

# Introduction

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There has been a distinct resurgence of interest in modernism as a theme or aesthetic practice in recent years. With the single word “Modernism” as a main title, there were eight volumes published in English in the past decade alone.<sup>1</sup> We can see the full breadth of interest in the topic if we expand the title search only slightly, to notable examples such as Marjorie Perloff’s *Twenty-First-Century Modernism*, David Bradshaw and Kevin Dettmar’s *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, Michael Levenson’s *Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough’s *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, and Mia Carter and Alan Friedman’s *Modernism and Literature*, not to mention the newly emergent journal *Modernism/Modernity* and its affiliated Modernist Studies Association.<sup>2</sup> Yet, apart from Christopher Bush’s *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*, relatively little has appeared in English about Chinese modernism, and even less still about modernism in Chinese poetry.<sup>3</sup> The only exceptions are Carolyn FitzGerald’s *Fragmenting Modernisms: Chinese Wartime Literature, Art, and Film, 1937–1949*, a work quite restricted in time span and focused largely on the historical dimensions of violent conflicts and their effect on artistic practice across generic forms, and Au Chung-to’s *Modernist Aesthetics in Taiwanese Poetry since the 1950s*, a work that takes Taiwan as a singular focus.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Heesok Chang, *Modernism*; Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*; Robin Walz, *Modernism*; Christopher Butler, *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*; Ahmet Ersoy et al., *Modernism: Representations of National*; Michael Levenson, *Modernism*; Peter Childs, *Modernism (The New Critical Idiom)*; Laura Winkiel, *Modernism: The Basics*.

2 See the following: Marjorie Perloff, *Twenty-First-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics*; David Bradshaw and Kevin Dettmar, *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*; Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*; Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*; Mia Carter and Alan Friedman, *Modernism and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*.

3 Bush’s work, excellent though it is, does not so much address writing in Chinese as it does the idea of the Chinese character as catalyst for the development of Euro-American modernism. As to work about modernism in Chinese poetry itself, there has yet to be a single volume in print. See Bush’s *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*.

4 FitzGerald’s discussion of poetry is principally about Mu Dan’s, to which she devotes an entire chapter and a significant segment of the epilogue. Her discussion of Mu Dan, though acknowledging heterogeneous sources in Chinese and Western poetics, does not develop a modernist theme as it could, focusing more on the urban/rural divide and other thematic elements of Mu Dan’s work. Au’s study offers many detailed insights into a specific set of

Our book fills this gap; it is the first broad-based compilation of research on modernist Chinese poetry collected in a single volume in English. The goal of our research, moreover, is not simply to attempt to fix “modernism” within the cultural record, Chinese or other. We aim, rather, to narrow the aperture enough to enable in-depth discussion of one style and geographical and generic pairing, Chinese modernist poetry, while at the same time allowing for at least some of the intellectual anarchy Xudong Zhang describes in his 1997 discussion of Chinese modernism, a cultural phenomenon that is “never a neatly developed, fully secured, and glamorously ossified object awaiting gentlemanly scholarship; it is always in a moment of painful birth, and profound ambiguity, mired in its formal and political promises and fragility.”<sup>5</sup> Part of the problem, as Zhang points out, is not only the question of origin, but also the attendant problem of scope.

Zhang is not the only scholar to address such questions where modernism is concerned, and we find related problems in traditions other than Chinese. Most recently, in a wide-ranging study, Susan Stanford Friedman enjoins “planetary modernism” as a challenge to the most basic assumptions about what we as scholars and literary historians gain by staking out such stylistic or temporal categories. Friedman’s highly ambitious work uses a “more expansive framework” to move back in time to before 1500, a traditional starting point for Western modernity, and then across the planet to various episodes of cultural upheaval and modern development. The real benefit of Friedman’s work in the context of our study of modernisms is its successful decentering or complete dismantling of a center (West)—periphery (Chinese) epistemology.<sup>6</sup> Such a reorientation, necessary and vibrant though it may be to our current efforts to grapple with modernism worldwide, is still on a slightly different track from what we endeavor to accomplish in this work. While it seems clear that the West did not actually invent modernity, it is evident that the West successfully created the idea that the West created modernity. Further, many cultures, China among them, accepted that invention both because Chinese people were forced to by very real threat of significant military reprisals by Western powers in the mid to late nineteenth century and because an appeal to exoge-

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modernist poets associated with Taiwan but does not situate them into the broader modern Chinese (language) literary tradition (for good or ill). Moreover, the characterization of them as “Taiwanese” is sure to raise eyebrows among scholars, as all the subjects of her work are *waishengren* 外省人, “mainlanders” who were born in mainland China and migrated to Taiwan after the Civil War. See Carolyn FitzGerald, *Fragmenting Modernisms*; Au Chung-to, *Modernist Aesthetics in Taiwanese Poetry since the 1950s*.

5 Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms*, 3.

6 Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms*, esp. ix–xi and 311–313.

nous authority worked in local context more effectively than, say, appeal to the authority of tradition, or even more or less *ex nihilo* creation, if such a thing can be said to exist. In other words, and particularly where literary practice is concerned, the Western “roots” of modernity in China are difficult to deny, even if by recognizing them we to some degree recapitulate the misguided assumptions that accrue to the Western-centric origin story for modern culture. Fortunately, the granular view of poetic practice in the Chinese case in fact effectively complicates larger narratives so as to make moot the concern of Western hegemony, at least in case of Chinese poetic modernism.

Before delving into the granular, though, we will provide a simple but necessary review of the developmental arc of modernism in Chinese poetry. Such an arc is typically described as having occurred in three distinct waves: the first fully conscious and self-titled “Modernist” Movement in China emerged with the writer Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905–2003) in the early 1930s. The 1932-inaugurated journal *Les Contemporains* (*Xiandai* 現代) is therefore the default enclosure for establishing the “in” and “out” of modernist poetic writing early in the century, and the Chinese term *Xiandaipai*, or “Modernist group (or school),” of authors refers explicitly to the poets whose works were selected by Shi Zhecun for inclusion in the journal.<sup>7</sup> This is also to say that from the point of view of a great deal of Chinese scholarship, the bulk of modernist poetic expression appeared in print between the years 1932, when *Les Contemporains* first appeared, and 1935, when it was forced into closure by worsening political and social circumstances in war-torn Shanghai. Some of the writers first associated with the Modernist group went on to form other modernist-affiliated organizations, but for the most part Chinese scholarship treats modernism as something that grew out of Shi Zhecun’s journal and waned with the same well before the middle of the century. The second wave emerged on Taiwan, with Ji Xian’s 紀弦 (1913–2013) groundbreaking *Modern Poetry Quarterly* (*Xiandaishi jikan* 現代詩季刊, established in 1954, but adopting an explicitly modernist program beginning in 1956. The final wave returns us to mainland China, where loosening of the Maoist propaganda apparatus, with its once ubiquitous control and absolute adherence to strict socialist-realism as the only admissible style of creative expression, began to fall apart in 1979. What followed were five or so years of renewed explicit interest on the part of writers and artists alike in modernist styles drawn once again from the West. These are the broad strokes. However, there is considerably more to the story than the three-wave description will reveal. For instance, an earlier, less recognized but

7 A good example of this is Lan Dizhi’s *Xiandaipai shixuan*, the introduction of which forms chapter 1 of this volume.

fully modernist expression in poetry and visual art emerged on Taiwan before *Les Contemporains* was inaugurated. Moreover, modernist writing formed an important backdrop to Ji Xian's Modernist Movement almost twenty years later. Or, in another important case, some post-*Les Contemporains* activities of many of the Shanghai group, combined with others from around the country during the short-lived Southwest Associated University in Kunming, found expression in the Nine Leaves poetry of the early 1940s, a sophisticated movement that became an important touchstone for writers later in the century. These and other complexities are explored in detail in this book.

Of the questions our inquiry into the term modernism(s) will raise, where and when such modernism may be said to "end" is perhaps the most challenging. Here is where the authors in this volume stake out new territory. Allowing for the obvious importance of postmodern discourse in literature worldwide in general terms, and in Chinese literature and culture beginning with Fredric Jameson's lectures in Beijing in the mid-1980s, what we see emerging in the final decades of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century is a notable continuation of (rather than return to) modernist strategies emerging alongside postmodern challenges to aesthetic practice, both modernist and not. Modernism remains, in other words, an ongoing poetic style the arc of which continues to travel through our shared cultural sky. The first step in the process of exploring such cultural productivity, however, is to acknowledge the plurality of aesthetic practices associated with the word modernism, and hence our choice of "Modernisms" as a title. At the same time, commonalities do exist among modernist practices in the Chinese cultural record, and part of our goal will be to provide lucid descriptions of what these entail. One notable example is the relationship between cultural production and the social, or even political, self-positioning of artists and writers across the twentieth century, a fundamentally ambivalent or even contradictory status, given modernism's clear association with progressive modernity, and its coterminous association with an "art for art's sake" disaffection with social programming in general. This important contradiction inherent in modernism's status as strand, strain, or shade of modernity is not of course particular to China, but is more pronounced in a Chinese context where modernization was taken to be a matter of survival, a national mission, and not simply a frivolous aesthetic pursuit. The early thrust of this activity was the social and political "self-strengthening" operation designed to keep China intact just as a multitude of outside pressures sought to literally tear it apart. The end of the nineteenth century in China, then, is the story of finding the best mode of governing that would enable the culture to keep its essential identity while changing enough in practical terms to enter the international community as an equal. It was

not until establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that such stability was reached, and in exchange for that stability China sacrificed most of its freedom of expression with the establishment of a strict cultural policy concerning what could appear in public record.<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, when the reins were loosened ever so slightly in 1979, and the stirrings of cultural change began in fits and starts around Beijing and other major Chinese cities, it was immediately "modernism" that emerged, for the reformers, as a style rich with new potentialities and, for the censors and others attempting to control cultural and other discourse, the quintessential signal of the erosion of the commitment of artists and writers to the common good.

We hope that our volume amounts to more than one more replaying of "the game of origins" (i.e., attempting to identify the specific moment when a discrete "Chinese modernism" can be said to properly start and from which a single "it" develops). Instead, by tracing multiple modernist trajectories from roughly the era of May Fourth modernization through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, we provide a sufficiently variegated account of poetic practices related to modernism to achieve something approaching a comprehensive view, much of which has not been published before in English, and certainly not in one volume. As we approach the contemporary period in particular the need for such a study is ever more acute given the rapidly shifting status of China as a geopolitical cultural force. After decades of centripetal absorption of everything from technology to political systems, China is now exerting considerable centrifugal influence on the outside world. The degree to which this influence will be soft, meaning cultural as well as economic and political, remains to be seen. But at the very least, China's newly emergent high position on the global stage means that a review of its cultural record in the modern period is needed. It will be upon this cultural record that subsequent steps are taken by Chinese cultural producers of all kinds, poets included. This is also to say that it may well be time to turn the tables on modernism, to look again at this strain of cultural production now moving in the other direction, from the heretofore peripheral (China/East Asia), now increasingly central, and the heretofore central (Euro-American West), now arguably moving toward the periphery. To return again to one of the central features of the global dynamic as observed by Ezra Pound in his important work *Guide to Kulchur*, the fragments are now "dispersing" in the opposite direction, a fact

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8 The strictures on literature and art in particular were laid down by Mao Zedong in his "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" and have remained until the present day. For a translation and comprehensive introduction, see Bonnie S. MacDougall, *Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art*.

that makes the question of the globality of such writers such as Xi Chuan 西川 (b. 1963), Bei Dao 北島 (b. 1949), and other prominent Chinese poets of magnified significance, voices expressed on globalized stages when the taken-for-granted hegemonic figure of a Western empire finally seems to be moving off to the wings.<sup>9</sup>

The arrival of China as a global force happens to occur just as the medium of modern Chinese poetry itself celebrates its centennial. The fact that such an event can be dated (albeit roughly) at all is again testament to the self-conscious quality of Chinese cultural modernity, one that patterned itself upon advancement of the nineteenth century in a process of study, appropriation, and implementation of externally (Western) technological or even political systems. For poets, the task of modernizing their art form has been particularly arduous and self-aware given poetry's longstanding status as China's premier expressive medium, the one that gave lyrical voice to the experiences of China's literati culture since at least the turn of the last millennium. The reform of such a voice, particularly along the lines of an imported aesthetic, resulted in an acute sense of identity rupture, one that can be seen repeatedly in the tentative experiments of early reformers. It was, in fact, in the context of this quest for a new, modern, lyrical voice that modernism was introduced into Chinese poetry. Now, after one hundred years of literary practice, modern poetry's lyrical subjects stand on solid ground, and poetic modernisms of various sorts have lodged themselves in the cultural record in ways that are secure but also continue modernism's well-established role of oppositional and cutting-edge poetics. In this volume, we will be exploring the center and the edges of modernist practice in Chinese poetry, providing a combination of historical record and careful analysis of loosely but importantly connected aesthetic practices across a century of poetry writing in Chinese.

The collection of essays here is divided into four sections that are to some extent chronological, but also geographical, and, to a lesser extent, emblematic of the differences that the respective literary milieu inside and outside mainland China have created. The first section is mindful of the aforementioned receding horizon one pursues in seeking a concrete beginning point to modernism in China. Nevertheless, it provides copious information and analysis with respect to modernist poetry of the Republican era (1911–1949). The second section highlights modernist poetry from Taiwan, a hotbed of creativity for modernist poetry beginning in the 1950s and continuing for several decades. Each of the chapters in the third section of the book deals with a wide variety of poets and transcends political borders, including works from mainland

<sup>9</sup> Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 82.

China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The final section provides a reassessment of poetry from the post-Mao era in mainland China, over thirty years of great productivity. The demarcations of epoch and milieu certainly have an effect on the styles and tendencies of modernist poetry in Chinese. Equally important, given the propensity of modernist authors to articulate themselves through painstaking attention to formal uniqueness and idiosyncrasy, is that we do not want to discount individual voice in considering these poets. Each of the poets discussed in this volume is her or his own person, unmistakably inimitable and dedicated to individual expression. One of the paradoxical characteristics of modernism is the way its proponents have sought to distinguish themselves as much from each other as they do from previous movements and poetic trends. Thus, as editors, we resist the urge to present an overly procrustean view of what constitutes Chinese poetic modernisms. Nevertheless, we still seek to take on the daunting task of examining Chinese poetic modernisms in different periods and locales in an effort to provide the reader with a comprehensive appreciation of how the past century of poetry has been greatly affected by this global aesthetic phenomenon.

The first section, “Toward an Origin of Chinese Poetic Modernisms,” begins with Lan Dizhi’s 藍棣之 (b. 1940) classic essay originally published in Chinese in 1986 as the introduction to an anthology of modernist Chinese poetry edited by Lan. It sketches the origins of Chinese modernist poetics from the publication of Li Jinfa’s 李金發 (1900–1976) three collections of poetry that appeared in the 1920s and the later *Creation Weekly* (*Chuangzao zhoukan* 創造週刊) work of Mu Mutian 穆木天 (1900–1971) and Feng Naichao 馮乃超 (1901–1983), but devotes most of its space to the poetry found in *Les Contemporains*. Lan’s chapter takes “pure poetry” as the core feature of modernist practice in Chinese in the mid-1930s and credits this period in the larger development of free-verse Chinese poetry with major innovations in form and method. By “pure” the author means poetry free from particular ideological commitment and without explicit social function. In this respect, modernist poetry is distinct from the realist and formalist poetics against which it draws its primary contrast. Lan also elucidates aspects of a modernist style, namely, anti-lyrical, as overtly sentimental poetry lacks refinement, anti-rational, as too much logic inhibits poetic freedom, and anti-inspirational, as ebullient feelings often overwhelm attention to craft.

Lan addresses another attribute often associated with Chinese modernist poetry: incomprehensibility. Lan differentiates between poetry that is fundamentally *huise* 晦澀 (opaque) and that which is merely “difficult to understand” (*nan dong* 難懂). The opaque, he suggests, has no place in poetry. The difficult to understand, by contrast, follows in the tradition of French Symbolists, and

particularly Stéphane Mallarmé, who believed that it is not the poet's responsibility to clearly indicate or explain what the poem is about. Mallarmé in turn was one of the principal influences on Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905–1950), a leading author of Chinese modernist poetry in the 1930s. Poetry that is challenging is ultimately worth the time and effort to understand.

Géraldine Fiss's chapter offers a reading of one major modernist poet of the Republican period, Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905–1993), illustrating how his work establishes a dialogue with that of prior greats, both Chinese and European. Fiss argues that Feng Zhi expresses in his nonpoetic writings, particularly his collection of essays titled *On Goethe* (Lun Gede 論歌德), a poetic-philosophical system of thought that is based on a syncretic fusion of classical Chinese aesthetics (Du Fu's poetry), European Romantic impulses (Goethe's thought), and modernist poetic practice (Rilke's experimental innovations). Fiss presents an analysis of key themes in Feng Zhi's aesthetic thought and delineates his intertextual relations and indebtedness to Rilke, Goethe, and Du Fu, among whom he perceives a correspondence of poetic ideals. Feng Zhi, similar to Rilke, Goethe, and Du Fu before him, seeks to transcend the surface of concrete objects to bring to light the invisible substrata of deeper consciousness that informs our lives. In order to achieve the Goethean ideal of revealing the "open secret of nature," Feng Zhi writes "thing-poetry" and employs the Rilkean techniques of "turning point," "transformation," "sublimation," and "pure contradiction." A reading of Feng Zhi's *Sonnets* (*Shisihang shi* 十四行詩, 1942), in relation to his mature poetic-philosophical thought and Rilke's *Sonnette an Orpheus* (*Sonnets to Orpheus*, 1923), illuminates the unique modernist traits of Feng Zhi's art.

Although perhaps a slight misnomer to label the "Nine Leaves poets" (Jiuyeshipai 九葉詩派) a group or a movement, since the label was applied much after the fact and not all the poets congregated together for an extended period, the group that has come to be known as the Nine Leaves was most active during the same historical moment (primarily the 1940s) and shared a great many aesthetic qualities and interests. Yanhong Zhu, in her chapter, suggests that the salient commonality among the nine poets who form this group is a hybrid dramatization or "dramatic synthesis" that riffs off two denotations of the term "drama": first, the poetry indeed is often written in the form of drama or with dramatic effect; second, the poetry is oftentimes spectacular and dazzling, containing reconceptualizations of time, memory, and history. Time is manipulated in the work of the poets so that the present, the "Now," as Zhu terms it, emerges as the nodal point of poetic expression, even though embedded within this preoccupation with the present are resurgences of the past. The "modernism with Chinese characteristics" that Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉



(1921–2008), one of the poets and the critical exponent of the group, espouses as their dominant aesthetic seeks to infuse modern Chinese poetry with Western modernist poetics and sensibilities. We often see past, present, and future coexisting in the work of the Nine Leaves through what Yuan describes as “nonlinear, spatial logic.” This, for the Nine Leaves, is the essence of New Poetry (*xinshi* 新诗), something that defies the linear, temporal orientation of preceding poetic work. Not surprisingly, the Nine Leaves poets are some of the best educated and most erudite of modern Chinese literary figures, and all are urban based.

The past-present duality is further explored in Dian Li’s chapter concerning “classical echoes” in modernist poetry. Thoroughly undermining the sense of rift upon which much modern discourse is developed, Li locates essential “building blocks” of the modern poetry program within classical poetics. Taking, for instance, *shiyi* 詩意 (poetic-ness) as an essential trope, Li explores the ways in which a modern poem, while seeming to labor in the shadow of classical poetics, actually more often than not returns to modified classical models to advance formal and other innovation. At the heart of Li’s discussion, then, is a challenge to the zero-sum contest between modernity and tradition, where the modernist poem can succeed only when tradition has thoroughly receded. In fact, as Li demonstrates through a review of work beginning in the contemporary context of Wang Xiaoni 王小妮 (b. 1955) but then working back through May Fourth-era discussions of form in poetry, the Chinese poetic tradition continues to exert considerable influence in modern and modernist poetics throughout the history of the genre of New Poetry. The best example of the classical echo is the modern sonnet, itself an important formal experiment in the development of New Poetry.

Part two of the volume, titled “Modernist Poetry from Taiwan,” offers three essays on modernist poetry published in Taiwan, both by poets who were born in mainland China and immigrated to Taiwan during the Civil War period and by those born and raised in Taiwan. Michelle Yeh’s chapter, which principally addresses the work of a single author, Xia Yu (Hsia Yü) 夏宇 (b. 1956), begins with a review of each of the six moments during which modernist style held sway in Chinese poetry. This review spans the urban centers of Shanghai in the 1930s (Modernist school), to Taiwan in the same decade (Le Moulin group), on to Kunming (Southwest Associated University poets) of the 1940s, back to Taiwan and Hong Kong for coterminous modernist movements, and finally the post-Cultural Revolution surge in modernist writing in mainland China. In the process, Yeh advances the importance of a fully historicized reading of this literary history, necessary because transnational application of literary-historical nomenclature often does not account for the fundamental

variability and elasticity of its categories. For instance, the internal logic of Chinese poetic modernism permits a much closer proximity between that style and romanticism, against which Euro-American modernism is studiously opposed. Similarly, and more to the point for Yeh's analysis of Xia Yu, is the fact that modernist/postmodernist divergence is not very acute or, in some respects, even useful, which is to say that Xia Yu's work often demonstrates an important blend or overlapping of the two literary styles.

Building on Michelle Yeh's work on Xia Yu, Chen Fangming's 陳芳明 chapter sets out to account for a paradoxical aspect of Yu Guangzhong's 余光中 (1928–2017) poetry: the twin features of modernism and traditionalism that pervade his work. Chen argues that Yu Guangzhong neither rejected nor wholeheartedly embraced modernism. Rather, his stance is better characterized as a critical acceptance of modernism, a position that includes an adherence to its fundamental tenets, such as individualism, an existentialist view of life, and a skeptical regard of industrial progress on the one hand and, on the other, a rich devotion to traditional Chinese imagery and symbolism. Chen compares Yu to some of the modernists in Taiwan of the 1950s who advocated a clean break with the past. Yu, by contrast, never sought such a dramatic divestment of traditional aesthetics and literary techniques. Chen suggests that Yu charted his own course in reconciling the salient tenets of modernism with a lyricism that he retained from traditional Chinese poetry, especially Song dynasty *ci* 詞. His poetry of this period also presented a unique sense of the self. In the process of establishing his distinctive poetics he unavoidably crossed pens with other writers, including Luo Fu 洛夫 (1928–2018). The polemics that arose in poetry circles at the time fully illustrate that the modern poetry written by Chinese émigrés to Taiwan after the War of Resistance was far from a monolithic entity. Pivotal to Chen's argument is an exposition of how Yu evolved from a poet who in the 1950s largely followed the trends of other modernists into someone who came to eschew such stereotypical modernist topics as exile and alienation as his poetry evolved. A much more characteristic topic of Yu's mature style is the theme of life affirmation, a subject that went against the generally dour grain of many modernists. As other poets regarded traditional culture with disdain, Yu came to celebrate it, fashioning intertextual relationships between his own work and that of many of the ancients, including Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BCE), Wang Wei 王維 (699–759), and Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 (1037–1101). Like others of his era, his poetry reveals a deep distaste of war and an attempt to seek refuge away from it in intimate, human embrace. His opposition to the Vietnam War, for instance, is evident in poems such as "Double Bed" ("Shuangren chuang" 雙人床) and "In the Event of a Distant War" ("Ruguo lianfang you zhanzheng" 如果遠方有戰爭). Ultimately, Yu elects to celebrate

reconciliation with the various phenomena of his contemporary environs—including modernization in Taiwan, the status of traditional Chinese culture and literature, and the state of mainland China—over the themes of exile and abandonment. In the process, he forges a complicated, variegated poetic oeuvre that is both a continuation of modernism and an extension of localism.

Modernism in postwar Chinese poetry from Taiwan is generally considered to be associated with poets born in mainland China who fled to Taiwan near or at the end of the Civil War in 1949. But the fact that modernist poetry is understood to be an overwhelming feature of the mainland refugees masks the fact that many nativist Taiwanese poets were associated with modernism as well. The nativist or “homegrown” poets who convened and founded the Bamboo Hat poetry group (Li shi she 笠詩社), in 1964, though often considered to be primarily “realist” poets and often lumped in with “nativist” or “localist” writers, actually had extensive affinities with modernism and modernist poetry. Ruan Meihui’s chapter on the Bamboo Hat group and its journal illuminates the connections between the modernists and the Bamboo Hat poets. Ruan begins with a detailed description of the complex historical background from which the journal emerged. From there she argues that the Taiwan modernists were fundamentally different from Euro-American, or even Japanese, modernists, because in the latter case modernism had an opportunity to percolate through intellectual circles over decades; whereas in Taiwan, as Ji Xian declared in his 1956 manifesto, modernism was enacted by a process of “horizontal transplantation,” one that could happen suddenly, and at any time.

The Bamboo Hat poets founded their eponymous *Bamboo Hat* (Li 笠) journal in 1964 with twelve principal members. Several of these poets were already active in one or more of the three aforementioned poetry societies, having honed their modernist skills long before joining to form the journal. The fluid quality of many of the literary encampments is one misunderstood aspect of Taiwan’s literary history that Ruan seeks to redress. The other is that the journal *Bamboo Hat* itself was antagonistic to modernism. Ruan provides detailed documentation of various articles, both those originally written in Chinese and those in translation from English, French, German, and Japanese, primarily, to refute this notion. Bamboo Hat poets sought to further extend and modify the evolution of modernism in Taiwan by making it more germane to the precise historical, social, and culture specificities of the island. *Bamboo Hat* was influential in translating and publishing the manifestos from European literary movements such as Andre Breton’s “Surrealist Manifesto,” F. T. Marnetti’s “Futurist Manifesto,” and Richard Aldington’s “Six Beliefs of the Imagists.” What is often overlooked, however, is that *Bamboo Hat* established its heritage with previous groups by featuring a number of poets not in the Bamboo

Hat group numerous times over the years. They also published analyses of some of these poets' works. In spite of these connections, there is certainly no question that the *Bamboo Hat* coterie moved the line on modernist poetry in Taiwan. Their contribution in reestablishing the link between the Japanese Colonial (1895–1945) and postwar eras in Taiwan as well as highlighting the work of Japanese modernists in their journal stands out as a distinguishing component of their contribution. The Bamboo Hat poets certainly were more engaged with the social issues of the moment in Taiwan in a way that many of the émigré Chinese authors were not, at least not initially. Several articles in the 1960s spoke of the need for poetry to *zhenji* 真擊 (strike truth) or of the need to be “truth striking.” By this, the Bamboo Hat poets stressed sincere adherence to life as it was lived at the time in Taiwan; it needed to be empirical. But it also needed to be “modern,” in the sense of being of the times as well as exhibiting the broader characteristics of modernism. Ruan offers the most substantial, subtle, and evenhanded scholarly presentation of the relationship between those most closely associated with modernist poetry in Taiwan and the nativist poets who formed the Bamboo Hat poetic society.

“Bridging Borders in Contemporary Poetry,” the third portion of our volume, contains three chapters that focus on particular stylistic tendencies or thematic propensities that transcend the boundaries of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Nikky Lin's chapter does what few scholars seem willing to do: it compares a Taiwanese poet with a contemporary mainland Chinese poet. Her paper begins exploring similarities between poetic modernism in Taiwan in the 1950s and that of the so-called Misty or Obscure poets who began writing in China during the 1970s. The return of modernism in the post-1949 era was one of the most prominent literary phenomena in both Taiwan and mainland China: in Taiwan, this reemergence began in the mid-1950s when the government's interference in art and culture was at its peak; in China, it happened in the late 1970s, shortly after the Cultural Revolution had ended. The rise of modernism in the post-1949 era on both sides not only signaled a break from the political-literary orthodoxy of the day, but was also indicative of a new pursuit of what poetry should be. However, rather than emerging from a highly developed industrial society as it had in the West, the return of modernism in Taiwan and later in China had a strong and specific political element, a corrective to policies that creative writers found oppressive or at least detrimental to the development of their art. For instance, the feelings of “confinement” and “exile” are two of the most significant themes in Taiwanese and Chinese modernist poetry. Lin describes how modernism motivated Taiwanese and

Chinese poets to broaden poetry's aesthetic dimension and delve into alienation of the individual, as well as conflicts between the individual and society. She compares the two sides' unique experiences in regard to this transformative time. By focusing on two modernist poets who experienced physical exile, one Taiwanese and one Chinese, Shang Qin 商禽 (1930–2010) and Bei Dao, respectively, she examines how descriptions of “confinement” and “exile” are not only a reflection of their own personal experiences caused by historical circumstances, but also serve as pathways to explore the universal state of human existence. And it is therein that the poets' challenge to what poetry should be can be found.

One of the conundrums of modern Chinese literary studies is how to navigate the tortuous road between the particular cultural heritage from which it arises, the global phenomena of such trends as modernism, and the individual creative voice. Some take the tack that indigenous culture and Westernization are mutually exclusive. Others emphasize the need to view Chinese modernism as part of a global trend in which cultural and national specificities are at best superficial, cosmetic, and incidental. In this chapter, through a discussion of specific poems from William Butler Yeats and the three Chinese poets Wu Xinghua 吳興華 (1921–1966), Luo Fu, and Xiao Kaiyu 蕭开愚 (b. 1960), Christopher Lupke advances the view that it is precisely the ability to mine the native landscape, transforming it into the rejuvenated imagery of a modern form, that makes contemporary Chinese poets modernist in style and outlook. Utilizing Yeats as a signpost, Lupke suggests that it is not only Asian authors who bridle against the converging trends of modernization. Yeats, who saw himself as residing on the margin, engaged in a battle to maintain and resurrect the myths and narratives of his own cultural heritage. Yeats himself worried about becoming a poet whose verse could be interchangeable with that of anyone in any other language. Facing the same predicament in the second half of the twentieth century, some Chinese poets have also turned to the Chinese tradition with its history, beliefs, and stories and used it as a reservoir for their artistic endeavors. An analysis of modern Chinese poets affords a picture of complicated, even conflicted, feelings toward the modern predicament that are best articulated through a hybrid style. Rather than asserting a historically deterministic thesis that Chinese authors are influenced by Yeats in a tightly causal sense, Lupke asserts that in some ways their situations were similar, their grievances were shared, their thoughts resound with a certain amount of affinity, and they all possess a desire to express themselves in the somewhat controlled linguistic idiom of verse rather than in a more expansive

mode of narrative. Lupke concludes that Yeats's work, preoccupations, and methods of resolving his troubles in writing have some kinship with those of a number of modern Chinese poets.

In the 1950s the wave of modernist experiments in Chinese poetry was marked by Ji Xian's launch of *Modern Poetry Quarterly* (1953) in Taiwan and Ronald Mar's 馬郎 (b. 1933) publication of *New Trends in Literature and the Arts* (*Wenyi xinchao* 文藝新潮 1956) in Hong Kong. Both Ji Xian and Mar called for a continuation of the May Fourth generation's project of literary reform and promoted the development of "Chinese modernism" or "new modernism" in poetry writing. Literary works produced during this phase showcase daring experiments with new poetic forms and the Chinese language. Since the use of the vernacular seemed to guarantee the "newness" in New Poetry or modern poetry from its inception, colloquialism and nonconformism in language use has become one of the keys to modernism in the Chinese literary scene. To offer a fresh perspective to the study of Chinese modernist poetry, Lisa Wong's chapter looks at how some representative poets writing in Taiwan and Hong Kong—namely, Shang Qin, Luo Fu, Huai Yuan 淮遠 (b. 1950), Ye Si 也斯 (1949–2013), and Xi Xi 西西 (b. 1938)—have explored the linguistic possibilities of an almost invisible part of vernacular speech (measure words) in their poems published from the 1960s to the 1980s. By comparing the conventional syntax and pairing of measure words in the received Chinese classifier system with the modernists' application of it to poetry writing, she argues that these poets' innovative use of measure words has contributed artistically and in terms of technique to seeing things anew by a twist of grammar, using a poetic device unique to the Chinese language.

Our final section turns to mainland Chinese poetry of the post-Mao era, offering four papers that reconceptualize contemporary poetry in China. We begin with the chapter by Nick Admussen, who addresses recent work on network theory as it bears generally on research in the humanities, and specifically on poetry circles in contemporary China. Before looking at Chinese poetry, though, Admussen thoroughly and critically examines the limitations of data-based analysis. Such analysis, in Admussen's view, "actively performs modernization and globalization on its objects, deforming nonmodern and local materials into parts of a modernist narrative." With attention to the etymological origins of the "network" itself, a metaphor that is "centrally materialist and commercial ... and which has also evolved to accept a top-down, imaginative imposition of order onto a variety or experiences," Admussen redeploys focus on the "slippage, lacunae, and aporia" that not only delineate the limits of network analysis but also provide fertile ground for exploration of modernist expression. One of Admussen's essential insights is that nodes are

not only homogenous in many cases, but actually entirely overlapping, where the very same people act in completely different capacities in the social milieu that is contemporary poetry circles. The author then envisions the possibility of a data-based system that allows for necessary switches among categories (in network analysis amounting to shifting dynamics of node-to-edge relationships), accounting for poets who host poetry festivals, business executives who compose and perform at poetry events, and all points in-between. His reconfiguration of nodes and edges of network analysis redeems commodity-based hermeneutics and points us toward something that strikes closer to the heart of the contemporary poetry community in China today.

Jacob Edmond is interested in the implications of recent scholarship on imaginings of China in Western modernism for reading what Marjorie Perloff calls “twenty-first-century modernism.” If, as this scholarship argues, the concept of modernism itself is inseparably bound up with Western modernist imaginings of China, how then do these imaginings play out when they are reimagined by a contemporary Chinese poet such as Yang Lian 杨炼 (b. 1955)? And what models for conceptualizing cross-cultural interaction, translation, and modernism itself do these reimaginings offer, other than discredited notions of mimetic reproduction and authenticity? Edmond revisits the entwinement of Chinese and Western modernisms and the mutual cross-cultural readings and imaginings that inform them by examining the work of contemporary Chinese poet Yang Lian and especially his collaboration with Canadian poet John Cayley. Yang and Cayley share a fascination with Ezra Pound’s translations of Chinese poetry and his and Jacques Derrida’s influential texts on the Chinese language. In their collaborations, they combine theoretical thinking about the Chinese language with a variety of translational and quasi-translational rewriting practices. In Cayley’s digital reworking of Yang’s *Where the Sea Stands Still* (*Dahai tingzhi zhi chu* 大海停止之处), for example, a text already built on reiterations is subjected to further repetitions and transformations. Yang and Cayley’s work demonstrates that while translation—and Pound’s translations and imagining of Chinese poetry in particular—played a key and much discussed role in the development of English-language modernist poetry, cross-cultural reading and translational and quasi-translational iterative practices occupy an arguably even more important place in twenty-first-century modernisms.

If Edmond’s chapter seeks to shatter the prism through which we have viewed modernist poetry from the West, inverting the paradigm and reflecting on how one Chinese poet reappropriates the classic modernist trope that absorbs Chinese imaginings into itself, the last two chapters in this volume transgress the bounds of media, with Lucas Klein’s chapter placing modernist

Chinese poetry into an architectural context and Paul Manfredi establishing connections with visual art. But Klein's chapter is not so much about a comparison of Chinese poetry with architecture, although it is that, as it is a meditation on an aesthetic internationalism and new sense of world literature to which he sees Chinese poetry as having a profoundly interventionist strategy. Taking the work of Xi Chuan 西川 (b. 1963) as his primary example, and as chief translator of Xi Chuan's work Klein is intimately familiar with it, he treats modern Chinese poetry as something that resides at the intersection of language, national identity, and memory. He offers the reader a thorough reprise of modernist and postmodernist architecture, including examples from contemporary China. But his main goal is to indicate how modernist aesthetics allows both for its own rootedness in the local and its continuous reinvestigation of its own history. Xi Chuan views modernism as an ongoing project, and he establishes an erudite dialogue in his work with the multifaceted works of literary and philosophical figures throughout the world. Paradoxically, though, Xi Chuan's dialogue with the world is "ultimately a dialogue with ourselves," as he dispassionately observes in one of his most important poems. The conclusion is that no poet in the contemporary world can be shut off from the world. On the contrary, he or she must reconstitute the matter to which he is exposed into something that is deeply unique and personal, something that functions on an international, a national, and an individual level all at once. Klein's chapter provides several close readings of important poems by Xi Chuan to exemplify how this is accomplished.

The final chapter of the volume, by Paul Manfredi, focuses on a recent convergence or mutuality of visual and verbal expression in the twenty-first-century Chinese poetic context with specific regard to abstract expressionism. Since the year 2000 a strong link has been forged between plastic art and the world of poetry in China, mostly due to the number of poets who are now engaged in visual art production. Their intermedia expressions are akin to modernist practices of the early twentieth century in the West, particularly extensive cross-fertilization, visual and verbal, in texts by William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and other Imagists. By focusing on specifically abstract expression, in both visual and verbal format, Manfredi explores a key facet of poetic innovation in contemporary Chinese literary scene. The Western connection to such art is easily the most visible, as iconic asemic expressions of concrete poetry or even visual art work of Franz Kline are immediately recognizable in the painting of notable contemporary Chinese artists, particularly of the ink brush variety. Manfredi encourages us to recognize, though, a broader visual context for Chinese contemporary poetry that is firmly connected to older traditions. From at least the ninth century but arguably long



before in China, creative practice both in terms of production and reception was marked by habitual traveling across media (from poetry to painting and calligraphy), often occurring in the same work. Moreover, in many instances literati expression was as much a function of the art displayed as it was a demonstration of the artists' degree of self-cultivation on extra-artistic levels. By reading contemporary poetry and visual art together, we can observe many contemporary Chinese poets returning to such a holistic mode of cultural expression, one that envelops innovation necessary to the contemporary global context into a milieu of writing and reading that demonstrates inherent cognizance of practices ancient in origins but still relevant. Manfredi's chapter takes three such figures, poet and abstract painter Lü De'an 呂德安 (b. 1960), critic, poet, and abstract photographer Yang Xiaobin 楊小濱 (b. 1963), and painter, poet, and abstract art theoretician Xu Demin 許德民 (b. 1953), as points of focus. However, the shared poetics of these three figures is one with considerably wider implication and, Manfredi predicts, long-term influence.

By gathering these various discussions, stitching together geographical, temporal, and stylistic features across roughly an entire century of Chinese poetic production, we are able to obtain a complete and complex picture of the multifarious elements known collectively, if sometimes contradictorily, as "modernism" in Chinese poetry.