Durham E-Theses

Lyricism and the Utopian Impulse: A Study of Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry

ZHOU, YANG

How to cite:

ZHOU, YANG (2022) *Lyricism and the Utopian Impulse: A Study of Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/14467/

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the full Durham E-Theses policy for further details.

Academic Support Office, Durham University, University Office, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HP
e-mail: e-theses.admin@dur.ac.uk Tel: +44 0191 334 6107
http://etheses.dur.ac.uk

Lyricism and the Utopian Impulse: A Study of Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry

Yang Zhou

Abstract

This thesis joins a vibrant conversation in literature and cultural studies on modern China about the challenging nature of the construction of modernity in the early twentieth century as well as the paradoxical relationship between China and the West. Tracing the implications of the two popular approaches to modernity in twentieth-century China, namely Marxist collective modernisation and Kantian individual refinement, I argue that neither has resulted in a comprehensive and profoundly critical view of modernity and its consequences amongst the majority of Chinese intellectuals. This partial understanding of Western literary modernity, combined with the eagerness to modernise the Chinese society through the functions of literature, has contributed to the utopian impulse in thought and expression regarding a modern and better future. The utopian impulse has also played a significant role in shaping China's political and cultural modernity, driving Chinese intellectuals into a 'love-hate' relationship with Chinese tradition.

This thesis delineates the utopian impulse in the poetic pursuit of modernity by Bian Zhilin with a focus on his most productive years between 1930 and 1937, namely the period of his pre-war poetry. It sets out to explore the nature of inconsistency between the actual dynamic of Western influences and classical Chinese poetics and what is envisioned under the context of iconoclasm after the May Fourth Movement. It is through this exploration that a vision is generated regarding Bian's negative feelings as consequence of his pursuit for modernity.

By examining the angst in Bian's experiment with a modern (Western) poetic expression to articulate his social critique by emulating the Western modernist style of poetry, this thesis provides evidence of his nostalgic yearning for classical Chinese literature, aesthetics and philosophy. I argue that strategies of French Symbolism and Metaphysical Poetry serve as a paradoxical bridge between Bian's desire to fashion himself as a modernist poet and his spiritual attachment to Chinese tradition. I argue that the utopian impulse is characterised by the backward-looking and nostalgic features. Furthermore, it is a psyche shared by generations of Chinese intellectuals when facing the existential crisis of the coherent cultural centre. In this research, I focus on the early

twentieth-century utopian impulse as it is symptomatic of the complex feelings of anxiety, doubt and hope of Chinese cultural elites at the historical juncture between tradition and progress, China and the West. The denial of the Chinese reality and romantic imagining of a modern West and the belief in its efficacy for a bright Chinese future create fertile ground for the utopian modernity that eventually evaporated in wartime China after the 1940s.

Lyricisim and the Utopian Impulse:
A Study of Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry

Yang Zhou
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Durham University

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2021

Table of Contents

Statement of Copyright i

Acknowledgements ii

Chapter 1 Introduction: Locating Bian Zhilin's New Poetry Utopia......................1

Rationale of research: Bian Zhilin as a neglected poet and the equation between modernity and the West 1

Key literature from the 1930s–2000s: existing efforts to locate Bian Zhilin in the history of New Poetry 4

An overview of concepts: image, lyrical poetry, tradition and modernity 8

Pushing boundaries: a brief review of New Poetry and the utopian impulse 11

Research Questions 14

A note on methodology 15

Chapter breakdown.. 17

Chapter 2 Bian Zhilin in Early Twentieth-Century China: Literature Amidst Socio-Political Movement..22

Culture, iconoclasm and Westernisation in the May Fourth Movement 22

Bian Zhilin: early days and the beginning of his poetic career 25

Bian Zhilin in the 1930s: connection to the Crescent Moon Society 26

Western influences: Bian Zhilin the poet as a translator 31

Post-war change of poetic style 33

Chapter 3 Perceptions of Modernity: Utopia in Chinese Poetry, 1930s–1940s....37

Understanding modernity in the context of early twentieth-century Chinese literature...... 38

Modernity through modernisation and the collective spirit of the nation: historical materialism and the implications for China... 40

Modernity through individual refinement: imagination of a modern lyricism and the enchantment of the Western traditions 45

Reflections on an age of Epic: Overseas scholars and the 'soulless' modern Chinese literature.. 53

A Song of iconoclasm: Current Literature and Key Debates about Modernity in New Poetry in Mainland China 61

Transforming tradition with European influences: current literature and key debates about modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry 73

The utopian impulse and New Poetry's quest for modernity 81

The utopian impulse as methodology of understanding the cultural and aesthetic structure of New Poetry's quest for modernity 85

Chapter 4 Unveiling the Classical Ideal: Poetic Language in Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry 89

Between obscurity and ambivalence: logical structure and *huise* in poetic language in Bian's poetry 89

Construction of poetic language in Bian's poetry: inheritance and transformation of classical poetic language 92

Resistance against *baihua*: anxiety of finding poetic beauty in language 98

Chapter 5 From *Fin de Siècle* to Metaphysical Solitude: Bian Zhilin's Struggle for *Raison D'être* 101

The image of shadow: metaphysical solitude vs. decadence 102

Dusk in autumn: classical sorrow of *ganshi youguo, youchan weiji* and the beauty of passive virtue 105

Lamentation for loss of *raison d'être*: struggle to find the promised land 109

A weary traveller on an arduous spiritual journey: exiled self and the struggle to find home 111

A pursuit out of despair: impersonality and intelligence beyond emotions 113

Darkness, death and dreams: the struggle to find the *raison d'être* 119

Xinglü poetry and cultural suffering: classical Chinese references 123

Chapter 6 Reflection and Intimate Expressions: Image of the Mirror 128

The image of the mirror in classical Chinese literature 128

Expression of intimate emotions: the image of mirror and reference to *gongti, huajian and guiyuan* 129

Changes and relativity reflected in the mirror: rediscovery of Taoist teachings and serenity 135

Chapter 7 Consolation from Classical Chinese Cosmology: Bian Zhilin's Path to Endurance and Serenity 140

Path to serenity: the image of water and connection to Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings 141

Confucian spirit with Buddhist and Taoist implications: Traditional morality in Bian's pre-war poetry 151

Sheng sheng zhi wei yi: Taoist cosmology in Bian's pre-war poetry 153

From the finite to infinity: *Xushi xiangshen* and the essence of Bian's poetic consolation 155

Chapter 8 From *Window on the West* to the Beauty of Intelligence: Bian Zhilin's Nostalgic Look Back into Classical Chinese Poetry 162

Style and ambience: Imagination of classical Chineseness 162

Symbolism and classical Chinese poetics: Home away from home 165

Chapter 9 *Guiqu Ye* and the Backward-Looking Utopia in China 181

Imagination of self, time and the motif *xiangchou* in 'Chi Ba' 181

The Chinese self through the *xiyang jing* (mirror from the West 西洋镜)........................ 184

A homophony of despair: *xiangchou* and utopia in China 187

O Return: the lyrical construction of *xiangchou* utopia in seeking inner peace 192

Chapter 10 The Utopian Impulse and Chineseness Revisited 199

Bian Zhilin's Pre-war poetry and the anxiety of modernising culture: The consequences of modernity in New Poetry.. 199

The problematic pursuit of the West and the absence of tradition in New Poetry 202

Conclusions: The utopian impulse and its consequences in Bian's pre-war poetry.......... 204

The utopian impulse as method: contribution to knowledge.. 208

Limitations of this study... 209

Appendix I Glossary of Chinese Characters I

Appendix II Selected poems by Bian Zhilin cited in this thesis in original Chinese VII

Bibliography XXXIII

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give appreciation to the people who have helped and supported me in the years for this thesis. First of all, it is great privilege to work with my principal supervisor Dr Qing Cao, whose proficient knowledge and invaluable guidance have benefited me throughout my research. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Claudia Nitschke, my second supervisor, who has generously provided me with her academic insights and kind support.

I would like to give thanks to staff members of St. John's College, especially to Revd Professor David Wilkinson, Dr Mark Ogden, Rev Susie Thorp, Mrs. Angela Cook, and Mr. Alan Usher, for their continuous encouragement and caretaking. My appreciation also goes to Ms. Lucia Luck in School of Modern Languages and Cultures for her patience and efficiency. It has been a pleasure to be part of St. John's College and MLAC in Durham University.

In addition, I would also need to thank the medical team that watched over me during the most unexpectedly challenging period of my life. Without their excellent work I would not have gathered my strength and courage to finish this research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. Their constant love, encouragement and support have been essential throughout the course of this thesis.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Locating Bian Zhilin's New Poetry Utopia

This thesis is a study of the twentieth-century Chinese poet, translator and literature researcher Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910–2000), with a specific focus on his work from 1930–1937, namely, his pre-war poetry, with references to his other works, such as prose and, most notably, articles reflecting his literary practice. Unless noted otherwise, all translations of the poems and texts in this thesis are by the researcher.

It is undeniable that Bian Zhilin's most active years, the early twentieth century, are particularly important for understanding modernity in China. As the literary branch of the May Fourth Movement, New Poetry contributed to the disenchantment from the old world. In both literature and culture, New Poetry undermined Chinese tradition and the coherent centre of classical China. Instead, an abundance of Western references arose that are believed to have played a key role in modernising Chinese literature and, eventually, re-inventing the national character. How, in the twenty-first century, should we reinterpret New Poetry's quest for modernity? A good starting point is the mentality of representative poets, such as Bian Zhilin. With close reading of the texts mentioned above and intertextual analysis, I aim to understand how Bian's individual expression fits into the grand narrative of his time. The structure of feeling stemming from classical China has played a vital role in shaping the modern Chinese history of intellectuals. I intend to look deep into the overwhelming call for modernity and seek a deeper understanding of the paradoxical role that the dynamics between Chinese tradition and Western influences play in forming the intellectual quest for modernity reflected in Bian's poetic career.

Rationale of research: Bian Zhilin as a neglected poet and the equation between modernity and the West

In his later years, Bian Zhilin reflected upon his work in literature. 'You could not find the word "poem" in any of my poems' (Bian, 1986, ii). Nevertheless, looking at his 70 years of writing across all genres, including his translation works, one could not comment on Bian without noting his poetic quality. As Zhang Manyi 张曼仪 summarises, 'The muses, not fully light-heartedly, used the artist's left hand; yet with the best wishes, they used his right hand to write poetry' (Zhang, 1990, p. 168). It is without question that Bian Zhilin is a highly accomplished yet misunderstood poetic

figure. Through his creative combination of Western and Chinese elements, Bian achieved a unique, poetic life, though he had only been active as a poet for less than 20 years.

In 1982, with the publication of the new edition of Bian's《雕虫纪历》*Diaochong Jili*, Joint Publishing（三联书店）makes the following introduction to the poet and his work:

> Bian's poetry inherits classical Chinese traditions and borrows from the new poetic style of Western modern poetry. His work is unique with a signature form, language and taste: intimate, suggestive and dynamic. Some poems are simple and refreshing; some profound and elegant; some are sung by generations of people; some provoke endless debates. All is due to his poetic taste of infinity. Therefore, the poet is still enjoyed by many readers today. (Bian, 1982, para. 2)

This introduction resonates with later academics. The uniqueness of Bian's pre-war poetry resulted in a lack of popularity and academic interest in Bian's underlying psychological motivation, despite the passionate praise in the publisher's introduction. Although scholars inside and outside of China have continuously held discussions on his poetry, translation, and occasionally, his fiction works, the overall academic research on Bian as a literary figure is inadequate in two respects.

First, existing academic interest in Bian seems inadequate in comparison to other literary figures of his era. Since the 1940s (when Bian published *Letters of Comfort* 慰劳信集 in 1947), there has been little research about Bian compared to his peer poets, such as He Qifang 何其芳 (1912–1977), Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905–1950) and Mu Dan 穆旦 (1918–1977), not to mention Bian's predecessor, the Crescent Moon Society (*xinyue pai* 新月派). Bonnie S. McDougall (1985) sees Bian as a poet who does not take any specific political stance as he does not openly welcome or oppose any side, and therefore, the relatively small amount of research is a result of political unpopularity (p. 269). Echoing McDougall, Tang Qi 唐祈 (1920–1990) refers to the mainstream literary criticism dominated by political utilitarianism in mainland China (1990, p. 22). Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui 江弱水 (2000), a preeminent mainland Chinese scholar in modern poetry and Chinese cultural studies, also makes his suggestion that Bian is neglected: 'In general, research in Bian's poetic creation is not matched with his artistic achievements' (p. 4). Furthermore, in his walkthrough of research on Bian's poetry, Jiang evokes the years of the 1930s–1940s and the 1980s–

1990s as periods with a ‘relatively normal cultural environment and academic ambience’ where ‘a minority of critics and scholars have a profound understanding of the artistic value of Bian’s poetry’ (ibid.).

The other aspect of inadequacy and neglect is closely related to Jiang’s statement above. Amongst hundreds of articles published[1] with analysis of Bian’s poetry, there is hardly any existing work devoted to examining Bian’s mentality and motivation for writing. Most studies dwell on textual analysis and intertextual comparison to showcase the poet’s skilful hand in combining Chinese and Western elements. In the relatively understudied mentality behind poetry writing, the mainstream view dwells on Bian’s pursuit to emulate Western poetry. There are three main strands of Western sources that existing studies compare Bian’s pre-war poetry with – French Symbolist poetry, T.S. Eliot’s modernist writing and Shakespearian qualities. Such an academic tendency is (if we side with Tang (1990) and McDougall (1985)) closely related to China’s dominant political stance towards the cause–effect relationship between modernisation and modernity.

Therefore, it is fair to say that existing scholarship on Bian and his poetry has failed to fully grasp the poet’s attitude towards and treatment of both Chinese and Western elements. More importantly, the research gap is further widened by the lack of an adequate discussion on the concept of modernity, though assertions are constantly made about the modern quality of Bian’s poetry. Modernity does not serve as the analytical framework on the psyche of Chinese intelligentsia represented by Bian; rather, it has become the uniform conclusion. A further discussion about this inversion in existing research, especially research by mainland Chinese scholars, is provided in Chapter 3.

The term Western modern poetry (*xifang xiandai shi* 西方现代诗) marks a widely recognised idea that modern equals Western. At least in the context of modern poetry in early twentieth-century China, this idea has been embedded in the subconsciousness of Chinese intelligentsia. A good indication of this is the academic consensus praising Bian’s poetic techniques of combining classical Chinese and Western elements, whilst the latter is considered a benchmark for modern qualities and

[1] According to search results from www.cnki.net, there are 1750 articles that include 卞之琳 as keyword. Most of these articles are textual analysis focused on a small number of his poems and any in-depth discussion would be carried out to prove influences from either Western poetry or the political idea of modernisation of literature as a tool of social progress. A detailed discussion on this academic tendency in mainland China is provided in Chapter 3.

thus directing the poet's so-called transformation of Chinese poetic tradition. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to assume the equation between modern and Western, as the Chinese construction of modern politics and culture is a mindlessly replicated modernity filled with Western schools of thought. Understandably, existing research on Bian and New Poetry recognises the undeniable fact that the Chinese reception of Western influences has resulted in modifications and misunderstandings. However, looking into such modifications, we see most studies assigning the position of a diligent pupil to Chinese poets. Their efforts to reproduce Western elements in Chinese poetry are treated as unconditionally positive. This academic tendency has ignored the more complicated and paradoxical attempts, either conscious or unconscious, of defining Chinese tradition as outdated whilst feeling inevitably nostalgic for tradition. This research focuses on the interaction of Chinese elements and Western influences in the poetic search for modernity to address this problem. In this research, Bian is seen as a representative figure of Chinese intelligentsia in the early twentieth century. The poet's attitude towards tradition and the West must be further exploited to move to a more profound reading of New Poetry.

Based on analyses of poetic qualities on the textual level, the creative combination of Western and Chinese elements is not simply the result of the poet's skilful hand but a vehicle to reach the true voice of Bian Zhilin hidden beneath what he calls the qualities of intelligence, intimacy and suggestion. In exploring this true voice and attitude towards tradition and progress, the mentality of Chinese intelligentsia is examined, as they are confronted with the collapse of the middle kingdom and its coherent cultural centre, along with the Western influences that have become ubiquitous since the 1920s.

Key literature from the 1930s–2000s: existing efforts to locate Bian Zhilin in the history of New Poetry

A notable feature of current literature lies in the predominant voice following the general principles of Marxist literary criticism, especially amongst scholars in mainland China after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Such research engages the functional Marxist literary standard that literature must be used to educate the people and serve the overarching goal of its society. To begin with, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978)'s *Fight to Construct New China's People's Literature and*

Art (《为建设新中国的人民文艺而奋斗》) (1950, p. 38) has laid the foundation for the mainland Chinese pattern of literary criticism that focuses on the grand narrative of revolution and movements instead of individual expression. Almost all existing literature in New Poetry in mainland China has followed this pattern. Therefore, their literary criticism is inevitably marked by the enlightenment features of the May Fourth Movement since the former is treated as a literary branch of the latter. At the same time, the focus on the social and political function of New Poetry is the undertone of almost all key literature of this kind. Since the 2010s, the most notable works on New Poetry, especially on the topic of modernity, have continued to benchmark literary modernity with Western schools and theories of poetry[2].

As a result, dedicated research on Bian Zhilin focuses on the homogeneous recognition of his poetry as an example of iconoclasm and reception of Western influences. The conclusion and definition of modernity are therefore drawn based on these qualities. The most significant works dedicated to studying Bian's pre-war poetry in mainland China include the following: *Bian Zhilin and the Art of Poetry* 卞之琳与诗艺术》 (1990), edited by members of *Les Contemporains* (*xiangdaipai* 现代派) founded in 1932 by Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905–2003) and Du Heng 杜衡 (1907–1964)), Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉 (1921–2008), Wu Ningkun 巫宁坤 (1920–2019) and Du Yunxie 杜运燮 (1915–2002); and *Studies of Bian Zhilin's Poetic Art*《卞之琳诗艺研究》 (2000) by Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui. Much emphasis has been put on identifying Western elements in Bian's works, and there is a lack of discussion on Bian's attitude towards tradition. Zhang Manyi (1989) and Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之 (1990) also carried out a thorough textual analysis of Bian's pre-war poetry. However, neither sought to focus on the poet's mentality and attitude towards tradition.

On the other hand, since the mid-twentieth century, overseas scholars of modern and contemporary Chinese literature have attempted to deconstruct the Marxism-inspired grand narrative. Furthermore, rejecting the conclusion that modernity in China results from Western influences and collective modernisation, they trace the origin of

[2] See Zhang Songjian (2012)'s exploration of lyricism in modern Chinese poetry, Wu Xiaodong (2010)'s studies in the dominating spirit of New Poetry, and Jiang Tao (2005)'s walkthrough of the emergence of New Poetry anthologies. Sun Yushi (2010) and Li Yi (2008) both engage their discussions with traditional elements in New Poetry, however, they focus on how the reception of Western influences direct the 'creative transformation' of traditional poetics where the latter is still considered as outdated and in need of modernisation.

cultural modernity in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Also, since C.T. Hsia introduced modern Chinese fiction to the West, overseas Chinese scholars have paid much attention to fitting modern and contemporary Chinese literature into the context of world literature. Since the publication of C.T. Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1999), obsession with China has become prevalent amongst overseas Chinese researchers' discussions about modern Chinese literature. Both Leo Ou-fan Lee (2002) and David Der-wei Wang (1997, 2015) have dealt with a handful of representative Chinese poets of 'the Romantic generation' (Lee, 2002) and their individual creativity. However, there has been no dedicated examination of Bian's poetry and experiences, possibly due to the shortness of his poetic career.

It is essential to understand that the neglect of Bian as a poet does not mean that there are few existing academic materials. Rather, since Bian's debut in Chinese literary circles in the 1930s, much detailed, high-quality research on him has been carried out, especially in textual analyses that provide a good foundation for this research. In 1942, Bian's peer Li Guangtian 李广田 (1906–1968), one of the Han Garden poets (*hanyuan shiren* 汉园诗人) - a small group of poets consisting of Bian and two other university friends – published his review article of 'Poems of Ten Years'. The article discusses the formal quality, wording and images in Bian's pre-war poetry. Benefiting from his close friendship with Bian, Li's detailed textual analysis offers an insight into the quality of obscurity in Bian's works. In 1948, as Fei Ming 废名 (1901–1967) began teaching New Poetry at Peking University, he paid particular attention to Bian's poetry and praised that 'his literary style is most modern; his taste is, however, the most traditional' (Fei and Zhu, 2008, p. 332).

In the 30 years following the 1940s, the overall political turbulence contributed to a period of silence for Bian and research on the poet. It was not until February 1980, with the publication of the special Bian Zhilin edition of 'Bafang*'* 《八方》, that the discussion resumed. In this special edition of 'Bafang*'*, Zhang Manyi, alongside other scholars, analysed the Western sources of Bian's pre-war poetry. In the appendix, Zhang enclosed her detailed work summarising all Bian's writing and translation works. In 1989, Zhang published *Bian Zhilin Zhuyi Yanjiu* 《卞之琳著译研究》to offer a comprehensive insight into almost all Bian's writings. Zhang's work serves as a basis for understanding Bian as a poet and a modern Chinese intellectual to many researchers.

Since the 1990s, much research on the poet has been carried out in mainland

China. As mentioned above, two most notable books stand out: *Bian Zhilin and the Art of Poetry* (Yuan, Wu and Du, 1990) and *Studies of Bian Zhilin's Poetic Art* (Jiang, 2000). The former is an anthology of critical evaluations by more than twenty scholars, most having lived during Bian's literary life and enjoyed a close relationship with the poet. The latter is dedicated to a comprehensive and systematic study of Bian's life and his ideal of the artistic value in poetry. Though not exclusively focused on Bian, many other works discuss Bian's pre-war poetry in the context of New Poetry and the New Cultural Movement.

In work dedicated to his much-missed teacher, Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui (2000) lists the timeframe of Bian's literary life. He offers a focused discussion on the influences of and connections between Bian and Western poets, including Paul Verlaine, Paul Valerie and T.S. Eliot, with a parallel listing of classical Chinese elements (mainly textual) to emphasise the intertextual quality of Bian's pre-war poetry. Though Jiang has not defined the term artistic value, he has showcased, in detail, the abundant resources and influences present in Bian's pre-war poetry. In his work, Jiang makes attempts to explore Bian's state of mind in the 1930s. However, despite the writer's later publication – *Modernity in Classical Chinese Poetry* 《古典诗的现代性》 (2010) – that challenges the idea that only Western literature could be modern, there is no further discussion on either the Chinese psyche reflected through Bian's pre-war poetry or the underlying motivation for combining Western and classical Chinese poetic elements.

At the same time, it is worth noting that scholars in mainland China have contributed much to understanding Bian Zhilin primarily as a translator. As mentioned above, Zhang Manyi (1989) recognises Bian's lifetime work in translation as much as his poetry in *Bian Zhilin Zhuyi Yanjiu* 《卞之琳著译研究》 (1998); Xiao Manqiong 肖曼琼 (2010) applies Medio-translatology theory to analyse Bian's translation work and his contributions to Chinese literature. Xiao (2009) also discusses Bian's stylistic choice and aesthetics in translation. Though both Zhang and Xiao mentioned the influence of Bian's translated works on his poetry writing and the development of New Poetry, both use the original Western texts to act as benchmarks for evaluating Bian's work.

There is naturally a series of reasons why this specific neglect exists for Bian and his poetry. Lloyd Haft attributes the neglect 'to the seeming difficulty of

interpreting his poetry' (1983, p. 1). Haft considers the difficulty as the result of influences from both classical Chinese poetry and Western poetry. To make his argument, Haft presents a robust work analysing the form, themes and images of Bian's pre-war poetry. Despite a brief mention of possible influences from Buddhism and Taoism (1983, p. 27), Haft does not offer any insight into Bian's attitude towards Chinese tradition. At the same time, as Haft attempts to find connections between Bian's pieces and those of his peer Chinese poets, due to the limited number of texts cited and a lack of discussions on the shared mentality of poets, his arguments are not highly persuasive.

I agree with Haft's argument that it is quite difficult to interpret Bian's pre-war poetry fully. Instead of repeating Haft's research that follows thorough textual and intertextual methods only, this research sets out to address the difficulty of interpreting the poet's complex attitudes towards tradition and Western influences. A significant amount of intertextual analysis is performed to explore the dynamics between classical Chinese and Western poetic elements, followed by an in-depth discussion of Bian's structure of feeling and its connection with Buddhism and Taoism and Confucian teachings. I consider Bian's pre-war poetry his outlet of frustration with political upheavals and his source of mental consolation at the same time; examination of both could offer suggestive evidence for his mental experience when confronted with the collapse of the coherent cultural centre.

An overview of concepts: image, lyrical poetry, tradition and modernity

In this research, images have been used as the entry point into Bian's world of poetry. Images are indispensable in Bian's poetic expressions as the poet has deposited his deepest feelings and thoughts in almost every key image in his works. These images consist of the essence of the lyrical quality, a closer examination of which allows us to understand Bian's appreciation and nostalgia for tradition and the Chinese culture in contrast to Western influences and teachings.

My use of the word image refers to both the classical Chinese poetic term *yixiang* 意象 and the Western poetic element widely used by Imagists such as Ezra Pound and the French Symbolist poets. Both are important since Bian's poetic expression relies heavily on the similarities between the two origins to justify his longing for classical Chinese poetry.

Bian uses images in the classical Chinese style to achieve full poetic expression

of his intimate feelings. The definition of *yixiang* matured in the Southern Qi dynasty literary work *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龙). Images are described as the result of *shensi* (spiritual thoughts and imaginations 神思), which is the mechanism that brings about a rhetorical apprehension of physical things that reach the literary man's mind. Therefore, the objective existence of images is under the full influence of subjective feelings and thoughts. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* also states that '此盖驭文之首术, 谋篇之大端 (This is the first step in the art of writing and the main principle in planning a literary piece)'. Based on this subjective feature, poets have the discretion to manipulate images and create the difference between the *xu* (emptiness 虚) and *shi* (fullness 实) or bury their deepest emotions behind a seemingly superficial natural object to create poetic obscurity. These techniques and effects are frequently present in Bian's pre-war poetry. A detailed discussion of his connection with the classical Chinese use of image is given in Chapter 8.

This analysis also takes note of the French Symbolist use of image, which primarily focuses on the evocative power of poetry; images are used as symbols of another object, the connotation of which has much to do with '*état d'âme'* (mental state). Many of the scholars mentioned above agree with Bian's statement that he has been heavily influenced by French Symbolist poetry represented by Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Valéry. It is also worth noting that Imagist poets such as Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme have laid out three principles (Flint, 1913, p. 199) that greatly resemble the classical Chinese origin of poetic image. Bian's adaptation of French Symbolist images is analysed in Chapter 5, and a further discussion in the similarities between Chinese poetic traditions and modern Western poetic trends is provided in Chapter 8.

Since Bian uses poetry as his most familiar expression, it is important that we categorise his pre-war poetry as lyrical poetry, though he has been admired for the intellectual quality by many scholars. Despite his superficial coolness and calm temperament, Bian has poured the most passionate and deepest feelings into poetry: his anxiety and stress when facing the upheaval of Chinese society, his distress and hopes when facing a young and impossible love, his longing for serenity, peace and harmony, etc. Therefore, unlike most existing research that pays great attention to analysing the intellectual quality with comparisons drawn to Western principles such as T.S. Eliot and Paul Valéry, this research focused much on the lyrical side to understand the poet's

mental state and motivations of writing New Poetry. Through this careful examination of the lyrical features, Bian's feelings and reception of Western impacts on a cherished yet abandoned Chinese tradition could be truly understood.

In this research, tradition has two levels of meaning. On the first level, it refers to the traditional Chinese way of life and beliefs based on Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings. In other words, it refers to the elitist, literati understanding of aesthetics, philosophy and literature. The first level of the meaning is incorporated throughout this research, especially in textual analysis. The second level of meaning has much to do with the cultural attitude towards tradition. Tradition has been perceived as the opposite of progress by the May Fourth intelligentsia since the mainstream of the time was iconoclasm that rejects the cultural continuity of classical China and its heritage of the past (Lin, 1979). In Bian's time, tradition had fallen from grace, and only Western ideas of progress, including science and democracy, could save the entire Chinese nation.

However, this thesis does not examine tradition under the prevalent analytical framework of progress. Tradition is not considered the opposite of progress. Instead, it focuses on the Chinese intellectuals' ambiguous attitudes toward tradition and their attempts to re-invent tradition to fit into their intellectual iconoclasm within the grand narrative of modernisation. It attempts to reveal the attachment to tradition in Bian's pre-war poetry and draws a comparison between his nostalgia and iconoclasm. Adapting to the dominant trend of thought that welcome progress and detest tradition, Bian's treatment of classical Chinese poetics and teachings seems to resemble Hobsbawm's invention of tradition:

> 'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices…which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past … with a suitable historic past. (2012, p. 1)

By combining the first and second level of the meaning of tradition, this research investigates the traditional elements in Bian's poetry to understand the aesthetics, values and norms that Bian had chosen to take into his modern poetry practice. Then, further analysis is carried out to understand Bian's poetic practice of finding justifications for these traditional elements. Bian's invention or re-invention of tradition, at least on the superficial level, is motivated by the need to show his links with Western poetry, hence achieving modernity recognised by most intelligentsia of his time.

Similar to the concept of tradition, in this research, the concept of modernity is not limited to its established definitions; it is not intended to define poetic or cultural modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry. Instead, this research focuses on the features of the literary construction of modernity and its implications. Bian's mentality is highly representative of the distress and tension experienced by Chinese intellectuals in the early- to mid-twentieth century. The re-invention of tradition under the banner of iconoclasm is naturally paradoxical; moreover, the lack of a profound understanding of Western influences further suggests the omnipresent utopian impulse and burdens the reproduction of Western influences in literature. The utopian impulse is used as an analytical framework in this research to explore Chinese intellectuals' structure of feelings facing the clash between West-driven modernisation and Chinese tradition. The utopian impulse is also evident in the complex attitude adopted by Chinese intellectuals towards tradition, evident in both the self-motivated exile of cultural tradition and the inevitable nostalgia for tradition. A discussion of the utopian impulse as an analytical framework in New Poetry is provided in Chapter 3.

Pushing boundaries: a brief review of New Poetry and the utopian impulse

This research attempts to reinterpret Bian by looking beneath the surface of the text to understand his mentality. To achieve this, it draws on the utopian impulse to conceptualise the equation between the West and modernity and the paradoxical approach towards tradition.

On the textual level, analysis is carried out to examine the dynamic between classical Chinese poetics and Western 'modern' poetics in Bian's pre-war poetry. A critical aspect of this dynamic is the justification for New Poetry. Whether or not a piece of literature work could be considered modern and new has to do with its Western elements and the level of vernacular Chinese language adopted. Affinities to Western poetics is a standard that Bian uses to justify the value of his poetry. Moreover, it is a prevalent standard that many researchers used to justify the modern quality of Bian's poetry.

This is due to a widely accepted equation between modern and Western influences amongst academics in mainland China in Bian's time. This equation was revisited and has dominated modern Chinese literature studies in mainland China since the 1980s. Modernity is therefore placed on a pedestal with exclusively positive features

and the promise of historical progress. A walkthrough of this dominant academic tendency is given in Chapter 3. As a result, current studies that look beyond textual quality tend to use Western poetics as benchmarks and make arguments based on the closeness of Bian's pre-war poetry to such benchmarks. Some scholars discuss Bian's intellectual poetry (*zhixing shi* 知性诗) and consider such writing as good examples of being modern, as it is a fruit of the poet's successful and conscious absorption of Western poetics, aesthetics and lifestyle. What is missing in this equation is the critical stance against modernisation and the capitalist way of modern life adopted by leading Western scholars on the topic of modernity. This partial understanding of Western modernity captures the utopian impulse alongside the passionate and anxious debates around New Poetry.

Following the loud and completely free expression by Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) and Guo Moruo in the 1930s, New Poetry moved to embrace French Symbolism and English Romanticism, and Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902–1988) observed a period of silence as a result of 'Westernisation' (2009, p. 145). In order to carry forward the historical task of New Poetry after the chaotic, loud 1920s, many poets began reviewing the progress of New Poetry and pointing out many flaws of total Westernisation. In practice, they looked back to tradition to find ways to calm down the poetic atmosphere and used classical Chinese poetic elements to rejuvenate their literary inspirations. However, driven by the desire to justify their efforts in describing such an approach and purpose, they upheld iconoclasm by categorising Chinese elements under the name of various Western schools. Based on these conflicting attitudes towards tradition, the pursuit of literary modernity in the 1930s was inevitably accompanied by utopian features.

The judgement of modernness in New Poetry is based on the emulation of external influences rather than internal experience and the deliberate reformation and transformation. Yuan (1947) envisions his plan with a new tradition (*xin chuantong* 新传统), which is primarily inspired by T.S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. Therefore, despite the term itself, tradition is not fully reflected or consciously transformed. It seems that poets only skimmed the surface of tradition as a tribute paid to T.S. Eliot. In their eyes, the intrinsic Chinese experience of writing is still inferior to Western ideas, and the latter must be appropriated to modernise New Poetry. Rooted in the rich legacy of classical Chinese poetry, Yuan's theory, as such, lacks the

consciousness to adjust, transform and re-contextualise literature. In practice, poets attempt to find links between classical Chinese aesthetics, culture and teachings and Western elements: ‘New Poetry is iconoclastic; however, it is not prepared to, or in fact, truly separated from tradition’ (Yu, 2010, p. 447). Therefore, in this research, the evolution of utopia as a concept and an omnipresent impulse is examined. Notably, that the utopian impulse and consciousness persisting in human civilisation – an idea shared by Bloch, Jameson and John Gray – responds greatly to New Poetry’s quest for modernity. John Gray’s argument that terminal convulsions have repeatedly acted as an apocalypse of contented status quo resonates with Wolfgang Kubin’s description of the Chinese poet’s self-image as simultaneously a creator and a destroyer (Kubin, 1996, p. 247). In Kubin’s words, as Chinese poets consider themselves with a responsibility to end history, there is ‘a feeling of superiority towards all things past … as a trait of the modern spirit’ (ibid.). Therefore, Chinese poets have embarked on a self-motivated exile of cultural tradition for the sake of creating something new, modern, and, therefore, better.

Under the banner of iconoclasm and Westernisation, most Chinese intelligentsia denied the fact that tradition survived through the succession of crises in the early twentieth century. Paradoxically, in their pursuit of modernity through literature and other art forms, they were constantly reminded of their close ties with tradition. In this research, the predominant presence of classical Chinese cosmology, aesthetics and poetics in Bian’s pre-war poetry highlights the utopian impulse to search for modernity.

The period of silence in New Poetry in the 1930s was the result of cultural iconoclasm. Chinese poets, as destroyers, began to recognise their discomfort and anxiety as a consequence of modernisation realised through emulating Western influences that they have not fully grasped. On the one hand, with the abrupt disenchantment of the old world, the construction of a new *raison d’être* was far from the Chinese experience. On the other hand, Chinese tradition continued to act as a spiritual homeland. Poets tend to look back at the spiritual homeland whenever they experience overwhelming negative feelings caused by utopianised attempts to modernise.

Therefore, it could be seen that in New Poetry’s quest for modernity, the names and faces of tradition were constantly changing to suit the need for justification. As modernity gradually became a widely recognised concept, tradition, with its invisible role in the utopian impulse, becomes fully dynamic and reflects the most pronounced

mentality and mechanism of literary expression. Bian represents poets attempting to invent the classical poetic tradition that could be applied to New Poetry without risking being branded as supporting the very tradition they oppose. This created a paradox in both their literature and mentality.

Research Questions

This research aims to contribute to overarching questions concerning New Poetry and the New Culture Movement: What are the key features in the construction of modernity in New Poetry? Is there a difference between what was constructed and what was envisioned? As the Chinese intelligentsia carried out the task of modernisation in literature, has the total iconoclastic goal been achieved, and what are the consequences of their attempt to break away from tradition?

It is important to take a step further than the previous, purely literary study and examine the angst in Bian's experiment with modern (and, to a certain extent, Western) poetic expressions to examine these questions: What characterises Bian's construction of modernity in his pre-war poetry? How does a poet with a seemingly exclusive pursuit for Western poetic expressions accommodate himself in the political turmoil and perceived cultural extinction of his nation? In seeking a deeper understanding of these issues, the research will try to answer the following specific questions.

1. To what extent has Bian borrowed from Western poetry, and what is the relationship between classical Chinese elements and Western elements in his pre-war poetry? Could we simply consider Bian's pre-war poetry as purely a result of his reception of French Symbolist and Modernist poetry?
2. Despite his claim and the common understanding amongst Chinese elites since the May Fourth Movement, what is Bian's real attitude towards classical Chinese literature and cultural traditions?
3. What types of feelings and emotions have served as motivation for Bian's pre-war poetry writing, and to what extent is such motivation presented in his work?
4. What is the relationship between Bian's pre-war poetry and the socio-political upheavals of his time? Is Bian, as some scholars claim, an outlier of his passionate and revolutionary peer elites?

This research uses Bian's pre-war poetry as key texts to examine these questions.

The poems studied primarily come from the following anthologies:

1. *San Qiu Cao* 《三秋草》 (1933),
2. *Fish Eyes* 《鱼目集》 (1935),
3. *The Han Garden* 《汉园集》 (1936),
4. *Poems of Ten Years* 《十年诗草》 (1942),
5. *Diaochong Jili* 《雕虫纪历 1930–1958》 (1979).

These are texts of Bian's most productive years as a poet. They are also the most frequently studied in existing research on Bian and New Poetry.

A note on methodology

The primary methodology of this research is textual analysis through close and comparative reading of Bian's key texts alongside texts of Western poets followed by Bian. Textual analysis is also carried out in a critical reading of articles written by Bian and his peers to generate a deeper understanding of Chinese intelligentsia's poetic motivation and mentality.

Apart from the analysis of the formal quality, images and style in Bian's pre-war poetry, this research also focuses on the structure of feeling, not only to understand the types of feelings and emotions in his poetic expression but also to draw a comparison between Bian's poetry and the classical Chinese and Western influences. Though 'it was one of feeling much more than a thought', Raymond Williams (1979, p. 64) asserts that feeling is organised and subject to analysis as 'a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones' (ibid.). Williams (1977) admits the difficulty of the term yet insists that the most profound understanding of feelings lie in 'social experience in solution' (p. 134) expressed through imaginative explorations in literary forms. In this research, the structure of feeling is used as a methodology to clarify the characteristics of Bian's emotional experience. Therefore, the difficulty in clarifying the fleeting term is excluded; instead, as a methodology, the structure of feeling helps differentiate types of structures and their coexistence in a particular type of literature created by a certain group of people sharing the same social experiences. This research considers the spatial, temporal and social characteristics of early twentieth-century China. It aims to identify the similarities and differences between Bian's structure of feeling, the Western masters he claims to follow and the classical Chinese poetic experiences. This approach leads to a better understanding of Bian's true attitude towards tradition and his reception of

Western influences.

At the same time, this research takes a cultural studies approach to focus on the interplay between texts, discourses, lived experiences and social contexts. Intertextuality is, therefore, another important aspect of its analytical framework. As this research sets out to link Bian's poetry with the psyche shared by Chinese intellectuals, the textual and contextual analysis is owed to Harold Bloom's claims of literary critics (1976) that 'Any poem is an interpoem, and any reading of that poem is an interreading' (p. 3). Bloom's theory is based on what he calls the sublime tradition in English literature, which naturally differs from the context of this research. Nevertheless, in Bian's case, the intertextuality of his pre-war poetry exists in three aspects that could be treated as 'the initial fixation of influence' (Bloom, 1976, p. 27), classical Chinese poetry, Western influences and the mainstream of Chinese intellectual thoughts. These strong influences have led to the inevitable reliance of Bian's poetic texts on pretexts. Chinese tradition has not yet lost its charming and deep-rooted influence whilst the mainstream considers Western influences as the almighty approach to modernity and progress. In order to understand the dynamic of these pretexts and Bian's creative intentions, a careful analysis must be carried out to understand the intertextuality.

Another theory of intertextuality that this research resonates with is Iser Wolfgang's fictionalising acts (1993). The writer selects 'the referential field of the text' (p. 5) (social, historical, cultural and literary) based on his creative intentions and combines different elements within the text with his intentions and imagination. This fictionalising act of selection and combination 'produces relationships within the text' (p. 8), which lead to the self-disclosure that 'indicates that it is to be used for an as-yet hidden, though overarching, purpose' (p. 19). The fictionalising act reveals intentionality, relatedness and bracketing of purposes that define the writer's mode of writing. All three elements of fictionalisation could be observed in Bian's intertextuality. This research attempts to understand how he selected referential texts from the three aspects mentioned above and combined them with his poetic texts. Moreover, the analysis of intertextuality aims to reveal the purposes of his self-disclosure, where answers to the research questions lie.

As the primary focus of this research is the motivation and mentality beneath poetic elements, it also draws on cross-cultural psychology studies. The concept of culture used in this research generally follows the widely recognised explanation given

in Kroeber and Kluckhohn's catalogue of definitions (1952). Culture refers to the patterns of human groups 'acquired and transmitted by symbols; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (*i.e.,* historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values' (1952, p. 180). Alongside the definition of culture, it is also important to stress the necessity of studying variability and the individual as we investigate the interrelation of cultural forms. Another concept of cross-cultural studies applied in this research is the emic–etic distinction. Emic analysis notes principles and behaviour described and justified by people in one culture as meaningful and important. Etic analysis is performed to make sense of a general system that accounts for all meaningful generalisations across cultures. The distinction represents a common problem in cross-cultural psychology: 'The problem arises when researchers try to reach conclusions about culture A by scoring according to the norms derived in culture B … that norms for B may be irrelevant for A, and that the results of such research can be false and misleading' (Brislin, 1976, p. 16). Following the basic framework of the emic-etic distinction, this research aims to identify distinctions between the poetic practice of Bian and the generalisations about poetry, culture and modernity made by Bian and his peers. At the same time, it will look for distinctions between Bian's treatment of Western elements and that of original Western poems. These distinctions are the key to the puzzle of Bian's mentality as a poet in times of political turbulence and cultural extinction. Therefore, intertextuality plays an important role in interpreting the Western and classical Chinese elements in Bian's poetry.

Chapter breakdown

This chapter lays out the scope of this thesis: A discussion on the pursuit of modernity is required to investigate the complex mentality of Chinese intelligentsia in a tumultuous period. It proposes to look beyond the existing research that persistently, though lacking in good quality, studies the one-sided reception of Western poetry and validates those with closeness to Western resources with the label of modern. It intends to inquire into the utopian imagining that drives the interplay between classical Chinese poetics and Western theories. This research aims to shed some light on the sensibilities, anxieties, and affections experienced amongst Chinese elites represented by Bian in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 2 offers a contextual introduction to Bian's short yet interesting life in

poetry and translation and the key debates, ideals and trends that shaped the atmosphere of culture and literature in early twentieth-century China. Chapter 3 discusses the concept of modernity and utopia and provides a critical review of current research concerning Bian Zhilin and New Poetry. The first part of the chapter traces the two most influential Western approaches to modernity, Marxist materialist collective modernisation and Kantian individual refinement, focusing on their implications in China. The second part offers a critical reflection of the two strands of existing research in New Poetry, the New Cultural Movement and Bian, the overseas scholarship and Chinese academic research. The current research is placed into these two categories, as each bear distinctive features and academic focus on the same topics

Chapters 4 to 7 focus on the textual and contextual poetics of Bian Zhilin in the 1930s. Analysis of images and expressions facilitates a better understanding of Bian's mentality, poetic intentions and the resources of his literary creativity. This understanding partly answers the question about Bian's attitude towards classical Chinese literature and cultural traditions.

Chapter 4 focuses on Bian's inheritance of the Crescent Moon Society in the formal quality that represents the pursuit of Westernisation in New Poetry. By focusing on the two most prominent aspects – obscurity and the choice of poetic language – the research asks how Bian reconciles his idea of poetic ambience and language despite the impulsive trend of *baihua* (vernacular Chinese 白话) that reflects cultural iconoclasm. Instead of carrying out a passionate emulation of Western poetic form to construct an awkwardly modern poetic form, through linguistic tactics, references and grammatical innovations, Bian manages to weave a linguistic structure that fits both the vernacular standard and the classical ideal that he inherited from classical Chinese literati and the Crescent Moon Society.

Chapter 5 investigates the suffering and struggle of the poet, symbolised by the scenes of the setting sun and a weary traveller on an infinite journey. It describes how Bian projects his deep sorrow and anxiety in these two revisited poetic scenes. The existence of these emotional projections shows that, contrary to claims that Bian focuses exclusively on pure poetry and takes relatively few of his poetic emotions from the upheaval of political situations, his pre-war poetry has much to do with the political turbulence and existential crisis of Chinese society and culture. At the same time, it analyses the connection and distinction between these poetic scenes and those in French

Symbolist poetry. As opposed to the common opinion that Bian's poetic sorrow reflects his reception of *fin de siècle*, the analysis in this chapter evokes the frequently revisited themes of metaphysical solitude and a weary traveller in an arduous spiritual journey in Bian's pre-war poetry, which can be traced back to classical Tang and Song Dynasty poetry.

Chapter 6 focuses on the image of a mirror and the repeatedly visited theme of self-reflection in Bian's pre-war poetry. Discussions are based on textual analysis focused on Bian's contemplation of self and reflection, the expression of romantic and intimate feelings, and the links between individual expression and philosophical ideas. This chapter aims to move deeper into the poet's private emotions to understand the poetic self. Analysis of images and the structure of self-reflection shows Bian's deep connection to classical Chinese poetry and philosophy. Analysis is not limited to Bian's poems; rather, this research adopts the intertextual method and aligns images with their classical Chinese sources to show Bian's intimacy with tradition. This chapter also initiates the discussion on Bian's rediscovery of Taoist teachings, which is elaborated on in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 discusses classical Chinese cosmology in Bian's poetic pursuit of consolation. It focuses on the mutual illumination between Confucian and Taoist notions of time and life and spiritual transcendence by drawing examples of connections between images, expressions and classical elements in Bian's pre-war poetry. For instance, the examination of the image of water reflects the poet's inheritance of the Confucian spirit with Buddhist and Taoist implications (*wai shi dao er nei ru* 外释道而内儒). Furthermore, the Confucian notion of time as a river that passes one by and the Taoist notion of the constant flow of water (a symbol of changes and the eternity of time) play a definitive role in Bian's poetic philosophy and aesthetics. Naturally, these two strands of classical Chinese teachings differ in many ways, especially in their styles and philosophical backgrounds. However, the fact that Bian uses both to deal with his pre-war suffering and anxiety points to something more than personal preference. It tells the compelling story of how it is in tradition that Bian resolves at least part of his trauma caused by political upheaval and iconoclasm.

However, to generate an insight into the construction of literary modernity and its consequences in Bian's pre-war poetry, a discussion on the contextual and cultural level must be furthered. Chapters 8 to 10 advance from the basis of textual and

individual analysis and take on the utopian notion to analyse the relationship between tradition and Western influences in New Poetry through a discussion based on cultural intertextuality. Furthermore, these chapters aim to identify the shared psyche of Chinese intellectuals as they attempt to break away from tradition and construct modernity based on a superficial impression of Western influences.

Chapter 8 draws a cross-reference between the poet's self-claimed association with French Symbolist poetry and his much deeper connection with classical Chinese poetics. It sets out to understand the inconsistency between Bian's claim of following French Symbolist poetry and his writing practice that, according to previous chapters, reflects influences cast by classical Chinese literature and philosophical teachings. Looking beyond textual analysis, it refers to Bian's translation works and arguments made by Chinese intellectuals in Bian's active days to draw a comparison between French Symbolist poetry and Bian's poetics. At the same time, it investigates private symbols in Bian's pre-war poetry to reveal the sources of the poet's emotional structure. By turning to the emotional depth of his writing rather than lingering on the much-sought-after discussions of modernity (which usually means Westernisation), a fresh insight could be generated – Bian came to a Westernised representation of the artistic agency of classical Chinese poetry. Therefore, this chapter argues that Bian's pre-war poetry is a Chinese child, despite its birthmark from symbolism and metaphysical poetry. The construction of Westernised modernity has much to do with an imagined ideal that accommodates the poet's yearning for tradition.

Chapter 9 explores the emotional structure of Bian's pre-war poetry in search of the shared psyche of Chinese intellectuals in early twentieth-century China. It attempts to connect the poetic emotions dominated by classical Chinese poetics and the reality of China's existential crisis. This chapter addresses three issues: the justification of the expression of the Chinese self under the cover of Western influences, the development of the emotion of *xiangchou* under the context of totalistic iconoclasm and the Chinese construction of backwards-looking utopia intertwined with *xiangchou*.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by discussing the findings at the level of cultural anxiety. In this chapter, the two axes of locating utopian construction in New Poetry are given, as it intends to draw attention to the unsolved problems of modernity in China since the age of New Poetry and pose an inquiry into China's ongoing project of nation-building. The questions, problems and possible answers given in this research may shed light on the identity of a modern Chinese intellectual. This might help map the path to

future understanding of the fast-growing, complex Chinese society with deep compassion instead of drawing quick assertions that define the dichotomy of China and the West, tradition and modernity. It argues for more academic attention to be paid to negative feelings suffered by intellectuals in the middle of the ongoing and overwhelming obsession with historical progress.

Chapter 2 Bian Zhilin in Early Twentieth-Century China: Literature Amidst Socio-Political Movement

This chapter reviews the contextual background of Bian Zhilin's poetic career in the 1930s and 1940s. The first half of this chapter discusses 'the grand narrative' of the most influential political and social changes in twentieth-century China, the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong* 五四运动) and the New Culture Movement (*xinwenhua yundong* 新文化运动), and their impact on literary production. The chapter then seeks to determine the mentality and motivation behind the cultural progress. By embracing a political and cultural movement, Chinese elites set a goal for their nation and society to move both forwards and upwards, which contradicts the traditional idea of the Middle Kingdom as an entireness under the monarchy and not necessarily in need of advancement.

Under this grand narrative, two aspects are relevant to Bian's poetic career: despair and the hope of rejuvenating Chinese culture and society. Such strong emotions can be attributed to political turbulence and the anxiety caused by the attempt to construct Western modernity while experiencing hidden, guilty nostalgia for tradition. The second half of this chapter, therefore, reviews Bian's poetic inspirations and activities from his early education to the most fruitful years of poetic creation, between 1931 and 1937. This chapter also discusses Bian's translation work, which extends beyond his career as a poet. To provide a clear understanding of Bian's contemporary political and intellectual environment, this chapter considers the key literary figures with whom Bian associated and the political events that impacted his budding poetic life.

Culture, iconoclasm and Westernisation in the May Fourth Movement

Since the May Fourth Movement and the literary movement that followed, China has been fascinated by the ideal of modern society provided by Western examples. The mainstream opinion of the Chinese intelligentsia is that literature is the fountainhead of the reproduction of modernity under Western influences via the combination of political, cultural and social radicalism (Chow, 1960). The May Fourth Movement is widely recognised in mainland China as having an iconoclastic agenda: it

is a movement from old thoughts, culture and social structures towards new thoughts and culture. What distinguishes the new from the old is the Western influences introduced by leading intellectuals' calls for total Westernisation. Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942), Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889–1927) and Hu Shi were amongst the pioneers who introduced, on a significant scale, schools of philosophy and social ideals, theories, fiction, poetry, theatre, prose and other cultural products from the West, largely through Japan. Their introduction of and call for Westernisation also initiated the New Culture Movement that merged into the May Fourth Movement.

At the time, there was an outcry against Westernisation. Represented by the *Xueheng* School (School of Balanced Learning 学衡派), conservative social elites in China were disappointed by the consequences of World War I and began criticising capitalist social and cultural structures in the West. They began building a theory of Chinese tradition as globally superior while depreciating Western cultural elements without fully understanding them. A full understanding of the West, at the time, was not realised by either the conservatives or the passionate leaders in the New Culture Movement. Despite this, the New Culture Movement was persistent. Western influences were introduced, studied and embraced with great passion as the *Xueheng* School quickly excited the cultural movement.

One important aspect of the New Culture Movement is the translation of Western literary works under the banner of media agencies founded during the movement, including *the New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian* 新青年) and *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo Yuebao* 小说月报). Since 1915, Western literature and political essays have been consistently translated and published in China. Fiction Monthly issued special editions concerning Russian literature, French literature, modern world literature and even post-colonial literature. Simultaneously, leading publishers, including Commercial Press, *Hufeng* Bookshop (胡风书店), *Beixin* Bookshop (北新书店) and the Crescent Moon Bookshop (新月书店), have published various selections of European and American literature.

Translators of these publications acted simultaneously as translators, movement pioneers and writers. Translation and creative writing, to them, are incorporated in the same process, so literature can serve the goal of the movement and revolution. According to Hu Shi (1999, p.56), translated Western literature was a resource and example for writers aiming to create new literature after the May Fourth Movement.

Western literature is seen as a tool that provides opportunities and inspiration to build a new coherent centre on top of the shattered, outdated and much-detested old culture.

Another notable aspect of the New Culture Movement and translation of Western literature is the introduction of *baihua* in literature. The May Fourth Movement brought *baihua* to the formal discussion of modernising Chinese literature. *Baihua* is developed on the basis of spoken Chinese excluding uncommon dialects; this new type of language is also influenced by written languages in translated Western literary works. *Baihua* represents the most iconoclastic agenda of the New Culture Movement: classical Chinese literature uses a set of well-established criteria for the careful selection of words and sentences in strict rhyme and metre. Both Guo Moruo and Hu Shi are passionate advocates of *baihua* and demanded literature be released from these strict rules. The former, in his famous poem 'Heaven Dog 天狗' (1920), written in colloquial Chinese without clear limitation in rhyme or metre, claims to 'have swallowed the entire universe' before stating 'The I of I is about to explode!' The poet's blissful cry reflects his determination to completely destroy the traditional literature system and write in the most vernacular and, hence, new style. Hu Shi, apart from writing various articles promoting vernacular writings, focused on social reformation that incorporates *baihua*. He successfully demanded that the Republic of China government replace textbooks nationwide with ones written in *baihua*. Additionally, teaching the English language and literature written in English became a trend in South and East China schools, the most prosperous and open-minded at the time.

However, before long, questions arose surrounding *baihua*. In 1919, Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900–1990) published 'Three Conditions of Vernacular Poetry 白话诗的三大条件'. Yu and many other intellectuals criticised the abuse of *baihua* in literature. Without directly criticising the use of vernacular language, Yu called for a clear distinction between *baihua* and poetry written in *baihua*, as unrestrained use of the former could destroy the poetic and literary beauty of the modern Chinese language and, therefore, if left unexamined, endanger the fruit of the New Culture Movement. Critics and translators, including Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱 (1903–1983), Mu Mutian 穆木天 (1900–1971) and Wang Duqing 王独清 (1898–1940), even used the practice and theory of Western literature to defend Yu's call to put a limit on *baihua*. Consequently, *baihua* in its most free form in literature, though initiated by the call for total Westernisation, was seemingly terminated by Western influences. In this research, when

analysing the formal qualities of Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry, I reinvestigate the resistance to *baihua* in the 1920s and ask whether this resistance was due to a better understanding of Western influences or the intellectuals' yearning for classical Chinese poetic beauty. Furthermore, in the context of the trend of total Westernisation in the New Culture Movement, I examine whether intellectuals such as Bian somehow found a connection between Western influences and their hidden nostalgia for classical Chinese poetics.

Bian Zhilin: early days and the beginning of his poetic career

Bian Zhilin was born on 8 December 1910 in the town of Tang under the Haimen Administration of Jiangsu Province. Writing under both his real name and pseudonyms, including Ji Ling 季陵 and Xue Lin 薛林, Bian was most active in the early twentieth century as a poet, critic and translator. In his childhood, schools on China's east coast began teaching English. Due to the decline of the domestic economy, Chinese families tended to hope to send their children, after proper education, to work in businesses owned and managed by foreign governments and agencies. Bian's mother, the wife of a once-successful businessman, was no exception. In 1927, Bian's mother made the decision to send her son from Haimen, a relatively conservative and traditional town, to study in Shanghai, where new and modern schools had been established. Bian entered Pudong High School that year. Pudong High School adopted an English-only course for young students, which provided Bian with the opportunity and ability to read and translate foreign languages (Chen, 1998, p. 5). In high school, Bian studied Shakespeare and attempted his first translation of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the title of which Bian translated to 古舟子咏 (*gu zhouzi yong*). This title has since been considered the standard translation of Coleridge's poem in Chinese.

In 1929, Bian graduated from high school and entered Peking University. In Peking University's Department of Foreign Languages, the young man mastered both English and French. Bian continued to translate English poems read in class into Chinese, though most of these translations were deserted immediately. He also attempted to translate French poetry, including works by Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé.

Bian Zhilin in the 1930s: connection to the Crescent Moon Society

In 1930, Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897–1931) left Shanghai to teach at Peking University with a recommendation from Hu Shi, then-Director of Arts and Humanities at the university. Bian Zhilin also began writing poetry that year. Interestingly, in Bian's 1979 work commemorating Wen Yiduo 闻一多 (1899–1946), another representative figure of the Crescent Moon Society, he wrote about his first encounter with Xu's poems as 'great inspiration between The Goddesses and Dead Water' (1979, p. 87–93). According to an article written by Haimen journalist Jiang Liangen, in his later years, Bian (1984) recounted his memories as a student in Xu's class with great admiration and happiness:

> Xu Zhimo is the kind of poet with extraordinary talents. He talked to us in class about English Romantic poetry, especially about Shelly, with his eyes turned to the outside of the window or the ceiling. Indeed, he was writing poems himself (as he taught), his imagination had no limitation and dazzled us all like heavenly flowers. (p. 20)

In 1931, Bian joined the editing team of *Peking Student Weekly* 北大学生周刊. Xu Zhimo wrote a short poem titled 'I Envy' (*wo xianmu* 我羡慕), which was published in the paper. Xu wrote to Bian various times to praise his translation of English poetry, for example, Thomas Hardy's 'The Weary Walker'. Xu also recommended that Bian translate Stendhal's *Rouge et Noir*.

Though Bian noted of his poems that 'the majority was destroyed by myself' (2002, p. 445), he gathered his courage to show his writings to Xu, as Xu 'for no reason asked if I also write poems after class' (ibid.). Xu's advice, to a certain extent, relieved Bian's tendency to think, 'When I write poems, I always hope that they are unknown' (ibid.). To Bian's surprise, Xu brought his works back to Shanghai and shared them with Shen Congwen. The two then quite established literary figures decided to compile an anthology for Bian to publish. Without meeting Bian in person, Shen wrote a long letter to Bian to explain his idea of publishing a book titled after one of Bian's submitted poems: *The Crow* (*qunya ji* 群鸦集). Both Xu and Shen recommended Bian's poems to 新月诗刊 (*Xinyue Shikan*, *The Crescent Moon Society Monthly*), 文艺月刊 (*Wenyi Yuekan*, *Arts and Literatures Monthly*) and other magazines associated with the Crescent Moon Society. From then on, Bian's association with the Crescent Moon Society became well known.

The anticipated publication of *The Crow*, however, never occurred, as the January 28 incident happened in Shanghai in 1932, violently disrupting culture and life there. In November 1931, Xu Zhimo died in an airplane accident. As the information reached Bian at Peking University, the young poet was struck by sadness. In tears, he began reciting Xu's 1931 poem '*Yunyou* 云游' (wander as a cloud). '*Yunyou'* is titled and structured in Xu's attempt to construct a poetic ambience emulating William Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud'. In 1941, when Bian published *Ten Years of Poems*, he dedicated this anthology to his short yet precious memories of Xu Zhimo. Jiang Ruoshui (2000), Bian's student, greatly admires Bian's dedication as a student presenting his final paper to a respected and loved teacher.

Bian returned to Peking University to teach English literature with a focus on Byron and Shelly after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In 1979, as chief editor of *Xinyue Shikan*, he published an article with six selected poems of Xu:

> His poems, whether about love, nature, or mortal sufferings, make me understand his thoughts and emotions in three themes: love for motherland, iconoclastic calls and promotion of humanity… in fact they are precious things. (Bian, 1984, p. 22)

This article was used as the prologue for the 1982 reprint of *Selected Works of Xu Zhimo* by Renmin Chubanshe. As Bian (1984) reflects in this article, Bian praises Xu's widely recognised 'positivity and artistic advantages' (p. 30).

Bian was never officially a student of Wen Yiduo. However, on various occasions, Bian had paid tribute to Wen with the attitude of an apprentice. In 1933, Bian spent a summer frequenting Wen's house at Tsinghua University, consulting the anthology *Imprint* (*Laoyin* 烙印) by Wen's student Zang Kejia's 臧克家 (1905–2004). Wen (1993) admired Bian's poetry, especially his techniques, which Zhang Manyi (1990) compared to a muse's gift. Bian recounted being familiar with Wen's poems, including *Dead Water* (*sishui* 死水) (1928), before graduating from high school. The influences of the Crescent Moon Society, introduced by Xu and Wen, mainly remain on the formal level in Bian's pre-war poetry. Bian (1979) commemorated Wen's contribution to New Poetry by referring to his techniques of using vernacular Chinese with rhyme and metre. Bian stated, 'Until now, none of us has caught up with Wen and Xu, not to mention surpass them' (1979, p. 10). Fei Ming (2008) has asserted that 'Bian Zhilin's form of writing is a complete development based on Xu Zhimo's form of

writing' (p. 166). Zhang Manyi (1989) has also confirmed that Crescent Moon Society influenced how Bian learnt to 'accept and benefit from the limitations of endless rhyme and metre' (p.16).

Nevertheless, the essence of Bian's pre-war poetry, apart from the formal quality, diverted from that of his romantic predecessors. Jiang Ruoshui (2000) has cited a preface from the 1974 book *Selected Chinese Poems 1917 to 1949*:

> The poet rose above rhymes of the Crescent Moon Society's poetry, and created his own style of Symbolist poetry, which extends to his patriotic poetry during the Sino-Japanese war. He had gone through a long stage of growth and development. Bian Zhilin has always been a Taoist thinker in life: his poems read in such a familiar and vernacular way, yet incorporate such simplicity and infinity of meaning. (p. 6)

<u>First publications: association with Shen Congwen and the anthology *San Qiu Cao*</u>

Though *The Crow* was not published successfully, it demonstrates the association between Shen Congwen and Bian Zhilin. In admiration of Bian's poems, Shen published an article titled 'Remarks (*fuji* 附记)' in *Creation Monthly* (*chuangzuo yuekan* 创作月刊). Shen (1984) praised Bian as one of the leading young poets of his time:

> [He] uses plain words to write about plain people's emotions. Because he has such an apt hand, he writes beauty that is beyond words. If the first condition of the poetic art is choice of words, then Zhilin is most sensitive in this aspect. He knows of choosing 'appropriate' words and wipes off 'empty' ones. (p. 17)

This was a significant inspiration for Bian as a young poet. In 1933, Bian published his selected translation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleur du Mal* (*e zhi hua* 恶之花; the title, similar to 古舟子咏, has since been considered the standard translation of the book) in *Crescent Moon*, the magazine founded and run by the Crescent Moon Society. The publication granted Bian a small amount of money, which he used for travel expenses to visit Shen Congwen in Qingdao. During this visit, Bian talked about his creation of 'a dozen poems of slightly different style in the three months in autumn 1932' (2002, p. 237). Shen generously sponsored his idea of publishing this anthology under the name of *San Qiu Cao*, which became Bian's first published poetry anthology in 1933.

On the copyright page of *San Qiu Cao*, Shen Congwen is listed as the only publisher. Bian remembered the decline of the Crescent Moon Society at the time: ‘in 1933 Shao Xunmei truly has no means of continuing the Crescent Moon Bookshop’ (ibid.). Yet, he still chose to publish with the Crescent Moon Society’s publishing house, possibly because it was the chosen publisher of *The Crow*.

Bian’s association and friendship with Shen continued. In 1934, Shen wrote a poem titled ‘Bian Zhilin: a bas-relief 卞之琳浮雕’ under his pseudonym Shangguan Bi 上官碧. In the poem, a young man with ‘two hands supporting his chin/in his heart he draws a circle’ (Shangguan, 1934, no pagination) asks himself questions about life, disappointment, hope and distaste. The poem is Shen’s impression of Bian, which highly corresponds to the poetic self in Bian’s pre-war poetry. In 1936, as Bian struggled with his career, Shen wrote a letter to Hu Shi in hopes of finding more translation work for Bian. Later that year, Bian was offered the opportunity to translate for the China Foundation,[3] chaired by Hu Shi.

In his *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (2015), David Der-wei Wang dedicates a chapter to Shen Congwen and explores his individual lyricism in relation to what Wang calls ‘history with feelings’ (*youqing de lishi* 有情的历史; p. 41) in addition to the grand narrative of revolution and progress. Bian’s association with Shen, though a topic less addressed by existing literature, showcases the two men’s shared empathy and individual poetic tendency in literature.

Exploration of lyrical creativity: *The Han Garden*

The anthology *The Han Garden* was published in March 1936 by the Commercial Press in Shanghai. It includes 16 pieces from He Qifang’s *Yanni Ji* 燕泥集 (anthology of the swallow’s trace), written between 1931 and 1934; 17 pieces from Li Guantian’s *Xingyun Ji* 行云集 (anthology of moving clouds), written between 1931 and 1934; and 34 pieces from Bian Zhilin’s *Shuhang Ji* 数行集 (anthology of a few lines), written between 1930 and 1934. Bian explained the anthology’s title in the 1936 preface:

[3] Founded in 1924, the original name is the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture 中华教育文化基金董事会; in 1931, the foundation was officially named the China Foundation 中基会.

> The place where we studied together is called 'Han Garden'. I remember when I was in South China, I truly had some dreams of that name. I did not know, at the time, that as I visited the place, I found only the name but not a garden. I ascended the tall building with much sorrow. However, we had always been keen to using the name; we thought it might be interesting to use an outdated title for the book. Hence, *The Han Garden.* (Zhang, 2020, p. 43)

The street of the Han Garden is no longer known in Beijing today. However, during Bian's days, it was a well-known location for cultural activities in the middle of Peking University. As young students, the three poets of *The Han Garden* must have witnessed Hu Shi's vernacular movement, the Crescent Moon Society's most glorious days and the cultural and art salons held in the living rooms of notable figures, such as Lin Huiyin. It is fair to say that 'the outdated name' symbolises the three poets' memories and respect regarding the peak of the New Culture Movement. Bian Zhilin was a student with Li Guangtian in the Department of Foreign Languages. He Qifang was the youngest of the three and a student in the Department of Philosophy. The three young men joined hands in consulting Zang Kejia's publication and forged a strong friendship inside the circle.

In *The Han Garden*, He Qifang and Bian Zhilin share poems with characters from Symbolist poetry, while Li Guangtian's work was generally considered modernist poetry. David Der-wei Wang (2015) offered a detailed analysis of He Qifang's lyricism and poetic features, which differ significantly from Bian's poetic techniques, especially in images and ambience. He's work in *The Han Garden* also showcases the strong character of his early poetry; he adopts a variety of elements from classical Chinese poetry, notably from *huajian ci* 花间词 popular in the late Tang Dynasty. If one analyses Bian's pre-war poetry, one finds many references from *huajian ci* and Tang Dynasty poetry. His early works also tend to use an imagined female self to express feelings of sorrow and nostalgia, which again resonates with Bian's pre-war poetry. This might be one reason that the two young poets easily formed a friendship despite their differences in poetic images and formal qualities.

The Han Garden drew much academic praise upon its publication and was seen as a symbol of the pursuit of pure poetry and 'true modernity' (Li, 1937, no pagination). However, soon after its publication, the three young men embarked on different routes in pursuit of their ideal literature. In 1935, Bian published a poetry collection titled *Fish*

Eyes. In the next few years, before the termination of his poetry career in the 1940s, Bian continued with a similar style of poetry. Bian (2002) has compared himself with He and Li: 'what I wrote was not as robust or rich as their early poetic works; I merely compose a light-hearted style in my explicit or implicit sorrow' (p. 447). Li Guangtian shifted his view from poetry to prose and essays and published various books of essays in the 1930s and 1940s. He also published a book of literary criticism, *The Art of Poetry* 诗的艺术, in 1944. He Qifang also went on to write both poetry and prose. In 1936, he published a collection of his prose work titled *Huameng Lu* 画梦录 (anthology of painted dreams), a representative work of his understanding of lyricism and literal emotions. After *Huameng Lu*, He's artistic exploration was interrupted. He later adopted a drastically political and realistic direction in his literature, which won him great acclaim and acceptance in China. Bian Zhilin was, all his life, an introverted man. He and Li, however, were more active and socially oriented, which was proven in the rise of their fame in China, especially after 1949, while Bian's name was gradually lost.

Western influences: Bian Zhilin the poet as a translator

Like Hu Shi, Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo, Bian Zhilin practiced the translation of Western literature throughout his poetic life. His career in translation even exceeded his active years as a poet, as the latter only lasted through the 1930s then sparked with a drastic change in style at the very beginning of 1940s before the poet became silent and only used the words of translation. Together, *Translation Works of Bian Zhilin* 卞之琳译文集 (2000) and *Collected Works of Bian Zhilin* 卞之琳文集 (2002) include close to 1.5 million translated words and 1.2 million words of his research on English and French literature. The 1.5 million words of translation include almost every genre; Bian diligently translated poetry, prose, essays, fiction, biography, theatre and other literary works.

Under the influence of the New Culture Movement, Bian began publishing his translations in 1930 under the pseudonym of Lin Zi 林子. In his university years, he devoted his translation skills to French Symbolist poets represented by Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Paul Valéry and Stephane Mallarmé. In 1936, he collected his translation works published in *Ta Kung Po Literary Supplement* 大公报文艺副刊. These works were published together by Commercial Press under the title of *Window on the West* 西窗集. Many of the Western writers translated by Bian in *Window on the*

West were listed by the poet himself in his preface to *Diaochong Jili* (records of carving an insect):

> In the earliest stage**,** I wrote about the grey objects and scenes in the streets of Peking**;** obviously, I was inspired by Baudelaire's writing about the poor, the old and the blind in the streets of Paris. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and short essays influenced my writing techniques in the middle stage in my early years. The same situation occurred in the third stage of my early years in addition to W.B. Yeats, R.M. Rilke and Paul Valéry's late short poems**.** In my later years of poetry writing until the New Era after liberation, I more or less referred to W. H. Auden's poetry and some poems from the Aragon Resistance Movement. (2002, p. 460)

Window on the West was popular after its publication, as it includes works of Western European writers from the 1850s to the 1920s, the most welcomed genre in China after the May Fourth Movement. After the 1947 publication of *Letters of Comfort* 慰劳信集, Bian stopped writing poetry and devoted almost all his attention to translation. He first published a series of translations completed in the 1930s, including Giles Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* 维多利亚女王传; Paul Fort's *Henry III* 亨利第三; R.M. Rilke's *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* 旗手; and André Gide's *La Porte Étroite* 窄门, *Les Nouvelles Nourritures* 新的粮食 and *Les Retour de L'enfant Prodigue* 浪子回家集. In 1949, Bian worked at Oxford University as a visiting scholar for a year and a half before he was offered a professorship in the Department of Western Languages at Peking University. In the 1950s, as a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Bian undertook a grand translation and research project concerning Shakespeare's work. He planned to finish translating the four tragedies towards the end of the 1950s. However, as the Cultural Revolution violently interrupted literature and cultural work in China, that plan was abolished. In the 1980s, Bian resumed his translation work and eventually published *Four Tragedies of Shakespeare: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (1988) and *On Shakespearean Tragedy* (1989).

Jiang Ruoshui (2000), Zhang Manyi (1989), Zhao Yiheng (2013), Michelle Yeh (1994 and 2008) and Lloyd Haft (1983) have all discussed Bian's affiliation to the names listed in his preface to *Window on the West*. Both Zhang (1989) and Jiang (2000) have offered detailed analyses on Bian's parody and dramatization technique under the influences of T. S. Eliot to support the argument that Bian had also accepted modernist and metaphysical poetry in the West. Bian also attributed this specific technique to

influences from Wen Yiduo's *Dead Water* by comparing Wen to T. S. Eliot. Almost all existing discussion on Western influences in Bian's pre-war poetry focuses on textual and inter-textual analysis. For example, in an article published in 1983, Bian's friend, art critic Wang Zuoliang 王佐良 (1916–1995), compared (Wang, 2005) the last line of Bian's 'Return 归' (1934) with the first three lines of T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Tang Qi (1990) and Haft (1983) have also compared four lines from Bian's 'Station 车站' (1937) with two lines in the same T. S. Eliot poem, and Jiang Ruoshui has provided a detailed discussion comparing 'Peking, 1934 春城' (1934) with 'The Waste Land'.

Most academic and poetic voices discussing Bian's connection to Western poetry are positive and encouraging, as they see Western influences contributing to the modern quality of Bian's pre-war poetry. In my opinion, this trend and unified attitude reflect the notion of cultural progress in the New Culture Movement. Not much has changed from Hu Shi's view of translating Western literature and writing literature to emulate Western influences: as classic Chinese literature and culture are considered outdated, to become modern, one must become Western.

Post-war change of poetic style

In 1938, at the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War, Bian published a short article titled 'The Map is Moving 地图在动'. In this article, he discusses the migration of Chinese people due to the war and confirms the newly forged national spirit of resistance and hard work. In the same year, Bian collected 20 of his new poems on the same theme, praising the hardworking people in the warzone in China, and published them as *Letters of Comfort*. Though these 20 poems are in the sonnet format Bian learnt from the Crescent Moon School, upon first reading, it is difficult to connect *Letters of Comfort* with the poet's past poems in *Fish Eyes*, *The Han Garden* and *San Qiu Cao*. In *Letters of Comfort*, the poetic sensibility, the sorrow and despair and the dim hopes of finding the imagined wonderland are absent; instead, Bian uses realistic depictions and words that belong to the grand narrative of revolution and resistance. *Letters of Comfort* is a collection of standard revolutionary literature, which quickly became the mainstream in Yan'an. It also fit perfectly under Chairman Mao's demand in his talks on literature at the Yan'an forum (1980) that literature be used as a weapon to educate and serve the people and society overall.

In reviewing the change of style from *Fish Eyes* to *Letters of Comfort*, Bian's peer poet, also a passionate advocate of pure poetry and French Symbolist poetry, Mu Dan, considers Bian a representative figure who led the shift of New Poetry from boundless lyricism to reason and intelligence. He claims that there has been a 'loss of lyrical elements from the May Fourth Movement' (2006, p. 53) in *Letters of Comfort*. Furthermore, he connects this change of style to English and American poetry in the twentieth century, as 'since T. S. Eliot brought the literary trend from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it seems that writing poetry with wit has become quite popular; the use of brain nerves has replaced the burning blood' (ibid.). Mu Dan did not fully welcome the decline of lyricism. In fact, he criticised both *Fish Eyes* and *Letters of Comfort*, despite the difference in style, as 'overly calm[;] they lack the emotional tempo that accommodates the plot. Such "wit" … must jump out and point to a running river of emotions to boil people's blood' (ibid. p. 56). This criticism is an accurate description of *Letters of Comfort*. Though Bian changed the overall subject, style and ambience of his poetry, he remained the cold-blooded and shy young man in the deserted street. The motivation for his style change was almost purely political.

In 1938, Bian travelled to Yan'an and Taihang Mountain, where the Chinese Communist Party was based. Between 1937 and 1949 the area had witnessed a series of revolutionary changes in social culture with an emphasis on revolutionary literature. Bian spent one year in Yan'an. His memories of Yan'an on the trip seem rather different from those of his peer He Qifang: 'memories of life in Yan'an before the literary rectification are unforgettable and embarrassing' (2002, p. 111); 'differences in life and literary style indicated [a different choice of life between] Qifang and I' (p. 287). He Qifang stayed in Yan'an to work as a revolutionary writer, while Bian left the area after one year. In his novel *Shanshan Shuishui* 山山水水 (according to Haft, the majority of the novel was destroyed by Bian himself), Yan'an was depicted as the source of intellectual sensitivity, anxiety and paradox. Discourse of political and poetic origins in *Shanshan Shuishui* reflects Bian's lost identity in balancing individual lyricism and the collective narrative. The novel is also Bian's attempt to 'accommodate and showcase the collective political unconsciousness in the poetic discourse. The transformation of Bian's literary mind is conscious and spontaneous[,] at the same time limited by the political environment in Yan'an' (Li, 2012, p. 66).

This transformation was painful and unsuccessful, as Bian burnt the manuscript

of *Shanshan Shuishui* after eight years of writing. As he found balancing individual poetics and the collective narrative too difficult, in the 1940s, Bian devoted most of his time to lecturing in universities and performing translations. In the 1950s, according to Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui (2000), Bian wrote a total of 40 poems, less than one third of the 120 poems written between 1930 and 1939. The theme of these poems is directly connected to the communist party's national project:

> In 1950 he wrote about the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (抗美援朝); in 1953 he wrote about Co-operation in Agriculture; in 1958 he wrote about construction of socialism. (p. 56)

For the next twenty years, Bian did not write poetry, but his poetic silence was broken in the 1980s. As Bian visited Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, he wrote a handful of short poems recording his trips. At this stage, Bian 'began to recognise the style of expressing directly from [the] heart in classical Chinese poetry' (ibid. p. 65). As Zhang Manyi (1989) has noted, in his later years, Bian adopted the tendency to comment in the most honest and direct manner. Therefore, his preface to *Diaochong Jili*'s 1982 revised edition should be counted as the poet's most honest statement. His affiliation with classical Chinese poetry, anxiety and hesitation, though in many people's view not progressive or positive enough, should be considered alongside his much praised modern/Western quality and beauty of intelligence.

Summary of chapter

The notion of progress in early twentieth-century China is reflected through totalistic iconoclasm and the passionate emulation of Western influences in the New Culture Movement. The overarching rationale is clear: language, literature, culture, society and the nation must be driven towards a better, healthier and more modern world. This idea profoundly influenced Chinese intellectuals in early twentieth-century China, including members the Crescent Moon Society, with whom Bian Zhilin was closely associated in his early poetic career.

From the beginning of his intellectual life, Bian was educated extensively in Western literature. It is only natural that he would later become associated with the Crescent Moon Society and adhere to its cause of individual refinement through poetic creations emulating the West. This association inspired the young poet to

pursue a poetic career, laying the foundation of poetic principles dominated by the desire to renew and modernise.

Though he was active for less than 10 years, Bian Zhilin created an abundance of unique poems and influenced many later poets. His exposure to Western influences came from extensive reading and his experience as a translator. Even after he ceased poetic creation, Bian continued to produce translation works, showcasing his consistent belief in progress and modernity under Western influences. He had also received classical Chinese teachings from an early age, yet this was not fully reflected in his association with the Crescent Moon Society or the Han Garden. Therefore, a broader view of his poetic career and his affiliations with both tradition and the West is needed to fully understand the poet's social and emotional experiences before he stopped writing poetry in the 1940s.

Chapter 3 Perceptions of Modernity: Utopia in Chinese Poetry, 1930s–1940s

In this chapter, I discuss the perception of modernity in China and the concept of utopia. Given the contextual background detailed in Chapter 2, it is only natural that modernity was introduced to China as a Western concept. China's quest for modernity has developed through two different approaches: the collective imaginary of a better, modern future and the individualist approach aiming at enhancing the national character through individual refinement. However, it is notable that neither of these two approaches fully captured the full range of meanings in their Western origins. In this chapter, I refer to this pattern of partial understanding as a result of the utopian impulse in early twentieth-century China's quest for modernity.

The division of the two approaches primarily concerns the cause and effect of modernity. With the majority of intellectuals believing in the overarching power of socio-economic transitions, literature and aesthetics in China have conformed to a historical view of modernisation as a 'universal' path towards modernity. By contrast, advocates of individualism, such as the Crescent Moon Society poets, saw individual perfection as a preparatory step towards the possibility of a refined, modern community.

Since the May Fourth Movement and the literary movement that followed, China has been fascinated by progress, making modernity a seeming accessory to the task of modernisation instead of a tool of critique by Western philosophers such as Hegel and Marx. Furthermore, despite the predominant motivation of setting up a better, updated China with reference to the Enlightenment idea of human betterment, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940)'s 'aesthetics instead of religion' and the Crescent Moon Society's romanticism following the Kantian proposal of individual refinement through aesthetic education became an aborted task.

Therefore, in this section, I have selected the Western origins of modernity that have implications for the quest for modernity in China. I begin my discussion by tracing the Western origins of the two approaches towards modernity followed by the Chinese. The implications of these approaches have two different levels: the practice and theory in early twentieth-century China and the academic literature under the influence of the two approaches. It is notable that years after the beginning of China's quest for modernity, overseas and mainland Chinese scholars remain divided on these two

different approaches. In this chapter, I also review the key debates and literature on the construction of modernity in literature, New Poetry and Bian Zhilin's works.

I then look into the concept of utopia, and more importantly, the 'utopian impulse' under the social and cultural context. In the literature movement known as New Poetry, there has not been a structured set of organisational rules or a proposal for a social and political framework required for a utopian project. However, I use the term 'utopian impulse' in this research to explore Chinese intellectuals' understanding of the West and modernity as well as its consequences. The utopian impulse is also evident in their complex attitude towards tradition and the love–hate relationship between the Chinese intelligentsia and classical Chinese culture.

Understanding modernity in the context of early twentieth-century Chinese literature

I would like to open a discussion on the nature of lyricism in China's quest for modernity with an inspection of the persistent critical stance towards it. At the beginning of the New Culture Movement, its proponents reflected modernity in Chinese literature in the revolution by focusing on the form of writing. They used *baihua* in contrast to Classical Chinese, the latter being the standard form of writing from the emergence of written language to the early twentieth century. Writing in vernacular Chinese validated the intellectuals' common pursuit of using new and 'free' writing styles. Many scholars today consider the rise of *baihua* and fiction writing, extending to the present, as the most remarkable symbol of modernity in Chinese literature. This includes Chih-Tsing Hsia and Chen Pingyuan's research on the history of modern Chinese literature, Wang Zuoliang's *Consonance of Literatures* (《文学间的契合》), David Der-wei Wang's *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: Repressed modernities of late Qing fiction, 1848-1911* (1997), Shu-mei Shih's *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (2001) and many others. At the same time, lyricism, with its focus on individual expressions of emotions and appreciation of beauty, seems to have been exiled from China literature.

However, instead of being marginalized, lyricism established a dialogue with the eagerness of political transformation, thus actively participating in the quest for modernity by raising the question, 'How should an individual feel and express himself/herself in modern China?' The answer offered by Bian Zhilin and his followers, primarily the poets of *Les Contemporains*, corresponds to the notion of the West and

modernity: they adopt the aesthetic forms, styles and standards of the Western schools of poetry. At the same time, their poems bear figures, deep structures, themes and images frequently seen in classical Chinese poetry, philosophical teachings and ethics. Their attitude towards tradition and modernity seems ambivalent in their writing: they certainly share the determination of the Chinese intelligentsia in building a bright future by making their poetry lyrical and modern, yet they were at the same time self-doubting, seeing their work and goal as unrealistic and merely a dream.

I believe this attitude has much to do with the radical understanding of modernity. Moreover, I see a division between the two approaches towards modernisation in China, both of which trace their roots to Europe during and after the Enlightenment. One path, stemming from the idea of material modernisation that developed from 18th-century liberalism into Marxism, acquired its indispensable status as China's 'mainstream' choice. This approach is marked by its collective imaginary of a better, modern future. The other path has much to do with the Weimar Classicism movement and Kant's philosophy concerning education, aesthetics, morality and individual perfection. The two approaches differ in their understanding of the definition of modernity. In the case of Bian's exploration in modern lyricism, refined taste and the free expression of emotions, which ultimately compose the Western idea of morality, should be considered a human being's true progress into modernity.

Interestingly, these two approaches to modernisation initiated in early twentieth-century China have cast a profound influence on the research, ideas and practice of Chinese literature, socio-political development and culture to this day. Following the Marxist approach of material modernisation, the predominant voice in literary criticism in mainland China follows the general principles of Marxist literary criticism. Literature on the implications and participants of the May Fourth Movement is based primarily on the iconoclast spirit and the function of literature in addressing issues of political turbulence. By contrast, overseas scholars, notably Chinese diaspora members, criticise the collective uniformity and aim to explore individual creativity and expression. As they look to define the boundary between the sublime national imaginary and individual psyche, emotions, individual talent and lyricism have become the central topics of such key literature. In the following analysis, I will go through the individualist approach in early twentieth-century China and review its linkage to Western ideas. Then, I will consider the key literature on modern Chinese literature under the influence of both approaches to generate a clear view of the task of modernisation, the notion of the West

in the task, and the West's role in academic research in Chinese literature and culture today.

Modernity through modernisation and the collective spirit of the nation: historical materialism and the implications for China

The early twentieth century saw China begin to experience the development of modernisation. During this period, Chinese intellectuals began a quest for the concept of modernity. This occurred at least 100 years later than it did in the broad outline of the history of modernity in the West. In the West, modernity refers to a mixture of political, social, intellectual, economic, technological and psychological factors that emerged between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Parallel to the enthusiasm for progress, a distaste for belatedness began to grow. The assumption of a 'belated modernity' (Jusdanis, 1991) dominates China's quest for modernity. This has resulted in the view of a bright future in China possible by constantly moving toward European and American benchmarks as representative of modern societies.

The notion of 'catching up' is reflected in the New Cultural Movement that followed the May Fourth Movement, which stressed scientific advances with the slogan 'Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science'. This echoed with the Enlightenment ideas of reason and progress, which does not cover only the sciences but also the overall culture of society: institutions, legal codes, economy, manners, and even individual and collective feelings. In this sense, Western connotations in the Chinese understanding of modernity, which deal with drastic changes including culture and the conditions of life, have become a subordinate result of modernisation. The latter is the process driven by 'Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science' as well as the introduction of China to a series of Western institutions.

The goals of the May Fourth Movement have meant omitting the criticism of modernity and treating this conception as a positive and desirable outcome of modernisation. Therefore, since the beginning of China's quest for modernity, there has been an ambivalent understanding of modernity that does not correspond to the Western context. Furthermore, the ideal modern society of collective progress and, to some context, morality that is different from the seemingly stale Chinese tradition, corresponds to the underlying assumptions of Hegel and Karl Marx's view of historical progress, though their arguments are different from one another. On the other hand, the

omission of the problems brought over by modernity is exactly the opposite of Hegel's view of the Enlightenment as a contradictory phenomenon in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). It also conflicts with Karl Marx's fierce attack on the consequences of capitalism in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867).

Modernisation has been set as a goal of history not only in China but also more broadly in capitalist societies.[4] This could be analysed through the theory of social progress in history proposed by both Marx and Hegel. However, as a result of the Chinese Communist Party's ideology, the social and political theories of historical materialism developed by Marx on the basis of Hegel's metaphysics also serve as the most influential strand of thought in mainland China.

Both Hegel and Marx defined historical periods or events such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Discovery of the New World, the Enlightenment, the formation of a global market, the Industrial Revolution, etc., as milestones that divide history between modern time and the past. This chronicle view of actual historical progress also sets a goal for history and human society. In Hegel's view, a Euro-centric goal was inevitable and led to a universal history that explains the elevation of the spirit and includes the experience of all times. Hegel's philosophy of history is centred around the theory of the objective spirit. He explains the relationship between history and spirit in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807): 'The other aspect of spirit's coming-to-be, history, is that knowing self-mediating coming-to-be – the spirit relinquished into time' (2018, p. 446). He also explains how the spirit extends into history:

> The aim, absolute knowing, or spirit knowing itself as spirit, has its path in the recollection of spirits as they are in themselves and are as they achieve the organization of their realm. Their preservation according to their free-standing existence appearing in the form of contingency is history, but according to their conceptually grasped organization, it is the science of phenomenal knowing. Both together are conceptually grasped history. (p. 447)

In summary, history is relinquished spirit, and hence, a specific form of spirit. As Hegel treats the history of the world as the process of spirit's development and realisation, he also recognises the essence of spirit: its free-standing existence. Therefore, in Hegel's philosophy, history does not equal the natural unfolding of the overall plot of history; instead, history points to both the events that had happened and

---

[4] See Bury's *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and* Growth (1932, reprinted 2008) and Nisbet's *History of the Idea of Progress* (1994)

the self-driven recording, narration and summary of these past events. History is only made when people in these events could understand the changes of their time under a framework constructed to deliver, record and narrate. In this process, humanity unfolds itself and eventually reveals itself as one spirit, rather than individual spirits, under the universal philosophy of history.

This universality is thus the goal of history. The Hegelian modernity is therefore defined with the development of the spirit. Supporting this philosophy of history is Hegel's dialectical method, which is based on 'materialized thinking' (2008, p. 36). Hegel rejects the 'clever argumentation' that 'amounts to freedom from content and to the vanity that stands above all content' (ibid.) and considers judgement based on 'non-actual thoughts' (ibid.) a mere vanity. Therefore, Hegel's view of the Enlightenment is characterised by the dialectical duality. On one hand, rationality and humanism in the Enlightenment are in opposition to superstition, creating a certain level of modernity that 'brings out *absolute freedom*' (ibid., p. 283) through *pure insight* or pure reason with the understanding of the objective world. On the other hand, the opposition to superstition leads to the *pure insight* or denial of faith that is both inconsistent and deceiving because 'it immediately declares that what is pronounced to be *alien* to the consciousness is what is *ownmost* to consciousness' (ibid., p. 320).

It is worth noting that Hegel's criticism of the Enlightenment is very specific as he places great focus on the religious aspect in French thoughts.[5] Because Hegel's complicated attitude towards religion and faith is out of the scope of this research, I will not examine this duality but will focus on his theory of progress and the goal of history. Hegel points out that the dominant rationality in the Enlightenment has reduced everything, including truth, to utility. Based on this, Hegel stresses the vital role of the material quality in reality, so that 'truth as well as presence and actuality are therefore united' (ibid., p. 339). In social and political practice, Hegel proposes in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821) that 'the state is the actuality of concrete freedom' (1991, p. 282) and argues that the natural condition of an individual is a result of abstraction, therefore lacking the actual and material quality of the universal spirit. However, because the individual consists of the spiritual totality with the state as mediation, 'personal individuality and its particular interests should reach their full *development* and gain *recognition of their right* for itself' (ibid.). Though Hegel did not use the term

[5] See Moggach and Lledman's "Hegel and the enlightenment project" (1997)

modernisation himself, in practice, this could be interpreted as the collective progress of modernisation by regulating and elevating individual interest over collective morality; it is through this modernisation that modernity embodied in absolute freedom and spirit could be realised.

Marx adopted Hegel's materialist view of history and centred his arguments on the very concept of progress. He extends the Hegelian method that refuses the freedom that makes judgements on socio-political elements by standards that are not materialized. The dialectical method suits his goal 'to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society' (Marx, 1965, p. 10). This famous announcement in *Capital* reveals Marx's basic assumption that modern society is constantly moving forward according to a certain trend, which resonates with Hegel's conception of the inevitable endpoint of history. Based on historical materialism and dialectics, Marx draws the equation between increasing productivity and historical progress. In his 1853 work, *The British Rule in India*, he even argues that 'whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution' (1962, p. 32), showcasing his inheritance of Hegel's idea of historical progress and the Euro-centric conception of the historical endpoint.

Compared with the Hegelian endpoint, the Marxist goal of social and historical progress is socialism and, ultimately, communism. Karl Marx inherited these Hegelian dialectics by drawing an equation between the development of productivity in Europe and historical progress. In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), he argues that increasing productivity will modify the social institutions and lead to socialism (1965).

Though Marx never laid out a definition for modernity, he extensively used the concept of modernity, and it is quite clear that 'the capitalist mode of production' (ibid., p. 12) characterises the modern society.[6] In both *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), modernity seems to capture the status of being men in a society drastically changed by capitalism since the 15th century. His fierce criticism of capitalism could therefore be understood as a criticism of modernity. Marx vividly summarises the transitional and changing nature of modernity: 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real

[6] Lynn Hunt differentiates between a modernization paradigm and Marxism, see *Writing History in the Global Era* (2014)

conditions of life and his relations with his kind' (1969, p. 120). Concerning the economic and class tensions, he argues for the living status of men as social beings instead of isolated individuals. Therefore, Marx considered modernity as realised through modernisation to be negative, yet he argues for the historical progress brought about by modernisation. However, the promise still lies in the unceasing movement of history where the elevation of human status will be realised in socialism and communism.

With his extensive influence on the current understanding of modernity, Anthony Giddens considers modernity to be a consequence of modernisation. In his 1973 book, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Giddens considers Marx's analysis of the origin, driving force, problems and consequences of modern society as reflections of modernity and attempts to rebuild modernity. On the first page of *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), Giddens gave a straight-forward definition of modernity:

> Let us simply say the following: "modernity" refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. (p. 1)

To Giddens, modernity lies primarily in the organisation of social structures. In forming his theory of modernity, Giddens inherited Marx's understanding of capitalism and industrialism: the capitalist mode of production is the origin of modernity and the whole structure and organisation of the modern society.

In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), Giddens lays out two features of modernity: an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality (p. 1) and discontinuity, saying 'modern institutions are in various key respects discontinuous with the gamut of pre-modern cultures and ways of life' (p. 16). Giddens argues that modernity has changed the world and individuals in the world to form a global mode of organisation and contact. Further, modernity has caused the emergence of a new mechanism: self-identity. The dynamic between extensionality and intentionality results in the interconnection between globalised society and the individual. As extensionality and intentionality change the world and our way of life in an extraordinary way, discontinuity occurs in every aspect of our society on a global scale and at an unprecedented speed.

Giddens extends his thoughts on this duality of structure to his discussions on

modernity. Modernity is described as a double-edge sword, a structure that motivated scientific and industrial progress whilst causing the abuse of instrumental rationality, environment pollution, nuclear wars and totalitarianism. Modernity, at the same time, empowers men to control and change the world and change the innate nature of mankind. This methodology corresponds highly to the historical dialectics adopted by Hegel and Marx.

Furthermore, as Giddens (1990) considers the reflexive self-identity and reflexivity of modernity, he examines human actions and the connection between human beings and what they do; he uses the phrase "reflexive monitoring of action" (p. 36) to describe how human connection is an element of human action. This is based on an examination of the status of being in a globalised world, which Marx would indeed consider as a consequence of capitalism, and therefore, the project of modernisation. Based largely on the theories on modernity mentioned above, because the mentality of modernity is the key focus of this thesis, I consider the experience and feelings of men affected by modernisation as key to the understanding of modernity in early twentieth-century China. Under the context of this thesis, modernity seems to continuously pose challenges to self-identity and the free spirit of individuals who are deprived of the stable nation-state's coherent centre.

Modernity through individual refinement: imagination of a modern lyricism and the enchantment of the Western traditions

The belief in modernisation as a historical task of collective efforts, put in the Chinese context, has not only resulted in the obsession with socio-economic progress; it has also driven an enchantment with the West, especially with the Kantian tradition of the Enlightenment and individual perfection, which has influenced generations of Chinese intellectuals in their quest for modernity. This path diverted from historical materialism and dialectics, yet it has equally influenced the mode of thinking in China.

Aesthetics instead of religion: China's early twentieth-century project of individual refinement

Throughout his life, Bian Zhilin has claimed to be a pupil and follower of the Crescent Moon Society, which dominated the domain of lyricism and its socio-political function in early twentieth-century China. At its peak, the Crescent Moon Society was

devoted to re-inventing the national character of China through poetry and literature under the influence of the English Romanticists, including John Keats and Lord Byron. Ironically, contrary to the English Romanticists' ideals of free expression and artistic beauty in an idyllic life away from societal complexities, the Crescent Moon Society was proactive in the political agenda of China. They were firm believers in the power of lyrical literature in promoting individual refinement, and hence, the improvement of the entire society. However, despite this patriotic motivation, the Crescent Moon Society has long been considered as opposite to the officially recognised and praised, innate spirit of the New Culture Movement. Such a spirit, later described by Mao in his talks on literature at the Yan'an forum (1980), is focused on the mission of literature and art as weapons to educate, save and serve the people with social responsibility and political alignment.

Why was a passionate statement of seeking for a better future considered a goal of decadent, apolitical, liberal, pro-aesthetic and anti-utilitarian indulgence in literature? It is true that the Crescent Moon Society most sought value for literature in individualism and aesthetics by promoting lyrical poetry. Compared to the Chinese society's efforts in embracing a new era, the belief of the Crescent Moon Society poets lay not in socio-economic progress, but in the state of men in a society undergoing modernisation.

Such a belief is not necessarily a self-indulgent or absolutely liberalist one in contrast to China's collective quest for modernity in its socio-economic progress. On the contrary, lyrical literature was considered as a possible cure for the society that became 'a nation of modern civilisation without a soul' (Xu, 2013, p. 453). By offering such a cure, *Xinyue de Taidu* 新月的态度 (Attitude of the Crescent Moon) is actively participating in the quest for modernity through an approach that seeks progress in individualist expression and refinement. Both efforts, though bearing a certain level of difference and practiced in opposition to each other, have similar origins in the European Enlightenment.

A perfect political, socio-economic institution in a society may not be the only goal of history. Another may be the recognition of aesthetics as a study of intrinsic patterns of art and literature, free of ideology and politics, and the vitality of its role in modernity. This influential approach has its origins in German Enlightenment, where aesthetics is treated as a consummation of the beautiful, personal feelings and emotions,

and morality. The late Crescent Moon Society's understanding of emotions combined it with rationality, an essential idea of Kant's aesthetics in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, second edition 1787).

In 1928, the monthly magazine *Xinyue Shikan* was published for the first time in Shanghai, shortly after the Creation Society 创造社, a mainstream literary community leading the New Cultural Movement in China, launched the movement for revolutionary literature. *Xinyue Shikan* announced the entrance of the Crescent Moon Society into the literary polemics in early twentieth-century China. Xu Zhimo, the main organizer of the Crescent Moon Society, published an article under the title '新月的态度' (*xinyue de taidu,* The Attitude of the Crescent Moon Society) in the first issue of the magazine. The motivation behind this publication, according to Xu, is for the sake of 'hopes to add some physique to thoughts, and render some glow to lives in this time we live in' (1928, p. 4).

The physique and glow, as Xu further explained, lay in the healthy ideals and dignified manners that would fulfil 'our mission, owed to our brilliant past, of creating a sublime future; our responsibility, owed to this bright future, to put an end to the dark present' (1928, p. 5). Xu's writing marked his fellow Crescent Moon Society poets' stance towards the Chinese society, where thoughts were either confined into 'a slavery silence', or, under the name of 'a modernity that confuses morality', simply developing into a mass where 'anything dignified, true and universal is nowhere to be found' (Xu, 1928, p. 5). This publication reads almost like a political statement, with its eloquent and poetic criticisms towards the contemporary environment of intellectual thoughts and practices and a strong determination to build a better future with expressions of individual belief, voice and art. Such stances have been followed and practiced by the Crescent Moon Society poets throughout their period of activity.

In 1931, Chen Mengjia 陈梦家 (1911–1966) drafted the preface to *Anthology of the Crescent Moon Society's Poems* 新月诗选, remarking on the late Crescent Moon Society poets' attitude towards poetry and their precursor's efforts and accomplishments. The preface, though extending Xu's initial proposition, reads much less politically and offers more confessions of the poets' emotions. Again, Chen announced the individualist stance that 'we have always been loyal to the self. We have been loyal in expressing this small cluster of feelings and emotions, and we do not dream that grand dream of the others' (1931, p. 2). The 'grand dream', of course,

indicates the popular idea that poetry should correspond to great social changes and the voices of people yearning for them.

Dreaming this great dream, though probably not at the expense of individual expression, is also what Xu depicted as the Crescent Moon Society's responsibility. However, instead of fleeing from a duty of honesty towards its readers, the preface to *Anthology of the Crescent Moon Society's Poems* emphasizes the importance of exploring lyricism for the sake of "keeping a tight connection with readers" and "being completely honest in making poetry" (ibid.). Seeing poets as craftsmen (*jiangren* 匠人), Chen marks that 'the greatest success of a poet lies in the constant reflection of his spirit in his verses' (1931, p. 5). This demonstrates the late Crescent Moon Society's persistent effort in exploring beauty and morality through lyricism. Furthermore, the discussion concerns strict forms of poetry writing, which Chen (1931, p. 12) depicted as follows: 'we ask for discipline in literature … so that all rhymes and metre carry an appropriate beauty'.

Wang Guowei 王国维 (1877–1927) was a scholar of accomplishment in such areas as philosophy, aesthetics, historiography, archaeology and literary criticism. His compelling pronouncements about art as having a supreme value on par with philosophy and his refusal to mix art and literature with any utilitarian purpose set the tone behind the idea of 'pure poetry' after the May Fourth Movement (Yeh, 1990). However, it is still noticeable that Wang's concern was again put in a broader context of society, culture and aesthetics, rather than an artistic and moral argument about how beauty and emotions could lead men to modernity.

In his essay, 'On Evolution of Aesthetics' (*meixue de jinhua* 美学的进化), Cai Yuanpei referred to the German aesthetician Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, where Baumgarten talked about aesthetics as the Greek etymology denoting feeling and sensation (Cai, 1987). To Cai and his fellow scholars, feeling and sensation, under the name of aesthetics, seemed to be an effective way of dealing with the world of human senses and emotions. It therefore lent itself to the moral refinement and education of the populace. Therefore, Cai enthusiastically rendered his efforts in cultivating and nurturing the new people of a new nation because aesthetics are part of what civilised modern life is supposed to be.

In his speech to the Scholarly Society of China in 1917, titled 'On Aesthetic Education as Substitute for Religion' (*yi meiyu dai zongjiao* 以美育代宗教), Cai

endowed aesthetic education with a religious function by pointing out that religion organises spiritual life and the feelings and faith of its believers. Aesthetic experience can also provide a frame of meaning and orientation, especially when drastic changes of modernisation are happening in a society. Aesthetic education can nurture and cultivate people so the emotional structure can develop noble habits and refined tastes, both of which are indispensable qualities for a modern individual. Consequently, an individual so refined will be ready to join his or her fellow citizens in a community of noble feeling and morality to form a better society (Cai, 1984).

The Western origin of individual perfection as progress and modernity

Both Wang's and Cai's ideas bear much similarity to Kant's idea of historical progress. In answering the question 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784), Kant draws attention to the movement 'out of the immaturity which has become almost natural for him' (1997, p. 83). By arguing that the theme of the Enlightenment is to 'have the courage to use your own intelligence' (ibid.), Kant praises the power of a rational person with individual maxims, which is exactly the opposite of Hegel's argument of the Enlightenment as fundamentally utilitarian. Alongside the rationality that enables men to think for themselves, Kant stresses the vital importance of aesthetic pleasure, which Wang Guowei borrowed in his *Confucius on Aesthetic Education* (1904) in envisaging the educational function of aesthetics that separates individual taste from utilitarianism.

In Kant's manuscripts on aesthetic education dated back to the 18th century, the progress that brings modernity is not made through socio-economic modernisation (Kant, 1960). Kant talked about cosmopolitanism, where children should be educated to have 'love toward others as well as feelings of cosmopolitanism' (1960, p. 120). According to him, cosmopolitanism is indicated not only by his vision of the political future but also by moral teaching. In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, second edition 1784), Kant expanded his teaching through historical progress as he points out that a universal cosmopolitan condition would always head towards the direction in which history is moving (1963). However, Kant recognised the moral perspective of the cosmopolitan goal of history, which is as important as the political goal, if not more important. Instead of a perfect civil constitution, Kant speaks of progress towards perfection, where mankind's 'progressive cultivation of the disposition toward goodness' (1963, p. 65). By examining the beginnings of human history, Kant shows that they contain the seeds of development, leading to 'perpetual peace and perfect

culture' (ibid., p. 60). In revealing this idea, Kant compares it with Rousseau's *Emile* and *Social Contract* and admits that man is historical. However, he substitutes Rousseau's vision of historical progress as historical decline with the possibility of the perfection of man's soul.

Kant's philosophy of critique originated from the bridging of feeling, thought, body and mind through the discussions of the German Enlightenment. Weimar Classicism is 'explicitly offering an aesthetic solution to troubled times' (Richter, 2005, p. 5). The idea of individualism as a cure to the brutality of modernisation, which was discussed in the case of the French Revolution, considers revolutions as source of disease in the human soul, which corresponds to Xu Zhimo's criticism of modern civilisation without a soul, as well as aesthetics defined by Baumgarten, as mentioned in the previous section.

In his work, 'What Difference Can a Good Theatrical Stage Actually Make?' (1784), Schiller wrote this famous sentence about his understanding of the role of art:

> [Art] should remain play, but also be poetic play. All art is dedicated to joy, and there is no higher and more serious task than of making people happy. The highest enjoyment, however, is the freedom of the inner life of feeling in the living play of all of its powers. (Cited in Bishop and Stephenson, 2005, p. 27)

Schiller believes in art and feelings free from political stress because in his idea, the aesthetic experience surpasses any political judgement: the good is the beautiful. Based on this equation, he argues for the enjoyment of beauty as it covers the education of morality. Furthermore, the good, or the beautiful, is the ultimate practice into a refined future of modern man. In his pivotal work originally published in 1794, *Letters on Aesthetic Education of Man* (1967), Schiller criticises the violence of the French Revolution, pointing out that it is due to this violence that the French Revolution had failed. He argues for moral perfection of the people realised by aesthetics.

In response to the Kantian philosophy, Schiller (1967) coined the notion of two drives towards modernity: the sensuous drive and the formal drive. He talked about the conflict between man's sensuous nature and his ability to reason and argues that the solution would be a union of the two, which he called the 'play drive'. This drive in which both other drives work in concert is the play drive, reconciling becoming with absolute being and change with identity' (p. 126). The object of the play drive is the living form. In contemplation of the beautiful, it allows man to become most human.

Schiller advocates for a focus on the inner state of man, including feelings, morality and aesthetics, to reach the goal of ultimate humanity. This he contrasts with external pressure imposed by drastic social changes, such as the French Revolution.

In *Letters,* Schiller also describes the lyric poem as a sincere expression through elevated language in verse. The originality and mood regulated by moderation are two key features of such a refined mode of expression. Again, we can see from here that the late Crescent Moon Society's appeal to free individual expressions under the guidance of rationality bears much similarity to its Western precursors.

Charles Taylor expands and supports individualism and modernity in his work, *Sources of the Self: The making of modern identity* (1989). Taylor assembled the portrait of the modern identity through its history and pointed out that modern subjectivity has its roots in the ideas of human good. Modern identity established by inner subjectivity is considered as not simply a consequence of modernisation but as engaged in a dynamic interaction with the quest for modernity.

Rejecting a common contemporary idea that subjectivity leads to mere subjectivism and nihilism, Taylor argued that the qualitative distinctions we make among moral goods are intrinsic to the way we conduct our lives as well as constitutive of our identity. Modern identity itself constitutes an orientation towards particular activity and social understandings, which eventually orients us towards the outer world and the meaning of human life. Though Taylor included no direct mention of individual emotions, he constructed a key definition of the good as 'affirmation of ordinary life'. This resonated with Michel de Certeau's 1990 publication, *L'Invention du Quotidien*, and its recognition of the crucial role of individuality. Specifically, through individualist experience and understanding, individuality played a vital role in the comprehensive understanding and construction of moral goodness in the former's case and culture in the latter's case.

Understanding self means more than simply describing evident matters but also discovering and bringing to light what was hidden within individuals. Artistic expression creates an understanding that is integral to constructing modern identity. With their origins both rooted in the European Enlightenment, these two approaches to modernity point to the promised land of Western Europe, a utopia that is both spatial and temporal. In early twentieth-century China, utopia is not an imagined destination discovered through the stumbles of an innocent-minded hero. This understanding was shared by groups of Chinese mediators educated abroad, including Bian Zhilin and the

Crescent Moon poets. In Western Europe, they learnt to look inside of oneself and express emotions freely in lyrical poems. Driven by the belief in individualism, they imagined the construction of modern identities as consisting of feelings, aesthetics and eventually, a new national character for China.

Further, the pursuit and emulation of a temporal utopia indicated, if not caused, a disenchantment with the classical world of China, which was an indispensable feature of modernity. However, much evidence and research have shown that this disenchantment was never thorough, and it was especially evident in Bian's pre-war poetry. Moreover, utopia itself as an enchantment has also cast its shadow on the already eager quest for progress and catching up with the West. Struggling between the enchantment of tradition and the enchantment of modernity, it is almost natural that the imagination of Chinese intellectuals is constantly haunted with despair, exhaustion and confusion.

In my study, I intend to understand New Poetry's quest for modernity by exploring the contrast between tradition and Western influences in Bian's poetry. Adopting the underlying angle mentioned in the previous paragraph, I aim at understanding the dynamic between the two approaches towards modernity in Bian's literary construction. I believe that tradition, including classical Chinese poetry, aesthetics, morality, philosophy and the structure of feeling, has never been absent. Therefore, my discussion focuses on why tradition seems invisible in New Poetry and existing research on New Poetry. I argue that the invisible tendency in the national campaign of modernisation is a result of the utopian impulse in early twentieth-century China. It has coloured the overall notion of progress in China today. Before continuing with any textual or contextual analysis of Bian's pre-war poetry, further exploration of tradition's absence in current research as well as Bian's abrupt retirement from poetry must be carried out. This exploration has much to do with the utopian impulse omnipresent in New Poetry. Due to the utopianised nature of New Poetry's quest for modernity, the failure of all projects, including Bian's poetic career, is inevitable. The utopian impulse is also useful in furthering the understanding of Bian's mentality, especially with regards to the negative feelings of confusion and futility.

Reflections on an age of Epic: Overseas scholars and the 'soulless' modern Chinese literature

As an extension of the early twentieth-century appeal for individual refinement, existing research in modern Chinese literature carried out by overseas scholars (primarily scholars working in the US with a focus on modern Chinese culture) realises this missing puzzle from the collective, Marxist progress of modernisation and criticises literary modernity by looking into the contrast between the grand narrative, historical task of modernisation and individual creativity.

One of the most influential scholars is the academic exploration of aesthetic modernity is Li Zehou 李泽厚. Though he had spent the first half of his life in mainland China, his primary recognition came from Western countries. He is put in the category of overseas scholars also due to his move to the US in the 1990s. With his previous role in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Li Zehou's work had significantly impacted the trend of thought in China in the 1980s, drawing the academic methodology away from communist ideology and the dominant historical materialism. Not unlike Cai Yuanpei's proposal of aesthetic education mentioned in the previous section, Li Zehou's theory on the human being in modernity is largely based on the Kantian conception of individual intelligence, morality and aesthetic imaginations.

In his *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics* (1988), Li Zehou explores the concept of subjectivity in Enlightenment and provokes the deep level question: in the process of China's modernisation, how do we re-evaluate tradition and identify the meaning of individual lives? Furthermore, Li Zehou (2010) initiates a new question on modern China: what is the essence of the social-political institution of China today? As Li Zehou pursues hermeneutics on Confucian classics with reference to Kantian and Heidegger's ideas on ontology and criticism of Enlightenment, Li Zehou has developed the duality (2005) of subjectivity: subjectivity captures both the collective features and individual features of mankind, at the same time, subjectivity is structured on both the material-social and the cultural-psychological levels. Li Zehou puts much emphasis on the cultural-physiological level and the individual structure of subjectivity and therefore constructs his framework of criticism on modernity with the central concept of *qing* (feelings 情).

C.T. Hsia is arguably the most representative figure of such scholars with his comprehensive introduction of modern Chinese literature to the West in the 1960s. Not

only has Hsia published a significant amount of English translation of modern Chinese literature, he also carried out detailed analysis of the mentality behind these literary works. Since the publication of *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1999), Hsia's conception of 'obsession with China' (*ganshi youguo* 感时忧国) has become a key topic amongst overseas Chinese researchers' discussions about modern Chinese literature. However, the focus on individual feelings and refinement does not only exist in literature studies, the first approach to modernity is widely adopted by overseas Chinese scholar in politics, history and aesthetics.

Hsia (1999) talks about the overarching moral burden in literary creation in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Hsia, 'what distinguishes this modern phase of Chinese literature' is its 'obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity' (p. 8). However, the socially recognised antidote to this 'disease', rather than a focus on understanding and expressing the inside world of each human, was 'a generally historical approach - with due regard to intrinsic literary concerns' (Lee, 2002, p. 142). Again, Hsia's arguments on 'obsession with China' as a literary theme reflect on Chinese writers' efforts in making sense of the socio-political disorder. Such efforts were driven by a sublime cause in the immediate environment. Hsia considers 'obsession with China' the definitive feature of Chinese literature between 1917 and 1949 as it marks the difference between traditional literature and Communist literature. The obsession is about 'China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity' (1999, p. 8). According to Hsia, indulging in this obsession has resulted in China's failure in competing for modernity in literature on the global level; and he prescriptively advises China to find solutions from Western forerunners.

Hsia criticises the lack of competitiveness in modern Chinese literature, though he himself is caught up in the 'obsession with China'. Therefore, not too different from Bian, Hsia has separated the 'modern' period of Chinese literature from the classical period. I argue that *ganshi youguo* has persisted through classical Chinese culture. A further exploration of *ganshi youguo* is included in chapter 5.

Leo Ou-fan Lee extended Hsia's discussion by pointing out three 'imperative and inevitable' (2002, p. 143) major variations of modern Chinese literature: first, the moral vision of China as a diseased nation created a sharp polarity between tradition

and modernity, defining modernity as 'an iconoclastic revolt against this tradition and an intellectual quest for new solutions'; second, modern literature became a vehicle where social discontent was expressed by writers, therefore, literature itself acquired its modernity not through 'spiritual or artistic considerations (as in Western modernistic literature)' (ibid.), but through a socio-political stance; third, as modern Chinese literature reflects an overpowering sense of socio-political anguish, writers offered a subjective critical vision where the writer's narratives are set as opposed to the troubled society, 'thus gives rise to an aggravated ambivalence in the modern Chinese writer's conception of self and society' (ibid., p. 147). Lee again noted that this ambivalence has caused a subjective tension, where writers hope for a better future, a historical goal, which caused at the same time a feeling of disgust towards the reality. This subjective tension, might serve an underlying motivation for literary creativity since early twentieth-century China. However, such literary creativities deviated greatly from Western modernistic literature in its ambivalence in conceptualising individualism and exploring the self, an essential task of literature. In this case, it is obvious that the beautiful, as discussed in Wang's studies, has succumbed to the historical sublime, and cost the essence of literature, or in Xu's words, the soul of modern civilisation.

This consequence of 'soullessness' of modernisation as the dominating drive of progress is more audaciously expanded in a modern discussion (Murat, 2014) that looks into the link between revolution and madness, and describes Paris in 1790 as a national mind flooded with vigour, 'as though by some electric virtue, the system of nerves and muscles for a new life' (p. 128). The conclusion of Lee's research is straight-forward: that revolution was madness on a national scale with reference to Edmund Burke's argument (1790) that political fear has surrendered the French people to an 'incomprehensible spirit of delirium and delusion' (p. 175). It seems that China's attribution of the sublime figure to history is a similar practice of this national passion for modernisation, which was exaggerated to such an extent that the individual minds might lose the ability to recognise refined taste, emotions and expressions adjusted by rationality, a great national passion that transformed into an infamous politically manipulated cultural movement that almost destroyed individual souls in modern China. Ironically, in the case of many European Enlightenment aestheticians, philosophers and writers, such ability is indispensable in reaching the goal of 'the Good is the Beautiful' and the realisation of a true modernity.

Though I differ with the source and origin of 'obsession with China', I pay

tribute to the fact that Hsia has provoked a new domain of literary criticism in modern Chinese literature. 'Obsession with China' looks into the mentality of Chinese intellectuals and recognises the angst of intelligentsia caused their social political agenda. Lee's studies, especially in the area of exploring the Romantic characters of Chinese intellectuals, are valuable addition to this new domain. Furthermore, in this research, I argue that a contributing factor to this angst lies in the deliberate exile of tradition. Caught in the historical goal of reviving the nation, as aesthetic standards, modes of expressions and literary imagination must follow the route to progress and catching up with the Western benchmarks, there is little space for writers to look into their own aesthetic experience and linkage to tradition. Therefore, 'obsession with China' remains a futile obsession with no solution to the complex attitude towards tradition and the spiritual homeland.

A direct impact of 'obsession with China' lies in Hsia's own conclusion. Hsia points out that modern Chinese writers tend to place the dilemma of China in a unique position and ignore the rest of the world. Therefore, modern Chinese literature could not understand or contribute to solving the basic problems in modern civilisation. The perspective that the China has, in its modern history, endured through a uniquely traumatising suffering dominates the mainstream view of literature until this day in mainland China. At the same time, in the whole twentieth century, 'Chinese literature walked towards World Literature in a condition filled with humiliation and pain' (Qian, Huang and Chen, 2004, p. 107). Under this context, mainland Chinese scholars have developed the consensus that a form of 'modern tragic, which is different from classical literature' serves as 'the aesthetic feature of twentieth-century Chinese literature' (ibid., p. 22). Xie Mian (1998) invokes the motif of Chinese literature in the past one hundred years as *youhuan* (sorrow and anxiety 忧患). He even argues, reflecting the spirit of Marxist literary criticism that focuses on social and political functions, that 'since early modern time, the internal and external attacks and our sufferings are blessings on literature' (p. 28). Discussions of the Marxist literary criticism and its strong influences on Mainland China is given in the next section.

This aspect of problem in China's utopianised understanding of modernity in captured by Ban Wang (1997), who demonstrated how politics in modern China has been closely intertwined with an aesthetic experience that conform greatly with the pre-set goal of history. According to Wang, with a history littered with numerous upheavals,

wounds, transformations, and revolutions, China sees such a history in dire need of meaning. The meaning, as it turns out, is rendered with an aesthetic discourse marked by a persistent attempt to achieve the sublime. In Wang's analysis of various modern Chinese aestheticians' work, the Chinese sublime resonates with the language of Marxist historical materialism. The pursuit of the Chinese sublime shares the Marxist idea of the telos of history and the collective goal of progress. Wang raises the topic of the sublime figure of history in China in contrast with another term, the beautiful. Aesthetics, or aesthetic experience in twentieth-century China discussed by Wang, is in fact, Marxist aesthetics, a science that studies dimensions of the beautiful and the sublime in the objective laws of nature and human society. It is then no surprise that any attempt towards the beautiful and emotions free from ideology and socialist culture would be seen as bourgeois and false, hence the negative attitude towards the Crescent Moon Society.

Wang's attitude in this book is clearly against the collective imaginary of a sublime goal: China's task of modernisation. However, ten years after the book was first published, in the foreword to the Chinese version of *The Sublime Figure of History* (2008), Wang reflects upon his attitude and notes that 'if given the opportunity to rewrite this book I would have adopted a different tendency' (no pagination). He again talks about the positive and negative influences of the intertwined relationship between aesthetics and politics. Furthermore, he recognises the collective imaginary in 'establishing a modern, independent nation and country' (ibid.). Wang explains that this change of attitude is due to the fact that 'the more 'sublime' globalised politics of economic development and mad consumption have enslaved the anti-sublime and anti-political discourse' (ibid.) Therefore, the role of the sublime has reversed and become 'idealistic romanticism' (ibid.).

I find the change in Wang's academic and personal attitude towards the dynamic between aesthetics and collective politics highly interesting; putting his discussion in the context of literature and modernisation, aesthetics and the sublime are reflected in individualist refinement through lyricism and the Marxist approach to material and national modernisation. As a young Chinese intellectual living in the United States with experiences in mainland China where the collective imaginary dominates individual expressions, Wang took the individualist path and criticises the grand narrative; as he becomes older, he begins to question the consequences of the Western world's modernisation. I wonder whether or not a similar change of attitude would happen to

Bian Zhilin and poets of *Les Contemporains* if they were still with us today – Bian's poetic silence after *Letters of Comfort* might be a response to the more eager task of building a modern and independent People's Republic of China.

David Der-wei Wang carries out his studies on the relationship between the individualist and collective approach to modernity in modern Chinese literature, primarily in fiction. In his *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: repressed modernities of late Qing fiction, 1848-1911* (1997), Wang defines the critical boundary of late Qing dynasty modernity and the construction of modernity after the May Fourth Movement. Arguing for the abundance of creativity and cultural resources, Wang proposes to reconsider late Qing dynasty as a period of climax in the modern history of Chinese literature, hence the beginning of literary modernity. Furthermore, he criticises the May Fourth Movement for repressing the pursuit of diversity in modernity that blossomed in late Qing dynasty. The repression, according to Wang, is represented in three aspects: repression of the innate creativity of the Chinese literary tradition, repression that leads to self-censorship in the post- May Fourth making of literature and history of literature, and repression of all types of non-mainstream artistic and literature experiments between the May Fourth Movement and 1949.

Fin-de-Siècle Splendor focuses on a less discussed field in modern Chinese literature: tradition and the negative influences of the May Fourth Movement with the pursuit for modernity. Wang chooses fiction as the text of his studies to innovate the prevalent academic voice that rigidly criticises late Qing dynasty fiction. At the same time, by recognising the abundance of creativity in these works of fiction and their transformative qualities in Chinese literature, Wang negates the academic consensus in mainland China that the May Fourth Movement, with its iconoclastic agenda, has played an important and positive role in driving the Chinese society towards progress and modernisation. On this level, Wang pushes the boundary of existing research by questioning the May Fourth definition of tradition and modernity. More importantly, *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor* continues on the conclusion of 'obsession with China', and draws a clear picture of the fate of tradition in modern China: as the centralised Confucian way of life collapses in late Qing dynasty, literature, represented by fiction (repelled by Confucian values), found its vitality in removing the corruption of traditional ethics and social orders, thus departing on a route towards diversity, liberalism and its own way of defining modernity; however, the May Fourth Movement, with its historical task, has become the definition of modernity by laying out its own

standard of order, ethics and the grand narrative: progress and Westernisation.

Nevertheless, David Der-wei Wang's argument about modernity in the late Qing dynasty and the innate creativity of tradition needs a better defence. I would like to go back to the three aspects of repression. There is clear evidence, both textual and intertextual, for the self-censorship amongst the May Fourth generation of Chinese intellectuals; it is practiced by not only fiction writers, but also by poets including Bian, the Crescent Moon Society poets and followers of *Les Contemporains*. The discretion adopted to censor out 'outdated' material in writing is, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, a result of the totalistic iconoclasm and Westernisation agenda that serves the historical task of modernisation. David Der-wei Wang's analysis, as under Hsia's influences, focuses on the collective distaste for the Chinese society in crisis that has repressed individual creativity. David Der-wei Wang has eloquently argued that the innate creativity of the great classical Chinese literature might lead to its unique construction of a better modernity than the repressed one, he has hardly explored the role of tradition in the 'repressed modernity'. David Der-wei Wang's preferred modernity could not be constructed deliberately; as a matter of fact, since the literary trend of the late Qing dynasty was interrupted in 1920s, no one could be sure that this supposed natural development of diversified modernity could come to a fruitful ending even without the abrupt crisis in the Chinese nation. Moreover, David Der-wei Wang himself has adopted an ambivalent attitude when it comes to different works of fiction; it seems that the boundary between the repressed modernity and the grand narrative modernity is drawn for the sake of nostalgia for the untainted, highly aesthetic 'high culture' of classical China.

David Der-wei Wang's dichotomous handling of late Qing dynasty writers and the May Fourth generation intellectuals is, too, questionable. The boundary between tht two periods and the two types of modernity, namely, the repressed and diversified modernity, seems ambiguous without an in-depth discussion on the role of tradition in the construction of modernity. Moreover, though Wang points out that individualist expression and emotions have been completely denied in post-May Fourth literature, this argument needs to be backed by more empirical evidence.

In his more recent work, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (2015), David Der-wei Wang echoes with Li Zehou's analysis in *The Path of Beauty* by mentioning 'history with feelings.' He reviews the grand narrative of modern China and points out that individualist

lyricism has played a vital role in the construction of an epic national quest for a better society and nation. This corresponds to studies in cultural positioning and cultural patronage (Perry, 2012) in various movements in modern Chinese history: revolutionary imaginary is accomplished through both a collective call for a better reality and a detailed micromanagement of emotions and feelings. In response to Průšek (1980)'s assertion that 'both the 'lyrical' and the 'epic' are said to be encapsulated in the individualistic expression of lyrical poetry' (loc 1504), Wang invokes 'epic' in China as 'a history with feeling' (loc 1706) in which the grand narrative also reflects individual expressions and lyrical feeling. Moreover, Wang argues that 'a history with feeling' is traceable with classical Chinese literature in figures such as Qu Yuan 屈原 (c.343–278BC) and Sima Qian 司马迁 (c.145–86BC).

I recognise David Der-wei Wang's academic contributions in *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, especially in his exploration of 'a history with feeling' that has persisted in the structure of feelings amongst Chinese intelligentsia for thousands of years. On this level, he has pushed the boundary of existing research: the dynamic between collective imaginary and individual structure of feelings has created a scenario where history actively requires individual response and expression to become history, not the other way around. Therefore, this dynamic has opened up a new perspective into the enquiry of social, political and cultural construction of modernity in China.

The Lyrical in Epic Time also reflects David Der-wei Wang's dialogue with Hsia's 'obsession with China'. 'Obsession with China' reduces feelings of Chinese intellectuals to the level of limited vision driven by anxiety and distaste for the crisis of a nation, and concludes that such a mentality could not offer the solution to the troubled nation. David Der-wei Wang argues that the crisis of a nation and its emotional consequences should not be considered as a limitation. As he refers to cases ranging from poetry, prose, fine art, music, theatre, cinema, calligraphy and literary criticism in modern to contemporary China, he points out that the intertwined dynamic between individualist expressions and national responsibilities is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. Therefore, 'obsession with China' is in itself not an ideology under the context of modern politics. On this level, David Der-wei Wang has escaped from the one-sided recognition of the individualist approach in *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor*. The value of lyricism is no longer the power of protesting against authority; instead, lyricism allows individuals to align their emotional experiences with reality.

Based largely on the framework of *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, I structure this research on Bian on a similar basis: I aim at understanding how Bian's mentality and individual expression fit into the grand narrative of his time. It is my belief that the structure of feeling in the classical world of China has undertaken a vital role in shaping the modern Chinese history of intellectuals. I intend to examine the overwhelming call for modernity and understand the dynamic between tradition and Western influences, as well as the quest for modernity and nostalgia for tradition in Bian's poetic career. Therefore, existing research that follows the collective approach to modernity is equally important.

A Song of iconoclasm: Current Literature and Key Debates about Modernity in New Poetry in Mainland China

Literary criticism of modern literature in Mainland China is focused almost exclusively on the re-invention of national character, revolutionary imagery, liberation from the monarchy and most importantly, reception of Western influence. This mainstream pattern went through several historical stages due to the evolution of political radicalism adopted by the Communist government. However, the overall direction has been consistent: modern literature and New Literature are results and weapons of the revolution, and therefore serving the goal of iconoclasm and national progress of the People's Republic of China, also known as the New China.

At the same time, the social and political function of literature that fits into the grand narrative of the revolution is the undertone of almost all key literature in the history of modern Chinese literature and New Poetry.

<u>The Marxist methodology in literary criticism in Mainland China: the self-motivated exile of 'old culture'</u>

In the Chinese Communist Party's socio-political practice of the collective imaginary of modernity in 'obsession with China', cultural progress is the key benchmark in literary criticism and the studies of history of Chinese literature. The distaste for tradition has developed further with the political eagerness to establish a new nation governed by the Chinese Communist Party. The backdrop for this methodology is the official definition of the period between 1919 and 1949 as The New Democratic Revolution (*xinminzhuzhuyi geming* 新民主主义革命). This definition has

dominated mainstream Chinese scholarly thinking with its explicit notion of progress, the division between old and new in culture, and the approach to cultural modernity through the re-invention of national character. Old culture refers to classical Chinese culture under the monarchical order, which draws the nation backwards; and 'our aim in the cultural sphere is to build a new Chinese national culture' (Mao, 1965, p. 340). In 1940, Chairman Mao Zedong coined the term 'New Democracy' (ibid., p. 339) to describe the Chinese Communist Party's Marxist approach to democracy and political governance. Based on this, the period between 1919 to 1949 has been defined as 'New Democratic Revolution Period' in China, a term that has been used by almost all scholars in Mainland China ever since. According to Mao, the New Democratic Revolution 'is an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution of the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat' (ibid.). This definition has explicitly made iconoclasm the defining character of the period. Furthermore, by putting the word 'new' in front of democracy, nation, government and culture, the idea of New Democracy stems from the notion of social progress. According to Mao, on the cultural side, the revolution must 'change the China which is being kept ignorant and backward under the sway of the old culture into an enlightened and progressive China under the sway of a new culture' (ibid. p. 340).

In 1942, Mao gave a series of talks on literature at the Yan'an Forum (1980), setting up the preliminary pattern of artistic creation and criticism in Mainland China: literature must be used as a weapon to educate and serve the people and the overall society. Under the specific context of the Yan'an Forum, instead of the old culture of the classical Middle Kingdom, the new culture of enlightenment should be the central content of education. At the same time, literature must belong to the people and the overall society, which means that individualist expression is not of any importance in literary criticism. Guo Moruo (1950) elaborates on this pattern in "Fight to Construct New China's People's Literature and Art" (《为建设新中国的人民文艺而奋斗》) (p. 38), laying down the foundation of the unified direction and standard of literary criticism. This pattern of criticism requires a combination of literary creation with reality in the political domain, thus amplifying the political influences of literature. This process succeeds in transforming the seemingly subjective and individual literary works into a tool to establish a political identity and social recognition. As a result, the political imaginative plays a vital role in this pattern of criticism: the political goal of a better

future via solidarity effectively excludes individual anxiety and distress, securing the collective political identity from doubt, which is usually the consequence of individual experiences. The study of New Poetry and Bian Zhilin in Mainland China inevitably follows this pattern and serves the ultimate goal of recognizing Chinese Marxism, the Chinese Proletarian Revolution and the modern socialist construction.

The political stance on the May Fourth Movement in Mainland China dominates the current academic view on New Poetry as the latter is the literary branch of the former. Mao Zedong praises the May Fourth Movement as a 'cultural revolution' (1965, p. 374) with credit owed exclusively to its denunciation of tradition:

> Raising aloft the two great banners of the day, "Down with the old ethics and up with the new!" and "Down with the old literature and up with the new!" (ibid.)

This political agenda sets up the framework for the norms in mainland China: to praise the enlightenment and progress (both are terms borrowed from the West) brought by the May Fourth Movement, and to identify Western elements (whenever the political environment allows) in New Poetry as they symbolise modern qualities. According to the founder of the League of the Left-Wing Writers and former Minister of Culture, Zhou Yang 周扬 (1908–1989), the May Fourth Movement is defined as the first literary revolution that is of the same importance as Mao's Yan'an talks (Zhou, 1985, p. 66). Witnesses of the history such as Guo Moruo, Zhou Yang and Bian's poetic fellow He Qifang all assumed important positions in the PRC government, and they spared no effort in making sure that their literary criticism reflects this ideological trend. Furthermore, their practice has affected the following generation of intellectuals that study this subject matter; as the eagerness to showcase one's political identity dominates the literary discourse, there is little space of any reflection on the iconoclast agenda. This has resulted to the absence of a comprehensive discussion on tradition and an excess of positive comments made on social progress reflected in literature.

In 1980, as the Chinese government held an academic seminar to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, the idea of three major movements of modern enlightenment in China was proposed: the May Fourth Movement, Yan'an Rectification Movement and the "mind emancipation" following China's reform in 1978. At this point, the strong and definitive political stance on the May Fourth Movement is completely established, and its anti-imperialist and iconoclast appeals have since served as the main plot of modern Chinese history. It is also notable that at

this point, after ten years of academic silence caused by the radical socio-political purge of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, the passionate discussion on the reception of Western influences and its contribution to modernity has resumed. Furthermore, the political event of 'eliminating chaos and returning to normal' (*boluan fanzheng* 拨乱反正) between 1977 and early 1980s rehabilitated a large number of victims of the anti-rightist campaign in 1957. Many of the persecuted victims are intellectuals educated in Western countries and in favour of Western influences and the promise of cultural modernity. This has contributed to the appeal of 'rewriting literary history' in 1980s, and Chinese intellectuals were eager to celebrate and promote Western influences in order to make up for the past ten years.

<u>The political undertone of the history of modern Chinese literature as an academic discipline</u>

Since 1949, the establishment of modern Chinese literature history as an academic discipline has been treated as a national political task. Specifically, between 1950 and 1960, this new discipline is established as a branch of the history of the New Democratic Revolution. Therefore, the notion of progress and the self-imposed exile of tradition define the political undertone of the studies.

The establishment of the history of modern Chinese literature as an academic discipline was the result of the Ministry of Education's 1950 decisions on higher education curriculum, more specifically, the 1951 *Course Outline of History of China's New Literature* (《〈中国新文学史〉教学大纲》). It has become an ongoing practice for the government to publish guidelines in teaching modern Chinese literature history in higher education facilities; until this day, the majority of universities, if not all, diligently follow the current version of the *Course Outline* and its advised textbooks. In the past few decades, though the *Course Outline* has seen various amendments, none has touched the overall framework of judging the modern and new qualities of literature on the basis of iconoclasm and Western influences (the 'official' attitude towards the latter has changed several times due to political radicalism before 1978), which serves the goal of validating the communist government as the leader of the new and modern nation.

<u>*Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History* and the establishment of the literary</u>

criticism framework in 1950s

The *Course Outline* focuses much on the relationship between politics and literature and demands special academic focus on the literary and ideological struggle (*wenyi sixiang douzheng* 文艺思想斗争). The foremost task of academic research and teaching of this type lies in proving the dominant position of the revolution over New Literature. That is to say, New Literature has been inspired by the political structure, and therefore must serve the latter. In other words, the establishment of history of New Literature is a branch of the establishment of history of the Chinese Communist Party.

Wang Yao's *Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History*, originally published in 1951 and 1953, is the first and most influential work on this topic. *Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History* (《中国新文学史稿》) sets up the framework for the mainstream pattern of literary criticism of Mainland China: literary works are judged according to the theme, content and political agenda of the writer, rather than the linguistic, formal or aesthetic considerations. This is strictly in line with the Chinese Communist Party's cultural policy. As the ministry made history of modern literature a mandatory course in universities, in Wang Yao's own words, 'the *Course Outline* is comparable to the constitutional law and must be executed' (Wang, 1995, p. 20). Naturally, his work has corresponded to the prevalent psyche of paying much more attention to the present than the past (*hou jin bo gu* 厚今薄古): 'In order to embrace Democracy and Science, we have to reject the classical essence and literature traditions' (1982, p. 27). This definition is clearly influenced by the League of Left-Wing Writers (*zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 左翼作家联盟) including pro-communist party writers such as Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936), Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–1986), Hu Feng 胡风 (1902–1985), and Mei Zhi 梅志 (1914–2004).

In the early days of the CCP administration, New Literature is a term closely related to the communist revolution. *Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History* aims at defining the history of New Literature in such a way so that it offers validation to the newly established government. Based on this goal, it is no surprise that Bian Zhilin appeared only in one paragraph in this work. Wang Yao briefly touches on the Han Garden poets and refers to Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898–1948) and Liu Xiwei 刘西渭 (1806–1982)'s work to criticise 'the excessive obscurity' (p. 199). Wang Yao pays tribute exclusively to poets 'with radical notions of revolution' and 'convinced by the

victory of the revolution' (1982, p. 81) such as Guo Moruo and Ai Qing 艾青 (1910–1996) and criticises writers that 'naturally felt unsatisfied with reality, yet unconsciously yearns for the past' (ibid., p 273) such as Shen Congwen.

Comparable to 'the constitutional law', *Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History* has established the framework of literary criticism on New Literature, especially works produced during the May Fourth Movement period, on the basis of Mao's Yan'an talks and New Democracy. At the same time, Wang has implicitly shown personal appreciation for Romanticism and classical Chinese elements in New Literature, which later caused the ill fate of the author and the book. In my opinion, Wang Yao's self-contradictory position between the consciousness of political task and the poetic thinking is evidence of the entangled relationship between politics and academia in 1950s. Wang Yao's personal struggle reflects the mainstream trend of Chinese intellectuals' attempt to assimilate with the political narrative.

Wang Yao was banished from mainstream academia and forced to self-criticise in various occasions in later years (Wang, 1995, p. 501). Interestingly, despite his academic background in classical Chinese literature and philosophy, in 1979 when this disputed work was allowed to be published again, Wang Yao held on to the same critical framework:

> New Literature under the influences of the May Fourth Movement was born with the historical mission to serve people's revolution; it is a strong weapon to unite and educate the people, and to vanquish and eliminate enemies. (Wang, 1982, p. 4)

Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History has fulfilled its political task by setting up a model of modern literary criticism that is echoed in almost all representative works of this type in 1950s. Examples include Zhang Bilai 张毕来's *Outline of the New Literature History* (《新文学史纲》) (1955) and Liu Shousong 刘绥松's *First Draft of Chinese New Literature History* (《中国新文学史初稿》) (1956). All of the above focus on the dominant power of New Democracy over New Literature. Zhang Bilai specifically talks about the class struggle reflected in New Poetry and differentiates the political agenda of various poets, and criticises poetic figures including the Crescent Moon Society due to their bourgeois tendencies. At the same time, in all these homogeneous research works, the term New Literature is taken for granted as the other name of modern literature in China, though no clear explanation has been offered,

except for Ding Yi's *The Brief History of Chinese Contemporary Literature* (《中国当代文学简史》) (1955). Ding Yi discusses the connotation of modernity in literature and judges the merits of New Poetry on the basis of two standards: whether or not the poem embodies a political agenda of iconoclasm and revolution; and whether or not the poem was written for the people. It is fair to say that Ding's discussion of modernity in literature is tightly tucked under the political consciousness framework.

As the political environment became more radical in late 1950s, the scope of New Literature has been significantly reduced to focus exclusively on left-wing/revolutionary literature. Western influences are no longer praised or emphasised on, and the notion of iconoclasm must accompany Mao Zedong's theory of cultural and literary revolution. There was no space left for the discussion of tradition since it belongs to the old culture that draws the nation backwards. Under this context, before the complete silence of academic research during the Cultural Revolution, only left-wing writers were recognised as New Literature intellectuals. In 1956, the *Course Outline* was amended and the term 'literature of the New Democratic Revolution (*xin minzhuzhuyi geming shidai de wenxue* 新民主主义革命时代的文学' was coined to cover New Literature between 1919 to 1949. The resulted textbook of three volumes, *History of Modern Chinese Literature* (《中国现代文学史》) (1979) by Tang Tao 唐弢 did not get published until 1979 due to the Cultural Revolution that puts the drafting work to an indefinite halt. *History of Modern Chinese Literature* is widely known and used as the government's appointed textbook for teaching New Literature history since 1978, though the main body of the volumes were written in 1960s during the Cultural Revolution. *History of Modern Chinese Literature* is a product of the political radicalism in China between 1956 and 1978. Similar to *Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History,* Tang Tao's work is set out to fulfil the same political task with a much more strict, left-wing standard of progress and modernity. Tang Tao traces the history of the League of Left-Wing Writers living in Yan'an, the members of which have been treated as patriotic and revolutionary writers by the Communist Party. It goes without saying that only this type of literature could qualify as New Literature; modernity is hence benchmarked against the function of supporting political movements including New Democracy, the resistance against Japanese aggression and eventually, the Chinese Communist Revolution between 1945 and 1950. In contrast to the prevalent trend, Tang Tao gives little judgement to literary events and figures in

areas controlled by the Japanese army and the Republic of China government. Tang Tao uses acrimonious words in criticising writers with a more individualist agenda; he argues against the lack of realistic content and social functions in their works. Though he made no direct comments on Bian Zhilin, when it comes to the latter's friend Li Jinfa 李金发 (1900–1976) and 'symbolist poetry' (*xiangzheng shi* 象征诗), Tang Tao uses the negative political term 'reactionary' (*fandong* 反动) to describe 'the grotesque form that veils the superficial content is convenient for their expression of *fin de siècle* dreams and decadence' (1979, p. 255). Despite Tang Tao's later efforts to correct the radical political tendency of this work, many poets associated the accusation of 'reactionary' remain relatively neglected in the current studies of modern Chinese literature.

Following the 1977 central government's decision to resume College Entrance Examination, the demand for updated history of literature textbooks significantly increased. Apart from the publication of Tang Tao's *History of Modern Chinese Literature*, nine leading universities joined to publish a 1979 textbook, also titled *History of Modern Chinese Literature*. The nine universities' textbook shows an attempt to re-broaden the scope of modern literature, and pays special attention to the rehabilitation of literary figures and works that received fierce criticism during the past two decades. However, the core idea behind this textbook remains political, only this time, it has changed to the newly established CCP principle of 'to seek truth from facts' (*shishiqiushi* 实事求是). Furthermore, the political standard of whether or not literature served the goal of the New Democratic Revolution persists in the new textbook. The term 'to seek truth from facts' stresses facts and practices as the single standard to judge theories. This is the Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904–1997) administration's interpretation of Marxist political philosophy, and has been extensively practiced since late 1970s as the theoretical support to the reform and opening-up policy, which fits into China's national task of modernising the economy and society. Naturally, literary criticism under this political principle remains dominated by the Marxist framework.

Rewriting literary history and the 'rehabilitation' of Western influences in the history of modern Chinese literature from 1980s

With the political rehabilitation and the backdrop of reform and opening-up, academic studies in history of modern literature quickly shifted from the radical left-

wing literary criticism pattern and gazed upon Western influences and Chinese literature's place in world literature. After two decades of political repression, the academic admiration and passion for Western influences roared back. Nevertheless, it is notable that the basic Marxist framework has not seen much change: literature must serve the social and political goal of national progress. Since 1980s, the goal of national progress has expanded on the basis of the reform and opening-up policy: literature must be considered under the framework of world literature as China opens up towards the world.

Two summits with the focus on re-understanding modern literature in China were held in 1981 and 1983 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, attracting attendees with national reputation and influences. The proceeding of the two summits, *Chinese Modern Literary Trend of Thoughts* (《中国现代文学思潮流派讨论集》) (1984) lays the foundation for key topics in the following decades; Articles in this publication introduce the new pattern of research that argues for the connection between modern Chinese literature and Western literary trends including Realism, Romanticism, Symbolism and Modernism. This shift of academic focus has to some extent relaxed the political criticism on literary works, and broadened research scope, which led to the idea of 'rewriting literary history' (*chongxie wenxueshi* 重写文学史) in late 1980s.

The most representative and influential reaction to 'rewriting literary history' is the proposal of the term 'twentieth-century Chinese literature' (*ershi shiji zhongguo wenxue* 二十世纪中国文学) by Huang Ziping 黄子平, Chen Pingyuan 陈平原 and Qian Liqun 钱理群 (1985, p. 3). By treating twentieth-century literature as a conception in its totality, Huang, Chen and Qian challenges the political establishment that defines modern (1919 to 1949) and contemporary literature (1949 to present). By treating modern literature as a whole, they argue for the rewriting of literary history in the scope of world literature under the following framework:

> Chinese literature enters 'world literature'; 're-inventing the soul of a nation' as the theme of literature; 'sorrow and grief' as its key character of modern aesthetics; modernisation of artistic thoughts reflected in literary languages; lastly, the question of methodology involved in this concept. (ibid.)

The essence of this proposal is a shift of methodology in literary studies from the left-wing radical political standard. As the political censorship gradually relaxed its grip, New Democratic Revolution is no longer the sole standard of considering Chinese

literature and writers. As a result, Chinese intellectuals again embraced influences of Western literary studies. It is clear that this framework is heavily influenced by René Wellek's *Theory of Literature* (1949), especially concerning the concept of 'general, comparative and national literature' (ibid. p. 38). This is the first time that the methodology of New Critics, a mainstream Western school of literary studies, is proposed in the study of modern Chinese literature since 1949; influences of New Critics have since persisted in literary studies in mainland China until this day.

Furthermore, by rejecting the founding of the PRC in 1949 as the division of two literary periods, the conception of 'twentieth-century Chinese literature' represents the scholarly return to the May Fourth Movement agenda of iconoclasm and progress brought over by Western influences. In the eyes of Chinese intellectuals, the repression and political purge of the Cultural Revolution has damaged the Chinese society; China was again being kept ignorant and backward, and enlightenment and a new form is culture is anxiously needed to re-invent the national character. On this level, Chinese intellectuals feel that they are facing the same, if not worse, situation that the May Fourth generation was facing. The choice could not have been more natural: Western influences as enlightenment is again celebrated with the promise of modernity. Moreover, this modernity has the potential of alignment with the current political agenda of reform and opening-up, therefore, 'one key connotation of "twentieth-century Chinese literature" lies in the progress of Chinese literature's assimilation with "world literature"' (Chen, Huang and Qian, 1985, p. 9). The eagerness of abandoning the past decade of political radicalism and to 'catch up' with the West symbolises the comeback of 'obsession with China'. Though Chen, Huang and Qian also propose a relatively more individualist perspective of literary criticism as rebel against the left-wing political narrative, this aspect of their argument is dwarfed by the collective goal of re-inventing the soul of a nation. On this level, despite Chen, Huang and Qian's aspiration to rehabilitate literature, their literary agenda remains political and complies with the Marxist emphasis on the functional role of literary modernity in serving the political goal of progress.

Qian Liqun carried on to join Wen Rumin 温儒敏 and Wu Fuhui 吴福辉 in drafting the *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* (《中国现代文学三十年》) (1998); since the publication of the first edition in 1987, this book has undoubtedly become the most widely used textbook for teaching history of modern

Chinese literature in Chinese universities. The 2nd edition published by Peking University Press in 1998 was appointed by Ministry of Education as the official university textbook. Until this day, *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* is listed as textbook and reference book for graduate school admission test in the subject by almost all leading universities.

Qian Liqun extended the proposal of 'twentieth-century Chinese literature' in this book, focusing on the first thirty years of modern Chinese literature: between January 1917, when Hu Shi published his "Tentative Proposal for Literary Reform" (*wenxue gailiang chuyi* 文學改良芻議), and July 1949, when the First National Meeting of Literary and Art Circles was held. This specific time period is chosen to conform with the rehabilitation of modern literature before 1949 as the writers attempt to re-evaluate a series of literary works that were either ignored or negatively criticised in the past decade. At the same time, *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* follows the methodology of New Critics, which is reflected in the following definition of modern literature at the beginning of the book:

> 'Modern literature' is at the same time a concept that reveals the 'modernity' in literature of this period of time. The so-called 'modern literature' refers to 'literature written in the modern language and formality, and expresses the thoughts, feelings and psychology of modern Chinese people. (Qian, Wen and Wu, 1998, p. 4)

Not unlike the proposal of 'twentieth-century literature', *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* is ambivalent in literary modernity. The above definition was given in the introduction chapter of the book as the writers argue that modern literature is not limited to the progress of history and time. However, the majority of the book is devoted to a progress-centred discussion on 'the modernization of literature' (ibid. p .4) as a subsidiary of the Chinese modernization in politics, economics, social structure, science and technology, etc. Apart from the claimed focus on individual feelings and psychology, it seems that modernization of literature and literary modernity are two inter-changeable concepts, though no explanation was given to the equation. Given the dominant power of modernization over the actual discussion of literary modernity, again the Marxist methodology is adopted in this book as writers spare no effort in analysing the role of literature in China's path towards the founding of the PRC in 1949.

Furthermore, the same level of ambivalence is reflected in *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History*'s attitude on the dichotomy of tradition and modern.

Though the writers recognise 'the flesh and blood connection between modern and traditional literature' (ibid. p. 5), the discussions are built almost exclusively on the reception and adaptation of Western literary resources. The book seems to resonate with the proposal of 'twentieth-century Chinese literature'; it argues for literary modernity reflected in 'the breakaway from tradition' (Chen, Huang and Qian, 1985, p. 13), or at least, the so-called 'revolutionary transformation' of tradition. This is proved in *Study Guide to Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* (Wen, 2007), edited by one of the original writers of the textbook as the designated handbook for university students. In the *Study Guide*, Wen Rumin cited Wang Yao's 'Re-evaluating the Value of Chinese Classical Literature in the May Fourth Period' (2007, p. 743). Wang Yao places the value of classical literature on the possibility of transformation through 'the key references of Western literature' and argues for 'a profound, deep-rooted revolution in literary concepts, aesthetics, expressions of feelings and literary languages' (ibid. p. 766).

For *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History* remains the most influential work in Mainland China in modern literature studies, it is only natural that the same conceptions and ideals persist in the mainstream academic works in the field: 'obsession with China' in combination with the Marxist literary criticism framework has dominated the academic space in mainland China since 1990s. Since then, the mainstream view in Mainland China considers 'obsession with China' consequence of impact from the West. As a result, this corresponds to the popular approach to modern Chinese history adopted by Fairbank (1954) and Levenson (1971), which is later summarized by Cohen (2010) as the 'impact-response' (p. 4) model. On the mainland China side, since there is no space left for reflection on the iconoclastic agenda of the May Fourth Movement, there is almost no academic discussions on the dichotomy of tradition and modern, Chinese and Western. The so-called enlightenment is, to some extent, social Darwinist, and an equation is drawn between modernity and the West. Ironically, this ambiguous idea of progress and modernity could not be more distant from enlightenment brought about in the French Revolution or the concept of modernity and modernisation in Max Weber's creations. This is not to say that the latter stands as the standard or correct understanding of modernity; however, this difference showcases the utopian feature of the Chinese conception of modernity.

This so-called enlightenment and utopianised understanding modernity have persisted in current research around the topic of New Poetry. Despite Cohen's effort to

introduce the 'China-centred history' (p. 149) approach in America, representative studies on New Poetry such as Zhang Songjian 张松建 (2012)'s exploration of lyricism in modern Chinese poetry, Wu Xiaodong 吴晓东 (2010)'s studies in the dominating spirit of New Poetry, and Jiang Tao 姜涛 (2005)'s walkthrough of the emergence of New Poetry anthologies still benchmark modernity with Western schools and theories of poetry. Sun Yushi 孙玉石 (2010) and Li Yi 李怡 (2008) both engage their discussions with traditional elements in New Poetry, however, their academic interests rely on the creative transformation of traditional elements with a standard of modernity again benchmarked with Western poetry. It is quite clear that in mainland China's debate about New Poetry, tradition is placed in an inferior position and could only affect the discussions on modernity when it is transformed into a rebirth. At the same time, existing research as such tends to pay a majority of attention to historical facts and details such as the dating and publications of poetic works. The excellence of this historian-like research tendency, however, does not make up for the lack of an in-depth discussion on the overwhelming political definition of enlightenment and the equation between modern and Western.

***Transforming tradition with European influences:* current literature and key debates about modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry**

Naturally, key literatures in Bian's pre-war poetry follow the same trend as the overall discussions in modern Chinese history, literature and New Poetry. Even Bian Zhilin himself, in various occasions, laid much emphasis on the West. Bian's review in his 1978 testimony from the preface to *Diaochong Jili* (1984), Bian Zhilin put his poetry before the Second Sino-Japanese War (hereafter referred to as 'pre-war poetry') into three main periods: the earliest period was between 1930 to 1932 when Bian wrote as an undergraduate student; the second period was between 1933 to 1935, before the Japanese army's invasion into East China, which he described as 'a period of temporary peace and satisfaction' (2002, p. 446); the third period was the year of 1937 when Bian resumed poetry writing after a short pause during his trips in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Bian's designation, according to the time, style and predominating influences on his work, is accepted and referred to by several scholars including Tang Qi and Wang Yi. Yet some other researchers, such as Zhang Manyi (1989) and Lan Dizhi (1990), argue to merge the two later stages into one period from 1933 to 1937 since both see a

distinctive turn in Bian's poetry starting from 1933. Zhang bases his designation on the influence from different schools on Bian's poetry and calls the first period, 1930 to 1932, the period of the Crescent Moon; and the second period, 1933 to 1937, the period of Modernism, where the writing skill and style come generally from French Symbolism (1984, p. 5-53). Lan, on the other hand, makes the distinction based on the Bian's maturity as a poet and sees 1930 to 1932 as an early stage of exploration and 1933 to 1937 as when Bian reached his heyday as a modern Chinese poet (1990, p. 56). These different designations of Bian's pre-war poetry, each with its validity, are important tools to trace how Bian adjusted himself as a poet to the changing cultural conditions of the Chinese society, especially when the change of both time and predominating influences are taken into account. In this chapter, I will not argue in any of the designations' favour but to trace Bian's journey as poet according to the two changing factors to reveal the construction of modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry. It is, however, important to notice that all methods of putting the poetry into sub-periods have put a special note on the change of style in the year of 1933 or 1934 and a devoted discussion on Bian's establishment as a modern Chinese poet through his writings in 1935 and 1937. For example, in the famous lecture series of 'New Poetry in China' given by Fei Ming in Peking University, all 11 poems by Bian were selected from his works in 1935 and 1937. It is fair to admit that the construction of modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry was completed during 1933 and 1934, marked by the poem 'The Composition of Distances' in 1935.

Bian's contemporary intellectuals celebrate his poetry on the basis of Western elements. Moreover, the criticism framework adopted in this celebration is obviously West-centred. Fei Ming offers an ambivalent recognition of traditional elements. In his celebrated lecture series in Peking University about Chinese New Poetry, talks about the taste of classical poetry in Bian's pre-war poetry by comparing symbols with late Tang dynasty poems. However, his admiration of the classical taste relies on the Westernised style in Bian's pre-war poetry. To Fei Ming, the value of Bian's poetry lies in how the style has transformed traditional elements. Fei Ming's opinion resonates with Bian's description of *hua gu hua ou*, which is mentioned in Chapter 1. This idea of transforming traditional Chinese poetic elements in order to adapt to Western influences has become the dominant criteria in the definition of modernity in Bian' s pre-war poetry in current literatures. Despite the term's seeming balance between *gu*

(tradition 古) and *ou* (European/Western 欧)，the essence of *hua gu hua ou* is the equation between modern and Western.

To begin with, almost all key existing research has paid the majority of, if not all, attention to Bian's reception of French Symbolist poetry and English Modernist poetry. Tang Qi, the representative figure of *Les Contemporains*, also known as 'The Nine Leaves' (*jiuye shiren* 九叶诗人) poets in 1940s, also wrote in 'Bian Zhilin and Modernist Poetry' (1990, p. 19) that 'Bian has absorbed the influence from the French Symbolists and the Modernists from England and America; with which, at the same time, he assimilated traditional Chinese philosophies and artistic creativity. He has developed a new path and crystalized his unique poetics.' Both the 'new path' and the 'style' and 'taste' described what was truly modern about Bian's prewar poetry: the repressed and exiled Chinese poetics struggling to reborn under the self-claimed Western style. Since the rebirth of Chineseness serves as the true goal of poetry, the classical Chinese elements inevitably modifies the Western poetics. However, the Chinese poetics, as well as the true goal of poetry, was repressed and even distained by the poet, thus creating an obstruction to the poet to consciously see the transformation of Western poetics and the transition of classical Chinese poetics. The obstruction is reflected in a misplaced understanding: the poet sees his writing as an extension of the Western poetics, hence contributing the construction of modernity through poetic factors such as image, self and style to French Symbolism. Critics and existing research about Bian also treat modernity as a result of the Western influence and put classical Chinese poetics in a submissive position. The following analysis traces the poet's struggles to establish himself as a modern poet and a Chinese intellectual. It seems that such misplacement has helped the poet conquer his solitude and despair in search of a spiritual homeland, which has greatly contributed to the transformation of Western poetics and the transition of classical Chinese poetics, hence the emergence of modernity.

According to search results from www.cnki.net, there are 1750 articles that include 卞之琳 as keyword; most of these articles are textual analysis focused on a small number of his poems and any in-depth discussion would be carried out to prove influences from either Western poetry or the political idea of modernisation of literature as a tool of social progress. In my opinion, despite the detailed textual analysis and careful findings about historical facts, most of these articles are repeating the same

conclusions about the Western influences and how they represent Bian's achievements that echo with the political eagerness to construct modernity. These conclusions have been well carved out in two most notable books, which I have repeatedly reviewed in this research: *Bian Zhilin and the Art of Poetry* 《卞之琳与诗艺术》 (1990), edited by members of *Les Contemporains*, Yuan Kejia, Wu Ningkun and Du Yunxie; and *Studies of Bian Zhilin's Poetic Art*《卞之琳诗艺研究》 (2000) by Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui. The former is an anthology of critics by more than twenty scholars, most having lived through Bian's literary life and having enjoyed a close relationship with the poet. The latter, on the other hand, is dedicated to a comprehensive and systematic study of Bian's life and his ideal of the artistic value in poetry. In his work dedicated to his much-missed teacher, Jiang Ruoshui lists the timeframe of Bian's literary life and offers a focused discussion on the influences of and connections between Bian and Western poets including Paul Verlaine, Paul Valerie and T.S. Eliot with a paralleled listing of classical Chinese elements (mainly textual) to emphasise the intertextual quality of Bian's pre-war poetry. Though Jiang has not given a clear scope of what he means by artistic value, he has, in detail, showcased the abundant resources and influences present in Bian's pre-war poetry. In his work, Jiang makes attempts to explore Bian's state of mind in certain periods of the 1930s. However, despite the writer's later publication – *Modernity in Classical Chinese Poetry* 《古典诗的现代性》 (2010) – that challenges the idea that only Western literature could be modern, there is no further discussion on either the Chinese psyche reflected through Bian's pre-war poetry or the underlying motivation of combining Western and classical Chinese poetic elements.

Furthermore, amongst various dedicated research works in the past decades, there exists the tendency of breaking down Bian's poetry into poetic units (images, metre and rhymes, etc.) that could be directly compared with selected French and English poetry to prove Bian's reception of Western influences. This tendency is observed in both Mainland Chinese and overseas scholars' works. The conclusion is then drawn that this also proves his spirit of modernity. This conclusion is questionable, since the definition of modernity is questionable: no one seems to have made any attempt to argue for the equation between modern and Western. Moreover, this type of research almost completely ignores the possibility that these poetic units could be compared to both the Western influences and classical Chinese poetics. For example,

in an article published in 1983, Bian's friend, art critic Wang Zuoliang (2005), compared the last line of Bian's 'Return 归' (1934) with the first three lines of T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; Tang Qi (1990) and Haft (1983) also compared four lines from Bian's 'Station 车站' (1937) with two lines in the same T.S. Eliot poem; Jiang Ruoshui dedicated a detailed discussion comparing 'Peking, 1934 春城' (1934) with 'the Waste Land'. Zhang (1989) and Jiang (2000) offers detailed analyses on Bian's technique of parody and dramatization under the influences of T.S. Eliot to support the argument that Bian had also accepted Modernist and metaphysical poetry in the West. Bian also attributed this specific technique to influences from Wen Yiduo's *Dead Water* by comparing Wen to T.S. Eliot. Using the same methodology, Luo (2000) even praises Bian's poetry writing as 'A song against his tradition' (p. 84). In the past 10 years, more and more academic efforts in Mainland China have contributed to researching Bian as a translator rather than a poet. It seems that the academic interests in Bian's originality have been exhausted; the current research has been conclusive as almost all academic and poetic voices that discuss Bian's connection to Western poetry are positive and encouraging as they see Western influences remarking the modern quality of Bian's pre-war poetry.

This is not to say that no efforts have been made to reveal traditional elements in Bian's pre-war poetry. Michelle Yeh (1994 and 2008) draws several intertextual comparisons between Bian's poetic images and classical Chinese philosophies with a focus on Taoism. However, Yeh's argument is rather ambiguous: she recognises the influences of tradition in the construction of modernity, yet also asserts that Bian is critical of tradition. Yeh's view of modernity in Bian's pre-war poetry, as well as her general idea of modernity in New Poetry, is again limited by the conception of *hua gu hua ou*. Yeh kept mentioning the interaction between 'tradition and modernist poetics' (2008, p. 46) without pointing out the actual relationship between the two resources of inspirations. On one hand, Yeh recognises that 'the myth of modern Chinese poetry's complete breakaway from Chinese tradition is not valid' (2008, p. 47); on the other, she seems to treat traditional elements as accessory to the poet's reception and adaptation of Western influences. She also admires Bian's 'ironic and critical study of tradition.' (Ibid.) This ambiguity is due to Yeh's opinion that the construction of modernity is realised through Bian's absorption of tradition after he was enlightened by French Symbolists and T.S. Eliot, which she calls is 'a man who inherits creatively' (p. 40); the

use of tradition in constructing modernity is only good when it is modified according to Western standards, and 'creatively' means none other but Western influences. This ambiguous attitude towards tradition is of no significant difference from the scholars mentioned above. Therefore, it is fair to say that Yeh's research, despite the valuable analysis revealing the influences of tradition in Bian' pre-war poetry, is limited to the overwhelming assumption that modernity is based on reception of Western influences.

As mentioned above, this popular trend and unified attitude reflects the notion of the May Fourth Movement and the Chinese Marxist literary criticism. Not much has changed from Hu Shi's view of translating Western literature and writing literature to emulate Western influences: as classical Chinese literature and culture are considered out-dated, to become modern one must become Western. In the past 10 years, the same conclusions on the textual quality and reception of Western influences have been tediously repeated, and the absence of a comprehensive reflection on the abandoned tradition and the psychological distress experienced by poets persists.

It seems that Bian himself has been victimised by this mainstream view on modernity. Bian Zhilin described his mode of expression by using the verb *jie* (borrow 借) for four times: 'I express by borrowing emotions from natural sceneries, objects, other people and their business' (2002, p. 446). In his pre-war poetry, emotional expression is realized through dedicated descriptions of objects and people other than an explicit self-called 'I'. The strategy has its connection with *xing* (兴), one of the three dominating poetic techniques in *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 诗经). *Xing* relies on the affective images, instead of logical concepts and deductions usually carried out by a centralized 'I' in the poem, to uplift the emotion of the writer and help readers relate to certain feelings. However, despite Bian's later confession of his affinity to late Tang Dynasty poetry in 1980s, he explained this emotional trait through the influence of the symbolists: 'I focus on the implicit; therefore, my poems agree with that Western school in the emphasis of suggestion. We are naturally bonded in this way.'

The natural bond described by Bian is in fact a psychological solution to his struggle: intimacy and suggestion, as qualities of the Chinese tradition that he should find disdainful, are now qualities celebrated by Western poetry, which, according to the common imagination of the Chinese intellectuals, is the new form in which the shattered Chinese culture could breathe its first modern breath. This reflection has played a vital role in Bian's poetry writing and laid the foundation for his unique style

as a modern lyrical poet. 'That Western school' obviously points to the French Symbolists that Bian frequently translated from and wrote about, he even talked about how he 'put down the English poetry' after finding the quality of 'intimacy and suggestion' in poems written by Paul Verlaine and Paul Valéry. Bian talked about the two qualities as 'exactly what classical Chinese poetry is good in' (2007, p. 31). Bian described how 'intimacy and suggestion' in French Symbolism and Modernism in the early 20th century that made him feel 'like meeting an old friend' (2002, p. 446). It is interesting to see the description of the poet's bond with the French Symbolists as a natural one. The musical qualities shared by both *Book of Odes* and most poems written by Paul Verlaine may have laid the literal foundation for the possible similarities between *Xing* and 'intimacy and suggestion'. More importantly, Bian's preference for the latter is a reflection of the eager pursuit of a new coherence for the Chinese culture. On one hand, he was reluctant to reveal his comfort in using classical Chinese poetic traits. On the other hand, the decline of the Crescent Society's overall transplantation of English Romanticism has driven him to confront the reality that he is again trapped between a distrusted Chinese tradition and the uncertain future where all problems will be solved by copying something Western.

It is also notable that amongst almost all studies mentioned above, there is little attention paid to the disappointment, distress and yearning for inner peace that Bian expressed through poetry. I view this as a result of the predominating political stance of literary critics. As mentioned above, there is little space left for individualistic feelings. Moreover, it makes no sense in this political stance that a poet should feel disappointed when his efforts echo with the iconoclast calls of the May Fourth Movement. As these negative feelings could lead to doubts and individual separation from the mainstream political goal of a unified, re-invented national character of China, a more profound study of Bian might reveal his identity as someone not as qualified to carry the banner of New Poetry. As a matter of fact, Bian's much quieter reputation than his university friend He Qifang proves this point of view. This also explains why most research dwells on textual analysis and intertextual comparison to showcase the poet's skilful hand in combining Chinese and Western elements. Even Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui, who challenges the equation between modernity and Western influences, focusing almost exclusively on Bian's reception of French Symbolist poetry and T.S. Eliot's Modernist poetry in order to prove Bian's position in "modernising" New Poetry.

Interestingly, as a number of mainland Chinese scholars are finding new ways

of understanding modernity and culture in China, the literary critics in New Poetry have not caught up. Since Li Zehou (2010)'s explorations in aesthetics in literature in 1980s, the discussion of Marxist aesthetics has centred around the theory of Marxist aesthetic ideology, which analyses the social structure, superstructure and social ideology that define aesthetic features of literature and art. The theory of Marxist aesthetic ideology is a first step in dissolving the predominant influences of political stances in artistic creation and reconsiders the complexity and subjective features of aesthetics. However, existing research in New Poetry has not reflected this advancement in theory.

Under this situation, it might be helpful to look into some of the Marxist aesthetic studies in Mainland China in recent years. Wang Jie (1995) proposed the idea of "aesthetic illusion" that differs from the Western idea of mental absorption. Wang looks back into the classical Chinese ideals of beauty in music and art, arguing for the similarities and differences between the characters of modernity in China and the West. Inspired by Cohen's protest against the Eurocentric model, Wang Hui (2004) looks back into the formation of the concept of 'modern China' and calls for a 'renewed definition of China' (p. 1428). His carries out a review of classical Chinese philosophy, teachings and rules in such a manner that everything in the Chinese tradition has to do with a political science framework. By rejecting the simple reception of modernisation offered by the West in its order of globalised capitalism, Wang searches for a renewed interpretation of Chinese history and aims at finding its unique path towards a 'anti-modern modernity' (p. 136). A similar concept is proposed in Liu Kang (1995)'s discussions on Mao Zedong's practice in leading China towards the path to an 'alternative modernity' (p. 10). Liu's argument is based on a cross-reference between Mao's practice and Althusser's philosophical criticism on Hegelianism. Liu sees Mao's thoughts and practice as a mirror that reflects the dilemma of Western modernisation and modernity. Wang's argument echoes with Liu and Althusser's challenge on the dominating status of the Western discourse. However, Wang pushes the boundary of the discussion and argues that the history and tradition of China are the origin of the 'anti-modern modernity'. Therefore, the definitive feature of modern thoughts in China is its position against modernity itself.

In my study, I intend to understand New Poetry's quest for modernity by exploring the contrast between tradition and Western influences in Bian's poetry. Adopting the underlying angle mentioned in the previous paragraph, I aim at understanding the dynamic between the two approaches towards modernity in Bian's

literal construction. I believe that tradition, including classical Chinese poetry, aesthetics, morality, philosophy and structure of feeling, has never been absent. Therefore, my discussion focuses on why tradition seems invisible in New Poetry and existing research on New Poetry. I argue that the invisible tendency in the national campaign of modernisation is a result of the utopian impulse in early twentieth-century China. It has coloured the overall notion of progress in China today. Before continuing to any textual or contextual analysis of Bian's pre-war poetry, a further exploration of the absence of tradition in existing research and Bian's abrupt retirement from poetry must be carried out. This exploration has much to do with the utopian impulse that is omnipresent in New Poetry. Due to the utopianised nature of New Poetry's quest for modernity, the failure of all projects, including Bian's poetic career, is inevitable. The utopian impulse is also useful in furthering the understanding of Bian's mentality, especially with regards to the negative feelings of confusion and futility.

The utopian impulse and New Poetry's quest for modernity

The relationship between progress and the conception of utopia

Utopia, being originally the title of the 1516 book by Thomas More that represents the continuation of ancient traditions coming from classical Greece in a clear humanist way, was traditionally treated as a literary genre where adventurers stumble into an ideal world that is nowhere to be found in our secular world. However, the development of Utopia exceeded the confines of literature and has expanded into sociology, politics and other fields of human society. Though started in a style of never being possible to be put into realization, namely, a spatial Utopia, Utopia gained its temporality in both time and space from Plato's *Republic,* the *Critias* and Marxist ideology. That is, many utopian projects are believed to be realized in the future (time temporal Utopia) or in a reachable distance in our world (space temporal Utopia).

In the case of many Third World countries led by Marxist liberation movements and decolonization, Utopian thought had a profound influence on the belief that Marxism would lead humanity to the final achievement of communism and the planned society, which represents the attainment of paradise in a secular world. The concept of utopia extended into the modern world with relevance to Hegel's idea of history as an evolution that has reached its highest state. Chinese cultural elites, though not all of

them took the highly political term of Utopia, saw Europe as the ideal continent of modern supremacy where all the political and social contradictions that China was suffering could be resolved.

Raymond Trousson (1975) raised the idea that imbrications of individual interests form the kernel of social organisation in a utopia. To Trousson, rather than pointing to individualism concerning the artistic expression of feelings and subjective experience, the main interest of Utopia indicates the societal structure that could offer an objective judgement of individuals. Though the idea of utopia has been dismantled in much contemporary thought, as a motivation, utopia is both necessary and desirable in modernity.

Attributing the goal of progress to history, no matter what the definition of progress, could be in itself an effort in futility. Walter Benjamin (1940) summarised the concept of progress as not holding to reality but as a construction guided by utopianism:

> Progress, as it was painted in the minds of the social democrats, was once upon a time the progress of humanity itself (not only that of its abilities and knowledges). It was, secondly, something unending (something corresponding to an endless perfectibility of humanity). It counted, thirdly, as something essentially unstoppable (as something self-activating, pursuing a straight or spiral path). (para XIII)

Such a threefold concept of progress seems vulnerable. Here, Benjamin first challenged the popular idea of seeing the accumulation of abilities and knowledge, which fits as the definition of modernisation, as true progress. Moreover, by claiming a progress that is endlessly perfectible, any progress would be easily considered a preparation or, even worse, a failed attempt at true progress. Therefore, because 'the concept of the progress of the human race in history is not to be separated from the concept of its progression through a homogenous and empty time' (ibid.), any historical effort towards progress, be it the eternal individual perfection or the unstoppable improvement of the society, is an idealised construction of history. In other words, it is a construction of utopianism.

Even when making peace with the idea of progress, Benjamin again set out his doubts about the question of whether a goal of history could be realized. Through Klee's painting, Angelus Novus, which Benjamin calls 'the Angel of History', he eloquently depicted the relationship between the past, progress and the future: The Angel of History, with his face always turned towards the past and his back to the future, does not always capture the optimism towards a better tomorrow. Instead, his gaze could

only be put on the piles of rubbles that represent the unsatisfying past and present. Exactly as Xu put it, the pursuit of progress, like the Angel of History that desires to piece together what has been smashed, is based on a debt to the past and a responsibility to the troubled present. The innate conflict in this idea of debt lies in the fact that progress, as the storm from heaven, simultaneously cases the destruction of the Angel's goal.

It is true that progress is the promise of a bright future of science, knowledge, rationality, morality, etc. Yet in the vision of progress as the goal of history, the realisation of the bright future (if possible) also announces the validity of the past as opposed to the future because the past is simply a procedure of progress. Yet Hegel affirmed that a man of progress, in the spirit of history, would make an absolute rupture from the past. To Benjamin, the idea of progress is simply utopianism that uses an imagination of the future to dominate reality. By criticising utopianism, Benjamin reveals an eternal struggle of mankind as we always hope that linear time will bring us the future we yearn for.

Benjamin's equation between progress and utopianism is captured by John Gray as the latter examined the significant influence of millenarianism on utopian thought through the ages. In his *Black Mass: Apocalyptic religion and the death of utopia* (2007), Gray argued that history is continuously seen as a process with a built-in goal. However, any such goals of human history are doomed to failure. Gray referred to this as the apocalypse and the death of utopia. He further asserted that utopia will always exist in human civilisation because an unceasing motivation is based on his observation of the apocalypses of different versions of utopia. Utopianism is, under this context, a haunting ghost that ironically provides to history a sense of security and the fulfilment of chasing after a sublime cause. Gray saw this innate drive towards one utopian project after another as the definitive character of the human mentality throughout history.

I find Gray's examination of motivation in the discussion of utopia particularly interesting: as human beings continue to build utopian projects on countless failures and apocalypses, this motivation backed by security and fulfilment seems short-sighted. Under the critical framework of Gray's arguments, the destiny of New Poetry's quest for modernity is rather similar to Gray's apocalypses; furthermore, the sense of security and fulfilment brought over by the sublime cause is shared by the New Poetry participants. In Frederic Jameson's 'Varieties of the Utopian' (2005, p. 1-9), he proposed a distinction between 'the utopian form' and 'the utopian wish'. I consider the

latter as the category for New Poetry and Bian Zhilin's eagerness and struggle for modernity, captured with what Chodorkoff (1983), Bloch (1986, reprinted 2009) and Jameson call 'the utopian impulse' (ibid.).

The utopian impulse and the self-imposed exile of tradition in New Poetry

The utopian impulse represented a central conception in Jameson's argument for a revised methodology of utopia (2004). He rejected the superficial reflection of a society in the traditional utopian text and argued for the function of ideological critique in the distinction between the form and wish of utopia:

> Its function lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future—our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity—so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined. (p. 46)

The ideological closure of the system in New Poetry is the utopianised understanding of Western influences and the resentment towards tradition. It is worth noting that critique aspects of the Kant/Schiller proposal on aesthetic education and, especially, the Hegelian and Marxist view of modernity, were almost completely omitted in both the early twentieth-century quest for modernity and the existing literature concerning modern Chinese literature. This reflects a certain level of the 'incapacity' that characterises the utopian impulse as described by Jameson above.

The second level of 'incapacity' mentioned by Jameson lies in the fact that the absence of tradition plagued the mentality of the Chinese. In his reflections on the utopian tradition, Chodorkoff (1983) made the following remarks on the term 'the utopian impulse':

> The utopian impulse is a response to existing social conditions and an attempt to transcend or transform those conditions to achieve an ideal. It always contains two interrelated elements: a critique of existing conditions and a vision or reconstructive program for a new society. (para. 9)

Both the interrelated elements mentioned above are evident in New Poetry and the overall quest for modernity in early twentieth-century China. Wolfgang Kubin described the Chinese poet's self-image as simultaneously a creator and a destroyer (Kubin, 1996, p. 247). Kubin argued that, with the cause of modernity set as a sublime goal, for Chinese poets, 'a feeling of superiority towards all things past or even a sense of oneself at the end-point of history figures as a trait of the modern spirit' (ibid.).

Backed by the utopian impulse, this dual identity was practiced with a critique of Chinese tradition and a reconstructive programme envisaged on the basis of either the Kantian individual refinement or the Marxist collective modernisation. In pursuit of the security and fulfilment described by Gray as well as the superiority described by Kubin, Chinese poets have banished the Chinese tradition.

This corresponds, to a certain level, to the Chinese intellectuals in exile described by Wai-lim Yip. With the coherent centre lost in the separation of time (the glorious history of ancient China vs. the existential crisis of the nation) and space (China vs. the West), they struggle to piece together fragments of experiences from the Chinese-ness to re-invent the narrative of the nation and themselves as modern men. Moreover, Chinese poets have put Western modernity on a pedestal alongside a full resentment towards tradition. Anxious about the functional role of poetry in modernisation, Chinese poets are so eager to reinvent their writing and their nation that they do not examine, in any substantive way, the Chinese socio-cultural tradition; they only opt to abandon the past and advocate wholesale Westernisation. In this study, writing as an affinity to Western poetry is considered to be a formal construction of a non-existent identity. This identity exists in neither Western nor Chinese reality.

The utopian impulse as methodology of understanding the cultural and aesthetic structure of New Poetry's quest for modernity

During the early twentieth century, Chinese intelligentsia, including Bian, considered classical China to be a failure. It is this sense of failure that drove tradition and the coherent centre of classic Chinese culture into exile. Beneath the surface of modernity and enlightenment lay the restlessness expressed as utter dissatisfaction with the self, nation and society. The experience of imperialism and foreign invasions produced this remorse, which eventually developed into a shame that drove people to both resist and reinvent tradition. Therefore, the quest for modernity rested on a foundation of despair; the feeling of shame further hastened the desire for justification and affirmation. Moreover, utopia itself as an enchantment also casted its shadow on this already eager and contradictory quest for progress and modernity.

The discussion of 'the utopian impulse' is intended to map a different order of literary and cultural studies. Approaches towards opening new critical terrain for cross-cultural analysis relevant to early modern China have concerned themselves with the

challenge of dominant narratives, during which other narratives may take part but fail to affect a fundamental revision. A well-trodden path is to expose the anxious and passionate efforts towards modernity in an epic age of resistance against external threats. To this end, much emphasis has been placed on the centre of China's semi-colonial confidence in deserting classical China. Consequently, much critical effort has gone into disclosing the values of language, norms or institutions, as negotiated and contested categories settled by what was called 'combining Chinese and the West' (*zhongxi jiehe* 中西结合). It is as if despair and melancholy are completely healed once modernity, in the form of imitating the West, is established.

Although these are all part of the story of Chinese intellectuals, they do not fundamentally shift the frame of analysis in such a way that they break the pattern of arguing against the disadvantage of a cultural and temporal belatedness. Even if framed as constructive intervention, such critical stances remain regarding the lack of discussion about exile and intellectuals' suffering in mapping the new *raison d'être* that would, at the same time, represent the two layers of their desire: a desire for catching up with the West and a desire to re-embrace classical Chinese culture.

'The utopian impulse, in this way, argues for a different point of departure. Rather than rushing to the extreme of praising all literary works in early twentieth-century China as 'songs against traditions', it takes the paradox of building cultural modernity to its logical conclusion. Instead of inflating the image of New Poetry, it sees it in its fantasised plumage, making Chinese poetry, which is modern in the sense of being Western in China, unattainable; it serves as the cover of the true ideal: writing as an Odyssey towards the shattered pieces of classical Chinese aesthetics. In this way, utopia is built on the impossible commitment to the ideal. It considers how this paradox of building modernity accommodates the cultural suffering and production of a contrary sense of cultural confidence.

Although I have analysed the utopian impulse as the specificity of exiled national culture and literary modernity in China, the conceptual orientation behind it suggests other trajectories for revising critical inquiries on culture and national identity. For instance, could we analyse categories of self, text and culture when writers and the people have constructed them in a way that conflicts with their surface goal of modernity? Departing from the much-discussed notion of progress in China's road to modernity, how do we establish a sense of cultural confidence under the spectres of

unadorned nostalgia for classical Chinese culture?

Utopia, as a concept in analysing China's cultural modernity, could also be applied to the examination of some unsolved problems. For instance, in the still under-examined cultural history of nineteenth-century China, during which time Western technology, revolutionary, liberal ideologies, and literature were translated en masse into Chinese, what miscomprehensions were produced on this forced common ground? How is 'reception' a long-stigmatised term for its implication of passivity and subjugation, the accidental offspring of 'imprecision' as translated Western discourses excite their Chinese audience under false impressions? As an extension of 'utopia' discussed in this thesis, one might also probe with questions about contemporary utopia(s) in communities and culture in China. The idea that the paradox is far from over or that a national exile can never end, alerts us to the fact that utopia may not be what is sought in the desire for cultural confidence. We require new conceptions of how cultural confidence, as a political ideal or cultural practice, has evolved and been adapted apart from the idea of progress and the emulation of the West to evaluate new forms of its expression. Looking back on the development of modern Chinese nationalism and cultural identity, from the late nineteenth century to the first four decades of the twentieth century, one can see how a sense of injury resurfaced as a reason for further construction of utopias as a means to defend and recover China. No odyssey can wash away a memory that tenaciously holds on to the destruction of a nation and its culture. As long as there is nostalgic guilt towards classical China, utopias will be built to serve all types of paradoxes and desires as a consequence.

As an inquiry into China's nation-building project, the utopian impulse revises the way we understand representations of cultural distinctions and survival. Taking China as a focal point, it re-evaluates how one approaches the questions of culture, identity and nation in contemporary critical and psychoanalytical inquiries. It proposes alternative considerations of the conditions of abjection, subjugation and the idea of progress. Individuals' attachments to these states can, in fact, generate productive affirmations of their identity. The appeal of suffering and exile, furthermore, continues to bind individuals to the quest for their identities. Even though the process of identification is fraught with tension between emulating the West and longing for tradition, it enables the preservation of the shattered coherent centre of classical China. Utopia reconceptualises the production of identity predicated not only on Western and Modern images but, rather, on revealing the true motivation in their absence.

Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, the two approaches to modernity are critically examined from the ideas and practice in the New Poetry period to current research concerning Chinese literature and modernity. It is clear that both the collective approach towards a national imaginary and the individualist refinement through lyricism and aesthetic construction have persisted since the early twentieth-century. At the same time, the utopian impulse and notion of progress has accompanied the two approaches and haunts the imagination of Chinese intellectuals.

Chapter 4 Unveiling the Classical Ideal: Poetic Language in Bian Zhilin's Pre-war Poetry

This chapter looks into the poetic language in Bian's pre-war poetry. Aiming at revealing the poet's ideal of formal poetic quality, I begin the discussion with an exploration of the literary quality of *huise* (obscurity 晦涩) as it has long been considered an important feature of Bian's pre-war poetry. Though conclusions drawn by existing research that *huise* is evidence of Bian's reception and imitation of obscurity in French Symbolist poetry, I argue that his inheritance of classical Chinese poetry has played a vital part in the modern poetic language constructed. In order to support this argument, this chapter carries out textual and intertextual analysis in the following aspects: the logical structure of Bian's poetic language, the contrast in Bian's attitude towards *baihua* (colloquial vernacular Chinese 白话) and *yayan* (elegant classical language 雅言), Bian's creative transformation of allusions and a comparison between his construction of poetic language and the traditional Chinese techniques of *lianzi* (smelting words 炼字).

Between obscurity and ambivalence: logical structure and *huise* in poetic language in Bian's poetry

Bian's pre-war poetic language is subject to much literary criticism on the phenomenon of *huise*. Poets of the *Les Contemporains* set the tone of this discussion and considers *huise* as a mark of Bian's identity: 'an explorer of early Chinese modernism' (Tang, 1990, p. 22). However, a closer examination of the unique structure shows the different path Bian has taken from French Symbolist poetry; instead of leaving blank spaces in poems and omitting logical connections between images, Bian writes his poems as coherent and whole works. Instead of capturing an obscurity that matches standards in Western poetry, Bian's pre-war poetry constructs an ambivalent ambience that leads to *huise*. As a matter of fact, the establishment of *huise* that implies the cause-effect logic in poetry is not set out to confuse readers and pay tribute to the vanished interactions amongst traditional reader, critics and writer in modern times. Hidden behind the poet's conscious design of a seemingly Westernised formal quality, his techniques bear traces of classical Chinese poetry.

This explains Bian's response to Li Jianwu's review of 'Round Treasure Box 圆宝盒' (1935):

> I believe that nothing in the words and lines of this poem is quite difficult to understand. Even if there is something difficult, my readers shall get by through their feelings and personal experiences; since it is all about specific ambience and situation. Because, this poem, as you have pointed out, is not a dumb quiz; there is no rigid answer set aside and my purpose is not to get everyone to take a guess. Otherwise, the more you read, the more mythical it gets. (Li, 1983 p. 109)

This section looks into the poetic techniques that create 'specific ambience and situation' hinting at the connotations of Bian's pre-war poetry.

Many prose pieces, verses and lines in Bian's pre-war poetry are connected with the poet's deliberate use of logic such as cause-effect and comparison. Nevertheless, close reading of such texts does not necessarily lead to fragmented understanding. 'Tears 泪' (1937) provides an example of cause-effect in Bian's pre-war poetry. Symbols and trivial events are threaded together by layers of cause-effect to set off the poet's philosophical thoughts of occasional chances in life, a classic theme of Buddhist and Taoist teachings:

> Hearing the weary steps on the snow outside the door
> and the palpitation of the restless fire,
> how could one have no tears?
> To ask on the land whether on the sky or the sea
> there are roads or no roads
> carries nowhere yet it has started a longing.
> This flight of birds come home from my native place
> I should say, for the birds have their home
> as the bees have their home,
> a tiny shell picked up on the seashore,
> a tiny button fallen from an old shirt,
> a tiny key of a lost box
> have all their home
> in my suit-case that accompanies me north and south,
> like pearls in the mother-of-pearl.
> The walker in the lane and the tree inside the wall
> have really nothing to do with each other?
> No more than shedding a drop of yesterday's rain
> on the shoulders of a dusty coat?
> It is not that one has no tears:
> only one knows the kinship between the dew and the morning.
> Come and draw a tangent.
> I will treasure up the point which occupies no space,
> like a pearl or a tear —
> one may well have tears.
> (Trans. Bian)

Though 'the walker in the lane and the tree inside the wall have really nothing to do with each other', 'a drop of yesterday's rain' from the tree leaves fell on the walker's 'dusty coat'. Therefore, a connection is made between the two that seems to have nothing to do with each other. The blank space in the next line could thus be filled:

> It is not that one has no tears:
> (it is because that) only one knows the kinship between the dew and the morning (that creates a brief yet precious moment in life).

'The tangent' and 'the point which occupies no space' in the next line symbolises encounters and separations in life, casting a contrast with various images in the first half of the poem that symbolise the happiness of one with a home to go to (therefore one does not experience sorrowful separations). For a lonely person without a home such as 'the walker', one has to cherish an instant 'like a pearl or a tear' even if it 'occupies no space'. As a result, 'one may well have tears', with 'tears' symbolising human affections.

In the first layer of cause-effect, 'one' started in a position where there are no 'tears', for one understands that all encounters are instant and lesser than those (birds, bees, a shell, a button, a key) with their home; in the second layer, because encounters and separations are seen as the 'tangent' and 'point' of a circle, 'one' learns to cherish temporary connections in life, leading to the result that 'one may well have tears'. 'Tears' in the beginning and the end of the two layers of cause-effect draw an interlocking chain of logic that resonates with consolation from beauty of intelligence seen in many of Bian's pre-war poems.

The above analysis shows that it is, first of all, important to recognise Bian's efforts in emulating the formal quality of obscurity in French Symbolist poetry. However, the end product of such efforts is the poetic ambience that holds the poem as a consistent whole. The difference between *huise* in Bian's pre-war poetry and the Western style of obscurity contests for the poet's selective reception, instead of the claimed totalistic iconoclasm, of Western influences: on the formal level of poetic construction, Bian adopts elements that best serve the theme and emotional expression. Therefore, it is fair to say that images and their connotations play a more important role than structural qualities in Bian's pre-war poetry, which contributes more to the natural bond with French Symbolist poets described by Bian (Bian, 2002, p. 446). However, images and connotations with the quality of *huise* may not point exclusively to French

poetry, a detailed discussion on the aforementioned 'bond' is given in later chapters to reveal Bian's affiliate to classical Chinese poetry and the popular Western schools in his time.

Construction of poetic language in Bian's poetry: inheritance and transformation of classical poetic language

Bian was anxious to find a new poetic language in his pre-war poetry. He had constructed a system that was very private to his understanding of poetic beauty: though written in vernacular Chinese, Bian's poetic language was based on classical Chinese aesthetics, which the poet made great effort to reincarnate through a blend of linguistic references to classical Chinese, French Symbolist poetry and even modern Japanese culture. Bian described his principle of poetic language as follows:

> Spoken language has played a major role throughout; I absorbed syntax and phrasing techniques in European languages (for the sake of simplicity: less words, more connotations). I write both free verses and sonnets. At first, I experimented with rhyme and metre that are not fully developed; for a while I mainly wrote free verses before I eventually settled almost fully on writing in fully developed sonnets. (Bian, 2007, p. 283)

It is fair to say that Bian had 'substantially made progress in vernacularizing New Poetry' (Yuan et al., 1990, p. 7) as most of his poems are written in a simple and plain language. Nonetheless, the quality of simplicity and elegance are results of the poet's polishing of words and rhymes, instead of the completely free style of using vernacular Chinese as adopted by Guo Moruo. As a result, Bian's pre-war poetry showcases a style of precision and meaningfulness that corresponds to late Tang Dynasty poetry.

<u>Yayan vs. European languages: sources of Bian's poetic language</u>

It could be seen clearly that when writing free verse poems, Bian tended to use modern spoken Chinese, whereas in sonnets, his use of language reflected influence from *yayan* 雅言. In *The Analects* (*lunyu* 论语), *yayan* points to 'the Master's frequent themes of discourse' when reading 'the Odes, the History, and the maintenance of the Rules of Propriety' (trans. Legge). Furthermore, Confucius said that 'In language it is simply required that it convey the meaning' (trans. Legge). Though insisting that

‘spoken language has played a major role throughout’, as Bian ‘settled almost fully on sonnets’, he developed a poetic language as a modern version of *yayan*.

Despite the novel form, many of Bian’s poems read like a prose divided in lines. This is an experiment in mixing free verse with plain *baihua*, which leads the poet down the path of New Poetry at its birth. In comparison, free verse poems such as ‘Tiredness 倦’ (1932) and ‘Peking, 1934 春城’ (1934) are not intended for the depiction of an ordinary scene; instead, the poet aimed at *tuowu yanzhi* (using objects to express philosophical aspirations 托物言志). Attempting to correct his path, Bian quickly changed his direction to developing refined sonnets, which he contributed to his pursuit of *Poésie Pure* under the influence of ‘learning from Baudelaire, from Verlaine and Rimbaud!’ (Mu, 1985, p. 99). A close examination shows that influences from European languages could be seen in two aspects: choice of words and objects; grammatical inventions. However, in both aspects, European influences are mixed with, if not complementary to, image and grammatical form borrowed from classical Chinese poetry.

Bian uses a wide range of objects in his pre-war poetry. Spoken vernacular Chinese words were used to construct the familiarity and plainness of ordinary life; poetic words and allusions from classical Chinese literature laid the foundation of the simple, elegant and profound theme. On the other hand, Bian also used many loanwords, scientific terminologies and objects invented in the 20th century to add a taste of ‘modern life’. ‘The Migration of Birds 候鸟问题’ (1937) and ‘Composition of Distances 距离的组织’ (1935) both showcase the mix of words of different sources. Both are written in pure *Baihua*, followed with symbols from classical Chinese poetry: water in basin (*penzhou* 盆舟), camel-bells (*luotuoling* 骆驼铃), wild geese from the south (*nanlaiyan* 南来雁) and gossamer (*yousi* 游丝). On the other hand, modern objects such as ‘the passage of airplanes’, ‘a desperate radio’ and ‘waves of sound’, ‘*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*’, ‘the comet’ and ‘the high tower’ are included as if the poet is exploring the possibility of his mixture of poetic languages.

‘The Round Treasure Box’ showcases Bian’s use of classical Chinese poetic grammar. As discussed in the first half of this chapter, Bian tended to omit logical connections of images and verses. Instead, in order to decipher the poem, one must focus on the overarching connotation and emotion. Consequently, the poetic language of such poems seems to jump in lines, leaving blank spaces for the readers to judge on

the basis of emotional experiences. In 'The Round Treasure Box', symbols are organised with Chinese characters that carry with them exquisite images, such as pearls (*zhenzhu* 珍珠) and the luxurious banquet (*huayuan* 华宴). These symbols are put together with no explicit logical words – readers must imagine an evening scene and align all symbols in the scene with reference to synaesthesia: with their eyes they see the pearls and the lamp light; with their nose they smell the rain and food from the banquet, with their ears they hear 'your sigh of last night' 你昨夜的叹气. Without the reader's imagination and the visual experience of the Chinese characters, this poem will be extremely difficult to read and interpret. This has contributed to the quality of *huise* mentioned above, proving that classical Chinese poetics play an important role in the establishment of *huise*. The trimming of words corresponds to formal techniques in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龙): 'sentences can be shortened to reveal simplicity; words must not be extracted so that the density of meaning is known 句有可削，足见其疏；字不得减，乃知其密'.

<u>Classical Chinese poetic language in Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry</u>

As Bian's peers, such as Li Jinfa, judged the spirit of tradition to be the basis of Bian's pre-war poetry, a further analysis of poetic language reveals Bian's perfectionist pursuit for the classical Chinese formal quality. Similar to his peer poets, Bian constructed his poetic language with the goal to construct, on the very basis, a modern system of poetic language that tackles the problems of *Baihua* and distinguishes from the vernacular language used in prose. In the 1940s, Bian was seen as one of the most creative minds in the construction of modern poetic language: 'In *Poems of Ten Years*, verses are dynamic, lines are dynamic; amongst those, semantics come from classical Chinese, and also from European languages. A fusion of different sources of semantics; but eventually it is built on the basis of *Baihua*. It is similar to how the content is built on the basis of the spirit of tradition' (Li, 2010, p. 228). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the influence of European poetry, especially French Symbolist poetry and Modernist Poetry, has been addressed broadly in scholarship, yet such broad strokes tend to miss important dynamics that fall outside of general narratives. One reason might be that the heterogenetic elements under Western influence tend to draw more scholarly attention for fitting into the grand narrative of China's efforts in modernising itself (see Chapter 2 for how culture is seen as a 'movement'). Another explanation of

the scholarly omission of classical poetic tradition in Bian's pre-war poetry has to do with the fact that even in formal qualities, Bian used Western elements primarily on the surface level; on the other hand, his notion of classical Chinese poetic language is hidden under the wording, phrasing and deep level semantics. Moreover, it is immersed with the style and spiritual connotation of his poems.

Referencing to Taoist and Buddhist teachings (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7), Bian adopts the spiritual world of traditional Chinese hermits, distinguishing him from his Western masters. Instead of spiritual transcendence, Bian's poetry seeks inner peace and puts forward his emotions and struggles through images and symbols in nature. Therefore, as a poet, Bian did not seek to conquer the world. Instead, similarly to a Chinese hermit, the subject in Bian's pre-war poetry sees the ultimate spiritual home as one immersed with its surroundings. When it comes to poetic language, it could be seen clearly that Bian valued an aesthetic of roundness, familiarity and disconnection. Though plagued with anxiety, no traumatic experience or intensive emotions is transplanted (unlike his peer Li Jinfa's practice of writing in fragments of Western elements), and his pursuit for inner peace makes sure that the negative feelings could not be transmitted without a contextual understanding and analysis.

Lianzi and the practice of classical Chinese poetic language

The technique of *lianzi* is a good reflection of Bian's unsatisfying pursuit in poetic language. Apart from writing in vernacular Chinese, Bian preferred short poems to longer ones. Writing under a limited word count, Bian sought to write as many connotations as he was able to instead of expanding lines and sentences. This poetic practice in classical Chinese literature could be seen in several aspects of Bian's pre-war poetry.

To begin with, the use of *xuci* 虚词， function words in classical Chinese, is a significant demonstration of his extreme pursuit of the ideal formal beauty. In classical Chinese poetry, apart from their grammatical feature, function words could be used (and are frequently used) to express emotions, coordinate rhymes and make logical connections between meaningful units. According to Li, Bian's preference for this classical Chinese function word has 'properly showcased a resilient, flexible, implied and solemn style…resulting to a situation that requests deductions, enabling an everlasting, lingering charm' (2010, p. 228–230). Li's analysis reflects Bian's taste for

poetic aesthetics. He tended to use function words in an attempt to construct the effect of *wuqiong* (endless meaning 无穷) in classical Chinese literature (a more detailed analysis of *wuqiong* is given in Chapter 8). By using function words frequently seen as the last word in a classical Chinese poetic line (哉, 也 and 矣), Bian realised the lingering charm as he expressed emotions, which is a typical linguistic feature in classical Chinese poetry. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous section, Bian invented unusual ways to 'twist' the grammatical structure of his poetic language, also with function words.

When analysing his 'Fragment', Bian wrote:

> In the two lines in the first verse, the central axis (or *the eye of the poem)* is the phrase 'take in the view'; in the second verse, the eye of the poem is 'adorn'. Both verses are symmetrical, corresponding to the connotation and theme. (2007, p. 67)

Bian used the term from classical Chinese poetics, *shiyan* 诗眼 (eye of the poem) to describe the unit of meaning in 'Fragment'. The composition of 'Fragment' is similar to that of *jueju* 绝句 poems, as Bian wrote only four lines and two verses with symmetrical *shiyan*. As a matter of fact, in order to appreciate Bian's pre-war poetry, readers could not apply the methodology of analysing long verses written by Guo Moruo and Ai Qing. Instead, experience from reading poetry and classical Chinese *lüshi* (rhymes 律诗) would be of great benefit. Bian's pre-war poetry is constructed around words and characters instead of sentences, the latter being widely practiced by New Poetry poets. Most poems written during the New Poetry Movement use lines and verses as units of meaning. As a result, most examples of modern Chinese poetry are characterised with free verse. On the other hand, classical Chinese poetry is limited strictly in the length and form of verses. In order to properly write on the theme, *lian* 炼, meaning to crystallise or to refine, has become key to poetic language. The Song Dynasty scholar Fan Wen 范温 lists the term *lianzi* as a critical terminology in analysing Li Bai and Du Fu's poetic language, arguing that 'good word choice is essential in writing good verses' (*haoju yao xu haoci* 好句要须好词). Bian's description of *shiyan* reflects this classical literary view that considers words and characters more dominant than sentences and paragraphs in literature.

Furthermore, Bian's pursuit of simplicity in poetic language has resulted in a significant reduction of commonly spoken words and an increase of eloquent, crystallised written language. This has distinguished Bian from many of his peer New

Poetry poets. For example, in ‘The Peninsula 半岛’ (1937), modification of images (nouns) and actions (verbs) is usually integrated into a combination of words such as ‘slender fingers’ (*xianshou* 纤手) and ‘points at a distance’ (*yaozhi* 遥指), both clearly referring to classical Chinese poetry lines: ‘Nimbly move her slender white fingers/click-clack goes her weaving-loom’ (trans. Yang & Yang) 纤纤擢素手，札扎弄机杼 from ‘Parted Lovers 迢迢牵牛星’ in *Anthology of Yuefu Poetry* and ‘When I ask a shepherd boy where I can find a tavern/He points at a distant hamlet nestling amidst apricot blossoms’ 借问酒家何处有，牧童遥指杏花村 in Tang dynasty poet Du Mu’s ‘In the Rainy Season of Spring 清明’. It could be seen that in experimenting with vernacular poetic Chinese, Bian ‘trims’ his poetic language in such a way that only the central meaningful unit is left. This method corresponds heavily to classical Chinese poetic language. As discussed in the previous section, he would omit several logical prepositions and have the theme jump amongst lines in a poem. At the same time, the semantic structure is disrupted through a change of the position of agents, adjuncts and verbs. ‘The Ichthyolite 鱼化石’ (1936) is a good example, as disruption of semantics is seen in each of the four lines. In the second line, the adverb always 往往 is used in an unusual way in the passive tense of 我溶化于水的线条 (I am dissolved into the lines of water), which, compared to regular use of the Chinese language, is yet another invention since the latter would compose the same meaning in an active voice such as 水往往溶化我 (the lines of water always dissolve me). *Wangwang* (往往), as a typical function word, modifies repetitive actions. At the same time, ‘I’ is not perceived as a usual object of the verb dissolve 溶化. In the third line 你真像镜子一样爱我呢 (just like a mirror, you truly love me), Bian used personification with the symbol of the mirror and became the subject of the verb ‘love’. In the last line, 你我都远了乃有了鱼化石 (both you and I/Has gone into the distance and the ichthyolite merges), the adjective distant 远 is used as a verb to modify ‘both you and I’ 你我 though in Chinese, 远 is not an effective modifier of a person; instead, it must be coupled with another character to form the word *shuyuan* (distant 疏远) in order to express the meaning of the distant status (usually not physically) of people.

Resistance against *baihua*: anxiety of finding poetic beauty in language

Not exactly seen as a productive poet compared with many of his peers, Bian's focus was on the infinite space created by poetic form and languages, which could be seen in many poems that were repeatedly edited with notes sometimes longer than the poem itself. Bian had been a persistent editor of his own poems from the 1930s until the very late days of his life – evidence of his high standard in his poetic language, as most of his editing work was aimed at implementing rhyme, metre, vocabulary and semantics without changing the ambience and theme of the poem. It is very clear that Bian, by editing his poetic language, had shown the tendency against plain *baihua*. At the same time, the classical Chinese idea of poetic beauty through the construction of an elegant, simple and symbolic language persisted in Bian's poetic practice. Therefore, it is worth looking into the feature and changes in poetic language in order to understand the belief and aesthetics of Bian as a poet and an intellectual reflecting upon the cultural and poetic movement for vernacular Chinese in literature.

The May Fourth Movement brought over *baihua* the formal discussion of modernising Chinese literature. *baihua* is developed on the basis of spoken Chinese excluding uncommon dialects; this new type of language is also under the influence of written languages in translated Western literature works. Despite a short period of passionate writings contributing to *baihua*, this new type of vernacular Chinese did not hold its place in New Poetry. Interestingly, it seems that most of their discussions are ambivalent about modernity in poetic language, as many features in New Poetry proposed by such discussions resemble those in classical Chinese poetry. As a matter of fact, discussions against *baihua* provide evidence of the May Fourth generation's nostalgia for classical Chinese aesthetics. Though Bian never published any formal work specifically on the topic, many of his peer intellectuals (including close friends such as Liang Zongdai and Mu Mutian, both greatly influenced by the French Symbolists) were actively engaged with the discussion and construction of a new type of poetic language in Chinese.

One of the key discussions on *baihua* has much to do with the distinction between poetic language and the general idea of the vernacular Chinese language. In 1919, Yu Pingbo published 'Three Conditions of Vernacular Poetry' (*baihua shi de san da tiaojian* 白话诗的三大条件), in which he commented on a clear boundary between *baihua* and *baihua* Poetry as the essence of the latter resides in poetic beauty: '*Baihua*,

which is popular in China today, is not an absolutely appropriate tool to make poetry' (1985, p. 21), 'we make Poetry in vernacular Chinese; we are not coming all the way to simply use *baihua*.' (p. 25). Yu considered *baihua* to be a linguistic tool disqualified for New Poetry because it 'lacks the artistic beauty…it is dry, withered and shallow' (ibid.). The actual argument, on the other hand, reflects Yu's ambivalent attitude on what is traditional and what is modern. According to Yu, though New Poetry must focus on a realistic style, the poetic form must be 'perfectly weaved in beauty' (ibid.) because 'to polish is out-dated; to adorn, it is fresh and modern' (ibid.). In this article, no definition is given on 'to polish' and 'to adorn'. Furthermore, Yu's standard of poetic form sounds rather similar to qualities of classical Chinese poetry: 'words must be proper and simple; sentences must be elegant and clean; verses must be tightly and sophisticatedly organised' (ibid.).

Liang Zongdai (2003), widely considered to be a 'spokesman' for French Symbolist poets such as Paul Valéry, expressed his anxiety in search of an ideal poetic language that must be different from classical Chinese yet tick all boxes of poetic qualities similar to classical Chinese poetry:

> How on earth could we use this deprived, rough and unrefined tool in our hands—since when it comes to the traditional tool, we do not wish to, maybe we are not able to, embrace it fully—to create a brand-new world whilst asking it to obtain the same harmony and immortality? (p. 156)

Resistance against *baihua* marks a certain level of failure in the total reception of Western elements in New Poetry. Liang's words reflect the fact that in the 1930s, Bian and his peer intellectuals returned to their taste for a poetic form that captured the qualities of the old world that they were so eager to be rid of. Despite their subjective attitude of 'no wish to and not able to embrace the traditional tool', poets were actively experimenting with a poetic language that is distanced further from prose and fiction in its refined, simple and elegant qualities. In observing the evolution of poetic language, it could be seen that poets such as Bian, Dai Wangshu and He Qifang all returned to classical Chinese poetry. However, they all also attempted to make connections between classical poetic language and Western poetry, notably French Symbolist poetry and Modernist poetry. Li Jianwu 李健吾 (1906–1982) (1947) describes Bian, Dai and He's poetic language as 'regardless of old or new' since 'they wish to make a mixture of languages and clauses' (p. 139).

Summary of chapter

Bian’s construction of poetic language acts as a mind bridge between classical Chinese aesthetics and Western influences. It is by crossing this mind bridge that Bian finds a justified balance between his pursuit for classical poetic beauty and his ethical task of modernising poetry in a Westernised manner. The close examination of linguistic techniques reveals Bian’s close relationship with classical Chinese poetry. Elements such as allusions, *lianzi* and *yayan* language are essential in Bian’s poetic pursuit of formal beauty. Furthermore, these classical Chinese elements are used as basis of the logic structure and mode of expression in Bian’s pre-war poetry. This finding further serves as evidence that classical Chinese elements play the most essential part in Bian’s poetic language.

Chapter 5 From *Fin de Siècle* to Metaphysical Solitude: Bian Zhilin's Struggle for *Raison D'être*

In order to understand his motivation and need for justification through Western influences, this chapter examines Bian's mentality reflected through poems featuring two specific scenes: dusk in autumn and a traveller on a long journey. Both scenes are frequently visited by classical Chinese poets and French Symbolist poets. Therefore, analysis in this chapter is set out to understand the interplay between Bian's reception and interpretation of Western poetry, notably French Symbolism, and classical Chinese knowledge and poetic emotions.

Classical elements seem to be invisible to the poet and the invisibility is reflected in a dislocation of image, self and style; as the poet gains more experience and confidence, the dislocation gradually changed into a co-location of both the classical Chinese poetics and the Western poetics, and created a synthesis which characterizes Bian's unique and modern style. I see this change of style as a rediscovery and justification of tradition.

Though Bian claims that his poetry writing is built around emulation of Western schools, my argument is that the poet's belief in reproducing Western influences in his poetry is an imagination. The belief that Western poetry could solve all problems in the Chinese society by an injection of modernity (though with a highly ambivalent definition) is motivated by: first, the Confucian morality and classical Chinese tradition of *ganshi youguo* (sorrow over defeated nation in difficult time 感时忧国); and second, the need for justification and a method to make up for the guilty yearning for the tradition. Bian's imagined modernity has endowed him with the aspiration and confidence necessary to the rediscovery of his spiritual homeland: classical Chinese poetics. This aspect of Bian's poetic career is much neglected in existing research. Moreover, as existing research focuses on recognising Western influences and the notion of progress, movement and iconoclasm, negative experiences including solitude, despair and paradoxical feelings are hardly discussed in current literature. This chapter, therefore, is dedicated to textual analysis of images and scenes that symbolise negative thoughts, as they are key to Bian's deep emotional structure and poetic mentality.

The first half of this chapter focuses on poems with the images of the dusk, the season of autumn and the shadow in attempt to analyse the poet's feeling of solitude;

these three images are also heavily discussed and considered as proof of linkage to French Symbolist poetry. Following the feeling of solitude, the second half of this chapter explores the scene of long journeys in Bian's pre-war poetry as it reflects the poet's struggle to find a destination; analysis is carried out to find out about the concept of destination in order to understand the motivation of writing, and furthermore, Bian's cause of engaging himself with New Poetry and the New Culture Movement.

The image of shadow: metaphysical solitude vs. decadence

Amongst the 39 poems written by Bian from 1930 to 1934, 32 included the images of a setting sun and the season of autumn. The setting sun glows over 'the ancient city' in 'the Heart of the Ancient City 古城的心' (1933) in North China, the autumn season has befallen 'the ancient canal town' from 'the Dream of the Ancient Town 古镇的梦' (1933) of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. As the poet 'breathed the air of desolation' (2002, p. 445), his emotions are expressed through two central images: the setting sun (*xiyang* 夕阳) and autumn (*qiu* 秋), not only as two independent images, but also as a combined image carrying the poet's feeling of solitude, nostalgia and hesitation. Before the year 1934, Bian, a university student then, was deeply intrigued by French Symbolism and projected his use of image in poetry to representative figures such as Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé. However, a closer inspection of the poems reveals two interesting findings: 1 the images are presented in a style bearing no less similarities to classical Chinese poetry; 2 the emotion and connotation symbolized by the images are reflections of feelings uniquely Chinese.

The feelings of hesitation and futility are caused by the dislocation and misunderstanding of Western influences in 1920s. Chinese intellectuals during and after the May Fourth movement avidly embraced the Western tradition with confined understanding of what it had meant to the West. This was due to the fact that China had hardly any experience in industrialisation, and therefore knew nothing about the threat to the already constructed modernity that they embraced without asking any question: reification of the natural self. The only motivation of China's embrace of the Western idea of self lies in the coveted social order of democracy and liberalism. The complex has resulted to the unconscious identity crisis suffered by poets like Bian in the 1930s: the relegation of anything Chinese, as a result of the exile of Chineseness proposed since 1920s, put the Chinese intellectuals between the fragments of a glorious past and

an uncertain future:

> Solitary, anxious, nostalgic, and overwhelmed by a sense of futility and desperation, they turn inward to seek by attempting, through artistic creativity, to come up with a world of new coherence and *raison d'être* for modern China, also for Chinese culture. (Yip, 1993, p. 202)

However, without a rethink of the rejection and preservation of Chinese literary tradition, most of those inward efforts could not go through the common project of cross-cultural confrontation which demands resistance, negotiation, modification and the maintaining of 'a coexistence within radical difference' (Jameson, 1991). As a result, the much longed-for cultural modernity could only emerge as superficial attempts of different political centres. The feelings of anxiety, ashamed nostalgia and desperation also follow.

Bian's student Jiang Ruoshui argues that the frequent usage of the combined image reflects the influence of Stéphane Mallarmé, whose 'Plainte D'automne' and 'Frisson D'hiver' were the first two pieces of Bian's anthology of translations, *Window on the West* (1936). Jiang quoted from 'Plainte D'automne' to explain the 'similar tone' in Bian's poems between 1930 and 1934:

> …car depuis que la blanche créature n'est plus, étrangement et singulièrement j'ai aimé tout ce qui se résumait en ce mot : chute. Ainsi, dans l'année, ma saison favorite, ce sont les derniers jours alanguis de l'été, qui précèdent immédiatement l'automne, et dans la journée l'heure où je me promène est quand le soleil se repose avant de s'évanouir, avec des rayons de cuivre jaune sur les murs gris et de cuivre rouge sur les carreaux. (1863)[7]

Jiang might be correct about the influence of Mallarmé's work on Bian. However, there is no further evidence that Bian used the same image in the same way that Mallarmé did. Furthermore, there is a subtle difference between the two poets' attitude towards the image. Mallarmé emphasizes on the one word 'chute', which corresponds to the English verb 'fall' in his preference for autumn. Mallarmé enjoys

---

[7] Englis translation: For since the white creature is no more I have loved, uniquely and strangely, everything summed up in the word: fall. So, in the year, my favourite season is the last slow part of summer that just precedes autumn, and, in the day, the hour when I walk is when the sun hesitates before vanishing, with rays of yellow bronze over the grey walls, and rays of red copper over the tiles. (trans. Kline, 2004)

autumn at most when promenading in the sunset, a moment of the dying of the day. The colours in Mallarmé's piece are the yellow from the bronze and the red from the copper, both implying the colour of blood under the dying sun. 'Plainte D'automne' is clearly under the theme of decadence, which 'constitutes the common denominator of all the literary trends that emerged during the last two decades of the nineteenth century' (Pierrot, 1981).

Decadence is defined and discussed by many scholars and has been considered as a historical pessimism (Swart, 1964), the attraction of fatality as 'The Beauty of Medusa' (Praz, 1951), a reflection of the badness of civilization and the virtues of nature (Carter, 1958), etc. It is commonly agreed that decadence, as a literary style in a specific period of time (from the mid-nineteenth century to the fin de siècle), has a specific relationship with some aspect of romanticism (Weir, 1995).

It may be easy to claim that Bian found his 'natural bond' with such a style because of his close relationship with the Crescent Moon Society, they are passionate followers of English Romanticism with an undifferentiated attitude towards these influences. However, decadence reflects the poets' pleasure and admiration of the corrupted and decayed, an attitude that greatly differs from that held by Bian and his fellow Chinese poets. In *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence* (1975), Phillip Stephan points out that instead of seeking relief, poets and writers 'cultivated their misfortune as a source of inspiration' (p. 18) and enjoyed the corruption of civilization. According to Stephan, 'such perverse enjoyment of what is thought to be evil characterizes decadence' (p. 19). The enjoyment is based on the acceptance of the very corruption. Therefore, in 'Plainte D'automne', as the writer promenades in the sunset, he as the subject is free from the helplessness of the sunlight lingering on the rooftops.

Enjoyment and acceptance of the decaying reality never had their place in the mind of Chinese intellectuals during Bian's time. As for Bian, the sunset on an autumn day symbolized the poet's feelings of not an aesthetic sorrow, but a real, deep-cut solitude and hesitation. As a university student by then, used the image as the vessel of the feeling of 'weariness, downheartedness and futility' (Haft, 1983, p. 38). For example, in 'Grass on Wall 墙头草' (1932), 'a patch of dying sun' serves as a symbol of a meaningless life, posed in comparison with 'the grass on the wall' that 'grows tall and then yellow'. The grass is a relatively invariable object in the poem as it follows only the rule of nature whilst the dying sun is foretelling the end of a constantly moving

life with attempts of 'dreaming a little bit'. In this poem, a life of trying and dreaming is somehow mocked by the grass on the wall, an object traditionally conceived as a mocking metaphor for those easily swayed by power.

Dusk in autumn: classical sorrow of *ganshi youguo, youchan weiji* and the beauty of passive virtue

The seemingly individual feelings of nostalgia and hesitation expressed by Bian are bounded with the emotion of *ganshi youguo* (sorrow over defeated nation in difficult time 感时忧国), which is translated into 'obsession with China' (Hsia, 1999, p. 533) by C.T. Hsia. I argue that 'obsession with China', though seen by Hsia and the majority of overseas Chinese scholars as the distinctive feature of Chinese literature between 1917 and 1949, could be traced back to Tang and Song dynasty poetry themse of *youguo* (sorrow of a nation 忧国) and *youchan weiji* (worries about slanderous talk and evil-willed ridicules 忧谗畏讥).

Hsia considers 'obsession with China' the definitive feature of Chinese literature between 1917 and 1949 as it marks the difference from traditional literature and Communist literature. The obsession is about 'China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity.' (ibid.) According to Hsia, indulging in this obsession has resulted in China's failure in competing for modernity in literature on the global level; and his prescriptively advises China to find solutions from Western forerunners. Since the 1961 publication of Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1999), 'obsession with China' has become a key topic amongst overseas Chinese researchers' discussions about modern Chinese literature (see chapter 3).

As stated in chapter 3, I agree with Hsia, primarily on the basis of his perspective that focuses on mentality and motivation of writing in early twentieth-century China. 'Obsession of China' has its profound implication to a literary, cultural and national problem that still haunts China on this day: a lack of clear distinction between individual creativity and a unified artistic vision backed by national morality. I agree that when it comes to mentality of writing, 'a bitter line of hostility to civilization which runs through it' (ibid., p. 536) is shared by Chinese intellectuals including Bian. I also agree with the conclusion summarised by David Der-wei Wang (1999) that 'writers had to come to terms with imagining their nation as a new political entity of the modern age'

(xxiii). My argument about the utopian impulse in this research echoes with Hsia and Wang's discussions on this imagination of a new modern nation.

However, Hsia's argument does not explain the complex questions surrounding Bian. Alongside Bian, poets of *Les Contemporains* have actively sought after solutions to the problems in New Poetry (and furthermore, problems in grand issues including the national character, social ethics and the future of China as a nation). Moreover, according to Hsia's belief, only writers with a profound moral responsibility could apply artistic standards that fits into the need of individual creativity. Based on this, given Bian's writing style as 'a cold-blooded animal' alongside his passionate pursuit of French Symbolist poetry, it is fair to say that Bian has in practice carried out Hsia's prescription for Chinese literature. Yet modernity remains a question in Chinese literature, and Bian, until this day, remains a neglected poet.

Hsia criticises the lack of competitiveness in modern Chinese literature, albeit he himself is caught up in the 'obsession with China'. Therefore, not too different from Bian, Hsia considers the 'modern' period of Chinese literature as completely independent from the classical period. I argue that *ganshi youguo* has persisted through classical Chinese culture and can be dated back to Du Fu's *youguo* in Tang dynasty in lines such as 'Grieved o'er the years, flowers make us shed tears; hating to part, hearing birds breaks our heart 感时花溅泪，恨别鸟惊心' (trans. Xu) and Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052)'s *youchan weiji;* the latter is eloquently discussed by Chia-ying Yeh (2013). Yeh coins the term 'beauty of passive virtue' (*ruode zhi mei* 弱德之美) (p. 285) as the common structure of aesthetics of *ci* poetry. Taking examples from Tang and Song dynasty poetry, Yeh argues that Chinese poets have always upheld morality in an implicit manner when they are exposed to existential crisis and enormous external pressure. Furthermore, Yeh considers the popular female subject in *huajian* poetry symbolises the same structure of beauty captured by poets such as Su Shi 苏轼 (1037–1101) and Xin Qiji 辛弃疾 (1140–1207), who writes in a bold and unconstrained manner about their social and political concerns.

'The beauty of passive virtue' is usually conveyed through the technique of *xing* to express feelings of weariness, solitude and nostalgia, which is often the theme of Bian's pre-war poetry. As a matter of fact, Bian especially prefers to express his metaphysical solitude set in the poetic scene of dusk in autumn. In 'At Dusk 傍晚' (1930), images including 'the falling wall of the temple', 'the skinny donkey ridden by

an old man', 'the dry tune' accompany the central image of 'the sun setting in the West', which naturally reminds us of the Yuan poet Ma Zhiyuan's famous poem about solitude of a traveller: '天净沙•秋思', in which a withering vine witnesses a lean horse plodding on a worn path in the west wind.

Haft (1983) is one of the few to identify Bian's expression of solitude and nostalgia through these images. He believes that 'the setting sun is combined with the idea of a shadow through which the poetic subject experiences feelings of separation that accentuates metaphysical isolation' (p. 38) in 'Shadows'. Haft carried out a detailed textual analysis and outlined his understanding of the taste and style of this poem. He also points out that the combination of the setting sun and the shadow is commonly seen in classic Chinese poetry, and Bian's specific techniques of dramatizing the scene 'only serves to emphasize his lonely, irresolute state' (p. 40). However, despite further analysis of many other poems bearing the same tone, Haft did not seek to fully explain the cause of the poet's lonely state. At the same time, he only lightly touches on the possible similarities between Bian's poetry and classical Chinese teachings. There is no in-depth discussion in his work that is dedicated to an intertextual comparison or cultural analysis of this similarity, not to mention the motivation and the poet's attitude towards tradition. In my opinion, these feelings, as well as what Haft calls 'the metaphysical isolation' (p. 38) greatly resembles *youchan weiji*, and is driven by none other but the mainstream anxiety of *ganshi youguo*. Since *youchan weiji* is a common theme in classical Chinese poetry, it is no surprise that Haft (ibid.) also points out that the images are presented in an obviously classical Chinese ambience:

> At the coming of autumn, Ai! I often feel as if
> I had lost something from beside me,
> Making me even lonelier: it is a shadow, yes,
> Lost among those fields of the South.
> Though it is a little longer, leaner, you know,
> This is what has been following you
> In your pacings back and forth
> Beneath a setting sun. (trans. Haft)

Similar to 'Grass on the Wall 墙头草' (1932), an overwhelming feeling of solitude is projected in the image of sunset that lengthens shadows. Yet the loss of the shadow has further added to the deep solitude, much like the poet's feeling of a lost identity and the follower of a poetic school that ended in futility. This feeling of loneliness is quite realistic and deep in Bian's own soul, and it probably resonated with the classical poems

he had learnt as a young boy. Lu You, the celebrated poet in the Song Dynasty, projected his sorrow and desperation in 'My lonely sorrow in the time of sunset, added by the wind and the rain 已是黄昏独自愁， 更著风和雨' to express the feelings of a poet from a defeated nation.

The second half of 'Shadows' makes a shift from the subjective emotion to a scene of the special relationship between the shadow and the subject. The shadow, treated as 'the bosom friend' instead of part of the first person, effectively arose the feeling of a happy retrieving, offering a guiding hand to the readers lost in the solitude and desperation from reading the first half. However, despite the introduction of a second person, the readers quickly realise that 'the poet is really only talking to himself' (Haft, 1983, p. 39), because the shadow is part of himself and the lost friend has never sent him company to save him from his solitude. The realisation has again reminded the readers the sorrow from the first half, only with a tone that is more desperate and lonelier, because what the poet has truly lost is never the shadow, but a treasured friendship. After the loss, the man finds no consolation other than his shadow, which is 'a common theme in classical Chinese poetry' (ibid.). Examples include the Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai's 'I asked the bright moon to bring me my shadow and make us three' (举杯邀明月，对影成三人).

Compared to the first half, where parallel images of solitude and weariness create the ambience that resembles those in classical Chinese poetry, the second half of 'Shadows' has elevated and deepened the feelings projected on images through a scene with dramatic qualities. The consolation provided by the shadow is accentuated through 1) the separation between the man and his shadow: the shadow is described as a friend to 'me', which is sent by a second person ('you'); 2) the dramatic switch from the first half of symbolist expression of subjective emotion to a scene of 'me' talking to both the shadow and the imagined friend from afar, whose whereabouts is unknown. Identities are shared not only by the shadow and 'you', but also by the poet and 'you'. As a matter of fact, the shadow itself could also be seen as the poet himself. The one folded solitude in the first half of the poem is transformed into a metaphysical solitude in which 'I' could communicate with self and reflect upon the feeling of solitude. The conversation amongst the two persons and the shadow, which all point to the poet himself, instead of aligned images, has an extraordinary emotional effect. It is fair to say that this strong solitude is the essence of the images used in this poem and many others mentioned at

the beginning of this chapter, which makes the in-depth understanding of this emotion even more important. Now that we have seen the difference between Bian's solitude deposited in the autumn setting sun and the French Symbolists' transcendental thoughts expressed through decadence, it is time to look into Bian's social experiences to further explain the nature of his feelings.

Lamentation for loss of *raison d'être*: struggle to find the promised land

To examine the two types of solitude that make up the emotional effect of this poem, which is more closely linked to classical Chinese poetry than French Symbolist poetry, it is necessary to look further into this emotion. One form of solitude is the poet's loneliness as a man trapped in loneliness with hesitation about his future; the other is an eminently metaphysical solitude expressed through the image of the shadow, which symbolizes 'I', 'you' and 'my shadow' at the same time, hence excluding the limited visual perception of the poem, and requires an in-depth analysis to fully understand the first type of solitude.

The first mode of solitude, though at first glance may be perceived as an individual's lonely confession, differs greatly from its counterpart in literal decadence in that the latter establishes its aesthetic relationship to modernism and modernity through a centralized individualism (Calinescu, 1987, p. 170). The confined room and the lonely light in 'the Shadow' are metaphors of the social, and the consequent psychological condition of almost all Chinese intellectuals. It is true that the image of autumn has played an important role in many poems of French Symbolists such as Paul Verlaine's 'Chanson D'automne', in which autumn symbolizes the nostalgia and futility. Though the poetic voice speaks of autumn, the dying leaves recall their greenery just as 'I' recall livelier days that are irretrievably over. Bian's understanding of autumn is quite similar to that of Paul Verlaine's. However, the similarity is not the sole basis of Bian's preference of the image; not different from 'suggestion and intimacy', the quality of the image shared by both classical Chinese poetry and French Symbolism has allowed Bian to comfortably reflect upon his Chinese tradition without guilt as a poet in the ongoing movement of New Poetry.

In order to understand the first solitude in the poem, it is worth looking back at the mention of the poet's location in 'Shadows': 'those fields of the South' and 'this ancient city'. Bian left his hometown alongside the East Coast of China in 1929 for

Beijing to study in Peking University. Though after the breakout of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Bian stayed in Southwest China for a long time, the poem was written in 1930. Therefore, 'the fields of the South' may be an imagined location. It is probably, yet not necessarily, a reference to Guangzhou, where the National Revolution of 1927 started. 'This ancient city' is arguably Beijing where the poet dwells. Bian has a special affection towards Beijing and his heart throbs with 'The Heart of an Ancient City 古城的心' (1933) when he strolled and looked at the landmark of politics 'Zhongnanhai 中南海' (1933). The solitude and reflection of the man looking for his shadow resemble that of the young man meditating in the deserted street in 'Several Individuals 几个人' (1932). The city of Beijing is both the deserted street and the empty, lonely ancient city. In 1949 Bian wrote about his early years in Beijing:

> In China, there was a storm of revolution in 1927. It has even moved the hearts of the most conservative, left-behind high school students. I travelled to the deserted Northern capital in search of the birthplace of the May Fourth Movement. Now that I think of it, it is a meaningful act, though quite unconscious at the same time. It somehow reflects the influence of the success and failure of the revolution on the immature, confused mind of a high school student, especially a student that inclines to like literature. The influence is big, and reflexive. (2002, p. 444)

The failure of the revolution pushed the hopeful young poet to the hesitation between the shattered ancient China and the uncertain future China. In 'Shadows', the poet is a lonely man trapped in a deserted ancient city with no friend or hope in front of him. In 'Several Individuals', the poet could not fully understand the failure of the once hopeful society; he felt helpless in the deserted street, which is a symbol of a failed capital of a unified world of ancient China. The same helplessness and futility are visible in other poems produced by Bian from 1930 to early 1931.

The second aspect of the solitude, which is the metaphysical solitude, has shown us the potential of the 'new path' that Bian took. The separation and unity of 'I', 'you' and 'the shadow' create a multi-dimensional relationship between an individual and his solitude. Instead of focusing on the first solitude like his predecessors, the Crescent Moon poets, and his peer poets whose sad and disappointed cries were so loud, Bian took a step ahead and sought for an intellectual meaning behind those feelings. The act may seem easy as we write it down. However, it is in effect a consequence of the exile of Chineseness and therefore, an act out of desperation. Wai-lim Yip (1993) uses the metaphor of an exiled man defeated in a war to explain this psyche:

> …when he is in exile, finding himself cut off from a cultural centre of coherence and settled in a new — yet never coherent or harmonized for him — centre. The cultural impact has suddenly induced his extreme sensitivity for the eternity of time and the limit of space. As a result, in the smallest things in life he seeks for the Chineseness. Those that he used to think as vulgar now seem dear and friendly. …On the other hand, he is not allowed to live in the past, he must become part of the new cultural centre so that he could actually live and resume his relevance. (p. 264)

Bian's much admired poetry after 1933, as well as his 1978 testimony that 'I acquired the acute sensitivity for the small things in life; yet I was blind and hesitant about the big things: I am not sure about my future directions', corresponds to the extreme sensitivity for the relativity of time and space. The poet realizes that he has no choice but sink into his meditation—looking inward for a new *raison d'être*. In Bian's case, images and philosophies from Taoism and Buddhism, the two traditions from classical China, help the poet find his 'own position as a man in the river of history, i.e., to form one's poetic style in the creation of art', a goal chased by many of Bian's fellow poets. Yet amongst all of the passionate modernist poets after the Crescent Society, Bian was probably the only one that has admitted such a motivation.

As mentioned above, visual and plain logical understanding of feelings is broken down by the metaphysical aspect and provided for a serene quality of Bian's poems, as opposed to a deep cut, stirring sorrow so frequently seen amongst other poets of the time. The relativity of time, space, and more importantly, the feelings and an individual, is the connotation behind the serene aspect and constructs the beauty of intelligence. The serenity quickly becomes the character of almost all of Bian's later pre-war poems and gives the impression that something new must happen in this very serenity and that other images and symbols, beyond those already manifest, must find place within the images and styles of the poems. However, unlike the Taoist and Buddhist teachings that ask for eternal inner peace, the serenity in Bian's pre-war poetry is but a result of the poet's desperate struggle to find a spiritual homeland.

A weary traveller on an arduous spiritual journey: exiled self and the struggle to find home

Road and a journey on the road are central images in many of Bian's pre-war poems. Bian has repeatedly used this image alongside images in a journey such as street,

bridge, footprint, traveller, bus/train station and home to construct the connotation: a man's life as a journey and his experience throughout. Extending beyond the road and the journey, Bian's pre-war poetry constantly discusses the loss and meaning of life and the ultimate question of *raison d'être*.

In Bian's pre-war poetry, the images of road and journey could be put into three categories: the arduous journey of life full of sufferings; the spiritual journey towards an imagined home; the intellectual journey that help the self to surpass emotions with reminiscent thoughts on time and the meaning of life.

The first category is closely connected to the defeated feelings and solitude reflected in the images of the setting sun and autumn. On the poet's journey, he suffers from endless emptiness, loneliness, confusion and sadness. This experience is not too different from that expressed in 'Grass on the Wall' and 'Shadow'. In addition, the images of road and journey offer a more concrete view into the poet's mentality as he takes a step forward from deposited emotions in symbols and invent his own avatars as the self on the road in the poems. Therefore, a closer examination of such images could offer a well-rounded understanding of Bian's negative emotions and answer the question of whether or not Bian is an outlier of his passionate and revolutionary peer elites when facing the upheaval Chinese society.

The images of road and dusk were combined as the poet sighs in futility, as disappointment and hesitation are explored in ‘Drop 落’ (1931): as the self recollects memories of ‘a heart that seems familiar (似曾相识的知心)', he realises that his tiredness because ‘the autumn wind is tired of walking on the road in the garden (秋风已经在园径上走厌)'. This image of a journey in vain symbolises the endpoint of the poem: ‘Alas, my star of fate has really dropped! (唉，真掉下来我这颗命运！)’ The sense of futility and decadence are products of the poet's metaphysical solitude. By contemplating on his footsteps, he understands that all his efforts to watch the star of his fate through the telescope is wasted, which is a metaphor of the poet's struggle to find the promise land.

As a matter of fact, as early as 1931, in one of Bian's earlier works 'A City-full of Rain 一城雨', the protagonist 'you', probably an avatar of the poet as the latter had just arrived in Peking city, is already troubled with confusion, emptiness and hesitation that do not match with the young poet's age:

A city-full of rain is comforting you;
Now that you are frowning, gazing in the sky,
Sitting alone in vain in the room,
Or in the empty cold streets,
With your umbrella, walking to the east, walking to the west,
You might as well feel that, a city-full of rain
Is comforting you with tenderness;
Otherwise you would not be quiet,
It does not matter if you remember this or not:
‘Where am I going? Where?’
See? You look like you are bewitched,
Lost in contemplation, you merely listened to a city-full of rain.

In this poem, though the young man is beginning a new journey in a city, he sees nothing but the pouring rain because the rain is the only thing that can give him comfort when he is lost in directions. Though there is no direct evidence that the line ‘walking to the east, walking to the west (走向东，走向西)’ indicates the poet’s baffled attitude towards Western influences and Chinese tradition, the poem, with its overall theme of struggle and confusion emphasised through a misty and rainy environment depiction, clearly sends the message that the self does not have the answer to the question ‘Where am I going? Where? (我要上哪儿去？哪儿去？)’

A pursuit out of despair: impersonality and intelligence beyond emotions

In addition to the metaphysical solitude expressed by the images of the dusk and the autumn, the image of the journey serves as a vessel of the poet’s contemplation on the hopelessness of individual future in social turbulences. Similar combination of the images of the dusk, the autumn and the journey on a road could be seen in a series of poems that incorporates the technique of impersonality (*fei geren hua* 非个人化), which Bian (2002) refers to as ‘parody’ (p. 444), a result of that ‘I am always afraid to show my face and my head (*chutou loumian* 出头露面)’ (p. 445). The analysis below shows that despite the poet’s reputation of being a calm, pure-hearted thinker with no special concern with the politics, many poems were written to express and inspect his anxiety about China under the domestic and foreign threats.

Combined images of the road, the journey, the dusk and the autumn are key to understand this true anxiety hidden behind the poet’s claimed coolness. In a series of

poems that construct a depersonalised, dramatic scene, images above carry the poet's negative thoughts: in 'An Idle Man 一个闲人' (1936), the idle man stumbles on the path of his journey as the poet sighs as he sees the journey wasted: 'Alas! Who knows how much time has been wasted? 唉！不知磨过了多少时光？'; in 'Huqin 胡琴' (1935), the young man plays his *huqin*, a traditional Chinese string instrument, in an empty street where the sunset is implied by the images of 'winter crow' (寒鸦), an image from classical Chinese poetry. The poetic ambience of desolation in Huqin reminds the readers, naturally, of Wang Changling 王昌龄 (c. 690 - 756)'s 'Autumn Song of the Palace of the Disfavoured 长秋信词 （其三）': 'My visage, though fair as jade, is not as charming as that of a winter crow, which is lit by the shadow of the gracious sunlight 玉颜不及寒鸦色，犹带昭阳日影来', as well as Du Fu's 'Dim Prospect 野望': 'So late comes back the snowy crane, the wood's thronged with crows as dusk winks 独鹤何归晚，昏鸦已满林' (trans. Xu).

In 'West Chang'an Street 西长安街' (1930), the shadow in the setting sun and the road are a pair of central images:

> Long is the slanting, slanting, faint shadows
> Of dead trees, of the old man walking under the trees,
> Of the cane on which he leans,
> All upon the wall, the red wall of the afterglow.
> Long also is the red wall, the blue sky beyond the wall,
> The blue sky of the North is very long, very long.
> O! Old man, this road, to you, must be
> Long? The days in winter, to you, must be also
> Very long? Yes, I believe.
> Look! I am now closer, why not
> Talk as we walk, about this, about that?
> But we say nothing to each other,
> We only follow, follow each other's shadow,
> Walking, walking…
> How many years now,
> These shadows walking, these long walking shadows?
> On and on, and on and on,
> To the wilderness, marching to the Great Wall?
> …
> Thinking? Not a bit of use at all!

Think tomorrow. Now do nothing but
Keep quiet, no conversation, but come head-lowered.
Look at the cars flash past the long boulevard.
How “modern”! how comfortable! Martial-looking, eh…
But how can they be compared to the large flags of former times?
A whole face of broad smiles under the red sun!
If you don’t believe me, ask the three big red doors
In front, now sadly facing
The autumn sun.
Ah! under the setting sun
I have an old friend who is living in
A much older city, how is he now?
Perhaps he is walking past a deserted street
Accompanying a long, slanting, faint shadow?
Tell me your first impressions of Chang’an.
(By my side there seems to be your shadow)
Friend, don’t follow the example of the old man;
Let us talk……
(trans. Yip)

The long shadow in this poem seems a persistent central image whilst the road/street changes as time goes by in a man’s journey of life. The overwhelming sadness and despair in this poem overshadow the seemingly nostalgic tribute paid to Chang’an. Interestingly, in this poem, West Chang’an Street, which points to a street in Beijing, and the old Chinese capital Chang’an, seem to be interchangeable. Scenes change in both the street and the old capital yet the shadow keeps its long and dead form as the endless walking goes on. The self in this poem, despite the change of time and scene, searches for ‘an old friend who is living in a much older city’. The modern, comfortable and martial looking present seems like a joke and cannot be compared with ‘former times’: This line, in my opinion, offers an insight into Bian’s poetic and cultural truth. Though Westernisation and the task of modernisation seem exciting and modern, the comfort is only superficial as he constantly wonders about Chang’an: the first impression, the much older city, where an old friend (tradition) lived in. The last two lines seem like the poet’s self-depreciating joke, for he himself, and maybe, New Poetry itself, is ‘the example of the old man’ that is on exile from the wonderous former time. When in exile, what is left is nothing but ‘a long, slanting, faint shadow’.

In ‘Sour Plum Juice 酸梅汤’ (1931), the voice in the poem comes from a

conversation between a handcart man and an old man selling the sour plum juice. The two characters talk about the departure of summer and the few days left to drink their sour plum juice under the trees. The handcart man is, again, on a journey of hard labour. The monologue accentuates the comparison between the changing season and the static life of men: 'Is there anything different? ... The only thing that changes is your hair—each year it gets greyer'. The objective description of two men's conversation serves as an insight into man's desperation when helplessly witnessing the change of their society. Digging into subjective feelings through an objective perspective, is at the same time an inheritance of and a rebel against the Crescent Society's Romantic approach. Romantic poets perceive nothing but subjective feelings and perspectives. However, in 'Sour Plum Juice', dramatic monologue, instead of a tool of emulating experimental Romantic works, is used by Bian to separate the poet from the voice of the poem and observe in the identity of different characters. The dramatization allows readers to see what happens through the eyes of the two men, yet at the same time, to critically compare the different angles of observing what happens, which adds the intellectual quality to the poem. The old man in the poem seems sad and desperate whilst the handcart man opts for a nap before he seriously thinks of anything that would happen to him. The poet, by distancing himself from the scene, did not interfere with their attitude and thoughts. Instead, he displays one common scene of life in Beijing and invites the readers to think and taste the life in their own way.

The overall tone and plot of 'A City-full of Rain' is revisited a year later in 'Several Individuals 几个人' (1932), in which a 'young man meditates in the deserted street':

> The hawker calls, "Candied apples!"
> He seems not to mind at all swallowing a mouthful of dust.
> The man with a bird cage in hand gazes at the white pigeons in the sky,
> And strolls casually over the sandy creek.
> As a young man meditates in the deserted street:
> A carrot peddler idly toys with his little knife, whetted gleaming sharp.
> A load of carrots smile their silly smiles in the setting sun.
> As a young man meditates in the deserted street:
> Some hold a bowl of rice in hand and sigh,
> Some listen to other people talking in a dream at midnight,
> Some pin a red flower in their white hair,

Like a setting sun supported on the horizon of a snowy land… (Trans. Hsu)

The poem is written in the narrative style of a novel about another life scene in Beijing. The young man is the central character that connects all incidents around him, therefore, his experience and perspective is central as well: the line ‘as a young man meditates in the deserted street’ repeated for three times, yet both the semantics and the content of his thoughts are ambiguous and the reader could only speculate about the young man’s experience by making sense of the characters around him. The uncoordinated actions of the ‘several individuals’ including the venders, the man with the bird cage and the beggar, have driven the young man into his meditation. The poem opens up the ground for thoughts and judgment from the readers: What is the young man meditating about? Why are the actions of other people in the street so bizarre? Why is the young man meditating in a deserted street when the street in question is described as a busy one? The indefinite identity of the central character, a remarkable feature of Bian’s skilful impersonality combined with the dramatized homophony consisting different characters in the poem, has created multiple possibility of interpretation. One common analysis is that the young man is the poet himself. Beyond ‘Several Individuals’, Bian has played a lifelong role as a meditator using images and feelings to express thoughts rather than unbounded emotions. The image of the setting sun is visible in both ‘Sour Plum Juice’ and ‘Several Individuals’, marking the subjective feeling of solitude and helplessness. However, since the self is withdrawn from the description of voices and dramatic scenes in the poem, the feelings seem neither imposing or meaningless as described by Mo Gong. Bian (2002) himself hinted the technique of transforming pure emotions in his testimony by disclosing to the reader that the line in ‘Peking, 1934’ (1934) ‘I am a kite already severed from the string’ was written to reflect the poet’s sarcastic attitude towards ‘cliched love songs’ (p. 450).

What is the young man in the deserted street meditating about? He might be thinking about possible ways to prove that the Crescent Society laid the foundation for poetry beyond the cliched love songs, or the seemingly impossible solution to save the Ancient Capital. ‘Peking, 1934’ is a good example of the division of a distanced poetic self-expression in bizarre monologues such as:

…

What bad luck! Again another bath of dust!

Cars, you swim in shallow water, but look at this!

What joke are you playing on me?

Sorry! This, this is nothing.
That other is really wild (Indeed, horrid!)
Winds of yellow wool srit up a huge incense burner.
A thousand years of old old ash
Flies, flies, flies, flies, flies.
…
Today, look, what beautiful weather!
Even the flowering trees on the streets are riding upon unicycles for a spring outing.
…
Seeing scenery from a plane, I tell you,
Nobody is hard-hearted enough to bomb the glazed tiles below
……
City of Peking: Fly a kite upon the garbage dump. (Trans. Yip)

The Peking City in the poem, according to the poet, is the actual Chinese capital between 1933 to 1935, when the Japanese invading army was threatening North China. Bian's peer critics, limited to their ideas of New Poetry as purely Western and lyrical, accused Bian of being a maniac coward that turned his back on the society in crisis. However, the monologues in the poem do not represent the poet's own voice. Instead, the monologues are speeches given by characters and a narrator in the poem. In the fourth verse, the narrating voice comments 'Vainly howl and cry, howl and cry, howl and cry. O Return, O Return! Ancient capital! What can we do to the Ancient Capital!' The line *guiquye* (O Return 归去也) is written in its classical Chinese form, which creates a contrast to the vernacular, if not random, form of speech in the whole poem, to remind the reader of Tao Yuanming (365–427)'s 归去来兮辞 and the Late Tang Dynasty poet Li Shangyin's '望帝春心托杜鹃' (the failed emperor sent his dying wish to return to his capital on the cuckoo's sorrowful cry) in his famous piece '*Jinse*' (锦瑟), both famous poems reflecting a Confucian intellectual's desperate hope to rejuvenate the nation. The numb, despairing narrative voice is also placed in contrast with the noisy, meaningless conversation amongst different yet nameless characters to further the irony in the poem. The homophony has therefore invited the reader to inspect each voice and acquire a deep cut feeling of helplessness, as well as a reflection upon the seemingly righteous passion towards the national salvation, which was

overwhelming in the Chinese society.

Darkness, death and dreams: the struggle to find the *raison d'être*

The lack of confidence has caused the self to suffer even more in his exile in Bian's poems during this period. Replacing the lonely 'I' and the shadow, the inter-changeable images of the traveller, the passers-by and the meditator, consist a hidden self in two poems: 'the Long Road 长途' (1931) and 'the Long Journey 远行' (1931) and. Though 'I' is absent from the poem, it could be seen that the poet depicts himself as traveller eagerly searching for a vague goal through sufferings.

> White-hot, a long road
> Stretches toward the edge of the wilderness,
> Weighing like a heavy carrying-pole
> On the coolie's shoulder.
>
> Sustained strands of cicada's call
> Rein in the westward-moving sun;
> The willows, their scorched heads hanging,
> Cannot disgorge their grief.
>
> Faster, walk a little faster —
> Yonder is a plum-juice vendor,
> Walk beneath that green shade —
> Drink a cup, enjoy a cool breeze…
>
> Sustained strands of cicada's call
> Rein in the westward-moving sun;
> The willows, their scorched heads hanging,
> Cannot disgorge their grief.
>
> Take a rest, for the moment —
> Here, we could lie down —
> But we can find no peace,
> We cannot but look ahead.
>
> White-hot, a long road
> Stretches toward the edge of the wilderness,
> Weighing like a heavy carrying-pole
> On the coolie's shoulder. (trans. Haft)

Again, the dislocation of image could be seen from the poem. The theme of a long journey in the desert, has a certain degree of relationship with Hardy's 'The Weary Walker', which Bian translated in *Window on the West.* In 1979, Bian wrote about the line with 'cicada's call' and its inspiration from an untitled poem by Paul Verlaine. However, despite the musical quality and the similarities mentioned above, the poem, written in the form of one long sentence, is connected by prominent Chinese imagery

(‘cicada’, ‘willow’, ‘setting sun’, etc.) that calls to each other. Another dislocation could be seen in the style of writing. Yuan Kejia (1985) points out that ‘the Long Road’ is an intentional emulation of the arrangements from one of Paul Verlaine’s ‘Untitled’ poems. The grey tone of the dying town in the poem does indeed resemble the French Symbolist works. However, the quality of ambiguity is the predominant feature of Verlaine’s work, whilst this poem is primarily a depiction of the poet’s feeling of weariness and hesitation.

In the last paragraph of the poem. the suffocating heat and the description of the journey in the desert has exaggerated the central image, the heavy carrying-pole, before the repentance of the first paragraph at the end of the poem to enhance the persuasion of the spirit of the poem: the heat and hardship of one’s long journey does not stop the traveller; for only the constant looking ahead could offer him peace. ‘The Long Journey’ records the poet’s determination to look into his inner solitude and weariness and symbolized the start of Bian’s exploration of his *raison d’être* through artistic creation. However, the poet’s determination is not always strong enough.

> If riding on camels in a line of swells
> We surge on a huge slumbering desert
> While a peal of faint bells
> Pierces the solitude of the twilight
> We’ll set up tents wherever we happen to be.
> Let us brew fatigue into a sound sleep,
> Sour and sweet, a huge urn-ful of strong liquid
> To soak us in thoroughly.
> Let us not bother about whether we could dream of an oasis,
> We have, anyway, already become dead drunk.
> Should a stormy wind carry sands and stones quietly?
> To bury us, that also would be quite all right. (trans. Hsu-Haft)

‘The Long Journey’ begins with the view focused on the line of the camel’s hump, which resonates with the verb ‘surge’ onto the desert; the desert, being ‘slumbering’, resonates with ‘the dream of an oasis’ and ‘dead drunk’. The modern simile of ‘a strong liquid’ to a good sleep in the long journey is the central image of the poem: the ‘brewing’ of fatigue’ into a good sleep grammatically connects the two images of wine and sleep, with adjectives indicating pleasures such as ‘sour and sweet’, ‘a huge urn-ful of strong’, that connects the two central images by recalling the sense of taste in the reader’s mind. The last paragraph is again a dramatic turn of the poem: dying before reaching the destination in a good sleep that makes one feel ‘dead drunk’ is a salvation for all from the arduous long journey.

The traveller's wish for death as salvation is not merely a product of the influence of decadence in works of Stéphane Mallarmé or Paul Valéry. It is the reflection of the struggle of the hidden self with the rift between his body and mind. Such a struggle and wish for death is also seen in Lu Xun's works such as 'The Shadow's Farewell' (1924) when the hidden self, through the identity of a shadow, was hesitating between daylight and darkness. The shadow could not stop its reluctant wandering in search of daylight, yet when tortured by the vagueness of the future and the lack of confidence, it wishes for death:

> …Ah, no! I do not want to. I would rather wander in nothingness.
> I am only a shadow. I shall leave you and sink into darkness. Yet darkness will swallow me up, and light also will cause me to vanish.
> But I do not want to wander between light and shade; I would rather sink into darkness. (trans. Yang and Yang)

The 'darkness' symbolizes two layers of meanings in this piece: the first one points to the Chinese traditions that Lu Xun saw as a monster devouring China's hope for modernity. However, since Lu Xun himself demonstrated more proficiency with traditional verse than with modern vernacular poetry (Hsia, 1999, p. 149), he feels his passionate longing for the Western and the 'new' in vain. Therefore, an uncertain future may not serve him any better than sinking into the second layer of the 'darkness', where he would give up all effort and become silent and numb, which corresponds to Bian's description of the traveller, who longs for death.

The similar connotation between Bian's traveller and Lu Xun's shadow is not a coincidence. In the 1920s, Lu Xun was facing the delay and eventual failure of the 'golden age' that the May Fourth movement eagerly anticipated. 'The Shadow's Farewell' was written as a contemplation of the utopian claims of his contemporaries. The utopian claim is built on the un-differentiated embrace of all things Western, as mentioned in the section above. Like the shadow, Lu Xun could not root his self in any Western ideological ground. However, the Confucian sense of responsibility mentioned in the previous section caused the same pain for Lu Xun, which pushed him to insist that an overall destruction is the basis of the rejuvenation of Chineseness.

It is also interesting to see that alongside darkness and death, the lyrical self and weary traveller sometimes have dreams. Different from the bizarre dreams of French Symbolist poets that usually include wild imaginations and hallucinations in drastic contrast with the tedious reality, Bian's dreams symbolise his yearning for peace and

serenity. These dreams express the poet's wish to be pardoned from this self-imposed exile. In 'The Long Journey', the traveller continues on the road without bothering 'whether we could dream of an oasis'. It is because of these dreams that the weary traveller does not fall down 'dead drunk' but takes rests 'against a bush of reeds' (in 'Drop') before he resumes the journey. In 'Gazing 望' (1934):

> When I was young, I loved to watch the blue sky of a summer's day,
> Viewing it as a map of nature. The stretch of blue
> Was a vast ocean, with cloud upon white cloud ---
> The large ones continents, with smaller islands in the sea.
>
> The darker patches on the mainland were mountain ranges, forests;
> The many flaws and fractures were free-flowing waters ---
> And there were harbors, as if expecting a sail's return,
> Awaiting reports of newly discovered worlds.
>
> Nowadays, as in the fabled 'mulberry orchards where wide seas were',
> A bosomful of blossoms has been traded for a handful of hollow smoke ---
> Though now, like a lost sheep, I must
> Tumble through the mire, fortunately, there remains the blue sky;
> There are still the seeming cloud-peaks, drifting amidst the impalpable ---
> One may still, after all, look up and gaze upon that Realm of the Immortals. (trans. Haft)

Both 'the blue sky' (*weilan* 蔚蓝) and 'The Realm of the Immortals' (*xianxiang* 仙乡) are dreams and imaginations of the self 'like a lost sheep' (*miyang* 迷羊), representing the coveted destination of the self's long and arduous journey. The destination, however, is exactly the same as what the self 'loved to watch' when he was young, as shown in the beginning of the poem. The self is apparently exiled from his childhood surroundings with hopes to bring back 'reports of newly discovered worlds'. However, the journey was endless and in vain: 'A bosomful of blossoms has been traded for a handful of hollow smoke.' The comparison between the happy and innocent state 'when I was young' and the exiled subject dreaming of arriving at a destination that is exactly the same as the childhood memories is yet another reflection of Bian's struggle to find the *raison d'être*.

In 'Road 路' (1937), the poet focuses on his footprints in the journey:

Ah, road, prolongation of footprints,
Like a tune arising from written notes.
Sound, no sound, I keep playing through it, as if
Carefully counting a rosary
… (Trans. Haft)

It is due to the struggle in cultural exile that the footprints carry such importance to the poet. The image of camels and their trails in 'Long Road' and 'Long Journey' bears the same connotations. The image of rosary (*nianzhu* 念珠) in 'Road' renders the journey a sense that is almost religious with its reference to Buddhism. These images all symbolise hope and redemption as Bian counts his footprints to separate himself from the noises of time caused by social turbulences in China. Though he did not follow Wen Yiduo's practice and use acrimonious poetic creations such as 'Dead Water' to strongly criticise reality or weep about his despair and disappointment, he steps on various exhausting journeys in his poetry and writes about his cultural sufferings and dim hopes of finding an ideal home and reconstruct what he is exiled from. His metaphysical solitude is at the same time cut off from reality and closely tied to the reality of his life. To this extent, it is fair to say that Bian is not, as some believed, an outlier of his passionate peers crying and shouting about the nation's existential crisis; rather, almost all his pre-war poetry is dedicated to his negative feelings caused by social turbulences: he writes about his sufferings and tries to find comfort and redemption back in his writings. As a matter of fact, this pattern of writing could be traced back in classical Chinese poetry in the theme of *kulü* (arduous journey with sufferings 苦旅), usually seen in the form of *xinglü* poetry or *jilü* poetry (travel poetry 行旅诗/羁旅诗).

Xinglü poetry and cultural suffering: classical Chinese references

Jing Tsu (2005) points out that 'a profound sense of suffering, unease, and affliction permeated social, political, and cultural life in the 1920s and 1930s' (p. 195) and introduced the term *kumen* (suffering, agony, mental anguish, or depression 苦闷) as 'suffering displayed the emotion of literary modernity' (p. 196). In his research in fiction during the Republic of China administration, especially in Yu Dafu's works, Tsu points out that 'this double sense of *kumen*, as both individual and societal torment, suggests a powerful way of reconciling literary artistry with social reality' (p. 197). This

cultural suffering is experienced by Bian Zhilin, too. As analysis in the previous sections show, Bian expresses his sufferings through his poetic avatars in various difficult journeys with a complicated set of feelings and emotions: despair, longing of death, glimmers of hope in dreams and comfort provided by imagined homelands. This coping mechanism, through poetry writing, has its roots in classical Chinese poetry, especially in *xinglü* Poetry, a popular form of poetry in the Tang and Song Dynasty.

Most poets of *xinglü* poetry were banished officials and cultural elites that hold a highly similar complex for the idea of homeland to that held by Bian and his peers in early twentieth-century China. To *xinglü* poets, homeland represents, at the same time, their spiritual home with cherished memories of the past, and the dominating power of the royal court that cast them away with fierce punishments. In the Tang Dynasty where the monarch's power had developed a strong, prosperous and colourful society, banished poets were exiled both physically and spiritually; they were once close to power that could shape the society, yet eventually they ended up as forgotten members of their nation. With this love-hate complex for homeland, their journey of exile is bound to be bitter and full of *kumen*, hence the concept of *kulü* in classical Chinese culture.

On the textual level, Bian's poems with images of road and journey share many symbols that are used in *xinglü* poetry. The symbols of water and land, for example, is the most frequently visited in *xinglü* poetry associated with sorrow, despair, futility, tiredness and redemption. For example, as Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) travelled through the Tang Dynasty China as his official position constantly changed, he deposited his tiredness and despair in the water and land scenery of Hangzhou in 'Traveller's Gaze on Home During the Night 夜泊旅望':

> a traveller with little sleep and much sorrow wakes up in the middle of the night and look towards the direction of his hometown
> the sand is lit by the moon shining on the water
> covered in moonlight the sail boat looks silver white
> the borderless river connects with the sea
> the long night predicts the befallen of fall
> thirty nights I have travelled on water
> Yet still I have seen no sight of my destination the river of Qiantang.

The narrative tone and the images of water, land, sand and the moon in an evening

during a long journey is rather similar to that of Bian's poems about travelling. In addition, the subjective description of the journey being endless towards an ideal destination, Qiantang, corresponds to the sighing in Bian's 'Drop' and 'An Idle Man'. One of the most famous *xinglü* poems in classical Chinese poetry is Li Bai's 'Hard Roads in Shu 蜀道难', which is centred around the image of the road. In the poem, for three times, the poet cries about his sufferings: 'Oh, but it is high and very dangerous! Such travelling is harder than scaling the blue sky 蜀道之难，难于上青天！' (trans. Xu) The poem was written before Li Bai's second trip to Chang'an as he failed to find commendations in his talent. Both 'Traveller's Gaze on Home During the Night' and 'Hard Roads in Shu' is a metaphor of the arduous journey to realise political and cultural ideals. Images of objects on the road and in the water are symbols of obstructions and cultural sufferings, which could be dated back to as early as the Warring States period when Qu Yuan wrote about his patriotism and cultural sufferings in the *Chu Ci* anthology.

On the emotional level, Bian's poems of travelling share the twofold connotation of classical *xinglü* poetry: changes in the state of mind on the road; and changes in the cosmology and faith of the traveller. In Bian's pre-war poetry, the image of the road represents the loss in search for a new coherent centre. In 'Dusk 黄昏' (1931), written in the same period as Gazing, as 'the stove fire starves to death 炉火饿死了', the poetic 'I' took a 'look around in blindness/ as if on a wasteland/ without knowing the east from the west'; in the relatively earlier work 'Helpless 奈何' (1930), the poet talks to the dusk about his futile efforts:

> I was at first by the side of the road
> I don't know how
> I was back inside the deserted garden
> then back in the house close to the corner of the wall
> …
> Really, where should you go?'

The poetic self is like a sleepwalker stuck between the house and the road. 'Where should you go? 你哪儿去好呢?' poses a question not only to the dusk, the seeming second person in the poem, but also to the quest for *raison d'être*. The house in the poem resonates again with Lu Xun's description of an iron house (*tiewuzi* 铁屋子) in

‘Preface to “Call to Arms” ’ :

> Imagine an iron house without windows, absolutely indestructible, with many people fast asleep inside who will soon die of suffocation. But you know since they will die in their sleep, they will not feel the pain of death. Now if you cry aloud to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn? (Trans. Yang and Yang)

Similar to Lu Xun, Bian’s loud question of ‘Where am I going?’ is posed also to the people living and dying in the iron house of early twentieth-century China. This poem creates a suffocating ambience which corresponds to the poet’s determination to embark on a journey towards his *raison d’être*. Words of futility and tiredness, as well as the transcendental endings yearning for redemption in inner peace, could be traced to Qu Yuan’s ‘The way was long, and distant far was my goal; I would ascend and descend, pursuing my search 路漫漫其修远兮，吾将上下而求索’ (trans. Legge). Trapped in the iron house, the poet found in himself the co-existence of pure disappointment (longing for death and darkness) and gleaming hopes (dreams and imagined destinations). These resonate with Cui Shi 崔湜 (671– 713) in early Tang Dynasty on his exile from the political centre:

> Time will pass but the mountains and rivers cannot be remade. 岁月行遒尽，山川难重陈
> Even if I were to know that I will be banished as an official, 始知亭伯去，
> I would still humbly make my way in the royal court. 还是拙谋身。

At the same time, Bian’s inward turn to Taoist and Buddhist teachings to find inner peace and consolation bears a high resemblance to the Tang Dynasty poets including Wang Wei, Li Bai, Bai Juyi, to name a few. Apart from images of the road and the journey, other images in Bian’s pre-war poetry such as water, time, and mirror (for the poet’s self-reflection), are clear evidence of the poet’s closeness to classical Chinese poetry, as well as his passionate ‘obsession with China’.

Summary of chapter

In this chapter, I carry out textual and intertextual analysis to reveal the link between these images and their classical Chinese source. The poetic scene of the dusk

in autumn is highly representative in Bian's pre-war poetry: it embodies the poet's solitude and distress with the backdrop of political turbulences. Compared with the widely discussed affiliation to French Symbolist decadence, this expressive mode is much more closely related to the Tang and Song dynasty poetic theme of *youguo* and *youchan weiji*.

Bian's poems featuring a lonely traveller on an arduous journey reflects his mentality as a Chinese intellectual trapped by the self-imposed exile of tradition. Ironically, the form and content of these poems are highly similar with the classical Chinese *jilü/xinglü* poetry. The eagerness of finding a new *raison d'être* and the desperation are reflections of the utopian impulse in the quest for modernity.
Poetry is therefore a channel for his despair and imagination of a better, modern nation elsewhere. Since the quest for a new *raison d'être* is based on his imagination and problematic understanding of Western influences, Bian suffers not only from the ill fate of classical China, but also the disappointment and exhaustion in his utopian notion.

The poetic discussion of relativity reminiscent to Taoist classics reflects Bian's continuous attempt to find redemption for his sense of lost. Seeking answers from Zhuangzi while making links with French Symbolists and Western Metaphysics wherever possible, Bian put much of his efforts in 'reprogramming' his *raison d' être*. In the next chapter, analysis is carried out on the image of mirror and self-reflection to understand how Bian is driven to an inward turn in search of consolation.

Chapter 6 Reflection and Intimate Expressions: Image of the Mirror

This chapter discusses the images of mirror and reflection in Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry. Since these images carry most of the poet's private feelings, the aim of this chapter is to explore the deep structure of Bian's poetry. With analysis of his poetic style, use of images and the overall background of society, this chapter draws a picture of Bian's mentality as a modern intellectual, which is highly representative of the shared psyche amongst his peer cultural elites. I begin the discussion with an exploration of the images in classical Chinese literature; at the same time, I discuss Bian's claims to connect his use of mirror with influences from Western poets such as Paul Valéry. In order to achieve this, this chapter looks into what the poet refers to as 'an exception' (2002, p. 449) in his mostly reserved personal feelings, offering an insight to Bian's mentality between 1935 and 1937, which is understudied in the existing literature.

I argue that in both style and expression, Bian inherits the emotional structure of classical Chinese poetics. In this chapter, textual analysis focuses on three aspects of Bian's mentality: his contemplation of self and reflection; his imagination of female beauty and romanticism; and the illusory redemption of self. Intertextuality is another important approach in this chapter in order to draw cross-reference between the claimed relationship with Western influences and the deep structure that is closer to Chinese traditions.

The image of the mirror in classical Chinese literature

The use of mirrors has a long history and a unique position in Chinese literature. It is reasonable to assume that Bian is well-versed in the allusion of mirror, given his well-rounded early education in the Chinese classics. In his pre-war poetry, the image of mirror is used almost exclusively in accordance with its function in classical literature: a metaphysical object used for self-reflection with a purpose to find serenity and morality.

To understand oneself from one's reflection in the mirror is a cultural metaphor of classical Chinese cosmology; according to Confucianism, the sage uses his mind to reflect on the physical world and its history, just like the image of the sage is reflected in a mirror. Therefore, the image of the mirror in classical Chinese literature and philosophy dates back to *Da Ya* in *The Book of Odes*: the history of the decline and fall

of the Yin Dynasty (943–945AD) is referred to as *yinjian* (the *Yin* Mirror 殷鉴). In the Confucian classic *Beitang Shuchao* 北堂书钞, the sage is described as someone who draws precious lessons from three mirrors: the actual mirror for his physical reflection, the mirror that reflects the past and the mirror that reflects other people. In *Zhuangzi The Way of Heaven* 庄子天道, *jing* (the mirror 镜) represents another *jing* (peace 静) in both the interior and exterior: 'the still mind of the sage is the mirror of heaven and earth, the glass of all things 圣人之心静乎，天地之鉴也，万物之镜也' (trans. Legge). In Chinese legends, 'a Broken Mirror Made Whole Again' (*pojing chongyuan* 破镜重圆) is a metaphor for the reunion of a royal couple after a forced separation in the Northern and Southern Dynasties and is a very widely accepted concept of lost love with a happy ending.

The image of the mirror in Bian's poetry between 1935 and 1937 inherits, if not all, many of the connotations mentioned above. An analysis of this image, interestingly, is a mirror that reflects Bian's private emotions and mentality living under the upheaval of the Republic of China. The fact that Bian's most private emotions could be traced through the image of a mirror also shows the poet's inclination to make reference to classical Chinese teachings and aesthetics to make the most intimate expressions, rather than through the 'intimacy and suggestion' he discovered in French Symbolist poetry.

Expression of intimate emotions: the image of mirror and reference to *gongti, huajian and guiyuan*

Bian might be as reluctant as he claims when it comes to revealing his private feelings; yet in his style of expression amongst poems written between 1935 and 1937, there are strong similarities between his intimate emotions and those expressed by poets in the classical period. In discovery of romantic feelings towards a young woman, Bian captures the tendency of using a female voice of 'I' and the combination of romantic thoughts with sadness and lamentation towards his nation. Such a poetic repertoire is frequently seen in the classical Chinese form of poem *guiyuan* (poems of grievance 闺怨诗.) The expressions of deep grievance and melancholy in *guiyuan* are often set in the scene of a boudoir where ancient Chinese maidens dwelled. Poets of *guiyuan* often express themselves through a fictional female persona. Moreover, the image of mirror plays a vital role in both *guiyuan* and Bian's poetic expressions.

Rather than indulging in purely subjective emotions, Bian explores the deeper

meaning of romantic feelings through the eyes and words of fictional figures. It is his way of showcasing his philosophy of human relations, time and space. In doing so, Bian also reveals his introverted personality. Bian was in his mid-twenties between 1935 and 1937. As a young man, not entirely comfortable with his independent adulthood, Bian entered a period in his life in which he experienced romantic love: not only for another person, but also as a reflection of how he sees himself. However, he 'usually prefers that people do not know about (my) writing of poems'; because 'I am always afraid to show my face and my head; I am satisfied as a silent figure in the crowd. Moreover, I am afraid of exposing my private emotions' (Bian, 2002, p. 445–446). However, as a young man who is 'sensitive about minor matters and baffled with grander' (Bian, 2002, p. 444), Bian expresses his feelings in his poems by examining himself in the mirror. The poet feels more secure and confident to look into the reflection of those 'private emotions.' The mirror and the reflection have, therefore, become a duo of images in his poetry, usually brought to attention through the words of a fictional 'you' or a female 'I' in the poem instead of the poet himself.

<u>The mirror as a looking glass: self-reflection and reference to *guiyuan*</u>

In 'Dressing Table (modern imitation of a classical intention) 妆台(古意新拟)' (1937), the subject is a female, yet it is through the voice of this female that Bian sees his own reflection in the mirror. As the female 'I' stands in front of the mirror, she dislikes herself freshly awake from her bed and complains 'Mirror, mirror; you are truly hateful'. When she starts her makeup routine, she says to the mirror: 'to begin with, let me paint you two delicately pretty eyebrows with my pencil'. This conversation happens at the beginning of the poem to point out the relationship between self and reflection: they are two sides of one coin and are, therefore, interchangeable. This resonates with the last paragraph of this poem:

> Please give that new garment a graceful bearing.
> 'The meaning of decoration is to lose oneself.'
> Who wrote these words for me? Do not think of that—
> Loathsome! 'I accomplish myself to accomplish you.'

This paragraph has been repeatedly discussed as an example of the quality of *huise* (see Chapter 4) in Bian's pre-war poetry. The two quoted sentences arguably contain the most important messages in the poem. The first sentence carries a two-fold connotation.

First, it explains Bian's philosophical idea that all types of decoration lead to

emptiness in which one would lose his true self. This reflects Bian's affiliation to Buddhist and Taoist teachings; it is also a reflection of his mental struggle. Similar expressions can be seen through the image of water in poems including 'Comparison' and 'Tiny Green Moths'. However, we learn from the next line that this sentence, as well as the other quoted sentence, are taken from a letter from an admirer of the female 'I': intense emotions, such as romantic love might make a man repress and lose himself voluntarily to 'accomplish' another.

On the surface, the last sentence of this poem, 'I accomplish myself to accomplish you', seems to be a murmur from the female 'I'; she examines and makes up her reflection in the mirror. Since self and reflection are two interchangeable sides of the true self, the 'decoration' done through 'the delicately pretty eyebrows' is an accomplishment of both. Underneath this seemingly difficult description of transferability and relativity, Bian is explaining his philosophy on self, others and emotions for another: an accomplishment on self should be an accomplishment of another and vice versa. This reads like a reference to *the Analects of Confucius*: 'Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge others by what is nigh in ourselves – this may be called the art of virtue 夫仁者、己欲立而立人、己欲达而达人。能近取譬、可谓仁之方也已' (trans. Legge). Again, Confucian teachings become the underlying allusion of Bian's poem; this should be the 'classical intention', which Bian imitates in a modern style in the title. Another possible classical intention (the classical intention might not include only one reference) is Chinese *guiyuan* poetry as the poem resembles *guiyuan* in its tone of indolence, the mood of pretended anger, the relief through the classical *guiyuan* image as well as the sudden change into the loss of oneself. The most evident line of the imitation of *guiyuan* poetry is 'Catkin, please do not fall into the water of my basin': the water in the basin symbolises the young woman's emotions; although she wishes the catkin, an image of romantic love, would not disturb her, she still falls into this romance and feels annoyed enough to curse 'Mirror, mirror, you are truly hateful'. In this line, the female 'I' finds both the complicated feelings in romance and her own reflection (interchangeable with herself) hateful.

The 'modern imitation' is emphasised by the first line: 'The world enriches my dressing table'. Classical Chinese images, such as *yousi* (gossamer 游丝), *liuxu* (catkin

柳絮), and *yuanwa* (the upper tile of the traditional Chinese design of pairing roof tiles that emulates pairing mandarin ducks 鸳瓦) are contrasted with modern images, such as a fruit store or a weak stomach. The latter group of images is the 'new garment' in need of 'a graceful bearing'. However, it is notable that like a garment, in this poem Bian makes 'the classical intention' to 'wear' modern images, such as 'the fruit store surrounds me with fruits' without changing the philosophical theme. If we see this poem as Bian's expression of his own experience of romance and his insight into such strange and complicated feelings, it is obvious that the poet finds his feelings despite the enrichment from 'the world' (his modernist pursuit through emulating Western poetry), corresponds to the theme of *guiyuan* poetry with a more profound connotation in Confucian teachings.

This ambivalent linkage to classical Chinese poetry is revisited more explicitly in the first stanza of 'Reflection on the Lantern Festival Night 旧元夜遐思' (1935):

> By the lamp is a windowpane,
> A looking glass.
> Don't draw back the curtain.
> You can't see anything far
> Nothing but your own image.
> But a distant window
> Is a deeper mirror.
> Who is looking out
> Under a solitary lamp
> With sad eyes in pain? (trans. Ding)

The image of a looking glass, in its original Chinese *zijian* 自鉴, is an allusion from *Bei Tang Shu Chao*: the sage's three mirrors. The looking glass is again referred to in the poem as 'a deeper mirror'. Therefore, when peering into the looking glass, one is not only seeing 'one's own image', but also deep into themselves. Not unlike 'the Dressing Table', this poem is built on the interchangeable self and reflection. The question 'Who is looking out under a solitary lamp?' is intended to explore interiority and exteriority: the reflection of the subject's own sad eyes on the window asks about the meaning of this complicated emotion hidden in the self-reflected by 'a deeper mirror'; outside of this poem's location, there is also a 'distant window' on which the sad eyes of someone waiting and sharing this emotion are reflected. The theme of reflection and self as well as the transferability of 'you' and 'I' is revisited in this poem.

The reference of the 'Reflection on the Lantern Festival Nights' to classical Chinese poetry is self-evident in its title; it is a poem about lovers on the Lantern

Festival Night. It does not take much guessing to understand the homage paid to Xin Qiji's 'the Lantern Festival Night – to the tune of Green Jade Table 青玉案•元夕', especially with the line of the lover's eyes 'under a solitary lamp' resonating to the last line of the *ci* piece: 'When all at once I turn my head, I find her there where lantern light is dimly shed 蓦然回首，那人却在灯火阑珊处' (trans. Xu).

<u>Intimate expressions through the mirror and refernce to *ci*</u>

Apart from *guiyuan* poetry, the imagined female 'I' alongside an image of a mirror is usually seen in other forms of classical Chinese poetry: *gongti ci* 宫体词 and *huajian ci*. The influence of classical Chinese poetry as well as Bian's experience, with the image in Western literature translated by him, is reflected in his poems.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the image of the mirror is used frequently in Bian's poems written between 1935 and 1937 and this is an image that is usually connected to the theme of romantic love. The same applies to the imagined 'I' of a female protagonist. Although he stated his reluctance to express his private emotions in *Diaochong Jili*, Bian mentions 'an exception' that happened in life 'in early autumn 1933':

> 'In the common socialization of young men and women, there was an uncommon first encounter; apparently each other shares 'one thing' in common. Due to my reservation, and due to my counterparty's carelessness, this one thing - it seems like a transient gleam of hope. I thought it was something precious; yet I could do nothing but to let it disappear like morning dew … our destiny led us to a reunion … I started a good dream and I sought after the profound sadness and happiness in private. Somehow, implicitly, I felt hopeless with my hope.' (2002, p. 444)

The quotation suggests that in 1936 Bian was reunited with Zhang Chonghe 张充和 (1914–2015), for whom he held unrequited love for decades before his relatively late marriage at the age of 45 with Qing Lin 青林. As a matter of fact, private emotions associated with this 'exception' in Bian's life are shown in traces within poems written soon after their first encounter.

Due to Bian's 'emotional reserve', the implication of romantic feelings in the poet's life remains obscure in the two poems above. However, in 1936, after his reunion with Zhang, the seed of romantic love began to blossom. It was in 1936 that Bian wrote

‘An Ichthyolite 鱼化石’:

> I want to have the shape of your embrace.
> I am always dissolved into the lines of water.
> Just like a mirror, you truly love me. Both you and I
> Has gone into the distance and the ichthyolite emerges. (trans. Beita)

The key line of the poem is ‘Just like a mirror, you truly love me’, not only for its position in the centre of the verse, but also due to its function of elevating the emotion. In this poem, a female ‘I’ expresses her expectations of romantic love through three pairs of images that serve as each other’s reflection: ‘the shape’ of ‘me’/ ‘the shape of your embrace’, the fish that ‘dissolved’/the water, the fish/the ichthyolite. The three pairs of reflections and the subject are evidence for the conclusion ‘you truly love me’.

In ‘An Ichthyolite’, the fish symbolised the female in a romantic relationship. The image of water serves as a mirror that reflects the fish. The three pairs of images could be seen as a reference to the Chinese idiom *yu shui zhi huan* (the pleasure of fish and water 鱼水之欢), which uses the two images as a symbol of romance and sexual enjoyment between men and women. The transferrable relationship between reflections and their counterparts symbolises the ideal love: the lover is a reflection of ‘I’ in the mirror; since the mirror binds the reflection with ‘I’ in reality, ‘you’ must love ‘me’ truly ‘just like the mirror’.

Bian elaborates his use of the imagined female in the postscript of ‘An Ichthyolite’ added in 1982, 45 years after the poem was written. Bian points out that the poem is the monologue of ‘a fish or a woman’ (2002, p. 123). The fact that the words of love are, at the same time, from a fish to the fossil it is about to become and a woman to her lover, makes the reader aware of the ambivalence of forms and images as well as the consistency of the theme in this poem. To explain the first line, Bian mentions that a photo of an ichthyolite inspired him and he wishes to set the poem as something that happened before the formation of the fossil. He explains that the first line has two reference sources: one from Paul Eluard’s ‘L’Amoureuse’ and Sima Qian’s ‘A woman makes up her face for one who pleases her’ from *Historical Records*. This corresponds to the second line: the line of water and the shape of the fossil both imply the form of a female body that is presented in the view of her lover. Bian states that he was reminded of Paul Valéry’s ‘the Bath’ (ibid.), which also contains the scene of an imagined woman taking a bath in water in which her shape could be observed through the reflection.

As the third line brings out the key image of a mirror, the ambiguous relationship between reflection and self becomes more complicated. The image of the mirror is ambiguous. On the one hand, the mirror is a loyal friend that always shows the reflection as it is. On the other hand, the mirror symbolises distance as it could only render the reflection of one's appearance instead of the inner world. To this extent, the mirror provides nothing but an illusion. In the postscript, Bian writes about his inspiration from works by Stéphane Mallarmé: 'it was "your Venetian mirror" that is "deep as a cold fountain, framed by wyverns that have lost their gilding: who has been reflected in it? Ah! I am sure that more than one woman has bathed the sin of her beauty in that water; and perhaps I could see a nude phantom if I gazed" ' (ibid.). This corresponds to the mirror's function as a symbol of illusion.

This reference is really interesting and offers us a glimpse into Bian's poetic mind: Bian seems to have ignored all the references of mirror, reflection and expression of the most intimate feelings in classical Chinese poetry, and chose to point out 'the Venetian mirror'. Though the structure of feeling in the poems mentioned above is of no significant difference from classical Chinese poetry, he seems to find it necessary to link his works with that of Mallarmé. Since Bian has apparently not bothered to explain the full background to the allusions in Mallarmé's poetry, which usually points to transcendental ideals and impressions beyond this world, the 'nude phantom' and 'the sin of beauty in that water', on the superficial level, do not differ much from images in *gongti, huajian and guiyuan*. And since Bian did not touch any of the spiritual and mystical elements in his use of the image of mirror, I argue that he is using 'the Venetian mirror' to re-package the classical Chinese expressions of self-reflection and aesthetic ideals. As Bian references classical Chinese poetry to express his most personal and intimate feelings, these feelings were not even fully expressed in real life; yet the image of mirror and the poetic use borrowed from *gongti, huajian and guiyuan* offers Bian the taste of sweetness and sourness in an ideal poetic world.

Changes and relativity reflected in the mirror: rediscovery of Taoist teachings and serenity

A further exploration of the re-packaging of classical pretexts in 'An Ichthyolite' mentioned above links Bian's personal romantic feelings and his philosophical view of life. Despite the detailed account of the reference to French poetry, the last sentence of

'An Ichthyolite' brings back Bian's deep connection with classical Chinese teachings: 'You and I both/have gone into the distance and the ichthyolite emerges'. First of all, when it comes to the formal quality of poetry, the use of *yuan* (an adjective of distance 远) as a verb is a good example of Bian's skill of *lianzi* (see chapter 4). Furthermore, in this sentence, *Yuan* looks beyond the physical distance in time; it also points to the change of existence. 'You and I both' means the fossil and the fish as much as the female 'I' and her lover. As 'You and I both have gone into the distance', their existence is no more as the integration and conversion makes them into one absolute being: the ichthyolite and the ideal love. This sentence is a good summary of Bian's understanding of romantic love and his exploration into its philosophy: in love, two would merge into one; then, the two would cease to exist whilst elevating the one's absolute existence in its quality. The ego of one should cease to exist; change and conversion remain eternal.

This conclusion is interesting because it is almost exactly the same as the philosophy in *Xi Ci* from *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing* 易经/周易): 'The successive movement of the inactive and active operations constitutes what is called the course (of things) … Production and reproduction is what is called (the process of) change. 一阴一阳之谓道……生生之谓易' (trans. Legge). As usual, Bian tends to overlook the romance of his pure ego and poses a question about the true meaning of his emotions. If the first three lines of this poem reveal Bian's bittersweet experience in romantic love as 'a transient gleam of hope', then the last sentence reflects his epiphany in love. He chooses to surpass the existence of one individual and look into the eternal being of love so that he can be free from a struggle in love. Not unlike his attempt to be free from exhaustion caused by his society's upheaval, in pursuit of freedom from egoist romance, Bian did not apply the transcendental view shared amongst French Symbolist poets, despite his passionate effort of showcasing his connections to them. Instead, Taoist teachings that look beyond individual beings and their natural course are held closest to Bian's heart. This might explain why he thinks that his 'soul was on the peak of a mountain' (2002, p. 446) during his career as a poet in the 1930s. In his self-critique essay titled 'Growth' 成长 (1936), Bian refers to 'production and reproduction is what is called (the process of) change *sheng sheng zhi wei yi* 生生之谓易' (trans. Legge) to explain Paul Valéry's intention in the lines 'as fruit melts into pleasure, its form dies in the mouth and changes absence; here I sense my future: smoke transformations' ('*Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance, comme en délice il change son absence. Dans*

une bouche où sa forme se meurt, Je hume ici ma future fumeé'). This is evidence that Bian's philosophy of relativity and constant changes in his poems has been sourced from classical Chinese teachings rather than Western influences. Taoist teachings are, therefore, important aspects of his poems. In many poems, Bian continuously explores the change of identity between the inactive and active, as well as the transformation amongst different types of objects and emotions. This is a reflection of the poet's persistent idea of cosmology that relativity exists in everything.

The poem 'Chi Ba 尺八' (1935) carries Bian's sorrowful thoughts and nostalgic feelings for the lost world of classical China. 'Chi Ba' was written in 1935 between 'The Composition of the Distances' and 'Resounding Dust' (an analysis of how the two poems show the poet's space-time perspective of relativity is given in the next chapter). Interestingly, when talking about the content of 'Chi Ba', Bian states the following:

> Imagine a man from the middle kingdom listening to (the instrument) Chi Ba in Mishima during the night; from that, imagine many, many years ago, a man from Mishima in the ancient capital of Chang'an listening to Chi Ba, which invoked his nostalgic thoughts of hometown. Like a mirror covered by dust; it reflects itself in history (Bian, 2007, p. 207)

Naturally, 'Chi Ba' as a long poem is worth a closer examination. An extended analysis of the poem and its theme could be found in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

It is notable how Bian describes a comparison of similar situations in a different time period as a reflection in a mirror, which corresponds to discussions in the previous section. A good example of the poet's idea of relativity of this type is the poem 'Fragment 断章' (1935), which uses the metaphysical metaphor technique:

> You take in the view from the bridge,
> And the sightseer watches you from the balcony,
>
> The gracious moon adorns your window,
> And you adorn another's dream. (trans. Bian)

Although the word *zhuangshi* (adorn 装饰) is used twice in this four-line verse, Bian insists that the adornment of words and images is not the essence of 'Fragment'; instead, 'I meant to emphasise relativity' (Bian, 2007, p. 205). The mirrored images in this poem symbolise relativity, which is one step further from that in 'Chi Ba': instead of a comparison of similar situations, perspectives are alternated when 'you' is reflected

in the eyes of others. In four lines, ‘Fragment’ sets up two situations in which ‘you’ is an active agent in the first situation and a passive object in the second. The alternating perspective in ‘Fragment’ corresponds to many poems analysed in previous sections about the reflection and the mirror: as one stands in front of the mirror facing his/her own reflection, any action is correspondent to the reflection. Therefore, everything, including one’s existence, is relative.

It is notable that Bian uses mirrors not for the expression of narcissistic love; honest to his self-understanding as ‘cold-blooded’ (2002, p. 444), the poet hardly shows any egotistical self-appreciation in his poem. Instead, the image of the mirror usually undertakes the role of a messenger that helps the persona in the poem to look beyond him/herself and connect with others through alternating perspectives. Both ‘An Ichthyolite’ and ‘Dressing Table’ address this idea. In the epilogue of ‘An Ichthyolite’, Bian reflects upon the transition of the fish: ‘the fish is no longer the original fish; the rock is no longer the original rock. Thus, it fits into the standard of *sheng sheng zhi wei yi*. To make this standard more relevant: ‘ourselves in days past are not ourselves today; we are cherished footprints on ashes of snow; we memorise ourselves’ (Bian, 2007, p. 212). In order to progress into a new self, one must lose the old self; one has to die before the rebirth. The Ichthyolite serves as the central symbol of infinity: a fruit of continuous change and alternation.

Summary of chapter

In this chapter, analysis shows that not only does the image of mirror in Bian’s pre-war poetry could be traced back to classical Chinese philosophy and literature, it also reflects Bian’s inheritance of Confucian morality. Female ‘I’s and their observation of the world in poems analysed is highly similar to those in *guiyuan* poems, which serve as poetic metaphors for Confucian literati’s unsatisfied moral purpose of political and social engagement. At the same time, through the mirror’s function of *zijian,* Bian contemplates upon his romantic experiences and elevates private emotions to the level of philosophical understanding of love, changes and time. Further analysis in this chapter reveals the influences of Taoist and Buddhist perspectives in these elevated philosophical thoughts. Moreover, this chapter showcases Bian’s preference for classical Chinese style and aesthetics when writing about private feelings that are closest to his heart – in order to cover up this preference the poet even uses classical Chinese teachings to interpret French Symbolist poetics. In order to further understand

the reason of his preference and eagerness of justifying it with Western influences, the next chapter moves deeper into the poet's cosmology and his inheritance of Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist teachings through an analysis of the water image.

Chapter 7 Consolation from Classical Chinese Cosmology: Bian Zhilin's Path to Endurance and Serenity

Following the previous two chapters' discussions on Bian's sufferings and private emotions, this chapter focuses on the poet's pursuit of consolation supported by textual and intertextual analysis on the image of water; an image which symbolises the poet's contemplation of life and change.

In the poems that heavily focus on the image of water, the emotions of despair and solitude, the discussion of physical pleasure and the tone of *fin de siècle* seem to point to French Symbolist poetry and the Aesthetic movement. The upheaval of Chinese society haunts the poet's imagination: he expresses the feeling of isolation and weariness in poems about water. By doing this Bian seems to be constructing a Western identity in literature as 'water and madness have long been linked in the dreams of European man' (Foucalt, 1988, p. 12).

However, in this chapter, an exploration of the relationship between water and time draws attention to Bian's rather Confucian mode of poetic contemplation. The chapter begins with an examination of the mutual illumination between Confucian and Taoist notions of time in Bian's pre-war poetry. Then, a comparison is drawn between Taoist and Buddhist teachings on the experience of inner-peace and the Western literary theme of decadence to identify the resources of Bian's pursuit of consolation. Both Haft (1983) and Yeh (2008) have carried out analysis on the image of water; a discussion on their research outcome is given alongside the analysis of specific poems.

I argue that Bian inherits the Confucian idea of time, yet overlooks the positive motivation of time in Confucian teachings. This is due to the poet's identity of an elite in a defeated society with a desperate attempt to rejuvenate his nation, rather than a decadent French poet that seeks transcendence to resolve the trauma of industrialisation and modernisation. A further analysis of texts shows the influences of Taoist and Buddhist cosmology in many of Bian' poems featuring the image of water. Bian deposits his emotions in the image of water in the same style that classical Chinese hermits *jiqing* (deposit feelings 寄情) in literature. At the same time, Bian echoes with the hermits as he finds consolation in Taoist view of changes, Buddhist meditation of Zen, and most importantly, Confucian morality of a sage.

Path to serenity: the image of water and connection to Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings

Since Confucius stood by a stream and said ‘It passes on just like this, not ceasing day or night! 逝者如斯夫，不舍昼夜’ (trans. Legge), water has been a frequently reviewed image in classical Chinese poetry as it carries an abundance of connotations. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) considers the image of water as a symbol of wisdom inspired by persistent curiosity: ‘how could it be so clear and cool? For freshwater comes from the source 问渠那得清如许，为有源头活水来’ (trans. Xu). Interestingly, the image of water is seen from different perspectives as many poets develop their poetry under the influence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. At the same time, water, as a single image, reflects how the three streams join to form a balanced system of classical Chinese teachings.

In *The Analects*, Confucius uses the running water as an analogy to time in order to encourage his students to work diligently. In *Mengzi*, Mencius resonates with Confucius’s ‘O, water！ Water! 水哉水哉’, not only by emphasizing the never-ceasing nature of water (for example, ‘day and night, the source of the stream does not cease t flow 源泉混混，不舍昼夜’), but also through the analogy ‘the bursts of rain that comes in the seventh and eighth months…This is why the *junzi* is ashamed if his reputation exceeds his actual accomplishments 七八月之间雨集……故声闻过情，君子耻之’ (trans. Eno). In Confucian teachings, water is a positive image as it reflects the righteous men who exert themselves regularly to reach the unity of knowledge and action; water has always been considered as a symbol of time and virtue.

Buddhist teachings treat water as a metaphor for change and motion. The difference is that Buddhist teachings emphasise the unpredictable nature of water flow as an analogy to life and death. The course of human life is seen as a simile of water bubbles in *The Nirvana Sutra.* Water is used to describe the rise and fall of the human body while true peace waits on the opposite side of the water. The image of water is also a symbol of calmness, clarity, and purity. *The Amitayurdhyana Sutra* depicts the Buddhist practice of visualisation of water, where the Western Paradise is entirely flooded by water that is ‘clear and pure 见水澄清,’ ‘shines brilliantly, inside and out 内外映彻’. The brilliance and purity of water have made the image into a powerful tool in reaching the ultimate Buddhist peace.

Taoist teachings share the Confucian view of water as a form of the virtue of men yet from a different perspective:

> The highest excellence is like (that of) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (its way) is near to (that of) the Tao. (上善若水。水善利万物而不争，处众人之所恶，故几于道。) (trans. Legge)

The sage, who acquires the Tao, 'affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech 是以圣人处无为之事，行不言之教' (trans. Legge). Lao-tzu puts his preference in water and praises its similarity to the Tao due to its implicit yet ubiquitous influence. Instead of focusing on the constant motion of water flow, Taoism teachings consider the virtue of still water as it becomes clear and reflective. The image of water suits the Taoist teaching of *wuwei* 无为 *(*do nothing to do everything): Emptiness, stillness, purity, silence and *wuwei* are the substance of the Tao and its power.

Early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals that actively follow the cause of the May Fourth Movement usually have their spiritual root in classical Chinese teachings, though many of them chose to deny such affiliation. Lu Jinshu (2015, p. 95) summarises the image of water in *San Qiu Cao* and gives an excellent example of his background in traditional Chinese culture:

(1) 'To the Flowing Water 寄流水'1933: How many lives went by without being discovered? Some will be sad. Some will say: this is better — to the flowing water.

(2) 'Dream of an Old Village 古镇的梦' 1933: The watchman with his clapper went across the bridge; again, the watchman with his gong went across the bridge. The only thing that does not cease to flow is the sound of water underneath the bridge.

(3) 'Comparison 对照' 1934: The new taste of autumn, plus a few memories of the past three years; you had a sleep when lying slacking in this spring water.

(4) 'The Sedimentary Rock 水成岩' 1934: 'O, water! Water!' The contemplator sighs. The affection of old people is like flowing water. That has stored up layers of sadness (trans. Bian).

(5) 'Reflection on the Lantern Festival Night 旧元夜遐思' 1935: It is a sharp knife. Yet it cannot cut open the water: the person is in your dream. You are in the person's dream.

(6) 'An Ichthyolite 鱼化石' 1934: I want to have the shape of your embrace, I am always dissolved into the lines of water (trans. Bian).

(7) 'Untitled (I) 无题一' 1937: Water has sorrow, sorrow by itself. Water is willing to carry you (trans. Yip).

(8) 'The Doormat and the Blotting 无题三' 1937: I know that sea-water can cleanse the worldly glitter.

(9) 'Naughty 淘气' 1937: I peeped at you and waited for you to satisfy your thirst from drinking the spring water. I laughed at how you kissed yourself.

(10) 'Tiny Green Moths 灯虫' 1937: Too much of water, poor things? To aspire, you fling down your green bodies born in dew.

Lu's article is one of the first mainland Chinese studies that links the image of water in Bian's poetry with classical Chinese teachings. According to the classical connotations of the image in various poems, Lu put the texts in three categories: Confucian teachings, Taoist teachings and Buddhist teachings. Limited by the scale of her journal article, Lu seems to focus much more on listing the classical Chinese references, leaving on average only a dozen of lines to the textual and cultural analysis of Bian's poems. Moreover, eager to draw the conclusion that tradition is inherited in Bian's poetry; Lu moves too quickly from one comparative reading to another without exploring the in-depth motivation of Bian's inheritance. Moreover, Lu has not examined the relationship between the classical inheritance and the consequences of Bian's pursuit for modernity. Nevertheless, Lu's article has provided a new understanding of the image of water and the analysis structure that follows different sources of classical teachings is highly inspirational. Furthermore, poems analysed in Lu's article are highly representative of Bian's mentality at the time. Therefore, largely based on the established structure of textual analysis and the raw material, i.e., Bian's poems containing the image of water, this chapter endeavours to further explore the connection between the image of water and classical Chinese teachings. Apart from reaching textual conclusions that conform with Lu's arguments, I aim at understanding the reason why Bian looks into classical Chinese teachings to create his modern poetry.

Confucian contemplation of time and solitude in Bian's pre-war poetry

The image of water as metaphor for time occupies a central position in Bian's pre-war poetry. It is through the poetic observation of water that Bian showcases his contemplation of time and the past, which is evidently his inheritance of Confucian teachings. At the same time, Bian has endowed his contemplation with the feeling of solitude, a reflection of the poet's nostalgic and lost emotions marked by the upheaval society.

While according to Foucault (1988), in the Western imagination water is linked with uncertainty, lack of reason and madness, water is a symbol of literati morality in classical Chinese poetry. Bian's poems are typical examples of the Chinese imagination of water as he laments the mortality and fate; he expresses wishes for inner peace and harmony in stillness: 'Water has its own sorrow/water has its sadness/water is willing to take you' (Untitiled I 无题一). The poet's tune of confusion and insecurity wept quietly and continuously throughout his poems underneath the image of water, reminds us not so much of the *fin de siècle* writings as of *mimi zhi yin* (obscene music 靡靡之音) in Late Tang Dynasty.

On the other hand, the image of water and the connotation of inner peace and a natural state of being resonate with Wang Wei 王维 and Du Fu's *jiemen* (distraction from boredom 解闷) through *jiqing shanshui* (expressing feelings through descriptions of natural landscapes 寄情山水). It is not unusual for Confucian literati in ancient China to seek comfort in a Taoist hermit's lifestyle following a defeat in his role in the public domain. The *xieyi* (depicting the connotation 写意) style of Bian's writing is yet another evidence of the poet's strong inheritance of classical Chinese teachings and aesthetics.

Born and raised in Zhejiang Province where the beautiful landscape of water bodies has nourished generations of literati, Bian's attachment to water never left him. The image of water, as well as songs of life, time and peace sung by literati from one dynasty to another, has passed itself down to play an essential role in Bian's modernist career. In 'The Sedimentary Rock', Bian showcases his traditional understanding of time by making a direct reference to *Mengzi*: 'O, water! Water!' Interestingly, in *Mengzi,* this line is also a direct quote from Confucius when he praises water as a symbol of *junzi*'s virtuous life in constant curiosity. In the poem, no matter if it is when the older child asks the mother if he was as lovely as his younger brother, or when the mother

thinks of her old photos ‘piling in the drawer of an old desk locked by dust’ and ‘a shelf of brilliant colours/hidden in the dried bean pod in front of the window’, every line points to the core image: time. In conclusion, the poet writes ‘emotions of ancient people flow away like water, leaving behind layers of sorrow.’ It corresponds to the title. Though the content of the poem does not relate to the title, ‘The Sedimentary Rock.’ The title serves in itself as a symbol of time. The Chinese words of 水成岩 could be broken down into three characters: water, become, fossil. Upon reading the title, the readers are already immersed in the poet’s feelings of how time could change the form of things. The image of water in this poem again comes from its Confucian allusion. However, similar to his choice in the previous section, Bian abandons the positive encouragement of the allusion. Instead, he focuses on the negative aspect of Confucius’ reaction to water: a lamentation of past time. ‘The Sedimentary Rock’ is a good example of Bian’s aesthetics, as the poet usually in poems discusses the relativity of time and space. In ‘The Sedimentary Rock,’ more specifically, Bian uses the image of water to depict a very personal experience of time, which is a theme of late French Symbolist poetry. The theme of lamentation and disappointment, as well as the beautiful verses that depict the beauty of the past, distinguish Bian from his fellow poets such as Dai Wangshu and He Qifang. However, an exaggeration of French Symbolist poetry’s influence on Bian’ style might not be accurate.

Though it could be seen that Bian got in touch with certain topics in modern Western philosophy, it is obvious that he has no interest in pushing himself into a more profound discussion in his poem. ‘The Sedimentary Rock’ as well as ‘Fragment’ and ‘Throw’, is evidence to his choice. The theme of lamentation in ‘The Sedimentary Rock’, on the other hand, is also a reflection of Bian’s lamentation for classical Chinese art; ‘O, water! Water!’ is the ‘steps’ that took away the shelf of the dazzling beauty of his traditional teachings. As a result, he could only think of these teachings as locked by dust and sealed in a dry pod, not unlike the fate of the Chinese society.

<u>Taoist teachings and Bian’s poetic consolation: water, decadence and the Tao</u>

‘Comparison’ is a poem written to introduce Bian’s thoughts on letting life flow like water and being what it is. In this poem, images are connected through comparison. Bian also uses one of his signature techniques of *liubai* (leaving blank spaces intentionally 留白). ‘Imagine myself as a philosopher’ sets the background of

'Comparison' so that readers understand all images are imagined. The poet, in the identity of a philosopher, points out the cause-effect relationship between 'consolations in rotten apples' and 'men born as parasites to rotten earth'. 'Standing alone on top of a hill facing the twilight,' the philosopher is deep in his thoughts, confused about the origin of men and their relationship to nature. The repeated adjective 'rotten' symbolises the poet's doubt about the meaning of life.

In the second part of the poem, however, the poet forgets about his philosophical complex; he asks about the taste of 'the fresh grapes you had today.' Body is the subject of this verse; the poet's interests in the taste of grape symbolises the indulgence of the body. This 'taste of the new autumn', is not only one of the most intimate senses of human beings, but also enhanced by 'a few memories of the past three years.' This description of physical pleasure bears most resemblance to the poetic technique of Bian's Crescent Society predecessors, though the latter frequently elaborate such pleasure with much fuller expression of delicacy and beauty. In 'Comparison' elaboration is given implicitly to illuminate the light-hearted happiness of life; a contrast to the solitude and melancholy caused by the mind in the first verse. A contrast, or, to resonate with the title, a comparison is thus made between mind and body: though deep in complicated philosophical thoughts, the body could still indulge itself in 'the taste of the new autumn'.

The images analysed in 'Comparison' so far, including the rotten apple and planet, the fresh taste of grapes and new autumn, seem to point to the influence of French Symbolist poetry with its taste of *fin de siècle* and the theme of decadence, frequently seen in poems written by Verlaine and Mallarmé. In the last verse of 'Comparison', the poet decides to forget about the confusing thoughts and the emptiness of meaning and life, and become 'asleep when lying slacking in this spring water': since the meaning of life and being might be too difficult to find, it might be a good idea to focus on the immediate taste of 'the new autumn' and seek for an instant pleasure instead; when the world we live is rotten as an apple, men like parasites could only find their existence in their form of living – their body.

If we consider Bian's situation in 1934, we could understand why the poet feels so restless in his mind despite his identity as a philosopher. The comparison between mind and body is not unlike the comparison between 'a few memories of the past three years' and 'the taste of new autumn', as the former is bitter and hopeless when the poet was trapped in 'Peking, 1934'. Bian describes himself from 1930 to 1934 as restless

and exhausted: he ‘could not find peace’ (Jiang, 2000, p. 15), ‘could not find my rest’ (Bian, 2002, p. 446).

Compared with the exhausted traveller in ‘The Long Journey’ and ‘the Night Rain’, the poet in ‘Comparison’ has ceased his struggle towards a better future and succumbed to the *fin de siècle* feelings; in a rotten world, where could a parasite go? Wilde answers this question with physical pleasure and decadence; he draws the focus further away from the mind and seeks shelter only in instant beauty and pleasure. On the other hand, the French Symbolists, through their melancholy, solitude, and ambivalence, tend to separate the suffering in capitalist civilisation from mystical beliefs. Images are not symbolling of the poet's emotions and thoughts (entirely different from how Bian uses images); instead, they represent a massive world of transcendence.

Bian chose none of the above answers. To the poet, Taoist teachings provide him with more consolation. The conclusion of ‘Comparison’ is that the poet settled himself ‘in this spring water.’ The worn-out philosopher eventually finds his rest in ‘the highest excellence’ regarded in Taoist teachings. Water is an important symbol of the law of Tao in *Dao De Jing*. According to Lao Tzu, Tao is the source of our universe, the law of which is ‘being what it is 道法自然’ (trans. Legge). It is due to Bian’s recognition of how water benefits all things. In his deepest despair, clean, running water from a spring provides the peace and washes away the dust from his weary mind; as water in Taoist teachings occupies ‘the low place which all men dislike’.

Taoist teachings also provide the solution to his tortured mind and the lost feelings in decadence. In ‘Comparison’, the contrast is not only between mind and body, which causes the torment on the philosopher. The contrast is also made in the concept of time as the poet ‘learns from the tower far away to face the twilight’: The twilight is the beauty of an instant, yet the tower stands still in time. Apart from this learning, the sleep in the spring water binds the poet’s body and mind similar to the way water is immersed in nature. He finds his reconciliation between his body and mind: though lying slacking in the water (his body in full pleasure), the philosopher feels safe and comfortable because he can overlook his trouble; the image of water is his recognition of the law of the Tao: *wuwei*.

In Confucian teachings, the running water represents the running of time as a caution that encourages men to find virtue throughout his life; just like the running

water with its source that could never dry. Bian takes the metaphor of time and leaves behind the running source of water. The change of time and the helplessness of men in time are frequently visited in his poems to use water as a symbol of the poet's despair.

In order to surpass his melancholy, Bian seeks a solution from Taoist water. The highest excellence in Taoist teachings stands for the virtue of benefiting everything without striving. When using the image of water to offer consolation to the weary subject in his poems, Bian designs a contrast between water in movement and water that is relatively static. Therefore, while the running water in Confucian teachings symbolises time and the despair it leaves, the water that occupies and contains everything symbolised the poet's longing for a position that surpasses all spiritual torments. Instead of passively adopting the Taoist appeal of *wuwei*, Bian emphasises on the 'to do everything' aspect, which resonates with *Zhuangzi*: 'In the emptiness they attain fullness; in fullness, they grasp the patterns of things. Empty they are still; …still, they rest in *wuwei*, then those charged with affairs fulfil their responsibilities 虚则实，实则伦矣. 虚则静……静则无为，无为也，则任事者责矣' (*The Way of Heaven* 庄子天道). On top of the seemingly peaceful view of 'being what it is,' the image of Taoist water reveals the poet's mental struggle to find meaning in life during upheaval time of the nation; the exhausted philosopher finds his inner peace in spring water by forgetting about his thoughts while Bian is still struggling.

The same representation of the poet's sufferings could be seen in his reference to Buddhist allusions of water. As a metaphor of the cycle of life and incarnation, the image of water has two meanings: on one hand, the 'alluring sea' that stops the mortals from reaching the Western Paradise; on the other, the Law-water that cleanses all dirt and support one to rise above the world of vanity and vain.

It is worth noting that the above analysis does not include all aspects of traditional teachings shown in Bian's pre-war poetry. For example, the poet takes the notion of emptiness from Buddhism in 'Fixing the flower makes me remember/ That the world is empty' ('The Lover's Logic 无题五'1937) and the idea of unceasing change and transformation amongst natural beings from Taoism in 'The Sedimentary Rock'. This chapter, however, is not intended to draw a comprehensive picture of all Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist features in Bian's pre-war poetry; instead, it focuses on analysing the image of water in order to understand Bian's connection to classical Chinese teachings.

Buddhist teachings in seeking inner peace: 'Tiny Green Moths'

The image of water in Bian's poems is frequently presented with its power of cleansing the soul and washing off the dirt: the superficial world that traps the soul. 'Tiny Green Moths' is a good example. In the first paragraph, the tiny green moths that 'feed on vanity' are symbols of people drifting up and down the world of superficiality during Bian's time in China; their pursuit of vanity and the instant sense of security is not different from the flying moth's attraction to the flame. In classical Chinese, it is represented by the idiom of *fei'e puhuo* (flying moths chasing fire 飞蛾扑火). The poet sees this chase as a pity because the moths already acquire something much better and more precious than the vanity of lamp light: the water seen as 'too much' in the eyes of those 'poor things' and their 'green bodies born in dew'.

The poet's pity reflects the poet's connection to Buddhist allusions. A body nurtured by dew, which reminds us of the image of a good rain (*ganlin* 甘霖) in Buddhist teachings, is most blessed: one of the most essential daily offerings to the Buddha's body as a sculpture in a temple is fresh water. The image of dew that nurtures the green body of a small moth in nature also points to the pure water from the jar of Guanyin. Guanyin would use a green willow branch to render the water to the mortal world in order to cleanse and save those suffering in the world of vanity.

The second paragraph begins with a series of images from *the Iliad*. The Argonauts are not unlike the little moths; they would sail into their doom in search of sheer vanity. Knowing that 'pursued with gallantry,' they would still march into the end where their dream 'has turned out in the end to be Helen's locks!' The tone of the second paragraph, compared with the tone of pity in the first, is sarcastic with an implication of lamentation. The sarcasm is emphasized in the next paragraph when the poet calls the Argonauts, alongside the moths, 'tipsy fairies' that 'have found your dreamy end in the tomb of light.' Compared with the green bodies in dew that they started with, their gallantry and flavour of vanity are no more than another adornment of 'halos around a Buddha's head'. As a result, in the last paragraph, 'I' woke up and got rid of the corpses of the moths with no more than an exhalation. 'I' still pity those moths and compare them to 'the fallen redness'. However, their existence no longer matters as 'a breeze which sweeps from the steps' could eradicate the 'trace of a night.' 'I', the one that denies the moths (and Argonauts), is the only one left in peace 'at dawn and back from

all vagaries'.

The comparison between images from *the Iliad* and Buddhist allusions in this poem is rather interesting. The tiny green moths are categorized with the Argonauts, the dew and water are categorized with the halo of the Buddha. In this poem, the poet mocks and pities the gallantry of the Argonauts alongside the passionate moths flying into the fire because they destroyed their privileged value (the Buddhist blessing of dew). It is clear that the poet values the Buddhist blessing with the power of cleansing and the halo of the Buddha much more than a heroic sail in search of the Golden Fleece. This poem reflects the complicated mentality of Bian: on the one hand, he wants to show off his understanding of Greek Epics; on the other, rather than admiring the gallantry and glory of Western heroes, he feels much more blessed to find his inner peace in Buddhist teachings.

Michelle Yeh (2008) is one of the few scholars to recognise that 'in his sense and sensibility, he is at least partly inspired by Taoist and Buddhist teachings.' (p. 44) Yeh believes that it is Bian's signature technique to 'combine the human experience with a certain form of water, then return to the image of water by the end of the poem' (p. 42) with supporting textual analysis of the poems 'The Sedimentary Rock', 'The History of Communications and a Running Account 无题四' (1937) and 'To the Flowing Water'. However, as Yeh asserts that the modern quality lies in the transformation of traditional elements limited by Western standards, she argues that the connotation of water is beyond the 'chaotic, vague and shapeless meaning in Taoist and Buddhist teachings' (2008, p. 41) and argues that the image 'is related to Freud, rather than Chinese philosophy' (ibid.) without further elaboration. At the same time, her ambiguous attitude towards tradition is again reflected as she adds that the image of water symbolises 'other significant connotations (especially in Taoism)' (ibid.). A conclusion is then drawn that Bian's creative style lies in the interaction between tradition and modernist poetry whilst the latter clearly means Western literary modernism. I do not believe that such an abundance of classical Chinese references in Bian's use of the water image is merely the poet's attempt to criticise and transform these traditional elements. Rather, Bian chose the image of water to express his notion of time, life and serenity that resonates with Confucian, Taoist and Buddist teachings because this is his most familiar and preferred expression.

Confucian spirit with Buddhist and Taoist implications: Traditional morality in Bian's pre-war poetry

We can see clearly that the image of water in Bian's pre-war poetry shows his deep connection to all three primary schools of classical Chinese culture: Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings. Nevertheless, not unlike his predecessors in Tang, Song and all dynasties in ancient China, Bian upholds the spirit of Confucian literati.

Though seeking consolation from Taoist and Buddhist water, Bian uses the image of water to primarily express his despair and disappointment in a defeated society. As the discussion focuses on his longing for consolation in Taoist and Buddhist image of water, it is worth noting that when 'lying slacking in spring water', the philosopher could only find a temporary consolation for his troubled mind – though he chose to indulge in physical pleasure, 'the taste of new autumn' would become old and the philosopher will eventually fall back into his troubled fate for he could not really transcend the mortal world and view things as they are. In 'Tiny Green Moths', the solution is never really offered: the best situation for the moths is in the past when their green bodies were in the dew. In order to end a vain life of suffering, Buddhist teachings offer hope for the next life. However, the poem concludes when the moths die, and their corpses of no relevance are blown off the table.

As one of the few scholars that goes beyond textual qualities and attempts to understand Bian's mental state, Haft (1983) notices the poet's distress in the image of water as he focuses on the contrast between land and water in Bian's poetry. In his analysis of 'Sea Sorrow', 'The Peninsula' and 'Reed-leaf Boat 芦叶船' (1934), Haft points out that 'water represents not only the familiarities of the individual's childhood but also the primordial state of undifferentiation or non-incarnation' (p. 41), following a brief sentence about 'Buddhist-Taoist "alienation" …an original "sea" condition has been traded for the present-day "land" ' (ibid.). In Haft's analysis, the contrast between water and land represents at least three aspects of Bian's mental state: first, the alienation from the natural state of being and the consequential suffering; second, the wish to 'reconcile the various states or domains of being' (p. 47) and piece together the perfect shape of roundness, or completeness, a conception of 'return home' (ibid.); and third, 'the constant shifting or rearrangement' (p. 49) of identity and existence in relativity. Interesting enough, though Haft has not provided any in-depth explanation of the cause of alienation, this is the part in his work where he heavily focuses on the

traditional elements in Bian's poetry. He even cited *Zhuangzi* in order to prove the third aspect: Taoist relativity in 'Fragment' and 'Thrown', though the two poems do not actually feature the image of water or land.

I agree with Haft's analysis of the three aspects of Bian's mental state, though the images of water and land might not represent the full picture of all of the three. The image of land and a traveller on a journey is as important as the image of water, and in my opinion, the connotation is key to understanding the distress and weariness in Bian's expression. Not unlike the image of water, the image of land and arduous journey is profoundly connected to classical Chinese poetry, which is briefly pointed out by Haft (2008, p. 43), though his main focus in on the contrast between water and land. A more detailed discussion on Bian's poetic theme of land and journey is given in Chapter 5. Moreover, Haft's exploration into the conception of relativity is not robust enough to reveal the in-depth connection to tradition in Bian's poetic expressions, therefore could not help generate an insight into Bian's true attitude when experiencing distress caused by the conflict between tradition and Western influences. As analysed in Chapter 6, relativity is a rather important conception as it represents a possible consolation for mental sufferings.

Bian asks for neither oblivion nor transcendental salvation in his poems. Instead, he writes about small things in his life as images to symbolise his feelings. Instead of retreating from the real world, Bian uses water to express his struggle: in despair he maintains the Chinese literati's ethical responsibility to his society, nation and contemporary history. Realism hidden beneath the calm and aloof style of writing, in general, reflects Bian's inheritance from classical Chinese poetry. In *On Poetry* (1984), Zhu Guangqian talks about how almost all Chinese poets from Qu Yuan 屈原 (c.340 – 278 BC), Li Bai 李白 (701–762) to Gong Zizhen 龚自珍(1792–1841), could eloquently describe their sufferings and disappointment in the real world whilst not being able to draw a clear picture of an ideal world that transcends their reality. In his criticism of late Tang dynasty poets, Zhu Guangqian (1997) writes:

> On the surface, they wish to rise above the real world. Deep down they carry with them the roots of Confucian Realism; indeed, they are never rid of this unique humanity of the nation of China…Most poems under the influence of Buddhism are limited to the extent of 'the taste of Zen' without discussing 'the Law of Buddhism'…They do not long for Buddhism; they simply envy those with the Buddhist faith. (p. 71-75)

In his novel *Shanshan Shuishui* written between 1941 to 1943, the manuscript of which was destroyed by the writer himself, Bian talks about the intention of referencing classical teachings in a speech made by the protagonist Liao Xuzhou: 'I only use the mystic and aloof style of Buddhism to ascertain how realistic my Confucian mind is' (1997, p. 138). Bian himself is not different from classical literati in China; both wrap their Confucian spirit with Buddhist and Taoist implications.

***Sheng sheng zhi wei yi*: Taoist cosmology in Bian's pre-war poetry**

Following analysis above, it is fair to say that the image of water is frequently used by Bian to explore the theme relativity in space and time. It is the perspective the poet uses to contemplate meaning of life. In many critics' eyes, the notion of time, including flowing and overlapping of time and spaces, metaphors of relativity, is key to Bian's contribution to New Poetry in China as it endows his poems with a 'literary style...most modern' (*qi qu zuixin* 其趣最新) (Fei and Zhu, 2008, p. 332). As a matter of fact, despite its seemingly modern and bizarre presentation, Bian's notion of time and space corresponds to Taoist cosmology. Moreover, as an attempt to find justification for his cosmology, Bian has made much effort to link tradition with Western influences.

In 1934 Bian translated the first book of Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, *Du Coté de Chez Swann* (在史万家这一边). In the translator's preface (1934), Bian expresses his admiration of Proust's writing of time: 'the instant happiness and sorrow, sudden confusion and endless patterns of images; everything at the same time is in relativity as time entangles space. Definitely it becomes *disi du* (the fourth dimension 第四度) and it corresponds to Einstein's theory' (no pagination). During the same period, the conscious use of time, space and relativity is frequently seen in Bian's pre-war poetry. Further research is required to reveal whether or not the poet's taste of the theme of time should be contributed to his translation work of Proust. Nevertheless, the style has been frequently adopted in Bian's pre-war poetry.

On the other hand, Bian's explanation of the repeated use of water as metaphor of life and time is as follows:

We Chinese people, bearing with us drops of Confucian teachings in our blood,

have the tendency to agree that life is no more than something that resembles water; it is easy to see: water makes rivers. No matter what form it takes…the essence of water is its constant flow. (Bian, 1982, p. 4)

Alongside the Confucian view of time as water, influence of Taoist teachings is evident in the poet's technique of making contrasts to showcase the dominant principle of the 'constant flow'. There are two pairs of contrasts seen in Bian's pre-war poetry that discusses time: the contrast of an instant and eternity; the contrast of being and non-being. The purpose of contrasts in these poems is to bring forward the poet's understanding of change, the one essential principle and idea of the Taoist classic, *Book of Changes* (also known as *I Ching*).

As discussed in the previous chapter, in 'Growth 成长' (1936) Bian refers to 'Production and reproduction is what is called (the process of) change (*sheng sheng zhi wei yi*)' (trans. Legge) from *Book of Changes* to elaborate this cosmology: a man's life is but an instant in the constant motion of nature. The ego of one should cease to exist; change and conversion remain eternal. In many of Bian's poems, details of a man's mortal and daily life are depicted to emphasise the despair and helplessness, especially when put in contrast with the silent yet unceasing passing of time. In previous chapters analysis of images of autumn, the setting sun and long journeys is given on the metaphysical loneliness of the poet as he struggled to find *raison d'être* in 1930s.

'Loneliness 寂寞' (1935) is a very good example in understanding this contrast. Despite the title, the word loneliness does not appear in any line in this poem. Instead, a pair of images implies the theme of the poem: the cricket owned by a child in the village and the night light watch the child bought after growing up. Contrast is made concerning time that lies behind the images: the cricket was a childhood playmate whilst the watch was a trophy of the child's adulthood; the death of the cricket (implying the death of childhood time) does not affect time as the watch does not stop simply for the death of one's childhood. Through plain description of how time flies, two typical loneliness of life correspond to the poem's title. As a child, though without a thing a worry about in his life, the child had to seek comfort in the cricket to get by the childhood loneliness. As a grownup he moved to the city and had to suffer from loneliness of adulthood: working day after day filled with boredom and despair. The watch plays the role of the central image in these two types of loneliness: on one hand it serves as the milestone where the child's childhood ends; on the other, the watch ticks

and marks the man's life. By putting contrast on the images and loneliness, the poet writes about the eternal loneliness of life: born alone and die alone, leaving nothing but an instant spark in eternity. The theme of loneliness is a discussion of the poet's philosophical idea of time. Moreover, it is an outlet of Bian's negative emotions during 1930s.

Not unlike 'the person at the bank' in 'The Sedimentary Rock', Bian sees 'the affection of old people' through the image of 'the flowing water'. Time, in a tone built by 'layers of sadness', is observed in its reflection on the poet's surroundings. In 'the Grass on the Top of a Wall 墙头草' (1932), the passing of day and the arrival of night are implied by alternating sources of light: 'there sticks a part of the setting sun…there hangs a half wheel of lamplight' (trans. Bian). The passing of time is reflected in daily objects while days only pass the poet by through repeats: the grass on the top of a wall, being the key image, simply turns yellow and green from time to time. The same theme is seen in 'To the Flowing Water 寄流水' and 'Autumn Window 秋窗' as the poet brings forward a metaphor of his own twisted fate in the aging beauty and change of seasons. In lines such as 'Like a middle aged man I turned to look at my footprints of the past' and 'I dream of the rosy cheeks of a youth facing the ancient mirror in twilight', the sense of confusion and exhaustion is quite obvious, echoing the metaphysical solitude analysed in the previous chapter: his *raison d'être* is concealed in silence despite the passing of time.

From the finite to infinity: *Xushi xiangshen* and the essence of Bian's poetic consolation

Taoist perception of beauty in literati paintings, *miao* 妙, is manifested through the style of *xushi xiangsheng* (the mutual production of emptiness and fullness 虚实相生), which is frequently used in Bian's pre-war poetry. Not only does *xushi xiangsheng* enhance the poetic ambience sought by Bian, it also allows the poet to find inner peace and consolation when facing difficulties and despair in his society. The following analysis shows the deep connection between Bian's consolation and classical Chinese poetry. I argue that the poet, despite his efforts in constructing the most modern of all styles as described by Fei Ming, seeks after relief in a similar manner of classical Chinese poets.

Bian named the first anthology of his poems written before 1940s 'Anthology

of Resounding Dust 音尘集' and the second 'Outside of Anthology of Resounding Dust 音尘集外'. The word *yinchen* (resounding dust 音尘) could be interpreted as information or trace and influence of past events. It could be deduced that Bian chose to name his anthology in an attempt to review his past. The poem under the same title, 'Resounding Dust 音尘' (1935), is a very good example of space and time threaded together. Alongside images from classical Chinese idioms, stylistic techniques in classical literati painting and Taoist beauty are embodied in 'Resounding Dust'.

In its original text, *xushi xiangsheng* means the mutual production of emptiness and fullness in depicting space in literati painting.[8] Instead of focusing on realistic production of the space we live in, painting of empty or invisible space produces infinity on top of the actual space, keeping human perceptions and changes in the world together. Moreover, *xushi xiangsheng* represents the style, or *yijing*, of classical Chinese poetry. In order to translate *xushi xiangsheng* into his modern theory of aesthetics, Zong Baihua refers to Tang Dynasty poems written by Wang Wei, Wei Zhuang and Du Fu (Zong, 1981, p. 95). Zong points out that literati painting and classical Chinese poetry share the same notion of space: 'The Chinese (literati) sees infinity from the finite; then returns to the finite from infinity. His style and taste are not following a straight line that extends towards no end; instead, they form an endless circle.' (Ibid.) Instead of emptiness, in literature, *xu* 虚 is similar to *wu* 无 (non-being) through the imagined situation with no realistic value; *shi* 实, similar to *you* 有 (being), represents more substantial activities and experience. Nevertheless, in both art and literature, employment of *xushi xiangsheng* always aims at the production of the endless circle of taste and style.

> The postman startled the familiar ring of the bell,
> Startling the heart of the householder.
> Is it a fish that comes swimming through the Yellow Sea
> Or a wild goose hovering after its journey *via Siberia*?
> 'Open your map,' my friend tells me from afar.
> The town he shows me is a black point near a dotted line.
> Were it a golden grape and my seat the summit of Taishan
> On a moonlight night, I would be sure the place you speak
>   of
> Is just a solitary railroad station.
> Yet I have been musing over a book of history,
> Looking forward over the ancient road to Hsienyang,

[8]'空本难图，实景清而空景现；神无可绘，真境逼而神境生。位置相戾，有画处多属赘疣；虚实相生，无画处皆成妙境。'（(清)笪重光：《画筌》，见沈子丞编：《历代论画名著汇编》，310页。）

I've heard the hooves of a speedy posthorse! (trans. Bian)

The poem starts with the bell that provokes the householder's thoughts. Following these thoughts, the image and theme of the poem extend. Letters brought by the postman, implying life in modern society, are delivered from sea freight ('the Yellow Sea' and land transport (via 'Siberia'). Nevertheless, two images, 'a fish' and 'a wild goose' are borrowed from classical Chinese idiom *yu yan chuanshu* (letters delivered by fish and wild geese 鱼雁传书). The link between traditional symbols of letters and delivery system in modern life creates a contrast in merely four lines.

The fifth line, on the other hand, leaps in space: the instruction comes from the friend that sent the letter yet the poet describes the communication in a face-to-face style. The leap of space does not stop here. The instruction, 'open your map', is meant for 'a black point near a dotted line': without leaving home any destination could only exist in the form of a black point in spite of the friend's wish to show the whole world in a map. This part is a good example of imagined situation in lines of *xu.*

Starting from the eighth line, 'I' imagine his travel through to other locations – a change of space, though imagined, now endowed with *Shi*. The summit of Taishan is an allusion to *Mengzi:* 'Confucius climbed East Mountain and felt that Lu was small, but when he climbed Mountain Tai, he felt the world was small 孔子登东山而小鲁，登泰山而小天下' (trans. Eno). Wishing to take his seat on Taishan, 'I' steps out of his identity as the householder and experience *Shi* as he sees the transformation of 'a black point' into 'a golden grape' with his own eyes. He also sees his friend's location afar: 'a solitary railroad station'. Not unlike how Confucius realises one's limitation by stepping on the summit of a higher peak, the householder's longing for a journey to visit his friend afar now seems less important as he could see how vast the whole world is. In these lines, it could be seen that the space changes from *Xu* to *Shi* and from near to far, expanding the style and taste of the poem as imagination entangles with realistic experience.

Time comes into play in the last three lines of the poem by reversing itself. 'Yet I have been musing over a book of history' reveals that all above was imagined. Through the book of history, time went back to 'the ancient road of Hsienyang' where horses were the only carrier of information. It is not until the image of Hsienyang when readers come to understand that the title of the poem comes from Li Bai's 'Yi Qin'e': '乐游原上清秋节，咸阳古道音尘绝 (On Yue You Plain on the Double Ninth Festival,

she saw the dying out of resounding dusts on the ancient road of Hsienyang)'. By using the allusion, the poet successfully shares with his readers the empathy for the disappointed and anxious female waiting for letters of her beloved one in Li Bai's poem. To everyone's relief, the sound of 'the hooves of a speedy post horse' provides comfort to both Li Bai's female character and the householder in 'Resounding Dust'. Moreover, it corresponds to the first line of the poem: both horses in ancient Hsienyang and the postman at the door are carriers of letters. At this point, the poem has created an interesting overlapping of time and space; the householder is receiving a letter both in his own modern time and in the Tang Dynasty. His identity travels through time and space and overlapped with the female figure in Li Bai's poem.

The timeline in 'Resounding Dust', in the first half, travels in a straight line as 'I' let his thoughts free after receiving a letter from a friend. However, as he travels to a different space, time reverses itself and brings him back to the Tang Dynasty. Yet as the hooves of horse bring the letter, 'I' is brought back to the beginning of this poem. The thoughts of 'I' (and of course, the poet's thoughts) travelled in a circle; it is a return trip in space and time. Indeed 'Resounding Dust' is written in an endless circle of style and taste! The overlapping identity between 'I' and Li Bai's female figure surely provokes endless thoughts: though traveling back to the beginning of the poem, after seeing 'the summit of Taishan' and feeling the emotions of the Tang Dynasty woman, 'I' is no longer the simple-minded householder; the space that 'I' dwells in has also changed.

'The Composition of the Distances 距离的组织' (1935) is a similar composition written nine months before 'Resounding Dust'. On 26 December 1934 an article published in Ta Kung Pao 大公报, introducing the explosion of a star and how its light travelled through 1,500 light-years to reach the earth. The article inspires Bian to write 'The Composition of the Distances'. In 1936 Zhu Ziqing reviewed (1984) the poem in detail. Showing a different opinion on the poem from the review article, Bian added three notes in addition to the original three when the poem was re-published in *Poems of Ten Years* and *Diaochong Jili*; as a result, the poet's notes are twice as long as the poem itself. It is thus important to read the notes alongside the poem in order to understand Bian's ideas of space and time as well as the theme and connotation of this rather complicated poem.

The title 'The Composition of the Distances' entails the use of images from

classical Chinese literature and those introduced through life in modern society and influences from the West. These contrasting images consist the composition of the distances of different time periods and spaces, threaded together by thoughts of the persona; as 'I' let his thoughts free, the distances between time and space continue to change, intensifying the overlap of *xu* and *shi*.

A look at the beginning stanza is the beginning of time travel:

> When I dream of reading alone on the highest terrace
> 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'
> there appeared in the newspaper the star that marks the Fall.
> The newspaper drops on the floor. The atlas opens
> to a thought travelling to a far-off name.
> The landscape received here is now clouded with twilight...(trans. Bian)

Mixing scenes in a modern society with the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the stanza initiates a journey not only in time, but also from China to the Europe. The title of the poem is presented very well in the stanza: isolated periods of time and lands are connected and composed in a journey taken in the persona's imagination. As 'reading the newspaper and imagine about the Roman Empire, thoughts are extended from the poet's daily life to ancient times and civilisations as well as the instant 1,500 years ago when a star exploded. This time flip, according to the poet's notes, is represents Bian's idea of cosmology: 'here I am writing about relativity of time and space' (Bian, 2002, p. 56). In real life, 'I' is looking at 'the atlas', possibly a present from the 'far-off name. The view on the atlas, which is reflection (*xu*) of the friend's location (*shi*), provokes thoughts on memories of friendship. Bian points out that 'here I am writing about being in substance and notion' (ibid.).

Three personas exist in this poem, either in imagination or reality: 'I', a friend with 'a far-off name', and a local 'friend' whom 'I' is visiting. The fifth line of the poem implies how the thoughts of 'I' took him back to reality from the space and ancient Rome: '(When I wake up, the dusk is coming. Fastidious, I want to visit my friend.)' According to the poet's note, quotation marks are added when republished in *Diaochong Jili*: the intention of this line is to introduce the third persona, a local friend. At the same time, as 'I' walk on 'the grey road', the friend from afar is brought up as 'I' heard his name from a very long distance. This is obviously imagined. At the same time, allusions in classical Chinese literature and philosophy are introduced:

> How tired! No one really stirred the boat in my basin,

no one caused a storm in the sea?

In the last two lines, the exhaustion and feelings of lost in imagination is replaced by an experience in reality:

O my friend has brought me five o'clock
and the sign of impending snow. (trans. Bian)

Here the imagination and time travel seem to cease as a local friend's visit replaces the friend in a faraway location. Intriguingly, in previous lines, 'I' is walking to visit this local friend. More interestingly, this local friend also just woke up from a nap and wanted to visit a friend as 'dusk is coming'. The two personas therefore overlap each other. As 'I' dream of a friend faraway, a friend nearby is thinking about 'I'; in a dream-like setting where 'I' depart to visit a friend while thinking about someone faraway, a local friend is on his way to bring 'five o'clock and the sign of impending snow'.

Similar to 'Resounding Dust', the overlap of time, space, thoughts and identity in 'The Composition of the Distances' evokes an endless circle of taste and style. Lines of *xu* and *shi* carry out the composition of space and time: *xu* and *shi* each extends from the fifth line and reunite in the eighth line, which is also the only line in this poem that directly depicts reality. In this reality, 'the impending snow' again paints the picture of a dream-like scene: waking up from the grey road and the grey sky to dusky weather that resembles the dream. This scene provides the sense of decadence and depression, revealing the repeated theme of Bian's pre-war poetry: feeling of loss and exhaustion.

Inside the endless circle of style and taste, the change of space and time moves in what Bian calls '*luoxuan shi de jinxing* (a spiral march foward 螺旋式的进行)' (Bian, 2000, p. 656) and '*luoxuan shi de jinbu* (a spiral progress 螺旋式的进步)' (p. 660). Bian particularly appreciates this idea as he repetitively brings it up in his discussions on André Gide's work. In Translator's Foreword in his 1943 translation of Gide's *Les Nouvelles Nourritures* (新的食粮), Bian elaborates this idea in a philosophical manner: when something repeats itself and appears for a second time, it differs from its first appearance and progresses onward (Bian, 2000).

The reason why Bian finds this particular idea so appealing might be personal: it may have to do with his shared experience in love affairs with Gide. As discussed previously, Bian's unrequited love for Zhang Chonghe is frequently visited in his poems between 1930 and 1940 through the image of mirror: repeated yet different images of

self and reflection in a mirror. Bian mentions Gide's experience in the Translator's Foreword to further explain the spiral progress (*luoxuan shi de jinbu*): 'It is the same when Gide talked about his own experience: his proposal to his cousin (who later became his wife) was rejected. However, he was not defeated; instead, his hopes carried on. Many ideas and emotions were once hidden before reappearing in a more meaningful manner. Similar examples could be found everywhere' (Bian, 2000, p. 659).

The fact that Gide found hope out of his lover's rejection probably had inspired Bian; this encouragement went further and inspired Bian to rediscover the Taoist cosmology of time, and more importantly, the Taoism-driven idea of beauty in traditional Chinese painting and literature. It is rather interesting to see how 'a spiral progress' corresponds to Zong Baihua's analysis of the goal of *xushi xiangsheng*. It is, of course, not the first time that Bian rediscovers classical Chinese literature ideals with merits he saw in translating Western literature, notably writings by French Symbolist poets. As a matter of fact, the poet's efforts in using pairs of images with sources in both traditional Chinese culture and modern society are good evidence of his attempt to compare, if not re-programme, classical Chinese teachings and poetry with what is considered as the most modern of all writing styles. The motivation and psyche behind this rediscovery are further explored in Part II of this research.

Summary of chapter

In Bian's poems featuring water as a dominant image, classical elements play a vital role in the poetic expressions and contemplations over time and life. It is clear that Bian inherits the Confucian notion of time alongside the poetic aesthetics completed by the Taoist view of the constant flow of water and the eternity of time in contrast with morality and changes. The Confucian morality serves as a key driver of such poetic creations; Bian's contemplation on the images of water represents his negative feelings, which is a result of the lack of ability to provide solution through literature the social-political crisis of his nation. Moreover, it is Confucian morality that drives Bian to pursue consolation for his negative feelings, which contradicts the Aestheticist call for self-indulgence and emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes. The interplay of Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist influences in Bian's poetry, though differ in many ways, tells the compelling story that Bian deals with his trauma almost exclusively with the aid of tradition, rather than the construction of an imagined Western modernity.

Chapter 8 From *Window on the West* to the Beauty of Intelligence: Bian Zhilin's Nostalgic Look Back into Classical Chinese Poetry

Chapters 4 to 7 examine the themes, symbols and style of lyricism in Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry. In Chapters 8 and 9, I turn to a different direction of discussion, and focus on the utopian impulse and the deep structure of feelings and mentality in Bian's imaginings of modernity.

This chapter aims to cross-reference Bian's self-claimed association with French Symbolist poetry and his much deeper connection with classical Chinese poetics. Looking beyond textual analysis, I refer to Bian's translation works and the arguments made by Chinese intellectuals in Bian's active days to draw a comparison between French Symbolist poetry and Bian's poetics. At the same time, I look into private symbols in Bian's pre-war poetry to reveal the sources of the poet's emotional structure. By turning to the emotional depth of writing rather than lingering on the much sought-after discussions of modernity (which usually means Westernisation), a fresh insight is generated: Western influences serve as the artistic agency of classical Chinese poetry for Bian. I argue that Bian's pre-war poetry is a Chinese child despite its birthmark from Symbolism and Metaphysical poetry. The projection of a Westernised modernity has much to do with an imagined ideal that accommodated his yearning for tradition.

A closer examination of Bian's pre-war poetry and notes, as well as his critics reveals the mentality shared by many Chinese intellectual elites in Bian's time, which lay behind the emphasis on influences from the West. This mentality revolved around the anxiety caused by self-motivated cultural exile and an eagerness to construct an aesthetic modernity for the sake of a new *raison d'être*. Following on from the previous chapter, which deals with a textual analysis of a selection of Bian's pre-war poetry, this chapter explores Bian's mentality by looking at three aspects of his poetry: private symbols; *kumen* (cultural suffering); and the beauty of intelligence. As all three aspects have been examined and discussed by other Chinese scholars both in Bian's time and today, their views will be critically evaluated in exploring the driving force of creating modern aesthetics in literature.

Style and ambience: Imagination of classical Chineseness

The previous chapter has shown that symbols and stylistic features in Bian's

pre-war poetry reflect his bond with classical Chinese philosophy and poetry. Therefore, Bian's self-reflection on his poetic strategy seems inconsistent with his writing practice. At the same time, similarities can be found, to an extent, between classical Chinese poetry (especially late Tang Dynasty poetry in Bian's case) and French Symbolism and Modernism. With no intention of replacing one poetic tradition with another, this section discusses such similarities in an attempt to understand the motivation behind this inconsistency and its influence on his attempt to construct aesthetic modernity in poetry.

In the 1980s, Bian Zhilin explained his strategy of expressing emotions in poetry by talking about the influence of French Symbolism: 'I focus on the implicit; therefore, my poems agree with that Western school in the emphasis on suggestion. We are naturally bonded in this way' (Bian, 2002, p. 446). 'That Western school', French Symbolism, was frequently translated and studied by not only Bian, but also by many of his peer intellectual elites, including Dai Wangshu, Liang Zongdai, and Li Jianwu.

To emphasise his literal kinship to French Symbolism, Bian (1949) even talked about how he 'put down English poetry' (p. 31) after finding the qualities of 'intimacy and suggestion' in poems written by Paul Verlaine and Paul Valéry. Bian (1932) talked about these two qualities as 'exactly what classical Chinese poetry is good at' (p. 1), which resulted in him feeling 'like meeting an old friend' (1982, p. 3). It is interesting to see in various notes and opinion articles how he repeatedly put emphasis on his affiliation to French Symbolism (and later on, English and American Modernism). In contrast, his seldomly mentioning of inheritance from classical Chinese poetry until 1978 when he formally recognised his preference for late Tang Dynasty poetry. Apart from this, Bian produced little to no writing that reflected the same preference in his most productive years as a poet.

Moreover, all his writings on the influence of traditional Chinese art and literature, which were mostly written in the 1980s, were presented in a comparative style. As French Symbolism and Modernism were put in a dominant position, it seems as if any poetic element that bore a classical Chinese characteristic was only employed because it had some similarity to 'that Western School'.

Amongst all the writers, Bian showed particular interests in a few names leading French Symbolist poetry in his following works. In his own poetry-writing he wrote down many notes referring to Paul Valéry and Stéphane Mallarmé. In essays reviewing his poetics he talks about "intimacy and suggestion" (2002, p. 459). Furthermore, in

1932 as his translation works were to be published in *Window on the West*, he published an article entitled 'Verlaine and Symbolism', in *The Crescent Moon Society Monthly,* the main poetry magazine run by Bian's Crescent Moon Society predecessors (Haft, 1983, p.20). Citing translated excerpts from Harold Nicolson's *Paul Verlaine* (1921), this article aims to introduce and discuss poetic techniques and aesthetics that Bian later adopted in his own poetry.

Window on the West (1936) is Bian's positive response to the call for *Poésie Pure* in 1920s, which was made by Chinese intellectuals living in Europe and Japan during this time. The two representative figures, Wang Duqing and Mu Mutian, were also among the most appealing writers after the criticism of New Poetry written by Hu Shi, Guo Moruo, and Xu Zhimo became widely accepted. Doubting the artistic value of poems written with the primary goal of freeing vernacular Chinese from classical writing strategies, Wang Duqing 王独清 (1898–1940) wrote a passionate letter to Mu Mutian:

> In order to treat the disease caused by a lack of beauty and an adaptation of coarse writing in Chinese literature, I feel the necessity of employing *Poésie Pure* — Mutian! Your ideals of consistency and persistence in poetry; only *Poésie Pure* could achieve both to a satisfying level! ... I hope, through our hard work, we can make the art (of poetry) complete. We must learn from Baudelarie, from Verlaine and Rimbaud! We must also become poets of beauty! (Wang, 1985, p. 110)

Wang's words, as well as Bian's life as a poet, represent a common, even the 'natural' methodology of thinking and practicing that has been employed by Chinese intellectuals since the May Fourth Movement, after the enchantment of classical Chinese aesthetics was shattered. When constructing a new coherent cultural centre in literature, thought and culture to replace the classical Chinese system, all the problems had to be solved by seeking a solution from the West. This also explains why poets like Bian Zhilin claimed that he only writes poems in the style similar to those that had been translated. The motivation behind such methodology is of interest for this research. Indeed, it is very interesting how a popular Western school of literature emerged in China alongside the emergence of a problem with the existing way of writing. Wang connected the completeness of poetry to the adoption of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud in a tone so natural that it almost sounds as if he was taking the connection for granted. French Symbolism served as a good excuse to 'put down English poetry' when the followers of the latter, e.g., the Crescent Moon Society, started to lose their

once magnificent power.

The solution of introducing one Western school as a replacement for another has never helped to reduce the anxiety hidden behind the problems raised during the long and arduous journey of New Poetry. The discontent caused by 'coarse writing' in the Crescent Moon Society's passionate expression of feelings when writing English Romanticism in Chinese is a result of the buried guilt and nostalgia towards classical Chinese poetry. Symbolism provided a modern (because it is Western) reference for poets like Bian Zhilin to rediscover classical Chinese poetry, a tradition that every respectful Chinese intellectual had to abandon after the May Fourth Movement.

Symbolism and classical Chinese poetics: Home away from home

After the success of *Window on the West,* in the 1940s and 1950s, though Bian had stopped writing poetry, he carried out a grand project of translating English and French literature and introduced a long list of great writers to China (see chapter 2). Interestingly, apart from the French Symbolist poets and T.S. Eliot (as discussed in previous chapters), even their influences are to a certain extent superficial), literary influences from writers translated by Bian are quite limited in his own poetry.

Intimacy and the strategy of *xing* in classical Chinese poetry

Not unlike his peer poets and fiction writers, such as Dai Wangshu and Yu Dafu, Bian Zhilin started his practice of imitating his Western predecessors with the formal qualities of poems. Bian's translation of Valéry's work kept strictly to the rhyme-and-stanza scheme of the original and developed some lively rhythms within the compass of its short, spare lines. Bian's translation techniques have contributed much to his successful emulation of rhymes and metre in poems, e.g. 'The White Shell', 'Song', 'Sea Sorrow' and 'A Piece of Broken Ship'. The musical qualities shared by both the *Book of Odes* and most poems written by Paul Verlaine may have laid the literal foundation for the possible similarities between classical Chinese poetry and Symbolism. When looking beyond the formal qualities, however, it is arguably the symbols and their connotations that define the boundary. According to Bian's comments in *Window on the West* (Bian, 1946) and his 1980s monologue in *Poems of Ten Years,* intimacy and suggestion are the two 'old friends' that led him to the path of writing as a Symbolist.

Nicolson's (1902) final chapter, 'Verlaine's Literary Position', contains a number of passages of striking relevance to Bian's own poetry. Nicolson (p. 236) describes Symbolism as inseparable from the features of 'intimacy' and 'suggestion', these being 'the two essential qualities which raise true lyric poetry above the level of merely elegiac'. In Nicolson's presentation, 'intimacy' implies:

> A feeling of a definite and immensely human personality… Its effect resides firstly in the sparing and skillful use of attributes, in an apparently incidental but vivid reference to minor objects which…radiate with emotional significance. It is not that such objects are themselves of any interest… it is simply that our sentiment of association is set vibrating by these references, that a pleasurable chord is struck by the thought of other objects, intimate to us, which have precisely such a connexion in our own experience. (Nicolson, 1902, p. 239)

In his pre-war poetry, Bian relies heavily on affective images instead of logical concepts and deduction usually carried out by a centralised yet implicit 'I' to uplift the emotion of the writer and help readers relate to certain feelings. Bian's style of writing has received many appraisals in China due to this seemingly close affiliation to Symbolism and Modernism.

In his celebrated lecture series about Chinese New Poetry at Peking University, Chinese literature critic Fei Ming greatly admires Bian's poetry writing: 'his literary style is most modern; his taste is, however, the most traditional' (Fei and Zhu, 2008, p. 332). Tang Qi (1990) also wrote that 'Bian has absorbed the influence from the French Symbolists and the Modernists from England and America; with which, at the same time, he assimilated traditional Chinese philosophies and artistic creativity. He has developed a new path and crystalized his unique poetics' (p. 19).

The path, however, may not be as 'new' as Bian and his critics had hoped. Bian's strategy was as similar to *xing* as to his claimed Western affinities. In the 1920s, Bian's good friend Liang Zongdai, a well-known Chinese disciple of Valéry, introduced Bian, a student at Peking University at the time, to French Symbolism. Liang was among the very few Chinese intellectuals who attempted to compare the association and sense of finality described by Nicolson with the strategy of *xing* 兴 in classical Chinese literature. In the Southern Qi dynasty literary work, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龙), *xing* is referred to as 'those [who] intend to express emotions must start by exploring significance in minor objects'. Liang (2003, p. 62) talks about the relevance of *xing* by defining Symbolism as 'an imprint of our

feelings on that piece of scenery'. Liang (2003, p. 60) cites the Song Dynasty book of classical Chinese literary criticism, *Xu Jinzhen Shige* 续金针诗格, to explain the strategy of symbolising: 'A poem should always carry with it two layers of meaning: the internal layer intended as an expression of emotions and ideas; and the external layer for the depiction of its symbols. A poem is not fit for appreciation unless both its layers are written in an implicit style'.

In his 1980s monologue in *Poems of Ten Years,* half a century after his most fruitful years as a poet, Bian confessed his preference for late Tang Dynasty poetry, revealing the identity of the 'old friend' that he met when reading about intimacy and suggestion in Symbolism. Expressing emotions related to 'turning loose' and 'escape' (Eliot, 1932, p. 21), Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1154–1221), one of the three Tang poets named by Bian Zhilin, was a representative figure in imprinting his emotions on minor objects in his surroundings through a hidden self. Hiding their experience and feelings behind words, it was common practice for Jiang Kui and his peer poets, including Li Shangyin and Du Mu, to start from a point either in time or in geography and develop a full poem composed with an implication of experience through the description of minor scenery followed by a highly implicit expression of feelings. For example, the city of Huainan has been employed in ten different poems by Jiang Kui, where the hidden self in the poem would refer to details such as the 'clear wind and moon over a small boat riding the gentle waves' ('Shadows of Apricot Blossoms from the Sky', *Xinghua Tianying* 杏花天影) and 'the bright moonlight kept the thousand mountains cold' ('Treading On Grass', *Ta Suo Xing* 踏莎行). Detailed observation of minor objects serves as a hint of the poet's true emotions, such as that of leaving his homeland and the recollection of a lost lover.

Many of Bian's pre-war poems include two layers of meaning. 'Comparison 对照' (1934) incorporates a light-hearted description of the season and an implied sadness over lost love even though there is no direct mention of love, while 'Round Treasure Box' relies on the symbol of a bridge to connect the past and the future, implying his own idealism flowing down the river of life. 'Fragment', on the other hand, although written using simple, short words, buries an endless story of sadness underneath the poetic air of carelessness.

In 1935, Bian's friend, poet Li Jianwu, published his review of Bian Zhilin's second poem collection *Fish Eyes* (1935) and passionately appraised 'the modernity of

Bian, who represents a minority of poets in the front line of writing as a modern man, lies in the suggestion of symbols organised in a strict stanza that is intended to maintain a vague dream in which the unlimited beauty of poetry could be seen through limited mortal eyes' (Li, 1983, p. 94). Bian strongly disagreed with Li's analysis of 'Fragment', however. Li (2005) sees the sorrow in 'Fragment' as 'the poet's views over life: nothing in life is beyond the function of decoration' (p. 94) and argues that despite the sad internal layer of meaning, the poem is beautiful due to Bian's focus on decoration in the art of poetry.

Bian published an article in response to Li's review: 'I focus on the relativity of symbols (in the space created in 'Fragment')' (Li, 1983, p. 118). All symbols in 'Fragment', including 'you', 'the scenery on the bridge', 'the moon' and 'your dream' are interconnected to reflect the poet's idea of relativity. By doing so, Bian has created a dynamic of agencies in the poem. A similar sense of relativity can be seen in poems written in the same year, such as 'The Composition of Distances', 'Chi Ba', 'Round Treasure Box' and 'Seafaring'. These poems, through simple words and short verses, create a space of imagination where traces of the poet's emotions and thoughts are so implicit that the analysis depends on the taste of the readers. Readers, when following these traces, are engaged in the dynamic space of relativity, hence they become part of the poem. Symbols representing the beautiful and the damned, the good and the evil, happiness and sorrow…none stands solely as a signifier of the poet's centralised feelings. Instead, readers, through their 'limited mortal eyes', can gain a glimpse of the poet's mentality by playing a part in the beauty of poetry and philosophy. Despite Michelle Yeh (2008)'s assertion that Bian is 'a man who inherits creatively' (p. 40), she recognises the Taoist idea of relativity in 'Round Treasure Box', and asserts that 'despite Bian's close affiliation to Western poetry, I do not think that he has made the last step towards Symbolism – which includes the faith in artistic eternity and reification' (p. 46). The liquidity of time, space and life represented by the round treasure box symbolises the poet's 'conservative reception of the transcendental aspect of art' (ibid.). However, Yeh adds that this attitude is not reflected in all of Bian's poetry since 'this round treasure box is unique in Bian's works' (ibid.). This ambiguity is highly representative of Yeh's works on Bian and the New Poetry. As stated in Chapter 3, Yeh uses Westernisation as proof of modernity in poetry and has not made a clear distinction between Western modernist literature and modernism in Chinese literature. Her ambiguous arguments, though providing a new approach in considering the influence

of tradition in New Poetry, could not explain Bian's true attitude towards tradition and Western influences. On this level, in my opinion, her discussions on the combination of classical Chinese poetic elements and the so-called 'modernist literature' are somehow less enlightening than Jiang Ruoshui (2010)'s work that aims at questioning the established consensus that only Western literature could be modern. I also disagree with the same ambiguity reflected in Yeh (1991)'s analysis of Bian's use of impersonality as she recites Bian's translation of *Window on the West* and his association with William Empson, who was teaching in Peking University in 1940s, when Bian had ceased writing poetry. However, I would like to argue that Bian's use of this technique has a more profound connection to classical Chinese aesthetics rather than the Western names listed to justify his affiliation to tradition.

Suggestion, impersonality, and the classical Chinese aesthetics in *wuwo zhi jing*

Bian's writings in 1930 all strictly adhere to the refined standard of word count and rhyme to create the 'Gothic chill' (Zhang, 1989, p. 13) celebrated by the Crescent Society. A good example is 'At Dusk', which was mentioned in the previous chapter, where the aligned images animate the theme of weariness and nostalgia, but the projection of feelings, despite the classical Chinese qualities, is nothing new to the readers. Both the Romantic Gothic chill and the weighted composition of the poetic form are evidence of the dislocation discussed above, which is a product of the imagination of modernity through the emulation of Western form and superficial style. It is fair to say that during this period, there was no clear evidence of modernity other than the vernacular and formal quality in Bian's pre-war poetry.

Impersonality and dramatization are two remarkable artistic features valued by Late Symbolism:

> Lyric poetry, the subjective genre, is objectivised by Eliot's ideal of impersonality; all art aspires to the classical ideal of the objective drama, and the feelings in lyric poetry should not be the feeling of the poet. (Wellek, 1986, p.190)

Instead, poetry is simply the expression of an emotion through an object, not the expression of the author. Eliot (1919) even coined the term 'objective correlative', which was described by Wellek (1986, p. 192) as 'a symbolic world which [Eliot] thought of as continuous with the feelings of the poet, objectifying and patterning them

[…] motivate the emotion […] simply as the 'equivalent' of the author's emotion, the successful objectivation of emotion in art'.

The goal of impersonality and dramatization, according to T. S. Eliot (1921), is to transform the individual description of feelings into a universal narrative by dissociating sensibility. Eliot (ibid.) finds 'a direct apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling […] it modified his sensibility'. As a result, Modernist and Symbolist poets set out to rebel against single denotation and connotation with a pursuit of ambiguity and uncertainty in languages and poems. The difficulty in interpreting their poems, combined with the effect of defamiliarization, serves as the formal quality of modern poetry.

It was the complexity and the quality of intelligence and the call for pondering and inspection of different types of patriotic and nostalgic sorrow that made 'Chi Ba' a unique piece as the subjective feelings is impersonalised. On the other hand, the character and narrative voices are all subjects of the poetic self, which is personal. These two seemingly conflicting features are never seen in the same poem in any of T. S. Eliot's works, apart from his widely recognised achievement of coining the poetics of impersonality. The transformation of the technique realised in 'Chi Ba' was a result of Bian's limited mode of understanding the French Symbolists and Modernist poets. More importantly, the difference also reveals the motivation behind Bian's practice of using impersonality.

In 1934, under the instruction of his mentor Ye Gongchao 叶功超 (1904–1981), Bian published his translation of T. S. Eliot's famous 1917 essay, 'Tradition and The Individual Talent'. This publication quickly had an extensive impact on the space of New Poetry as well as on Bian's individual practice as a poet. Bian (2000) talked about this translation on several occasions: 'As the translator I have, during the course of editing this anthology of translated works, shifted my personal interests in translating Western Literature from Verlaine and the Symbolists to T. S. Eliot's works on tradition' (p. 587). 'Not only has it influence[d] my poetic style in 1930s, it had, to a certain level, contributed to some relatively more sophisticated poems written between the 1930s and 1940s' (p. 188).

According to many scholars (see chapter 3), the influence Bian talked about can be attributed to T. S. Eliot's theory of depersonalisation, primarily described in his 1921 article 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. According to this theory, 'poetry is not a

turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality' (Eliot, 1921). He also called for a constant belief in 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' (ibid.). As Bian translated the piece, he made a clear distinction between the terms 'emotion' and 'feelings'. The former was translated into *ganqing* 感情, *qingxu* 情绪, and *qinggan* 情感 and the latter as *ganjue* 感觉 only. When Bian (2002) later talked about his poetic tendency of 'crystallisation (*jiejing* 结晶)' (p. 444), he also mentioned T.S. Eliot's influence as Eliot proposed the technique of impersonality, which transforms emotions into feelings.

It is evident that many of Bian's pre-war poems benefit from a similar pursuit and qualities. Distinctive features include the withdrawn self, multiple dramatic scenes, and the difficulty of interpretation. It is more interesting to observe the similarity between modern poetry's pursuit of objectifying emotions in the West and the classical Chinese poetic technique of *xing*, (which was discussed in the first section of this chapter) however. More interestingly, the dissociation of sensibility is almost equivalent to classical Chinese poetics' pursuit of *yijing* (meaning and ambience 意境), which requires a cold treatment of subjective feelings yet no demand for precise visualisation to retreat from moralising or commenting on the matter. Zong Baihua (1994)'s elaborate explanation of poetic beauty showcases the quality of ambivalence in *yijing*: 'The definition of poetry goes: 'the use of a language of beauty…of musical and fine art's qualities…in order to depict *yijing* in the deepest human emotions.' (p. 361). The idea of *yijing* is again a reference to classical Chinese poetry. However, the idea of musical and artistic qualities seems to show influence from French Symbolist poetry, though no further explanation is made in his article either.

Suggestiveness, in creating *yijing*, serves as the evocation of emotional effects through secondary epithets and vague, mysterious words. Bian (2002) described how 'intimacy and suggestion' (p. 349) in French Symbolist poetry and Modernist poetry in the early 20th century made him feel 'like meeting an old friend'. On the other hand, inexactness and imprecision in classical Chinese poetry has served to construct modernity in Western poetry after Romanticism and Classicism. For example, Ezra Pound (2007) used the late Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei's poetics and the symbol of *yan* (the smoke and the mist 烟) to explain the modern aesthetics in Rémy de Gourmont's poetry. Bian's pre-war poetry, according to research mentioned in the first section of this chapter, was a product of the similar pursuit of classical Chinese and

Western Modernist and Symbolist poetics.

Despite their similar features in verses, however, the two poetics were born under different philosophical and spiritual circumstances. Bian's preference for impersonality and suggestion, as discussed above, was motivated by the crisis of identity. The influence of traditional Chinese poetics is deep rooted and highly influential in Bian's pre-war poetry. Bian's successful transformation of *yijing* and the classical Chinese intellectual's pursuit of *yuan* (roundness 圆) are examples of the modernity achieved by the poet through the confidence and inspiration of French Symbolism and Modernism, however.

Even Bian himself felt highly uncomfortable about his writing. Bian (2002) described his problem as 'whenever I write a poem, I feel like my body was lost in a deep valley, though my mind was striving to speak from the peak of the mountain above' (p. 446). Bian also wrote about his lack of confidence about being discovered and his tendency to hide his face in the crowd. The rift between body and mind symbolised the dislocation: his mind was set to write according to 'that Western school', yet hidden underneath was the despair of a Chinese man not so different from the disappointed Qu Yuan in the Warring States Period (475–221BC) and Du Fu in the Tang dynasty, whose heart was broken by the An Lushan Rebellion of 755AD. The dislocation caused the poet spiritual pain about poetry writing, which greatly resembles the dilemma described at the start of the chapter.

The writing strategy adopted by Jiang Kui, which was much admired by Bian, represents a common practice of incorporating Taoist aesthetics of 'viewing objects from the eyes of the object' (*yi wu guan wu* 以物观物) and the impersonal state (*wuwo zhi jing* 无我之境) of writing where the emotions of 'I' no longer serve as centre of the poet's appreciation of his surroundings. According to Wang Guowei 王国维 (1998), versatile scholar of classical Chinese aesthetics in the late Qing Dynasty, when self-consciousness is placed in the centre, 'in the personal state (*youwo zhi jing* 有我之境) the poet views objects in terms of himself so everything takes on his colouring' (third verse of *Commentaries on Lyrical Work*, 1998). Wang sees the other state, where self-consciousness is 'hidden as a secondary viewer', as arguably successful in its value of art and beauty. In the impersonal state of writing, 'the poet views objects in terms of the objects; we cannot tell if the poet is himself, or has he absorbed the state of the object. Most ancient poets write in the personal state. However, that is not to say that

they have not been able to reach the impersonal state; but to do so takes an unrestrained, brave soul of a literatus that stands completely on his own' (ibid.).

Bian (2002) wrote about his strategy of hiding the subjective 'I' in poems as follows: 'Poets are 'animals of emotions'. When I write poems, though they are all lyrical, I tend to control myself from indulging my feelings, as if I'd prefer to be 'cold blooded' … I filter my words and thoughts; I long for when my poems rise above myself and crystalize' (p. 444). It is not just the poet's personality that drives him to weaken his subjective feelings. Influences from post-Symbolism, and more importantly classical Chinese poetry, are key to his transformation from 'O Dreams! O Roses! O Tears!'.

Bian used *yijing* to explain his strategy of parody and impersonality. For Bian, the purpose of a decentralised 'I' in a poem was to create a proper ambience or *yijing* so that the poem could be read and understood beyond its words, an idea that he linked to the strategy of suggestion in Symbolism. In Bian's poems, the strategy is realised through what he called 'crystallisation'. Relativity, as shown in 'Fragment', is frequently used to create endless meanings subject to the reader's understanding, which also corresponds to the effect of *wuqiong* (endless 无穷) in classical Chinese literature. *Wuqiong* is a term from Buddhism (the endless meanings of the Buddhist wisdom and teachings). At the same time, due to the nature of the effect, classical Chinese plays and stories usually include both illusions and reality to achieve this effect for the readers

Bian (2002) reflects on his pre-war poetry as 'some sing the tune of 'fin de siècle'' from the West whilst some play notes from the late Tang dynasty and the Southern Song' (p. 459). The structure and allusions of 'The Composition of Distances' shows how the poet pieces together these strategies into a poem of his own. The poem, in Bian's 1935 translation, includes the following passages:

> When I dream of reading alone on the highest terrace
> 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'
> there appeared in the newspaper that star that marks the Fall.
> The newspaper drops on the floor. The atlas opens
> To a thought travelling to a far-off name.
> The landscape received here is now clouded with twilight…
> …
> How tired! No one really stirred the boat in my basin.
> No one caused a storm in the sea?
> O my friend has brought me five o'clock
> And the sign of impending snow.

Seven footnotes followed this poem, ten lines in its original language. According to

Bian, he read in the newspaper about the discovery of a supernova, the bright light of which was caused by 'an explosion during the time of the Roman Empire'. Therefore, the first three lines point to the relativity of time, a topic that appeared repeatedly in Bian's pre-war poetry. 'The landscape received' is from the atlas sent by his friend, a symbol about the relationship between will and representation; the line 'no one really stirred the boat in my basin' is an allusion from the late Qing dynasty story book *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (*liaozhai zhiyi* 聊斋志异), in which a young man's illusion had a big impact due to the strange relationship between the world in his mind and the world in reality; and the last line brings about the theme of the poem: relativity of will and representation, as 'my friend', a substance in the world of objective reality, brought with him the time and the sign of snow, which are only perceivable in the poet's mind. The poem is written in the structure of a classical Chinese theatre play, and the poet emphasised in his notes that 'this is not a poem of any mysterious philosophy of my own thoughts; instead, it is about a certain type of feelings set in a certain type of *yijing*' (2002, p. 404).

The 'certain type of *yijing*' resembles that of the Eastern Jin and Liu Song Dynasty poet Tao Yuanming's famous poem 'Drinking Wine' (*Yin Jiu* 饮酒), which includes the following lines:

> Picking chrysanthemums under the eastern fence,
> One pensively views the southern mountains.
> The mountain air and sunset are beautiful;
> Flying birds return together.
> There is true meaning in this;
> Desiring argument, one stops and forgets to speak.

The reason why a poet's exquisite technique in making metaphors is inferior to the 'natural poetic quality' lies in the endless meaning, *wuqiong*. In 'Drinking Wine', the poet's idyllic life, alongside his relieved mind free from an orthodox life as literati, becomes immersed in the pensive view of the southern mountain in sunset. The identity of the poet is therefore engaged in a dynamic relative to that of his surroundings. The 'true meaning' in this relativity, according to the poet himself, is not comprehendible through mere words. Instead, as the reader reads the poem, he or she gets involved in the relativity and become part of the untold 'true meaning'. Therefore, when reading 'Drinking Wine', one gets drawn not only to the idyllic scenery, but also the effect of *wuqiong* behind all the symbols closely associated with each other. The natural quality

of the poem is not so different from that of 'Fragment' and 'The Composition of Distances'.

Interestingly, Paul Valéry became enthusiastic about Taoism after reading Liang Zongdai's translation. He wrote in the preface to Liang's *Les Poèmes de T'ao Ts'ien* (1930) and offered his empathetic commentary on not only the poet, but also the classical Chinese poetics. Valéry (1930) compared Taoism with La Fontaine and Virgil by describing *yijing* in Tao's poems as 'frigus opacum', 'amica silentia', and 'le sombre plaisir d'un cœur mélancolique' so that 'cette caresse va loin'. The 'caresse' in this case has much to do with the 'true meaning' represented by private symbols in classical Chinese poetry.

The structure of aesthetics and imagination of French Symbolist poetry

The discussion in the previous section provides a good understanding of how strategies in Symbolism serve as a bridge between the longing for modernity (modern equals Western for poets like Bian) and the inescapable nostalgia for classical Chinese poetics. In this section, an examination of the choice of symbols and the emotions they represent in Bian's pre-war poetry is presented. As shown in the analysis of 'The Composition of Distances', symbols usually lie between the objects and the poet's idea of those objects to create unexpected, unseen, and philosophical links between text, reader, and author.

In contrast with universal symbols, which contain an inner idea that is perceived widely by many, the symbols in Bian's poems are usually private symbols that he himself arbitrarily assigns a personal meaning to. In the case of 'The Composition of Distances', symbols carry cultural connotations that are agreed upon with little discussion (for example, the allusion to the boat in the basin, the star that marks the Fall, and the landscape received). At the same time, however, they are private as the symbols are discernible in the context of one specific experience of the poet. It is through the private connotations of symbols that a poet can express his unique emotions and aesthetic ideas. In other words, it is in the private symbols that we can reveal the type and quality of sensibility in a poem. Not unlike the strategy of *xing*, rediscovered through a reference provided by Symbolism, private symbols in Bian's pre-war poetry reflect the heritage of classical Chinese poetry.

The source and meaning of private symbols in Bian's pre-war poetry

It is not unusual to see symbols that carry both a universal and a private quality in late Tang Dynasty poetry. *Xing* serves as a typical strategy to transform a symbol's agreed connotation into a private symbol of specific experiences and emotions. For example, Jiang Kui was a master of using the symbol of a willow tree. The willow tree has been seen as a universal symbol of love affairs and hidden passion in classical Chinese poetry since the Southern Dynasty, and in *The Collection of Yuefu Songs and Ballads* 乐府诗*,* the willow tree is used for its commonly recognised meaning:

> As I walk out of the white gate of my house,
> I see your dark hair hidden behind the willow tree.
> Our pleasure smells like the Incense of Chenshui;
> You are the fire of our pleasure;
> Just like the Boshan Burner that melts the incense.

In *Dan Huangliu* 淡黄柳 and *Qiliang Fan* 凄凉犯, Jiang Kui constructed his poems around the central symbol of willow trees in Heifei, the Capital City of Huainan, where he made many detailed observations of the ordinary surroundings and expressed his feelings using the strategy of *xing.* As both poems are about memories of a lover, willow trees, as a universal symbol, surely correspond to the theme. The ambience of both poems, on the other hand, has much to do with the function of willow trees as a private symbol hinting at a trace of the poet's personal experience: an old lover—the city of Hefei in Huainan—willow trees. The symbol of willow trees is only complete due to the hints provided by the previous two poems as readers cannot see into Jiang Kui's heartbroken, hidden love affair in the city without understanding this private experience underneath the symbol. Therefore, willow trees are transformed from their superficial level of meaning as a universal symbol to a private symbol employed by Jiang Kui to represent one specific memory that can touch the feelings of his reader.

Liang Zongdai (1930) uses an approach similar to Valéry's to evaluate private symbols in Jiang Kui's poems. He stated that by weakening the universal symbols and basing the connotations around individual experience, Jiang Kui's poems are *Poésie Pure* in classical Chinese poetry. Compared to other poets, Jiang 'is capable of leading us into a world that is simpler and more innocent; so that we can feel the shiver from a beauty that has no name' (Liang, 2003, p. 87). Again, both Valéry and Liang provide references using terms and names from the West for the sake of understanding classical Chinese poetry. It seems that private symbols in late Tang Dynasty poetry have carried classical Chinese poems through time. The poems are read and analysed by 'modern'

seekers like Liang and Bian because the classical strategies and effects magically lift them from the prevalent abomination of Chinese traditions to the altar of Western modernity.

In the previous chapter, symbols in Bian's pre-war poems were categorised into the following types: everyday people and objects, such as the sour plum juice, the handcart carrier, two walnuts in the hand of the idle man and a small rock underneath the foot of a child; symbols borrowed directly from classical Chinese poetry, including dreams, windows, tears, a dressing table, falling leaves, flowing water, the moon, autumn, and the setting sun (among all 39 poems written between 1930 and 1934, 32 employed symbols of this type); objects associated with new technology, including radio waves, the star that predicts the fall of Rome, the watch with night vision, and the fossil; and symbols borrowed directly from classical Chinese philosophy and religions, including Buddhist scriptures, *se* and *xiang* of Buddhist teachings, karma, and cicadas.

Different categories of symbols reflect the poet's signature style of using private symbols. The poet tends to borrow symbols from various backgrounds and align them together in one poem to construct a unique style. Borrowed symbols are usually associated with the poet's personal ideas and experience. For example, in 'Tears', the poet compares tears to pearls and dew, both of which are metaphors widely used in classical Chinese poetry. The symbol of dew, in particular, represents the short duration of life and feelings. In the first two lines, the poem seems to tell the story of how tears are as instant as a lost love, however, Bian digs deeper into the connection of the symbols and uses the theory in modern mathematics: a tangent point on the curve does not take up any extra space. Through this theory, the symbol of tears represents the meaning of emptiness: 'I will cherish this tangent point of emptiness…a man might as well cherish his tears' ('Tears' 1937).

Sensibility: A Chinese 'child' of Symbolism and Metaphysics

Poetic languages used to associate all different types of symbols also play a vital role in transforming them into private symbols. At first glance, Bian's poems seem to be written in a bizarre Western tone. By using abstract and concrete words, however, Bian associates symbols that point to both objective and objective. For example, 'I took a sip of the haze in the street' ('The Record 记录', 1930), 'O my friend has brought me five o'clock' ('The Composition of Distances'), 'I spit out an 'Alas' in the colour of

ivory' ('Dusk'), and 'I remember that once, somewhere, I took a handful of its glamour' ('The Road'). In all these poems, symbols that do not exist in the real world are associated with real movements and gestures that only point to an objective existence. This strategy of associating symbols can be seen as the poet's attempt to transform the state of objects into a state of mind. Although compared repeatedly with Western poets such as Emily Dickinson (e.g., 'A Quartz contentment, like a stone', 1862), Bian's strategy of fitting actual words describing human gestures with abstract nouns resembles the requirement of *lianzi* (炼字, see chapter 4), meaning 'smelting poetic words', in classical Chinese literature.

Through *lianzi*, Bian's sensibility becomes 'touchable' through abstract symbols that usually do not provide readers with sense-related appeals. Chinese scholars praise Bian's poetry writing as 'A song against his tradition' (Luo, 2000, p. 84) because such sensibility may correspond to metaphysical poetry and Imagism in Europe and North America as the movement was 'driven by conscious desire to overturn traditional modes of representation and express the new sensibilities of their time' (Childs, 2008, p. 4). Poems by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound put so much emphasis on sensibility that a poem composed of imagery alone is seen as acceptable and comprehensible. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bian connects himself with both Symbolism and metaphysical poetry.

Yet it is also notable that sensibility is an important feature that makes classical Chinese poetry beautiful and charming, especially the *shanshui* poetry. Pound (1974) makes a brilliant point when explaining why poets like Bian find 'an old friend' in Symbolism. When talking about imagery, Pound referred frequently to images in classical Chinese poetry and even emphasised the Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei's modernity and his resemblance to the French Symbolists by calling him 'the real modern-even Parisian-of VIII cent. China—' (Pound and Eliot, 2007, p. 154). To Pound, the terms 'modern' and 'modernity' do not necessarily point to the West.

Sensibility, therefore, plays a vital role in Bian's pre-war poetry. Though writing about his true emotions, Bian rarely employs a direct, subjective expression. Moreover, despite his appreciation of the 'beauty of intelligence' (Bian, 1936, no pagitaion) in his poems, he seldom writes about his ideas in a direct and impulsive style. The combination of abstract and concrete words in his poems is frequently used; sensibility has been an important part of his poetry as much as that of Wen Yiduo's, although the

latter claimed to be a disciple of the Imagists.

It is illuminating to look at how private symbols carry Bian's sensibility, especially with reference to his self-reflection and reviews from his close friends. In the footnotes to the poem 'An Ichthyolite', he connects the line 'I want the form of your embrace; I usually melt into the lines of water' to Paul Eluard's 'L'Amoureuse' (1926): 'Elle a la forme de mes mains, elle a la couleur de mes yeux'. Bian (2002) wrote: "We also have Sima Qian's 'It is only to her lover that a woman devotes her beauty" ' (p. 123). Compared to Eluard's poem of pure expression of love for a woman, 'Fossil of a Fish' endows the similar symbols with a dynamic role that goes beyond the image of a lover and points to the philosophical tidea of relativity. Here, the symbols again become private to Bian and his Chinese readers.

In an article published in 1983, Bian's friend, art critic Wang Zuoliang, compared the last line with the first three lines of T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915): 'Let us go then, you and I, When the evening is spread out against the sky'. Arguing that both poets use the road as a symbol of the poet's state of mind, Wang Zuoliang (2005) admires the quality of simplicity (of language) and close association (of symbols) in Bian's 'Return'. Moreover, Wang attributes these poetic qualities not to T. S. Eliot's influences, but to the fact that Bian was 'bred for years under the influence of classical Chinese *lüshi* and *jueju*' (2005, p. 244).

Zhao Yiheng (2013) praised Bian as the first Chinese poet to have 'a similar spirit and poetics to T.S. Eliot and Valéry that makes Bian Zhilin a poet that synchronizes himself with the literary trend of the world; no poet in the Crescent Moon Society acquires such strong modernity as he does' (p. 240). After almost a century Zhao has a perspective that is not so different from Bian's: modernity equals a synchronisation with the West.

Both the 'new path' and the 'style' and 'taste' described what was truly modern about Bian's pre-war poetry: the repressed and exiled Chinese poetics struggling to be reborn under the self-claimed Western style. Since the rebirth of Chineseness serves as the true goal of poetry, the classical Chinese elements inevitably modify the Western poetics. The Chinese poetics, as well as the true goal of poetry, was repressed and even disdained by Bian, however, thus creating an obstruction to him consciously seeing the transformation of Western poetics and the transition of classical Chinese poetics. This obstruction is reflected in a misplaced understanding: Bian saw his writing as an extension of the Western poetics, which justifies the poet's construction of modernity

through poetry.

Summary of chapter

Bian's preference for classical Chinese poetics reflects the eager pursuit of a new coherence for the Chinese culture. On the one hand, he was reluctant to reveal his comfort in using classical Chinese poetic traits. On the other, the decline of the Crescent Society's overall transplant of English Romanticism drove him to confront the reality that he was again hesitating between a distrusted Chinese tradition and the uncertain future where all problems will be solved by copying something Western. The natural bond described by Bian acts as a psychological solution to his struggle. As qualities of the Chinese tradition, intimacy and suggestion were features that he should have found disdainful, however, these are now qualities celebrated by Western poetry, which according to the common imagination of the Chinese intellectuals, is the new form in which the shattered Chinese culture could breathe its first modern breath. This reflection played a vital role in Bian's poetry writing and laid the foundation for his unique style as a modern lyrical poet.

Chapter 9 *Guiqu Ye* and the Backward-Looking Utopia in China

This chapter discusses the emotional structure of Bian's pre-war poetry and its connection to the shared psyche of Chinese intellectuals driven by the utopian impulse. It addresses three issues: the justification of the expression of the Chinese self under the cover of Western influences, the development of the emotion of *xiangchou* (homesickness 乡愁) amidst cultural iconoclasm and the backward-looking utopia.

Imagination of self, time and the motif *xiangchou* in 'Chi Ba'

Despite its widely practiced translation in English as 'nostalgia', *xiangchou* is different from the Western concept discussed among scholars in modernity, modernism and post-modernism. For example, nostalgia is often considered a traumatic consequence of modernity, 'a time of emergence from darkness, a time of awakening and "renascence", heralding a luminous future' (Calinescu, 1987, p. 20). Shadowed by progress and industrialisation, Baudelaire 'nostalgically evokes the loss of an aristocratic past and deplores the encroachment of a vulgar, materialistic middle-class present' (ibid., p. 58). Nostalgia is also engendered by the nature of utopia in its Western context, as 'the clash between the utopian criticism of the present and the anti-utopian criticism of the future resolves itself into a variety of nihilisms…with the concept of decadence' (ibid., p. 68). Therefore, in the following discussion, I will use the term *xiangchou* instead of its inaccurate English translation. In the third section of this chapter, a detailed analysis of the term is provided.

Bian's poem 'Chi Ba', as the poet's expression of 'anxiety and distress when missing my homeland in decline' (Bian, 2002, p. 448), is a tribute paid to a piece by the Chinese poet Su Manshu 苏曼殊 (1884–1918), 'Ten Autobiographical Poems' (*benshi shi shou* 本事诗十首). Disappointed by the vulgarity of secular life, Su became a monk and exiled himself to Kyoto, Japan, where he was inspired by music from the Japanese instrument shakuhachi (in Chinese, *chiba* 尺八[9]). Su found an inner resonance to the sorrowful and desolate tune. This poem is translated by Chung and Rexroth under the English title 'Exile in Japan':

[9] For clarification, in this chapter, the term *chiba* represents the music instrument; and 'Chi Ba' refers to Bian's 1935 poem with the Chinese title 《尺八》

On the Balcony of the tower 春雨楼头尺八箫，
I play my flute and watch
The spring rain.
I wonder 何时归看浙江潮。
If I ever
Will go home and see
The tide bore
In Chekiang River again.
Straw sandals, an old 芒鞋破钵无人识，
Begging bowl, nobody
Knows me. On how many 踏过樱花第几桥。
Bridges have I trampled
The fallen cherry blossoms.

In the notes of this poem, Su explains the musical instrument of the *chiba* and the fact that a dedicated group of Japanese monks is specialised in playing the music. It is interesting that this group of monks is known as the *komuso*; as these Chinese characters manifest the absence of specific ego under the zen context, it is possible that the music of *chiba* played by a *komuso* has aroused the metaphysical solitude that corresponds to the theme of desolation and *xiangchou* in the poem.

'Exile in Japan' is one of Su's most well-known poems, and it reminds a Chinese reader of his or her experience of reading Su Shi's 'Calming the Waves' (*ding fengbo* 定风波): 'Better than saddled horse I like sandals and cane/O I would fain/Spend a straw-cloaked life in mist and rain 竹杖芒鞋轻胜马，谁怕，一蓑烟雨任平生' (trans. Xu). Su adapted the hermit in the Song dynasty poem into a lonely, exiled monk in ragged clothes. The music from *chiba*, which is so similar to the Chinese flute, has aroused the monk's nostalgic feelings for home. As he walks over bridges covered in fallen blossoms, he is so plagued by sorrow and desolation that he cannot remember how many bridges he has passed; more importantly, he cannot count how many steps he is away from home. Though there is no explicit expression of this feeling of desolation, every character and image in the poem supports the extension of the theme. The three characters *Zhejiang chao* (the tide bore in Chekiang River 浙江潮) symbolise the scenes and life he left behind, again emphasising the theme of *xiangchou*.

Twenty years after Su wrote his 'Exile in Japan', Bian Zhilin arrived in Kyoto and wrote his poem under the title of the music instrument in Su's sorrowful dream of *xiangchou*: 'Chi Ba' 尺八 (1935). In the article 'The Night of *Chiba'* (*chiba ye* 尺八夜), published in 1936, Bian recounted his experience and inspirations. In 1935, as a translator, Bian took the cruise ship 'Chang'an' and sailed from China, past Kobe and

eventually arriving at Kyoto. Bian stayed in a small room close to Kyoto University. His landlord at the time was a research assistant in the department of physics at the university; Bian had heard that the landlord played the *chiba* though he never had the opportunity to hear him play. On his trip to Tokyo in March, as Bian walked down a street near the Waseda area, he heard the music of the *chiba* for the first time in his life, and 'all of a sudden, I remembered the incomparable lines written by Su Manshu…I cannot remember how many times I read them in middle school; I do not understand what great sorrow I could have had at such a young age. Remembering all this has touched a soft spot in my heart' (2002, p. 13). As Bian returned to Kyoto in May, his drunken landlord played the *chiba* in the evening and the music was 'so strange yet so intimate' (ibid.).

The poem 'Chi Ba', upon first reading, is a beautifully designed lyrical poem about uncertain sorrows. The first 10 lines of 'Chi Ba' thread together three different periods of time: the time when *chiba* as a Chinese musical instrument was brought to Japan (notably, Bian uses classical images of 'from the setting sun' and 'from west of the sea' to symbolise China, his time when the drunk landlord played the *chiba* in the middle of the night, and the Tang Dynasty Chang'an in the imagination of the traveller. Such a non-linear arrangement of time is analysed in Chapter 7, reflecting Bian's Taoist cosmology, which is under the significant influence of late Tang Dynasty poets such as Li Shangyin 李商隐 (813-c858). Through poetic imagination, the same music and instrument exist simultaneously in two different times with the connection of one echoed emotion: *xiangchou*.

'Chi Ba' is a poem in which the overall voice is separated into three layers: the self, the narrative voice and the characters. The inconsistency among the three voices results in the dramatic tension, which leads to the uncertainty of the sorrow as the tone of the poem. The characters in 'Chi Ba' include 'the traveller from west of the sea', who experiences nostalgia when hearing a second character, the musician, play the musical instrument, *chiba*. The traveller dreams of his past experience with the same instrument and compares his dear memory with 'the sniff of the past' in the modern city of Tokyo. He cannot hold back his sorrow, and the music of *chiba* turns into the cry 'O Return' in his ears. The narrative voice, on the other hand, tells the story not only of the characters; it plays a character created by the poet as well, therefore distinguishing itself from the self in the poem. The narrative voice, though invisible in the plot, comments on the

scenes and acts. For example, when the traveller is walking in Tokyo, the narrative voice asks: ‘Why, amongst thousands of flowers lit by the bright light, a sniff of the past is floating in the air?’ followed by the repetitive cry of ‘O return! O return!’ Just as the voices of the traveller and the narrator become one and cry out ‘O return’, the narrative suddenly poses another question: ‘Do you also want to bring back the sorrow of loss?’ The last question is posed by the self, which represents the poet’s own voice, questioning the patriotic passion of his peer Chinese and ask whether they would become the traveller, who thinks only about his nation when sniffing the past.

The third layer of self is the voice of Bian, as the abrupt verses ‘O return, O return!’, used in ‘Peking, 1934’, serve to achieve semantic uncertainty in the poem, which breaks the structure of narration and exposes the lyrical quality of ‘Chi Ba’. ‘O return’, in both poems, represents the self-interfering of the characters and plots in the poem out of strong subjective feelings. The interference has united the three voices: the traveller as someone who is missing home; the narrator as one poet, yet not the writer of the poem, who sees his own feelings in the traveller’s; and the self, which is the poet himself, who sorrowfully looks into ancient history to find the resonance of his *xiangchou*.

The Chinese self through the *xiyang jing* (mirror from the West 西洋镜)

Apart from Paul Valéry and his fellow French Symbolists, Bian Zhilin devoted much of his passion to introducing Andre Gide to China. It is not a coincidence that the images of water and mirror are repeatedly seen in Bian’s poetry, since Gide accomplishes the reconstruction of Narcissus: Narcissus looks at his own reflection through a window so that his self could be expressed through symbols and images in a mirror. Narcissus manages to see his own soul at the same time he sees his reflection. It is a process in which poets acquire self-recognition, and poetry becomes images and structures that capture poetic subjectivity.

The Narcissus complex can also be seen as a symbol of poets such as Bian and his friends Dai Wangshu and He Qifang. Young poets in the 1930s exhibit striking similarities to Narcissus: secretly obsessed with Chineseness, deep in thoughts about the future of their generation (当一个年轻人在荒街上沉思), trapped by solitude (影子), reluctant to accept the realities of their society (距离的组织) and extremely passionate about the perfect formality of poetry (Poésie Pure). However, instead of an

attempt to see their true selves in the mirror, Chinese poets look into mirror from the west (*xiyang jing* 西洋镜) to validate themselves by creating a perfect subjectivity to replace the shattered centre of Chinese tradition.

Bian and his fellow poets stepped onto the stage of New Poetry in the 1930s. After China's failure in its first round of 20th century revolutions, classes were profoundly divided. Most poets did not adhere to any political group; they wrote and acted on the edge of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At the same time, most young poets travelled from rural China to urban areas, which intensified the tension between the traditional way of life and the budding of a modern urban lifestyle. As a result, feelings of detachment and solitude are very commonly expressed in poems, which Bian relates to the *fin de siècle* feelings he read about in French poems.

Repeated images of the mirror and water are what these poets were looking for: an enclosed aesthetics in which they distort their attachment to tradition into a perfect reflection, in this case, Western poetry under the name of modernity.

The close examination in previous chapters reveals how shadows and reflections provide comfort to the metaphysical solitude experienced by poets. Driven by despair, the self-reflective observation into the mirror becomes the mental state of most poets. However, this comfort does not provide a solution that crystalises and becomes the ideal art of poetry. Instead, it magnifies solitude and despair. The analysis of Bian's 'Reflection on the Lantern Festival Night 旧元夜遐思' (1935) indicates how the mirrored reflection is the only validation of his writing. The Chinese self is explained by intimacy and suggestion, therefore, a distorted image depicted by the *xiyang jing.*

The term *jinghua shuiyue (*flower in the mirror, moon in the water 镜花水月*)* reveals that the mirrored reflection is never a strange concept in classical Chinese culture. Rather, it is a cautionary tale: One could easily become obsessed by the comfort provided by the mirror and enjoy the fictional new coherent centre. However, once one notices the difference between the Chinese self and the fictional centre, the mirror will be smashed. Despair returns and no problem is solved, since the formal construction of a non-existent modernity could not validate the poet's longing for classical Chinese poetry. Bian's beauty of intelligence is constructed on the basis of his experience in this unreliable validation of modernity. He would rather 'climb up the tower and read *The*

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' than examine the realities of his society. Obsessed with the construction of a perfect model for New Poetry, Chinese intellectuals never created a true subjectivity in their Narcissus complex that could support the Chinese self under the impact of the collision between old and new, East and West.

The lack of a true subjectivity also results in the feelings of loss when facing the realities of society. Poets such as Bian never truly entered the authoritative circles of literati in their society, nor could their work obtain a place in the doctrine of ethics in poetry to invent a salvation for their discredited tradition. Conversely, as elites became educated outside of China, they could not acquire the compassion for those who were suffering from the dark realities. However, this is not to say that Bian and his fellow poets created no poetic art. Their imagination and their passionate quest for a perfect reflection created texts as a reflection on the basis of an imagined order in which their Chinese self was seen in a validated, acceptable style. Beauty of intelligence and relativity are the fruits of Bian's efforts in this utopian construction. However, it must be understood that this result does not meet the original goal of Chinese intellectuals. No coherent centre is accomplished so that the Chineseness can be reborn. What is harvested is a utopia built on language, text and imagination, an artistic poetics of *jing hua shui yue,* a result of the lack of true subjectivity. However, *jing hua shui yue* also motivates the poets to seek validation in a more passionate manner.

Bian and his fellow poets repeatedly adopt two subjects in their poems, namely, You and Me (*ni he wo* 你和我). Jiang Ruoshui (2000) and Zhang Songjian (2005) explain this phenomenon as 'inter-subjectivity' and praise Bian for achieving 'transcendence beyond one subject self', therefore, 'comparable with Paul Valéry's and Mallarmé's poetic thoughts. What is missing in this discussion is a focus on the mentality behind these two subjects: Me can be validated only through the construction of You. An analysis of Bian's 'The Ichthyolite 鱼化石' reveals the ambiguous identity of You, Me, a Woman and a Fish. This poem represents Bian's ideal of an immersed self and its reflection. The longing that their Chinese selves could be immersed or even absorbed by Western culture, such as French Symbolist poetry, is shared by the entire generation of poets.

The so-called 'inter-subjectivity' has its roots in imagination. Rather than finding Andre Gide's self-recognition by gazing into the mirror, Chinese poets are merely wishing under their utopian impulse. Bian's poems that incorporate multiple

subjects are divided into two groups according to the mood of the poems: love poems in which no negative emotion is depicted and poems on metaphysical solitude. In the first category, You and Me are deeply in love, so that the two subjects merge into one quite easily. However, the latter group of poems reveals what the poet is truly feeling: anxiety. What is lacking in the mirrors in these poems is the perfect reflection, or You, that can provide comfort.

The fictional reflection cannot last forever. As Dai Wangshu wrote his *Eye,* the merged lovers, You and Me, no longer comfort the poet's solitude. Looking into a Chinese self through a Western mirror can satisfy the need for validation only temporarily. What it truly provides is a reflection of the poet's wishes to initiate a conversation between the Chinese self and its Western counterpart. Regrettably, the lack of tradition and true subjectivity in New Poetry prevented this wish from coming true.

A homophony of despair: *xiangchou* and utopia in China

In Chapter 4, discussions are presented to distinguish the metaphysical solitude symbolised by images in Bian's poetry and the taste of *fin de siècle* in French Symbolist poetry. It is notable that Bian's metaphysical solitude and the consequential search for inner peace resonate with thousands of manuscripts and poetic pieces written in the history of Chinese literature, as they all centre around one important theme: *xiangchou*.

In previous sections, discussions on Bian's cosmology and his quest for inner peace seem to correspond with the Western nostalgic yearning for a peaceful experience from the past against the unsatisfactory present. However, the anxiety driving the utopian impulse of Bian and his fellow poets lies in the clash between totalistic iconoclasm and the longing for the classical Chinese ideal of beauty. Therefore, nihilism is almost never visited in New Poetry. *Xiangchou*, at the same time, does not include key issues in the Western concept of nostalgia such as anti-urbanism, regionalism, corporatism and doubts about the new technology in the cultural and art history discourse. Moreover, *xiangchou* has much to do with the cultural system in the ancient Chinese mythology of ancestral worship.

Consisting of two expressive Chinese characters, 乡愁, *xiangchou* is a human emotion towards, first of all, xiang 乡, which means hometown. The second character, 愁, offers a vivid description of a delicate and subtle emotion acquired by generations of Chinese intellectuals. The character 愁 (sorrow) forms itself on the basis of 心 (*xin*,

heart) since the emotion is perceived in the heart; the upper part is the character 秋 (autumn), a combination of the characters 禾 (*he*, crops) and 火 (*huo*, fire), symbolising the spirit of agricultural tribe life and connections built among people on the basis of traditional ethics.

Xiangchou's reflection in Chinese literature, from the classical period to modern and contemporary times, showcases the metaphysical solitude and the consequential collective consciousness that yearns for familiarity and intimacy, a spiritual land to return to, rather than the physical dwelling land. Therefore, *xiangchou* is evoked, in most cases, during a spiritual exile. That is to say, for poets such as Bian, the metaphysical solitude could not be resolved simply by remaining in their home country; even more, the fact that they are not outside of China aggravates their *xiangchou* as they witness the internal and external existential crisis of China, both physically and spiritually.

Xiangchou could be traced back to a time as early as *Book of Odes* in which the themes of nostalgia are focused primarily on the ethics of blood ties. In the Six Dynasties, poets express their feelings in a style beyond the simplistic *Book of Odes* and find the landscape of home to be an important source of symbol and image (Zhao, 2008). During the Tang Dynasty, poets invented the special genre of *xinglü / jilü* poetry, written by poets in exile to reflect the difficulties of their journey, and their *xiangchou* is reflected in classical images such as the moon, the goose, the willow tree and the cuckoo, which later evolved into the most representative piece written by Li Yu 李煜 (937–978) to express *xiangchou* through the image of water: 'If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased/Just see the over brimming river flowing east 问君能有几多愁，恰似一江春水向东流' (trans. Xu). As a matter of fact, in different of historical periods, *xiangchou*, though expressed in different forms and symbolised by an extensive group of classical images, has been an arguable motif that is echoed in the words of Chinese intellectuals. *Xiangchou* also conforms with the construction of aesthetic ideas of China beyond the concept in time and space, a cultural recognition within the nation. A useful way of looking at this idea is to trace the historical context of *xiangchou* in the classic period and early modern times.

<u>The historical context of *xiangchou* in literature before 1840: three strands of the construction of a spiritual homeland</u>

It is essential to understand that China is perceived by its people as a stable

society ruled by the ethics of the patriarchal enfeoffment system. In *The Origin of Things*, Julius Lips describes 'the basic expression of home' to primitive peoples as 'not the more or less temporary structure which shelters the family from night and from wind and rain…but rather the tribal land in its entirety' (1949, p. 19). This definition remains true to this day when it comes to the Chinese idea of home, as China is constantly described as 'homeland' and 'motherland', not to mention the extensive writings of nostalgia for the vast land and its landscape in Chinese literature. Therefore, the stable society in ancient China has resulted in the social recognition of an agrarian civilisation in which the idyllic life in a farming village forms the foremost idea of home. Therefore, it is not a surprise that *xiangchou* was sung as early as *the Book of Odes*：

> 'Cai Wei'
> When we left home
> The willows were softly swaying;
> Now as we turn back
> Snowflakes fly
> Our road is a long one
> And we were thirsty and hungry,
> Our hearts are filled with sorrow;
> But who knows our misery? (trans. Yang)

'Cai Wei' sets the pattern for the expression of *xiangchou* in the development of classical Chinese poetry with representative pieces such as Qu Yuan's 'Mourning the Lost Capital 九章·哀郢' in which the poet experienced while 'setting out from my home for places far away 去故乡而就远兮', 'Walking, walking, and Keep Walking 行行重行行'; in *Nineteen Old Poems* as *xiangchou* lies in the images of 'a northern horse attaches to the northern breeze/A southern bird clings to a southern tree 胡马依北风，越鸟巢南枝'; Wang Wei's 'On the Mountain Holiday Thinking of My Brothers in Shandong 九月九日忆山东兄弟', with the classic lines 'When brothers carry dogwood up the mountain/Each of them a branch – and my branch missing 遥知兄弟登高处，遍插茱萸少一人' (trans. Bynner); and Du Fu's 'On the Height 登高', in which the famous Tang Dynasty poet experiences his metaphysical solitude in the sorrowful scenery of autumn: 'The boundless forest sheds its leaves shower by shower; The endless river rolls its waves hour after hour 无边落木萧萧下，不尽长江滚滚来' (trans. Xu).

It can be seen that classical Chinese literature expresses *xiangchou* in two important aspects: a nostalgic revision of the idyllic life and images found in the common landscape of home. In contrast, most poets found their *xiangchou* in exile: Vagabonds, travellers, soldiers and generals guarding the border and literati banished from court form the majority of writers of *xiangchou.* In these journeys, constant change of space has dissolved the feeling of security when one is in 'the tribal land in its entirety'; at the same time, as time goes by, poets in exile increasingly sense the endless solitude in the vast land of otherness. Together, the changes of time and space cause the spiritual yearning for 'O return!' of both the physical existence and the spiritual world to serve as the central token of *xiangchou* in classical Chinese poetry. When Su Shi repeatedly recounts his memories of home in '送运判朱朝奉入蜀', his hometown ceases to exist in its contemporary time and space; instead, it has become a spiritual hometown in which the poet can find relief and compensation for his regretful life. Under this context, 'the tribal land in its entirety' is transformed into a utopia where the exiled Chinese mind can find peace in familiarity.

A third strand of *xiangchou* in poetry resides in poems written to lament the fall of a previous dynasty. During changes of dynasties, intellectuals were forced to confront the twofold rupture of time: the abrupt end of the individual's life in a stable society (the previous dynasty and life under its governance) and the rupture of the tie between the individual and the cultural and social customs, which inevitably resulted in a disenchantment with their *raison d'être*. In this context, *xiangchou* is extended from the yearning for home and the idyllic lifestyle to a strong, profound and nationalistic emotion in a time of upheaval. Most poets writing about their nationalist *xiangchou* are intellectuals educated with the core idea proposed by Confucius in *The Great Learning* (大学): 'Their persons being cultivated; their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy. 身修而后家齐。家齐而后国治。国治而后天下平。' The alignment of a person, his family, his state and 'the whole kingdom' of men are exactly why *xiangchou*, a seemingly personal nostalgic feeling for home, is closely linked with the fall of a dynasty.

In verses such as 'Stirred by the time, flowers, sprinkling tears, hating parting, birds, alarm the heart 感时花溅泪，恨别鸟惊心' (Du Fu's 'View in Spring', trans. Owen) and 'If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased/Just see the over

brimming river flowing east', poets attempt to close the gap caused by changes in time and space and ruptures in the construction of a spiritual home; they wish to connect themselves again with the past to make peace with the present and, furthermore, to provide comfort to themselves in the future where their identity, existence and *raison d'être* are still under threat.

The historical context of *xiangchou*: the love-hate complex for tradition

In the previous section, I quote from *the Great Learning* to explain the motivation of *xiangchou* at the turn of dynasties. It is interesting to note that the classical teaching makes a distinction between *guo* 国 (state; country; nation) and *tianxia* 天下 (the whole kingdom). The same distinction of the two concepts is seen in other Confucian classics such as *Mengzi*: 'People have this common saying, 'The kingdom, the State, the family.' The root of the kingdom is in the State. The root of the State is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its Head. 人有恒言，皆曰'天下国家'。天下之本在国，国之本在家，家之本在身。' (trans. Legge). *Tianxia*, in the classical Chinese idea, is above the concept of *guo*, not only in its physical existence but also in the context of traditional culture and morality: 'Mencius said, 'There are instances of individuals without benevolence, who have got possession of a single State, but there has been no instance of the throne's being got by one without benevolence. 孟子曰：'不仁而得国者，有之矣；不仁而得天下，未之有也。' (trans. Legge). Naturally, the physical distinction between the two concepts is based on the historical condition of the society in which Mencius and Confucius lived. Nevertheless, the two concepts and the distinction were held true in the entire intellectual history of China: The idea of China is not limited to one state (*guo*); sitting in the middle of the world where no higher civilisation stands above it, China is *tianxia*, 'as long as the people of "*Chung-kuo*" deserved to be central, as faithful servants, not careless masters, of the ideals of civilization' (Levenson, 1968, p. 103).

From *tianxia* to *guo*: self-criticism and the construction of the *xiangchou* dystopia

As Chinese society began its transition after 1840, the ideal of *tianxia* was dissolved, causing the intellectuals to confront the reality that China was merely another *guo* in the entire world. As the glory of the ancient Chinese *tianxia* faded away, since the May Fourth Movement, intellectuals began travelling to Western countries (and in

many cases, to Japan). At the same time, they blamed the downfall of their *tianxia* on the corrupt, outdated character of its people. In consequence, and with disdain for classical Chinese culture and morality, they look to the West as an attempt to reform the national character. At this stage, Chinese intellectuals have sent both their bodies and their minds into exile. This is reflected in literature in early modern China, as the motif of *xiangchou* embodies both hate and love for the Chinese tradition.

In this very special period of history, Chinese intellectuals found profound reflections by criticising ancient China, notably its collective unconscious reflected in the traditional superstition, feudalist ethics and the twisted psyche of the nation. In literary works written by many early modern Chinese literati, *xiangchou* aligns the description of a beautiful, traditional rural landscape with the painful discovery of the disconnected beauty of nature and the depraved, sick life of traditional Chinese people. More importantly, writing *xiangchou* allows the writers to exploit the national character (*guomin xing* 国民性); they claim that the sick, outdated national character is limiting the spiritual development of a proper modern man. Such cases include Lu Xun's famous pieces 'Hometown' (1921) and 'New Year's Sacrifice' (1924) and Xiao Hong's (萧红, 1911–1942) *Tales of the Hulan River* (1942). In these works, time plays a vital role in the idea of home; the *chou* (sorrow) in their *xiangchou* is echoed when examining the warped human nature and fate of people living in grief, a dystopia.

The contrast between the sad, distasteful writing about the national character (with dystopian features) and the longing for the beautiful classical landscape (with utopian features) is, in effect, a revision of the cultural and moral ideal of *tianxia*, as it seems that people such as Aunt Xianglin, Runtu and Er Bo do not deserve the nature surrounding them. Since the people living in ancient China lost their benevolence, they are responsible for the downfall of the Middle Kingdom. Therefore, buried deep under the strong criticism against traditional Chinese culture is the sorrowful, empty wish that *tianxia* could be restored to its glorious past, though through the construction of a modern, fresh system of national character.

O Return: the lyrical construction of *xiangchou* utopia in seeking inner peace

Levenson (1968) explains the exchange of positions between *tianxia* and *guo*, by quoting Liang Qichao, as 'the exaltation of nation over culture, of *kuo-chia* over *t'ien-hsia*…nationalism invades the Chinese scene as culturalism hopelessly gives

away' (p. 104). Levenson makes the excellent point by arguing that Chinese intelligentsia seek a validation to break away from tradition and justify their pursuit of foreign ways, as 'culture should be changed, they said, if the change would serve the nation' (ibid.). He also points out the fact that tradition is preserved and must 'exist in nationalism, shorn of its claim to value as it is', because 'the nationalist protected tradition so that he might…be able to attack it' (1968, p. 108). Levenson argues that tradition 'had lost its natural charm…And nationalism justified emotionally the departure from tradition' (ibid.).

Conversely, *xiangchou* towards the idyllic lifestyle in ancient China has been even further explored by a series of Chinese intellectuals. Under the strong influence of the West, these intellectuals felt, more than anything, the crisis of the traditional Chinese way of life and the clash between the stable system of culture and morality. Therefore, their *xiangchou*, reflected in literature, is dedicated to cherished and idealised memories of Chinese traditions in which they find inner peace. Most pieces of Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry, including 'Chi Ba', are written to express this aspect of *xiangchou*. Not unlike his peers, such as Shen Congwen and Fei Ming – the former builds a paradise separated from all external influences in the name of an actual area in China, Xiang Xi; while the latter finds inner peace in settings bearing clear classical Chinese taste, including the bamboo forest and a beautifully designed bridge – Bian constructs an artistic world that is pure and perfect, with idyllic songs echoing from nowhere on this earth. This *xiangchou* utopia resonates with classical Chinese poetry, especially poems written at the turn of dynasties. Coming 'from the soil', writers such as Bian feel the pain coming from strong criticism of the once-stable civilisation; at the same time, as a result of modernisation, urban life has imposed tension and anxiety on their restless souls. Not unlike iconoclastic writers who banished themselves in a double exile, Bian and his peers departed from their beloved, much-missed community of traditional culture. In their exile, the ideal hometown has become the opposite of modern cities, as the former gradually becomes a *xiangchou* utopia of cherished childhood memories and traditional Chinese teachings (which they believe, on the level of intellectual morality, they must be rid of). In exile, with the understanding that such a hometown exists no longer, they began daydreaming and, eventually, cast such dreams in their literary practice in a lyrical, idealist way.

In his *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, David Der-wei Wang examines the lyrical

manifestations (*shuqing* 抒情) in mid-20th-century China, and argues that 'lyrical provocation can serve as a critical index to the structure of feeling of modern China' (2015, p. 353). He points out that, despite the yearning for and strong belief in a nation with sublime expectations and nationalist progress that has extended throughout Chinese society since the May Fourth Movement, when it comes to the discourse of modernity in China, 'there is another history, the "history with feeling", that speaks equally if not more emphatically to us' (2015, p. 368). To make the point that *shuqing* does not mean that such literature and art works are completely disengaged from reality and political anxiety, Wang refers to the classical Chinese literature term *jijing shuqing* (a lyrical expression occasioned by scene or circumstance 即景抒情) to explain Shen's writing, as it 'suggests both personal sensibility and historical engagement, both artistic figuration and imaginary intervention' (2015, p. 363).

Wang did not take issue with *xiangchou* in his research; however, he reviews the traditional Chinese wisdom in *shuqing* and introduces Li Zehou's (2010) proposal that Confucianism serves as the rationale of *qing* (情 sentiments). Though the case made by Wang is focused on a certain group of Chinese intellectuals with emphasis on an excellent study of Shen Congwen, it is fair to say that Bian is among the writers of 'history with feeling'. The lyrical construction of *xiangchou* utopia, as analysed in previous chapters, deals with *jijing shuqing*, and in the very essence resides the anxiety and despair suffered by the Chinese intelligentsia. Wang's study has widened the domain of discussion on modernity and literature in early to mid-20th-century China. Among various pieces written with *shuqing*, the *xiangchou* utopia is an important source, and at the same time, an outcome of the *qing*, as it offers the spiritual salvation for helpless Chinese elites who struggle to find solutions for political upheaval.

***Xiangchou* and the backward-looking utopia**

In this research I focus primarily on the utopian features of Bian's pre-war poetry. This is due to the fact that, as an individual poet, Bian never consciously finished the construction of a utopia that meets the institutional criteria widely recognised in most cases of utopian literature. However, in this chapter, when the view is widened beyond one individual writer and *xiangchou* is examined in its historical context, it is fair to say that the construction of *xiangchou* utopia has persisted in most of China's intellectual history. Such a construction corresponds with the writing of

history with feelings. However, unlike traditional utopia construction in Western philosophy and literature, the lack of explicit social systems and ethical rules does not necessarily deny the essence of *xiangchou*: a notion of utopia.

In all three strands of writing *xiangchou* in classical Chinese poetry – the spiritual home, the appreciation of idyllic life and the symbols found in images carrying homely memories – all of the above showcase Chinese intellectuals' strong and desperate wishes to reconnect with the past.

At the same time, *xiangchou* in early modern China can be divided into the construction of a dystopia that questions the national character while yearning for the restoration of *tianxia* and the lyrical construction of a *xiangchou* utopia that offers inner peace. These two strands bear different features, as the former prescriptively seeks enlightenment in a love-hate dilemma of tradition and the latter searches for salvation in the spiritual construction of the hometown and the past.

In all cases, the ideal home constructed with *xiangchou* acquires many features of a backward-looking utopia described by Tillich:

> One of the most important insights into the essence of utopia is that every utopia creates a foundation for itself in the past – that there are backward-looking utopias just as there are forward-looking ones. In other words, which is envisioned as the ideal in the future is at the same time that which is projected as 'once upon a time in the past – or as that from which one comes and to which one seeks to return. (Tillich, 1971, p. 133)

If the term 'backward-looking utopia' is replaced with *xiangchou* utopia, the statement remains true, as 'Dreams of a better life – as Ernst Bloch titled one of his writings – are primarily dreams that look in the first instance to the past, but then also to the future' (ibid.). This corresponds to the essence of *xiangchou*: It attributes honour, glory and happiness to 'the past' while detesting 'the present'; at the same time, hopes reside in 'the future', in which the honour, glory and happiness of 'the past' are restored. To a certain extent, *xiangchou* and the backward-looking utopia represent the Chinese understanding of the correlation of past and future, which 'is one of the most astonishing phenomena of human thought' (ibid.). Under the context of eager modernisation and passionate effort to infuse modernity into the national character, *xiangchou* threads together past and future, mending the rupture of time so that the correlation consists of the linear, circular cosmology of time and history, which sits at the centre of classical Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist doctrine, as analysed in previous

chapters.

I repeatedly use the term 'in search of inner peace' in analysing Bian's construction of an ideal spiritual world. It has much to do with the underlying psyche of *xiangchou*. Levenson raises the point that nationalism offers an emotional justification for Chinese intellectuals to depart from tradition. At the same, it is worth noting that the departure is, emotionally, incomplete. The construction of *xiangchou* utopia relies heavily on the emotional need: Since intellectuals reluctantly broke away from their cherished tradition, comfort is offered only if they know, or believe in, a future in which the past can be relived. Therefore, *xiangchou* utopia does not have much to do with the Western utopian drive to provide a 'screenshot' of the blueprint for a brand-new future; rather, it is constructed as a daydream, so that Bian and his peers, deep in despair and disappointment about the present, can gather their strength and hopes in their self-imposed exile.

Moreover, *xiangchou* represents a specific type of utopia under the Chinese context of aesthetics and culture. It has much to do with the utopian impulse in China's path to modernisation. As discussed in Chapter 2, much academic attention is paid to the special conditions of modernity in China. Regarding the topic of utopia, there is a cross-border consensus that the utopian tradition in China differs from the West.

Zhang Longxi, for instance, discusses studies that deny the existence of an explicit utopia literature tradition in China; however, most of such research recognises the utopian features in the formation of political ideals and practice in Chinese society over centuries (Zhang, 2008, p. 13). He compares the Confucian ideal of a prehistoric *taiping shengshi* (peaceful and prosperous world 太平盛世) with the biblical ideal of the Eden and highlights two important differences: First, the Confucian yearning for the past does not result from original sin; as a matter of fact, it has almost nothing to do with religious belief; and second, the path to the prehistoric paradise is not through redemption and aid from heaven; rather, it relies on personal efforts 'to subdue one's self and return to propriety 克己复礼.' (trans. Legge).

Though Zhang makes no explicit assertion in his 2008 article about whether he agrees that there is no utopia tradition in Chinese literature, he makes it very clear that the Western pattern does not apply to all types of utopias, or in his words, 'in the style of utopia', in this world. In his *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (1992), Zhang elaborately introduces the two essential concepts in Chinese

and Western philosophy. He argues that one of the key differences lies in whether knowledge and metaphysical wisdom rely on the act of speaking. Quoting from the *Dao De Jing*, since 'He who knows (the Dao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready) to speak about it does not know it 知者不言，言者不知。' (trans. Legge), it is clear that Lao Zi focuses on intuitive knowledge and reaches a metaphysical state through the combination of *yan* (to speak 言) and *xiang* (the image 象). At the same time, both Heraclitus, in his *The Complete Fragments*, and Heidegger directly connect logos to speech and discourse. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger analyses the translation of λόγος, the original Greek word for logos, as its basic signification is discourse: 'to make manifest what one is "talking about" in one's discourse' (1962, p. 56). It is through discourse that logos signifies its translation into ' "reason", "judgment", "concept", "definition", "ground" or "relationship" ' (ibid., p. 55). This difference explains Zhang's assertion that no true utopia tradition exists in Chinese literature, if utopia is defined by its Western practice, since almost all the significations of logos mentioned by Heidegger are missing, not only in literature, but also in Dao.

Therefore, it is highly possible that the utopia tradition in China follows the rule of Dao, as it does not necessarily rely on discourse and clear rule-making; instead, it relies on images, sentiments and the collective unconscious. If one looks beyond the Western tradition of utopia in literature – that is to say, removing the strict conditions that utopia must, on the basis of itself, develop an explicit set of rules, backed by good, reasonable judgments and a supple list of concepts and definitions – and looks for literature and philosophy in China that take issue with an ideal past with sentiments closely associated with *xiangchou*, as introduced in the previous section, *xiangchou* utopia is repeatedly visited.

As early as in *Dao De Jing*, there is a description of a prehistoric utopia 'in a little state with a small population 小国寡民' (trans. Legge). Ever since the ideal was proposed, China has adopted a different pattern of utopia: 'Unlike the West, where the ideal is the future… China upholds "ancestral worship" on the basis of an aesthetic ideal formed in an agrarian society and sees beauty and goodness in the past' (Wang and Shi, 2017, p. 29). Working on the basis that the Western pattern of a utopia tradition could not be traced in China, Zhang Pengsong analyses the key differences in the notions of utopia in China and the West (2010, p. 15). According to Zhang, the idea of utopia in China is romantic, since it assumes that there was a natural state of harmony

in the past and that the problems and crises of the present are due to men's departure from the previous harmony; therefore, men must return to the past to get rid of their current sufferings. Levenson even considers that nationalists in early 20th-century China 'had a romantic attachment…which denies the contention of rationalists that abstract value should be the sole criterion in intellectual choice' (1968, p. 107). It is natural that literary practice has made *xiangchou*, a sentiment instead of an abstract value, the centre of utopia in China. As a backward-looking utopia, when it enters the 20th century, *xiangchou* utopia reflects the need that China must move on from the painful present; more importantly, it offers comfort to the anxious intelligentsia in exile from their homeland, and most importantly, disenchanted with their *raison d'être*. To this extent, 'the difference between *xiangchou* (as a sentiment) and *xiangchou* utopia is (China's) access to modernity' (Wang and Shi, 2017, p. 29). In other words, when confronting the consequences of modernisation and modernity, *xiangchou* offers the opportunity to look beyond reality and a way of criticism, through feelings and emotions, against modernity. To this extent, it is fair to say that *xiangchou* plays a vital rule in writing 'the history of feeling'; at the same time, *xiangchou* utopia should be considered an example of utopia in modern China.

Chapter 10 The Utopian Impulse and Chineseness Revisited

The preceding chapters have examined the utopian impulse hidden behind New Poetry's revolutionary appeal in early twentieth-century China, highlighting Bian Zhilin as a representative intellectual and modern Chinese man. Although his poetic career is dominated by pre-war anxiety, revolutions and totalistic iconoclasm, such a background brings tension between old and new in culture, literature and poetry. In this study, case studies are drawn from Bian's poems written between 1930 and 1940. Some of the poems analysed in this research are frequently read and cited by people familiar with New Poetry in China, whilst others are less known and discussed to a limited level. Prose and review articles by Bian and his peer intellectuals are included in this research to provide further material to better understand Bian's attitude towards Chineseness.

This study challenges the existing studies on Bian and New Poetry that associate modernity primarily with Western influences. It argues that a good understanding of the cultural psyche and utopian impulse could shed fresh light on the construction of New Poetry and the prevailing understanding of modernity in early twentieth-century China.

Bian Zhilin's Pre-war poetry and the anxiety of modernising culture: The consequences of modernity in New Poetry

From the late Qing intellectuals' attempts to establish the yellow race's relevance to the progress of world civilisation to the May the Fourth generation's suffering, the predominant mood of an epoch in exile in China was despair. The building of modern cultural and national consciousness in China encompasses a paradox. How could a nation restore the glory of a coherent culture centre that has been sentenced to lifelong exile? It is difficult to understand how cultural and national identities would embrace utopia to build and re-build cultural confidence. Even though contemporary examples from other parts of the world attest to the fact that the Chinese case is by no means unique, one of the most compelling aspects of utopia is the conviction that it is unique to oneself.

Poets and intellectuals such as Bian, through their rejection of an innate passion for a pastoral escape depicted through English Romanticism, turned their back on nature and even on society to embark on an inward journey. By endowing his poems with 'the

beauty of intelligence', Bian sought, quested and questioned. This resulted from being driven into an existential extremity or crisis since the exile of the classical spirit had broken the trust of the past. The above comprises the tension within the pursuit of modernity in New Poetry.

Within the tension, Bian, alongside many peer intellectuals, feels lonely, anxious, and, more importantly, nostalgic. Turning his eyes to French Symbolists, Bian sought a new *raison d'être* by attempting to reformulate tradition by using a new name from the utopianised Western world through his limited literary imagination. By doing so, Bian constructs, with the utopian impulse, new cultural confidence. The utopian impulse captures both temporal and spatial references, although they point in different directions. Not unlike many classical Chinese utopias, the utopia of poets looks backwards, rather than forwards in time, to write in classical Chinese poetics and aesthetics. However, spatially, this utopia points clearly to the West (in Bian's case, at French Symbolists and metaphysical poets). Located on the two axes, it is not difficult to understand Bian's description of 'seeing an old friend' when he first reads French Symbolist poems. What Bian and his peer intellectuals saw in what they called New Poetry from the West was rewritten and grounded in specific cultural conditions and framed by their anxiety and nostalgia in exile. Therefore, writing became an odyssey. Through the discovery of Western poetry, Chinese poets merely rediscovered classical Chinese poetics and aesthetics. Through such rediscovery, intellectuals could reclaim their felt existence and even hope to resurrect their culture, now in exile and threatened by new myths of modernity (which is Western in Bian's and his peers' minds), with full attention on modernity itself. Such consequences of modernity, or rather, the Chinese understanding of modernity as a positive result of progress and modernisation, have the following three implications in today's understanding of New Poetry.

First, despite the collapse of Chinese tradition in the May Fourth era, many aesthetic and intellectual elements of classical Chinese culture survived as various Chinese intellectuals still took classical ideals of beauty and morality for granted. These are validated in their pursuit for modernity under their new names. In Bian's case, 'the beauty of intelligence', 'crystallisation' and, most notably, 'that Western school (French Symbolist poetry)' are good examples of the wording chosen by the poet to justify his writing as compliant with the political and social progress.

Second, whilst creating new problems in building a modern national identity, the cultural call for a full acceptance of Western ideology created only formalistic

intertextuality within New Poetry. Even in exile, on a formalistic level, the Chinese language has not been completely remoulded by poets' emulation of English, French and German writings. Moreover, since it is impossible to eradicate all elements of classical Chinese culture, the formalistic intertextuality negates an explicit recognition of the anxiety and aesthetic structure of the New Poetry utopia. It ignores the fact that the key utopian impulse in New Poetry has hindered intellectuals' view of resolving the very real problem of finding a new coherent centre for integrating tradition with new ideas and social values from the West.

Third, the failure in constructing the New Poetry utopia, alongside its problems, is still confusing when it comes to identifying the modern Chinese identity as political and cultural disintegration becomes increasingly impossible. The New Poetry utopia and the utopian impulse in Chinese society since the May Fourth era forbid the construction of a sophisticated and prescriptive system of modern Chinese philosophy. Therefore, even today, Chinese intellectuals continue their debates on issues that define the very basis of literature, society and modern identity, such as grassroots versus aristocratic culture, nationalism versus Westernism, individualism versus collectivism and Romanticism versus Modernism.

More importantly, as political discourse replaces individual discourse with a non-artistic, political system of concepts, it temporarily catches the imagination of the intelligentsia's wish for a modern identity that no longer clings to the confirmation of Western forces. However, this does not resolve any fundamental issues evoked in the May Fourth era apart from a collective rise of power on the global stage. Furthermore, this political system is based on the negation and deletion of artistic sensitivity. Chinese intellectuals would be cut off from in-depth reflection and criticism of the present and the mentality of the modern man practised in post-modern utopianists in the West (as their individual mentality and talent no longer matter compared to the implementation of political tasks). At the same time, the long tradition of finding inner peace through Taoist and Buddhist ideals, as well as the moral level of the taste in literature reflecting Confucian teachings, would also be lost as all interpretations of literature must fall into the political category of advocacy and appeals. This baffling situation has troubled the artistic space within China for a long time, especially since the Cultural Revolution. In an even more powerful way than during the May Fourth era, the revolutionary movement has broken down the coherent cultural centre of the Chinese self. It is important to understand that neither the totalistic acceptance of Western values nor the

political resurrection of traditional Chinese culture could realise the reconstruction of Chinese consciousness in literature, art and society. In seeking the answer to China's problematic construction of modernity, it might be worth paying attention to terms that have a seemingly negative connotation: despair, anxiety, ignorance, individual mentality and problematic utopias.

The problematic pursuit of the West and the absence of tradition in New Poetry

During and after the May Fourth Movement, Chinese intellectuals embraced the Western tradition with a highly confined understanding of its implication, especially the negative consequences of the capitalist modern society. Without the experience of industrialisation, their understanding of Western influences ignored the dominating threat of modernisation on the human society - the reification and distortion of the natural self.

Moreover, as Chinese intellectuals have put Western modernity on a pedestal, they have become resentful of their own traditions. Anxious about the ethical function of poetry, Chinese poets were so eager to modernise their writing and their nation that they did not examine, in any substantive way, Chinese social and cultural traditions. They only opted to abandon the past and advocate wholesale Westernisation. In this study, I argue that by writing in affinity to Western poetry, Chinese poets represented by Bian attempted to construction a Westernised identity that corresponds to the ideal concept of modernity. However, this identity exists in neither Western nor Chinese reality.

Formalism in emulating Western poetics serves as a rigid mental model without a careful understanding of the background and realities of modern and contemporary Western writing. This problematic yearning for the West has completely removed Chinese tradition from the focus of Chinese intellectuals. In Bian's case, this inevitably results in the simplification and distortion of French Symbolism. Eventually, both the poet and his contemporary critics are limited to their ambiguous understanding of modernity, which, as analysis has shown in this research, already exists in classical Chinese poetry – although they call it modern feelings. At the same time, benchmarks used in *baihua* and the call for the 'beauty of intelligence' were set up to mark modernity; these benchmarks are borrowed from the West. Moreover, they were not even the true focus of the English Romantics, French Symbolists or metaphysical poets.

Bian's misunderstanding of decadence and transcendence reflects this.

However, the absence of tradition plagues the mentality of Chinese intellectuals in New Poetry. Poets, including Li Jinfa and Dai Wangshu, attempted to comprehensively integrate Western verses into their version of symbolist poetry. However, such formalistic endeavours only resulted in simplification and distortion. Bian was inspired by the creativity and aesthetics of classical Chinese poetry; therefore, his poems are created based on ambience and the emotional structure of late Tang poetry and the *ci*. His cultural anxiety pushed him to feel guilty, whilst the ethical anxiety forbade him from acknowledging tradition as his true inspiration. As a result, by hiding classical Chinese poetry under French Symbolist poetry, tradition is again weakened by a distorted understanding of Western poetry. The dialogue between New Poetry and classical Chinese poetry is still, to this day, an unaccomplished mission.

During the past decade, research on New Poetry has stagnated in this unaccomplished mission. Under the vision of Marxist literary criticism, scholars, including Jiang Ruoshui (2000), centre their discussions on New Poetry around the balance between classical Chinese poetry and influences from the West. Bian Zhilin is highly praised for his techniques of *hua gu hua ou.* Jiang (ibid.) even coins the term *tongbu weiyi* (simultaneous progress 同步位移) to praise Bian's achievement as a modern poet. By bringing attention to 'adapting' and 'transformation' (*hua* 化), this discussion seems to converse about classical Chinese poetry by moving forward from focusing solely on the formal construction. However, it is not unlike the totalistic Westernisation of Bian's time; the standard of modernity still lies in how much is absorbed from the West.

Why is Chinese tradition never fully examined? It seems that, until now, tradition is still discredited in the eyes of Chinese intellectuals. As a result, they can neither explain nor contribute to the Chinese nature of Chinese tradition. However, neither will this mode of thinking deal effectively with the substantive problems resulting from the confrontation between Chinese and Western culture on the Chinese scene. By its formalistic nature, it ignores the real problems and issues arising from this confrontation. If all elements of traditional China were organically related to a coherent centre, or a *raison d'être*, the disintegration of the centre is a reflection of a loss of meaning and usefulness of all its parts. No part can survive without the centre in its entirety. Moreover, Chinese intellectuals cannot keep holding on to their favoured

traditions and still introduce Western elements to China because they are also parts of the coherent centre of a different culture. Despair, weariness and a sense of failure are inevitable.

Conclusions: The utopian impulse and its consequences in Bian's pre-war poetry

This research argues that Bian's pre-war poetry predominantly attempts to piece together the broken fragments of classical Chinese poetics and teaching and reformulate a coherent entirety of Chineseness. Despite the claimed passion for emulating French Symbolism and modernist poetry in New Poetry, poets use Western influences like glue, an imported tool that serves to piece together shattered historical experiences and emotional structures. Through this tool, Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century could validate their yearning for tradition and classical Chineseness in an age of totalistic iconoclasm.

This is a result of the self-motivated cultural exile of tradition in exchange for the coveted modernisation. The utopian impulse is a reflection of this mentality since neither emulation of the West nor the cutting-off from tradition is complete. Furthermore, facing feelings of distress and futility in the utopianised quest for modernity, Bian always seeks consolation from classical Chinese teachings, which corresponds to the backwards-looking feature of the utopian impulse. This section lists the findings from the analysis carried out in this thesis on the textual, contextual and intertextual levels.

<u>Bian's anxiety to modernise: Western influences as a tool to reformulate and justify tradition</u>

The textual analysis in Chapters 4 to 7 aims to answer the research questions set out in Chapter 1: To what extent has Bian borrowed from Western poetry and what is the relationship between the classical Chinese elements and the Western elements in his pre-war poetry? Can we simply consider Bian's pre-war poetry as purely the result of his reception of French Symbolist poetry and Modernist poetry? What types of feelings and emotions have served as the motivation for Bian's pre-war poetry writing, and to what extent is such motivation presented in his work? What is the relationship between Bian's pre-war poetry and the upheaval of social reality in his time? Is Bian, as some scholars claim, an outlier compared with his passionate and revolutionary Chinese peer elites?

Analysis on the formal level of Bian's pre-war poetry reveals two levels of findings relating to the formal quality of New Poetry under Bian's standard. First, the dominant position of *baihua* and frequent use of modern terms (translated new words, scientific terminology, etc.) represent Bian's anxiety about finding a new poetic language to replace the classical Chinese, which is considered as part of the old culture that drove the nation into backwardness. Therefore, the poetic language itself has become part of the modernisation project for poetry, literature and culture. Furthermore, Bian seems to take for granted the idea that this Western-driven modernisation of poetry will lead to poetic modernity. However, the second finding is proof that this project to renew poetic formality is closely connected to classical Chinese poetic elements. A close, intertextual analysis shows that Bian's efforts to establish the ideal formal qualities in poetry only resulted in aesthetics similar to classical Chinese poetry. This is contrary to claims arguing for the affiliation of formal qualities such as *huise,* and ambivalence to French symbolists. Though the classical grammar was replaced with *baihua* and new words invented on the basis of European languages, words and grammatical units bearing classical Chinese features never ceased to be used.

Furthermore, the qualities of *huise* and ambivalence reflect Bian's preference for the aesthetics of roundness, familiarity and disconnection, all of which are part of the aesthetic ideal in classical Chinese poetry. Compared with Western elements used on the superficial level of formality, these classical Chinese elements are indispensable for the poet's expression of traumatic feelings caused by political upheavals and yearning for inner peace. This, combined with the *lianzi* techniques applied by Bian in finding his own poetic language, supports the argument that Bian's construction of the poetic language acts as a bridge between classical Chinese aesthetics and Western influence. By crossing this bridge, Bian finds a balance between his pursuit of classical poetic beauty and his ethical task of modernising poetry in a Westernised manner. This balance is much needed as the poet was experiencing anxiety driven by the utopian impulse.

An exploration of the sources and expressions of poetic images, including the dusk, autumn, the weary traveller and the arduous journey, leads to findings that further demonstrate Bian's anxiety and need for justification. Whilst recognising Bian's efforts to reproduce French Symbolist poetics using images such as the dusk and autumn, textual and intertextual analysis shows that such expressions should not be interpreted solely as emulation and reproductions of the *fin de siècle* theme of decadence.

Furthermore, the absence of poetic contemplation on transcendental and nihilist themes demonstrates that Bian does not share the French Symbolists' somewhat pessimist and critical attitude towards the consequences of modernity in the West. Compared with Bian and his peers' goal of creating literary modernity through the Western school, this task could only be considered half-done. In stark contrast, the themes and structure of feelings in classical Chinese are clearly evident: Bian's tendency to express metaphysical solitude in poems is a common practice in the poetic expression of *youchan weiji*, and corresponds to the aesthetic structure of 'beauty of passive virtue' in *ci*. The same anxiety has been shared by generations of Chinese poets from the Tang and Song Dynasty to early twentieth-century China when political turbulence challenged the coherent cultural centre. In addition, the sense of loss is also evident in most of these poems, which points to Bian's lamentation for the loss of tradition. Based on this anxiety, the long and arduous journey serves as a poetic depiction of Bian's spiritual journey to find a new *raison d'être*. Western elements seem to be the best tools to make up for his guilty yearning for tradition.

The explicitly expressed negative feelings in these poems are the experiences of a Chinese intellectual in a self-imposed cultural exile. The motivation for such an exile is aligned with the Confucian belief that the literati must use literary means to find solutions for social and political crises. In his pre-war poetry, Bian's gaze in the mirror represents a lamentation for his unachieved moral purpose of political and social engagement. Caught up in the belief that he must be superior to the old classical culture, he is trapped in the reflection of failure. The obsession with progress and modernisation, on the other hand, drove him to introduce Western elements to justify his cause.

Findings in the examination of the images of water and mirror offer an insight into how Bian addresses such anxiety. Bian repeatedly explores and expresses classical Chinese cosmology on the basis of the Confucian interpretation of the water metaphor as progress and refinement. On the other hand, the stillness of water symbolises the poet's desire for inner peace instead of the external challenges and upheavals of Chinese culture and society. Bian inherits the Confucian notion of time alongside the poetic aesthetics underpinned by the Taoist and Buddhist view of the constant flow of water and the eternity of time in contrast with modernisation and its overwhelming impacts on living conditions and the way of life. The feelings of weariness, futility and, most importantly, anxiety are mitigated as Bian contemplates the Taoist and Buddhist peace. It is notable that in poems featuring water, there is little reference to Western poetic

elements. It is fair to say that Bian deals with the trauma caused by modernisation almost exclusively by looking back to the banished Chinese tradition. It seems that any attempt to reproduce an imagined Western modernity is of no use when it comes to the mentality of a Chinese intellectual trapped by an overwhelming obsession with progress.

The characteristics and consequences of the utopian impulse in Bian's pre-war poetry

Based on findings of the interplay of Western and classical Chinese elements in Bian's pre-war poetry, Chapters 8 and 9 set out to further explore the mentality using the framework of the utopian impulse. Specifically, these chapters aim to answer these overarching questions: What characterises the quest for modernity in Bian Zhilin's pre-war poetry? How does a poet with a seemingly exclusive pursuit of Western poetry adapt himself to his nation's political turmoil and cultural extinction?

Findings mentioned in the previous paragraphs show that Bian's understanding of Taoist and Buddhist teachings defines his poetry's undertones between 1930 and 1937. Findings in Chapter 8 reveal an important aspect of Bian's poetic techniques. The poet only feels confident and comfortable referring to his Chinese inheritance when one or two of the strategies taught by his Western masters can be applied to interpret classical poetic experiences, such as *xing* and *yijing*. This leads to the reproduction of imagined Western poetics based on elements relatable to classical Chinese elements. Therefore, instead of occupying a submissive position, classical Chinese poetics is key to Bian's preferences in Western poetry. In this reproduction of so-called Western influences, he sees a mirrored Chinese self, representing the entirety of modern Chinese history and its uneasy and paradoxical relationship with the West. Chen (1995) says 'the Chinese actors and actresses assume Occidental voices, wearing Occidental costumes, while speaking, all the time, for the political interests of the Oriental Self'. In this context, Bian's reproduction of westernised New Poetry must, inevitably, look back into Chinese traditions as the glue alone could not piece together the treasured pagoda. Therefore, this understanding of Western poetics and the project of reproduction both act as the sublime cause of modernity by providing the sense of security and fulfilment that John Gray (2007) talks about in the omnipresent utopianism in human civilisation.

In Bian's pre-war poetry, the utopian impulse is characterised by one of the persisting motifs in Chinese literature throughout history, *xiangchou*. This showcases

Bian's strong and desperate wish to reconnect with the past as a result of the impact of modernisation. In all cases, the ideal home constructed with the emotions of *xiangchou* acquires many features of a backwards-looking utopia; more importantly, it offers comfort to the anxious intelligentsia in self-imposed cultural exile. In other words, when confronting the consequences of modernisation and modernity, Bian explores the theme of *xiangchou* to look beyond reality and make peace with his angst. It is fair to say that the emotion of *xiangchou* acts as passive resistance to the traumatising consequences of the utopianised quest for modernity in Bian's poetic career. At the same time, the backwards-looking feature of Bian's exploration of *xiangchou* is a strong reflection of the utopian impulse. As Jameson puts it, the utopian impulse represents the poet's incapacity to imagine a truly better future that satisfies the overwhelming pursuit of progress and the innate connection with tradition. Bian Zhilin's utopianised quest for modernity has cast him into imprisonment in a non-utopia present without historicity or futurity. His anxiety never ceased to torture him; the abrupt change of style and the end of Bian's poetic career after the 1940s both announce the death of his New Poetry utopia.

The utopian impulse as method: contribution to knowledge

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis as a reinterpretation and fresh understanding of Bian Zhilin's poetry between 1930 and 1937, which adds to the relative neglect by current scholarship of New Poetry and modern Chinese literature. This research treats Bian Zhilin as a representative Chinese poet in the early twentieth century, a person who has been relatively absent in existing literature despite an abundance of influence on generations of poets that follow. It contributes to the current study on Bian Zhilin in New Poetry and modern Chinese literature.

With a focus on Bian's mentality and motivation for writing, this research pushes out the boundaries of existing scholarship which tends to dwell on details at the textual level. From this perspective, poetic expressions engage with the eagerness for political transformation, thus actively participating in the quest for modernity. By raising the question of how an individual should feel and express him/herself in modern China, this research has broadened the vision and value of poetic studies and its implications in the intellectual history of Chinese modernity.

In addition, this thesis offers extensive discussions on classical Chinese poetics,

aesthetics, teachings and cosmology in Bian's pre-war poetry, which adds weight to the conspicuous scarcity of academic interest in the role of tradition in New Poetry. The findings of this thesis show the dominant position of tradition and reveal Bian's love-hate relationship with the old culture, which is highly representative of early twentieth-century Chinese poets. At the same time, this thesis reveals that the adoption of Western elements is used primarily as a tool to justify Bian's guilty yearning for Chinese tradition, which provides a new perspective in understanding the ambiguous reception of Western literature in early twentieth-century China.

This research provides a new analytical framework to explore the poet's mentality, considering his strong desire for a better future brought by historical progress. This methodology rejects the existing popular view that treats modernity as the conclusion of New Poetry's relationship with tradition and Western influences. By referencing the two approaches to modernity, namely Kantian individual perfection and Marxist collective modernisation, this research considers China's paradoxical view on the relationship between the individual and the state in re-inventing the national character. This is further embodied in analysing Bian's structure of feeling expressed in his poetry as well as his pursuit of inner peace and consolation through classical Chinese teachings.

Furthermore, by identifying the omnipresent utopian impulse in Bian's poetry, the arguments offer an insight into the discomfort and struggle experienced by poets as they spare no effort in making New Poetry a project of modernisation. Within cultural studies, this study contributes to the nascent academic interest in the consequences of modernity, in which the idea of a unique utopian impulse in China's modernisation plays an important role.

Limitations of this study

Inevitably, this study has limitations. The research findings are based on and therefore limited to Bian Zhilin's poetry between 1930 and 1937. Due to limited time, the research could not be extended to Bian's earlier works, most of which the poet himself destroyed, or his poetry after 1940 represented primarily by *Letters of Comfort*. Likewise, dedicated research on any of his translated works, which comprise a large part of his literary career, could not be included. Therefore, it is subject to an incomplete understanding of the poet, his mentality, and the structure of feeling in his time.

Furthermore, the concept of utopia and the analytical framework of the utopian impulse are highly complicated, with implications in various disciplines and historical periods that extend much further than the scope of this research. This thesis uses this framework as an innovative perspective for examining modernity and the motivation behind those pursuing it. However, neither this framework nor utopia should be seen as limited to the understandings and applications in this research. Finally, the specific conditions, mentality and structure of feeling reflected by Bian and his peers revealed in this research might not be exclusive to early twentieth-century China or China overall. Therefore, these results must be interpreted with caution, and the number of limitations mentioned above should be borne in mind.

Possible areas for future investigation include Bian's poetic works created after 1937 and his literary works in other genres. One avenue for further study should be research into Bian's translation works and the detailed connection between translation and poetry writing. It is also important to investigate less researched poets of Bian's time, including Li Jinfa and Li Jianwu, alongside poets of *Les Contemporains* as they claimed to be affiliates of Bian's poetic arts. I would also like to encourage more dedicated research reflecting on the role of tradition in modernity in China. Again, I hope to call for more academic focus on the negative feelings, experiences and even failures during various attempts to appropriate the backwards-looking utopia under the guise of Western influences. Schwartz (1964, p. 2) writes the following cautionary words against the dichotomy between West and non-West cultures (in this case, modern and not modern): 'we are not dealing with a known or unknown variable, but with two vast, ever changing, highly problematic areas of human experience'.

Appendix I Glossary of Chinese Characters

Ai Qing 艾青

Bafang 八方

baihua 白话

Baihua Shi de San Da Tiaojian 白话诗的三大条件

baodong 暴动

Benshi shi shi shou 本事诗十首

Beitang Shuchao 北堂书钞

Bian Zhilin 卞之琳

Cai Ge 采葛

Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培

ci 词

Chen Duxiu 陈独秀

Chen Mengjia 陈梦家

Chi Ba Ye 尺八夜

chuan 穿

chutou loumian 出头露面

Da Ya 诗经　大雅

Dan Huangiu 淡黄柳

Dagongbao 大公报

Dai Wangshu 戴望舒

Dao De Jing 道德经

denghuo 灯火

disi du 第四度

Diaochong Jili 雕虫纪历

Du Heng 杜衡

Du Yunxie 杜运燮

Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹

fanfu 繁复

Fei Ming 废名

fei’e puhuo 飞蛾扑火

gangjue 感觉

ganlin 甘霖

ganqing 感情

ganshi youguo 感时忧国

Gong Zizhen 龚自珍

gongti ci 宫体词

gudian lixiang 古典理想

guiyuan 闺怨诗

guo 国

Guo Moruo 郭沫若

guomin xing 国民性

He Qifang 何其芳

Hu Shi 胡适

huajian ci 花间词

huaibao 怀抱

huayuan 华宴

huise 晦涩

huodong 活动

I Ching 易经

jilü poetry 羁旅诗

Jiang Kui 姜夔

jiangren 匠人

jiejing 结晶

jiemen 解闷

jijing shuqing 即景抒情

jing 镜/静

jinghua shuiyue 镜花水月

jiqing 寄情

jiqing shanshui 寄情山水

Jiuye shiren 九叶诗人

jueju 绝句

Kang Youwei 康有为

konghua 空华

kulü 苦旅

leizhu 泪珠

Li Bai 李白

Li Guangtian 李广田

lianzi 炼字

Liaozhai Zhiyi 聊斋志异

Liang Qichao 梁启超

Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱

Li Jianwu 李健吾

Li Shangyin 李商隐

Liubai 留白

Lu Xun 鲁迅

Lunyu 论语

Luo Jialun 罗家伦

luotuoling 骆驼铃

luo xuan shi de jinbu 螺旋式的进步

luo xuan shi de jinxing 螺旋式的进行

lushi 律诗

Meixue de Jinhua 美学的进化

mimi zhi yin 靡靡之音

Mu Dan 穆旦

Mu Mutian 穆木天

nanlaiyan 南来雁

niwo 你我

Poems of Ten Years 十年诗草

Qiliang Fan 凄凉犯

qing 情

qinggan 情感

qingxu 情绪

qiu 秋

Qu Yuan 屈原

qun ya ji 群鸦集

ruode zhi mei 弱德之美

San Qiu Cao 三秋草

sexiang 色相

Shanshan Shuishui 山山水水

shensi 神思

Shen Congwen 沈从文

sheng sheng zhi wei yi 生生之谓易

shi 实

shi kan 诗刊

Shi Zhecun 施蛰存

Shi Zhi Saishang 使至塞上

shuiyin 水银

shuqing 抒情

shuyuan 疏远

Sima Qian 司马迁

Su Shi 苏轼

ta suo xing 踏莎行

taiping shengshi 太平盛世

Tang Qi 唐祈

Tao Yuanming 陶渊明

The Han Garden 汉园集

taoxi 淘洗

tian 填

tianxia 天下

tilian 提炼

tuowu yanzhi 托物言志

wai shi dao er nei ru 外释道而内儒

wangwang 往往

Wang Duqing 王独清

Wang Wei 王维

Wen Yiduo 闻一多

Wenxin Diaolong 文心雕龙

wenxue gailiang chuyi 文学改良刍议

Wu Ningkun 巫宁坤

wuqiong 无穷

wusi yundong 五四运动

wusi yundong de jingshen 五四运动的精神

wuwei 无为

wuwo zhi jing 无我之境

xiandai 现代

xianshou 纤手

xiangchou 乡愁

xichuang ji 西窗集

xifang xiandai shi 西方现代诗

xin chuantong 新传统

Xin Qiji 辛弃疾

Xin Qingnian 新青年

Xinchao 新潮

xing 兴

xinglü 行旅

xinghua tianying 杏花天影

xingzhuang 形状

xinwenhua yundong 新文化运动

xinyue de taidu 新月的态度

Xinyue Shikan 新月诗刊

xiyang 夕阳

xiyang jing 西洋镜

Xu Jinzhen Shige 续金针诗格

Xu Zhimo 徐志摩

xu 虚

xuci 虚词

xushi xiangsheng 虚实相生

yaozhi 遥指

yayan 雅言

Ye Gongchao 叶功超

yi meiyu dai zongjiao 以美育代宗教

yi wu guan wu 以物观物

yijing 意境

Yin Jiu 饮酒

yixiang 意象

youchan weiji 忧谗畏讥

youguo 忧国

youhuan 忧患

yousi 游丝

youwo zhi jing 有我之境

Yu Guangzhong 余光中

yuan 远

Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉

yudian 雨点

yushui zhi huan 鱼水之欢

yuyan chuanshu 鱼雁传书

Zang Kejia 臧克家

Zhang Chonghe 张充和

Zhang Guotao 张国焘

Zhejiang chao 浙江潮

zhenzhu 珍珠

Zhimo de shi 志摩的诗

zhixing shi 知性诗

Zhu Xi 朱熹

Zhuangzi 庄子

Zhuangshi 装饰

Zhuangshi Ji 装饰集

zijian 自鉴

Appendix II Selected poems by Bian Zhilin cited in this thesis in original Chinese

傍晚 (1930)

倚着西山的夕阳，
和呆立着的庙墙，
对望着：想要说什么呢？
怎又不说呢？驮着老汉的瘦驴
匆忙地赶回家去，
忒忒的，足蹄敲打着道儿——
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。

记录 (1930)

现在又到了灯亮的时候，
我喝了一口街上的朦胧，
倒象清醒了， 伸一个懒腰，
挣脱了多么沉重的白日梦。
从远处送来了一声"晚报！"
我吃了一惊， 移乱了脚步，
丢开了一片皱折的白纸：
去吧， 我这个一天的记录！

影子 (1930)

一秋天，唉，我常觉得
身边仿佛丢了件什么东西，
使我更加寂寞了：是个影子，
是的，丢在那江南的田野中，
虽是瘦长点，你知道，那就是
老跟着你在斜阳下徘徊的。

现在寒夜了，你看炉边的墙上
有个影子陪着我发呆：
也沉默也低头，到底是知己呵！
虽是神情恍惚了些，我以为，
这是你暗里打发来的，远迢迢，
远迢迢的到这古城里来的。

我也想送个影子给你呢，
奈早已不清楚了：你在哪儿。

远行 (1930)

如果乘一线骆驼的波纹
涌上了沉睡的大漠，
当一串又轻又小的铃声
穿进了黄昏的寂寞，
我们便随地搭起了蓬帐，
让辛苦酿成了酣眠，
又酸又甜，浓浓的一大缺，
把我们浑身都浸过；
不用管能不能梦见绿洲，
反正是我们已烂醉；
一阵飓风把沙石来偷偷
把我们埋了也干脆。

长途 (1931)

一条白热的长途
伸向旷远的边上，
像一条重的扁担
压上挑夫的肩膀。

几丝持续的蝉声
牵住西去的太阳，
晒得垂头的杨柳
呕也呕不出哀伤。

快点走，快点走吧，
那边有卖酸梅汤，
去到那绿荫底下，
喝一杯，再乘乘凉。

几丝持续的蝉声
牵往西去的太阳，
晒得垂头的杨柳
呕也呕不出哀伤。

暂时休息一下吧，
这儿好让我们躺，
可是静也静不下，
又不能不向前望。

一条白热的长途
伸向旷野的边上，
像一条重的扁担
压上挑夫的肩膀。

黄昏 (1931)

闷人的房间
渐渐，又渐渐

小了，又小，
缩得像一所
半空的坟墓——
啊，怎么好！
幸亏有寒鸦
拍落几个“哇”
跟随了风
敲颤了窗纸，
我劲儿一使，
推开了梦。
炉火饿死了，
昏暗把持了
一屋冷气，
我四顾苍茫，
像在荒野上
不辨东西，
乃头儿低着，
酸腿儿提着，
踱去踱来，
不知为什么
呕出了一个
乳白的“唉”。

落（1931）

在你呵，似曾相识的知心，
在你的眼角里，一颗水星
我发现了，像是在黄昏天
当秋风已经在道上走厌，
嘘着长气，倚着一丛芦苇
天心里含着的摇摇欲坠
摇摇欲坠的孤泪。我真愁，
怕它掉下来向湖心里投。
那不要紧，可是我的平静——
唉，真掉下了我这颗命运！

投 (1931)

独自在山坡上，
小孩儿，我见你
一边走一边唱；
全都厌了，随地
捡一块小石头
向山谷中一投。

一城雨（1931）

也说不定有人，
小孩儿，曾把你

（也不爱也不憎）
很好玩的捡起，
像一块小石头，
向尘世中一投。
一城雨正在抚慰着你：
你如今皱着眉，望天宇，
一个人枯坐在屋子里，
或是在冷清清的街衢，
撑着伞，走向东，走向西，
你总会觉得罢，一城雨
正在轻柔的抚慰着你；
要不然你为甚不言语，
不管你再想起不想起
“我要上哪儿去，哪儿去？”
你看，你真的像着了迷，
出了神，呆听着一城雨。

海愁 (1932)

记得我告别大海，
她把我摇摇：
“去吧，一睡就远了，
游大陆也好。”
“不见我也不用怕，
如果你生病，
朋友也不在身边。
告我，托白云。”
“记好，我总关心你。
一定向蓝天
放出一小叶银帆
航到你窗前。”
如今我真想老家，
我埋怨白云；
他告我：“秋天到了，
大海也生病。”

几个人 (1932)

叫卖的喊一声“冰糖葫芦”，
吃了一口灰象满不在乎；
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。
矮叫化人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，
象雪野的边缘上一半红日……

路过居 (1932)

路过居在什么地方
你们问也不容易问到，
路过的很多，
却不大有人留心到
门上
一块满面云雾的木匾，
虽然它一定看过
几代人走过了。
大家只知道，
一条并不大
也并不荒凉的街上
有一家小茶馆：
一所小屋四个洞，
长的一个像嘴，
常常吸进拭汗水的，
吐出伸懒腰的；
方的三个像眼睛，
常常露出几个半身。

店主是谁
也不容易看出来，
里头的汉子
打扮
差不多全是一样，
衣服
也差不多全是一样
穿的蓝粗布，
到夏天
谁也赤膊；
而且有时候要水
这个去
那个也去
自动拿开壶。
他们平常是喝茶，
一边谈话；
有时候谈得
伸出大拳头捶桌子，
有时候大笑
直笑得坐也坐不稳了，
叫板凳也跳了，
一碗茶泼倒了，
泼到了谁的脚上了，
那么骂，那么打，

打过了又哈哈的笑了；
有时候有人拉胡琴，
几个人围着他，要他唱，
他要唱又不唱了。
有时候也冷清清，
也许有一个年老的
抽旱烟，
喷出一口烟
又哼出一声长叹，
窗前
有一张《白话实事报》
被一阵怪风赶去了
追一片黄叶。

到黄昏
这儿也用电灯，
但只有一盏
而且很暗，
初看总以为
是仍然用油灯，
不过比别家小铺子
点得久。
在晚上
十一点光景
有时候还可以听到
有人在这儿
唱京调——
独自从市场回来的，
来得正好，你听：
"一马离了
西凉界……"

倦 (1932)

忙碌的蚂蚁上树，
蜗牛寂寞地僵死在窗槛上
看厌了，看厌了，
知了，知了只知让人睡觉。
蟪蛄不知春秋，
可怜虫亦可以休矣！
至多像残余的烟蒂头
在绿苔地上冒一下蓝烟吧。
被时光遗弃的华梦，
都闭在倦眼的外边了。

墙头草 (1932)

五点钟贴一角夕阳
六点钟挂半轮灯光

想有人把所有的日子
就过在做做梦，看看墙
——墙头草长了又黄了。

西长安街 (1932)

长的是斜斜的淡淡的影子，
枯树的，树下走着的老人的
和老人撑着的手杖的影子，
都在墙上，晚照里的红墙上，
红墙也很长，墙外的蓝天，
北方的蓝天也很长，很长。
啊！老人，这道儿你一定
觉得是长的，这冬天的日子
也觉得长吧？是的，我相信。
看，我也走近来了，真不妨
一路谈谈话，谈谈话儿呢。
可是我们却一声不响，
只是跟着各人的影子
走着，走着……
　　走了多少年了，
这些影子，这些长影子？
前进又前进，又前进又前进，
到了旷野上，开出长城去吗？

仿佛有马号，是一大队骑兵
在前进，面对着一大轮朝阳，
朝阳是每个人的红脸，马蹄
扬起了金尘，十丈高，二十丈——
什么也没有，我依然在街边，
也不见旧的老人，两三个
黄衣兵站在一个大门前，
（这是司令部？当年的什么府？）
他们像墓碑直立在那里，
不作声，不谈话，还思念乡土，
东北天底下的乡土？一定的！
可是这时候想也是徒然，
纵然想起这时候敌人的
几匹战马到家园的井旁
去喝水了，这时候一群家鸡
到高粱田里去徬徨了，也想
哪儿是暂时的住家呢。拍拍！
什么？枪声！打哪儿来的？
土枪声！自家的！不怕，不怕！……

可是蟋蟀声早已浸透了
青纱帐，青纱帐早已褪色了！
你想吗，一点用处也没有了！
明天再想吧，这时候只好

不作声，不谈话。低下头来吧。
看汽车掠过长街的柏油道，
多“摩登”，多舒服！尽管威风
可哪儿比得上从前的大旗
红日下展出满脸的笑容！
如果不相信，可以问前头
那三座大红门，如今怅望着
秋阳了。
　　啊！夕阳下我有
一个老朋友，他是在一所
更古老的城里，这时候怎样了？
说不定从一条荒街上走过，
伴着斜斜的淡淡的长影子？
告诉我你新到长安的印象吧，
（我身边仿佛有你的影子）
朋友，我们不要学老人，
谈谈话儿吧。……

一块破船片 (1932)

潮来了，浪花捧给她
一块破船片。
不说话，
她又在崖石上坐定，
让夕阳把她的发影
描上破船片。
她许久
才又望大海的尽头，
不见了刚才的白帆。
潮退了，她只好送还
破船片
给大海漂去。

古城的心 (1933)

你可以听到自己的脚步声
在晚上七点半的市场
（这还算是这座古城的心呢。）
难怪小伙计要打瞌睡了，
看电灯也已经睡眼朦胧。
铺面里无人过问的陈货，
来自东京的，来自上海的，
也哀伤自己的沦落吧？——
—个异乡人走过也许会想。
得、得，得了，有大鼓！
大鼓是市场的微弱的悸动。

古镇的梦 (1933)

小镇上有两种声音
一样的寂寥：
白天是算命锣，
夜里是梆子。
敲不破别人的梦，
做着梦似的
瞎子在街上走，
一步又一步。
他知道哪一块石头低，
哪一块石头高，
哪一家姑娘有多大年纪。
敲沉了别人的梦，
做着梦似的
更夫在街上走，
一步又一步。
他知道哪一块石头低，
哪一块石头高，
哪一家门户关得最严密。
“三更了，你听哪，
毛儿的爸爸，
这小子吵得人睡不成觉，
老在梦里哭，
明天替他算算命吧？”
是深夜，
又是清冷的下午：
敲梆的过桥，
敲锣的又过桥，
不断的是桥下流水的声音。

寄流水 (1933)

从秋街的败叶里
清道夫扫出了
一张少女的小影；

是雨呢还是泪
朦胧了红颜
谁知道！但令人想起
古屋中磨损的镜里
认不真的愁容；

背面却认得清
“永远不许你丢掉！”

“情用劳结，”唉，
别再想古代美女的情书
沦落在蒲昌海边的流沙里
叫西洋的浪人捡起来
放到伦敦多少对碧眼前。

多少未发现的命运呢？
有人会忧愁。有人会说：
还是这样好——寄流水。

秋窗 (1933)

像一个中年人
回头看过去的足迹
一步一沙漠
从乱梦中醒来
听半天晚鸦
看夕阳在灰墙上
想一个初期的肺病者
对暮色苍茫的古镜
梦想少年的红晕。

烟蒂头 (1933)

谈笑中扔掉一枚烟蒂头，
一低头便望见一缕烟
在辽远的水平线上——
不见了——天外的人怎样了？
这样想得胡涂的人
却正在谈笑的圈子外，
独守着砖地上的烟蒂头，
也懒得哼"大漠孤烟直"。

春城 (1934)

北京城：垃圾堆上放风筝，
描一只花蝴蝶，描一只鹞鹰
在马德里蔚蓝的天心，
天如海，可惜也望不见你哪
京都！——

倒霉，又洗了一个灰土澡，
汽车，你游在浅水里，真是的，
还给我开什么玩笑？

对不住，这实在没有什么；
那才是胡闹（可恨，可恨）：
黄毛风搅弄大香炉，
一炉千年的陈灰
飞，飞，飞，飞，飞，
飞出了马，飞出了狼，飞出了虎，
满街跑，满街滚，满街号，
扑到你的窗口，喷你一口，
扑到你的五角，打落一角，

一角琉璃瓦吧？——

“好家伙！真吓坏了我，倒不是
一枚炸弹——哈哈哈哈哈！”
“真舒服，春梦做得够香了不是？
拉不到人就在车磴上歇午觉，
幸亏瓦片儿倒还有眼睛。”
“鸟矢儿也有眼睛——哈哈哈哈！”

哈哈哈哈，有什么好笑，
歇斯底里，懂不懂，歇斯底里！
悲哉，悲哉！
真悲哉，小孩子也学老头子，
别看他人小，垃圾堆上放风筝，
他也会“想起了当年事……”
悲哉，听满城的古木
徒然的大呼，
呼啊，呼啊，呼啊，
归去也，归去也，
故都故都奈若何！……

我是一只断线的风筝，
碰到了怎能不依恋柳梢头，
你是我的家，我的坟，
要看你飞花，飞满城，
让我的形容一天天消瘦。

那才是胡闹，对不住；且看
北京：垃圾堆上放风筝。
昨儿天气才真是糟呢，
老方到春来就怨天，昨儿更骂天
黄黄的压在头顶上像大坟，
老崔说看来势真有点不详，你看
漫天的土吧，说不定一夜睡了
就从此不见天日，要待多少年后
后世人的发掘吧，可是
今儿天气才真是好呢，
看街上花树也坐了独轮车游春，
看完了又可以红纱等下看牡丹。
（他们这时候正看樱花吧？）
天上是鸽铃声——
蓝天白鸽，渺无飞机，
飞机看景致，我告诉你，
决不忍向琉璃瓦上下蛋也……

北京城：垃圾堆上放风筝。

对照 (1934)

设想自己是一个哲学家
见道旁烂苹果得到安慰
地球烂了才寄生了人类
学远塔，你孤立山头对晚霞。

今天却尝了新鲜的葡萄。
酸吧？甜吧？让自己问自己，
新秋味加三年的一点记忆，
懒躺在泉水里你睡了一觉。

水成岩 (1934)

水边人想在岩石上刻一点字迹；

大孩子见小孩子可爱，
问母亲"我从前也是这样吗？"

母亲想起了自己发黄的照片
堆在尘封的就桌子抽屉里，
想起了一架的瑰艳
藏在窗前干瘪的扁豆荚里，

叹一声"悲哀的种子！"——

"水哉，水哉！"沉思人忽叹
古代人的感情像流水
积下了层叠的悲哀。

望 (1934)

小时候我总爱看夏日的晴空，
把它当作是一幅自然的地点：
蓝的一片是大洋，白云一朵朵
大的是洲，小的是岛屿在海中；
大陆上颜色深的是山岭山丛，
许多孔隙裂缝是冷落的江湖，
还有港湾像是望风帆的归途，
等它们报告发现新土的成功。
如今，正像是老话的苍海桑田，
满怀的花草换得了一把荒烟，
就是此刻我也得像一只迷羊
辗转在灰沙里，幸亏还有蔚蓝，
还有仿佛的云峰浮在缥渺间，
倒可以抬头望望这一个仙乡。

尺八 (1935)

象候鸟衔来了异方的种子，
三桅船载来了一枝尺八。

从夕阳里，从海西头，
长安丸载来的海西客。
夜半听楼下醉汉的尺八，
想一个孤馆寄居的番客
听了雁声，动了乡愁，
得了慰藉于邻家的尺八。
次朝在长安市的繁华里
独访取一枝凄凉的竹管……
(为什么年红灯的万花间，
还飘着一缕凄凉的古香？）
归去也，归去也，归去也——
象候鸟衔来了异方的种子，
三桅船载来一枝尺八，
尺八乃成了三岛的花草。
（为什么年红灯的万花间，
还飘着一缕凄凉的古香？）
归去也，归去也，归去也——
海西人想带会失去的悲哀吗？

断章 (1935)

你站在桥上看风景，
看风景人在楼上看你。
明月装饰了你的窗子，
你装饰了别人的梦。

归 (1935)

像一个天文家离开了望远镜，
从热闹中出来闻自己的足音。
莫非在自己圈子外的圈子外？
伸向黄昏去的路像一段灰心。

航海 (1935)

轮船向东方直航了一夜，
大摇大摆的拖着一条尾巴，
骄傲的请旅客对一对表——
“时间落后了，差一刻。”
说话的茶房大约是好胜的，
他也许还记得童心的失望——
从前院到后院和月亮赛跑。
这时候睡眼朦胧的多思者
想起在家乡认一夜的长途
于窗槛上一段蜗牛的银迹——
“可是这一夜却有二百浬？”

寂寞 (1935)

乡下小孩子怕寂寞，
枕头边养一只蝈蝈；
长大了在城里操劳，
他买了一个夜明表。
小时候他常常羡艳
墓草做蝈蝈的家园；
如今他死了三小时，
夜明表还不曾休止。

旧元夜遐思 (1935)

灯前的窗玻璃是一面镜子，
莫掀帷望远吧，如不想自鉴。
可是远窗是更深的镜子：
一星灯火里看是谁的愁眼？
“我不能陪你听我的鼾声”
是利刃，可是劈不开水涡：
人在你梦里，你在人梦里。
独醒者放下屠刀来为你们祝福。

距离的组织 (1935)

想独上高楼读一遍《罗马衰亡史》，
忽有罗马灭亡星出现在报上。
报纸落。地图开，因想起远人的嘱咐。
寄来的风景也暮色苍茫了。
（醒来天欲暮，无聊，一访友人吧。）
灰色的天。灰色的海。灰色的路。
哪儿了？我又不会向灯下验一把土。
忽听得一千重门外有自己的名字。
好累呵！我的盆舟没有人戏弄吗？
友人带来了雪意和五点钟。

音尘 (1935)

绿衣人熟稔的按门铃
就按在住户的心上：
是游过黄海来的鱼？
是飞过西伯利亚来的雁？
“翻开地图看，”远人说。
他指示我他所在的地方
是哪条虚线旁的那个小黑点。

如果那是金黄的一点，
如果我的座椅是泰山顶，
在月夜，我要你猜你那儿
准是一个孤独的火车站。
然而我正对一本历史书。
西望夕阳里的咸阳古道，

我等到了一匹快马的蹄声。

圆宝盒 (1935)

我幻想在哪儿 (天河里)

捞到了一只圆宝盒，

装的是几颗珍珠：

一颗晶莹的水银

掩有全世界的色相，

一颗金黄的灯火

笼罩有一场华宴，

一颗新鲜的雨点

含有你昨夜的叹气…

别上什么钟表店

听你的青春被蚕食，

别上什么骨董铺

买你家祖父的旧摆设。

你看我的圆宝盒

跟了我的船顺流

而行了，虽然舱里人

永远在蓝天的怀里，

虽然你们的握手

是桥——是桥！可是桥

也搭在我的圆宝盒里；

而我的圆宝盒在你们

或他们也许也就是

好挂在耳边的一颗

珍珠——宝石？——星？

鱼化石 (1936)

我要有你的怀抱的形状，

我往往溶于水的线条。

你真象镜子一样的爱我呢，

你我都远了乃有了鱼化石。

白螺壳 (1937)

空灵的白螺壳，你？

孔眼里不留纤尘，

漏到了我的手里

却有一千种感情：

掌心里波涛汹涌，

我感叹你的神工，

你的慧心啊，大海，

你细到可以穿珠！

可是我也禁不住：

你这个洁癖啊，唉！

请看这一湖烟雨

水一样把我浸透，

象浸透一片鸟羽。

我仿佛一所小楼

风穿过，柳絮穿过，

燕子穿过象穿梭，

楼中也许有珍本，

书页给银鱼穿织，

从爱字到哀字——

出脱空华不就成！

玲珑吗，白螺壳，我？

大海送我到海滩，

万一落到人掌握，

愿得原始人喜欢，

换一只山羊还差

三十分之二十八，

倒是值一只盘桃。

怕给多思者拾起：

空灵的白螺壳，你

带起了我的愁潮！

我梦见你的阑珊：

檐溜滴穿的石阶，

绳子锯缺的井栏……

时间磨透于忍耐！

黄色还诸小鸡雏，

青色还诸小碧梧，

玫瑰色还诸玫瑰，

可是你回顾道旁，

柔嫩的蔷薇刺上

还挂着你的宿泪。

半岛 (1937)

半岛是大陆的纤手，

遥指海上的三神山。

小楼已有了三面水

可看而不可饮的。

一脉泉乃涌到庭心，

人迹仍描到门前。

昨夜里一点宝石

你望见的就是这里。

用窗帘藏却大海吧

怕来客又遥望出帆。

灯虫 (1937)

可怜以浮华为食品，

小蠓虫在灯下纷坠，

不甘淡如水，还要醉，

而抛下露养的青身。

多少艘艨艟一起发，

白帆蓬拜倒于风涛，

英雄们求的金羊毛，

终成了海伦的秀发。

赞美吧。芸芸的醉仙

光明下得了梦死地，

也画了佛顶的圆圈！

晓梦后看明窗净几，

待我来把你们吹空，

象风扫满阶的落红。

第一盏灯 (1937)

鸟吞小石子可以磨食品。

兽畏火。人养火乃有文明。

与太阳同起同睡的有福了，

可是我赞美人间第一盏灯。

候鸟问题 (1937)

多少个院落多少块蓝天

你们去分吧。我要走。

让白鸽带铃在头顶上绕三圈——

可是骆驼铃远了，你听。

抽陀螺挽你，放风筝牵你，

叫纸鹰、纸燕、纸雄鸡三只四只

飞上天——上天可是迎南来雁？

而且我可是哪些孩子们的玩具？

且上图书馆借一本《候鸟问题》。

且说你赞成呢还是反对

飞机不得经市空得新禁令？

我的思绪像小蜘蛛骑的游丝

系我适足以飘我。我要走。

等到了别处以后再管吧：

多少个院落多少块蓝天？

我岂能长如绝望的无线电

空在屋顶上伸着双臂

抓不到想要的远方的音波！

泪 (1937)

巷中人与墙内树

彼此岂满不相干？

岂止沾衣肩掉一滴宿雨？

人并非无泪，

而明白露水因缘。

你来画一笔切线，

我为你珍惜这空虚的一点，

像珠像泪——

人不妨有泪。

路 (1937)

路啊，足印的延长，

如音调成于音符，

无声有声我重弄，

像细数一串念珠。

穿过亭，穿过桥，停！

这里我丢过东西：

一本小小的手册，

多少故旧的住址。

记得在什么地方

我掏过一掬繁华，

走了十步，二十步：

原来是一朵好花！……

也罢，给埋在草里，

既厌了“空持罗带”。

天上星流为流星，

白船迹还诸蓝海。

淘气 (1937)

淘气的孩子，有办法：

叫游鱼啮你的素足，

叫黄鹂啄你的指甲，

野蔷薇牵你的衣角……

白蝴蝶最懂色香味

寻访你午睡的口胭。

我窥候你渴饮泉水

取笑你吻了你自己。

我这八阵图好不好？

你笑笑，可有点不妙，

我知道你还有花样——

哈哈！到底算谁胜利？

你在我对面的墙上

写下了“我真是淘气”。

无题（一）(1937)

三日前山中的一道小水，

掠过你一丝笑影而去的，

今朝你重见了，揉揉眼睛看

屋前屋后好一片春潮。

百转千回都不跟你讲，

水有愁，水自哀，水愿意载你

你的船呢？船呢？下楼去！

南村外一夜里开齐了杏花。

无题（二）(1937)

窗子在等待嵌你的凭倚。

穿衣镜也怅望，何以安慰？

一室的沉默痴念着点金指。

门上一声响，你来得正对！

杨柳枝招人，春水面笑人。

鸢飞，鱼跃；青山青，白云白。

衣襟上不短少半条皱纹，

这里就差你右脚——这一拍！

无题（三）(1937)

我在门荐上不忘记细心的踩踩，

不带路上的尘土来糟蹋你的房间

以感谢你必用渗墨纸轻轻的掩一下

叫字泪不沾污你给我写的信面。

门荐有悲哀的印痕，渗墨纸也有，

我明白海水洗得尽人间的烟火

白手绢至少可以包一些珊瑚吧，

你却更爱它月台上绿旗后的挥舞。

无题（四）(1937)

隔江泥衔到你梁上，

隔院泉挑到你怀里，

海外的奢侈品舶来你胸前；

你想要研究交通史。

昨夜付出一片轻喟，

今朝收你两朵微笑，

付一支镜花，收一轮水月……

我为你记下流水帐。

无题（五）(1937)

我在散步中感谢

襟眼是有用的，

因为是空的，

因为可以簪一朵水花。

我在簪花中恍然

世界是空的，

因为是有用的，

因为它容了你的款步。

雨同我 (1937)

“天天下雨，自从你走了。”

“自从你来了，天天下雨。”

两地友人雨，我乐意负责。

第三处没消息，寄一把伞去？

我的忧愁随草绿天涯：

鸟安于巢吗？人安于客枕？

想在天井里盛一只玻璃杯，

明朝看天下雨今夜落几寸。

妆 台（古意新拟）(1937)

世界丰富了我的妆台，

宛然水果店用水果包围我，

纵不费气力而俯拾即是，

可奈我睡起的胃口太弱？

游丝该系上左边的檐角。

柳絮别掉下我的盆水。

镜子，镜子，你真是可恼，

让我先给你描雨笔秀眉。

可是从每一片鸳瓦的欢喜

我了解了屋顶，我也明了

一张张绿叶一大棵碧梧——

看枝头一只弄喙的小鸟！

给那件新袍子一个风姿吧。

“装饰的意义在失却自己，”

谁写给我的话呢？别想了——

讨厌！“我完成我以完成你。

Bibliography

Works in Chinese

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1934). Shuimian yu jiyi 睡眠與記憶 (Sleep and memory). *Ta Kung Pao Literary Suplement.* 21 February.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1936). Guanyu Yumu ji 关于鱼目集 (On *Fish Eyes*). *Ta Kung Pao Literary Suplement.* 10 May.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. trans., ed. (1936). *Xichuang ji* 西窗集 (Window on the West). Shanghai: Commercial Press.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1979). Bian Zhilin xiansheng de laixin 卞之琳先生的来信 (A letter from Mr. Bian Zhilin) *Chuangzao Yuekan.* 2(4), p. 140.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1979). Wancheng yu kaiduan: jinian shiren Wen Yiduo bashi shengchen 完成与开端：纪念诗人闻一多八十生辰 (Completion and beginning: to commemorate the poet Wen Yiduo's eightieth birthday). *Wenxue Pinglun,* (3), p. 70-75.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1981). *Xu* 序 (Foreword). In Dai, W. *Dai Wangshu shiji* 戴望舒诗集 (Poems of Dai Wangshu). Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanse, p. 2.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1982). *Cangsang ji* 沧桑集 (Collection over the years). Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1982). *Diaochong jili* 雕虫纪历 (Carving of insects). Revised ed. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1984). *Ren yu shi: yijiu shuoxin* 人与诗: 忆旧说新 (Men and poetry: memories of the old and disccusions on the new). Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1986). *Wenyi baijia tuwen xilie Bian Zhilin* 文艺百家图文系列卞之琳 (One hundred masters in art and literature: Bian Zhilin). *Suibi*, (5), ii.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (1997). Shanshan Shuishui 山山水水 (Mountains and waters). In: Gao, H. ed. *Ditu zai dong* 地图在动 (The map is moving). Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, p. 126 to 168.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (2000). *Bian zhilin yiwen ji* 卞之琳译文集 (Translation works of Bian Zhilin). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (2002). *Bian zhilin wen ji* 卞之琳文集 (Collected works of Bian Zhilin). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Bian, Z. L. 卞之琳. (2007). *Ren yu shi: yijiu shuoxin* 人与诗: 忆旧说新 (Men and poetry: memories of the old and disccusions on the new). Revised. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Cai, Y. 蔡元培. (1984). *Cai Yuanpei quanji* 蔡元培全集 (Collected works of Cai Yuanpei). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company

Cai, Y. 蔡元培. (1987). *Cai Yuanpei meiyu lunji* 蔡元培美育论集 (Collected works of Cai Yuanpei's theory of aesthetic education). Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe.

Cao, W. 曹万生. (2003). *Xiandaipai shixue yu zhongxi shixue* 现代派诗学与中西诗学 (Modernist poetics and Chinese-Western poetics). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

Chen, B. 陈丙莹. (1998). *Bianzhilin pingzhuan* 卞之琳评传 (Critical biography of Bian Zhilin). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe.

Chen, M. 陈梦家. (1931). *Mengjia shiji* 梦家诗集 (Poems of Mengjia). Reprint 2000. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Chen, P. 陈平原. (2010). *Chumo lishi yu jinru wusi* 触摸历史与进入五四 (A touch of history and entrance to the May Fourth Movement). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Chen, R. 陈瑞云, Gu, Z. 顾章义, Meng, Z. 孟昭信 and Tong, B. 佟宝昌. eds. *Daxue lishi cidian* 大学历史词典 (History dictionary for universities). Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe.

Ding, Y. 丁易. (1955) *Zhongguo xiandai wenxueshi lue* 中国现代文学史略 (The Brief History of Chinese Contemporary Literature). Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe.

Fei, M. 废名 and Zhu, Y. 朱英诞. (2008). *Xinshi jianggao* (Lecture manuscripts on New Poetry). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Guo, M. 郭沫若. (1950). Wei jianshe xinzhongguo de renmin wenyi er fendou 为建设新中国的人民文艺而奋斗（Fight to construct New China's People's Literature and Arts）In *Quanguo wenyi xueshu gongzuozhe daibiaodahui jinian wenji* 全国文艺学术工作者代表大会纪念文集 (A collection of essays commemorating the China National Literature and Arts Workers Representatives Congress). Beijing: Xinhua shudian, p. 38.

Guo, M. 郭沫若. (1992). *Guo Moruo quan ji* 郭沫若全集 (Collected works of Guo Moruo). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Hu, S. 胡适. (1998). *Hushi wenji* 胡适文集 (Collected works of Hushi). Vol.2. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Hu, S. 胡适. (1999). *Hushi shuo wenxue bianqian* 胡适说文学变迁 (Hushi on changes in literature). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

Huang, J. 黄健. (2002). *Jingpai wenxue piping yanjiu* 京派文学批评研究 (A critical study of the *jingpai* school of literature). Shanghai: sanlian shudian chubanshe.

Huang, Z., Chen, P. and Qian, L. 黄子平；陈平原；钱理群. (1985) *Lun "ershishiji zhongguo wenxue"* 论 "二十世纪中国文学" (On "Twentieth-century Chinese Literature"). *Wenxue Pinglun*, 05, p. 3-13.

Jiang, R. 江弱水. (2000). *Bian Zhilin shiyi yanjiu* 卞之琳诗艺研究 (A study of Bian Zhilin's art in poetry). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Jiang, R. 江弱水. (2010). *Gudianshi de xiandaixing* 古典诗的现代性 (Modernity in classical Chinese poetry). Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian.

Jiang, T. 姜涛. (2005) *"Xin shiji" yu zhongguo xinshi de fasheng* "新诗集" 与中国新诗的发生 ('An Anthology of New Verse' and the rise of modern poetry in China). Peking University Press.

Lan, D. 蓝棣之. (1990). Lun Bian Zhilin shi chuangzuo de mailuo 论卞之琳诗创作的脉络 (On the sequence of periods in Bian Zhilin's poetic creations). In: Yuan K. ed. *Bian Zhilin yu shi yishu* 卞之琳与诗艺术 (Bian Zhilin and the art of poetry). Shi Jiangzhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, p. 56.

Lan, D. 蓝棣之. (1994). *Xiandaishi de qinggan yu xingshi* 现代诗的情感与形式 (Emotions and forms of modern poetry). Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe.

Lan, D. 蓝棣之. (2002). *Xiandai shige lilun* 现代诗歌理论 (Theory of modern poetry). Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe.

Li, G. 李广田. (2010). *Li Guangtian quanji* 李广田全集 (Collected works fo Li Guangtian). Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe.

Li, J. 李健吾. (1947). *Juhua er ji* 咀华二集 (Second collection of digesting Chineseness). Reprin 2010. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Li, J. 李健吾. (1983). *Li Jianwu wenxue pinglun xuan* 李健吾文学评论选 (Selected work of Li Jianwu's literary criticism). Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe.

Li, S. 李松睿. (2012). Zhengzhi yishi yu xiaoshuo xingshi: lun Bian Zhilin de Shanshan shuishui 政治意识与小说形式——论卞之琳的《山山水水》 (Political notions and novel forms: on Bian Zhilin's *Shanshan shuishui*). *Modern Chinese literature studies* 中国现代文艺研究丛刊, (4), p. 53-66.

Li, Y. 李怡. (2006). *Zhongguo xinshi de chuantong yu xiandai* 中國新詩的傳統與現代 (Tradition and modernity in Chinese New Poetry). Taipei: Xiuwei zixun.

Li, Y. 李影心. (1937). <Hanyuan Ji> <汉园集> (the Han Garden). *Ta Kung Pao Literary Suplement*. 31 January.

Li, Z. 李泽厚. (1994). *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun* 中国近代思想史论 (On the modern history of Chinese thinking). Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe.

Liang, Z. 梁宗岱. (2003). *Liang Zongdai* wenji 梁宗岱文集 (Collected works of Liang Zongdai). Vol. 2. Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe.

Liu, S. 刘绶松 (1956) *Zhongguo xinwenxueshi chugao* 中国新文学史初稿 (First Draft of Chinese New Literature History). Shanghai: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Lu, J. 卢锦淑 (2015) '*Bian Zhilin shizhong shuiyixiang yu chuantong sixiang chuancheng* 卞之琳诗中水意象与传统思想传承' (Image of water in Bian Zhilin's poems and the inheritance o traditional thoughts), *Research of Chinese Literature*, (04), p. 95-98.

Luo, J. 罗家伦. (1991). *Luo Jialun xiansheng wencun* 羅家倫先生文存 (Collected works of Mr. Luo Jialun). Taibei: Guoshi guan.

Ma, L. et al. 马良春等 (1984) *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sichao liupai taolun ji* 中国现代文学思潮流派讨论集 (Chinese Modern Literary Trend of Thoughts). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Mu, D. 穆旦. (2006). *Mu Dan shiwenji* 穆旦诗文集 (Collected poems and proses of Mu Dan). Vol. 2. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Mu, M. 穆木天. (1985). Tanshi: ji Moruo de yifeng xin 谭诗——寄沫若的一封信 (On poetry: a letter to Muoruo). In: Yang, K. And Liu, Fu., ed. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中国现代诗论 (On modern Chinese poetry). Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, p. 98.

Qian, L. 钱理群, Huang, Z 黄子平. and Chen, P 陈平原. (2004). *Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenxue sanrentan* 二十世纪中国文学三人谈 (Three men on twentieth-century Chinese literature). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Qian, L., Wen, R. and Wu, Fu. 钱理群；温儒敏；吴福辉 (1998) *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshi nian* 中国现代文学三十年 (Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History). Beijing: Peking University Press.

Shangguan, B. 上官碧. Bian Zhilin fudiao 卞之琳浮雕 (Relief of Bian Zhilin). *Ta Kung Pao Literary Suplement.* 1 December.

Shen, C. 沈从文. (1984). *Shen Congwen wenji* 沈从文文集 (Collected works of Shen Congwen). Vol 11. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe.

Shen, C. 沈从文. (2010). Women zenmeyang qu du xinshi 我们怎么样去读新诗 (How to read New Poetry). In: Xie, M. and Jiang, T. eds. *Zhongguo xinshi zongxi* 中国新诗

总系 (Complete guide to New Poetry in China). Vol 9. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, p. 145.

Sun, Y. 孙玉石 (2010). *Zhongguo xiandai zhuyi shichao shilun* 中国现代主义诗潮史论 (History of the modenist poetry trend in China). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Tang, Q. 唐祈. (1990). Bian Zhilin yu xiandai zhuyi shige 卞之琳与现代主义诗歌 (Bian Zhilin and modernist poetry). In: Yuan K. ed. *Bian Zhilin yu shi yishu* 卞之琳与诗艺术 (Bian Zhilin and the art of poetry). Shi Jiangzhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, p. 19-22.

Tang, T. 唐弢 (1979) *Zhongguo xiandai wenxueshi* 中国现代文学史 (History of Modern Chinese Literature). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Wang, B. 王斑. 2008. *Lishi de chonggao xingxiang* 历史的崇高形象 (The sublime figure of history). Translated from English by X. Meng. Shanghai: Sanlian shudian chubanshe.

Wang, D. 王独清. (1985). Zai tanshi: ji Mutian, Boqi 再谭诗——寄木天、伯奇 (Again on poetry: a letter to Mutian and Boqi). In: Yang, K. And Liu, Fu., ed. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中国现代诗论 (On modern Chinese poetry). Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, p. 109.

Wang, G. 王国维. (1998). *Renjian cihua* 人间词话 (Commentaries on lyrical work). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

Wang, H. 汪晖. (2004). *Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* 现代中国思想的兴起 (Rise of modern Chinese thinking). Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian.

Wang, J. 王杰. (1995) *Shenmei huanxiang yanjiu* 审美幻像研究 (A study of aesthetic illusions). Beijing: Peking University Press.

Wang, J. 王杰. (2016) Xiangchou wutuobang : wutuobang de zhongguo xingshi jiqi shenmei biaoda 乡愁乌托邦：乌托邦的中国形式及其审美表达 (xiangchou utopia: utopia's form in China and its aesthetic expressions). *Exploration and Free Views,* (11), p.4-10.

Wang, J. 王杰 and Shi, X. 史晓林 (2018). Makesi zhuyi meixue de dangxia yu weilai 马克思主义美学的当下与未来 (The present and future of Marxist aesthetics). *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* (1), p. 25-32.

Wang, Y. 王瑶 (1982) *Zhongguo xinwenxue shigao* 中国新文学史稿 (Manuscript of Chinese New Literature History). Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.

Wang, Y. 王瑶 (1995) *Wang Yao Quanji* 王瑶全集 (Complete Works of Wang Yao). Shanxi: Beiyue Literature and Art Publishing House.

Wang, Z. 王佐良. (2005). *Wenxue jian de qihe* 文学间的契合 (Consonance of literatures). Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe.

Wen, R. 温儒敏 (2007) *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshi nian xuexi zhidao* 《中国现代文学三十年》学习指导 (Study Guide to Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literary History). Beijing: Peking University Press.

Wen, Y. 闻一多. (1993). *Wen Yiduo quanji* 闻一多全集 (Collected works of Wen Yiduo). Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe.

Wu, X. 吴晓东. (2004). *Xiangzheng zhuyi yu zhongguo xiandai wenxue* 象征主义与中国现代文学 (Symbolism and modern Chinese literature). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Wu, X. 吴晓东. (2010). *Ershi shiji de shixin: Zhongguo xinshi lunji* 二十世纪的诗心：中国新诗论集 (Twentieth-century poetic hearts: essays on Chinese New Poetry). Beijing: Peking University Press.

Xie, M. 谢冕. (1998). Youhuan: bainian Zhongguo wenxue de muti 忧患：百年中国文学的母题 (Youhuan: motif of Chinese literature in 100 years). *Nanfang Wentan*, (2), p. 25-29.

Xu, Y. 许渊冲. (2013). *Xu yuanchong jingdian yingyi gudai shige 1000 shou* 许渊冲经典英译古代诗歌 1000 首 (1000 classical Chinese poems translated to English by Xu Yunchong). Beijing: Haitun chubanshe.

Xu, Z. 徐志摩. (1928). Xinyue de taidu 新月的态度 (The attitude of Crescent Moon Society). *Xinyue*, 1(1).

Xu, Z. 徐志摩. (2013). Yishu yu shenghuo 艺术与生活 (Art and life). In: Jiang, F. and Liang, S. eds. *Xu zhi mo quan ji* 徐志摩全集 (Complete works of Xu Zhimo). Vol 1. Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chuban she, p. 453.

Yeh, C. 叶嘉莹. (2013). *Jialing zawen ji* 伽陵雜文集 (Essays of Jialing). Taipei: Dakuai wenhua.

Yeh, M. 奚密. (2008). Bian Zhilin: chuangxin de jicheng 卞之琳：创新的继承 (Bian Zhilin: innovative inheritance). *Jiangsu daxue xuebao* 江苏大学学报, (3), p. 40-47.

Yu, P. 俞平伯. (1985). Baihua shi de san da tiaojian 白话诗的三大条件 (Three Conditions of Vernacular Poetry). In: Yang, K. And Liu, Fu., ed. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中国现代诗论 (On modern Chinese poetry). Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, p. 21.

Yu, P. 俞平伯. (1992). *Yu Pingbo* 俞平伯. Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian.

Yu, G. 余光中. (2004). *Yu Guangzhong ji* 余光中集 (Works of Yu Guangzhong). Vol. 5. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

Yu, G. 余光中. (2010). Xinshi yu chuantong 新诗与传统 (New Poetry and tradition). In: Xie, M. and Jiang, T. eds *Zhongguo xinshi zongxi* 中国新诗总系 (Complete guide to New Poetry in China). Vol 9. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, p. 447.

Yuan, K. 袁可嘉. (1985). *Xiandaipai lun · yingmei shilun* 现代派论·英美诗论 (Theory on modernism on English and American poetry). Beijing: zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.

Zhang, B. 张毕来 (1955) *Xinwenxue shigang* 新文学史纲 (Outline of the New Literature History). Reprint 1985. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Zhang, J. 张建智. (2000). Hanyuanji jiuying 汉园集旧影 (Photos prints of the Han Garden). *Book Town* 书城 (7), p. 43-50.

Zhang, M. 张曼仪. (1989). *Bian Zhilin zhuyi yanjiu* 卞之琳著译研究 (A study of Bian Zhilin's creative works and translation). Hong Kong: School of Chinese, University of Hong Kong.

Zhang, M. 张曼仪. (1990). Haishi youshou de Miusi 还是"右手"的缪斯 (The Muse still watches over "the right hand"). In: Yuan K. ed. *Bian Zhilin yu shi yishu* 卞之琳与诗艺术 (Bian Zhilin and the art of poetry). Shi Jiangzhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, p. 168.

Zhang, P. 张彭松. (2010). Wutuobang yujing xia de xiandaixing fansi 乌托邦语境下的现代性反思 (Reflection upon modernity under the context of utopia). Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe.

Zhang, S. 张松建. (2012). *Shuqing zhuyi yu zhongguo xiandai shixue* 抒情主义与中国现代诗学 (Lyricism and modern Chinese poetics). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Zhang, X. 张新颖. (2009). *20 shiji shangbanqi zhongguo wenxue de xiandai yishi* 20世纪上半期中国文学的现代意识 (The modern consciousness in early twentieth-century Chinese literature). Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe.

Zhao, H. 赵红玲. (200). *Liuchao nishi yanjiu* 六朝拟诗研究 (Six Dynasties mimesis oetry). Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.

Zhao, Y. 赵毅衡. (2013). *Lijiao xiayan zhihou* 礼教下延之后 (After the downward extension of lijiao). Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe.

Zhou, Y. 周扬. (1985) *Zhou Yang wenji* 周扬文集 (Collected works of Zhou Yang). Vol.2. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Zhu, G. 朱光潜. (1997). *Shilun* 诗论 (On poetry). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Zhu, Z. 朱自清. (1984). *Xinshi zahua* 新诗杂话 (Essays on New Poetry). Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian.

Zong, B. 宗白华. (1981). *Meixue sanbu* 美学散步 (A walk with aesthetics). Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.

Zong, B. 宗白华. (1994). *Zong Baihua quanji* 宗白华全集 (Collected works of Zong Baihua). Vol.2. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

Works in Western languages

Baudelaire, C. (2010). *The Painter of Modern Life (Penguin Great Ideas)*. Translated from French by P. E. Charvet. [Kindle e-book]. London: Penguin Books.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Benjamin, W. (1940). *On the Concept of History*. [Online]. Translated from German by D. Redmond. Available from: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm

Bloch, E. (2009). *The spirit of utopia*. Translated from German by A.A. Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bishop, P. and Stephenson, R. 2005. *Friedrich Nietzsche and Weimar classicism*. Rochester: Camden House.

Bloom, H. (1976) *Poetry and Repression*. New Haven.: Yale University Press.

Bradbury, M. and McFarlane, J. (1976). *Modernism, 1890-1930.* London: Penguin Books.

Brislin, R. (1976). 'Comparative research methodology: cross-cultural studies', *International Journal of Psychology*, 11(3), p.215-229.

Brown, J.K. (2005). Drama and theatrical practice in Weimar Classicism. In: Richter, S. *The literature of Weimar classicism*. Rochester: Camden House.

Burke, E. (1790) *Reflections on the revolution in France.* [Online]. [Accessed 20 September 2018]. Available from: https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/burke/revfrance.pdf

Bury, J.B. (1932). *The Idea of Progress.* Reprint 2008. New York: Cosimo.

Calinescu, M. (1987). *Five Faces of Modernity*. 2nd ed. Durham: Duke University Press.

Carter, A. (1978). *The Idea of Decadence in French literature, 1830-1900*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Certeau, M. (1990). *L'Invention du Duotidien*. Paris: Gallimard.

Chang, L. (1992). *The Tao and the Logos*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Chodorkoff, D. (1983) 'The utopian impulse: reflections on a tradition'. http://social-ecology.org/wp/1983/12/the-utopian-impulse-reflections-on-a-tradition/

Chow, T. (1960). *The May Fourth Movement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cohen, P.A., (2010). *Discovering History in China*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Eliot, T. and Pound, E. (2007). *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions.

Eno, R. (1990). *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fairbank, J. and Teng, S. (1954). *Research Guide for China's Response to the West*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Flint, F. (1913). 'Imagisme', *Poetry*, 1(6), p. 198-200.

Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and Civilization.* Translated from French by R. Howard. New York: Vintage Books.

Giddens, A. (1973). *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (2002). *Runaway World*. London: Profile books.

Gray, J. (2008). *Black Mass*. London: Penguin.

Haft, L. (1983). *Pien Chih-lin*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Halcli, A., Browning, G. AND Webster, F.V. (2000). *Understanding Contemporary Society*. London: SAGE.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1991) *Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by A. W. Wood. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. (2018). *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated from German by T. Pinkard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hobsbawm, E. J. and Ranger, T. eds. (2012). *Invention of Tradition.* Reissue. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hsia, C.T. (1963) ‘Twenty years after the Yan’an Forum’, *The China Quarterly,* (13), p. 226-253.

Hsia, C.T. (1999). *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*. 3rd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hsia, C.T. (2004). *C.T. Hsia on Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hsu, K. (1970). *Twentieth-Century Chinese poetry*. Ithaca: Cornell University.

Hunt, L. (2014) *Writing History in the Global Era*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Iser, W. (1993). *The Fictive and the Imaginary*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Jameson, F. (2004). ‘The politics of utopia’, *New Left Review*, 25, p. 35-54.

Jameson, F. (2005). *Archaeologies of the Future*. London: Verso.

Jauss, H. (2007). *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jusdanis, G. (1991). *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kant, I. (1960). *Education.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kant, I. (1963). *Critique of Pure Reason.* Translated from German by N.K. Smith. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Koselleck, R. (1988). *Critique and Crisis.* Translated from German by M.W. Richter. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Kroeber, A. L. and Kluckhohn, C. (1952). ‘Culture, a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions’, *Bulletin de l’Institut de recherches économiques et sociales*, 20 (07), p.755.

Kubin, W. And Wagner, R. eds. (1982). *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature and Literary Criticism.* Bochum: Studienverlap Brockmeyer.

Kubin, W. (1996). ‘Creator! Destroyer! — on the self-image of the Chinese poet’, *Modern Chinese Literature*, 9 (2), 247-259.

Lee, L.O. (1973). *Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*. Reprint 2014. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lee, L.O. (2002). Literary trends I: the quest for modernity 1895-1927. In: Goldman, M. and Lee, L. eds. *An Intellectual History of Modern China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.142-195.

Legge, J. trans. (1891). *The Chinese Classics.* 5 vols. Reprint 1960. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Levenson, J. (1968). *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levitas, R. (2014). *Utopia as Method.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Li, Z. (1988). *The Path of Beauty*. Morning Glory Publishers.

Li, Z. (2010). *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Li, Z. (2019). *A History of Classical Chinese Thought*. Translated from Mandarin Chinese by A. Lambert. Milton: Routledge.

Lin, Y. (1979). *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Lips, J.E. (1949). *The Origin of Things*. London: George. G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.

Liu, K. (1995) 'The problematics of Mao and Althusser: alternative modernity and cultural revolution', Rethinking *Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture, and Society*, 8(3), p. 1-25.

Lu, X. (2002). *Old Tales Retold*. Translated from Chinese by Yang, G. and Yang, X. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Mallarmé, S. (2006). *Collected Poems and Other Verse.* Translated from French by E.H. and A.M. Blackmore. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mao, Z. (1965) *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung.* Vol. II Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Marx, K. (1965) *Capital*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1962) *On Colonialism*. Moscow, Russia: Foreign Languages Publishing House

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1969). *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, selected works*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Masini, F. (1993). 'The formation of the modern Chinese lexicon and its evolution toward a national language: the period from 1840 to 1898', *Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series*, 6(I), 295.

McDougall, B. S. (1979). ‘Report on the workshop on contemporary Chinese literature and the performing arts at Harvard, June 13-20, 1979’, *Modern Chinese Literature Newsletter* 5, Spring-Fall 1979, p. 28 to 29.

McDougall, B. S. (1980). *Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art"*. Ann Arbor: Centre for Chinese Studies.

Moggach, D.S. and Lledman, E. (1997) ‘Hegel and the enlightenment project’, *The European Legacy*, 2 (3), p. 538-543.

Murat, L. (2014). *The Man Who Thought He was Napoleon*. Translated from French by D. Dusinberre. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Nicolson, H. (1921). *Paul Verlaine*. London: Constable & Company, Ltd.

Nisbet, R. (1994) *History of the Idea of Progress*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Pickowicz, P. (1981). *Marxist Literary Thought in China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Pierrot, J. (1981). *The Decadent Imagination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Průšek, J. (1980). *The Lyrical and the Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Richter, S. (2005). *The Literature of Weimar Classicism*. Rochester: Camden House.

Schiller, F. (1967). *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Translated from German by E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Schwartz, B. (1964). *In Search of Wealth and Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Shih, S. (2001). *The Lure of the Modern.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Spencer, H. (2012) *The Data of Ethics.* [online]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Library Collection - Philosophy). [Accessed 15 March 2017]. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139149808.

Stephan, P. (1975). *Paul Verlaine and the Decadence, 1882-1890*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Swart, K. (1964). *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-century France*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.

Taylor, C. (1992). *Sources of Self*. Reprint. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tillich, P. (1971). *Political Expectation*. New York: Harper & Row.

Trousson, R. (1975). *Voyages Aux Pays De Nulle Part*. Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles.

Tsu, J. (2005). *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wang, B. (1997). *The Sublime Figure of History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wang, D.D. (1997). *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wang, D.D. (2015). *The Lyrical in Epic Time*. [Kindle e-book]. New York: Columbia University Press.

Weir, D. (1995). *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*. Amherst: University of Massachussets Press.

Wellek, R. (1949). *Theory of Literature.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Wellek, R. (1986). *A History of Modern Criticism.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (1979) *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review*. London: New Left Books.

Yang, G. and Yang, X. (2001). *Yuefu Songs with Regular Five-syllable Lines*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Yeh, M. (1991). *Modern Poetry of China*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Yeh, M. (1994). *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Yip, W. (1993). *Diffusion of Distances.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yip, W. (1997). *Chinese Poetry*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Zhang, L. (1994). *The Tao and the Logos*. Durham: Duke University Press.