

**THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNIST MAHUA
LITERATURE, 1959-1989**

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**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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KUALA LUMPUR**

2017

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LITERATURE, 1959-1989**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2017

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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Matric No: AHA 090024

Name of Degree: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNIST MAHUA LITERATURE, 1959-1989

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study and the subject is Mahua Modern Literature. Specifically, the study aims to analyse the strategies and methods employed by literary media in disseminating the Modernist Mahua Literature. The researcher has identified evidence which shows that the literary magazine Chao Foon Monthly, the Sirius Poetical Society and literati such as Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping are the three main media vital in the dissemination of Modernist Mahua Literature. Research findings indicate that Mahua Literature has become a major component in the World Chinese Literature, and the emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature was the result of the influence by Modern Literature from Mainland China and Taiwan. The literary magazine Chao Foon Monthly is considered as one of the important media in promoting the emergence and development of Mahua Modernist Literature. It has employed various strategies to introduce and bring in the modernist resources from the West and Taiwan. It has finally changed the literary taste of local writers and readers, and also nurtured a big number of modernist writers. In the 1970s, the Sirius Poetical Society played an important part in promoting and strengthening Mahua Modernist Literature by publishing three representative anthologies of modernist poems and many other personal collections of different genres. It has thus enriched the publication of Mahua Modernist Literature. As for literati, Bai Yao was the pioneer in promoting and disseminating the modernist literature. He had written several articles to promote literary revolution and published the first modernist poem in Mahua literary arena. His footsteps were followed by Chen Ruixian, a modernist writer from Singapore, who joined the editorial board of Chao Foon Monthly and published various special issues to introduce Western modernist literature, modernist writers and the translations of modernist articles. During his term as the editor of Chao Foon Monthly from August 1969 to December 1974, he had supplied abundant resources to local writers and readers, thus improving the writing techniques of writers and consequently nurturing many Mahua modernist writers. The third literati Wen Renping on the other hand started disseminating the concept of modernism, the theories of modernist poetry and prose by publishing modernist poems, modernist prose and literary criticism in the 1970s. His poems and prose have proven that the use of modernist techniques is appropriate. It is very pertinent to recall here that Mahua Modernist Literature would have faced many difficulties without Chao Foon Monthly and its achievement would not have been as outstanding as what we have today. Similarly, without the Sirius Poetical Society, the three representative anthologies of Mahua modernist poems would not be published. Last but not least, the three literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping have played active roles in disseminating Modernist Mahua Literature. In conclusion, the strategies employed by the three different media in disseminating Modernist Mahua Literature from 1950s to 1980s were successful.

ABSTRAK

Ini adalah kajian kualitatif dan bidang kajiannya adalah tentang Kesusasteraan Moden Cina Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa strategi dan cara yang digunakan oleh media kesusasteraan dalam penyebaran Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Pengkaji telah mengenal pasti bukti-bukti yang menunjukkan majalah kesusasteraan iaitu *Bulanan Chao Foon*, *Persatuan Puisi Sirius* dan tokoh-tokoh kesusasteraan seperti Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian dan Wen Renping merupakan tiga orang tokoh yang aktif dalam penyebaran Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Dapatan-dapatan kajian menunjukkan Kesusasteraan Mahua telah menjadi suatu komponen penting dalam Kesusasteraan Cina Dunia, dan kemunculan Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua disebabkan pengaruh Kesusasteraan Moden dari benua Cina dan Taiwan. Majalah kesusasteraan *Bulanan Chao Foon* telah dianggap sebagai salah satu media yang penting dalam memupuk kemunculan dan perkembangan Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Ia telah menggunakan pelbagai strategi untuk memperkenalkan dan membawa sumber-sumber modernisme dari Barat dan Taiwan. Ia telah menukarkan selera kesusasteraan pengarang-pengarang tempatan dan para pembaca dan juga menyuburkan sebilangan besar pengarang moden. Pada tahun-tahun 70an, *Persatuan Puisi Sirius* memainkan peranan penting dalam pemupukan dan pengukuhan Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua dengan menerbitkan tiga buah antologi puisi moden dan banyak lagi koleksi perseorangan dalam pelbagai genre. Ia telah memperkaya penerbitan Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Tentang tokoh kesusasteraan Bai Yao pula, beliau merupakan pelopor dalam memupuk dan penyebaran Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Beliau pernah menulis beberapa artikel untuk memupuk revolusi kesusasteraan dan juga menerbitkan puisi moden pertama dalam arena Kesusasteraan Mahua. Jejak langkahnya telah diikuti oleh Chen Ruixian, seorang pengarang moden dari Singapura yang menyertai Lembaga Editorial *Bulanan Chao Foon* dan juga menerbitkan pelbagai isu istimewa untuk memperkenalkan kesusasteraan moden Barat, pengarang moden dan menterjemah artikel moden. Dalam tempoh beliau sebagai editor *Bulanan Chao Foon* dari Ogos 1969 ke Disember 1974, beliau telah membekalkan sumber-sumber yang banyak kepada pengarang tempatan dan pembaca, lantaran memajukan teknik penulisan pengarang dan berjaya menyuburkan banyak pengarang moden Mahua. Tokoh kesusasteraan ketiga iaitu Wen Renping pula telah mulai menyemai konsep modernisme, teori-teori modernisme tentang puisi dan prosa dengan menerbitkan puisi moden, prosa moden dan kritikan kesusasteraan pada tahun-tahun 70an. Penggunaan teknik moden telah terbukti sesuai dalam puisi dan prosa yang dihasilkan. Adalah dijangka Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua pasti akan menghadapi banyak kesukaran tanpa kewujudan *Majalah Bulanan Chao Foon* dan pencapaiannya tidak akan juga seperti hari ini. Tambahan pula, tanpa penubuhan *Persatuan Puisi Sirius*, dan penerbitan tiga buah antologi puisi tidak akan diterbitkan. Yang terakhir tetapi tidaklah kurang pentingnya daripada yang lain, ketiga-tiga tokoh kesusasteraan iaitu Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian dan Wen Renping telah memainkan peranan yang aktif sebagai penyemai media kesusasteraan dalam pelbagai fasa perkembangan Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua. Sebagai kesimpulan, strategi yang digunakan oleh tiga media yang berbeza dalam penyemai Kesusasteraan Moden Mahua dari 1950an ke 1980an terbukti berhasil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Fan Pik Wah for the continuous support of my PhD study and related research, for her patience, motivation, and valuable comments. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor for my PhD study.

My sincere thanks also go to Mr. Leong Kim Kuan, Dr. Krishnan, Dr. Yeoh Seong Li and Associate Profesor Kuang Ching Hei, for their encouragement, insightful comments and hard questions which incented me to widen my research from various perspectives. Without their precious support it would not be possible to conduct this research.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my wife for her unceasing encouragement and support and to my sons for supporting me spiritually throughout writing this thesis.

I also place on record, my sense of gratitude to one and all who directly or indirectly, have lent their helping hands in this venture

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University of Malaya

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem

The study of literature has lately shifted its focus from a two dimensional study of authors, literary texts to a four dimensional study of authors, literary texts, dissemination and reception of literature (Wang, 2009, p.7). This cross-discipline approach has combined the theory of mass media and that of literature. It is an important development in the study of literature in the 21st century. There are some results in the study of the dissemination of literature. However, this kind of literary study is only a beginning. At present it is considered a new approach in literary study in Mainland China, Taiwan and particularly in Malaysia.¹

An international conference on the Dissemination and Reception of Chinese Literature was held at the University of Malaya in 2009. To a certain extent, this event marked the beginning of this new trend of literary study in Malaysia. The conference was jointly organized by the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya, Wu Han University, China, and the alumni of the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya (PEJATI).²

¹ For details, please refer Wang Zhaopeng (2013). "Wenxue Chuanbo Yanjiu de Cengmian" (<文学传播研究的层面>, "Different Aspects in the Study of Literary Dissemination", in *Songdai Wenxue Chuanbo Tanyuan* (《宋代文学传播探原》, *Literary Dissemination in Song Dynasty: A Critical Study*). Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, pp.3-14.

² The conference was held on the 7 and 8 of August, 2009, at Lecture Hall F, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Malaya. Two proceedings were published, entitled *Zhongguo Wenxue de Chuanbo yu Jieshou (Xian Dangdai Juan)* (《跨越时空：中国文学的传播与接受》(现当代卷), *The Reception and Dissemination of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, and *Zhongguo Wenxue de Chuanbo yu Jieshou (Gudai Juan)* (《跨越时空：中国文学的传播与接受》(古代卷), *The Reception and Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature*, both edited by Fan Pik Wah and Wang Zhaopeng.

The research field is *Mahua* Literature.³ Mahua Literature has a very close relationship with the Chinese Modern Literature in China which has emerged since the May Fourth Movement, or better known as the Cultural Revolution, in China in 1911. In other words, the emergence of Malaysian Chinese Literature is due to the influence of the May Fourth Literature. One of the major changes in the literary revolution in China is the use of the baihuawen (白话文, Modern Chinese). This literary revolution heralded the demise of wenyawen (文言文, Classical Chinese). Classical Chinese which represented the past era was no longer considered relevant as it was regarded as an archaic and lifeless language. It could no longer express the feelings and thoughts of the new China.

The shift from Classical Chinese to Modern Chinese in China created a great impact on Malaysian Chinese writers. They were also in favour of using Modern Chinese rather than the Classical Chinese. Modern Chinese is easier to use and is closer to everyday life. Mahua Literature is written in Modern Chinese which has been in existence since 1919.

The subject of this research is not Mahua Literature per se but The Malaysian Chinese Modernist Literature (hereafter abbreviated to Mahua Modernist Literature throughout the thesis) from 1959 to 1989. It emerged in 1959 and has existed for more than half a century. It is undoubtedly linked to the Modern Literature of Mainland China but it has its own characteristics. Most importantly, its emergence is due to the influence of Taiwan Modern Literature rather than China Modern Literature.

³ Mahua means Malaysia Chinese, Mahua Literature is the short form for Malaysia Chinese Literature. Mahua Literature will be used throughout the thesis.

Although Mahua Modernist Literature has existed for more than 50 years, only a few studies have been carried out on this topic. These studies either focused on a certain genre, modernist writers' literary works or the comparative study of Mahua Modernist Literature and Modern Literature in Mainland China. Recent studies have identified the relationship between Mahua Modernist Literature and Taiwan Modernist literature (Jin, 2010, p. 130-142). However, no attempt has been made to delve into the very aspect of dissemination of literature, particularly from 1959 to 1989 in Mahua Modernist Literature.

As such, this research aims to fill the gap and study the literature from the point of dissemination. This is considered a new approach which differs from previous studies which have basically focused on the writers, the texts or literary history.

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 General Research Objective

The general objective of this research is to examine the ways and means through which Mahua Modernist Literature has been disseminated by (1) *Jiao Feng Yuekan* (《蕉风月刊》, *The Chao Foon Monthly*), a literary magazine; (2) *Tianlangxing Shishe* (天狼星诗社, *The Sirius Poetical Society*), a literary group or society and (3) Chen Ruixian (陈瑞献), Bai Yao (白垚), both are modernist writers and *Chao Foon* editors, and also Wen Renping (温任平), a modern poet, modern prose writer and literary critic.

1.2.2 Specific Research Objectives

This research is also carried out with the following four specific objectives by discussing:

- (i) the ways and means through which the *Chao Foon Monthly* disseminated modernist literature from the end of 1950s to the end of 1980s;
- (ii) the efforts taken by the Sirius Poetical Society (1972-1989) in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature in the 1970s and 1980s after its development from 1973 to 1989 has been outlined;
- (iii) the different strategies adopted by the modern writers and also *Chao Foon* editors Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian, in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature; and
- (iv) the role played by Wen Renping and his contribution in disseminating modernist literature from 1973 to 1989.

1.2.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above five objectives, the following four research questions are designed:

- (i) What were the means taken by the *Chao Foon Monthly* in disseminating the Mahua Modernist Literature from 1950s to 1980s?
- (ii) What were the activities organized and books published by the Sirius Poetical Society with the aim to disseminate the Mahua Modern Literature during 1970s and 1980s?
- (iii) What were the strategies employed by Chen Ruixian and Bai Yao in disseminating elements of modernist literature from the end of 1950s to early 1970s?
- (iv) What is the role played by Wen Renping in disseminating elements of modernist literature from 1972 to 1989?

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Method and Approach

By and large, this is a qualitative study, and to support the findings the researcher has also used quantitative analysis when necessary. In this study, various methods have been used. The researcher did a wide library research on Mahua Modernist Literature and Modern Literature in Mainland China. Induction methodology (归纳法), text analysis approaches (文本分析法), and social analysis techniques have also been used to analyse logically the social background of the writers and the people. Various books, magazines and newspapers written by various authors in different times on this subject (ref. bibliography) have been referred to in this study. The researcher has read and noted the important views from all the relevant materials which were published from 1959 to date.

(a) Analytical Methodology

By reading the published articles analytically the researcher could explicate the reasons for the emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature and how it was spread widely by *Chao Foon Monthly* and other media. Besides that, from the articles published in magazines, newspapers and books during this period, the development of Mahua Modernist Literature could be traced clearly.

(b) Induction methodology

In inductive reasoning, the focus moves from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. Informally, this approach is sometimes called a "bottom up" approach. It begins with specific observations and measures, then proceeds to detect patterns and regularities, formulates some tentative hypotheses for further exploration, and finally ends up developing some general conclusions or theories. So, by using this methodology, the researcher could conclude the measures employed by different media after reading all the relevant materials collected for this study.

(c) Text Analysis

To strengthen the findings of this study, the researcher has also used text analysis. By analyzing the relevant texts critically and logically, the content of the texts will be discerned, which is helpful in understanding the contemporary literary texts and also the performance of the writers vividly.

(d) Analysis of Social Background

The researcher feels that the analysis of the social background of the society is vital for this study because it provides useful input on why the Mahua Modernist Literature emerged in the late 1950s and how it was disseminated since then. There was various evidence which attributed the emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature to some special social backgrounds. For instance, the students who returned from Taiwan had new perspectives on modern literature because they had been exposed to Modernist Literature in Taiwan and some of them even wrote modern poems and novels since

then. After they had returned, they started to write modern poetry, prose and novels. Nevertheless, they could not publish their articles for the simple reason that all the editors of literary columns in the two major Chinese papers, namely *Nanyang Xiang Pau* (《南洋商报》, *The Nanyang Press*) and *Xingzhou Ribao* (《星洲日报》, *Sin Chew Daily*) during that time, were from the traditional group of writers. They were not in favour of modernist literature and had ignored all the articles.

Secondly, most of the young writers were not satisfied with articles published in these two newspapers. From their point of view, the articles published were mediocre and too shallow in ideas. The techniques employed were not good enough, and more importantly, the content of those articles were not able to pull the young writers emotionally towards their ideologies. These articles were didactic in nature and were more inclined to propaganda rather than revealing the authors' inner feelings. They also did not portray the mystery of human life profoundly and vividly.

1.3.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory employed in this research is the theory of literary dissemination. Literary dissemination is a cross disciplinary combination of dissemination and literature which aims to study the literary information system and the regular pattern of its changes. Communication or dissemination is a new course of study which emerged in the first 20 years of the twentieth century. Leo L wenthal was aware of the problem of literary dissemination in 1920s. Latest in 1940s, Leo has mastered the effect of dissemination on literature. He then tried to untie the mystery of literary transformation from the point of dissemination, thereby opened the prelude of the communication or dissemination studies in Western literary studies.

In the mid-twentieth century, due to the influence of empirical sociology, scholars of literary society regarded writers as a kind of profession, studied literary pieces as a form of communication, studied readers as the customers of cultural products. This was put forward by Escarpit in 1958. In 1950s, he established the Bordeaux school of literary sociology in the University of Bordeaux. The main feature of this school is to study literary phenomena by sociological survey and statistical techniques. Another distinguishing feature of the school is to observe and study the literary phenomena in the society by using the dissemination of books and the perspective of mass media. This is a literary school which combines literature, sociology and dissemination study. (He, 1989, p.51-72)

From the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, literary studies in the West concentrated on empirical study and internal studies, such as historical studies, autobiographical study, the new criticism. The focus of studies were writers and their articles, literary groups and literary trend, but it seemed to be unaware of the problem of literary dissemination.

It became an academic discipline in the 1950s. Dissemination is a science subject which studies the disseminating activities and its laws. Dissemination happens every day on each and every one of us. It is a social behaviour, and it is also a process of information flow.

From the perspective of literary dissemination, what kind of information needs to be disseminated? How this information is made known to the public? What kind of effect or result can be yielded? In literary dissemination, the writer is considered as one of the most important media in literary dissemination and with the help of other media

the dissemination process will be considered complete. In other words, by studying the activities carried out by the different dissemination media, which includes the writers, editors, literary magazines and societies, the complete picture of literary dissemination will be disclosed.

China scholar Wang Zhaopeng suggested eight areas in his study of Song Ci, a prominent literary genre in the Song Dynasty. One of the areas is the study of dissemination and reception. He stated very clearly what should be emphasized in his study of Song Ci. Wang Zhaopeng said: “I think, the main focus includes who to disseminate, what and how to disseminate, to whom should be disseminated, where to disseminate and what are the effects of dissemination?” (Wang, 2008, p.34-35)

“Who to disseminate” means the dissemination media which includes people, newspaper, magazine and organization. These are important literary dissemination media. “How to disseminate” refers to the strategies and methods employed by the dissemination media to disseminate literature. “To whom should be disseminated” in this case, refers to writers and readers. “What to disseminate” discusses the content of dissemination. In this thesis, modernist literature are the answer, which include writing techniques, the theme, content and also stylistics.

This thesis combines the theories of literary sociologist Robert Escarpit, literary and communicational theorist Leo L wental and Chinese scholar Wang Zhaopeng, and concludes that the common literary dissemination media include literary magazines, literary columns in newspaper, literary societies and literati. These four media employ different strategies in different eras to disseminate modernist literature in general and Mahua modernist Literature in particular.

In this research, the role played by three out of the four media will be discussed, which are: societies (The Sirius Poetical Society); magazine (The *Chao Foon Monthly*) and literati (editors of *Chao Foon* and writers Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping). Supplements in Chinese newspapers played an important role in the dissemination of Mahua literature, and they are regarded as one of the major media of dissemination. However, the role played by these supplements are not discussed in a separate chapter because the supplements of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* only played an active role at the beginning period of Mahua Modernist Literature, that is from the end of 60s to early 70s. After that period, it had no more influence on the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature because all the editors were from the traditional group. These editors did not give any chance to modernist writers to publish their articles. In view of this situation, the role played by the supplements of newspapers in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature (hereafter abbreviated to MML throughout the thesis) will not be discussed due to constraints of pages of the thesis.

The framework of this research is as follows:

Chapter 1, the Introduction, discusses the research background, research problems, research objectives, methodology and also the literature review. The objectives discussed consist of the general objectives and the specific objectives. In this chapter, under the section of research methodology, the research theory and methods, as well as the subjects are examined. After discussing the methodology, the importance of this research is highlighted. The constraints and the limitations of the study are then discussed elaborately.

In chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, the media of disseminating is discussed in detail. Chapter 2 focuses on the role played by literary magazine *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1950s to 1980s. *Chao Foon Monthly* is seen as an important base for MML. Without *Chao Foon Monthly*, MML might not exist. The discussion starts with the literature revolution in 1950s, followed by 1960s, and in 1970s, it stresses on the positive achievements of MML which includes the tremendous increase in the number of modernist writers and their publications, as well as the two important anthologies of Mahua Modernist Poems. Although in 1980s the relationship between the two literary groups was not as tense as before, it is clear that *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish modernist texts and translated articles of Modernist and contemporary Western literature.

The dissemination of literature needed a group of people who shared a passion for literature. Chapter 3 analyses the role played by the Sirius Poetical Society and the ways and means through which the society disseminated modernist literature in the 1970s and 1980s. It is clear that the society employed different strategies in 1970s and 1980s, due to some special considerations and constraints of the society. In short, the methods used in 1970s were more traditional and those in 1980s were more dynamic and flexible. Both achieved their goals and these goals can be seen as the contribution of the society to Mahua Literature in general and Mahua Modernist Literature in particular.

Writers and literary dissemination are closely related. So Chapter 4 focuses on the role played by two modernist writers Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian. Bai Yao started off the literary revolution at the end of 1950s by publishing the first modernist poem “Ma He Jingli” (<麻河静立>, “Silently Stands along the Muar River”) in Malaysia

and also two essays, namely “Xinshi de zai Geming” (<新诗的再革命>, “The Revolution of the New Poetry”) and “Xinshi de Daolu” (<新诗的道路>, “The Road of New Poetry”). He further published a series of four articles on the concept of modernist literature “Xiandaishi Xianhua” (<现代诗闲话>, “Musing on Modernist Poetry”) in which he criticized the traditional group for being too conservative. Bai Yao’s iconic status is obvious in this sense. On the other hand, Chen Ruixian, a Singapore citizen, who was a famous modernist novelist and poet, joined *Chao Foon Monthly* as an editor in August 1969. After joining the editorial board, Chen implemented new measures to disseminate Modernist Literature. In the beginning, he himself and together with other writers, translated many important literary pieces from the Western Modernist Literature. In addition, he gave the monthly magazine a new lease of life, publishing various issues of *Chao Foon Monthly* which focused on different and yet popular thematic or topical issues. These themes included the special issue on the different genres of Modernist Literature and also different writers on different issues of *Chao Foon Monthly*. Before ending this chapter, a comparative analysis between these two writers and editors is presented.

Chapter 5 discusses Wen Renping’s role as a writer, a literary critic, the founder of a poetical society and how he contributed in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature from 1970s to 1980s. He is younger than Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian and he had never been the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. As a modernist poet, he had published five collections of modernist poems. His poems reflect the spirits of modernism, explore lives’ philosophical existence and experiment various techniques of presentation. As a literary critic, he acted as the guardian of MML. When there was any emergence of uncalled for criticisms from the traditional camp, Wen would never

miss to react. Wen's contribution to the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature also includes his efforts in grooming his students and the members of the Sirius Poetical Society to write modernist poems. Last but not least, he took the initiative to compile and edit a collection of Mahua Modernist Poems written by 27 Mahua Modernist Poets. This collection, entitles *Da Ma Shi Xuan* (《大马诗选》, *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*), has become an important milestone in the development of Mahua Modernist Poetry. As a medium of literary dissemination, Wen had tried many ways to achieve his goals. In short, he interpreted modernist poems piece by piece, and explained in detail the content and techniques used by the poets; in addition, he himself had written many poems using modernist techniques. More importantly, he put forward his theory on modernist poem by publishing two very important articles namely “Dianying Jiqiao zai Zhongwen Xiandaiishi de Yunyong” (<电影技巧在中文现代诗的运用>, “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry”) and “Zhongguo Xiandaiishi de Yinyuexing ji qi Juxian” (<中国现代诗的音乐性及其局限>, “The Musicality and Limitation of Chinese Modernist Poetry”). Similarly, in promoting the concept of modernist prose, he was personally involved in writing prose and he also illustrated his view on modern prose by writing essays and prefaces for the prose collection of young writers.

Finally in the 6th chapter, the research findings are listed and discussed in detail critically. In the conclusion, the significance and the limitations of this study are mentioned besides suggesting the topics or areas for future research. Since MML has become part and parcel of the World Chinese Literature, it should be given more prominence in further research.

1.3.3 The Subject of Research

The subject of this research is not Mahua Literature per se but The Malaysian Chinese Modernist Literature.

1.3.4 Scope of Research

This research focuses on the Mahua Modernist Literature and the time frame is between 1959 and 1989. The reasons for this choice of time frame are: (1) The scope is too wide if the time frame is set between 1959 and 2009. If in-depth study is to be carried out, 50 years is too long for a doctoral thesis. (2) The second reason is that 1989 marked the end of Sirius Poetical Society which had influenced the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature greatly. It was formed in 1973 and after a few years, the development of Mahua Modernist Poem entered The Era of Sirius Poetical Society. This view was put forward by a literary critic, Ye Xiao (Ye, 1999, p.290). (3) From 1990 onwards, the confrontation between the traditional group and the modernist group was not obvious. It is a fact that from the beginning until 1989, the arena of Mahua Literature was controlled by the traditional group of writers. They controlled the newspapers, magazines and even the writings of Malaysian Chinese Literary History. The editors of the literary columns of both *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and *Sin Chew Daily* were writers from the traditional group. They never allowed Chinese Modernist poems, prose and novels to be published in these two columns. This created a situation where the modernist writers had no place to publish their articles especially in 1960s and early 1970s. This phenomenon changed in 1990s. (4) In 1990s, the study of Malaysian Chinese Literature was different from that of 1960s to 1980s. Special issues were discussed in this period, which included (a) Why the term Malaysia Chinese Literature

was used and not Chinese Malaysia Literature? (b) The absence of Malaysia Chinese Literary Classics; (c) The possibility of Malaysia Chinese Literature to be excluded from Chinese Literature in Mainland China; (d) The “Cultural Elements” in Malaysia Chinese Literature; (e) The Writing of Political poems; (f) The History of Malaysia Chinese Literature: Rewriting.⁴

1.3.5 The Choice of Dissemination Media

The four common literary dissemination media include literati, magazine, society and bookshops. Three of the four elements are studied in this thesis except bookshops. This is because bookshops in Malaysia do not play an important role as a medium of literary dissemination. The bookshops do not sell books written by local or foreign writers as the major reason is that literary works are not popular among them. They usually sell textbooks and exercise books.

Comparatively, the other three media have performed their role respectively and have influence on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. The reasons for selecting the literary magazine *Chao Foon Monthly*, the literary society The Sirius Poetical Society and the literati are discussed below.

⁴ Wen Renping wrote an article entitled “Jiushi Niandai Mahua Wenxue Lunzheng de Bankuai Guancha” (<九十年代马华文学论争的板块观察>, “The Segmental Observation of the Mahua Literature Debate in the 1990s”). This article was first presented in the International Conference on the Teaching and Study of Mahua Literature, organized by Fu Dan University, China and PEJATI on 11-13 January 2013. It was later collected in *Disan Wenhua Kongjian•Mahua Wenxue* (《第三文化空间•马华文学》, *The Third Cultural Space-Malaysian Chinese Literature*), edited by Chen Sihe 陈思和 and Xu Wenrong 许文荣.(2014). Kuala Lumpur: PEJATI, pp.171-189. In 2015, it was collected in Wen’s collection of essays entitled *Mahua Wenxue Bankuai Guancha* (《马华文学板块观察》, *The Segmental Observation of Mahua Literature*), published by Showwe Information Co.Ltd 秀威咨询科技股份有限公司 in Taipei, pp.101-121.

1.3.5.1 Why *Chao Foon Monthly* is Chosen

Chao Foon Monthly was founded in 1955 in Singapore. It was not a literary magazine in the beginning. However, when it changed the printed size from B5 to A4, it became a literary magazine. It has published many translated articles of Western Modernist Literature as well as a great number of Chinese Modernist literary pieces from abroad and local, and introduced Taiwan Modernist Literature. It has contributed tremendously in the dissemination of MML from the end of 1950s to the end of 1980s. It has performed a significant role in the emergence of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature in the early stage and in the second and third stage of the development of MML. If not for its perseverance, the MML would not have developed in such a big scale.

1.3.5.2 Why the Sirius Poetical Society is chosen?

The aim of setting up the Sirius Poetical Society was to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature. The Sirius Poetical Society was aggressive and proactive in promoting modernist literature. It is chosen because: (i) It was set up by a group of modernist poets who were very keen in disseminating Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature from early 1970s until the end of 1980s; (ii) Many important modernist poets hailed from this society; (iii) Its influence on the development of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature was substantial; (iv) Efforts in disseminating the subject was recognized and it was awarded literary prizes twice by Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, the first time in 1978, and then in 1985.

1.3.5.3 Why literati (editors and writers) are chosen?

Editors and writers were two of the very important media in the dissemination of literature. Editors played a very important role in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature. Editors in the early 1960s were conscious about the Chinese Modernist Literature and thought it was timely to promote Mahua Modern Literature.

“Literati” refers to those who are directly involved in the dissemination of literature and also involve themselves in writing articles. In this case, literati refer to *Chao Foon Monthly*'s editors Chen Ruixian, Baiyao and a modernist local writer, Wen Renping.

1.3.6 Definition of concepts

1.3.6.1 Modern Chinese Literature in Mainland China

There are two different views on the emergence of Modern Literature in China. The first is of the opinion that modern Chinese literature emerged in the May Fourth Movement of 1919.⁵ Due to this incident, some critics postulated that modern literature emerged in 1919. However, before the May Fourth incident, articles espousing a literary revolution were published in newspapers. These articles were published in 1917, thus, another group of critics come up with the opinion that modern literature

⁵ The May Fourth Movement is one of the most important cultural, literary and social-political movements of modern China that climaxed with students' and workers demonstrations on May 4, 1919 in Beijing. It covers the period roughly from 1917 to 1921. See Chow Tse-tzung 周策纵, *The May Fourth Movement*, 1967

emerged in 1917. From our point of view, both views are reasonable. In China, modern literature is also known as the New Literature.⁶

1.3.6.2 Mahua Literature

Mahua Literature is the abbreviation of Malaysian Chinese Literature. It emerged in 1919 and until now it has existed for more than 90 years. In 1965, Singapore and Malaysia became two different countries. Mahua Literature then developed into an independent literary entity. In less than one century, articles of different genres were springing up one after another. Especially in the 1980s, writers emerged in large numbers. Their literary works stood out prominently in the world of Chinese Literature.

1.3.6.3 Mahua Modernist Literature

The emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature was due to the influence of Modern Literature in Taiwan at the end of 1950s and at the beginning of 1960s (Huang, 1995, p.42). This does not mean that Modern Literature in Mainland China has asserted little influence. It cannot be denied that the literary revolution in Mainland China has a far-reaching influence on Mahua Literature in general and Mahua Modernist Literature in particular. In 1956, the Modern Poets' Society was formed by a group of modern poets with Ji Xuan as the leader. They stressed on the expression of the inner self, the expression of the outside world and the sub-consciousness of human being. In terms of writing techniques, they paid attention to the use of imagery,

⁶ According to Merle Goldman, writers of the May Fourth Era are generally referred to as writers who emerged in the outburst of nationalism after the May Fourth Movement. It spans the period from 1911 to 1942. See Merle Goldman, *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, 1977.

emphasized the musicality of poems, the ambiguity of poetical language, as well as ignored the traditional grammar and structure.

Malaysian students studying in Taiwan in 1950s and 1960s were influenced by the modernist movement in Taiwan. They read articles and poems of modern writers such as Ji Xuan, Yu Guangzhong, Zheng Chouyu, Luo Fu and soon they started writing modern poems. In 1959, Bai Yao published a poem entitled “Silently Stands along the Muar River” in *Xuesheng Zhoubao* (《学生周报》, *The Student Weekly*)⁷, issue 137. This poem is regarded as the first modernist poem in Malaysia. Since then, the emergence of the modernist poets is increasing and more modernist poems were published in both *The Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon Monthly*.

1.4 The Significance of Research

The importance of this research lies in the fact that it promotes the advancement of knowledge in the study of literature in general and Mahua Modernist Literature in particular. At present, there are very few in-depth studies on Mahua Modernist Literature, let alone approaching it from the perspective of dissemination. This research will make an attempt to bridge the gap in the study of Mahua Modernist Literature.

This research is also significant because it helps future researchers or people who are interested in studying literature to make a better decision on what to look for in

⁷ *The Students' Weekly* was founded in Singapore in July, 1956. It was published once a week. In August 1958, it was shifted from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur. In 1965, it became a monthly magazine and was named as *Xue Bao* (《学报》, *The Students' Weekly*) but the content remained the same. See Ya Meng(雅蒙) on *Xue Bao*, *Wen Dao Yuekan* (文道月刊), *Wen Dao Monthly*, January issue, 1985.

literary research. It provides a new perspective in studying literature and they can also study Mahua Literature from the point of dissemination.

In short, this research is important and significant in the field of Mahua Literature.

1.5 The Limitations of Research

From its emergence in 1959 to its height of development in 1989, over a period of 30 years, not much research has been done on the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. Due to the complexity of the scope of study, this research focuses only on three of the four main media in the dissemination of literature, namely the literary magazine *Chao Foon Monthly*, the literary society The Sirius Poetical Society, the literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping. Another medium, the bookshop has been left out for two reasons: (i) Bookshops in Malaysia have been struggling to survive since the 1950s. Although theoretically, they play an important part in the dissemination of literature, their role in Malaysia, as a medium of dissemination is not as prominent as the other media. None of the bookshops here are regarded as an important medium in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. (ii) In fact, the development and dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature depend more on the other media rather than the bookshops.

Each of the media chosen can be studied in detail and extended into an individual thesis. For instance, the role played by Sirius Poetical Society, and discussion on the publications by the society, the activities organized in 1970s and 1980s, together with the ways and means used in disseminating Mahua Modernist

Literature are issues sufficient to be developed into a full-length thesis. Writers like Wen Renping, whose modernist inclination only started towards the end of 1960s, his five collections of modernist poems, a collection of modernist prose and five collections of literary criticism, make him an appropriate research subject at the level of PhD. His immense contribution in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature is acknowledged and recognized when he was awarded the Cultural Award: Literature Section by the Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society in 2010. The *Chao Foon Monthly*, since the late 1950s, has played a significant role in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature and discussion on its role can be very extensive.

In view of the above constraints, this research will only describe in general the role and contribution of the above three media in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Academics from China often encounter a major problem when they embark on a study of Mahua Literature because of the lack of accessibility to relevant materials and references. They seldom come to Malaysia and stay for a sufficient period of time to collect materials on Mahua Literature. Perhaps they are more acquainted with some writers from the traditional group and thus the materials they collect, more often than not, do not reflect a more comprehensive and inclusive picture of Mahua Literature. For instance, Professor Chen Xianmao (陈贤茂) has published a book entitled *Haiwai Huawen Wenxueshi* (《海外华文文学史》, *Overseas Chinese Literary History*) (Chen, 1999). One of the chapters that deals with The Sirius Poetical Society has only a few short paragraphs. The other chapters in this book have different focuses, and again no prominent coverage is given to this poetical society. In view of this imbalanced and

unrealistic coverage, the present research will attempt to fill in the gap on Mahua Modernist Literature in general and The Sirius Poetical Society in particular.

Recent research on Mahua Literature carried out by academics like Zhu Wenbin (朱文斌), Jin Jin (金进), Zhang Xiaoqi (赵小琪) and Zhu Lili (朱立立) are more balanced due to the fact that these scholars have a better rapport with writers in Malaysia and some of them even stayed in Malaysia for a period of two years to collect relevant materials. With the abundant first-hand publications, the studies done by these academics are more comprehensive and reliable.

1.6 Research Literature

There are three domains of study in Mahua Literature, namely (i) local academics and literary critics; (ii) academics from Mainland China; (iii) academics from Taiwan.

The similarity of these three domains is that the research areas covered are almost the same which include the following aspects: (a) Mahua Literature per se; (b) Malayan Chinese Left Wing Literature; (c) Malaysia Chinese Realistic Literature; (d) The “Chineseness” in Malaysia Chinese Literature; (e) Important issues in 1990s; (f) Study of individual author; (g) The Influence of Hong Kong and Taiwan Literature in Malaysia Chinese Literature; (h) The History of Malaysia Chinese Literature.

It is obvious that studying Malaysia Chinese Literature from the point of dissemination and the study of Mahua Modernist Literature is not a popular choice

among academics from those three domains. There are only a few articles on Mahua Modernist literature and these will be discussed later in this chapter.

Mahua Literature has captured the eyes of academics from Taiwan and China since 1970s and 1990s respectively. After 1990s, a number of Malaysian writers who had completed their studies in Taiwan worked as lecturers in Taiwan universities. These writers were frequent winners of Taiwan Literary Awards. In academic research, these writers are very concerned about Mahua Literature. They voiced sharp criticism towards Mahua Literature, and compiled reading texts for Mahua Literary history. Their work is indeed fruitful and they are treated with utmost respect. As in Malaysia, academic trained literary critics with doctoral degrees are on the rise, and their critical pieces are impressive.

1.6.1 Local Academics and Literary Critics

There are two aspects in the literary criticism and research of Chinese literature that are sadly lacking in Malaysia. In the early days, literary critics did not undergo academic training and thus articles written could not stand close scrutiny.

1.6.1.1 Study of Mahua Literature by Local Literary Critics

The scopes of research by local academics and literary critics focus on discussion of literary works, study of author and their works, study of a particular genre, the history of Malaysia Chinese Literature. There are very few articles that deal with Mahua Literature from the point of dissemination. In addition to this, discussion and study are more on the traditional or the realistic Malaysia Chinese Literature. The

Mahua Modernist Literature seems to have failed in attracting a wider audience and attention. Local literary critic Woon Swee Tin or better known as Wen Renping (温任平) has written a number of essays on Mahua Modernist Literature which include: (i) “Mahua Xiandai Wenxue de Yiyi yu Weilai Fazhan: Yige Shi de Huigu yu Qianzhan” (<马华现代文学的意义与未来发展：一个史的回顾与前瞻>, “The Meaning and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature: A Historical Retrospect and Forward Looking”); (ii) “Xiandaishi de Yuyan Xianxiang” (<现代诗的语言现象>, “The Language Phenomenon of Modernist Poetry”); (iii) “Xiandaishi Xinshang” (<现代诗欣赏>, “Appreciation of Modernist Poetry”); (iv) Studying Modernist Poetry from Different Perspectives and others. These articles are collected in his book entitled *Wenxue.Jiaoyu.Wenhua* (《文学·教育·文化》, *Literature, Education, Culture---A Collection of Working Papers*) (Wen, 1986). In addition to these articles, Wen has also written an article which has been regarded as a very important theoretical work by not only local but also Taiwan literary critics: *The Application of Movie Techniques in Chinese Modernist Poetry*.⁸ In 1997, Wen presented a conference paper entitled “Tianlangxing Shishe yu Mahua Xiandai Wenxue Yundong” (<天狼星诗社与马华现代文学运动>, “The Sirius Poetical Society and Mahua Modernist Literature Movement”) which is the first article to discuss the relationship between the two. Last but not least, Wen Renping published his collection of literary criticism “Jingzhi de Ding” (《精致的鼎》, *The Elegant Tripod*) (Wen, 1978). The book is entirely on

⁸ This essay was first published in *Youth Literary*, issue 241, January 1963, Taipei: Youth Cultural Publisher; and later was collected in Zhang Hanliang, Xiao Xiao, ed. *Youth Cultural Publication*, 1969, pp. 315-356.

modernist poetry. The first part is about the theory building of modernist poetry which includes three articles: (i) The Musicality of Poem and its Constraint; (ii) The Application of Movie Techniques in Chinese Modernist Poetry; (iii) The Hint of Chinese Characters and Chinese Poetry. The second part is the interpretation of individual modernist poem by using The New Criticism method. Ten poems are interpreted in this section. The third part consists of five articles. They are either book reviews, open letters or prefaces to poem collections. The last part is the Appendix, only two articles are included, namely “Zhi Qu Yuan Shu” (<致屈原书> , “A Letter to Qu Yuan”) by Wen Renping, and a reply by Yang Shengqiao(杨升桥), on behalf of the late Qu Yuan.

From 1970s to 2015, local critics such as Ye Xiao (叶啸), Zhang Guangda (张光达), Xu Wenrong (许文荣), Zhuang Huaxing (庄华兴), Lin Chunmei (林春美), Ma Lun (马仑), and Liu Yulong (刘育龙), have written quite a number of articles on Mahua Modernist Literature.

In order to disseminate the Mahua Modernist Literature, Xie Chuancheng (谢川成) (the researcher) has published two books on Chinese Modernist Poetry and a collection of literary criticism which cover literary genres like prose, modern novels and plays. These three books entitled *Xiandaishi Quanshi* (《现代诗诠释》, *The Interpretations of Modern Poetry*), *Xiandaishi Xinqing* (《现代诗心情》, *The Mood of Modern Poetry*) and *Xie Chuancheng de Wenxue Fengjing* (《谢川成的文学风景》, *Collection of Literary Criticism of Xie Chuancheng*). The first book was published in 1982, and the second and third books in 2000.

Zhang Guangda is one of the critics who has given close attention to Mahua Modernist Literature especially the modernist poetry. He has published a book entitled *Mahua Xiandaishi Lun: Shidai Xingzhi yu Wenhua Shuxing* (《马华现代诗论：时代性质与文化属性》), *Studying Malaysian Chinese Modern Poetry: Literary Culture, Context and Identity* (Zhang, 2009). In the book, Zhang wrote a short history of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Poetry from 1957 to 1990; other articles focus on Mahua Modernism, Mahua Modernist Poetry in 1960s and 1970s, criticism on Collection of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Poetry edited by Wen Renping, and other aspects of Malaysia Chinese modernism.

Another critic who is also an academician, Xu Wenrong (许文荣) published a book entitled *Xinma Huawen Xiandai Wenxue de Bijiao* (《新马华文现代文学的比较》), *Comparison between Malaysia Chinese Literature and Singapore Modern Literature*. There are few articles that compared and discussed Mahua Modernist Literature with that in Singapore. He has also compared the performance in poetry between local writer Wen Renping and Singapore Modernist poet Chen Ruixian. This is a good study, but he has made a few mistakes. One of the mistakes is in chapter 2. He quoted a poem written by Dan Ling (淡灵) and wrongly regarded it as the work of Wen Renping. Another mistake is the origin of Wen Renping's mother, who was from Xin Hui, China and not from Chao Zhou, China.

1.6.1.2 Study of Mahua Literature by Local Undergraduates and Postgraduates: The Case of the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya

The Department of Chinese Studies was founded in 1963. It is an important base for the study of Mahua Literature. Before 2000, among the higher education institutions, only University of Malaya offered programmes in Chinese studies. After 2000, University Tuanku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Universiti Putra Malaysia and Sultan Idris Education University (commonly known as UPSI) also offers courses or programmes in Chinese studies. Compared to other universities, University of Malaya has demonstrated more commitment in the study of Mahua Literature. During this period (from 2001 until now), many theses, dissertations or project papers (“projek ilmiah”) were carried out by undergraduates and postgraduates focusing on Mahua Literature.

From 1967 to 2015, ten undergraduate students chose Mahua Literature as the subject of research in their final year project, 15 master dissertations dealt with Mahua Literature, and four PhD theses discussed Mahua Literature from various points of view. There are a total of 29 final year research papers, master and PhD theses. However, it is sad to see that in more than 40 years, the number of research thesis on Mahua Literature is relatively small.

The four doctoral theses are tabled below:

Table 1.1: List of PhD Theses on Mahua Literature, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya

| Year | Name | Title of Thesis | Supervisor |
|------|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1991 | Tang Eng Teik (陈应德) | <i>Mahua Shige Fazhan shi :1945-1969</i> (《马华诗歌发展史: 1945-1969》), <i>The Development of Malaysian Chinese Poetry: 1945-1969</i> | Lin Changmei (林长眉) |
| 1995 | Yulduz Emiloglu (永乐多斯) | <i>Nxing Xinling de Husheng: Mahua Nv Zuojia yu Malai Nv Zuojia de Zuopin Bijiao yu Yanjiu (1957-1982)</i> (《女性心灵的呼声: 马华女作家与马来女作家的作品比较与研究(1957-1982)》), <i>The Spiritual Voice of Woman: A Comparative Study of Mahua and Malay Feminine Writers(1957-1982)</i> | Lin Changmei(林长眉)and Abdul Wahab B. Ali |
| 2005 | Seng Yan Chuan (孙彦庄) | <i>Mahua Zuojia yu Shehui Guanhuai: Mahua Zuojia Pan Yutong, Xiao Hei yu Liang Fang de Xiaoshuo Yanjiu</i> (《马华作家与社会关怀: 马华作家潘雨桐、小黑与梁放的小说研究》), <i>Mahua Writers and Society Concern: A Study of the Novels of Pan Yutong, Xiao Hei and Liang Fang</i> | Zhang Lizhen (张丽珍) |
| 2006 | Chong Fah Hing (庄华兴) | <i>Mahua Wenxue de Piping ji Lishi Xianxiang</i> (《马华文学的批评及历史现象: 一个发展的过程》), <i>Mahua Literary Criticism and Historical Phenomenon: A Development Process</i> | Zhang Lizhen (张丽珍) |

From the above table, it is clear that the first doctoral thesis on Mahua Literature appeared in 1991. From 1991 to 2015, in a period of 24 years, there are only four doctoral theses. This shows that Mahua Literature is not a popular subject of research among postgraduate students especially at the PhD level, in the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya.

The first doctoral thesis was *The Development of Malaysian Chinese Poetry: 1945-1969* by Tan Eng Teik or better known as Chen Yingde (陈应德). This is a study on literary history, and it focussed on Mahua Poetry only. It covered a period of 24 years that is from 1945 to 1969. One of the most important findings of this research is about the first modernist poem in Malaysia. The first modernist poem used to be accepted as Bai Yao's "Silently Stands along the Muar River" as put forward by Wen Renping in late 1970s. However, Chen Yingde holds the opinion that the first modernist poem should be "Shi Shizi" (<石狮子>, "The Stone Lion") by Wei Beihua (威北华). Regarding this point of view, Tan presented a paper at the International Conference on Mahua Literature (Tan, 1999). At the conference, Wen Renping and Chen Yingde heatedly disputed the issue. After the conference, Wen Renping wrote an open letter to Chen Yingde, to further discuss the matter.

The second thesis is by Yulduz Emiloglu (永乐多斯), with the title *The Spiritual Voice of Woman: A Comparative Study of Mahua and Malay Feminine Writers*. Yulduz compared three different aspects to discuss feminine writers' attitude and performance in their works. The first issue discussed is the influence of politics and religion. The second aspect discussed is love. In this regard, the author discusses the attitude and concern of the protagonist towards lover, husband, family and animals. The third aspect is gender. This section compares and contrasts the image of man and woman in the writing of Chinese woman writers and Malay woman writers. Finally the author concludes that although the Chinese and Malay woman writers originate from different cultural backgrounds, their destiny or their problems are similar.

The third thesis entitled *Mahua Writers and Social Concern: A Study of the Novels of Pan Yutong, Xiao Hei and Liang Fang*. The former two writers are from West Malaysia and the third one is from East Malaysia. The political and social environments are different, thus the focus of writers from East and West Malaysia is different. This kind of comparison enables us to understand more about novelists from East and West Malaysia, especially their spiritual worlds and their real life concerns.

The fourth thesis entitled *Mahua Literary Criticism and Historical Phenomenon: A Development Process*, by Chong Fah Hing. The research subject is different from the other three. It discusses Mahua Literary Criticism and Historical Phenomenon. Undoubtedly, compared to poems, proses and novels, the achievement of Mahua Literary Criticism is as fruitful as the other three genres. It is a good attempt to draw a developmental process of literary criticism to enable readers and researchers to have a better understanding of it.

There are all together 17 dissertations at the master's level. The details can be seen in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: List of Master Dissertations on Mahua Literature from 1967 to 2015

| No. | Year | Name | Thesis Title |
|-----|------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | 1967 | Yu Wang Luen (俞王纶) | <i>Mahua Wenxue de Xingcheng yu Fazhan, yi Xiaoshuo Chuangzuo wei Zhongdian zhi Yanjiu</i> (《马华文学的形成与发展，以小说创作为重点之研究》, <i>The Development of Malayan Chinese Literature with Special Reference to Works of Fiction</i>) |
| 2 | 1993 | Ching Wai Ting (程慧婷) | <i>Mahua Xiandaiishi zhi Tanyuan</i> (《马华现代诗发展之探源》, <i>The Origin and Development of Mahua Modernist Poetry</i>) |

Table 1.2 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|------|-------------------------|--|
| 3 | 1993 | Seng Yan Chuan (孙彦庄) | <i>Malaixiya XiandaiXiju (1919-1969) : qi Fazhan yu Daibiao Juzuoja</i> (《马来西亚现代戏剧(1919-1969): 其发展与代表剧作家》, <i>Modern Chinese Drama in Malaysia(1919-1969): Its Development and Representative Playwrights</i>) |
| 4 | 1998 | Chan Foo Heng (陈富兴) | <i>Mahua Shige 的 Yanjiu yu Pingxi, 1945-1957</i> (《马华诗歌的研究与评析: 1945-1957》, <i>Analysis and Comment on Mahua Poetry from 1945 to 1957</i>) |
| 5 | 1999 | Chong Fah Hing (庄华兴) | <i>Mahua Xiaoshuo yu Malai Xiaoshuo(1957-1993) Zhuti zhi Yitong</i> (《马华小说与马来小说(1957-1993) 主题之异同》, <i>The Difference in Themes between Mahua Short Stories and Malay Short Stories (1957-1993)</i>) |
| 6 | 2000 | Wong Hee (黄妃) | <i>Shalao Yue Huaren Wenxue de Fazhan (1950-1962)</i> (《砂劳越华人文学的发展(1950-1962)》, <i>The Development of Chinese Literature in Sarawak (1950-1962)</i>) |
| 7 | 2000 | Choo Siew Hwa (朱秀华) | <i>Mahua Xinwenxue Zuoja : Wei Yun yu Fang Bei Fang</i> (《马华新文学作家: 韦晕与方北方》, <i>Mahua New Literature Writers: Wei Yun and Fang Bei Fang</i>) |
| 8 | 2001 | Ting Hea Chuen (陈韦贻) | <i>Mahua Liutai Zuoja de Nvxing Shuxie</i> (《马华留台作家的女性书写》, <i>Feminine Writing by Mahua writers graduated from Taiwan(1970~1995)</i>) |
| 9 | 2002 | Ng Kok Keong (吴国强) | <i>Mahua Xiaoshuo zhong de Yizu</i> (《马华小说中的异族》, <i>A Study on the Alien Race in Mahua Short Stories (1970s-1990s)</i>) |
| 10 | 2003 | Lim Saw Tin (林素珍) | <i>Mahua Baishi Niandai Sanwen Yanjiu: Yun Li Feng, Li Yi Jun deng Zhuzuo</i> (Nanyang Shangbao Kanzai) (《马华八十年代散文研究: 云里风、李忆著等著作(南洋商报刊载)》, <i>Study on Mahua Prose in 1980s: with special reference to Prose published in Nanyang Xiang Pau written by Yun Lifeng, Li Yijun and others</i>) |
| 11 | 2004 | Tan Lip Thong (陈立同) | <i>Mahua Wenxue zhong de Huanbao Sixiang</i> (《马华文学中的环保思想》, <i>Mahua Literature with Theme on the Love of Nature</i>) |

Table 1.2 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|------|-------------------------|---|
| 12 | 2009 | Lim Cheen Soon (林臣顺) | <i>Waiji Zuoji dui Mahua Wenxue de Gongxian</i> (《外籍作家对马华文学的贡献》), <i>The Contribution of Foreign Writers to the Development of Mahua Literature</i>) |
| 13 | 2010 | Huang Xiao Yan (黄晓燕) | <i>Mahua Dangdai Nv Zuoji de Zhuanti Yanjiu---yi Shang Wanyun, Bo Yi he Li Zishu Weili</i> (《马华当代女作家的专题研究——以商晚筠、柏一和黎紫书为例》), <i>A Study on Mahua Female Writers: With Special Reference to Shan Wanyun, Bo Yi and Li Zishu</i>) |
| 14 | 2010 | Hong Moi Hiong (汤眉湘) | <i>Malaixiya Xiaoxue Keben zhong Mahua Ertongshi de Yanjiu</i> (《马来西亚小学课本中马华儿童诗的研究》), <i>A Study on the Mahua Poems for Children in Primary Chinese Textbooks</i>) |
| 15 | 2010 | Ng Mew Yeen (伍妙燕) | <i>Mahua ErtongWenxue: Ma Han Zuopin Yanjiu</i> (《马华儿童文学：马汉作品研究》), <i>Mahua Children Literature: A Study on Ma Han's Writings</i>) |
| 16 | 2014 | Ten Yien Hsia (邓燕霞) | <i>Renxing de Niuqu: Xiaoshuo Zuopin Jiling Chunqiu li Nanxing Shijie de Yanjiu</i> (《人性的曲折：小说作品《吉陵春秋》里男性世界的研究》), <i>Distortion of Human Nature: A Study on the World of the Men in the Novel Jiling Chunqiu</i>) |
| 17 | 2015 | Chong Yew Reei (张尤蕊) | <i>Mahua Xiaoshuo de Bentuxing yu Shidai Tezhi</i> (《马华小说的本土性与时代特质 (1945-1970)》), <i>The Locality and Trait of the Era, 1945-1970</i>) |

The research areas of the above 17 dissertations include the study of different genres of Mahua Literature, Mahua writers, the environment preservation theme, the contribution of foreign writers, Chinese Literature in Sarawak and also Mahua Children Literature.

The first master thesis on Mahua Literature is “The Formation and Development of Mahua Literature: The Case of Mahua Novels” by Yu Wanglun. There are seven chapters in the thesis. The author uses four chapters to discuss the formation and

development of Mahua Literature, which includes Budding Stage (1919-1936), The Stage of Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), The Period of Post-war and Chaos (1945-1952), and The Period before Independence to the Merging of Singapore and Malaya (1953-1965). The following three chapters discuss the performance of some representative Mahua novelists such as Wei Yun and Miao Xiu. The last chapter is the conclusion.

Mahua Literature has been neglected since its formation. Although the Department of Chinese Studies has been formed 50 years ago, Mahua Literature is not a popular subject among postgraduate students. As mentioned earlier, the first master thesis on Mahua Literature was written in 1967. From 1968 to 1992, over a period of 24 years, no dissertation focused on Mahua Literature as the research subject. In 1993, Ching Wai Teng graduated as a master in arts with her dissertation entitled *A Study on the Origin of the Development of Mahua Modernist Poetry (1959~1974)*. In the beginning, the author gives a definition of Modernist Poetry, followed by an introduction of the emergence of Modernist poetry in the West, and the development of Modernist Poetry in Taiwan. In the thesis, the author also provides a comprehensive report on the reasons Mahua Modernist Poetry emerged in Malaysia: a special political and cultural background. The author then compares and contrasts how Taiwan Literature has influenced Mahua Literature. The thesis also discusses the contribution of literary supplement of newspapers, magazines and literary societies. In Chapter 6, the author analyzes the modernist poems written by four poets, Chen Ruixian, Wang Runhua (王润华), Mei Shuzhen (梅淑贞) and Wen Renping (温任平), and their contributions.

Another thesis on Mahua Poetry is written by Chan Foo Heng. The title of his thesis is *Analysis and Comment on Mahua Poetry from 1945 to 1957*. In this dissertation, the author first introduces the development of Mahua Poetry from 1920 to 1942. After that, he analyses the themes and artistic features of the following three stages: (i) The Early Post-war Period (1945-1948); (ii) The Early Emergency Period (1948-1953) and (iii) The Pre Independent Period (1953-1957). The findings of the dissertation show that in these three periods, the themes, functions and artistic features are influenced by politics, economic and social changes.

On the whole, the content of the above 17 dissertations can be classified into 6 categories which are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Analysis of Master Dissertations on Mahua Literature

| No. | Research Area | Number of Dissertation |
|-----|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Different genre of Mahua Literature | 9 |
| 2 | Mahua writers | 3 |
| 3 | The environment protection theme | 1 |
| 4 | The contribution of foreign writers | 1 |
| 5 | Chinese Literature in Sarawak | 1 |
| 6 | Mahua Children Literature | 2 |

It is clear that none of the dissertations studied Mahua Modernist. In addition, the approaches used are traditional and mono discipline. Unlike the present research which combines the theory of literature and that of mass media to study the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature.

As for undergraduates, for the final year projects, some students chose Mahua Literature as their research subject. From 1991 to 2015, there were altogether nine projects on Mahua Literature which are shown in Table 1.4 below.

**Table 1.4: List of Undergraduate Final Year Projects on Mahua Literature,
Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya**

| No. | Year | Name | Thesis Title | Supervisor |
|-----|------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | 1991 | Tang Yeok Sim (邓月欣) | <i>1970-1989 Bendi Huawen Baozhang zhong de Mahua Xiaoshuo Mulu</i> (《1970-1989 本地华文报章中的马华小说目录》), <i>Mahua Modern Fiction Bibliography in Newspaper 1970-1989</i>) | Tan Wooi Chee (陈徽治) |
| 2 | 1991 | Chan Yein Ning (陈韵宁) | <i>Wei Yun Duanpian Xiaoshuo yu Changpian Xiaoshuo zhi Yanjiu</i> (《韦晕短篇与长篇小说之研究》), <i>The Study of Wei Yun's Short Stories and Novels</i> | Wu Tiancai (吴天才) |
| 3 | 1994 | Chan Fong Yee (陈凤仪) | <i>Qishi Niandai de Mahua Wenxue Fazhan</i> (《七十年代的马华文学发展》), <i>The Development of Mahua Literature in 1970s</i>) | Chen Yingde (陈应德) |
| 4 | 1999 | Ng Yean Leng (伍燕翎) | <i>Bianyuan Zuopin: Shang Wanyun Xiaoshuo zhong Youguan Nvxing de Zuopin</i> (《边缘作品: 商晚筠小说中有关女性的作品》), <i>The Description of Woman in Shang Wanyun's Novels</i>) | Sun Yanzhuan g (孙彦庄) |
| 5 | 1999 | Teoh Hooi See (张惠思) | <i>Tianlangxing Shishe Zhuzi de Yuanxiang Qingjie</i> (《天狼星诗社诸子的“原乡情节”》), <i>The China Complex of Sirius Poetical Society Members</i>) | Sun Yanzhuan (孙彦庄) |
| 6 | 2007 | Lee Chi Heng (李志恒) | <i>Pingdeng Jiaoliu yu Duihua Quanli : Lun Mahua Wenxue de "Duoyuanhua"</i> (《平等交流与对话权利: 论马华文学的“多元文化”》), <i>Interaction and Dialogue: The Study of Mahua Literature by Using the Cross-cultural Theory</i>) | Sun Yanzhuan (孙彦庄) |

Table 1.4 (continued)

| | | | | |
|---|------|------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 7 | 2007 | Ten Yien Hsia (邓雁霞) | Renxing, Nvxing yu Xingyang: Tantaos <i>Jiling Chunqiu</i> de Renlei Beiju (《人性、女性与信仰: 探讨《吉陵春秋》的人类悲剧》, <i>Human Nature, Female and Belief: A Discussion on the Human Tragedy in Li Yongping's Novel Jiling Chunqiu.</i>) | Sun Yanzhuan (孙彦庄) |
| 8 | 2011 | Lew Ya Ling (刘雅玲) | Hongqingting Xilie Shaoer Xiaoshuo Chuangzuo Celue Tantaos (《“红蜻蜓”系列少儿小说创作策略探讨》, <i>A Study on the Techniques of Series Dragon Fly Novels for Children</i>) | Pan Bihua (潘碧华) |
| 9 | 2011 | Yap Ming Yan (叶茗苑) | <i>Lun ZhongYiwen Sanwen zhong de Xiuci Shoufa</i> (《论钟怡雯散文的修辞手法》 <i>The Rhetoric Techniques in Zhong Yiwen's Prose</i>) | Cui Yan (崔彦) |

Out of the nine projects, five studied Mahua Novels, one on the development of Mahua Literature in 1970s, one on literary society, one on the rhetoric technique in prose, and one studied Mahua Literature using the multi-cultural theory.

1.6.2 Study of Malaysia Chinese Literature by Academics from China

The performance of Mahua Literature became popular since 1990s. It attracted the attention of academics from Mainland China in early 1990s. From early 1990s to 2015, there were altogether 247 articles published in different journals in China and can be read in cnki.net.

As for postgraduate thesis, the first master dissertation on Mahua Literature was written in 2001. From 2001 to 2015, there were a total of 31 theses, four of them are PhD theses and 27 others are master dissertations. Details can be seen in the Table 1.5 and 1.6 below:

Table 1.5: List of Master Dissertations on Mahua Literature from Mainland China

| No | Year | Name | Title | University |
|----|------|----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | 2001 | Huang Suhua (黄素华) | <i>Mahua Wenxue de Xianshi Zhuyi Chuantong</i> (《马华文学的现实主义传统》, <i>The Realism Tradition in Mahua Literature</i>) | Xiamen University 厦门大学 |
| 2 | 2002 | Yan Quanfa (颜泉发) | <i>Fenliu yu Zhenghe</i> (《分流与整合》, <i>The Difffluence & Conformation</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 3 | 2006 | Shu Qin (舒勤) | <i>Mahua Dangdai Xiaoshuo zhong Fuqin Xingxiang de Shanbian</i> (《马华当代小说中父亲形象的嬗变》, <i>The Evolving Image of Father in Contemporary Malaysian-Chinese Novels</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 4 | 2006 | Ma Shuzhen (马淑贞) | <i>Mahua Xiaoshuo de Yizu Xiangxiang Bianyi</i> (《马华小说的异族想象变迁》, <i>The Change of Image of the Other in Chinese-Malaysian Novels</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 5 | 2007 | Wei Lili (魏莉莉) | <i>Xin Lishi Zhuyi Shiyu xia de Haiwai Huawen Wenxue</i> (《新历史主义视域下的海外华文文学》, <i>Overseas Chinese Literature: New Historical Perspective</i>) | Lanzhou University 兰州大学 |

Table 1.5 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 6 | 2007 | Huang Xianxian (黄羨羨) | <i>90 Niandai Mahua Wenxue Lunzheng de Yizhong Huigu ji Fansi</i> (《90年代马华文学论争的一种回顾及反思》, <i>Review and Ruminant on the Controversy of Chinese Literature of Malaysia in 1990s</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 7 | 2008 | Zheng Chengquan (郑成全) | <i>Malaxiya Dangdai Huawen Zuoja Ai Wei Yanjiu</i> (《马来西亚当代华文作家爱薇研究》, <i>A Study on Mahua Contemporary Writer Ai Wei</i>) | Zhe Jiang University 浙江大学 |
| 8 | 2008 | Wei Shuqin (魏淑琴) | <i>Lun Chen Dawei Shige Chuangzuo zhong de Guxiang Qingjie</i> (《论陈大为诗歌创作中的故乡情结》, <i>Study of Nostalgic Sentiments in Chen Dawei's Poems</i>) | Zhe Jiang University 浙江大学 |
| 9 | 2008 | Yuan Xiuping (袁秀萍) | <i>ZhongYiwen Sanwen Yanjiu</i> (《钟怡雯散文研究》, <i>Study on Choong Yee Voon's Prose</i>) | Fu Jian Normal University 福建师范大学 |
| 10 | 2008 | Li Sumei (李苏梅) | <i>Mahua Lvtai Zuoja Xiaoshuo Cuangzuo Lun</i> (《马华旅台作家小说创作论》, <i>Novels of Malaysian Chinese Writers in Taiwan</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 11 | 2010 | Zhu Min (朱敏) | <i>Huazong Wenxuejiang yu Mahua Xinshidai Zuoja Qun</i> (《花踪文学奖与马华新生代作家群》, <i>Flower Trace Literature Prize and the New Generation Writers of Malaysia</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |

Table 1.5 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------|-----------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 12 | 2010 | Luo Jie (罗洁) | 《Huawen Wenxue》 dui Dongnanya Wenxue de Chuanbo yu Yanjiu (《《华文文学》对东南亚文学的传播与研究》, <i>The Media and Research of Chinese Literature to South-east Asian Chinese Literature</i>) | Shantou University 汕头大学 |
| 13 | 2010 | Lin Jinping (林金平) | Lun 20 Shiji 70 Niandai yilai de Xin Ma Huawen Nvxing Wenxue (《论 20 世纪 70 年代以来的新马华文女性文学》, <i>On Singapore and Malaysian Chinese Feminine Literature since 70s, 20th Century</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 14 | 2010 | Lin Shiyong (林世英) | Yuanxiang, Bentu, Zuqun Yishi: You Chuan Shige de Jingshen Suqiu yu Yishu Biaoqian (《原乡、本土、族群意识: 游川诗歌的精神诉求与艺术表现》, <i>Homeland, Indigeneity and Ethnic Consciousness: A Study of The Spirit and Means of Expressions in You Chuan's Poems</i>) | Zhe Jiang University 浙江大学 |
| 15 | 2011 | Xie Cong (谢聪) | Sanshi Nian lai Dalu de Haiwai Huawen Wenxue Yanjiu Pingshu (《三十年来大陆的海外华文文学研究评述》, <i>The Reviewing on Thirty Years of Overseas Chinese Literature in the Academic Field of Mainland China</i>) | Soochow University 苏州大学 |
| 16 | 2011 | Zeng Chunyan (曾春艳) | Zhong Yiwen Sanwen Lun (《钟怡雯散文论》, <i>A Study on Zhong Yiwen's Prose</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |

Table 1.5 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 17 | 2012 | Wang Wenquan (王文泉) | <i>Shenzhou Shishe de Wenhua Xinli Yanjiu</i> (《神州诗社的文化心理研究》, <i>A study on the Cultural Psychology of Shen Zhou Poetical Society</i>) | Central Racial University 中央民族大学 |
| 18 | 2012 | Zhang Hui (张慧) | <i>Mahua Xinshengdai de Xincun Xushi</i> (《马华文学中的“新村”叙事》, <i>The “New Village” Narrative Literature in Malaysia</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 19 | 2012 | Xu Hui (许晖) | <i>Mahua Xinshengdai Zuojia de Chuangzuo yu Hou Zhimin Yujing</i> (《马华新生代作家的创作与后殖民语境》, <i>The Works of Malaysian Chinese Writers of New Generation and the Post-colonial context</i>) | Guangxi Normal University 广西师范大学 |
| 20 | 2013 | Zhang Yu (张愉) | <i>Lun Chen Dawei Chuangzuode Shenyi Xushi</i> (《论陈大为创作中的神异叙事》, <i>The Mystic Narrative in Chen Dawei's Literary Writings</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 21 | 2013 | Wang Xiuling (王秀玲) | <i>Xushu Rentong yu Zuqun Xiangxiang ---Lun Mahua Xinshengdai Wenhua Sanwen de Rentong Zhuti</i> (《叙述认同与族群想象 ——论马华新生代文化散文的认同主题》, <i>Narrative Identity and Ethnic Imagination---On Malaysian Chinese New Generation Culture Prose Identity Theme</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |

Table 1.5 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------|------------------------|--|---|
| 22 | 2013 | Huang Lizhen (黄丽贞) | <i>Lvxingzhe de Huiwang ---Lun Zhang Guixing de Yuanxiang Shuxie</i> (《旅行者的回望——论张贵兴的原乡书写》), <i>Thoughts of Traveler ---A Study on Zhang Guixing's Novels about Homeland Writing</i>) | Fu Jian Normal University 福建师范大学 |
| 23 | 2013 | Wang Miao (王淼) | <i>Aidao Shiluo de Chunzhen ---Li Yongping Xiaoshuo (1968-2012)</i> (《哀悼失落的纯真——李永平小说(1968-2012)研究》), <i>Yanjiu (Mourning the Lost Innocence---A Study on Li Yongping's Novels (1968-2012))</i> | Jilin University 吉林大学 |
| 24 | 2013 | Yang Meixiao (杨美娆) | <i>Lun Li Zishu Xiaoshuo de Xushi Lunli</i> (《论黎紫书小说的叙事伦理》), <i>Discussion on Narrative Ethics on Li Zishu's Novels</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学 |
| 25 | 2014 | Zhang Xia (张侠) | 《Jiling Chunqiu》zhong de Huaren Xingxiang yu Zhonghua Wenhua Yanjiu (《《吉陵春秋》中的华人形象与中华文化研究》), <i>A Research on Chinese Image and Chinese Culture in Retribution: The Jiling Chronicles</i>) | Central China Normal University 华中师范大学 |
| 26 | 2014 | Peng Guichang (彭贵昌) | <i>Lun Mahua Qizibei Zuojia dui Hongda Xushi de Jiegou</i> (《论马华七字辈作家对宏大叙事的解构》), <i>Deconstruction on Grand Narrative of 1970s Malaysian-Chinese Writers</i>) | Jinan University 暨南大学, |
| 27 | 2015 | Liu Xiuli (刘秀丽) | <i>Pan Yutong Shengtai Wenxue Yanjiu</i> (《潘雨桐生态文学研究》), <i>The Study of Pan Yutong's Ecological Literature</i>) | Nanjing University 南京大学 |

Out of the 27 dissertations, only one studied the literature from the point of dissemination. The title of this dissertation is *The Media and Research of Chinese Literature to South-east Asian Chinese Literature*. It analyses the effort taken in by a literary magazine in China entitled *Huawen Wenxue* (《华文文学》, *Chinese Literature*) in the dissemination and study of Chinese Literature in South-east Asia. In this study, Mahua Literature forms only a minor part of the dissertation. Another two dissertations that touch on Mahua Literature briefly are “Overseas Chinese Literature: New Historical Perspective” and “The Reviewing on Thirty Years of Overseas Chinese Literature in the Academic Field of Mainland China”. Three other dissertations focused on individual writers, including “A Study on Mahua Contemporary Writer Ai Wei”, “Study of Nostalgic Sentiments in Chen Dawei’s Poems” and “Study on Choong Yee Voon’s stories, Chen Dawei (陈大为) is famous for his poems and Choong Yee Voon has won several top literary prizes in Taiwan for her brilliant prose writing. Another three dissertations paid attention to Malaysian novels. These include “The Evolving Image of Father in Contemporary Malaysian-Chinese Novels”, “The Change of Image of the Other in Chinese-Malaysian Novels” and “Novels of Malaysian Chinese Writers in Taiwan”. Although studying the same genre, the focus of each dissertation is varied from one another. The other four dissertations that had different research subjects were “The Realism Tradition in Mahua Literature”, “The Diffluence & Conformation of Mahua Literature” and “Review and Ruminant on the Controversy of Chinese Literature of Malaysia in 1990s” which discussed literary events in the 1990s. The last dissertation dealt with a very special area regarding a literary award offered by *Sin Chew Daily*, namely “Flower Trace Literature Prize and the New Generation Writers of Malaysia”. The other dissertations included “The Reviewing on Thirty Years of Overseas Chinese Literature in the Academic Field of Mainland China”, “A study on the Cultural Psychology of Shen Zhou Poetical Society”, “The

New Village Narrative Literature in Malaysia” and “The Works of Malaysian Chinese Writers of the New Generation and the Post-colonial Context”. The latest dissertations were “Deconstruction on Grand Narrative of 1970s Malaysian Chinese Writers” by Peng Guichang (彭贵昌) and “The Study of Pan Yutong’s Ecological Literature” by Liu Xiuli (刘秀丽).

The titles of these dissertations perhaps reflect the prevalent concerns of these researchers. Study of short stories and novels were the most preferred research subjects, followed by prose and other subject matters.

None of the 27 dissertations dealt with Mahua Modernist Literature, even until 2012, little attention was given to this field by postgraduates. In other words, studying Mahua Modernist Literature as a whole using the theory of media is really a groundbreaking venture in the study of Mahua Literature.

As for doctoral thesis, there are four theses as tabulated in Table 1.6 below:

Table 1.6: List of PhD Thesis on Mahua Literature from Mainland China

| No | Name | Year | Thesis Title | University |
|----|----------------------|------|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | Xie Shijian (谢诗坚) | 2007 | <i>Zhongguo Geming Wenxue Yingxiang xia de Mahua Zuoyi Wenxue (1926-1976)</i> (《中国革命文学影响下的马华左翼文学(1926-1976)》), <i>Malayan Chinese Left Wing Literature: Its Influence by China Revolutionary Literature (1926-1976)</i> | Xiamen University 厦门大学 |

Table 1.6 (continued)

| | | | | |
|---|-------------------|------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2 | Yang Qiping (杨启平) | 2008 | <i>Wenhua Yujing xia de Nvxing Shuxie---Dangdai Dalu/Mahua Nvxing XiaoshuoBijiao Yanjiu</i> (《文化语境下的女性书写—当代大陆/马华女性小说比较研究》, <i>Feminist Writing in Cultural Context---A Comparative Study on Female Writers' Novels from Mainland China and Malaysia Chinese Literature</i>) | Nanjing Normal University 南京师范大学 |
| 3 | Liu Lijuan (刘立娟) | 2010 | <i>Dongnanya Huawen Wenxue Liumai de Kua Wenhua Yanjiu</i> (《东南亚华文文学流脉的跨文化研究》, <i>Cross-cultural Research on South East Asian Literature in Chinese in Thread</i>) | Jilin University 吉林大学 |
| 4 | Zhang Jing (张晶) | 2010 | <i>Dongnanya Huawen Shige de Zhongguo Xiangxiang</i> (《东南亚华文诗歌的中国想象》, <i>The Imagination of China in Chinese Poetry of Southeast Asia</i>) | Wuhan University 武汉大学 |

It is obvious that in the last two of the dissertations stated above, Mahua Literature is only part of the content. As for the other two, one discussed the influence of China Revolution Literature while the other one compared and contrasted the feminine writings between novels from China and Malaysia.

The study of Malaysia Chinese literature by academics from Mainland China started in 1991 and until now there are quite a number of articles written on it. The earliest articles are (i) “Dai Xiaohua Qingjie” (<戴小华情结>, “The Complex of Dai Xiaohua”), by Tang Shumin from Jiang Su Social Science College, (ii) “Xin Ma

Sanwen Lueying” (<新马散文略影>, “A Brief Account of Prose from Singapore and Malaysia”) by Chen Xianmao, from Santou University, (iii) “Jianping Wu Tiancai” (<简评吴天才>, “A Comment on Wu Tiancai’s Poems”) by Gao Tao from League of Chinese Writers, (iv) “Zhan hou 20 nian Xin Ma hua Xiaoshuo Gailun” (<战后 20 年新马华小说概论>, “A Study of Malaysian Chinese Novels of 20 Years after World War II”) by Su Weihong from Guang Dong Social Science College and (v) “Xin Ma Xiandaishi Yanjiu” (<新马现代诗研究>, “Study of Modern Poetry in Singapore and Malaysia”); (vi) “Pianli Yu Huigui---Shi Qie Xin Ma Xiandaishi Maixiang” (<偏离与回归——试切新马“现代诗”脉象>, “Deviate and Return : A Study on Modernist Poetry in Singapore and Malaysia”) by Ma Yang from Hua Xian Magazine, Guang Dong.

From the above six articles and other articles by academics from China, it can be concluded that the research of Malaysia Chinese Literature in the first decade (1991-2000) is divided into three categories, namely: (i) The Introduction of Malaysia Chinese Writers and their Articles; (ii) The Study of Malaysia Chinese Writers and their Literary Works; (iii) The Writing of the History of Malaysia Chinese Literature.

The writing of History of Malaysia Chinese Literature seems to be the interest of China academics since then. From 1990s until now, four books of this kind have been published. The first book entitled *Overseas Chinese Literature: A General Survey*, was published by Lai Bojiang. The second chapter of this book which

describes the Chinese Literature in Asia includes a section on Malaysia Chinese Literature. The author has written the history of Malaysia Chinese Literature from 1920s to 1980s. This section focuses on the emergence of Malaysia Chinese Literature, several literary controversies and some major writers and their literary pieces.⁹ The second book is by Professor Chen Xianmao and others, entitled *Overseas Chinese Literature History: An Overview* (Chen, 1993). The third book is a revised copy of the second book: *The History of Malaysia Chinese Literature* (Chen, 1999). The fourth book is *The History of South East Asia Chinese Literature*, edited by Zhuang Zhongqing.

There are obvious mistakes in the above mentioned books on Malaysia Chinese Literature History. The researcher will discuss some of the mistakes found in these books. The first book which was edited by Chen Xianmao is commendable, in terms of its extensiveness and coverage on the *History of Malaysia Chinese Literature*. However, the mistakes are obvious. The editor and the contributors are too passive in looking for materials and too dependent on the books provided by the members of Malaysian Chinese Writers' Association. They should have come to Malaysia and look for books and other first-hand materials here but obviously they did not do so. The most serious mistake in this book is the total exclusion of writers born in the 1960s. These writers formed the major group of writers from the 1980s until 1999. It is indeed sad to see that all of them have been neglected and not mentioned at all.

The mistakes in the *History of South East Asia Chinese Literature* are not much different from those of Chen's book. The author of the section on Malaysia Chinese

⁹ For details, please refer to Huang Xianxian. (2007). Review and Ruminant on the Controversy of Chinese Literature of Malaysia in 1990s (Master Dissertation, Ji Nan University, China, 2007).

Literature wrote the history of Malaysia Chinese Literature based on outdated materials and information. The discussion is heavily laden with mistakes. For instance, Chapter 3 of the section: The Bright Sparks of Malaysia Chinese New Literature (1990), written by Su Yong Yan has 3 obvious mistakes. Firstly, the author regards Han Li, Xu Jinshun, Xu Yuquan, Zhong Yiwen, Huang Weisheng, Chen Dawei, Sha Qing, Wu Longchuan, Lv Yutao, Li Jingde, Ye Ming, Lin Xingqian, Chen Qianghua, Lin Chunmei and many others as new breeds of the traditional group, but in fact they were from the modernist group. The discussion of these writers occupies 80% of the chapter. These writers were born in the 1960s and became the major writers of the traditional group, and from this categorization, the researcher is skeptical about Su Yongyan's findings. Perhaps he is unable to distinguish the traditional group from the modernist group in Malaysia.

Secondly, from the bibliography, we can see that the author did not refer to any books written by writers born in 1960s, almost all discussion and even the introduction of writers were based on/were taken from *Collection of Contemporary Malaysia Chinese Prose 1990 -1995* and *Collection of Contemporary Malaysia Chinese Poems 1990 – 1994*.

Thirdly, in the discussion of this section, Su Yongyan never referred to the research findings by the local Malaysian academics and academics from Taiwan. His analysis/findings solely focused on the 1980s.

1.6.3 Studies of Mahua Literature in Taiwan

Taiwan Modern Literature has a direct influence on Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature. It is ironical that not many Taiwan scholars engage themselves in the study of Malaysia Chinese Literature.

Li Ruiteng and Yang Zonghan are the only two academics who have long and continuous concern for Malaysia Chinese Literature. Other scholars like Chen Pengxiang (陈鹏翔), Zhang Jinzhong, Lin Jianguo, and Huang Jinshu, have their tertiary education and work as lecturers in Taiwan Universities. They have written quite a number of articles on Malaysia Chinese Literature.

The research done by Zhang Jinzhong, Lin Jianguo, Huang Jinshu and other Malaysia Taiwan academics has dominated the discussion of every important issue about Malaysia Chinese Literature. Chen Pengxiang and others on the other hand apply different theories to analyse literary texts of important writers. They have delved deeply into Malaysia Chinese literary texts. The literary research done by Malaysian Taiwan academics, to a greater extent, has influenced the direction of discussion on Malaysia Chinese Literature. Regarding this issue, Zhang Jinzhong in his *Study of Malaysia Chinese Literature in Taiwan* and Liu Xiaoxin in his *A Review on the Recent Study of Malaysia Chinese Literature*, both have presented a very comprehensive and in-depth discussion.

1.6.3.1 Academics from Taiwan

Since 1950s, thousands of students furthered their study in Taiwan universities. Over the past 50 years, more than 40,000 students pursued their tertiary studies in Taiwan.¹⁰ Some of them were young writers or young students who were interested in literature. They were amazed by the literary atmosphere in Taiwan and learned about modernist literature from the West and in Taiwan. Some of them started writing modernist poems and published in Taiwan magazines and newspaper.¹¹ From 1980s onwards, some of these students won several literary prizes organized by the two major and influential newspapers, The China Times and Lianhe Zaobao. Wang Runhua, Chen Pengxiang were two of the earlier Malaysian writers who graduated from Taiwan University, and Shang Wanyun (商晚筠), Pan Yutong, Chen Dawei, Zhong Yiwen (钟怡雯) are some of the well known writers of this category. They were the winners of literary awards organised by *Lianhe Bao* (《联合报》, *United Daily News*) and *Zhongguo Shibao* (《中国时报》, *China Times*). Below is a list (Table 1.7) of prizes won by Malaysian students in Taiwan.

¹⁰The history of Malaysian students pursuing higher studies in Taiwan is now more than 50 years, and the accumulated number, as mentioned above is more than forty thousand, and the highest record is more than one thousand in a year. At present, the average number of students going to Taiwan for their studies is about seven hundred yearly. Some of the reasons are being (1) tuition fees is comparatively low ;(2) there are more than 160 universities in Taiwan, offering variety of courses and programs. See Yazhou Zhoukan (亞洲週刊), volume 23, issue 24, 21-6-2009.

¹¹In 1963, active young Malaysian undergraduates writers formed the Xing Zuo Poetical Society. It was a trans campus literary society. The important members were Wang Runhua(王潤華), Dan Ying(淡瑩), Bi Luo(畢洛), Lin Lv(林綠), Chen Guihua(陳慧樺) and Chen Pengxiang (陳鵬翔). In 1972, there was a restructuring in Xing Zuo Poetical Society, some members like Chen Huihua, Li Zhongsheng, Lin Fengxiong left and formed another society named Da Di Poeticla Society(大地詩社).

Table 1.7: List of Literary Prizes Won by Malaysian Writers in Taiwan

| Year | Award | Writers/Articles |
|------|---|--|
| 1977 | Yang Literary National Short Story Competition: Excellent Award (幼狮文艺全国短篇小说大竞写: 优等) | Shang Wanyun(商晚筠): “Muban Wu de Yinduren”(《木板屋的印度人》, “The Indian in the Wooden House”) |
| 1977 | Second United Daily News Group Novel Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第二届联合报小说奖: 短篇小说佳作) | Shang Wanyun(商晚筠): “Jun zi Guxiang Lai”(《君自故乡来》, “You are from my Hometown”) |
| 1978 | Third United Daily News Group Novel Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第三届联合报小说奖: 短篇小说佳作) | Shang Wanyun(商晚筠): “Chinv A Lian”《痴女阿莲》, “Crazy Woman A Lian”) |
| 1978 | Third United Daily News Group Novel Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第三届联合报小说奖: 短篇小说佳作) | Li Yongping 李永平: “Gui Lai” (《归来》, “Return”) |
| 1978 | First China Times Literary Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第一届中国时报文学奖: 短篇小说佳作) | Zhang Guixing(张贵兴): ”Xiaying Lu”(《侠影录》, “Record of Heroic Image”) |
| 1979 | Fourth United Daily News Group Novel Award: Short Story Champion (第四届联合报小说奖: 短篇小说第一名) | Li Yongping 李永平: “Ritou Yu”(《日头雨》, “The Sun Rain”) |
| 1979 | Second China Times Literary Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第二届中国时报文学奖: 短篇小说优等) | Zhang Guixing(张贵兴): “Fu Hu”(《伏虎》, Tigers) |

Table 1.7 (continued)

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| 1980 | Third China Times Literary Award: Short Story Master Piece Award (第三届中国时报文学奖：短篇小说奖佳作) | Zhang Guixing(张贵兴): “Chu Jia” (<出嫁>, “To Marry”) |
| 1981 | Sixth United Daily News Group Novel Award : Short Story Award (第六届联合报小说奖：短篇小说奖) | Pan Yutong(潘雨桐): “Xiang Guan” (<乡关>, “Xiang Guan”) |
| 1982 | Seventh United Daily News Group Novel Award : Novella Award 第七届联合报小说奖：中篇小说奖 | Pan Yutong 潘雨桐: “Yan Suo Chonglou” (<烟锁重楼>, “Smoke Locks the Building”) |
| 1984 | Ninth United Daily News Group Novel Award : Short Story Third Prize (第九届联合报小说奖：篇小说第三名) | Pan Yutong (潘雨桐) (潘贵昌) : “Heri Jun Zilai” (<何日君再来>, “When will Sir be Coming?”) |
| 1986 | Ninth China Times Literary Award: Recommended Fiction Award (第九届中国时报文学奖：小说推荐奖) | Li Yongpeng(李永平): “Jiling Chunqiu” (<吉陵春秋>, “Ji Ling Spring”) |
| 1987 | Tenth China Times Literary Award: Novella Award (第十届中国时报文学奖：中篇小说奖) | Zhang Guixing 张贵兴: “Ke Shan de Nver” (<柯珊的儿女>, “The Daughter of Ke Shan”) |

Due to the excellent performance by Mahua writers in Taiwan, academics started to take note of Mahua literature. The study of Mahua Literature had started in 1970s but it only became a common research subject by Taiwan academics starting from 1995. From 1995 to 2012, there were altogether 30 dissertations on Mahua

Literature, in which five are PhD theses, and the other 25 are master dissertations.

Details of these dissertations are shown in Table 1.8.

Table 1.8: Thesis on Mahua Literature in Taiwan

| No. | Author | Title | Master/PhD /year | University |
|-----|-------------------------|---|------------------|--|
| 1 | Zheng Xiufang (郑琇方) | <i>Wenrou yu Baolie : Lun Li Yongping Xiaoshuo zhong de Kongbu Yishi</i> (《温柔与暴烈：论李永平小说中的恐怖意识》), <i>Gentle and Violent: A Study of the Horrible Consciousness in Li Yongping's Novels</i> | Master (1995) | Fo Guang University (佛光大学) |
| 2 | Zhang Jinzhong (张锦忠) | <i>Wenxue Yingxiang yu Wenxue Fuxitong zhi Xingqi</i> (《文学影响与文学复系统之兴起》), <i>Literary Interference and the Emergence of a Literary Polysystem</i> | PhD (1996) | National Taiwan University (国立台湾大学) |
| 3 | Choong Yee Von (钟怡雯) | <i>Yazhou Xiandai Sanwen de Zhongguo Tuxiang(1949-1999)</i> (《亚洲现代散文的中国图象(1949-1999)》), <i>The China Images in Chinese Prose in Asia (1949-1999)</i> | PhD (1999) | National Taiwan Normal University (国立台湾师范大学) |
| 4 | Qiu Peixuan(邱珮萱) | <i>Zhanhou Taiwan Sanwen zhong de Yuanxinag Shuxie</i> (《战后台湾散文中的原乡书写》), <i>The Description of Homeland in Post-war Taiwan Prose</i> | PhD (2002) | National Kaohsiung Normal University (国立高雄师范大学) |

Table 1.8 (continued)

| | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|------------------|--|
| 5 | Huang Meiyi (黄美仪) | <i>Manyou yu Nvxing de Tantaoyanjiu</i> (《漫游与女性的探讨：李永平小说主题研究》 <i>Roaming and the Discussion on Female: A Study of Themes in Li Yongping's Novels</i>) | Master (2003) | National ChengChi University (国立政治大学) |
| 6 | Shen Xiaowen (沈晓雯) | <i>Dangdai Taiwan Xiaoshuo de Shenhuoxue Jiedu</i> (《当代台湾小说的神话学解读》, <i>Interpretation of Contemporary Taiwan Novels from Mythology</i>) | Master (2003) | National Chi Nan University (国立暨南国际大学) |
| 7 | Hong Wang Yuping(洪王俞萍) | <i>Wenhua Shenfen de Zhuixun jiqi Xingou : Luo Yijun yu Huang Jinshu Xiaoshuo zhi Bijiao Yanjiu</i> (《文化身份的追寻及其形构---骆以军与黄锦树小说之比较研究》, <i>The Quest and Formation of Cultural Identity: A Comparative Study of the Novels of Luo Yijun and Huang Jinshu</i>) | Master (2004) | National Cheng Kung University (国立成功大学) |
| 8 | Huang Huimin(黄慧敏) | <i>Xin Ma Wenxue de Yanjiu</i> (《新马峇峇文学的研究》, <i>Baba A Study of Baba Literature in Singapore and Malaysia</i>) | Master (2004) | National ChengChi University (国立政治大学 / 民族研究所) |
| 9 | Chen Huiling(陈惠龄) | <i>Taiwan Dangdai Xiaoshuo de Wutuobang Shuxie</i> (《台湾当代小说的乌托邦书写》, <i>The Description of Utopia in Taiwan Contemporary Novels</i>) | PhD (2005) | National Kaohsiung Normal University (国立高雄师范大学) |

Table 1.8 (continued)

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|----|--------------------|---|---------------|---|
| 10 | Shen Fangxu(沈芳序) | <i>Sansan Wenxue Jituan Yanjiu</i> (《三三文学集团研究(与神州诗社作比较)》), <i>A Study of San San Literary Group, Comparison with Shen Zhou Poetical Society</i>) | Master (2005) | Providence University (静宜大学) |
| 11 | Chen Ruibin(陈锐宾) | <i>Keji Chuanyue Xiangchou de Chidao Xian : Zai Tai Malaiyiya Huaren de Lisan Jingyan</i> (《科技穿越乡愁的赤道线: 在台马来西亚华人的离散经验》), <i>The Diaspora Experience of Malaysian Chinese in Taiwan</i>) | Master (2006) | National ChengChi University (国立政治大学) |
| 12 | Lin Jiayi (林家绮) | <i>Huawen Wenxue zhong de Lisan Zhuti :Liu Qishi Niandai Taiwan Liuxuesheng Wenxue Yanjiu --yi Bai Xianyong, Zhang Xiguo, Li Yongping Weili</i> (《华文文学中的离散主题: 六七十年代台湾留学生文学研究---以白先勇、张系国、李永平为例》), <i>The Diaspora Theme in Taiwan Foreign Students' Novels: The Cases of Bai Xianyong, Zhang Xiguo and Li Yongping</i>) | Master (2007) | National Tsing Hua University (国立清华大学) |
| 13 | Wu Liubei (吴柳蓓) | <i>Lun Zaitai Mahua Nvxing Zuojia ---yi Shang Wanyun, Fang Ezhen, Zhong Yiwen wei GuanCha Hexin</i> (《论在台马华女性作家---以商晚筠、方娥真、钟怡雯为观察核心》), <i>Study of Mahua Female Writers in Taiwan: With Observation Focus on Shagn Wanyun, Fang Ezhen and Zhong Yiwen</i>) | Master (2007) | University of South China (南华大学) |

Table 1.8 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| 14 | Zhan Minxu(詹 闵旭) | <i>Kuajie Difang Rentong Zhengzhi: Li Yongping Xiaoshuo (1968-1998) yu Taiwan Xiangtu Wenxue Mailuo</i> (《跨界地方认同政治：李永平小说（1968-1998）与台湾乡土文学脉络》, <i>Trans boundary Political Recognition : Li Yongping's Novels and Taiwan Local Literary Network</i>) | Master (2007) | National Tsing Hua University (国立清华大学) |
| 15 | Zheng Henghui (郑恒惠) | Jiating, Chengshi, Lvxing---Taiwan Xinshiji Nvxing Sanwen ZhutiYanjiu (家庭·城市·旅行---台湾新世代女性散文主题研究(钟文音、钟怡雯等)), <i>Family, City, Travel: A Study of the Themes of Taiwan Feminine Prose</i> | Master (2008) | National Central University (国立中央大学) |
| 16 | Chen Fangli(陈 芳莉) | <i>Zai Tai Mahua Wenxue zhong de Yuanxiang zai xiang---yi Huang Jinshu, Zhong Yiwen, Chen Dawei</i> (《在台马华文学中的原乡再现---以黄锦树、钟怡雯、陈大为为例》, <i>The Homeland Representation in Chinese Malaysian Literature in Taiwan: The Cases of Chin-shu Chu, I-wen Chung and Da-wei Chen</i>) | Master (2008) | National Cheng Kung University (国立成功大学) |
| 17 | Chen Jianlong(陈 建隆) | <i>Luoshi de Xinglv zhe ---Chong Hui Li Yongping de Xiaoshuo Ditu</i> (《落失的行旅者---重绘李永平的小说地图》, <i>The Lost Traveller : Redraw the Novels' Map of Li, Yung-Ping</i>) | Master (2008) | National Central University 国立中央大学 |

Table 1.8 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|---------------|---|
| 18 | Gao Jiaqian(高嘉谦) | <i>Hanshi de Yuejie yu Xiandaixing: Chaoxiang yige Lisan Shixue</i> (《阅读马华: 黄锦树的小说研究》, 1895-1945, <i>Poems cross-border and Modernity: Towards a discrete poetry (1895-1945)</i>) | PhD (2008) | National ChengChi University (国立政治大学) |
| 19 | XiaoXiuyan (萧秀雁) | <i>Yuedu Mahua: Huang Jinshu Xiaoshuo Yanjiu</i> (《阅读马华: 黄锦树小说研究》, <i>Reading Mahua: A Study of Ng Kim Chew's Fiction</i>) | Master (2009) | National Chi Nan University (国立暨南国际大学) |
| 20 | Huang Yuhui (黄玉慧) | <i>Yuejie: Mahua Wenxue zhong de Yu Dafu yu Huang Hinshu</i> (《越界: 马华文学中的郁达夫与黄锦树》, <i>Beyond the Boundary: Yu Dafu and Ng Kim-chew in Chinese Malaysia Literature</i>) | Master (2010) | National Taiwan Normal University (国立台湾师范大学) |
| 21 | Li Yidi(李怡萩) | <i>Lun Zhang Guixing de Yuli Shuxie</i> (《论张贵兴的雨林书写》, <i>A Study of Zhang Guixing's Novels about Rainforest</i>) | Master (2009) | National Taipei University of Education (国立台北教育大学) |
| 22 | ZhangYuzhen (张瑜真) | <i>Shang Wanyun Xiaoshuo Yanjiu</i> (《商晚筠小说研究》, <i>The Research of Shang Wan Yun' novels</i>) | Master (2009) | National Central University (国立中央大学) |
| 23 | Hou Jiping (侯纪萍) | <i>Yulin de Fuchou---Zhang Guixing Xiaoshuo de Yuanxiang Yishi Yanjiu</i> (《雨林的复仇—张贵兴小说的原乡意识研究》, <i>Revenge of Rainforest-Research of Homeland Consciousness For Zhang Guixing's Novels</i>) | Master (2009) | Soo Chow University (东吴大学) |

Table 1.8 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|---------------|--|
| 24 | Pan Lilin (潘丽玲) | Li Yongping Xiaoshuo zhong de Yuanxiang Xiangxiang Yanjiu (《李永平小说中的原乡想像研究》), <i>A Study on Homeland Imagination in Li Yongping's Novels</i> | Master (2009) | Taipei Municipal University of Education (台北市立教育大学) |
| 25 | Chen Shuling(陈淑铃) | Nanyang Fengqing yu Taiwan Jingyan de Jiaorong --- Zhongyiwen Sanwen Yanjiu (《南洋风情与台湾经验的交融—钟怡雯散文研究》), <i>The Mingling of Nanyang Feeling and Taiwan Experience: A Study of Zhong Yiwen's Prose</i> | Master (2009) | Taipei Hsinchu University of Education (国立新竹教育大学) |
| 26 | Zeng Yijing (曾怡菁) | Chuanyue Shikong de Changlang ---Zhong Yiwen Sanwen Yanjiu (《穿越时空的长廊---钟怡雯散文研究》), <i>Pass through the long corridor of time and space: Studies on Zhong Ye-wen's prose</i> | Master (2010) | National Chung Hsing University (中兴大学) |
| 27 | Shen Pinzhen (沈品真) | Pingte de Daoyu, Shengming de Ningshi ---Lun Zhong Yiwen de Sanwen Chuangzuo (《拼贴的岛屿、生命的凝视—论钟怡雯的散文创作》), <i>The Collage of Island, The Gaze of Life: Discussion on the Prose by Choong Yee Voon</i> | Master (2010) | National Chung Hsing University (中兴大学) |

Table 1.8 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|------------------|---|
| 28 | Li Wanning (李婉宁) | <i>Nvxing Sanwen zhong de Kongjian, Shijian, yu Guanxi Shuxie---yi Ke Yufen, Zhang Huijing, Zhong Yiwu wei Taolun Duixiang</i> (《女性散文中的空间、时间与关系书写——以柯裕棻、张惠菁、钟怡雯为讨论对象》), <i>The Description of Space, time and Relationship in Feminine Prose: The Case of Ke Yufen, Zhang Huijing and Zhong Yiwu</i> | Master (2010) | National Taiwan Normal University (国立台湾师范大学) |
| 29 | Chen Meilan(陈美兰) | Zhang Guixing Xiaoshuo Yanjiu (《张贵兴小说研究》), <i>A Study of Zhang Guixing's Novels</i> | Master (2010) | Fo Guang University (佛光大学) |
| 30 | Zhang Sixiang (张斯翔) | Lun Mahua Tongzhi Xiaoshuo yu Tongzhi Wenhua (《论马华同志小说与同志文化》), <i>Analysis on Malaysian Chinese Homosexual Fictions and Cultures</i> | Master (2012) | National University of Taiwan (台湾大学) |

Out of the 30 theses mentioned above, only two theses studied Mahua Literature as a whole, none of the theses took Mahua Modernist Literature as the research subject. There are differences in content between these two theses. Zhang Jinzhong's thesis "Literary Interference and the Emergence of a Literary Polysystem", employs a theory, the Polysystem theory by Itamar Even-Zohar in 1970, to study the relationship between Mahua Literature and Chinese Literature in China. This is a new approach, and can be regarded as the most comprehensive and extensive discussion on the history of Mahua Literature (Lin, 2000, p. 72). One of the characteristics of Polysystem theory which is the dynamic relationship between centre/border, can be used to interpret the synchronic and diachronic relationship, the canon and non-canon relationship between Mahua

Literature and Chinese Literature in China (Zhang, 2003, p.167). Another characteristic of polysystem is the multiplicity of intersection, meaning it is impossible to analyse only one system in its own right. One should also consider the complexity of multiplicity, more than one centre and border, and one should also consider more relationships between them.

In the thesis, Zhang Jinzhong sees Mahua Literature as a polysystem. Lin Jianguo (林建国) commented that Zhang has made two shifts in theory. Firstly, the polysystem by Zoha is actually an evaluation system. Each of the systems will fight for a better status in the system. This kind of competition has been cut away by Zhang Jinzhong, and he made it into a system in form. Secondly, Mahua Literature in Zhang Jinzhong's thesis also refers to literary works written in Chinese, Malay and English. Zhang Jinzhong endows the three literatures in different languages a relation by using the theory of polysystem. However, these three literatures have no interaction at all, and it is difficult to define and discuss their relationship.

Lin Jianguo has made a detail analysis on how the polysystem is to be used. Zhong Yiwen is of the opinion that the main contribution of the polysystem theory in Mahua Literature research is that it does away with the hegemony and centre, and at the same time discarding the old thinking of center and periphery.

Zhang Jinzhong's thesis has a panoramic view on Mahua Literature and he attempts to give it a new definition. Other theses focus more on either individual writers and their literary pieces, or the themes of Mahua Literature. Mahua writers are the research subject of 16 theses. Some of the writers discussed are Li Yongping, featured in seven theses; Zhong Yiwen, the subject of five theses, Zhang Guixing, a

novelist, discussed in three theses; Huang Jinshu, a novelist and literary critic, studied in three theses. Other writers include Shang Wanyun and Chen Dawei.

There are two theses that dealt with the literary groups or societies. Shen Fangxu made a comparison between SanSanJituan 三三集团 (San San Literary Group) and Shenzhou Shishe 神州诗社 (Shen Zhou Poetical Society)¹² from different aspects such as the emergence and development and the promotion of Chineseness. In the thesis entitled “*The Chinese Image in Asia Modernist Prose (1949-1999)*”, Zhong narrated that the committee members and members of Shen Zhou Poetical Society shared a very similar background and conviction because they were brought up in an environment in which Chinese Education was not treated fairly. Due to this unfairness, these young writers stressed the chivalrous spirit, and even tried to link ‘spiritually’ to China through the practice of martial arts and the readings of classics. This kind of spirit can be seen in the poems and proses written by Shen Zhou members because these works revealed many geographical names in China, their nostalgia of Chinese culture and Chinese cultural codes.

Two of the theses discussed the theme of diaspora. The first one is “*The Diaspora Theme in Chinese Literature: A Study on Taiwan Literature by International Students in 1960s and 1970s: The Cases of Bai Xianyong, Zhang Xiguo and Li Yongping.*” Bai Xianyong and Zhang Xiguo are Taiwanese who furthered their studies in America, and Li Yongping was among the first group of Malaysian students who

¹² Shen Zhou Poetical Society was formed in 1975 by a group of Malaysian young writers who furthered their studies in Taiwan. They were actually the important members of the Sirius Poetical Society in Malaysia but they were expelled from the society in 1975. In 1976, the leaders Wen Ruian(温瑞安) and Fang Ezhen (方娥真) were arrested due to cases of doubt and were expelled by the Taiwan Government and the society was dissolved because of this reason.

studied in Taiwan. The three writers originated from two different countries with different cultural backgrounds. The author stresses that when two cultures come into contact, anything can happen. One thing that should be noted is that the discussion of the diaspora theme in the cases of the three writers mentioned above is based on the context of world Chinese Literature. The second thesis on the same theme is written by Chen Ruibin, entitled *The Diaspora Experience Malaysia Chinese in Taiwan*. The author started with his own experience, and then discussed the emergence and elimination of nostalgia. Another theme which has relation with the theme of diaspora is the theme of homeland. The thesis, “*The Portrayal of Homeland in Postwar Taiwan Prose*” by Qiu Peixuan started with China Nostalgia and local concern and then expands to the different faces in the portrayal of homeland. This discussion has no direct relation with Mahua Literature, however, it is useful as a reference.

Some authors studied Mahua Literature by using comparative methods. Hongwang Yuping compares the novels of a Taiwan novelist Luo Yijun and Malaysian novelist Huang Jinshu. She compared two of three aspects, namely modernism, cultural identity and the narration of diaspora. The title of the dissertation is *The Quest and Formation of Cultural Identity: A Comparative Study of the Novels of Luo Yijun and Huang Jinshu*.

Another dissertation which adopted the same method is *Yu Dafu and Huang Jinshu in Mahua Literature*, by Huang Yuhui. She compares the two authors from the points of symptoms of double space, the similarity and difference of their spiritual atlas, and their contribution to the formation of uniqueness of Mahua Literature. The scope of this dissertation is beyond the discussion of literature, as it was a cultural study.

Zhong Yiwen is a favourite research subject of Taiwan postgraduates. Out of the 30 dissertations, seven dissertations chose Zhong Yiwen as their research subject. Three of the seven dissertations discussed Zhong Yiwen's Prose, and the other four compared Zhong Yiwen with other prose writers. Two of the three dissertations studied Zhong Yiwen's prose were completed in 2010, supervised by professor Yang Cui in National Ching Hsing University, and one was completed in 2009, in Taipei Hsinchu University of Education, by Chen Shuling. The first one entitled *Pass through the long corridor of time and space: Studies on Zhong Ye-wen's prose* by Zeng Yijing, the second one carried the title *The Collage of Island, The Gaze of Life: Discussion on the Prose by Zhong Yiwen*, and the third one is *The Mingling of Nanyang Feeling and Taiwan Experience: A Study of Zhong Yiwen's Prose*, by Chen Shuling in Taipei Hsinchu University of Education.

Zheng Henhui in her dissertation *Family, City, Travel: A Study of the Themes of Taiwan Feminine Prose* studied the prose of six feminine prose writers in Taiwan and grouped them according to three themes: family, city and travel. By looking at these three themes, the author intended to investigate the value and meaning of contemporary feminine prose in the context of Taiwan Modern Prose. The six writers discussed are Zhong Wenying, Shi Qiongyu, Ke Yufen, Zhong Yiwen, Li Gelale and Zhang Huijing. One of the writers Zhong Yiwen is a Malaysian prose writer who is working at a Taiwan university.

In summary, it is obvious that the Taiwan postgraduates who pursued their masters or PhDs, with the exception of Zhang Jinzhong, none of them take Mahua Literature, Mahua Modernist Literature or the Dissemination of Mahua Literature as their subject of research.

Although Malaysian Taiwan scholars have done a lot of research about Malaysia Chinese Literature, none of them studied the Malaysian Chinese Literature from the point of dissemination. This is same with China scholars and literary critics from Malaysia.

Thus, the present research on Malaysian Chinese Modernist Literature will fill two research gaps. One of the gaps is the comprehensive study of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature from 1959-1989 which has never been explored until now. The second gap is the study of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature from the point of dissemination because until today only one article of this kind has been found. (Xie, 2009)

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 2: *CHAO FOON MONTHLY* AND THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNIST MAHUA LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

There were various media involved actively in disseminating the modernist literature in Mahua Literature. As such, the researcher has decided to discuss the contributions of the three main literary dissemination media: (i) literary magazines; (ii) literary society and (iii) literati. Among the many magazines, *Chao Foon Monthly* was chosen and the strategies employed in disseminating modernist literature will be discussed in this chapter. Meanwhile to highlight the role played by literary societies, *The Sirius Poetical Society* is chosen and will be discussed in Chapter Three. Finally after scrutinizing all the literati, the investigator decided to choose the three renowned scholars, namely Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping for their relentless effort in spreading the modernist literature in Mahua Literature and they will be discussed in Chapter Four and Five.

Newspaper literary supplement was not chosen even though the literary column in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* played an important role in early 1960s in the dissemination and promotion of Mahua Modernist Literature. However, due to the reasons that the role played by this *Nanyang* supplement lasted for only a few years and also the word limit of thesis, it will not be discussed.

Chao Foon Monthly is one of the most important literary dissemination media in promoting Mahua Modernist Literature from the late 1950s to 1980s. This chapter

will discuss in detail the ways and means *Chao Foon Monthly* employed in disseminating the modernist literature from the 1950s to 1980s.

2.1 *Chao Foon Monthly*: A Brief Introduction

2.1.1 From Foundation to the Last issue

Chao Foon Monthly was founded at the end of 1955 in Singapore.¹³ It was a small-sized literary magazine published fortnightly¹⁴ and edited by Fang Tian (方天) in the earlier stage.¹⁵ Later, when the Union Publisher shifted to Kuala Lumpur¹⁶, the publication of *Chao Foon Monthly* continued but the editors were changed. Yao Tuo, Huang Sicheng and Huang Ya were among the new editors. 488 issues were published until it was forced to stop publishing in 1998 due to financial difficulties. For a short period its publication was stopped but soon it was taken over by The Southern University College and continued its publications until today. In the early stage after

¹³ The founder of *Chao Foon Monthly* was Shen Qing (申青), whose original name was Yu Dekuan (余德宽). Before he came to Singapore, he was the President of *Zhongguo Xuesheng Zhoubao* (《中国学生周报》, *China Students' Weekly*) in Hong Kong. Shen Qing was both the founder and editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He was the editor from the beginning until the editorial board shifted to Kuala Lumpur. He was also a regular contributor as a writer of *Chao Foon Monthly*. Since 10 April 1957, he wrote a column in *Chao Foon Monthly* with the title "Gossip on *Chao Foon Monthly*". Occasionally, he published short stories.

¹⁴ *Chao Foon Monthly* was founded on 10 November 1955 in Singapore. Initially it was a half monthly magazine, with size of 32 folios, edited by Fang Tian (方天). With the publication of issue 19, the edition was enlarged to the size of 16 folios which was double the size of the original edition. After the independence of Malaya in 1957, the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board was shifted to Kuala Lumpur and continued as a half monthly magazine. When Huang Sicheng (黄思骋) became the editor, it was published once a month, and the size remained as 16 folio edition. See Ma Han (马汉). "Huang Sicheng Became the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*", website article: <http://www1.sarawak.com.my/org/hornbill/my/smsia/026.htm> (04082011)

¹⁵ Fang Tian, formerly known as Zhang Haiwei (张海威), was the son of Zhang Guoshou (张国焘), an important figure in the Communist Party of China, came to Singapore from Hong Kong with Shen Qing. When they reached Singapore, they cooperated with writers such as Li Hongfen (李宏贲), Chen Zhenya (陈振亚), poet Fan Jing (范经), writer from Malaya Ma Moxi (马摩西) and founded the *Chao Foon Monthly* Publisher. In the early publications of *Chao Foon Monthly*, no one knew who the editor was because the name of editors had never appeared in the magazine. Editors in the early stage of *Chao Foon Monthly*, according to Shen Qing, included Zeng Tiezhen (曾铁枕), Ma Junwu (Ma Moxi), Chen Zhenya, Li Hongfen (Li Rulin), Fan Jing, Zhang Haiwei (Fang Tian, also as executive editor). See Shen Qing. Yi Benkan Shoujie Bianwei (忆本刊首届编委) (Recalling the first Editorial Board of *Chao Foon Monthly*). in *Chao Foon Monthly* issue 483, 1998, p. 86.

¹⁶ In August 1958, *Chao Foon Monthly* Publisher was shifted to Petaling, Selangor, and the editorial board for both *Chao Foon Monthly* and *Students Weekly* were also shifted to Petaling.

shifting to Petaling, many of the articles were from Singapore (Zhang, 2004, p.139-140).

Chao Foon Monthly is an important ground for Mahua Modernist Literature and Singapore Chinese Modernist Literature. It is a literary magazine which played a decisive role in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature and Singapore Chinese Modernist Literature. It is also a literary magazine which lasted the longest. Li Jinzong has the opinion that “*Chao Foon Monthly* is one of the long-lived literary magazines not only in Malaysia but also around the world” (Li, 2007, p.238). It is “the oldest and most representative literary magazine”, and “played an important role in promoting the development of literature.”¹⁷ It has a great contribution in the dissemination of modernist literature. Undeniably, many Mahua Modernist writers were nurtured by *Chao Foon Monthly* and they grew with it. On the role of *Chao Foon Monthly* in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature, Ma Lun, a Mahua novelist commented:

(1) Mahua Modernist Writers and Singapore Chinese modernist writers in the early stage and at present all came from *Chao Foon Monthly*; (2) after the independence of Malaya, nearly 60 % of Mahua writers have published articles in *Chao Foon Monthly*; (3) in addition, *Chao Foon Monthly* is a bridge with the most literary exchange with Hong Kong, Taiwan and even Europe and American Chinese Literature (Ma, 1994, Issue 458).

¹⁷ Zhang Yongxiu.(2011) Discussion on the Last Issue of *Chao Foon Monthly*: From the Situation of Literary Magazine, website article: [http://freesor.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post_24.html\(06072011\)](http://freesor.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post_24.html(06072011))

Chao Foon Monthly is a non-profit making literary magazine. Although the publisher met loss in every issue, he didn't give up and continued publishing for more than 25 years. This tireless effort of his is definitely laudable. How was the financial situation of *Chao Foon Monthly* actually? No one knows the reality, and what is known to the public was that it encountered a loss of about RM3000.00 in every issue (Ma, 2004, p.219). Regarding this issue, the editor made a clear statement in the final issue:

The loss incurred for publishing every issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* is shouldered by Union Cultural Limited Company. The companies under Union Cultural like Malaya Cultural Limited Company, Malaya Publishing Company, Singapore Union Bookshop, and Yi He Bookshop...in order to cope with present situation of *Chao Foon Monthly*, and prepare how to raise fund for the future publication of *Chao Foon Monthly*, the editorial board and the board of advisers decided to publish *Chao Foon Monthly* until issue no 488, January and February issue, 1999. In our plan, by the end of 1999, *Chao Foon Monthly* will continue to be published. In other words, *Chao Foon Monthly* will be published in a new look (Editorial Board, 1999, p.2-3).

The reason behind *Chao Foon Monthly* being forced to cease publishing was due the retirement of the late Yao Tuo, who was a prose and short story writer and also one of the directors of Union Cultural Company. He was the one who had sponsored the publication of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He retired in 1999, and sold out his license. In other words, no more company or publisher could support publishing *Chao Foon Monthly*. Most people believed that, Yao Tuo would not let *Chao Foon Monthly* to

vanish for a long time, and they trusted that one day in the future, *Chao Foon Monthly* will be in the market again. Yao Tuo was called the Father of *Chao Foon Monthly* by Tang Lin (唐林). The reasons were that (i) he has supported the publishing of the magazine from the beginning until it was forced to stop publishing; (ii) through the magazine *Chao Foon Monthly*, he nurtured numerous Mahua writers and (iii) as the editor and publisher of *Chao Foon Monthly*, he encouraged literary activities especially between editors and readers. Yao Tuo firmly believed that even when he had retired, *Chao Foon Monthly* would be published continuously without any assistance from others.

In January 2003, the 489th issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* appeared in front of its readers and contributors. It has stopped publishing for five years. Now, it has been taken over by the Southern University College and it will continue to be evergreen.

2.1.2 *Chao Foon Monthly* Editorial Board

In the early publications, no one knew who the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* were because the name of editors never appeared. In the past Yao Tuo wrote an article to reveal the actual board of editors, otherwise those involved in editing would be a secret and mystery for all of us until today. He said:

During the long course of 25 years, the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* are like a revolving door, in the first stage we have editors like Fang Tian, Peng Zidun and Huang Sicheng, and in the middle stage we have Huang Ya, Bai Yao, Li Chang and Zhou Huan, in the recent stage we have Mu Lingnu, Mei

Shuzhen, Chuan Gu and Qiao Ling, and at present stage we have Zhang Ruixing (Yao, 1980, p.4-6).

This is the list of editors until 1980 only. In 1993, Yao Tuo wrote an article in the newspaper *Malaixiya Tong Bao* (《马来亚通报》, *Malaya Tong Bao*) with the title “About *Chao Foon Monthly*: A Gossip”, and narrated:

Huang Ya is the editor who has served for the longest period, approximately 10 years. In about 1970, Huang Ya left *Chao Foon Monthly*, and then Bai Yao took over and started publishing Modernist Poems, followed by Zhou Huan, succeeded in publishing a collection of modern poems entitled *Mei de V Xing* (《美的 V 形》, *The Beautiful V Shape*). He published modernist poems in large numbers. Consequently, *Chao Foon Monthly* was then called *The Modernist Group*. Actually, *Chao Foon Monthly* did not publish modernist articles only. All kinds of articles were published in *Chao Foon Monthly*, for instance the not modernist inclined articles written by Huang Runyue, Zheng Liangshu and myself (Yao Tuo) were also published.

After Zhou Huan, we have editors like Mei Shuzhen, Qiao Ling, Chen Ruixian, Zhang Jinzhong, Li Youcheng, Chuan Gu, Sha Qin, Xu Youbin, Wang Zuan, Mei Cai, and Wang Zhaiyu until the present editors Xiao Hei and Duo La, all of them were voluntary editors, who worked without any payment, especially Chen Ruixian, who was from Singapore and has been very busy in editing *Chao Foon Monthly* for three years, and Miss Mei Shuzhen, who has been busy editing *Chao Foon Monthly* until her blood

pressure went high and fell sick. To all of them, I feel really grateful (Yao Tuo, 1993).

Yao Tuo has clearly listed the names of editors together with some other information about the whole team of editors. Li Jinzong has made a more systematic list of *Chao Foon Monthly* editors and put in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1: List of *Chao Foon Monthly* Magazine Editors (1955-1990)

| No. | Year/month | Chief or Executive editor | Board of editors/note |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 1 | 1955-1956 | Fang Tian | Shen Qing, Ma Moxi, Chang Fu, Luo Ping |
| 2 | February 1957 to July 1958 | Fang Tian | Shen Qing, Ma Moxi, Chang Fu, Luo Ping, Yao Tuo |
| 3 | August 1958 to December 1958 | Yao Tuo Note: The Editorial board shifted to Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The Editorial board in Singapore ceased to function | Peng Zidun |
| 4 | 1959-1961 | Huang Sicheng | None |
| 5 | 1962 to July 1969 (issue 201) | Huang Ya | None |
| 6 | From August 1969 (issue 202) | Yao Tuo and Bai Yao | None |
| 7 | September 1969 (issue 203) to September 1970 | Editors: Yao Tuo, Mu Lingnu, li Cang, Bai Yao | |
| 8 | October 1970 to May 1971 | Editors: Editors: Yao Tuo, Mu Lingnu, Zhou Huan, Bai Yao | Note: Li Cang resigned, Zhou Huan joined in |
| 9 | Jun 1971 (issue 221) to August 1972 (issue 234) | Editors: Yao Tuo, Mu Lingnu, Zhou Huan, Bai Yao, Mei Shuzhen | Note: Mei Shuzhen joined the editorial board |

Table 2.1 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|---|--|---|
| 10 | September 1972 (issue 235) to December 1972 (issue 300) | Names of editors not listed | None |
| 11 | 1973 to 1975 | Yao Tuo, Bai Yao | None |
| 12 | 1976 to February 1978 | Chuan Gu | Yao Tuo |
| 13 | March 1978 (issue 301) to January 1979 (issue 311) | Editors: Qiao Ling, Sha Qin, Zhang Jinzhong | None |
| 14 | February 1979 (issue 312) to February 1981 (issue 335) | Zhang Jinzhong | Yao Tuo, Bai Yao, Mei Shuzhen, Zi Yisi |
| 15 | March 1981 (issue 336) to May 1982 (issue 349) | Zi Yisi | Yao Tuo, Bai Yao |
| 16 | Jun 1982 (issue 350) to August, July 1982 | Yao Tuo, Bai Yao, Mei Shuzhen, Zi Yisi | None |
| 17 | 1982-1983 (issue 353 to issue 360) | Zhou Qingxiao (周清啸) | - |
| 18 | 1983-1985 (issue 361 to issue 383) | Mei Shuzhen | - |
| 19 | 1985 (issue 384 to issue 386) | Wu Meicai(伍梅彩) | - |
| 20 | 1985 (issue 387 to issue 391) | Yao Tuo, Liu Ge(刘戈), Mei Shuzhen, Zi Yisi, Wu Meicai, Zhang Jinzhong | - |
| 21 | 1985-1987 (issue 392 to issue 398) | Zhang Jinzhong, Wu Meicai, Huang Zhaoyu(黄昭谕) | - |
| 22 | 1987-1988 (issue 399 issue 421) | Wang Zu'an (王祖安), Wu Meicai | Yao Tuo, Liu Ge, Zheng Liangshu(郑良树), Mei Shuzhen, Zi Yisi, Zeng Meijing(曾梅井) |
| 23 | 1989-1990 (issue 422 to issue 443) | Xu Youbin(许友彬) | - |

It is apparent from Table 2.1 that Huang Ya had served *Chao Foon Monthly* for the longest period compared to all the other voluntary editors. When Huang Ya became the editor, the modernist ideologies or thoughts were seen very distinctively. In other

words, during his term as the editor, he has transformed *Chao Foon Monthly* into a modernist literature magazine, and the evolution of New Poetry was portrayed as more suitable one.

2.1.3 The Contribution of *Chao Foon Monthly*

The contribution of *Chao Foon Monthly* towards Mahua Modernist Literature is great. If not for the effort of *Chao Foon Monthly*, the emergence and development of Mahua Modernist Literature would not be so smooth and successful like now. Below are some of the comments put forward by writers and academics. Former *Chao Foon Monthly*'s editor Dr. Zhang Jinzhong, the present associate professor in Taiwan Zhong Shan University said:

If *Chao Foon Monthly* does not exist, the Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature will still be in existence, but it may resemble the condition of China Contemporary Literary Arena, will only be modernized as late as in the 80s and 90s (Zhang, 2010).

This comment states clearly the role played by the *Chao Foon Monthly* in the modernized path of the magazine.

Wang Runhua, present Deputy Director of Southern University College, who is also a Malaysia Chinese modernist poet commented that *Chao Foon Monthly* is a second wave of revolution after the May Fourth Movement, which illustrates a new literary tradition, like literary vision, artistic thinking. The other contribution of *Chao Foon Monthly* is to nurture young writers.

Local female writer Yulduz Emiloglu once put forward a question when she interviewed the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* Yao Tuo. She asked Yao Tuo, whether *Chao Foon Monthly* has contributed much in Mahua Literary arena by nurturing the young writers, and she also wanted to know when he was the editor, how he groomed or encourage them to send articles to the magazine and whether he had organized other activities besides this.

For all these questions Yao Tuo replied:

We did not really cultivate writers..... But, in Malaysia and Singapore, many writers did send their articles to *Chao Foon Monthly* and were published, *Chao Foon Monthly* provided a place for them to publish articles. Writers like Ma Han, Liang Zhiqing, Mei Shuzhen, Bai Yao, Zhou Huan, Lin Muhai, Qiao Ling, Zhang Fa, Liang Yuan, and Xiao Hei, all of them had close relation with *Chao Foon Monthly*. We, the editors had close contact with the writers, participate in literary camp for writers and forums, for instance in Cameron Highlands, Port Dickson..... (Yao, 1993, p.18)

Ma Lun, a novelist, felt that Yao Tuo's reply was too careful and humble, and somewhat evasive or elusive. From the researcher's point of view, Ma Lun's comment was appropriate. Yao Tuo's reply regarding the nurturing of writers was quite humble, but we could not deny the effort put forward by *Chao Foon Monthly*. Actually, many Mahua writers, especially those from the modernist group, from the day they started publishing articles, until they became popular, they were closely related to *Chao Foon Monthly*. Ma Lun provided a list of these writers, but the list is not complete. The Tables 2.2-2.5 below are drafted based on the information in Ma Lun's articles.

Table 2.2: Mahua Novelist and *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Name | No. | Name |
|-----|--------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1 | Ma Han(马汉) | 17 | Zhu Niuren(朱牛人) |
| 2 | Wen Xiangying(温祥英) | 18 | Cao Lan(曹岚) |
| 3 | Zhang Han(张寒) | 19 | Shang Wanyun(商晚筠) |
| 4 | Liang Yuan(梁园) | 20 | He Jin(何谨) |
| 5 | Chen Meng(陈孟) | 21 | Mai Lang(麦浪) |
| 6 | Huang Geer(黄戈二) | 22 | Xiao Hei(小黑) |
| 7 | Yuan Shangcao(原上草) | 23 | Xu Youbin(许友彬) |
| 8 | Song Ziheng(宋子衡) | 24 | Lin Yuesi(林月丝) |
| 9 | Ju Fan(菊凡) | 25 | Ya Meng(雅蒙) |
| 10 | Mai Xiu(麦秀) | 26 | Hong Quan(洪泉) |
| 11 | Nian Hong(年红) | 27 | Luo Ye(落叶) |
| 12 | Wen Ruian(温瑞安) | 28 | Zhang Jinzhong(张锦忠) |
| 13 | Ji Xiao Ru(纪小如) | 29 | Ye Shui(叶谁) |
| 14 | Li Yijun(李忆著) | 30 | Ju Yaoru(鞠药如) |
| 15 | Pan Youlai(潘友来) | 31 | Yu Chuan(雨川) |
| 16 | Chen Zhengxin(陈政欣) | | |

Table 2.3: Mahua Prose Writers and *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Name | No. | Name |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1 | Lu Mang(鲁莽) | 20 | Wu Hailiang(吴海凉) |
| 2 | Zhuang Mu(Sha Yan)庄 牧(沙燕) | 21 | Chen Die(陈蝶) |
| 3 | LanYing(蓝影) | 22 | Qiao Ling(悄凌) |
| 4 | Liang Ruiming(梁瑞明) | 23 | Lin Yanhe(林燕何) |
| 5 | Chen Huihua(陈慧桦) | 24 | Cang Song(苍松) |
| 6 | Lin Lv(林绿) | 25 | Mai Ke(迈克) |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|-------------------|
| 7 | Bing Gu(冰谷) | 26 | Li Guoqi(李国七) |
| 8 | Huang Runyue(黄潤岳) | 27 | Zuo Han(佐汉) |
| 9 | You Cao(忧草) | 28 | Feng Shanfan(风山泛) |
| 10 | Liu Fang(刘放) | 29 | Zhong Kesi(钟可斯) |
| 11 | Si Cai(思采) | 30 | Lai Ruihe(赖瑞和) |
| 12 | He Naijian(何乃健) | 31 | Gong Yujie(公羽介) |
| 13 | Mei Shuzhen(梅淑贞) | 32 | Liao Yanping(廖雁平) |
| 14 | Chuan Gu(川谷) | 33 | Ye Lei(叶蕾) |
| 15 | Wen Renping(温任平) | 34 | Ji Cheng(继程) |
| 16 | He Qiliang(何启良) | 35 | Fang Ezhen(方娥真) |
| 17 | Zhang Shulin(张树林) | 36 | |
| 18 | Li Youcheng(李有成) | 37 | |
| 19 | Liang Jiyuan(梁纪元) | 38 | |

Table 2.4: Mahua Modernist Poets and *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Name | No. | Name |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------------|
| 1 | Bai Yao(白垚) | 20 | Chen Qianghua(陈强华) |
| 2 | Dan Ying(淡莹) | 21 | Fang Ang(方昂) |
| 3 | Wang Runhua(王润华) | 22 | Xiao Ai(萧艾) |
| 4 | Hui Shi(慧适) | 23 | Fu Chengde(傅承得) |
| 5 | Zhou Huan(周唤) | 24 | Lin Ruoyin(林若隐) |
| 6 | Gui Yan (归雁) | 25 | Ning Meier(宁牧儿) |
| 7 | Qiu Mei (丘梅) | 26 | Li Jingde(李敬德) |
| 8 | Ai Wen(艾文) | 27 | Zhang Yongxiu(张永修) |
| 9 | Fang Ezhen(方娥真) | 28 | Lan Qiyuan(蓝启元) |
| 10 | Zhang Chenyin(张尘因) | 29 | Yang Jiguang(杨际光) |
| 11 | Sha He(沙河) | 30 | Piao Beiling(飘贝零) |

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|----|---------------------|
| 12 | Sha Qin(沙禽) | 31 | Wen Renping(温任平) |
| 13 | Shen Cuanxin(沈穿心) | 32 | Wen Ruian(温瑞安) |
| 14 | Cuan Cao(川草) | 33 | Zhang Shulin(张树林) |
| 15 | Huang Yuanxiong(黄远雄) | 34 | Xie Chuancheng(谢川成) |
| 16 | Zhou Qingxiao(周清啸) | 35 | Cheng Kexin(程可欣) |
| 17 | Li Zongshun(李宗舜) | 36 | |
| 18 | Lai Jingwen(赖敬文) | 37 | |
| 19 | Zi Fan(子凡) | 38 | |

Table 2.5: Mahua Literary Critics and *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Name |
|-----|----------------------|
| 1 | Li Youcheng(李有成) |
| 2 | Xie Chuancheng(谢川成) |
| 3 | Zhang Ruixing(张瑞星) |
| 4 | Chen Hongzhou(陈鸿洲) |
| 5 | Ye Xiao(叶啸) |
| 6 | Li Jinzong(李锦宗) |
| 7 | Yang Shenqiao(杨升桥) |
| 8 | Zhuang Shengtao(庄声涛) |
| 9 | Chen Yingde(陈应德) |
| 10 | Zhang Guangde(张光达) |
| 11 | Luo Yaoting(骆耀庭) |
| 12 | Bi Cheng(碧澄) |
| 13 | Wen Renping(温任平) |
| 14 | Wen Ruian(温瑞安) |
| 15 | Zhang Shulin(张树林) |

From the tables listed above, it is clear that *Chao Foon Monthly* has nurtured numerous Mahua modernist writers in the fields of poetry, prose, novels and literary criticism. It acted as a platform for young modernist writers to publish their articles and grew along with *Chao Foon Monthly*. In other words, *Chao Foon Monthly*'s influence on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature is obvious and it can also be regarded as the grooming ground for Mahua Modernist writers.

2.2 *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Dissemination of Modernist Literature in 1950s

Chao Foon Monthly was first published at the end of 1955. In the first issue, *Chao Foon Monthly* listed its taste of articles such as:

Literary articles like novels with Malaya background, prose, drama, new poetry, songs, fables, fairy tales, travel notes, random thoughts, short essays, folk legends, historical stories, close-up of certain people, literary criticism, introduction of masterpiece and comics, wood engraving, sketches, photographs are all welcome, and for translation articles, the original title and the author of the article were included.¹⁸

The statement by *Chao Foon Monthly* clarified the content of the magazine, and the different types of genres were also mentioned. From what has been listed, it is clear that *Chao Foon Monthly* was actually not a pure literary magazine because its content contained all sorts of articles. In addition to that, the final section of the issue where the

¹⁸ *Chao Foon Monthly*, Initial issue, November 10, 1955, p. 32.

column where the writers, editors and readers are mentioned reflected the Malayan inclination.

Only at the end of 1950s, *Chao Foon Monthly*'s inclination of Modernist Literature was clear. Yang Zonghan believed that the most important contribution of *Chao Foon Monthly* was its revolution from the 78th issue in 1959, which emphasized humanistic literature and individual literature, and thus kicked off the first wave of modernism in Malaysia (Yang, 2004, p.67-72). That issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* published two essays and a few modernist poems. The two essays were "Wenyi de Geti Zhuyi" (<文艺的个体主义>, "Literary Individualism") by Lu Wen (鲁文), and "Xinshi de Zai Geming" (<新诗的再革命>, "The Second Reformation of New Poetry").¹⁹ "Literary Individualism" had made a clear description of the characteristics of articles with literary individualism. "Most of the articles with literary individualism stressed on the beauty in form, the genuine emotion, the harmony between human beings, the aggravation of internal thoughts" (Lu, 1959, p.5). The characteristics listed here are far different from articles of the Realistic school. Although modernism was not stated in this article, the intension of modernization of *Chao Foon Monthly* was obvious. The revolution meant the style of *Chao Foon Monthly* will turn towards modernism in the future.

"The Second Reformation of New Poetry" was an important article. Zhang Jinzhong had the opinion that "The emergence of the first wave of Modernism in Malaysia and Singapore started from the literary movement promoted by Bai Yao in 1959 when he published his article 'The Second Reformation of New Poetry'" (Zhang,

¹⁹ *Chao Foon Monthly*. Issue 78, April 1959, pp. 4-5 and 19.

2003, p.52). This statement acknowledged the meaning of Bai Yao's article in literary history. At the same time, the hidden agenda of *Chao Foon Monthly* could be noticed when it published the above two articles. It was an action of pre modernized era, in other words, *Chao Foon Monthly* in one way promoted modernism by publishing modernist articles, and at the same time it also laid the importance of essays which promoted the dissemination of modernism. This article was a continuous effort in disseminating modernism by Bai Yao after the publication of The First Modernist Poem in Malaysia. The former was an example of literary creation; the later tried to spread the concept of modernism by using words and sentences.

The above article was published in *Chao Foon Monthly*, April 1959, which was much a kind of manifesto. It was not long, briefly proposing the five major proposition of new poetry revolution. Below are the five propositions:

- (1) New Poetry is a horizontal transplant of old poetry, and not the vertical succession;
- (2) The abolition of meter and rhyme;
- (3) The Form of poetry is determined by the content;
- (4) It is intellectual and also emotional;
- (5) The choice of new and old, good and bad, which is the revolution of poetry.

(Bai, 1959, p.19)

These few propositions were quite similar to the modernist's notion by Ji Xian (纪弦) in Taiwan. The modernization of Taiwan Literature started in 1953, with the publication of the literary magazine *Xiandai Shi* (《现代诗》, *Modern Poetry*). In the

magazine, Ji Xian declared that he wanted Taiwan poetry to be modernized and he was responsible to make it a kind of modern poetry with special characteristics. Consequently, Ji Xian organized the meeting of Modernist Poets, and in 1956 he declared the formation of the Modernist Group. 102 poets attended the meeting and it was quite representative. After the meeting, Ji Xian published the Modernist's Credo in the front cover of the 13th issue of *Modern Poetry*²⁰, which sounded as below:

- (1) We are a group of modern poets who discarded and developed selectively the spirits and elements of all new poetry schools since Charles Baudelaire.
- (2) From our opinion, new poetry is the horizontal transplant of old poetry, and not the vertical succession. This is an overview, a basic starting point for the establishment of theory and the practice of writing;
- (3) This is an adventure of the new world in poetry, the open up of virginity in poetry, which includes the expression of new content, the creation of new form, the discovery of new tools, and the invention of new techniques.
- (4) The emphasis of intellectualism.
- (5) The pursue of poetical purity.
- (6) Anti-communist. Support freedom and democracy.

If we were to contradistinguish the propositions put forward by two literary leaders from Taiwan and Malaysia respectively, the influence of Ji Xian on Bai Yao was obvious, especially the first proposition, it was directly transferred from Ji Xian,

²⁰ *Modern Poetry* was a poetry magazine. It was first published in February 1956. Ji Xian was the publisher and editor. From February 1956 to February 1964, 45 issues were published.

with only two words “old poetry” added. Bai Yao’s fourth proposition was almost the same as Ji Xian’s fourth proposition. This is the reason for Zhang Jinzhong’s comment: “Bai Yao studied in Taiwan in the late 1950s, it was impossible to be ignorant of the Modernist Group, or not being influenced. The first wave of modernism in Mahua literary arena and its relation with Taiwan Modernism is worth doing a detailed study” (Zhang, 2003, p.53).

How did the editor of the issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* react to Bai Yao’s proposition? The former editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, Zhang Jinzhong interpreted it in this way: “Yao Tuo the editor of the 78th issue did not respond directly to Bai Yao’s revolutionary movement, but instead published Bai Yao’s article in the revolutionary issue of the magazine, and repeated the five propositions of Bai Yao’s. Furthermore, he published Bai Yao’s two poems in the same issue, and this could be regarded as his support.”²¹ Chong’s comment was appropriate and *Chao Foon Monthly’s* continuous efforts in disseminating modernism in the 1960s and 1970s has proven that Chong’s comment was correct.

When discussing the issue of Bai Yao and the First Wave of Modernism in Mahua literature, Zhang Jinzhong quoted Bai Yao’s prediction:

In 1959, Bai Yao advocated the Second revolution of New Poetry, and predicted that ‘The history of China New Poetry Movement, will end in the hands of Malaysian Chinese, whereas the foundation of modern poetry will start from that point. This kind of discourse undoubtedly belongs to the

²¹ Zhang Jinzhong. (2008) “Bai Yao yu Mahua Wenxue de Diyi Bo Xiandai Zhuyi Fengchao” (<白垚与马华文学的 第 1 波现代主义风潮>, “Bai Yao and The First Wave of Modernism in Malaysia”), Nanyang Xiang Pau. 18 November 2008.

forceful rhetoric of literary movement manifesto, but it also denotes that when Mahua Literature crosses the border, and wants to be the master of the new world in Nan Yang, not only becomes the medium and characteristics of Malaya Chinese and the subjectivity of Chinese language, but also becomes the onset or the beginning of Chinese Language literature, and makes modernist poetry as the new critical point²² (Zhang, 2008).

The prediction revealed Bai Yao's historical perspective and intention. He published modernist poems in the late 1950's and several essays on the dissemination of modernist literature that could be regarded as structured actions, not just for personal feelings and notions. Without this kind of strategic introduction, showing examples and provocations, it is not easy for Mahua Modernist Literature to survive, reemerge and develop into this kind of literary environment and ecology. However, with *Chao Foon Monthly* as a base, together and followed up with a series of strategic actions, the first wave of modernism in Mahua Literature was set in motion.

In the final years of 1950's, the effort put in to bring about the emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature was clear to all. In April 1959 which was the reform period of *Chao Foon Monthly*, it published Bai Yao's article entitled "The Second Revolution of New Poetry". In the following issue it published his second article entitled "The Road of New Poetry", and then in the following few issues, his essays on modernist literature was published. In fact, before April 1959, *Chao Foon Monthly* had published a few articles on modernist literature, which could be regarded as the warm up activities of its reformation.

²² Zhang Jinzhong. "Bai Yao and The First Wave of Modernism in Malaysia", Ibid.

2.2.1 Publishing Collections of Modernist Poetry

After the reformation of *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1950s, in addition to publishing modernist poems and essays on modernist literature, the more important action was the publication of two collections of Modernist Poetry, namely *Mei de V Xing* (《美的V型》, *The Beautiful V Shape*) and *Jiao You* (《郊游》, *The Excursion*) in June 1959 and September 1959 respectively. After seeing this development Bai Yao commented as follow:

Within three months, *Chao Foon Monthly* has published two collections of Modernist Poetry, regardless of whether the two collections of modernist poetry are successful, the response from readers are positive and encouraging; in promoting and encouraging the writing of new poetry, *Chao Foon Monthly* has done its best. At least, it has recommended a new kind of genre or form of poetry to the readers, as a result, this new kind of poetry is named as The Chao Foon Monthly School (Bai, 1959, p.4).

There are two points in Bai Yao's comment. Firstly, *Chao Foon Monthly* has shown its great contribution in promoting and encouraging the writing of new poetry. As is known to all, *Chao Foon Monthly* is a magazine published with a loss of a few thousand Ringgit every issue. In such an economic plight, it still published two anthologies of new poetry. It was predicted that the anthologies were unmarketable and finally they were given free of charge to the readers. If not for its special mission, we cannot find any other reasons why this unprofitable action was taken. Secondly, it started a new trend in literature, recommending a new kind of poetry form to the readers, and this action has a great impact on the emergence of Mahua Modernist

Literary Arena. More importantly both collections of modernist poetry are well received by the readers. In other words, local readers have accepted this new kind of poetry form.

The Beautiful V Shape is a collection of 29 poems by local and Taiwan Modernist Poets. Modernist poems from Taiwan include: “Shang Le Suo de Yi Ye” (<上了锁的一夜>, “The Night Being Locked”) by Zhou Mengdie(周梦蝶), “Lang Yan” (<狼烟>, “Smoke Signals”) by Xiang Ming(向明), “Jiu Yue” (<九月>, “September”) by Ye Shan, “Mao Boli Wai” (<毛玻璃外>, “Outside the Frosted Glass”) by Yu Guangzhong, “Huabing Ren” (<滑冰人>, “The Skating Man”) by Qiong Hong (瓊虹), “Hu” (<弧>, “The Arc”) by Yuan Dexing(袁德兴), “Mei de V Xing” (<美的 V 形>, “The Beautiful V Shape”) by Luo Men (罗门), “Dang Ying Hong Mei Qing Shijie” (<当樱红梅青时节>, “In the Season of Red Cherry and Green Plum”) by Ai Wei (艾薇), “Xiao Baima” (<小白马>, “Little White Horse”) by Lin Ying (林鹰), “Dushi Sanqu” (<都市散曲>, “Verse on the City”) by Zhou Ding (周鼎), and others. Poems from local writers include: “Changdi Lu” (<长堤路>, “The Causeway”) by Bai Yao, “Senlin He” (<森林河>, “River in the Forest”) by Ling Leng, “Shenqu” (<神曲>, “The Divine Comedy”) and “Yequ” (<夜曲>, “The Nocturne”) by Zhou Huan(周唤), “Li Hua” (<梨花>, “Flower of the Li Tree”) by Chen Junzai(陈君在), “Chun de Huhuan” (<春的呼唤>, “The Calling Out of the Spring”) Lin Hua (林华), “Xia Ye” (<夏夜>, “The Summer Night”) by Ying Zi(樱子) and “Liuxing” (<流星>, “The Meteor”) by Duan Muling(端木羚).

The local writers mentioned above were actually writers from Singapore and Malaysia. At that time, Mahua and Singapore Chinese Literatures were considered to be one, as Singapore became independent later in 1963.

The nationality of some of the writers in this collection of poems cannot be determined. The researcher has referred to three books regarding the life of Malaya and Singapore Chinese writers. The three books are *Mahua Xiezuoren Jianying* (《马华写作人剪影》, *The Sketch of Malaya Chinese Writers*), *Xin Ma Huawen Zuojia Qunxiang* (《新马华文作家群像》, *Group Images of Singapore and Malaya Chinese Writers*) and *Xin Ma Wentan Renwu Saomiao (1825-1990)* (《新马文坛人物扫描 (1825-1990)》, *Scanning Literary Figures in Singapore and Malaya (1825-1990)*). These three books were actually the biography of the writers and the collections of the titles of the books published by almost all Singapore and Malaya Chinese writers. Writers such Ling Ying, Zhou Chui, Che Yue, Chen Si, Ping Dun, Zhao Jing, You Xiangxiang, Fang Wen, Cai Shenxin, and Kong Lin cannot be found. The investigator believes that these names are pen names of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*. As mentioned earlier, the Mahua Modernist Literature emerged only in 1959. In the middle of 1950s, very few writers were able to write modernist poetry. Publishing this collection could be considered as one of the strategies by *Chao Foon Monthly* to disseminate modernist literature in Malaya and Singapore literary arena. Putting in more names in the collection will create an impression that there is a group of writers in the modernist group. It is not necessary to judge whether this action is right or wrong, however it was a necessary move at that particular time. These few names only appeared once in this collection. After that, they have never published any literary works in *Chao Foon Monthly*, *Students' Weekly* and newspapers' supplements. There are 15 writers of this kind in *Jiao You* (《郊游》, *The Excursion*).

The publication of these two collections of new poetry caused a considerable repercussion. The readers' response to these collections of modernist poetry was encouraging. Since the publication of *Mei de V Xing*, there were quite a number of comments. Most of the critics shared one common point:

From this collection of modernist poetry, one can discover that the writing styles of many modernist poets have begun to change. They have thrown away the form, the rhyming scheme, and turn to a free poetry, without the constraint of rhymes and rhythm (Ling, 1959, p.6-7).

Strictly speaking, *Mei de V Xing* was not a successful collection of poetry. Its importance lies in the historical meaning of it. This can be discussed from two different perspectives. Firstly, it is the first collection of modernist poetry, its meaning in literary history is clear. Secondly, the young poets in the collection have put away the traditional, old form; they are courageous enough in trying to write modernist poetry with free forms.

The Excursion was published three months after the publication of *Mei de V Xing*. It is an evidence of the continuous effort by *Chao Foon Monthly* in the dissemination of modernist literature. This collection has collected 25 modernist poetries, six by Taiwan poets, four from Malaya and Singapore, and 15 others were of unknown nationality. Details of the poems in this collection are tabulated in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Modernist Poems in *The Excursion*

| No. | Author | Poem | Note |
|-----|--------------------|---|------|
| 1 | Duan Muling(端木矜) | “Jiaoyou”(〈郊游〉, “Outing”) | |
| 2 | Zhou Mu(周牧) | “Liuyue”(〈六月〉, “June”) | |
| 3 | Shangguan Yu(上官予) | “Yu”(〈雨〉, “The Rain”) | |
| 4 | Lin Xi(林熙) | “Shuimian”(〈睡眠〉, “Sleep”) | |
| 5 | Ruan Xiang(阮襄) | “Bingqi”(〈冰期〉, “Ice age”) | |
| 6 | Huang Sun(黄隼) | “Songshu”(〈松鼠〉, “Squirrel”) | |
| 7 | Fei E(飞蛾) | “Weifeng”(〈微风〉, “The Breeze”) | |
| 8 | Bai Yao(白垚) | “Benshi”(〈本事〉, “Ability”) | |
| 9 | Xie Pu(谢璞) | “Yu”(〈语〉, “Language”) | |
| 10 | Ya Xian(痲弦) | “Du Lieren Riji”(〈读猎人 日记〉, “Reading The Hunter’s Diary”) | |
| 11 | Bo Xiong(柏雄) | “Jinbi de Xinling zhi Chuang”(〈紧闭的心灵之 窗〉, “The Closed Window of Soul”) | |
| 12 | Zhi Hao(志浩) | “Jimo Hu”(〈寂寞湖〉, “The Lonely Pond”) | |
| 13 | Zi Yan(子燕) | “Kuangcao”(〈狂潮〉, “Frenzy”) | |
| 14 | Hua Lian(花莲) | “Xiao Yequ”(〈小夜曲〉, “Serenade”) | |
| 15 | Wang Xianyang(王宪阳) | “Yin Putaojiu”(〈饮葡萄酒 〉, “Drinking Wine”) | |
| 16 | Ma Jiao(马角) | “Ximalaya Shan”(〈喜马拉 雅山〉, “Himalayas”) | |

Table 2.6 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|---|---|-----------------|
| 17 | Huan Ying(唤欢) | “Qi Qu”(《弃曲》, “The Abandoned Song”) | |
| 18 | Li Ying(李迎) | “Yipie”(《一瞥》, “A Glimpse”) | |
| 19 | Lin Lv(林绿) | “Jingjing de Ye”(《静静的夜》, “Silent Night”) | |
| 20 | Mai Liufang(麦留芳) | “Damenlu zhi Chen”(《大打路之晨》, “Morning of Tambun Road”) | |
| 21 | Yun Tian(云天) | “Wei Ni”(《为你》, “For You”) | |
| 22 | Cheng Lian(承廉) | “Chen Chuan”(《沉船》, “Shipwreck”) | |
| 23 | Yu Guangzhong(余光中) | “Chao Xianshi zhi Ye”(《超现实之夜》, “Surrealistic Night”) | |
| 24 | E.Verharen(比利时) wrote, translated by Tan Zihao(覃子豪) | “Chengshi”(《城市》, “City”) | Translated Poem |
| 25 | BB. Borkar wrote, translated by Lin Bei(林北) | “Xiang Dipingxian”(《向地平线》, “The horizon”) | Translated Poem |

Poetry should keep pace with the progress of the times. Poets should also write poems using new techniques. It is a fact that towards the end of 1950s, the content and techniques of traditional realistic poems could not satisfy young readers and writers. *Chao Foon Monthly* editors realized this fact and published a collection of new poetry entitled *The Excursion*. This collection of new poetry at least portrayed a new picture of poetry writing.

There are similarities and differences between *The Excursion* and *The Beautiful V Shape*. The similarity is that both collections are free verse that are not

restricted by form. The difference is that, according to Bai Yao: “In styles, these two collections are not the same. Poems collected in *The Beautiful V Shape* are mostly written in a clear and attractive style; those collected in *The Excursion* are magnificent in loftiness. It does not only make people feel the beauty of poetry, but also the poet’s feeling towards the depression and struggles of life and time” (Bai, 1959, p.4).

The society is moving forwards, so poetry should be going in tandem with the society. The fact that cannot be denied is that the content and techniques of the traditional group can no longer satisfy the needs of young poets, thus it is appropriate to publish books like *The Excursion*, so that the new poetry is new and challenging to readers and the poets.

In short, *Chao Foon Monthly* has supported the Modernist Chinese Literature, and followed that published Bai Yao’s two controversial articles, in order to create Rebellious Literary Wave, and enhance the criticism of Modernization of Mahua Modernist Literature. At last modernism started to flourish in Mahua Literature in Malaysia.

The publication of the above two collections of new poetry marked the beginning of a new poetic style under the influence of Taiwan Modernism. Literati in Mahua literary history Li Jinzong (李锦宗) believed that the concept and writing of modernist poems were introduced to Mahua literary arena through these two collections of new modernist poems.

2.3 *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Dissemination of Modernist Literature In 1960s

2.3.0 Introduction

In 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to disseminate modernist literature in order to enhance the development of modernist literature in Mahua literary arena. However, the dissemination strategy differs from the 1950s. By the end of 1950s, modernist literature were introduced in Mahua literary arena. It was the initial stage, badly in need of the introduction of modernist literary concept, examples of modernist poems and the techniques of writing modernist poetry. 1960s marked the development stage, and the encouragement of modernist writings by local writers was needed. Of course, the dissemination of modernist literature needed to be strengthened and more western modernist masterpieces needed to be imported for reference. In view of this, this section will be discussed from four perspectives, namely “The New Poetry Discussion Column”, the publication of Bai Yao’s serial essays on Modernism, the translation and introduction of Western modernist literature and lastly the publication of modernist articles by local writers.

This section will give a brief account of Mahua Modernist Literature in 1960s and followed by the discussion about how *Chao Foon Monthly* employed different techniques to increase the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua literary arena.

2.3.1 Mahua Modernist Literature in 1960s: A Brief Account

From 1920 to the end of 1950, excluding a period of three years and eight months from 1941 to 1945 during the Japanese occupation period, Mahua New Literature was controlled by the Realistic Group. The stress on content and political teachings was prominently displayed in its literary pieces. Even until 1960s, Mahua Literature was still under the reign of the Realistic Group. The Realistic Group monopolized most of the literary resources, controlled the publications and production of literature, and to a certain extent, a kind of hegemony was formed. Under the influence of realistic literary ideology, the emergence of Modernist Literature was seen as an act of rebellion, and the modernist poets were regarded as the apostates. However, with the existence of apostates, the controlled condition by the Realistic Group in 1960s had an opportunity to take a turn for the better. Bai Yao was the apostate, who had started off the literature of revolt at the end of 1950s when he published modernist poems and essays on Modernism. He said:

From the end of 1950s in the 20th century, there was a rebellion in Mahua Literature, till 1990s, the image of apostate did not exist anymore, wherever there is poetry, her name will be there. The name of apostate in Mahua Literary Arena, is not the name of a person, it is the name commonly shared by all rebellious literary pieces: Modernist Poetry (Bai, 2007, p.82).

The era of the 1960s of Mahua Modernist literature was long and arduous but its emergence is nevertheless a major event in Mahua literary history. Its emergence has brought about the hope of a diverse literary environment. In the mid-1960s, modernist literature has become an important faction of Mahua Literary scene.

Wen Renping categorized the most critical periods of Mahua Modernist Literature, the period from 1959 to 1964 as the “period of exploration” while the period from 1965 to 1969 as the “period of laying foundation”. The “period of exploration” was the crucial period of exploration and experimentation for Mahua Modernist literature.

On the one hand, this exploration and experimentation was an attempt to create a new sensation through the search for new forms and new techniques. On the other hand, it delved into new substances and contents, an attempt to broaden and deepen the meaning of the literary work. This spirit found verification in the works of the young writers.

From the beginning to the mid-1960s, writers of modernist literature were mainly from the younger generation. Their demand for literature went beyond what the realist writers could provide, thus they turned to Modernism. Many of their works were enriched by the nuances that they have learnt from Western modernist literature and Modernist Literature from Taiwan. Initially they started with imitation and soon transferred their own experiences with localized themes into their works. This created a unique style of their own which was different from Western modernist literature and Taiwan modernist literature.

During that period, some of the major writers of modernist poetry were as follows: Bai Yao, Zhou Huan (周唤), Leng Yanqiu (冷燕秋), Qiao Jing (乔静), Mai Liufang (麦留芳), Wang Renhua (王润华), Di Yu (笛宇), Lu Lang, Li Cang (李苍), Mu Lingnu (牧羚奴), Ai Wen (艾文), Dan Ying (淡莹), Lai Ruihe (赖瑞和), Lai

Jingwen (赖敬文), Jiang Zhenxuan (江振轩), Mei Shuzhen (梅淑贞) and Gui Yan (归雁).

In terms of the performance of the different genres, Mahua modernist poetry performed slightly better than prose. The quality of Mahua modern prose was mediocre, particularly in the early stage. The more important or versatile prose writers were Lu Mang (鲁莽) and You Cao (忧草).

During that time, most of the proses written were just variations or modifications of the May-Fourth Prose. Although written with a touch of localized themes, they were generally lacking in terms of language, techniques, mood or major breakthroughs.

Lu Mang was extraordinary at that time. It was due to the fact that his themes were more varied, his understanding of life was more sober and his emotional expression of nature was more intense. His words were colorful; his dictions were varied and embedded with profound repetitive and modernistic characteristics. His profound themes and characteristic vocabulary separated him from others.

You Cao became prominent and later wrote “Panni” (<叛逆>, *Rebellion*), a piece of prose that broadened the world of prose writing and initiated a trend of sensibility. According to Wen Renping, You Cao was “one of the most important prose writers of the 60s in Mahua literature” (Wen, 1980, p.70). This is an objective assessment. At that time, You Cao had already published a good number of proses. He himself was also a poet with intense emotions, had an impulse to be creative, was imaginative to his readers, and his insightful words often brought new life.

Mahua modernist novels and short stories emerged in the mid 60s. A few of the writers who represented this field were Song Ziheng (宋子衡), Zhang Han (张寒), Wen Xiangying (温祥英), Mai Xiu (麦秀), and Ju Fan (菊凡). Mu Lingnu (Chen Ruixian) published a considerable number of short stories in *Chao Foon Monthly* and in the Literary Supplement of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* when Wan Yanjie (完颜藉) was the editor. He was bold, creative and filled with the modernist spirit of experimentation. His short stories displayed unfamiliar usage of words and new grammatical structures which drew a lot of attention among the readers.

Song Ziheng probably began to write novels in mid-1960s. He liked to employ the commonly used skills of modernist writers such as stream of consciousness and symbolic techniques. He used symbolic techniques and vividly portrayed the psychological aspects of his characters. In arranging his plot, he is skillful in dealing with various conflicts such as the conflict between life and death, between an individual and the society, and between emotions and rationality. "Conflict" was found to be the common theme and trait in his novels (Xie, 1980, p.49-62).

By the end of the 1960s, Mahua Modernist Literature has become a literary group. A group of young modernist writers emerged, and took over the baton left over by the initiators. Wen Renping, Mei Shuzhen, Mai Xiu, Sha He (沙河), Li Cang, Si Cai (思采) were some of the prominent ones. They later became the major modernist writers in the 1970s.

However, there were also underlying concerns which could be seen from two phenomena. Firstly, most initiators had stopped writing, for instance novelist Zhang Han, prose writers You Cao, Lu Mang, poets Qiao Jing and Di Yu. The second

phenomenon was that these writers left Malaya to further their studies in Taiwan. Although they continued to write, they seldom published their articles in local newspaper and magazines. Some of them formed a literary society, and published their own books and magazines. In short, they have become part of the Taiwan modernist literature circle. For instance, Lin Lv (林绿), Chen Huihua (陈慧桦), Ye Mansha (叶曼莎), Wang Runhua, and Dan Ying are some of the typical examples.

2.3.2 New Poetry Discussion Column

In 1960, Singapore separated from Malaya and gained its own sovereignty. It was a historical incident in the Malayan history.

In 1960s, one of the influential incidents in Malaya was the separation of Singapore from Malaya. It was a great political event which influenced the people of both countries. It eventually influenced, perhaps in a minor way, the development of Mahua Literature. Newspaper like *Nanyang Xiang Pau* was circulating in both countries with the same edition before the separation, but after 1965, it had to be published differently to cater for the political needs of these two different countries. However, there was a special arrangement for the literature column. In fact, the literary supplement that appeared in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* of both countries was the same. Besides this major political change, literary development in the 1960s was also a period of great confrontation between the modernist group and the traditional group.

As mentioned earlier, *Chao Foon Monthly* introduced Modernist Literature in 1950s, or to be more specific, at the end of 1950s. It published a big number of modernized articles and poems. In addition, it even published two collections of new

poetry. At that time, the Mahua literary arena was still under the influence or control of the traditional group. So, when *Chao Foon Monthly* published quite a number of modern poems and other literary criticism, it was criticized by the traditional group. In April 1960, Du Sa (杜萨) wrote articles criticizing the poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly*. The article entitled “Xinshi Laza Tan” (<新诗拉杂谈>, “Discussion on New Poetry”) was published in *Nanfang Wan Bao* (《南方晚报》, *The Southern Evening News*). It criticized *Chao Foon Monthly*’s liberal approach. In August 1959, *Chao Foon Monthly* published its stand and response to Du Sa, in an article entitled “Jiaofeng dui Xinshi suo caiqu de Lichang” (<蕉风对新诗所采取的立场>, “The Stance of *Chao Foon Monthly* on the Writing of New Poetry”). At the same time, it opened up “Xinshi Yanjiu Zhuanji” (<新诗研究特辑>, “New Poetry Study Column”) for three continuing issues, which aimed to give concerned readers a platform to air their views.

With regard to Du Sa’s criticism, *Chao Foon Monthly* held this stand: “Our new literature is still in an initial stage, it still lacks great literary pieces worthy of comprehensive discussion. Based on this reason, *Chao Foon Monthly* will certainly assist and nurture the development of new poetry which is still young and weak.” (Editor, 1960, p.25) This shows *Chao Foon Monthly*’s stance was firm in introducing, translating and publishing modernist poetry. Its role was important to the young, and its significance was far-reaching in terms of literary development.

As mentioned earlier, in the issue of August 1960, *Chao Foon Monthly* launched a special column namely “New Poetry Study Column”, which published

several modernist poems and essays on Modernist Literature. Essays included Ma Fang's (马放) "Cong Xin de Benzhi Kan Xinshi" (<从新的本质看新诗>, "Looking at New Poetry from a New Essence"), translated essay of Rikle's "Gei yige Qingnian shiren de Xin" (<给一个青年诗人的信>, "A Letter to a Young Poet"), Lin Yiliang's (林以亮) "Xinshi de Qiantu" (<新诗的前途>, "The Future of the New Poetry"), Lin Yin's (林音) "Qiantouwanzhu Hua Xinshi" (<千头万绪话新诗>, "On New Poetry"), *Chao Foon Monthly* Editor's "The Stance of Chao Foon Monthly on the Writing of New Poetry" and "Gongkai de Fuxin" (<公开的覆信>, "An Openly Reply to a Letter"); Modernist Poems included Ruo Bin's (若宾) "Zuji" (<足迹> (外一章), "Footprint in Two"), and Lin Hui's (林蕙) "Zai Bingcheng Dulun shang" (<在槟城渡轮上>, "On a Ferry to Penang"). These are the essays and Modernist Poetry published in the August issue of 1960. In September 1960, in a new issue, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued the "New Poetry Study Column", and published two essays which were Tong Meng's (童蒙) "Zhanzhu ba! Shiren Men" (<站住吧! 诗人们>, "Stand Still! Poets"), and Lin Lu's (林陆) "Shi yu Ganqing" (<诗与感情>, "Poetry and Emotion"). In the October issue of 1960, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued with the "New Poetry Study Column", and encouraged writers to put forward and exchanged their views. There were 4 essays and an open letter by the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, which included Zhao Kangdi's (赵康棣) "Xinshi de Chulu" (<新诗的出路>, "The Outlet of New Poetry"), Xu Su's (徐速) "Xinpai Shi Pingyi" (<新派诗评议>, "Comment on the So-

called New Poetry”, Tang Chengqing’s(唐承庆) (<新诗旧谈>,”*New Poetry from the Traditional Perspective*”, Qiu Jian’s (丘骞) “Tan Xinshi” (<谈新诗>, “On New Poetry”, and a letter by the editor “An Openly Reply Letter”.

It was a brave attempt to have the “New Poetry Study Column” for a series of three issues. It had created room for writers and readers to discuss the issue deliberately. As we all knew that in 1950’s, the Mahua literary arena was still dominated by the traditional Realistic Group. In the last few years of 1950s, when *Chao Foon Monthly* published numerous modernist poems, it provoked an angry response from the opposite group. Among the critics from the opposite group, Yue Qian (岳骞) vigorously denounced modernist poetry. He said:

This kind of poetry is like a duckweed in the water, has no ground, although these poets claimed that they learned from foreign country, actually it is totally irrelevant. Some of them learned from Modernist artist like Picasso and shamelessly claimed to represent modernist poets and painters. People cannot understand all these so-called Modernist Poetry.Even though we invite poets themselves to read these poems, I am sure that they will not understand what they have actually written. A poem that cannot be understood by readers is meaningless, so what is the point of writing? The Modernist poetry has gone to a dead end, because they have learned very little (Yue, 1960)

Yue Qian’s criticism shows his misunderstanding and prejudice on Modernist Poetry. At that time, new poetry was just trying to be modernized, how could it enter a

dead end? Modernist poets have been reading essays on modernist literature and writing modernist poems which were published in *Chao Foon Monthly*, it was wrong to make the conclusion that the modernist poets have learned very little through their reading.

Wen Renping commented on the “New Poetry Study Column” that he still stood by his point that “the Modernist Poetry Movement as a whole started in 1959”. He noted that *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1959 and 1960 had published a significant number of modernist poems, *Chao Foon Monthly* in the 94th issue, even provided a special column to discuss new poetry, which ran for a series of three issues, in order to encourage readers and writers to voice out their views. As a Terrible Infant, modernist poetry began to receive widespread attention, and because of this, criticism emerged immediately. Bai Yao later wrote an article to defend the new poetry.²³

The main function of “New Poetry Study Column” is to let people from both sides to give comment on new poetry, and more importantly, *Chao Foon Monthly* in the process of this discussion, has clearly revealed its modernist inclination. In the following issues, *Chao Foon Monthly* published more and more modernist poems, and in 1964, it published Bai Yao’s serial articles “Xindaishi Xianhua”(<现代诗闲话>, “Musing on Modernist Poetry”). This is indeed an indisputable piece of evidence.

²³ Wen Renping. Mahua Modernist Literature: 30 Years, in Nanyang Xiang Pau 26 August 1989. This article was later collected in his book entitled *Thoughts of Intellectuals*, pp.156-158.

2.3.3 Initiating the Second Wave of Modernization: Publishing Bai Yao's "Musing on Modernist Poetry"

Chao Foon Monthly initiated the literary revolution towards the end of 1950s by publishing Ling Leng's (凌冷) articles entitled "The Revolution of New Poetry" and "The Road of New Poetry", kicked off the first step in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. In 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* was attacked by writers from the Realistic Group. However *Chao Foon Monthly* was firm on its stand, and continued to disseminate modernist literature. In 1964, *Chao Foon Monthly* published Ling Leng's series of four articles "Xiandaishi Xiantan" (<现代诗闲谈>, "Musing on Modernist Poetry"), which resembled the second wave in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. Bai Yao understood that it was difficult to continue Mahua Modernist Literature without a strong will and stand. It was due to this reason that he wrote these four articles. As can be seen from the title, the term 'Modernist Poetry' was used, instead of 'New Poetry'. The change of literary term has reflected the stand of *Chao Foon Monthly* towards Mahua Modernist Literature.

From March 1964 to July 1964, *Chao Foon Monthly* published Bai Yao's four articles consecutively, and their publication details are listed below.

Table 2.7: List of Bai Yao's Articles

| No. | Title | Publication Date | Pages |
|-----|---|--|----------|
| 1 | "Buneng Bian Fenghuang de Tuoniao: Xiandaishi Xianhua zhiyi" (<不能变凤凰的鸵鸟: 现代诗闲话之一>, "Ostrich Can Never Transform into the Phoenix : Musing on Modernist Poetry 1") | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , March 1964, Issue 137 | pp.12-13 |

Table 2.7 (continued)

| | | | |
|---|--|--|----------|
| 2 | “Dangche de Langbi: Xiandiashi Xianhua zhi er” (<挡车的螂臂：现代诗闲话之二>, “The Shoulder of Mantis That Block the Cars: Musing on Modernist Poetry 2”) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , April 1964, Issue 138 | pp.12-13 |
| 3 | “Cangzhuo buru Chuchou: Xiandaishi Xianhua zhi san” (<藏拙不如出丑:现代诗闲话之三>, “Avoiding Clumsiness is not better than Being Humiliated : Musing on Modernist Poetry 3”) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , June 1964, Issue 140 | pp.12-13 |
| 4 | “Duojiao de Zhuanshi : Xindaishi Xianhua zhi si” (<多角的钻石：现代诗闲话之四>, “The Polygon Diamond: Musing on Modernist Poetry 4”) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , July 1964, Issue 141 | p.13 |

From “The Second Reformation of New Poetry” to “Musing on Modernist Poetry”, it indicated the change in the attitude of *Chao Foon Monthly* in the dissemination of Modernist Literature. Initially, it may arouse discontent by using the term Modernist Poetry, especially from the Realistic Group. Five years later, the phenomenon has changed because *Chao Foon Monthly* has published numerous modernist poems in this period. It is time to speed up the dissemination of Modernist Literature by using the term modernist poetry, and publish Bai Yao’s series of articles.

There are three main points in, “Ostrich Can Never Transform into the Phoenix: Musing on Modernist Poetry 1”. Firstly, Bai Yao had the opinion that the emergence of Modernist Poetry could not be rejected, whether you liked it or not. Secondly, Modernist Poetry was not something new, in the West; its history was even longer than the history of Vernacular Poetry. However, it was strange to local readers and writers because the introduction and translation of Western Modernist literature were not

enough. The second reason was that our appreciation scope was too limited. The article also discussed the reasons why local readers were not familiar with Modernist Literature. In his opinion, the problem laid in the work of translation and introduction. These two points, as seen today, were pertinent.

The third point is a bit radical. He described those who opposed Modernist Poetry as an ostrich. He said:

Firstly, it is unnecessary to oppose modernist poetry, if 'he' has no patience to read T.S. Eliot's article Tradition and Individual Talent, his opposition is powerless. Secondly, conservative writers have made their interest and perception blunt, 'he' refuses to accept something different ...This is a kind of unprogressive thoughts, and it will discriminate against those who had different views (Bai, 1964, p.12).

The first point presented here is rather acute; the second one is sharp like hitting the nail on the head. The message was that those who opposed should reflect whether it was the problem of Modernist Poetry or they themselves being the problem. The adjectives 'blunt' and 'not progressive' were properly used and they had pointed out the actual problem and the reason why the traditional group opposed Modernist Poetry. After analyzing the problem of those who opposed, Bai Yao reached a concluding remark that numerous opposing writers had gradually accepted Modernist poetry. Furthermore, the researcher believes that the modernist poets of today derived from New Poetry.

The editor of 137th issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* supported Bai Yao's view. One of the paragraphs in the editor's note mentioned the phenomenon discussed in Bai Yao's article. Modernist Poetry was looked down upon and attacked in both Singapore and Malaysia. Actually, this phenomenon happened in other places. New things sometimes are difficult to be accepted. Some people even never thought of accepting new things, and rejected totally. This is a sad and horrible phenomenon! Bai Yao's article had discussed this kind of phenomenon and it was expected that more readers would air their views regarding this issue. (Editorial Board, 1964, p.2)

In order to facilitate the dissemination of modernist literature, Bai Yao published another article entitled "The Shoulder of Mantis That Block the Cars: Musing on Modernist Poetry 2" "in the following month. There were two main points in this article. Firstly, Bai Yao mentioned about the three obstacles in the development of Modernist Poetry, namely (i) The poets are stagnant in thinking; (ii) the lack of creative critics and (iii) the political dogma.(Bai, 1964, p.12) These three obstacles covered the poets, the critics and the content of poems. Bai Yao understood that it was difficult to force other people to change their attitude or literary perception, thus, Bai Yao decided to enhance literary concept and write more modernist poetry for publication.

After analyzing the obstacles, Bai Yao put forward his second point which is the kind of attitude modernist poets should have when they come across criticism and other obstacles.

- (i) As a modernist poet with high intellect, we have the responsibility to bring these dwarfs in the temple to the sunshine, so that they will become normal people.

- (ii) As a modernist poem writer, at an appropriate time, should open the birdcage, accept their lazy peck bravely.
- (iii) As a modernist poet, we are not afraid to be regarded as a young girl who does not understand the dwarfs' wealth in a feudal family.
- (iv) As a modernist poet, we are afraid to be regarded as decadent, because modernist poems are not pornographic at all, only playboys with a pair of decadent eyes, and change all pure and innocent thing into pornographic (Bai, 1964, p.13).

Writers and literary works are two important elements in the dissemination of literature. Without literary works, literary dissemination has no texts to be read, and thus it would not be influential, in the end, the process of dissemination cannot be completed. In "Musing on Modern Poetry 2", Bai Yao emphasized people or more specific writers, and in his following article, both writer and literary works were stressed. In the beginning, he gave a definition to the term 'modern', and then pointed out the weakness of local modernist poets, and lastly he listed all important works to be accomplished by modernist poets. He believed that Modernist Poetry is contemporary poetry, and the term "modern" is formed by numerous past, and this is to be portrayed by poets. Furthermore, 'modern' is being enriched by the non-stop passing time; every moment in the future will become 'modern' in a very short time (Bai, 1964, p.13).

He then criticized that local modernist poets were weak in self-cultivation. He did not explain the meaning of self-cultivation. The researcher believed that it was not a problem in moral. It was due to the inadequate understanding of Modernist Literature. Nevertheless, he encouraged modernist poets not to be afraid of criticism;

they should be worried about whether they could produce good articles. Modernist poets should try to write articles which are rich in modern life. Lastly, he had the opinion that the most important task for modernist poets was to write poems, do more study on literary theory and publish whatever have been written (Bai, 1964, Issue 140). Bai Yao's comment was pertinent, and his suggestions were reasonable. At the beginning stage, if the modernist poets did not work hard enough, the movement of Mahua Modernist Literature will not continue, and he earnestly hope that modernist poets should face his own articles, and claim more for themselves.

The last article, "Musing on Modernist Poetry 4" was the continuation of the third article. There were only two main points, namely, (i) modernist poetry and racial style; (ii) modernist poets should have high aspirations. This was the additional requirements in literary creation. Writing poems is not a personal matter, modernist poets should be concerned about ethnic group, and also be aware of the wider world outside the ethnic group. He stressed that when modernist poets write poems, they have a better understanding of ethnic group style and this in a way provokes the formation of poetic style of the time. This will only succeed through the continuous writing of poems and not to be stubborn or restricted in the imitation and recognition of certain kind of ethnic group style (Bai, 1964, p.12).

The four series essays by Bai Yao had not only revealed his modernist inclination, more importantly it had verified the modernist inclination and the revolution of new poetry since Huang Ya became the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*.²⁴ These few essays are important in the development and dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. In addition, its historical significance is also obvious. Wen

²⁴ Zhang Jinzhong. Bai Yao and the First Wave of Modernism in Mahua Literature. *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, 18-11-2008.

Renping has the opinion that Bai Yao has blazed its way forward through all the difficulties for modernist poetry when he wrote the series of essays “Musing on Modern Poetry” (Wen, 1986, p.3). In 1969, when Bai Yao became one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*, it further promoted and disseminated Mahua Modernist Literature.

2.3.4 Translating Western Modernist Literature

One of the important ways of disseminating the modernist literature by *Chao Foon Monthly* was by translating Western Modernist Literature. The editor of issue 101, March 1961 had published quite a number of translations and introduced the Western Modernist Literature. This action angered some of the readers and they demanded that such articles be published infrequently. But *Chao Foon Monthly* did not stop the effort of translating modernist literature. In 1963, *Chao Foon Monthly* declared that from issue 103, it would introduce modern literary and artistic trends as well as outstanding works of Modernist Literature. In the issue 103, May 1961, one of the editor’s notes sounded:

From this issue onwards we will introduce the world Modernist Literature in a more systematic manner. Being an ardent appreciator of literature or a literary worker, it is necessary to know something about Modernist Literature; although introducing Western Modernist Literature is a tedious job, we will continue doing it (Editorial Board, 1961, p.2).

In this message, the importance of knowing Modernist Literature was stressed. Consciously knowing that translating and introducing Modernist Literature are difficult tasks. “Difficulty” in this sense may mean the difficulty to look for writers who were

able to translate or write articles to introduce Modernist Literature. In addition to this, it may also mean that in the process of doing such a task, it would encounter many obstacles from the opposition.

When translating Western Modernist Literature, *Chao Foon Monthly* had a good start. In issue 103, it introduced and published a translated poem of T.S. Eliot, “*The Waste Land*”. T. S. Eliot was a great Modernist Poet and literary critic of the 20th century. *Chao Foon Monthly* had published not only the translated version of “*The Waste Land*”, it also published an article entitled “Jianjie Ai Lue Te he Huangyuan” (<简介艾略特和<荒原>>, “Introducing T.S. Eliot and The Waste Land”) by Ye Fengsheng (叶逢生). The editor’s intention was obvious and could be seen from the Editor’s note:

In this issue, we have introduced the poem “The Waste Land” by the most popular poet in the 20th century. Due to the reason that most of our readers are influenced by classical literature, and had less exposure to Modernist Literature, you may experience difficulty when reading *The Waste Land*, but you must note that this poem has gone through a long period of discussion before being recognized as an outstanding long poem. So, we have to be patient when reading it (Editor, 1961, p.2).

It is unquestionable that “The Waste Land” is a very difficult modernist poem and not easy to understand. The intention *Chao Foon Monthly* chose to publish such a difficult modernist poem was to help its readers acquire a taste for good literature.

In the following issue, *Chao Foon Monthly* introduced novels that were written by Stream of Consciousness writers using a technique which was an important modernist element. To the Mahua literary arena, this was still a new name or term. In other words, local writers and readers were not familiar with this kind of novels. Because of this, *Chao Foon Monthly* invited Zhuang Zhong(庄重) to write an article entitled “Tan Yishiliu Xiaoshuo” (<谈意识流小说>, “On Stream of Consciousness Novels”), to psychologically prepare the readers to accept this new literary concept. The following rationale was given in the Editor’s note: novels, particularly those that use the Stream of Consciousness device was the most popular genre at that time, but oriental readers were not familiar with it, so it is necessary to make an introduction. “The Stream of Consciousness Novel was a very popular literary genre in the last few decades. Not only it was popular, it reflected the trend of literary development, and could be regarded as a big wave in contemporary literature. But, it was regretted that oriental readers were not familiar with it” (Editor, 1961, p.2)

Undoubtedly, most of the local writers have never read novels of this kind before, and because of this, the stream of consciousness technique provided local writers a new way of expression. The most popular novel written in Stream of Consciousness technique was *To the Lighthouse*, by Virginia Woolf, and other novels by Henry James and James Joyce. The novel that had the greatest influence or enlightenment was the novels by Virginia Woolf. As for Henry James, his use of words was too difficult for local writers to imitate, but the experiment in language did by James Joyce have influence on local novelists. This kind of influence became more obvious during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time, the two most popular novelists were Wei Yun (韦晕) and Fang Beifang (方北方). Both of them were

representatives of the Realistic Group. The novels written lacked profundity, and the so-called realistic approach was just trying their very best to imitate reality but the technique used was not impressive, and that's why it failed to touch readers of that time, especially the younger readers. *Chao Foon Monthly's* effort in introducing the stream of consciousness opened up opportunities for local novelists to develop a new way of writing short stories and novels.

In the "Editor's Note" of *Chao Foon Monthly* (issue April 1963), the editor made a summary of the views of the opposing team and at the same time clarified the stand of *Chao Foon Monthly* on the issue of Modernist Literature: "Recently, we have received a large number of letters from the readers, suggesting that we should minimize the number of pages in introducing Western Modernist Literature, to summarize, there are two reasons: Firstly, we are not familiar in reading translated literature pieces; secondly, the techniques used in Modernist Literature are different from local literary pieces.....We will make an adjustment, will only publish Modernist Literary pieces with less pages." *Chao Foon Monthly's* stand was clear. They respected the readers' suggestions and their stand in promoting or disseminating Modernist Literature. They were firm in their opinion and were still publishing suitable and relevant literary articles. At that time, *Chao Foon Monthly's* stand was to produce avant-garde literature and it brought about the conflict between the realistic and the modernist group. In other words, in translating and introducing western Modernist Literature, its stand was positive, calm, cautious, and with the perspectives of the future (Huang, 2004, p.42-43).

From 1960 to July 1969, there were 320 translated works published in *Chao Foon Monthly*. They are categorized according to the genres in the following Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Translated Articles Published from 1960 to July 1969

| Genre | Number | Accumulative Number |
|------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Criticism | 116 | 116 |
| Translated Poems | 52 | 168 |
| Short Stories | 116 | 284 |
| Prose | 25 | 309 |
| Letters | 6 | 315 |
| Biography | 4 | 319 |
| Fairy Tales | 1 | 320 |

It was in 1959 that Modernist Literature was introduced to Mahua literature. It was still at the initial stage at the beginning of 1960, and thus required theoretical guidance and various referential works. From the table 2.8, it can be seen that the two most important genres highlighted by *Chao Foon Monthly* are literary criticism and modern novels, not modernist poetry. Both genres totaled 116 pieces each. Literary criticism on various genres of literature provided beneficial guidelines for the readers.

The published modern novels did play a key role as learning models for Mahua writers. The standard of Mahua novels and short stories were of low quality and unable to meet the requirements of young readers. The motive for the publication of numerous pieces of modernist fiction is obvious. On the other hand, the much criticized modern poetry had only 52, very much less than literary criticism and novels. The number of other genres is insignificant, with 25 pieces of prose, six pieces of letter, four pieces of biography and a piece of fairy tale.

By translating many Western Modernist works, the following Anglo-American writers and their works were introduced to the local readers and writers. Somerset Maugham, T.S. Eliot, Yeats, Faulkner, Thomas Man, Lawrence, Henry James, Ezra Pound, Freud, Virginia Woolf and Spender were some of the famous writers introduced.

It is true that the translated works introduced by *Chao Foon Monthly* in the 60s were somewhat fragmentary and inconsistent; however, they were so timely that they were like rain on a parched land. Among the many literary masters, the influence of T. S Eliot and Virginia Woolf were most prominent, sustained and to be emulated.

Eliot advocated impersonality. This was in response to the over emphasis on personal and emotional aspects of the romantic poems. Eliot emphasized that poetry should be impersonal emotionally and that art was a process of “impersonality”. This influential view could be verified in his poem “The Waste Land”.

Among the Mahua poets of the 1960s, few were capable of handling their emotions and achieved a state of impersonality. It took T.S Eliot's poetic advocacy to widen young Mahua poets' literary horizon. For the first time, they realized that poetry could have so much ambiguity and could be written with so much profundity. Such works made modernist poetry written by Zhong Qi, as well as lined prose and slogan-styled poems written by Du Hong looked utterly naive and different. With their inner beauty, the mood of modernist poems could be very intimate and yet very distanced.

As for the translation of novels, Virginia Wolf, who used the stream of consciousness technique in her novels, exerted immense influence on Mahua novelists.

Her unique way of expression in a way helped Mahua novelists to break away from the shallow and superficial realists such as Wei Yun and Fang Beifang.

They learnt how to use language to capture the inherent ideological activities as well as the flow of consciousness, vividly and concretely documenting the real mental activities and ideas in flux. Stream of Consciousness speeds up changes, moved over spaces and reverses time, as if all happened in a state of disorder, yet on closer examination, there existed an inherent emotional coherence. This novel style of writing presented the real side of life or reality, which the style of the realists will have difficulty to achieve.

Two other influential novelists introduced into the Mahua literary arena were Henry James and James Joyce. The refined and exquisite writing style of Henry James was inimitable. However, James Joyce's exploration, experimentation and innovation in the use of words and language brought greater insight for Mahua novelists. Novelists who emerged in the 1970s were directly or indirectly influenced by Henry James and James Joyce. They are Zhang Han, Song Ziheng, Ju Fan, Mai Xiu, Wen Xiangying, and Xiao Hei (小黑).²⁵

From the perspective of dissemination, the publication of a large number of modernist works would have considerable influence over the readers. *Chao Foon Monthly*, being a literary journal, is in essence the prime mover of Mahua modernist literature which in no way should be overlooked. The publication of a large number of Western modernist literatures laid the foundation of Mahua modernist literature. After

²⁵ In Taiwan Literary Arena, novelists such as Lin Huaimin(林怀明), Wang Wenxing (王文兴), Wang Jingxi (王敬希), Bai Xianyong (白先勇), Nie Hualing (聂华玲), and Yu Lihua (蔡莉华), were influenced by Henry James and James Joyce in one way or another.

1965, besides the publication of modern Western literature, *Chao Foon Monthly* published nearly 70 modernist poems and most of these poems were written by local modernist poet. This is result of the influence of dissemination.

At the later part of the 1960s, Zhou Huan, Sha He, Piao Beiling (飘贝零), Xie Yongjiu (谢永就), Hei Xinzang (黑心藏), Li Muxiang (李木香) and others published modernist poems that were linguistically unique. In other words, *Chao Foon Monthly's* initiatives in introducing and disseminating Western modernist literature had, to a certain extent, elevated Mahua modernist literature to a new height of development.

From the point of creativity, after the reception and transference of modernist linguistic and creative techniques, Mahua modernist poets of the 1960s, have succeeded in finding a direction and a breakthrough for Mahua poetry. Ai Wen and Sha He were two of the poets of the 1960s whose prominence cannot be ignored.

Their main contribution lies in the aesthetical aspects of poetic language. They learnt how to apply techniques in search of inner thoughts, and to use a lot of metaphoric, symbolical, and imagery expressions to challenge the realists' style of writing. Ai Wen's "Faith", "Dilemma", "Left Hand", "White Disaster", "Voice", "Desert Symbols" and Sha He's "Morgue", "Street Scene and Death", "Face", "Gear", "Feelings" used symbolic language which was a common feature of symbolic poetry. They were in fact displaying their inner thoughts and reflecting social issues through their newly acquired aesthetical thinking.

2.3.5 Publishing Numerous Modernist Poems and Literary Criticism from Taiwan and Hong Kong

The third strategy *Chao Foon Monthly* undertook to disseminate Modernist literature was through publishing articles by Taiwan and Hong Kong writers. Through this effort, the novels by Wang Jingxi, Zhu Xiling, Nie Hualing, Guo Yidong (郭衣洞) were seen, the modernist poems by Tan Zihao (覃子豪), Yu Guangzhong (余光中), Xia Jing (夏菁), Ya Xian (痲弦), Ye Weilian (叶维廉), Luo Men (罗门), Zhou Mengdie (周梦蝶), Zheng Chouyu (郑愁予) and others appeared in *Chao Foon Monthly*, prose by Chen Zhifan (陈芝藩), Qi Jun (琦君), Zhang Xiuya (张秀亚), Ye Shan (叶珊) also appeared in *Chao Foon Monthly*. All these articles enriched the reading experience of local writers, and also had provided examples for imitation, which had much influence on young writers.

From 1960 to 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* had published 120 issues, and 269 poets had published a total number of 609 poems, about five poems in every issue. Mahua Modernist Literature was started in March 1959. In 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* published modernist poems from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which formed an example for reference. From the beginning of 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* also published a large number of articles by local writers, and out of 609 articles, many were articles by Malaysian writers. This showed that modernist poems, prose and novels were well received by younger writers. The effort put forward in the dissemination could be seen from the increasing number of modernist poets.

Among the poets, Taiwan poet Ya Xian, and local poet Zhou Huan, had contributed the biggest number of articles. Each of them produced 17 articles followed by Lin Hui's 13 poems, Zhou Mengdie's 12 poems and Yang Cheng's (羊城) 11 poems.

When western modernist poets were introduced, poems written by Taiwan Modernist poets such as Tan Zihao, Yu Guangzhong, Ya Xian, Luo Fu, Ye Weilian, Luo Men, Zheng Chouyu, and Zhou Mengdie also appeared in *Chao Foon Monthly*. The writing styles of these poets were different and each had their own uniqueness. The Pure Experience of Ye Weilian, French Symbolism of Tan Zihao, the Third Nature by Luo Men, Neoclassicism of Yu Guangzhong, Surrealism by Luo Fu, and the Zen poem by Zhou Mengdie, each had their followers. For instance, the local poets Wen Ruian and He Qiliang, were influenced by Yu Guangzhong's Neoclassicism or Chineseness. The elements or taste of Zen in poems by Piao Beiling, Li Muxiang and Lui Sichi made us think of Zhou Mengdie. The experimental spirit in the poetic language of Li Youcheng shows that he has been inspired by the essence of modernism, regardless of the experiment on meta-language or indirect ways of expression. This shows that his poems has been detached from the forms of May Four new Poetry, and also the fixed form and the ossified language in realistic poems. Wen Renping commented on Li Youcheng's poems that: "Among the Mahua Modernist Poetry in 1960s, it seems that only Li Youcheng's poems possesses the spirit of innovative, carries forward the revolutionary cause pioneered by predecessors, and forgoes ahead into the future."²⁶

²⁶For details, please refer Wen Renping. (2003). "Dang Mahua Wenxue yushang Mosheng Shixue" (<当马华文学遇上陌生诗学>, "When Mahua Literature Encounters Unfamiliar Literary Trend"), in *Sin Chew Daily*, 6April 2003.

The publication of such a big number of Modernist Literature has made a surge of Modernist Literature trend. In 1960s, another literary magazine *Xuesheng Zhoubao* (《学生周报》, *The Students' Weekly*) in its Poetry Column published quite a number of modernist poetries. The table below shows the number of published modernist poems, and from reading such information, it is clear that *The Students' Weekly* has cooperated with *Chao Foon Monthly* to disseminate Modernist Literature.

Table 2.9: Number of Modernist Poetry Published in Poetry Column of the Students' Weekly

| No. | Year | No. of Published Modernist Poems | Note |
|-------|------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | 1966 | 40 | |
| 2 | 1967 | 100 | |
| 3 | 1968 | 97 | |
| Total | | 237 | Average 79 poems every year. |

It was not difficult to discover that, *Chao Foon Monthly* published a big number of modernist poetry. This showed *Chao Foon Monthly's* continuous effort in publishing modernist poems. More and more modernist poems were published, the number of published page increased, and the number of modernist writers also increased as compared to the last decade. In other words, the acceptance of modernist literature was obvious, and this was undoubtedly a breakthrough and a success.

2.3.6 Promoting Malaysianised Articles from 1967 Onwards

Mahua Modernist writers have learned a lot from translated articles from the West, and Modernist Literature from Taiwan and Hong Kong. They learned different ways of presentation, and they had a deeper understanding of modernist literature.

Because of this, *Chao Foon Monthly* published a lot of articles written by local writers in order to show the strength of modernist group.

Secondly, articles of young writers appeared in big number in *Chao Foon Monthly*. This formed a special local phenomenon. The writers include Yuan Shangcao(原上草), Hui Shi(慧适), Ma Han(马汉), Bing Gu(冰谷), Yao Tuo(姚拓), Shan Bazai(山芭仔), Nian Hong(年红), Lin Fang(林方), Liang Zhiqing(梁志庆), Leng Yanqiu(冷燕秋), Ye Fengsheng(叶逢生), Gao Xiu(高秀), Chen Huihua(陈慧桦), Lv Sui(绿穗), Bei Lanling(北蓝羚), Lu Mang(鲁莽), and Liang Yuan(梁园). In 1960s, these writers were still young, the quality of their works were still not up to the level of Modernist Literature aesthetics. Their articles showed the experiential spirit. They tried new ways of writing, expressing their emotions towards Nanyang life and people, discarding the stiff way of writing of the Realistic Group. Thus their articles displayed a new look, an image different from that of Taiwan and Hong Kong writers. On the whole, the literary taste of ordinary readers had been uplifted and at the same time the vision of writers has been broadened.²⁷

The editor's note stated that, "Readers, Writers, Editors of this issue stated clearly the localizing objectives of *Chao Foon Monthly*. In this issue, we published a big number of articles and translated works of local writers, to show the strength of Mahua literary arena; henceforth we will continue to strive hard to achieve this objective" (The Editor, 1967, p.2). Articles by local writers in this issue include Huang Ya's novel "Meitan de Emeng" (《煤炭的噩梦》, "The Nightmare of Coal"), You Cao's

²⁷Wen Renping commented literary texts of Mahua writers of that time, believed that "Zhang Li (张力), Jin Sha(金沙) were intense in experiencing, Shan Bazai (山芭仔), Lin Fang (林方), Leng Yanqiu (冷燕秋), Chen Huihua (陈慧桦) seemed more modernized inclined if compared with writers of the same period." For detail, please refer Wen (2003).

prose “Si Yue de Ge” (<四月的歌>, “The Song of April”), Dan Ying’s poem “Kuli yu Hanyi Zhishang” (<鹤立于寒意之上>, “Standing Straight in a Chill in the Air”), Wang Runhua’s article introducing western literature “Renshi Kamiu he Hei Si Bing” (<认识卡繆和黑死病>, “Knowing Albert Camus and his Plague”), and also articles by Mei Jing(梅井), “Qian Gechuan” (<钱歌川>) and others. In the same issue, *Chao Foon Monthly* published a special column of Collection of Mahua New Poetry and in this column, Lin Yingqiang’s (林英强) eight poems were published. This is a big step in realizing the objective of localization of the magazine.

A year later, *Chao Foon Monthly* had brought another reform. From issue 186, April 1968, *Chao Foon Monthly* published articles by local writers only. Editor of this issue announced that:

On the same day of last year, *Chao Foon Monthly* decided to head for Malaysianised objective. Today this year, we have totally achieved this Malaysianised objective. From this issue onwards, *Chao Foon Monthly* will only publish local articles and translated works by local authors, which will be the sheer hard works of local authors. In addition, the editorial board will invite experts to write the history of Mahua Literature and the history of Malay Literature, hoping that *Chao Foon Monthly* will become a representative local literary magazine (The Editor, 1968).

Throughout this year, *Chao Foon Monthly* has published 52 poems altogether, of which 44 poems are written by Mahua writers and eight poems are from Taiwan and

Hong Kong like Zhou Ding, Ye Shan, Yu Guangzhong, Xin Yu, Dai Tian. It is an obvious breakthrough. From issue May 1968 to issue July 1969, articles from Taiwan and Hong Kong were not published at all. In other words, *Chao Foon Monthly* published only articles by local writers.

Among these poets, some continued to write and became important Mahua Modernist poets, for instance Dan Ying, Wang Runhua, Wen Renping, Diyu, Zhou Huan, Mu Lingnu, Li Cang, Ai Wen, Wen Ruian, Zi Yisi, Sha He, Zuo Shouren, Jiang Zhenxuan, Lai Ruihe, Lai Jingwen and Lv Lang. Of course some of them stopped writing in 1980s. Poets from East Malaysia, Li Muxiang, Xie Yongjium Xie Yongcheng, and those from Peninsula Malaya like Qiao Jing, Zhou Huan, Hei Xinzang, Yang Jiguang, Lai Jingwen, Lan Qiyuan, and Gui Piaoling are some typical examples.

2.3.7 Conclusion

The relationship between *Chao Foon Monthly* and Mahua Modernist Literature is very close. Without *Chao Foon Monthly*'s effort in promoting and disseminating, the continuous development of Mahua Modernist Literature seems impossible. Although the road before was tough, however, *Chao Foon Monthly* has taken up several steps and strategies, supplying relevant information and classical text references, encouraging local writers to produce more articles, publishing literary criticism and translation, as its efforts aiming at protecting Mahua Modernist Literature from being attacked. As a result, Mahua Modernist Literature has developed well. In an interview (Appendix 1), Wen Renping summarises the strategies employed by *Chao Foon Monthly* in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature in 1960s: "The editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* seemed to nurture local young writers in one hand, and introduce literary texts

of Taiwan writers on the other hand. This can be regarded as the reference for local writers and it also enhanced the literary taste of local readers.”

In 1969, or more exactly in August 1969, with the joining of Singapore writers, Chen Ruixian to *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial boards, *Chao Foon Monthly* experienced another transformation, and it disseminated Mahua Modernist Literature in a more comprehensive way. The development of Mahua Modernist Literature during 1970s will be elaborated in detail in the next section.

2.4 *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Dissemination of Modernist Literature in the 1970s

2.4.0 Introduction

Mahua Modernist Literature entered an important era in the 1970s. The continuous and strategic effort of *Chao Foon Monthly* in promoting and disseminating modernist literature in the 1950s and 1960s were the major contributing factors. In the 1970s, starting from August 1969, Singapore modernist writer Chen Ruixian or better known as Mu Lingnu, joined *Chao Foon Monthly*'s editorial board and became an important editorial board member. He was responsible for the second transformation of the literary monthly. He contributed to the emergence of a more dynamic editorial board that ultimately advanced a systematic and strategic process in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature.

From August 1969 to December 1979, it was a period that witnessed the robust development of Mahua Modernist Literature. During this period, a few literary

societies were formed. Mahua Modernists acted independently and defiantly against the Realists. The formation of literary societies gave strength to Mahua Modernist Literature. Three important anthologies of modernist poems were published, namely *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Chinese Poets*, edited by Wen Renping, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, edited by Zhangshulin, and *Collection of Sirius Poetical Society*, by Shen Chuanxin. These three collections of modernist poems laid the foundation of Mahua Modernist Poetry in Malaysia. More young modernist poets joined the fray to produce and publish more modernist poems. Mahua Modernist Literature was at the height of a literary boom, unsurpassed even by the achievement in the 60s. It was precisely due to these few phenomena that 1970s was recognized as an important era in the history of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Mahua Modernist Literature was 12 years old in 1970. Generally, its works were still immature, its language was convoluted. However, by the end of 1970s, Mahua Modernist Literature has attained an impressive achievement. During this decade, *Chao Foon Monthly*, still retained its traditional strategies of literary dissemination, and at the same time, implemented some creative measures to enhance the result of dissemination. In short, it continued its role as the guardian and protector of Mahua Modernist Literature.

This section will discuss the different measures taken by *Chao Foon Monthly* to disseminate modernist literature in the 1970s and its influence on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature.

2.4.1 Mahua Modernist Literature in 1970s: An Overview

Mahua Modernist Literature in the 1970s, in the words of Wen Renping, was engulfed in a period of sculpting (1970-1974), and a Period of Doubtfulness (1975-1979). The researcher shall reclassify them as the phase of moulding and booming. The 1970s saw a group of pioneer writers throwing in their towels and the emergence of a new band of young writers. This is a reflection of the passage of time, ubiquitous and inescapable.

It marked a watershed in Mahua Modernist literary history. Writers of the 60s such as Ai Wen, the poet; Song Ziheng, Wen Xiangying and Ju Fan, the novelists; are more mature and sophisticated in their literary techniques, continued their quest for literary clarity.

A few controversies or phenomena of Mahua Modernist literature in the 1970s needed an elaboration and disentanglement. To facilitate discussion, the Mahua Modernist literary arena in the 70s shall be divided into two stages. The literary activities of the first five years from 1970 to 1974 were different from the past. On the other hand, the following issue will be analysed more profoundly.

2.4.1.1 The Emergence of Two Poetical Societies

According to Ye Xiao, the 1970s was the age of the Sirius in the development of Mahua Modernist poetry. Huang Jinshu had the same opinion that the most prominent literary discourse of the whole of the 70s was the collective discourse of Wen Renping and his 'literary brothers' from the Sirius Poetical Society. The views of

these two commentators were basically true; however, they both had left out the contributions of The Constellation Poetical Society of Sarawak, East Malaysia in disseminating modernist literature. The Constellation Poetical Society was formed in 1970, three years earlier than the Sirius Poetical Society which was set up later in 1973.

2.4.1.2 Emphasis on the Publication of Literary Works

The emphasis on the publication of collective or individual collections of literary works was completely different from the independent pieces that were published in literary supplements of magazines and newspapers in the 1960s. In other words, the writers began to feel concern about the significance of their literary legacy. Perhaps they have been awakened by a sense of the historical importance of literature (Wen, 1980, p.7).

Li Jinzhong had sorted out the literary publications of these five years: Collections of Poetry: *Niao ji Qita* (《鸟及其他》, *Birds and Others*) by Li Youcheng, *Mei Shiji* (《梅诗集》, *Poetry of Plums*) by Mei Shuzhen, *Ai Wen Shi* (《艾文诗》, *A Collection of Poems*) by Ai Wen, *Bei Xi Ju* (《悲喜剧》, *Dramas of Agony and Joy*) by Xie Yongjiu, *Jiangjun Ling* (《将军令》, *The General's Command*) by Wen Ruian, *Zi Yi Si Shixuan* (《紫一思诗选》, *A Collection of Poems*) by Zi Yisi, *Kebei* (《刻背》, *Engraving on the Back*) by He Qiliang, *Liuying Fenfei* (《流萤纷飞》, *The Fireflies*) by He Naijian, *Liufang shi Yizhong Shang* (《流放是一种伤》, *Grief in Exile*) by Wen Renping, *Yi Shui Xiaoxiao* (《易水萧萧》, *The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River*) by Zhang Shulin, and others.

The publication of modernist poems was overall impressive. However, the publication of modern prose was rather unsatisfactory. The number of published prose collection was not as good as the publication of modernist poems. The prose collections published include *Feng Xiang* (《风向》, *The Direction of the Wind*) by Si Cai, *Nanian de Caose* (《那年的草色》, *The Grass of Yesteryear*) by He Naijian, *Huanghun Yu* (《黄昏雨》, *The Rain at Dusk*) by Mai Xiu, *Zhezhong Yanshen* (《这种眼神》, *The Glance*) by He Qiliang, and *Huang Pifu de Yueliang* (《黄皮肤的月亮》, *The Moon with Yellow Skin*) by Wen Renping.

Publication of literary criticism includes *Renjian Yanhuo* (《人间烟火》, *Human Matters*) by Wen Renping, *Wenxue Chuangzuo yu Shensi* (《文学创作与神思》, *Literature Creation and Inspiration*) by Chen Huihua and *Wenxue Pinglunji* (《文学评论集》, *A Collection of Literary Criticism*) by Lin Lv and five books by Wang Runhua which includes *Bijiao Wenxue Lunji* (《比较文学论集》, *Collection of Comparative Literature Theory*), *Yu Dafu zai Xing Jia Po yu Malaixiya* (《郁达夫在新加坡与马来西亚》, *Yu Dafu in Singapore and Malaysia*), *Zhongri Renshi Suojian Yu Dafu zai Sumendala Liuwang de Shenghuo* (《中日人士所见郁达夫在苏门答腊的流亡生活》, *The Exile Life of Yu Dafu in Sumatra as Seen by the Chinese and The Japanese*) and *Zhong Xi Wenxue Guanxi Yanjiu* (《中西文学关系研究》, *Study of The Relationship between Chinese and Western Literature*).

Publication of novels and short stories includes *Zaijian, Banmaxian* (《再见·斑马线》, *Goodbye Zebra Lines*) and *Jue Liang* (《绝粮》, *Running Out of Food*) by Mai Xiu, *Song Ziheng Duanpian* (《宋子衡短篇》, *Short Stories of Song Ziheng*) by

Song Ziheng, *Wen Xiangying Duanpian* (《温祥英短篇》), *Short Stories of Wen Xiangying*) by Wen Xiang Ying, *Da Lengmen* (《大冷门》), *Big Surprise*) by Zhang Han, *Pan Youlai Xiaoshuo Ji* (《潘友来小说集》), *Novels of Pan Youlai*) by Pan Youlai, and *Muse Zhong* (《暮色中》), *When Dusk Fell*) by Ju Fan (Li, 1994, p.39-42).

2.4.1.3 Literary Societies' Collaboration and Cooperation

The collaboration and cooperation between literary societies were the second key phenomenon in the literary arena of the 1970s. Lone rangers who used to roam in the literary wilderness had come together to work and focus on the issues they were in accord, and to exemplify the spirit of unity. The Rhinoceros Publishers, the Palm Publishers and the Sirius Poetical Society of West Malaysia as well as the Constellation Poetical Society of East Malaysia were formed on basis of their members' volunteer and spontaneous desires. This was indeed an extraordinary phenomenon of the early 70s. The Sirius Poetical Society was formed in 1973 which swiftly expanded into ten branches.

The modernist writers of the early 70s came mostly from these four literary associations. Modernist lone rangers were few. These young writers did not publish any of their literary works in the 60s. They became the focus of literary arena only in the 1970s. A few of them were noticeably brilliant and gifted.

2.4.1.4 The Publication of Lofty and Idealistic Modernist Text

These publishers and poetical societies stressed on the publication of individual or combined collections of literary works. The publication of individual collections of

works has already been elaborated earlier. The more prominent publications of this period were the publication of a few lofty and idealistic modernist texts.²⁸ All these are collections of modernist poetry, include *Shalayue Xiandai Shixuan* (《砂拉越现代诗选》, *A Collection of Sarawak Modernist Poems*), edited by Li Muxiang(李木香) and published in 1972, *A Collection of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, edited by Wen Renping and published in 1974, *Jindai Mahua Shige Xuanji* (《近代马华诗歌选集》, *Recent Collection of Poems*), edited by Li Shihuang(李拾荒), and published in 1977, *Da Ma Xinrui Shixuan* (《大马新锐诗选》, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*), edited by Zhang Shulin, and published in 1978, and *Tianlangxing Shixuan* (《天狼星诗选》, *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*), edited by Shen Chuanxin, and published in 1979.

In 1973, Malaysia had a stock market crash and a devastated and distressed national economy. It truly took extraordinary courage to publish unmarketable poetry collections in the economic downturn of the 1970s. The actions of these publishers and poetical societies were indeed commendable.

Wen Renping was also responsible for the publication of a special edition on Malaysian modernist poems in *Pure Literature*; a bimonthly literary magazine was published in Hong Kong. A number of modernist poems and critical essays were published in the October and December issues of the bimonthly. These works were later published as *Mahua Wenxue* (《马华文学》, *Mahua Literature*) by Hong Kong Literary Book House in 1974.

²⁸Zhang Jinzhong (张锦忠). (2008) Bai Yao Yu Mahua Wenxue de Xiandai zhuyi Fengchao 白堊与马华文学的现代主义风潮 (Bai Yao and Mahua Modernism), *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, 8 November, 2008.

2.4.1.5 Recognition of Mahua Writers in the Abroad for Their Exemplary Performance

Mahua writers are widely recognized for their exemplary performance abroad since 1970. *Hope*, a novel by Zhang Yiping won the prestigious Cultural Prize for Writers Abroad. Beside Zhang Han, the Mahua novelist was the second writer to receive such a prize.

Mahua writers, modernist writers in particular, published numerous literary works in the literary supplements of the two major newspapers in Taiwan. From 1970 to 1972, Wen Renping published the following pieces of prose in “Overseas Column” of Taiwan’s *China Times*: “Jianmo shi bu Keneng de” (<缄默是不可能的>, “Silence is Impossible”), “Cong Fouding Chufa” (<从否定出发>, “To Begin from the Negative”), “Gudu de Yun” (<孤独的云>, “The Lonely Cloud”) and “Jiafeng zhong de Xiaocao” (<夹缝中的小草>, “The Weed in a Crack”). These pieces of prose revealed indirectly or implicitly that he was living in a cultural rift; they also revealed his quest for a sense of worth and meaning in the face of adversity. “Silence is Impossible” was the very first piece to be published in Taiwan’s *China Times* in which he wrote about himself and his Form Five students. The other Mahua writers who published articles in Taiwan newspaper were Chen Huihua, Wang Runhua and Dan Ying.

In addition to Taiwan, Mahua writers also published articles in Hong Kong. In 1970, *Dangdai Wenyi* (《当代文艺》, *Contemporary Literature*), a monthly literary magazine edited by Xu Shu in Hong Kong, published many Mahua literary works. Liang Yuan, Ya Bo, Jiang Zhenxuan, Wen Ruian and Lang Gefei were some of the writers whose works were published in this magazine.

The performance of Mahua modernist writers discussed above proves the effort put by *Chao Foon Monthly* in the 1960s has resulted fruitful outcome. It had nurtured local modernist writers, and these writers became the major writers in the 1970s and have enriched the Mahua literary arena with good literary pieces of different genres.

2.4.2 *Chao Foon Monthly* Continues Publishing Modernist Translated Articles in Large Quantity

Translated articles regarding western modernist literature is one of the major strategies employed by *Chao Foon Monthly* to disseminate modernist literature in Mahua literary arena. In 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* translated a large number of Western Modernist Literary classics, and introduced a few major modernist writers from the West such as T.S. Eliot, Virginia Wolf, and James Joyce. Their works had influenced Mahua writers especially Mahua Modernist short story writers. After reading the modernist articles by these writers, Mahua young writers imitated them and wrote articles or more precisely short stories by using different techniques and styles. In other words, the efforts in translating and introducing Western Modernist Literature in 1960s by *Chao Foon Monthly* have laid an important foundation for Mahua Modernist Literature. Local writers were exposed to literary genres that were different from the traditional Realistic writers.

In August 1969, Chen Ruixian joined *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board and kicked off the second transformation of *Chao Foon Monthly*, where the editorial policy shifted towards Modernism. Chen Ruixian took Modernist Literature as his major during his undergraduate studies. Furthermore, he was a talented and creative writer, skillful in writing modernist poems and modernist fictions. More importantly, he planned an entirely different approach in translating and introducing modernist literature, and these measures helped to enhance Mahua writers' world view. In short, there are three major changes after Chen Ruixian joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board, namely: (i) The magazine had published a great number of Western Modernist Literature articles, demonstrated the importance of translation; (ii) it had edited literary special issues, with a special theme in each issue; (iii) it continued to publish *Chao Foon Monthly* Literary Series. This part of this chapter will discuss the general scenario of translation works undertaken and the introduction of western modernist literature.

It was an appropriate step to edit or publish special issues. In 1967, when the former *Chao Foon Monthly* editor Huang Ya left *Chao Foon Monthly*, the editorial work was taken over by Chen Ruixian, Li Cang, Yao Tuo and Bai Yao, and the editorial style shifted to modernism. At that time, a modernist poet name Yang Jiguang (杨际光), who had been promoting modernist literature in Hong Kong, worked in Xin Ming Daily, and his office was near *Chao Foon Monthly* Publisher. He visited *Chao Foon Monthly* now and then. When *Chao Foon Monthly* decided to make a shift to modernism, Bai Yao, the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* at that time, sought advice from Yang Jiguang. His viewpoint and suggestions were similar to Chen Ruixian's idea, both of them proposed to publish literary special issues.

Before that, translated articles were chosen from Taiwan, very few were translated by local writers. When Chen Ruixian held the post as the editor, most translation work was taken over by local writers. They selected and translated western literary classics. From August 1969 to December 1974 (a period when Chen Ruixian was the editor), *Chao Foon Monthly* invited 80 Singapore and Malaysia writers to undertake the translation work of Modernist literature from the West and Malay Modernist Literature from Indonesia and Malaysia. The magnitude of the translation work was, for the first time, extremely large. These translators, some only translated one article, and some translated many articles. More specifically, there were seven writers who had translated ten pieces and above, and Chen Ruixian himself had translated 62 pieces by using different pen names. The number is astonishing, and he became the champion of the translated works at that time. The table below shows the number of translations done by local writers.

Table 2.10: Top Seven Translators in the 1970s

| No. | Name of Translators | Number of Translated Articles | Nationality |
|-----|---|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Liang Mingguang (Wan Yanji, Xiu, Li Sao) | 10 | Singapore |
| 2 | Zhen Zhen (Shi Miutuo) | 12 | Singapore |
| 3 | Mai Lang | 13 | Malaysia |
| 4 | He Xiaofei(Xiao Fei, Xiao He)(including co translation) | 14 | Singapore |
| 5 | Lai Ruihe | 15 | Malaysia |
| 6 | Mei Shuzhen (including co-translating) | 19 | Malaysia |
| 7 | Chen Ruixian(Mu Lingnu, Su Binlang, Luo De, Huang Yu, Shuang He, Shu Haimei, Li Cangpu, Li Mingcun, Xi Ahan, Jiang Mian, Zhi Jie, Zhang Ku)(including co-translation) | 62 | Singapore |

From the above table, it is clear that most of the translation works were done by Singaporean writers. Among the seven translators with the highest number of translation pieces, three are from Malaysia; they are Mei Shuzhen, Lai Ruihe and Mai Lang. Among these three writers, the number of translation work is quite equal, each contributed 13 to 19 articles. Mei Shuzhen contributed 19 pieces of translation; 15 pieces are her own translation while four pieces are jointly translated with Chen Ruixian. Four Singaporean writers have translated a total of 98 pieces, in which 62 were translated by Chen Ruixian, which is 63% of the total number. The other three writers translated 10 to 14 pieces each. The difference in the volume of the translated works between Chen Ruixian and these three writers is very great.

Translating and introducing Modernist Literature from Europe, America, England, Japan and Indonesia was one of the steps taken by *Chao Foon Monthly* to promote and disseminate Modernist Literature. Changing the aesthetic concept of Mahua literary writers is the ultimate objective. This is especially necessary and true at the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s. From 1969 to 1975, *Chao Foon Monthly* had put in much effort in translating and introducing Modernist Literature from abroad. Due to such an effort, Mahua Literature began to move towards Modernism. In this aspect, *Chao Foon Monthly*, as a pure literary magazine, has shouldered the toughest responsibility (Wu, 2010, p.18). The so called “toughest” responsibility” refers to the attempts taken by *Chao Foon Monthly* in promoting the modern literary concepts and propagating the changes in literary aesthetic values. Even though the sales of *Chao Foon Monthly* were unsatisfactory, it still played its role in disseminating modernist literature. We must understand that those who read *Chao Foon Monthly* were mostly young writers and those who were interested in literature. When writers read translated articles in *Chao Foon Monthly*, they will learn new literary concepts and understand the

different modernist literature. For those who are interested in literature, they will surely encounter articles that are very different from those published in the newspapers. This will thus enhance their literary knowledge and understanding.

From issue 202 (August 1969) onwards, *Chao Foon Monthly* became more active in translating and introducing western Modernist Literature. The number of translated articles published increased from one to four articles, an increase of three articles, which is 300%, and since then, the number of translated works maintained at this number. In issue 205, November 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* even published a *Special Edition on Poetry*, and the contents were mostly related to modernist poetry and poetry criticism and literary theories from the West. These two measures indicated *Chao Foon Monthly's* intention to influence and transform Mahua Literature through the translation of Modernist literary theory and articles. In this aspect, Wu Yanling (伍雁翎) acknowledged strongly *Chao Foon Monthly's* effort. She stressed that *Chao Foon Monthly* was a magazine which has promoted modernism seriously. *Chao Foon Monthly's* translated works started from scratch and grew larger each day. The efforts of *Chao Foon Monthly* in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature were indisputable (Wu, 2010, p.17-22).

This section will focus on discussing the transformation of *Chao Foon Monthly* from August 1969 to December 1974, from issues 202 to 262, with Chen Ruixian as one of the editors. During these five years Chen Ruixian has actually involved very actively from 1969 to 1974.

By reading the issues 202,203 and 205 of *Chao Foon Monthly* we may understand the changes that occurred in *Chao Foon Monthly* after Chen Ruixian

became the editor. The help of *Chao Foon Monthly* was really great. These were the very first few issues edited by Chen Ruixian during that time.

2.4.2.1 *Chao Foon Monthly* Issue 202: Second Transformation Stage

To discuss the influence of translation on Mahua Modernist Literature, it is important to mention *Chao Foon Monthly*, particularly issues such as 202 and 203. Issue 202 was the first issue of the 'second transformation'. The editorial style was distinctly different from the previous issues of *Chao Foon Monthly*. Issue 203, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish more modernist literary articles and translation works and its role in promoting modernist literature was exceptionally significant. Fang Guixiang (方桂香) argued that these two issues of *Chao Foon Monthly* basically revealed the influence of Singapore Modernist Literature on the original status of the prominent literary magazine (Fang, 2009, p.383). Fang's viewpoint had been exaggerated. From the researcher's point of view, Chen Ruixian's individual influence on Mahua Modernist literature superseded that of Singapore Modernist Literature. Although Chen Ruixian is from Singapore, he cannot be held as the immediate representative of the whole of the Singapore literary community. In addition, Mahua Modernist Literature was influenced by Taiwan Modernist Literature at the end of 1950s and the beginning of 1960s. It is a historical fact. Yu Guangzhong's poems, prose, literary criticism, Ye Shan's prose and poems and the prose of Yang Mu of a later stage, Zheng Chouyu's poems, and Ya Xuan's poems were the works that have influenced Mahua Modernist Literature. As a matter of fact, Singapore writers were also influenced by Taiwan modern literature because from the beginning until 1965, before Singapore's independence, Singapore and Malaya Chinese literature were considered as one. So, it was not appropriate to state that Singapore literature has

influence on Mahua Literature. Furthermore, when Chen Ruixian joined *Chao Foon Monthly* in August 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* has already joined the modernist bandwagon and has published numerous articles from the West and articles from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In other words, Chen Ruixian's contribution lies more in his strategic organization and planning of how Special Issues of different genres in *Chao Foon Monthly* would be published. He introduced and translated volumes of western literary works, and thus intensified the growth of Mahua Modernist literature and the modernization process of *Chao Foon Monthly*.

The characteristics of *Chao Foon Monthly* issue 202 can be seen from three aspects namely magnifying the importance of translation, creating literary special issue and planning and publishing *Chao Foon Monthly* book series (蕉风文丛).

The importance of translation was magnified from issue 202. From this issue onwards, *Chao Foon Monthly* stopped publishing translated works taken directly from Taiwan magazine, instead published translated works by local editors and writers. These writers chose for themselves the important classics of western modernist literature and translated these materials into Chinese. From this issue to 1974, almost all the translated articles published in *Chao Foon Monthly* were accomplished by local writers. The readers of *Chao Foon Monthly* were fortunate enough to read the first hand translation. These hard works by editors and writers have opened up new horizon for the readers, and the chance to read western classical publications.

Creating literary special issue was the second characteristic of *Chao Foon Monthly* from issue 202 onwards. As the *Chao Foon Monthly* editor for four years,

Chen Ruixian created and published 11 literary special issues. Details of these special issues will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Planning and publishing *Chao Foon Monthly* book series is also an important effort Chen Ruixian put in as the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. It was a brave action to publish literary books at that time. As is known to all, the sale of literary publication is rather low and poor because most of the commoners have the idea that reading literary books is not important. The publication of these books marked the progress of Mahua Modernist Literature.

In issue 202²⁹, there were four translated articles: (i) “A Defence in Court”, on the ban of his book *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller. This article was translated by Wan Yanji; (ii) “On Fiction”³⁰, by D.H. Lawrence, translated by Luo Yan. (iii) “Looking at the New Human Being from the Moon”, by Archibald Macleish, translated by Su Binlang. (iv) “The Art of Poetry”, by Archibald Macleish, translated by Su Binlang. Each of these four articles has its own characteristics, as the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* stated that: “We chose Su Binlang’s translation of ‘Looking at the New Human Being from the Moon’, the readers will understand how the poets and writers accept and response to the challenge of the times in a progressive era” (Editor, 1969, p.92). The other three articles were chosen because these articles “express the views on literature by three Western Modernist Writers”, or “these three articles are not merely court documents of their own defense but a piece of literary criticism, a poem,

²⁹ Tropic of Cancer was published in France in 1934. At that time, the book was banned in America. The Obscene Literature Control Committee took up a court case to ban this book. After sixty four court proceedings, it was finally released from the ban list in June 1964.

³⁰ This essay was translated from *English Critical Texts*, edited by D.J. Engright and Ernst de Chikera. This is an important essay which was published after the death of D.H. Lawrence.

and more importantly a work that revealed their deep-seated inner thoughts literary creation” (Editor, 1969, p.93).

Although there were only four articles, each shows its importance and substance. For instance, “Wo Cai Bu Ba Nimen Fangzai Yan Li” (<我才不把你们放在眼里>, “You Are Well Below Par”), written by Henry Miller, and translated by Wan Yanji. It was a famous piece on war. The translator made a statement at the end of the article: “In Modern American Literary Arena, Henry Miller was the most reckless and unbridled writer. He regarded his book *Tropic of Cancer* as ‘a spit onto the face of art.’ This book was published in 1934 by a French Publisher. However, it was listed as a banned book in America. The book was concealed beneath a box of recipe books and smuggled into America and in the end it reached the hands of Virginia Woolf, an American writer. After reading the book, she said; ‘When we read a great book, we know immediately it is a great book” (Translator, 1969, p.17).

2.4.2.2 *Chao Foon Monthly* Issue 203: Names of Editors Appeared for the First Time

This issue is entirely different from previous issues of *Chao Foon Monthly*, because from this issue onwards, all the editors’ names, Yao Tuo, Mu Lingnu, Li Cang, and Bai Yao were printed on the second page of each issue. Before this, this information was concealed from the readers. The reason was mentioned in the editor’s note of that issue.

From this issue onwards, we will publish all the editors' names. This is to show our responsibility. Editors who publish their own articles in the magazine will be misunderstood by others. As we have mentioned before, we do not want to be hypocritically humble, we will courageously express ourselves and be responsible. The editors for the last issue were Yao Tuo and Bai Yao, and assisted by Mu Lingnu and Li Cang. From this issue onwards, we have invited Mu Lingnu (Chen Ruixian) and Li Cang to join our editorial board. We hope more writers will join our editorial board. We made these changes because we want to turn *Chao Foon Monthly* into a magazine for all writers (Editor, 1969, p.96).

The above note reveals that the editors for the magazine's new version were Yao Tuo and Bai Yao, and assisted by Mu Lingnu and Li Cang. It also confirms that Chen Ruixian started his work as a *Chao Foon Monthly* editor from issue 203.

If we compare the editorial styles of these two issues, they are basically very similar. Both focus on the translation and introduction of foreign Modernist literature. In issue 202, only four translated articles were published, but in issue 203, there were ten translated articles, an increase of 250%. The ten translated articles are as below:

Table 2.11: Translated Articles Published in Issue 203 (September 1969)

| No. | Translator | Original Writer | Articles | Genre | Pages |
|-----|------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------|
| 1 | Mu Lingnu | Eugene Evtushenko (E•叶夫杜星可) | Babi Yar(巴比牙) | Poetry criticism | 62-66 |

Table 2.11 (continued)

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------|-------|
| 2 | Mu Lingnu | A.Latiff Mohidin(拉笛夫) | Poems of Latiff Mohidin: (1) “Yizhi Liulang de Zeiyu” (<一只流浪的贼鱼>, “A Wandering Fish”) | Translated poem | 31-35 |
| 3 | | | Poems of Latiff Mohidin: (2) “Meigong He” (<湄公河>, “The Meikong River”) | | |
| 4 | Mu Lingnu | O•A•卡莱 | “Ye Fu Du Xing Ke Sumiao” (<叶夫杜星可素描>, “A Sketch of Eugene Evtushenko”) | Short Piece | 68 |
| 5 | Mu Lingnu | Eugene Evtushenko | “Ye Fu Du Xing Ke de Mingzu Zhuyi” (<叶夫杜星可的民族主义>, “The Nationalism of Eugene Evtushenko”) | Short Piece | 68 |
| 6 | Mei Shuzhen (梅淑贞) | A.Ghfar Ibrahim(A•嘉化•伊布拉欣) | “Yu Latifu Yi Xu” (<与拉笛夫一叙>, “A Gathering with Latiff”) | Prose | 40-42 |

Table 2.11 (continued)

| | | | | | |
|----|--|------------------------------|---|------------------|-------|
| 7 | Xiu(修) (Bai Yao) | AnatolyKuznetsov(安纳托上•库兹涅索夫) | “Ku Zi Nie Suo Fu gei Su Lian Zuo jia Lianhehui de Xin” (<库兹涅索夫给苏联作家联合会的信>, “Letter to the United Association of Soviet Writers”) | Letter | 61 |
| 8 | Wan Yanji | Anatoly Kuznetsov | “Duo Yu Qugou Ji” (<剥鱼取钩记>, “Getting Fishhook by Killing the Fish”) | Short Story | 56-60 |
| 9 | English Translation : Edward Osers ; Chinese translation : Li Youcheng(席瘦人/ (李有成)) | 赖索霍斯基 (Ondra Lysosky) | “Jian. Balazi zhi ge” (<坚•巴拉兹之歌>, “The Song of Jan Pillach”) | Translated Poem | 69-70 |
| 10 | Di Zhong Hai (地中海) | 塞利斯 (Shaileish) | “Lun Latifu” (<论拉笛夫>, “On Latiff”) | Poetry criticism | 36-39 |

Information Source: *Chao Foon Monthly*

The ten articles are of various literary genres; three are translated poems, two on poetry theory, one novel, a piece of prose, two short pieces of essays, and one letter.

The *Chao Foon Monthly* readers are not familiar with these translated articles. In order to attain the effects of literary dissemination, the editorial board would make an

introduction of the translated articles and at the same time highlight the essence of this issue.

The first paragraph of the editor's note states:

We have notified the readers in the last issue that we will bring in Malay Modernist Poet Mohd Latiff and his poems in this issue. Now, through the cooperation of Mei Shuzhen, Di Zhong Hai, and Mu Lingnu, we bring to you the three translated poems, the focus of the content of this issue. It is hoped that this effort will broaden the understanding of the literary trend of another language in our society (Editor, 1969, p.95).

This paragraph clarifies the objective and rationale of translating Malay Modernist literature. As a Malaysian, we need to understand the development of Malay Literature. Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, and in 1969 that is 12 years after independence, as Mahua Literature modernizes, it is necessary to know about the development of Malay Literature too. The promotion of the interaction between the Chinese and Malay literati is one of the steps taken by *Chao Foon Monthly* to 'Malaysianize' Mahua Literature.

The second paragraph discusses the importance of the translation of foreign Modernist Literature:

This issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* has another focus, which is the translation and introduction of the works of the Soviet writers. Wan Yanji (Liang Mingguang) translated Anatoly Kuznetsov's *Getting Fishhook by Killing*

the Fish, Mu Lingnu translated Eugene Evtushenko's Babi Yar, both pieces can be read together, as their focus are the same; Xi Shouren (Li Youcheng) translated Ondra Lysosky's poem "The Song of Jan Pallach", Miao Miao (Xiu, Bai Yao) translated "A Letter for Eighty Eight Persons" by Ondra Lysosky. The letter tells the story of a chaotic time by a group of writers, which could be considered as historical witness in future. The extracts of Kuznetsov's letter to the United Association of Soviet Writers, a portrayal of Eugene Evtushenko and his piece on nationalism will help the readers to feel the pulse of the times (Editor, 1969, p.95).

Most of the readers are unfamiliar with the writers and their works mentioned above. Mistakes are likely to be made in the translation of these articles. The editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* thus invited different writers to do the job to minimize mistakes. It is a meticulous effort on the part of the editors to broaden the world view of both its writers and readers.

2.4.2.3 Translated Articles Published from August 1969 to December 1974

The analysis above focuses on the first two issues on translated works after *Chao Foon Monthly*'s transformation. The discussion below will analyse the issues published from August 1969 to December 1974.

Table 2.12: Translated works of *Chao Foon Monthly* from August Issue of 1969 to December 1974

| No. | Issues | No. of Articles | Note |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|--|
| 1 | August 1969 | 4 | |
| 2 | September 1969 | 7 | |
| 3 | October 1969 | 0 | |
| 4 | November 1969 | 17 | |
| 5 | December 1969 | 4 | |
| 6 | 1970 | 75 | |
| 7 | 1971 | 18 | |
| 8 | 1972 | 45 | |
| 9 | 1973 | 12 | |
| 10 | 1974 | 15 | |
| | Total | 197 | There are altogether 65 issues of <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , and there are three translated articles published in each issue of <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> |

The table listed 197 pieces of translated articles from 65 issues of *Chao Foon Monthly*. There were average three articles in every issue. The number will be much higher if all modernist poems and critical essays are taken into consideration.

2.4.2.4 Translated Articles Published from 1975 to December 1979: Post Chen Ruixian Period

When Chen Ruixian was an editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, the translation and introduction of western Modernist Literature were carried out in a systematic manner and the number of translation was big. This strengthened the dissemination of modernist literature. It provided the local writers an opportunity to read classic Modernist articles, which in a way helped them in improving their writing techniques. Initially many complaints were made regarding the large number of translation works but later as the modernist trend gains momentum, the disputing voices faded.

Chen Ruixian left *Chao Foon Monthly* after he had completed editing the December issue of 1974. *Chao Foon Monthly* entered the era where the editorial board consisted of only locals or Malaysians. Local writers shouldered all the editorial works. The work of introducing and translating Western literature continued. *Chao Foon Monthly* still progressed steadily although without the ambitious drive to produce voluminous translated works which was the hallmark of Chen Ruixian's two-year stint in the editorial board. In addition to introduce Modernist writers, *Chao Foon Monthly* tried very hard to publish articles written by local writers. It took the lead in encouraging the whole literary community to reflect critically on modernist literature.

The following table illustrates the number of translated articles from 1975 to December 1979, the post Chen Ruixian period of *Chao Foon Monthly*.

Table 2.13: Translated and Introductory Articles of *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1975 to 1979

| Year | Number of Translation | Remarks |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| 1975 | 08 | |
| 1976 | 27 | |
| 1977 | 17 | |
| 1978 | 28 | |
| 1979 | 49 | |
| Total | 129 | There are altogether 60 issues, published an average of two translated works |

Translating western modernist articles has been one of the major strategies that *Chao Foon Monthly* employed in disseminating modernist literature in Mahua literary arena. From August 1969 to December 1974, *Chao Foon Monthly* published 129

pieces of translated work, with an average of three pieces per issue. Through this effort, local readers and writers were exposed to modernist literature. The writers learned from these elements and engaged themselves in writing modernist articles. Their achievement had been discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter.

It is undeniable that with the systematic plan to disseminate modernist literature through translating western modernist literary works by Chen Ruixian, it has resulted in the increasing number of modernist writers in Malaya and Singapore and also the publication of articles and books in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The modernist foundation was laid during the 1960s.

Chen Ruixian left *Chao Foon Monthly* in December 1974. *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to disseminate modernist literature through different measures and ways, one of them is translating articles. From 1975 to 1979, *Chao Foon Monthly* had published a total of 129 translated works in 60 issues, with the average of 2.15 articles in each issue. Although there was a drop in the number with the difference of 0.85 only, we can infer that *Chao Foon Monthly* was still taking translated western modernist articles as its major way of disseminating modernist literature. Modernist concept needed to be strengthened in the 1970s.

2.4.3 Strategies in the Dissemination of Modernist Literature in the 70s: Special Issues, Special Theme, Special Compilation, *Chao Foon Monthly* Series of Literature

As discussed earlier, *Chao Foon Monthly* underwent major changes when Chen Ruixian joined the editorial board. He promoted modernist literature with dynamism; he offered and implemented varied and new strategies. Besides publishing numerous translated Western works, he coordinated the publication of special issues, issues on specified authors and themes, which turned out to be the most important and influential mode of literary dissemination. In an interview with Fang Guixiang, he pointed out that publishing such special issues on poetry was first carried out when he and Liang Mingguang were editing *Wencong*, the literary supplement of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* in Singapore. He found that literary supplements of newspapers had the constraints of limited slot or space for publication while magazines have more freedom and thus do not face such limitation.

The Special Issue refers to an issue that focuses on a special theme and all the published articles were centered on that theme. Special Theme or Special Compilation refers to one of the topics or themes that take up more space or length in a particular issue. For instance, the Special Issue on Poetry will only publish modernist poems and articles on poetry. Special Theme such as “Kafka” will publish articles on this particular author. Special Compilation is similar to Special Theme; one section of the issue will be dedicated to it, for instance, “*Song Ziheng’s Short Stories: A Critical Appreciation*”. Chen strategically planned 11 Special Issues and 17 Special Themes and Special Compilation when he was the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* from issues 205 to 262. Details can be seen in the table below.

Table 2.14: The 11 Special Issues Published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from November 1969 to December 1974

| No | Issue of <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> | Publishing Date | Special issue |
|----|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 1 | 205 | November 1969 | On Poetry(诗专号) |
| 2 | 207 | January, February 1970 | On Drama(戏剧专号) |
| 3 | 211 | June, July 1970 | On Novel(小说专号) |
| 4 | 212 | August 1970 | On Novel(小说专号) |
| 5 | 220 | April, May 1971 | On Malay Literature(马来文学作品专号) |
| 6 | 224 | September 1971 | On Mu Lingnu's Articles(牧羚奴作品专号) |
| 7 | 235 | September 1972 | On Movies(电影专号) |
| 9 | 240 | February 1973 | On Prose(散文专号) |
| 10 | 261 | November 1974 | On Classical Literature(古典文学专号) |
| 11 | 262 | December 1974 | On Classical Literature (2)(古典文学专号 (二)) |

Of the 11 Special Issues, five issues were on different genres of literature, three issues were on special issues on literature such as “Special Issue on Works of Malay Literature”, “Special Issue on Classical Literature- Part 1”, “Special Issue on Classical Literature- Part 2”, “Special Issue on Authors” and “Special Issue on Movies”.

Of the 17 Special Themes and Special Compilation, all were integrated into the 11 Special Issues. For instance “Special Issue on Works of Malay Literature” (Issue 220) combines the following Special Themes such as On Tongkat Waran, On Yahaya Ismail, Interviews with Malay Writers, On Latif Muhiddin, Literary Resources of

Malay literature, *The Present Scenario of Malay Literature and its Future Development*. There are the Special Themes/ Compilation on Critical Essays on Literature and Others which included “A Critical Appreciation on Chen Ruixian’s Art Exhibition” and “A Critical appreciation On the Short Stories of Song Ziheng”.

Of the 11 special issues, “Special Issue on Classical Literature” and “Special Issue on Movies” have little impact on the dissemination of modernist literature. Perhaps this move by *Chao Foon Monthly* was aiming at playing down its efforts in promoting and disseminating modernist literature which would avoid the criticism from the realists of the opposing camp.

Chen Ruixian left *Chao Foon Monthly* when he had accomplished his editorial job in 1975, after publishing the December issue. After 1976, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued the strategic policy of Chen to publish a variety of Special Issues, Special Themes and Special Compilations.

After the 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued with its editorial policy with a slightly shifted focus. The objective of *Chao Foon Monthly* at the earlier stage was to disseminate modernist literature and it focused on the translation of modernist literature and the publication of the works of local modernist writers. However, with a more diversified content, the publications of Special Issues, Special Themes and Special Compilations remained unchanged. The following tables list the Special Issues, Special Themes and Special Compilations that were published from 1975 to 1979.

Table 2.15: Special Issue Published from 1975 to 1979

| No. | <i>Chao Foon Monthly Issue</i> | Publishing Date | Special issue |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1 | 292 | June 1977 | On Poetry(诗专号) |
| 2 | 313 | March 1979 | On Science Fiction(科幻文学专号) |
| 3 | 319 | October 1979 | On Singapore Young Writers(潮变之后新加坡年轻作者专号) |

Table 2.16: Special Theme Published from 1975 to 1979

| No. | <i>Chao Foon Monthly Issue</i> | Publishing Date | Special Theme |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 1 | 267 | May 1975 | On Chinese Epic (诗专题) |
| 2 | 286 | December 1976 | On Saul Bellow(沙白罗专题) |
| 3 | 305 | July 1978 | On Xiao Hei(小黑专题) |
| 4 | 311 | January 1979 | On The Translation Indonesia Modernist Literature (印尼现代文学译介专题) |
| 5 | 313 | March 1979 | On Kurt Vonnegut(库克 冯尼卡) |
| 6 | 313 | March 1979 | On Isaac Asimov(以撒 阿西摩夫专题) |
| 7 | 317 | August 1979 | Special Exhibition of Engraved Papers (陈瑞献纸刻展专题) |
| 8 | 320 | November 1979 | On Song Ziheng's Short Story (宋子衡小说专题) |
| 10 | 320 | November 1979 | On Prose (散文专题) |
| 11 | 321 | December 1979 | On Dh Lawrence (D.H 罗伦斯专题) |

Table 2.17: Special Compilation from 1976 to 1979

| No. | <i>Chao Foon Monthly Issue</i> | Publishing Date | Special Compilation |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | 287 | January 1977 | On Mallow(马洛特辑) |
| 2 | 295,296 | September , October 1977 | On He Qifang (1)and (2)(何其芳特辑 (一) 和 (二)) |

Table 2.17 (continued)

| | | | |
|---|-----|---------------|--|
| 3 | 308 | October 1978 | On Albert Altrman(罗拔·阿特曼特辑) |
| 4 | 309 | November 1978 | On the Nobel Prize Winners (诺贝尔文学奖得主特辑) |
| 5 | 314 | April 1979 | On Scientific Fiction(科学小说专辑) |

To summarize, from 1975 to 1979, *Chao Foon Monthly* published only three Special Issues, 11 issues with Special Themes and five Special Compilations. Such editions have reduced much compared with what was published when Chen Ruixian was the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. When Chen left *Chao Foon Monthly* after the December issue of 1974, *Chao Foon Monthly* managed to publish only one Special Theme from January 1975 to December 1975. That was the Special theme on Chinese Epic. However *Chao Foon Monthly's* efforts to promote modernist literature could not be discounted. Special Issues were linked to specific genres of literature such as “Special issues on Poetry”, “Special Issues on Science Fiction” and the composite issues “Special Issue on Singaporean Young Writers”. Special Themes normally centered on works of authors, Mahua writers or Western writers. The cover of one of the issues of Special Compilation was a blend of Special Issues and Special Themes, “Special Theme on Science Fiction” is an example, it is a special issue on a genre, yet it should be classified as a “Special Issue on Science Fiction” to show editorial consistency. Similarly, shouldn't Special Compilations on authors such as “Special Compilation on He Qifang” and “Special Compilation on Robert Altman” be classified under “Special Themes” too?

Of the 19 Special Issues, Special Themes and Special Compilations, “Special issue on Poetry”, “Special Theme on Song Ziheng”, “Special Theme on Prose”, “Special Theme on Indonesian Modernist Literature” and other Special Themes on Western authors are issues that were directly linked to modernist literature. “Special issue on Poetry” published a great volume of modernist poems. The critical essays call upon Mahua modernist poets to keep in touch with their social communities and express their sense of empathy towards social realities. Other Special Compilations revealed the editorial ideals of *Chao Foon Monthly*, which was to manifest a greater social concern. After it had played its role successfully as the guardian of modernist literature, *Chao Foon Monthly* intended to exert its influence to other humanitarian spheres too.

As said earlier, since not many “Special Issues” were published in the second half of the 70s, the “Special Issue on Poetry” of June 1977 is worthy of mentioning at this juncture. This was the second time a “Special issue on Poetry” was published. The first issue was planned to disseminate modernist literature, the second was now reaping its harvest. The works of the 1977 issue, whether they are critical essays or poems, were mostly the works of Mahua modernist poets and literary critics.

The following statement is extracted from the “editor’s note” of “Special Issue on Poetry”:

The Special Issue on Poetry is an exhibition of poems; it reflects the scenario of the poetical arena as well as the achievement of the poets. We have done this before, we are now doing it again and we intend to do it in the future. Poets need encouragement, the poetical arena needs active

promotions, only then the poetical movement will have a robust growth (Editor, 1977, p.119).

The statement above tells the objective of the “Special Issues” and the stand *Chao Foon Monthly* had taken. The reason that they have done this before and now doing it again and will do it in the future is simply because “poets need encouragement to write poems”. As a purely literary bimonthly, *Chao Foon Monthly* has precisely done that. Besides the “Special Issue on Poetry”, every issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* published a number of modernist poems. Poets have found a platform to publish their works, modernist poems in particular. If *Chao Foon Monthly* did not publish them, they would find it hard to be published in literary supplements of the newspapers.

Due to this unfavorable condition, *Chao Foon Monthly* published as many poems as possible by local writers. This in a way was a kind of encouragement, and it also showed the strategy of *Chao Foon Monthly* to nurture young modernist writers. In June 1977, issue 292, *Chao Foon Monthly* published the Special Issue on Poetry, in which 39 poems were published.

Six out of the 39 poems were written by Singaporean poets and the rest were products of local modernist writers. No poems were from Hong Kong or Taiwan. However, not all Mahua poets’ poems were included, as in the words of the editor, “it is regrettable that the works of some renowned poets did not appear in the Special Issue. Perhaps they are busy; perhaps they are in a state of meditation. Hopefully we will see them in the next Special Issue on Poetry” (Editor, 1976, p.119).

All the critical essays and reviews in this edition of “Special Issue on Poetry” were written by Mahua writers, which is a rather unique feature. There were four reviews and critical essays respectively. The four reviews are as follows: (i) “Tianshang Renjian Wo ziyou Yinyue” (<天上人间我自有音乐>, “There’s Music in Heaven and on Earth”) by Zhang Ruixing, (ii) “Mahua Xiandaishi yu Mahua Shehui” (<马华现代诗与马华社会>, “Mahua Modernist Poems and the Mahua Community”), (iii) “Xuehua Fengye Zhi Duoshao” (<雪花风叶知多少>, “Of Snowflakes and Falling Leaves”) by Jiang Qi(江旗) and (iv) “Malai Xinshi fazhanshi” (<马来新诗发展史>, “The Historical Development of Malay Poem”) translated by Wenzang(温臧). The four critical essays are: (i) “Shenme Shenghuo Xie Shenme Shi” (<什么生活写什么诗>, “Poems as a Reflection of Life”) by Ye Xiao(叶啸), (ii) “Daoying yu Ceying” (<倒影与侧影>, “Reflection and Shadow”) by Wen Ruian, (iii) “Chengshu hou de Kongdong” (<成熟后的空洞>, “The Hollowness of Maturity”) by Xu Shuyu(许书瑜) and (iv) “Yu Guangzhong de Bei Wang he Jiuguang Tielu” (<余光中的《北望》和《九广铁路》>, “A Critical Appreciation of Yu Guangzhong’s ‘Looking North’ and ‘The Railway of Jiuguang’”) by Yang Shengqiao(杨升桥).

In the review section, three writers offered their views on the link between poetry and the society. Whether a poem reflects or does not reflect the reality of a society cannot be the only benchmark for a poem’s performance. It is also undeniable that a poet who shows no concern about his society has to face a lot of failures. In

1977, Mahua modernist poetry has entered its 18th year, so, imperfections were natural. So Mahua modernist poets should take this opportunity to pull out the feelers and closely observe the society from close range, and then only they will be able to reflect the social realities in their works. Most of the critical essays were detailed analysis of the works of local, Hong Kong and Taiwan poets. These essays gave the impression that modernist poems could be analysed and appreciated in different ways. The “Editor’s Note” says: “Ye Xiao did a good analysis of Zi Fan’s recent shift in his style of writing and his subject matter. Wen Ruian, Xu Shuyu and Yang Shenqiao’s analysis have demonstrated convincingly that modernist poems are not beyond comprehension” (Editor, 1976, p.119).

The message behind this edition of “Special Issue on Poetry” is that poets are more aware of the substance of their poems and those who displayed their social concern more vividly were given approval while poets who still indulge in their emotions and sentiments were criticized. Nonetheless, some poets feel that if left unchecked, social concerns would ruin artistic considerations. On the content and significance of this “Special Issue on Poetry”, Wen Renping did an objective and comprehensive analysis. He says:

He Qiliang wrote a short essay entitled “Mahua Modernist Poetry and the Mahua Community” which was published in the “Special Issue on Poetry” of the *Chao Foon Monthly* of June 1977. It made a preliminary study and argued that Mahua modernist poems did not reflect the social outlook and spirit of Mahua community. He vehemently attacked the romantic poetical style that was prevalent at that time, the pretentious mystification of Zen Buddhism and the poems that displayed the depression, anxiety and

vexation of the youths. His comment was relevant and sharp but his very own poetical style was just the prevalent romanticism that exhibited the depressed and troubled minds of the youths. He did not practise what he preached, and so his argument was thus very unconvincing. Ye Xiao and Mei Shuzhen had subsequently rebutted his claim (Wen, 1980, p.82-83).

Other than He Qiliang's review, this edition of "Special Issue on Poetry" published Ye Xiao's long and exhaustive appraisal on Zi Fan's poetical style entitled "Poems as a Reflection of Life". It acknowledges the poet's aesthetically lucid and sincere style that is full of social significance. Ye hoped that the "modernist poets who speak the most gibberish" will ponder for a moment to "courageously leave behind the plight of isolation of the modernist poets of the past". His comment on one of the Collections of Poems that the researcher has edited is as follows: "Throughout the whole collection, we have yet to find a poet that uses life subjects as his source of inspiration". Zhang Ruixing, an emergent literary critic, expressed a rather mild criticism. The following is extracted from "There's Music in Heaven and on Earth":

Some of my poet friends espoused the notion of socialistic and contemporaneous, truthfulness and goodness in poems. At the very least, readers and the crowd are not side-lined or ignored. This can be viewed as being sober yet the question remains, how to reflect the times of life and be in touch with the society? Could works such as "Moving North" by Wang Renhua and "Cambodia" by Jiang Zhenxuan, from *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, be considered as poems that possess such qualities? I would concur with the views of Yang Mu which is stated in a postscript in "Ping zhong Gao" (<瓶中稿>, "Words in a Bottle"). 'Socialistic' should be

seen in the context of an individual's conscience and emotions; conscience guides emotions and explores the relevance and meanings of an individual's life and that of the community's (Zhang, 1976, p.5).

Such exchange of ideas, with high awareness, is meaningful when the essence of poems and its related components are explored and studied. It will be more commendable if the process has begun with the younger generation of writers and critics. The younger generation will no longer follow their predecessors blindly. They will have their own will and objectives, not a group of apathetic and lethargic writers who would accept the "ready-made". Thus Mahua modernist literature will develop into a highly self-conscious, vigilant and creative literature in the foreseeable future (Wen, 1986, p.19).

2.4.4 Publishing More Local Poems and Literary Criticism: The Shift from Literary Works of Hong Kong and Taiwan to Malaysia

In 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* published two collections of new poetry in which almost half of the poems were from Taiwan and Hong Kong. However, in 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* published another collection of poems entitled *Xing Ma Shiren Zuopin* (《星马诗人作品》, *Poems of Singapore and Malaysian Poets*), only poems by Malaysia and Singapore poets were included. There are altogether 25 poems, 13 from Singapore modernist poets and 12 from Mahua modernist poets. The poems are listed in Table 2.18.

Table 2.18 : Poems in *Poems of Singapore and Malaysian Poets*

| No. | Title of Poems | Author | Page Number |
|-----|--|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 | “Shi” (<诗>, “Poem”) | Wan Yanji (完颜藉) | 4-6 |
| 2 | “Lie Sui de Woke” (<裂碎的蜗壳>, “The Crumbled Shell of the Snail”) | Nan Zi (南子) | 7 |
| 3 | “Xinyang” (<信仰>, “Belief”) | Sha He (沙河) | 8-9 |
| 4 | “Bao” (<豹>, “The Leopard”) | Ying Peian(英培安) | 10-11 |
| 5 | “Xueyuan Pai”(<学院派>, “The Academic School”) | Zhen Zhen (蓁蓁) | 12-13 |
| 6 | “Chan Yuan Liuquan”(<潺湲流泉>, “The Slow Flowing Spring”) | Mei Shuzhen(梅淑贞) | 14 |
| 7 | “Zuyin”(<足印>, “Footprint”) | Shen Junhao(沈璧浩) | 15 |
| 8 | “Yiyu”(<异域 (诗简) >, “Poems from Foreign Country”) | He Lanning(贺兰宁) | 16-17 |
| 9 | “Sange Xiaohai”(<三个小孩>, “Three Kids”) | Mu Lingnu(牧羚奴) | 18-19 |
| 10 | “Mei Weiba de Shou” (<没尾巴的兽>, “The Beast without a Tail”) | Gui Yan (归雁) | 20-21 |
| 11 | “Chu le Xiaomen” (<出了校门>, “Out of the School Entrance”) | Meng Zhongji (孟仲季) | 22-23 |
| 12 | “Jimo” (<寂寞>, “Lonely”) | Li Cang(李苍) | 24-26 |
| 13 | “Bu Ti No.2” (<不题 No. 2>, “Not Elaborating No. 2”) | Lv Lang(绿浪) | 27 |
| 14 | “Yizhan Hongdeng”(<一盏红灯>, “A Red Lamp”) | Ai Wen (艾文) | 28-29 |
| 15 | “Xingqiri Xiawu” (<星期日下午>, “Sunday Afternoon”) | Ling Dianling (零点零) | 30 |
| 16 | “Yi Ren” (<忆人>, “Remembering Someone”) | Wen Kai (文恺) | 31 |

Table 2.18 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|--|-------------------|-------|
| 17 | “Benshi”(<本事>, “Ability”) | Bai Yao (白垚) | 32-34 |
| 18 | “Gulao de Ye” (<古老的夜>, “The Ancient Night”) | Ling Gao (凌高) | 35 |
| 19 | “Nan Lang Du” (<难浪渡>, “It is difficult to get across”) | Wu Weicai (吴伟才) | 36-37 |
| 20 | “Xinxiang Licheng” (<心象历程>, “The Process of Internal Image”) | Qian Qiu (浅丘) | 38-39 |
| 21 | “Yue Tai” (<月台>, “The Railway”) | Lai Jingwen (赖敬文) | 40-41 |
| 22 | “Yiyuan Lun zhe” (<一元论者>, “The Monism Holder”) | Chen Huihua (陈慧桦) | 42-43 |
| 23 | “Jibi Qiandan de Bianzou” (<几笔浅淡的变奏>, “Few Light Variation”) | Lan Meng (蓝梦) | 44-45 |
| 24 | “Lan Shan” (<阑珊>, “The Fence”) | Xie Qing (谢清) | 46-47 |
| 25 | “Die Chi” (<蝶翅>, “The Wind of the Butterfly”) | Liu Chuan (流川) | 48 |

In addition, from August 1969 onwards, when Chen Ruixian joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board, more and more poems by local poets were published. That was an important shift of editing policy. By the end of 1960s and beginning of 1970s, the editor had confidence in Mahua and Singapore Chinese poets. The dissemination of modernist literature from the end of 1950s to 1960s has resulted in increasing number of modernist poets.

Table 2.19 shows the number of modernist poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from August 1969 to December 1974. After that, the number of poems published from 1975 to 1979 will also be shown.

Table 2.19: Modernist Poems Published from August 1969 to 1974

| No. | Date of Publication | Accumulated Articles |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | August, 1969 | 9 |
| 2 | September, 1969 | 13 |
| 3 | October, 1969 | 17 |
| 4 | November, 1969 | 44 |
| 5 | December, 1969 | 51 |
| 6 | 1970 | 81 |
| 7 | 1971 | 122 |
| 8 | 1972 | 171 |
| 9 | 1973 | 199 |
| 10 | 1974 | 240 |

A total of 240 poems were published in this period, an average of four poems per issue. With the addition of translated works, there were seven pieces of modernist works in every issue.

The main objective of publishing and introducing western and Taiwan modernist literature was to disseminate modernist literature in Mahua literary arena. Both translated works and works of Taiwan modernists have influenced Mahua writers in one way or another. The most apparent sign is the gradual expansion of a group of modernist poets, prose writers and novelists. This verifies their acceptance of modernist literature.

On the relationship between Mahua modernist literature and Taiwan literature, Mei Shuzhen, one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* said:

Modernism was brought into Malaysia from Taiwan in the Mid-50s, and *Chao Foon Monthly* was the first literary publication to publish modernist works. Other newspapers and magazines, for reasons inappropriate to be discussed here, refused to publish 'modernist' works (Mei, 1984, p.31).

The so-called ‘Mahua Modernist Writers’ comprised writers who have and have not studied in Taiwan, and writers who continued to work in Taiwan after they have completed their studies. Poems, prose, novels, critical essays and plays are the five types of genres that are published in *Chao Foon Monthly*. Generally, poetry is the first genre to be developed in literature. Similarly, modernist poetry leads other genres in the development of Mahua modernist literature. From the perspective of genres of literature, modernist poems top the list of all the published works of *Chao Foon Monthly*. When Chen Ruixian joined the editorial board in August 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* followed the policy to publish works of Mahua writers with priority. Initially the number of published works of Mahua writers was small, however it has gradually increased in the following issues. The above Table 2.19 shows the publication of modernist poem’s true situation in *Chao Foon Monthly*.

The Table 2.20 below shows the number of poems published from 1975 to 1979. This is the period after Chen Ruixian has left *Chao Foon Monthly*. It is clear that from 1976 onwards, the number modernist poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly* increased a lot. It indicates the development of Mahua Modernist Literature has reached its climax, and thus 1970s can be considered as the golden period of Mahua Modernist Literature. Below is a statistic showing the number of modernist poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1975 to 1979.

Table 2.20: Number of modernist poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1975 to 1979

| Year | Number of Poems Published | Accumulated number |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1975 | 37 | 37 |
| 1976 | 71 | 108 |

Table 2.20 (continued)

| | | |
|------|-----|-----|
| 1977 | 96 | 201 |
| 1978 | 47 | 248 |
| 1979 | 34 | 282 |
| | 282 | |

In 1970s, Mahua modernist poets became more mature and published modernist poems. The poems from Taiwan and Hong Kong were comparatively less in 1960s. The total number of poems published from August 1969 to December 1979 is 522. More than 80 percent of the poems were from Singapore and Malaysia modernist poets.

The top ten modernist poets who had published the largest number of poems are ranked as below:

Table 2.21: Ranking of Poets According to Number of Poems Published

| No. | Name of Poet | No. of Poems Published |
|-----|--------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Chen Ruixian | 49 |
| 2 | Wen Ruian | 32 |
| 3 | Sha Qin | 30 |
| 4 | Wen Renping | 22 |
| 5 | Xie Qing | 19 |
| 6 | Wen Kai | 17 |
| 7 | Ai Wen | 14 |
| 8 | Zhou Huan | 13 |
| 9 | Sha He | 13 |
| 10 | Fang Ezhen | 12 |

Out of the ten poets, seven are from Malaysia and three from Singapore. Wen Ruian, Sha Qin, Wen Renping, Ai Wen, Zhou Huan, Sha He and Fang Ezhen are the seven modernists who had performed pretty well in 1970s. Out of the seven poets, poems of six of them are collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, edited by Wen Renping. This is a representative collection of Mahua modernist poems. Other poets who were actively involved in the publication of poems were Jiang Zhenxuan, Li Muxiang, Li Youcheng, Wang Runhua, Huang Hunxing, Dan Ying, Zhou Qingxiao, Lai Ruihe, Zi Yisi, Mei Shuzhen, Piao Beiling, Gui Yan, Lan Qiyan, Xie Yongcheng, Xie Yongjiu and Lai Jingwen. Their poems were also collected in the collection of poems mentioned above.

Among the ten top ranked poets, Sha Qin was not included in the collection of poems by Malaysian poets. His poems were later collected in another collection of poems *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, published in 1978 and edited by Zhang Shulin. The poems of the other active poets in 1970s were also collected in this collection of poems. They were Sha Qin, Shen Chuanxin, Dong Zhu, Lin Qiuyue, Yin Chengfeng, Zhang Ruixin, Zheng Rongxiang, Zi Fan, Chen Yueye, Yang liu, Zheng Yuli and Lin Yanhe.

The number of poets included in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* is 27, and the number of poets in *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* is 23, making a total of 50. In other words, at the end of 1970s, the number of established Mahua modernist poets was 50. There were other poets who were not included in these two collections due to respective reasons of their own. For instance, Chen Zhengxin, Huang Yuanxiong, Hong Xiangmei and Chen Qianghua were some of the poets whose works were not collected in the above two collections.

In addition to modernist poems, critical essays published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from August 1969 to December 1979 were mostly from local writers. The table below shows the total number of critical essays.

Table 2.22: Critical essays published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from August 1969 to December 1974.

| No. | Date of Publication | Total Number | Accumulation |
|-----|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | August 1969 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | September 1969 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | October 1969 | 1 | 1 |
| 4 | November 1969 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | December 1969 | 1 | 6 |
| 6 | 1970 | 07 | 13 |
| 7 | 1971 | 16 | 29 |
| 8 | 1972 | 18 | 47 |
| 9 | 1973 | 37 | 84 |
| 10 | 1974 | 38 | 122 |
| 11 | 1975 | 38 | 160 |
| 12 | 1976 | 24 | 184 |
| 13 | 1977 | 35 | 219 |
| 14 | 1978 | 47 | 266 |
| 15 | 1979 | 32 | 298 |
| | Total | 298 | |

The number of critical essays is slightly less than that of the translated works. There is a total of 122 pieces, on the average about two pieces per issue. It is important to note that critical essays are lengthy and so two pieces in each issue will in fact take up a lot of space. Looking at the three tables that tabulated the translated works, modernist poems and critical essays, it is evident to say that *Chao Foon Monthly*, in its efforts to introduce and disseminate modernist literature, places a lot of emphasis on literary theoretical analysis and critical appreciation of literary works. By only publishing the literary works and devoid of translated, introductory and critical pieces, readers would have the real difficulties in assimilating literary information and comprehending literary works. This might indirectly disrupt the development of Mahua

modernist literature. However, *Chao Foon Monthly* took comprehensive measures to overcome such obstacles.

2.4.5 Conclusion

1970s marked the second decade of development of Mahua Modernist Literature and also the dissemination of modernism in Mahua literary arena. It is obvious that the outcome of modernist literature dissemination was fruitful in 1970s. In this period, Mahua modernist literature succeeded in publishing two important collections of Mahua modernist poems and the total number of Mahua modernist poets by the end of 1970s is 50, excluding other poets whose poems were not collected in the above mentioned anthology of poems. These two collections of poems are now two important canons of Mahua modernist poems. Researchers need to read these two books in order to understand Mahua modernist literature.

It is an encouraging period during which many Mahua modernist poets became more mature. Local poets have imitated poetic techniques from western literature and also from Hong Kong and Taiwan writers. With this basic knowledge, local writers assimilated local factors into their poems and made these poems being different from that of Hong Kong and Taiwan.

A small number of literary critics were fostered and won acclaim both locally and in Taiwan. For instance, Wen Renping, Wang Runhua, Lin Lv, Chen Huihua, Li Youcheng were among the most prominent literary critics of this period. Most of their literary criticisms were published in Taiwan. Some of them even published their collection of literary criticism in Taiwan. For example, Wen Renping's collection of

poetry criticism, both theory and poetic criticism, *The Elegant Tripod*, was published by Long River Publisher (长河出版社) in Taipei in 1978.

Furthermore, during this period, *Chao Foon Monthly* became the representative magazine of Mahua modernist literature. No one can deny this fact. It has nurtured Mahua modernist literature for more than 20 years and has come out with brilliant successes.

2.5 *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Dissemination of Modernist Literature In 1980s

2.5.0 Introduction

Mahua Modernist Literature entered its 21st years of age in 1980. In order to commemorate the 21st anniversary of Mahua Modernist Literary Movement, The Sirius Poetical Society published a book entitled *Looking Back in Anger* to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the Malaysian Chinese Modern Literary Movement.

In Mahua literary arena, the conflict between the two antagonistic groups, the Realistic Group and the Modernist group has reached a climax. Written polemics were common and showed they were well matched in strength, especially when the Realistic Group planned to form the Association of Malaysian Chinese Writers. In response, The *Chao Foon Monthly* was active in developing local modernist writers, and has accumulated strength strong enough to make equal rival claim. Of course, Mahua Modernist Literature has its flaw backs in techniques, content and language. Certain writers and literary critics in the modernist group pointed out these common mistakes

with the intention that the Mahua Modernist Literature will attain a better development or performance in the future.

In 1980s, Modernist Literature has grown strong after overcoming all challenges. All resistance has been wiped out. The Realistic and The Modernist group stopped the rivalry and tried to understand each other. As pointed out by Pan Bihua: “We knew there was controversy between the two rival groups, however approaching 1980s, these two groups could work together.....” (Pan, 2009, p.56). It is a positive development between these two literary groups. In actual fact, there is nothing to argue about since both are beholding different literary aesthetics and in literature, it is difficult and improper to judge which literary group is better. However, positive competition should be encouraged. Writers in different group should try their best to come out with their best articles. This will enhance the performance of Mahua writers on the whole.

In such a peaceful decade, what had *Chao Foon Monthly* done to preserve and upgrade the performance of Mahua modernist writers? Most of the important modernist literature had been disseminated in 1960s and 1970s; it is really a challenge to *Chao Foon Monthly* to take proper actions in the 1980s.

The editorial policy of *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1980s basically resembled that in 1970s including the translation and introduction of Western modernist literature, publishing local modernist literary texts and literary criticism, as well as publishing special issues and special topics for writers. By and large, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish as usual without any new and innovative strategies. Unlike 1960s and 1970s, *Chao Foon Monthly* had been publishing in a strategic manner, shouldering

the mission of disseminating modernism in Mahua literary arena. The editor's note of issue 343, December 1981 revealed the process of editing:

The content of *Chao Foon Monthly* depends on the articles provided by writers. In order to take care of the common request of readers, we will try our best to make a balance in content. However, it is often to have no command over oneself (The Editor, 1981, p.4).

This showed that *Chao Foon Monthly* was passive in editing, lacking in initiatives to plan and publish certain special issues strategically.

2.5.1 Cultivating Local Literary Critics, Continued Publishing Literary Criticism by Foreign Writers

Entering 1980s, *Chao Foon Monthly* was more concerned about the performance of literary critic. The modernist group has published five anthologies of poetry and has achieved encouraging objectives. However, from the point of *Chao Foon Monthly* editor, the performance of local literary criticism was not satisfactory. As commonly noted, from September 1969 to 1979, Mahua Modernist Poetry, literary criticism, translation grew at the same pace, however from 1980 onwards, there was a shortage of literary criticism. In the Editor's note of February 1980, the editor wrote:

As has been mentioned several times, *Chao Foon Monthly* lacks objective and sincere literary criticism, we hope to receive criticism with no nonsense, no emotion, and practical criticism, which will make readers respect literary creation. But this kind of articles is difficult to find. Formerly we had Wan

Yanji, Lai Ruihe and Chen Ruixian, but now there seems to be no successors (Editor, 1988, p.1).

Actually, the editor was not worrying unnecessarily, because the absence of Wan Yanji and Lai Ruihe due to their return to Singapore brought about the absence of two literary critics. As for Lai Ruihe, although he is local, he seldom wrote criticism in the 1980s.

These are the two major reasons causing the deficiency of literary criticism in Mahua literary arena. This worry continues, until Wang Zu'an (王祖安) took up the post of editor. He emphasized the lack of literary criticism in Mahua literary arena and pointed out that, in Mahua literary arena, the lack of literary criticism had long been a reality. The deficiency of literary criticism to a literary arena is not a healthy condition. The worry of *Chao Foon Monthly* editor started in early 1980, and until 1988, the worry continued. Does this problem reveal the fact that local writers are not interested in writing literary criticism? Or there are other reasons?

The editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* made a comment on the phenomenon mentioned above. He stated: "With regards to the shortage of literary criticism, there are three reasons to be discussed. (i) There are few literary critics who are academically trained, (ii) There is a different conception towards literary criticism between readers and writers and (iii) The reading population was small" (Editor, 1988, p.1). The three reasons stated were focusing on the crux of the issue, especially the first reason because in the 1990s, the number of writers and literary critics graduated from local and foreign universities was increasing, and the standard of literary criticism was improving in a very fast rate. The second and third reasons were difficult to solve. However, when the

first reason has been solved, with the emergence of literary criticism in high standard, it will help to minimize the gap between readers and writers. As for the third reason, it is less convincing if compared to the first and second reasons.

Perhaps, due to this reason, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish literary criticism written by Taiwan writers to support local literary criticism. These articles include (i) “Shi yu Sanwen” (<诗与散文>, “Poem and Prose”) by Yu Guangzhong, (ii) “Wenzi Qingtong yu Fengge Duozi” (<文字清通与风格多姿>, “Clear Language and Various Stylistics”), (iii) “Wenxue de Si Da Jiqiao” (<文学的四大技巧>, “The Four Literary Techniques”) by Huang Weiliang (黄维梁), (iv) “Lin Leng de Shi” (<林冷的诗>, “Poems of Lin Leng”), (v) “Sanwen de Xinshang yu Chuangzuo” (<散文的欣赏与创作>, “The Appreciation and Writing of Prose”) by Yang Mu (杨牧), (vi) “Qing Ti Wenyi Songsong Bang” (<请替文艺松松绑>, “Please Untie Literature”) by Wan Yanji (完颜籍), (vii) “Shi de Zijue” (<诗的自觉>, “The Awareness of Poem”) by Yang Lian (杨炼), (viii) “Shi Hua Yangmu” (<诗话杨牧>, “On Yangmu”) by Xun Qing (迅清), (ix) “Nvxing de Chuantong” (<女性的传统>, “The Tradition of Female”) by Yang Mai (杨迈), (x) “Jing li Jing wai----Tan Shang Wanyun de Hudie Jie” (<镜里镜外——谈商晚筠的《蝴蝶结》>, “Inside and Outside of the Mirror---On Shang Wanyun’s Bowknot”) by Cao Shujuan (曹淑娟), (xi) “Fei Hua Xin Wenxue” (<菲华新文学>, “Philippines Chinese New Literature”) by Shi Yingzhou (施颖洲), (xii) “Dangdai

Xiaoshuo de Jige Chaoliu” (<当代小说的几个潮流>, “The Trends of Contemporary Novels”) by Ma Shen(马森), (xiii) “Shizhe ru si hu?” (<逝者如斯夫? > “Lost Time”) by Yang Fu (杨逵), (xiv) “Xiaoshuo de Xushi Guandian” (<小说的叙事观点>, “Narrative Point of View”), (xv) “Xugou and Xushi” (<虚构与叙事>, “Imagination and Narration”), (xvi) “Cong Xiandaizhuyi dao Hou Xiandaizhuyi” (<从现代主义到后现代主义>, “From Modernism to Post Modernism”) by Cai Yuanhuang(蔡源煌), (xvii)“You Rong Nai Da:Xie zai Shijie Zhongwen Xiaoshuo Xuan zhiqian” (<有容乃大: 写在《世界中文小说选》之前>, “Tolerance is a Virtue: Preface to Collection World Chinese Novels”), (xviii)“Pingxin Jingqi Du Jin Yong” (<平心静气读金庸>, “Keep Calm when Reading Jin Yong”) by Liu Shaoming(刘绍铭) and (xix) “Xianjie de Gang: Lun xiandaishi Gudian Sucai de Yunyong” (<衔接的钢—论现代诗中古典素材的运用>, “The Linking Steel: On the Use of Classical Materials”) by Zheng Mingli(郑明俐).

There are altogether 19 articles of literary criticism by foreign writers. These articles were published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1980 to 1989, in 10 years and 120 issues. At an average there was less than one article in each issue. In other words, this kind of articles was not the primary literary pieces to be published in *Chao Foon Monthly*. It is just a reference for local writers. One of the main objectives of *Chao*

Foon Monthly in the 1980s was to continue publishing a large number of literary criticisms.

In 1980s, literary critics who were active in the 1970s continued to publish articles. The number of articles published was obviously lesser. However, a group of young literary critics emerged in 1980s. Zhang Ruixing (张瑞星), Zhang Guangda (张光达) and Xie Chuancheng (谢川成) were among the most active ones. They published literary criticism not only on modernist literature, but also western literature and classical literature.

The literary criticisms published in *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1980s are listed in the table below.

Table 2.23: The Number of Literary Criticism Published from 1980 to 1989

| Year | No. of Literary Criticism |
|------|---------------------------|
| 1980 | 17 |
| 1981 | 17 |
| 1982 | 17 |
| 1983 | 05 |
| 1984 | 10 |
| 1985 | 13 |
| 1986 | 21 |
| 1987 | 26 |
| 1988 | 29 |
| 1989 | 31 |
| | 186 |

The total number of literary criticism published in 1980s is 186. After subtracting 19 articles by foreign writers, literary criticism contributed by local writers is far more than that by foreign writers. The total number is 167 and the percentage is 89.78. Obviously, *Chao Foon Monthly* has succeeded in publishing literary criticism by local writers.

Most of the top ten critics who had contributed articles from 1980 to 1989 were young. Those who were active in the 1970s did not involve themselves actively in writing literary criticism. Below is the list of top ten contributors of literary criticism in the 1980s.

Table 2.24: Mahua Top Ten Contributors of Literary Criticism in the 1980s

| No. | Name of Young Critics | Number of Published Articles |
|-----|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Xie Chuancheng(谢川成) | 14 |
| 2 | Zhang Jinzhong/Zhang Ruixing(张锦忠/张瑞星) | 9 |
| 3 | Li Youcheng(李有成) | 8 |
| 4 | Zhang Guangda(张光达) | 8 |
| 5 | Lin Jieluo(林杰洛) | 5 |
| 6 | Mai Ke(迈克) | 5 |
| 7 | Lin Tianxing(林添星) | 4 |
| 8 | Lan Qiyuan(蓝启元) | 2 |
| 9 | Lin Ruoyin(林若隐) | 2 |
| 10 | Fang Ang(方昂) | 2 |

As listed in the table, Xie Chuancheng, Zhang Jinzhong, and Zhang Guangda are young critics who are at the top three. Li Youcheng contributed the same number as Zhang Guangda, but he can be considered as a more senior writer because he was

quite active in the 1970s. The other six critics are also young critics. From this statistics, it is clear that young critics has also made a vast contribution to the literary criticism in the 1980s.

From the total number of articles published, it shows that the performance of literary criticism is not satisfactory. With 186 articles in ten years, the average was 18.6 in a year, and less than 2 in an issue. Wen Renping and Lai Ruihe who were active in the 1970s, did not contribute much in the 1980s. Only Chen Huihua had published five articles, although not as good as expected, he was still better than the other senior writers. In short, the results attained at the end of 1980s in literary criticism were the joint effort of *Chao Foon Monthly*, the hard work of young critics and the support from the senior writers.

2.5.2 Publishing Local Modernist Poems

Among the different genres of Mahua Modernist Literature, modernist poems attained the highest performance compared to modernist prose, novels and drama. The rise and fall of a literary movement, often takes poem as the indicator. This is the reason why the Realistic Group attacked modernist poem at the very beginning of Mahua modernist Literature.

As mentioned earlier, Mahua Modernist Literature has developed rapidly in the 1970s and flourished with five important collections of modernist poems. Entering 1980s, the modernist image of *Chao Foon Monthly* was weakened. The dissemination of modernist literature by the magazine was carried out in a passive way, unlike the positive initiative employed in the 1970s. It was passive because there were no other

new strategies to disseminate the modernist literature. It published whatever articles they received from the writers. Although special issues about writers, literary genres and translation were still published, the number of special issues was much lesser than in the 1970s.

Chao Foon Monthly had been trying hard to be localized and to publish good articles in the magazine since the 1960s. The number of modernist poems published in the 1980s was less in total than that in the 1970s. But the number of poems by local writers was very encouraging. Below is a table showing the total number of modernist poems published in *Choa Foon Monthly*.

Table 2.25: Modernist Poems published in the 1980s.

| Year | Total Number of Poems Published |
|-------|---|
| 1980 | 48 |
| 1981 | 91 |
| 1982 | 124 |
| 1983 | 33 |
| 1984 | 78 |
| 1985 | 45 |
| 1986 | 61 |
| 1987 | 107 |
| 1988 | 95 |
| 1989 | 129 |
| Total | 811 |
| | 81 poems annually and 6.75 poems in each issue. |

There were altogether 811 published poems, 81 poems annually and 6.75 poems in each issue. There were only a few poems written by Taiwan poets such as “Shuiniu Benji” (<水牛本纪>, “The Biography of a Buffalo”), “Faguang de Hehua” (<发光的荷花>, “The Shinning Lotus”) and “Jiang He” (<江河>, “The Great River”) by Luo Qing (罗青), “Wanru Shihang” (<宛如十行>, “To be Just Like Ten Lines”) by Xiang Yang (向阳), “Songxing” (<送行>, “Sending off”) and “Gushi” (<故事>, “The Story”) by Lin Ling (林玲). Of course there were also some poems by Singaporean poets. From this, the poems published in *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1980 to 1989 were mostly written by local poets.

The top ten poets who have published the highest number of poems are listed in the table 2.26 below. The other two senior poets were Mei Shuzhen and Xie Yongjiu. Zhang Ruixing who ranked number 9 is not unfamiliar to the readers as his poems were collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*.

Table 2.26: Top Ten Poet in Publication in the 1980s

| No. | Name of Poets | Number of Published Poems |
|-----|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Aiwen(艾文) | 38 |
| 2 | Li Zongshun(李宗舜) | 30 |
| 3 | Fang Ang(方昂) | 27 |
| 4 | Chen Qianghua (陈强华) | 22 |
| 5 | Lin Ruoyin(林若隐) | 21 |
| 6 | Fu Chengde(傅承得) | 20 |
| 7 | Mei Shuzhen(梅淑贞) | 12 |
| 8 | Xie Chuancheng(谢川成) | 11 |
| 9 | Zhang Ruixing(张瑞星) | 9 |
| 10 | Xie Yongjiu(谢永就) | 9 |

The top two poets are well known and their poems have been collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. The other two senior poets are Mei Shuzhen and Xie Yongjiu. As for Zhang Ruixing, who ranked number 9, his poems have been collected in the *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*. The other five poets are quite new in the 1980s. This is the result of *Chao Foon Monthly* in promoting local modernist poems from the 1950s to 1980s.

2.5.3 Publishing Mahua Modernist Poets Special Issues

One of the strategies employed by *Chao Foon Monthly* to disseminate modernist literature in the 1980s was to plan and publish special issues for Mahua modernist poets. This has been done before in the 1970s, but the meaning of doing so in the 1980s was not similar to that in the 1970s. In the last decade, it was a necessity for Mahua Modernist Literature to show its success and strength. For *Chao Foon Monthly*, it was also a need to materialize the outcome of its effort in disseminating modernist literature for such a long period. This was done successfully and by the end of the 1970s, Mahua Modernist Literature had become an important school in Mahua literary arena. In the 1980s, since the antagonistic situation between the two literary groups had stopped, *Chao Foon Monthly* could concentrate on giving special attention to those who were diligent in writing modernist poems.

Approaching the 1980s, Mahua modernist poets have emerged in large numbers. Although the number of poems by senior poets decreased, some of them even stopped writing, but among those poets who started writing in the 1960s, their poems became more matured in the 1980s, and their performances were encouraging. In order to magnify the individual achievement and accumulative performance of each

and every poet, *Chao Foon Monthly* had planned and published a few special issues for Mahua modernist poets. At the same time, for the purpose of encouraging local critics, *Chao Foon Monthly* had invited local critics to write reviews on the poems of Mahua modernist poets.

In May 1989, *Chao Foon Monthly* published a special issue for young poet Fang Ang (方昂), and 20 poems were published. Fang Ang was a young poet at that time. His poems were not collected in any of the five representative poem collection published in 1979. He was a sincere young poet and had tried very hard in writing modernist poems. This was the reason *Chao Foon Monthly* planned to publish a special issue for him. These poems included (i) “Wu Ti” (<无题>, “Untitled”), (ii) “Yan di” (<檐滴>, “Eaves Drop”), (iii) “Pi Fu” (<皮肤>, “The Skin”), (iv) “Cheluo de Ren” (<赤裸的人>, “The Naked Person”), (v) “Ge” (<鸽>, “The Dove”), (vi) “Hu” (<湖>, “The Lake”), (vii) “Chan” (<蝉>, “Cicada”), (viii) “Chouxiang Hua” (<抽象画>, “Abstract Painting”), (ix) “Sijiao Sou de Hua” (<四脚兽的话>, “The Beast with Four Feet”), (x) “Kan Rambo” (<看 Rambo>, “Watching Rambo”), (xi) “Mou Xingqiu de Bowuyuan” (<某星球的博物院>, “Museum in another Planet”), (xii) “Luoye” (<落叶>, “The Fallen Leaf”), (xiii) “Weidimala Nongfu de Lian” (<危地马拉农夫的脸>, “The Face of Farmer in Guatemala”), (xiv) “Yi” (<遗>, “To Leave Behind”), (xv) “Senlin zhi Ge” (<森林之歌>, “The Song of Forest”), (xvi) “Zeng Shu” (<赠书>, “Book Donation”), (xvii) “Huisheng” (<回声>, “Echo”), (xviii) “Jilongpo Daoyou de Hua” (<吉隆坡导游的话>, “Words uttered by Kuala Lumpur Tourist Guide”), (xix) “Reng Shitou” (<扔石头>, “Throwing Stones”) and (xx) “Huo Lian” (<火恋>, “Fire Love”).³¹

³¹ *Chao Foon Monthly* Month, issue 426, May 1989, pp.12-25.

There are two reviews on Fang Ang's poems. The first review entitled "Yu Jin Qing Yao—Luelun Fang Ang de Ershi shou Xiaoshi" (<语近情遥—略论方昂的二十首小诗>, "Language is near but the Content is Far: On Fang Ang's 20 Short Poems") was written by Zhang Guangda, and the second review which entitled "Yifu Daogua de Chouxianghua" (<一幅倒挂的抽象画>, "An Abstract Painting Hanging upside down") was written by Xie Chuancheng (谢川成). Both reviewers were young critics who emerged at the beginning of 1980s, and *Chao Foon Monthly* gave them opportunities to write literary criticism more frequently.

The second special issue 431 for Mahua poet was published in October 1989. The poet was Li Zongshun (李宗舜). Li was a senior Mahua modernist poet. His poems were collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, which was published in 1974. He was one of the pioneering 24 Mahua modernist poets in the 1970s. In the mid 1970s, he went to further his study in Taiwan and returned in the early 1980s. He was not active when he first returned to Malaysia, he only started writing poems again in the mid 1980s. This special issue was considered a recognition of his effort in poetry writing. In this special issue, 19 poems were published which include (i) "Shiren de Tiankong" (<诗人的天空>, "The Poet's Sky"), (ii) "You Nv Tongche" (<有女同车>, "On the Same Car with Daughter"), (iii) "Xiangjian zai Yuji" (<相见在雨季>, "Meeting in the Raining Season"), (iv) "Yaba" (<哑巴>, "The Dumb"), (v) "Deng" (<等>, "To Wait"), (vi) "Bingta shang" (<病榻上>, "On the Sick Bed"), (vii) "Deng Gao" (<登高>, "Climbing High"), (viii) "Feng" (<蜂>, "The Bee"), (ix) "Zhuru" (<侏儒>, "The Dwarf"), (x) "Cichangjie de Beiying" (<茨厂街的背影>, "The Back of Petaling Street"), (xi) "Jieri" (<节日>, "Festival"), (xii) "Shijian" (<

时间>, “Time”), (xiii) “Jia”(家>, “Family”),(xiv) “Qiuyin”(蚯蚓>, “Earth worm”),(xv) “Peichang”(赔偿>, “Compensation”), (xvi) “Du”(赌>, “Gamble”), (xvii) “Cuoshi”(错失>, “Missed”),(xviii) “Wo hai Huozhe”(我还活着>, “I am still Alive”) and (xix) “Shui lai Ban Wo” (谁来伴我>, “Who will Accompany Me”) (Li, 1989, p.7-21).

There were three reviews on Li Zongshun’s poems. The first review was written by Zhou Qingxiao (周清啸). Li Zongshun was a former member of Sirius Poetical Society, and Zhou Qingxiao was also a member of the same society. Zhou is also a senior poet whose poems were also collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. He is familiar with Li Zongshun and it is appropriate for him to review Li’s poems. His review entitled “Zou chu Xiangyata, Zou ru Shenghuo---Tan LiZongshun de Shi” (走出象牙塔, 走入生活---谈李宗舜的诗>, “Going out of the Ivory Tower, entering Realistic Life---A Study of Li Zongshun’s Poems”). In the first paragraph, he outlined the stylistic differences between Li’s poems in the early days and those in the present of that time. He described:

Li Zongshun was formerly known as Huang Hunxing (黄昏星). Huang Hunxing was a shining star in the 1970s and had written many outstanding lyric poetry, whose style is near to Zhou Chouyu and Ye Shan. But Li’s poems today are clear and realistic. In short, his poems today are much different from his poems not only in content, but also in techniques (Zhou, 1989, p.24).

Another review was written by Chen Huihua (陈慧桦), and the title of his article is “Cong Chushi/Rushi Kan Li Zongshun” (<从出世/入世看李宗舜>, “Studying Li Zongshun from the Perspectives of Withdrawing from and entering the World”) (Chen, 1989, p.30-34). The third review entitled “Ziwo he Jiamian---Lun Li Zongshun shi zhong de Diyi Rencheng Xushi Guandian” (<自我与假面---论李宗舜诗中的第一人称叙事观点>, “Self-ego and the Mask---Review on the First Person Point of View in Li Zongshun’s Poems”) (Zhang, 1989, p.35-37). From the titles of the two reviews, it is clear that the two critics employed different approaches to discuss Li Zongshun’s poems, Chen from the perspective of content and Zhang from the angle of poetic techniques.

The last issue in the 1980s was published in December 1989, issue 433. The special issue published poems of Ai Wen (艾文), a senior modernist poet from the northern part of Peninsula Malya whose poems were also collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. He published 21 poems including (i) “Suowei Dushu” (<所谓读书>, “The So called Reading”), (ii) “Liulian” (<榴莲>, “Durian”), (iii) “Piqiu” (<皮球>, “The Rubber Ball”), (iv) “Tiandi Youyou” (<天地悠悠>, “The Remote World”), (v) “Zai Gaoshu Gonglu” (<在高速公路>, “On the Highway”), (vi) “Natiao Jie” (<那条街>, “That Street”), (vii) “You Re Shuijing Ji” (<游热水井记>, “Tour to the Hot Water Well”), (viii) “Hudie zhi Si” (<蝴蝶之死>, “The Death of a Butterfly”), (ix) “Youyong de Zhexue” (<游泳的哲学>, “The Philosophy of Swimming”), (x) “Pudu” (<普渡>, “Purdue”), (xi) “Yu Lou Chun” (<玉楼春>, “The Spring Song”), (xii) “Niao” (<鸟>, “The Bird”), (xiii) “Tianbiao” (<填表>, “Filling in the Form”), (xiv) “Gang zhong Yu” (<缸中鱼>, “Fish in the Tank”), (xv) “Wuyun” (<乌云>, “The Dark

Cloud”), (xvi) “Ri Si”(＜日蚀＞, “Solar Eclipse”), (xvii) “Shilida Xushuichi”(＜实里达蓄水池＞, “Shilida Reservoir”), (xviii) “Xingzhou Shuanglin Si”(＜星洲双林寺＞, “The Shuanglin Temple”), (xix) “Shulin zhong de Niao” (＜树林中的鸟＞, “Bird in the Forest”), (xx) “Cong bowuyuan Chulai”(＜从博物院出来＞, “Out from the Museum”) and (xxi) “Zhongqiu”(＜中秋＞, “Mid-Autumn”).

There were three reviews and an article on Ai Wen’s personality and character. The three reviews were written by Fang Ang, Zhang Guangda and Xie Chuancheng, and the other article was written by Xiao Hei on the poet as a person. The title of Fang Ang’s review was “Dushi Biji” (＜读书笔记＞, “Notes of Reading”), and Zhang Guangda’s review entitled “Yunhuang Tiaoyue de Denghuo” (＜晕黄跳跃的的灯火＞, “The Yellow Twinkling Lamp”). Finally, the review by Xie Chuancheng entitled “HouguoYongyuan buwei Women zhuoxiang” (＜后果永远不为我们着想＞, “The Consequences will never Consider our Needs”).

From the perspective of planning special issue for modernist poets, it is clear that *Chao Foon Monthly* has tried very hard to publish special individual issues successfully. However, why was the honour only given to three poets? No one knew the answer. Those poets who were active in the 1970s such as Wen Renping, Wang Runhua, Mei Zhuzhen, Wen Ruian, Fang Ezhen and others were not invited to publish poems in any special issue. Unfortunately, these poets were too busy to publish poems in the 1980s. If *Chao Foon Monthly* had encouraged them, the outcome would be different.

2.5.4 Translating, Introducing Western Modernist Literature

Although Mahua modernist literature had achieved high performance in 1970s, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to disseminate modernist literature through translating Western modernist literature. The editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* had the opinion that continuous input of modernist literature was still necessary with the intention of enhancing the performance of local modernist writers. This strategy had been used in both the 1960s and 1980s and the result was positive and encouraging. From the researcher's point of view, it is appropriate for *Chao Foon Monthly* to continue this effort.

The social and political backgrounds were different from that in the 1970s. The hot issues in the 1970s were more on Chinese education in Malaysia because of the Razak Education report, which forced all the Chinese schools at that time to convert to government schools in order to enjoy the financial subsidy from the government. That was a great challenge for the Chinese community in Malaysia. Finally, some of the Chinese Schools decided to convert and the others preferred to stay as before. Consequently, there were 78 Chinese schools with partial government subsidy and the names of the schools were changed to Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan, whereas the other 60 Chinese schools remained as Chinese schools without any subsidy from the government.

In 1980s, the major social issue was about politics. Under the emergency act called the abolition of Lalang by the government, more than one hundred Chinese leaders were arrested due to a gathering organized in the Thean Hou Temple to discuss the future of Chinese education. The arresting action was called the The Lalang

Action. This social background supplied sufficient resources for Malaysian writers to develop the themes of social concern in their articles.

In the literary arena, the magazine *Chao Foon Monthly* still upheld the mission of disseminating modernist literature to Mahua literary arena. Some articles, poems and novels were translated and some Western modernist writers and literary classics were introduced. *Chao Foon Monthly* was supported by a group of translators who were willing to translate whatever articles needed by the magazine. Below is the number of articles of this according to the respective year.

Table 2.27: Number of Translation and Introduction in the 1980s.

| No. | Year | No. of Translation and Introduction |
|-------|------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1980 | 43 |
| 2 | 1981 | 30 |
| 3 | 1982 | 18 |
| 4 | 1983 | 11 |
| 5 | 1984 | 05 |
| 6 | 1985 | 11 |
| 7 | 1986 | 44 |
| 8 | 1987 | 16 |
| 9 | 1988 | 08 |
| 10 | 1989 | 03 |
| Total | | 189 |

The translation and introduction of Western modernist literature is necessary for it provides a reference for the Mahua modernist writers. In addition, local modernist

writers can also translate articles from the Western literature. This shows that the magazine has nurtured Mahua writers in the past two decades.

Mahua modernist literature has not attained high modernism yet. Modernist writers were still in need of resources from the West to enhance their performance. From this perspective, the effort of *Chao Foon Monthly* in publishing translations and introduction of Western Modernist literature was appropriate. In short, even until the 1980s, with the increasing number of modernist writers and literary critics, *Chao Foon Monthly* never planned to stop supplying relevant resources for local writers.

2.5.5 Continue Publishing Special Issue, Disseminating Western Modernist Literature

The other techniques of disseminating modernist literature used in the 1980s were quite similar to that in the 1970s. The special issues published in the 1970s were popular among the readers and writers. The effect and influence were great. In 1980s, although the two opposite literary groups were in harmony, yet disseminating new knowledge and introducing modernist writers, whether local or foreign, were still necessary. Special issues in the 1980s were very different from those in the 1970s, the content was not solely on literature, but modern arts movies were also included.

Below are some of the Special topic and Issues. (i) “1979 Nian Ruobeier wenzxuejiang dezhu Ailidisi Zhuanti” (<1979 年诺贝尔文学奖得主艾利蒂斯专题>, “Special Topic of Nobel Literary Prize Winner Odysseus Elytis”)³², (ii) “Junde. Gelaisi

³² 1979 nian Ruobeier wenzxuejiang dezhu Ailidisi Zhuanti 1979 年诺贝尔文学奖得主艾利蒂斯专题(Special Topic of Nobel Literary Prize Winner Odysseus Elytis), *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 322, January 1980, pp.6-23

de shi”(《君德·格拉斯的诗》, “The Poems of Gunter Grass”)³³, (iii) “Sah Te Xiaoji”(《沙特小辑》, “Special issue of Satre”)³⁴, (iv) “Xiju Zhuanti” (《戏剧专题》, “Special Topic of Drama”)³⁵, (v) “Xiju Zhuanti”(《戏剧专题》, “Special Topic of Drama”)³⁶, (vi) “Ase Mile Zhuanti”(《阿瑟·米勒专题》, “Special Topic of Arthur Miller”)³⁷, (vii) “Tang Tingting Zhuanji: Meiguo Wentan Xinxiu”(《汤婷婷专辑：美国文坛新秀》, “Special Issue of Tang Tingting”).³⁸

The above special issues and topics consist of poetry, drama, play writer, philosophy and introduction of a young writer from America. *Chao Foon Monthly* showed its emphasis on different genres and seldom concentrated only on one single genre. This shows an equal concern to all literary genres. The special issues for the whole of 1980s were scattered and published in this manner.

2.5.6 Conclusion

Chao Foon Monthly had performed a very important role in disseminating the modernist literature from the end of 1950s to December 1970s. By the end of the 1970s, *Chao Foon Monthly* had accomplished its missions: (i) to disseminate modernist literature in Mahua literary arena, (ii) to foster local modernist writers.

However, in 1980s, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish a large number of modernist poems, and had also published a few special topics for local modernist poets. In addition, *Chao Foon Monthly* had also fostered a few young literary critics. Their

³³ Junde. Gelaisi de shi 君德。格拉斯的诗 (The Poems of Gunter Grass), *Chao Foon Monthly* issue 323, February 1980, pp.4-5.

³⁴ Sah Te Xiaoji 沙特小辑 (Special issue of Satre), *Chao Foon Monthly* issue 328, July 1980, pp.4-11.

³⁵ Xiju Zhuanti 戏剧专题 (Special Topic of Drama), *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 328, July 1980, pp. 39-131.

³⁶ Xiju Zhuanti 戏剧专题 (Special Topic of Drama), *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 329, August, 1980, pp.55-116.

³⁷ Ase Mile Zhuanti 阿瑟·米勒专题 (Special Topic of Arthur Miller), *Chao Foon Monthly*, Issue 336, March, 1981, pp. 4-36.

³⁸ Tang Tingting Zhuanji: Meiguo Wentan Xinxiu 汤婷婷专辑：美国文坛新秀 (Special Issue of Tang Tingting) . *Chao Foon Monthly*. issue 337, April 1981. Pp.5-27.

works were not up to the expectation; at least there was an improvement in the arena of Mahua modernist literature. Approaching the 1990s, some of the literary critics were graduates from university, and were trained academically. Literary criticism from that time onwards showed a vast improvement. Furthermore, in this decade, *Chao Foon Monthly* continued to publish the translation and introduction of Western modernist literature until the end of 1980s.

2.6 The Influence of *Chao Foon Monthly*

Chao Foon Monthly is a literary magazine which has the longest lifespan among all literary magazines in Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong. It was published continuously for more than 40 years. It stopped publishing after issue 488, January, February 1999 due to financial difficulties and came into the market again in December 2002. It was then taken over by Mahua Literary Institute (马华文学馆), supported by Southern College University.

Actually, by the late 1980s, *Chao Foon Monthly* had basically completed its historical task. From Malaysianised poetry revolution, in disseminating modernist literature, publishing collections of modernist poetry and cultivating young writers for Mahua modernist literature, it has written an important page in the history of Mahua Literature. It has changed the layout structures of Mahua Literature, promoted the rise and development of Mahua modernist literature, and cultivated numerous modernist poets and some literary critics in Singapore and Malaysia.

To summarise the influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* on Mahua Modernist Literature, it can be categorized into three points, namely, changing the paradigm of writing among the writers and the literary taste of the readers. Secondly, through

translating and introducing Western modernist literature, and thirdly it supplied local writers with relevant literary resources especially those of modernist literature.

2.6.1 Changing the Paradigm of Writing among the Writers and the Literary Taste of the Readers

The most immediate influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* is to bring in modernist poetics into Malaysia and enhance the paradigm of writers and also the literary taste of the readers. From the end of the 50s to 60s, local young writers were sick of the Realistic articles. They were not satisfied with the content and also the techniques employed.

In the promotion of *Chao Foon Monthly*, Bai Yao published essays on literary revolution that stressed on the need of revolution in Mahua literature, especially the need of new look in poems. Otherwise, those old-fashioned poems, although looked like poetry but they were actually not, had no or only a little aesthetic design. *Chao Foon Monthly* published Bai Yao's essays, and then published two collections of Modernist poetry *The Beautiful V Shape* and *The Excursion* respectively in June and September 1959. After that, it also published Bai Yao's review on the two collections, and disseminated modernist literature at the same time.

In the early 1960s, *Chao Foon Monthly* published novels of Nie Hualing (聂华苓), Xu Xu (徐訏), Zhu Xining (朱西宁), Wang Jingxi (王敬羲), Guo Yidong (郭衣洞) from Hong Kong and Taiwan, poems of Tan Zihao (覃子豪), Yu Guangzhong (余光中), Xia Jing (夏菁), Zheng Chouyu (郑愁予) and Luo Men (罗门) from Taiwan. For the case of prose, *Chao Foon Monthly* published prose of Zhang Xiuya (张秀亚), Qi

Jun (琦君), Xu Zhongpei (徐钟佩) and Ye Shan. The editing policy of *Chao Foon Monthly* at that time was double strikes, in one respect, it cultivated new blood of local literature, and on the other hand, this action could translate and publish articles from Hong Kong and Taiwan, as a reference to local writers. As mentioned earlier, two collections of modernist poetry *The Beautiful V Shape* and *The Excursion* were published in June and September 1959 respectively. These two collections published poems of modernist from Taiwan, with limited number of local poets' work. Ten years later in 1969, *Chao Foon Monthly* published another collection of modernist poems Collection of Singapore and Malaysia. It has included 25 poems, all written by local Singapore and Malaysian poets. Within 10 years, *Chao Foon Monthly* had changed the entire writing consciousness among the local young writers, changing their style of Realistic to Modernist inclined style of poems, and undoubtedly, it was a breakthrough.

From the perspective of readers, they felt unhappy with the techniques employed by the Realistic poets in the 60s. *Chao Foon Monthly* grasped the golden opportunity to publish modernist poetry and modernist prose from Hong Kong and Taiwan and had to a certain extent satisfied the reader's literary taste. The general readers who read articles from other countries and translated articles and introductory articles of Western modernist literature, had gradually upgraded their understanding and appreciation of literature and in the end rejected articles of the Realistic Group. Especially Realistic poems were rejected totally by young readers because they preferred reading poems with more sophisticated expression techniques.

The effort by *Chao Foon Monthly* in the dissemination of modernist literature was not in vain. Mahua writers with high aspiration absorbed literary resources from articles published in *Chao Foon Monthly* and started writing modernist poetry and

prose. After 20 years of disseminating, a group of modernist poets emerged, together with a group of modernist prose writers. Comparatively, Mahua modernist poet outnumbered modernist prose writers, 27 of them had their poems collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, and 23 young poets had their poems collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*. In addition, Sirius Poetical Society published *The Sirius Collection of Poems* and poems of 37 Sirius Poetical Society members were collected. Furthermore, modernist poets in Sarawak had also published a collection of poems entitled *Collection Sarawak Modernist Poetry*. With these few collections of poems, it is obvious that an army of modernist poets was formed. In the case of modernist prose, there was no representative for prose collection like that of modernist poetry. However, there were quite a number of personal prose collections by writers like You Cao, Lu Mang, Wen Renping, Si Cai, and Zhang Shulin and He Naijian. The representatives of modernist novels are Song Ziheng, Ju Fan from northern Malaysia, and Hong Quan (洪泉) from Malacca. Other important novelists are those who furthered their studies in Taiwan and settled in Taiwan, like Li Yongping (李永平), Zhang Guixing (张贵兴), and those returned to Malaysia after finishing their studies who are Pan Yutong (潘雨桐), and Shang Wanyun (商晚筠).

The influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* in this respect is obvious. It succeeded in bringing new techniques and advance literary aesthetic into the literary arena of Malaysia. Youngsters at that period were inspired by modernist articles published in *Chao Foon Monthly*, whether it is local or from overseas. With the shift of literary paradigm, local writers started in writing modernist poems, prose and novels.

2.6.2 Supplying Modernist Literature Resources by Translating and Introducing Western Modernist Literature

Chao Foon Monthly employed different strategies in disseminating modernist literature. At first, it published modernist articles from Taiwan. It was convenient, however, Taiwan is the original source of Modernism. So, it started translating essays, articles, poems from Western modernist literature, and introduced Western modernism by articles written in Chinese. In addition, it also introduced famous modernist writers with the intention of providing local writers the chance of reading such articles and essays.

The Western modernist writers who were introduced were the major writers in the twentieth century. Modernist poet such as T.S Eliot, modernist novelist Virginia Woolf and playwright Arther Miller were some of the Western writers. Poems of T.S Eliot such as “Huang Yuan” (< 荒原>, “The Waste Land”) and “Sige sichongzou” (<四个四重奏>, “The Four Quarters”), Virginia’s Wolf’s novel entitled *Dengtaxing* (《灯塔行》, *To the Lighthouse*), and Arthur Miller’s *Yige Tuixiaoyuan zhi Si* (《一个推销员之死》, *The Death of a Salesman*) were published. These poems, novels and plays contained very clear picture of modernist literature and were well received by the contemporary critics and readers.

The influence of translation and introducing Western modernist literature is obvious to all, especially novels using the technique of stream of consciousness. Local novelists such as Song Ziheng and Ju Fan were inspired by this technique and have

written short stories of this kind. The influence and dissemination of other modernist literature has been discussed in Chapter Two.

2.6.3 Cultivating Young Writers for Mahua Modernist Literature

When *Chao Foon Monthly* was first published, it was not a magazine for Mahua modernist literature. At the end of the 50s, when Bai Yao promoted the literary revolution, *Chao Foon Monthly* supported him and published all his articles. It was then regarded as a magazine of modernist literature. After the literary revolution, it developed slowly and finally transformed into the centre of Mahua modernist literature.

The editors were good at cultivating young writers. The editor's note mentioned clearly about this:

We try our best to accept articles by young writers, excavate their talent and potential, and offer the best opportunity for them, all these are our major duty..... In case of writing modernist articles, the first poem of Sha Yan, Shui Shen, Wen Renping, Piaobeiling were published in *Chao Foon Monthly* (The Editor, 1970).

This show that the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* were serious in doing the routine of editor's work and cultivating the literary attitude of the young writers.

In the 70s, many modernist writers grew up in *Chao Foon Monthly*. Wen Renping pointed out:

As Zhang Jinzhong pointed out, Chao Foon Monthly has cultivated many writers. As for myself, my first modernist poem was published in Chao Foon Monthly. In the 1970s, I together with friends in the Sirius Poetical Society, Wen Ruian, Fang Ezhen, Li Zongshun, Zhou Qingxiao, Lan Qiyuan and others, all of us published our articles in Chao Foon Monthly (Wen, 2000).

In the 70s, modernist literature was considered as avant-garde literature. The literary supplements in the newspaper took it as unconventional and refused to publish articles of this kind. If not because of *The Students' Weekly* and *Chao Foon Monthly*, there were nowhere for the Mahua modernist writers to publish their articles. Due to this reason, some talented modernist writers died on the vine when they just started to sprout, they did not have the opportunity to improve themselves from their writing experience.

The late Shang Wanyun was also an outstanding Mahua modernist writer who was cultivated by *Chao Foon Monthly*. In the Editor's note issue 273, November 1975, "Comparatively, Shang Wanyun was still a young writer, she was studying in the Department of Foreign Language, this article "Mimi" (<秘密>, "The Secret") has a very exquisite narration about the secret in a young woman's heart" (The Editor, 1975). In this case, two aspects need to be considered, firstly, the introduction of this new young writer, and positive comments were given to his articles. Ma Lun made a review on *Chao Foon Monthly*: "If not for this good comment, Shang Wanyun at that time may not have been so diligent in writing novels, and later won several literary prizes in Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. Her novels were published by Taiwan publisher and the sales were very good. Now, she is an outstanding editor" (Ma, 1997, p.82). Ma

Lun's review may be exaggerative, however, without *Chao Foon Monthly's* encouragement, the development of Shang Wanyun in the future may be different from the reality. In other words, Shang Wanyun's performance may not be as good as she had achieved.

Another example of a writer who was also cultivated by *Chao Foon Monthly* was Huang Mo (荒漠), a secondary school student in an English school in Malacca. He published a short story entitled "Tu" (<突>, "Suddenly") in the issue 293, July 1977. The editor of that issue praised this young writer: "This short story is full of symbolic elements; it also symbolizes his limitless success in the future" (The Editor, 1977, p.99). This young writer received encouragement and continued to write, and finally in 1993, he was awarded the Third Outstanding Chao Chew Youth Literary Prize. He is known as He Jin (何谨), original name Chen Hejin. When he won the award, he has been the supplement director of Nanyang Xiang Pau. As pointed out by Ma Lun: "Just imagine, Huang Mo at that time, if he was not taken care of and fostered by the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, it is possible that he will not be able to become one of the outstanding writers after ten years or more" (Ma, 1997, p.82).

The above mentioned are examples in the 1970s. Let's take an example from the 1980s in order to show how the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly* took care of Mahua young writers, and their continuous effort and never ending mission in cultivating Mahua young writers. Those who were familiar with Mahua literature in the 1970s and 1980s will be familiar with novelist Hong Quan (洪泉). In the issue 342 of *Chao Foon Monthly*, October 1981, Hong Quan published his very first short story "Jietuo" (<解脱>, "Relief"). The editor of this issue wrote a positive review: ".....Hong Quan is one of writers who is willing to try. After working hard on writing for a few months, he is

proud to show his article to other people. Readers must try to take note of the author's effort in trying to make a break breakthrough, his suffering as well as hardwork in trying to improve and open up more borders and effort. The short story Relief, although it is not the best outcome of his effort, it is a sincere and brave attempt” (The Editor, 1981). After publishing the first short story in *Chao Foon Monthly*, he continued publishing several good articles in *Chao Foon Monthly*. This has to do with the positive review given by the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*.

Of course, there were many other writers who published their first article in *Chao Foon Monthly*, given good comment as encouragement and then continued to write and in the end became outstanding Mahua writers. Hence one can see that, *Chao Foon Monthly* has always valued young writers, and led youngsters to understand modernism, involved themselves in literary writing, and finally has cultivated a big group of young writers. This has made a great influence on Mahua literature.

In cultivating young writers, *Chao Foon Monthly* in addition to reviewing young and potential writers, it organized picnics for youth writers. This kind of picnics was also called life camp, and has been organized in Port Dickson, Cameron Highlands, Maxwell Hill in Taiping and Morib Beach. All these picnics were organized from 1961 to 1964. All the participants came from Singapore and Malaysia. The activities in the camp included forum, with the intention to let young writers voice out their opinions. Two of the titles were “Our Basic Belief” and “Our View on Mahua Literary Arena”. This kind of literary camps contributed to the relationship between all the young writers, and the more importantly strengthened the belief and confidence in writing and perseverance, with this to preserve the strength of young writers. The reality proves

that the effort of *Chao Foon Monthly* did not go to waste. In short, the influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* towards Mahua Literary arena is great.

2.6.4 Conclusion

The discussion above is a brief account of *Chao Foon Monthly*'s influence in Mahua Literature. These influences are clear and specific. For those who study Mahua Modernist Literature, the influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* can be studied in more detail.

2.7 Conclusive Remarks

As a literary dissemination medium, *Chao Foon Monthly* took disseminating modernist literature as its main mission. From the late 1950s to the end of 1980s, it had undergone several changes, not only in the size of the magazine and its policy of publishing articles, but also the content of the magazine. However, disseminating modernist literary elements has never ceased and it even continued in the 1990s. In other words, the contribution of *Chao Foon Monthly* to the Mahua literary arena is great in general, and to Mahua Modernist literature is even greater in particular. It may be concluded that, without the support of *Chao Foon Monthly*, Mahua Modernist Literature would not have succeeded as what is seen today. It kicked off the emergence of Mahua modernist literature in late 1950s and early 1960s. It planned a series of special issues, special editions for Western modernist literature, western modernist writers, Taiwan modernist writers and also for local poets. It even published two collections of modern poems, as well as poems from local and abroad. In 1960, it

published a collection of poems by Singapore and Malaysian modernist poets. This was the first evidence of its effort in disseminating modernist literature.

In the 1970s, the disseminating of modernist literature was strengthened and a large group of local modernist poets, prose writers and novelists emerged. They had distinctive performance in this decade and the performance of modernist poets were summarized in three collections of modernist poetry published by the Sirius Poetical Society. For prose writers, although no collection of prose was published, individual writers published their prose collection in Malaysia and also in Taiwan. In other words, the modernist articles of local writers were not only accepted locally, but also recognized internationally. The Malaysian novelists were recognized in Hong Kong and many writers had their first collection of short story published in Hong Kong. In short, the Mahua modernist literature has reached its climax at the end of the 1970s.

The 1980s was just a continuation of the literary activities of the 1970s. The only difference was the publication of modernist poems by local writers and special topics for local modernist poets. The modernist literary movement was mature in the 1980s and all modernist writers have had their best articles, whether poems, prose or sort stories, published in or before the 1980s.

In conclusion, *Chao Foon Monthly* has performed its duty well as a literary disseminating medium, and its influence to Mahua Literature was great and should be studied in depth. It has been nominated as the literary magazine with the greatest longevity. Although it stopped publishing for some time, it took a better look when it was replenished. It is still publishing today and the responsibility was succeeded from Yao Tuo to Southern College University until today.

CHAPTER 3: THE SIRIUS POETICAL SOCIETY AND THE DISSEMINATION OF MAHUA MODERNIST LITERATURE

3.0 Introduction

What is a poetical society? According to Li Ruiteng,

A poetical society is formed by a group of poets. From the perspective of a gathering, a poetical society is obviously a kind of voluntary association set up by human sociologists. It is independent, has clear objectives and is a non-profit organization. The so-called ‘obvious objectives’ of the society refers to why its members form such a society. This is commonly referred to as purposes which resemble its collective objectives. It can be very rational, for instance to promote a certain idea of poetry; it can also be relatively sentimental, merely for a social gathering. The so-called ‘non-profit’, implies that donations from society members are not for the purpose of creating profit, it just reflects a kind of voluntary participation. In addition to striving for collective poetical ideals, it also satisfies personal poetical preference. A poetical society is an independent non-governmental organization. The poetical society is self-supporting, not a subordinate of any other poetical groups. Even though it accepts donations, it will never work for the sponsors.³⁹

³⁹ Li Ruiteng (1999) *Poetical Society and The Development of Taiwan Modern Poems*, published in official website of “The 4th International Conference on Modern Poetry”, organised by Normal University of Zhang Hua, Taiwan. See also website: <http://bbs.nsysu.edu.tw/txtVersion/treasure/poem/M.999184888.A/M.1007540931.A/M.1007541268.M.html>. [Online Access date: 2nd March 2011]

Sirius Poetical Society in Malaysia obviously conforms to the above three characteristics identified by Li Ruiteng, namely, it has clear objectives, it is a non-profit organization and it is independent.

Gu Yuanqing (Gu, 2004, p.283) an academic from China, believes that the reasons poets get together to form a society vary. On one hand it is because they want to learn from each other the art of poetry, and on the other hand, it is to look for new ideas and also to widen the publishing arena for modernist poetry. The members of a society cherish their common goal, involve in poetical creation, and also express their views towards developing poetry. In this regard, members of the Sirius Poetical Society share the same trait. Discussing the art of poetry is their daily activity. This will be elaborated in the second and third part of this chapter. In fact, the activities of a poetical society are not restricted to members only; they even have some bearing on the whole literary arena. As for the Taiwan poetical arena, Gu Yuanqing commented on the role of a poetical society: "The reason for the rise of Taiwan Modern Poetry as a full-fledged movement bears a close relationship with the poets forming poetical societies" (Gu, 2004, p.283-284). Gu Yuanqing has discussed the great influence of poetical societies towards Taiwan Modern Poetry. For example, in the case of Lan Xing Shishe (藍星詩社, Blue Star Poetry Union), although its influence on the whole of the Taiwan poetical arena is not that prominent, each society member has created their own status in the literary arena. In the early stage, Epoch Poetry Union advocated the new racial poetical form (新民族詩型), but it was difficult to put into practice. Later they changed the emphasis to writing poetry and promoted surrealism, and this generated a great deal of impact on Taiwan Modern Poetry. Similarly in Malaysia, the rise of the Sirius Poetical Society has a great influence on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. Ye Xiao, the former chairman of Malaysian Chinese Writers'

Association and a literary critic, commented that the third stage of the development of Mahua Modernist Poetry (1970-1979) has ushered in the era of the Sirius (Ye, 1998, p.31). This statement recognised the contribution and the influence of Sirius Poetical Society in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. According to Ye,

In 1970s, the Sirius Poetical Society has attained immense success in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature; this is a reality which cannot be denied. At that period, young people who were interested in literature were keen to join the Sirius Poetical Society⁴⁰; most of the members write poems as their artistic priority. This may be due to the reason Sirius Poetical Society used to organise poetical activities that focused on activities such as recitation of modern poetry, competition of writing modern poems, conference or seminar on modern poetry and the publication of literary magazine⁴¹ (Ye, 1998, p.31).

The Sirius Poetical Society is a literary society, it upholds literary behaviorism. A society will grow in strength if it takes care of the unity of group thinking and action. The members of Sirius Poetical Society are scattered all over Malaysia. Individual members have to persuade their friends to join the society. By coordinating with the central committee, they exerted a lot of influence. As a literary group, The Sirius Poetical Society plays the role of disseminating literature, motivating its members to contribute to special issues, organizes talks for *Chao Foon Monthly*, and even produces

⁴⁰ A female poet, present lecturer in the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya, was keen to join the Sirius Poetical Society. She wrote in one of her proeses: "To me, the name of the Sirius Poetical Society is like an old photograph. Although I know very little about the society, and due to this reason, I have more imagination about the society." See Zhang Huisi (张惠思).1997. "Tianlangxing", (<天狼星>, "The Sirius"), Sin Chew Daily, 11 October 1997, p.4.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Jingxi de Xingguang (《惊喜的星光》, *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*), a collection of songs based on their modernist poems.

The Sirius Poetical Society is different from other literary societies in the 1970s. According to Wen Renping, the founder of the Sirius Poetical Society, in an interview (Appendix 1):

Literary societies such as the Palm Tree (棕榈), the Rhinoceros (犀牛), the Dove (鸽), the Drummer (鼓手), and the Human World Poetical Society (人间诗社), are different from the Sirius Poetical Society. The members of these societies are adults, capable of publishing books on their own. However, the members of the Sirius Poetical Society are mostly students in secondary schools. They required collective efforts in promoting Mahua Modernist literature and publishing books.

Although there was obvious limitation in the society, the members had done a lot in the dissemination of Madernist Mahua Literature in 1970s and 1980s. Its success was great and recognised.

This chapter will discuss in detail the formation and development of Sirius Poetical Society, its efforts and contributions in the 70s and 80s in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature.

It will also touch on the roles played by Wen Renping and Xie Chuancheng and their continual efforts in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature from the 90s to 2000. The last two parts will briefly discuss how the Sirius Poetical Society constructs Modern Malaysian literary canon and its influence on the process of disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature.

3.1 A Brief Account of the Development of Sirius Poetical Society

From the pre-formation stage to 1989, the Sirius Poetical Society has undergone several developmental stages. The first stage was called Pre-formation Stage or The Sprouting Stage, from 1967 to 1972. In 1967, Oasis Society (绿洲社) was formed by a few teenagers, who were students of Zhong Hua Secondary School in Bidor. They are Wen Ruian (温瑞安), Lan Qiyuan (蓝启元), Zhou Qingxiao (周清啸), Liao Yanping (廖雁平), Ye Pianzhou (叶遍舟), Yu Yuntian (余云天), Wu Chaoran (吴超然). They were led by Wen Ruian. The seven teenagers called themselves as ‘The Seven Man of Virtue’.

In the Sprouting Stage, there were only a few members. There were only three main activities including publishing Hand-written Periodical, Cyclostyled Periodicals and organise literary gatherings. Although these activities were carried out in the Sprouting Stage, some were continued after the formation of Sirius Poetical Society.

33 issues of the Oasis Periodicals have been published. This shows the members’ love towards literature. Members who had read the hand written periodical had to sign on the back cover of the issue.

The second important thing accomplished during the Sprouting Stage was the publication of a Special Issue for Malaysian Poets. The issue was edited by Wen Renping. All the articles were published in Pure Literature Bimonthly for two consecutive issues, namely Issue October 1972, and Issue November 1972. The editor Wen Renping stressed that he wanted to expand the power of Modernist Poetry to overseas, and claimed international recognition.

The objective of preparing such a special issue was, in addition to striving for international reputation, he wanted to do something beneficial for the Malaysia Chinese Literary Arena. He wanted Malaysia Chinese Poetry to be read by readers from other countries other than the local readers. He wanted poets and writers from other countries to know the performance of Malaysian Chinese Modernist Writers.

Sirius Poetical Society was formed in February 1973 and it was a period of developing and blossom stages until 1976. After the formation, members felt that they had a special home and their sense of belonging grew. They had an identity. The society was formed with specific objectives. In the beginning, there were only a few members, which included Wen Ruian, Huang Hunxing, Zhou Qingxiao, Lan Qiyuan and other Wen Ruian's friends. They were proud of the society and took this as an opportunity to communicate with readers from other states and encouraged them to join Sirius Poetical Society.

Sirius Poetical Society was an active society. It developed promptly after its formation in 1973, and entered the Blossom Stage. In 1973, Wen Renping, who was a teacher in the state of Pahang, was transferred to Datok Sagor Secondary School in Langkap, Perak. He stayed in Bidor, which was his hometown and he travelled to

Langkap everyday. Wen Renping was also a poet and had knowledge regarding literature in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Due to the transfer of workplace, the strength of Wen Renping and that of his brother Wen Ruian became more powerful. Under his leadership and strategic plans, The Sirius Poetical Society grew very fast. In less than three years, he had formed 10 branches throughout Malaysia. The branches include 'The Oasis' or better known as Lv Zhou (绿洲), Lv Lin (绿林), Lv Tian (绿田), Lv Hu (绿湖), Lv Ye (绿野), Lv Liu (绿流), Lv Feng (绿风), Lv Dao (绿岛), Lv Cong (绿丛) and Lv Yuan (绿园). With these 10 branches, an enormous literary force came into existence gradually. The Sirius then formed a headquarters for the 10 branches to ease management and organization issues. The President of the headquarter was Wen Renping, followed by Editor Wen Ruian, the person in charge of general affairs Huang Hunxing, the treasurer Zhou Qingxiao, secretary Lan Qiyuan. A few committee members were proposed in order to develop the society.

In 1976, the Lv Yuan Branch was formed, and the President of this branch was Xie Chuancheng, which was the 10th branch of Sirius Poetical Society. The Sirius Poetical Society at this stage had shown a good performance. The number of members increased, and most of them could write good poems. Their activities were not restricted to the traditional activities in the early stage. But, Wen Ruian and his friends who had furthered their study in Taiwan suddenly left the society. It was a blow to the The Sirius Poetical Society. In December 1976, all branches were dissolved in order to pool together human resources and fund for the future development of the society.

The major activities in the early stage included the The Zhen Mei Poetry Wall (振眉诗墙)⁴², the Eight Major Writers of Tang and Song (唐宋八大家), published periodicals and *A Collection of Malaysian Chinese Poetry*.

1976 and 1977 were considered a pernicious period because there was break in its activities and it was slowly recuperating. The damage was brought along by Wen Ruian, Huang Hunxing, Fang Ezhen and other members. Wen Ruian and other important committee members left Malaysia to further their studies in Taiwan. A few years later⁴³, they suddenly announced that they wanted to quit from the Sirius Poetical Society.⁴⁴ This collective action had brought about turmoil in Sirius Poetical Society. As a matter of fact, when they left for Taiwan, they were given an important assignment to recruit new members for Sirius Poetical Society, in order to expand Sirius' literary territory in Taiwan.⁴⁵ By doing so, they could also internationalise the Sirius Poetical Society. When they arrived in Taiwan, they really performed the task

⁴² The Zhen Mei Poetry wall was just a wall in the room of Wen Ruian. It was the place the result of monthly poetry competition was announced. All members were encouraged to send their best poems of the month to participate in the competition. All the poems *would* be read by Wen Renping and Wen Ruian, and the result would be announced at the end of the month by putting the winning poems on the so-called Zhen Mei Poetry Wall.

⁴³ Xiu Zhifu left for Taiwan in August 1973, Wen Ruian went in October in the same year. Both of them suspended their candidature in November and returned to Malaysia. Yao Tuo in his column in *The Students' Weekly*, wrote an open letter and advised Wen Ruian and Xiu Zhifu to be serious in their study. In September 1974, Wen Ruian left for Taiwan again, together with him were Fang Ezhan, Liao Yanping, Zhou Qingxiao did not follow due to objection from family members. Later, he succeeded in furthering his study in Taiwan in February 1975. For details, see Wen Renping (ed.): *Looking Back in Anger*. (Teluk Intan, Sirius Publisher, 1980), pp. 135-137.

⁴⁴ Wen Ruian, Huang Hunxing, Zhou Qingxiao and others left The Sirius Poetical Society in November 1976. At that time, they *had* already set up Shen Zhou Poetical Society in Taiwan. In October 1977, representatives from Shen Zhou Poetical Society Wen Ruian, Huang Hunxing and Ying Chenfeng returned to Malaysia, representatives from Sirius Poetical Society Wen Renping, Zhang Shulin, Yang Liu, Huang Haiming, Shen CHuanxin, Xie CHuancheng, Lin Qiuyue, Zheng Rongxiang met them in Kampar, at *Jin Ling* Restaurant. Three of them appealed for returning to Sirius Poetical Society. Wen Renping and Zhang Shulin proposed to settle some problem before considering their return. Some of the narration and insulting criticism in *Inaugural issue of Shen Zhou Poetical Journal, The Wind Blows and The Graet Wall is far away*, and some of Wen Ruian's books, must be clarified. Three of them equivocated, did not answer the question. Sirius Poetical Society then sustained their application to return. Details, see Wen Renping (ed.): *Looking Back in Anger*. (Teluk Intan, Sirius Publisher, 1980), p.144.

⁴⁵ Wen Ruian and others left for Taiwan to further their studies. In addition, they were also asked to develop Sirius Poetical Society in Taiwan. One of the missions is to publish *Sirius Poetical Journal*. The first issue was published in August 1975, Huang Hunxing and Zhou Qingxiao as the editors, and the representing three characters Tianlangxing (天狼星) was written by an artist Chen Tingshi. The second issue was published in November 1975, Zhou Qingxiao was the editor. This issue is a special issue for Swordsman Fiction and Modernist Poetry. The third issue was published in February 1976, Huang Hunxing as the editor. The fourth issue was published in June 1976, also edited by Huang Hunxing and others. See Wen Renping (ed.): *Looking Back in Anger*. (Teluk Intan, Sirius Publisher, 1980), pp.137-141.

and succeeded in recruiting new members. For instance Yan Zhi (燕知) and Zheng Renhui (郑仁惠) who appeared in the *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, were Taiwan citizens and have joined the Sirius Poetical Society. When Wen Ruian and his friends' withdrew, the Sirius Poetical Society entered into the era of the absence of Wen Ruian.

The main reason Wen Ruian and others left the Sirius Poetical Society was due to the Yin Jianbo (殷建波) incident. Yin Jianbo, at the age of 15, wanted to go to Taiwan and be with his big brother Wen Ruian.⁴⁶ This incident caused the relationship between Wen Renping and his brother Wen Ruian to turn sour and finally they went separate ways.

Wen Renping in an article expressed his feelings towards the absence of Wen Ruian. When Wen Ruian left, at the beginning there were some changes in Sirius Poetical Society. Everything was different, and it was a reality. The members of Sirius Poetical Society had to face and solve it.

In 1975, Mrs. Wen Renping was transferred to Pei Yuan Secondary School in Kampar. She tried to recruit members from the school. Xie Chuancheng, Zhang Liqiong and Wen Qian joined Sirius Poetical Society in 1976. Before that, they had also recruited new members from Langkap and Teluk Intan: Huang Haiming, Lin Qiuyue from Langkap, and Zhang Shulin, Shen Chaunxin and Gu Qiu from Teluk

⁴⁶ November 1975, Yin Chengfeng left for Taiwan without informing Wen Renping, and then he wrote a letter to withdraw from the society. See Wen Renping (ed.) *Looking Back in Anger*, Sirius Publisher, TelukIntan, 1980, p. 139. Yin Chengfeng wrote an article entitled *Tian Meng*, narrated his life and details when he was in Sirius Poetical Society, and the reason why he insisted in going to Taiwan, why he jumped from the second storey and hurt himself, why he still insisted to give a literary talk in Pei Yuan Secondary School in Kampar. However, some parts of the narration do not conform to the reality. It is good for the readers be objective when reading this article. See Shen Zhou Poetical Society(ed.): *The Wind Blow and The Great Wall is Still Far*. Taipei: Gu Xiang Publisher, 1977, p. 141-156.

Intan. Although the number of new members was not that satisfactory, it was good enough to handle the tasks left behind by Wen Ruian and others.

The period from 1977 to 1980, was the rejuvenating stage. The Sirius Poetical society needed some time to recover from the incident of Wen Ruian and others quitting from the group. Starting from 1977, the Sirius Poetical Society carried out several actions to recover from the dismay.

The first step was to encourage the members to publish their own collection of poems and proeses. Within four years, from 1977-1980, the Sirius Poetical Society succeeded in publishing 14 books, including personal collection of members and two important collections of Modernist Poems. On the other hand, this stage had a very good harvest as compared to the previous one because it managed to publish only two books in the previous stage. All the 14 books were published by Sirius Publisher.

In addition to the above publications, Wen Renping succeeded with his two books in Taiwan, namely *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, a collection of prose, and *The Elegant Tripod*, a collection of Modernist Poetical Theories and Criticism by the Youshi Cultural Company and Long River Publisher respectively. Furthermore, Wen Renping's collection of general criticism *Human Matters*, was published by Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society. A member from Teluk Intan, Chao Lang (朝浪) published his collection of poems entitled *Yuhuo Yin* (《渔火吟》), *The Singing of Fishing Boat*, and a member in the northern part Chen Qianghua (陈强华) also published his first collection of poems entitled *Yanyu Yue* (《烟雨月》), *Month of the Misty Rain*. In other words, from 1977 to 1980, the Sirius Poetical Society members had actually

published 19 books by different publishers. At that stage of weak financial situation, the publication of 19 books was really encouraging.

The second important activity carried out during this time was publishing *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. The former collected poems from 23 potential young poets, and the later resembles the collective presentation of 37 members from the Sirius Poetical Society. Both are important not only to Sirius Poetical Society but also to the literary arena in Malaysia.

The third important strategic move was organising literary gathering regularly. During this stage, the Sirius Poetical Society organised at least two major literary gatherings, one in the middle of the year, usually on 6th June, the International Poet's Day, and the other was held at the end of each year. The former was a short gathering, usually held in Cameron Highlands, two days and one night. The other one lasted for three days and two nights, held either in Cameron Highlands or in Pangkor Island. From 1975 to 1986, during the mid year gathering, the society published Poets's Day special issue, continuously for more than ten years without fail.

To the Sirius Poetical Society, 1980 was an important year or watershed. It was not because of the change of decade from 1970s to 1980s; it was because many Sirius members became inactive and even stopped writing poems during the second part of 1980s. From 37 members, who had contributed their poems in *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, around 18 of them either stopped writing or could not be contacted. The leaders of the society thought that it was the right time to recruit new members. Due to the effort by Wen renping and Zhang Shulin, they succeeded to recruit a group of new

members who were actively involved themselves in writing poems and proses. To encourage this group of young writers, the society published a collection of their articles entitled *Feng de Lvcheng* (《风的旅程》, *The Journey of the Wind*), edited by Cheng Kexin, a student from Pei Yuan Secondary School in Kampar. There were 16 of them, contributing either poems or proses or both of the genres. The first part of the book was poem collection and the second part prose collection.

Entering the new decade was a stage of transformation that was from 1981 to 1986. It is an undeniable fact that most of the Sirius members were secondary school students. They did not have financial background, and it was difficult for them to develop or grow further. This dilemma needed to be resolved and the only measure was to transform. The Sirius Poetical Society decided to cooperate with outside societies which were financially sound. The society sent the president Wen Renping to hold the post of the Head of the Language and Literature Committee in the headquarters of Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. Furthermore, Wen Renping and a few Sirius committee members formed the Perak Branch of Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. Sirius members held most of the important posts. They could organize big scale activities, for example inviting Yu Guangzhong to give a talk on Modernist Poetry and conducting a literary workshop for three days and two nights in a hotel and most importantly successfully held the National Literary Convention of Modernist Chinese Writers in Malaysia.

There are several activities worth mentioning in this stage. The publication of Modern Ballads entitled *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*. This was a joint venture by the Sirius Poetical Society and Bai Zhuan Choir in Johore Bahru, led by the late Chen Huichong. This was published in Modernist Poetry Cassettes and Phonogram. Poems

were supplied by the Sirius members, and melodies were composed by the members of Bai Zhuan Choir. *The Star with Pleasant Surprise* was popular and the response from the people was good. The cassettes were sold out in a very short period. At that period in Malaysia, publishing such cassettes was an unprecedented undertaking.

In this stage, members were encouraged to publish individual collection of their works. In 1981, Xie Chuancheng, who was then a second year student in the University of Malaya, published his first book of literary criticism entitled *Interpretations of Poetry*. Another collection of literary criticism entitled *Literature. Education. Culture* by Wen Renping, was published in 1986. This was a collection of his working papers presented in different conferences from 1978 to 1985.

There were a few collections of different genres by the members. The first collection of poems published in this stage was Lei Sici's *Xun Ju* (《寻菊》), *Looking for Chrysanthemum*, in which 20 poems were included. The "Preface" was written by Wen Renping, and an article analysing Lei's poem by Shen Chuanxing (沈穿心) was also included in the book. Of course, there was also a "postscript" by the poet.

A special or unique publication in this stage was *Duobian de Miusi: Tianlangxing Zhongyingwu Shixuan* (《多变的缪斯：天狼星中英巫诗选》), *The Muse: His Many Faces: Sirius Collection of Modernist Poetry in Three Languages: Chinese---Malay---English*. This book was planned by Wen Renping, edited by Xie Chuancheng. The English translation was done by Chen Shichuan (陈石川), while the Malay translation by Qian Mo (潜默) and Zhang Jinliang (张锦良).

Another kind of publication was the *Zhongqiuujie Teji* (《中秋节特辑》, *Mooncake Festival Special Issue*), published on the Mooncake Festival day. Most and almost all the articles inside dealt with mooncake and activities concerning the festival. A literary activity was usually held and the special issue produced was distributed to all participants of the gathering.

Mooncake Festival Special Issue was first published in 1981, and five issues were subsequently published. Compared to Poets' Day Special, Mooncake Festival Special Issue had a more focused theme, on anything related to mooncake festival, for example mooncake, the full moon, lanterns, and mooncake festival legend. Thus, to study the so called Chineseness Modernism, in addition to patriotic poet Qu Yuan, the other aspect was no doubt the writing about mooncake festival.

Another important activity in this stage was the transformation of the Sirius Poetical Society. The society had its structural weakness; it needed a society or association with stronger financial background to fulfil Sirius Poetical Society's aspirations to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature in a bigger scale. The first step of the transformation was allowing the president Wen Renping to accept the post of Head of Language and Literature Committee in Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. During his tenure, Wen succeeded in inviting internationally wellknown modernist poet Yu Guangzhong to deliver a special talk on Modernist Poetry. Another bigger project was to publish an *Anthology of Modernist Literature*. The project was approved with a condition that the title should be changed to *Anthology of Contemporary Mahua Literature*. There were altogether four books, but only two were published. The poetry anthology and the anthology of literary criticism were not published due to insufficient budget.

In line with the post held by Wen, Wen together with his committee members in The Sirius Poetical Society and other cultural and educational figures in Perak formed the Perak Branch of the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. It was formed in 1982 in Teluk Intan. The opening ceremony was initiated by the MCA President Datuk Lee San Choon. There was a little book exhibition by the side of the hall. It was an exhibition of publication by Sirius Poetical Society. All the books were meant for reading and not for sale.

The Perak Branch was very active. Within three years after its formation, it managed to organize two big scale literary workshops, one in Pangkor, one in Teluk Intan. The more influential activity was the National Literary Convention in 1984.

It was clear that the important posts of Perak Branch were held by Sirius members. Due to this reason, the activities organized by the Perak Branch were literary activities. Sirius Poetical Society was successful in its transformation, as its base had changed to a bigger and more influential association. The Sirius could carry out their literary aspiration through the Perak Branch.

In this stage, the efforts in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature by the Sirius Poetical Society could be regarded as more comprehensive. They adopted various strategies to disseminate Modernist Literature and the effects were fruitful. If not for Wen Renping looking for external resources, the *Anthology of Contemporary Mahua Literature* would never be published. We could discern that if the Perak Branch of Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society was not formed, it was impossible to organize the National Literary Convention in 1984 and the First and Second Literary Workshops.

The last stage was regarded as the Weakening Stage (1987-1988), because during this stage a lot of resources were lost or scattered. In 1986, the Sirius Poetical Society underwent a second transformation. It was not as active as before. The new president was Xie Chuancheng, who worked as a secondary school teacher in Teluk Intan. Other committee members such as Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, and Zhang Changhao furthered their studies in University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. The ecocentric figure Wen Renping was transferred to Yuk Choy Secondary School in Ipoh, and was difficult to contact. Due to scattering of committee members in different places, it was difficult to organize activities. Thus, in 1987, Sirius Poetical Society was dormant and inactive.

The scattering of human resources could not be solved in 1987. Members had their own development in different places, and had nothing to do with the Sirius Poetical Society. Wen Renping commented this phenomenon as “each has his own fortune”. In 1987, Lin Ruoyin, Cheng Kexin, Zhang Changhao, Chen Qianhua together with Lin Jincheng (not a member of Sirius Poetical Society), The Surging Workshop, carried the work of ballad composing and organized a few concerts which had attracted much attention. At that time, Zhang Shulin and Xie Chuancheng were busy in the Youth Association’s activities, inactive in writing poems. Members in Kampar had the feeling of being neglected, having to fend for themselves.

In February 1988, Xie Chuancheng was transferred to Kinta Teacher Training College. He was near to Wen Renping and had close contact with him. They tried to reorganise or reactivate the Sirius Poetical Society. In 1988, they organised a Poets’s Day Literary Gathering in Cameron Highlands.

From 1987 to 1988, Sirius Poetical Society had only organised one activity, recruited only one member. This kind of inactive condition was contrastive to the society in 1970s. This might symbolise the fate of the Sirius Poetical Society.

From 1967 to 1989, a period of 22 years, the Sirius Poetical Society had accomplished its historical mission and terminated all activities in 1989. In 1970s, it was called a Mystical Kingdom, and 22 years later, “(it) likes a meteor burning to the last minute, and vanished silently” (Chen, 1998, p.66-72). From the perspective of literary history, the rise and fall of Sirius Poetical Society is a prefated rhythm. The more important thing is to understand and recognise the contribution of the Sirius Poetical Society to the development of Mahua Modernist Literature.

The very reason for the fall of Sirius is not due to external factors, but it was because of the internal problems. In the late 1980s, most of the members of the Society had lost interest in writing poetry and were not interested in literature anymore. The inappropriate arrangement of leadership setup had resulted in the closure of the society. The Sirius Poetical Society had published a great number of books and important materials, which are useful for future research purposes. Thus, the end of Sirius Poetical Society was a historical certainty. Since the mission had been accomplished, it was good to let it bring its shining past into history, let the astonishing starlight illuminating Mahua Literary Arena and the people in the past decades.

3.2 The Sirius Poetical Society and the Dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature in Early 1970s

3.2.0 Introduction

1970s can be considered as a remarkable era in the history of Mahua Literature. Entering a new decade, particularly after the May 13 incident of 1969⁴⁷, Chinese's political, economic, cultural and educational situations were in a quandary. The leaders from different spheres of human endeavors, writers included, attempted very hard to achieve a breakthrough. However, it was the writers who dealt with the situation with a very different approach.

In Mahua Literary arena, the literary columns in the newspapers were still controlled by the Realistic Group of writers. Mahua Modernist writers could only publish their articles in *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Students Weekly*. Publishing articles in literary columns of newspapers seemed to be an impossible mission.

However, we noticed that modernist writers formed literary societies one after another as an attempt to counter “the age of aphasia”. From 1969 to 1971, Southern Malaya Literary Society, The Penang Xi Niu Publisher, The Lu Zhou Society, The Sarawak Constellation Poetical Society, The Zong Lu Publisher were formed successively. Apparently, the current social malaise and the predicament of the

⁴⁷ In the general election of 1969, the coalition formed by Umno, MCA and MIC won on 48% of votes, however in the parliament, they are still holding the majority seats. MCA contested in Chinese areas, all lost to the representatives of opposition party. The opposition party celebrated their success by marching along the streets in Kuala Lumpur. Their supporters held blooms, showing their intention to carry out a great change. Their declaration made the Malays worried. They were *worried*-because they thought Malays *were* the targets of changes. As a result the Malays *struck* back, resulting *in* May Thirteen Incident of removing Chinese. According to statistics, about six thousand Chinese houses and enterprises were burnt, the number of death was near to 200. The Prime Minister at the time, Tunku Abdul Rahman was forced to resign and his deputy Tun Razak succeeded in the post.

Chinese community did not dampen the morale of the Modernist writers to work together and to remain relevant and meaningful.

After the formation of the Sirius Poetical Society in 1973, the unfavorable factors of the environment, the unfair treatment in the literary arena, the sense of inadequacy of individuals, did not hinder the emergence of new literary societies formed by passionate modernist writers. In such an environment, it was really difficult for the society to disseminate Modernist Literature. Under such disadvantageous circumstances, coupled with the lack of financial support, the Sirius Poetical Society, still a student-based society was indeed having an insurmountable obstacle to disseminate modernist literature.

The focus of this part is to discuss the ways and means Sirius Poetical Society used to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature. Activities in disseminating literature includes the distribution of cyclostyled collections of literary works, the organization of literary seminars and the documentation and publication of such seminars. At the end of this chapter, a conclusive comment on the effort of the Sirius Poetical Society will be discussed.

3.2.1 Dissemination through Words: Handwritten Publication and Mimeograph Publication

The major mode of disseminating Modernist Literature in the late 60s and early 1970s was by handwritten and cyclostyled publications. During the initial stage, the Oasis Society, the predecessor of Sirius Poetical Society, published handwritten and cyclostyled collections of articles to disseminate Modernist Literature. The handwritten

publication, being the only copy, was indeed very precious. In the collection, the published articles were mostly written by members of the society and some articles were reproduced from famous Taiwan modernist writers. Members would read the collection on a one-by-one basis, and the collection was only circulated among the society members. After all the members had read the collection, the collection would only then be passed on some other writers who were close to the society. In other words, its effect of disseminating literature was limited.

In the early 1970s, there was a shortage of literary information and materials, books on Modernist Literature were limited. The objective of the publication of a handwritten collection by the Sirius Poetical Society was to disseminate Modernist Literature. Although the disseminating effect was limited to a small circle of people, it exerted some subtle influence. Many of the members who were influenced by articles published in the collection had become important pillars of The Sirius Poetical Society in particular and later the important writers in Malaysian's local literary arena in general. In the early stage, members like Zhou Qingxiao, Huang Hunxing, Liao Yanping, and Fang Ezhen were much enlightened after editing a handwritten collection, and soon involved themselves in writing modernist poems and prose. Later, Zhang Shulin, Gu Qiu, Yin Chengfeng, Dong Zhu, Chao Lang, Wang Mujing, always read and published articles in the collections. In retrospect, Huang Hunxing said:

We edited handwritten collection and disseminate literary seeds, three years later, many members from all over the country gathered together, and Zhen Meige (Wen Ruian's room) become a place of literary creation and gaining experience.....⁴⁸ (Huang, 2011).

⁴⁸ Huang Hunxing. Utopia vanishing in the air: On 10 Years Writing Scene, Nanyang Xhang Pau, 8-3-2011.

Such kind of traditional disseminating mode, particularly in the early 70s where there was a severe lack of Modernist Literature information, really played an important role.

As for the cyclostyled collection, its circulation was better. The number printed for each issue was 100. After distributing to society members, the remainder would be distributed to friends who were also interested in Modernist Literature. The Oasis Periodicals had published more than 30 issues. The first six issues were handwritten, and the following issues were published by cyclostyling. The cost of cyclostyling was not high, and all the remainder copies were sent to friends in various places, the disseminating effect was better than handwritten collection. Thereafter, branches in different places also published their periodicals by cyclostyling. For instance, the Lv Liu Branch (绿流分社) had published 20 issues of *Lv Liu Qikan* (《绿流期刊》, *The Green River Periodicals*), Lv Lin Branch(绿林分社) had published five issues of *Lv Lin Qikan* (《绿林期刊》, *The Green Grassland Periodicals*), Lv Ye Branch(绿野分社) had published 11 issues of *Lv Ye Qikan* (《绿野期刊》, *The Green Field Periodicals*), Lv Yuan Branch(绿原分社) had published two issues of *Lv Yuan Qikan* (《绿原期刊》, *The Green Land Periodicals*), Lv Hu Branch(绿湖分社) had published three issues of *Lvhu Qikan* (《绿湖期刊》, *The Green Lake Periodicals*), Lv Feng Branch(绿风分社) had published three issues of *Lv Feng Qikan* (《绿风期刊》, *The Green Wind Periodicals*), and Lv Dao Branch(绿岛分社) had published two issues of *Lv Dao Qikan* (《绿岛期刊》, *The Green Island Periodicals*) and three issues of *Qing Liu Qikan* (《清流期刊》, *The Clear Stream Periodicals*). The last two branches, Lv Cong Branch (绿丛分社) had published two issues of *Lv Cong Qikan* (《绿丛期刊》, *The Green Forest Periodicals*) and Lvyuan Branch (绿园分社) in Kampar had

published two issues of *Lvyuan Qikan* (《绿园期刊》, *The Green Garden Periodicals*).⁴⁹

Publishing handwritten and cyclostyled collections became a tradition of Sirius Poetical Society from the initial stage in the 70s to its heyday in the 80s. The reasons are: (i) At that time, Modernist Literature in Chinese was not popular. In the starting place of Oasis Society, from the end of 1960s to early 1970s, the literary magazines available were *Chao Foon Monthly*, *The Students' Weekly*, and *Contemporary Literature*, a literary magazine from Hong Kong. Besides, there were other non-literary reading materials like swordsman fictions and popular fictions. (ii) Most of the society members were students with low purchasing power, and unable to bear the high printing cost nor have extra pocket money to buy literary books. (iii) Convenient to pass on information and new knowledge. When the president received materials on Modernist Literature, he could share with all the members when the relevant materials were published in the handwritten collection. (iv) It trained members to be responsible to each other and to the society. Due to constraints of a single copy of the handwritten collection, the editor in-charge was usually very creative in designing and editing the collection. They also tried very hard to look for suitable materials to be published. Last but not least, each and every word in the collection was written by the editor himself.

Later, in order to have better dissemination effect, the publication of Oasis Periodicals changed from handwritten collection to mimeograph publication. 100 copies were published for each issue. As mentioned earlier, the dissemination effect

⁴⁹ Zhang Shuli (ed.). Special issue on 10th Anniversary of Sirius Poetical Society, Teluk Intan. Sirius Publisher, 1983, pp.8-10.

was better. Although the periodicals still were handwritten on mimeograph paper before it was printed for circulation, the content of every issue was edited seriously. It includes special features of contemporary modernist poets from Taiwan such as Yu Guangzhong, Ye Weilian, Ye Shan and others. Of course, literary features were also included. Details of the contents of the Oasis Periodicals are as follow:

Table 3.1: Oasis Periodicals: Content and Publication

| No | Issue | Content | Editor | Publishing Date | Handwritten / Cyclostyle |
|----|---------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Oasis Periodical 1 | First issue/Essay competition | Wen Ruian | 1967 | Handwritten |
| 2 | Oasis Periodical 2 | Announcement of Essay Competition | Wen Ruian | 1968 | Handwritten |
| 3 | Oasis Periodical 3 | Third Issue | Wen Ruian | 1968 | Handwritten |
| 4 | Oasis Periodical 4 | Special Issue with 2 Volume/ Singing and Painting Competition Results/ Announcement of articles | Wen Ruian | 1968 | Handwritten |
| 5 | Oasis Periodical 5 | Fifth Issue | Wen Ruian | 1969 | Handwritten |
| 6 | Oasis Periodical 6 | Announcement of 4 th Essay Competition Results and articles | Wen Ruian | 1970 | Handwritten |
| 7 | Oasis Periodical 7 | Innovative Issue | Wen Ruian | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 8 | Oasis Periodical 8 | Change in Size | Wen Ruian | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 9 | Oasis Periodical 9 | Special Issue on Travel Note | Wen Ruian | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 10 | Oasis Periodical 10 | Special Issue on Positioning for Prose | Huang Hunxing | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 11 | Oasis Periodical 11 | Special Issue on Literary Criticism | Zhou Qingxiao | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 12 | Oasis Periodical 12 | Twelfth Issue | Yu Yuntian | 1971 | Handwritten |

Table 3.1 (continued)

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|---------------|------|-------------|
| 13 | Oasis Periodical 13 | Thirteenth Issue | Ye Bianzhou | 1971 | Handwritten |
| 14 | Oasis Periodical 14 | Special Issue on Poetry | Wen Ruian | 1971 | Cyclostyed |
| 15 | Oasis Periodical 15 | Fifteenth Issue | Wu Chaoran | 1972 | Handwritten |
| 16 | Oasis Periodical 16 | Special Issue on Ye Shan\Ye Weilian,Wen Ruian ⁵⁰ | Zhou Qingxiao | 1972 | Handwritten |
| 17 | Oasis Periodical 17 | Special Issue on Wen Renping | Huang Hunxing | 1972 | Handwritten |
| 18 | Oasis Periodical 18 | Special Issue on Yu Guangzhong | Huang Hunxing | 1972 | Handwritten |
| 19 | Oasis Periodical 19 | Nineteenth Issue | Lan Qiyuan | 1972 | Handwritten |
| 20 | Oasis Periodical 20 | Special Issue on Poetry | Wen Ruian | 1972 | Cyclostyed |
| 21 | Oasis Periodical 21 | Special Issue on Huang Hunxing | Wu Chaoran | 1973 | Handwritten |
| 22 | Oasis Periodical 22 | Special issue on Mooncake Festival Celebration of Oasis Society | Zhou Qingxiao | 1973 | Handwritten |
| 23 | Oasis Periodical 23 | Special Issue on Wen Ruian's articles | Lan Qiyuan | 1973 | Handwritten |
| 24 | Oasis Periodical 24 | Special issue on Sirius Poetical Society Gathering in Cameron Highlands | Zhou Qingxiao | 1973 | Handwritten |

⁵⁰This issue is like an almanac, it has more than 500 pages. In addition the special edition of the three poets, it also provides one special column which is called The Column of Scolding People, and a Letter Box for the Readers. Details is seen in Shen Zhou Poetical Society (ed.) *The Wind Blows and The Great Wall is Far* (Taipei: Homeland Publisher, 1977), p. 106.

Table 3.1 (continued)

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|---------------|------|--|
| 25 | Oasis Periodical 25 | Special issue on The Sirius Poetical Society gathering on International Poets' Day | Wen Ruian | 1973 | Handwritten |
| 26 | Oasis Periodical 26 | Twenty-sixth Issue | Che Caiyi | 1974 | Handwritten |
| 27 | Oasis Periodical 27 | Special issue on Wen Renping's Articles(1) | Huang Hunxing | 1974 | Handwritten |
| 28 | Oasis Periodical 28 | Special issue on Wen Renping's Articles (2) | Huang Hunxing | 1974 | Handwritten |
| 29 | Oasis Periodical 29 | Special issue on Wen Renping's Articles (3) | Huang Hunxing | 1974 | Note: This issue was not completed, due to some unforeseen difficulties. |
| 30 | Oasis Periodical 30 | Special Issue on the Marriage of the President | Lan Qiyuan | 1974 | Handwritten |
| 31 | Oasis Periodical 31 | Special issue on the Coming Back of Wen Ruian, Zhou Qingxiao from Taiwan. | Liao Yanping | 1974 | Handwritten |

From the above table, it is clear that editing the Oasis Periodical is not an easy job. There was a special issue for every publication. To enrich the content of the special issue, the editor had to look for materials and to request society members to write the relevant articles. After receiving articles from members, he had to copy all the articles in handwritten form and put up with some design for the page. As can be seen, there were three special issues in one of the publications, namely the special issue on Ye Shan, a famous Taiwan Modernist Poet and Prose writer, the special issue on Ye Weilian, a famous Taiwan Modernist Poet and Literary Critic, and the special issue on Wen Ruian, founder of Oasis Society. The workload of the editor was inconceivable.

Out of the 31 issues mentioned above, one of the issues was not published. In other words, the actual number of published Oasis Periodical was only 30 issues or volumes. Most of the Oasis Periodicals were published in handwritten form except issue 14 and 20, which were published in cyclostyled form. Handwritten publication of Oasis Periodicals showed the deep love of the Oasis members' towards literature. Without this kind of intense emotional engagement, it was impossible to publish 30 volumes of Oasis Periodicals. Even though the dissemination effect of handwritten Oasis Periodicals was limited, it played an important disseminating role in the early 1970s during the era in which literary information and materials especially those on Modernist Literature were limited. Handwritten Oasis Periodicals had great influence on Oasis members, and it also laid a foundation for the members to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature actively in time to come.

Out of the 30 issues of Oasis Periodicals, the first 20 issues were published during 1969 to 1972, issues 21 to 30 were published during the peak development stage of the society. To bring forth the Oasis Periodicals during the two developing stages was ample proof that the society was very concern with the development of Mahua Modernist literature. Furthermore, Oasis Periodicals were published from the early stage to the blooming stage of Sirius Poetical Society. Publishing periodicals, whether handwritten or cyclostyled was a major means of disseminating Modernist Literature, the society held on to this tradition in those days.

The society developed very fast after its formation in 1973. By 1976, it has formed ten branches throughout Malaysia. The other nine branches followed the Oasis Society, also published their own periodicals as a means of publishing member's articles and disseminating materials and information regarding Modernist Literature.

Most of the members from the different branches were students who were financially weak. They could only afford to publish their periodicals in handwritten form or by cyclostyling. Below are details of some of the publications from the branches of the society.

The earliest periodical was *Lv Lin Periodical*. The branch was formed in 1972 and its first issue of periodical was published in 1972. When Sirius Poetical Society was formed, the Lv Lin Society joined Sirius Poetical Society as one of the ten branches. The inaugural issue was edited by Chen Meifen. However, five issues of the periodicals were published. Details are shown in the table below:

Table 3.2: *Lv Lin Periodical*: Content and Publication

| No. | Title of periodical | Content | Editor | Publishing date |
|-----|---------------------|---|-------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Lv Lin Issue 1 | First Issue | Chen Meifen | 1972 |
| 2 | Lv Lin Issue 2 | Special Issue on Prose | Chen Meifen | 1973 |
| 3 | Lv Lin Issue 3 | Special Issue on Gathering in Pangkoe Islang (2 Issues) | Chen Meifen | 1973 |
| 4 | Lv Lin Issue 4 | Special Issue on Literary Criticism | Fang Ezhen | 1973 |
| 5 | Lv Lin Issue 5 | Special Issue on Wen Ruian's novels (Cyclostyle) | Fang Ezhen | 1974 |

Out of the five periodicals, there was only one issue being published in mimeograph and the other four issues were in handwritten form.

Lv Ye branch was formed after the Lv Lin branch. Under the encouragement of Wen Renping, they published 11 issues of periodicals. They are listed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: *Lv Ye Periodicals*: Content and Publication

| No. | Name of Issue | Content | Editor | Year of Publication |
|-----|---------------|--|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Lv Ye 1 | First Issue | Zhan Yongfu | 1973 |
| 2 | Lv Ye 2 | Second Issue | Yin Jianbo | 1973 |
| 3 | Lv Ye 3 | Third Issue | Huang Haiming | 1973 |
| 4 | Lv Ye 4 | Forth Issue | Xie Anxing | 1973 |
| 5 | Lv Ye 5 | Fifth Issue | Peng Qiufeng | 1973 |
| 6 | Lv Ye 6 | Sixth Issue | Ji Xiuzhu | 1973 |
| 7 | Lv Ye 7 | Special issue on Poetry | Yin Chengfeng | 1974 |
| 8 | Lv Ye 8 | Special Issue on Wen Ruian's Prose collection. | Yin Chengfeng | 1974 |
| 9 | Lv Ye 9 | Special issue on Wen Ruian's Poems | Yin Chengfeng | 1974 |
| 10 | Lv Ye 10 | Special Issue on Wen Ruian's Satirical essays | Yin Chengfeng | - |
| 11 | Lv Ye 11 | Special Issue on Wen Ruian's Novels | Yin Chengfeng | 1975 |

Although *Lv Ye Periodical* was a platform for members to publish their articles, the special issue of each publication focused on Wen Ruian's articles only and it was not done systematically. Actually they could publish special issue for Wen Renping or famous Taiwan poets and prose writers such as Zhou Mengdie, Ya Xuan, Luo Fu, Zheng Chouyu and others. Perhaps this would expose to the members the poems of different poets.

The branch that carried on this tradition and managed to publish the periodical on a more regular basis was Lv Liu branch. This branch was led by Zhang Shulin, and under his leadership, Lv Liu Periodicals managed to publish 20 issues in three years.

Table 3.4: *Lv Liu Periodical*: Content and Publication

| No. | Title of Periodical | Content | Editor | Publishing Year |
|-----|---------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| 1 | Lv Liu 1 | First Issue | Zhang Shulin | 1974 |
| 2 | Lv Liu 2 | Second Issue | Lan Wei | 1974 |
| 3 | Lv Liu 3 | Special issue on Literary Criticism | Dong Zhu | 1974 |
| 4 | Lv Liu 4 | Special Issue on Interviews | Zheng Rongxiang | 1974 |
| 5 | Lv Liu 5 | Cyclostyled copy | Shen Chuanxin | 1974 |
| 6 | Lv Liu 6 | Sixth Issue | Shen Chuanxin | 1974 |
| 7 | Lv Liu 7 | Special issue on Poetry/Cyclostyled copy | Zhang Shulin | 1974 |
| 8 | Lv Liu 8 | Cyclostyled copy | Shen Chuanxin | 1974 |
| 9 | Lv Liu 9 | Cyclostyled copy | Dong Zhu | 1974 |
| 10 | Lv Liu 10 | Cyclostyled copy | Chao Lang | 1975 |
| 11 | Lv Liu 11 | Special Dragon Year Issue | Dong Zhu | 1975 |
| 12 | Lv Liu 12 | Cyclostyled copy(Extra Large) | ShenChuan xin, Dongzhu,Lan Wei, Chao Lang. | 1975 |
| 13 | Lv Liu 13 | Cyclostyled copy | Lv Sha | 1975 |
| 14 | Lv Liu 14 | Cyclostyled copy | Si Yiwen | 1975 |
| 15 | Lv Liu 15 | Cyclostyled copy | Zheng Rongxiang | 1975 |
| 16 | Lv Liu 15 | Fifteen Issue | Shen Chuanxin | 1975 |
| 17 | Lv Liu 16 | Special Issue on New year Cyclostyled copy | Mu Jing | 1975 |
| 18 | Lv Liu 17 | Cyclostyled copy | Chao Lang | 1976 |
| 19 | Lv Liu 18 | Cyclostyled copy | Dong Zhu | 1976 |
| 20 | Lv Liu 19 | Cyclostyled copy | Lv Sha | 1976 ⁵¹ |

Lv Liu Journal was first published in 1974, and the first four issues were published in handwritten form. From the 5th issue onwards, it was published by using the cyclostyled machine. From the mode of publication, *Lv Liu* was obviously more advanced than other journals of the same kind. From the point of disseminating literary information, it was circulated quite widely at that time. For every published issue of *Lv Liu Journal*, 100 copies were printed, it was circulated quite widely. Not only all

⁵¹ Zhang Shulin. Ed. *Sirius Poetical Society Ten Anniversary Commemorating Special Issue (1973-1983)*. Teluk Intan: Sirius Poetical Society, 1983. P.9.

members of Sirius Poetical Society were given a copy, others, particularly the young students who were interested in literature were also given a copy. The effort of sharing literary resources and the effect in disseminating Modernist Literature by the Lv Liu division was next to Lv Zhou society in the early stage, and at a later stage, its contribution grew more vividly.

Other branches also published their own journals, but they never last long. The journals stopped publishing eventually after two or three issues, and these journals included *Lv Hu*, *Lv Feng*, *Lv Dao*, *Lv Cong*. Details can be seen in table below.

Table 3.5: *Lv Hu*, *Lv Feng*, *Lv Dao*, *Lv Cong* Periodicals: Content and Publication

| No. | Title of Periodical | Content | Editor | Publishing Year |
|-----|---------------------|---|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Lv Yuan 1 | Inaugural Issue | Chen Caiyi | 1974 |
| 2 | Lv Yuan 2 | Second Issue | Xu Ruoyun | 1974 |
| 3 | Lv Hu 1 | Inaugural Issue | Yu Yuntian | 1973 |
| 4 | Lv Hu 2 | Second Issue | Ye Bianzhou | 1974 |
| 5 | Lv Hu 3 | Interview of Wen Renping | He Qiliang | 1974 |
| 6 | Lv Feng 1 | First Issue | Members of Lv Feng | 1974 |
| 7 | Lv Feng 2 | Second Issue | Members of Lv Feng | 1974 |
| 8 | Lv Feng 3 | Third Issue | Members of Lv Feng | 1975 |
| 9 | Lv Dao 1 | Inaugural Issue(Special Issue on Poetry, Crostyled) | Chen Zhonghua | 1973 |
| 10 | Lv Dao 1 | Special Poetry Issue (Crostyled) | Chen Junzhen | 1974 |
| 11 | Qing Liu 1 | Crostyled | Chen Zhonghua | 1973 |
| 12 | Qing Liu 2 | Crostyled | Chen Junzhen | 1974 |
| 13 | Qing Liu 3 | Crostyled | Chen Junzhen | 1975 |

Table 3.5 (continued)

| | | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------|---------------------------|------|
| 14 | Lv Cong 1 | Inaugural Issue | Li Meiling | 1974 |
| 15 | Lv Cong 2 | Crostyled | Xu Youbin , Li Meiling | 1975 |

(Zhang, 1983, pp.9-19)

After the division system was disbanded, the publication of handwritten and cyclostyled journals still carried on and it had become the tradition of Sirius Poetical Society. This tradition was the major medium of disseminating Modernist Literature by Sirius Poetical Society. When young literary friends read handwritten journals, they could feel the passion of the editors and writers towards literature. These young literary friends particularly treasured the limited time they were given when it was their turn to read the handwritten journal. In the reading process, the theory and concept of Modernist Literature were disseminated. It was a very old and traditional method of dissemination. However, due to financial constraints, this was the only way they could get in touch with Modernist Literature. The enthusiasm and passion of the editor of each issue was clearly discernible, perhaps this was what made reading journal a joyful exploration for the society members.

From the whole process of dissemination, we could see it started with the disseminator (the source of information) to the receiver (readers); there was a process of coding and decoding. The origin of information is from the editor, content means the information to be transmitted in each issue, the medium is words, and finally the readers being the receiver. During the process of reading, the readers will select articles they are interested to read. This is the initial stage of decoding.

In each handwritten issue, besides articles written by the members, there were also articles from foreign famous writers. After reading, the readers would come up with different opinions, evaluations and even suggestions. All this information would be reflected to the editor and the whole process of dissemination from disseminator to receivers and vice versa is completed now.

As mentioned earlier, the publication of journals, whether handwritten or cyclostyled, the circulation and effect of dissemination was limited. The founder of Sirius Poetical Society commented that the satisfaction derived from publishing journals (handwritten or cyclostyled) was more of a spiritual satisfaction rather than a hope of securing a wide circulation. It could also be regarded as an idealistic endeavour. This was an objective comment which pointed out the limitation of handwritten journals in dissemination. The effect of dissemination could be seen among the society members only. The members were supplied with literary information on Modernist Literature, and they had a chance to read such articles. The impact of dissemination or influence outside the society was greatly diminished. Sirius Poetical Society members used to take along with them handwritten journals when they visited friends in both northern and southern parts in the Peninsula of Malaya and this act truly amazed and impressed their literary friends, however, due to the constraint of time, they just flipped through and had little chance to read the content fully. As a result, the impact of dissemination or influence was rather ineffective.

Journals in the cyclostyled form were less than handwritten journals from the aspect of the volume of content. The number of pages in each issue of the former is about 20-40, and the latter could run up to 200 pages. However, the number of printed copy of the former was 100, and could be circulated not only among society members

but also to other friends or youngsters who like literature, thus the dissemination impact was greater.

3.2.2 Publishing Collection of Modernist Poetry, Prose and Literary Criticism

The third stage of dissemination Modernist Poetry was through the publication of Modernist Poetry by individual poets. In 1970s, the Sirius Poetical Society published poetry collections of members which included *The General's Command* by Wen Ruian, *Grief in Exile* and *Zhongsheng de Shen* (《众生的神》, *The God of All Living Creatures*) by Wen Renping, *The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River* by Zhang Shulin. As for the collection of poems by different poets, the Sirius Poetical Society published three important collections of Modernist Poetry, namely *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, edited by Wen Renping, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, edited by Zhangshulin, and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, edited by Shen Chuanxin. For the prose collection, there were *The Moon with Yellow Skin* by Wen Renping, *Qianli Yun he Yue* (<千里云和月>, *A Thousand Miles Covered by Moon and Clouds*) by Zhang Shulin. As for literary criticism, Wen Renping, the founder of the Sirius Poetical Society published two volumes of literary criticism namely *Human Matters* and *The Elegant Tripod*.

From the above publications of different genres, it is obvious that the Sirius Poetical Society employed multiple strategies in disseminating Modernist Literature. For the publication of personal collection of poetry, three members were involved and four books were published. Wen Renping, the leader, had published two collections of poetry, the other two members were Wen Ruian and Zhang Shulin, each published one

collection of poetry. Three of them were leaders of Sirius Poetical Society. The publication of these collections of poetry was significant, firstly, these three poets took the lead in publishing personal poetry collection; secondly, they showed the public that they were active members and were also active in literary creation; thirdly, it was not commercially viable to publish poetry collections and thus all the more courageous to undertake such a venture. This conveys a message to society members, that publishing a personal collection is a very important step to establish himself as a writer or a poet in the literary arena. Wen Renping's poetry collection, *Grief in Exile*, was printed in Taiwan. The quality of paper and printing were more sophisticated in Taiwan then. More importantly, this was a strategic attempt of the Sirius Poetical Society to blend into Taiwan's literary arena.

The Sirius Poetical Society had published three important collections of Modernist Poetry. The first collection included poems of major modernist poets in Malaysia. The second collection included poems of elderly modernist poets and the third collection included poems by young poets. The first collection could be regarded as a poetic rebellion against the practices of the Realistic Group, and an attempt to make modernist poetry as the foremost literary genre in Malaysia Literary Arena. This was the subtle reason the collection was named as *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* and not as *An Anthology of Modernist Poems by Malaysian Chinese*. The anthology had included 134 poems of 27 modernist poets.

The publication of *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* had several implications. Firstly, it was the first collection of modernist poetry, significant in the history of Mahua Literature, and a milestone of the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. Secondly, it had made a breakthrough, under the dominating force of the

Realistic Group, that there was another group of poets who wrote poems using different techniques other than realistic techniques. Thirdly, it revealed a more comprehensive composition of Mahua Modernist Literature because the modernist poems collected were selected from the states in West Malaysia and also from East Malaysia, the distribution from the point of locality of the poets was quite even, and thus enhance its representation. Fourthly, poems collected seldom reflect the contemporary social issues and from a contrary perspective, this phenomenon was an indirect indication of the dilemma of Chinese education at that time. It also revealed how depressed the community of Chinese writers was by expressing their emotional discontent through the imageries of Chinese culture. In other words, *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* mirrored the many aspects of Chinese society in the 1970s. Finally, the publication and circulation of *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* concretized the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. It ushered in a new era in the history of Mahua Literature.

The works of 27 modernist poets were selected for this anthology of poems. The editor considered the 27 poets as representatives and having irreplaceable status in Mahua literature. He said:

They have all worked feverishly in writing and exploring poetical possibilities. The vast majority of them continue unabated to bettering their art of poetry. Although one or two of them have stopped writing, they have contributed immensely in building a strong Mahua Modernist poetical foundation. Their contribution is neither monetary nor materialistic, but their works, and because of their works, Mahua Modernist poetry begins to take shape. To examine their works that was published 10 years from

today's perspective, they would seem rather immature, in fact they were heavily influenced by writers such as Li and Dai of the May Fourth Movement. In a sense they seemed to seek modernity just for the sake of modernity. However, their influences and insight was profound and far-reaching. This influence and insight came not from their superb artistic attainments but rather from the pioneering spirit reflected in their works. Their selection made the collection intact and complete (Wen, 1974, p.303-304).

This statement reflects the criteria of selection of the editor. To summarize, representation, literary status, contribution in laying the foundation of Mahua modernist poetry and a profound influence and insight were the editor's criteria of selection.

The editor's selection criteria were objective. Zhang Guangda had commented on the selection criteria of the poets of *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. Examining how the poets were selected, he found that seven poets were either the members of Sirius Poetical Society or were linked closely. They were Wen Renping, Wen Ruian, Fang Ezhen, Zhou Qingxiao, Huanghuan Xing, Lai Ruihe and Lan Qiyuan. Those who were active in poetical and literary societies of Northern Malaya were Li Youcheng, Gui Yan, Ai Wen and Jiang Zhenxian. Malaysian scholars in Taiwan who were involved in the society's activities and had published their works were Wang Runhua, Lin Lv, Chen Huihua, Dan Ying and Lai Jingwen. Modernist poets from Sarawak of Eastern Malaysia are Fang Bingda, Li Muxiang, Hei Xinzhang, Xie Yongjiu and Xie Yongcheng. Other independent poets were Zhou Huan (newspaper and weekly editor of *Shenhuo Bao*, Students' Weekly), Yang Jiguang (attached to Radio Malaya), Mei Shuzhen (editor of *Jiaofeng*), Sha He, Piao Beiling and Zi Yisi.

The list is inclusive of all the modernist poets of major poetical societies and publications who were from different social backgrounds. The list is even, balanced and not lopsided. Though seven poets came from Sirius Poetical Society, the difference was minimal when compared to other poetical societies. Zhang Guangda's statistical analysis revealed that (i) the editor, the president of the Sirius Poetical Society, showed no favoritism in his selection of poets and (ii) *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* was a truly representative collection.

An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets's original title was *An Anthology of Modernist Poems by Malaysian Poets*. However, later the word "modernist" was dropped so that the realist poets could make no claim to be the real Malaysian poets. Wen Renping said in a postscript:

They can indulge in their "doufu" style, they can scream out their slogans of the peasant class, yet I would still see them as "doufu" style, slogans, plain water and not poems, just because they are non-poems, they are not qualified to be selected into the collection. To them, this is what I want to say, these poems are trash, as a devout Confucian, I will refrain myself from spitting at them, yet honestly, I have to say: I am ashamed that they are not up to par (Wen, 1974, p.28).

Wen's strong statement shows that he has every intention to safeguard Mahua Modernist Poetry. Perhaps it is true to say that the realists and the modernists are completely at odds with each other.

According to Ye Xiao, “from a historical perspective, Wen Renping’s effort to publish this anthology was not in vain. Today, *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* is regarded as a very precious document in the study of Mahua Modernist Poetry (Ye, 1998, p.31). Zhang Jinzhong, on the other hand holds that this collection can make up for the loss or absence of classic Mahua Modernist literature. *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* and *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* are the classic works conceived by Wen (Zhang, 1999, p.232). The two critics above examine the collection from a different perspective, yet they shared the same conclusion: *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* is a piece of representative literary work and its historical status is intact.

The second poetry collection was *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*. The poems collected in this book did not appear in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. It had several historical implications. Firstly, it was a concrete presentation of the dissemination and reception of Mahua Modernist Literature. The dissemination of Modernist Literature began from the end of 1950s to the 1980s. A group of Modernist poets appeared and a group of young Modernist Poets saw the need to follow suit. They wrote modernist poems and achieved impressive results.

Secondly, a group of 23 new poets had become the successors of Mahua Modernist Literature. This was a clear indication that Mahua Modernist Literature would enjoy a continuous expansion and development. The number of poets in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* was 27 and those in *An Anthology of Poems by*

Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets were 23.⁵² This shows that by the end of 1978, there were 50 prominent Mahua Modernist Poets which is not in any way a small number. Thirdly, both anthologies combined would show a complete layout of Mahua Modernist poetry. They had become the indisputable classic of Mahua Modernist Literature.

The third book was *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. It was different from the other two poetry collections mentioned above. It was a poetry collection of the members of one society. Although from the perspective of Mahua Literature, it was not a representative work in general, it was no doubt the collective work presented by Sirius Poetical Society members. As mentioned above and as known to all, Sirius Poetical Society had contributed a lot in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. The dream to publish *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* did finally materialize. It was the first collection of Modernist Poetry by one literary society itself, and this contributed to its meaningful role in literary history.

Besides, there were several new faces that did not appear in the previous poetry collection. They are CuanCao(川草), Ge Huang(戈荒), Xin Ru(心茹), Wen Qian(文倩), Jiang Aotian(江敖天), Du Junao(杜君敖), Feng Ke(风客), Ha Ge(哈哥), Se Yiwen(思逸文), Chen Qianghua(陈强华), Sang Lingzi(桑灵子), Ling Rulang(凌如浪), Zhang Liqiong(张丽琼), Dan Ling(淡灵), Yang Liu(杨柳), Yang Jianhan(杨剑寒), Lei Sichi(雷似痴), Zheng Renhui(郑人惠), Ou Zhiren(欧志仁), Ou Zhicai(欧志才), Liu Jiyuan(刘吉源), Yan Zhi(燕知), Xie Chuancheng(谢川成), Lan Yuting(蓝雨亭) and

⁵² These 23 young poets include Zi Fan, Dong Zhu, Yi Bi, Shen Chuanxin, Sah Qin, He Qiliang, Lin Qiuyue, Lin Yanhe, Jin Yezi, Hong Erliang, Yin Jianbo, Chen Yueye, Kang Hua, Huang Haiming, Zhang Ruixin, Zhang Shulin, Mo Beiyang, Yang Baihe, Zheng Yuli, Zheng Rongxiang, Pan Tiansheng, Lan Wei and Xiao Yu.

Su Chi(苏迟). This collection marks the collective works of 37 members. This shows the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature had entered another stage and more young writers were ready to accept Modernist Literature.

According to Wen, the publication of *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* in 1979 had two implications. 1979 was the 20th anniversary of Mahua Modernist Literature. According to T.S Eliot, 20 years could be regarded as a cycle in literary history, and within this cycle, literary trends and changes could be detected. Therefore, publishing *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* in this particular year had double meaning. The first implication was that it added an annotation to the end of a literary cycle, to offer a heartfelt salute to the 20th anniversary of Mahua Modernist Literature. The second implication was that its publication trumpeted the arrival of the next literary cycle, and it was an encouragement to young poets and writers. The new generation needs to proceed in a high spirit in order to pick up the baton from the predecessor, to stride onto the new historical journey (Wen, 1979, p.1).

From the perspective of literary canon construction, *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* seemed to have an aura which had enhanced Mahua Modernist Poetry. In 1974, *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* was published. It was followed by the publication of *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, edited by Zhang Shulin in 1978. These two collections represented the poets of a larger Malaysia, whereas *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* represented the poets of a smaller literary society. The scale was much smaller; however it was uniquely poised to bear extraordinary significance.

In 1970s, poetical societies published very few poetry collections. In Taiwan, there are Poetry Collection of 1960s, and Poetry Collection of 1970s, both do not represent any literary society. In view of this, *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* had demonstrated the poetical vitality of Sirius Poetical Society and it also had motivated members of the society to write more poems, and subsequently their work will leave an imprint on the literary history of this period.

3.2.3 Publishing Individual Collection

The publication of personal/individual collections include Wen Renping's poetry collection *Grief in Exile*, prose collection *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, and literary criticism collections *Human Matters* and *The Elegant Tripod*, and Zhang Shunlin's poetry collection *The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River*, and prose collection *A Thousand Miles Covered by Moon and Clouds*. After the occurrence of Wen Renping's "Modern Enlightenment" in the 1970s, he vigorously promoted Mahua Modernist Literature. He practised what he preached, and he wrote modernist poems and modernist prose. In order to make the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature more effective, he also wrote literary criticism, which in a way had enhanced the theoretical foundation of the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. *Grief in Exile* was Wen's second poetry collection. It marked a shift in his style since his first anthology of poems entitled *Wuxian Qin* (《无弦琴》, *Stringless Harp*).

Zhang Jinzhong regarded *Grief in Exile* as one of the classics of Mahua Modernist Poet. In this collection, Wen Renping had undoubtedly employed a variety of techniques to write modernist poems, such as using the technique of moviemaking, employing the structures of novels and using the structure of musical pieces to write

poems. This kind of experiment was important in the dissemination of literature. In prose writing, Wen Renping was very ambitious. The prose collection *The Moon with Yellow Skin* had reflected Wen Renping's literary ambition. He frankly admitted that he would attempt to emerge from the shadows of prominent prose writers such as Yu Guangzhong, Yang Mu, and Zhang Ailing, to establish a style of his own. This collection of prose revealed the author's inner world that showed explicitly the creative art of prose writing. The appendix entitled "Dialogue" clearly displays his literary ambition.

With regard to Wen's critical essays, it should be noted here that his essays collected in *Human Matters* were more than literary commentaries, there were essays which touched on education as well some of them focused on literary polemics. While he was engaged in the war of words, he defended modernist literature. Whenever there was a debate, he never stayed out of the controversies, but soldiered on to speak on behalf of modernist literature. He was the focus of controversy when the realists and the modernists clashed over an issue, as one of the major representatives of the modernists, the bulk of criticism fell on him.

Wen's *The Elegant Tripod* was a major discourse on modernist poetics. He used the techniques of the New Criticism to interpret modernist poems, trying to disarm the prejudices of the readers towards modernist poetry and leading them to explore the subtleties of modernist poems. The book also incorporated a few articles on modernist poetics.

The above discussion is an account of the Sirius Poetical Society's effort to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature through the written words and publications.

From the early handwritten publications to the publications using cyclostyled machine, and then from cyclostyled machine to modern printing, this transformation revealed the contribution of Sirius Poetical Society in the promotion and dissemination of modernist literature. The effort put forward by the Sirius Poetical Society had in a way advanced the development of Mahua Modernist Literature, and in this process The Sirius Poetical Society had played a very important role. Perhaps, as Ye Xiao says: “the development of Mahua Modernist Poetry has entered the Age of Sirius” (Ye, 1998, p.31).

3.2.4 Disseminating Modernist Literature through Activities

The activities here referred to planning literary forums, organizing literary camps and literary gatherings. The first two activities were meant for members of the society and the third activity was open to anyone who were interested in literature. This activity allowed members of the society to bring new friends with the ultimate aim to recruit new members for the society.

3.2.4.1 Strategizing and Organizing Literary Forums, Debates and Seminars

The other strategy used by the Sirius Poetical Society was conducting forums. Later the contents of the forums would be published either in magazines or newspapers. To achieve the effect of dissemination, it was crucial to publish the contents of the forums. For instance, in February 2012, Wen Ruian planned a forum with the title *The Characteristics of Song Ziheng's Short Stories*. Those who participated in the forum included Fang Ezhen, Huang Hunxing, Zhou Qingxiao, He Qiliang, Ling Luo, Chen Caiyi, Lan Qiyuan, Wu Chaoran, Yu Yuntian, Chen Meifen and Tang Jintang. The 11

of them were all members of the Sirius Poetical Society. The content of the forum was then published in Chao Foon's Special Issue: *Special issue of Literary Criticism* (Wen, 1980, p.133-134). In May of the same year, Wen Ruian organized another forum entitled *The Voice of Young Writers*, the forum panels included ten members of the society, one of them, Yin Jianbo was a new member, and the forum was conducted by Wen Renping.

The content of this forum was published in July in *Xing Bao*, whose editor was Huang Ya. In Jun of that year, Wen Renping planned and organized a forum on prose. In July, Wen Renping had an important dialog with Wen Ruian on prose and prose writing. The content of the forum was later published by *Chao Foon Monthly* (issue 246). That issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* was actually a special issue on prose.

Table 3.6: Details of other forums by Sirius Poetical Society

| No. | Year and Month | Titles | Attentance |
|-----|----------------|---|--|
| 1 | January 1974 | “Xiaoshuo Yanjiu ji Xiaoshuo de Xushu Guandian” (<小说研究及小说的叙述观点>, “The Study of Fiction and Narrative Point of View in Fiction”) | Huang Hunxing, Xiu Zhifu, Lan Qiyuan, Yin Chengfeng, Zhang Shulin, Xu Ruoyun, Li Yanjun, Lin Qiuyue, Fang Ezhen, Huang Haiming. |
| 2 | May 1974 | “Xiju Lun” (<戏剧论>, “On Drama”) | Lan Qiyuan, Huang Hunxing, Xiu Zhifu, Zhang Shulin, Yin Chengfeng, Li Yanjun, Xu Ruoyun, Lan Wei, Chen Meifen, Fang Ezhen, Huang Haimin. |
| 3 | June 1974 | “Mahua Xiandaishi, Shiping, Shi Fangxiang” (<马华现代诗、诗评、诗方向>, “Mahua Modernist Poem, Poetry Interpretation, New Bearing in Poetry”) | Wen Renping, Zhang Shulin, Shen Cuanxin, Xie Chuancheng, Ling Rulang, Chen Yueye, Huang Haimin, Lin Qiuyue. |

Table 3.6 (continued)

| | | | |
|---|---------------|---|---|
| 4 | December 1974 | “Mahua Xiandai Wenxue de Jiantao” (<马华现代文学的检讨>, “A Review on Mahua Modernist Poetry”) | Wen Renping, Zhang Shulin, Huang Haimin, Lin Qiuyue, Shen Chuanxin, Lv Sha, Chao Lang, Luo Yusi, Xie Chuancheng, Zhang Liqiong, Feng Ke, Liu Qiuying, Lei Sichi, Ling Rulang, Si Yiwen, Yan Ming, You Wen, Zheng Rongxiang. |
| 5 | January 1978 | “Mahua Xiandai Shitan de Qingkuang yu Fazhan” (<马华现代诗坛的情况与发展>, “The Situation and Development of Mahua Modernist Poetical Arena”) | Zhang Shulin, Lan Qiyuan, Huang Haiming, Shen Chuanxin, Xie Chuancheng. |
| 6 | February 1979 | “Tan Mahua Xiandai Sanwen” (<谈马华现代散文>, “On Mahua Modernist Prose”) | Chuan Cao, Feng Ke, Shu Ling, Ye Jinlai, Xie Chuancheng, Chen Junzhen, Ling Rulang. |
| 7 | February 1979 | “Tan Yu Guangzhong zhi Wenxue Chuangzuo yu Wenxue Guan” (<谈余光中之文学创作与文学观>, “On Yu Guangzhong’s Literary Works and his Literary Point of View”) | Chuan Cao, Feng Ke, Shu Ling, Ye Jinlai, Xie Chuancheng, Chen Junzhen, Ling Rulang, Lan Qiyuan, Zhang Shulin, Shen Cuanxin, Gu Qiu. |
| 8 | April 1979 | “Tan Wen Renping de Anxiang” (<谈温任平的<暗香>>, “On Wen Renping’s Anxiang”) | Zhang Shulin, Xie Chuancheng, Chuan Cao, Shu Ling, Feng Ke, Chen Junzhen, Lv Sha, Ye He, Lan Yuting. |
| 9 | June 1979 | “Shi yu Rensheng” (<诗与人生>, “Poetry and Life”) | Zhang Shulin, Xie Chuancheng, Chuan Cao, Chun Xin, Dan Lei, Xin Ru, Gu Qiu, Chen Yueye, Shen Chuanxin, Zheng Rongxiang, Dong Zhu, Zhang Liqiong, Ye Jinlai. |

Table 3.6 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|------------------|---|---|
| 10 | December 1979 | “Wenxue yu Rensheng” (《文学与人生》, “Literature and Life”) | Zhang Shulin, Lan Qiyuan, Xie Chuancheng, Shen Cuanxin, Yang Liu, Chao Xu, Chaun Cao, Dong Zhu, Xin Ru, Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Ye He, A Wa, Feng Ke, Zhang Qifan, Lei Sichi, Shi Changhuan, Ye Jinlai. |
|----|------------------|---|---|

(Zhang, 1983, p.14-15)

From 1974 to 1979, except for 1975 to 1976, Sirius Poetry Society held forums once or twice on a yearly basis. Such forums are becoming an increasingly important mode of literary dissemination. This mode of dissemination has its advantages. It prepares the participants to equip themselves before they attend the forums. It is a commitment as well as an opportunity to enhance and expand their knowledge of modernist literature. The publication of the content of the forums will also promote a better understanding of the activities of the society among the non-members, and more importantly, it disseminates modernist literary information.

3.2.4.2 Organizing Festivals of Poetry and Literature

Another mode of dissemination of modernist literature by the Sirius Poetry Society was through the mode of literary gatherings. There were two gatherings each year, the first falls on the sixth of June, the International Poets Festival either in Cameron Highlands or in the Island of Pangkor; the second is normally a year-end gathering in December. The first lasts two days and one night, while the second one would last three days and two nights. Both gatherings are important gatherings in the dissemination of modernist literature.

Since the setup of the society in 1972 till 1979, it had organized numerous Poets Festivals and year-end gatherings. As stated above, the two gatherings focused on the writing of poetry. Thus it makes the gathering on the 6th of June every year as, the International Poets Festival even more meaningful. The venue of the gatherings was either in Pangkor Island, which is near the beach or in Cameron Highlands, which is in the hills. The two days one night gathering normally planned with a very tight schedule. The participants arrived by mid-day and the activities would begin immediately after lunch and stretch into midnight. Due to the rare opportunity of meeting with each other, the members continued their discussions all through the night. However, they were still fresh and in high spirits the very next morning to proceed with the literary activities of the second day.

Members usually brought along their new friends to each gathering. They normally got along very well with each other in no time, for they shared a common passion, and the love for literature. These new friends were very positive after attending the activities and some would request to join the society at that instance. Some would join later. This is how the society recruited fresh blood, not through the mass media such as newspapers and radio stations. New members believed that they would eventually meet other lovers of literature.

Comparatively, in the year-end literary gathering of three days and two nights faced less time constraint and was able to conduct more and various kinds of activities. Generally, a forum would be held on the first day after the members' arrival. It was always a useful warm-up for the upcoming activities. It gave the participants an opportunity to express their views freely on certain literary subjects. Then, it was followed by one or two literary seminars on specific themes. Papers would be

presented by the president of the society or other senior members. The speakers would then take questions from the floor. Occasionally, some prominent literary writers such as Qian Mo, Shen Junting, and Zhu Jiahua would be invited to present their papers. Two teams would then prepare for a literary debate that was usually scheduled after dinner. The dinner was usually prepared by female members who had cooking experience or outsiders when the schedule was tight.

Then a debate would be arranged for the members or participants. The heated debate would enliven the tense atmosphere. The president was the judge and he would review the debate and announce the results. The main purpose of the activity was not to identify the winners but for members to learn how to incorporate literary knowledge into the debating process, to put forward ideas, to argue effectively and to think logically.

One of the topics of the debate was “*Does the work of San Mao possess any literary significance?*” The open-ended question was controversial and effectively tested the debaters’ literary knowledge as well as their ability to think logically and skillfully. Some of the forums, seminars and debates are listed in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Forums and Debates from 1973-1976

| No. | Titles | Participants | Year and Month | Venue |
|-----|---|---|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 | The Heartfelt Wishes of Young Mahua Writers | Huang Hunxing, Xiu Zhifu, Chen Meifen, Fang Ezhen, Chen Caiyi, Lan Qiyuan, Yu Yuntian, Ye Pianzhou, Yin Jianbo. | May 1973 | Cameron Highlands |

Table 3.7 (continued)

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|----------------|-------------------|
| 2 | Study of Fiction and Narrativ Point of View in Fiction | Huang Hunxing, Xiu Zhifu, Fang Ezhen, Lan Qiyuan, Yin Jianbo, Zhang Shulin, Li Yanjun, Xu Ruoyun, Huang Haiming, Lin Qiuyue. | January 1974 | Kampar, Perak |
| 3 | On Drama | Lan Qiyuan, Huang HUNxing, Xiu Zhifu, Zhang Shulin, Yin Chengfeng, Li yanjun, Xu Ruoyun, Lan Wei, Chen Meifen, Fang Ezhen, Huang Haiming. | May 1974 | Pangkor Islang |
| 4 | Marshall Arts and Literature | Debates: Proposition: Huang HUNxing, Lan Qiyuan, Xiu Zhifu, Opposition: Members of 10 Association ⁵³ | January 1974 | Cameron Highlands |
| 5 | Psychological Analisis and Literature | Debates: Proposition: Members of Ten Association Opposition: Huang Hunxing, Lan Qiyuan, Xiu Zhifu. | September 1974 | Cameron Highlands |

⁵³ Before going to Taiwan, Wen Ruian has trained a group of young members to take over his work. The formation of 10 Association, is with the purpose of training new members, hoping that they will scarify for the society, be active in performing their duties, active in studying literature, more important is that they must mutual encourage each other, and be better. The members of 10 Association were chosen from 10 branches over Malaysia. See Yin Chengfeng: Oath to the God (Tian Meng), in Shen Zhou Poetical Society (ed.) *The Wind Blows and The Great Wall is Far* (Taipei: Homeland Publisher, 1977), pp. 144-145.

Table 3.8: List of Literary Seminars

| No. | Titles | Speakers | Year and Month |
|-----|--|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | “Xiandai Wenxue Piping de Jingshen Xuepai yu Xinpiping Xuepai” (<现代文学批评的精神分析学派与新批评学派>, “Psychoanalysis and New Criticism in Modernist Literature Criticism”) | Wen Ruian | August 1973 |
| 2 | “Yixiang yu Yixiang de Yuyan zai Sanwen Xiaoshuo li de Xiaoyong” (<意象与意象的语言在散文小说里的效用>, “The Effective Use of Images and Imagery Language in Prose and Novels”) | Huang Hunxing | August 1973 |
| 3 | “Tan Meixue Juli” (<谈美学距离>, “Discussion on Aesthetic Distance”) | Lan Qiyuan | August 1973 |
| 4 | “Lun Shi de Dingxiang Diejing” (<论诗的定向叠景>, “Discussion on Directed Overlapping Scenery in Modernist Poetry”) | Zhou Qingxiao | August 1973 |
| 5 | “Cong Yige Jiaodu lai Quanshi Si Kongtu de Shiguan” (<从一个角度来诠释司空图的诗观>, “Si Kongtu’s View on Poetry: A New Perspective”) | Ye Pianzhou | August 1973 |
| 6 | “Qianshi Yalisiduode de Jinghuashuo”, <浅释亚里斯多德的“净化说”>, “Aristotle’s View on Catharsis”) | Fang Ezhen | August 1973 |

The purpose of a literary gathering is obviously to disseminate the seeds of literature. It is hoped that the members will be more passionate, more confident in their pursuit of literary creativity. To the “new friends”, the gathering shows them that the literary road is not a lonely path and they can gain a better understanding of the positive implications of literature and also be able to assume the responsibility to disseminate literature.

From the perspective of dissemination, there are two tiers of significance. Firstly, the gathering embodies the strength of the society members, enhances their confidence and consolidates their ideals of modernist literature. Secondly, it always attracts new friends who subsequently will join the Sirius Poetical Society. This is the living proof of the positive effects of the dissemination of modernist literature.

3.2.5 Dissemination through Interpersonal Interaction: Wen Renping and Yang Liu

Theoretically, dissemination through interpersonal interaction involves the interaction of literary information between individuals. From the point of the medium of interpersonal interaction, there are two types, one is face-to-face interaction between individuals which is highly interactive and feedback is immediate and instantaneous; the other one is interaction through the media such as mails, telephone, faxes, SMS and emails. The following discussion will focus on the first type of interaction.

3.2.5.1 Wen Renping: Face-to-face Interaction

The second objective of the Sirius Poetical Society was to groom a new generation of literary writers. It motivates and encourages the young members, and the literary community fresh blood. Since the objective was to groom the young ones, there should be a specific training programme. Wen had a very unique idea, and that was to conduct a face-to-face training. Wen had a vast and good collection of books. At different phases, he would invite individual members with literary potentiality to stay in his “library”. It allowed the selected members to read extensively and to write actively. Their completed pieces would then be handed to Wen for review. Wen would

then highlight their literary inadequacies immediately. Discussions on related subjects and literary techniques and knowledge would follow.

The first member to be admitted to Wen's study was Hong Erliang from Alor Setar. Besides helping the president to deal with the routine operations of the society, he read extensively and prepared himself to enter a Taiwanese university. Hong entered the "library" in 1975. He left in September 1976 to further his studies in Taiwan.

In December 1976, after completing his SPM studies, Xie Chuancheng moved into the "library". At that time Xie was still a new member. He had a voracious appetite for reading and was particularly interested in reading books on literary criticism. From December 1976 to May 1977, he completed several pieces of critical essays and wrote many poems. This brief stint saw his personal literary development progressed by leaps and bounds. When his first critical essay "The Plight of Mahua Modernist Poetry" was published in Dazhong Wanbao, it immediately invited a literary debate. To Xie, he considered the controversy as another good form of training. The half year stint with face-to-face training enabled him to strengthen his literary foundation and muster up sufficient courage to proceed with his pursuit of a literary development. He studied English literature for his HSC and later entered University of Malaya to major in Chinese, English and American literature.

After Xie, it was Shen Chuanxin's turn to move into the "library". He originated from Teluk Intan and worked as a newspaper correspondent for Nanyang Xiang Pau in Kampar. Two of his poems entitled "Kampar. 1978. To Chen Chuanxing" and "Birds and Forest: A Dedication to My Love" were written in this period.

This face-to-face method took full advantage of the direct and instantaneous transmission of literary information. However, only one could be trained at a time. This mode of dissemination, from the point of effectiveness, had a great limitation. Perhaps its significance lied more in its intensive training for a selected group of members. Those who had mastered the skills were expected to shoulder the mission to disseminate modernist literature. In retrospect, Hong's recruitment of three graduates as Sirius Poetical Society members during his stint of studies in Taiwan was a success story. After six months of intensive training, Xie had since been producing a series of critical essays and numerous poems. Within five years, he had emerged as one of the new and young literary critics and poets of the Mahua literary community. This is another instance of the success story of this mode of literary dissemination.

3.2.5.2 Grooming Fresh Blood in the Schools

Wen Renping, the president of the Sirius Poetical Society, treated the dissemination of modernist literature with meticulous attention. In 1973, he was transferred to Langkap from Pahang. He stayed at his old house in Bidor. As a teacher of the Chinese language, he seized every opportunity to talk about modernist literature during his classes. Students were impressed by his intense enthusiasm and his depth knowledge and understanding of Chinese literature. His style of teaching amazed the students and eventually turned many disinterested students to be inspired and they began to seek advice from him. The interested students soon became the new force of the Sirius Poetical Society. His students included Lin Qiuyue, Huang Haiming, Chen Yueye, Yin Jianbo, Ling Rulang, Ou Zhiren and Ou Zhicai.

The other teacher who was responsible in the dissemination of literature was no other than Yang Liu, Wen's wife. She was transferred to Pei Yuan High School in Kampar Perak in 1975. She taught Chinese language in the lower secondary classes. She was also in charge of the St John's Ambulance Society of the school. When she became the chief advisor of the society, she formed a literary group in the society. Besides members of the St John's Ambulance Society, the group was open to all the students in the school. At that time the captain of the society was Xie Chuancheng, in order not to offend the teacher, and to encourage more members to join the group, he felt obliged to take the lead to become its first member. He invited his classmates who excelled in the Chinese language such as Zhang Liqiong and Ye Caijuan to join too. When there were enough members to form a group, Yang began her literary talks after each St Joh Ambulance Society's gatherings. In the beginning, everyone was unsure of what was going on. After a few lessons, their interest in the subject took a positive turn, they showed more eagerness to know and understand what the teacher was trying to teach.

To broaden the members' literary knowledge, Yang has arranged a series of talks on Mahua literature. It was held during the year-end school holidays. She invited Wen Renping, then already a renowned writer, to be the speaker. Xie Chuancheng, Zhang Liqiong, Wen Qian were among the few who were influenced and inspired, they joined Sirius Poetical Society in 1976. The literary talks in Pei Yuan Secondary School turned out to be another platform where Wen disseminated modernist literature.

In 1982, Wen was transferred to Pei Yuan from Langkap. He was asked to teach the Chinese language and Chinese Literature in the upper secondary classes. His influence grew even stronger in a national type school. Under his tutelage and

influence, many students from Pei Yuan joined the Sirius Poetical Society. They were Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Xu Yixiang, Zhang Changhao, Wu Huanmu, Wu Jiexin, Zheng Yuelei, Zhang Yunxiu, Zhang Qifan, Qiu Yunjian, You Junhao, Chen Shilou and others. Among these members, later Lin Ruoyin and You Junhao won the prestigious Huazhong Poetry Prizes. Such stories continued into the 80s and later years.

3.2.6 Dissemination of Modernist Literature through the Mail

Another mode of dissemination of literature was through the setting up of Century Cultural Company. The company involved in the selling of literary books through mailing services. Zhang Shulin, who proposed the idea of mailing services, was in charge of its operations. It imported modernist literary books from Taiwan, prepared a book list, and then posted it to literary friends. They would then make an order and sent the payment of the ordered books to the company. Once the company received the payment, the ordered books would be mailed to them. The company was based in Teluk Intan.

It was set up in 1976 when the realist writers were still very popular in the Mahua literary community. Through the setting up of the company, the Sirius Poetical Society hoped to propagate modernist literature and to provide the local readers a chance to read the works of Taiwan modernist literature. The very first beneficiaries of this effort were members of the Sirius Poetical Society. They were having difficulties to purchase literary books, whether it was a book on modernist poems, modernist prose or modernist novels, from the local bookstores. Members who lived in Teluk Intan, the Lv Liu members, were overjoyed when the company was set up in their hometown. Whenever new books arrived from Taiwan, they were the first to tease out a book list

and the first to buy and to read the books they were interested in. The members who had joined the working class and financially well-off would be able to buy their favorite books while school students would only buy when they had saved up enough money.

Century Cultural Company rented a commercial unit to store the books. It was also its administrative office and the venue of activities for the members of the Lv Liu Society. They would gather there every evening, teasing out the book list, sorting out books sent from Taiwan and managing the mailing orders.

The mailing service was indeed a very good idea, however, the lack of business management skills folded up the company's business in less than a year. Yet literary friends or society members, who had bought books from Century Cultural Company, whether through mailing orders or directly from the shop, would never forget such a memorable experience. The very first few books the researcher bought from Century Cultural Company were books on modernist poems and literary criticism.

3.2.7 Intensive Literary Training Programmes: To Improve the Effectiveness of Dissemination

3.2.7.1 Presentation of Papers at Literary Seminars

To disseminate modernist literature effectively, the Sirius Poetical Society vigorously educated and trained an elite group as communicator of dissemination. In the early stage, programmes such as “Zhenmei Poetical Wall” and “The Eight Masters of Tang and Song” were conducted. At a later stage, the mode of training changed. Members were required to present papers at literary gatherings. Leaders of each

poetical society not only were expected to be able to write good poems but also be able to defend their works on a theoretical basis independently.

Seminars were held at every literary gathering. Selected members had to present papers on assigned topics.

Other training programmes included the requirement of members to speak on specific topics in gatherings such as the Poets Festival and major literary gatherings. Selected members had to make in-depth studies of specific topics, written in the form of presentation papers, before presenting them in the seminars. After the presentation, they were expected to take questions from the floor. How the content of the papers were presented and how questions were answered would reveal the extent of mastery of the subject matter by the speakers. Below is a list of papers presented by selected members in 1973 and 1979.

Table 3.9: List of names and topics presented from 1973 to 1979

| No. | Year and Month | Name of Member | Title of Seminar Paper |
|-----|----------------|----------------|--|
| 1 | August 1973 | Wen Ruian | “Xiandai Wenxue Piping de Jingshen Fenxi Xuepai yu Xin Piping Xuepai” (<现代文学批评的精神分析学派与新批评学派>，“Psychoanalysis and New Criticism in Modernist Literature Criticism”) |
| 2 | | Huang Hunxing | “Yixiang yu Yixiang Yuyan zai Sanwen Xiaoshuo de Xiaoyong” (<意象与意象语言在散文小说里的效用>，“The Effective Use of Images and Imagery Language in Prose and Novels”) |
| 3 | | Lan Qiyuan | “Tan Meixue Juli”(<谈美学距离>，“Discussion on Aesthetic Distance”) |
| 4 | | Zhou Qingxiao | “Lun Shi de Dingxiang Diejing” (<论诗的定向叠景>，“Discussion on Directed Overlapping Scenery in Modernist Poetry”) |

Table 3.9 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|---------------|----------------|---|
| 5 | | Ye Bianzhou | “Cong Yige Xin de Jiaodu lai Quanshi Si Kongtu de Shiguan” (<从一个新角度来诠释司空图的诗观>, “Si Kongtu’s View on Poetry: A New Perspective”) |
| 6 | | Fang Ezhen | “Qianshi Yalisiduode de Jinghua Shuo” (<浅释亚里士多德的“净化说”>, “Aristotle’s View on Catharsis”) |
| 7 | February 1979 | Lan Qiyuan | “Wenxue Chuangzuo de Dongji” (<文学创作的动机>, “The Intention of Literary Creation”) |
| 8 | December 1979 | Gu Qiu | “Yizhong Xiangsi, Liangchu Xianchou---Tan Zhongguo Gudianshi” (<一种相思, 两处闲愁—谈中国古典诗>, “On Chinese Classical Poems”) |
| 9 | | Lan Qiyuan | “Xian Jieduan Nianqing Zuoze de Chujing” (<现阶段年轻作者的处境>, “The Plight of Young Writers”) |
| 10 | | Xie Chuancheng | “Tan Wen Renping Shizhong de Quyuan Qingyijie” (<谈温任平诗中的“屈原情意结”>, “The Qu Yuan Complex in Wen renping’s Poems”) |
| 11 | | Shen CHuanxin | “Shenhua yu Xiandaishi” (<神话与现代诗>, “Myth and modernist Poetry”) |
| 12 | | Yang Liu | “Wuxia Xiaoshuo zhi Wojian” (<武侠小说之我见>, “Discussion on Wu Xia Novels”) |
| 13 | | Xin Ru | “Shi yu Ganqing” (<诗与感情>, “Poetry and Emotions”) |
| 14 | | Zhang Shulin | “Cong Xinlixue Tan Wenxue” (<从心理学谈文学>, “Discussion on Literature from Psychology”) |

The scope of the subject matter present was wide and varied. Individual topics needed an in-depth analysis. Members were under immense pressure when they had to present papers. The positive side was that it was also very motivational. Members, who had gone through the process of reading widely and thinking skillfully during the preparation of their papers on a particular topic, would find the experience obviously

beneficial when they become communicators or agents of dissemination later. After 1980, more training based on this mode was organized.

3.2.8 Concluding Remarks

The many efforts in promoting and disseminating modernist literature by the Sirius Poetical Society mentioned in the preceding sections are self-explanatory. The society had proved itself to be a worthy successor of the mission upheld by literary publications such as *Hai Tian*, *Huang Yuan* and *Ying Xing*. Moreover, in the process, it had indeed experimented with the many modes of dissemination. Such efforts exemplified, to a certain extent, the influence exerted on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. The role of Sirius Poetical Society on this important aspect certainly deserved to be written into Mahua literary history.

In conclusion, the effort made by Sirius Poetical Society in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist literature in the 70s was exemplary. Their major modes of dissemination are: publication, internal training, external promotion, building links with modernist writers in Malaysia and foreign countries. In the local literary community and foreign countries, the Sirius Poetical Society had made an all-out attempt to succeed in the ideals it championed. The work of the Sirius Poetical Society has won the recognition of the literary community and has been accorded an indisputable place it deserves in Mahua literary history.

3.3 Sirius Poetical Society and the Dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature in 1980s

3.3.0 Introduction

The Sirius Poetical Society emerged in the early 1970s and soon bloomed swiftly into a myth.⁵⁴ It had produced numerous talented poets, who excelled in poetry writing. This development, according to Mahua Literary critic Ye Xiao, had propelled Mahua Modernist Poetry into the era of the Sirius in 1970s (Ye, 1999, p.290). Regarding the mystical veil of Sirius Poetical Society, Xie Chuancheng had a comprehensive account (Xie, 2009, p.144-158).

In November 1979, the Sirius Poetical Society was granted the literary award (group award) by Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society, as recognition for its effort and contributions in disseminating Mahua Modernist Society. The literary arena in 1970s was not favorable to Mahua Mordernist Literature. It was still under the tight and influential control of the Realistic Group. The main problem faced by modernist writers was a lack of publishing opportunities. The Sirius Poetical Society insisted in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature in 1970s and its effort and achievement were obvious. Thus, it deserved the award. However, winning a prize was not the end of the society. Far from resting on its laurels, it made further attempts to consolidate support for its efforts to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature into the 1980s.

⁵⁴ Lai Ruihe has the opinion that the Sirius Poetical Society has put a mythical posture to the outside world. He has also commented on the source of enthusiasm and concluded that "this kind of enthusiasm, needs the support of a self-imposed belief and an unbreakable conviction. This kind of conviction is somehow youthful, romantic and idealistic, abstain realistic consideration." See Lai Ruihe. A Mythical Kingdom: The Sirius Poetical Society, in *The Students Weekly* issue 869, Jun 1976.

The impression of Sirius Poetical Society was mystical in 1970s. In 1980s, it uncovered the mystical veil gradually to face the reality. In early 1970s when the society was newly formed, and with the social and cultural constraints of that time, the society could only disseminate literature by handwritten and printed periodicals. In the last five years of 1970s, the society started to publish a few collections of poetry, prose and essays employing modern printing presses. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Sirius Poetical Society, continued its emphasis on the publication of literary works and, adopted multi-strategies to disseminate modernist literature. This chapter will discuss the strategies employed to disseminate modernist literature in 1980s.

3.3.1 Publishing Looking Back in Anger: A Collection of Articles in Commemoration of the 21th Anniversary of the Malaysian Chinese Modern Literary Movement

It is an undeniable fact that Malaysian Chinese Modern Literature since 1959 has never been treated fairly. Influential realist writers in the Mahua literary sphere have applied multiple pressures on modernist writers. At that time the editors of literary supplements of the two newspapers, the “*Nanyang Xiang Pau*” and “*Sin Chew Daily*” were Zhong Xiatian and Zeng Gong respectively. The former was the editor of “Readers’ Literature”, the latter was the editor of “Literary Chunqiu”. They were the realists’ writers; they not only blocked the works written by modernist writers but also often published articles attacking modernist literature.

Among the modernist writers, probably only Wen Renping and a few others sporadically published their inconspicuous poems in Nanyang Xiang Pau's literary supplement “Readers Literature”. Modernist writers could only publish their work in

Chao Foon Monthly. Unfortunately, its print volume was small, and its sales volume was low. Although it only achieved limited effect, it had done its best to promote modernist literature. The dissemination of Malaysian literature had always been dependent on the literary supplements of the newspapers, without this traditional medium of dissemination, it was a struggle for the survival for modernist literature.

The Sirius Poetical Society had been very active in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature since its formation, and due to this reason, it became the target of attack by the Realistic Group. There were six purposes of establishing the society, namely: (i) to inherit the unfinished mission of magazines like *Hai Tian*, *Huang Yuan Yin Xing* and others, and continue promoting modernist literature; (ii) to groom a new generation of literary writers; (iii) to fortify the belief that literary achievement is a lifelong endeavour; (iv) to pursue literary and artistic excellence devoid of mundane considerations; (v) to promote literary education that would imperceptibly change the attitudes of the public within a broader cultural context and; (vi) to defend literature as an art, and not of political affiliations. The writers' mission should be linked with political dogma, but ties in with an objective, truthful, thorough and comprehensive inquiry on the realities of life (Wen, 1979, p.11-12). Sirius Poetical Society remained steadfast in upholding these purposes and thus became the target of attack. Should there be any criticism or attack on modernist literature, Sirius Poetical Society was always the first to make a rebuttal. So, the society had never shed away from any literary controversies that emerged in the 1970s, for instance the literary debates that flared up in *Jianguo Ribao*, *Dazhong Wanbao* and *Nanyang Xiang Pau*.

In the early 1980s, Sirius Poetical Society made a review on the emergence of Mahua Modernist Literature from 1959 to 1980 and its 20 years of development. A

special book entitled *Looking Back in Anger: Commemorating Issue on the 21st Anniversary of the Malaysian Chinese Modern Literary Movement* was published. This book had made an overall review on the Mahua Modern Literary Movement. There were essays discussing the success of modern literature, and in order to get a more objective review on the performance of Mahua Modernist Literature, academics and professionals were interviewed. The book was divided into three parts; the first part is discursive discourse, which consists of five essays. They are “*The Three Important Prose Writers*” by Zhang Shulin, “*The Obsessions of Young Writers*” by Lan Qiyuan, “*A Study on the Central Theme of Mahua Modernist Poetry*” by Shen Chuanxin, “*Of Subject Matter, Competence and Performance of Mahua Modern Short Stories*” by Xie Chuancheng, and “*The Meaning and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature*” by Wen Renping. The second part consists of face to face interviews or interviews through written statements. They interviewed Yao Tuo, Zhong Xiatian, Wang Runhua, Zheng Liangshu, Wu Tiancai, Li Jinzong, Yang Shengqiao, Chen Huichong, Ye Xiao, and Song Ziheng. They voiced their views by answering the questions put forward by the editor. The third part was a collection of information or data, which documented all the important literary activities in 1970s.

Wen Renping wrote an article entitled “*The Developing Stages of Mahua Modernist Literature*” in the Preface to this special book. He divided the 21 years of development into four stages. The first stage was the Exploration Period (1959-1964), the second stage was the Foundation Period (1965-1969), the third stage was the Moulding Period (1970-1974) and the fourth stage is the Sceptical Period (1975 – 1979) (Wen, 1980, p.5-14). Although 21 years is not a long period, according to T.S. Eliot, it is only a literary cycle. In this literary cycle, literary styles will experience great changes. This literary cycle appears in English and America literature too. This

short essay by Wen Renping, clarified the development of Mahua Modernist Literature through observation and induction, and listed out four developmental stages. This short essay had laid a foundation in the history of Mahua Modernist Literature, which would help in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. To foreign researchers, this essay becomes a very important guide when they carried out surveys in Mahua Modernist Literature.

From the content of the book, it is not difficult to understand the intention of Sirius Poetical Society. First of all, Mahua Modernist Literature is divided into four periods with a specific time span, the phenomenon and representative writers and incidents in each period are recorded. In the discursive part, aspects like Modernist Poems, Modernist Prose, Modernist Short Stories, dilemma of the young writers are extensively covered. In the discussion of prose and short stories, the performances of representative writers are discussed. It is inextricably linked to the performance of these two literary genres. In the discussion of Modernist Poetry, the stress is on the themes of poetry, and several common themes found are portrayed differently in Mahua Modernist Poetry. In the discussion of the dilemma faced by the young writers, the continuation or succession of Mahua literature is discussed and the problems faced in writing and publishing are given more attention. The last article, by Wen Renping, highlights the past and future of Mahua Modernist Literature. In this article, Wen analyses in detail the maladies afflicting Mahua Modernist Literature and gives suggestions to overcome them. In the last part, the future development of Mahua Modernist Literature is also mentioned. These few articles do not make any attempt to discuss Mahua Modernist Literature in detail, however, their focus and analysis of a particular genre and literary phenomenon will enhance the readers' overall understanding of Mahua Modernist Literature.

The second part of the book is about a series of interviews. Writers, poets, academics literary historians, editors of newspaper column were interviewed. Those interviewed were Yao Tuo, Zhong Xiatian, Wang Runhua, Wu Tiancai, Zheng Liangshu, Yang Shengqiao, Chen Huichong, Ye Xiao, Li jinzong, Song Ziheng. The interviews were conducted face to face or through written statements. The questions asked during the interview are listed below:

1. 1979 marks the 20th anniversary of Mahua Modernist Literature. Do you agree that in these 20 years, Mahua Modernist Literature has attained a certain level of achievement?
2. Based on your observation, which literary genre has produced the most fruitful and creative works? Please give me the reasons.
3. Can you elaborate on the type of jobs that Mahua Modernist Literature has provided?
4. From your experience, after reading Mahua Modernist publications can you tell us the strengths and weaknesses of Mahua Modernist literature?
5. It is undeniable that in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature, there were a lot of obstacles and resistances, from your point of view, what is the crux of the problem?
6. In the near future, what measures can be taken in order to overcome all these problems?
7. What do you think about literary popularization in Malaysia?
8. What do you think about the future of Mahua Modernist Literature?

The opinions for the above questions asked were not consistent. By and large most of the people who were interviewed had the same opinions about MML. They stressed that the future for MML is bleak. Their answers were not favourable.

We could see a list of major events which took place during 1970s in the last part of the Sirius Poetical Society's book. It is tabulated according to year and month, from January 1970 to December 1979, and the events are documented in details. This table of information is important because it is a key to understand the Sirius Poetical Society which was once regarded as a mystical literary society.

This book has collected a lot of important literary documents, a set of precious research materials on Mahua Modernist Literature, as well as on Sirius Poetical Society. It has an important meaning from the point of disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature. In the first place, the two articles contributed by Wen Renping, "*The Meaning of Mahua Modernist Literature and Its Future Development*", and "*The Important Developing Stages of Mahua Modernist Literature*", had the intention of placing Mahua Literature into historical perspective. Although Mahua Modernist Literature had developed for 21 years, it faced many challenges and setbacks. The articles also touched on the efforts and achievements of the writers as well as the problems in modernist literary works. Wen Renping did not hold back from highlighting the problems of modernist literature and gave suggestions to overcome them. In other words, he made a comprehensive review of the past and took a deep look at the future of Mahua Modernist Literature. The other essays each have their own characteristics respectively. The only flaw is, perhaps, that the essays were all written by members of the Sirius Poetical Society. Although they tried to be objective in their discussion, the impression that an element of subjectivity may still be present in their

criticism. If the two essays were written by people from outside Sirius Poetical Society, the discussion on Mahua Modernist Literary history will be more convincing and more meaningful. Interviews were carried out with 10 persons from different disciplines. This aimed to some of them were from the Realistic Group, for instance, Zhong Xiatian. They were free to talk anything about Mahua Modernist Literature. The data collected was objective. Thirdly, the last part of the book, which listed the events of Sirius Poetical Society in 1970s, serves as an important historical document. For the first time Sirius Poetical Society revealed its “secret” activities to the public. To a certain extent the events listed recorded the process of dissemination of Modernist Literature by Sirius Poetical Society. It is indeed a piece of invaluable information.

3.3.2 Publishing/Making Modernist Poetry Cassettes and Phonogram, to Popularize Modernist Poetry

Until 1979, the Sirius Poetical Society had published three important collections of Mahua Modernist Poems. Due to some unforeseeable circumstances, the circulation of *Malaysian Poetry Collection* was limited. The same thing happened to *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*. As for *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, which was printed in Taiwan, the sale was even lower since the number of copies that could be brought back from Taiwan was very limited. The member who managed the sales to society members was Hong Erliang. He only sent out a few copies to members and left the remaining copies of the collection in Taiwan. Some may be interested to know why the collection was printed in Taiwan. There are three reasons. In the first place, the printing quality in Taiwan was much better. The paper used was Dowling paper, it was slightly yellowish, and when writings were printed in black on it, it made reading comfortable to the eye comparatively, white

paper which was more reflective and dazzling. The second reason was the collection could be sold in Taiwan, and thus it carried the hope of introducing Mahua Literature to the Taiwan literary arena. At that time, the Sirius Poetical Society invited a famous designer, Xu Zhangzhen to design the book cover. Xu, who was the designer of the Publisher of Foreign Literature in National Taiwan University, also designed the cover of literary magazine *Zhong Wai Literature Monthly*. To coordinate the publication of *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, Zhang Shulin published his prose collection and was printed in Taiwan too. Before 1979, Wen Renping published his second collection of prose *The Moon with Yellow Skin* and a collection of critical essays on poetry entitled *The Elegant Tripod*. Wen's second collection of poems *Grief in Exile*, was also printed in Taiwan. Thirdly, some of the poets in *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* like Ha Ge, Yan Zhi, Zheng Renhui are members of Sirius Poetical Society from Taiwan. During that time, the Sirius Poetical Society had published 14 books, the society was in full swing, and everyone believed that it was the suitable time to extend successfully its literary territory into Taiwan. However, they did not expect the high printing cost of *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, and they did not include the mailing cost in their initial plan of publication. Due to this unforeseen reason, *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, although was published in hard copy and normal copy, did not enjoy a wide circulation in Malaysia and the effect of literary dissemination were curtailed. Furthermore, even though *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* was a representative collection, it had low circulation and only few people knew about its publication. For those who were keen to conduct studies on Sirius Poetical Society, the shortage of these texts was a genuine obstacle for them.

It may be inferred that, the three poetry collections which were of monumental significance did not enjoy a wide circulation. The poor circulation was in part due to an

inefficient sales strategy. Due to this reason, very few readers and researchers had the chance to read these three poetry collections and thus did not respond to the publications with much enthusiasm. Because of this, the Sirius Poetical Society changed its strategies and focused on the dissemination of Modernist Literature, through the publication of individual collection of articles with an active marketing strategy. They even published modern poetry phonograph records and cassettes which were an unprecedented undertaking.

The Modernist Poems are profound and difficult to understand, and are regarded as “poison grass” by the Realistic Group of writers. Actually, poetry is always the interest of a small group of people from ancient times to the present, and few people are able to appreciate its beauty. Thus, they are indeed prejudiced against the existence of Modernist Poetry just based on its profundity. To make Mahua Modernist Poetry more popular, the Sirius Poetical Society, together with the Bai Zhuan Choir, led by the late musician Chen Huichong, composed songs based on selected Modernist Poems by members of Sirius Poetical Society. The first phonograph record of Modernist Poetry in Malaysia was finally published. The poem entitled *Jingxi de Xingguan* (《惊喜的星光》, *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*) by Wen Renping became the society song. The President of Sirius Poetical Society, Wen Renping commented that:

A literary society that has its own society song implies its organization strength and reflects an obvious trend towards advances in multiple artistic endeavours (Wen, 2004, p.224-228).

The Star with Pleasant Surprise consists of 13 poems contributed by eight Sirius members. The 13 poems were “Zhongsheng de Shen” (<众生的神>, *The God of All Living Creatures*) by Wen Renping, “Yun yu Feiyan” (<云与飞檐>, *Cloud and the Upturned Eaves*) by Wen Renping, “Shuang Hua” (<霜华>, *The Flowers of Frost*) by Wen Renping, “Jiyi de Shu” (<记忆的树>, *The Tree of Memory*) by Zhang Shulin, “Yisui Xiaoxiao” (<易水萧萧>, *The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River*) by Zhang Shulin, “Lou Shi Zhi Ge” (<陋石之歌>, *The Song of Ugly Stone*) by Gu Qiu, “Feng Ling” (<风铃>, *The Wind Bell*) by Yang Liu, “Gen de Suiyue” (<根的岁月>, *Years of the Root*) by Shen Chuanxin, “Yulian” (<雨帘>, *Curtain of Rain*) by Xie Chuancheng, “Yanyang” (<艳阳>, *The Bright Sun*) by Dong Zhu, and “Gan Lu” (<赶路>, *Hurry on with the Journey*) by Lan Qiyuan. In the Preface, Wen Renping stated that the production or publication of phonograph record and cassettes were the hopes to disseminate Modernist poetry far and wide, so that it would reach all levels. “Wherever there is well-water, there are people singing and reciting Modernist Poetry”⁵⁵. Undeniably, poetry songs are more popular than written poetry. This helped in disseminating Modernist Poetry especially among secondary school students and young writers. For instance, when Wen Renping introduced poetry songs to students in Pei Yuan Secondary School in Kampar, Perak, and the students welcomed this kind of songs and lyrics very much. Later, students who were musically gifted tried to compose their own songs. They were Cheng Kexin (程可欣), Lin Ruoyin (林若隐), Wu Huanmu (吴缓慕), and Wu Jiexin (吴结心), who were also members of Sirius Poetical Society. In Teluk Intan, when Xie Chuancheng introduced poetry songs to his students in Sultan Abdul Aziz Secondary School, it invoked the same kind of positive

⁵⁵ Wen Renping (1981). *Entering to a New World - Preface to Modern Ballad Cassette*. Teluk Intan: Sirius Poetical Society; Johor Bahru: Pai Chuan Choir.

response. A few of his students also composed some poetry songs and later applied to join the Sirius Poetical Society.

The inspiration of producing modern poetry phonograph and cassettes originated from Yang Xian's Modern Chinese Ballads. In 1975, Yang Xian composed a few modern poetry songs based on Yu Guangzhong's poems. He then organised a concert of singing. He was then honoured as the father of Modern Ballads. Initially, after composing modern ballads, he performed in a ballad restaurant. To his surprise, customers liked the ballads very much. Hence, on 6th June 1975, which was the International Poet's Day, Yang Xian held a concert of Modern Ballads in Zhong Shan Hall, Taipei. Singers, Hu Dehu and Li Shuangze were singing together with Yang Xian. They sang 8 modern ballads composed by Yang Xian based on Yu Guangzhong's poems. After the concert, all the eight ballads were collected in the Modern Chinese Ballads Phonograph, with one extra ballad.⁵⁶ All the nine poems were selected from Yu Guangzhong's collection of poems *Baiyu Kugua* (《白玉苦瓜》, *The White Jade Bitter Guard*) which included "Minge Shou" (<民歌手>, "The Folk Singer"), "Bai Feifei" (<白霏霏>, "Drizzling White"), "Jianghu Shang" (<江湖上>, "On the Road"), "Xiangchou Si Yun" (<乡愁四韵>, "Nostalgia in Four Rhymes"), "Huixuan Qu" (<回旋曲>, "Rondo"), "Xiaoxiao Tianwen" (<小小天问>, "Time and Eternity"), "Yaoyao Minyao" (<摇摇民谣>, "Swing on, Folk Song"), "Xiangchou" (<乡愁>, "Nostalgia") and "Minge" (<民歌>, "Folk Song"). When the phonograph was produced, it was named *Xiangchou Si Yun--- Zhongguo Xiandai Mingeji* (《乡愁四韵---中国现代民歌集》, *Nostalgia in Four Rhymes: Modern Chinese Ballads*). The

⁵⁶ Lyrics by Yu Guangzhong, Melody by Yang Xian *Modern Chinese Ballads* Taipei: Hongjianquan Education and Cultural Foundation, 1977

phonograph was popular and more than ten editions had been published within a very short period. The style of Yang Xian's ballads was inclined to Chinese classical music, and was very pleasant to the ear.

In the late 1970s, the Chinese Society of Nanyang University, Singapore, organised a concert entitled *Poetry Music* (诗乐). All the songs were composed by Nanyang university undergraduates. This kind of concert gave rise to Campus Songs later. In 5-6th August 1978, Nanyang University Poetical Society organised a Poetry Exposition in the Exposition Hall of Chinese Commercial Association. The Poetry Exposition was a show that merged poetry with other artistic forms, which included calligraphy, Chinese painting and carving. This exposition has broadened the varied expression of poetry. On the first night of the exposition, the Nanyang University Poetical Society held a special small concert performed by Nanyang Garden Group (南园小组) and Zhang Fan, with the theme of expressing the feelings and thoughts of Nanyang University Students. The poetical songs presented were as follows: "Gushi" (<故事>, "Story"), "Hui Shou" (<挥手>, "Waving Hands"), "Hupan" (<湖畔>, "Beside the Lake"), "Wuwai" (<屋外>, "Outside the House"), "Shang Shan" (<上山>, "Going up the Hill"), "Rulin Daoshang" (<儒林道上>, "Along the Scholar's Road"), "Sheng Ming" (<生命>, "Life"), and "Gaosu Yangguang" (<告诉阳光>, "Tell the Sunshine").

The Poetry Songs in Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia were varied. In Taiwan, it was called Modern Ballads (现代民歌), in Singapore it was called Poetry Music (诗乐), and in Malaysia, the Sirius Poetical Society called it Modern Poetry Songs (现代诗曲). The term "modern" was stressed, with the hope that it would achieve the effects of

literary dissemination. Yang Xian, the father of Chinese Modern Ballads Taiwan, has contributed himself by merging music with modern poems, which produced melodies that were refined and fresh. The lyrics in Chinese Modern Ballads were all modern poems wrote by the internationally renowned modern poet, Yu Guangzhong. This was quite different when compared with lyrics of Poetry Music. The lyrics of Poetry Music in Singapore were written by a group of young modern poets such as Zhou Wanghua (周望桦), Du Nanfa (杜南发), Pan Zhenglei (潘正镭), Chen Laishui (陈来水), and Lin Shanlou (林山楼). Lyrics in *The Star with Pleasant Surprise* were also modernist poems. All the poets were from Sirius Poetical Society, they were the junior, senior and older members of the society. Judging by the quality of the lyrics, the Chinese Modern Ballads was considered to be the best. Lyrics writers from Singapore Poetry Music and Modern Poetry Songs were apparently different and of a lesser quality from the lyrics written by Yu Guangzhong. The lyrics of Poetry Music were composed by Singapore young Modern Poets. The lyrics were representative of that generation and had their own characteristics, which had indeed promoted and disseminated Modernist Poetry in Singapore. The lyrics of *The Star with Pleasant Surprise* were the works of Sirius Poetical Society's members. It was special in the sense that it came from one single literary society, and this society had been actively involved in promoting and disseminating Modernist Literature.

From the perspective of melody composers, Yang Xian and at a later stage, Zhang Fan were the only composers who involved themselves in the creative writing of Chinese Modern Ballads and Poetry Music. Zhang Fan was also the composer of "Chuangdeng" (<传灯>, "Passing Lamp"), a melody representing Malaysian Chinese Spirit. Fan was also a literary graduate, and holds a master degree in Business Administration. He was also the Music Academician of London Music College,

England with a PhD in Musical Arts in America and an Honorary PhD in Business Administration. In addition, he was also the Chief Examiner of Chinese Music Examination in the Music College of London, the Chief Examiner of International Musical Enterprise Centre, a Professor in Raffles Music College of Singapore, and the visiting professor of several universities outside Singapore. However, when he composed melody from Poetry Music, he was just an undergraduate with little foundation in music.

When Yang Xian composed melody for Yu Guangzhong's poems, he did not undergo any musical training, he just loved singing. During his first year of study at the university, he joined the choir and at that time he learned how to read musical notes, and underwent some kind of training. That little training aroused his interest in music. Later, he bought a guitar, learned to play the guitar himself and sang his own songs. In his third year, he learned some composing theory and theory of Jazz and Rock music. Only in his fourth year, he started writing something on his own. In his leisure time, he used to watch Hu Defu's performance in Columbia Coffee House in Taipei, sometimes he volunteered to sing some English songs. His first Chinese song was a modern ballad based on Yu Guangzhong's poem "*Nostalgia in Four Rhymes*" as its lyrics. At that time, he composed the melody together with a pianist, the composition was completed in 1974. His first performance was at Hu Defu's Concert organised by International College in 5th Jun 1974.

In "*The Star with Pleasant Surprise*", melody composers were members of Bai Zhuan Choir from Johore Bahru. This choir was formed by the late Chen Huichong, and members of the choir were his students. Out of the 13 melodies, Chen contributed

five of them. Other melodies were composed by other members. Details are shown in the table below:

Table 3.10: Content in *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*

| Poetry Song/Modern Ballads | Melody | Lyrics | Note |
|--|---------------|----------------|--|
| “Jingxi de Xingguang” (<惊喜的星光>, “The Star with Pleasant Surprise”) | Chen Huichong | Wen Renping | The Club Song of Sirius Poetical Society |
| “Zhongsheng de Shen” (<众生的神>, “The God of All Living Creatures”) | Ke Junsheng | Wen Renping | |
| “Loushi zhi Ge” (<陋石之歌>, “The Song of Ugly Stone”) | Chen Huichong | Gu Qiu | |
| “Gen de Suiyue” (<根的岁月>, “Years of the Root”) | Chen Huichong | Shen Chuanxin | |
| “Yulian” (<雨帘>, “Curtain of Rain”) | Ke Junsheng | Xie Chuancheng | |
| “Duilian” (<对联>, “Antithetical Couplet”) | Chen Qiangxi | Yang Liu | |
| “Gan Lu” (<赶路>, “Hurry on with the Journey”) | Chen Zhicai | Lan Qiyuan | |
| “Yun yu Feiyan” (<云与飞檐>, “Cloud and the Upturned Eaves”) | Chen Huichong | Wen Renping | |
| “Shuang Hua” (<霜华>, “The Flowers of Frost”) | Chen Zhicai | Wen Renping | |
| “Fengling” (<风铃>, “The Wind Bell”) | Chen Qiangxi | Yang Liu | |
| “Jiyi de Shu” (<记忆的树>, “The Tree of Memory”) | Chen Huichong | Zhang Shulin | |

Table 3.10 (continued)

| | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--|
| “Yanyang”(< 艳阳 >, “The Bright Sun”) | Liu Youcheng | Dong Zhu | |
| “Yishui Xiaoxiao” (< 易水萧萧 >, “The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River”) | Ke Junsheng | Zhang Shulin | |

The major composer was Chen Huichong, who was a very famous composer. He was born in Hainan Island, China, and came to Malaya for a reunion with his father. He continued his study in Taiwan after finishing his secondary education in Malaysia. In Taiwan, he followed Professor Shi Weiliang (史惟亮教授) to learn music composing. He graduated in 1973 and returned to Malaysia. He was then attached to Kuan Rou Secondary School, Johor (柔佛宽柔中学) where he started his musical career. It was because of his continuous effort and perseverance, the Choir, the Symphonic Band, String Orchestra, and other musical clubs or societies were gradually formed.

Chen Huichong underwent a classical composing training, so his poetic melodies were inclined to artistic songs. The composers under his training ended up having their own styles, however, their melodies mostly showed an artistic flavour. For instance, “*The Star with Pleasant Surprise*”, with lyrics by Wen Renping and the melody by Chen Huichong, was also the official song of Sirius Poetical Society. The rhythm is light and fast, accompanied by guitar, and jazz drum, combined with recitation, the overall style is like marching music. It portrays a group of writers who were pursuing their literary passion. Melodies in Chinese Modern Ballads were all composed by Yang Xian, the styles bore little changes, yet they carried classical air.

Poetry Music by Zhang Fan was similar to Campus Ballads, mostly accompanied by guitar and piano, with a weaker artistic flavour.

In Taiwan, Modern Chinese Ballads songs and Poetic Music were first performed in concert before being collected and produced in the form of albums. These songs had a big group of followers and the influence was great. In Malaysia, no concert was organised before the production of *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*. An open concert would be good to disseminate poetic songs. If a concert was to be held and all the songs in *The Star with Pleasant Surprise* were performed in the concert, the sales of the phonograph could be very much better. In spite of this, the sale of cassettes was very encouraging, and those who bought them were mostly secondary school students. This was an unexpected response.

The good sale of cassettes and the buyers were mostly secondary school students and undergraduates, perhaps this indicated the effects of literary dissemination too. In Sirius Poetical Society, after the publication of *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*, members such as Cheng Kexin, Li Ruoyin, Liao Qianxin, Hu Lizhuang and Wu Huanmu, tried to compose melody for society members' poems one after another. The styles employed were inclined towards Campus Songs, which were very much different from the artistic styles of Chen Huichong. However, poetry song can be recited and can be sung, which turns out to be a good tool of literary dissemination. In 1982, the Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society invited Yu Guangzhong to Malaysia for a seminar on Modernist Poetry entitled *The New Bearing of Modernist Poetry*. After the seminar, the organizer invited Chen Qiangxi to perform Zhang Shulin's *The Tree of Memory*; Cheng Kexin and her sister, performed Yu Guangzhong's *Wind Bell*. Also present was Qiu Shuming (邱淑明), a famous singer. She was also the head of the Unit of Art of

Listening, Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. She told the organizing Chairman Wen Renping that she likes this kind of unique performing styles.

Sirius members Cheng Kexin, Xu Yixiang, Lin Ruoyin, formed the Literary Society of University of Malaya (马大文友会) with He Guozhong, Cu Yuhua, Chen Quanxing, and Pan Bihua after joining the University of Malaya to further their studies. In the society, the poetic songs influenced the students in University of Malaya, and eventually they formed *The Turbulent Workshop* together with Zhou Jinliang and Zhang Yingkun. This workshop organised concerts in small villages that performed locally composed songs. Cheng Kexin said:

The Modern Poetry Songs followed us into the University of Malaya, and later inspired the first performance of locally composed songs. This kind of development was never expected when we sang our own songs accompanied by guitars in small villages (Chen, 1998, p.70).

Another member of the Sirius Poetical Society, Xie Chuancheng, was posted to Sultan Abdul Aziz Secondary School in Teluk Intan after finishing his Diploma of Education at the University of Malaya. In that school, he recruited some new members for the society. These students were also influenced by Modern Poetic Songs and those who had music backgrounds such as Li Jiaying composed lyrics for Wen Renping's poem entitled *1984 Annotation* (一九八四注脚), a poem by Zhang Yunxiu entitled *Days of Waving Hands* (招手的日子) and the official song for the Chinese Society,

written by Xie Chuancheng entitled *The Song of Green Garden* (绿园之歌).⁵⁷ Other new members at that time were Che Huihan, Ma Zhenfu and Chen Haoyi.

Poetry song is a suitable and convenient tool to promote Modernist Poetry to the younger generation, particularly those who are still schooling. If a teacher uses poetry song in his teaching, the lesson will be more interesting. In this way, the students not only have the chance to read modernist poem, they also come forward to appreciate the better effects of poetical melodies. The production of *The Star with Pleasant Surprise* had played the role as a catalyst for the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature in general and Mahua Modernist Poetry in particular.

3.3.3 Enhancing Dissemination by Continuous Publication

As mentioned earlier, since the formation of Sirius Poetical Society, it had been publishing handwritten periodicals to disseminate modernist literature. Later mimeographed printing was used and this was used by most of the branches all over Malaysia. It has promoted modernist literature, and the effect was encouraging. From 1976 onwards, the method of printing changed to modern printing. Before the end of 1970s, Sirius Poetical Society succeeded in publishing *Grief in Exiles*, *The God of All Living Creatures*, *The Far-reaching Cloud and The Moon*, *The Wind Soughing and Sighing at the Yishui River*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, *Utterance of Ships* and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. The president, Wen Renping published four books over a span of five years. His prose collection was published by Taipei Youth Cultural Publishing Company (台北幼狮文

⁵⁷ Huang Jiajie, Liao Yunshi Ed *Ly Yuan* Teluk Intan: Chinese Society, Abdul Aziz Secondary School, 1986. 31

化出版公司), his critical essays on Modernist Poetry was published by Long River Publisher (长河出版社), and his collection of essays was published by Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society. Other published books were *The Never Ending Road*, by Chuan Cao, Feng Ke and others.

The top leaders of the society realised that the literary arena was a very realistic world. One could only survive by publishing the collections of personal articles. The society encouraged individual members to publish personal collections or collections of different writers. Using this strategic plan, the Sirius Poetical Society had published 14 books⁵⁸ in 1980s.

The publication of the above 14 books had one thing in common, the printing cost was not subsidized and the authors had to bear the whole cost themselves. Those who were financially sound would pay the printing fees themselves and those who were not so well-off, had to borrow money from financial institutions and they paid back the money by monthly installments. The Sirius Poetical Society and the Sirius Publisher, did not pay royalty to the writers, they did not help the writers to sell some of their books. The author himself was responsible for the sale of his own publication. Thus, the publication of the above mentioned 12 books was indeed a tough task. The authors' commitment to such an ideal objective had left behind precious literary resources and materials for Mahua Modernist Literature. The so-called "Sirius Spirit" had created the

⁵⁸ The 14 books are *Fennu de Huigu* (《愤怒的回顾》, *Looking Back in Anger*), *Wenxue Guancha* (《文学观察》, *Literary Observation*), *Feng de Lvcheng* (《风的旅程》, *The Journey of Wind*), *Qingtailu* (《青苔路》, *The Literary Journey of Young Writers*), *Chen zhi Dansheng* (《晨之诞生》, *The Birth of Dawn*), *Ailianshuo* (《爱莲说》, *The Lotus*), *Xiandaishi Quanshi* (《现代诗诠释》, *The Interpretations of Modern Poetry*), *Xunju* (《寻菊》, *Looking for Chrysanthemum*), *Cichangjie* (《茨厂街》, *Petaling Street*), *Zhuanlidian* (《转戾点》, *The Turning Point*), *Duobian de Miusi* (《多变的缪斯》, *The Muse: His Many Faces*), *Wenxue.Jiaoyu.Wenhua - Yantaohui Gongzuo Lunwenji* (《文学·教育·文化——研讨会工作论文集》, *Literature, Education, Culture---A Collection of Seminar Working Papers*), *Yeguan Xingxiang* (《夜观星象》, *Looking at the Twinkling Stars*) and *Jiangshangai* (《江山改》, *The Change of Political Power*).

awareness among the members of the society that virtually any impossible task could be surmounted eventually. It marks the successful culmination of an unreserved sacrifice and a yearning for the love of literature.

3.3.4 Promoting Literary Interaction by Publishing Collections of Modernist Poetry in Three Languages

Mahua Literature is not considered as a part of the national literature. National literature refers to Malay Literature. In 1980s, the President of Malay Writers Association commented that Mahua literary articles were plain as written by primary school students and therefore could not be taken to be a part of national literature. It was generally known that Malay writers who had read Mahua Literature, particularly Mahua Poems, were poems translated from the works of the Mahua Realistic writers. Those translated works were weak in terms of literary techniques and language usage and lacks profundity. Sirius Poetical Society made an important move, to publish collections of Modernist Poems in three languages, in order to promote literary interaction among the different races in Malaysia.

The translation work was carried out by Mahua Modernist Poet Chen Mo (潜默) and Zhang Jinliang (张锦良). Both of them are proficient in Malay language. Chen Mo himself is also a Modernist Poet. Undoubtedly his actual experience in writing poems has helped him tremendously in his translation. The English translation was done by Chen Shichuan. Chen's proficiency in English, and his in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Chinese language, have made his work of translation a smooth journey. The help of these three specialists in the relevant languages had paved the way for the publication of the collection of poetry in three languages.

This first collection was published by mimeograph printing and made known to society members during the Poets' Day gathering on 6th June 1985. The title of the book is *Duomian de Miusi Tianlangxing Zhongyingwu Shixuan* (《多面的缪斯——天狼星中英巫诗选》, *The Muse: His Many Faces*). The publication of this collection of poems in three languages was an unprecedented undertaking. The main objective of publishing this collection was to inform our fellow Malay writers, that Mahua Modernist Poems had attained a certain level of standard, and much higher than the level of primary students. The Sirius Poetical Society sent five copies of this publication to the National Library, hoping that more people were able to read these poems. From the perspective of literary interaction and dissemination, this collection had achieved its mission. In a way it had paved the way to interact as well to disseminate the Mahua Modernist Poetry to Malay writers.

There were 12 Modernist poems in *The Muse: His Many Faces*: (i) “Yujing Yitie” (<雨景一帖>, “The Raining Scenery”) by Wen Renping, (ii) “Mishi zai Shanwu li” (<迷失在山雾里>, “Lost in the Mountain Mist”) by Zhang Shulin, (iii) “Chuang” (<窗>, “Window”) by Xie Chuancheng, (iv) “Xiangjiaoshu de Hua” (<橡胶树的话>, “Utterance of the Rubber Tree”) by Lan Qiyuan, (v) “Jiedeng” (<街灯>, “The Street Lamp”) by the late Gu Qiu, (vi) “You Zheyang de Yige Jia” (<有这样的一个家>, “Having such a Family”) by Feng Ke, (vii) “Jiudi” (<旧地>, “A Once Familiar Place”) by Ye Jinlai, (viii) “Qingkong de Hua” (<晴空的话>, “Words from the Cloudless Sky”) by Cheng Kexin, (ix) “Shui” (<水>, “Water”) by Lei Sichi, (x) “Xinshi” (<心事>, “Anxiety”) by Lin Qiuyue, (xi) “Feng he Rizhi” (<风和日子>, “The Wind and the Days”) by Xu Yixiang, and (xii) “Zhe'er Meiyou Xue” (<这儿没有雪>, “There were no Snow here”) by Lin Ruoyin. (Xie, 1985, p.1-39)

The Muse: His Many Faces stressed on the quality of translation, so that it could enable a proper and better literary interaction, it was especially directed to the Malay Writers who were prejudiced against Mahua Literature. Literary communication involves a two-way process, and in this case, Sirius Poetical Society had not done enough to promote this interaction. All along, the communication between the Mahua and the Malay literati was held by the Realistic Group, and Mahua articles translated into Malay were articles from the Realistic Group too. Due to this reason, Mahua Literature suffered severe criticism that it was of substandard. It was precisely due to this kind of misunderstanding that Sirius Poetical Society eventually took the responsibility to plan and publish *The Muse: His Many Faces*.

After a number of years, Wen Renping realised that there were still a lot of limitations in literary dissemination through the publication of the trilingual poems collection. Wen Renping published a bilingual collection of his poems entitled *Shanxing Didai* (《伞形地带》, *The Place in Umbrella Form*). The 40 poems were translated by Chen Mo and Zhang Jinliang. Due to the fact that Sirius Poetical Society had stopped all activities, the collected poems were published by Qian Qiu Publisher and distributed by Da Jiang bookshop.

3.3.5 Sharing Resources and Extending Literary Enterprise

Until the end of 1980, the Sirius Poetical Society had published 19 collections and anthologies of literary work. At the beginning of 1980s, Wen Renping realized the structural pitfalls of the society because most of its members were students and financially weak. If changes were not made, the society would not be able to have a thorough transformation. Reviewing the events of the past, Wen Renping said:

As a literary society, its space of development (Sirius Poetical Society) has reached its limit. To make a breakthrough, Sirius Poetical Society must attach itself to a bigger and financially stronger society. However I have no intention to dissolve the society, I want to combine the resources in both Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society and the Sirius Poetical Society so that we can organize successful literary activities in a bigger scale (Wen, 2004, pp.224-228).

Hence, in the early part of 1980s, Wen Renping accepted the invitation to be a committee member in Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society. He was made the head of the Language and Literature Unit. In 1982, the Perak Branch of Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society was formed and Wen Renping became the President. He appointed Xie Yulin, the headmaster of a Chinese Primary School in Teluk Intan as the Deputy President, Zhang Shulin as Secretary and head of the Language and Literature Unit, Xie Chuancheng as deputy head of the Language and Literature unit, Shen Chuanxin and Ye Jinlai as the head and deputy head of the publication unit, and Chen Shunsheng as the head of communication unit. It is obvious that, the appointment of six Sirius Poetical Society members as the committee members of the Perak Branch of Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society was not an incidental arrangement but a strategy to transform Sirius Poetical Society.

The Perak Branch was very active. At the end of 1983, the Perak Branch organized the first literary camp in Pangkor Island. The camp had attracted more than 60 students all over Malaysia. It was a three days and two nights literary camp. The organizer invited three writers namely, Chen Yingde (陈应德), Zhang Shulin (张树林) and Xie Chuancheng (谢川成) to present papers entitled *On Modernist Poetry*, *On*

Modernist Prose and *On Modernist Novels* respectively. The response was encouraging and most participants shared their view that they had gained a better understanding of Modernist Literature after attending the literary camp.

In 1984, Perak Branch organized *National Modernist Writers Conference* (全国现代文学会议). This was the biggest activity ever organized by the Perak Branch. The conference had invited 60 Mahua Modernist writers to participate. This group of writers consists of poets, prose writers, short story writers, novelists and literary critics from the whole of Malaysia. The conference was held in Yi Dong Hotel and all writers were provided lodging in the hotel. It has incurred substantial expenses and the organizing committee had to raise fund to settle the bills. The conference was officiated by Chen Zhonghong (陈忠鸿), the Deputy Minister of Education.

The conference programme included seminars and forum. A few seminars were held and there were Wen Renping's "The prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen: A Comparative Study", Wen Ruian's "Geography in Literature", and Chen Huichong's "Chinese Modern Ballads". The forum was divided into three groups to deal with the development, the performance and to highlight the weaknesses of Mahua Modernist poetry, prose and short stories. It is meaningful to have such a study and discussion. However, the chairman of the conference organizing committee was not satisfied with the final report of the forum. He was of the opinion that the report was not complete, hastily written, and thus, lacked evidence and unconvincing. Perhaps the conference participants were not informed earlier that they have to do some research before attending the conference.

There were two obvious objectives in organizing such a conference. Firstly, it was to make a comprehensive review on Mahua Modernist poetry, prose and short stories in the last 25 years. It was also a show to prove to the Realistic Group what Mahua Modernist Literature had achieved. This objective was achieved partially. It is undeniable that organizing such a conference was an attempt to show the strength of the Modernist group. However, the achievement of Mahua Modernist Literature could not be documented in detail. The other objective of the conference was to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature. It was hoped that the coverage of the media about the conference would make the public aware of the Mahua Modernist Literature. The organizing committee had also arranged a special programme for poetry recitation and for the performance of Chinese Modern Ballads. Few poets were invited to recite their own poems and this has captured the attention of the media. It was not easy to assemble such a big number of Mahua Modernist writers. Poets like Wen Ruian, Xie Chuancheng, Wen Renping and others recited poems in this programme. Chinese Modern Ballads were performed by Bai Zhuan Choir, which was led by Chen Huichong. Ballads performed include Wen Renping's *Grief in Exile*. The response was very encouraging. After the poetry recitation, a poet, Duan Muhong (端木虹) was requested to make some comment. To him, the performance was great and on the whole the programme was successful. He was a realistic poet, formally a rival of Mahua Modernist group. Recently, he decided to write Modernist Poem. At that special gathering, he made known to the public that he was now a member of the Mahua Modernist Group.

After the conference, the Perak Branch organised the second literary workshop in 1985. The workshop was held in Ansoka Hotel, which was the best hotel in Teluk Intan at that time. A group of 60 secondary students and youngsters participated in the

workshop. Some participants were members of Sirius Poetical Society and some were not but were considered to be the future members of the society. From this point of view, it is clear that Wen Renping and his fellow members had the intention to strengthen Sirius Poetical Society through organising literary activities by the Perak Branch of Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society. During the three-day workshop, four writers were invited to present literary lectures to the participants. They were Yulduz Emiloglu, Fang Ezhan, Xie Chuancheng and Fu Chengde. The former two writers discussed the art of writing prose, whereas the latter two writers focused on Modernist poetry.

Another strategy of transformation of the Sirius Poetical Society was the publication of four volumes of Mahua Modernist Literature. The plan was proposed during Wen Renping's term as the Head of Language and Literature Unit. The four volumes included Modernist Poetry, Modernist Prose, Modernist Short Story and Literary Criticism. However, in the end only two volumes were published. Wen Renping was then appointed as the Chief Editor of the anthology. In 2004, when he recalled the incident, he said:

Although I have tried my best to publish a set of anthology in four volumes, the plan was then criticised at the central committee meeting and I was ordered to change the title of the anthology from Mahua Modernist Literary Anthology to Mahua Contemporary Literary Anthology. Just the difference in the selection of a single word for the title of the anthology, the whole criteria of selection of relevant articles have to be amended. In 1984 and 1985, Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society published Mahua Contemporary Literary Anthology (Prose and Short Stories). The volumes of Modernist

Poetry and literary criticism were not published due to financial constraints.

The initial publishing proposal remained uncompleted and Zhang Jinzhong called it an ‘unfinished project’ (Wen, 2004, p.224-228).

As mentioned earlier, the Mahua Contemporary Literary Anthology was planned and it comprised four different volumes. The anthology of prose was edited by Zhang Shulin, the anthology poems was edited by Shen Chuanxin, the anthology short stories was edited by Ma Lun and finally the anthology of literary criticism by Xie Chuancheng. In mid 1980s, editorial works of all four anthologies were completed and ready to be published. Unfortunately only two anthologies were successfully published, the other two remained unpublished due to financial constraints.

It cannot be denied that poetry is not a popular genre. Collections of poems were not popular in 1980s. It is a cruel fact. Literary criticism is more academic, generally many do not like to read. In other words, few readers liked literary criticism, as expected, and it is not marketable. Perhaps this has a lot to do with literary taste. Malaysia Chinese Cultural Society may have its own realistic considerations, however, it is deeply regretted that only two out of the four volumes were published.

This “unfinished project” is undoubtedly one of Wen’s major regrets. It is also to be regretted that this incident has hampered the Mahua Modernist Literature’s wishes to construct the literary works to a monumental status. If this set of literary works were to be published, it would set yet another milestone as a very significant literary document in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature, besides other works such as *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young*

Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets, and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. The literary territorial map of Mahua Modernist Literature would thus be distinctly clarified too.

In 1982, Wen organized a seminar on the works of Yu Guangzhong at the Lee Sanchun Hall of MCA in Kuala Lumpur. It gave a much needed boost to Mahua Modernist Literature. Local modernist writers had the opportunity to meet the renowned poet personally.

This pattern of sharing resources had brought about very encouraging results in the 1980s. In 1986, Wen was forced to leave Malaysian Cultural Society. He was also transferred to Yuk Choy National High School in Ipoh as a secondary school teacher. In 1989, he was again transferred back to Zun Kong Secondary School in Kuala Lumpur. Wen seemed to have lost interest in leading the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society of the Perak Branch. After he had left the society, the society became dormant with few activities being organised. The same thing happened to the Sirius Poetical Society, once its president had left its base in Perak, the whole society was disintegrated. The succeeding president, in terms of personal charisma or literary achievement, was not on par with Wen. Gradually the society became inactive and by 1989, it ceased all its operations.

3.3.6 Conclusion

The discussion above summarizes some of the patterns of literary dissemination employed by Sirius Poetical Society in the 80s. One of the patterns of dissemination was “seeking good opportunities and spreading the seeds of literature”. As time changes, the method of literary dissemination has to be changed or adjusted. More

importantly, to actively promote modern literature, to groom a new generation of young writers and to explore new literary frontiers have always been the consistent missions of the Sirius Poetical Society. Such efforts have continually been given recognition. In 1982, for the second time, the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society awarded Sirius Poetical Society the literary organization award. This is another proof of the Sirius Poetical Society's outstanding achievement.

The spark of vitality of Sirius Poetical Society gradually faded in the mid-80s. In 1986, Wen Renping moved to Ipoh from Kampar. He left Pei Yuan Secondary School of Kampar, an important "base" of the society, a new scenario emerged. The first "bad sign" was the immediate cessation of publication of the Commemorative Issue during the Poets' Festival. In 1987, Sirius Poetical Society's youngest and staunchest supporters such as Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Xu Yixiang, and Zhang Changhao left for Kuala Lumpur to study at the University of Malaya. The geographical distance from the "base", the university's abundant course assignments had contributed to their absence from the running of the society. Wen Renping, Zhang Shulin and others had lost interest too and fell dispirited. Looking back from the perspective of literary development, from 1987 to 1989, was the phase of decline for the Sirius Poetical Society.

In 1986, Wen Renping had moved to Ipoh and worked in Yuk Choy High School, he had little time to run the society due to geographical distance. In 1989, Wen shifted again from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur to teach at Zun Kong Secondary School. He rarely got in touch with the society's affairs. Zhang Shulin, the acting president of the society, stopped writing literary pieces and involved himself more in youth activities rather than literary activities. As mentioned earlier, committee members such as Cheng

Kexin, Lin Ruoyin and Zhang Changhao were studying in University of Malaya and had little time for the society. Other members either plunged totally into their jobs or were married, few continued their creative writing. The Sirius Poetical Society seemed to have reached a bottleneck, incapable of further development. It had already completed its historical responsibility in the 70s and 80s. Furthermore, the situation of the society at that time was not in favour of retaining the resources of the society. The future development of the society was largely dependable on the wishes of its individual members.

The achievement of the Sirius Poetical Society in its efforts to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, the production of *The Star with Pleasant Surprise*, an album of modern poetic ballads, has reinforced the effectiveness of dissemination of modernist poems in Malaysia through the use of melodies and sound effects.

Secondly, the publication of *Looking Back in Anger---In Commemoration of the 21st Anniversary of the Malaysian Chinese Modern Literary Movement* has made a summary of the strength, weaknesses, characteristics and performance of the various literary genres in the 21 years of development of Mahua Modernist literature. It has also made a historical attempt to separate the outlines of this development.

Thirdly, the inheritance of literary works such as a dozen collections of poems and proses are left for the future researchers on Mahua Modernist Literature with important documentations of the authors and their texts.

Fourthly, the support and assistance given by Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society had provided the main impetus for some major literary activities. Two of the most important events were as follows: the first was the sponsorship of a talk given by Yu Guangzhong, a renowned modernist poet from Taiwan, which was the first-ever event of such nature to be held in Malaysia. The second was the publication of two important volumes, *An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature (Prose and Novel)*. This event may have shed some light on how the modernist and realist of the Mahua literati abandoned their confrontational approaches that forged a better integration in the 80s.

Fifthly, the sponsorship of literary seminars and workshops has consolidated the strength of modernist writers. For instance, the *National Conference of Modern Literature* was held with the help of the Perak Branch of the Malaysian Cultural Society. The conference has made a review of the past 25 years of Mahua modernist literature and took a look into its future development. Two literary workshops that were held has helped in the dissemination of literature to some extent.

Sixthly, old members of the Sirius Poetical Society who had joined University of Malaya to further their studies had set up the Literary Society of University of Malaya. It has undoubtedly inspired and promoted campus literature in the arena of Mahua literature in the 80s.

3.4 The Influence of Sirius Poetical Society

3.4.1 The Impact on the Creative Paradigm in Mahua Literary Arena

The impact of Sirius Poetical Society on Mahua literary arena is the paradigm shift in creative writing. In the 1970s, despite the first wave of modernism had begun, Mahua literary arena was still under the control of the Realistic Group. The Realistic writers had controlled almost all the literary supplements in newspapers and other literary resources. The modernist writers could only publish their articles in *The Students' Weekly* and *Chao Foon Monthly*, working hard against difficult circumstances.

One of the missions of the Sirius Poetical Society was to promote and develop literary modernism in Malaysia. It accepted Taiwan Modernism Literature and localized it in order to have local characteristics, and used this to check and balance the status of Realistic Group as the main stream in Malaysia. The members of this society were diligent in writing poems, recruiting new members, organizing literary activities, and the most important part was that they provided training in understanding modernist literature and taught new members the ways of writing modernist poetry. Due to their perseverance and effort, within two years, the society had set up 10 branches throughout Malaysia. The branches targeted the local secondary school students and youngsters, and led them to know the poetical society and in the end invited them to join movement. As a result, there was a great increase of new members, with poems of modernist inclined and in the end formed a new literary group. It can be said that, these youngsters or new members were influenced by the Sirius Poetical Society to write modernist poetry.

This whole group of modernist young writers published their articles in *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Students' Weekly*, and formed a powerful group, and had a great impact on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. In the article entitled *The Development of Mahua Modernist Poetry*, Ye Xiao reviewed that the development of Mahua Modernist poetry entered the age of the Sirius in 1970s, was an undeniable reality. Ye Xiao's judgement was objective and the contribution of the Sirius Poetical Society was affirmed.

As mentioned earlier, the Sirius Poetical Society was a society with high quality and strength, and its members were active and influential. They had ideals, full of energies, and took literature as their lifelong career. To them, literature is as sacred as religion. They were active in activities and writing. For those who were famous in literary arena in the 1970s and 1980s, many of them were members from the Sirius Poetical Society. Thus, the view that the development of Mahua modernist poetry has entered the Sirius Stage is acceptable.

When Zeng Weilong (曾维龙) discussed the influence of modernism in the 1970s on Mahua Literature, he made a determination that the literary practice and performance of the Sirius Poetical Society was most representative and influential (Zeng, 2015, p.35-36).

3.4.2 Nurturing Young Writers for Mahua Literature

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the purposes of forming the Sirius Poetical Society was to cultivate new generation of Mahua literature, to help the young and potential writers to improve and supply new blood for the society and

Mahua literary arena. In reality, the Sirius Poetical Society had actually achieved this purpose or objective.

At the early stage of the 1970s, the number of modernist poets was comparatively less, although a group of poets had been cultivated in 1960s. By the end of 1970s, the situation was entirely different. The number of young modernists and their performance were worthy of a completely new appraisal. Some of representative poets include Wen Renping, Wen Ruian, Zhou Qingxiao, Lan Qiyuan from *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, Zhang Shulin, Huang Haimin, Shen Chuanxin, Chao Lang, Lin Qiuyue, Shu Ling (舒灵) from *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, and 37 poets from *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. The total number of Mahua modernist poets was 87. The Mahua modernist arena was really proud of the large number of poets. In Mahua literary arena, the Sirius Poetical Society was the only society, which was successful in cultivating numerous young poets.

In short, in order to enhance the force of Mahua, the second influence of the Sirius Poetical Society was to cultivate numerous modernist young writers in modernist literature and this influence was obviously achieved.

3.4.3 Promote the Rise of Campus Literature in the 1980s

The third impact of the Sirius Poetical Society on Mahua modernist literature arena was promoting the rise of campus literature in the 1980s. The members of the Sirius Poetical Society such as Lin Tiangong, Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Zhang Yunxiu (张允秀), Zhang Changhao (张嫦好) have furthered their tertiary education in the

1980s. All of them entered into University of Malaya in different years. They met other undergraduates such as Luo Yaoting (骆耀庭), Chen Quanxing (陈全兴), Xu Yuhua (许育华), He Guozhong (何国忠) and others. They like literature, gathered to discuss literature and shared their experiences in writing and finally formed the Literary Society of University of Malaya (马大文友会).

It was undeniable that the campus literature was prosperous in the 1980s. Young writers in universities' campus came forth in large numbers, they were active in organizing activities, and their activities were diversified. All these were related to the active involvement of the members of the Literary Society of University of Malaya. This society was formed in 1985. It was an unofficial student association in the University of Malaya. It was formed because of the collective effort by Fan Ye (凡夜) from the Medical Department, Xu Yuhua (许育华), Luo Yaoting (骆耀庭), Lin Tiangong (林添供) and He Guozhong (何国忠) (Pan, 2009, p.152). After the formation of the society, Lin Tiangong, Chen Quanxing, Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Zhuang Songhua and Luo Yaoting took turn to organize meetings. Among the conveners of gathering, Lin Tiangong, Cheng Kexin and Lin Ruoyin were members of the Sirius Poetical Society.

The active period of the literary society was between 1985 and 1988. It was not a long period but its influence was great. The literary society started with the cooperation with the Sin Chew Daily. They supplied articles and the newspaper supplements were responsible to publish it. The society also cooperated with the Department of Chinese Studies, University of Malaya, to jointly organize the "Wenxue Shuangzhou" (文学双周, "Literary Fortnight"), and Sirius Poetical Society's member Cheng Kexin was the first chairman of the activity. The society also conducted regular

discussion on literary articles written by members. All these have helped a lot in promoting the literary culture in the campus. The society also published a collection of proses by its members, which entitled *Shujuan you yuqing* (《舒卷有馀情》, *Collection of Prose in Campus*) (Fan, 2009, p.152).

As mentioned in the last paragraph, after the formation of the Literary Society of University of Malaya, the most important activity was successfully organized was the first Literary Fortnight in University of Malaya. This activity was headed by Cheng Kexin, a member of Sirius Poetical Society and supported by other Sirius members such as Lin Tiangong, Xu Yixiang, Lin Ruoyin and other members from the Literary Society. Members from the Sirius Poetical Society were the backbone of the activity. Due to the reason that the Literary Society of University of Malaya was not a registered society, the Literary Fortnight finally became one of the activities of the Department of Chinese Studies. Later, it became the annual activity of the department and they have just finished organizing the 30th Literary Fortnight in April 2016.

One of the main activities of the Literary Fortnight was to invite senior writers to deliver talk on literary topics. They invited writers such as Chen Zhengxin (陈政欣), Wen Renping (温任平), Su Qingqiang (苏清强), Xie Chuancheng (谢川成) and many others. The other activities included Poetry Writing Competition, Prose Writing Competition, which were popular among the undergraduate students in the campus. As pointed out by Wen Renping, “(Literary Fortnight) not only became the annual activity of the Department of Chinese Studies, it seems to have become part of the precious tradition of the department” (Wen, 2004, p.187).

The literary flavour of the Literary Fortnight was very strong, not only stimulated the desire of literary writing, but also built up the positive literary atmosphere in the campus. Later, Lin Tiangong set up the Wen Cai Publishing Company(文采出版社), published two books entitled *Yixuesheng Shouji* (《医学生手记》, *The Notes of a Medical Student*) by Chen Quanxin and *Mada Hubian de Rizhi* (《马大湖边的日子》, *Days Besides the University Malaya Lake*). These two books were popular, especially Cheng Kexin's book, was sold up to fourth edition. The good sales of these two books promoted the formation of "Zeyin Shufang" (泽吟书坊, "The Ze Yin Bookstore").

The Ze Yin Bookstore was set up by a group of students in University of Malaya in 1986. There were three founders, namely Xu Yuhua, He Guozhong and Lin Ruiren (林锐仁). The word "zeyin" in Zeyin Bookstore was taken from *Shi Ji* (《史记》, *Records of the Grand Historian*) by Si Maqian(司马迁), in an article with the title of "Qu Yuan Jiasheng Liezhuan" (<屈原贾生列传>, "Collective Autobiographies of Qu Yuan and Jia Sheng"), from the sentence "Xing Yin Ze ban Lu Manman" (行吟泽畔路漫漫, "Chanting by the Side of Ze River"), which means although the long road ahead, but still want to get on with courage. This is the spirit behind the sentence. The name of the bookstore was suggested by He Guozhong. The location of this bookstore was called *The Swan Building*, which was a double storey terrace link house rented by the three founders of the bookstore (Fan, 2009, p.149-150).

The first book published by Zeyin Bookstore was *Ma Da Sanwenji* (《马大散文集》, University Malaya Collection of Prose). The sales of the book were pretty

good. Thus, they hoped to continue with the good sales and published 14 books from 1987 to 1993.

Members of the Sirius Poetical Society are not only active in writing, but also have basic knowledge in literary criticism. They were exposed to literary activities, and had experience in organising activities. These members entered University of Malaya almost at the same time, so it was really a big force to campus literature, and the influence and impart were also obvious. In short, the motion that the rise of campus literature in the University of Malaya was initiated or promoted by the Sirius Poetical Society was true and acceptable.

3.4.4 Constructing Literary Canons by Publishing Books, Special Issues

One of the influences of the Sirius Poetical Society was constructing the canons of Mahua Modernist Literary by publishing books and special issues of the International Poet's Day and the Mooncake Festival. All these publications had enriched the number of publications for Mahua literature, and are beneficial in the study of Mahua modernist literature in the future.

These few collections of poems were *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* and *The Sirius Collection of Poems*. Actually there was another collection of poems entitled *Duobian de Miusi---Tianlangxing Zhong Ying Wu Shixuan* (《多变的缪斯：天狼星中英巫诗选》), *The Muse: His Many Faces: Anthology of Modern Poetry in Three Languages* (Xie, 1985). This is a collection of poems in three languages, Chinese, English and Malay. The poems collected in this anthology were limited in number.

The main purpose of publishing this collection of poems was for cultural exchange with the Malay writers who had the opinion that Mahua poems were of primary school standard only. This anthology would certainly change the impression of the Malay writers. In addition to these four collections of poems, the Sirius Poetical Society had also published numerous books of different genres by its members.

There are altogether 20 books published by the Sirius Poetical Society, which provides important materials for studying the Sirius Poetical Society in the future. Some of the books are collection of poems, prose, literary criticism and essays. The authors of these books were senior society members such as Wen Renping, Wen Ruian, Lan Qiyuan, Zhang Shulin, and new members such as Qian Fan, Cheng Kexin. These books provided a panoramic view on the performance of the members of Sirius Poetical Society.

Apart from publishing books, the Sirius Poetical Society also published 11 copies of Special Issues on International Poets' Day, from 1976 to 1986. The articles published were about modernist poems and literary criticism. All the articles were written by the members from Sirius Poetical Society.

3.4.5 The Cultivation of Literary Core Cell and Their Influence

The major influence of the Sirius Poetical Society was through its members to disseminate modernism to outside world. As mentioned earlier, these members were well trained in basic knowledge of modernist literature. They usually introduced the basic elements of modernism, and then introduced the society and invited new friends to join. Wen Renping, being the founder and the first president of the society, was one

of the major core literary figures of the society. He had set an example as the senior member and had brought many new members into the society. Details of his influence will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Another core cell of the society was Yang Liu (杨柳). She was also a secondary school teacher. Her influence has been discussed in section 3.5.2, the second and third paragraph.

Another core cell in Teluk Intan was Zhang Shulin (张树林). He was appointed as the Deputy President of the Sirius Poetical Society after the incident of Wen Ruian in 1976. Ruian and his friends Huang Hunxing, Zhou Qingxiao, Fang Ezhan, and other members withdrew from the society. He was good in forming network. Li Zizong (李子宗), Chen Qianghua (陈强华) and Lai Guanglian (赖广连) from Butterworth joined the Sirius Poetical Society due to the influence of Zhang Shulin. Similarly, in Teluk Intan, a student from Horley Methodist Secondary School, Tan Chongmeng (陈钟铭) also joined the society under the influence of Zhang. He had a very good rapport with all the new members from Teluk Intan, Butterworth and even in Kampar. These new members were encouraged by Zhang to write modernist poems and prose. Through his influence and encouragement, and also the hard work of new members, a collection of articles of different genres by new members entitled *Feng de Lvcheng* (《风的旅程》, *The Journey of Wind*) was published in the 1980s. Later, some of these new members furthered studies in different universities both locally and abroad. The performance of the students who joined local universities, Cheng Kexin, Lin Yueyin, Zhang Changhao, Xu Yixiang, and You Junhao had been discussed above. The late Chen Qianghua (陈强华) (1960-2014) graduated from Taiwan. When he returned and taught in secondary

school, he formed a society named as The Devil's Club (魔鬼俱乐部) in 1994. He taught his students to write modernist poetry. Due to hard work and perseverance in poetry learning and promoting modernist poetry, he won the Mahua Modern Poetry Recommendation Award in 1999 and 2003.

Another core cell is Xie Chuancheng (谢川成). He was also a graduate from the University of Malaya, taking Chinese and English studies as his majors. He was sent to Teluk Intan as a secondary school teacher after finishing his diploma of education. He taught Chinese and English in Sultan Abdul Aziz Secondary School. Later in 1988, he was transferred to Kinta Teaching Training College, and in 1989, he was transferred to Ipoh Teaching College in Hulu Kinta, Perak. And in 2001, he was transferred to University of Malaya. Wherever he went, he never stopped to act as a core cell.

When he was in Sultan Abdul Aziz Secondary School, he taught almost all the Chinese classes, from Form One to Form Five. He was also appointed as the adviser of the Chinese Society in the school.

He introduced modernist poems in the Chinese classes in the Form Four and Form Five classes. He also encouraged his pupils to write modernist poems. For those who tried to write, he gave his full support and gave suggestions for correction. As an encouragement, for poems which were good enough, he published them in the notice board of Chinese Society.

To enhance the students' interest, he organized special talks on modernist literature. He himself was the main speaker and other members of the Sirius Poetical

Society such as Zhang Shulin, Cheng Kexin were also invited. Workshops on writing modernist poems were also organized. Due to these series of literary activities, many students wrote poems and the performance was actually quite encouraging. To further encourage his students to continue writing both modernist poems and prose, he published *Lv Yuan* (《绿园》, *The Green Garden*) annually, and this became one of the most important events of the Chinese Society.

He used Chinese Ballads to teach modernist poems. In other words, the students could also sing the poem they had read. In 1980s, numerous modernist poems had been composed songs and published in the form of cassette and black album. Even the Sirius Poetical Society had also published a cassette and album, which was a joint venture with the Bai Zhuan Choir in Johor Bahru. The members of the Sirius Poetical Society supplied their poems, and the members of the choir were responsible to compose all the poems into songs. Details of this special arrangement can be seen in 3.3.2 of this chapter.

The influence of Xie Chuancheng as a literary core cell was obvious when some of his students joined the Sirius Poetical Society. Chen Huihan (陈辉汉), Huang Jiajie (黄家杰), Li Jiaying (李家兴), Chen Haoyi (陈浩益), Ma Zhenfu (马振幅), were among those who wrote modernist poems. Later, they joined the Sirius Poetical Society. Li Jiaying in the end had composed songs with lyrics from Wen Renping, Xie Chuancheng and other members from the Sirius Poetical Society.

Xie Chuancheng was transferred from Sultan Abdul Aziz Secondary School in Teluk Intan to Kinta Teacher Training College in Ipoh on the first day of February in 1988. He taught in Kinta College for one year and a month, and was transferred to Ipoh

Teacher Training College in Hulu Kinta, Perak. When he was in Kinta College, he conducted several talks on modernist literature and encouraged trainees to write modernist poem. Some of his trainees tried to write, however, they did not continue after a while due to the stress of doing assignments and teaching practice. Only one trainee insisted on writing, and Xie helped to read through and gave suggestions for improvement. Finally, this trainee, Xie Shuangfa (谢双发) joined the Sirius Poetical Society and published his first collection of poems in March, 1989.

Xie Chuancheng was transferred to Ipoh Teacher Training College on the 16th of March, 1989. He was appointed as Chinese lecturer and taught courses of Special Chinese Class.⁵⁹ Xie Chuancheng was in charge of Teaching of Poetry, Teaching of Writing and Special Education Research Topic. Out of the three courses, the first two courses were closely related to literature.

A total of 52 hours was allocated for teaching poetry and the content was teaching classical and modern poems. The lecturer in charge was Xie Chuancheng. He wanted all students to write a modernist poem as their assignment. Furthermore, he requested all the students to present a poem each at the end of the semester. Their presentations included declamation, songs and dances. They had used various methods of presentation to accomplish the poetry presentation night.

The poems presented at the poetry presentation night were more modernist poems than classical poems. Actually, Xie Chuancheng extended the mission of the

⁵⁹ The Chinese Special Course was a course specially designed for primary and secondary school teachers. The objective of this course was to improve their knowledge of Chinese Language, for a period of one year. All the courses were taught in Chinese Language. The courses included The Chinese Phonetics, Chinese Grammar, Teaching of Poems, Teaching of Writing, Teaching of Reading, Education Special Research Topic. This course was conducted in Ipoh Teaching Training College, from 1989 to 1993.

Sirius Poetical Society to disseminate the modernist literature and modernism. From 1989 to 1993, the modernist poems presented was not a small number, and inclusive of Yu Guangzhong's "Changcheng Yao" (<长城谣>, "The Song of Great Wall"), "Deng ni, zai Yuzhong" (<等你, 在雨中>, "Waiting for you, in the Rain"), "Qing buyao zai Shangfeng de Difang Xiyao" (<请不要在上风的地方吸烟>, "Please do not Smoke at the Direction of the Wind"), Zheng Chouyu's popular short poem "Cuowu" (<错误>, "The Mistake"), Luo Fu's "Yan zhi Wai" (<烟之外>, "The Smoke"), Wen Renping's poem "Liufang shi Yizhong Shang" (<流放是一种伤>, "Grief in Exile"), Yang Mu's poem "Nide Xinqing" (<你的心情>, "Your Mood") and others.

As mentioned earlier, the presentation techniques were interesting and not confined to one particular method. As for declamation of poetry, the forms of declamation included were individual declamation, dual declamation, ballads, declamation together with singing, and dancing. For instance, the presentation of Luo Fu's *The Smoke*, was the fusion or synthesis of declamation, singing and dance. Local popular singer Zhou Jinliang (周金亮) was invited to compose a song for the poem. A dance teacher from the Guandong Association of Perak was invited to design a dance which is suitable to be presented on stage for the poem. This presentation was the climax of the night and won appraisal from the audience.

The Poetry Presentation Night was the main event of the Chinese Special Course. The director of the college was a Chinese. He took care of the Chinese Course. He attended the Poetry Presentation Night every year as his support and encouragement to the students of the Chinese Course. The audience of the Poetry Presentation Night were trainees from other courses who stayed in the campus. The

hall can accommodate about 400 people. In other words, every Poetry Presentation Night was watched by about 400 audiences. They were exposed to the different types of poetry presentation. In a way, they were also exposed to modernist poetry.

The Poetry Presentation Night was a modified way of disseminating modernist literature. This kind of disseminating might not be effective at that moment. However, most of the trainees would be future Chinese teachers in primary and secondary schools. Once the modernist literary seeds were planted in their mind, they would finally spread these literary seeds to the schools all over the country. Especially the students of the Chinese Special Course, who were trained to be secondary school Chinese language teachers. They would disseminate modernist literature to the students year after year. From the year 2000 onwards, the advisers of National Secondary Schools Poetry were mostly former students of the Chinese Special Course, who were graduated from Ipoh Teacher Training College. This is an undeniable evidence of the influence of the literary core cell of Sirius Poetical Society.

In addition, the two assignments given to the students of the Chinese Special Course were on writing modernist poem and prose. To the in service teachers, writing prose is not a difficult task, it was just the matter of good or bad. However, writing modernist poem was a challenge to them. Whether they liked it or not, they must apply all the theories learned in the class of creative writing in poems and prose. This kind of disseminating method stressed on the fusion of theory and practical. Xie Chuancheng wanted his students to be able to appreciate modernist poetry and prose, and was capable of teaching their future students to write modernist poetry and prose.

In actual fact, the above Chinese Special Course had succeeded in training two Mahua writers. One was the late Teh Chewping (郑秋萍), she was active in disseminating children literature, especially children poetry. She has conducted numerous talks on children poetry. The other one was Yi Xiu (毅修), who became an outstanding novelist. Teh was the student of the third batch of the Chinese Special Course, and Yi Xiu was the student of the fifth batch of Chinese Special Course.

In the 1990s, Ipoh Teacher Training was the centre of Chinese Teaching. The Chinese courses conducted in the college were 'Secondary Chinese Teaching Course', 'Primary Chinese Teaching Course', 'Secondary Chinese Special Course', and 'The Chinese Education Course' for graduates. During the heyday of Chinese Department, there were altogether 14 Chinese lecturers in the department.

To further disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature, Xie Chuancheng has employed the following three measures:

(1) Conducting Two Workshops on Modernist Poetry Writing

In the 1990s, Xie Chuancheng conducted two workshops on Modernist Poem Writing in Ipoh Teacher Training College (1994 and 1995). These two workshops combined theory and practical. Xie introduced the theory of modernist poetry and then guided the trainees step by step to write modernist poetry. After these two workshops, the trainees had a better knowledge of modernism and experience in writing poetry. After these two workshops, the trainees continued in writing modernist poems and later all these poems were collected in a collection of poems published by the Department of Chinese Studies in Ipoh Teacher Training College.

(2) Publishing Three Books of Literary Criticism

Xie Chuancheng started writing articles on poetry interpretation in the early 1980s. He published numerous articles in *Chao Foon Monthly* and Supplements of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and *Sin Chew Daily*. In 2000, 11 years after the Sirius Poetical Society stopped all activities, he published two books which entitled *Xiandaishi Xinqing* (《现代诗心情》, *Thoughts on Modernist Poetry*) and *Xie Chuancheng de Wenxue Fengjing* (《谢川成的文学风景》, *Literary Scenery of Xie Chuancheng*).

(3) Editing and Writing Secondary School Chinese Textbooks

In 1989 and 1990, Xie Chuancheng was invited by Yao Tuo to edit and write the Form Four and Form Five Chinese textbooks respectively. The procedure of writing Chinese Textbooks may not be similar as today. In the 1980s and early 1990s, interested tender or publisher must in the first place look for a suitable editor. After receiving the syllabus and guidelines, the editor would have to prepare ten chapters, a package inclusive of a reading text, annotation, text analysis, relevant grammar and various exercises. The Ministry will then set up an assessment committee to assess the ten chapters. Members of the assessment committee are experts of Chinese Language from various institutions such as university, teacher training college and secondary schools. After three months, the publishers will be told whether the ten chapters submitted were accepted or not. If accepted, the publisher will continue to write the other 20 chapters and the whole book, which consists of 30 chapters, and must be submitted before a date given by the Ministry. It was lucky for Xie Chuancheng. The ten chapters submitted for both Form Four and Form Five have passed the assessment.

The Form Four textbook was among the six selected by the Ministry while the Form Five Textbook was among the three selected.

The *Zhongsi Huawen* (《中四华文》, *Form Four Chinese Textbook*) (Xie, 1990) has collected five modernist poems and a piece of prose as reading text. The five poems were “Woshi Manglu de” (<我是忙碌的>, “I am Busy”), “Xiangchou” (<乡愁>, “Nostalgia”) by Yu Guangzhong, “Yizhi Bainiao” (<一只白鸟>, “A White Bird”), “Xiang Shu” (<橡树>, “The Rubber Tree”) by You Chuan and “Xiangjiao Shu de Hua” (<橡胶树的话>, “Utterance of the Rubber Tree”) by Lan Qiyuan. The only prose selected was “Wode Kongzhong Louge” (<我的空中楼阁>, “My Castle in the Air”) by Li Lewei (李乐薇).

For the Form Five Chinese Textbook (Xie, 1991), four modernist poems and a piece of prose were selected. The four modernist poems were “Jia” (<家>, “Family”) by Wan Zhiwei (万志为), “Muqin” (<母亲>, “Mother”) by Lan Yuanxue (蓝原雪), “Dangran bushi Gankui” (<当然不是感喟>, “Of course it is not Lament”) and “Shuidao zhi Ge” (<水稻之歌>, “The Song of the Water Paddy”) by Luo Qing (罗青). The modernist prose selected was “Shanju” (<山居>, “Living in the Mountain”) by Yu Guangzhong.

In the two Chinese textbooks, Xie Chuancheng had selected nine modernist poems and two pieces of prose. As commonly known, there were strict limitations in editing and writing a textbook. For instance the limit of different genres, the number of poems cannot exceeds certain percentage, the texts in modern Chinese must at least reach a certain percentage, classical Chinese texts also has the same limitations and the

length of each classical text must not be too long and should be narrative. From the perspective of content, there must have a certain percentage of texts describing local contexts such as local tourist attraction, festivals of Malays, Chinese and Indians, national industry such as the automobile industry of Malaysia, patriotism, racial integration and others. Xie Chuancheng had chosen nine modernist poems and two pieces of prose, which was really not an easy task.

Textbooks played an effective role in literary dissemination. The students in Malaysia have knowledge of Chinese literature, both classical and modern, via Chinese textbooks in primary and secondary schools. In the primary school Chinese textbooks, several classical and modern poems were selected as the reading texts. In secondary school Chinese textbooks mentioned above, in addition to classical and modernist poems, there were also modernist proeses. As a result, these modernist poems and proeses were disseminated among secondary school students. In Malaysia, a textbook was normally used for 6 to 12 years. In this period, a large number of students had read and studied these articles from all over the country. Modernist literature were disseminated in schools silently through these textbooks. As discussed earlier, most of the prominent Mahua writers started their writing career during their secondary school times. When they entered the university or grew up later, they have had the basic knowledge of literature and elementary writing skills or techniques. Some even became famous when they were still young. For instance, Lin Qiuyue, who has won the First Prize of the First Malaysian Modernist Poem Competition (第一届全国现代诗奖) when she was 15 years old, and the winning poem was entitled “Zai ye Bugan Chongti” (<再也不敢重提>, “I Will Never Be Brave to Mention Again”).

3.5 Conclusion

The Sirius Poetical Society is one of the important literary disseminating media in the 1970s and 1980s. It has disseminated modernist literature by using a variety of strategies. It contributed a lot in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. In the 1970s, the Sirius Poetical Society was very active and successfully published three important anthologies of poems namely *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* and lastly, *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*. These three anthologies become the subjects of study. In the 1980s, the Sirius Poetical Society was still active in the first five years, however, it became less active from 1986 until the end of the 1980s.

In short, the Sirius Poetical Society has great influence on the development of Mahua Modernist Literary. It nurtured many modernist writers and poets, published many anthologies, collections of members poems, prose and literary criticism. Although it ceased all activities at the end of the 1980s, it was undoubtedly one of the most influential literary media in Mahua Modernist literary arena.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF BAI YAO AND CHEN RUIXIAN IN THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNIST LITERATURE

4.0 Introduction

This chapter gives prominence to the writers who are considered as the major media for the literature dissemination. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, “writer” in this context refers to editors, authors and literary critics. To discuss the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature by editors, it is unavoidable to mention Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian. On the other hand, when linking writers and the dissemination of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature, Woon Swee Tin or better known as Wen Renping, cannot be left out. The former two editors, who are also modern writers, played a very important role in the early development of the Mahua Modernist Literature; while the later, exerted immense influence through his employment of different strategies and means in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature from early 1970s to the mid of 1980s. Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian’s contributions were recognized by scholars such as Zhang Jinzong and Fang Guixiang. Wen Renping, on the other hand, was offered the Cultural Award (Literature Section) by the Malaysia Chinese Culture Society on 30th October 2010 as a recognition of his contribution and effort in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Bai Yao’s contribution in the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature stemmed from his strong sense of literary mission which motivated him to write a series of poems and articles. He published a few modern poems when he returned from Taiwan after graduating from the National University of Taiwan. In addition to this, he wrote two articles entitled *The Revolution of New Poetry*, and *The Road of New Poetry*

which have been regarded as the starting point of literary revolution in Malaysia. In 1964, he published four essays, “Musing on Modernist Poetry” (1-4), to discuss the emergence of Modernist Poems in Malaysia.

Chen Ruixian’s contributions can be seen in his works as a modern writer and also his effort endeavours in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature as an editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. His poems and short stories were considered as typical modernist poems and short stories written during 1960s. When he joined the editorial board of *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1969, he introduced Modernist Literature from both Western and from Taiwan to Malaysian authors. He took three major steps in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature, namely (i) translating numerous modernist literature from abroad; (ii) planning and publishing special issues on various genres, modernist poems, modernist novels, modernist proses in order to promote the image of Modernist Literature; and (iii) planning and publishing modernist poetry in *Chao Foon Monthly* publications.

Wen Renping is not an editor. He is a Chinese modernist poet, prose writer, and also a literary critic. Due to his multiple/various abilities, the ways and means of disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature are very much varied from Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian. He used seven different ways to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature, particularly by: (i) publishing literary criticism to promote the philosophy of Modernist Literature; (ii) writing modernist poems and prose, to establish himself as a staunch practitioner of modernist literature; (iii) writing the History of Mahua Modernist Literature; (iv) compiling and editing different anthologies of modernist poetry and modernist literature to build the canons of Mahua Modernist Literature; (v) promoting modernist poems via giving public talks on special topics and producing

recordings of modernist poems in the form of audio cassettes; (vi) setting up the Sirius Poetical Society in order to disseminate the Mahua Modernist Literature in an organized manner; and (vii) writing numerous prefaces for individual publications and collective publications.

Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian's relentless efforts are discussed below, while Wen Renping's role will be discussed in the following chapter in detail.

4.1 The Life of Bai Yao

Among the Chinese literati, Bai Yao is acknowledged as the first Malaysian writer who promoted the writing of Chinese Modernist Poetry in Malaysia and he is also credited as the first Chinese Modernist poet of Malaysia. Bai Yao was born in 1934 in Guang Dong, China and was called as Liu Guojian. He had his early education in his hometown, and studied in a traditional private school. He had his lower secondary education in Pei Zheng Secondary School in Guang Zhou and later completed his upper secondary education in Pei Zheng Secondary School, Hong Kong.

In 1953, he majored History in National Taiwan University. His coursemate Lu Yao Dong, was invited to be the editor of *The Ideological Trend of Taiwan University*, a students' publication, and Bai Yao was asked to be the co-editor. Thus, from then onwards, he started his life as an editor. He came to Malaysia at the age of 23, which is at the end of year 1957, after graduating from the National University of Taiwan. When he reached at Kuala Lumpur, he engaged himself in some cultural activities and began his career as an editor of *The Students' Weekly*. As the coordinator in charge of the correspondence unit of the weekly, he had the opportunity to interact

with many school representatives of *The Students' Weekly* all over Malaysia. Many of these school representatives were writers and agents of the weekly issues in their respective schools. Most of them were excellent in their studies, although many of them came from poor families. They were recommended by their school heads to be agents of the weekly. Of course, there were also some teachers who helped to sell *The Students' Weekly* too. In other words, Bai Yao was the editor who had a very close relationship with the readers, writers and agents from the schools. Bai Yao met these representatives quite often. He organized gatherings, literary camps, picnics, and shared his editorial experiences with them in many different places included Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Taiping, Ipoh, Malacca, Muar, Petaling Jaya, Buntong, Singapore and many other parts of Malaysia.

After his graduation, Bai Yao came to Kuala Lumpur at the invitation of Yao Tuo (Bai, 2007, p.28). They knew each other when Bai Yao was still an undergraduate in Taiwan. Bai Yao sent his articles to *China Students' Weekly* in Hong Kong which was edited by Yao Tuo. At the end of year 1956, when Bai Yao returned to Hong Kong for a holiday, a meeting was arranged by Yao Tuo in the office of *China Students' Weekly*. Yao Tuo offered Bai Yao to work as a temporary trainee editor for a month. Later Yao Tuo asked Bai Yao whether he would be interested to follow him to work in Nan Yang after his graduation. Perhaps it was difficult to get a job in Hong Kong during that time, Bai responded positively to Yao Tuo's invitation (Bai, 2003).

In the early days, he used Lin Jian (林间) as his pseudonym, and published some poems. These poems had rectangular forms that resembled the shape of that of dried bean curds or "doufugan" (豆腐干). He also published articles and modernist poems by using the pen name Ling Leng (凌冷). In 1950s and 1960s, the poems

published in newspaper were traditional poems. Although these poems were written in modern Chinese, the techniques used were too simple. The visual forms of these poems looked like dried bean curd. Young readers and writers, especially secondary school students at that time, wanted to read more challenging poems. Bai Yao was certain about this literary phenomenon when he met readers of *The Students' Weekly* in Ipoh in 1958. One of the secondary school students he met was Leng Yanqiu (冷燕秋), a Form Two student from Yoke Choy Secondary School. When Bai Yao had a discussion on Poetry Appreciation with Leng Yanqiu and a group of students, Bai was told that contemporary poems of “Gelv Shi” (格律诗, “Metrical Poetry”) and poems of Slogans were dull and boring. They then asked Bai Yao whether *The Students' Weekly* can publish different kinds of poems. Bai Yao was impressed by the students' suggestion and from this encounter, he later found out that this was the common response and the typical perception of secondary students towards poems published in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and other newspaper during that time.

In 1960s, many young writers were encouraged by Bai Yao to write Chinese Modernist Poetry. Bai Yao was better known as the poet of the controversial modernist poem, “Silently Stands along the Muar River” which is regarded as the First Chinese Modernist Poem in Malaysia. He was the editor of both *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Students' Weekly*. During his 24 years stay in Kuala Lumpur, in addition to writing poems and literary criticism, he was also one of the founders of *The Association of Drama, Ba Cui Art Gallery*. He was also a playwright and had written three famous musical dramas entitled *The Dragon Boat*, *Han Libao* and *The Widow Mountain of China*. Bai Yao named these three dramas as *The Nanyang Epic* (Bai, 2007, p.6).

He migrated to America in 1981. In 1990s, he published a few articles in *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Students' Weekly*. The articles that appeared in *Chao Foon Monthly* (issues 482, 484, 486 and 487⁶⁰) looked like his memoirs, and provided very precious first hand materials on literary history. His only publication is *Lvyun Qiyu Lvcao* (《缕云起于绿草》, *Clouds of Green Origin*) (Bai, 2007), which is a collection of prose, poems, musical drama and other articles.

Bai Yao, the first Mahua modernist poet, died on the 19th June 2015 in the United States of America at the age of 81 (Chen, 2015).

4.2 The Earliest Mahua Modernist Poet: Bai Yao

Bai Yao is a modernist poet. He has written altogether 120 poems which are collected in a book together with his proeses and drama which entitles *Clouds of Green Origin*. His first step in disseminating Modernist Literature was through publishing modernist poems. When he was in Taiwan from 1953 to 1957, he was influenced by the Modernist writers in Taiwan. Among his poems, the most quoted and controversial one was the poem entitled “Silently Stands along the Muar River”.

“Silently Stands along the Muar River” is a modernist poem. Before writing this poem, Bai Yao wrote metrical poetry (格律诗). Although he was influenced by the Modernist Literature in Taiwan, he still wrote classical style of poems. However, after meeting the readers of *The Students Weekly* from many states of Malaya,

⁶⁰ The four articles include: (1) “Jiaofeng Jiushi Xuebao Dangnian” (蕉风旧事, 学报当年, “Chao Foon Monthly Old Stories, Those Days in The Students' Weekly”) in *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 482, p. 13-16; (2) “Xiandaishi de Qian Zhuluoji” (现代诗的前侏罗纪, “Pre Zoorassic Modernist Poetry”), in *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 484, p. 90-91; (3) “Xianshizhuyi de Jiaofeng” (现实主义的蕉风, “Realism in *Chao Foon Monthly*”), in *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 486, September & October 1998, pp.75-77; (4) “Cong Wudaiju dao Dianying” (从舞台剧到电影, “From Stage Play to Theatre”), in *Chao Foon Monthly*, issue 487, p. 71-73.

especially those from Ipoh and Muar, he felt deeply in his heart that he should change his style of writing poems. After visiting the Muar River, he wrote the poem and published it in “The New Poetry Column” in *The Students’ Weekly*. After its publication, he received immediate responses from Leng Yanqiu, Zhou Huan, Li Ying and Luo Man.

Wen Renping regarded “Silently Stands along the Muar River” as the first Mahua Modernist Poem. Whether or not this poem can be considered historically to be the first one is an issue, so the researcher will discuss it in the later part of this chapter with concrete evidences. Bai Yao was a graduate from National Taiwan University, and his major was History Studies. This academic training could have created awareness in Bai Yao’s heart that Modernist Literature will eventually emerge in Malaysia sooner or later. Thus when he returned from Taiwan, he began to publish a few Chinese Modernist Poems.

Why “Silently Stands along the Muar River” was regarded as the first Mahua Modernist Poem in Malaysia? According to Wen, after the poem was published, Bai did not stop there, and continued writing articles supporting the emergence of Chinese Modernist Literature in Malaysia. Furthermore, after the publication of that poem, more and more people involved themselves in writing Chinese Modernist Poetry and essays supporting this special phenomenon of the literary development (Wen, 2015, p.259).

This could be seen from the fact that after publishing “Silently Stands along the Muar River”, Bai Yao continued to publish articles or essays such as *The Revolution of*

New Poetry and *The Road of New Poetry* and also other Chinese modernist poems. A few years later, he published a series of essays on Modernist Poetry.

On the other hand, Chen Yingde had a different opinion. He suggested that Wei Beihua's poem *The Stone Lion*, published in 1952, was the earliest Chinese Modernist Poem in Malaysia. However, Wen Renping disagrees because after Wei Beihua's publication of the poem, he himself stopped writing and publishing poems of this nature, and more importantly, no other poets followed suit. There were also no responses from other writers in promoting the revolution of new poem. The absence of support from other poets and writers eventually had paralysed the literary movement. As such, at this juncture we can see that Wen's opinion was justified without any doubt. So, the literary activity of an individual cannot be regarded as a literary movement, it is just an isolated literary phenomenon. Any endeavour to turn a phenomenon into a literary movement, needs support from a group of writers and their publications. Due to this reason, even though there are some elements of modernism in Wei Beihua's *The Stone Lion*, he lacked of the modern consciousness, and he was writing the so called modern poem alone (Wen, 1997). From this point of view, Tan and Wen shared the similar opinion. According to Tan:

The rise of modernism does not depend on a poem or an individual, but rather on publisher and a group of creative writers putting effort together (Tan, 1999, p.347).

It was a fact that in the arena of Malaysia Chinese Literature, after the publication of the first Chinese Modernist Poem in 1959, there were other modernist poets actively involved in writing modernist poems. Those poets who were actively

indulged in writing modernist poems were Di Yu, Qiaojing, Zhou Huan, Leng Yanqiu, Wang Runhua, Dan Ying, Chen Huihua, Lin Lv, Ai Wen, Xiao Ai, You Cao, Huang Huaiyun, Qiu Yin, Ye Mansha, Jin Sha, Zhang Li. In addition, there was another group of writers Qian Gechuan, Wang Runhua, Ye Fengsheng, Yu Feng and others who were involved in translating western Modernist Literary articles into Chinese and published them in *Chao Foon Monthly*. The active involvement of the writers and translators enables the Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature to grow in strength, and brought genuine changes in the Chinese literary field.

Looking at the development of Malaysia Chinese Literature, the critics have little difference of opinion concerning the rise of modernism in Malaysia. They differ only at the beginning stage of Modernism. When Chen Yingde raised a challenging query, Wen Renping wrote an open letter to Chen Yingde after the conference. In that letter, besides putting forward his idea, Wen also changed from his earlier opinion. According to Wen, the rise of Mahua Modernist Literature was probably in 1959, although Zhou Huan, Ai Wen and he himself felt that Bai Yao's modernist poem "Silently Stands along the Muar River", which was published on 5th March 1959, was probably the first Chinese Modernist Poem in Malaysia, and its historical status is yet to be examined. However, the rise of literary modernism in Malaysia is brought forward by a group of modern poets including Bai Yao, Zhou Huan, and the determined efforts made by literary magazines such as *The Students' Weekly* and *Chao Foon Monthly*. The movement became a reality in 1959 and early 1960s. Wen's observation turned out to be undoubtedly true.

As a modernist poet, after publishing the so called first modernist poem in Malaysia, Bai Yao did not stop. He continued publishing modernist poems in both

Chao Foon Monthly and *The Students Weekly*. Below are two tables showing Bai Yao's poems that were published in the above mentioned magazines.

Table 4.1: Bai Yao's Poems in *The Students Weekly* (6th March 1959 to 25th October 1967)

| No. | Title of Poems | Publishing Date | Pages |
|-----|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Silently Stands Along Muar River | 6 th March 1959 | The page of Poetry |
| 2. | "GuihunYu"(<鬼魂语>, "Utterance of the Ghost") | 3 rd April 1959 | The page of Poetry |
| 3. | "Baiyun ban de Wo", (<白云般的我>, "Me, Like the White Cloud") | 1 st May 1959 | The page of Poetry |
| 4. | "Fanzhou de Wuyue Ji" (<泛舟的五月季>, "The Boating Season in May") | 1 st May 1959 | The page of Poetry |
| 5. | "Haibian de" (<海边的>, "Those by the Seaside") | 7 th August 1959 | The page of Poetry |
| 6. | "Naye, cong Xiaodian Chulai" (<那夜, 从小店出来>, "The Night, Coming Out From the Little Shop") | 1 st April 1960 | The page of Poetry |
| 7. | "Mahe Du" (<麻河渡>, "Crossing the Muar River") | 1 st June 1960 | The page of Poetry |
| 8. | "Xinsheng de Li" (<新生的力>, "The New Generated Strength") | 9 th June 1961 | The page of Poetry |
| 9. | "Lainian de Qiu" (<来年的秋>, "Autumn in the Coming Year") | 16 th June 1961 | The page of Poetry |

Table 4.2: Bai Yao's Poems in *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Title of Poems | Publishing Date | Pages |
|-----|--|-----------------|-------|
| 1. | “Badaling de Zaocheng” (<八达岭的早晨>, “The Morning of Petaling”) | April, 1959 | p.13 |
| 2. | “Qiuzhang zhi Ye” (<酋长之夜>, “The Night of Cacique”) | May, 1959 | p.9 |
| 3. | “Siyue yi Shi” (<四月已逝>, “April has Gone”) | July, 1959 | p.22 |
| 4. | “Quzhong” (<曲终>, “The End of a Song”) | April, 1960 | p.9 |
| 5. | “Huo Dao” (<火盗>, “Pirate of the Fire”) | July, 1961 | p.20 |

The number of poems Bai Yao published in both *The Students Weekly* and *Chao Foon Monthly* was few. His importance as a poet lies in the fact that he was the poet who published the first Mahua Modernist Poem. Of course, his other poems had modernist inclination obviously and this made them different from poems published in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* of that time.

4.3 The Initiator of the First and Second Waves of Mahua Modernist

Literature: Bai Yao

In addition to writing poems, Bai Yao also wrote essays to promote Mahua Modernist Literature.

The Revolution of New Poetry is an important article. Zhang Jinzong believes that the first wave of modernism in Singapore and Malaysia started with this essay (Zhang, 2003, p.52-53). Bai's espousal of Modernist Literature through such pieces of

writing was a follow-up action after publishing “Silently Stands along the Muar River”. As a poet, he wrote modernist poems, and as a critic, he wrote essays to disseminate new literary ideas. This article was published in the April Issue of *Chao Foon Monthly*, 1959. This piece of writing was not very lengthy, and resembled a literary manifesto or declaration. In this article, he stated his propositions very briefly:

- (i) New Poetry can be likened to as a “horizontal” transplantation, and not a “vertical” inheritance;
- (ii) Abolish rhyming schemes of classical poetic composition;
- (iii) Emphasise content rather than form;
- (iv) Reflect intellectual and romantic inclinations;
- (v) Make the choice of new and old, good and bad, is actually the revolution of poetic element (Bai, 1959, p. 19).

These few propositions resembled that of Ji Xian in Taiwan. The modernisation of Taiwan Chinese Literature started in 1953 when the poetical magazine *Modern Poetry* was published. The magazine was edited by Ji Xian. In the first issue, Editor Ji Xian declared that he wanted to modernise poetry, and at the same time, to create a kind of modern poetry with its distinguished characteristics. Then he organised the First Conference of Modern Poets, and formed the Modern Poets Group in 1956. The first conference has attracted 102 modern poets, and it was said to be the representative of Taiwan’s literary circle. After the conference, Ji Xian published the propositions of the modern group in the 13th issue of *Modern Poetry* (February, 1956) magazine, which appeared in the front page:

- (i) We are a group of modern poets who embody the elements and spirit of modern poem since Baudelaire.
- (ii) We regard new poetry as a development of Chinese literature which is likened to be a “horizontal migration”, and not a “vertical succession”. This major viewpoint set an important starting point in terms of theoretical development or literary creation. The new world of poetry is yet to be explored. The espousal of new content, the creation of new form, the discovery of new tools, and the invention of new expressing methods.
- (iii) The stress of an intellectual identity.
- (iv) The pursuit of pure poetry.
- (v) Highlighting patriotic, anti-communist, freedom and democratic themes.

A closer look at the five propositions above would reveal that Ji Xian had exerted considerable influence on Bai Yao. Bai's first proposition was almost similar to that of Ji Xian; only the phrase “old poetry” was added. The fourth proposition also closely resembles Ji Xian's fourth proposition. Due to this obvious similarity, Zhang Jinzong concludes that Bai Yao has obviously been influenced by the Modern Group, and “the relationship between Modernism in Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan” calls for an in-depth study” (Zhang, 2003, p.53).

Although the editor of the 78th issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* did not response to Bai Yao's revolutionary literary movement, the article was published in the new edition of the magazine, and repeated the five propositions mentioned by Bai Yao, and also at the same time published two other modern poems of Bai Yao. This was clearly a sign of support.

When discussing on the relationship of Bai Yao and the first wave of Malaysia Chinese Modernism, Zhang Jinzhong quoted the prediction put forward by Bai Yao. In 1959, Bai Yao advocated the Revolution of New Poetry, and predicted that,

The history of Chinese modern poetry movement will end on the hands of Malaysian Chinese, while the basis or foundation of modernist poetry will thus begin. Perhaps this kind of rhetoric ushered in a new era of literary development in Nanyang (the land of the south). Such kind of discourse though belongs to the rhetoric of movement propositions, it also shows that Malaysia Chinese Literature after crossing the boundary, will be the host of Nan Yang new world, not only becoming the carrier and the external characteristics of the main parts of Chinese language and Malaysian Chinese, and has the intention to become the commence of Chinese Language Literature, and the new critical point of Modernist Poetry (Bai, 1959, p.19).

The prediction revealed Bai Yao's sense of history and his unquenchable enthusiasm. The publication of the few modernist poems and essays on poetry revolution were strategically planned, and not just an emotional outburst. Without a well-organised strategy to introduce, illustrate and disseminate the information on the emergence, existence and development of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature, all measures taken to promote the literary movement will end in vain. But with *Chao Foon Monthly* as a base, together with a series of strategic actions, the emergence of the first wave of modernism in Malaysia turned into a reality.

The follow-up actions done by Bai Yao have strengthened the position of “Silently Stands along the Muar River” as the first Chinese Modernist Poem in Malaysia. The reason for Wen Renping to regard it as the first modernist poem was that after its publication, there was a group of writers who engaged themselves in writing modernist poems actively. There were also another group of writers, although they did not write modernist poems, wrote essays to support the Chinese Modernist Literature. The efforts by different groups had resulted in the formation of the first wave of modernism in Malaysia. In other words, without the support shown by many writers, the influence of “Silently Stands along the Muar River” would have vanished. As mentioned above, Bai Yao the poet who wrote “Silently Stands along the Muar River” had written many essays to advocate modernism and succeeded in influencing other people. His essays also to the extent attracted many followers to support the movement.

Besides that, in his two essays, *The Revolution of New Poetry* and *The Road of New Poetry*, Bai Yao had discussed the poetical phenomenon from Hu Shi to Xu Zhimo (Bai, 1959, p.4-7, 19). He also touched on Li Kuang’s articles from Hong Kong and Malaysia, and its influence. At the end of the second essay, Bai recommended a few modernist poems viz. Ya Xian’s “Qifu” (<弃妇>, “Abandoned Women”), Qiong Hong’s “Qianxin Ren” (<虔心人>, “The Sincere Man”) and Wu Wangyao’s “Pan Gu” (<盘古>, “The Pan Gu God”).⁶¹ According to Bai, all these are “good and wonderful Free Verse” (Ling, 1959, p.4-7). The three poets mentioned at the end of the articles were famous modernist poets during that time.

⁶¹ In Chinese mythology, Pang Gu is the god who created the universe. Editor. 2000. *Gujin Hanyu Cidian* (《古今汉语词典》), Dictionary of Classical and Modern Chinese, Beijing: Shangwu Publishing House. p.1061

From the date of publishing “Silently Stands along the Muar River” to the end of 1964, Bai Yao had published five modernist poems and ten essays on modernist poetry. The ten essays on modernist poetry were *The Revolution of New Poetry*, *The Road of New Poetry* and other comments on poetry. *The Revolution of New Poetry* and the poem *Silently Stands along Muar River* marked the beginning of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature. Later, the series of four essays on modernist poetry further strengthened the revolutionary movement of poetry after five years. In the beginning, Bai Yao used the term New Poetry, and in 1964, he used the term Modernist Poetry. The change in literary term illustrates the change of literary concept, which is a precise definition of Modernist Poetry.

Followed by the publication of *The Revolution of New Poetry* and *The Road of New Poetry* in 1959, *The Beautiful V Shape*, an anthology of Modernist Poetry was published in June 1959. Bai Yao then wrote a book review on the collection entitled *The Transformation of New Poetry: A Critical Comment of New Poetry Collection The Beautiful V Shape*. In November 1959, Bai Yao wrote another book review on another collection of modernist poetry *Jiaoyou* (《郊游》, *Excursion to the Outskirts*), which entitled “Xinshi? Xinshi! Xinshi. Ping Jiuyue fen Jiaofeng Shiji <Jiaoyou>” (<新诗? 新诗! 新诗。评九月份蕉风诗集《郊游》>, “New Poetry? New Poetry! New Poetry. A Comment of Chao Foon September Poetry Collection *Excursion to the Outskirt*”). After that, he stopped publishing articles until 1964 when he started another wave of advocating modernism. Within these five years, during which Bai Yao was absent totally, quite a number of modernist poems and pieces of literary criticism on modernist literature were published in *Chao Foon Monthly*.

In June 1959, Bai Yao did not publish any article. In this very same year, *Chao Foon Monthly* published the collection of modernist poetry *The Beautiful V Shape*, as a free supplement to the readers. At the same issue, *Chao Foon Monthly* published a long essay by Zhong Qirong entitled “Chao Xianshi Zhuyi de Shi” (<超现实主义的诗>, “Surrealistic Poetry”) (Zhong, 1959, p. 5-9). Both publications can be considered as the follow-up pieces of *The Revolution of New Poetry*.

In the July issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* 1959, five modernist poems were published. This was the first time *Chao Foon Monthly* used the term Modernist Poems officially. The five modernist poems were (i) “Xiang Ming’s Shi Zhi Ye” (<向明的视之野>, “The Vision”) (p. 9), (ii) “Ping Dun’s Yin Yang Jie” (<平盾的阴阳界>, “The Dead and the Living”) (p.22), (iii) “Bai Yao’s Si Yue Yi Shi” (<白垚的四月已逝>, “April has Gone”) (p. 22), (iv) Luo Man’s Ni Zou Le (<罗曼的你走了>, “You Have Left”) (p. 22), and (v) Li Ying’s Mou Zhi Ninan (<李迎的眸之呢喃>, “Whispering of Eyes”) (p. 22). In the same issue, a modernist prose by Wang Jingxi entitled “Xinshan” (<新扇>, “New Umbrella”) and a modernist novel by Nie Hualing was also published.

In the August issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1959, Bai Yao published a book review entitled *The Transformation of New Poetry: A Critical Comment of New Poetry Collection The Beautiful V Shape* (p.6-7). In the same issue, six modernist poems and the modernist prose of Zhu Xining and Wang Jingxi were also published.

According to Bai Yao, *The Beautiful V Shape* was a very successful collection of poetry and, an important one too. The reason was that many of the young poets had

thrown away the old literary form and employed the free verse form. In addition to this, he analysed and commented in detail some of the more successful poems to the lesser ones as well. In the article, he stressed on the freedom from rigid poetical form, the correct use of diction, the application of symbolic techniques and the technique of personification. These few techniques were some of the common techniques used by modernist poets.

During the following two months, Bai Yao did not publish any articles, but *Chao Foon Monthly* continued publishing essays by Taiwan Modernist poet, Tan Zihao, which entitled *Symbols and Simile*, Ji Wei's *The Beauty of Pure and Sincere and the Plain Beauty* and quite a number of modernist poems.

In the issue of November 1959, Bai Yao published a book review of modern poem collection "New Poetry? New Poetry! New Poetry. A Comment of Excursion to the Outskirts". In the same issue, seven modernist poems were published and one of them belonged to Taiwan Modernist poet, Luo Men and his poem was *Beautiful Venue for Photographing*.

The book review mentioned above are some of the efforts done by Bai Yao in 1959 for the dissemination of modernist literature. During this period, to a certain extent, Bai had succeeded in making the emergence and development of Malaysia Chinese Modernist literature to a reality. He laid the groundwork for the future development.

The publication of a series of essays (four essays) written by Bai Yao from March 1964 to July 1964 reflected as the second wave of development in the history of Malaysian Chinese Modernist Literature. The titles of the four essays are as follows:

Table 4.3: The Serial Articles of “Musing on Modernist Poetry”

| No. | Topics of Article | Issue | Pages |
|-----|---|---|-------|
| 1. | The Ostrich that cannot change into Phoenix: On “Musing on Modernist Poetry”(1) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , 1964 March, Issue 137. | 12-13 |
| 2. | “Musing on Modernist Poetry” (2) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , 1964 April, Issue 138. | 12-13 |
| 3. | “Musing on Modernist Poetry”(3) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , 1964 May, Issue 140. | 12-13 |
| 4. | “Musing on Modernist Poetry”(4) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , 1964 July, Issue 141. | 13 |

From “*The Revolution of New Poetry*” to “Musing on Modernist Poetry” (1-4), depict Bai Yao’s change in attitude towards the dissemination of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature. In the initial stage he did not use the term modernist poetry because it was feared that it may arise discontent or evoke dispute, particularly from the Realistic Group. In 1964, five years later, there was a change in the literary arena. *Chao Foon Monthly* had published many modernist poems from 1959 to 1964. In 1969, when Bai Yao initiated the second wave in the dissemination of Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature, he used the term modernist poetry without any hesitation.

There are three main points in the essay “The Ostrich that cannot change into Phoenix: Musing on Modernist Poetry (1)”. Firstly, Bai Yao stressed that no one can deny the advent of modernist poetry, whether one likes it or not. Secondly, Modernist poetry is not something new, in the West, its history is even longer than the history of our vernacular poetry. It is not familiar to our readers and writers, this is because there

is a lack of translation. Another reason is due to our taste of literature is restricted to a certain scope. The first point stressed the certainty of the emergence of modernist poetry; the second point analysed the reason why readers in Malaysia are still not familiar with it. According to Bai, the problem lies in the insufficient translations, and the conservative attitude of local readers. These two points, even from today's perspective, are still very relevant.

The third point is a bit radical. He compared those who opposed modernist poetry as to an ostrich. He commented that there was no reason why a person should oppose modernist poetry. If he does not even have the patience to read T.S. Eliot's "Chuantong yu Geren Caiju" (<传统与个人才具>, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"), he does not have any basic knowledge of modernism, then his opposition is powerless. Secondly, the conservative people had their own taste and feelings. They were not ready to accept something new or different views. Such attitude would bring disaster to the development of Modernist Literature (Bai, 1964, p.12).

In short, Bai Yao's four essays on Modernist Poetry, not only have showed his modernist inclination, more importantly, it reinforced the modernist inclination of *Chao Foon Monthly's* editor such as Huang Ya, who took over the editorial board in 1962. In 1969, Bai Yao was invited to be one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He advocated the Malaysia Chinese Modernist Literature ideals together with Chen Ruixian, Li Chang and others.

In short, Bai Yao's contributions to the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature are: (i) publishing the first Mahua Modernist Poem; (ii) publishing about 15 pomes with modernist inclination in both *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Student's*

Weekly; (iii) initiated the first wave of Mahua Modernist Literature by writing articles; (iv) strengthening the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature by publishing four articles with the common title *On Modernist Poetry*.

4.4 The Life and Background of Chen Ruixian

Chen Ruixian (1943-), originated from Nan An, Fu Jian Province, China, was born in an island called Halang Island in Sumatra, Indonesia. He migrated to Singapore later, and became a Singapore citizen in 1973. He learned painting and writing poem only at the age of 17.

After his high school education, he entered Nanyang University in 1964 and graduated in 1968. During his four years of undergraduate studies, he chose English language and Literature as his majors. Upon graduation, he joined the French Embassy in Singapore and served as its press secretary. It was during this period that he produced literary pieces and translated articles in the literary column of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and *Chao Foon Monthly* by using pennames like Mu Lingnu, Huang Yu, Su Binlang, Wu Yumian, Jiang Mian, Shuang He, Luo De, Shu Haimei, Li Changpu, Li Mingcun, Xi Ahan, and Zhi Gai. In 1968, he formed the Wu Yue Publisher (五月出版社) and published his own collection of poems entitled *Juren* (《巨人》, *The Giant*). From August 1969, he became one of the voluntary editors of the newly reformed issue of *Chao Foon Monthly*. Three years later, he joined *Nanyang Xiang Pau* as a co-editor of *Nanyang Weekly* with Liang Mingguang. As an artist, he organized his first art exhibition in 1973. Chen Ruixian is more than a poet; he is an artist who excels in many fields. Chen Ruixian is the name used in literary arena. Other than poetry, he

also excels as a novelist, a literary critic, a translator, a seal engraver, a calligrapher, a painter and an enlightened Buddhist.

The contribution of Chen Ruixian to the Mahua Modernist Literature Movement can be discussed from two perspectives. Firstly, the modernist writer Chen Ruixian has espoused the modernist literary ideas. Secondly, as an editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* and literary column in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, he actively promoted modernist literature in Singapore and Malaysia. In his former role he was an introducer and advocator; in his later role, he was a promoter of modernist literature. His contributions are discussed below from two perspectives.

4.5 Chen Ruixian: Modernist Poet and Novelist

Chen Ruixian is regarded as “an important writer in the history of Modern Literature in Singapore and Malaysia” (Fang, 2009, p.19). He produced his first poem in 1958, and he published his poems for the first time in *The Students' Column*, *Nanyang Xiang Pau* in 1962. Later, he continued publishing poems, novels, translation, and became the writer who churned out the largest number of articles in *The Literature Column* of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* in 1967. In 1968, he published his collection of poems *The Giant* which was regarded as the first collection of modernist poems in Singapore and Malaysia. In the following year, he published his collection of modern novels.

Chen Ruixian is a modernist writer. He rejected the literary concept of Realism from the very beginning. In writing, he was influenced by several modernist writers such as Rilke, T.S Eliot, James Joyce, Kafka, André Gide (纪德), and Søren Aabye

Kierkegaard (齐克果) (Fang, 202, p.238). During 1960, the literary arena was controlled by the so-called *Realistic Camp*; those who did not toe the line would be regarded as recalcitrance and thus be excluded from their literary circle. However, Chen Ruixian wrote actively, refused to compromise, and wrote articles by using new techniques. Actually as early as 1962, when he was only 19 years old then, he started producing poems, proses, and novels, and translated articles that were published in few newspapers and magazines. The publication media were *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, *The Teaching and Learning Monthly*, *Min Bao* and *The Students' Weekly*.

In the early 1960s, more specifically in 1962, Chen Ruixian, at the age of 19 only, had his works began and appeared in newspapers such as *The Nanyang Evening Paper*, *Min Bao* and magazines such as *The Teaching and Learning Monthly* and *The Students Weekly*. He published poems, prose, novels and translated articles from English.

In 1964, the editor of the literary column, *Nanyang Xiang Pau* Singapore was Yang Shoumo, penname Xing Ying (杏影), whose writing styles were obviously inclined to the Realistic Camp. In spite of this, Chen Ruixian succeeded in publishing 25 articles from April 1964 to 16th September, 1966 in the *Youth Literature* and *Nanyang Xiang Pau*. Chen was grateful and respectful to Yang Shoumo who was a highly respected editor during that time. Although Yang Shoumo usually chose articles from the Realistic Group, he never supplanted modernist articles with realistic pieces and because of Yang's liberal mind, Chen was able to publish 25 articles in only two years' time. Chen felt sad that he had not the opportunity to meet and know Yang Shoumo more closely.

Details of his publication are shown in the table below:

Table 4.4: Chen Ruixian's articles published in Youth Literature, *Nanyang*

Xiang Pau

| No. | Date | Titles | Accumulative Number |
|-----|------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | 20/4/1964 | “Yingxiong” (<英雄>, “The Hero”) (poem) | 1 |
| 2. | 29/5/1964 | “Linxing de Hua” (<临行的话>, “Words before Leaving”) (poem) | 2 |
| 3. | 24/7/1964 | “Jindi” (<禁地>, Forbidden Area”) (poem) | 3 |
| 4. | 23/10/1964 | “Muqin de Hua” (<母亲的画>, “Mother’s Painting”) (poem) | 4 |
| 5. | 14/12/1964 | “Juren” (<巨人>, “Giant”) (poem) The editor changed to “Ni de Shidai” (<你的时代>, “Your Era”) | 5 |
| 6. | 25/12/1964 | “Xiu Cu” (<锈锄>, “Rusty Hoe”) (prose) | 6 |
| 7. | 17/2/1965 | “Xianrenzhang” (<仙人掌>, “Cactus”) (poem) | 7 |
| 8. | 24/2/1965 | “Shi San Shou: Heifengdong Gucheng Wuya Gangkou” (<诗三首: 黑风洞、古城、乌鸦港口>, “Three Poems: Batu Caves, Ancient City, Crow Port”) | 8-10 |
| 9. | 8/3/1965 | “Lao Baopo” (<老鸨婆>, “The Procure”) (poem) | 11 |
| 10. | 16/7/1965 | “Tonglei” (<同类>, “Same Category”) (poem) | 12 |
| 11. | 23/7/1965 | “Juren” (<巨人>, “Giant”) The editor changed to “Shi” (<诗>, “Poem”) | 13 |
| 12. | 27/8/1965 | “Jiashu” (<家书>, “A Letter from Home”) (poem) | 14 |

Table 4.4 (continued)

| | | | |
|-----|------------|---|----|
| 13. | 15/10/1965 | “Shi zhe” (<侍者>, “Waiter”) (poem) | 15 |
| 14. | 22/10/1965 | “Taomang Qu” (<逃亡曲>, “Fleeing Song”) (poem) | 16 |
| 15. | 12/11/1965 | “Ye Haizi” (<野孩子>, “Wild Child”) (poem) | 17 |
| 16. | 29/12/1965 | “He Shang” (<河上>, “On The River”) Translation, penname Lan Cao (蓝槽) | 18 |
| 17. | 1/3/1966 | “Hua Zhong” (<花钟>, “Flora Clock”) (poem) | 19 |
| 18. | 9/2/1966 | “Yazi” (<哑子>, “The Mute”) (poem) | 20 |
| 19. | 18/2/1966 | “Nian Hua Zhe” (<拈花者>, “The Person who Holds up a Flower”) (poem) | 21 |
| 20. | 25/3/1966 | “Cuimian Ge” (<催眠歌>, “Hypnotic Song”) (poem) | 22 |
| 21. | 23/5/1966 | “Yuanfen” (<缘分 (1)>, “Destiny(1)”) Novel, continuous publication in 4 issues | 23 |
| 22. | 25/5/1966 | “Yuanfen” (<缘分 (2)>, “Destiny (2)”) | |
| 23. | 27/5/1966 | “Yuanfen” (<缘分 (3)>, “Destiny (3)”) | |
| 24. | 30/5/1966 | “Yuanfen” (<缘分 (4)>, “Destiny (4)”) | |
| 25. | 3/6/1966 | “Yuetai Songbie” (<月台送别>, “Farewell in the Platform”) (poem) | 24 |
| 26. | 16/9/1966 | “Qi yin” (<弃婴>, “Abandoned Baby”) ⁶² | 25 |

⁶² The Young Literature, Nanyang Xiang Pau, 20/4/1964-16/9/1966.

From the above table, it is clear that Chen Ruixian published mostly modernist poems. Out of 25 publications, 22 are poems, one prose, one novel and one translated article. In fact, it is commendable for him to publish 22 poems in the literary column edited by Xing Ying. The *Youth Literature of Nanyang Xiang Pau* at that time, under the editorship of Xing Ying, was regarded as the base camp of the Realistic Group. Even writers from the Realistic Group had difficulty in publishing their articles, and the reason was that Xing Ying laid down stringent conditions in his selection of articles for publication. However, the young Chen Ruixian, who wrote modernist poems, was an exception, much to the displeasure of the writers from the Realistic Camp. A writer whose name was Yang Qun criticised:

Numerous poisonous weeds lay sprawled in our own “literary plot”. They are not only eating the existing sprouts, but also had the tendency to replace “honest literature”. The emergence of Modernist Group is one of them (Yang, 1965, p. 10).

This blatant expression of displeasure is unnecessary. The publication of articles in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* did not show any link between the writer and the editor. It solely depends on the articles’ quality. However, Chen Ruixian’s “invasion” into *The Youth Literature* had a more important implication. Although the editor was a Realistic poet, he was more ingenious than the other Realistic editors, especially when he encountered modernist poems. Otherwise, it was impossible for Chen Ruixian to publish 25 articles during such a short period. Xing Ying’s action must have encouraged and inspired the young Chen Ruixian to write more prolifically. In his poems, he used imagery, metaphors. His new ways of writing had surprised the readers and his hard work was much appreciated. During that period, his attitude and view

towards literature are only embodied and reflected in his literary creation. He seldom wrote literary criticism and never involved himself in literary debates in newspaper (Lin, 1972, p.29-32).

In addition to this, Chen Ruixian also published in *The Students' Weekly*.

Details are in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Articles Published in “The Poetry Column” of *The Students' Weekly*

| No. | Date | Issue Number | Title | Accumulative Number |
|-----|-------------|--------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | 27/11/1965 | 488 | “Yuhuo de Xinian” (<渔火的系念>, “Lights in Fishing Boats”) | 1 |
| 2 | 28/12 /1965 | 493 | “Zhizhu” (<蜘蛛>, “Spider”) | 2 |
| 3 | 1/3/1966 | 502 | “Juren” (<巨人>, “Giant”) | 3 |
| 4 | 3/5/1966 | 510 | “Kaochang Nei” (<考场内>, “In the Examination Hall”) | 4 |
| 5 | 29/6/1966 | 519 | “Jianshenshi” (<健身室>, “Fitness Room”) | 5 |
| 6 | 2/11/1966 | 537 | “Ye Di” (<叶笛>, “Leaf Flute”) | 6 |
| 7 | 3/5/1967 | 563 | “Hai de Xingge” (<海的性格>, “The Personality of Ocean”) | 8 |
| 8 | 5/7/1967 | 572 | “Yehua Jiu” (<椰花酒>, “Toddy”) | 7 |
| 9 | 6/9/1967 | 581 | “Ji Qi” (<祭旗>, “The Flag of Memorial Ceremony”) | 9 |

The editor of *The Students' Weekly* at that time was Zhou Huan. As the editor, Zhou Huan had the habit of attaching his comments and opinions at the end of each published poem. These little notes were words of encouragement to the writer or sometimes suggestions for the improvement and refinement of the poems. He seemed to like the young Chen Ruixian who had published six poems in a year. According to him, Chen Ruixian was a rising star and would shine in Singapore and Malaysia. He was right because Chen Ruixian became one of the best modernist poets in Singapore.

Chen Ruixian published many modernist poems and gradually rose to become a major modernist poet in Singapore and Malaysia. His poems were highly acclaimed. If one were to comment that Chen Ruixian was still the leading poet in the Modernist Literature Arena even at the end of 1960s, few would rebuttal. Earlier, a Singapore Modernist poet wrote a poem entitled *To Chen Ruixian*, and the image of Chen Ruixian as a leader of Modernist Literature in Singapore and Malaysia had been established. This poem was written by Chen Mu, and was published in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, on 21st July 1967.

The poet Chen Mu expressed honestly that Chen Ruixian had awoken from his classical dream. The so-called beautiful dream in the past was rotten. He is awake, and will jump over the abyss of the past, to find out the poetic sentences lost in the wind and cloud. In the last stanza, he professes to be a follower of Chen Ruixian. Due to the influence of Chen Ruixian, Chen Mu bid farewell to the styles of poetry in the past, and his penname had been changed to He Lanning after this poem. He continued his career as a poet and continued to espouse the use of new literary and new language styles.

Chen Ruixian's poem "Jiqi" (<祭旗>, "The Flag Ceremony"), published in *The Students' Weekly*, was actually sending a message to the Realistic Group, which could also be seen as his determination to safeguard Modernist Literature. This poem received powerful resonance with the readers.

"The Flag Ceremony" (祭旗) was actually a superstitious practice in military force. It was a normal practice that before expedition, the general of the ancient army would kill an animal, and offer it as a sacrifice to the divine, hoping for his blessing to win the battle. The ceremony consists of four stages. Firstly, the vow of the General; secondly offering the oblation(祭品), in this case the animal; thirdly, fire three gun shots and lastly kill the animal and offer it as a sacrifice to the divine. This kind of ceremony, in addition to praying for the divine's blessing, was to boost the morale of the soldiers, hoping for continuous victory. This poem seems to be a fitting metaphor for the current literary arena in Singapore and Malaysia; it can also be seen as his "declaration of war" against the Realistic or traditional group. Chen Ruixian's action resembled the action taken by Bai Yao in Malaysia when he published a series of essays on Modernist Poetry. The difference was that, Chen Ruixian used his poems to start the revolution, while Bai Yao used literary criticisms and poems to start the battle.

"The Flag Ceremony" embodies warring and challenging sentiments, however, when it was published, the response was overwhelming. In Malaysia, Li Cang (name Li Youcheng) wrote an open letter to the editor of *The Students' Weekly*, and one of the sentence in the letter sounded like this: "When I read Chen Ruixian's poem at the bookstore, I was very impressed and moved. A lot of things are in my mind. After returning home, I told Qiu Ying that I wanted to write poem" (Li, 1968, p.1). This is one of the evidences of Chen Ruixian's influence.

Beside publishing poems in *The Students' Weekly*, Chen Ruixian also published poems in *Teaching and Learning Monthly* (教与学月刊) at the same time. From the 37th issue to 108th issue, Chen Ruixian has published 14 poems and details are shown in the table below:

Table 4.6: Articles Published in *Teaching and Learning Monthly*

| No. | Issue/ Date | Titles | Accumulative Number |
|-----|----------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Issue 37 (1/9/1963) | “Xi Yi Fu” (<洗衣妇>, “The Woman who washes clothes”) | 1 |
| 2 | Issue 39 (1/11/1963) | “Guan Wang” (<观望>, “Wait and See”) | 2 |
| 3 | Issue 40 (1/12/1963) | “Ai” (<爱>, “Love”) | 3 |
| 4 | Issue 41 (1/1/1964) | “Xue Po” (<血泊>, “A Pool of Blood”) | 4 |
| 5 | Issue 42 (1/2/1964) | “Liulang Nv” (<流浪女>, “Stray Female”) | 5 |
| 6 | Issue 48 (1/8/1964) | “Su Xin Hua Shu” (<素馨花束>, “A bouquet of Flowers”) | 6 |
| 7 | | “Yu zhi Dao” (<渔之岛>, “The Island of Fisherman”) | 7 |
| 8 | Issue 51 (1/11/1964) | “Chong Jitu zhi Shen” (<冲积土之什> (散文诗), “The Variation of Alluvial Land (Prosaic poem)”) | 8 |
| 9 | Issue 59 (1/7/1965) | “Hong Mao Dan” (<红毛丹>, “Rambutans”) | 9 |
| 10 | Issue 61 (1/9/1965) | “Kua Fu” (<夸父>, “The Person who Chases the Sun”) | 10 |
| 11 | Issue 62 (1/10/1965) | “Si Xiang Bing” (<思乡病>, Homesickness”) | 11 |

Table 4.6 (continued)

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|----|
| 12 | Issue 71 (1/9/1966) | “Jin Li” (<金鲤>, “The Golden Carp”) | 12 |
| 13 | Issue 108 (1/7/1971) | “Chan Sheng Guo Cheng” (<蝉声过程>, “The Sound of Cicada”) | 13 |
| 14 | | “Zu Wu” (<组屋>, “The Flat”) | 14 |

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Mahua Modernist literary movement was still at the beginning stage. Most of the literary columns in the Chinese newspaper and magazines were controlled by the traditional group. His success in publishing numerous modernist poems in the newspaper was regarded as mission impossible because the literary column used to be regarded as the base of the traditional group. This implication was extraordinary. Lin Ye commented that Chen Ruixian published poems continuously in *The Youth Literature of Nanyang Xiang Pau*, was actually a transitional period of Realism to Modernism, because he entered the so called ‘our garden’ by the Realistic Group and published the Modernist poems. On the other hand, images, metaphors that appeared in his poems had aroused the astonishment and appreciation of the readers. He used literary creation to espouse his literary view and attitude. He seldom wrote literary criticism, and never published long debating articles (Lin, 1972, p.31).

As a Modernist writer, Chen Ruixian acted in accordance with established practice in writing. The publication of numerous poems written in new styles had actually brought about the Modernist literature in Singapore and Malaysia. He was one of the ten authors who had the highest number of poems published in *The Literature*

section of *Nanyang Xiang Pau*.⁶³ Among the ten, he was the most prolific writer. According to a statistic, for the period from 1st March 1967 to 31st October 1969, Chen Ruixian had published 33 articles in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*. Among them, there were 15 poems, six novels, two proses, two literary criticisms, one preface, an introductory article of a writer and six arts pieces.⁶⁴

The first poem Chen Ruixian published in *The Literature*, literary column of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* was a translated poem entitle “Xing zai Jixing” (<星在疾行>, “Stars in Speed Walk”) (Mu, 1967, p.12), from a poem by Russian poet Boris Pastenak⁶⁵(1890-1960) entitled *Variation No. 2*. In retrospect, this poem assumed the historical status. The editor Liang Mingguang, by publishing it in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, had sowed the seed of modernist literature in Singapore. It could also be regarded as the beginning of the modernist literary movement in Singapore. In other words, the status of this poem resembled the historical significance of Bai Yao’s *Silently Stands along Muar River* in Malaysia.

As the first modernist poem in Singapore Chinese Literary Arena, “Stars in Speed Walk” was a typical modernist poem. Various techniques were used in this poem. Symbols, montage used in film editing, personifications, images of time and space were used skilfully by the writer. Besides that, the poet had used a variety of modernist poem techniques to portray the theme about the mystery of life and existence. The profound theme and thoughts and also the diversified techniques used in

⁶³ The ten writers were Chen Ruixian (牧羚奴), T.Y.(歹羊), Ying Peian(英培安), Ling Dianling (零点零), Li Xiang (李向), Wan Yanji(完颜藉), He Lanning(贺兰宁), Kan Kan (看看), Nan Zi (南子) and Qian Gechuan (钱歌川).

⁶⁴ Out of the 15 poems, 6 were translated poems, and out the seven novels, one of them which entitled “Ping’an Ye” (<平安夜>, “Christmas Eve”) was published in 7 series. The 6 artistic pieces include 5 paper cuts, and a sculpture. (Fang, 2009,pp.229-230)

⁶⁵ Boris Pastenak is a Russian poet in 20 century, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1958.

the above poem challenged the readers' skill and ability in literary appreciation. These are some of the characteristics of modernist poetry.

The editor Liang Mingguang chose Chen Ruixian's translated poem as the starting point of a new literary movement was a great move. The reasons behind may be the author is a Nobel Prize winner in literature, and secondly, the poem itself has tangible modernist inclinations.

Chen Ruixian also published novels and the number of novels published is far less than poems. He has published six novels only. In his novels, the author wrote his stories with a sense of detachment intervene. The stories in the novels had never made moral judgement on his characters. This is the basic requirement of Modernist novelists. In addition, the techniques used in these novels were diversified. Techniques like stream of consciousness, dreamy, lyrical and unique structure, irony are employed. Singapore academic Fang Guixiang had commented that Chen Ruixian's characters in his novel often mirror the inner psychological world of a struggling soul, performing miracles in overcoming insurmountable odds. The world it depicts never ceases to take its readers by surprise. Through the character's unique way of thinking on existence, he shows the solicitude of existence neglected by social reality. This is uncharted territory, and more possibilities are yet to be explored (Fang, 2009, p.233).

What has been discussed above is Chen Ruixian's role as a Modernist writer. He used his articles to speak for himself, and also used Modernist articles to prove the value of Modernist literature. He started a new way and style of writing, introduced new elements to Chinese literature needed during that time. His perseverance on this

and his excellent works performance cannot be denied. Other than poetry writing, Chen Ruixian also engaged himself in writing literary criticism, and his main objective was to introduce modernist literature. The two literary criticisms are “Kafuka jiqi Jueshi de Yiren” (<卡夫卡及其《绝食的艺人》>, “Kafka and his A Hunger-Artist”), and “Shamubei Bike Xiaozhuan” (<沙姆贝·毕可小传>, “Samuel Baket: A Biography”).

In short, Chen Ruixian is undoubtedly a leader and a promoter of Modernist Literature. In literary creation, he is active in poetry and novel writing. The articles he wrote reflect the spirit and techniques of Modernism. This brings a new look to the literary arena which was controlled by the Realistic Group. The spirit, avant-garde practice, and all these can be seen in Chen Ruixian. He used articles to change the literary arena, used articles to disseminate Modernist Literature, and more importantly, he broke the rules and gained his results.

Regarding Chen Ruixian's contribution in literary creation, Zhang Jinzhong has made a pertinent (fair and objective) assessment. According to him, the emergence of Chen Ruixian, Ling Mingguang, Bai Yao and Wu Yue Publisher and the Modernist Literature Movement in Singapore and Malaysia, were the indicatives of the diminishing influence of the Realistic literary group. It had reached, as mentioned by Russian Formalist Theory, the point of automatic state. Unlike the Realistic Group of writers who prominently focus on the so called reflection of reality, the Modernist writers are sceptical and critical of such a stand. This kind of sceptical attitude can also be used to explain the translation of articles from existentialism, nihilism, absurd comedy, stream of consciousness literature, which then became the source of modernism in 1960s (Zhang, 2003, pp.174-175).

4.6 Chen Ruixian: The Editor in *NanyangXiang Pau* and *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Disseminator of Mahua Modernist Literature

4.6.1 As the Editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* (1969-1974)

Towards the end of 1960s, Chen Ruixian had become a famous modernist writer in Singapore and Malaysia. At that time, it was rare to have seen a writer taking Modernist Literature as his or her major course in the university. Chen Ruixian was one of those writers. At the end of 1960s, he joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board and this platform enabled him to render more contribution to the development of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Former *Chao Foon Monthly* editor, present professor of Taiwan Zhong Shan University, Zhang Jinzhong, commented that the emergence of Chen Ruixian, liked a sparkling star, illuminated the local Modernist Literature Movement. Without Chen Ruixian, it was difficult to imagine how local literary canon could evolve and grew from there. In 1969, Chen Ruixian joined the editorial board of *Chao Foon Monthly*, with the intention of integrating the modernist literature group in both Singapore and Malaysia. In 1971, he edited the *Wen Cong Column* together with Wan Yanji, further translated and introduced Modernist Literature from Europe and America. Those four years (i.e.1969-1972) could be regarded as the peak of Chinese Modernist Literature in Singapore and Malaysia, and Chen Ruixian's poems and novels were the two shining stars hanging high up at the summit of the mountain.

The above comment is quite objective and most of the points are justified. However, the statement that "those four years (i.e.1969-1972) could be regarded as the

peak of Chinese Modernist Literature in Singapore and Malaysia” is an exaggeration. Actually, the few years mentioned above was the period *Chao Foon Monthly* editors laid the foundation for Mahua Modernist Literature, and Chen Ruixian concentrated on the translation and introduction of European and American Modernist Literature. This had laid a strong foundation in the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. It is commonly accepted that the basic conditions of a literary movement is that it must have fulfilled at least the 2 conditions. The peak or summit of a literary movement should be: (i) local writers have written many articles and their performance was excellent too; (ii) local writers involved in the writing of literary criticism at a prolific rate. However, even until 1971, the group of Mahua Modernist Literature writers was still very small. The actual literary output was also not up to the standard as expected. It was only until 1974, when the *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets* was published, important and noticeable literary output was produced. It is not convincing to say that Mahua Modernist Literature has reached its summit just merely by referring to the number of translated articles. Posting a different view does not mean to underestimate Chen Ruixian’s contributions and achievements, on the contrary, it sheds even more light on his role as an editor and writer.

Zhang Yongxiu also commented on Chen Ruixian’s role in 1960s. He stressed that issue 202 of *Chao Foon Monthly*, in August 1969 proved to be a watershed year for the literary magazine. The editorial board members at that time were Bai Yao, Yao Tuo, Li Cang and Chen Ruixian. On Chen Ruixian’s contributions to *Chao Foon Monthly*, Bai Yao mentioned that Chen Ruixian was responsible to keep in touch with writers of *Chao Foon Monthly*, asking articles from writers, choosing appropriate articles for publication, and editing articles. There was no fax machine at that time. Thus, just the task of sending letters and magazines to writers all over the country was a

tedious job. Later, Chen Ruixian planned to publish six different special issues, the *Chao Foon Monthly* series and to organize literary seminars. Moved by Chen Ruixian's sincere invitation, writers such as Wan Yanji and Dai Yang sent articles to *Chao Foon Monthly*.

This section commented on Chen Ruixian's contributions to *Chao Foon Monthly*, and also his effort to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature as a volunteer editor. As a dedicated person, he is oblivious to materialistic achievement and his spirit was commendable. He carried with him a sense of mission and an intense enthusiasm to disseminate modernist literature. Because of his effort, Mahua Modernist Literature had gained considerable development.

Actually, Chen Ruixian's contributions to *Chao Foon Monthly* can be regarded as his contributions to the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. Li Youcheng, in his email interview by Fang Guixiang, had made a comprehensive comment on Chen Ruixian's contribution to *Chao Foon Monthly*. In a very short period of time, *Chao Foon Monthly* had planned and published a few special issues like Special Issue on poetry, novels, drama and other literary publications. In that particular literary environment in Singapore and Malaysia at that time, it was not easy at all. These few special issues were widely acclaimed by critics. It is undeniable that Chen Ruixian played a crucial role in the process of disseminating Mahua Literature. He had to write articles, translate western modernist articles, invite writers to contribute articles and designed cover page for *Chao Foon Monthly*. A number of Western Modernist writers and poets were introduced to local readers at that time, in other words, *Chao Foon Monthly* has opened up new opportunities and possibilities to see literature from other countries. *Chao Foon Monthly* was really open-minded at that time. However, they

were meticulous in the selection of good and creative articles. Many young writers, especially those with experimenting spirits, were encouraged and subsequently willing to contribute their articles to *Chao Foon Monthly*. Due to this development, there was an increase of young writers (Fang, 2009, p.378).

Li Youcheng had mentioned about Chen Ruixian's role in *Chao Foon Monthly* and how *Chao Foon Monthly* has influenced the young writers. Due to *Chao Foon Monthly*'s free and open editorial policy, articles with strong experimental spirit were accepted. *Chao Foon Monthly* provided a new platform for this kind of young writers. These writers read articles in *Chao Foon Monthly*, and gradually they were influenced by them. Mahua Modernist Literature was disseminated in such a manner. After Chen Ruixian joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board, it had a clear modernist inclination, and at the same time, he brought in articles from Singapore writers. In his recollection, Bai Yao commented that in 1969, Chen Ruixian and Li Cang, changed their roles from reader to editor. As both of them were modernist writers, they planned for a radically reformed issue, issue 202. Due to Chen Ruixian's Singapore network, the number of articles by Singaporeans appeared prominently in *Chao Foon Monthly* (Bai, 2007, p. 98). Indeed, when Chen Ruixian became one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*, it has changed its long-standing practice of publishing articles mostly from Hong Kong, and instead it chose to publish articles and translated pieces by Malaysia and Singapore writers. This change of editorial policy was innovative and unprecedented. Wong Yunwah is of the opinion that *Chao Foon Monthly* readiness to turn over a new leaf is likened to that of a second wave of revolution in Literature after the May Fourth Movement of China.

There were obvious characteristics found in *Chao Foon Monthly* after the reformed issue of 202. These characteristics could also be regarded as the strategic work carried out to disseminate Mahua Modernist Literature. There are three main characteristics: (i) highlight the importance of translation; (ii) publish the first special literary edition; (iii) plan and publish *Chao Foon Monthly* series. It is our opinion that the three characteristics should be modified to: (i) translate a large quantity of Modernist articles from various countries; (ii) publish special issue of different genres to show different modernist styles; (iii) plan and publish *Chao Foon Monthly* series of literary books.

Below is a discussion of each of the characteristics mentioned above.

(i) Translate a large quantity of Modernist articles from various countries

When Huang Ya was the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, it had been a normal practice that articles published in *Chao Foon Monthly* were mostly from Hong Kong, and local writers' articles were regarded as supplementary. At the same time, modernist poetry from Taiwan and Hong Kong were also published. During Huang Ya's period, very few translated articles were published, this may be due to the reason that translated articles were not as important as articles written in the Chinese language.

Before Chen Ruixian joined *Chao Foon Monthly* as an editor, the number of articles by local writers published in *Chao Foon Monthly* was limited. Perhaps it is due to the fact that Mahua Modernist Literature has only emerged for the past ten years. However, it is also crucial to point out that Mahua literature of that period was still under the control of the Realistic Group of writers. At that time, not many writers

wrote both modernist poetry and modernist prose. They were not familiar with Modernist Literature. Chen Ruixian, as an outstanding modernist writer in Singapore, joined *Chao Foon Monthly* as an editor, and tried very hard to transform *Chao Foon Monthly*. The first step he took was translating and publishing numerous articles from the West, Japan, Indonesia, and even local Malay Modernist literature. This is to serve as a reference for local writers, and to disseminate the concept of Modernist Literature. Chen Ruixian also published some pieces of prose by local writers.

From August 1969 to December 1975, Chen Ruixian had translated 44 articles, which include 28 pieces of translated poetry, 13 pieces of criticism and prose, two interviews and one novel. He had also collaborated with other writers and had translated 15 articles. These translated articles originated from 11 countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, United Kingdom, America, France, Germany, Japan, Spanish, Russia, The Czech Republic and Belgium.

(ii) The Pioneer in Literary Special Issues

When Chen Ruixian joined the editorial board, in addition to translating Modernist Literature pieces from various countries, he tried to enrol local writers to join his translating panels, and his next important mission was to publish different special issues.

Below is the list of special issues.

Table 4.7: List of Special Issues in *Chao Foon Monthly*

| No. | Special Issues | Issue No. | Publishing Date |
|-----|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Poetry Special Issue | 205 | November 1969 |
| 2 | Drama Special Issue | 207 | January, February, 1970 |
| 3 | Novel Special Issue(1) | 211 | June, July, 1970 |
| 4 | Novel Special Issue(2) | 212 | August, 1970 |
| 5 | Malay Literature Special Issue | 220 | April, May, 1971 |
| 6 | Chen Ruixian's Articles Special Issue | 224 | September, 1971 |
| 7 | Special Issue on Movie | 235 | September, 1972 |
| 8 | Special Issue on Literary Criticism | 240 | February, 1973 |
| 9 | Special Issue Prose | 246 | August, 1973 |
| 10 | Special Issue on Classical Literature (1) | 261 | November, 1974 |
| 11 | Special Issue on Classical Literature(2) | 262 | December, 1974 |

Special literary issues include the four genres of literature and literary criticism. Among them, the special issue on novels is the most voluminous. The contents of novels in the special issues were published in two special issues. In addition to special issues of Modernist Literature, *Chao Foon Monthly* also published issues that focused on Malay Literature, Classical Chinese Literature and movie. Actually before the special issues on Malay Literature, *Chao Foon Monthly* had already published some introduction articles on Malay Modernist Articles. When Chen Ruixian first joined *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board, he translated and published seven poems by Mohd Latiff. The aim of publishing Malay Literature was to enhance Mahua writers' understanding of contemporary Malay Literature. Another special issue was that of Classical Chinese Literature. Although this issue has nothing to do with Mahua Modernist Literature, it is intended to broaden the readers' perspective of literary tradition, where Mahua Literature had its roots and link to Chinese Literature in Mainland China. The special issue on Movie introduced movie as a form of art that is closely related to literature. Writers with experiential spirits can thus learn from movie arts to enrich their literary endeavours. For example, Wen Renping, a Malaysian

Modernist poet, also a literary critic, published an important essay entitled “The Application of Movie Techniques in Chinese Modernist Poetry” during this period. Wen’s poems “Raining Scenery” and “Homeland of Water” have successfully employed movie techniques.

Besides that, Chen Ruixian is actually a Singapore writer. Before joining the editorial board of *Chao Foon Monthly*, he was already an outstanding modernist novelist. When he popularized Modernist Literature and wrote modernist articles of different genres, he set an example for the young writers. Consequently, when *Chao Foon Monthly* published Special Issue on Chen Ruixian’s works, its implication was extraordinary. More importantly as Fang Guixiang pointed out, out of all the 11 special issues, the Special Issue on Chen Ruixian, turned out to be the only special issue that focused on a single writer. This showed that Chen Ruixian played a decisive role in Malaysian Modernist literature (Fang, 2009, p.376). The researcher agrees with Fang. In the editorial page of *Chao Foon Monthly* issue 224, Bai Yao commented that:

Special issue on the articles of only one writer, in the history of magazine, I have never come across. Now we did it, and we expect two different responses, one agrees, and the other one objects. However, when we think that one thing worth doing, it is unnecessary to argue too much. The content of this issue has proven that Chen Ruixian is able to write articles in different genres.⁶⁶

As mentioned earlier, Chen Ruixian was already an outstanding modernist writer before joining *Chao Foon Monthly*. The special issue on his articles has three

⁶⁶ The articles publish in this special issue include 3 novels, 4 poems, 2 dramas, 4 allegories, 2 translated articles, note taking, 3 prefaces.

implications, firstly it was a brave attempt; secondly *Chao Foon Monthly* showed a positive assessment of Chen Ruixian's work; thirdly, it served as a good example for Mahua Modernist writers.

(iii) Publishing *Chao Foon Monthly* Series

In *Chao Foon Monthly*, the third strategy employed to disseminate Modernist Literature was the publishing of *Chao Foon Monthly* series, which included the translation of articles and articles by local writers. From 1969 to 1974, during which Chen Ruixian acted as the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, he had systematically published translated works like *The Diary of Nijin Siji* (translated by Chen Ruixian and Hao Xiaofei), and *The Mekong River* (by Latif, translated by Chen Ruixian and Mei Shuzhen); books in Chinese included *Informal Essays* (by Dai Yang), *Force Feed Duck* (by Wan Yanji), *Record of Free Thinking* (by Huang Runyue), and *The Poems of Tan Yuanming: A New Approach* (by Hao Yimin).

It is clear that the books published are not modernist articles. Only two books have direct link with modernist literature. In other words, Chen Ruixian had pioneered the publication of the *Chao Foon Monthly* series, though the series do not have much influence on the movement of Mahua Modernist Movement. At best, the *Chao Foon Monthly* series helped writers to publish their books. Thus, the influence of the *Chao Foon Monthly* series was limited.

4.6.2 As the editor of Literary Column Wen Cong, *Nanyang Xiang Pau*

Chen Ruixian's excellent performance as an editor could be seen since he became the editor of "Literary Column Wen Cong", *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and also as one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*. "Wen Cong" was actually the continuation of the former literary supplement, "The Literature". He started his role as an editor in 25th July 1971. The difference between "Wen Cong" and "The Literature" is that the latter appeared in the Supplement, whereas the former appeared in *Nanyang Weekly Supplement*, and was given to the readers together with *Nanyang Xiang Pau* for free. It consisted of two open pages, one page was edited by Liang Mingguang, and the other page was edited by Chen Ruixian. That was a very special arrangement. Both editors were graduates of Modern Literature. However, they differ in the way they choose articles for publication. Their similarity is that they published a lot of translated articles to introduce Western Modernist Literature. This has undoubtedly proved the crucial need of the writers in Malaysia and Singapore to understand the literary world of the West.

What is the contribution of "Wen Cong" towards the dissemination of Modernist Literature? Below is the comment given by Zhang Jinzhong.

"Wen Cong", appeared in *Nanyang Weekly* which was published separately, and was given to the readers together with *Nanyang Xiang Pau* every Sunday. There were two pages every week, and had published or translated many good articles. The introduction of European and American writers such as Eara Pound, T.S. Eliot, Kafka, Satre and others, helped the readers to understand the development in the western literary better. The number of

literary creations published in “Wen Cong” was very small, however the published works were good pieces (Such as poems by Mei Shuzhen, Piao Beiling). Some of these works were written by Chen Ruixian (Fang, 2009, p.271.).

There were four main points in the above paragraphs. Firstly, “Wen Cong” was a window for Zhang Jinzhong to understand foreign literatures. Secondly, it had explained the misunderstanding of Modernist Literature. Thirdly, it had published many good pieces which were exemplary. These three points are important to the dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature. The fourth point highlighted was that Chen Ruixian was a fantastic translator of poems.

It is not surprising for “Wen Cong” to publish translated articles. More important is that all these articles were translated by Chen Ruixian and Wan Yanji. Thus, Chen Ruixian’s contribution towards Chinese Modernist Literature in Singapore and Malaysia during this period was through the introduction of western literary pieces. As the editor, he had the convenient to access and to publish many translated articles, and this made “Wen Cong” an important base for Modernist Literature to grow and flourish.

From 25th July 1971 (when he started as the editor of *Wen Cong*) to 11th June 1972, Chen Ruixian has published and translated 41 articles. They were a selection of classical literature, literary pieces, book reviews, fables, interview with famous experts, comics, novels, humorous articles and translation of novels. When he published articles, he used many pseudonym, such as Chen Ruixian, Dong Ming, A Meng, Xi Yahan, Gong Shunyu, Ou Yangyun, Qian Long, Luo, Ming, Yu Qing, Zhang De, Shan

Feng, Gu Ren, Yi Si, Xing, Wu Mian, Gong Sunbao, Qiu Ying, A Guda, Xiao Hou, Zhong Shiji, Hong Dazi, Sahgguan Hu, A Ba, Mali Shifu, LuXiuxu and Shi Shi.

In less than a year, Chen Ruixian translated and published 41 articles. These articles were printed important information on western Modernist Literature, and local readers and writers had gathered beneficial information through reading these articles. Chen Ruixian's articles can be regarded as a bridge between readers and western Modernist Literature. His sheer hard work in translation has hastened the dissemination of Modernist Literature in Singapore and Malaysia.

The focus of "Wen Cong" was on book reviews, interviews, translations and introduction of literary articles. The page edited by Liang Mingguang focused on politics, detectives' stories, humour and movies. From the focuses of these two pages, there is a big difference between the artistic taste of the editors as well as the type of information the editors wish to deliver to the readers. However, the multi faces and diversities in content of these two pages appeared side by side thus supplementing and complimenting each other.

4.7 The Influence of Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian

Literati are one of the important media in literary dissemination. Literati include writers, literary critic, and editors (inclusive of editors of literary magazines, literary supplement of newspaper, literary anthology and literary collection). Some of them are writers, as well as literary critics, and some of them are writers and at the same time editors. Most of them behold double identities. This study discovered that from the 1950s to the 1980s, literati had a great contribution and influence on the

dissemination of modernist literature. The three literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping, contributions were very obvious and influential. Their influences were scattered quite equally in the three different periods.

Bai Yao published numerous modernist poems and essays on literary revolution from the end of 1950s to 1960s. In the 1960s, he joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* and continued to disseminate modernist literature as an editor of literary magazine. Chen Ruixian is a modernist writer from Singapore. He published a big number of modernist poems and short stories in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*, and had a great impact on the Realistic Group. In August 1969, he was invited to be one of volunteer editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He fully exhibited his ability as an editor and his influence in modern literature. He had different plans and measures to disseminate modernist literature which had never been used by other editors. He was active from August 1969 to December 1974. Wen Renping encountered with modernism as late as the 1970s. He introduced modernism to his brother Wen Ruian and his friends such as Huang Hunxing, Liao Yanping, Zhou Qingxiao and others. Later in 1973, he formed the Sirius Poetical Society and continued to disseminate modernist literature as a group. Even in the 1990s, Wen Renping still wrote poems and literary criticism and continued to disseminate modernist literature in different ways.

Bai Yao furthered his study in Taiwan in the 1950s, taking History as his major. His discipline enabled him to have a special perspective on literature. He brought back what he learned in Taiwan. He wrote modernist poems and several essays discussing the literary revolution of Chinese Literature in Malaysia. He disseminates modernist

literature through the writing of modernist poetry and essays. Later, he also joined the *Chao Foon Monthly* as a volunteer editor.

In short, Bai Yao's contributions can be summarized as : (i) publishing the first modernist poem and making the possibility of writing the history of Mahua Modernist Literary; (ii) publishing a series of essays on the revolution of literature and had ushered the first and second waves in the literary movement of Mahua Modernist Literature; (iii) as an editor, he tried his best to publish modernist articles written by local writers, laying foundation for Mahua Modernist Literature and preparing eagerly to develop it further. Wen Renping summarises the contribution of Bai Yao in a different way. In an interview (Appendix 1), he said: "The controversy on modernist poetry in *Chao Foon Monthly*, I think the director behind was Bai Yao, he actually used different pennames to participate in both sides of argument. We thanked him for his deliberate plan, because in late 1950s and early 1960s, it was necessary to have someone challenge the aesthetics and techniques of writing poetry. "

It is apparent that the first modernist poem written by Bai Yao had greatly contributed and influenced the dissemination of Mahua Literature, as well as in writing the history of Mahua Literature. The literary history can be written by different people in different time. Whenever there was new materials and methods, the writing style of the history of Mahua Modernist Literature can be influenced. Mahua Modernist Literature has developed for less than a century, thus it is easy to sort out the detail development. However, based on present circumstances, despite any new findings, what methods are used, no one can ignore Bai Yao's poem "Silently Stands along Muar River", since it was the first modernist poem in Mahua literary arena. This is agreed by most of the writers as an important influence of Bai Yao.

Bai Yao's second influence is kicking off the development of Mahua Modernist Literature. Firstly, he published an article entitled "The Revolution of New Poetry" in April issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* in 1959, proposed the five advocates which looked like a kind of declaration. As pointed out by Zhang Jinzhong,

The rise of the first wave of modernism in Singapore and Malaysia started in 1959 when Bai Yao (Ling Leng) promoted "The Revolution of New Poetry" movement (Zhang. 2003, p.52).

This is the beginning of the literary revolution, and in 1964, Bai Yao published a series of article with the main title "Gossip on Modernist Poetry", which has further influenced the development of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Chen Ruixian's can be seen from three perspectives. Firstly he as a modernist writer, secondly he is an editor and thirdly he is a translator. His three fold identities have great influence on the dissemination of modernist literature and finally on the development of Mahua Modernist Literature.

Chen Ruixian had made clear that he is a modernist writer, and has never claimed to be a writer of realistic literature. He is a promoter and practitioner of modernism. He disseminated modernist literature through writing and publishing modernist poems and short stories. He is hardworking in writing and is considered to be the best among the modernist writers in Singapore at that time. When interviewed by Fang Guixiang, he admitted that,

When I was in Overseas Chinese Secondary School, I was indulged in reading literary pieces of the May Fourth Period and Chinese Classical Literature. When I furthered my study in the Department of Chinese Studies, I was exposed extensively to Western literature, and also literature from South-east Asia, Taiwan and Hong Kong modernist literature. After graduating, I worked in the Embassy of France, had the opportunity to read French literature. Due to this background, it was natural for me not to accept the Realistic Group as the only literary group in Singapore. Thus, choosing to be a modernist writer is an intentional decision. Furthermore, the editor of *Nanyang Xiang Pau* literary supplement Liang Mingguang strongly advocating modernist literature, I supported him by writing a large number of modernist articles, and also translating Western modernist literature. Thus, from the point of writing, promoting modernism means promoting writing freely (Fang, 2009, p.139).

So, Chen Ruixian's first influence on Mahua literary arena is publishing a large number of modernist poems and short stories. This action showed the strength and style of modernist literature, and indirectly influenced and changed the literary taste of Singapore readers and writers. In 1962, he published his poem in literary supplement *The Students' Weekly* in *Nanyang Xiang Pau*. Later from April 1964 to September 1966, he managed to publish 24 pieces of modernist poems and a short story which was published continuously in four issues as supplementary. The literary supplement *The Students' Weekly* was an important ground for realistic writers, however, it was not easy for Chen Ruixian to publish so many articles in the supplement.

Later in 1967, Chen started publishing a large number of modernist poems, short stories and translated articles in the literary supplement "Literature" of *Nanyang*

Xiang Pau. The supplement was edited by Liang Mingguang. Two years later, he published his collection of modernist poems *The Giant* and his collection of modernist novels entitled *Mu Lingnu Xiaoshuo Ji* (《牧羚奴小说集》, *Mu Lingnu's Collection of Novels*). The former was published in 1968 and the latter in 1969. With that quantity of publications, no one could outnumber him. His poems possess distinctive modernist characteristics. Firstly, he used symbols in his poems which were influenced by symbolism technique used in France. His poems are also full of images, techniques of association. His short story *Jiwei Shang* (《鸡尾上》, *The Cocktail*) used the technique of Stream of Consciousness, whereas *Cao* (《草》, *The Grass*) merged the elements of absurdism and black humour. His literary pieces in these two genres were obviously modernist inclined, had an obvious impact in literary arena and undoubtedly contributed a new trend of writing.

Secondly, Chen Ruixian's effort in translating Western Modernist literary pieces also influenced many writers. These translated articles were published in *Nanyang Xiang Pau* and *Chao Foon Monthly*. He had used eight pen names such as Huang Yu (黄裕), Li Mingcun (李明村), Xi A Han (西阿汉), Zhi Jie (芝芥), Luo De (罗德), Shuang He (双禾), Li Changpu (李菖蒲) and Shu Haimei (叔海美) to publish. Of course, using different pennames is a necessary measure at that particular period because it is necessary to show that there are many people doing the translating job and not Chen Ruixian himself alone doing it. As Fang Guixiang pointed,

After joining the *Chao Foon Monthly* in August 1969 or issue 202, Chen Ruixian has brought the tradition of editing being involved in translating literary classics from *Nanyang Xiang Pau* to the *Chao Foon Monthly* (Fang, 2009, p.151).

It is true because there was a great change in *Chao Foon Monthly* after Chen Ruixian joined it. He has planned the change and was helped by some writers. The details of translating Western modernist classics have been discussed earlier.

From August 1969 to December 1974, *Chao Foon Monthly* has published altogether 259 pieces of translated articles. Among these articles, Chen Ruixian himself has translated 62 pieces, 23.9% out of the total number. Other translators from Singapore were Zhen Zhen (蓁蓁), 12 pieces; Xiao Fei (小菲), Wan Yanji (完颜藉), ten pieces each; Maike (迈克), six pieces; and Gu Ming (孤鸣), five pieces. Writers from Malaysia who were also involved in translation were Lai Ruihe (赖瑞和), 15 pieces and Mei Shuzhen (梅淑贞), 19 pieces.

4.8 Conclusion

By and large Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian have played a vital role in disseminating Mahua Modern Literature. Apart from writing articles, poems and translating foreign publications, they also worked as editors of certain publications.

To conclude, Bai Yao's contributions include: (i) publishing the first modernist poem in Mahua literary arena; (ii) kicked off the literary revolution by publishing two articles in 1959 entitled "The Revolution of New Poetry", and "The Road of New Poetry" which have been regarded as the starting point of literary revolution in Malaysia. He even proposed a literary manifesto, making a firm standing in promoting modernist literature in Malaysia. He then promoted the second wave of modernism by publishing four articles on modernist poems in 1964. His concentration was from the end of 1950s to early 1960s.

Chen Ruixian's contribution to Mahua Modernist Literature started from August 1969 until December 1974, as one of the editors of *Chao Foon Monthly*. His contributions lied on introducing Western Modernist Literature and translating numerous modernist poems and novels. Wen Renping shared almost the same view with the researcher on the contribution of Chen Ruixian in an interview (Appendix 1). He briefly commented: "He introduced western modernist literature, playing the role of Wang Wenxing in the journal of *Modernist Literature*. His poems and short stories were creative and modernist inclined."

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 5: WEN RENPING AND THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERNIST MAHUA LITERATURE

5.0 Introduction

Three Malaysian writers who have been actively involved and significantly contributed to the dissemination of modernist literature are Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping. Of the three, Bai Yao was the pioneer of Malaysian Chinese modernist literature. He brought the modernist literature into Malaysia and initiated an unprecedented “rebellious” literary movement and played a pivotal role in the history of Malaysian Chinese literature. On the other hand, Chen Ruixian expanded this literary horizon based on the efforts of Bai Yao. Bai Yao was the active editor of *Chao Foon Monthly* from 1959 to 1964⁶⁷, while Chen Ruixian was its honorary editor only for a shorter period, from August 1969 to December 1974. From 1973 onwards, besides the efforts of many individuals, it was the literary societies which were actively promoting and disseminating Mahua modernist literature. In East Malaysia, there is the Constellation Poetical Society and in West Malaysia, Sirius Poetical Society is exemplary. During this period, among the individual writers, Wen Renping was the most active and influential one.

This chapter will focus on an in-depth discussion of the strategies and approaches in the dissemination of Mahua modernist prose and poetry employed by Wen, from the early 1970s to the late 1980s.

⁶⁷ Bai Yao joined the editorial Board of *Chao Foon Monthly* in the later part of 1960s. Beginning Issue 202, there are four members in the editorial board, they are Yao Tuo, Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Li Cang. Yao Tuo was heavily involved in the editorial work of school text books and the editorial work was practically done by Bai, Chen and Li. Chen was basically responsible for the change in *Chao Foon Monthly*'s editorial style beginning that issue. Bai was involved at this stage too; however he was more involved in the writing of the editorial notes “Wind Direction” (风讯) of each issue.

5.1 The Brief Background of Wen Renping

Wen Renping (1944-) was born in Ipoh Perak. He is of Meixian ancestry. Meixian is a district in Guangdong, China. He finished his primary and secondary education in Bidor, a small town in Perak, Malaysia. He later studied at an English school in Ipoh before completing his teachers' training course. In 1966, he began his career as a teacher in Temerloh, Pahang. In 1973, he was transferred to Langkap, Perak and in 1981 transferred again to Pei Yuan National Type Secondary School in Kampar, Perak. Five years later, he was posted to Yu Cai National Type Secondary School in Ipoh. From 1989 till his early retirement in 1993, he was attached to Zun Kong National Type Secondary School in Kuala Lumpur. He has been a columnist of two local Chinese newspapers, "Jingzhong Tinglei" (<静中听雷>, "Listening to Thunder in Silence") of *Sin Chew Daily* (星洲日报) and "Xianzhuang Qingjie" (<线装情结>, "Classics Entanglement") of *Nanyang Xiang Pau*. At present he writes for *China Press*, in the column called "Da Jiangtang" (<大讲堂>, "The Grand Lecture Hall").

5.2 The Literary Works of Wen Renping

5.2.1 A Preview

Wen Renping is a Mahua modernist poet, prose writer and a reviewer of Chinese literature and culture. He belongs to the plain literati and later he even called himself a "Jack-of-all-trades"⁶⁸ (Wen, 1993, p.8) when he crossed the literary

⁶⁸ Wen Renping once said, "it is my feeling that I always tend to do more than what I am supposed to do other than my real and regular occupation, if literature is my real and regular occupation." See Wen Renping. 1993. *Preface*, in Wen Renping's *Wenhua ren de Xinshi* (《文化人的心事》, *Thoughts of a Culture Enthusiast*). Kuala Lumpur: Mentor Publication, p.8.

boundaries and landed on the territories of cultural criticism. In the preface of his book, *Listening to Thunder in Silence*, a collection of Wen's columnist essays, Fu Chengde (傅承得) said,

I am very familiar with Wen Renping in literary arena. He is the master of Mahua modernist literature, the leader of the once powerful and influential Sirius Poetical Society. He is an expert in poetry, prose and literary criticism. His poem "Liufang shi Yizhong Shang" (<流放是一种伤> , "Grief in Exile") has been rendered into a melody by Chen Huichong (Fu, 2004, p.3).

Fu Chengde's comments were befitting, yet only a more thorough examination of Wen's life and works would produce invaluable insights into the influence of Wen Renping. Wen had published five collections of poetry and a shift in his style was reflected in each anthology. As an ambitious writer of prose, his two collections of prose basically displayed his many attempts at creative writing. As an acclaimed and prolific literary critic of Taiwan in the 70s, Wen is considered one of the best newcomers in contemporary literary criticism. His works are diverse and multifaceted, with a brilliance born out of a "wonderfully colourful pen".⁶⁹ He is adamant about an all-round and comprehensive education. The lack of tertiary education has not deterred him from becoming an avid reader. He reads extensively, it is little wonder his columnist pieces touch on multiple disciplines beyond the confines of literary themes and subjects. He once said:

⁶⁹ The term "wonderfully colourful pen" is borrowed from the title of a book edited by Huang Weiliang. It is a collection of critical essays on Yu Guangzhong's works.

I am not an all-rounder, yet I am determined and aspired to cross over into the many other fields of interests (Wen, 1993, p.8).

His few columns were characteristically varied and diverse in content. In short, his poems, prose, literary criticism and cultural commentary, displayed either technical creativity, innovative knowledge or the views from a unique perspective, and they also always create the feelings of breathing fresh air.

As a Mahua writer of the early stage, Wen belonged to the 'group of the 40s' (四字辈), writers born between 1940 and 1949. He started his career as a writer in his early 20s. He was the editor of many collections of literary works. His passion for literature has never faded. Even when he stops writing occasionally, he is still inexorably linked to his interest. As mentioned earlier, his poetical and prose skills are varied and have very unique styles of their own. It is regrettable that commentaries on his works are few.⁷⁰ Today, he has published five collections of poetry⁷¹, two collections of prose⁷², five collections of critical essays⁷³, two collections of columnist pieces.⁷⁴ He was the editor of many anthologies of poetry and literature.⁷⁵ His newly

⁷⁰ So far, only five critics have discussed Wen's poems. They are Yang Baihe (杨百合), Zhang Cuo (张错), Li Ruiteng, He Naijian (何乃健) and Xie Chuancheng while critics who have touched on Wen's prose are Yang Shengqiao (杨升桥), Lai Ruihe (赖瑞和), Zhang Shulin and Xie Chuancheng. The most comprehensive study on his was published by Xie Chuancheng in 2014. The book entitled *Malaixiya Tianlanxing Shishe Chuangbanren Wen Renping Zuopin Yanjiu* (《马来西亚天狼星诗社创办人温任平作品研究》), *The Founder of Sirius Poetical Society Malaysia: A Critical Study of his Literary Works*.

⁷¹ The five collections of poetry are: *String-less Harp*, Malaysia: Camel publication, 1970; *Grief in Exile*, Malaysia: Sirius Publication, 1978; *The God of All Living Creatures*, Malaysia: Sirius Publication, 1979; *Umbrella Territory*, Kuala Lumpur: Qianqiu Enterprise, 2000; and *Thinking Hats*, Kuala Lumpur: Mentor Publication, 2007.

⁷² The two collections of prose are: *The Stormy Road*, Malaysia: Camel Publication, 1970 and *Moon with Yellow Skin*, Taipei: Young Lion Cultural Publication, 1977.

⁷³ These five collections of critical essays are. (1) *Exquisite Tripod*, Tainan: Long River Publication, 1978; (2) *Mundane Affairs on Earth*, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, 1978; (3) *Literary Observations*, Kuala Lumpur: Sirius Publication, 1980; (4) *Literature, Education, Culture*, Teluk Intan: Sirius Publication, 1986; and (5) *Segmental Observation of Malaysia Chinese Literature*. Taiwan: Showwe Information Co. Ltd., 2014.

⁷⁴ The two collections of columnist essays are: *Thoughts of a Culture Enthusiast*, Kuala Lumpur: Mentor Publication, 1999 and *Listening to Thunder in Silence*, Kuala Lumpur: Mentor Publication, 2004.

published collection of literary criticism includes articles such as *Sirius Poetical Society and the Mahua Modernist Movement* (1997), *The Uniqueness of Mahua Literature: A Dialogue with Bo Yang* (1997), *On the Construction of Literary Classics: A Dialogue with Zhang Jinzhong* (1997), *Looking for Masterpieces: A Critical Study on the Works of Sirius Poetical Society* (1997), *The First Modernist Poem; A Dialogue with Chen Yingde, the Development of Mahua Literature* (2001), *The Development of Malaysian Literature* (2001), *On Literary Renaissance* (2002), *Of Fantasy and Imagination: Nanyang Writings* (2003), *The Encounter between Mahua Literature and An Unfamiliar Poetics* (2003), *The Associations of Confused Theories and Literature* (2003), *Fragmented Criticism: Of Micro-Macro Criticism* (2003), *The Isms of Fei Fei and the The Art of Going to the Moon* (2003), *Language at the Razor-edged: The Preface by Zhang Jingyun on An Anthology of Poetry* (2003), *Cultural Poetics and Language Consciousness* (2003), *Alternative Writing and the Current Chinese Literature: Literary Production and Consumer Trends, Haizi the Poet: Cultural Tragic Hero* (2004), *A Discussion on Literary Classics: Birds and Others : A Collection of Poems from 1966 to 1969 by Li Youcheng; Uncovering the Three Faces of You Chuan, Poems in Pensive Moods: A Critical Appreciation of Yan Quan Ji; On the Mahua Poetical Arena of 1981 to 1988: A Dialogue with Shen Junting on the Malaysian Chinese Poetical Arena of 1981 -1988* (2004), *The Trash in the Hall of Literature* (2004), *The Similarities of the Clan in Never Mention Again* (2004), *Further Discussions on Never Mention Again* (2004), *Writing in False-Teeth Mode* (2005), and *Poetry is an Open Secret* (2006).

⁷⁵ These five collections are: (1) *A Collection of Malaysian Poems*, Bidor: Sirius Publication, 1974; (2) *Malaysian Chinese Literature*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Literary House, 1974; (3) *Looking Back in Anger- A Commemorative Issue for the 21st Anniversary of Malaysian Chinese Literary Movement*, Teluk Intan: Sirius Publication, 1980; (4) *A Collection of Contemporary Malaysian Chinese Literature* (Part A: Prose), Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, 1985; and (5) *A Collection of Contemporary Malaysian Chinese Literature* (Part B: Novels and Short Stories), Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, 1985.

In the Mahua literary arena, Wen is a controversial figure. He formed the Sirius Poetical Society whose mission was to promote modernist literature. He soon became the subject of attack by the Realistic Group which disliked him. Even some modernist writers did not agree with his ideas and approaches. Wen seemed to be unable to please both literary camps and became the focus of a literary tug-of-war. However, he persisted with his ideals. He produced literary works which demonstrated the inner strength of modernist literature. His literary criticism played the role of nurturing and promoting modernist literature. To promote Mahua modernist literature, he feverishly penned numerous critical essays, actively groomed young writers and organized literary activities to disseminate modernist literature. The set-up of the Sirius Poetical Society merged the forces of the modernists to face the criticisms. Whenever there was a literary debate, he would rebuke literary fallacies in support of modernist literature. He never yielded to the opposite forces or retreated to Taiwan to pursue his career.⁷⁶

Wen showed his loyalty to Malaysia, his motherland and the small literary circle called the Mahua Literary Arena. It is noteworthy here that Wen Renping was the keeper of Mahua literary arena during the years of turbulence.

The section below will discuss the poems, prose, literary and cultural criticism of Wen Renping and his efforts in promoting the Mahua modernist literature.

⁷⁶ Many Malaysian Chinese writers furthered their studies in Taiwan in the 60s, for instance, Wang Runhua, Dan Ying, Li Youcheng, Lin Lu, Chen Huihua, Ye Mansha, Huang Huaiyun, Bi Luo and others.

5.2.2 From Non-Partisan Individual to Modernist Literature Leader

When Wen Renping began writing poetry in the 60s, he called himself as “the prodigal son of poetry” (诗的浪子). At that time, he still had not come into close contact with modernism; he considered himself as a non-partisan member of the literati. Wen said,

If someone were to ask to which camp my poems belong to, I would tell them that my poems are not affiliated with any poetical organization or group. It is purely by chance that I have developed an interest with new poems. In my teenage days, I borrowed and read the following books from a friend, *Yanyu* (《燕语》, *Whispers of the Swallows*), and *Gaoyuan de Muling* (《高原的牧铃》, *Shepherd Bells of the Plateau*) by Li Kuang (力匡), I instantly fell in love with the novelty of such writing approach (Wen, 1970, p.3).

The above confession clearly suggests that Wen was totally out of touch with modernist literature. Wen liked such approaches which inspires him to write poetry. Later he came across the poems of Ai Qing (艾青), Xu Zhimo (徐志摩), Wen Yiduo (闻一多), Zang Kejia (臧克家) and other modernist poets from Mainland China. He was also inspired by the poems of Mahua poets such as Zhong Qi (钟祺), Zhou Can (周粲), Hui Shi (慧适) and You Cao (忧草). Hence Wen’s works of the early stage lacked the experimental spirit and the shades of romantic colours that permeate his works at a later stage. Though he used similes in his poems, his language on the whole was plain and straightforward. The theme of the poem “Wuxian Qin” (<无弦琴>, “String-less

Harp”) used metaphor and the last line of the poem conveys its major message, while other lines are rather prosaically straightforward.

string-less harp, dusty and old
a silent, sorrowful song
broken memories, ah, the rounded face of a girl

which boy will not take great delight in looking at her
listen, comes again the singing of Homeward Bound
a deep sigh and a depression
ah, my song is sorrow and sad
my heart is the string-less harp
(Wen, 1970, p.33)

In the last line of the poem, the original object is “*my heart*” while “*the string-less harp*” compares the object, using a concrete object to describe the heart. The abstract “heart” is used in “Cuowu” (<错误>, “A Mistake”) by Zheng Chouyu (郑愁予). Zheng uses a few comparisons to describe the “heart”: your heart is like a little lonely town / your heart is like the green pebble street at dusk / your heart is like the tiny casement window tightly shut (Tang Qi, 1990, p.700). Words such as “town”, “street” and “casement window” are concrete objects employed by the poet to describe the abstract “heart”, thus enabling the readers to have a good grasp of its textural subtleties. Similarly, in the poem “Fengling” (<风铃>, “Wind Chime”), Yu Guangzhong used “the wind chime hanging on the eaves of the seven-story tower” to vividly describe “my heart”. Unlike Yu and Zheng, no attribute is used to describe the comparing object in Wen’s poem. To explore the depth of Wen’s “heart”, readers have

to look for more associations and need to go beyond the shape of the “string-less harp” and its sound.

There are 52 poems in *String-less Harp*. The poems were written from 1961 to 1969, they were basically works of the 60s. There are four sections, each comprises 13 poems. The major content centres on the experiences and feelings of the poet’s daily life. Some poems have a melancholic atmosphere. However, the poet adamantly denies that he is a sentimentalist who is “pretentiously fishing for sympathy” (Wen, 1970, p.3). In the “Preface” to this collection, Wen revealed his objective that the writing of poems was “to express the secrets which were rooted deeply in his heart” (Wen, 1970, p.3). It is common to express feelings and emotions through poems. However, an emotional outburst, more often than not, is a pretentious behaviour that is unlikely to touch the readers. On the quality of this poetical anthology, critics see it as a poetical exercise with little surprises. Aware of his own shortcomings, Wen says,

...my published poems from 1969 to 1971 are many but most of them are trash (Wen, 1978, p.159).

He is talking about works of a later stage, yet it is perhaps more suitable to use it to describe his works at the time of the writing of *String-less Harp*.

After reading the poems of Tan Zihao (覃子豪) and others such as Yu Guangzhong, Ya Xuan (痲弦), Ye Shan (叶珊), Wen’s style of poetry writing began to change.⁷⁷ In the later part of the 60s, under the influence of some friends, he read the

⁷⁷ Taiwan modern poets had influences on Mahua poets, especially Yu Guangzhong, who had great influenced on Wen Renping, Chen Guide and Xie Chuancheng. As for the influence of Yu on to Wen, please refer to the article written by Lee Soo Chee (2013). “Cong Taiwan de Yu Guangzhong dao Malaixiya bendi de Yu Guangzhong---Yu Guangzhong de Wenxue Guandian yu Pinglun dui

poems of Robert Burns, Longfellow, and T.S. Eliot, and attempted to translate poems of John Keats, William Wordsworth and other romantic poets. Perhaps the reading and translating of western poems were Wen Renping's subtle ways of influencing modernist literary indoctrination. The Realistic Group was the most prominent literary group of Mahua literary arena in the 60s. Although modernist literature had already landed in the Mahua literary arena in the 50s and continually developed into the 60s, yet not many writers were involved and some modernist poets and writers refused to be labelled as being modernist. For this reason, modernism failed to exert much influence at that time. Wen, who had been deeply immersed in modernism was dissatisfied with Mahua poems of that time and believed that:

The conservative tendency of Mahua poems is reflected through its poetical system, techniques, and language expressions, and is similar to the poems of the May Fourth Movement. They have contributed little to make meaningful changes. The poetical structure is mostly made up of stanzas of four to five lines of "dried bean curd" or sonnets of 14 rhymed lines. These metrical poems can only be considered as replicas of works by Liu Dabai, Wen Yiduo and Zhu Xiang. The more lively works may resemble poems by Xu Zhimo or He Qifang. Technically, these poems have not improved much from the poems of the May Fourth Era, they are just plain simple and monotonous. The use of language lacks flexibility, variation and experimental spirit. The overall performance of the Malaysian poetical arena

Wen Renping zhi Yingxiang Yanjiu" (<从台湾的余光中到马来西亚“本地的余光中”——余光中的文学观点与评论对温任平之影响研究>, "An Influence Study of Yu Kwang Chung's Literary Criticism On Malaysian Writer Wen Ren Ping") in Wang Xiaochu, Zhu Wenbin (ed.) "Shijie Huawen Wenxue Yanjiu" (《世界华文文学研究, "World Chinese Literature Studies"). Anhui: Anhui Publisher, China, November, pp.181-192.

of the 50s gives the impression that they possess little quality and are in fact 'prose written in the form of a poem' (Wen, 1978, p.159).

Wen was resentful of such works and suggested that revisions and improvements needed to be made. That was a period of modernist awakening for Wen, because he was yet to become a leader of the modernist group in Mahua literary arena.

In the anthology of poems, "Wandao" (<晚祷>, "The Evening Prayers") turned out to be the turning point for Wen's creativity. Below is the full poem:

Stately yet solemn, the chapel bells toll
Murmured evening prayers, like whispers below the starry night
Do not meditate on the loneliness of the night
The full moon shines, a peaceful and wonderful inspiration
In the evening prayers, all human beings fall asleep soundly
The buzzing of the insects pierce through the tranquillity of the night
The prayers fade into silence
As the dew glisters in the dim light of dawn
The night is concealed, last night
The noisy night is finally gone
This world is still filled with cheer and glory
The evening prayer of the other night was to pay homage to the passing of a
nightmare (Wen, 1970, p.48)

This poem was completed in August 1963 and published in the May issue of *Chao Foon Monthly* of 1967. The poetical language is plain and stable with little

surprises. The simile used in the second line of the first stanza is not particularly good either. Wen himself once acknowledged that “the poem’s historical merit far outweighs its literary significance” (Wen, 1978, p.75). Wen was very much aware of his style of writing, he was also conscious of the shift in his style. “The Evening Prayers” is undoubtedly the beginning of that shift. This modernist tendency was displayed in his later works which were collected in his two anthologies of poems, which entitled *Grief in Exile* and *The God of All Living Creatures* (Wen, 1979).

Grief in Exile was published on the national day of 1978.⁷⁸ It was printed in Taipei. There are 52 poems grouped into three parts. The first, second and third part has 16, 15 and 21 poems respectively. The reader will have no difficulty sensing the poet’s incessant attempts to break the confines of poetical techniques. “Yuenan Meigui” (<越南玫瑰>, “Vietnam Rose”) which appears in Part One is about the lives of prostitutes. It has a bold theme. Instead of the usual elegant and graceful poetical language, it focuses on the realistic vocabulary of the prostitutes. Below is the second stanza of the poem:

The squeezes look somewhat like being pampered by a mother

Dad’s shadow is a bed sheet being kicked out of bed

That damned man is made of water

Her cleavage is filled with his moist saliva

That flows into a sticky canal

(Wen, 1978, p.23-24)

⁷⁸ The national Day of Malaysia falls on the 31st of August.

“Damned” is a typical vulgar term or pseudonym daily used to refer the prostitutes, and such kind of words will not destroy the beauty of the poem if they are used appropriately in the poem. Wen does not believe that there is a necessity for the so-called healthy and correct stuff in literary works. Ugliness in real life can be transcended into a piece of beautiful art through artistic transformation. “Vietnam Rose” touches on the ugliness of reality and yet expresses a very different kind of esthetical beauty. In a letter to Wen, a Malaysian Chinese poet comments that beauty is “built from ugliness.”

In the 16 poems of Part One, I, the researcher would like to discuss two poems entitled “Zichuan Jiyi” (< 纸船记忆 >, “Memory of Paper Boats”) and “Diyi Jiaoxiangshi” (< 第一交响诗 >, “The First Symphonic Poem”). The first poem uses the structure of a short story and is basically a narrative poem. The first and second stanza of “Memory of Paper Boats” reveals the monologue of the character, while the third stanza focuses on his actions:

He folded many paper boats nonstop

Large, medium and small

Gently placed on a fast-moving water

Clustering then rotating in a circular motion

And they sank as drops of rain fell upon them

Only then he went to answer a call

After the long and sad scream of the phone in the hall (Wen, 1978, p.35-36)

The following actions move in succession: As the telephone rings, the protagonist in the poem refuses to answer it; instead he folds without stopping numerous paper boats of all sizes. Then he places them on moving water and watches the consequences. Finally, he answers the call “after the long and sad scream of the phone”. These few lines are rather dramatic, such motions are no longer purely motions, and they carry symbolic significance. As can be seen from the title of the poem, “Memory of Paper Boats”, the main substance of the poem has something to do with memory and the “telephone” is the symbol of modern life. Looking at it from this perspective, the motion of folding paper boats by the protagonist in the poem symbolizes his happy childhood and teenage days. His indulgence in the past was the main reason why he refuses to answer the call that has been ringing for a long time. Such psychological resistance mirrors his tired and weariness of modern living and interpersonal relations.

There are three stanzas in this poem, the first touches on childhood; the second reflects teenage days while the third focuses on the life after marriage. The storyline moves in sequence in the three stanzas, the plot progresses according to the different stages of the protagonist’s life. Finally the reader will come to an understanding of why the protagonist is fatigued and weary of modern life.

“The First Symphonic Poem”, another poem from Part One, reveals the obvious transformation of Wen’s poetic technical skills. “Symphonic poem” is actually one of the genres of music composing. Wen uses “The First Symphonic Poem” as his title, unveiling his attempt to employ musical structures to write this poem. Such attempts would call to remind us of “The Four Quartets”, a poem written by the great poet T. S. Eliot of the 20th century, who used musical structure in his poem. These two poets’

experimental attempts to use different musical structures in their poems are self-evident.

Classical music has a first and second theme. Generally, if the first is of a symphonic allegro, the second would be a presto. Such arrangements help to create emotional contrast, a fast-paced tone that is lively and a slow-paced tone that is lyrical and gentle. It would be easier to read the singular lines of the poem first, then the plural lines. “You”, the second personal pronoun is the character that appears in the singular lines:

You are the one in search of a mirror
You are the keeper at the exit of the spirit of humanity
You are lost in an eternal watch
You strum a piece of Han poetical songs with your thin hands
You sing a song that few would comprehend
You grab a broken knife, grinding wildly
You curse as you are cutting it off
You are your own jury, you are a prisoner
So your cry has no echo
Oh, you are the one in search of a mirror
Can your gentle and elegant words
Stronger than the gambler who has a bet on the railroad
(Wen, 1978, p.41-46)

This poem is a quest for personal ideals, and it can be seen that the “you” has gone through a lot of hardships. However, the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, ten and

twelve stanzas present a very different view of the realistic world which is socialistic and of the human race. For instance, the second stanza writes about people talking about problems of instalments of loans and the level of flavour of their coffee in a newly opened restaurant. The fourth stanza touches on the lives of the prostitutes; the sixth stanza focuses on the scenario of the protagonist of a pornography street on the eve of a shutdown; the eighth stanza centres on the various issues of urban development; the last or the tenth stanza, highlights some living philosophies and the helplessness of life.

Thus the other stanzas convey a very different world view from that of the stanzas mentioned above. They are like two themes intertwined with each other from a musical score of the philharmonic orchestra. Such a sharp dramatic contrast further enhances the sense of alienation of the two differing worlds. In short, from the fourth to the seventh stanza, through the attempt to intertwine the first and second theme of the classical score, the poet has successfully contrasted two different kinds of emotions and vividly expressed the external worldliness and the internal realm of spirituality. Placing these two conflicting worlds in the unique musical structure, they clash over and over again, hence creating an obvious poetical drama with sharp opposing forces.

The 15 poems in Part Two reveal Wen's multiple poetical skills. "Shijian" (<事件>, "An Incident") uses plain and simple language to portray the theme of generation gap. The poet discards imageries and highlights the external actions of the characters to reflect their inner thoughts and feelings. The plot begins with the return of the narrator from the street. Initially he refuses to answer the questions of his father. He sits down sipping tea. A little while later (seven lines are spaced between the father's questions and the narrator's answers), the narrator responds with a faint and vague voice before

he leaves for the streets again. The poem is like a play, the poet exposes the problems of the two generations through their gestures and actions. With the clues provided in the lines, a reader would be able to experience the sentiment of indifference and estrangement between the two generations. The sparing employment of the stage-skills does produce dramatic effects. This experiment has inspired Wen to boldly apply movie-making techniques in poems such “Jiachong yu Nvren” (<甲虫与女人>, “Beetle and Woman”), “Fengjing” (<风景>, “The Scenery”) and “Bianqian” (<变迁>, “Transition”).

“Beetle and Woman” is essentially a dramatic poem. It has four scenes. The time is from 7.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. At 7.00 p.m., the scene is at location A; at 9.00 p.m., the scene is at location B; at 11.00 p.m., there are two locations, one at location C, and the other at location A; the final scene goes back to the first location which is the beginning and ending part of the story. Applying theatrical techniques to write poems in an experimental mode is obviously one of Wen’s major attempts. “The scenery” continues with this method of merging imagery with the techniques of montage in film-making. Every stanza is in itself an image. The poet arranges them in an order that reflects and enhances each other, creating a cinematic effect. “Transition” which appears as the last poem in Part Two is structurally similar to “The Scenery”. However, it has added a camera shot that suspends and freezes all motions. Such a shot appears in stanza four:

The chorus abruptly stops

The wave of the conductor’s hand freezes

(Wen, 1978, p.96)

This is the so-called technique of “suspension of motion” of movie-making. The poem begins with the waving of the conductor’s hand; the chorus is in progress, then an abrupt cessation, the conductor’s waving hand freezes in the air. The poet does not explain why the conductor’s hand freezes or why the chorus stops. This leaves a lot to the readers’ imagination. In the poem, the poet captures the transient and unpredictable factors and retains the most dramatic moment. This “suspension of motion” brings a sudden standstill which may seem contradictory to the theme of “change”, yet it is precisely this sudden standstill of the performance that reflects the state of change. There are six stanzas in the poem, the first five focuses on the changes of men, events and objects. The last stanza is rather different:

The river flows gently

The calling of the gibbons still fills the mountain

(Wen, 1978, p.96)

These two lines express the unchangeable flowing waters and the calling of the gibbons; they are a strong contrast with the first five stanzas which focus on changes. “Following water” and “calling of the gibbons” are part and parcel of nature, thus the imagery contrast is directed at the changes in human beings and the eternality of nature. The reversal in the last stanza highlights the contrast more conspicuously.

There are 21 poems in Part Three. Four of the poems reveal the multiple and varied techniques of the poet. Two poems will be discussed below. There are 15 lines in “Jia” (<嫁>, “To Marry”), the first and the last lines have similar morphological structures and each line has six words. The first line is “long eyelashes raise slightly” while the last line is “long eyelashes fold gently”, and morphologically both lines are

the subjects of the structure. The third and the fourth word (character) in both lines, “weiwei” and “qingqing”, are duplications with different arrangements; the first line from top to bottom, while the last line from midway to bottom. The 13 lines between the first and the last line reveal the consciousness and spiritual world of the character of the poem. In short this technique is the flow of consciousness used by modernist novelists. “Suishou Nian lai de yishoushi” (<随手拈来的一首诗>, “A Poem Randomly Picked”) is a poem with a prose-like structure, it can be termed as the segmented or prosaic poem. Wen says,

There is no necessity to stick to the format of having less than 20 words in a line; using such a method to decide whether it can be considered as poetry or otherwise has become so common that we are not aware of the practice (Wen, 1970, p.165).

This statement exposes the reality in the Mahua literary circle. Wen does not agree nor disagree to such a scenario, he thus wrote the above poem “A Poem Randomly Picked” as a sign of protest.

From 1976 to 1978, Wen did not produce much and keeping a low profile from 1977 to 1978. Wen’s poetical career has entered a new phase with a new breakthrough in his style. The works in his new anthology of poems, *The God of All Living Creatures*, indicates that Wen’s past attachment with his personal feelings and age has vanished. As a middle-aged man, he has matured emotionally and mentally. He was concerned about the events that happened in his surroundings; he was shocked by the many social phenomena. So, he had to artistically transform many of the raw stuffs of real life with meticulous care. He was no longer interested in delving into his personal

sentiments; he wanted to deal with his realistic living experiences and criticism of life and he aspired to fulfil his noble mission of promoting modernist literature for the rest of his life.

The God of All Living Creatures is divided into two sections. Section One entitled “Boat and Umbrella” has a collection of 12 poems; Section Two entitled “River Wishes” consists of 13 poems; this anthology has a total of 25 poems.

Shanxing Didai (《伞形地带》, *Umbrella Territory*) (2004) was Wen Renping’s fourth anthology of poems which consists of 40 poems. This is a bilingual anthology of poems; the Malay translation products of earlier period and the poems he produced during the 70s had been collected in *Grief in Exile* and *The God of All Living Creatures*, while works from 80s and 90s were collected in Section Two and Three of this anthology.

Wen’s works of the 80s such as “Wenxue” (<文学>, “Literature”), “Shehuixue” (<社会学>, “Sociology”), and “Renleixue” (<人类学>, “Anthropology”) were actually three pieces from a poetic serial, the other two pieces were “Aesthetics” and “Geology”. The language used in this group of poems is cheerful and light, the use of symbolism has enhanced their meaning. These poems thus deserve to be analysed further. In addition, the last two poems written during 80s, “Yu Taoqian Lun Tianyuan” (<与陶潜论田园>, “A Dialogue with Tao Qian on the Countryside”) and “Yu Ruanji Tan Sixu” (<与阮籍谈思绪>, “A Dialogue with Ruan Ji on Contemplation”) are from the serial “Cong Guren You, Bing Shu Kuailei” (<从古人游, 并抒块垒>, “Travel with the Ancients to Express our Yearnings”). There are six

pieces in this serial of poems, they are “Yu Han Yu Lun Dao” (<与韩愈论道>, “A Dialogue with HanYu on Dao”), “Yu Liang Qichao Lun Qunzhi” (<与梁启超谈群治>, “A Dialogue with Liang Qichao on Group Treatment”), “Yu Tan Sitong Lun Chongjue” (<与谭嗣同论冲决>,” A Dialogue with Tan Sitong on Conflicts”), “Yu Dadao Wang Wu Tan Daoyi” (<与大刀王五谈刀艺>,”A Dialogue with Broadsword Wang Wu on the Art of Broadsword”), “Yu Taoqian Lun Tianyuan” (<与陶潜论田园>, “A Dialogue with Tao Qian on the Countryside” and “Yu Ruanji Tan Sixu” (<与阮籍谈思绪>, “A Dialogue with Ruan Ji on Contemplation”). The style of the little poems in this serial of poems is different from each other, and each one is commendable in its own way. “A Dialogue with Tao Qian on the Countryside” begins with four declarative sentences and follows by the techniques of montage; one sentence equals to one shot, which is a combination of the poet’s thoughts and feelings. The sixth and seven lines are antithesis couplets, though there are a few structurally neat lines, there is a variation among sentence patterns and structures. They set the tone for the line “you are finally lying face upward into a towering mountain.”

“A Dialogue with Ruan Ji on Contemplation” uses a surrealistic technique to create an imagery of action. Readers are able to grasp the meaning of the poem through the imagery of action in the line “the golden leaves immersed themselves between the lines.” “A Dialogue with HanYu on Dao” is a Zen poem. It attempts to show us how to achieve enlightenment suddenly through a smiling Jia Ye holding a flower in his hand. The poet also teases Han Yu the great literary master indirectly. Repetition is employed in the last three poems. The poet uses similar sentence patterns and syntax to create a linguistic force, which enhances the expressiveness of its language.

The poem “Tinghai” (<听海>, “Listen to the Sea”) in *Umbrella Territory* is worth a closer examination. The poem consists of 14 lines:

Listen to the sea rather than to confront the sea
Listen to the pulse of nature as it rises and falls
Rises and falls are the undulating waves come rolling
Rolling without a trace is the barge of time
The barge carries so much hope and grief
Grief turns to tears looking for a shelter at the horizon
The horizon is where the sun sets and the moon ascends at the cape
The cape is lighting up a sea of poignancy
The poignancy is dripping like a drizzle
The drizzle patters like the breathing of the sea
The breathing of the sea stretches into a piece of history
History rises and falls like an ocean
Creeping up on you and let me listen to you
(Wen, 2000, p.97)

This poem is delightful, meaningful and has a charming and relaxed atmosphere. Its internal content and external structure merge seamlessly. The “sea” is the central imagery of the poem. It expresses a philosophical thought on time, life and the universe. The poet seeks “the pulse of nature as it rises and falls” and at the same time explores the mysteries of life. In the process, the poet does not indulge himself in fantasy, history is his subject, and he is more concerned with the larger life than the individual little self. This is the true spirit of modernism.

The continuation of life, the rise and fall of history, “the undulating waves come rolling”, are continuous and unbreakable things. The poet has used anadiplosis or reduplication and sentence patterns to mimic the rolling waves, which have really caught the readers’ imagination.

Wen wrote only few poems during the 90s, nevertheless he did produce many poems in 1998. The first three years into the new millennium, Wen turned into a prolific poet, he wrote about 70 poems, most of which were small poems which comprise not more than 20 lines. His themes are varied; techniques lively, the poems are less experimental and more natural and carefree. The works of this period are collected in *Thinking Hats*, which is his latest anthology of poems.

5.3 Wen Renping and the Dissemination of Mahua Modernist Poetry

Malaysian scholars who have been actively involved and who have immensely contributed to the dissemination of Mahua modernist literature at the early stage were Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian. Besides these two, the third person is Wen Renping, who is the focus of discussion in this chapter. In the early 70s, Wen was exposed to modernist literature, soon he began writing modernist poems and at the same time he actively promoted modernist literature.

This section will make an in-depth study from a few perspectives to describe and analyse the three strategies adopted by Wen, from the early 70s to the late 80s, to disseminate Mahua modernist literature.

5.3.1 Theoretical Construction: Writing of Literary Criticism and Promoting Concepts and Ideals of Modernist Literature

Wen Renping's ideal of modernist literature dissemination can be seen explicitly from his modernist poetry and modernist prose. He has not done much to disseminate modernist novels. Theoretical construction and the practice of applying new criticism to interpret modernist poems and prose are his emphasis in the process of dissemination.

Mahua poems of the early stage, to Wen Renping, were just replicas of Liu Dabai (刘大白), Wen Yiduo and Zhu Xiang (朱湘). The more lively products resembled closely with the poems of Xu Zhimo and He Qifang, particularly Xu's poems. Xu Zhimo has been a scholar in the West and was influenced by Western literature. The new language used in his poems is a blended language. However, Mahua poets of the early stage were incapable of doing that. Technically, Mahua poems of the early stage were just plain, monotonous and straight forward. Their standard was at the level of the May Fourth Era, simple and plain. Linguistically, the language lacked of flexibility and variation. The overall impression is that, the Mahua poems of the early stage were "prosaic poems" which are ordinary, common place with little esthetical quality.

In his efforts to disseminate modernist poetry, Wen, on one hand would compile theories of modernist poetry, and on the other hand would focus on a selected piece of work, applying new criticism to produce a piece of in-depth analysis. This approach raised the level of poetical appreciation of the readers and provided new learning models. Whenever poetical theories were introduced, Wen would always

supplement such theories with relevant examples. This had been a very effective approach of dissemination.

Literary criticism and theoretical writing of modernist literature did not enjoy a robust development in the 70s in Taiwan, let alone in the Mahua literary arena, yet its significance was undeniable. Without theoretical guidance, literary criticism would be likened to a building without a foundation. Chen Huihua (陈慧桦) says that, literary criticism should be written based on theoretical principles. It is only useful when the comprehensive theories have been applied. It is dependent on a dialectical process rather than a master-slave relationship. John Crowe Ransom, a staunch member of the New Criticism, discusses the relationship between criticism and theory in his book *Shijie de Quti* (《世界的躯体》, *The World's Body*), that a good critic does not stop at the study of poetry; he has to study poetics too. If he thinks that he must abandon his preference for theory strictly, then a good critic is perhaps just a good little critic. Theoretical expectation decides criticism, even if it is contrary to normal practices, nothing less. It is unrealistic to have a critic who is oblivious of theoretical existence.

Wen Renping's greatest contribution to the theory of poetry is his promotion of poetic film criticism. He used the theories and techniques of movie-making in the criticism of modernist poetry. His critical essay, "Dianying Jiqiao zai Zhongguo Xiandaiishi de Yunyong" (<电影技巧在中国现代诗的运用>, "The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry"), had become a very significant piece of writing on the theories of modernist poetry. Meng Fan (孟樊) has commented on Wen's film poetics that, Wen's "The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry", was the first in the field of criticism. He is then followed by Luo Qing's (罗青) "Luying Shixue de Lilun Jichu" (<录影诗学的

理论基础>, “Theoretical basis of Video Poetics”), and Lin Yaode’s (林耀德) “Qianwei Haiyu de Qijian: Youguan Luo Qing jiqi Luying Shixue” (<前卫海域的旗舰: 有关罗青及其电影诗学>, “The Flagship of Avant-Garde: On Luo Qing’s Theoretical basis of Video Poetics and Others”). In “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry”, Wen made an analysis of Tu Fu and Li Bai’s works based on the shooting techniques of movie-making. He then used examples of poems such as “Shamo Liu Bianzou” (<沙漠六变奏>, “Six Variations on the Desert”) by Lai Ruihe (赖瑞和), a Mahua poet; “Shihuangzhe” (<拾荒者>, “The Scavenger”) by Wen Kai (文凯), a Singapore poet; “Guiyang Jie Er Duan” (<贵阳街二段>, “The Second Part of Guiyang Street”) by Lin Huanzhang (林焕章) and “Sange Tanzi” (<三个罇子>, “Three Jugs”) by Guan Guan (管管), both poets from Taiwan, to illustrate the theory.

Wen discovered that the movie-making techniques such as close-ups, fade-in, fade-out, dissolving, overlaps, slow motion, freeze motion and transpositions were used by modernist poets. In short, this piece of critical essay has enriched modernist poetics and turns a new page in modernist poetical theory and effectively played a positive role in the dissemination of Mahua modernist literature. In the early 70s, modernist poems were known as “the poisonous straw” in the Mahua literary arena. Wen’s essay merged with many forms of modernist art. He compared the modernists’ techniques and methods of classical poets, cross-examined the theories with the practical examples and came to the conclusion that “poisonous straw” is a baseless accusation. More importantly, he proved his theories with the works of Mahua modernist poets. For instance, in the discussion on split shooting, he used “Six Variations on the Desert” by Lai Ruihe as a case study:

His face masked with white gauze

The man in white knelt and cried on the sand

Unable to become pregnant

The mother buried her face in her bosom

Hold aloft its forepaw towards the sky

The wild wolf mournfully howled at the desolate moon

Carrying a corpse

The camel hurried its way in the starlight

The troops were two rows of moving plants

withering one by one

The stray traveller

Was holding his guitar towards the sun

(Wen, 1968, p.51-52)

There are six stanzas in this poem with two lines in each stanza. Each stanza presents an independent scene. The crying man in white kneeling on the sand, the mother who is unable to become pregnant buries her face in her bosom, the wild wolf mournfully howls at the desolate moon, the camel which is carrying a corpse hurriedly moves under the starlight, the moving troops and the stray traveller; each and every scene is a self-contained imagery. When they are placed together, a montage effect is created.

Wen cited the poems of a number of modernist poets to elaborate how various movie-making techniques were used in their works. In the last few paragraphs of the essay, Wen stressed that the techniques of modernist poetry were varied and diversified, and the movie-making technique was just one of them. These techniques were derived from the masters of an earlier age as well as enriched by the transference and transformation from other forms of arts such as paintings and music.

Another significant piece of critical essay written by Wen Renping is “Lun Shi de Yinyuexing jiqi juxian” (<论诗的音乐性及其局限>, “On the Musicality of Poetry and its Limitations”). It was published in the March issue of 1972 in *Chun Wenxue Yuekan* (《纯文学月刊》, *Pure Literature Monthly*), a monthly literary in Hong Kong. It was later collected in *The Elegant Tripod*, Wen’s collection of critical essays on poetry. He begins by citing the lines of Tu Fu:

The leaves fall rustling from the boundless forest

The waves roll roaring from the endless river

(Wen, 1978, p.3)

Wen points out the symmetrically words in the poem and how the melodic effect of yin and yang is created through their sound and meaning. Then Wen cites the following lines from two classical poems:

The cock crows by the inn under a waning moon

The man steps on the frost of a wooden bridge

(Wen, 1978, p.3)

The white sun into the mountain it sets

The yellow river into the sea it flows

(Wen, 1978, p.3)

Wen tried to highlight how the positive and negative tonal patterns mingle with each other and how the symmetrical words and meanings mirror each other delicately to generate the blending of two scenes and the transcendence of space. Wen also cited “The Pegasus Song” of Li Bai to highlight the onomatopoeic effect it displays in creating a surging and rapid rhythm.

The essay also touched on how a few pieces of new poetry had failed to convey their intrinsic beauty, when they failed to treat the phonological aspects successfully. A typical example is “Maibu Yao” (<卖布谣>, “The Ballad of Selling Clothes”) by Liu Dabai:

Sister-in-law is weaving clothes while elder brother is selling clothes. After selling clothes you can buy rice, then to have a good meal. Sister-in-law is weaving clothes while elder brother is selling clothes. Younger brother’s pants are run-down, and there’s no cloth to patch up (Wen, 1977, p.11).

Liu tried to break free the restrictions of classical poems, yet he eventually succumbed to metrical rules. It thus flops aesthetically and fails to appeal its readers. The new poetry of the early stage, promoted by poets such as Dai Wangshu, Xu Zhimo, He Qifang and others, gradually freed itself from the limitations of its musical forms and instead began to emphasize the rhythms of language and its musical effects. Next, Wen cited “Cunzai zhi Duo” (<存在之多>, “Existence Aplenty”) by Zhou Huan, and

“Hai zhi wai” (<海之外>, “Beyond the Sea”) by Luo Fu to stress the musical effects of rhyming within the lines. Wen continue citing “Shengnv Jie” (<圣女节>, “The Festival of Sacred Lady”) by Xia Jing, “Suimo” (<岁末>, “Year End”) by Xie Qing of Singapore, Qimu Ri (<启幕日>, “Opening Day”) by Xin Yu, a modernist poet from Taiwan, “Yijing Pifa de” (<已经疲乏的>, “The Exhausted”) by Lai Jingwen, a Malaysian modernist poet and poems by Zi Yisi to discuss the role of alliteration and assonance in modernist poetry.

The use of reiterative locution is an indispensable way to achieve musicality effects in poetry. This technique was applied in modernist poems in the 70s. For instance, “Qingchang” (<清唱>, “An Unaccompanied Song”) by Wen Ruian :

The mountain knows, I know, you know
When will the fun-loving youths
Carrying a heavy guitar...
When will they come?
The fun-loving children
The mountain knows, I know, you know

Wen highlights how the unrestrained emotions in the poem had been effectively conveyed by using the technique of reiterative locution. “Zuo” (<坐>, “Sitting”) by Fang Xin (方莘) is cited by Wen to illustrate how alternate lines had effectively mimicked the unstable emotions and complementary meanings.

On the musicality of poetry, Wen illustrated his point by using many classical poems, new poems and modernist poems in particular. He explored and studied the link between the two different forms of art. It is his contention that an over emphasis on the musicality of poetry at the expense of its content could be disastrous. According to Wen, the structural lines of a poem and the poetic language help to create the musical variations, which constitute only a small part of the artistic world. It had been generally regarded that this article touched on many issues such as a comparison between classical and modernist poems, the homonyms of the dialect poems, alliteration and assonance, internal rhyming, alternate rhyming, the consistency of rhyming at the end of each line, even the strategies that reinforce the musicality of poetry were also discussed. It would be true to say that Wen's study is exhaustive and comprehensive. More importantly, his analysis of the limitations of poetic musicality is not based on superstition and he has categorically stated that poetry and music are two very different realms of art, to compose poems into musical melody has never been the objective of poetry. He agreed with the following statement made by Liang Shiqiu (梁实秋),

Literal words are literal words and could not be transformed into symbols of a musical score. However, sonorous and forceful a poem sounds; it could not become a piece of music (Wen, 1978, p.4).

This article was written with a meticulous line of thought and could be considered as a very significant piece of poetical essay. After its publication, it was well-received and valued by Yu Guangzhong. This article had prompted Yu to invite Wen to join the academic staff of the Faculty of Western Languages, National Chengchi University.

Whether it is “On the Musicality of Poetry and its Limitations” or “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry”, Wen never failed to cite the many classical poems, particularly Tang’s poems, to prove his point that modernist poetry is not something new but part and parcel of the long lyrical tradition of Chinese literature. Such a link transcends time and space and reinforces the rationality in the dissemination of modernist poetry. In fact it sets a strong basis for Mahua modernist poetry.

In the process of disseminating modernist literature, Wen believes that it was urgent to help readers to disentangle the mysteries that had bound modernist poetry. With little knowledge and little experience in reading modernist literary works, it would be difficult for readers to appreciate modernist literature. It was on this basis that Wen acted as the go-between, he wrote articles on the interpretation of modernist literature and discussed in detail the themes, thoughts and techniques of expression of modernist poems. He introduced new criticism. The focus of new criticism was on text analysis. This focus had inspired Wen to convincingly and cautiously apply its techniques on the critical appreciation of poetry.

Wen Renping’s relentless efforts in this regard can be seen in his analysis of the following modernist poems. The ten articles in the second part of *The Elegant Tripod*, Wen’s collection of critical essays on poetry, is his attempts at analysing poems using new criticism. The ten articles are: “Shi Wenkai de Zousuo zhe” (<释文恺的〈走索者〉>), “An Analysis of ‘Tightrope Walker’ by Wen Kai”, “Lun Ye Weilian de Choudu Wuqu” (<论介叶维廉的〈愁渡五曲〉>), “On Ye Weilian’s ‘Five Melodies of Sorrowful Crossing’”, “Xi Wen Ruian de Xingge” (<析温瑞安的〈性格〉>), “An Analysis of ‘Character’ by Wen Ruian”, Xi Danying de Yingfeng zhi Ren” (<析淡莹

的〈饮风之人〉>, “An Analysis of ‘Breeze Drinker’ by Dan Ying”), “Xi Zheng chouyu de Dang Xifeng Zouguo” (<析郑愁予的〈当西风走过〉>, “An Analysis of ‘When the Westerly Wind Breezes’”) by Zheng Chouyu, “Lun Lin Fan de Shiti” (<论林梵的〈失题〉>, “An Analysis of ‘Title-less’ by Lin Fan”), “Xi Yu Guangzhong de Changcheng Yao” (<析余光中的〈长城谣〉>, “An Analysis of ‘Ballads of the Great wall’ by Yu Guangzhong”), “Jiangxue yu Han Jiangxue” (<〈江雪〉与〈寒江雪〉>, “Snowy River and Cold Snowy River”), Xi Guo Qing de Yishou Xiju Shi (<析郭青的一首戏剧诗〉), “An Analysis of A Dramatic Poem by Guo Qing(郭青)”), and “Kuqi de Yangzi shi Zenyang de?” (<哭泣的样子是怎样的?〉), “What is the look of a Crying Face?”).

Besides these articles, other critical essays are collected in *Literature, Education and Culture*, they are: “Fenduanshi Chutan bing Juli” (<“分段诗”初探并举例>, “A Preliminary Study on Segmented Poetry”), “Xiandaishi de Yuyan Xianxiang” (<现代诗的语言现象>, “The Language Phenomena of Modernist Poems”), “Shuqing yu Xushi zhijian” (<抒情与叙事之间>, “Of Lyrical and narrative Poetry”), “Xiandaishi de Xinshang” (<现代诗的欣赏>, “Appreciation of Modernist Poetry”), “Qujing Youtong Kan Xiandaishi” (<曲径幽通看现代诗>, “Puzzling Through the Maze of Modernist Poetry”), “Tan Zheng Chouyu de Yibo” (<谈郑愁予的〈衣钵〉>, “An Analysis of ‘Yibo’ by Zheng Chouyu”), and “Qiu Yunjian de Liangzhong Fengge” (<丘云笈的两种风格>, “The Two Styles of Qiu Yunjian”). These articles highlight the characteristics and the art of modernist poems from different perspectives and provide a much focused study on methods of appreciation. He wrote prefaces for young poets’ collections of poetry. In these prefaces he used the techniques of new criticism as well

as his own critical comments. Each and every preface is a piece of critical appreciation on poetry. They are: “Xu ZiYisi Shixuan” (<序《紫一思诗选》>, “A Preface: Poetry Collection of Zi Yi Si”), “Denghuo Zong hui bei Jicheng Xiaqu de---Xu Zhangshulin bian *Dama Xinrui Shixuan*” (<灯火总会被继承下去的---序张树林编《大马新锐诗选》>, “The Lights will Be Lit Endlessly: A Preface to *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*”), “Xiushixing yu Zhenzhixing---Xu Yuhuoying” (<修饰性与真挚性---序《渔火吟》>, “Of Decoration and Sincerity: A Preface to *Ballad of the Fishermen*”), and “Daode Yishi yu Shikong Yishi---Xu Yanyu Yue” (<道德意识与时空意识---序《烟雨月》>, “Moral Consciousness and the Awareness of Time and Space: A Preface to *Moon Over Misty Rain*”).

It is apparent that Wen’s objective in writing critical appreciation of poetry is to help local readers to have a better understanding of modernist poems. His articles, supported with numerous examples, lead the readers into the complexities of modernist poetry and to explore its characteristics and uniqueness. Wen puts in so much effort that he has written nothing less than a hundred thousand words, which again reveals his passion and attitude towards Mahua modernist poetry. All these analysis of modernist poems take on the aesthetical interpretations as of secondary importance. Wen is very much aware that this is an unenviable job. He says,

Poetry appreciation is an intuition, the most direct and the most truthful interaction. When a poem is being analysed with critical tools, more often than not, they hurt poetry itself, the very subject of analysis (Wen, 1978, p.2).

Such a statement obviously reveals his spirit of “doing the impossible”. His endeavours provided the readers with an opportunity to understand how form and structure merge, how the stanzas and the lines in a poem supplement and complement each other, how the poet manoeuvre the words to create rhythm and a symphony of words thus effectively engage the aesthetic participation of the readers. The application of new criticism on modernist poems by Wen has indeed successfully played a guiding role to help the readers.

In his efforts to disseminate Mahua modernist literature, Wen made a very good attempt at linking Mahua modernist poems with the poems of the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties. It is important to stress that this is a literary link and not a geographical link. Such a link that transcends time and space is evidently displayed in “On the Musicality and Limitations of Poetry” and “*A preliminary Analysis of Qiao Lin: The Face of Christ*”. In the dissemination of poetry, it is crucial to identify the literary source and to stick to a clear objective, Mahua literature cannot be dissociated from Chinese literature. Thus, the link between the various characteristics of Mahua modernist poetry and classical Chinese poetry is of a continuous lyrical tradition. Such a link underpins the base of Mahua modernist poetry and thus the claims that Mahua modernist poetry is just imports can be convincingly refuted.

5.3.2 The Application of Theories to Ascertain the Applicability of Multiple Strategies in Composing Modernist Poetry

Wen stresses that both theories and practice are of similar importance in the dissemination of modernist poetry. He hopes that Mahua writers understand theories of modernist poetry and the spirit of modernism. He draws from his own works to

demonstrate the applicability of literary theories. In other words, he practiced what he preached. For instance, he used the movie-making techniques of modernist poetry to write “Beetle and Woman”, “The Scenery”, “Shuixiang zhi Wai” (<水乡之外>, “Beyond the land of Canals”) and “Transition”.

Below is given a short analysis of the poems mentioned above.

Beetle and Woman

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: A

What is the creature that bumps across the room

A beetle

He spits it out and flips it far away with his fingers

Not forgetting

Using his white handkerchief

To clean his fingers

Time: 9:00 pm

Place: B

Hello

Nice to meet you

Lifting his golden hairy hand courteously

Whole heartedly

Raising his just bowed head:

“it is such a great pleasure”

Time: 11:00 pm

Place: C

The moonlight is on the back of the sky

Under a neat pine tree

Sucking away all the Avon lipsticks on her face

The fishy smell in her mouth turns out to be the nutrients in his stomach

Time: 11:00 pm

Place: A

That beetle

Lying half-death

Overturms and convulses into spasms

Two rounded eyes protruding

Have never been shut

This is a dramatic poem with four scenes. The time stretches from 7.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. This poem has been discussed in section 5.2.2.

“The scenery” also applies dramatic techniques that blend imageries with montage:

The scenery

A ragged old man

Sits and

Cries in front of a fallen temple

The squeals of an angry horse

Removes the saddle

Locks into the stable

No one uses fire to warm the wine

The Longjing tea sulks alone

Not far away

The new township is fuming with black smoke

The helpless scenery

Hiding behind the mountain and attempting to forget

A white bird flies askew

Its wings dripping blood

This poem uses the movie-making techniques too. Each stanza is a self-contained imagery, appearing side by side creating a very effective montage. Each of the six stanzas of “Transition” has two lines. The first five focuses on the transformation of people, events and objects. Each scene takes on a different shot, an employment of movie-making techniques. It differs from “The Scenery” on the reversal of the last stanza:

Gently flows the river water

The calling of the gibbons still fills the mountain

This stanza contrasts sharply with the first five, creating immense poetical tension.

On the musicality of poems, Wen has made many attempts to use various techniques to achieve special effects. For instance “Diyi Jiaoxiang Shi” (<第一交响诗>, “The First Symphonic Poem”):

In front of the hall sits a stylishly furnished man-made bench
Starts a conversation with an ashtray on the pavilion ladies of Zhang Daqian
The snake with an artificial face roams over the grass-less streets
The simple alley spreads out its legs to welcome the kneeling gentlemen
You are still expecting some kind of a breakthrough
Some kind of a rhythm. A lamp
Strumming the guitar a song of the Han Dynasty with your thin hands
Singing a song few people could comprehend

At this moment someone makes a long yawn
Squeezing her exposed breasts back into her brassiere
A yellow chrysanthemum from Indochina could be exchanged for
The delta of the Red River, a fragile straw. A darkened armpit
Dragon tattoos on the shoulder. Poisonous gas
The vegetables at the suburb of Saigon merely wither

You attempt to walk out through that door
Yet your door is without a handle or a knob
Impatiently you walk back and forth. Cursing of course

Pale and in anguish

Grabbing a broken knife, grinding desperately

Cursing furiously

The above lines are extracted from the fourth to the seventh stanzas of “The First Symphonic Poem”. The poem is interspersed with the first and second themes from classical music expressing contradictory emotions. The fourth and the sixth stanzas express the external phenomena while the fifth and seventh tell the internal spiritual world of the characters in the poem.

Wen’s tireless efforts to disseminate Mahua modernist poetry are commendable. His creative and innovative works confirm that Mahua modernist poetry’s survival and development remains intact and would achieve great accomplishment.

5.4 Wen Renping and the Dissemination of Mahua Modernist Prose

5.4.0 Introduction

Besides being actively involved in the promotion and dissemination of modernist literature and Mahua modernist poetry, Wen Renping sees modernist prose as an expendable genre. He concedes that he is “ambitious’ about writing prose (Wen, 1977, p.1). He was not satisfied with the performance of Mahua prose of the early 60s and 70s and believed that there is still a lot of room for improvement. For Mahua prose to get ahead, modernist spirit must be instilled into it, and at the same time it must learn

from modernist poetry. As he was actively involved in the dissemination of modernist poetry, he also engaged himself in the dissemination of modernist prose.

Promoting prosaic theories, interpreting works of prose and practicing the writing of prose are some of Wen's strategies in disseminating Mahua modernist prose. Through his articles, dialogues, prefaces, seminar papers, Wen's attempt to disseminate modernist prose is clear. The following chart lists out Wen's discussions on prose writing.

Table 5.1: Wen Renping's Articles on Prose Writing

| No. | Topic | Date of Publication | Publication Source | Type of Articles |
|-----|--|---------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. | “Xie zai ‘Dama Shiren Zuopin Teji’ de Qianmian” (<写在“大马诗人作品特辑”的前面>, “Preface to ‘Special Issue of the Works of Malaysian Poets’ ”) | Aug 1972 | <i>Chun Wenxue</i> (《纯文学》, <i>Pure Literature</i>) Issue 65, Hong Kong | Preface |
| 2. | “Sanwen de Xieshi yu Xieyi” (<散文的写实与写意>, “Realistic and Impressionistic Prose”) | May 1973 | “You Shi Literature”, (<幼狮文艺>, “Young Lion Literature”, Taiwan | Prosaic Theory |
| 3. | “Lun Si Cai de Sanwenji Fengxiang” (<论思采的散文集《风向》>, “The Direction of the Wind: On Si Cai's Collection of Prose”) | Sept 1973 | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , Issue 304 | Critical essay |
| 4. | “Duihua Lu” (<对话录>, “A Dialogue”) | July 1977 | <i>The Yellow-Skinned Moon</i> | Prosaic Theory |
| 5. | “Huang Pifu de Yueliang Zixu” (<《黄皮肤的月亮》自序>, “Preface to The Moon with Yellow Skin”) | July 1977 | <i>The Yellow-Skinned Moon</i> | Prosaic Theory |
| 6. | “Huang Pifu de Yueliang Houji” (<《黄皮肤的月亮》后记>, “Postscript to The Moon with Yellow Skin”) | July 1977 | <i>The Yellow-Skinned Moon</i> | Critical essay |

Table 5.1 (continued)

| | | | | |
|-----|---|------------|--|---------------|
| 7. | “Mahua Xiandai Wenxue de Yiyi he Weilai Fazhan : Yige Shi de Huigu yu Qianzhan” (<马华现代文学的意义和未来发展：一个史的回顾与前瞻>, “The Significance and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature: A Historical perspective”) | Dec 1978 | Literary Seminar | Seminar paper |
| 8. | “Cong Yan Mu de Nianlun Kan Xiandai Sanwen de Bian” (<从杨牧的《年轮》看现代散文的变>, “Annulation by Yang Mu: The transformation of Prose”) | Feb 1979 | Literary Seminar | Seminar paper |
| 9. | “Lun Zhang Shuli de Sanwen Fengmao” (<论张树林的散文风貌>, “The Style of Zhang Shulin’s Prose”) | Oct 1979 | Preface to <i>A Thousand Miles Covered by Moon and Clouds</i> | Preface |
| 10. | “Mahua Dangdai Wenxue Xuan Zongxu” (<《马华当代文学选》总序>, “Preface to <i>An Anthology of Mahua Contemporary Literature</i> ”) | May 1981 | <i>An Anthology of Mahua Contemporary literature</i> | Preface |
| 11. | “Tian wei Shan Qi, Shui Qiu Shi Fang ---yi Zhang Xiaofeng, Fang Ezhen weili, Luelun Xiandai Sanwen de Zhongyao Qushi” (<天为山欺，水求石放—以张晓风、方娥真为例，略论现代散文的重要趋势>, “The Significant Trends of Modernist Prose : A study on the Prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen”) | April 1984 | National Seminar on Modernist Literature, Malaysian Chinese Cultural Association of Perak Branch | Seminar Paper |

The 11 articles listed above can be divided into four types, the first type on prosaic theory such as “Realistic and Impressionistic Prose”, “A Dialogue”, “Preface to *The Moon with Yellow Skin*” and “Postscript to *The Moon with Yellow Skin*”; the

second type of articles focus on critical appreciation of prose such as “The Direction of the Wind: On Si Cai’s Collection of Prose”, and “The Style of Zhang Shulin’s Prose”; the third type of articles are prefaces that focus on the discussion on the various phenomena of Mahua prose such as, “Preface to ‘*Special Issue of the Works of Malaysian Poets*’ ”, and “Preface to *An Anthology of Mahua Contemporary Literature*”; the fourth type of articles are seminar papers such as “Annulation by Yang Mu: The Transformation of Prose”, “The Significance and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature: A Historical Perspective”, and “The Significant Trends of Modernist Prose : A study on the Prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen”.

This section will analyse how Wen promoted prosaic theories through his theoretical articles, expressed his expectations of modernist prose through his critical essays, confirmed the validity of prosaic theories through his works of prose and finally how he described the phenomena as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Mahua prose through his prefaces.

5.4.1 Achieving the Effects of Dissemination of Modernist Prose through the Writing of Prosaic Theories

“Realistic and Impressionistic Prose” and “A Dialogue” are two pieces of writing that have elaborated Wen’s prosaic theories. In “Realistic and Impressionistic Prose”, Wen divides prose into two categories, that is realistic and impressionistic prose, and that they are two very significant trends. He used numerous examples to support his contentions. In Wen’s opinion, realistic proses are intellectual while impressionistic proses are sensual. Impressionistic prose focuses on emotional sublimation which has a lyrical style. “Pugongying de Suiyue” (<蒲公英的岁月>,

“Dandelion Days”), “Jiu Zhang Chuang” (<九张床>, “Nine Beds”), and “Xiayou de Yiri” (<下游的一日>, “A Day at the Downstream”) by Yu Guangzhong are some prominent examples (Wen, 1978, p.7). Wen uses “A Day at the Downstream” to argue his case.

Wen stresses that, it takes talent and a natural gift, something more than the basic writing skills, to write impressionistic prose. A master prose writer with a sense of emotional detachment may just be involved in writing biographies and theories of his life. To an impressionistic prose writer, the language foundation he acquires in later life is important, but his personal temperament and natural gift will play an even greater role in his works (Wen, 1978, p.7).

Wen thus suggests that prose writers should be aware of the importance of intellectual constraints. He then takes Si Cai, a Mahua prose writer as an example to illustrate his point. Si Cai’s strong and uncontrolled emotional attachment turns out to be one of his main weaknesses. Si Cai’s emotional attachment is likened to the flood that crushes the dikes, cracks the walls, it is beyond the author’s ability to control (Wen, 1978, p.14-15).

On the dissemination of modernist prose, three important points are highlighted in his discussions with Wen Ruian in “A Dialogue”. They are the status of prose, the language of prose and finally the issue on pure prose. Firstly, Wen disagrees with Yan Yuanshu (颜元叔) who categorizes prose under the genre of novel and views prose as just a tool without the status of an independent genre. Wen is aware that Yan’s categorization is based on Western literary theories. The state of prose in Western literature is unstable; at times it is called essay, at times it is called short stories. Since

it is unstable in terms of literary status, it cannot be classified as one of the literary genres (Wen, 1977, p.253). This is the status of prose in Western literature.⁷⁹ Wen holds a different opinion, and considers such a categorization to be unsuitable for Chinese prose. He stresses that,

The establishment and the in-depth studies of a Chinese theoretical system and its creative trends and performance should be based on the foundation of Chinese literature and not based on that of Greece, Western Europe or America; though in methods of interpretation and analysis, we can learn from the West (Wen, 1977, p.254).

Wen's views are objective and practical. Chinese and Western literary traditions and characteristics are different; the Western views should not be applied on Chinese literature. Such trends were prevalent among the Taiwanese scholars of the 70s; Yan Yuanshu is a typical case. When Yan uses new criticism to analyse classical poetry, he draws the rebuttal of Ye Jiaying (叶嘉莹). Wen's basis and principle on the recognition of the status of prose is thus more acceptable.

Wen asserted that Chinese prose has a long tradition and this tradition is manifested through the various styles of the representative writers of the different dynasties. Chinese prose can be traced as far back as the ancient *Shangshu* (《尚书》),

⁷⁹ Since the 20th century, the enthusiasm on prose was waning fast in Western literature. This gradual decline, according to Yu Guangzhong, can be seen from the disappearance of the grand masters of prose of the 18th and 19th centuries. Prose pieces have been replaced by the news coverage and political commentaries of the mass media. Supplements of Anglo-American newspapers no longer publish creative literary works. Literary journals focus on novels and poetry, literary criticism also seldom touches on prose. Pulitzer Prize awards are only given to poets, playwrights and novelists. It is not meant for prose writers. Bibliography is considered as one of its kind but it is not the equivalent of prose. Nobel Prizes for Literature have been awarded to poets, novelists and playwrights. It is very rare to see Canetti won the award for his anthology of prose; in fact he won it more on his achievements in novels and plays and not purely on prose. See *Yu Guangzhong's Anthology of Prose*, PRC: Times Literary Publication, 1997, 8th Edition, p. 515.

Book of Document)⁸⁰, *Yijing* (《易经》, *Book of Change*)⁸¹, *Mengzi Qipian* (《孟子七篇》, *The Seven Pieces of Mengzi*) and the works of numerous writers of that period. From the Warring States to the current modern times, the styles, trends, content and form of prose have experienced many changes. The most conspicuous writers are Han Yu (韩愈), advocate of “Guwen Yundong”(古文运动, “The Guwen Movement”)⁸²; the Three Yuans of Gongan Group (公安派三袁), advocates of unrestrained form and independent expression of mind; Fang Bao (方苞), Liu Taikui (刘大魁), and Yao Ding (姚鼎) of the Tongcheng Group (桐城派), advocates of Yifa (义法).⁸³

Obviously, Wen attempts to rationalize the status of prose from a historical perspective. From the stated historical data, Chinese prose does possess its theoretical framework and can be verified by its creative works. On this basis, prose is certainly a very significant genre of literature and should not be treated as a dispensable genre like what is happening in Western literature. Yu Dafu says,

Prose has always been the main genre of Chinese classical essays; verse is just an occasional outburst of emotions, rarely happens and cannot be forced upon (Yu, 1984, p.441).

⁸⁰ *The Book of Documents* or Classic of History, also known as the *Shangshu*, is one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature.

⁸¹ This is a Chinese book of ancient origin consisting of 64 interrelated hexagrams along with commentaries attributed to Confucius. The hexagrams, originally used for divination, embody Taoist philosophy by describing all nature and human endeavor in terms of the interaction of Yin and Yang.

⁸² The classical Chinese movement refers to the revolutionary movement to promote classical Chinese during the middle of Tang Dynasty and era of North Song Dynasty. This movement was against the kind of articles with characteristics of parallel prose. Classical Chinese refers to prose in the Pre Qin and Han Dynasty, and its characteristics are funky and free, no restriction in form, easy to reflect the reality and portray inner thoughts.

⁸³The basic theory of the Tongcheng Group starts from Fang Bao. He succeeded the proposition of the Guwen Movement in Tang and Song dynasties, stresses on Yifa (义法). Yi (义) means the content of an article, and Fa(法) refers to the logical structure of an article.

Hence, Chinese prose has a long tradition and it is an important genre in Chinese literature. Wen emphasizes the tradition of prose, and indisputable principle. Chinese literature has a long tradition, and prose is a genre that is the product of a very unique time and cultural background. To deny the traditional significance of prose or to sideline it for other genres is inappropriate.

The second important point of “Dialogue” touches on the issues of language in prose. This discussion is based on “One-way or Multiple-ways”, an article written by Yan Yuanshu. Yan sees,

... Poetry as a multiple-ways language, while prose is a one-way language. Multiple-ways language refers to language motives that are projected into multiple directions, while one-way language refers to language motives that are projected into a single direction⁸⁴ (Wen, 1977, p.266).

Wen considers Yan’s views as constructive views and agrees with Yan’s statement that the difference between poetic language and prosaic language is a matter of differences in scale and not in genre.

Such discussions on prosaic language are rarely seen in the 70s in particular. Zheng Mingli did not specifically touch on the difference between poetic language and prosaic language in her three books on prose in the 80s and 90s. In short, such a discussion on the language of prose is quite unprecedented. Yan even tries to elaborate

⁸⁴ This is quoted by Wen Renping in his dialogue with Wen Ruian and the dialogue was collected in Wen’s collection of prose *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, 1977. p. 266.

the differences of the language of the two genres graphically. However, Wen believes that the graphical presentation is flawed and incomplete.

The third important point of “A Dialogue” touches on the definition of pure prose. The concept of pure prose is raised by Wen Ruian, who puts forward his own views,

A piece of pure prose is not decided based on its intellectual or emotional properties. Its pureness depends not just on its language, the elasticity and cohesiveness of its textural structure, the depth and width of its content; but more importantly, the essence of pure prose should be impressionistic (Wen, 1977, p.275).

Such a view mirrors what has been mentioned earlier on impressionistic prose, it will also enhance the theoretical framework of impressionistic prose.

Another strategy of dissemination applied by Wen was to introduce and promote the prose of Zhang Ailing, Ye Shan and Yu Guangzhong. In the Preface to *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, Wen’s anthology of prose, he first discussed the status of prose, then examined the state of insufficiency of critical and theoretical pieces on prose, and finally introduced the works of the above three prose writers. On Zhang Ailing’s *Yaoyan* (《谣言》, *Rumours*), a collection of prose, Wen admired its language brevity and conciseness, appropriate imageries, rich, witty and playful content with a cynical touch. On Ye Shan’s prose, Wen feels that Ye has merged the style of

‘pianwen’ (骈文)⁸⁵ of the Wei and Jin Dynasties with the exotic ambience of foreign lands and at the same time, Ye’s prose expressed the beauty of the Song Dynasty with the so-called classical surprises, his unique style was beyond imitation. On Yu Guangzhong, Wen highly appraised Yu’s prose and felt that Yu’s mastery of word usage in his prosaic pieces had reached a very high level of excellence. In the Postscript to *Xiaoyao You* (《逍遥游》, *The Untrammelled Traveller*), Yu says,

I try to compress, stretch, sharpen, split and merge, fold and stack the Chinese characters to test their speed, density and elasticity. It is my ideal to make the Chinese characters into a symphony through the variations of syntax. At the wave of his hand, the writer’s pen would behave like the baton of a conductor of an orchestra (Yu, 1982, p.206).

Such an earnest and obsessive attitude towards the words of prose is indeed appealing. It sends a clear message to the Mahua writers that prose writing is more than the simple approach of “from speech to writing”. Subsequently Wen cited relevant examples from Yu’s prose to highlight the musicality, syntactic deployment, rhythmic proximity, word inflections and other aspects that are found in Yu’s works.

Having introduced the works of the three prose writers, he presented Zhang Xiaofeng (张晓风), the fourth prose writer. First, Wen briefly described the uniqueness of the prose of Zhang Ailing, Ye Shan and Yu Guangzhong, and then he introduced the prose of Zhang Xiaofeng. Zhang’s attempt to blend the classical and the modern in his prose always brings surprises. In 1984, Wen presented a paper entitled, “The

⁸⁵ ‘Pianwen’ is a kind of literary form, started in Qin and Han dynasties, prospered in Wei Jin and the six dynasties. ‘Pianwen’ stresses on the use of phrases or sentences that are matched in sound and sense for reiteration purposes.

Significant Trends of Modernist Prose: A study on the Prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen” at the National Convention on Modernist Literature. It is a comparative study of the prose of Taiwan and Mahua writers. Wen’s study revealed the differences between the prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen from the point of taste and theme; spirituality and language mastery; yet when a comparison is made, there are still some similarities.

Besides proposing constructive theories of prose, elaborating his views of the four prose writers of Taiwan, Wen promoted the ideals of Mahua modernist prose through the prefaces that he wrote for prose anthologies of young writers. Some of these writers are Zhang Shulin, Fu Chengde and others. These prefaces also touched on the strategies and language use in writing prose.

To make the dissemination of modernist prose more effective, he involved himself in writing critical comments on prose writers. The following are the three articles: “The Direction of the Wind: On Si Cai’s Prose”; “Annulation by Yang Mu: The Transformation of Prose”; and “The Significant Trends of Modernist Prose: A Study on the Prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Ezhen”.

5.4.2 Achieving the Effects of Dissemination of Modernist Prose Quantitatively and Qualitatively through the Writing of Critical Appreciation of Prose

The number of essays written by Wen on the critical appreciation of prose was less than that of poetry, yet from these different pieces of essays, it is never difficult to see Wen’s infatuation with modernist prose and his noble attempt to disseminate modernist prose in the Mahua literary arena. In the Preface he wrote for the *Special*

Issue on Works of Malaysian Poets, Wen discussed the scenario, the background and the performance of the different literary genres. Below is an excerpt of what he had to say about prose:

Prose writing is still at the stage of exploration, many so-called modernist works of prose are filled with an air of melancholy, obsessed with resentment, self-pity, self-glorification, masked by a pretense of innocence and a fake sense of loss. Prose writers who deliberately use distorted text and syntactic structures and completely ignored the textual structures, more often than not, fall into the realm of rhetoric scam inadvertently (Wen, 1980, p.32).

The two statements above are the general critical comments on Mahua prose of the 70s. The first statement had been discussed in detail in “The Direction of the Wind: On Si Cai’s Prose”. The second statement briefly sketches Wen’s criteria for a good piece of prose. One can be innovative in prose writing without distorting words deliberately or ignoring the syntactic structures of the language. These criteria are not something extraordinary; they are just basic requirements of writing a proper piece of prose.

Wen’s views on prose are reflected in the following two articles, “The Direction of the Wind: On Si Cai’s Prose” and “The Style of Zhang Shulin’s Prose”. According to Wen, Si Cai had a very unique status amongst the Mahua prose writers. Si’s works displayed a steady command of words and sensitivity towards language. However, Wen pointed out Si’s emotionally over indulgence and the irrationality as his major flaws. An over indulgence in sentimental expression is a common problem of

contemporary prose writers. Zheng Mingli (郑明俐) had pointed out that this was one of the shortcomings of the Taiwan modernist prose, “for the past 40 years, Taiwanese prose writers have been addicted to producing sentimental lyrical pieces of prose” (Zheng, 1992, p.83, 87-88).

From Wen’s comment on Si Cai, it could be concluded that Wen’s prerequisite for a good piece of prose are as follows: (i) stability in word usage, (ii) sensitivity in word usage, (iii) rational and restraint without excessive emotional outburst. In addition, from the suggestions offered to Zhang Shulin, the following basic views of Wen on prose could be summarized: (i) uncompromising structure; (ii) a balanced mixture of emotional and intellectual sensitivity and (iii) a concern for classical constraints and balance at effusive moments of expression (Wen, 2004, p.308-315).

In “The Style of Zhang Shulin’s Prose”, Wen presented his perception of a good piece of prose,

...is not necessarily written with excessively exuberant and brilliant words, although such exuberant and strong rhetoric and words do help to create a good piece of prose. Yet it takes a much more solid foundation on the part of the writer to be able to blend the dense with the light, the strong with the faint in his prose (Wen, 2004, p.308-315).

These are Wen’s linguistic expectations of a good piece of prose. According to Wen, “Riverbank” written by Zhang Shulin, had a simple and easy, slow and steady style. It possesses a poetic quality that evokes a sudden sense of surprise and

imagination. Hence it would be true to say that poetic quality, according to Wen, is one of the prerequisites of a good piece of prose. To achieve such an ambience, strong and colourful words may not necessarily be the only means to do so, a simple and easy tone can be an effective tone too. More importantly, a writer must be emotionally truthful and sincere. Untruthfulness will be seen as a pretense that is ill-mannered and unworthy of emulation. Yet this scenario seems to be the trend of the 70s. To avoid overflows of sentimentality, Wen thus advised Zhang Shulin to use the reserved and restrained styles of the classics when writing prose.

In “The Meaning and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature--- A Historical Retrospect and Prospect”, Wen criticized most of the contemporary Mahua lyrical proeses as:

...thoughts and lamentations that are written leisurely, the successfully written pieces are easy and lively as if they are daily chats; the poorly written pieces are rambling and long-winded speeches like garrulous gossips (Wen, 1986, p.7).

Such criticism reflects the consistency in Wen’s perception of prose writing. His earlier discussion on impressionistic prose did focus on the possible weaknesses of impressionistic prose.

The critical comments on the prose of Lu Mang (鲁莽) and You Cao (忧草) (1940-) revealed once again Wen’s ingredients of a good piece of prose: a colourful style, abundant vocabulary, innovative language and techniques, a rich and profound content.

To summarize, Wen's discussion on prosaic theories in the 70s focused on the status and genre categorization of prose. He offered numerous views and suggestions through his critical comments, prefaces and postscripts. His method of genre categorization was not new or unusual, let alone flawless, yet it played a guiding role. Wen's other articles have also helped the readers to understand the artistic techniques of prose.

Wen's views on prose in the 80s were basically similar to that of the 70s. In this decade he had only written one piece of critical commentary on prose and that was "The significant Trends of Modernist Prose: A Study on the Prose of Zhang Xiaofeng and Fang Erzhen". This article was a comparative study on the styles of prose.

The first similarity between Zhang and Fang's prose, according to Wen, was the blending and merging of their sense of history and modernity. Zhang's prose,

...on the one hand overflows with the movement of modernity, on the other hand, flashes with the brilliance and glory of history. Fang's prose evolves from her 'infatuation and admiration of a great China' (Wen, 1986, p.74-86).

Yet these two writers' major achievements lie neither in their "classical inclinations that evoke the readers" longings for a historical past, nor their successful attempts to imitate the techniques and styles of the ancient writers. Their achievements lie in "using the modern language processing and critical thinking methods to blend with the traditional and to transform history; thus producing works that are modern and

classical, elegant and unbridled” (Wen, 1986, p.74-86). This was a similarity found in their style of writing.

Their next similarity lies in their application of knowledge of modernist poetry in their prose. In Zhang’s prose, techniques of modernist poetry such as associations and skipping were used; while Fang used the techniques of modernist poetry such as the splitting and blending of clichés, splitting and stacking in her prose. The third similarity among the two female prose writers is their skills in the creation of imageries and fancy imaginations. Their works always bring the readers to another level of esthetical ecstasy with taste.

Of course there are differences between Zhang and Fang’s prose. According to Yu Guangzhong, Zhang can be subtle and bold at the same time, her prose carries “an air of greatness and heroic immortality” (Yu, 1981, p.238). Wen agreed with the views of Yu. Comparatively, Fang follows a subtle, delicate and feministic style, truthful, natural and with refreshing candour. The last statement of the article summarized the differences of style in Zhang and Fang’s prose. Wen continues:

The different narrative approaches of Zhang and Fang basically reveal their different styles. Fang uses monologues and soliloquies to reveal her heart and soul and treats her readers as a close and trusted friend. Her language has a fascinating rhythmic chant; the upward and downward tones reveal the feelings and sensibilities of a teenage girl. Zhang’s mastery in blending the objective reality with the subjective imagination helps her to merge her sentimentality with the surrounding characters and scenes that she is depicting. Her love and her sincerity is the source of her passion, yet under

close observation, I have found that Zhang will rationally restrain her most passionate emotions. This is truly different from the absolute sensibilities of Fang (Wen, 1986, p.74-86).

This piece of article reflected Wen's admiration on different styles of prose. He praised the two writers' classical tendencies and also agreed with their approach to learn from modernist poetry. To conclude, Wen's view on modernist prose at this stage was still influenced by views of modernism, that were very similar to his views in the 70s, albeit his ideas have expanded to a greater extent.

5.4.3 Dissemination of the Techniques of Modernist Prose through the Creative Writing of Modernist Prose

Wen is 'ambitious' on his attempts and efforts in writing modernist proses and has also achieved a certain degree of success. According to Wen, his involvement in the writing of critical pieces on prose had helped him to be "more original and more critical of his own works based on his reading of theories of prose" (Wen, 1977, p.10). *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, Wen's second anthology of prose, had recorded Wen's process of transformation and his achievement. This anthology had a collection of 49 pieces of prose and it was published in Taiwan in 1977.

Yang Shengqiao (扬升桥) in an article entitled "Xiandai Sanwen de Qifeng--- Ping Wen Renping de Sanwen" (<现代散文的奇峰---评温任平的散文>, "The Extraordinary Peaks of Modernist Prose: A Critical Comment on Wen Renping's Prose"), asserted that *The Moon with Yellow Skin* has collected "a minimum of nine pieces of masterpieces that will last. They are "Sanfa piaoyang zai fengzhong"(<散发

飘扬在风中>, “Messy Hair Fluttering in the Wind”), “Sishe de She” (<死蛇的舌>, “The Tongue of a Death Snake”), “Yige Quanyuan” (<一个全圆>, “A Full Circle”), “Huangpifu de Yualiang” (<黄皮肤的月亮>, “The Moon with Yellow Skin”), “AnXiang” (<暗香>, “Subtle Fragrance”), “Chaohu” (<朝笏>, “Face Scepter”), “Mingxinpian yu shi” (<明信片与诗>, “Postcard and Poetry”), “Jilongpo” (<吉隆坡>, “Kuala Lumpur”) and “Tianwen” (<天问>, “Enquire Heaven”)(Yang, 1991). Yang indeed had his rationales for his picks. Besides the nine pieces mentioned above, the researcher feels that there are a few more pieces that reflected Wen’s experimental spirit and his quest and attempts to apply varied techniques of writing, they are “Xishi” (<惜誓>, “Precious Oath”), “Zheshi Jiuyue” (<这是九月>, “This is September”), “Pifa de Ma” (<疲乏的马>, “The Tired Horse”), “Shan de Langman” (<山的浪漫>, “Romance in the Mountains”), “Yaoshang ziji de ren” (<咬伤自己的人>, “Self-Inflicted Wound”) and others.

The above mentioned prose can be divided into a few categories. First, the language of “Subtle Fragrance” and “Face Scepter” is tender and mild with ambiguous words and flexible nature. These two pieces of prose attempt to aestheticize the words, they are the modified versions of songs of the Song and Yuan Dynasties, more inclined to the feminine writings. Such are risky artistic attempts, yet they are the so-called “aesthetics of the beautiful”; anyone who does not lack empathy will immediately be moved by the rhythm and sensibility of these two pieces of prose when they start to recite them. One of the reasons is largely due to their musical quality. From the perspective of textual characteristics, we can see the seamless blending of the classical and the modern in these two pieces of prose. The writer used a self-invented classical vernacular language to create a very unique ambience of language. For instance:

From the moment I left in late autumn, snowflakes covered the land. The fierce sunlight shone brightly, it would be best not to say anything at all. Things that I did not wish to say, or were not proper to say and should not be said, yet I had said so much that I could not say any more, speaking intermittently and sobbing before I could speak. To be callous or not to be, at this moment there were so many speculations as a piece of unfavourable rumour was spreading at the marketplace. People said I had mistakenly fallen into the evil trap of the fox. Where did this piece of yellow paper painted with a cinnabar spell come from? A sword cut across its middle, the flames of the candle were turning it to patches of black permeating in flashes of white. The thin, wrinkled and parched greyish pieces blended into the tea for me to swallow. My wry smile was an unauthorized rebuttal; I had no choice but to leave immediately. I stumbled as I was rushing out, the huge door at my back slammed loudly. Tiny blossoms of azalea struggling up the wall suddenly crashed onto the ground, still trembling in a body of mud and dirt (Wen, 1977, p.191).

Wen used 22 four-character word groups (四字词语) in this short passage, undoubtedly written with immense effort. Both the word groups “xuehua mandi” (雪花满地, “Snowflakes covered the land”) of the first sentence and “mengyang liezhao” (猛阳烈照, “The fierce sunlight shone brightly”) of the second sentence, are of similar linguistic structure, which is of a subject-predicate word group. Yet the two word groups are of opposite meanings, “snowflakes” and “sunlight”, a cold object and a hot object respectively; they are contradictory and show strong contrast to each other. The word group “covered the land” implies huge expanse of space, it intensifies the sense of “cold”. “Shone brightly” stresses the degree of intensity, it conveys the hotness of “the

fierce sunlight”. The other parts of the two word groups modify and gives depth to their subject from different perspectives. There are many four-character word groups in sentence four. First, quantifiers act as modifiers and general nouns as words being modified, the modifier-noun word group, “This piece of yellow paper”, “the flames of the candle”, are linked by “a piece of unfavourable rumour” in the following sentence, forming a broad parallelism that intensifies the power of language. From “the flames of the candle” to “for me to swallow” (让我吞服), there are 29 characters, Wen used six four-character word groups, which is a big number and again revealed the ingenuity of the writer.

These four-character word groups are of different syntactical structures; “the flames of the candle” and “patches of black permeating in flashes of white” are modifier-noun structures; “thin, wrinkled and parched” is a complex structure, “greyish pieces” is a subject-predicate structure; “blended into the tea” is a verb-complement structure; “for me to swallow” is a concurrent structure. Using five grammatical structures in six word groups is Wen’s intention to show how a string of four-character word groups can achieve the effects of brevity, coherence and the liveliness of a language. The sense of movement is very strong in the last sentence; this feeling was created by using verb-complements that appeared in succession. The following five verb-complements, “to leave immediately”, “stumbled and rushing out”, “slammed loudly”, “crashed onto the ground” and “still trembling” create strong dramatic effects and lively images. Such dynamic language had effectively revealed the narrator’s turbulent inner emotions. In short, Wen’s employment of a dynamic language to expose how contradictions are produced in emotions and how the form and content are integrated seamlessly. “My wry smile” and “in a body of mud and dirt”, the readers can find an echo in each other; the first word group paints the facial expression of the

conflicts of the main narrator, while the second describes the blossoms of azalea as the symbolic identity of the main narrator. The noumenon (本体) and the metaphor objects possess the same fate which intensifies the complexities of expression.

The allusions that are used in this piece of prose, such as “golden phoenix”, “pavilion”, “ancient seal”, and “copper stove incense” exude classical fragrance.

“Subtle Fragrance” (1977) and “Face Scepter” (1977) deal with “the voices of the hundreds of thousands of ‘married women’ who are scattered around the world” (Yang, 2004, p.319). It is a great theme, it bears witness to the historical reality of ‘the spiritual werewolves’ who admire and revere the source of Chinese culture for generations and yet are forced to live outside this cultural sphere. Wen combines the idea of elegance, subtlety, vagueness, solemnity and other modernist techniques such as musicality, stream of consciousness, symbolism, the density and elasticity of the written word to deal with these gigantic themes. These two pieces of prose have successfully helped to disseminate the characteristics and techniques of modernist prose. Although many allusions were used, in terms of style, both pieces neither belong to the works of classicism nor neoclassicism. On the whole, both pieces of prose possess strong modernist tendencies, particularly in language refinement and purification and structural construction. Basically they encompass the lyrical and romantic inclination, not the rigidity of modernism. At the same time, the syntactic aspects of the sentences are refined naturally and extemporaneously. Such a technique of writing has undoubtedly provided a role model for Mahua modernist prose writers.

“Enquire Heaven” and “Precious Oath” belong to another category of prose. The language used was ‘classical vernacular’; the circumstance was associated with Qu Yuan, the great ancient poet. Using Qu Yuan as a substitute of the writer, Wen is in fact writing about his very own anguish, his state of mind is likened to a solitary minister at court and a perverse son. “Enquire Heaven” used rhetorical questions throughout, one question after another with a total of 32 questions. It was not segmented into paragraphs and thus produced an overwhelming linguistic atmosphere that created tension for the readers. The content was multifaceted with unanswerable questions that dealt with ideals, realities and dilemmas of life. For instance:

Towards the sky, I lifted my head and let out a battle cry. The rustling dust falling from the roof was the only response, how could you continue saying that you could care less. The wind howled, the wolf yipped, the horse neighed, the monkey cried, the unscrupulous hero wept aloud, how could you continue to cover your ears? The general was available, the soldiers were not; the sword was at hand, the person was not; how could you perpetuate a lawless world? The wife was innocent, the baby was weak. The wife defended you adoringly, the baby’s babble made you smile. Oh, how could you continue to be heroic? (Wen, 1977, p.230)

The arrangement of the questions above has obviously been designed by Wen with the intention to create a dense and well- knit effect.

A thorough reading will reveal that many of the sentences in “Enquire Heaven” are cited from the questions of ancient classics. For instance, the questions such as ‘the fields laid waste’ from the 2nd sentence, ‘friends came from afar, such a happy moment’

from the 5th sentence; ‘you cannot see the ancients in the front’ from the 9th sentence; ‘towards the sky, I lifted my head and let out a battle cry’ from the 10th sentence; ‘to Confucius, it’s benevolence, to Mencius, it’s justice’ from the 14th sentence; ‘the fields laid waste’ from the 24th sentence; ‘for ten years the living and the dead were both ignorant of each other’ from the 26th sentence; and ‘this is not Gaixia, this is not Wujiang’ from the 29th sentence. Some sentence structures are taken from Yuan poetry such as ‘The wife was innocent, the baby was weak. The wife defended you adoringly, the baby’s babble made you smile. Oh, how could you continue to be heroic?’ There is nothing unusual with such arrangements; in fact they bring about familiarity.

“Messy Hair Fluttering in the Wind” is in itself an independent entity. It is one of the most important pieces in this anthology. Generically, it could be placed under poetry or prose, Yang Shengqiao calls it a piece of prosaic poetry. In other words, Wen attempts to break the categorization of the genres. Such a bold attempt was a manifestation of the experimental spirit of modernism. He applied poetic structure to write this piece of prose and the whole piece is like a long poem. Such a statement could be linked to the contention of Wang Wenxing, who argued that,

It is important to learn from poetry in order to revitalize the language of prose of today. Poetry is the aristocrat of literature; our prose is in dire need of an infusion of such noble blood (Wang, 1968, p.22).

Thus the most significant key to categorize this piece of literary work as a piece of poetry or a piece of prose would depend on what Wen has termed as the “poetic structure”.

The researcher has the opinion that “poetic structure” means the sentences of the article have a logical and coherent relationship; they are linked with conjunctions that produce a clear and unambiguous meaning, which is a prosaic structure. However, when each and every sentence of that article exists independently, the relationship between the sentences cannot be seen from the text, instead the intricate relationship can only be perceived subtly, that is the poetic structure.

Sentences in “Messy Hair Fluttering in the Wind” can be classified as periodic sentences. The main characteristic of these sentences is the appearance of an emphatic climax at the end of these sentences which will evoke the interest of the readers. For example:

This is the age of materialistic dissatisfaction and spiritual inadequacy. Of all the musical instruments the symphonic music of Igor Stravinsky and Leonard Berstein display, zither and lute are non-existent; the art of Qi Rushan and Mei Lanfang is a pursuit of the gradual silence of the classical; there is not much of the cultural East in the precise composition of Zhao Wuji. As the darkness of night falls into the greedy hours; you are consciously awake burning yourself and rhythmically polishing, refining poetry; reciting your poem coolly and naturally, in the eyes of those whose phonographs are blasting away, you are just sick... (Wen, 1977, p.42)

Superficially, it can be seen that the sentences above are each independent and unrelated to each other, to quote Lai Ruihe, it is “an independent door, opens and closes rhythmically” (Lai, 1971, p.26). There is no logical coherence between the self-independent sentences, like the sentences of modernist poetry, there is an internal

linkage between the lines, overall it looks more like a long poem, the sentences open and close intermittently, it ends with “is sick” as the last sentence with suspense. Yet something is hidden in each of these sentences, when it opens and before you could see it clearly, it closes again, it is thus shrouded in mystery.

Technically, dramatic monologue has been applied in “Messy Hair Fluttering in the Wind”. The ‘you’ in the essay is in fact the narrator; the protagonist has a split personality, from the point of psycho analysis, this is a dialogue of the hearts. Monologue, according to theories of drama, is a process where the characters in the play, alone on the stage, expose their secrets to the audience. For instance, the few scenes of monologue in Shakespeare’s Hamlet exposed the inner world of Hamlet, his conflicts, concerns and anxieties. Dramatic effect is an important element of plays. A dramatic context can only be created when there are two interacting persons on the stage. When the two are placed beside each other, we come to understand that there are two interacting persons, which is very dramatic. Then we realize that they are dialogues of the hearts, they are like soliloquy. This is the ingenuity of Wen. This piece of prose used dramatic techniques creatively. In the Mahua literary arena of the 70s, such an innovative approach had indeed played an exemplary role.

In terms of imagery, “messy hair” is the main imagery; it also plays a symbolic role. This imagery has been elevated to the status of primitive cult, which can be used to avoid being “torn and eaten by the black queer bird” and to ignore “a little melody that could arouse passionate feelings”. For instance:

Only you were still alive, your messy hair drifted like the clouds in the pale courtyard, you made three screams, that alien voice was as shrill as a

weeping mandrill; enough to rock the ghost of the furious Qu Yuan underground tens of thousands li away. Rising steadily, all the leaves had fallen; all that you could see was an image of coldness and stillness (Wen, 1977, p.42-43).

This paragraph is scary and frightening; the whole essay is thus shrouded in an eerie and ghostly atmosphere. “Messy hair” is symbolic. We cannot help but ask why the “you” in the essay kept long hair? Is it because “that is the only freedom?” What does freedom refer to here? If “messy hair” symbolizes an attitude of perseverance, a non-religious belief, then, both “messy hair” and the bullfighter’s braids will have similar functions. The latter keeps the braids for the loss of pride and victory; the former keeps the messy hair for freedom and to avoid “being torn and eaten by the black queer bird” and to ignore ornaments that produce “a little melody that could arouse passionate feelings.”

“Messy Hair Fluttering in the Wind” also used some of the popular techniques of modernist literature, such as the annihilation of personality, a state of the greater self or the invisible self. The ‘you’ in the text is no longer a small entity, he is the spokesperson of modernity; what the narrator says or describes is the experience and the reality of the larger self. It would be true to say that the narrator in the text has a few dramatic dialogues with his soul, exposing the spiritual problems of the modern men: “That is so, so very boring and frustrated, they are physically in the 1920s but in reality their bellies point toward the sky and the universe, their tower of spirituality has crashed.” Such lines reveal one of the focuses of the essay: modern men are being attacked by modern civilization and only to find out at last that the tower of spirituality is no longer useful.

Another piece of prose, “Yige Quanyuan” (<一个全圆>, “A Full Circle”), is about the writer’s marriage. There is a special emphasis on its musicality; the modulation of the tones in the text has turned it into a piece of wedding march:

Music was everywhere, I walked into the hall and you took my right arm. My sparkling leather shoes stepped on the smooth rectangular bricks, I walked on a road I had never travelled before. Music was everywhere, the strings were strumming, the organs were playing, and the flutes were whistling, they were all greeting me; while you took my right arm, I could feel the warm hanging in my arms through your little catkins-like hand in a white glove (Wen, 1977, p.114).

Yang Shengqiao has convincingly argued that “one not only needs the eyes to see but also the ears to hear” in order to appreciate this piece of prose. “A Full Circle” is about a marriage, the connotation, word quality and musicality are its unique characteristics. The repetition of “Music was everywhere” is like the repetition of the theme of a musical score, the whole paragraph is made up of two sets of rhymes. The first set is made up of ‘i, u’, the second set is made up of ‘an, ang’. The ‘qi’ (起, rise) and ‘bi’ (臂, arm) of the first sentence, the ‘qi’ (起, rise), ‘ju’ (聚, gather) and ‘bi’ (臂) are continuous rhyming or alternate–line rhyming. The other set of rhyming first uses alternate-line rhyming then continuous rhyming, ‘tang’ (堂, hall), ‘zhuan’ (砖, bricks), ‘shang’ (上, above) appear in the first sentence; ‘cuan’ (窜, running), ‘wan’ (挽, hold), ‘nuan’ (暖, warm), and ‘bang’ (膀, shoulder) appear in the second sentence where alternate rhyming is used. Both sets of rhymes blend into a harmonic series of sound that is similar to symphonic music.

Reading this piece of prose will generally produce a sense of consummate happiness. This is one of the most experimental and the most musical pieces of Wen's prose. "Music was everywhere" is repeated four times, the theme runs through the whole text, the repetition of sentences intertwines and merges into a symphony of words.

To end the discussion of this section, an extract from Wen's view on the writing of *A Full Circle* is given below:

"A Full Circle" is one of my most experimental and the most musical pieces of prose. It is written after my marriage and honeymoon. Statements such as "we will form a coalition government without quarrels and election campaigns." The repetition and the interwoven sentences have created a symphonic poem, the four repetitive "music was everywhere" is its motif (Wen, 1977, p.283).

To promote and disseminate modernist prose, Wen has deliberately applied the common techniques of modernism to write prose. For instance, "The Tired Horse", collected in the second part of *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, uses the stream of consciousness, a popular technique of the modernist novelists. The whole text focuses on the thoughts of a young girl and the flow of her stream of consciousness. The technique employed by Wen was rather simple; the gap of time and space is not very obvious and is relatively easy to understand. More importantly, Wen tried to demonstrate that prose writers could learn from modernist novels, using the technique of a stream of consciousness to write prose.

Another piece of prose that uses symbolic technique, a technique of the modernist novelists, is “This is September”. The line ‘this is September’ appears in almost every paragraph, at the first line or the middle of a paragraph. A close reading will reveal that ‘*September*’ refers not to the real month of the year but to a symbol. The following lines tell more than the images of the real scene:

These old shops caught my attention, because they walked towards me slowly and creepily. Each and every old shop was waiting for me to walk into its widely-opened mouth. I did not do so and so they scrutinized me, they stared at me from left and right, they gazed at me from the front (Wen, 1977, p.117).

The two streets mentioned above do not suggest that they are the real thing but just the point of entry of the writer’s imagination. The shops, the street scenes of this street, are just symbols. The holes of the tar road described in the text, military trucks that came and went, the shops that ‘walked towards me slowly and creepily’ are uncomfortable scenes. They created a chaotic and dreamy atmosphere with a little nervousness. This is the application of symbolism, though it is imperfect, it carries an air of psychoanalysis.

Movie-making techniques can also be applied in writing of prose. Wen Renping has some knowledge of movie-making techniques and has written an article entitled “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry”. The techniques of translocation of sound and form are used in the prose “Shan de Langman” (<山的浪漫>, “Romance in the Mountains”). This piece of prose does not emphasize the spirit of word experimentation. It begins with a dialogue: “Is this a

mountain?” What follows is a description of how the bus moves up the mountain. Then another dialogue: “This is a high mountain?” “I have no idea; I have not been here before.” Soon, the scene is moved towards a group of people hiking on the mountain. Next is another dialogue, “Are we in the mountain?” “I think so.” Further down, the camera lens turns to the showdown in the story, the protagonist is stepping on a piece of driftwood and passing through the marsh; the background is “a secretive thick undergrowth, prickly weeds and interlaced branches.” This attempt is a breakthrough in the techniques of prose writing. Wen completed “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry” in the 70s, he was familiar with such techniques. When he applied these techniques in writing of a prose, he brings in a lot of surprises.

There are many more pieces of prose worth mentioning in *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, Wen’s anthology of prose. For example pieces such as “Kuala Lumpur”, “Huiguan” (<会馆>, “The Association”), and “Dangpu” (<当铺>, “The Pawn Shop”), where Wen attempts to experiment the plasticity of the Chinese characters, he integrated the sublime words with profound meanings into his prose. In “Hao Xuesheng” (<好学生>, “Good Student”), he injects into it the air of ridicule satire with cynical tendencies.

Undoubtedly, Wen has made tremendous efforts to disseminate modernist prose through his creative writing. Wen’s diversified skills are exemplified in his works of different types and styles. These works have indeed provided an exciting impetus into the Mahua literary arena of the 70s. The prose of the 70s was very straightforward, well-organized, too realistic and un-impressionistic. It was Wen’s intention to provide some form of examples, to stimulate the Mahua literary arena that was dominated by

the realist, in a way, Wen has achieved his purpose. At that time the Mahua literary arena was in dire need of a vigorous visionary modernist writer with a mission to put in his heart and soul into the dissemination of modernist prose that none but Wen Renping could give.

5.4.4 The Influence of Wen Renping on the Dissemination of Mahua Modernist Literature

The influence of Wen Renping on the dissemination of Mahua modernist literature can be seen from two main levels: the internal and the external levels. Internally, his influence involves his students and members of the Sirius Poetical Society; externally, his influence involves the Mahua literary arena and Mahua writers.

In the writing of modernist poem and prose, he started in the early 1970s when he was exposed to modernism through some copies of *Chun Wenxue* (《纯文学》, *The Pure Literature*). What is unique in his articles was that he added Chineseness, making them localized and created a kind of stylistics with personal flavour, called “The Chineseness Modernism” by Huang Jinshu (黄锦树). This element can be seen in his poems and prose. The exertion of the exile theme, the cultural symbol and meaning, made his poems unique. His prose pieces such as “The Moon with Yellow Skin”, “Subtle Fragrance”, “Face Scepter”, “Enquire Heaven” and “Precious Oath” are dealing with the theme of Chineseness.

This kind of stylistics with nostalgia in his poems and prose pieces had influenced the members of the society. Members like Wen Ruian, Fang Ezhen, Huang Hunxing, and Zhou Qingxiao were all influenced by Wen Renping, because many of

their poems also portrayed the theme of Chineseness but in different methods. For the younger members who had poems collected in the *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, for instance, there were also the theme of Chineseness in the poems of Zhang Shulin, Shen Chuanxin, Yin Jianbo, Chen Yueye, Zheng Rongxiang (郑荣香), Lan Wei (蓝薇) and Dong Zhu (冬竹). Of course, it is natural for the president of a society to have impact on the society members. However, in the *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*, 23 poets' work had been collected. Out of 23, 16 (69.6%) of the poets chose Chineseness as the theme for their poems.

The percentage of young poets who chose this theme was very high. The 16 poets never gathered together to discuss what to be written in their poems. They all chose the theme of Chineseness and this may be due to the influence of society, but more was due to the elements of Chineseness found in the poems and prose of Wen Renping.

Wen Renping was a secondary school teacher. Whenever he was transferred to a school, he would look for potential society members and encourage them to write modernist poem. In 1972, Wen was transferred to Dato Sagor Secondary School in Langkap, Perak. In this school, he brought in more than ten new members and all of them were able to write poems after his training and became some of the potential young poets of Malaysia. These members include Yin Chengfeng (殷乘风), Huang Haiming (黄海明), Lin Qiuyue (林秋月), Chen Yueye (陈月叶), Ling Rulang (凌如浪), Ou Zhiren (欧志仁), Ou Zhicai (欧志才) and others. Lin Qiuyue, at the age of 15, won the first prize in the First Malaysian Modernist Poetry Competition. The other members, though they did not win any award, the poems of Yin Chenfeng, Huang

Haiming, Lin Qiuyue and Chen Yueye, were collected in the *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*. Poems of Ou Zhicai, Ou Zhiren and the other members were collected in *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*.

In 1980, Wen Renping was transferred to Pei Yuan Secondary School in Kampar. In this school, he was appointed as the advisor of the Chinese Society. Through his effort and influence, numerous students: Lin Ruoyin (林若隱), Cheng Kexin (程可欣), Xu Yixiang (徐一翔), Chen Silou (陈似楼), Zheng Yuelei (郑月蕾), Yuan Zuanyin (袁钻音), Lin Mingzhi (林明智), Wu Huanmu (吴缓慕), Liao Qianxin (廖牵心), Wu Jiexin (吴结心), Wu Xiangxiang (吴想想), Qiu Chuifeng (丘翠凤), Zhang Zhiqiang (张志强), You Junhao (游俊豪) and etc. started writing poems. Among these students, Lin Ruoyin and You Junhao later won the first prize in modernist poetry section of the Huazong Literary Awards, organized by *Sin Chew Daily*.

In 1989, the Sirius Poetical Society stopped all its activities. Members were scattered in different parts of Malaysia and some even went overseas to pursue their higher education. Most of them stopped writing, some kept on but on the whole, the number of poems had dropped drastically. Some of them such as Wen Renping and Xie Chuancheng, wrote literary criticism. They have one similar subject of study, which is the Sirius Poetical Society.

It was puzzling that even though the Sirius Poetical Society was influential and had organized many types of literary activities in the 1970s and 1980s, only very few people really knew about the society. Its members were interested in literary writing and published poems in *Chao Foon Monthly* and *The Students' Weekly*. From the end

of the 1970s, Wen Renping started writing articles concerning the Sirius Poetical Society. More and more secrets were revealed and the most informative one came from Wen's conference paper presented in the Mahua Modernist Conference in 2012, organized by University of Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

Actually, Wen Renping started writing essays on Sirius Poetical Society in the 1970s. These articles, some are about the special discussion on the society, some touched a little on the society when discussing other relevant topics.

Table 5.2: List of Articles on Sirius Poetical Society by Wen Renping

| No. | Titles of Articles | Publication Details |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | “Yishuc Caoshou yu Wenhua Lixiang---Xu Tianlangxing Shixuan” (<艺术操守与文化理想---序《天狼星诗选》>, “Artistic Integrity and Cultural Ideal: Preface to <i>The Sirius Anthology of Poems</i> ”) | <i>Chao Foon Monthly</i> , Issue 321, December 1979, p. 102-115. |
| 2. | “Tianlangxing Shishe: Shenhua Wangguo de Xingshuai” (<天狼星诗社：“神话王国模式”的兴衰>, “The Sirius Poetical Society: The Rise and Fall of a Mystical Kingdom Mode”) | <i>Nanyang Xiang Pau</i> , 20-8-1989 |
| 3. | “Tianlangxing Shishe yu Mahua Xiandai Wenxue Yundong” (<天狼星诗社与马华现代文学运动>, “The Sirius Poetical Society and the Mahua Modernist Literature Movement”) | Jiang M.H.(1999).(ed.) <i>Mahua Wenxue de Xin Jiedu---Mahua Wenxue Guoji Xueshu Yantaohui Lunwen Ji</i> (《马华文学的心解读---马华文学国际学术研讨会论文集》, <i>A New Perspective in Decoding Mahua Literature---Collection of Seminar Papers Presented in the International Conference on Mahua Literature</i>), organised by The Federation of Alumni Associations of Taiwan Universities |

Table 5.2 (continued)

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 4. | “1970 Niandai de Wenxue Xingdong Zhuyi---Cong <i>Wenxue Qihuan Tanqi</i> ” (<1970 年代的文学行动主义---从《文学七环》谈起>, “The Literary Actionism in 1970s: Further Discussion after The Seven Ring in Literature”) | <i>Sin Chew Daily</i> , 9-2-2003. |
| 5. | “1980 Niandai de Wenxue Zhagen Gongcheng---Tianlangxing Shish de Juese Banyan” (<1980 年代的文学扎根工程---天狼星诗社的角色扮演>, “The Literary Foundation Laying Project: The Role of Sirius Poetical Society”) | <i>Sin Chew Daily</i> , 23-2-2003. |
| 6. | “Cong Beijin Xiangxiang dao Tui er Jiewang: Tianlangxing Shishe de Yeshi Biguan” (<从北进想像到退而结网: 天狼星诗社的野史稗官>, “From Northern Imagination to Retreating Webs: The Unofficial History of Sirius Poetical Society”) | In Li Shuzhi, Xin Jinshun. (2015). <i>Shidai, Dianlv, Bentuxing: Mahua Xiandiashi Lunshu</i> (《时代、典律、本土性: 马华现代诗论述》, <i>Epoch, Canon, and Localization: Collected Essays on Comtemporary Sinophone Malaysian Poetry</i>) Kajang: Institute of Chinese Studies, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, p.83-112. |

These six articles can be divided into two categories. The first category consists of four articles which explained the objectives, principles of forming the Sirius Poetical Society, and also the role of the society. The other two articles are in the second category. They are more academic inclined. The first article “The Sirius Poetical Society and the Mahua Modernist Literature Movement” discussed the role of the Sirius Poetical Society in the development Mahua Modernist Literature and also the activities organized by the Society. The second article “From Northern Imagination to Retreating Webs: The Unofficial History of Sirius Poetical Society” revealed some of the secrets of the society, the development of the society and also the relationship between the society and the Shenzhou Poetical Society in Taiwan.

To understand the Sirius Poetical Society, one must read the article “Artistic Integrity and Cultural Ideal: Preface to *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*”. This article consists of five parts which discussed the various aspects of the society’s establishment. They rejected the contemporary view of literature that it is only a propaganda tool; literature is just the reflection of class consciousness. At the same time, it narrated in detail the different activities, the special training programs in writing, and also the purpose of publishing different kinds of books and special issues. Anyone who wants to know about Sirius Poetical Society, he must read this informative article. The other two conference papers were also very informative. The first article “The Sirius Poetical Society and the Mahua Modernist Literary Movement”, discussed in detail the relation between the Sirius Poetical Society and the Mahua Modernist Literary Movement. The topics were clearly analysed and materials provided were first-hand information. The second article was even more concrete and interesting in terms of content. It revealed many things that were unknown to the public. Together with the preface to *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*, these three articles had supplied all the information which are useful to readers and researchers, and also created a direction to carry out studies on the developments of the Sirius Poetical Society. `

In the dissemination of literary criticism, Wen’s influence is also far-reaching. His anthology of poetry criticism, *The Elegant Tripod* has influenced a few young literary critics from local and Taiwan.

Zhang Guangda’s interest in the writing of critical pieces on the appreciation of modernist poems was obviously developed after he had read Wen Renping’s interpretation of poetry and modernist poems. He was a student of the University of Malaya; incidentally he came across *The Elegant Tripod* in the East Asian Library. He

was very surprised that a Mahua critic could produce such excellent pieces of literary criticism. Zhang began his career as a literary critic of modernist poetry and has established himself as one of the most prominent critics in the Mahua literary arena.

Xie Chuancheng, a Mahua literary critic, only began writing literary critical essays, especially critical essays on interpretation of modernist poetry after reading *The Elegant Tripod*. Xie published *Interpretation of Modernist Poetry*, *The Literary Scenery of Xie Chuancheng* and *Moods of Modernist Poetry* after relentless efforts of many years. Li Shuzhi, a lecturer from University Tunku Abdul Rahman, has commented, “*The Elegant Tripod* of Wen Renping has been Xie’s first teacher in literary theories. Wen’s influence has extended outside Malaysia, Professor Li Ruiteng, a Taiwanese scholar, was inspired by the poetical criticism of *The Elegant Tripod*” (Li, 2014, p.4).

Wen’s influence was far-reaching, Li Ruiteng, a professor from The Central University of Taiwan, admitted that in writing literary criticism, he was inspired by Wen Renping:

I understand literary criticism can be divided into critical theory and practical criticism, and practical criticism should contain two different levels, one is interpretation, the other one is evaluation; but in actual practice it is difficult to differentiate. In 1976, I was then a master student in the Department of Chinese Studies, started to interpret modernist poetry, later I published my articles in a special column of poetry interpretation in a magazine *Zhuanhua Wenyi* (《中华文艺》, *Chinese Literature*), edited by

Zhang Mo (张默), but my concept about poetry interpretation was actually inspired by Wen Renping (Li, 2014, p.4).

He then stressed that,

In October 1976, Ya Xian(痙弦) and Mei Xin (梅新) edited a book entitled *Shixue Di'er Ji* (《诗学》第二辑, *Poetics*, the Second Issue) published Wen Renping's article "Zhi Ya Xian Shu"(<致痙弦书>, "Letter to Ya Xian")(written in October 1975), the subtitle of that article was "Tan Shi de Quanshi"(谈诗的诠释'On the Interpretation of Poetry', in the article, the interpretation of poetry was categorized into four types, namely (i) Interpreting a poem word by word, sentence by sentence, (ii) Interpreting a poem from a unique angle, (iii) Discuss in detail on the most obvious characteristic or certain specialty, (iv) Compare with another poem with appropriate similarity or an entirely different poem. That article, from theory to method, supported with practical examples, has really inspired me a lot, enabled me being understand what I am doing, and what can be done when encounter different poems (Li, 2014, p.4).

5.5 Concluding Remarks

There is no qualm about Wen Renping's great contributions towards the dissemination of modernist prose. His attempt to construct the theoretical part of modernist prose is well-intentioned. He practices what he preaches, through his prosaic pieces, he has thus demonstrated the multiple creative techniques of writing modernist prose and by doing so his works on prose have achieved exceptional heights of quality.

Two third of the works in *The Moon with Yellow Skin*, express a sorrowful tone. Confronting an alien culture and a realistic environment, dwelling in a small room and studying in isolation, and perhaps these experiences have produced such a restless and disturbed mind. From these pieces, it can be seen that reading was not an enjoyment to Wen, it was a torture. Through his reading, Wen's literary ideas changed and transformed, ironically, reading has been a great torment to his heart and soul.

To cope with the shortages of realistic life and his spiritual anxiety, Wen has cited many words of wisdom of numerous literary giants such as Henri Heine, James Joyce, Yu Guangzhong, Zhang Ailing, Hemingway, Eliot, Tennessee Williams, William Frost etc. in his works; he has also touched on the symphonic music of Stravinsky and Bernstein, the art of Qi Rushan and Mei Lanshan, the philosophical insights of Andre Gide, Santayana and Hegel. The citations reflect a mobilization of the power of knowledge and a reinforcement of the ideology that Wen wanted to preach. Wen's lyrical prose is infused with a balance of knowledge and could be categorized as the lyrical prose of lofty aspirations, a very unique feature of his prosaic work.

Wen Renping started writing poetry in 1963, and he is still writing today. He has been writing poetry for more than half a century. During these years, he did not write poetry only, he also wrote modernist prose, literary criticism and more importantly, he shouldered the responsibility to promote Mahua Modernist literature in Mahua Literary arena. His continuous perseverance and hardwork was recognized when he was awarded the Literary Award (Literature Section) by The Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society in 2010.

This chapter discussed the various methods employed by Wen Renping in disseminating modernist poetry and prose from 1970s to 1980s. He has indeed put in a lot of effort in promoting Mahua Modernist Literature and he also acted as a protector of Mahua Modernist Literature. He was always one of earliest respondents to attacks on Mahua Modernist Literature by the Realistic Group of writers. Due to his performance in writing different literary genres, and his concern for Mahua Modernist Literature, he was called the “Local Yu Guangzhong”.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Yu Guangzhong is a Taiwan modern writer who has published more than 40 books of poems, prose and literary criticism. He was one of the “fighter” and “protector” of modern literature in Taiwan. In 1960s and 70s, modern literature in Taiwan was also criticized by other group of writers. Yu Guangzhong was one of modern writers who was always in the front row to encounter incoming attacks. Wen Renping performed the role of Yu Guangzong in Malaysia, and therefore was called the local Yu Guangzhong.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The main purpose of the present study is to analyse the means/modes of the dissemination of Modernist Mahua Literature. More specifically, the aim is therefore, to find out the process of dissemination of Modernist Mahua Literature from 1959 to 1989. And finally the study addresses how the various media of dissemination played their respective roles for past three decades in the development of Modernist Mahua Literature.

This study was carried out with the following four specific objectives:

- (i) the ways and means through which the *Chao Foon Monthly* disseminated modernist literature from the end of 1950s to the end of 1980s;
- (ii) the efforts taken by the Sirius Poetical Society (1972-1989) in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature in the 1970s and 1980s after its development from 1973 to 1989 has been outlined;
- (iii) the different strategies adopted by the modern writers and also *Chao Foon* editors Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian, in disseminating Mahua Modernist Literature; and
- (iv) the role played by Wen Renping and his contribution in disseminating modernist literature from 1973 to 1989.

Mahua Literature has an inseparable link between Chinese classical, modern literature. It is an indisputable fact that Chinese literature had been the source of Mahua literature. From an early age (7 years old), Malaysian Chinese students have gone through a primary education system where Chinese is the medium of instruction. They begin to learn classical poetry and prose in their secondary schools. Literary works of the new Chinese literature are included in their Chinese Language textbooks.

Thus, it is highly likely that most of the Chinese students have some form of access to contemporary Chinese literature and are familiar with writers such as He Qifang, Xu Zhimo, Zhu Ziqing and Lu Xun.

In the 1990s, in secondary Chinese textbooks, some Chinese literary works of well-known Mahua writers were incorporated and thus students were aware of Mahua literature, Mahua writers and how they were inseparably linked with Chinese literature. One of the Wen Renping's articles entitles "The Meaning and Future Development of Mahua Modernist Literature---A Historical Retrospect and Prospect" was also selected as a specified text in the Chinese Curriculum of the teachers' training colleges. "Wuzhe" (<舞者>, "The Dancer"), was one of the specified texts of the Chinese Language subject of the pre-university course. Another poem "Dangran bushi Gankui" (<当然不是感喟>, "Of course it is not Lament") was collected in Form Five Secondary Chinese Textbook. His prose "Anxiang" (<暗香>, "Subtle Fragrance") is chosen as one of the modern literary texts in the course of Chinese Competency VI, Department of Malaysian Languages and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. For articles of other Mahua writers, it is accessible to refer to Secondary Chinese Textbooks since 1990.

This chapter will summarise the findings of the study and conclude with recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary of Findings

There are altogether six major findings. This study teases out the influences of literature from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong on Mahua literature.

It is an undeniable fact that there is a closely intertwined link between Mahua Literature and Chinese Literature in Mainland China. It is also true to claim that the emergence of Mahua Literature is the product of a direct influence of the New Literary Movement of Mainland China. However, it is also true to take note of the indisputable influence of the classical Chinese literature. Mahua writers first came into contact with classical Chinese prose and poems during their primary education. They gained further exposure to classical Chinese literature during their secondary education. Perhaps it is this close encounter with Chinese literature that has inspired their literary creativity.

When classical Chinese was shifted to vernacular language with the emergence of the New Literature and Modernist Literature in China, the vernacular language, which is a language of daily usage, exerted an immense influence on the local Chinese students of Malaya. For instance, Qiu Mei (丘梅), a Mahua poet, wrote numerous poems with form resembling the dried bean curd (豆腐干). This kind of poems was called poems of the “doufugan” or dried bean curd poem (豆腐干体诗). This was Qiu Mei’s typical products due to the influence of the Chinese New Poetry. Zhen Gong (甄供), a Mahua essayist, was greatly influenced by Lu Xun’s satirical essays. He is another good example of Mahua writer who was greatly influenced by Chinese modernist writers.

In short, Mahua writers, who had been immersed in modernist and classical Chinese literature through the Chinese education system in Malaysia, were groomed to their literary careers since their secondary school years. This is the most obvious of the influence of Chinese literature on Mahua literature.

It was also found and confirmed in this study that Mainland China had provided the major literary resources for Mahua writers. However, in the 1960s, China closed its doors and broke all the links with the external world. China stopped exporting literary books to Malaysia. Subsequently, Mahua writers turned to Hong Kong and Taiwan in search of literary resources and supplements. Xu Shu (徐速) the Hong Kong novelist, and Li Kuang (力匡) the poet, took over the place of the writers from Mainland China and became very influential to the local writers in Malaysia. Members of the Sirius Poetical Society of the 1970s, in a little town in Malaysia could only buy *Dangdai Wenyi* (《当代文艺》, *Contemporary Literature*), a literary magazine edited by Xu Shu of Hong Kong, or Xu Shu's novels and Li Kuang's poetry collections. Li's poems have exerted some influence on the early poems of Wen Renping too, who was then the president of the Sirius Poetical Society.

The study finds out that the greatest literary influence on Mahua modernist literature came from Taiwan modernist literature. Mahua modernist literature is not the product of a direct influence from the Western modernist literature, instead it is through an indirect influence that is through Taiwan. From the works of Mahua modernist literature, it is apparent that Mahua modernist literature is inspired and influenced by Taiwan modernist literature. For instance, He Qiliang, a Mahua modernist poet, and Liu Guide, a poet from East Malaysia, are influenced by Yu Guangzhong's poetry. The late You Chuan or Zi Fan was influenced by the works of the members of the Li Poetical Society from Taiwan. Si Cai, a Mahua prose writer, is influenced by Ye Shan's prose. Li Tianbao, a short story writer, is influenced by Zhang Ailing. It is more precise to mention that Zhang Ailing who was a writer from Mainland China, however, most of her works were published in Taiwan and later distributed in Malaysia. Li Shuzhi (李树枝), in his detailed analysis of the influence of Yu Guangzhong on Wen

Renping, had stated that Wen Renping was deeply inspired by Yu Guangzhong's poetry.

It is found that there are three main media actively involved in the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua Literature, that are the *Chao Foon Monthly*, the Sirius Poetical Society, and literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping.

Chao Foon Monthly, the literary monthly played a vital role in the development of Ma Hua modernist literature. Its enormous influence on the development of Mahua modernist literature is undisputable.

In the later part of 1950s, *Chao Foon Monthly* initiated the reformation of new poetry and set off the movement of rebellious literature. It promoted and disseminated modernistic literature incessantly. The most obvious outcome was that revolutionary concepts of literature in the early stage were propagated through the dissemination of literary theories and the publication of collections of modernist poems. The influence of modernist literature from Taiwan and also the dissemination of modernist literature were firmly established. In August 1969, Chen Ruixian joined the editorial board of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He revolutionized editorial policies, published special editions on Western modernist literature and modernist writers, and special issues on different genres of literature. Once again, he pushed these changes through and steered a progressive stable development in Mahua modernist literature. His efforts brought along immense influences. Chen Ruixian left *Chao Foon Monthly* in December 1974; however, the editorial policies of *Chao Foon Monthly* were remained intact. Its objectives have never deviated from the propagation of modernist literature.

The influence of *Chao Foon Monthly* was enormous. Every successful Mahua modernist writer has been a subscriber of *Chao Foon Monthly* and has been publishing his or her literary works in this literary magazine. The special issues on Western modernist literature and Western modernist writers have accelerated the process of dissemination of modernist literature among the Mahua writers. The works of Mahua modernist writers gradually become more mature, the works collected in *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems* bear testimony to the success of modernist influences.

The contributions of *Chao Foon Monthly* towards the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua literature are summarized as follows:

- (i) The grooming of new writers: *Chao Foon Monthly* editors always give words of encouragement to those who publish their works in the magazine for the first time, at times the editors commented briefly on the strength of the writers' works, and even predicted the writers' future performance. Through these short words of encouragement, the young writers were greatly motivated.
- (ii) The launching of the movement of rebellious literature: this movement has greatly increased the momentum of modernist literary development.
- (iii) The import of Western modernist literature: the dissemination of concepts of modernist literature in Chinese literature has led local writers and readers into the amazing world of modernist literature. This has not only broadened the horizon of Mahua writers, but at the same time provided them with models of Western literary techniques.

The study has discovered that the Sirius Poetical Society has great influence and contribution to the emergence and development of Mahua Modernist. Thus, Chapter 3 of this study analyses the contributions of the Sirius Poetical Society in the 1970s as the bastion of Mahua modernist literature. From 1973 until it ceased all its literary activities in 1989, it had actively developed, promoted and disseminated modernist literature in Mahua literature. This chapter examines the different strategies of dissemination used by the Sirius Poetical Society in the 1970s and 1980s. It summarizes the various modes of dissemination and practices in detail: (a) through literary pieces; (b) through human interaction; (c) through lyrical songs; (d) through external aids in terms of funds to run literary activities from organizations such as the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society.

The greatest contribution of Sirius Poetical Society is the publications of three anthologies of poetry: (a) *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*: it is a collection of the works of 27 Mahua modernist poets. The poets come from both East and West Malaysia and can be considered as the most representative collection. (b) *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets*: it is a collection of the works of 23 young poets. Their works have not been collected in the first anthology and therefore can be considered as a serial to *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*. The number of poets that appear in these two collections total is 50. (c) *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*: this is the collection of poems of the members of a poetical society.

The contribution of the Sirius Poetical Society towards the development of Mahua modernist literature in general, and Mahua modernist poetry in particular, is immense through its 17 years of active propagation. For this very reason, Ye Xiao has

commented that the development of Mahua modernist poetry has entered into the Sirius Era in the 1970s.

Another very unique mode of dissemination employed by the Sirius Poetical Society is to turn modernist poems into lyrical songs. It is a mode that disseminates modernist literature through rhythmic melodies. This mode of dissemination is very effective. Poems that can be sung as songs are more attractive and popular. Cassettes of these lyrical songs that were produced were sold out within a short time. The dissemination of modernist poetry gathered momentum and became more effective. As Wen Renping said in the prologues of the cassettes, “the singing of modernist poems could be heard everywhere.” This cassette was popular with the high school students and eventually influenced students with musical background to compose lyrical songs based on poetry. This is the end result of the publication of cassettes of lyrical songs.

Another great contribution of the Sirius Poetical Society is that it has groomed many prominent Mahua modernist poets. The earlier batch of poets consists of Wen Ruian, Huang Hunxing, Lan Qiyuan, Zhou Qingxiao, and Fang Erzhen; the intermediate batch consists of Zhang Shulin, Chen Chuanxing, Lin Qiuyue, Dong Zhu, and Chen Yueye; the later batch of poets consists of Xie Chuancheng, Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, Zheng Yuerui, You Junhao, Chen Zhongming, and Chen Qianghua.

These prominent members continued to disseminate modernist literature in Mahua literature in their capacities as students, teachers or lecturers in various institutions of learning. For instance, Wen Ruian in Taiwan, Zhang Shulin in Teluk Intan, Xie Chuancheng from secondary school and teachers’ training colleges, Chen Zhongming from Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College, Cheng Kexin, Lin Ruoyin, and

Xu Yixiang from the University of Malaya. The Sirius Poetical Society has also indirectly facilitated the emergence of campus literature, university literary societies, and university literary activities such as the Literary Fortnight of University of Malaya.

Besides *Chao Foon Monthly* and the Sirius Poetical Society, writers, editors and literary critics have positive influences in the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua Literature.

Bai Yao is a poet who published “Silently Stands along the Muar River” in *The Students’ Weekly*, which was generally considered the first modernist poem in the Mahua literary arena. He also published “The Revolution of New Poetry”, “The Road of New Poetry” and “On Modernist Poetry” in *Chao Foon Monthly*. These articles launched the rebellious Literary Movement and initiated the development of Mahua modernist literature. Bai Yao also indulged himself in creative writing and published modernist poems. As the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, he fully intended to publish works of modernist poets of Taiwan, works of local poets and introductory pieces of Western modernist writers. His action speeded up the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua literature. He encouraged local poets to write modernist poems. He organized the publication of three collections of new poetry, *The Beautiful V Shape*, *Excursion to the Outskirts*, and *A Collection of Poems of Malaysian and Singapore Poets*.

The first two collections of poems were the works of Taiwanese and local poets published in 1959, while the poems collected in the third collection are all the works of Malaysian and Singaporean poets. It was published in 1969. From this shift in the selection of poets and their works for publication, it can be seen that the strategy of

literary dissemination used by *Chao Foon Monthly* has been very successful in the first ten years of its publication.

The next writer is Chen Ruixian, who is a very progressive modernist poet and a writer of modernist short story. His personal literary works gave the impression that modernist literature is not inaccessible as what the traditional realists have propagated. The majority of Chen's work is published in "Literature" and "Youth"; two literary supplements of newspapers edited by Xing Ying and Wan Yanjie. Chen's poems have motivated young writers to write modernist poetry. *The Giant*, Chen's collection of poetry is one of the major modernist collections in the early development of Ma Hua literature. In August 1969, he joined the editorial board of *Chao Foon Monthly*. He initiated the publication of a series of special issues that focused on Western modernist literature. These special issues created a new wave in the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua Literature.

The third significant writer is Wen Renping. Besides Bai Yao and Chen Ruixian, he is the most diligent and determined writer in promoting Mahua modernist literature. Wen first began writing modernist poems and critical essays on modernist poems after his encounters with Taiwan modernist literature in the 1970s. He was diligent in writing poems, prose and also literary criticism. By December 1989, he had published four anthologies of poetry, a collection of critical essays on modernist poems, three collections of critical essays on literature, two collection of prose. He edited *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *Mahua Literature*, and *Looking Back in Anger*. He was later appointed as the chief editor of *Anthology of Contemporary Mahua Literary Works*.

He is a tireless promoter of modernist literature. First, whenever modernist poetry was questioned and attacked, he responded with works of his modernist poems. He explained modernist poetry in his own way, interpreted many modernist poems piece by piece and step by step, leading his readers to explore and understand the intricacies of modernist poetry. Many of his critical essays are collected in *The Elegant Tripod*. He has also written an article “A Letter to Ya Xian” which summarises four methods of interpretation of modernist poems and describes the method he used to interpret them. He generously shared his views and hoped more writers would engage themselves in the writing of modernist poems. Wen Renping also tried to formulate theories of modernist poetry. “The Application of Techniques of Movie-Making in Chinese Modernist Poetry”, is Wen’s highly acclaimed article that pioneered “movie poetics” or “poetics of movie recording” as Luo Qing called it. This contribution was widely recognised. This piece of article has been collected in some of the major books on theoretical discussions of modernist poetry. This article was also collected in the authoritative publication, *An Introduction to Modernist Poetry: A Theoretical Discussion*. An article “On the Musicality and Limitations of Poetry” explored the creation of musicality in classical and modernist poems, its sound effects and limitations. This article used many modernist poems as examples to verify that modernist poetry also emphasises the aspect of musicality, and its rhythmic and tonal effects. The misconception that modernist poems have been criticised was lacking in rhythm and rhyme which are the focus of this article. Wen’s article is an attempt to correct this misconception.

Wen’s determined efforts eventually exerted immense influence. In the preface of *Daizhe Maozi Sixiang* (《戴着帽子思想》, *Thinking Hats*), Wen Renping’s anthology of poetry, Li Ruiteng, Professor of literature from Taiwan says “Wen writes

poems, he also interprets poems. His many pieces of articles in the 1970s such as ‘The Use of Movie-making Techniques in Chinese Modernist Poetry’ and ‘A Letter to Ya Xian’ have inspired my study on poetics” (Li, 2007, p.35).

In the preface to *Malaixiya Tianlangxing Shishe Chuangbanren: Wen Renping Zuopin Yanjiu* (《马来西亚天狼星诗社创办人温任平作品研究》, *The Founder of the Sirius Poetical Society Wen Renping: A Critical Study of his Literary Works*) by Xie ChuanCheng, Li once again mentioned how Wen has influenced and inspired him:

From my learning experience, I have come to understand that ‘literary criticism’ should be divided into ‘theoretical criticism’ and ‘practical criticism’. ‘Practical criticism’ should have two different levels, one focuses on ‘interpretation’, the other on ‘evaluation’. However, in true practice, it is difficult to make a clear demarcation. In 1976 while I was still pursuing my Master’s Degree in Chinese Studies at Huagang University, I began my study on the interpretation of modernist poems. Later, I wrote “The Interpretation of Poems”, a column published in *Zhonghua Literature* edited by Zhang Mo. It is Wen Renping who has inspired me the most (Li, 2014, p. 4).

Li continued,

In October 1976, Wen Renping’s article ‘A Letter to Ya Xian’, was published in the second issue of *Poetics* edited by Ya Xian and Mei Xin. The subtitle of the article was ‘On the interpretation of poetry’. This article classifies the interpretation of poetry into four categories:

- (i) Interpreting a poem word by word and sentence by sentence;
- (ii) Interpreting a poem from a unique perspective;
- (iii) Interpreting a poem based on its most obvious characteristics or on its most extraordinary quality;
- (iv) Comparing a poem with another poem that is very similar in style or completely different in style.

This article touches the aspects of theory and methodology and is supported by examples. It is indeed an extraordinary inspiration, like an old master giving enlightenment to his students was tremendously useful to me at that time, it has helped me to understand myself better and knowing what I am doing and what I should do when I face different types of poetry (Li, 2014, p.4).

The two paragraphs quoted above are the concrete and convincing evidence to assess the influence of Wen Renping. Li made a clear statement that his career as a literary critic was very much influenced by Wen Renping from Malaysia.

Xie Chuancheng (谢川成) is the second writer who has received immense influence from Wen Renping. After reading Wen's *The Elegant Tripod* in his secondary school days, Xie, as a member of the Sirius Poetical Society, has decided to become a literary critic. In the second year of his university days, he spent four months to complete his first book of literary criticism: *Xiandaishi Quanshi* (《现代诗诠释》, *The Interpretation of Modernist Poems*). He again published two collections of critical essays in 2010, namely the *Xin Chuancheng de Wenxue Fengjing* (《谢川成的文学风景》, *Literary Scenery of Xie Chuancheng*) and *Xiandaishi Xinqing* (《现代诗心情》,

Thoughts on Modernist Poetry). The styles of these two books are very similar to *The Elegant Tripod*.

Wen Renping is extremely meticulous when he writes modernist prose. He puts in tremendous efforts to disseminate modernist literature in prose writing too. On the dissemination of modernist prose, he uses two strategies, the first is his engagement in the writing of modernist prose, and the second is his writing of essays of critical appreciation of prose. He has written prefaces for many collections of prose of young writers. All these articles are included in three collections of critical essays, *Human Matters*, *Literature*, *Education*, *Culture*, and *Segmental Observations on Mahua Literature*.

All these articles by Wen Renping had successfully disseminated his ideas on the linguistic requirements, technical variation, and profound contents of modernist prose.

The following is a summary of Wen Renping's influences and contributions:

- (i) The dissemination of new concepts of modernist literature: he relentlessly analysed many modernist poems in detail so that readers and local writers will become more confident and realise that modernist poetry is neither incomprehensible nor abstract.
- (ii) The formulation of modernist poetics: his articles on movie-making techniques in poetry and on the musicality of poetry and its limitations are his most influential and significant pieces of critical writing.

- (iii) Intentionally or otherwise, he has become the focus of controversy in literary debates: Wen has always engaged himself in debates that are connected with the modernist and the realist camps. As the staunchest proponent of modernist literature, perhaps it is true to say that it is Wen who has given Mahua modernist literature an opportunity to grow and develop healthily.
- (iv) Wen has produced and published many collections of modernist poetry, modernist prose, and articles on critical appreciation of literature: These works are a great contribution to the local literary arena. His writings on literary criticism have won critical acclaim internationally too.

The four chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 5) of this study have comprehensively analysed the three literary media of literary dissemination, they are the literary magazines, poetical societies, and writers. It also analyses their strategies, methods and modes in the dissemination of modernist literature. Evidence in this study has shown that these three media of literary dissemination have completed their mission to accentuate the growth and development of Mahua modernist literature and eventually it has become more acceptable and accessible by a greater number of young writers.

6.2 Contributions of the Study

The theoretical framework and methodology of this study combine the field of literature and the science of dissemination. It looks at the study of literature from a new perspective and provides a new dimension in the study of Mahua Literature.

The greatest contribution of the research is to study the Mahua modernist literature through the theories of literary dissemination. This new approach is an

attempt to merge literature with the concepts of dissemination to explore how the different circumstances of dissemination have influenced literary development.

This research is closely linked with developments in the study of contemporary literature. It is a new approach, though still not very popular, has ushered in fresh ideas and yielded new interpretations on the study of Mahua modernist literature.

Wang Zhaopeng, a professor from Wuhan University of China, has indulged in the study of the dissemination of Song poetry for many years. He used theories of dissemination and a new direction in the study of Song poetry is formulated. This study basically follows his theoretical framework of literary dissemination that is through the media of dissemination such as writers, literary magazines and literary organizations to study the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua literature. It is a new attempt to produce meaningful insights on the development of Mahua modernist literature.

Last but not the least, the comprehensive study on the dissemination of modernist literature by *Chao Foon Monthly*, the Sirius Poetical Society and the literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping has been carried out. According to the knowledge and understanding of the researcher, this is so far the only study that involves the three literary dissemination media and their contribution and influence on Mahua Modernist Literature.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is wide and extensive; it elaborates in detail the development of Chinese Literature for the past 30 years, analyses the World Chinese literature, the development of Mahua modernist literature and the contributions of the three media of literary dissemination. A meticulously planned research schedule is followed; however, there are still inadequacies and limitations in the study.

Firstly, the time frame of 30 years is rather long. Under the constraints of the length of this thesis, making a flawless analysis and an in-depth study based on the enormous size of the data is almost an insurmountable task. The scope of the study is relevant but the depth of the study could still be elevated to a higher level. It is hope that future studies could explore further on this matter.

Secondly, the study focuses on the strategies and activities used by literary organizations such as the Sirius Poetical Society in the 1970s and 1980s in disseminating and promoting modernist literature in Mahua Literature. It did not make adequate analysis on the published individual works or group works of poems and prose of its members. Published poetical articles and essays of members of the Sirius Poetical Society are influential in Mahua modernist poetry and it is indeed regrettable that this study could not provide a deeper analysis on this matter.

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) organized a conference in 2015 entitled “*An International Conference on the Study of Mahua Literature and Dissemination: Modernism and the Sirius Poetical Society*”. The focus of the conference obviously was on modernism and Sirius Poetical Society. It subtly

recognized the status of the Sirius Poetical Society in terms of historical significance. One of the papers also touched on the link between modernism and the poetical society as well as its contribution in the dissemination of modernist literature in Mahua literature. It is evident that this study has not provided a more thorough analysis on this subject. Hopefully a broader and deeper analysis will be carried out in the future.

Thirdly, the next area which this study could have delved into in more detail is the analysis of *Chao Foon Monthly*. From the 1960s to the 1970s, the special issues published by *Chao Foon Monthly* had produced immense influences and impact on Mahua literature. A more thorough investigation would have shedded more light on this matter. Another aspect of this magazine which could have been given more attention is “Feng Xun”, the afterword of its editors. Besides giving a brief introduction to the published articles, it had provided the latest information on the literary activities within and outside the country. More importantly, the editors occasionally would have revealed their stand on current literary issues, their perplexity at the selection of articles, their encouragement to new writers, their opinions on newly published literary works, their state of mind when planning a project and it even would have revealed the voice of the readers. Such short pieces of “Feng Xun” did reveal many hidden and interesting matters which could become a meaningful subject for research.

The inadequacies and limitations mentioned above could provide some directions for future researchers on Mahua modernist literature. A more comprehensive study that focuses on the literary supplements of newspapers of the early years, literary magazines such as *The Students' Weekly*, literary societies such as Gushou (鼓手, The Drummer), publishers such as Zonglv Chubanshe (棕榈出版社, The Palm Publishers)

are deserved an in-depth study. Hopefully these limitations and inadequacies could turn out to be inspirations for future researchers that would lead them to a more insightful study.

6.4 Possible Directions for Further Research

From the emergence of Mahua modernist literature in 1959 to its development until 1989, this is a very important period in Mahua literature. A study on Mahua literature that ignores Mahua modernist literature, from any perspective, is fundamentally flawed. Through 30 years of dissemination of modernist literature and development, Mahua modernist literature has groomed numerous brilliant and exceptional novelists, short story writers, poets, prose writers and literary critics and its impact is irreplaceable.

From the perspective of literary dissemination, this study has examined three media of dissemination on Mahua modernist literature. They are literary magazines such as *Chao Foon Monthly*, writers such as Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping, and the literary society, Sirius Poetical Society. The study has found that these three media of dissemination have played their respective roles at different stages of development.

On the role of the Sirius Poetical Society, this research only analysed its strategies and activities in disseminating and promoting modernist literature in literature without giving further attention to its publications. Future researchers could examine:

- (i) The three poetical publications: *An Anthology of Poems by Malaysian Poets*, *An Anthology of Poems by Young Malaysian Chinese Modernist Poets* and *The Sirius Anthology of Poems*.
- (ii) It is also suggested that individual publications of the members of the poetical society and special issues that were published on the 6th of June every year in commemoration of the Poet's Festival, be taken seriously as the subjects of further research. Such analysis might reveal many facets of the society.
- (iii) The status of Sirius Poetical Society from the perspective of Mahua literary history.
- (iv) The literary status of Wen Renping in the development of Modernist Mahua Literature.
- (v) A comparative study of Sirius Poetical Society and Shenzhou Poetical Society (神州诗社) in Taiwan.

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, of the three media of literary dissemination, the writers are the most important medium. Bai Yao is the pioneer of Mahua modernist literature. His pieces of literary criticism, though not many, have influenced the development of Mahua literature. Zhang Jinzhong has stressed the importance of his literary status in Mahua literature. He is a progressive poet who has written "Silently Stand along the Muar River", the very first Mahua modernist poem. Future research should focus on his literary identity and status and historical consciousness in Mahua literature. He has not written many poems nor are they of exceptional quality, in other words, his works reflect more of a historical significance rather than of esthetical prominence.

Chen Ruixian is a Singaporean; many analyses of his works have been done. His contribution began with his stint as a member of the *Chao Foon Monthly* editorial board and as an editor of literary supplements of newspapers. As the editor of *Chao Foon Monthly*, he launched many special issues on modernist literature, modernist writers and literary genres which speeded up the transformation and development of Mahua modernist literature. This is indeed an immense contribution on the development of Mahua literature.

In short, the modernist literature has been successfully disseminated in Mahua Literature since 1959. Number of modernist writers began to increase in the 1960s and reached its climax in the 1970s. Three important anthologies of modernist poetry were published in the 1970s. Collections of poetry and prose of individual modernist writers were published from 1960s to 1980s. Until the end of 1980s, Mahua Modernist Literature was an inseparable part of Mahua Literature. The success in the dissemination of modernist literature was due to the relentless efforts by the major media the *Chao Foon Monthly*, the Sirius Poetical Society and Literati Bai Yao, Chen Ruixian and Wen Renping.

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