individual poets one can see neither the interaction among the poets, nor the common development of the group and their collective influence on history and culture.

The limitations of current research lead to two questions that this thesis has posed:

- 1) What common values or outlook can be found underlying the various cultural practices of the Crescent Moon School, prompting them to make certain decisions and take certain position in different situations? Answering this question helps to explain some seemingly conflicting aspects in the Crescent

¹¹⁷² René Wellek and Austin Warren, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

Moon practices, such as the conflicts between their Western experiences and conservative cultural position, and between their romantic poetic practice and classic-oriented theories.

- 2) What are the poetic features and underlying poetics of the group as a whole? What in their poetics has changed over time and what remained unchanged?

To answer these questions, this thesis firstly examined the core spirit of the group by reviewing their activities and historical development, and then reconstructed their poetics by analysing the poems with both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches.

So this thesis can be divided into two parts to deal with the two aspects of these questions. The first part (Chapters One and Two) looks into the history and core spirit of the group. By reviewing the activities, members, and publications of the Crescent Moon School, I found that their cultural and political practices displayed a consistent value orientation, which can be described as opposition to the radical and extreme mode of thinking and an advocacy of the ideas of moderation and eclecticism. This value orientation appeared to be conservative and even reactionary in the May Fourth era when tradition was severely challenged and radical revolution and progressivism was the zeitgeist. But I suggest that this seemingly conservative mindset actually reflected a unique way of understanding and pursuing modernity. I refer to this value orientation as the “modern conservative” spirit,¹¹⁷³ which in my view is the core spirit that had bound the group of people together and guided their various activities and decision-makings.

In Chapter Two I examined the modern conservative spirit and how it was distinguished from the May Fourth Occidentalism and traditional conservatism. I also specified how this spirit was expressed in various activities, especially the poetic practice, of the Crescent Moon School. The modern conservative thought emphasised the continuity and inheritance between tradition and contemporaneity, and asserted the universal applicability and modern value of some aspects of the

¹¹⁷³ This term was partly inspired by Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, and Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*

local culture. Therefore, it repudiated the May Fourth discourse of iconoclasm and Westernisation. But unlike the traditional conservatism, its assertion of tradition and the local was not from a nativist or defensive standpoint, but because of its unique understanding of modernity. Unlike the popular way of understanding modernity in the May Fourth era as a unilinear, evolutionary progress of time and history, the modern conservatives saw modernity as based on the multiplicity and diversity of localities.¹¹⁷⁴ They asserted a multi-directional and multi-linear mode of development where the traditional or the local was not the opposite of the modern or the global but a complement and enrichment to it. With this non-binary mode of thinking, to be “modern” was no longer considered to be “new” in the temporal sense. Rather, it was supposed to be a critical synthesis of the “universal” elements of diverse local cultures. Instead of being anti-modern, it represents a critical and extended understanding of the Western definition of modernity.¹¹⁷⁵

Then I demonstrated how the modern conservative mode of thinking was displayed in the various activities of the Crescent Moon School and how they acquired such a spirit. I have shown that it was because of their Western educational experience, from which they had closer contact with Western society and received the encouragement from their Western mentors and friends, that they were able to re-evaluate the China-West cultural relations and developed the modern conservative outlook. I argue that this core spirit is what they fundamentally gained from their Western experience, and is what differentiated them from most other contemporary intellectuals.

This core spirit, in my opinion, was reflected in the poetic practice of the Crescent Moon School in at least two aspects. Firstly, it finds its expression in the poets’ conscious selection and critical synthesis between the Chinese and Western, the classical and modern poetic elements. Unlike many other new poets in the May Fourth era, the Crescent Moon poets sought to blur the dichotomous distinctions between the old and the new, the Chinese and the Western. They tried to draw

¹¹⁷⁴ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 165-167.

¹¹⁷⁵ Shu-mei Shih, *op.cit.*, pp. 153-157; and Edmund S. K. Fung, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

inspiration from the conventions instead of repudiating tradition. But they were neither “unable” to break with the conventions nor defending tradition on a nativist ground. Rather, the Chinese/traditional and Western/modern poetic elements were all selected in a conscious and critical way. In their poetic values, as I have shown in Chapter Two, the “newness” of new poetry was not defined by the negation and rupture of the old/tradition, but by a critical synthesis and mutual conformity of the old and the new, the local and the global.

Secondly, the core spirit was reflected in the simultaneous coexistence of diverse literary tendencies in the Crescent Moon poetry. So the second part of this thesis (Chapters Three, Four, and Five) analyses the poems and examines the three poetic faces, i.e. the romantic temperament, the classic ideal, and the modern consciousness. My approach to poetry is to analyse the formal and textual features of the poetic texts and putting them into the historical and literary contexts. By the combination of textual and contextual analysis, I seek to understand what the poems say and how they are said. When discussing a specific poetic face, I have selected poems created by various Crescent Moon poets in various periods of time. This is to show the diversity and simultaneousness of different poetic faces throughout their poetic practice. Although there seems to be some conflicting notions and assumptions among the three poetic tendencies, I argue that the three faces have always coexisted with and complementing each other under the guidance of the modern conservative spirit.

1) Coexistence between the romantic temperament and the classic ideal:

The “romantic” and the “classic” are sometimes considered to be opposite notions,¹¹⁷⁶ but they coexisted well in the Crescent Moon poetics. I believe this is largely because of the influence of the New Humanist thought, one of the major sources that had shaped the classic face of the Crescent Moon poetics. As I have shown in Chapter Four, New Humanism stresses the eclectic and mediatory virtues, or “the law of measure”. The romantic assertion of emotion and free

¹¹⁷⁶ Chris Baldick, “Classicism”, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

expression does not clash with the classic ideals of reason and restraint, because in the New Humanist definition, the true classic spirit seeks to achieve a proper proportion of reason and emotion, and a true classicist does not “establish any hard and fast opposition between judgment and imagination”.¹¹⁷⁷ It championed the balance and proportion between dualistic concepts. This non-radical and non-contradictory mode of thinking well demonstrates the modern conservative spirit. So I have argued that the New Humanist influence had strengthened the modern conservative spirit of the group.

Moreover, I also identified two devices that the Crescent Moon poets have employed to achieve the restrained way of expressing emotion: A. the use of imagery to project the poet’s subjective emotion; B. the use of dramatic or descriptive technique to depersonalise the poet’s subjective emotion. I suggest that with the two devices, the Crescent Moon poets were able to achieve the balance between the romantic emotion and the classic restraint in not only theory but also practice.

2) Coexistence between the classic ideal and the modern consciousness

The classic ideal of health and dignity is conflicting with some of the modernist sensibilities such as decadence and nihilism. But the Crescent Moon poets have in most cases expressed these sensibilities in a rather restrained and indirect manner, thus maintaining a balance between the classic and modernist elements. Moreover, among the variety of modernist tendencies, the Crescent Moon poets were particularly drawn to the poetic ideas of T. S. Eliot. As I have shown in Chapter Five, one easily finds the poets’ interest in Eliot in the creation and criticism of Xu Zhimo, Ye Gongchao, Bian Zhilin, and Sun Dayu. By a textual analysis of the long poem of Sun Dayu, I have demonstrated that the affinities between Eliot and the Crescent Moon poets lied not only in the modernist techniques, or themes, or sensibilities, but more importantly in the understanding of the concept of being “modern”: being modern does not necessarily involve a

¹¹⁷⁷ Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

rupture of the tradition. It involves a critical integration with the literary past and a creation of a new tradition. Like Eliot, the Crescent Moon poets were also seeking a middle way between conformity and subversion, and a balance between the classic and the modernist. This understanding of tradition and modernity testifies to the modern conservative spirit of the group.

Aside from exploring how the core spirit is expressed in their poetry and poetics, Chapters Three to Five also draw the following conclusions about the Crescent Moon poetics:

- 1) The Crescent Moon poetics have exhibited more diverse faces than the mere pursuit of form and metre. As a result, their contributions to the new poetry development are not confined to the Formalisation Movement. As I have shown in Chapter Five, they opened up many new traditions, including the romantic, classic, and modernist traditions, for Chinese new poetry in both theory and practice.
- 2) The Crescent Moon poetics have been influenced by Western literary traditions. This influence does not only take place on the individual level between a Western master and a Chinese young poet, and it is not only reflected in the similarities or parallels between two poems in images, diction, or themes. I argue that the various literary traditions in the West, including romanticism, classicism, and modernism, have affected the group of poets' general understanding of the nature of poetry, the self-positioning of poets, the modes of expression, and the theoretical conceptions. Because of the varieties and complexities of these Western literary traditions, the influence can only be identified by analysing their specific features and attributes. The generalised and impressionistic way of study is not helpful to identify in which aspect and to what extent the influence had taken place, nor is it helpful to understand why and how the seemingly conflicting notions and terms could have coexisted with each other.
- 3) The poetic faces of the group have generally changed over time from the formless, "*Sturm und Drang*" way of expression in the early 1920s, through the pursuit of order, form, and restraint in the mid-1920s, to the comprehensive,

indirect, and impersonal expression after the 1930s. The direction of the change actually reflects the increasing alienation and marginalisation the Crescent Moon poets experienced with the deterioration of the national situation, the growing nationalist mood in society, and the radicalisation of the mainstream literary scene. The changing poetic faces prove the interaction between literature and history.

- 4) Although the dominant poetic face changed over time, the three faces have always been coexisting in each stage of their poetic practice. The diversity and simultaneousness of poetics demonstrates the modern conservative intellectuals' understanding and pursuit of literary modernity.

By looking into the history, core spirit, and poetry of the Crescent Moon School, this thesis places the group into the context of the Republican modern conservative trend. To Shu-mei Shih's discussion of the inheritance relationship between the neotraditionalist philosophy and the Beijing School literature, this thesis adds that the Crescent Moon School was a missing link between them. Therefore, I argue that the philosophy of the late 1910s and early 1920s neotraditionalists, the poetics of the mid-1920s Crescent Moon School, and the fiction of the mid-1930s Beijing School have constituted a modern conservative intellectual trend in Republican China. They represented a dissenting voice in the May Fourth and post-May Fourth era by defying the iconoclastic discourse and advocating an eclectic and non-radical outlook. But they were also committed pursuers of modernity and cosmopolitanism.

Due to the time limit of this short thesis, I have only analysed the poetic features and values of the Crescent Moon School. The possible influence of Western poets and poems has been discussed, but it is not the focus of this study. Future research could further investigate the specific interactions between Chinese and Western poets and study their poems from a comparative perspective.

Moreover, this study only explores the poetic practice of the Crescent Moon School. But I believe the core spirit I have found could contribute to future researchers when the other activities of the group, such as drama, politics, fiction, or prose writings, become their interested subjects. The cultural practices of the Crescent Moon School can be better understood when taking into account this core spirit.

Appendix: Original Poems in Chinese

草上的露珠儿 (节选)

——徐志摩 (pp. 134-135)

草上的露珠儿
颗颗是透明的水晶球，
新归来的燕儿
在旧巢里呢喃个不休；

诗人哟！可不是春至人间
还不开放你
创造的喷泉，
嗤嗤！吐不尽南山北山的璠瑜，
洒不完东海西海的琼珠，
融和琴瑟箫笙的音韵，
饮餐星辰日月的光明！
诗人哟！可不是春在人间，
还不开放你
创造的喷泉！
这一声霹雳
震破了漫天的云雾，
显焕的旭日
又升临在黄金的宝座；
柔软的南风
吹皱了大海慷慨的面容，
洁白的海鸥
上穿云下没波自在优游；
……
诗人哟！
你是时代精神的先觉者哟！
你是思想艺术的集成者哟！
你是人天之际的创造者哟！

……
你是精神困穷的慈善翁，
你展临真善美的万丈虹，
你居住在真生命的最高峰！

红烛 (节选)

——闻一多 (pp. 137-138)

红烛啊！
这样红的烛！
诗人啊！
吐出你的心来比比，
可是一般颜色？

……
红烛啊！
既制了，便烧着！

烧罢！烧罢！
烧破世人底梦，
烧沸世人底血——
也救出他们的灵魂，
也捣破他们的监狱！

红烛啊！
你心火发光之期，
正是泪流开始之日。

……
红烛啊！
流罢！你怎能不流呢？
请将你的脂膏，
不息地流向人间，
培出慰藉底花儿，
结成快乐的果子！

红烛啊！
你流一滴泪，灰一分心。
灰心流泪你的果，
创造光明你的因。

红烛啊！
“莫问收获，但问耕耘。”

寄一多基相

——朱湘 (p.140-141)

我是一个惫殆的游人，
蹒跚于旷漠之原中，
我形影孤单，挣扎前进，
伴我的有秋暮的悲风。

你们的心是一间茅屋，
小窗中射出友谊的红光；
我的灵魂呵，火边歇下罢，
这正是你长眠的地方。

莲灯

——林徽因 (p.142-143)

如果我的心是一朵莲花，
正中擎出一支点亮的蜡，
荧荧虽则单是那一剪光，
我也要它骄傲的捧出辉煌。
不怕它只是我个人的莲灯，
照不见前后崎岖的人生——
浮沉它依附着人海的浪涛
明暗自成了它内心的秘奥。
单是那光一闪花一朵——

像一叶轻舸驶出了江河——
宛转它漂随命运的波涌
等候那阵阵风向远处推送。
算做一次过客在宇宙里，
认识这玲珑的生从容的死，
这飘忽的途程也就是个——
也就是个美丽美丽的梦。

去罢

——徐志摩 (pp. 146-147)

去罢，人间，去罢！
我独立在高山的峰上；
去罢，人间，去罢！
我面对着无极的穹苍。
去罢，青年，去罢！
与幽谷的香草同埋；
去罢，青年，去罢！
悲哀付与暮天的群鸦。
去罢，梦乡，去罢！
我把幻景的玉杯摔破；
去罢，梦乡，去罢！
我笑受山风与海涛之贺。
去罢，种种，去罢！
当前有插天的高峰！
去罢，一切，去罢！
当前有无穷的无穷！

这是一个懦怯的世界 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p.147-147)

这是一个懦怯的世界，
容不得恋爱，容不得恋爱！
披散你的满头发，
赤露你的一双脚；
跟着我来，我的恋爱，
抛弃这个世界
殉我们的恋爱！
……
跟着我来，
我的恋爱！
人间已经掉落在我们的后背，——
看呀，这不是白茫茫的大海？
白茫茫的大海，
白茫茫的大海，
无边的自由，我与你的恋爱！

毒药(节选)

——徐志摩 (p. 148)

今天不是我歌唱的日子，我口边涎着狞恶的微笑，
不是我说笑的日子，我胸怀间插着发冷光的利刃；
相信我，我的思想是恶毒的因为这世界是恶毒的，
我的灵魂是黑暗的因为太阳已经灭绝了光彩，
我的声调是像坟堆里的夜鸦因为人间已经杀尽了一切的和谐，
我口音像是冤鬼责问他的仇人因为一切的思已经让路给一切的怨；
但是相信我真理是在我的话里虽则我的话像是毒药，
真理是永远不含糊的虽则我的话里仿佛有两头蛇的舌，
蝎子的尾尖，蜈蚣的触须；只因为我的心里充满著比毒药更强烈，
比咒诅更狠毒，比火焰更猖狂，比死更深奥的不忍心与怜悯心与爱心，
所以我说的话是毒性的，咒诅的，燎灼的，虚无的；

灰色的人生(节选)

——徐志摩 (pp.148-149)

我想——我想开放我的宽阔的粗暴的嗓音，唱
一支野蛮的大胆的骇人的新歌；

我想拉破我的袍服，我的整齐的袍服，露出
我的胸膛，肚腹，肋骨与筋络；

我想放散我一头的长发，像一个游方僧似的
散披着一头的乱发；

我也想蹀我的脚，蹀我的脚，在巉牙似的道
上，快活地，无畏地走着。

…

我只是狂喜地大踏步地向前——向前——口
唱着暴烈的，粗鲁的，不成章的歌调；

来，我邀你们到海边去，听风涛震撼大空的
声调；

来，我邀你们到山中去，听一柄利斧斫伐老
树的清音；

来，我邀你们到密室里去，听残废的，寂寞
的灵魂的呻吟；

来，我邀你们到云霄外去，听古怪的大鸟孤
独的悲鸣；

来，我邀你们到民间去，听衰老的，病痛的，
贫苦的，残毁的，受压迫的，烦闷的，奴服的，
懦怯的，丑陋的，罪恶的自杀的，——和着深秋
的风声与雨声——合唱的“灰色的人生”！

太阳吟

——闻一多 (pp. 150-152)

太阳啊，刺得我心痛的太阳！
又逼走了游子底一出还乡梦，

又加他十二个时辰底九曲回肠！

太阳啊，火一样烧着的太阳！
烘干了小草尖头底露水，
可烘得干游子底冷泪盈眶？

太阳啊，六龙骖驾的太阳！
省得我受这一天天底缓刑，
就把五年当一天跑完那又何妨？

太阳啊——神速的金乌——太阳！
让我骑着你每日绕行地球一周，
也便能天天望见一次家乡！

太阳啊，楼角新升的太阳！
不是刚从我们东方来的吗？
我的家乡此刻可都依然无恙？

太阳啊，我家乡来的太阳！
北京城里底官柳裹上一身秋了罢？
唉！我也憔悴的同深秋一样！

太阳啊，奔波不息的太阳！
你也好象无家可归似的呢。
啊！你我的身世一样地不堪设想！

太阳啊，自强不息的太阳！
大宇宙许就是你的家乡罢。
可能指示我我底家乡底方向？

太阳啊，这不像我的山川，太阳！
这里的风云另带一般颜色，
这里鸟儿唱的调子格外凄凉。

太阳啊，生命之火底的太阳！
但是谁不知你是球东半底情热，
同时又是球西半底智光？

太阳啊，也是我家乡底太阳！
此刻我回不了我往日的家乡，
便认你为家乡也还得失相偿。

太阳啊，慈光普照的太阳！
往后我看见你时，就当回家一次，
我的家乡不在地下乃在天上！

海上歌 (节选)

——孙大雨 (pp.153-154)

我要到海上去，
哈哈！
我要游水底的宫廷。

龙皇生满一身的毛发，
沙鱼披着银甲，
星鱼衔着银灯，
响螺同海蚌在石窟底下吹笙。

我要到海上去，

我要会海上的神仙。
神仙不知道住在何方，
好像是在海上；
好像是在天边，——
我寻了许久寻到虚无缥缈间。

雪花的快乐

——徐志摩 (pp. 155-156)

假如我是一朵雪花，
翩翩的在半空里潇洒，
我一定认清我的方向——
飞飏，飞飏，飞飏，——
这地面上有我的方向。

不去那冷寞的幽谷，
不去那凄清的山麓，
也不上荒街去惆怅——
飞飏，飞飏，飞飏，——
你看，我有我的方向！

在半空里娟娟的飞舞，
认明了那清幽的住处，
等着她来花园里探望——
飞飏，飞飏，飞飏，——
啊，她身上有朱砂梅的清香！

那时我凭藉我的身轻，
盈盈的，沾住了她的衣襟，
贴近她柔波似的心胸——
消溶，消溶，消溶——
溶入了她柔波似的心胸！

偶然

——徐志摩 (pp. 157-158)

我是天空里的一片云，
偶尔投影在你的波心——
你不必讶异，
更无须欢喜——
在转瞬间消灭了踪影。

你我相逢在黑夜的海上，

你有你的，我有我的，方向；
你记得也好，
最好你忘掉，
在这交会时互放的光亮！

一朵野花

——陈梦家 (p. 160)

一朵野花在荒原里开了又落了，
不想到这小生命，向着太阳发笑，
上帝给他的聪明他自己知道，
他的欢喜，他的诗，在风前轻摇。

一朵野花在荒原里开了又落了，
他看见青天，看不见自己的渺小，
听惯风的温柔，听惯风的怒号，
就连他自己的梦也容易忘掉。

废园

——朱湘 (p.162)

有风时白杨萧萧着，
无风时白杨萧萧着：
萧萧外更不听到什么：

野花悄悄的发了，
野花悄悄的谢了；
悄悄外园里更没什么。

心跳

——闻一多 (pp. 164-165)

这灯光，这灯光漂白了的四壁；
这贤良的椽子，朋友似的亲密；
这古书的纸香一阵阵的袭来；
要好的茶杯贞女一般的洁白；
受哺的小儿唼呷在母亲怀里，
鼾声报道我大儿康健的消息……
这神秘的静夜，这浑圆的和平，
我喉咙里颤动着感谢的歌声。
但是歌声马上又变成了咒诅，
静夜！我不能，不能受你的贿赂。
谁希罕你这墙内尺方的和平！
我的世界还有更辽阔的边境。
这四墙既隔不断战争的喧嚣，
你有什么方法禁止我的心跳？
最好是让这口里塞满了沙泥，
如其它只会唱着个人的休戚！
最好是让这头颅给田鼠掘洞，

让这一团血肉也去喂着尸虫。
如果只是为了一杯酒，一本诗，
静夜里钟摆摇来的一片闲适，
就听不见了你们四邻的呻吟，
看不见寡妇孤儿抖颤的身影，
战壕里的痉挛，疯人咬着病榻，
和各种惨剧在生活的磨子下。
幸福！我如今不能受你的私贿，
我的世界不在这尺方的墙内。
听！又是一阵炮声，死神在咆哮。
静夜！你如何能禁止我的心跳？

黄河谣

——陈梦家 (p. 166)

浩浩的黄河不是从天上来的，
它是我们父亲的田渠，母亲的浣溪；
从噶达齐苏老峰奔流到大海，
它是我们父亲的田渠，母亲的浣溪。
在它两岸，我们祖先的二十四个朝代，
它听到我们父亲的呼劳，母亲的悲哀。

浩浩的黄河永远不会止歇的，
它有我父亲的英勇，母亲的仁慈；
奔泛时像火焰，静流时像睡息，
它有我父亲的威严，母亲的温宜。
五千年来它这古代的声音总在提问：
可忘了你们父亲的雄心，母亲的容忍？

将进酒 (节选)

——李白 (pp. 166-167)

君不见黄河之水天上来，奔流到海不复回。
君不见高堂明镜悲白发，朝如青丝暮成雪。
人生得意须尽欢，莫使金樽空对月。

微光

——林徽因 (pp. 168-170)

街上没有光，没有灯，
店廊上一角挂着有一盏；
他和她把他们一家的运命
含糊的，全数交给这黯淡。

街上没有光，没有灯，
店窗上，斜角，照着有半盏。
合家大小朴实的脑袋，
并排儿，熟睡在土炕上。

外边有雪夜，有泥泞；
沙锅里有不够明日的米粮；
小屋，静守住这微光，
缺乏着生活上需要的各样。

缺的是把干柴，是杯水，麦面……
为这吃的喝的，本说不到信仰，——
生活已然，固定的，单靠气力，
在肩臂上边，来支持那生的胆量。

明天，又明天，又明天……
一切都限定了，谁还说希望，——
即使是做梦，在梦里，闪着，
仍旧是这一粒孤勇的光亮？

街角里有盏灯，有点光，
挂在店廊，照在窗槛，
他和她，把他们一家的运命，
明白的，全数交给这凄惨。

叫化活该 (节选)

——徐志摩 (pp. 171-172)

“行善的大姑，修好的爷，”
西北风尖刀似的猛刺着他的脸。
“赏给我一点你们吃剩的油水吧！”
一团模糊的黑影，捱紧在大门边。

……
我也是战栗的黑影一堆，
蠕伏在人道的前街；
我也只要一些同情的温暖，
遮掩我的刚残的余骸——
但这沈沈的紧闭的大门：谁来理睬；
街道上只冷风的嘲讽“叫化活该！”

你是人间的四月天

——一句爱的赞颂

——林徽因 (pp. 174-175)

我说你是人间的四月天，
笑响点亮了四面风，轻灵
在春的光艳中交舞着变。

你是四月早天里的云烟，
黄昏吹着风的软，星子在
无意中闪，细雨点洒在花前。

那轻，那娉婷，你是，鲜妍
百花的冠冕你戴着，你是
天真，庄严，你是夜夜的月圆。

雪化后那片鹅黄，你像；新鲜
初放芽的绿，你是；柔嫩喜悦
水光浮动着你梦期待中白莲。

你是一树一树的花开，是燕
在梁间呢喃，——你是爱，是暖，
是希望，你是人间的四月天！

奇迹（节选）

——闻一多（pp.177-179）

我要的本不是火齐的红，或半夜里
桃花潭水的黑，也不是琵琶的幽怨，
蔷薇的香，我不曾真心爱过文豹的矜严，
我要的婉变也不是任何白鸽所有的。
我要的本不是这些，而是这些的结晶，
比这一切更神奇得万倍的一个奇迹！
可是，这灵魂是真饿得慌，我又不能
让他缺着供养，那么，即便是糟糠，
你也得募化不是？天知道，我不是
甘心如此，我并非倔强，亦不是愚蠢，
我是等你不及，等不及奇迹的来临！
我不敢让灵魂缺着供养。谁不知道
一树蝉鸣，一壶浊酒，算得了什么？
纵提到烟峦，曙壑，或更璀璨的星空，
也只是平凡，最无所谓的平凡，

……

那么

我等着，不管得等到多少轮回以后——
既然当初许下心愿时，也不知道是多少
轮回以前——我等，我不抱怨，只静候着
一个奇迹的来临。总不能没有那一天，
让雷来劈我，火山来烧，全地狱翻起来
扑我，……害怕吗？你放心，反正罡风吹不熄灵
魂的灯，情愿蜕壳化成灰烬，
不碍事：因为那——那便是我的一刹那
一刹那的永恒：——一阵异香，最神秘的
肃静，（日，月，一切星球的旋动早被
喝住，时间也止步了，）最浑圆的和平……
我听见阖闾的户枢砉然一响，紫霄上
传来一片衣裙的綵繚——那便是奇迹——
半启的金扉中，一个戴着圆光的你！

为要寻一个明星

——徐志摩（p. 181）

我骑着一匹拐腿的瞎马，
向着黑夜里加鞭：——

向着黑夜里加鞭，
我跨着一匹拐腿的瞎马。

我冲入这黑绵绵的昏夜，
为要寻一颗明星；——
为要寻一颗明星，
我冲入这黑茫茫的荒野。

累坏了，累坏了我胯下的牲口，
那明星还不出现；——
那明星还不出现，
累坏了，累坏了马鞍上的身手。

这回天上透出了水晶似的光明，
荒野里倒着一只牲口，
黑夜里躺着一具尸首。——
这回天上透出了水晶似的光明！

再休怪我的脸沉 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p.182)

恋爱，我要更光明的实现：
草堆里一个萤火，
企慕着天顶星罗：
我要你我的爱高比得天！

春的投生 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p.182)

我的呼吸投射到你的身上，
如同万千的飞萤投向光焰？

红叶里的信念 (节选)

——林徽因 (p.182)

是脚步不能自己的走——
走，迈向理想的山坳子
寻觅从未曾寻着的梦：
一茎梦里的花，一种香，
……

再看见你 (节选)

——陈梦家 (pp. 182-183)

再看见你。十一月的流星
掉下来，有人指着天叹息；
但那星自己只等着命运，
不想到下一刻的安排

这不可捉摸轻快的根由。
尽光明在最后一闪里带着
骄傲飞奔，不去问消逝
在那一个灭亡，不可再现的
时候。有着信心梦想
那一刻解脱的放纵，光荣
只在心上发亮，不去知道
自己变了沙石，这死亡
启示生命变异的开端，——
谁说一刹那不就是永久？

死水

——闻一多（pp. 201-202）

这是一沟绝望的死水，
清风吹不起半点漪沦。
不如多扔些破铜烂铁，
爽性泼你的剩菜残羹。

也许铜的要绿成翡翠，
铁罐上锈出几瓣桃花；
再让油腻织一层罗绮，
霉菌给他蒸出些云霞。

让死水酵成一沟绿酒，
飘满了珍珠似的白沫；
小珠们笑声变成大珠，
又被偷酒的花蚊咬破。

那么一沟绝望的死水，
也就夸得上几分鲜明。
如果青蛙耐不住寂寞，
又算死水叫出了歌声。

这是一沟绝望的死水，
这里断不是美的所在，
不如让给丑恶来开垦，
看他造出个什么世界。

家乡

——饶梦侃（p. 210）

这回我又到了家乡，
前面就是我的家乡；
远远的凝着青翠一团；
眼前乱晃着几根旗杆。
转个弯小车推到溪旁，
嘶的一声奔上了桥梁；
面前迎出些熟的笑容，
我连忙踏步走入村中。

故乡啊仍旧一般新鲜，
虽然游子是风尘满面！
你瞧溪荷还飘着香风，
歌声响遍澄黄的田垌，
溪流边依旧垂着杨柳，
柳荫下摇过一只渔舟。
听呀井栏边噗噗洗衣，
炊烟中远远一片呼归，
算命的锣儿敲过稻场，
笛声悠扬在水牛背上。
这回我又到了家乡，
前面就是我的家乡。

决绝

——孙大雨 (pp. 215-216)

天地竟然老朽得这么不堪！
我怕世界就要吐出他最后
一口气息。无怪老天要破旧，
唉，白云收尽了向来的灿烂，
太阳暗得像死尸的白眼一般，
肥圆的山岭变幻得像一列焦瘤，
没有了林木和林中啼绿的猿猴，
也不再山泉对着好鸟清谈。

大风抱着几根石骨在摩娑，
海潮披散了满头满背的白发，
悄悄退到沙滩下独自叹息
去了：就此结束了她千古的喧哗，
就此也开始天地和万有的永劫。
为的都是她向我道了一声决绝！

康桥再会罢 (节选)

——徐志摩 (pp. 223-224)

康桥，再会罢；
我心头盛满了别离的情绪，
你是我难得的知己，我当年
辞别家乡父母，登太平洋去，
（算来一秋二秋，已过了四度
春秋，浪迹在海外，美土欧洲）
扶桑风色，檀香山芭蕉况味，
平波大海，开拓我心胸神意，
如今都变了梦里的山河，

……

康桥，再会罢！
你我相知虽迟，然这一年中
我心灵革命的怒潮，尽冲泻
在你妩媚河身的两岸，此后
清风明月夜，当照见我情热

狂溢的旧痕，尚留草底桥边，
明年燕子归来，当记我幽叹
音节，歌吟声息，缦烂的云纹
霞彩，应反映我的思想情感，
此日撒向天空的恋意诗心，
赞颂穆静腾辉的晚景，清晨
富丽的温柔；听！那和缓的钟声
解释了新秋凉绪，旅人别意，
我精魂腾耀，满想化入音波，
震天彻地，弥盖我爱的康桥，
如慈母之于睡儿，缓抱软吻；
康桥！汝永为我精神依恋之乡！
此去身虽万里，梦魂必常绕
汝左右，任地中海疾风东指，
我亦必迂道西回，瞻望颜色；
归家后我母若问海外交好，
我必首数康桥；……

再别康桥

——徐志摩（pp. 224-225）

轻轻的我走了，
正如我轻轻的来；
我轻轻的招手，
作别西天的云彩。

那河畔的金柳，
是夕阳中的新娘；
波光里的艳影，
在我的心头荡漾。
软泥上的青荇，
油油的在水底招摇；
在康河的柔波里，
我甘心做一条水草！

那榆荫下的一潭，
不是清泉，是天上虹；
揉碎在浮藻间，
沉淀着彩虹似的梦。

寻梦？撑一支长篙，
向青草更青处漫溯；
满载一船星辉，
在星辉斑斓里放歌。

但我不能放歌，
悄悄是别离的笙箫；
夏虫也为我沉默，
沉默是今晚的康桥！

悄悄的我走了，

正如我悄悄的来；
我挥一挥衣袖，
不带走一片云彩。

铁路行

——刘梦苇 (p. 231)

我们是铁路上面的行人，
爱情正如两条铁轨平行。
许多的枕木将它们牵连，
却又好像在将它们离间。

我们的前方像很有希望，
平行的爱轨可继续添长：
远远看见前面已经交抱，
我们便努力向那儿奔跑。

我们奔跑交到抱的地方，
那铁轨还不是同前一样？
遥望前面又是相合未分，
便又勇猛的向那儿前进。

爱人只要前面还有希望，
只要爱情和希望样延长：
誓与你永远的向前驰驱，
直达这平行的爱轨尽处。

雁子

——陈梦家 (p. 233)

我爱秋天的雁子
终夜不知疲倦；
（像是嘱咐，像是答应，）
一边叫，一边飞远。

从来不问他的歌
留在那片云上？
只管唱过，只管飞扬，
黑的天，轻的翅膀。

我情愿是只雁子，
一切都使忘记——
当我提起，当我想到：
不是恨，不是欢喜。

忘掉她

——闻一多 (pp. 236-237)

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花，——

那朝霞在花瓣上，
那花心的一缕香——
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
像春风里一出梦，
像梦里的一声钟，
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
听蟋蟀唱得多好，
看墓草长得多高；
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
她已经忘记了你，
她什么都记不起，
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
年华那朋友真好，
他明天就教你老；
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
如果是有人要问，
就说没有那个人；
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！
像春风里一出梦，
像梦里的一声钟，
忘掉她，像一朵忘掉的花！

口供

——闻一多（p. 246）

我不骗你，我不是什么诗人，
纵然我爱的是白石的坚贞，
青松和大海，鸦背驮着夕阳，
黄昏里织满了蝙蝠的翅膀。
你知道我爱英雄，还爱高山，
我爱一幅国旗在风中招展，
自从鹅黄到古铜色的菊花。
记着我的粮食是一壶苦茶！

可是还有一个我，你怕不怕？——
苍蝇似的思想，垃圾桶里爬。

两个月亮

——徐志摩 (pp. 252-254)

我望见有两个月亮：
一般的样，不同的相。

一个这时正在天上，
披敞着雀毛的衣裳；
她不吝惜她的恩情，
满地全是她的金银。
她不忘故宫的琉璃，
三海间有她的清丽。
她跳出云头，跳上树，
又躲进新绿的藤萝。
她那样玲珑，那样美，
水底的鱼儿也得醉！
但她有一点子不好，
她老爱向瘦小里耗：
有时满天只见星点，
没了那迷人的圆脸，
虽则到时候照样回来，
但这份相思有些难挨！

还有那个你看不见，
虽则不提有多么艳！
她也有她醉涡的笑，
还有转动时的灵妙：
说慷慨她也从不让人，
可惜你望不到我的园林！
可贵是她无边的法力，
常把我灵波向高里提：
我最爱那银涛的汹涌，
浪花里有音乐的银钟；
就那些马尾似的白沫，
也比得珠宝经过雕琢。
一轮完美的明月，
又况是永不残缺！
只要我闭上这一双眼，
她就婷婷的升上了天！

四月二日月圆深夜

昼梦

——林徽因 (pp. 258-259)

昼梦
垂着纱，
无从追寻那开始的情绪
还未曾开花；
柔韧得像一根

乳白色的茎，缠住
纱帐下；银光
有时映亮，去了又来；
盘盘丝络
一半失落在梦外。

花竟开了，开了：
零落的攒集，
从容的舒展。
一朵，那千百瓣！
抖擞那不可言喻的
刹那情绪，
庄严峰顶——
天上一颗星……
 晕紫，深赤，
天空外旷碧，
是颜色同颜色浮溢，腾飞……
深沉，
又凝定——
悄然香馥，
袅娜一片静。

昼梦
垂着纱，
无从追踪的情绪
开了花；
四下里香深，
低覆着禅寂，
间或游丝似的摇移，
悠忽一重影；
悲哀或不悲哀
全是无名，
一闪娉婷。

五月

——邵洵美 (p.266)

啊欲情的五月又在燃烧，
罪恶在处女的吻中生了；
甜蜜的泪汁总引诱着我
将颤抖的唇亲她的乳壕。

这里的生命像死般无穷，
像是新婚晚快乐的惶恐；
要是她不是朵白的玫瑰，
那么她将比红的血更红。

啊这火一般的肉一般的
光明的黑暗嬉笑的哭泣，
是我恋爱的灵魂的灵魂；
是我怨恨的仇敌的仇敌。

天堂正开好了两扇大门，
上帝吓我不是进去的人。
我在地狱里已得到安慰，
我在短夜中曾梦着过醒。

寒夜

——卞之琳 (pp. 270-271)

一炉火。一屋灯光。
老陈捧着个茶杯，
对面坐的是老张。
老张衔着个烟卷。
老陈喝完了热水。
他们（眼皮已半掩）
看着青烟飘荡的
 消着，又（像带着醉）
看着煤块黄亮的
烧着，他们是昏昏
 沉沉的，像已半睡……
哪来的一句钟声？
又一下，再来一下……
 什么，有人在院内
 跑着：“下雪了，真大！”

傍晚

——卞之琳 (pp. 271-272)

倚着西山的夕阳，
站着要倒的庙墙，
对望着：想要说什么呢？
 怎又不说呢？

 驮着老汉的瘦驴
 匆忙的赶回家去，
 蹄儿敲打着道儿——
 枯涩的调儿！

半空里哇的一声，
一只乌鸦从树顶
飞起来，可是没有话了，
 依旧息下了。

奈何

——黄昏和一个人的对话

——卞之琳 (p. 272)

“我看见你乱转过了几十圈空磨，
看见你尘封座上的菩萨也做过，

叫床铺把你的半段身体托住
也好久了，现在你要干什么呢？”
“真的，我要干什么呢？”

“你该知道吧，我先是在街路边，
不知怎的，回到了更加清冷的庭院，
又到了屋子里，重新挨近了墙跟前，
你替我想想看，我哪儿去好呢？”
“真的，你哪儿去好呢？”

小庙春景

——陈梦家 (pp. 276-277)

要太阳光照到
我瓦上的三寸草，
要一年四季
雨顺风调。

让那根旗杆
倒在败墙上睡觉，
让爬山虎爬在
它背上，一条，一条……

我想在百衲衣上
捉虱子，晒太阳；
我是菩萨的前身，
这辈子当了和尚。

一个和尚

——卞之琳 (pp. 277-278)

一天的钟儿撞过了又一天，
和尚做着苍白的深梦：
过去多少年留下的影踪
在他的记忆里就只是一片
破殿里到处迷漫的香烟，
悲哀的残骸依旧在香炉中
伴着善男信女的苦衷，
厌倦也永远在佛经中蜿蜒。

昏沉沉的，梦话又沸涌出了嘴，
他的头儿又和木鱼儿应对，
头儿木鱼儿一样空，一样重；
一声一声的，催眠了山和水，
山水在暮霭里懒洋洋的睡，
他又算撞过了白天的丧钟。

黄鹂

——徐志摩 (p. 279)

一掠颜色飞上了树，
“看，一只黄鹂！”有人说。
翘着尾尖，它不作声，
艳异照亮了浓密——
像是春光，火焰，像是热情。

等候它唱，我们静着望，
怕惊了它。但它一展翅，
冲破浓密，化一朵彩云；
它飞了，不见了，没了——
像是春光，火焰，像是热情。

残破 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p. 280)

但我不是阳光，也不是露水，
我有的只是些残破的呼吸，
如同封锁在壁椽间的群鼠，
追逐着，追求着黑暗与虚无！

卑微 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p. 281)

卑微，卑微，卑微：
风在吹，
无抵抗的残苇：

枯槁它的形容，
心已空，
音调如何吹弄？

火车禽住轨 (节选)

——徐志摩 (p. 281)

睁大了眼，什么事都看分明，
但自己又何尝能支使命运？

说什么光明，智慧永恒的美，
彼此同是在一条线上受罪；

罪过

——闻一多 (pp. 283-284)

老头儿和担子摔一交，
满地是白杏儿红樱桃。

老头儿爬起来直哆嗦，
“我知道我今日的罪过！”
“手破了，老头儿你瞧瞧。”
“唉！都给压碎了，好樱桃！”

“老头儿你别是病了罢？
你怎么直楞着不说话？”
“我知道我今日的罪过，
一早起我儿子直催我。
我儿子躺在床上发狠，
他骂我怎么还不出城。”

“我知道今日个不早了，
没想到一下子睡着了。
这叫我怎么办，怎么办？
回头一家人怎么吃饭？”
老头儿拾起来又掉了，
满地是白杏儿红樱桃。

几个人

——卞之琳 (p. 284)

叫卖的喊一声“冰糖葫芦”，
吃了一口灰像满不在乎；
提鸟笼的望着天上的白鸽，
自在的脚步踩过了沙河，
当一个年轻人在荒街上沉思。
卖萝卜的空挥着磨亮的小刀，
一担红萝卜在夕阳里傻笑，
当一个年轻人在荒街上沉思。
矮叫化子痴看着自己的长影子，
当一个年轻人在荒街上沉思：
有些人捧着一碗饭叹气，
有些人半夜里听别人的梦话，
有些人白发上戴一朵红花，
像雪野的边缘上托一轮落日……

自己的写照 (节选)

——孙大雨

1) pp. 295296

森严的秩序，紊乱的浮嚣。
今天一早起街顶上的云色
呈着鸽桃灰，满街人脸上
有一抹不可思议的深蓝。
我说你这个大都会呵，大都会！
（太阳在云堆里往复地爬，
那是进了个不漏光的大袋，）
你起了这无数巨石压巨石，

又寂寞又骇人的建筑底重山，……

2) p. 297

……但是——
假如这无数千唱的歌喉
方能诉出我的情欲和理想；
什么才能申叙清楚
我的大失望？
哦！我不知道。

3) pp. 297-298

……那站在人生
烟火里冲锋夺阵的黑人，
他们底衣衫尽管褴褛，
肤色尽管焦黄；可是呵，
他们红铜似的意志，沉潜里
总涵着一脉可惊奇的悲壮。

4) pp. 298-299

阿姐说过的，我要是有病，
可以打电话，如今那祸水
已经不来了两次，威廉，
星星火火的夜明天，昨儿
早上那恶鬼，又是你在掌柜
面前做鬼戏！母亲说是
要从加州来，自己还得靠
晚上走街去贴补，那来钱
养你这孩子，可是再过
两年，她眯着一只眼睛
在笑。……

5) p. 299

阳光泼满了长街第五条；
清晨底云色此时已经
消散得痕迹全无。二十
以上卅下的健女和康男
每一人都是裙履修齐，
和衣冠好整洁，浴在阳光
如流水的通衢中发亮……

6) p. 300

可是她们健康的脑白
向外长，灰色的脑髓压在
颅骨和脑白之间渐渐

缩扁，——所以只除了打字
和交媾之外，她们无非
是许多天字一等的木偶。

7) pp. 300-301

伤今吊古的诗人们，这两行
江水虽然送别了前人
又迎迓后来者，你们尽可以
不必如此去哀怜或嘲诮
人众命脉底无常！我们
人间的深远同河山底经久
不相似：我们刹那间几注
焦红的经历，（一坑沉痛，
一阵没遮拦的狂喜，百十朵
古今来才士哲人们磅礴
星辰之妙想，）要胜过山中
顽石底千年静默或海岬旁
终古的喧哗不知多少倍。

8) p. 301

哦！灰青青的“既往”不过是
“现在”底阴影，嫩青青的“未来”
也无非是意识头上的蜗角
虫须：我们若停止了每一刻
“现在”底探讨与追求与塑造，
不叫意识去对着周围
烛照，——
……就是
造化底整个神灵也会
顿时散失！

9) p. 302

……——呵，
你们正待射放的是纽约
市民对于人生的几箭
综合的肯定，还是这万众人
锋铓的疑问两三支？还竟许
没有弓，没有矢，也无意义
和象征，一切都是大雨
一人底憧憬，在无中生有？

10) p. 303

桥梁们嘿嘿，造桥的机师
工匠也不给我一句回答。
全市一个人，一个人，一个人，

都锁着眉在开辟自己的泉源，
或匆匆挖掘着自身的墓穴，
疑问的浪花在我的意识界
沙滩上滚：——一排又一排。

11) p. 307

我想起海风海浪海风中
有一艘神勇凌天的轮楫
凌冒着黑夜，前向又前向；
我想起一声霹雳射出
紫箭十余根，刺透一对
比肩的乌云狮子；我想起
人类草创文明的才智，
从地球结成一片硬壳后，
到太阳化作一线烟之前，
虽说是一时，总也打破了
星河里亿兆沉沉年底岑寂。

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