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Guest Editor's Note

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Guest Editor's Note

It is a great pleasure and privilege to put together this special issue on modern Chinese poetry. Each of the essays included here makes an original contribution to furthering our understanding of this complex, multifaceted subject. It is a felicitous coincidence that the six essays manage to cover the entire span and scope of the history of modern Chinese poetry, from the May Fourth to the contemporary era.

Paul Manfredi's essay addresses a fundamental philosophical and artistic issue that underscores modern Chinese poetry in its formative period. He points out the dilemma for many pioneers between the task of creating a progressively modern subject, on the one hand, and the profound ambivalence and alienation they experienced, on the other hand.

If the earliest attempts at creating a new poetry were fraught with self-doubt, the quest of modernity finds a more confident and mature voice in Fei Ming. Haoming Liu demonstrates that Fei Ming's poetics of representation, which draws on European and Buddhist sources with an emphasis on the esemplastic power of the imagination and the illusory nature of representation, is a major, albeit under-appreciated accomplishment.

John A. Crespi's essay transports us over the 1940s and 1950s, when innovations in poetry were severely disrupted, into the 1960s and 1970s. Examining the discourse surrounding state-sponsored poetry recitation, the author uncovers the tension inherent in "performing" revolutionary passion. As such, the tension between the lyric and the theatrical is an ironic replay, with a Maoist twist, of the above-mentioned May Fourth dilemma.

The irony of the situation is made more acute by our increasing knowledge of underground literary activities during and immediately following the Cultural Revolution. Andrew G. Emerson's essay on underground poetry in Guiyang suggests that no matter how tight ideological control or how harsh political persecution might have been, creative freedom and freedom of thought could not be stifled completely. This fact is evinced by Huang Xiang, leader of the Guiyang group, as well as by the Misty poet Gu Cheng in his early career. Simon Patton sheds light on the use of symmetry in Gu's early work. Moving beyond symmetry in classical Chinese poetry, on the one hand, and previous, mainly thematic studies on the other, the author calls attention to an important aspect of Gu's poetic art.

Besides mainland China, Taiwan has been the other major source of modern Chinese poetry since the second half of the twentieth century. Silvia Marijnissen's essay not only offers the sole study of Taiwan's poetry in this special issue but also deals with a recurrent poetic form: poem sequence or, as she prefers to call it, "the serial form." The author analyzes in depth the various types and functions of the form, particularly in the hands of Yang Mu, Luo Qing, and Xia Yu.

Each of the essays is a *tour de force* in its own way, and collectively they attest to the vitality, originality, and profound sociocultural implications of modern Chinese poetry. I thank all the contributors for their fine scholarship and their patience and cooperation throughout the editorial process. It is especially gratifying that many are young scholars at an early stage in their careers; they represent a new generation that will surely continue to advance the study of modern Chinese poetry. I would also like to thank all those who submitted manuscripts for their support and understanding, and those who served as reviewers for their expertise. Last but not least, my whole-hearted thanks to Kirk Denton for suggesting the special issue in the first place, and for his tireless, excellent editorial work.

Michelle Yeh