

Braving Cultural Identity: Modern Chinese Poetry Examined by Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Modern Chinese poetic discourse, being a genre in its own right, has since flourished under the very umbrella of practical, modernized Chinese poetry, but not entirely through the translation of modernized Western poetry. In this vein, within the scope of the selected three modern Chinese poems written by poets from Mainland China, Taiwan and Malaysia between 1980 and 2018, this paper examines the various dimensions of power, namely, reality in the representation of action, from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. The poem from China, despite foreign influences, responds to the pursuit of a “national local colour” colloquially within the popular poetry paradigm, whereas the poems from Taiwan and Malaysia sustain a “strong connection to classical diction” and are congruent with the “form and text change” as well as “content determines form” orientation in their search for cultural identity.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Modern Chinese Poetry, Taiwanese *Haiku*

Introduction

Chinese poetry dates back to the *Book of Songs*. *Wen Xin Diao Long* (henceforth *Wenxin*), the earliest collection of systematic literature theory and criticism in China, was produced in *Qi Guo* (nation state of Qi) of *Nan Chao* around A.D. 501-502. In the *Shen Si* section of *Wenxin*, the designation of imagery in a poetic discourse was believed to be the most prominent among all techniques in verse writing.¹ It was so revered that contemporaries viewed the use of imagery in a poem as the major assessment and analytical construct in literary criticism. This strongly confirms the significance of imagery in Chinese poetic discourse since the time of *Wenxin*.

Modern Chinese poetic discourse, as a genre in its own right, developed into a form around the 1930s in Mainland China when practical criticism or new criticism was formally introduced into the country at the institutional level, together with imported influence from Romanticism

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(Eliot, 1999; Richards, 2008; and 陈越/Chen Yue, 2015). The term “modern” or “new” Chinese poetry indeed has since come into question as to whether it is to be understood as relevant to “modernism” of T. S. Eliot or modernity (modernism, realism, surrealism, postmodernism, hypertext, etc.). In view of this, Taiwanese poet and author Luo Qing (罗青, 1978) suggests the use of “vernacular poetry” to avoid ambiguity.

With the advent of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, two years after Dr. Hu Shi’s manifesto in favour of the spoken language published in *New Youth* (1917), Europeanization was forcefully adopted in form as well as syntax. It eventually prompted the growth of Chinese literature at a later stage with characteristically “local colour” or national spirit, and the concern with the issue of cultural identity (张桃洲/Zhang Taozhou, 2013: 147). As Julian Lin noted (1973), the year 1937 saw “the most exciting and diverse experimentation in the history of modern Chinese poetry.” To most poets of the period, the experimentation was centred on the question of tradition versus modernity. But because classical poetry is inextricable from and emblematic of China, modern poetry is perceived by many Chinese readers as a challenge to the very cultural identity of China (Yeh, 2008: 16).

Indeed, in many of the poems produced during the period roughly from 1920 to 2018, traces of foreign influence are evident. For example, the employment of themes and tones borrowed from Romanticism, Symbolism, Feminism as well as Modernism is always tinged with a touch of psychological approach. According to Zhang Yingjin (2016), in the English-speaking world, modern Chinese literature is a standardized term to cover the period from the late Qing dynasty to the present, after having witnessed the transition from the Republican (1920s-1940s), Socialist (1950s-1970s) and subsequent Open-door and Reform periods. Modern Chinese poetry began to break away from the shackles of traditional poetic rules that governed classical poetry with its strict adherence to meter, rhyme and tone patterns. Instead, it draws inspirations from Western styles by experimenting with irregular meter and free verses that are more readily amendable to Western ideologies. The outcome is the emergence of modern Chinese poetry characterized by a “hybrid” of Chinese and Western elements with a generous “borrowing from the West” (Yeh, 2008: 15 and 25).

Moreover, there is clear evidence of Western influence on writing techniques in modern Chinese poetry. With the notion that “content determines form”, the influence on form and presentation is seen in the use of lines, stanza, visual employment of words, punctuations, including run-on-line, meters and tone pattern (纪弦/Ji Xian, 1970).

The May Fourth Movement of 1919 was a defining event in the modern history of China in more than one way. One of its consequences was to unleash the Westernization of the Chinese language. Chinese author Zhang Taozhou (张桃洲/Zhang Taozhou, 2013) concludes that, in modern Chinese literature, this process resulted in the change of form and syntax (use of punctuations, segmentation, and related aspects of writing) as well as in the introduction of new terms and expressions directly from foreign languages.

Yet it is noteworthy that after the founding of the Republic of China in 1949, Chinese poems were turned into folksongs, in the form of popular tunes in spoken style (*Taiwan Today*, 1968). At the same time, the language flourished without much intervention in Taiwan where the Kuomintang government had established itself. The folksongs were transformed from the 1980s when China began its Reform and Opening up policy. This led to an outburst of pent-up creativity leading to new forms of literary works and free verses inspired by the narratives of the recent past when artistic creations had to be politically correct. “Underground” poetry schools and camps including *Han Haiku* mushroomed almost overnight. These camps were led by, among others, poets such as Mang Ke and Duo Duo, who lived in the Baiyangdian region of Hebei province, and Ai Qiang, Xing Di and Shu Ting who were poets returning from overseas (新华社/Xinhuanet, 2008). Their creations became known as “Misty poetry” (poems marked by obscure manner in presentation and thematically challenged the Maoist artistic ideology of social realism) and its appearance ushered in a time when the intellectual poets, largely within the government system and elitist, and the *minjian* (grass-roots) poets at the other end of the power spectrum, parted ways in poetic discourse (Li, 2008: 185-200). The difference between the two categories of poets is further clarified by Wang Jiaxin (王家新, 2002):

.... *Minjian* poets have stopped accepting influences passively
and have begun to self-consciously, effectively, and creatively
construct an inter-textual relation with the West.

According to Day (2008: 201), there were at least 300 poetry websites operating online in China, and thus approximately there would be an enormous volume of new poems produced annually in China back in 2008. These amateur *avant-garde* poets, taking advantage of the development of the Internet in China after 1999, have reached out on a larger scale by blogging and posting e-poetry (Day, 2008: 203-204). Among these poetry websites, the outstanding ones include *Water and Wood Qinghua*, *Poem Life*, *Object-ism*, and *Secular World being Here-ism*. *Low Poetry Movement* is an example of popular poetry of the grassroots as opposed to the mainstream poetry that is considered “intellectual” and enjoys direct access to publication and avant-garde status without censorship through the Internet. The website *Poem Life* is considered to be weighted towards “intellectual” poetry or poetry in the received “Western” metaphysical tradition (张嘉彦/Zhang Jiayan, 2004). In contrast, the *Low Poetry Movement* is seen as an effort to purify Chinese poetic language and bring it closer to the lives and the language of the people (Day, 2008: 206). Moreover, updated by Lingenfelter (2008: 105-122), female poets with an unprecedented feminine stance writing frankly about all aspects of their lives also emerged in the 1970s, a prominent name being Zhai Yonming.

In Taiwan, which emerged after the war of resistance against Japan in 1945 from 50 years of Japanese colonization and its education policy (1895-1945) and subsequent political reform, dominant modern poetic discourse (a subgenre of modern Chinese poetry) has advanced to

include the infusion of Taiwanese *Haiku*. Lin Heng Tai was one of the modernist poets who composed both Taiwanese *Haiku* and poetry (吴昭新/Wu Zhaoxin, 2014). The *Haiku* is a three-lined poem acclaimed as the national poetic creation of Japan. Unlike the diversity of themes among the many *Haiku* schools in Japan, in Taiwan these themes are restricted to those celebrating the beauty of the seasons, including the flora and fauna. Taiwanese *Haiku*, though similar in form and structure, two-lined, limited to ten words sometimes, is not exactly *Haiku* in the strictest sense (吴昭新/Wu Zhaoxin, 2014).

The Kuomintang government adopted a policy of attracting overseas Chinese students from Southeast Asia and Hong Kong to further their studies in Taiwan. Among these students were those who became poets and whose creations dealt with the Taiwan experience and native home from different perspectives and contexts. Some, such as Wen Rui An, Fang Er Zhen, Wang Run Hua, Lin Lü, Zhang Cuo and others, reminisced or glorified their forefathers' motherland. Joining their rank in the 1970s were female poets such as Xia Yu and Xi Mu Rong who injected the feminine perspective to the new poetry.

From the 1950s onwards, there was a crackdown on local intellectuals who harboured leftist views. Malaysian poet Wen Rui An was deported in 1980 for his poetry which showed fond sentiments for Mainland China, and also for forming an association where collections of leftist books (with simplified Chinese characters) were found. In his article posted online on the death of the celebrated Taiwan poet Yu Guang Zhong on 14 December 2017, Wen Rui An disclosed how he was highly commended by Yu on many occasions, but later distanced themselves from each other for some 36 years (www.rewenju.com/article/189564.html). In the 1980s, several Malaysia-born poets came into the scene, including Zhao Shao Qiu, Chen Da Wei and others. Zhao Shao Qiu, otherwise known as Steven Chew, is perhaps the only Malaysian Chinese poet with Taiwan experience who experiments with writing poetry, in particular two-lined Taiwanese *Haiku*. On the other hand, there are many Facebook-based modern Chinese poetry websites available in Taiwan to promote modern Chinese poetry writing and appreciation, the general practice is for the hosts of the websites to organize the occasional poetry writing workshops for their members and to provide assistance in the submission and publication of poems in their own periodicals.²

The majority of the current literature on foreign elements or influences in modern Chinese poetry address mainly the poems produced between the 1920s and early twenty-first century. But few of these poems are examined by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study on some modern Chinese poets appear in *New Perspectives on Contemporary Chinese Poetry* edited by Lupke (2008). Zhang Hong (张红, 2008) also dealt with Symbolism and its influence on Chinese poets such as Li Jin Fa, Mu Mu Tian, Peng Zi and other poets of the late 1920s and later years. Ya Xian (痙弦, 1981) justified and provided contextual background to his own poetry, while Lin (1973) surveyed the historical narration of the experimental spirit of the poets and their era. Voigt and Jurafsky (2013), using UNIX-command-line tools (*sed*, *grep*, etc.) noticed a decline in the use of classical characters and phrases in poems among Mainland

Chinese poets but not among Taiwanese poets until as late as the 1950s and 1960s.³ Qin Lou Yue (秦楼月, 2016) lectured on Dai Wang Shu and other poets of the 1930s, and the relevance of their works to Symbolism, Imagery and Modernism.

Despite works by Lin, 1973; Harris 1989; Lupke, 2008; 张桃洲/Zhang Taozhou, 2005, and 2013; Voigt and Jurafsky, 2013; Zhang, 2016; 张嘉彦/Zhang Jiayan, 2004; and *Taiwan Today*, 1968, there is as yet little research on modern Chinese poetry that focuses on foreign elements or influences on modern Chinese poetics within the CDA paradigm.

The objectives of this study are to examine the foreign elements (traces of Romanticism, Symbolism, Feminism, Modernism, Postmodernism, Surrealism and Existentialism,⁴ imported media of presentation as well as writing techniques such as *Haiku*) found in modern Chinese poetic discourse from the appropriately selected poems produced between 1980 and 2018 in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the findings under the analytical framework of CDA (Fairclough, 1989 and 1992). Based on this general background, an attempt is made to identify and interpret from the various dimensions of selected poems to explore cultural identity by using the framework of CDA. Broadly, cultural identity is defined as what people identify themselves with, including loyalty to a religious or ethnic group, country, language, dialect and other factors that boost self-esteem and pride. However, this study will examine an illustrative poem by each of the selected poets of Mainland China, Taiwan and Malaysia in the light of CDA to show what these literary works deal with, and the underlying motives and messages that the selected poets attempt to convey.

Framework of the Investigation

Discourse is a broad term which puts together “a whole palette of meanings”. CDA is perceived as a research tactic with focus on various dimensions of power (Fairclough, 1989 and 1992; Van Dijk, 1996), and differentiates itself from Discourse Analysis as the term “critical” implies “showing hidden or unknown connections and causes as well as intervention”. Critical text analysis might, for instance, reveal how language choices such as transitive versus intransitive verb, or active versus passive voice, or particular choices of modal verbs or pronouns that enable writers to manipulate the realization of agency or power in the representation of action (Fairclough, 1989).

The focus of CDA thus follows that it is concerned with naturally occurring social interactions in context as opposed to imaginary ones, and it focuses on aspects of language usage such as the actual linguistic behaviour or performance of individuals, or features of an actual system as opposed to virtual system of which sentences are just a part. In the same vein, as suggested by Fairclough (1989), there are three levels of discourse which can be used as the possible procedures for analysing texts: firstly, social conditions of production and interpretation (social factor); secondly, the process of production and interpretation (how the text is produced and how it effects interpretation); and finally, how the text, being the product of the previous two stages, comments on the above.

In addition, in the study of the selected poems, the features of context suggested by Hymes (1972) are also useful: Who is the addressor? Who is exercising the power for the poem? Who are the co-hearers that may contribute to the communicative event? What is being talked about? Where is the setting (where the event is situated in time and space and the physical relations of persons interacting with respect to posture, gesture and facial expression)? How is the contact between participants maintained (such as by speech, writing, or other means)? What language or dialect or style of language is being used? What genre is it? What is the nature of the communicative event within which the genre is embedded (such as a political rally, an after-dinner speech, etc.)? What evaluation (for example, a good sermon, a pathetic explanation) is involved? What should come about as the result of the communicative event intended by the participants? Or, what was the actual outcome?

In a nutshell, CDA is employed merely within the above definition though Judith Duchan, in a preface in Bloom *et al.* (2015), informs that Discourse Analysis likewise reveals the socio-psychological characteristics of a person rather than the text structure and the like.

It is found that in modern Chinese poetry, traces of influence from the West emanating from Romanticism, Symbolism, Feminism, Modernism, Postmodernism, or Surrealism and *Haiku* from Japan as well as imported multimedia are evident. Based on this understanding, the frames of the said constructs are also used to examine the poems in terms of form, above all syntax, including semantic and semiotic implications. Moreover, analytical constructs generally used for poetic discourse like run-on-line, rhyme-scheme, anadiplosis,⁵ and image use (personification, visualization) etc., if any, are adapted in the discussion and interpretation.

The qualitative approach is adapted to examine the verses in this study. CDA is the main analytical instrument employed to reflect the three dimensional methods of discourse analysis, namely the language text (spoken or written), discourse practice (text production and interpretation) and the socio-cultural practice. In this study, samples of modern Chinese poetry are represented by appropriately selected pieces composed by a poet each in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia who is exposed to the Taiwan experience from 1980s to the present. A poem from each of the poets will be subjected to critical scrutiny. The poets are chosen for their popularity in their preferred medium of publication such as Facebook, WeChat, Weibo in each territory, and the considerable unique or innovative style in their presentation. Based on these criteria, Yashi from China, Winniefred Wang from Taiwan, and Steven Chew (Zhao Shao Qiu) from Malaysia make up the trio of poets for attention.

Each poem is examined to discern traces of foreign influences, including the writing techniques and type presentation medium as well as the implied power, ideologies and meanings embedded in the texts. The analytical constructs employed in the discussion and interpretation with respect to CDA are features such as run-on-line, rhyme scheme, anadiplosis, and use of imagery (personification, visualization).

Application of CDA to Modern Chinese Poems

Three Chinese poems with the common thread concerning cultural identity are explored and examined within the framework of CDA. These poems are *The Moon* (2003) by Yashi, *Paper-glued Love Letter* (2018) by Winniefred Wang, and *Bak Kut Teh* (2017) by Zhao Shao Qiu (also known as Steven Chew).

The Moon: Yashi from Mainland China

The Moon by modern Chinese poet Yashi begins with a swearing “go to hell” towards narcissistic tenderness. Awakening modern China with a soaring economy and poets experimenting on approaches searching for a national identity is the backdrop of this 96-character poem. To avant-garde writers, daring poems, posted on social media such as WeChat (Weixin) or Weibo, are probably reflective of playful outbursts and exuberant display of long suppressed feelings. Structurally, *The Moon* is presented in a casual and free style manner without fanciful adjectives and rhetoric that were features of the writings of the generation. It explicitly flows like a friend’s routine grumbles; readers are thus empowered to be his friends and critics.

In Chinese tradition, the moon is perceived as an embodiment of tenderness, however, in Western eyes, it implies an imagery of a pale wanderer. Narcissism is definitely an imported psychological term and in Yashi’s view, though tender the moon is, contextually it does not seem to function appropriately as it should be when narcissistic self-deception stays. Undisclosed power is operating, thus pushing the suppressed to act unlike themselves. In this vein, the author’s growl of “go to hell” can easily be justified. But he does not stop there, he further questions whether unwilling existence should be forgiven when life reaches its end. Out there, locusts with implication for the indifferent nature are causing harm to the people and on a large scale; meanwhile, the suppressor with daggers slays for his own agendas. In such hot water, the poet wonders what will eventually happen to the suppressed.

The real virtue of the lines “the tree roots are soaked in rain water, thunders/split the grindstone at foot hill into halves” splitting up “thunder” and “split” in run-on-line (enjambment) is perhaps to metaphorically imply potential and long existing catastrophe, the qualms and worries the suppressed may have and the banes that may ensue. Closing up, the writer doubts if the dominant power, viz., the suppressor, will dictate and indulge himself one day. Consequently, he is also unsure if the compliant will still be susceptible to the suppressor when the day comes.

月亮

让自恋的温柔见鬼去吧！

蝗虫有蝗虫的道理，匕首有匕首的道理：在这不能避免的一生

有多少人能最终宽恕自己——

雨水浸泡着树木的根，霹雳

The Moon

May the narcissistic tenderness go to hell!

Locusts devour as hunger strikes, daggers have their agenda: in this inevitable life

How many can forgive themselves eventually—

the tree roots are soaked in rain water, thunders

把山脚的磨刀石一下子就劈成两半
 我的问题是：如果神要纵欲
 月亮，是否还会和坏人亲切耳语？

split the grindstone at foot hill into halves
 My doubt is: if ever God indulges in desires
 will the moon, still whisper to the nasty?
 (Translated by author)

In this short and expository poem, traces of foreign elements such as punctuations use, free rhyme in form, and irregular in meter (thus free verse) show evidence of Western ideologies (narcissism). The use of words is simplistic or rather colloquial, evidently ensuing the efforts of purification of language in the *Low Poetry Movement* but that does not detract it from poetic intensity if not in terms of symbolism, imagism, etc. Though as short as eight lines in one stanza (visually presented as one cluster), helpless yelling explores through the employment of an exclamation mark “!” at the very outset, followed by a dash “—” probably suggests lying down flat (death?) and ending up with an enquiring question mark “?”. Moreover, tendencies towards spontaneous topicality, colloquial language and social responsibility advocated by *Low poetry* are identifiable. The quest for purification of language, viz., without bombastic narrative, national spirit and the very identity of China is likewise evident. The words in the poem may be “dancing” like what John Wain states, “Poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking”, yet “reaching out helplessly” is virtually the theme when social responsibility is sought. When dominant power (suppressor) acts wilfully, the helpless souls (suppressed) are questioned if they can live honestly and in integrity. As long as the cruel reality (hidden power) stays, as suggested by Yashi, not many of these souls may live their masked lives peacefully until they subsequently enter the graveyard. In fact, we feel so alienated and helpless from one another reading between the lines, and perhaps reaching out is the unspeakable way out. And that is when the poem fills in as a “social form” (Inwood, 2017) to get invisible netizens to mull on the net.

Paper-glued Love Letter: Winniefred Wang from Taiwan

Winniefred Wang began her “*Paper-glued Love Letter*” with a lover’s “extremely plane and light love” followed by “a cake of thin crunchy night” which aptly builds up a poetic intensity through a dualistic analogy of “plane and light versus thin and crunchy”. As the poem goes, the appearance of the lover in fact somehow thins his partner’s expanded love yearning; wanting more, the writer demands him to fold the “home delivery” well as a formality thus to show his care and make her happier. She sings on their ode of love with numerous adjectives like “flat”, “geomorphologic”, “fine”, “coarse” and “undulating”, etc. avoiding the platitudes. Eventually, she serendipitously feels blessed as their love is merely a natural one without scope and strength.

纸扎的情书

你的爱很平面很轻

适合一饼薄脆的夜

你削瘦了膨胀的相思

折好宅配

给我的眼波再一次碎裂

或许平的像一页诗集招魂

花朵在耳蜗开放些许比喻

反复诠释的地貌，细滑、粗糙

身形起伏的山丘借代一场

爱的歧义

所幸我们

很平很宽没有凹陷窝藏

堰塞的语助词

Paper-glued Love Letter

Your love is extremely plane and light

becoming a cake of thin crunchy night

you thin an expanded love yearning

Fold a home delivery well

Give my eyes another round of rupture

it may be as flat as a page of poetry evocation

flowers allow some analogies in ear cavities

repeated interpretation of geomorphologic, fine, coarse

undulating hill can be the metonymy of

the ambiguity of love

Luckily we are

Flat and broad without hiding hollows

The auxiliary for landslide

(Translated by author)

The context of this poem is presumably in democratic Taiwan, an island which has once experienced a booming economy and enjoyed a rich and stable cultural heritage. The narrator of the poem deductively is a female as her choice of theme and use of language reflect and reinforce the stereotyped generalization (e.g. women are weak, nurses, homemaker, implicit, etc.; men are strong, principals, breadwinner, explicit, etc.).

Noticeably, the use of adjectives is aplenty in this four-stanza poem such as *plane*, *light*, *thin*, *crunchy*, *expanded*, *flat*, *geomorphologic*, *fine*, *coarse*, *undulating* and *broad*. Similes and metaphors are likewise employed: *night* (tenderness), *evocation* (ethereal or drifting nature), *flowers* (love and passion), *ear cavities* (medium for love), *hill* (medium for love) and *landslide* (scope and strength). But noticeably no punctuation is used.

The enjambment (run-on-line) in the poem lies among the phrases “repeated interpretation of geomorphologic, fine, coarse/undulating hill can be the metonymy of/the ambiguity of love”. Phonetically, the number of lines in the four stanzas is equally implicative as its succession is 5, 2, 3 and 3. If they were to be read in a flow, 5-2-3-3 would serve as the homophone of “*wu ai shen shen*” or “I am deeply in love”; meaning, aside from the employment of narratives thus far, this poem reinforces love phonetically in consonant with its content. Love, obviously, is the dominant power of the entire poem. Lovers in the poem are caught in the world of passion enjoying themselves freely and lauding the pleasure it permits, probably not realizing the underlying force, which is again love.

***Bak Kut Teh*: Zhao Shao Qiu from Malaysia**

Malaysian poet Zhao Shao Qiu’s (popularly known as Steven Chew) *Bak Kut Teh* (in Fujian dialect) is a dedication to a popular local Chinese meal accompanied by a soup of

mouth-watering aroma cooked with herbs, pork and bones. As the poem recalls, the fragrance evokes a sense of homesickness to remind uprooted Malaysian expatriates of home. A single sip of the soup reminds ('hanging' in Chinese has the connotation of 'reminding' as well) the wanderer of his home with displaced pork and bones (siblings). Savouring the soup with a bite of the maw in the meantime cuts the greasy richness and mysteriously transcends the sorrowful moments into homecoming blessings. "Defoliating", translated as "homecoming" in a Chinese saying, metaphorically implies that the fallen leaves will eventually be with the roots of the tree, i.e., a reunion.

肉骨茶

一道香，牵动
离乡骨肉的肠，尝出
腻腻的当归叮咛
一口茶，挂起
背井肉骨的肚，品出
解腻的落叶祝福

Bak Kut Teh (Herbal soup of pork and bones)

A dish of fragrance, connects
the deracinated chitterlings of the pork and bone, tastes like
the reminders from the greasy *angelica sinensis*
A sip of the soup, hangs
the displaced maw up, savours
the defoliating blessings from the cut of greasy richness
(<https://youtu.be/U1jsNsPMrwg>)
(Translated by author)

This herbal soup of pork and bones is an original Malaysian recipe and is gaining popularity among Chinese tourists. It was a dish of rice and herbal soup of Chinese pioneers labouring in the steamy tropics. It has now become part of the local cuisine and served in many restaurants. A touch of homesickness is thus recollected through the fragrance from the homeland. The metaphorical use of long chitterlings - a mother's eternal care and worries for her offspring as used in a Chinese proverb - is the redolence of sweet and safe maternal love.

This two-stanza-six-lined poem may somehow resemble a double sized three-lined Japanese *Haiku*. It speaks about homesickness by dint of a dish redolent of home rather than lamenting on seasons, including flora and fauna. The employment of commas “,” carries sighing implication visually attributed probably to suppressed homesickness as men are disciplined since young to avoid shedding tears. Placed after short rhymed lines (A dish of fragrance; A sip of the soup), these commas convey the pent up feelings. Run-on lines (the deracinated chitterlings of the pork and bones, tastes/like the reminders from the greasy *angelica sinensis*), or the use of punctuations are saliently imported elements. Attached with this lucid and unadorned poem was a video clip with a poignant traditional Chinese melody as the background music. This multimedia combination reinforces the feeling of homesickness, and it miraculously cleanses the readers' mind the way catharsis does by virtue of a soothing music. The hidden power in this poem, if any, is the urge for the author to leave his homeland to set foot on foreign soil. The reasons can be manifold, mingling with intertwined sentiments, ranging from earning more income to making ends meet back home, or losing hope in one's country and to getting a degree for upward mobility in the future.

Conclusion

That scholars of Chinese literature realized that China's tumultuous literary history in the twentieth century had centred around the uncomfortable tensions between tradition and modernity was pointed out by Voigt and Jurafsky (2013) in their interesting research. Using UNIX command-line tools (*grep*, *sed*, etc.) to process the corpus of poetry on the website "Chinese Poetry Treasury," Voigt and Jurafsky (2013) revealed a decreased usage of the classical characters in Chinese poetry across the century. Furthermore, they unexpectedly discovered that Taiwanese poets constitute a surprising exception to the trend, demonstrating an unusual strong connection to classical diction in their work as late as in the 1950s and 1960s. Notwithstanding the finding, two ongoing putative questions in China are raised by Inwood (2017) in response to modern Chinese poetry: (1) whether through social media such as WeChat, Weibo and the like, the ownership of poetry has gradually returned to the people; and (2) whether this has rippled tensions between culture, media, and politics that are rife throughout contemporary China.

Cartier (2009) maintains that "local qualities" are essential to know the literature and the arts of a place. Yashi obviously strives to describe and voice his opinion on contemporary life in China in his work through "local qualities" such as "go to hell, locust, tree roots are soaked in rain water" and is inclined to use indigenous elements and colloquialism. However, it is not clear whether his poems are more "local" than Chinese poems of the past. Furthermore, the emotions expressed in his poem are generally common with what contemporary Mainland Chinese identify themselves with. That said, there is no denying that his poem is imbued with an atmosphere of opposing the suppressed thirst for knowledge as well as the search for cultural identity.

On the other hand, across the straits in democratic Taiwan, freedom of expression does not run astray in creativity. The priority is in the preservation of language use. As such, structurally Taiwanese poems are more fastidious in terms of language use while carrying foreign influence such as "form and text change" and the issue of "content determines form." In the case of Steven Chew, with his Malaysian roots and sojourn in Taiwan, his poem conveys a nostalgic reminiscence of his forefathers' motherland (Chinese-ness).

What is clear from the discussions in the light of CDA may be summarized. The three poems, all written in the first person narrative, show traces of foreign elements: the psychological term narcissistic, Japanese *Haiku*, run-on-lines, punctuations, texts, and multimedia presentation. The world within the texts in these poems are revealed through words or phrases like *go to hell*, *locusts*, *dagger*, *tree root*, *rain water*, *thunders*, *grindstone*, *foot hill*, *God*, *moon* and punctuations such as "!", "—" and "?" in *The Moon*; *night*, *evocation*, *flowers*, *ear cavities*, *undulating hill and landslide*, with the absence of punctuations in *Paper-glued Love Letter*; and *deracinated chitterlings*, *pork and bones*, *angelica sinensis* (a Chinese medicinal root), *maw*, *defoliated blessings*, and the adaptation of "," and a multimedia clip with sentimental melody in *Bak Kut Teh*.

The choice of discourse (spoken or written communication or utterances) is to serve the poet's individual goals in particular and thus its very content determines its form (纪弦/Ji Xian, 1970). To Yashi, it is a call for reaching out to de-alienate oneself from a mentally suppressed world through colloquial swearing and questioning as well as the ingenious use of punctuations with an "inter-textual relation with the West" (王家新/Wang Jiaxin, 2002), and a response to a "form and text change" (张桃洲/Zhang Taozhou, 2013). To Winnifred Wang, love speaks for all and, through a dualistic use of adjectives and phonetic embedded in stanzas, she subtly builds up poetic intensity. To Steven Chew, it is a thought on the cause of homesickness (home-land and Chinese-ness) and its enduring effect through a home reminding soup and a melodious clip. In actual fact, each poet is the narrator of his or her own story. In language use, Yashi is comparatively more colloquial whereas Winniefred Wang and Steven Chew sustain a "strong connection to classical diction" which literally corroborates Voigt and Jurafsky's (2013) finding. Yet they all correspond to the "form and text change" as well as "content determines form" orientation in Modern Chinese poetry in their attempt to write with "national local colour" and the search for "cultural identity".

Notes

- 1 In Chinese poetry, the designation of imagery in a poetic discourse was given the most prominent place among all techniques in verse writing. It was so revered that the use of imagery in a poem was regarded as the major assessment and analytical construct in literature criticism.
- 2 For instance, Xin Shi Lu: 3,600 members, Wenxue Nongchang: 1,100 members, You He Wenxuezazhi Tougaoyuandi: 1,000 members, and Yejianghua Yaji: 994 members, Huai Ying•Xinshi Xuetao: 808 members, etc., among which "Shiren Julebu" is perhaps the biggest Facebook-based website with some 4,300 members altogether.
- 3 UNIX is an operating system available on many computers, from PC's to supercomputers. "grep" and "sed" are tools to search and transform input files. In the simplest terms, "grep" (global regular expression print) will search input files for a search string, and print the lines that match it; "sed" (stream editor) performs basic text transformations on an input stream (a file or input from a pipeline) in a single pass through the stream (https://wwwusers.york.ac.uk/~mijp1/teaching/2nd_year_Comp_Lab/guides/grep_awk_sed.pdf).
- 4 "Romanticism" is a movement in the art or literature that originated in the last eighteenth century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual; "Symbolism" is a movement stressing the use of symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, and motions and states of mind in the art or literature; "Feminism" is the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes; "Modernism" is a movement of the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries which emphasizes a break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression in the fine arts; "Postmodernism" is a late twentieth century style and concept in the arts, architecture and criticism which represents a departure from modernism and is characterized by the self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, a mixing of different artistic styles and media, and a general distrust of theories; "Surrealism" is a literary and artistic movement in which the goal is to create something bizarre and disjointed, but still somehow understandable; and "Existentialism" is a philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.

- 5 The repetition of a word or words in successive clauses in such a way that the second clause starts with the same word which marks the end of the previous clause.

Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Ai Qing | 艾青 |
| Baiyangdian | 白洋淀 |
| <i>Book of Songs</i> | 《诗经》 |
| Chen Da Wei | 陈大为 |
| Dai Wang Shu | 戴望舒 |
| Deng Xiao Ping | 邓小平 |
| Duo Duo | 多多 |
| Fang Er Zhen | 方娥真 |
| Hai Zi | 海子 |
| Haiku | 俳句 |
| Han Haiku | 汉俳 |
| Huai Ying•Xinshi Xuetao | 怀鹰•新诗学堂 |
| Hu Shi | 胡适 |
| Ji Xian | 纪弦 |
| Kuomintang | 国民党 |
| Li Jin Fa | 李金发 |
| Lin Heng Tai | 林亨泰 |
| Lin Lü | 林绿 |
| Luo Qing | 罗青 |
| Mang Ke | 芒克 |
| Misty Camps of Poetry | 朦胧诗派 |
| Mu Mu Tian | 穆木天 |
| Nan Chao | 南朝 |
| New Moon | 新月派 |
| New Poetry | 新诗 |
| Object-ism | 物主义 |
| Poem Life | 诗生活 |
| Peng Zi | 蓬子 |
| Qi Guo | 齐国 |
| <i>Shen Si</i> | 《神思篇》 |
| Shiren Julebu | 诗人俱乐部 |
| Shu Ting | 舒婷 |
| Vulgar World being Here-ism | 俗世此在主义 |
| Vernacular Poetry | 白话诗 |

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|--------------------------------|------------|
| Wang Run Hua | 王润华 |
| Water and Wood Qinghua | 水木清华 |
| Wen Rui An | 温瑞安 |
| <i>Wen Xin Diao Long</i> | 《文心雕龙》 |
| Wenxue Nongchang | 文学农场 |
| Winniefred Wang | 露珠儿 |
| Wu Ai Shen Shen | 吾爱深深 |
| Xia Yu | 夏宇 |
| Xi Mu Rong | 席慕容 |
| Xing Di | 辛笛 |
| Xin Shi Lu | 新诗路 |
| Xu Zhi Mo | 徐志摩 |
| Yashi | 哑石/陈小平 |
| <i>Yejianghua Yaji</i> | 《野薑花雅集》 |
| You He Wenxueazhi Tougaoyuandi | 有荷文学杂志投稿园地 |
| Yu Guang Zhong | 余光中 |
| Zhang Cuo | 张错 |
| Zhao Shao Qiu (Steven Chew) | 赵绍球 |
| Zhai Yong Ming | 翟永明 |

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