

Language consciousness and poetic reconstruction: A re-examination of goddess as a modern Chinese poetry anthology

Jiantao Li¹, Wenhao Hong^{2,*}, Ying Hu³

¹ Faculty of Linguistic Sciences, Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing 100190, China

² College of Liberal Arts, Anhui Normal University, Wuhu 241000, Anhui Province, China

³ College of Liberal Arts, Capital Normal University, Beijing 100048, China

* Corresponding author: Wenhao Hong, wenh_0227@outlook.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 14 November 2023

Accepted: 6 December 2023

Available online: 14 December 2023

doi: 10.59400/fls.v5i3.2060

Copyright © 2023 Author(s).

Forum for Linguistic Studies is published by Academic Publishing Pte. Ltd. This article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ABSTRACT: Goddess, as the inchoation of Chinese New Poetry, has significant meaning and always attracts the attention of researchers. However, there is a lack of a practical understanding of the ontological characteristics of the goddess in modern Chinese poetry (MCP). Guo Moruo consciously uses the rich grammatical functions and means of modern Chinese to construct the textual space of poetry. The subjective, dramatic, and rich modality system of modern Chinese has created the intense lyricism and dramatic, poetic aesthetic style of goddess, which makes goddess the anthology that genuinely practices the writing of MCP. Re-examining the goddess from the perspectives of language consciousness and poetic reconstruction is of excellent enlightenment significance for understanding the linguistic properties of early new poetry.

KEYWORDS: goddess; modern Chinese poetry; language consciousness; modality system; dramatization

1. Introduction

There has been sound and stir, as well as silence and stillness, in the century-long history of modern Chinese poetry (MCP). As a literary genre, MCP has a short and problematic history. Many theoretical matters have not been discussed, which shows the incompleteness of MCP. For a period, paying attention to the emergence of new poetry has become an academic growth point consciously sought by the academic community, which can be regarded as delineating a relatively independent category of new poetry genetics. Researchers return to the historical scene of new poetry from various aspects, study the interactive generation of language, form, experience, and social history, and explore the mechanism of new poetry, such as reevaluating the historical significance of the poetry revolution (from the late Qing Dynasty to the “May Fourth Movement”) to new poetry, exploring the establishment of the legitimacy of new poetry at the levels of newspapers, new poetry anthologies, literary groups, and education systems from the perspective of Bourdieu’s academic field, and analyzing the intrinsic qualities of modernity in contemporary poetry from the perspective of the occurrence and transformation of the experience. Reevaluating earlier poetic works, poets, and critical theories is necessarily the starting point for reflecting on the development of new poetry.

In this sense, goddess, the first anthology of Guo Moruo, has become the subject of this paper. As a highly influential anthology at the beginning of new poetry, the importance of goddess is obvious. Wen Yiduo argues that “when it comes to new poetry, Guo Moruo’s poems are worthy of being called “new”. Wen (1923) works are not only artistically distinct from the old poems but completely consistent with the

spirit of the times: the spirit of the end of the 20th century.” The new language and art and the new spirit of the times complement each other. Therefore, to re-examine goddess, one needs to return to the starting point of the language of “MCP” and observe how goddess opens a new writing mode in the interactive generation of language and poetry. Zhang (2021) demonstrates that the study of the goddess seems to be sufficient, but behind the various discussions, there are many ambiguities at the level of the features between Chinese and poetry, which need further clarification and exploration.

2. Language consciousness and the writing of MCP

Sociolinguistics comes from sociology and linguistics. Sociology is an objective study of humans in society, institutions, and social processes that occur in society, while linguistics is a field of linguistics or science that studies language as an object of study. Thus, sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary study of language concerning the use of language itself in society (Chaer and Agustina, 2004). Sociolinguistics is a vast field of science and can be used to describe various ways of studying language. Sociolinguistics is a science that connects language factors with social factors with specifications for practical language use (Yendra, 2018). Based on this, sociolinguistics concerns the language used by society by understanding the structure of language and the function of language in communication. Understanding language cannot be done by listening to the language used by the community at a glance. However, we must recognize and understand the characteristics of language, language variation, the function of language variation, and language users because these three elements are interrelated when interacting, changing, and changing each other in a speech community.

As the pioneer of new poetry, goddess is often compared with *ChangShiJi*, the first anthology of contemporary poetry by Hu Shi. Some researchers believe that when the synchronistic difference between *ChangShiJi* and goddess is extended to a diachronic evolution, the complex situation of multiple possibilities during the new poetry is coherent, and the dialogue relationship in the tensity structure also becomes a two-period change (Jiang, 2020). In this sense, it is not apparent which is the inchoation of the new poetry. New poetry genetics does not intend to establish specific and subtle historical facts such as identifying the first poetry anthology or the first new poem (the status of Hu Shi’s *ChangShiJi* is undoubtedly the first in terms of the starting time), but to try to deeply explore the formation process of new poetry as a literary device from multiple perspectives. As Edward W. Said stresses in *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, “The beginning is not a liner completion; it always implies a regression and repetition.” Therefore, the importance of the goddess in “MCP” writing needs to be further demonstrated.

Recognizing the revolutionary characteristics of times conveyed by goddess has always been a primary focus for most researchers. For example, Bǐkè Shāntóu Zhǎnwàng and Fěitú Sòng express the spirit of resistance and dynamic at that time, full of passion for throwing off the shackles and destroying everything. Fènghuáng Nièpán expects a time calling for the rebirth of the motherland and the nation from the ashes of the old life. Tiān Gǒu shows a shocking emotional power. “Guo Moruo contributes a body that constantly bursts, decomposes, and crosses the inner and outer boundaries at the beginning of the new poetry.” Jiang (2003) demonstrates a profound sense of individual liberation during the “May Fourth” period through his body of writing. However, it’s often overlooked that the content of poetry and Guo Moruo’s sense of linguistic liberation are interconnected. Guo Moruo’s goddess possesses a significantly more radical awareness of linguistic freedom compared to Hu Shi’s early new poems. This liberation consciousness awakens the poetic potential of modern Chinese and completes the practice and exploration of contemporary poetic aesthetics at the same time. Liberation and renewal, destruction, and construction are why Guo Moruo’s poetry has great significance, inseparable from the importance of the

writing of goddess as “MCP”.

From the ontological standpoint of poetry, Wang (2003) reflects on the discursive practices of a century of new poetry, and he believes that “MCP” should move towards a new stage of “MCP” after the development stage of vernacular poetry and new poetry. Vernacular poetry initiates a poetic revolution rooted in language transformation, yet it tends to treat language as a tool and overlook the conscientious construction of poetic ontology. Contemporary poetry resembles a perpetual engine, compelling poets to pursue novelty but potentially creating a binary opposition between the old and the new, reality and tradition. This dynamic is unfavorable for the introspection and transcendence of modern poetics. “New and old, modernity and tradition are no longer as inconsistent and mutually exclusive as they were in “May Fourth”, but are seeking common ground, absorbing and transforming from each other.” Therefore, he proposes the term “MCP” to clarify ideological confusion in the history of poetry and re-establish the primary pursuit of modern poetics in the sense of poetics ontology. He believes that the biggest problem of Chinese poetry in the 20th century is still the problem of language and form. The development of Chinese poetry must return to this point to enrich and improve the poetry revolution, rather than change and decline. However, the poetic revolution after vernacular poetry neither consciously follows the principle of “rise-fall-rise” nor deliberately starts from language and form and constantly returns to the reflection and construction of language and structure. As a result, the shortcomings of the vernacular poetry movement have not been addressed, and the development and consideration of modern Chinese have been hindered.

The naming of the “MCP” follows the law of “Occam’s Razor”, which accommodates the multiple space and practice of Chinese poetry writing with the concept of the least common divisor, re-emphasizes and recognizes the ontological meaning of modern Chinese as poetry writing. In connection with the writing of early new poetry, we may be able to return to poetics with an awareness of this problem. Therefore, “MCP” is not only a unique starting point for modern poetics but also a method to analyze the generation of early modern poetry as a mechanism for the so-called third stage, which is the far-reaching significance of “MCP”. For example, we should re-examine Guo Moruo’s goddess as an “MCP” writing practice and realize that its spirit of times and romantic feelings were first born on the foundation of modern Chinese.

When writing new poems, Guo Moruo realizes the characteristic distinguishing “MCP” from classical poetry. In the early days of Chinese new poetry, writers like Hu Shi, Liu Bannong, Yu Pingbo, Liu Dabai, and others embraced modern vernacular in their language, but a classical influence persisted. Taking Hu Shi’s influential work *ChangShiJi* as an example, some poems within it carry distinct traces of classical poetry in terms of vocabulary, imagery, and structure. When exploring the modern Chinese language, there is room for further development in both the complexity and flexibility of grammar. In simpler terms, among this group of poets, there is still a need for more polished language and a spirit of experimentation in their new poetry. Unlike Hu Shi’s advocate of “poetry equals to composition”, which highlights the instrumental language change, Guo Moruo further emphasizes that the rhythmical characteristics of poetry, accompanied by the evolution of language, is the inner rhythm that has an essential influence on the development of modern poetics. Guo Moruo believes that the difference in new poetry is the true sense of free poetry, which forms with the natural flow of emotions and thoughts. Unlike the metrical rule classical poetry “Sìshēng Bābing”, new poetry is free from external fixed poetic rhythms. Inner rhythm is the rhythmic requirement of poetry, “inner rhythm is the natural rise and fall of emotions ... inner rhythm appeals to the mind and not to the ear” (Guo, 1982).

However, Guo Moruo’s poetic concept of inner rhythm is still not clear and complete. Its ambiguity

and limitations have increasingly emerged in developing “MCP”. For example, is it feasible to completely ignore the external features of language? What deep connection is there between “MCP” and modern Chinese? The explanation of inner rhythm may not be enough to answer these questions. Prosodic morphology is one of the main trends in contemporary linguistics, whose viewpoint is that prosody controls word formation. Even if the fixed poetic rhythm is abandoned, the rhythm of the language is still unconsciously and unavoidably used in the creation, reflecting the fact that the variation of syntactic structure results from the comprehensive effect of prosodic rules and pragmatic rules. Therefore, inner rhythm is influenced by many complex factors, and the solution to this problem needs to return to the process of new poetry writing and Guo Moruo’s poetry creation. Guo Moruo said about the characteristics of poetry during the creation of goddess, “The formation and repetition of poetry are influenced by the opera of Wagner, which is an attempt to musicalize poetry. However, from the standpoint of psychopathology, it clearly shows a neurological attack.” Whether it is an attempt at the formation and repetition of poetry or a neurological attack on poetic expression, it is necessary to emphasize that goddess is the product of a new language.

3. The lyrical strategy of goddess from the perspective of modern Chinese modality system

“To imagine a language is to imagine a way of life” (Wittgenstein, 2005). The passionate “May Fourth” spirit presented in goddess heralds the emergence of a new way of life for individuals and the whole nation. Most of the poems in goddess are cheering and powerful, and the poetry of strength is full of great emotional tension. The new lyricism can only be generated and formed in modern Chinese language mode and grammatical structure. The form, meaning, and function of language are highly consistent with each other. The research of language definition and function is inseparable from observing language form. Halliday (1985) sees language as an act, a system of meaning, focusing on the social symbolic properties of language. He classifies three significant functions of language: conceptual function, interpersonal function, and discourse function. As a speech act, poetry also has three systemic parts. The covert lyricism of the poem highlights the interpersonal position, expressing the speaker’s opinion, attitude, evaluation, and the relative role between the poet and the listener, including the social and communication functions. We can analyze the lyricism of Guo Moruo’s early poetry from the language form, which requires us to go deep into modern Chinese’s grammatical structure to understand better and discover the goddess’s revolutionary significance as an “MCP” at the beginning of new poetry.

The connection between language form and emotion has always been the focus of the humanities. Shen (2004) proposes that linguistics has increasingly emphasized the subjectivity of language with the influence of language humanism conception. Subjectivity refers to a characteristic of language that always contains the speaker’s expression in discourse. The speaker expresses his perspectives, attitudes, and feelings about the conversation, leaving a mark on the lesson. Subjectivation is the language structure adopted to define linguistic subjectivity or the relevant process of linguistic evolution itself. Modern Chinese is a language of rich expressions of subjectivity with a mainly developed modality system. Modality refers to the writer’s attitude toward the truth value of the proposition or the possibility of the realistic state of the event, involving the concepts of the objective world and possible world, such as ability, will, permission, prohibition, obligation, speculation, and inference. Modality is the most common cross-lingual semantic category in the world. There are a variety of modality expressions in modern Chinese. Some researchers have classified the modality expression means of modern Chinese

into four types: lexical means (modality verbs, modality adverbs, particles at the end of sentences, cognitive verbs); syntactic means (double negation, modality complements); contextual means (conjunctions, inserts); and prosodic means (intonation). The modality expression means of language are far more than these listed; specific punctuation marks also have prominent modality ideographic functions from the perspective of written language.

The linguistic characteristics of subjectivity and subjectivization proposed by Shen Jiaxuan, Zhang Bojiang, and others provide a new perspective for examining the rich lyrical elements in the poem goddess by Guo Moruo. Previous studies on the emotional aspects of the goddess have primarily interpreted them from the perspective of the ideas reflected in the work. This general literary research perspective has significant shortcomings and often lacks clarity. Re-examining the poetry collection goddess through various language strategies of subjectivity and subjectivization, we find that the intense lyrical elements in Guo Moruo's poetry are attributed to the flexible use of modern Chinese modal expression techniques. This includes the use of new punctuation, the utilization of emotional tone words (exclamatory words, and onomatopoeia), the reappearance of specific modal verbs, and so on. Re-examination of goddess can help us find that the lyrical solid color in Guo Moruo's poetry is due to the flexible use of modern Chinese modality expressions, such as the use of new punctuation marks, emotional intonation words (interjection and onomatopoeia), the repetition of specific modality verbs. These neglected written characteristics are the freshest and most lively form of goddess as "MCP".

The various uses of interjection in goddess can be roughly divided into three types: used alone, at the end, and at the beginning with the "interjection-motional expressions". The first type uses an interjection as an independent line or sentence, such as "ah" and "oh". As "ah" in *Fènghuáng Nièpán*, the interjection plays the most basic starting function of rising and brewing of emotions. In the second type, interjection is used at the end of sentences, as "The Sun, oh" and "The Sun is rising, oh" are repeatedly used in *Tàiyáng Lǐzàn* to express the amazement of the rising sun and the renewal of all things. In the third type, the interjection differs from the first type in that it not only has the effect of inducing emotions but also has a clear direction followed by a specific exclamation object. For example, in *Rì Chū*, "Oh oh, there were fire clouds all over the sky!" "Oh, the light in front of the motorcycle!" *Lú Zhōng Méi* starts each passage with "Ah, my young girl!" with the interjection-motional expressions, which is a romantic and direct expression playing the role of establishing common concerns, acting as a topic, and opening the conversation wheel in pragmatic functions, also reflects the most visible feature of Guo Moruo's early poetry. Interjection is the most direct and effective expression of poetic lyricism and can even be placed in the position of the poetry ontology. Wen (1939) imagines that primitive people originally made sounds such as "ah", "oh", "wo-ho", and "ai" due to emotional agitation, both the sprout of music and the breeding of untransformed language. The song's origin is the "ah" between music and language. Many of the poems in goddess can be seen as an expansion of an interjection. For example, poems such as *Rì Chū* and *Tàiyáng Lǐzàn* both use the constantly changing repetition of emotional expressions to enhance the lyrical effect of the poem. The poem *Chén Ān* is a typical example of expanding interjections and interjection-motional phrases to poetry. The poem has no substantive narrative content; each line begins with "Chén'ān" or "ah" and is followed by the people and things that the poet appreciates. The poet expresses his greetings from the natural scenery (sea, rising light, white clouds, silk rain, morning wind) to the landscape (the Yangtze River, the Yellow River, and the Great Wall) and then to the broader world picture (Russia, the Ganges, Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Tagore, Whitman), and finally to the Japan where the poet was living then. Guo Moruo's imagination and poetic travel are a passionate greeting to the animistic and universal world, which also contains Guo Moruo's specific

political imagination. For example, his greetings to Russia, Washington, and Lincoln include Guo Moruo's approval of the revolutionary and democratic new world of Russia and the United States. The poetic method used in Chen An is a direct poetic strategy of going back and forth between me and you, the subjective world and the objective world. A pure emotional call is achieved through the listing and advancement of emotional expressions and objects, and it is also the most direct dramatic poetics. The directness is closely related to the linguistic characteristics of the interjection itself because interjection is the easiest voice fragment for adults or children to pronounce from the physiological attributes. Interjection consists of monophthong or monophthong plus nasal ending, which are the easiest to pronounce because of the most natural tongue position and mouth shape. The addition of a nasal conclusion is probably because the airflow naturally enters the nasal cavity and resonates with the low openness of the mouth. The use of the simplest and most natural interjection as a sentence in a specific context is not only the product of the principle of labor-saving or economic principle but also the need to return to the original to express the most direct emotions without the constraint of logic and reason.

Goddess is also good at using onomatopoeia to make lyricism audible, such as “Dīngdāng”, “Jí” and “Zú”. Both interjection and onomatopoeia derive from the imitation of sound by the word form. In *The Rebirth of goddess*, Guo Moruo describes the great war between Gòng Gōng and Zhuān Xū in ancient times, striving to render the fierce collision of thunder, lightning, and fire and the alternation of light and darkness. Guo Moruo writes that only a mess and a male corpse remained after the man's battle. Above the ruins, the goddess sang the newborn sun, “In the morning I heard the morning bell ringing in the sea: Jingle Jingle, Jingle Jingle, Jingle Jingle.” (The last two paragraphs are changed to “funeral bell” and “wine bell”). Guo Moruo uses “jingle” nine times in a row, and each stanza is a whole of variations. The joy of the new world, the vanishing old world, and the carnival of celebrating convey a solemn like a chorus of hymns in the sound of jingle bells. The meaning reflected in onomatopoeia is based on our physical experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) argue that concepts are formed through the body, brain, and knowledge from the world, and only through those ways can they be understood. Applying onomatopoeia in the poem fully reflects Guo Moruo's thinking about the attributes of natural people and the cognition of physical experience. The abstract concepts are also constructed through metaphor. As the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras said, “Man is the measure of all things, and the conceptualized meaning of onomatopoeia comes from man's cognition of his own physical experience, which reflects man's cognitive psychology.”

In addition, modality verbs are also an essential lexical means to express emotions. Analyzing modality verbs can be used to understand the poet's cognition and interpretation of the objective and possible worlds. Guo Moruo is good at using the repetition of modality verbs in simple poems without external rhyme to convey the emotions of poetry and construct the internal rhythm of poetry. In the short poem *Wú Yān Méi*, Guo Moruo uses Stendhal's metaphor of comparing coal to new trends of thought, expressing a passionate call for new things and ideas. The whole poem is filled with a relaxed and uplifting atmosphere, which comes from the essential metaphors in the poem and the repeated use of the modality verb “Yào”.

*The ship will burn coal,
There will be at least three or four cubic feet of new ideas burning,
In my head,
...
Oleander flower,
Pomegranate flower,*

Bright red fire!
When will the flower of thought bloom?
Brilliant sunset,
Smiles at me over the roof of the neighbourhood,
As if to say,
“Moruo you! Where will you go?”
...
I whispered to her,
“I will go to dig coal in the library.”

In modern Chinese, “Yào” includes three meanings: the dynamic modality “willingness”; the deontic modality “obligation” or “regulation”, which is prescriptive; the epistemic modality “Yào”, “speculation or deduction”. In the poems “When Will It Bloom?” and “Where Will You Go?” The “Yào” in the two questions is obviously in the sense of epistemic modality, conveying uncertain speculation, which may not be stressed depending on the meaning of the sentence. The rest of the “Yào” in the poem indicates affirmation and determination. A class distinction within the dynamic modalities forms an “impossibility-possibility-probability-certainty” continuum. “Yào” is at the top of “certainty” and represents the poet’s strongest subjectivity. The “Yào” in the last sentence may need to be stressed to highlight the poet’s active choice. The repeatedly used word “Yào” presents the difference in meaning and emotion, which may account for the sense of internal rhythmic fluidity. All of the above illustrate the subjectivity embodied in the language of the goddess, which could serve as an illustration of specific instance analyses of language consciousness and poetic reconstruction to elucidate subjective characteristics in poetry.

4. Dramatic expression and dramatic poetics of modern Chinese creation of a poetic aesthetic

When goddess was first published by Taidong Publishing in 1921, it had the subtitle “*Poetic Drama Anthology*”. In the first series of goddess, “Xiāng Lèi” and “Tángdì Zhī Huā” are poetic dramas (one-act plays) with clear characters, settings and narrative characteristics. Besides, in 1919 and 1922, Guo Moruo created two children’s poetic dramas, “Guǎng Hán Gōng”. Guo Moruo’s early literary creation, poetry, and poetic drama are twins. The scholarly practice of the two genres and forms shows the profound cross-genre characteristics of Guo Moruo’s literary creations, such as “The Rebirth of goddess” and “The Dawn”, both of which are the product of lyrical and dramatic framework of poetry. However, this section wants to explore how Guo Moruo’s early poetry practiced dramatics poetry on a deeper level from the perspective of modern Chinese pragmatics.

Jing Zhuo explores the characteristics of dramatization of language through the study of Chinese “Bǎ” construction in his book *Dramatized Discourse: The Mandarin Chinese “Bǎ” construction*. He believes that a show mainly includes two aspects: one is cognitive salience, which is the focus that the speaker emphasizes or the speaker tries to get the listener to pay attention to; the other is the emotive expressiveness and subjectivity, which is the positive emotional involvement the speaker put in the things expressed. Jing Zhuo refers to it as a blend of perspectives. He emphasizes that the core function of modern Chinese Ba construction is to dramatize the events depicted. The performance of the dramatization of Chinese is related to the subjective interaction of Chinese (Tao, 2008). Modern linguists generally believe that Chinese is a particular subjectivity salient language. Zhang analyzes that dramatic language significantly impacts the expression of subjectivity in Chinese. There are discourse means

of both “into” and “out of” the character in the language of Peking Opera, such as introducing oneself and Dǎ Bèi Gōng, in which first-person is often interspersed with third-person when narrating stories or in a specific sentence, the combination of personal pronouns and proper nouns makes the dramatic language both self-narrated and audience-narrated. The shift in pronouns and perspectives is natural and may not be easily noticed. But this kind of natural shift between “into” and “out of” the play gives the dramatic language a vivid, subjective, interactive characteristic (Zhang, 2017).

Researchers often use literary texts as an analytical corpus when studying Chinese’s subjective interaction and dramatization. It was evident that dramatic expression is more prominent in academic language than in daily communication language. Compared with ancient Chinese, modern Chinese has more diverse and rich forms of theatrical expression. When analyzing Guo Moruo’s poetry from the characteristics of dramatization, we will find that the apparent attributes of expansion, extroversion, and dialogue presented in his poetry are based on the conscious use of the dramatization expression of modern Chinese. In actual language communication and literary texts, many grammatical forms of modern Chinese can present a dramatization effect, such as Ba constructions, monologues, the shift of personal pronouns, and the use of indicative pronouns. It is no coincidence that in goddess, Guo Moruo uses many unique grammatical means of modern Chinese to enhance the presence and dramatization of language.

The second series of goddess opens with Fènghuáng Niènnán, including six verses, which can be regarded as a poetic creation imitating the structure of drama. “*Prelude-Phoenix Song-Female Phoenix Song-Phoenix and Female Phoenix Song-Birds Song-Phoenix Rebirth Song*” follows the coherence of the dramatic system from the lament of the phoenix to the sneer of the birds and finally to the joyful singing of the rebirth of the phoenix. There are three modes of subjective interaction in the poem: the monologue and chorus of the phoenix and female phoenix; the sneer and dialogue between the phoenix and other flocks of birds; and the declarative monologue after the rebirth of Phoenix. In the final verse, Phoenix Rebirth Song, the shift and combination of personal pronouns embody the aesthetic style of Guo Moruo’s dramatic poetics.

We are him, and they are me!
You are in me, and I am in you!
I am you!
You are me!
The fire is the phoenix!
The phoenix is the fire!
.....
The light is you, and the fragrance is me!
The light is him, and the light is the fire!
The fire is you!
The fire is me!
The fire is him!
The fire is the fire!

Another example is in the famous poem Tiān Gǒu, almost all “Bǎ” construction, “I am a Tiān Gǒu!” “I swallowed the moon,” “I swallowed the sun,” “I swallowed all the planets,” “I swallowed the whole universe.” “I am what I am!” “Bǎ” is a unique Chinese construction that places the concerned and governed object before the verb. “Its subjective willingness of disposition in objective statements, it is free

switching between the known and unknown information in a fixed form, its commentating attitude in the semantics of high transitive transformation, its flexible stance of both in and out, and its stylistic choice that adapts according to the needs of expression typically reflect the character of the most dynamic and high-frequency Ba construction and the character of Chinese” (Zhang, 2019). Although “Bǎ” construction is not unique to modern Chinese, it gives the poem a unique sense of cadence through the frequent and creative use of “Bǎ” construction. As Jing Zhuo’s research shows, “the definiteness of the subject and object in “Bǎ” construction and the information structure of the construction itself help the speaker to focus on the verb at the end of the sentence, resulting in a dramatic effect.” “Bǎ” construction in Tiān Gǒu makes the language focus on the action verb swallow, so that the strength and emotional color of the action are maximized. Compared with the general “Bǎ” construction, Guo places a directional verb before swallow to indicate the subjective reference of spatial displacement. The emotional reference point is the position of the speaker’s psychological space, which can not only make the action verb to the greatest extent but also represent the speaker’s subjectivity and self-centeredness. The poet compares himself to the Tiān Gǒu, who swallows everything, exaggerating the poet’s arrogant and agitated spiritual aura. The poet’s mind and emotions wander back and forth between himself and the world, expanding infinitely. Guo Moruo writes at the end, “I’m going to burst!” which symbolizes the energy for the renewal of Phoenix Nirvana (Fu, 2014).

In goddess, Guo Moruo uses a quasi-dialogue form to declare to the world. This stylistic color is also reflected in the use of indicative pronouns. For example, Guo Moruo often uses “this/here” and “that” in his poems to indicate the following nouns, such as:

- (1). “Alone, sitting on the stone girder on **this** coast, I will send off the early summer sun about to set.”
- (2). “**This** mind of yours is like the “Great Universal Will!” You hold a pencil in your right hand and a manuscript in your left. **That** tip of your pen is pouring out a tide of rage.”
- (3). “Sitting **here** on the broken boat on this shore.” “It seems to fill this clear void.” “Sitting in the fishing boat on this shore, I’m facing **that** bright moon.” “Are you going to help me to push **this** fishing boat to the sea?”
- (4). “Oh, **that** light of his kind eyes, **that** healthy face of his, **that** white beard of his, **that** bulging veins of his golden hands.”

In the first three poems (Goldblatt et al., 2023), the poet uses “this” and “that” to create a dramatic space for a particular speaker. “This” refers to something that belongs to the speaker here and now (I’m sitting in a fishing boat on this shore), and “that” refers to something relatively far away from the speaker (I’m facing that bright moon). The juxtaposition of “this” and “that” forms a unique linguistic construction. In the poem *Xīhú Jì Yóu*, continuous parallel structures of “that” are used to describe the expression and appearance of the old farmer hoeing the ground. When writing this poem, Guo Moruo is influenced by the spirit of “*May Fourth*” labor and enthusiastically praises the hard-working farmers, which is also reflected in the Earth, My Mother, like “What I envy is your son—the worker in the carbon pit.”

Guo Moruo’s romantic spirit during the “May Fourth” period sets his dramatic, poetic style, which is extended by the diversified dramatic means of modern Chinese, such as constructing dramatic scenes. If this kind of theatrical poetics goes to extremes, it may result in inordinate emotion and tedious form. It corresponds to the overall evaluation of Guo Moruo’s early new poems by many critics, “sincere

writing is better than ornate terms.” (Choy, 2022) However, as the pioneer of “MCP”, Guo Moruo’s early poems must face a contradiction between creativity and radicality, the so-called profound one-sidedness. Zhu (2005) and Meng (2022) comment on Guo Moruo’s poems when teaching new poetry at Peking University, “his poems are indeed casual (Sun and Yao, 2020; Whyke et al., 2021). Casual writing is his poems, and it is not easy to write casually. Casual writing is supposed to be the poet’s nature after the liberation movement of Chinese poetry.” The casual writing mentioned by Fei and Zhu is deeply insightful. At the beginning of “MCP”, Guo Moruo breaks the old poetic form with strong determination and creatively reflects the linguistic characteristics of modern Chinese, contributing a unique mental achievement and poetic language crystallization to the novelty of poetry (Goodman, 2021). Re-examining goddess from the linguistic attributes of modern Chinese, namely the cognitive properties and syntactic-semantic functions of language, is this paper’s original intention and purpose.

5. Conclusion

“Modern Chinese Poetry (MCP)” is a gradual and constant process of refining, creating, and forming from the dual perspectives of the essential attributes of language and the development of poetics. Through the awakening and cultivation of language, the development of more abundant and freer means of poetic expression can make “MCP” continue to extend to a broader poetic space. Besides Guo Moruo’s dramatic poetics, there are also introverted, contemplative types of poetry. Although there are more complex cultural and contemporary factors accounting for the changing poetic style of Modernist poets of the 1930s, such as Bian Zhilin, Feng Zhi, and other poets, their deep understanding of modern Chinese, combined with the training of skills, is also an undeniable factor. However, in the 1940s, Mu Dan, Yuan Kejia, and other poets at Southwest United University, borrowing from Western modern poetry, advocated a dramatic strategy of poetry with richer poetic connotations. Guo Moruo and Mu Dan, who represent the dramatization of two different periods, can be compared from the micro standpoint of language. As a form of language expression, poetry is first a human language, reflecting three essential attributes of human beings: physiological, social (cultural), and ideological attributes. The language system connects social culture, common sense, and other conceptual information. The interpretation of poetry starts with the essential properties of language, which helps us to see the poetic brilliance more clearly refracted by the prism of language.

Author contributions

Writing—review and editing, resources and data curation, JL; methodology, conceptualization, writing—original draft preparation and formal analysis, WH; supervision, visualization and supervision YH. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work is supported by the Key Project of the National Social Science Foundation of China “Research on the Construction and Operation of Chinese Preschool Children’s Corpus” (19AYY010); Science Foundation of Beijing Language and Culture University (supported by “the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities” (22YBB17).

Acknowledgments

Not Applicable.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

References

- Chaer A, Agustina L (2004). *Sociolinguistics: Initial Introduction* (Indonesian). Rineka Cipta. p. 73.
- Choy HYF (2022). Introduction. *Chinese Literature and Thought Today* 53(3–4): 52. doi: 10.1080/27683524.2022.2131173
- Fu H (2014). The evolution of modern poetry in Taiwan. In: Chang SY, Yeh M, Fan M (editors). *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*. Columbia University Press. pp. 224–226. doi: 10.7312/chan16576-087
- Goldblatt HC, Nienhauser WH, Wilhelm H, Li T (2023). Chinese literature. Available online: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Chinese-literature> (accessed on 5 December 2023).
- Goodman E (2021). “In the Roar of the Machines”: Zheng Xiaoqiong’s poetry of witness and resistance. *Chinese Literature Today* 10(2): 77–87. doi: 10.1080/21514399.2021.1990699
- Guo M (1982). *Three Essays on Poems, Guo Moruo: On Creation* (Chinese). Heilongjiang People’s Publishing House. p. 2.
- Halliday MAK (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Edward Arnold.
- Jiang T (2003). The refutation of the starting point: Attempts and goddess in the history of new poetry (Chinese). *Literary Review* 6: 139–146.
- Jiang T (2020). *Waking Up from a Hypnotic World* (Chinese). East China Normal University Press. p. 279.
- Lakoff G, Johnson M (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books. 640p.
- Meng X (2022). Transcultural memory in visions and realities. *Chinese Literature and Thought Today* 53(3–4): 88–96. doi: 10.1080/27683524.2022.2131178
- Shen J (2001). The subjectivity and subjectivization of language (Chinese). *Foreign Language Teaching and Research* 4: 268–275. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.1000-0429.2001.04.006
- Sun X, Yao B (translators) (2020). Dancing in the empty city. *Chinese Literature Today* 9(2): 60–61. doi: 10.1080/21514399.2020.1852019
- Tao H (2008). Dramatized discourse: The mandarin Chinese Ba-construction (Chinese). *Contemporary Linguistics* 3: 267–272.
- Wang G (2003). *The Century-Old Evolution of Modern Chinese Poetry* (Chinese). Hebei People’s Publishing House. pp. 658–665.
- Wen Y (1923). Zeitgeist of the goddess (Chinese). *Creation Weekly* 4: 3.
- Wen Y (1939). Songs and poems (Chinese). *Zhongyang Ribao: Ping Ming* 16: 5.
- Whyke TH, Lopez-Mugica J, Chen ZT (2021). The rite of passage and digital mourning in Fang fang’s Wuhan diary. *Global Media and China* 6(4): 443–459. doi: 10.1177/20594364211041683
- Wittgenstein L (2005). *Philosophical Investigation* (Chinese). In: Chen J (translator). Shanghai People’s Publishing House. p. 2.
- Yendra O (2018). *Recognizing the Science of Language (Linguistics)*. Deepublish Publisher.
- Zhang B (2017). Isomorphism of the subjectivity of language and traditional art (Chinese). *China Social Science Review* 3: 89–99, 127.
- Zhang B (2019). *On Ba Construction* (Chinese). Xuelin Press. pp. 209–210.
- Zhang B (2021). On the verse innovation of Guo Moruo’s poetry anthology the goddess: For the centenary of publication of the goddess (Chinese). *Literary Review* 6: 78–86.
- Zhu Y (2005). *Lectures on New Poems* (Chinese). Peking University Press. pp. 130–135.