



The Literary Mind and the Carving of Modernities

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Classical-style poetry constitutes one of the most contested topics in the millennial reappraisal of modern Chinese literature. Ever since the May Fourth era, modern Chinese literature has built on the paradigm that highlights vernacular articulation, Western-style genres, a progressive agenda predicated on revolution and enlightenment, and an “order to mimesis” in the name of realism. Above all, “modern” is invoked to celebrate whatever is deemed iconoclastic and “new.” By way of contrast, classical-style poetry appears to be a perfect counter-example. Its adherence to nonvernacular discourse, its exercise of formulism, and its penchant for archaic motifs and imagery are all said to betray its reactionary nature.

Hindsight, however, calls attention to the fact that classical-style poetry continued to thrive throughout the twentieth century regardless of the predominant existence of New Literature. Although it was adopted by the conservatives to demonstrate their nostalgia, it was also celebrated among radical antitraditionalists from Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) to Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976). Classical-style poetry represents as much a token of cultural “necrophilia,” in Yu Dafu’s 郁達夫 (1896–1945) terminology, as a signal of political avant-gardism. More intriguingly, at select moments of historical crisis, classical-style poetry appeared to best address the “structure of feeling”¹ of the time, thus displaying its provocative power more than any form of New Literature.

The complex implications of modern classical-style Chinese poetry have yet to be carefully studied. Indeed, the genre prods one to rethink the multiple

strains in the genesis and development of Chinese literary modernization. It calls attention to issues ranging from the mutual implications between tradition and modernity to the politics of cultural axiology and the “plotting” of history and temporality. More important, through reading classical-style poetry in the new century, we are compelled to contemplate again the condition of “newness” underlying modern Chinese literary culture.

This special issue seeks to look into the multifarious dimensions of classical-style poetry and, by extension, classical-style prose and poetics in modern times. In eleven articles, it touches on a spectrum of themes such as the reinterpretation of classical literary thought, the fashioning of literary subjectivities, the politics of archaism, and the classicist intervention with history. Although the contributors each demonstrate a distinct theoretical training and methodological choice, they share the conviction that classical-style poetry is a dynamic genre capable of engaging the decadent and the progressive as well as the lyrical and the epic that are inherent in modern literary sensibilities. At their most polemical, the contributors ask whether the modern literature we consider here is the least modern of all Chinese modernities, if not the most conventional of all modern Chinese conventionalities.

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For readers who are not familiar with the historical context in which classical-style Chinese poetry “became modern,” a brief genealogical description is in order. First, we have to keep in mind that poetry (*shi* 詩) in traditional Chinese literary culture means more than a literary genre as defined by Western academia. Rather, it refers to a much broader domain of articulations, as a knowledge system, a pedagogical institution, a social *habitus*, and above all the quintessential form of civilization. This tradition of poetry started to show signs of disintegration in the late Qing 清 (1644–1911) era, when the dynasty was faced with incessant challenges from within and without the Middle Kingdom. Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792–1841) has often been regarded as the poet who anticipated the breakdown of the ancient poetic culture. Gong’s poetry is best characterized by an anxiety about historical crisis, a melancholy subjectivity, and an apocalyptic vision. Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), the leading literary reformer at the turn of the twentieth century, has described how he was once captivated by the “electrifying effect” (*ruo shoudian ran* 若受電然)² of Gong Zizhen’s poetry. Indeed, Gong’s lasting impact was found in works by classical-style poetry practitioners from Lu Xun to Liu Yazhi 柳亞子 (1887–1958) and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), and from Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 (1883–1944) to Mao Zedong.

Late Qing poetry after Gong’s time can be divided into three schools, all of which in one way or another proposed an antiquarian agenda of emulating the ancients. The neoancient school, led by poets such as Wang Kaiyun 王愷運

(1833–1916) and Deng Fulun 鄧輔綸 (1828–93), stressed their affinity to the styles of the Han 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE), Wei 魏 (220–265), and Six Dynasties 六朝 (222–589). The late Tang school, owing its fame primarily to Fan Zengxiang 樊增祥 (1846–1931) and Yi Shunding 易順鼎 (1858–1920), was known for its efforts at recapturing the opulent and refined taste of the mid- and late Tang 唐 (618–907) poets from Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812–870) to Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–858). The Song poetry school, the most accomplished of the three late Qing schools of poetry, sought to revive the erudite diction and obscure symbolism characteristic of Song 宋 (960–1279) poets, although in practice their interests appear to encompass styles of other periods. The leading names of this school include Chen Sanli 陳三立 (1852–1937), Chen Yan 陳衍 (1856–1937), Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 (1860–1938), and Shen Zengzhi 沈增植 (1850–1922). Their impact continued well into the republican era, in defiance of the reigning dogmas of the New Literature movement.

In addition to classical-style poetry, the song lyric became popular again in the late eighteenth century, thanks largely to the work of the Changzhou school. Building on the Changzhou school's predilection for allegory and allusion, Wang Pengyun 王鵬運 (1849–1904) perfected the style and brought it to bear on contemporary realities; for this he is regarded as the key person in reviving the song lyric in the late Qing. Under Wang's influence, Zhu Zumou 朱祖謀 (1859–1931) further cultivated fanciful imagery, topical relevance, and musical subtlety in the song lyric. Equally well known is Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤 (1859–1926), who was adept not only in metrics and the deployment of imagery but also in song lyric criticism. Long Yusheng 龍榆生 (1902–66) represented the most acclaimed composer and editor of the song lyric before 1949.

Of the late Qing poets wrestling with the vexed tradition of classical-style poetry, the one who rose to preeminence was none other than Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848–1905). Huang's defiant spirit was apparent early in life. An admirer of Gong Zizhen, Huang argued that the ancients used language that was suitable to their own times; for this reason their poetry need not be treated as something sacrosanct by later generations. He claims in this famous line, "I intend to write in my own language; I cannot be limited by the ancients" 我手寫我口，古豈能拘牽。³ On the strength of this conviction, Huang sought to create a new style of verse, which later came to be called modern-style poetry. In terms of poetic reform, Huang took up where Gong Zizhen left off, while also anticipating Liang Qichao's advocacy of a "poetry revolution" (*shijie geming* 詩界革命) in 1899.

Although all these poets share a goal of restoring classical-style verse vis-à-vis the "vernacular turn" of (literary) history, one should beware of generalizing about them as merely conservative. That each seeks to revive authentic poetry by consulting with *different* periods and paradigms of antiquity—variously, Han,

Wei, and Six Dynasties; late Tang; Song—already betokens a melting of tradition. Instead of one model, these poets find multiple options in the past, each with claims to legitimacy. Although they have not invented anything new, by juxtaposing various paradigms of the past in a synchronic constellation, they have “spatialized” distinct temporalities in ways rarely seen before. At the same time, they must cope with increasing pressures demanding drastic reform or even total denial of the tradition.

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The modernization of classical-style poetry became a paradoxical undertaking when the “more modern” exercise of literature was launched in the late Qing and May Fourth era. In this new wave of literary modernization, Western forms were introduced to China and quickly secured hegemonic positions. In the following decades, classical-style poetry, however much couched in the discourse of self-renewal, had to give way to various kinds of experiments ranging from metric liberation to semantic innovation. Classical-style poets were identified in terms of loyalism, antiquarianism, or merely outdated diletantism. At their best, they are said to have infused contemporary ethos into the format of conventional topics and styles, thus generating a sense of either anachronism or haunting *déjà-vu*.

Nevertheless, for all their antitraditionalist sentiment, practitioners of new literature appeared not completely exempt from the impact of the pre-modern legacies. As I argue in my article in this special issue, this was indeed a period that saw the clash of literary cultures. For example, his indebtedness to Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner aside, Lu Xun expresses his modernist angst by revisiting the abysmal pathos of both Qu Yuan 屈原 (340 BCE–278 BCE) and Tao Qian 陶潛 (395–427). Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) strives to cope with his existential crisis in terms of not only Immanuel Kant’s and Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophies but also the “mental vista” (*jingjie* 境界) originating with Buddhist thought as well as lyrical discourse. Zhu Guangqian’s 朱光潛 (1897–1986) career path takes him from Nietzsche to Benedetto Croce, Karl Marx, and Giambattista Vico, all the while pondering how to modernize the time-honored lyrical concept of the “fusion of feeling and scene” (*qingjing jiaorong* 情景交融). In the leftist camp, where Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935) demonstrated a strong penchant for lyricism traceable to the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry) despite his commitment to Anatoly Lunacharsky and Georgi Plekhanov, Hu Feng’s 胡風 (1902–85) “subjective fighting spirit” (*zhuguan de zhandaou jingshen* 主觀的戰鬥精神) is said to carry the imprint of both the Mencian thought of the mind and György Lukács’s Hegelian/Marxian revolutionism. Above all, what can be more intriguing a case than Mao Zedong, who

published a series of his classical-style poetic works in 1957, creating a national craze for a Maoist blend of lyrical archaism and lyrical revolutionism?

The post-May Fourth writers' and politicians' interest in classical-style poetry, to be sure, has to do with the fact that having grown up in the last decades of the traditional literary canon, they did not lose their deeply ingrained classicist sensibilities even after being converted to antitraditionalism. Lu Xun's classical-style poetry, for example, has been well received for its political poignancy as well as his ironic use of conventional motifs and metrics. Guo Moruo, the herald of romantic poetry, also composed classical-style lines on "youthful pathos" (*shaonian youhuan* 少年憂患) after the model of Gong Zizhen. It was in the hands of a writer like Yu Dafu, however, that classical-style poetry found a modernist resonance in registering the fleeting impressions of the changing times as well as the sense of alienation resulting from the loss of cultural, political, and emotional grounding.

In the classicist camp, Chen Sanli, Liu Yazhi, and Lü Bicheng 呂碧城 (1883–1943) merit attention as major poets of different styles. Whereas Chen was hailed for his historical pathos and intellectual rigor in the vein of the Song poetry school, Liu managed to combine his revolutionary agenda with the posture of an engaged literatus of the classical tradition. Liu was also a founder of the Southern Society or *Nanshe* 南社, the largest group of classical-style poets in the Republican era. Lü was already a well-known female song lyricist in the late Qing. She reached the peak of her creativity during her travels in Europe in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The spectacle of the Alps and other landscapes enabled Lü not only to expand the thematic repertoire of classical poetry, which had been confined to domestic topoi, but also to generate a modern, feminine vision of the sublime. By focusing on the nexus of space and gender relations, Lü's transgression of geographical and poetical boundaries worked in concert with her feminist consciousness to reshape the whole song lyric genre.

Even for the modernists, the impact of classical lyricism is subtly reflected by the motifs, rhetoric, and imagery of their works. It would be impossible to appreciate Dai Wangshu's 戴望舒 (1905–50) "Yuxiang" 雨巷 (Rainy Alley) without understanding that the lilac, its key image, alludes to a Tang poem; similarly, Li Jinfa's 李金髮 (1900–1976) signature poem "Qifu" 棄婦 (Deserted Woman) reminds us of the "deserted wife," one of the major tropes in premodern poetry. Both He Qifang 何其芳 (1912–77) and Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910–2000) resort to the opulent and decadent imagery of late Tang poetry in their conjuration of the wasteland of China. Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905–93), the exemplary interpreter of German romanticism and symbolism, made Du Fu his idol in poetic composition. More striking is the case of Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905–2003). A Shanghai neosensationalist par excellence, Shi was so keen on classical-style poetry that he ended up becoming a convert to the time-honored genre.

The May Fourth literary canon would not have been so dynamic without reverberating with the legacy of classical sources. As described above, the literati, intellectuals, and politicians composed classical-style poetry by attending to different periods, genres, tastes, subjects, languages, and intended readerships. The resultant conflation of their voices should never be simplified into a monolithic discourse. Rather it points to a cornucopia of voices and articulations that can be provocative and decadent, reactionary and revolutionary.

Meanwhile, one should not overlook the fact that since the nineteenth century, classical-style poetry traveled overseas, finding articulations in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as in sinophone communities such as Singapore, Malaysia, and even the United States. Classical-style poetry was taken to be a vehicle for expressing either diasporic longing or colonial co-optation (as is particularly the case of Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule), cultural essentialism or transcultural negotiation. In these cases, the old genre came across as amazingly modern in that it helped utter the contested sentiments of a sinophone “obsession with China.”

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At stake here is the politics of writing classical-style poetry and its feasibility in representing modern China. It will be recalled that one of the motivations of Chinese cultural modernization arose from literature reform, of which language reform came as a paramount goal. For the reformers, classical Chinese was deemed obsolete and therefore should make way for the vernacular language, a more lively and democratic communication tool. This language reform had two goals: to change the script system at both syntactic and semantic levels to facilitate a transparent inscription of the real and to update the sound system in both articulatory skill and its acoustic impact in order to generate a dynamic interlocutory circuit. Implied in this language project was a pedagogical mandate of reinscribing the Chinese mindset, a mimetic belief in the accuracy and immediacy of linguistic representation, and a truth claim based on seeking national solidarity.

Nevertheless, Chinese writers and literati had already cast doubt on the hegemonic power of this new writing project no sooner than it was first advocated. Lu Xun, for instance, wrote his “Kuangren riji” 狂人日記 (The Diary of a Madman) in 1918 to register the schizophrenic nature between, and within, classical and modern script systems, and throughout his career he never ceased to question the assumption of the total communicability of language and writing. Aside from writing iconoclastic subjects with recourse to the vernacular language, Lu Xun entertained a hobby of writing classical poetry, the purportedly “dead” form of the past. Through remembering the past as faded,

unintelligible allusions, he demonstrates a critical reflection on the opacity and untenability of writing and meaning over time, and the complacency of the enlightenment project vis-à-vis the unknown territories of history. As such, he enacts a modernity in terms of a “return of the repressed.”

Another notable case is that of Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), the leading classicist critic cum song lyricist of the republican era. On June 2, 1927, Wang drowned himself in the Imperial Garden in Beijing. Wang’s death has been variously attributed to domestic and psychological perturbations, his immersion in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, his eschatological visions, and his Qing loyalism. One might reprove Wang for lagging behind the spirit of his time, one that was life affirming and committed to the discipline of self-renewal. Insofar as his “anachronistic behavior” indicates a (deliberate) blurring of different temporalities as well as paradigms, however, Wang is arguably more modern than most of the self-proclaimed modern literati of his time. Even at the beginning of the Chinese modern age, Wang had already discerned temporality as something more than the staged realization of enlightenment, revolution, and corporeal transcendence. Faced with the radical incompatibilities between the public and private projects of modernity, he asserted his modern freedom negatively in a willful act of self-annihilation. Thus his suicide paradoxically testified to the emergence of a new, posttraditional Chinese subjectivity.

By the late 1930s, more and more New Literature writers turned to classical-style poetry as a way to construe Chinese reality. Even Feng Zhi, “the best modern lyricist in China” (*zhongguo zui wei jiechu de shuqing shiren* 中國最為傑出的抒情詩人)⁴ in Lu Xun’s eyes, composed classical-style poetry when the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War drove him into exile. A gesture of cultural nostalgia notwithstanding, these poets brought about an alternative engagement with Chinese modernity. That is, at a time when nothing seemed to last, the elaborate conventions and rich allusions of classical-style poetry provided a network of references through which the poets could reorient themselves vis-à-vis the civilization in shambles. Against charges that they escaped from their early commitments, these poets could have argued that classical-style poetry “liberated” them from the bonding of national and revolutionary determinisms, throwing them into a realm where historical contingencies and individual choices, heroic deeds and collective catastrophes, have left endless traces for reflection over time. At its most provocative, this “liberation” through classical-style poetry takes on an existential dimension, in the sense that it discloses to the poets a threateningly vast zone of temporalities, demanding that they make sense of the amorphous constellation of the past and present.

Such an argument strikes a more poignant note in the regime of socialist China. It will be recalled that the new republic was founded in 1949 amid the

euphoric exchange of classical-style poems among Mao and his acolytes such as Liu Yazhi and Guo Moruo, as if only the old form could lend a (dynastic) legitimacy to the new regime. The regime celebrated its first decade of rule by featuring Mao's classical-style poems and song lyrics. When Mao's eighteen poems were published in the inaugural issue of *Shikan* 詩刊 (Poetry) in 1957, coinciding with the antirightist movement, one cannot but sense an uncanny reinstatement of the tradition of imperial poetry. Meanwhile, during the same period Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) wrote in private to inscribe the political turmoil and personal harassment. As the son of Chen Sanli and arguably the greatest historian of modern China, Chen sought to elucidate Chinese cultural values regardless of the barbarian invasion and dynastic contingency, and as such he opened up a space for debate over personal integrity versus political power. Now, in the new era, Chen found himself trapped in an environment in which everything was subject to censorship and mutual surveillance. He could turn his thoughts and feelings only into a dense web of archaic references. His poetic encryption may bespeak a motivation of self-protection, but a more compelling reason perhaps is that national and personal trials had led him to a different understanding of literary agency and historical representation.

Chen wrote the famous elegy to commemorate Wang Guowei's self-drowning in 1927: Wang's suicide had demonstrated "the spirit of independence, the freedom of thought" (*duli zhi jingshen, ziyou zhi sixiang* 獨立之精神, 自由之思想).⁵ Despite the widespread perception at the time that Wang had committed suicide for the fallen Qing dynasty, Chen found in the poet's self-annihilation a gesture not of obsolete loyalism but of willful cultural restorationism: "For today's China is facing calamities and crises without precedent in its several thousand years of history. With these calamities and crises reaching ever more dire extremes, how can those whose very being represents a condensation and realization of the spirit of Chinese culture fail to identify with its fate and perish along with it?" 蓋今日之赤縣神州值數千年未有之鉅劫奇變; 劫盡變窮, 則此文化精神所凝聚之人, 安得不與之共命而同盡。⁶ In other words, through his seemingly anachronistic behavior of loyalism, Wang acted out his vehement critique of Chinese modernity in crisis.

Chen Yingke could not have foreseen that his elegiac description of Wang Guowei's predicament in republican China anticipated his own predicament in socialist China. In his final years, he witnessed incessant purges and campaigns that culminated in the Cultural Revolution. In the midst of political violence and cultural vandalism, he poured his sentiment into poetry. Like Wang Guowei, Chen did not worry about the transition of political power so much as the collapse of cultural heritage in the wake of the Chinese communist revolution. But unlike Wang Guowei, who took his own life at the country's most intense

moment of crisis, Chen chose to survive historical change as a prolonged process of self-elegy. Such a decision made his “poetic turn” all the more complex.

Chen Yinke was not alone in seeking refuge in classical-style poetry during the tumultuous years of Maoist revolution. Wang Xindi 王辛笛 (1912–2004), a renowned modernist poet and member of the nine leaves school (*jiuye pai* 九葉派), turned to classical-style poetry during the Cultural Revolution so as to lament individual frailty amid political brutalities. Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1904–86), the most important nativist writer of twentieth-century China, was exiled to a cadre school between 1969 and 1971; despite hardship, he managed to record his trials in lyrical cycles after the models of the Middle Ages such as Tao Qian. These poems reveal Shen’s life in disgrace as much as his amazing capacity to transcend adversity through an imaginary dialogue with the ancients. But the most remarkable case is that of Nie Gannu 聶紺弩 (1903–86). A veteran leftist who was involved in party activities as early as the 1920s, Nie came under attack for taking the ideologically incorrect line in the 1950s and went through incessant persecution from imprisonment to exile in the following decades. At the darkest moment of his life, Nie nevertheless managed to churn out one classical-style poem after another, recounting a life full of humiliation in Mao’s utopia. Contrary to the formula of “scar literature” (*shanghen wenxue* 傷痕文學), however, Nie’s poems are impressive as a series of sarcastic and even sly observations of everyday absurdities. His style wavers between self-mockery and a deep-seated gloom, while he never loses the perspective from which to contemplate the epoch at large. Finally, mixing various conventions from the quatrain to the doggerel, Nie’s poems are subversive in the sense that they question the formal and conceptual decorum of classical-style poetry, thereby injecting a robust energy into the genre.

Thus, at a time when literature had been reduced to nothing but propaganda in the service of Mao’s call for revolution, these poets wrote to utter their own voices against all odds. From the vantage of comparative poetics, they offer a modern Chinese counterpart to the politics of what Leo Strauss calls “esoteric interpretation.”⁷ But a more relevant association may be the ancient concept of *shi keyi yuan* 詩可以怨—poetry is capable of expressing discontent—which was brought back by Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–98) in 1980.⁸ The way in which Qian, arguably the most talented literary scholar in twentieth-century China and a practitioner of modern Chinese prose narrative as well as classical-style poetry, reinvented the old dictum in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution was not a coincidence but a sober reflection on the relationships between poetry *and* history in the modern context. It reminds us that poetry is not a form of “esoteric interpretation” any more than a lived experience that helps define the latitude of literary sensibilities with regard to historical trials.

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The Czech sinologist Jaroslav Průšek (1906–80) has described the dynamics of modern Chinese literature as generated by the pull of two forces, the lyric and the epic. Whereas the lyric refers to the discovery of individual subjectivity and a desire for emancipation, the epic refers to the making of social solidarity and a will to revolution. The lyric and the epic, accordingly, refer not so much to generic traits as to discursive modes, affective capacities, and above all socio-political imaginings. These two modes have fueled the momentum of an entire generation of Chinese writers in their struggle for modernity.⁹

While the lyric may be suggestive of the characteristic traits of Western romanticism and individualism, Průšek is at pains to note that it derives its distinctive orientation primarily from premodern Chinese poetic sensibilities. That is to say, granted their antitraditional posture, modern Chinese literati inherited from premodern literature, particularly from poetry and poetic discourse, a style and a mannerism in their crafting of a modern subjectivity. In this way, modernity and tradition form a relationship that, though necessarily antagonistic, also puts them in dialogue. The archaeological work of such a lyricism is merely at the beginning stage, and more has to be done to put in perspective the strength and weakness of classical-style poetry throughout modern times.

This issue is divided into four modules. The first section introduces three articles regarding the modern engagement with classical poetic concepts. Cheng Yu-yu revisits a dialogue on the “sound effect” that happened in the 1930s, examining the way in which the “natural rhythm” (*ziran de yinjie* 自然的音節) of Chinese poetry is defined by philologists in either biological or linguistic terms, and pondering the poetry’s consequences with regard to the rise of modern Chinese vernacular poetry. Leonard Chan calls attention to the contribution of Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898–1948) to modern literary thought in light of his inquiry into both modern Western criticism and premodern Chinese poetics. David Wang offers ways to rethink the key concepts of traditional poetic discourse such as poetry, *xing* 興 (poetic evocation), and *shishi* 詩史 (poetry as history) and their modern ramifications.

The second section addresses the issue of poetry, self-inscription, and the fashioning of modern subjectivities. Kang-i Chang deals with Shi Zhecun’s autobiographical poetry, particularly the poet’s recollection of his modernist periods. Through a parallel reading of Shi’s life and work, she offers a paradoxical view of a modernist’s experience, which, as Shi would have it, cannot be better crystallized by classical-style poetry. Shengqing Wu looks into the peculiar exercise of early modern Chinese literati who envisage their self-images through both classical-style poetry and photography. The dialogue between text and image evoked new states of perception and affect, which in turn reprogrammed

the ethical and aesthetic visions of modern selfhood. Haosheng Yang introduces the extraordinary life of Nie Gannu and his poetic adventure during his years of exile and humiliation, and contemplates the latitude of political oppression and censorship in opposition to the poet's resilience by means of his innovative play with classical-style poetry.

The third section calls attention to two aspects of Lu Xun's studies, which deserve more scrutiny. Jon von Kowallis traces out the tortuous path by which Lu Xun's early classical-style prose came to be recognized as the harbinger of Chinese literary modernization. Although Lu's early essays touched on a wider range of topics that he developed more fully later, they were not always received well, which speaks to the ambiguities embedded in the discourse of Chinese modernity versus classicism. On the other hand, Lei Ying undertakes an interdisciplinary exercise to rediscover the "seeds" of Buddhism in Lu Xun's thought and writings. Her interpretation of Lu Xun's stance toward *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna) and broader Chinese Mahāyāna thought points to an aspect of Chinese modernity, where belief and rhetoric, religion and (literary) enlightenment, are brought into contestation.

Finally, in the fourth section Xia Zhongyi studies the poetics and politics of classical-style poetry by Chen Yingke, Nie Gannu, and Wang Xindi during the Maoist era, and asks about poetry and testimony, regarding not only the poet's personal integrity and courage but also a civilization's capacity to remember and re-member atrocities. Ko Chia-cian takes on the discourse of loyalism as developed in colonial Hong Kong, examining its anachronistic provocation, anticolonial gesture, and material and ritualistic manifestation. Xia and Ko present two drastically different stances on the spectrum of classical-style poetry. Still, they both argue that these poets may not have sought shelter in a more conventional and, therefore, safer craftsmanship, as common wisdom would have it, any more than toying with a provocative vocation: where the modern form of writing betrays its finitude, classical-style poetry opens up new imaginary possibilities. In an unlikely way, their arguments resonate with Chen Yingke's elegiac words for Wang Guowei, "the spirit of independence, the freedom of thought."



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Notes

1. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 129–35.
2. Liang, *Qingdai xueshu gailun*, 75.
3. Huang, "Zagan" 雜感 (Mixed Feelings), in Huang, *Renjing lu shicao jianzhu*, 42.

4. Lu, *Xiaoshuo er'xi*, 5.
5. Chen Yinke, "Qinghua daxue Wang Guantang xiansheng jinian beiming."
6. Chen Yinke, "Wang Guantang xiansheng wanci bing xu," 13.
7. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 56.
8. Qian, "Shi keyi yuan."
9. Průšek, *The Lyrical and the Epic*. See my discussion in the introduction to *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, 1–38.

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