

Ci Recalled by the Storm: From "Daydream" to "Walking on the Forked Road": On Bei Dao's Literary Thought and Long Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Bei Dao, who has long garnered international attention and holds a prominent position in the history of modern Chinese poetry, returned to the realm of long poetry with "Walking on the Forked Road" after a thirty-five-year absence since completing "Daydream" in 1986. The time span of these two works encompasses several important turning points in Bei Dao's literary career and life trajectory, and at the macro level of poetry, also accompanies the development and transformation of numerous creative schools and theoretical systems. A comparative study reveals that while Bei Dao's writing still retains the characteristic "hazy" characteristics of its sober observation, reflection, dialectic, and questioning of reality, it has also undergone profound shifts and transformations in terms of linguistic perspective, identity within the poetic context, and the involvement of political and historical factors in cultural thought. The fusion of individual experience and public reality, the clash and convergence of the changing times and personal destiny, and the examination and reflection on the interaction between traditional Chinese literary context and the atmosphere of "world poetry" revealed in these works have in fact formed new illustrative value, sufficient to supplement or expand the scope of contemporary poetics.

KEYWORDS

Bei dao; Long poem writing; Poetic thought; Forked path

1 Thirty-five years of drifting and perseverance

A long and glorious literary career, accompanied by a life of constant twists and turns, this poet, who once embodied "the voice and image of an entire generation of new Chinese people,"^[1] After suffering from unforeseen circumstances and gaining honors outside the drifting region, he returned to his hometown as a "returner", ending nearly 20 years of sojourn. Settling in Hong Kong China, Kitajima became more and more aware of the connection between fate and history, and under the changes of society over the years, the emotion and look back of youth, the experience and thinking accumulated by years of collision between dreamy ideological visions and real materials prompted him to begin to put into action the creative suggestions put forward by Li Tuo and write long poems with a "sense of history"^[2] After more than ten years of hard work on paper, the progress of the poem came to a standstill, and the loss of speech and writing ability was a fatal blow to a writer. While the illness casts a huge haze on him and his works, it also instigates a deeper understanding of life and a special experience of its fragility, Kitajima's heart is tenacious, and in the process of recovering from the suffering of joy, due to the painting training, the more three-dimensional and picture-like artistic aesthetic thinking has been added to the handwriting of poetry, and after the disaster, the healthy poet tried his best to complete a long poem of thirty-four chapters. Looking back, nearly 35 years have passed since an important long poem on the North Island, and "Daydream", published in 1986, is like a strong pillar of a long bridge, and there is a span between "Crossroads" at the other end that transcends borders, passion, gray hair and tears. Jing Wendong once bluntly said, "Whether in the most hidden sense or the most obvious angle, the most important theme of poetry should be time"^[3]. Kitajima used "Daydream" to write "The darkness of the year is in the cup"^[4] and other contents to interpret the time picture scroll at that moment, while "Divergent Road" writes the important content of almost the entire time period from the 1980s to the 2020s, and even includes the time of the creation of "Daydream", looking back on the past from a more macroscopic and broad level on the whole, and in the treatment of details, with the determination to retrieve and explore the fragments of mountains and rivers with heavy contemplation. When the last line of characters was written in "Crossroads" at the end of 2021, the young North Island, who was full of passion after the dormancy and suffering of "underground writing", and the twilight North Island, who had survived the eight winds and thoughts and perseverance, turned the vast pages and finally gathered in the poem.

The time between the two long poems was the golden years of the literary journey of the North Island, where the main literary outputs and awards took place, and the rich practical experience and abundant ideas and language established its outstanding position in the Chinese poetry world and even the international literary circle. In general, the turning points of real life and the creation of works in the field of literature present a state of complementarity, interdependence, friction and confrontation, and ultimately shared consequences. In terms of specific image forging and interpretation of things, the poetic realm created by Kitajima is presented in the language in a form slightly higher than that of the real society, and this kind of writing similar to "flying close to the ground" not only takes into account the waves at the ideological level, but also does not completely derail from the material world and the real field. "Kitajima is the earliest poet with

modernist characteristics in the hazy poetry school ^[5] As Wu Sijing has noted, Bei Dao already possessed relatively mature poetic skills long before the "new generation" of literary circles gained a degree of creative freedom after 1978, allowing a flourishing of all kinds of works. His mastery and habitual use of the vocabulary, imagery, and spiritual qualities they symbolize, beyond expressing or elaborating positions in a manner reminiscent of political declarations, also constitutes a deconstruction, advocacy, and appeal that closely reflects the messages of the times and social dynamics. "Answer," written in 1973 (and published publicly in *Today* in 1976 and *Poetry Magazine* in 1979) ^[6], is a typical example. Precisely because of the poetic wisdom he had already revealed and mastered during his "underground period," Bei Dao quickly became a national idol for young poets when a new historical stage arrived. In the 1980s, when the literary and artistic world was booming, Bei Dao almost became a kind of leader or iconic concept. So much so that when the third generation of poets, represented by "Fei Fei," "Mang Han," "New Tradition," "They," "Sa Jiao," and "College Student Poetry School," began to engage in so-called avant-garde breakthroughs, linguistic experiments, surpass their predecessors, and even shouted slogans like "PASS Bei Dao," they had to admit that behind this "patricide"-like behavior, they themselves had been more or less influenced and even enlightened by a group of poets represented by Bei Dao ^[7] in its moment of seizing a certain poetic discourse, resisting, and attempting transcendence, almost echoes the shadow of Bei Dao and the magazine he founded, *Today*, from years earlier. "Daydream" was created in the mid-to-late 1980s, when younger poets were already eager to take the plunge. Lines like "Towards my beginning—you/or your end—me" ^[8] left behind by Bei Dao seem like a kind of poetic prophecy. Following Bei Dao's departure from his homeland, this poem becomes more like a heartfelt outpouring.

Traveling extensively, publishing frequently, and gaining international acclaim, Bei Dao ceased writing long poems in the 1990s. Instead, he produced masterpieces in essays, prose, and poetry criticism, and his poetic language underwent a subtle transformation. The weakening of political overtones or adjustments to social observation, the reliance on humanistic sentiments, and the integration and resistance to Western culture and its poetic system all contributed to Bei Dao's transformation. His "shouts" and "cries" became increasingly rare, replaced by rich metaphors and a sense of loneliness. In a 2002 interview in Boston, he recalled his writing in the 1980s with the lament that it was "closely related to revolutionary poetry, often high-pitched, with large words and a tendency towards linguistic violence." ^[9] In different social situations, professional identities and status, linguistic environments, lifestyles, and national borders, the tuning and reconstruction of poetry is inevitable. Bei Dao attended a poetry festival with Wolfgang Kubin in West Berlin, dined with Tomas Tranströmer in Stockholm, and met Bonnie in Oslo. In Copenhagen, Bei Dao discussed poetry criticism with Poul Borum and other poets over coffee. These experiences forced him to conceal or replace some of the interactions, writing habits, and thinking from his hometown days. He maintained his writing amidst the vast bifurcation and fluctuations of his writing. During his time in Europe, Bei Dao's poetry rarely displayed a eloquent or confrontational tone. Even though the sense of defense and bargaining within it is noteworthy, he often chose to create narrative features that were meticulous in detail, with a certain degree of leaps and defamiliarization in structure and rhythm. All of this transformation, as Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva said, "Poetry is existence; it cannot be anything else." ^[10] In general, Kitajima's solid and accurate language is a reflection of the current living situation, his loneliness and tenacity, and the sadness and lingering of nostalgia and the fate of exile that is almost determined to go their own way have become the wealth of poetry.

After leaving Europe and settling in the United States, in addition to a brief return to his hometown in 2001, Kitajima opened a new stage of life in New York and California, and his words have devoured or digested the most sad and sorrowful part of the strong feelings of his homeland ^[11]. It has become one of the characteristics of Kitajima's works, with the baptism of the west wind and rain and the growth of experience over the years, the unfazed demeanor began to control more languages, and the repeated shout "I don't believe it" in "Answer" ^[12] The passionate voice is difficult to see, and the length of life in "Daydream" is explored in the "dream" of finding the end like turning the pages of a book, this "journey of love" ^[13] It gradually became an irreproducible rubbing of memory, and Kitajima at that time was getting closer and closer to the state he was in when he wrote "Divergent Road".

In the fall of 2007, Bei Dao received an invitation from the East in the United States. The Chinese University of Hong Kong granted him a professorship and subsequently supported a series of cultural activities. The returning poet, now in his twilight years, was filled with the emotions of life. He suffered a car accident in 2005, the death of his friend Frederic Evans Wakeman in 2006, and the death of his friend Mahmoud Darwish in 2008. These events have accompanied Bei Dao's life and poetry. The ever-decreasing yesterday on the timeline is like a drum, beating out a tight beat and urging his pen to move. His helplessness and the weight of vicissitudes of life are fully revealed on paper. Facing fate, he wrote, "The fortune teller points to the future from the compass." ^[14] fictional and tender confession or confessional interpretation can no longer meet Kitajima's poetic needs. He became more and more like the distant poets of the Tang Dynasty, and after thousands of sails, he still did not know the geometry of the road ahead, and his inner melancholy and perseverance created the phenomenon that irrational content in the text served rationality and surreal content served reality. He wrote, "The moment of noise converges into a river / The waves copy the waves / I chase Du Fu's figure" ^[15] In the image of Du Fu,

who was constrained by the changes of the times and changed his destiny with it, Kitajima suddenly looked in the mirror and clearly saw a few remnants of himself, just as he had written about Confucius at the age of sixty when he turned sixty, which is not only a kind of reverie and dream, but also a reference and a plan to borrow his words. Writing about the divergence of Kitajima's life is actually recalling countless daydreams and journeys that have occurred in the past, such a long poem requires years of wear and restraint, breakthrough and dispersion, which goes far beyond the simple ledger of emotions or events.

2 Fluidity or persistence in language

Stephen Owen, who proposed the topic of "world poetry," once talked about the naivety of "de-nationalized" and "de-historicized" writing in one's native language^[16]. Simply relying on the current world's "dominant culture" or "cultural hegemony" to create works to please the so-called international audience that holds the power of judgment in the poetry world may gain discourse power, a record of honor, and partial respect within a certain moment or context, but at the cultural level, it faces a complete detachment from local genes, losing the deepest and most important spiritual qualities of the mother tongue. Such poetry is destined to fail to become a masterpiece of regional representation, let alone a key position in literary history. In fact, since the 1980s, some Chinese poets popular in the West have been keen on creating works suitable for translation, deliberately catering to the tastes and preferences of the "review community." This has resulted in texts lacking "Chineseness." Their poetry, regardless of nationality, can be seen as the work of poets from any country or ethnic group and fails to truly reflect the true state of contemporary Chinese poetry^[17]. A deeper look at this phenomenon reveals that Chinese modern poetry has been influenced by European and American literary paradigms since its inception around the 1930s. After the reform and opening up, whether it was the third generation of poets who emulated the "Beat Generation" or the ivory tower poets who promoted Wallace Stevens, Seamus Heaney, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, and Robert Frost, the poets of the 1930s and 1940s were often influenced by the poets of the 1950s and 1960s. Frost and other works, and even as a guiding principle, a group of intellectual writers who, over the following decades, gradually took over and dominated major areas of Chinese poetry. They were undoubtedly more active than the relatively small number of poets guided by the continuation of traditional spirit or who pursued a "de-stylization" approach. When Bei Dao returned, carrying a deep affection for his homeland, he observed the overall poetic landscape, which surprisingly revealed a certain steadfastness, a remnant of the ancient Chinese language.

A strong sense of mother tongue and local cultural connotations permeate most of Bei Dao's writing. He once said in an article that "people who do not understand tradition are like travelers without a map; they cannot travel far."^[18] Having long established himself in the international poetry scene as a "traveler" or "pioneer," Bei Dao has objectively been able to prioritize, deeply understand, and even immerse himself in Western literary systems and cultural traditions more deeply than many domestic writers. However, through the test of time, Bei Dao's nostalgia for his homeland and Chinese cultural context has not gradually faded or been covered by augmentations. Instead, it has become stronger and more prosperous. Faced with the logos of art and thought, Bei Dao secretly seeks the intersection between academic rules and social disciplines, as if "stepping towards the abyss of humanity."^[19] long engaged in a state of both negotiation and mutual learning, the vast expanse of foreign poetics and the underlying concepts of civilization became Bei Dao's powerful tool for bridging the East and the West. During his years in Europe and the United States, in addition to poetry writing, he also engaged in poetic criticism and translation. For example, in his 2005 collection of essays and essays, *The Rose of Time*, published by Oxford University Press, he systematically translated works by Federico García Lorca and other representative Western literary masters. Extensive textual research and critical reading laid the groundwork and preparation for the later completion of the monumental project "Walking on a Forked Path." It also provides opportunities and guidance for Bei Dao's own linguistic transformation and compatible development at this moment.

Bei Dao's language has never been characterized by the pursuit of skill or the display of complexity. Instead, it is anchored by an internal fluidity and precise (in his early years, even sharp) words and phrases, creating inward shifts in the poetic realm and even self-breakthroughs. He is extremely adept at metaphors. These sentences, which "hit the right spot between meaning and meaninglessness,"^[20] This state is precisely the realm Jacques Lacan repeatedly emphasized: neither over-consuming the scattered images of reality nor becoming a mirage in the lyrical project. Landscape creation emphasizes a two-way or multi-directional interaction between images, as exemplified by the key line in "Green Lantern": "The green lantern lifts a corner of the dream, and you grasp the flame, transforming it into a blanket of snow."^[21] are sufficient to make emotion and scene highly integrated and inseparable, and the language subject and object form a mutually corroborating and elevating effect, blurring the absolute barriers between reality and fiction, classic and modern, today and history on a practical level. The "flame" affects the "green lamp", and the "green lamp" illuminates the "heavy snow". The "heavy snow" is only "a corner of a dream", and this "dream" reflects the strong characteristics of classical Chinese poetry. Bei Dao is quite adept at constructing picturesque spaces in language, and the visual gestures he unfurls in long poems are actually more three-dimensional and expansive than those in short chapters, such as the final paragraph of the third chapter of "Wrong Path":

Youth is like the shattering of ancient porcelain
 Freedom removes old bandages
 The heart is a mad engine
 The roar turns into a hum
 The expedition has no boundaries ^[22]

The hard edges of thought irreversibly scratch and even penetrate the envelope of external embellishment. The cold, wise and calm language in Bei Dao's writing is well aware that "subjectivity has become a passivity more passive than any passivity" ^[23]. He pours his powerful experience into the text, addressing the rapid devaluation of large and easily uncontrolled terms like "fragmentation," "engine," and "boundary" within the poetic landscape. For example, he mastered images imbued with a unique spirit, such as "youth," "freedom," and "heart." He not only used language to resist the violence of history in his revolutionary narrative writing, but also woven a "transnational," "cross-cultural," and "cross-generational" confession into his lyrical, documentary-inspired work. From the 1980s to the late 1990s, Bei Dao's linguistic approach shifted from a focus on immediate political discourse and intellectual enlightenment to a personalized acquisition of a vast vocabulary, becoming a representative of trust in, and even the reshaping of, the value of his mother tongue. From the 2000s until 2021, when he completed "Wrong Path" (published in 2023), Bei Dao transformed himself from a staunch defender of Chinese culture or a lone minister adrift overseas into a "poetic historian" who rethinks through memories, maintaining his pursuit of truth and questioning of human nature through review and reflection on individual experiences and the grand era. As Xu Zhuoyun observes in the field of historiography, "Human spiritual life often consists of two parts: the sacred and the secular. But at the point of division, is it opposition or mutual resonance?" ^[24] "In general, Kitajima is also committed to exploring this issue, and unlike ordinary scholars who carry out public historical tracing, Kitajima also pays attention to its own vigilance and criticism.

Beidao's long poems almost have "the temperament and ancient aesthetics of Han Dynasty art" ^[25]. Most critics tend to ignore the relatively restrained and gentle side because of the sharp questioning language exposed in the early years, the protest language in the storm, and the avant-garde language that wedged into the political nerves. Kitajima has a sense of pride, ambivalence, and ambition to inherit and create because of his attachment and trust in his mother tongue and the cultural depth behind it. The tenderness of language is to unconsciously let go of the erect and passionate figure in the narrative, which may be embedded in the "shouts" before and after, or it may appear in a certain sigh, simple, and sad tone, and his confusion comes from the "five thousand years of hieroglyphs" ^[26]; at the forefront of the fusion and collision of Chinese and foreign cultures, a new generation faces the changing fate, and his emotion stems from sighing at "new ideas whizzing by/hitting the back of the times" ^[27]; at the age of over 70, seeing the era of rapid economic development accompanied by new and unknown changes and opportunities in the cultural field, his anxiety and prospects come from reflecting on "sending a letter, but having no address tomorrow" ^[28]. This is starkly different from the situation in post-Misty Poetry, which irreversibly transforms writing's love of poetry into a mere discovery of writing itself ^[29]. Bei Dao's aesthetic tastes and language patterns undergo a constant cycle of refinement and shifts. Most importantly, the foundation of his poetic architecture has never been confined to the small sphere of individual writing; his intellectual horizon largely determines his language.

According to Western scholars, the genre of narrative long poem originates from the study of The Iliad ^[30], strong language story, narrative ability, and orderly or jumping lyricism of emotional mixing make long poems a more special rank in the poetic category. Beidao's long poems are different from the general concept of "long poems", his language and fate thinking are extremely correlated, and his more meticulous and delicate writing ability has actually completed the deconstruction and even taming of relatively grand problems, and carried out a deeper "interpretation" behavior on the structure of the poem with the layout of words and paragraphs, similar to the "big poems" talked about by Cao He and Huo Junming since the 21st century ^[31] concept, Kitajima promotes the birth of the linguistic tension and extraordinary rhythm of "Divergent Road" by transcending the poetic paradigm at the public level and challenging and breaking the framework formed by all his past poems.

3 Poetic thought and "ancient dignity"

Throughout Kitajima's writing process, the most indispensable feature must be the light of the idea of "resistance". The courage and determination contained in it blend and relate to each other in different works and specific and diverse things, thus forming a deep connotation and a solid and close linguistic core. Zhong Wen, who defended and supported "hazy poetry" and Beidao and others at the Dingfuzhuang Conference (a symposium on poetry theory hosted by the "Poetry Journal" held at the Coal Management Cadre College in Dingfuzhuang, the eastern suburbs of Beijing in October 1980), bluntly said that "poets face the world and society with an insurmountable and unavoidable sense of responsibility and justice, and make a poetic answer to the world with doubtful and confrontational words, so there is a huge poetic power, a historical force is standing" ^[32]. Bei Dao's writing has long been burdened with a sense of mission. During the long period of literary transformation or adjustment, this has been almost impossible to divide, strip, or reconstruct. Like a

fighter or loyal minister, his poems maintain both the humanistic nature and concern for public society. Bei Dao cherishes "weak" things and events, possesses a persistent pursuit of peace and tranquility, and a vision of achieving them. His unwavering commitment to and defense of "freedom" compels him to confront all voices that oppose and prey upon it, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it, "I will place my entire freedom in my courage."^[33] Underneath Bei Dao's silent and elegant face, within his modest and resilient character, he uses a cool and powerful pen to continuously engage with questions of literature, art, society, history, and even human nature. With a pure sense of responsibility and moral commitment, he has evolved from the "enlightenment spirit and critical thinking" and "assertion of individual rights" displayed in the 1980s^[34], to the 2010s, when he began to expound on and question the essence of life, fulfilling his commitment to his own intellectual journey.

A pragmatic and truth-seeking mindset is not inconsistent with an idealistic vision and aspiration for dreams; in fact, they converge in a highly compatible way within poetry. Bei Dao's writing possesses a distinctly utopian quality. On the one hand, he strives to extend and critique the real world, while on the other, he remains committed to constructing an idealistic realm. Faced with the peril, cruelty, and collapse that are visible and shocking beyond the pages of his books, he strives to restore, repair, and consolidate a spirit of beauty and sincerity within his writings, achieving a certain correction and rectification of reality through a combination of grandeur and tenderness, magnificence and elegance. This path to poetic creation is nearly impossible to replicate. As Bei Dao confessed, "Without my subsequent wandering and isolation, my personal writing would have regressed or even stopped."^[35] Only through the interweaving of constant setbacks, hardships, happiness, and romance can a "crossroads" be forged, imbued with the aesthetics of scars, exile, resistance, and independence. Bei Dao, who has followed this path, has a poetic ideology free from cages and height limits. Due to his foresight and sophisticated nature, his immediate concerns are actually more like long-term concerns, visible to the world.

The biggest concern of the North Island is that the lack of "ancient dignity" needs to be solved urgently. In an interview with theHKTDC in 2009, he said that "it is not easy to restore the dignity of contemporary Chinese", and that this "dignity" to be restored is not only a rebellion against the mainstream discourse that dominates the world and gets rid of ideological restrictions^[36] It is also the dignity of modern poetry writing and even the entire social and cultural field, which is widely impacted by modernity and postmodernity, and is immersed or invaded by the Western cultural system. Regarding the former, Kitajima, as a person who has experienced the positive relationship or embarrassing situation between poetry and society since the 1950s, has seen that the fragility of a pen can be broken and crushed in an instant, but he also knows that the profound and vast power of words transcends the muzzle and shackles, and Kitajima's caress the scars on the timeline to warn of the cowardice and compromise of literature, and at the same time inspire generations of new writers not to give up clear cognition and the attitude and right to write independently. Kitajima emphasizes the cherishing of "dignity" as a person who has experienced vicissitudes of life and a gazer stationed in the present.

Regarding the latter, in China's rapidly developing economy, it's not just buildings and towers that are constantly changing; the spiritual will and cultural aesthetics of a broad range of social groups are also facing the intrusion of ideas shaped by foreign nations and ethnic groups, the intrusion of profit-seeking and utilitarian ideologies fostered by commercial capital, and the intrusion of Western-dominated research and thought systems within the globalized academic landscape. Bei Dao, having spent years abroad, experiencing the typical "Orientalist" scrutiny combined with his own deep nostalgia for his homeland and the classics, has instilled in him a deep sense of urgency to safeguard the orthodoxy of Chinese poetry. Settling in Hong Kong China and commuting to mainland China, Bei Dao, in the late 2000s, was struck by the unprecedented changes in the poetry landscape and atmosphere. Commercial, entertainment-oriented, and vulgarized texts have unfurled a massive banner, steadily encroaching on the market for serious literature. In the field of serious literature, the weight of poetry is far less than it was in the 1980s and 1990s. In order to earn royalties, activity funds, appearance fees and other income, poets are becoming more and more adept at lowering their status, not only in reality, but also in the status of poetic language. From the almost sensationalist internet "oral poetry" (or "slobber poetry") to the fluctuation or tendency of intellectual writing to align poetic concepts with "foreign" ones, from poets' habitual catering to the context of translated dialects to the gradual erosion of overall Chinese cultural characteristics, Zheng Min said, "The emphasis on the ease of understanding of spoken language, coupled with a preference for Western grammar, has prevented the opportunity for vernacular Chinese to learn and absorb the rich connotations of classical literary language and the essence of Chinese culture accumulated therein for thousands of years. Therefore, it is inevitable that vernacular Chinese writing has not matured for a long time."^[37] almost struck Bei Dao straight in the heart. In the seventeenth chapter of "Wrong Path", he wrote:

The new rain passes through the headlights of the opposing cars
Blow the horn to the horizon
The treetops change color like hair
That is the country of sighs
Following the backs of the fathers
The horizontal line collects the folding knife of the night

The strings broke and the song ended abruptly
 The table is the real boundary
 And the work is intermittent
 Behind is the secret winter
 The thought of the cloud becomes a meteor
 The moment when it illuminates the earth——
 Military books fall in snow and Chinese characters surround the city^[38]

There is a fundamental difference between him and poets who have long lived (exiled) in foreign countries, such as Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky. Bei Dao possesses a deep love and loyalty to his country and national culture that transcends the current ideology, politics and power trends. He is different from Adonis and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn and Bei Dao share a common trait: they never gave up writing in their mother tongue, their commitment to upholding and developing local culture deeply embedded in their ardent conscience. Words like "reverse," "sigh," "fathers," and "shooting stars" in his poems reflect Bei Dao's pursuit and reflection on the restoration of his mother tongue and local culture. Decades of wandering around have resulted in "intermittent work," but he never speaks of abandonment or betrayal. "Tree crowns change color like hair." As Bei Dao ages, his temples gray, his heart also gradually ages, his movements slowing. The spirited writing of his youth has long since become an irreplaceable memory. His fate has reached a new turning point. Having written about "military books falling in the snow, Chinese characters besieging a city," Bei Dao's metaphors have become almost literal, perceptually explicit. The contemporary dignity of Chinese cultural heritage, its cultural autonomy, its right to maintain its independence at the forefront of international trends, and its eligibility to participate in shaping the rules of "world culture" have become the core of his concerns. "To be recognized in English or other international languages^[39]" The so-called "status" that can be achieved is undoubtedly a one-sided contempt and injustice to Chinese literature.

Just as Cao Shunqing, a prominent figure in the field of comparative poetics, raised the issue of "aphasia^[40]" as early as 1996, constructing an independent and original Chinese literary theory system is both necessary and urgent. Cao even argues that, to a certain extent, "rewriting civilizational history" is the only way to break free from the deeply ingrained Western theoretical meta-discourse that has formed in Chinese academia over the past century, and is also a major initiative to encourage Chinese scholars to embark on the development of Chinese literary theory. This will contribute to the construction of a new world of diverse civilizations in the context of globalization and fundamentally abandon the arrogance and prejudice of Western civilization. This theory closely aligns with Shen Jiaxuan's advocacy in the field of grammar, namely, "to break free from the constraints of Western grammatical theory and strive for it."^[41] Combined with the idea of restoring "ancient dignity" in poetry revealed by Bejjima, Chinese scholars in the 21st century are completing the deconstruction and interpretation of Chinese culture from at least three fields: civilization history, literature, and linguistics, and paving the way for future development. And because Kitajima's poetic thought is accompanied by the foundation of his personal fame, it has a considerable degree of practicality and immediate value, and can set off a certain trend of thought in the ideological field of the current society in a relatively short period of time, at least at the intellectual level and in the vast global Chinese reading group.

While restoring and developing the "ancient dignity", Kitajima does not simply criticize or ignore the objectively existing real poetic field, he calmly observes, discards and absorbs the experience in it, and tries to create and contribute more specific means of expression at the level of works. For example, the change of the relationship between ordinary symbols, pains, and metaphors is introduced into poetry writing using montage techniques in the field of film, creating deflections, impacts, and rapid changes in imagery to stimulate readers' imagination. While creating a proportional blank space, we pay attention to the subconscious and momentary capture or presentation contained in poetry. Regarding Zhu Guangqian's so-called "Chinese poets can only hear nature in nature, Western poets can often see a mysterious and huge power in nature^[42]" This seemingly mysterious definition of "mysterious and huge power" is actually the shadow area caused by the narrowness of some writing ideas and strategies. When interpreting from the perspective of abandoning political preconceptions and violent language, it can be clearly seen that Kitajima's poetic thought has almost never stopped transforming and improving, and the pure and gentle ideological output shown in the long poem "Divergent Road" and the philosophical and dialectical language presentation make the "shining stars^[43]" Young people become resourceful "messengers"^[44], traveling back and forth between historical time and space.

4 Historical review and identity construction

A study of Bei Dao's literary works, especially his long poems, must focus on the historical value they embody and the historically informed reflections and concepts they reveal. Bei Dao has long fostered a complex and diverse relationship with historical information. His coexistence of respect and skepticism for written history, his cautious interpretation and critique of the "one-sided" views of official histories, and his extensive use of, reflection on, and willingness to correct and revise, unofficial histories, such as private notebooks and folk notes, demonstrates in many ways the uniqueness and

independence of his historical perspective. Bei Dao is not the logical successor of Marxist materialist historians such as Fan Wenlan and Jian Bozan, nor has he followed the example of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhongyue who lived and studied abroad in Europe and the United States. While Bei Dao is devoted to history, he never forgets to maintain his identity as a thinker and literary writer to criticize and engage in dialogue. With a broad vision and meticulous attention, he journeys from bureaucrats to ordinary people, from the heart of power to remote thatched cottages, from abroad to the mainland, transcending timelines, national borders, and class identities—factors that strictly control or manipulate the "perspective" of historical reading—to fully understand the fate of individuals (small history) and the turbulent times of collective destinies (big history). Friedrich Max Müller, the founder of comparative religion, once quoted Goethe's famous saying, "To know one thing is to know nothing" in his historical research ^[45]. Bei Dao actually returned to the field of literature with this sentence. He was well aware of the richness and limitations of history. In addition to the sunny side of "ritual and music civilization", there are also "Silenced Space" ^[46]. It is not easy to play a game and maintain stability between institutionalization and anti-system, discipline and heterogeneity, fence and extension. He rejects the one-sided interpretation of history, the presentation of bias, the ideological control of power, and the trend of "overturning" induced or bewitched by capital, and Kitajima forges his long poems into a kind of "melody", always moving forward between strife, dialectics and truth-seeking.

Revolution is a crucial link and topic in the history of poetry and social history. In his writings on various issues, Bei Dao fully demonstrates his enthusiastic participation in and calm judgment of "revolution." Amidst the oppositional, interrelated, unified, and volatile linguistic fluctuations within his texts, he successively completed a poetic revolution that asserted individual rights and a spiritual revolution that resolved or alleviated emotional conflict with the theme of "love." The former had a profound impact on the Chinese poetry scene in the 1980s, and the flow of "new thought" continues to this day. The latter, on the other hand, is a more personal activity of Bei Dao's long-term inner exploration and creation since the 1990s. As Gary Snyder once said, "In a sense, there is no hierarchy in life. The life of a stone is as beautiful, wise, and valuable as the life of a blade of grass, just as it is Einstein."^[47] This kind of writing method with universal axioms in the field of poetry is also a gentle and non-violent act of change (revolution) for the inner thoughts of poetry. In Kitajima's view, the essence of the poetry revolution is the spiritual revolution and the ideological revolution, which forms an impact and transformation on the inner thinking mode through the composition and expression of words, so the poetry revolution can even be regarded as a precursor or precursor to the social revolution, even if the development from the inner changes of the individual to the real social changes of the group is time-consuming and the hardships of achievement are unimaginable, but at the academic level, the so-called "revolution" of poetry has had an impact on the analysis and interpretation of history.

In the distant ancient era, Kitajima pinned on the object of writing itself, with a certain degree of fiction and imagination to complete the compensation and extension of the incompleteness and omission of historical materials, and the concept of "non-fiction" in the field of literature and the "bold assumptions" in the field of historiography formed a certain kind of intertwining. When depicting Confucius, he portrayed such an inner scene that blended with "reality":

At dawn, a flock of pigeons was released
 The territory is not a commemoration of the war
 You look back at the smoke and the well
 The days when the wind chases the clouds
 The road pulls the awakening sky
 On the chessboard of mountains and rivers
 You play against the king of your heart
 Read all the opportunities in your hand ^[48]

In the field of history, scholars such as Peng Xiaoyu and Liu Fusheng from mainland China, and Katsuhisa Fujita from Japan have successively expressed their recognition of the logic of the intersection of literature and history, and occasionally made creative attempts. At an earlier stage, Huang Liuzhu had proposed the idea of "connecting literature, history and philosophy", which led many scholars to think that "history might as well be written in this way". Li Kaiyuan even discussed "Which is more real, literature or history?" and proposed the theoretical framework of "3+N" (historical facts are the first history, historical materials are the second history, and historical books are the third history, followed by N extended histories)^[49]. In the field of poetry and literature, through Kitajima's long poetry writing, it can demonstrate its rationality and advantages beyond the general paradigm writing at a specific level, and Kitajima's consistent "find direction in writing, try to transcend in searching" ^[50]. This characteristic of Bei Dao's artistic style has always placed him at the forefront of absorbing relatively cutting-edge and avant-garde poetics, and even cross-disciplinary academic wisdom. Bei Dao, who was able to lead a generation of poetics in his thirties, still possesses an undiminished spirit of exploration even in his seventies. In Dufu's shadow, Beidao looks for his own shadow and observes Dufu's spiritual world. Bei Dao employs a "method of viewing through movement and a fusion of spatiality and practicality to create the scroll's primary media specificity."^[51] avoids the "blind spot" of the perspective of history books, controls the "superficiality" of literary

rhetoric, vividly portrays the rich emotions when "playing against the king in his heart", and the narrative and even qualitative analysis of the "chessboard of mountains and rivers". The chess game of history and the fall of thoughts can be captured, enriched, planned and constructed in a literary way, and even approached a certain "restoration" situation.

Why do we start to deal with the relationship between history and the present, and reconcile and enrich the methodology of the pursuit of logical rationality and linguistic perceptibility in poetics to coexist and develop the values of the classical and distant era with the contemporary, advanced or extraterritorial values? For Kitajima, answering this question is almost equivalent to repeating the spiritual motto left by Qian Mu more than half a century ago, and understanding "how we will now adopt the new trend of the West, how to use our old experience to open a way out for ourselves, to innovate the law, and to use new talents, this is of course the responsibility of our generation"^[52]. This is to understand part of the mission Bei Dao set for himself in his works. On his shoulders flows the torrent of Chinese poetics, surging from antiquity to the unknown. His writing involves renovating or dismantling the bright moon, fresh breeze, and pear blossoms in the old snow. He systematically incorporates and soothes the lonely boat and its silence, the storm and its sinking, and then leads them out of the metaphorical chamber filled with mirrors. He forges a bloody path through the wildly growing folk discourse and the inspiring official narrative, confronting and revealing the fallacies and omissions of a host of "unshakable things," and navigating the so-called "ancient hostility" between reform and antiquity^[53]. In relation to his writing, Bei Dao champions himself as a "great poet," and his construction of his own identity is another point of mutual verification in his review of history.

From "Daydream" to "Wandering on a Different Path," two images of "Bei Dao" can be discerned within the text: the Bei Dao with his intense poetics, seizing historical opportunities, like a linguistic chess player who values time like gold; and the Bei Dao with his protracted poetics, like a methodical visual artist. This bifurcated portrait, or the construction of a dual figure, stems from a combination of factors: his background, family, experiences, and reflections. Robert Hartwell once analyzed the social stratification of the Chinese literati, breaking it down into the founding elite, the professional elite, and the local elite or gentry^[54]. Three main sections. Bei Dao's father, Zhao Jinian, participated in the construction of the trust and financial systems of the New China, and eventually became one of the founders of the Chinese People's Insurance Company; Grandfather Zhao Zhiliao sold antique calligraphy and paintings as a profession; His great-grandfather Zhao Binyan served in the late Qing Dynasty, and was deeply trusted by Zhang Zhidong to be in charge of the manufacturing bureaus of Guangdong and Shanghai, and later became the governor of Shandong; His great-grandfather Zhao Jingxian served as the prefect of Huzhou, and his father Zhao Bingyan was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Governor of Huguang^[55]. Among the six direct generations of his family, including Bei Dao himself, four have risen through the ranks of government officials, two of whom even held high positions as governors and governors-general, truly powerful officials. Bei Dao's family tree and cultural genes almost encompass all the aspects of the three literary elite classes. In his youth, Bei Dao participated in social infrastructure construction as a worker. This is enough to explain the expression of his poetry, which combines the sentiments of the literati and the lyricism of the noble literati, with the long-term use of Bolshevik-style worker-peasant vocabulary. In his poetry, Bei Dao forges iron, wipes sweat, and looks back at steel and concrete at sunset. He also indulges himself in a glass of red wine and restores ancient scrolls with green lamps in literary rhetoric. Compared to his forefathers, Bei Dao, besides being an inheritor of cultural genes, is more often portrayed as a rebellious "outsider." Whether as a "language chess player" or a "visual artist," Bei Dao essentially breaks away from the more traditional family of local scholars, existing in a kind of wandering state, even a "fire thief" with both enlightenment and rebellious labels. He resembles what Walter Benjamin (Schoenflies Benjamin) called "the so-called wanderer who appears as a hero in an ironic way and with a social identity of nothing."^[56] It has long appeared in the hearts of many readers, which is different from the mild, hardworking and hard-working "old wood" in the realistic portrait^[57]. There is a contrast between the faces.

In the literary category and social field, Bei Dao's important self-positioning and identity awareness continue to have an impact on the development of contemporary poetry. Since 2008, Bei Dao has long been a dedicated worker and disseminator of poetics. This not only continues his identity as a literary editor and poet since he founded *Today* magazine in 1978, but also responds to the trend of the times and begins to serve as a planner (curator) and host of literary activities. Beginning with the inaugural Hong Kong China International Poetry Night in November 2009, the Poetry Festival (IPNHK) and its affiliated events, such as "Music Poetry Night," "Breakthrough: Recitation and Dialogue," and "Century Dialogue," have been held almost every year since. These events are imbued with humanity and universal concerns. Topics like "Boundaries of Mother Tongue," "Poetry and the Distant," "Cross-Boundary and Fusion," "Island or Continent," and "Poetry and Conflict" directly address the core debates between poetic writing and the social environment. Bei Dao, using Hong Kong China as his reception room, humbly and warmly invited guests from around the world, including Ouyang Jianghe, Xichuan, and Chen Xianfa from mainland China, Anastassis Vistonitis from Greece, Charif Shanahan and Eliot Weinberger from the United States, Maria Stepanova from Russia, and Ernest Wizner from Germany. Wichner and other poets and scholars have participated in the activities many times over the past decade. Bei Dao used his own achievements in the field of poetics and the reputation he had built up in the poet circle (circle of

friends) as "starting capital" and "guarantee funds" to support the long-term cause of the literary festival that upholds humanism and humanitarianism. Bei Dao's self-identity construction also invisibly infected and attracted other peers or younger generations. He once wrote in the inaugural words of "Today" that "we can no longer wait. Waiting is a step backward, because history has already moved forward."^[58] The young people of the Song Dynasty still call for and convey the power of poetry and thought many years later.

It's just no longer as urgent. Compared to his high-pitched cry of "For our generation, today, there is only today,"^[59] the Bei Dao in "Wandering on the Crossroads" is deeply concerned with the existence of the "future." Even though it's shrouded in confusion and uncertainty, after breaking through the layers of pessimism that have blocked it, he remains willing to devote his attention to it. The poetry festivals and journals he has sponsored, along with his works, strive to maintain the construction and development of a "third field." This is a field built and organized by literary groups, in addition to the "first field" primarily constructed by government and the "second field" primarily constructed by commercial capital. It plays a vital role in safeguarding and developing the relative purity of poetics and facilitating direct dialogue and exchange, and even mutual trust, between poets and scholars, and between Chinese and Western cultures. For example, within the realm of poetry, scholars from abroad who "take the 'two Greek cultures' as the source of their culture and always refer to Greece"^[60] and Chinese scholars who "strive to distinguish between Chinese and barbarians"^[61] "can achieve a direct breakthrough in thought, to a certain extent shattering the cultural biases and spiritual hegemony within their respective texts, gradually pursuing a writing realm that breaks free from cognitive cocoons while maintaining cultural confidence. This is precisely the path Bei Dao personally pursued.

After writing "Wandering on the Crossroads," Bei Dao lamented in the postscript that his energy for life and writing was at risk of declining at any moment, which reminded him of the Buddhist saying about the "impermanence" of fate^[62], having spent most of his life on an endless journey, Bei Dao has passed away one after another over the past few decades, including his father, Feng Yida, Cai Qijiao, Gu Cheng, Zhang Zao, Zhong Wen, Liu Yu, and many other old friends and relatives. These friends and relatives have brought him the perception of the peaceful and compassionate side of those who died of old age, or the vast and compassionate side of those who died young. Thoughts on life and death, and the relationship between life and death, have been continuously integrated into Bei Dao's poetic process, expanding the language elements or deepening the emotional foundation. His works are thus covered with a layer of meaning as a life account book or a mark of fate. Rejecting the flattened, simplistic disassembly of "symbolization" or "logoization," when Bei Dao's words are situated within the fluid course of time, a multifaceted, multi-staged close reading allows for a truly non-assembly-lined examination, excerpting, and critiquing of lightning-fast phrases in politics, culture, geography, personality, and even views of love and life and death; the life histories of ideological critics or technical reformers; the poetic vestiges of the revival of classical forms in the mother tongue; and the unwavering pursuit of a better future. Beyond expressing individual consciousness, its internal evolution, and its linguistic evolution, Bei Dao and his long poems offer a contemporary poetic perspective on the ethical aspirations of Chinese literature and even Chinese culture, as well as a demonstration and exploration of its worldview and future. On a broader level, they also provide evidence and commentary on the development of modern Chinese poetry over the past forty years. This is a circuitous, relatively alternative, non-official, non-academic, and even non-mainland China memory and private history. The words Bei Dao recalls or guides from the raging winds carry the samples, poetic genes, and ideological maps of a specific nation and era, merging into poetry. Their value cannot be ignored.

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