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The making of Chinese poetry of the nineties

Yang, L.Y.

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Chapter Three

During the Polemic: Weak Popular Arguments and Powerful Intellectual Refutations

I. Prologue

The scholars looking back at poetry's development in 1990s China appear to more or less automatically approve of N-Poetry. Reflecting on the full decade of the 1990s, they routinely note the Polemic between the Popular camp and the Intellectual camp at the close of the decade, but the majority hardly comb through the actual contentions that were made at the time. This is disturbing in that their work echoes the partisanship of Cheng Guangwei's designation of N-Poetry in *Portrait*, and fails to really engage with criticisms of Cheng by Yu Jian and others. The few scholars who do comb through the contentions of the Polemic pay more attention to the process of the Polemic unfolding – with frequent reference to the keywords that were asserted in this process but without truly problematizing either the validity of the Popular Standpoint in its representations of poetry written in the 1990s or the effectiveness of the Popular camp in positioning themselves and trying to dominate the discourse.¹ According to Maghiel van Crevel, of the two camps, the Popular camp was the louder, more aggressive, and more effective one in publicizing its contentions.² So why is it that those louder, more aggressive, and more effective contentions in the Polemic have exerted so little influence on subsequent scholarship, sometimes to the point of invisibility?

To answer this question requires us to re-engage with the Polemic, and to reconsider the contentions of both camps in terms of the connections between the Popular Standpoint, N-Poetry, and the decade of the 1990s. To this end, we turn to the four partisan anthologies mentioned in the preface to this study. In the context of the Polemic, they can also be understood as four book-length contentions submitted by the rival camps of the Polemic, as it were: Cheng's *Portrait*, Yang Ke's *1998 Yearbook*, Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo's *Memorandum*, and Yang Ke's *1999 Yearbook*. Specifically, the following discussion

¹ As discussed in Preface, the cases in point are studies that focus on the Polemic, namely Chan 2005; Van Crevel 2008; Zhou Zan 2007; Zhou Hang 2013; Tang 2014.

² Van Crevel 2008: 20.

foregrounds the essays included in “Section One” of *Memorandum* and the “Memorandum” section of the *1999 Yearbook* (it will be a challenge to distinguish the book called *Memorandum* and the section called “Memorandum” in another book, but I will regularly remind the reader of the difference). As explained earlier, most essays included in these two sets of texts were published during the Polemic, and as such they chart the collision of the Popular camp and the Intellectual camp. Each essay by itself constitutes a contention in the Polemic, and the compilations of the respective anthologies – reflecting decisions made by editors who were deeply involved in the Polemic – may count as such contentions as well. Thus, my focus here is not so much on when and where the individual essays first appeared, before they were repackaged in the anthologies. (This information is provided in the anthologies and, largely, in Van Crevel’s chronological bibliography³).

Notably, “Section One” of *Memorandum* and the “Memorandum” section of the *1999 Yearbook* are sets of texts that are fundamental to this discussion, from the Intellectual camp and the Popular camp, respectively. The following pages also feature some other relevant essays that are not included in “Section One” and “Memorandum”. Most of these are also included in one or several of the four anthologies. Therefore, in addition to *Memorandum* and the *1999 Yearbook*, it is also important that we pay attention to *Portrait* and the *1998 Yearbook* here, the former associated with the Intellectual camp and the latter with the Popular camp. Fundamentally, Poetry of the Nineties is that threads running through these critical essays in question.

Below, I will show that the contentions of the Popular camp are marked by bluff rather than cogent argumentation; and that specifically, they appear much weaker than the Intellectual camp’s contentions in establishing a connection between their poetics and the decade of the 1990s as a distinct period in poetic development.

Additionally, I attach a visualization of relations between the various authors we have reviewed in chapter Three, because the material under scrutiny is a complex affair. Notably, while most of these authors are themselves primary contributors to “Memorandum” in the *1999 Yearbook* and/or “Section One” of *Memorandum*, some appear because they are mobilized as important references: they are, so to speak, “secondary” contributors, but no

³ Van Crevel 2008: 451–458.

less important for that. Even though they do not themselves participate in the Polemic, they are given a role in the Polemic by the primary contributors.

II. The Polemic as a Tipping Point

“Section One” of *Memorandum* and “Memorandum” in the 1999 *Yearbook* encapsulate the heated debate between the sympathizers of the Popular Standpoint and N-Poetry respectively, but the two propositions that gave rise to this debate are not included. In this regard, better places to start a reconsideration of the Polemic are Cheng’s introduction to *Portrait* and Yu’s prefatory essay to the 1998 *Yearbook*. As close analyses of Cheng’s and Yu’s propositions have been offered in chapter Two, I provide only summaries below, with the aim of laying out the context for the other contentions exchanged in the Polemic. As the focus of the present chapter is on the connections between the Popular Standpoint, N-Poetry, and the decade of the 1990s, I will investigate how Cheng and Yu each establish the association between their respective propositions and the development of poetry written in the 1990s. It turns out that from the very beginning, Cheng’s position is much more solid than Yu’s.

The Effectiveness of N-Poetry

In his introduction to *Portrait*, Cheng Guangwei identifies fifteen N-poets: Ouyang Jianghe, Zhang Shuguang, Wang Jiaxin, Chen Dongdong, Bai Hua, Xi Chuan, Zhai Yongming, Xiao Kaiyu, Sun Wenbo, Zhang Zao, Huang Canran, Zhong Ming, Lü De’an, Zang Di, and Wang Ai.⁴ Also, four features are identified as N-poetics: Intellectual Writing, opposition to “pure poetry”, Narrativity, and Individual Writing.⁵ According to Cheng, these features complement each other, and he contrasts them with late-1980s developments in poetry. The latter point is captured in the notion of the opposition to “pure poetry,” which Cheng presents as a typical 1980s thing. The other three features explain N-poets’ advocacy for poetry’s engagement with the complexity of everyday life in positive terms. In brief, Intellectual Writing and Individual Writing communicate N-poets’ attitude vis-à-vis the emphatic presence of politics in everyday life. And, the representation and

⁴ Cheng 1998: Introduction 2.

⁵ Cheng 1998: Introduction 2-8 and 16-20.

reinterpretation derived from such experiences are made possible by Narrativity. These four features of N-poetics asserted by Cheng portray N-poets as introspective and independent individuals of the 1990s.

Such a profile of N-Poetry looks convincing, except that Cheng finds N-poets among the contributors to the unofficial journals *Tendency* and its successor *The Southern Poetry Review* – which, notably, was published between 1988 and 1993, starting in the 1980s and extending only into the early 1990s. This is not a substantial, representative, or objective set of material for characterizing poetry's development during the 1990s in full, all the more so because Cheng's choices appear to also reflect personal relationships with the N-poets. Cheng's approach shows him as appropriating the calendar decade for a particular poetics.

That said, Cheng substantiates his vision of N-poetics with essays published by these N-poets between the late 1980s and 1998. Specifically, Cheng goes back to poetics proposed by various poets at various points in the 1990s to sift out the four features of N-Poetry. In this way, the N-poets efficiently produce first-hand materials for a discourse on poetry written in the 1990s that helps in positioning themselves. While the introspectiveness and independence they claim as personal features are not easily measurable, their statements on these matters can in fact be seen to be borne out by their poetry, and as such, they are convincing. Moreover, the notion of the complexities of everyday life can accommodate pretty much anything, and there was no serious political upheaval in the 1990s to force the N-poets to choose between being dissidents or conformists, or to otherwise compromise this generic description of a key aspect of their poetics. The question then becomes how effective their terminology and their explicit poetics were vis-à-vis their various interlocutors. As it turns out, they become the sources Cheng draws on to establish a basic association between his proposition and the calendar decade.

The Ineffectiveness of the Popular Standpoint

Yu Jian certainly does not accept the N-poetic discourse. Even if Cheng Guangwei, or more precisely, the N-poets manage to implant a sense of introspectiveness, independence, and social engagement in their writings, Yu, as discussed in chapter Two, does not see these

features as characterizing N-Poetry and he makes this explicit in his proposition of the Popular Standpoint that is the prefatory essay to the 1998 *Yearbook*. Yu calls Cheng's designation of N-Poetry in *Portrait* Intellectual Writing and depicts N-poets, or what he calls the Intellectuals, as being affiliated with the Chinese cultural establishment, and at the same time as voluntarily subordinated to Western knowledge systems and Western-language resources.⁶ And, based on such observations, Yu concludes that the N-poets are governed by domestic authorities and Western influences. As evidence of their political dependence, Yu invokes the unanimous approval that N-Poetry receives from Cheng Guangwei and other scholarly critics.⁷ Regarding Western influences, Yu highlights the numerous references to Western culture in N-Poetry.⁸ While N-poetics mostly stress the writer's intention, Yu judges the end result of the intention, that is, the resultant poetry itself – which he claims lacks independence and the ability of being indigenous. Yu asserts that poetry written in what he calls colloquial language can better represent everyday life and achieve independence from authoritarian ideologies.⁹ This is a key point in his proposition of the Popular Standpoint.

Mirroring Cheng Guangwei, Yu designates over ten Popular poets: Bei Dao, Duoduo, Chang Yao, Lü De'an, Zhai Yongming, Zhu Wen, Yi Sha, A Jian, Lu Yang, Du Malan, Hou Ma, Xu Jiang, Zhong Dao, Yang Jian, Lu Xixi.¹⁰ Additionally, Yang Ke calls attention to some other budding poets namely, Li Mingpeng 黎明鹏, Bei Cun 北村, Zhang Zhihao 张执浩, Tang Danhong 唐丹鸿, Zhu Zhu 朱朱, Sang Ke, Ji Shaofei 纪少飞, Jiang Cheng 江城, and Fei Ya 非亚.¹¹ Together, Yu and Yang submit over twenty Popular poets. However, both Yu and Yang make no reference to critical discourse produced by these authors, and single-handedly puts forward their proposition instead.

Yu counts as a major proponent of the mid-1980s “colloquial” trend, and his mention of colloquial language stresses the continuity between poetry written in the 1980s and the 1990s, different from the position taken by the N-poets and Cheng Guangwei. This

⁶ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 7-9.

⁷ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 8-9.

⁸ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 2, 7-8, 13-14, and 16-17.

⁹ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 3-5.

¹⁰ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 5.

¹¹ Yang 1999: 519.

continuity is further stressed as Yu emphasizes the independent quality achieved by the contributors to unofficial journal *Them* since its launch in the mid-1980s, with himself as a key contributor – and, notably, earlier than either of the two journals cited by Cheng, *Tendency* and *The Southern Poetry Review*.¹² Indeed, Yu mainly relies on his observations of the 1980s poetry scene to explain the Popular Standpoint. This approach is a key aspect of the weakness of his argument.

It is certainly possible that the colloquial language adopted by the mid-1980s contributors to *Them* continues to matter to poets in the 1990s. However, as analyzed in chapter Two, Yu does not substantiate his assertion about the dissociation of colloquial language from authoritarian ideologies, and an association between colloquial language, an independent spirit, and authenticity. Besides, Yu hardly elaborates on how this mid-1980s poetical practice develops into the Popular Standpoint that he develops to discuss poetry written in the 1990s. All he does is give the colloquial poets of the 1980s center stage in his prefatory essay to the *1998 Yearbook*, a poetry anthology that is dedicated to the designation of works written a decade later. Yu claims a historical background for the Popular Standpoint but fails to extend this into the 1990s. Instead he rolls out history in the opposite direction, as it were, connecting *Them* with *Today* – published in 1978-1980 and widely considered the fountainhead of the unofficial journal tradition in the post-Mao era – and, even further back, with the May Fourth Movement of 1919.¹³ Where Yu does engage with poetry written in the 1990s, this is mostly by accusing the N-poets of harboring treacherous intentions.¹⁴

In all, Yu Jian in his prefatory essay situates the Popular Standpoint in a theoretical void, and comes nowhere near Cheng Guangwei's argumentatively supported proposition of N-Poetry as something that is characteristic of the 1990s, or important in terms of the development of poetry during the decade (quite aside from one's assessment of the arguments in question). As such, the Popular camp starts from a difficult place – per se, and certainly if compared with the Intellectual camp – when it comes to inventing, influencing, and controlling the designation of poetry written in the 1990s.

¹² Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 3-7.

¹³ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 1-5 and 9-10.

¹⁴ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 7-9.

III. The “True Faces” Disclosed in “Memorandum”

We now turn to the contentions made during the Polemic by the Popular camp and the Intellectual camp respectively. As “Memorandum” in the 1999 *Yearbook* captures the exchanges between the Popular camp and the Intellectual camp, I will introduce this first. Most of the essays from the Intellectual camp featured in “Memorandum” are also included in “Section One” of *Memorandum*;¹⁵ but the latter also has several additional essays, to which we subsequently turn. As it turns out, “Memorandum” by itself already exposes the flaws in the contentions by the Popular camp and the strengths in the contentions by the Intellectual camp; and the contentions made in the remaining essays in *Memorandum* only strengthen this impression.

The exchanges captured in “Memorandum” are united under the idea of the “true faces” 真相, as revealing the motives behind a statement or designation. This term directly refers to the Popular critic Xie Youshun’s essay “The Inner True Face of Poetry” 内在的诗歌真相,¹⁶ but the idea of unmasking the poetry scene or revealing its actual nature (as in the image of the true face) is not exclusive to Xie’s essay. “Memorandum” shows that this idea has previously already been presented by the Popular camp. It also shows that the Popular camp’s essays concerning the “true faces” appear to initiate the exchanges and the Intellectual camp appears to be forced into a reactive position. Hence, the arguments from the Popular camp are introduced first in the following discussion.

Notably, not all the Popular camp’s contentions in “Memorandum” work with the image of the “true faces.” More generally, they appear to reflect a certain discordance or minimally a lack of consistency within the Popular camp, in sharp contrast to the unanimity of the Intellectual camp.

Xie Youshun’s “Inner True Face” and What Had Gone Before

Three key essays that force the Intellectual camp to respond are Yu Jian’s prefatory essay to the 1998 *Yearbook*, Shen Qi’s “Square Accounts after the Autumn Harvest – 1998 : Memorandum on the Chinese Poetry Scene” 秋后算账——1998：中国诗坛备忘录,¹⁷ and

¹⁵ Only three of the eight essays by the Intellectual camp in “Memorandum” are not included in Section One of *Memorandum*. Details are provided below.

¹⁶ Yang 2000: 526–530.

¹⁷ Yang 1999: 384–395.

Xie Youshun's "Inner True Face," mentioned above. In terms of the time of their first publication, all three were part of the Polemic. They were all published around the same time,¹⁸ a year after Cheng Guangwei's *Portrait* and a few months before the April 1999 Panfeng Conference where the Popular camp and Intellectual camp had a face-to-face confrontation.¹⁹ Only Xie's essay is included in "Memorandum." Yu's and Shen's are featured in the 1998 *Yearbook*.

Crucially, these three essays were preceded²⁰ by Shen Haobo's "Who's Fooling 'the 90s'" 谁在拿“九十年代”开涮,²¹ which takes pole position in "Memorandum" – reflecting that it first appeared even earlier than Yu Jian's proposition of the Popular Standpoint.²² Even if Yu does not initially designate Shen as a poet of the Popular Standpoint, Shen is given such status more than a year later, by Xie Youshun, in Xie's introduction to the 1999 *Yearbook*. In other word, Shen's essay is retroactively appropriated for the Popular Standpoint. In this light, taking Shen Haobo's essay as a starting point to explore the argumentative strategy of the Popular camp can help explain several aspects of Yu Jian's proposition – including its argumentative flaws – and the Popular camp's subsequent strategy.

Hence, the following subsection will consider four essays in all, by Shen Haobo, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun.

Shen Haobo, "Who's Fooling 'the 90s'"

Shen takes issue with Cheng Guangwei's designation of N-Poetry in *Portrait* and, further, with Cheng's integrity as a literary critic. The evidence Shen uses to support this is his own experience as a poet and poetry reader in the 1990s. Classifying most N-Poetry as tedious and pretentious,²³ Shen insists that Cheng intentionally excludes "truly excellent poets"²⁴ in his designation of poets of this decade. Specifically, Shen grounds this argument on

¹⁸ Van Crevel 2008: 452.

¹⁹ For a summary of this conference, see chapter One. For details, see: Cheng 2003: 346; Zhang 1999.

²⁰ Van Crevel 2008: 451–452.

²¹ Yang 2000: 540–544.

²² Van Crevel 2008: 451–452; Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 17.

²³ Yang 2000: 540–541.

²⁴ Yang 2000: 543.

Cheng's exclusion of Yu Jian, Yi Sha, Hou Ma, Xu Jiang, Han Dong, and Wang Xiaoni.²⁵ As a result, Shen refuses to accept Cheng Guangwei's designation of N-Poetry. To further frustrate Cheng's ambition, Shen notes Cheng's personal relations with N-poets signaled in the introduction to *Portrait* and criticizes him:

多么有意思的事情啊，一个《倾向》杂志的同仁们便构成了 90 年代诗歌的全部，更绝妙的是，这些人还都是程光炜先生的朋友！²⁶

What an interesting situation. The fellows of a single journal, *Tendency*, constitute the whole of poetry of the 1990s. Even more fascinatingly, these people are all Mr Cheng Guangwei's friends!

From Shen Haobo's perspective, the rationale behind Cheng's designation is not poetics or poetry but personal relations.

Shen further points out that *Portrait* is not the first collaboration between Cheng Guangwei and the N-poets, and identifies Peking University professor Hong Zicheng as someone with whom the N-poets have also collaborated. As noted earlier, Hong is one of the authors of *A History of China's Contemporary New Poetry (Revised Edition)*, the first history of contemporary Chinese poetry, and one of the editors of *Literature of the Nineties*, the book series that includes Cheng's *Portrait* as its poetry volume. Shen observes that before the publication of *Portrait*, Cheng, Hong, and several N-poets sat on the editorial boards of several series of poetry collections, namely *The Best Works by Contemporary Chinese Poets, a Compendium: A Series to Safeguard Poetry Now* 中国当代诗人精品大系：坚守现在诗系, and *Chinese Poets at the End of the Twentieth Century: Their Own Anthologies* 二十世纪末中国诗人自选集.²⁷ Shen notes that the series titles suggest a representativeness that is belied by the fact that it was exclusively N-poets who contributed to these poetry series. Combining this with his observations on *Portrait*, Shen sees a

²⁵ Yang 2000: 543–544.

²⁶ Yang 2000: 542.

²⁷ 《中国当代诗人精品大系：坚守现在诗系》 [*The Best Works by Contemporary Chinese Poets, a Compendium: A Series to Safeguard Poetry Now*] 1997; Chen 1997; Ouyang 1997; Wang 1997; Xi Chuan 1997.

pattern of manipulation of the media and suppression of true talent. He also suggests an abuse of power by Cheng, Hong, and the N-poets.²⁸ He accuses Cheng, Hong, and poets Ouyang Jianghe, Wang Jiaxin, Sun Wenbo, Chen Dongdong, Xiao Kaiyu, Zhang Shuguang, Zang Di, and Xi Du of wanting to impose their preferred order on poetry and of excluding contributions by people outside their circle.²⁹

In all, focusing on N-poets' and N-critics' frequent and emphatic presence in critical discourse – rather than looking at the actual poetry – Shen Haobo draws on this for his vision of systematic (mis)behavior by N-poets and sympathetic critics, captured in the notions of personal relations and power relations.

Yu Jian's Proposition

The observations made here build on the above discussion of Yu Jian's proposition. If Shen's rationale is read together with Yu Jian's criticism of N-Poetry, this can help explain the unproductiveness of Yu's discussion. Yu Jian's and Shen Haobo's arguments are similar. Both criticize Cheng Guangwei's credibility as a literary critic and build their arguments against N-poets and N-poetics on Cheng's designation of these categories in *Portrait*. Both see the popularity of N-Poetry among scholarly and literary critics as an indication of the critics' inability to see N-poets' mediocrity. In this regard, Yu Jian, like Shen Haobo, keeps his eye on the issues of personal relations and power relations.

In addition, Yu further elaborates on the power relations which he sees N-poets as manipulating. On the one hand, as noted, Yu implies that the personal relations between N-poets and N-critics signals the N-poets' association with the political authorities. On the other hand, he sees N-poets' numerous references to Western culture as evidence for N-poets' allegiance with and subservience to this culture. While Shen Haobo merely flags the issues,³⁰ Yu elaborates them. In his view, the power relations that N-poets manipulate help explain how they can attain high status in spite of the deficiencies of their poetry, and also provide evidence of their betrayal of their Chinese roots.³¹

²⁸ Yang 2000: 541 and 544.

²⁹ Yang 2000: 540–541.

³⁰ Yang 2000: 540 and 542.

³¹ Yang 1999: Prefatory Essay 7–9.

Shen Haobo's essay contains many of the elements subsequently marshalled by the Popular camp to criticize N-Poetry. As such, Yu Jian can be seen to draw upon Shen's ideas in order to suggest suspicious relations between N-poets, N-critics, and the political authorities, and to fill in the attributes of a set of poetics that can be launched as a counterbid to N-Poetry. In other words, and this is a crucial point: one cannot help but wonder if the Popular Standpoint was merely a reactive, hasty creation to counterbalance the visibility of N-Poetry in the 1990s poetry scene, as the decade was drawing to a close.

While Yu Jian ascribes the crime of N-Poetry to N-critics and N-poets' affiliation with authoritarian ideologies, he makes his counterbid on behalf of the Popular camp hinge on the quality of being independent from such ideologies. Yu, as an avant-garde poet and a major proponent of the colloquial trend of the mid- and late 1980s, ends up contributing his unique experience to the Popular camp and elaborates it into a proposition of Poetry of the Nineties. This explains why Yu puts such great stress on the employment of colloquial language and its capacity in gaining independence from authoritarian ideologies, and also why he is so enthusiastic about identifying a genealogy of poetics that employs colloquial language to energize poetry and to be revolutionary. According to Yu, this genealogy runs from the 1919 May Fourth Movement to the late 1970s *Today*, to the mid-1980s *Them*, and then to the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s.

Following this train of thought, Yu claims that the Popular Standpoint maintains for the 1990s an earlier tradition of lively, genuine, and indigenous poetry; but he does not substantiate this claim. On the other hand, Yu's experience in the 1980s colloquial trend hinders the 1990s leg of this journey. Yu cites mostly examples from the 1980s, especially publications to which he himself contributed; and in regard to the 1990s, rather than explaining the Popular Standpoint in positive terms, he mostly does so in negative terms, by attacking N-Poetry. He has more to say about the 1980s colloquial trend and against N-Poetry than he has to say in favor of the Popular Standpoint.

***Shen Qi's "Square Accounts after the Autumn Harvest – 1998:
Memorandum on the Chinese Poetry Scene"***

Shen Qi examines four 1998 texts and events to illustrate the history of contemporary avant-garde poetry and to compare its past and its present development. Thus, he

contributes to the literary history that both Cheng Guangwei and Yu Jian draw on to contextualize their respective propositions of Poetry of the Nineties. The texts Shen Qi examines are:

- (1) “Investigation into the Current State of Chinese Poetry” 中国诗歌现状调查, published in *Poetry Journal* in late 1998 by the journal’s editorial committee,
- (2) Huanglin’s 荒林 “Reflections on Contemporary Chinese Poetry Criticism: A Report on the Seminar on ‘Post-New Tide Poetry’” 当代中国诗歌批评反思：“后新诗潮”研讨会纪要,
- (3) *Portrait* by Cheng Guangwei
- (4) *Them: Selected Poems from Ten Years of Them, 1986-1996* 他们：《他们》十年诗歌选 1986-1996, compiled by Xiao Hai 小海 and the editor of the 1998 *Yearbook*, Yang Ke.

But Shen Qi’s engagement with literary history remains shallow. He extracts historical facts but omits the relevant contexts. The development of poetry in contemporary China is directly entwined with the political circumstances of the times, but omitting the context allows Shen to take a detour back to the Mao era and to imply an association of N-Poetry with the political authorities, just like Yu Jian. This is evading the complex issues resulting from the interaction between poetry and the ever-changing social contexts of the 1980s and the 1990s. Accordingly, as an elaboration of Shen Haobo’s and Yu Jian’s articles, Shen Qi’s argument against N-Poetry is abstract and sketchy.

“Investigation” in *Poetry Journal* is the essay Shen Qi uses to introduce the divergence between the official and unofficial poetry scenes. He provides no background to this distinction, but simply ascribes dichotomous attributes to each scene. As the attributes provided by Shen are pieced together, the official scene appears to be a domain that has dominated media outlets for literature and implemented orthodox ideology ever since the founding of the PRC in 1949. He states that *Poetry Journal* is a representative product of the official scene. In this context, Shen translates his disappointment with “Investigation” and the committee producing it as a failure of the official scene in contributing to the

development of Chinese poetry in the 1990s.³² On the grounds of what he sees as the official scene's stagnation, Shen recalls the energy and creativity emerging from the unofficial scene in the late 1970s and the 1980s. What Shen also recalls is the official domain's obstruction of unofficial poets and poetry at the time. Based on this historical perspective, Shen assumes the existence in the 1990s of a still-obstructed but energetic and innovative unofficial scene, which can better push forward the development of poetry in present-day China. Consequently, Shen establishes a dichotomy in 1990s poetry between the conservative but superficially dominant, official scene on the one hand, and the innovative, unofficial scene, on the other.³³

At face value, Shen Qi's argument is not without merit. However, confronting it with a plain historical fact shows that it is improbable. As explained in chapter One, Chinese society underwent rapid marketization in the 1990s, and the authorities held a relatively relaxed attitude towards publication in general, with quite a bit of room for literary diversification. Accordingly, the ecology of the 1990s official scene is different from that of the 1980s, and the same thing holds for the official and unofficial scenes and the ways in which they relate to one another. As such, Shen Qi's recollection of the 1980s poetry scene is not necessarily helpful in elucidating the 1990s scene, whether in respect to mechanisms of obstruction or to other aspects of its ecology, such as unofficial publications. By solely emphasizing the superficial similarity between the 1980s and 1990s, Shen Qi suggests a dichotomy of the 1990s official and unofficial scenes that is untenable upon closer inspection.

Such an untenable dichotomy turns out to be Shen's lens for reading Huanglin's "Reflection" and identifying the officialist attribute of the seminar, a seminar that is dedicated to Post-New Tide Poetry – the successors to the avant-garde trend led by the unofficial journal *Today* – and organized by the Beijing branch of the Writers' Association 北京作家协会, Chinese Association of Contemporary Literature 中国当代文学研究会, the literary journal *Poetry Exploration* 诗探索, and the department of Chinese language and literature of Tsinghua University, three Beijing-based institutions that all have affiliations to the authorities and a firm foothold in the official scene. The warm reception of Intellectual

³² Yang 1999: 385–386.

³³ Yang 1999: 386–388.

Writing Shen observes in “Reflection” leads him to make an association between this seminar and the designation Cheng made in *Portrait* and see this seminar as an occasion intended by the participating academics to:

给滥觞于九十年代的一脉所谓“知识分子写作”的诗歌一个权威性的认同，并作为九十年代纯正诗歌写作的主流予以历史性的充份肯定。³⁴

Give authoritative recognition to the so-called Intellectual Writing that originates in the Nineties and to grant full chronicled recognition to it as the mainstream of the genuine poetry writing of the Nineties.

Shen's comparison of Cheng's designation to Intellectual Writing indicates that just like Yu Jian, he uses Intellectual Writing to refer to Cheng's designation of N-Poetry in *Portrait*. Generally, to varying degrees, scholars and associates of state-sanctioned cultural institutions in China always operate under the aegis of the political authorities, and as such one can see why their recognition of Intellectual Writing could count as “authoritative.” But this is by no means a situation that holds exclusively for the 1990s. Besides, although labeling Intellectual Writing's reception as “recognition,” Shen adopts a negative attitude toward it. Indeed, he considers it as an indication of a split within “the camp of genuine poetry” 纯正诗歌阵营, a camp that according to Shen, builds on the avant-garde trend initiated by *Today* in the 1980s and 1990s and consists of not only contributors to Intellectual Writing but also the Popular poets and women poets.³⁵ In short, Shen casts doubt over the avant-garde status of N-Poetry, or what he calls Intellectual Writing, because of its wide acceptance in the official scene.

Against this background, Shen feels the need to dwell on what he sees as the deficiency of Intellectual Writing. Shen Qi's criticism of it also asserts a confusing dichotomy and a distortion of historical chronology, as he compares Intellectual Writing with the early avant-garde poetics embodied in *Today* and explains its failure by measuring it against the poetics of the early 1980s Obscure Poetry. He claims that Intellectual Writing has lost the

³⁴ Yang 1999: 389.

³⁵ Yang 1999: 388–389.

ethos built by Obscure Poetry but brought back the linguistic deficiencies exhibited in it, such as mechanicalization 机械化 and aristocratization 贵族化.³⁶ Further, Shen criticizes what he sees as its contributors' solution for filling the void created by their departure from the good sides of Obscure Poetry and their retention of the bad sides of it. As Shen notes, this entails over-reference to Western literature and separation from everyday life in 1990s China;³⁷ this criticism calls to mind Yu Jian's proposition of the Popular Standpoint. Shen is of course free to criticize Intellectual Writing, but he does so anachronistically, by suggesting an untenable connection with early 1980s avant-garde poetics, and he provides no evidence for his claims. Moreover, when Shen measures the distance between Intellectual Writing and everyday life, he does not even briefly introduce the socio-cultural circumstances of the 1990s and disregards the vast differences in this respect between the 1980s and the 1990s.

Shen takes Yu Jian and Yi Sha as two counterexamples to further shame Intellectual Writing, but his praise for them also suffers from a lack of socio-cultural context and actual textual analysis. Thus, his criticism falls flat. (Incidentally, although Shen portrays Yu Jian and Yi Sha as counterexamples to Intellectual Writing, he does not explicitly portray them as the representatives of the Popular Standpoint in this context.³⁸)

The same fate befalls Shen Qi's recommendation of *Them: Selected Poems from Ten Years of Them, 1986-1996*. After portraying Intellectual Writing as an unworthy successor to *Today* and an unworthy reformer of Obscure Poetry, Shen has grounds for restoring some balance to the discussion on the development of poetry in the unofficial scene, and he does so with reference to this publication. Like Yu Jian, Shen Qi ties the importance of the unofficial journal *Them* to what he sees as the problems of Intellectual Writing. Indeed, Shen also extends Yu's vision: he absorbs Yu's portrayal of *Them* as the successor of *Today* and ultimately of the 1919 May Fourth Movement, with its well-earned if precarious independence from the authorities, starting from the journal's launch and continuing into the 1990s. Copying the flaws in Yu's conceptualization of the poetry scene, Shen further affirms that *Them: Selected Poems* preserves the energy of the unofficial scene and resists

³⁶ Yang 1999: 390.

³⁷ Yang 1999: 390.

³⁸ Yang 1999: 390–391.

the influence from the official scene better than other unofficial journals, not just in the 1980s but also in the 1990s. Moreover, Shen claims the contributors to *Them: Selected Poems* carry the gene that is responsible for 1990s avant-garde poetry and its continuing, proudly marginal identity. Shen further highlights these authors as guiding lights to those who are confused about and lost in the present conditions of the literary scene. Passionately, or ignorantly, Shen Qi praises the existence of *Them* for as long as ten years a miracle – a period of time long enough to allow its contributors to have their work published and circulated openly in official publications as well.³⁹

Shen Qi's wording once again is intriguing: is there any difference between circulating openly, officially, and unofficially in the 1990s? Does not the connotation of these concepts, and do not the realities to which they refer, change between the 1980s and the 1990s?⁴⁰ How does the open circulation of *Them: Selected Poems* leave its status unchanged in terms of the 1990s unofficial scene? While Shen also identifies himself as a scholarly critic in the essay and associates his teachers' and fellows' recognition of Intellectual Writing with authoritative recognition, or at least with a contribution to the new, unofficialist mainstream discourse,⁴¹ how can his recognition of the openly circulated *Them* and *Them: Selected Poems* not constitute the same kind of recognition and discourse itself? If the scholars' recognition of Intellectual Writing makes it the representation of orthodox poetics, how can Shen's recognition of *Them: Selected Poems* not change the political connotation of this publication and the poetry in it? Shen appears to employ double standards to evaluate the literary criticism made by himself and by others scholars. Shen ends his essay without touching on any of these questions and indeed without introducing the socio-cultural contexts of the 1980s and 1990s in any part of this essay. Shen makes his argument for *Them* just abstract and sketchy enough to echo Yu Jian's proposition of the Popular Standpoint.

From Shen Haobo to Yu Jian and Shen Qi, the connection between N-Poetry, the political authorities, and the official scene is argued ever more forcefully. However, this is based on their growing, obvious evasion of the complexity brought about by the relation of

³⁹ Yang 1999: 391–395.

⁴⁰ For more discussion on this issue, see: Van Crevel 2017a.

⁴¹ Yang 1999: 391.

text and context. Thus, while Shen Qi, who follows Yu, links the importance of the Popular Standpoint to the problems of N-Poetry, his questionable interpretation of N-Poetry weakens his argument. Arguably, Shen Qi confuses the proposition of the Popular Standpoint more than he clarifies it.

Xie Youshun's "The Inner True Face of Poetry"

In spite of its problems, Shen Qi's argumentation is accepted by Xie Youshun. Xie is especially drawn to the neat dichotomy between the quasi-orthodox avant-garde Intellectual Writing (in *Portrait*) and the genuine avant-garde Popular Standpoint (in *Them*); a dichotomy that is, of course, constructed by Shen Qi's negligence of the relation of text and context. In "The Inner True Face of Poetry," Xie extends the dichotomy into one of hegemonic Intellectual Writing (as in *Portrait*) versus liberating Popular Writing (as in the *1998 Yearbook*). Based on materials similar to those used by Yu Jian and Shen Qi, Xie also observes a similar manipulated order of the 1990s poetry scene. This observation leads Xie to claim that the *1998 Yearbook* is a rectification of the corrupt order imposed on present-day poetry by the official scene and represented by *Portrait*.⁴²

Specifically, by referring to Yu's proposition, Shen Qi's "Square Accounts," and Yang Ke's work note on the *1998 Yearbook*, Xie not only reaffirms the questionable, absolutist dichotomy official and unofficial scenes in the 1990s, but also neatly equates the *1998 Yearbook* and Popular Writing with the unofficial scene, and *Portrait* and Intellectual Writing with the official scene.⁴³ The associations that constitute the equations further reflect that Xie, like his fellows in the Popular camp, is not interested in the Intellectual Writing of N-poetics but uses it to call Cheng's designation of N-Poetry hegemonic; and both the *1998 Yearbook* and Popular Writing are references by Xie to Yu's proposition. When creatively assembling his fellow authors' thesis into his argument, Xie leaves out the more complex issues of partitioning the poetry scene and the poetry anthologies associated with each position. While Yu and Shen pay little attention to substantiating their dichotomies in terms of text and context, Xie's approach turns out preach the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s in a vacuum.

⁴² Yang 2000: 527–529.

⁴³ Yang 2000: 527–529.

Xie's other argumentative strategies also fail to establish a real, palpable identity for the proposition of the Popular Standpoint or what he calls Popular Writing. He proposes a dichotomy between it and N-Poetry, or in Xie's term, Intellectual Writing, but he does not divide his attention equally between them. In fact, Xie gives his elaboration on the proposition of the Popular Standpoint, or what he calls Popular Writing, only in two occasions. One occasion is that he cites the blurb on the *1998 Yearbook's* cover – "In art, we uphold and carry on: the authentic, eternal Popular Standpoint"⁴⁴ – to position the poetry included in it. The other occasion follows where Xie notes the contestation in the Polemic and states that one of the two contested propositions there is "Popular Writing represented by Yu Jian, Han Dong, Lü De'an, etc. and expressing the experience of everyday life in China today" 以于坚、韩东、吕德安等人为代表的表达中国当下日常生活经验的民间写作.⁴⁵ Otherwise, in most cases, he refers only to the *1998 Yearbook*, the anthology that embodies the poetics of his preference. Xie appears not very confident about adopting the concepts relating to the Popular Standpoint in his contention.

Following his brief sketch of Popular Writing, Xie turns to N-Poetry, or Intellectual Writing, as he calls it, following Yu Jian. Instead of describing its literary qualities, as he does for Popular Writing, Xie holds forth on the intentions of its contributors. According to Xie, Intellectual Writing "is represented by Xi Chuan, Wang Jiaxin, Ouyang Jianghe, Zang Di, etc.... and manifests a desire for connecting with Western poetry" 以西川、王家新、欧阳江河、臧棣等人为代表...明显渴望与西方诗歌接轨,⁴⁶ with the term for "connecting" connoting a sense of selling out one's own identity in order to find favor with those representing the hegemony of foreign (mostly Western) literature. The desire to "connect" is hardly discussed by N-poets themselves, but for members of the Popular camp, such as Shen Haobo, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun, this is an important issue (which is understandable; but this lies outside the scope of the present discussion). At any rate, as the Popular camp constantly presents N-poets' alleged, unstated intentions as the crux of the issue, it creates a disadvantage for itself.

⁴⁴ Yang 1999: Front Cover.

⁴⁵ Yang 2000: 528.

⁴⁶ Yang 2000: 528.

In the rest of Xie's essay, more and more labels are attached to the equation of Intellectual Writing with orthodoxy and the political authorities and with a Western knowledge system. For instance, in terms of the connection with the official scene, Xie compares Intellectual Writing to a hegemony⁴⁷ and a discourse of power.⁴⁸ Xie further states that Intellectual Writing flees into the labyrinth of (academic, intellectual) knowledge to avoid everyday life.⁴⁹ In the dichotomous thinking that is the framework of his essay, whatever holds for Intellectual Writing, automatically does *not* hold for Popular Writing. Hence, Xie claims that the publication of the *1998 Yearbook* is an emancipation of poetry from knowledge and power.⁵⁰ Xie translates the division between Popular Writing and Intellectual Writing into two different roads of writing 写作道路⁵¹, but his clear-cut conclusion appears to lack careful consideration. Although he employs "everyday life" as part of his definition of Popular Writing, N-poets also lay claim to everyday life as the source of their poetry writing in their contention for the Polemic (noted above and discussed further below). Everyday life as a topic or source of poetry writing in the 1990s is by no means exclusive to the Popular Writing supported by Xie.

From Yu Jian to Shen Qi and Xie Youshun, they all attempt to show the significance of the proposition of the Popular Standpoint in negative terms, by highlighting what they see as the problems of N-Poetry. The fates of N-Poetry and the Popular Standpoint are entwined increasingly tightly and antagonistically. However, like his predecessors, Xie's equation appears vague and confusing because of his lack of attention to either text or context. Xie pays little attention to substantiate what he means by the "hegemony" and the "discourse of power." As a result, Xie's "Inner True Face" does little to improve on the unproductiveness of Yu's and Shen's arguments.

Other problems are also caused by Xie's terminology, in his application of late-20th-century Western literary theories among other things, and they backfire on his disparagement of Intellectual Writing. Whereas Xie sees the Western knowledge system as the cause for the problems of Intellectual Writing, he relies on this very system himself,

⁴⁷ Yang 2000: 529.

⁴⁸ Yang 2000: 528 and 530.

⁴⁹ Yang 2000: 529.

⁵⁰ Yang 2000: 529.

⁵¹ Yang 2000: 530.

to justify his criticism of Intellectual Writing. Moreover, rather than citing actual works by N-poets or N-critics to verify his observation, Xie draws on Adorno, Heidegger, Havel, Kafka, and Proust.⁵² How can Xie adopt the same approach as N-poets and be free from the influence of the hegemony and the discourse of power? He ends his essay without touching on these concerns. As noted by Maghiel van Crevel, “Inner True Face” is not the only occasion that Xie uses this strategy to construct his argument. Xie’s second entry in “Memorandum,” titled “Poetry is Hurting” 诗歌在疼痛⁵³ is another case in point⁵⁴ (I will discuss this below). Xie’s disapproval of Intellectual Writing is essentially groundless – and because of the dichotomous nature of his argumentative strategy, this cripples his advocacy for Popular Writing.

If the essays by Shen Haobo, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun are read together, a clearer portrayal of the Popular Standpoint does not emerge. Instead, the evasion of both text and context and their relation in their arguments highlights unsubstantiated assertions as their primary rhetorical device. As these assertions are coupled with their dichotomous thinking and an implicit denunciation of the politics of the contributors to Intellectual Writing, the authors in the Popular camp inadvertently bring Intellectual Writing into the spotlight, paradoxically sidelining the Popular Standpoint or Popular Writing they set out to support. When Yu, Shen Qi, and Xie also tie the significance of the Popular Standpoint to the problems of Intellectual Writing, their unsubstantiated assertions about Intellectual Writing further undermine any discrete identity of the Popular Standpoint that could have made it an important notion in discourse on poetry written in the 1990s.

Other Popular contributors to “Memorandum” come up with different ways to combine unsubstantiated assertions, dichotomous thinking, and moral judgment of N-poets and N-critics, but attention paid to the Popular Standpoint remains scarce throughout – to the point where the alleged importance of the Popular Standpoint becomes hard to discern. We will return to this matter after the analysis of some key reactions from the Intellectual camp.

⁵² Yang 2000: 526–530.

⁵³ Yang 2000: 572–578.

⁵⁴ Van Crevel 2008: 415–417.

Refutations by the Intellectual Camp

Since the Popular camp tend to use the notion of Intellectual Writing in their discussion of Cheng's proposition of N-Poetry, the Intellectual camp promptly pick up the thread of Intellectual Writing and strike back.

In their rejoinders to the attacks from the Popular camp, authors in the Intellectual camp employ two basic strategies: dismantling the Popular camp's arguments but also positively boosting their own. The first two essays by the Intellectual camp included in "Memorandum" are cases in point, and address Xie Youshun's "Inner True Face" directly. They are Tang Xiaodu's "Open Letter to Mr Xie Youshun" 致谢有顺君的公开信⁵⁵ and Xi Chuan's "Contemplation Is More Important Than Abuse" 思考比谩骂更重要.⁵⁶

Tang Xiaodu's "Open Letter to Mr Xie Youshun"

N-poets and N-critics see Xie Youshun's "Inner True Face" as a disqualification of Xie as a poetry critic. In the essays by the Intellectual camp in "Memorandum" in the 1999 *Yearbook*, Xie's claim to expertise on poetry is rejected. Tang Xiaodu makes this point explicit in the opening of his "Open Letter" and says:

此前曾听杨克兄说到，您年轻有为，才华出众，于文学批评一道，已有相当阅历和实绩，却不知为何竟写出如此糊涂的文章？⁵⁷

As I have heard from Yang Ke who says that you are young, competent, and outstandingly talented, and you have a fair amount of experiences and achievements in literary criticism, I have no idea why you have written such a confused essay.

To elaborate this observation, Tang ridicules Xie's rationale behind the division between Popular Writing and Intellectual Writing, and rejects Xie's oversimplified dichotomies and equations.⁵⁸ By comparing Xie's approach to ideological criticism, Tang calls Xie out on his

⁵⁵ Yang 2000: 530–537.

⁵⁶ Yang 2000: 537–540.

⁵⁷ Yang 2000: 530–531.

⁵⁸ Yang 2000: 531–532.

use of the type of literary criticism that was applied in the Mao era and taken to extremes during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁹ Tang considers that instead of arguing for the sake of poetry, in “Inner True Face” Xie argues for (political) power over the discourse on poetry.⁶⁰ In Tang’s rendition, Xie is as power-craving as the N-poets and N-critics in the official scene whom Xie attacks himself.

In Tang’s view, Xie’s lust for power is also revealed through other details of the essay, such as its false comparison of Intellectual Writing to “knowledge writing”. The Chinese words for “intellectual” and “knowledge” play critical roles here. While “intellectual” is *zhishi fenzi* 知识分子 in Chinese, “knowledge” is *zhishi* 知识. The overlap of *zhishi* is the crux of the matter. Whereas Xie sees the knowledge system as the burden of Intellectual Writing, Tang sees Xie’s confusion about these two concepts as rendering Xie’s essay deceptive.⁶¹ This point also leads Tang to realize the close resemblance between Xie’s and Yu Jian’s arguments, and he compares Xie to an agent of Yu’s thought.⁶² Sarcastically, Tang applauds Yu’s prefatory essay to the 1998 *Yearbook* for its struggle for power over the discourse on poetry. Tang’s association between the arguments by Xie and Yu essentially portrays both as cheats, and as power-hungry to boot.⁶³ For those who disapprove of *Portrait*, Tang’s criticism can seem like personal attacks; however, those who see through the argumentative strategies of the Popular camp may well be swayed by Tang’s argument.

Xi Chuan’s “Contemplation is More Important Than Abuse”

Xi Chuan shares Tang Xiaodu’s view on the Popular camp. At the end of “Contemplation,” he compares the advocates of the Popular Standpoint, including Xie Youshun, Yi Sha, Yu Jian, Xu Jiang, and Shen Haobo, to liars and gangsters.

Xi Chuan positions himself in the essay as a poet whose consideration for poetry is ahead of the Popular camp and far beyond dichotomous thinking. Explicitly, Xi Chuan writes, “Rumor has it that Xie Youshun indeed knows nothing about poetry” 据说谢有顺

⁵⁹ Yang 2000: 533 and 535.

⁶⁰ Yang 2000: 536.

⁶¹ Yang 2000: 532.

⁶² Yang 2000: 535.

⁶³ Yang 2000: 535–536.

本对诗歌一无所知。⁶⁴ Moreover, Xi Chuan addresses Yu Jian twice to indicate that the gist of the Popular Standpoint is outdated, since Xi Chuan dealt with the same issues, such as the individuality of poetry and the influence of Western culture, in an essay and an interview published in 1997, well before Yu's publication of his proposition.⁶⁵ Notably, this remark of Xi Chuan hints at what is in fact a close resemblance of the core values between the Popular Standpoint and N-Poetry, or at least the terminology used by both camps. Moreover, Xi Chuan's remark reflects that the proposition of the Popular Standpoint is neither original nor groundbreaking.

Like Tang Xiaodu, Xi Chuan dwells on the Popular camp's confusion about the terms "knowledge" and "intellectual." Arguing from his attentiveness to Intellectual Writing, Xi Chuan acknowledges that intellectuals and poetry can benefit from knowledge, but adds that knowledge will not automatically generate intellectuals or poetry.⁶⁶ Based on this remark, Xi Chuan considers that the Popular camp oversimplifies the relationship between acquiring knowledge and being an intellectual, which leads to the oversimplification of the route between acquiring knowledge and writing poetry. Xi Chuan points out:

他们把知识(Knowledge)与知识份子(intellectual)莫明其妙地捆在一起,好像工人、农民就不需要知识似的。这是对于工人、农民的污蔑。我承认,知识使我受益,但我总不至于笨到以为有了知识就能写诗。⁶⁷

They senselessly tie knowledge to intellectuals, as if workers and farmers do not need knowledge. This is contempt for workers and farmers. I admit that I benefit from knowledge, but I am not a fool who thinks one can rely merely on knowledge to write poetry.

As a fellow poet of Yu Jian and Yi Sha since the 1980s, Xi Chuan recognizes that Yu Jian's and Yi Sha's poetry has benefited from "knowledge" since then just as much as the

⁶⁴ Yang 2000: 537.

⁶⁵ Yang 2000: 538–539.

⁶⁶ Yang 2000: 539.

⁶⁷ Yang 2000: 538.

contributors to Intellectual Writing. Moreover, Xi Chuan notes their arrogant denial of such beneficial influences in their poetry, and says they are out to deceive. Taking the position that such denials are used to paint a skewed picture of Intellectual Writing, knowledge, and intellectuals, Xi Chuan argues that the ignorant authors of the Popular camp, such as Yu Jian, Yi Sha, Xu Jiang, Xie Youshun, and Shen Haobo operate from a “Gangsters’ Standpoint” 黑社会立场 on the poetry scene to seize power over the discourse on poetry, in an obvious play on the notion of the Popular Standpoint.⁶⁸

To be considered as cheats or gangsters could lead to loss of credibility for the Popular camp, but it might also be worn as a badge of pride. At any rate, these appellations are far less devastating for the Popular camp than Xi Chuan’s point about the fact that authors in the Popular camp are just as deeply immersed in knowledge as the contributors to Intellectual Writing – especially since Xi Chuan counts as one of the most important representatives of Intellectual Writing. As such, Xi Chuan’s argument on intellectuals requires some more reflection here. From Xi Chuan’s perspective, being an intellectual in the 1990s requires being introspective about oneself and the socio-historical contexts in which one is situated,⁶⁹ an argument in line with what Cheng Guangwei highlights in his proposition of N-Poetry.⁷⁰ Accordingly, Xi Chuan sees the positive influence of knowledge in Yu Jian’s and Yi Sha’s poetry as a reflection of their introspectiveness. In this regard, Xi Chuan considers that Yu Jian and Yi Sha live out the essential quality of intellectuals. However, this recognition can coexist with Xi Chuan’s indictment of them as cheats and gangsters. After all, Xi Chuan notes that the knowledge and introspectiveness that Yu Jian, Yi Sha, and others built from wide reading have not kept them from using unsubstantiated assertions to wage a power struggle. In sum, according to Xi Chuan, the poet-critics of the Popular Standpoint are intellectuals, even if they tend to fall into self-sabotaging patterns.⁷¹

The introspectiveness of the intellectuals also serves as Xi Chuan’s foothold to dismantle the Popular Standpoint. From Xi Chuan’s viewpoint, being an intellectual in the 1990s concerns not only knowledge but also the *awareness* of being an intellectual. This

⁶⁸ Yang 2000: 539–540.

⁶⁹ Yang 2000: 538.

⁷⁰ Cheng 1998: Introduction 3.

⁷¹ Yang 2000: 539.

leads him to argue that an intellectual is rooted in everyday life and advocates for the independence of literature from the authorities.⁷² As the most important contributor to Intellectual Writing, Xi Chuan's view on intellectuals points to an affirmation that the essence of Intellectual Writing is in agreement with the essence of the Popular Standpoint. In other words, everyday life as a poetic subject is not exclusive to the Popular Standpoint – and this statement challenges the identity of the Popular Standpoint at its foundation. Once more, Xi Chuan draws on his experience of Intellectual Writing to shake the foundation of the Popular Standpoint.

Xu Chuan further does this by noting the contradiction between Yu Jian's word choice – the Popular Standpoint – and the independence of literature. Seeing a different connotation of the term than the one seen by its proponents, Xi Chuan indicates that the Popular Standpoint causes him concern.⁷³ He then cites another widespread reading of the current situation on the poetry scene that the advocates of the Popular Standpoint are eager for attention from their higher-ups in the official scene, or, in Xi Chuan's term: "We know plenty about the flattering and fawning visited on the "directors" by the poets or writers who boasts of being the "Popular," don't we?" 那些自诩为来自 "民间" 的诗人、作家，他们在 "主任" 面前撒娇的事我们知道得还少吗？⁷⁴ He claims that the words and actions of the advocates of the Popular Standpoint contradict their self-portrayals as dissociated from orthodoxy.⁷⁵ Thus, they are not only deceivers, gangsters, and self-sabotaging intellectuals, but also power-chasers. The Popular camp appears to have the same characteristics that it claims to find among the N-poets. In Xi Chuan's observation, the independence of the Popular Standpoint is seriously compromised, with their contributions to "Memorandum" as a shining example.

The Power of Tang's "Open Letter" and Xi Chuan's "Contemplation"

In "Open Letter" and "Contemplation," Tang Xiaodu and Xi Chuan reassess the concepts of "knowledge," "intellectuals," "Intellectual Writing," "Popular Writing," "the Popular Standpoint," and "everyday life" as the source of poetry. Based on these reassessments,

⁷² Yang 2000: 538.

⁷³ Yang 2000: 538.

⁷⁴ Yang 2000: 538.

⁷⁵ Yang 2000: 539.

they redraw the power relations between the authorities, Western influences, Intellectual Writing, and the Popular Standpoint. By foregrounding their observations of the poetry scene of the 1990s, and by questioning the integrity of the proponents of the Popular Standpoint, Tang and Xi Chuan refute the independence of the Popular Standpoint claimed by its advocates. Indeed, the introspectiveness actualized through Intellectual Writing, portrayed by Xi Chuan, appears to be the key to achieving the independence that the Popular camp ascribes to the Popular Standpoint.

Whereas the Popular camp spends four essays traveling far in history but fails to either underpin the Popular Standpoint or to truly subvert N-Poetry or what they call Intellectual Writing, the Intellectual camp needs only two essays to subvert the proposition of the Popular Standpoint. Moreover, Tang's and Xi Chuan's essays are not alone. Other essays in "Memorandum" by authors in the Intellectual camp have the same effect.

Cheng Guangwei's Elaboration

Tang Xiaodu has a second entry in "Memorandum," titled "I Saw..." 我看到…….⁷⁶ Tang continues his argument against the Popular camp's contentions by extracting their claims to give evidence of what he calls ideological criticism.⁷⁷ And Tang Xiaodu's comparisons of the Popular camp and Mao-era critics are shared by Cheng Guangwei. In "New Poetry Runs through History's Veins: In Response to a Polemic" 新诗在历史脉络之中——对一场争论的回答,⁷⁸ Cheng further elaborates on this comparison.

Specifically, Cheng further weaves the charge of ideological criticism into a broader historical context to elucidate the Popular camp's power struggle strategy. Cheng traces the issue back to the 1930s, the early years of the Chinese Communist Party, to contextualize the style of the Popular camp's argumentation in the historical development of contemporary poetry in China.⁷⁹ By giving a general overview of the demise of the intellectuals under CCP governance, Cheng demonstrates the similarity between "fundamentalists" in the CCP's and the Popular camp's respective frames of mind.⁸⁰ In

⁷⁶ Yang 2000: 570–572. The style of this essay bears similarity to the Chinese translation of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," and I translate the title of this essay accordingly.

⁷⁷ Yang 2000: 570–572.

⁷⁸ Yang 2000: 579–584.

⁷⁹ Yang 2000: 581.

⁸⁰ Yang 2000: 582–583.

other words, Cheng stresses the importance of Intellectual Writing by noting the precariousness *and* the significance of the role of intellectuals in the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the history leading up to it. As an N-critic and a member of the Intellectual camp, Cheng's essay indicates that Intellectual Writing and N-Poetry matter to not only the 1990s but also to broader Chinese history.

Tang and Cheng adopt (historical) comparison as a way to reveal the Popular camp's power craving and deception. Thus, the critics from the Intellectual camp appear to choose a less aggressive and less "loud" tone to voice their disagreements; but contentwise, they challenge the proposition of the Popular Standpoint on its fundamentals. And their arguments, compared to those of the Popular camp, are clearer and more direct in terms of positively constructing the discourse of poetry written in the 1990s.

Wang Jiaxin's and Sun Wenbo's Endorsement

While the critics from the Intellectual camp featured in "Memorandum" tend to point out the weakness in the Popular camp's argumentation, the N-poets of the Intellectual camp are seen adopting a trajectory that is similar to Xi Chuan's – who is central among the N-poets. Like Xi Chuan, as practitioners of Intellectual Writing, Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo tend to highlight the Popular camp's dependence on domestic authorities and Western influences, bouncing the Popular camp's arguments right back. A power-craving Popular camp is also depicted in Wang's essays titled "More on the 'True Face'" 也谈 "真相" ⁸¹ and Sun's "The Facts Need Clarification" 事实必须澄清,⁸² respectively.

Both Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo cite Xi Chuan's comparison between the Popular camp and a bunch of deceivers and gangsters, and provide more evidence for this analogy. Sun Wenbo notes that the Popular camp uses wild allegations to pursue fame and gain in the 1990s poetry scene. Observing the Popular camp's deviation from poetry and facts, Sun compares them to hoodlums 江湖泼皮.⁸³ The same wild allegations are also noted by Wang Jiaxin. Wang further takes issue with the Popular camp's terminology for their endorsement of the Popular poets. He finds the terms boastful and reflects: "To be honest,

⁸¹ Yang 2000: 544–547.

⁸² Yang 2000: 547–548.

⁸³ Yang 2000: 547–548.

I have never seen such shameless behavior in the history of New Poetry” 说实在，新诗史上我还从来没见过如此无耻的行径。⁸⁴

Although the “True Face” is part of the title of Wang’s essay, he does not allude to Xie Youshun’s “Inner True Face.” Wang makes reference to an essay by Yu Jian titled “The True Face Comes to Light” 真相大白 (which is not included in “Memorandum”).⁸⁵ To reveal the “true face” of Yu Jian and others in the Popular camp, Wang notes that Yu Jian has shifted his attitude towards the association between *Them* and Third Generation poetry: from rejecting it, before the publication of the 1998 *Yearbook*, to embracing it, after its publication.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Wang takes issue with Yu Jian, Han Dong, Yang Ke, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun’s sudden interest in contributing to the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s. In Wang’s view, this shifting attitude and sudden interest indicate the Popular camp’s craving for power and, presumably, their opportunism.⁸⁷

Zang Di’s and Zhang Shuguang’s Ruminations

While the essays by Sun Wenbo and Wang Jiabin in “Memorandum” target the Popular camp, the essays by Zang Di and Zhang Shuguang address not only Popular Writing but also Intellectual Writing. They, like Tang Xiaodu and Xi Chuan, share their contemplations on the concepts of knowledge, intellectuals, Intellectual Writing, and Popular Writing in the 1990s. Indeed, Zang and Zhang spend more words than Tang and Xi Chuan to address the same issue in the Popular camp’s contentions but also use the issue to positively attest the significance of Intellectual Writing in the 1990s.

In “Poetry as a Special Kind of Knowledge / Intellect” 诗歌作为一种特殊的知识,⁸⁸ Zang expresses his disagreement with Xie Youshun’s “Inner True Face” and Shen Qi’s “Square Accounts,” two critical essays that Zang says “attempt to disparage ‘Intellectual Writing’ of contemporary poetry through the fabrication of some kind of literary scandal” 企图通过制造某种文学丑闻，来诋毁当代诗歌中的“知识份子写作”。⁸⁹ Aside from explaining the unsubstantiated assertions and oversimplification in their arguments, Zang,

⁸⁴ Yang 2000: 546.

⁸⁵ Yang 2000: 544.

⁸⁶ Yang 2000: 545–546.

⁸⁷ Yang 2000: 546–547.

⁸⁸ Yang 2000: 551–554.

⁸⁹ Yang 2000: 551.

similar to Xi Chuan, argues from his own experience of writing poetry in the 1990s and the position of a contributor to Intellectual Writing.⁹⁰ These similarities makes Zang's argument a strong endorsement of Xi Chuan's. In particular, Zang Di provides his thoughts on Intellectual Writing and the relation between such writing and everyday life.⁹¹ Everyday life as a source of poetry is once again shown not to be the exclusive property of the Popular Standpoint. Zang also points out the impracticability of the kind of political independence – and by implication, the “indigenouness” – that Xie and Shen ascribe to Popular Writing in their contentions.⁹² Zang's essay suggests the proposition of the Popular Standpoint is flawed at a fundamental level. In this context, he reaffirms the significance of Intellectual Writing and its authors' introspective application of Western knowledge in writing Chinese poetry in the 1990s.⁹³

The flaws in the proposition of the Popular Standpoint are further disclosed in Zhang Shuguang's “Poetry in the Nineties and My Poetical Standpoint” 九十年代诗歌及我的诗学立场.⁹⁴ Zhang positions himself as a sympathizer of Intellectual Writing,⁹⁵ and his argument shows many similarities with N-poets' attitudes towards the application of Western culture and everyday life.⁹⁶ Moreover, Zhang's explanation of the importance of Intellectual Writing echoes Xi Chuan's and Zang Di's opinions. He also points out the unsound quality of the definition of the Popular Standpoint and the logic of its advocates' arguments.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Zhang's differentiation between poetry in the 1980s and in the 1990s challenges Yu Jian's reminiscence of the 1980s.⁹⁸

Zhang Shuguang's challenge to the Popular Standpoint becomes even more highly charged if his position in triggering the Polemic is considered. That is, Cheng Guangwei's *Portrait* not only designates Zhang as an N-poet in Cheng's proposition of N-Poetry,⁹⁹ but also chooses Zhang's poem “A Portrait of Years Gone By” as the title of the anthology that

⁹⁰ Yang 2000: 553.

⁹¹ Yang 2000: 553–554.

⁹² Yang 2000: 552.

⁹³ Yang 2000: 552–553.

⁹⁴ Yang 2000: 557–563.

⁹⁵ Yang 2000: 558–559.

⁹⁶ Yang 2000: 561–563.

⁹⁷ Yang 2000: 559–561.

⁹⁸ Yang 2000: 557–559.

⁹⁹ Cheng 1998: Introduction 2.

triggered the Polemic,¹⁰⁰ and includes it as the book's opening poem.¹⁰¹ Thus, Cheng makes Zhang a key figure of N-Poetry. As such, Zhang Shuguang's observation and self-positioning impact both the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s and the Polemic.

When constructing their arguments for Intellectual Writing, speaking in the first-person singular, Xi Chuan, Zang Di, and Zhang Shuguang do not pretend to be objective on the issues and criticisms regarding the subject, but their subjective arguments and first-hand accounts in defence of Intellectual Writing are much more robust than the Popular camp's assertions about the same subject. Indeed, the Popular camp's abrasive approach further gives N-poets the chance to promote Intellectual Writing and to protest against the Popular Standpoint, since the latter overwhelmingly flows from antagonism rather than a considered, positively defined poetics. As the proponents of the Popular Standpoint are incapable of establishing an identity for their proposition and of convincingly exposing problems of Intellectual Writing, their proposition risks collapsing as soon as its Intellectual rejoinders start appearing.

However, the proponents of the Popular Standpoint appear to "welcome" such rejoinders to be exhibited in "Memorandum" of the *1999 Yearbook*. Themselves the provokers of these exchanges in the Polemic, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun all sit on the editorial board of the *1999 Yearbook*, which includes a total of eight contentions by N-poets and N-critics in "Memorandum".

The Popular Camp's Inadvertent Promotion of Intellectual Writing

In addition to the essays discussed above, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun all have second entries in "Memorandum." However, in these contentions, they neither revisit their outdated dichotomous thinking nor regroup for the Popular Standpoint after it is torn down by the Intellectual rejoinders. Rather, they continue to behave more as attackers of Intellectual Writing than as positive advocates of the Popular Standpoint.

Yu Jian's "Passion" for Intellectual Writing

The character of the attackers from the Popular camp is further shown in Yu Jian's "Their True Face: On 'Intellectual Writing' and New Tide Poetry Criticism" 真相——关于“知识

¹⁰⁰ Cheng 1998: copyright page.

¹⁰¹ Cheng 1998: 1.

分子写作”和新潮诗歌批评。In this title, Yu not only showcases Intellectual Writing but also associates it with the discourse on New Tide Poetry, an association that calls to mind Shen Qi's criticism of the Seminar on "Post-New Tide Poetry," discussed above. In this lengthy essay, Yu pays all his attention to Intellectual Writing: he traces its origin and documents the progress of literary critics' recognition of this concept in the course of the 1990s.¹⁰² The circumstances once again suggest that Yu may have a clearer vision of the trajectory of Intellectual Writing in the 1990s than that of the Popular Standpoint with which he associates himself.

Indeed, Yu mentions the Popular Standpoint only once, when reminiscing about the avant-garde spirit represented by Third Generation Poetry of the mid-1980s.¹⁰³ Subsequently, Yu affirms the closeness between Third Generation Poetry and the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ This affirmation is a reiteration of his points in the proposition of the Popular Standpoint and those of Shen Qi's in "Square Accounts." Yet, this alleged closeness proves neither the avant-garde nature of the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s nor its political independence. As mentioned before, the absence of a clear trajectory for the Popular Standpoint in the 1990s is a fundamental flaw in Yu's proposition, and his revelation of the "true face" of Intellectual Writing provides little help to anchor the Popular Standpoint more firmly in the discourse on poetry produced in this decade. He could have done so by creating a chronology, or at least providing references, for the Popular Standpoint, the way he does for Intellectual Writing in this essay; but he does not.

Shen Qi's and Xie Youshun's One-Sided Exposures

Shen Qi's second entry in "Memorandum" shows a similar issue. The title of the essay is "What is 'Intellectual Writing'" 何谓 "知识分子写作"¹⁰⁵ – says a great deal. Shen Qi recycles and simplifies the arguments made in "Square Accounts." Because of this simplification, Shen's argument against Intellectual Writing becomes a simple affirmation of the corruptness of N-poets and N-critics, which leads this essay to bear resemblance to

¹⁰² Yang 2000: 587–604.

¹⁰³ Yang 2000: 603.

¹⁰⁴ Yang 2000: 601–603.

¹⁰⁵ Yang 2000: 565–567.

Xie Youshun's "Inner True Face." Although he is a proponent of the Popular Standpoint, Shen comments exclusively on Intellectual Writing here.

In his second entry in "Memorandum," the essay titled "Poetry is Hurting," Xie Youshun includes the *1998 Yearbook* and Intellectual Writing in his discussion. In similar fashion, he avoids adopting the concept relating to the notion of the Popular in this contention, which makes the Popular Standpoint almost invisible, just like in Yu Jian's "Their True Face."¹⁰⁶ While Xie focuses on the publication instead of the poetics within it, his explicit criticism of Cheng Guangwei's proposition and Intellectual Writing does not increase the Popular Standpoint's visibility or credibility in the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s.

In their second entries, Yu, Shen, and Xie each maintain their dichotomous thinking but somehow almost erase the Popular Standpoint from view. In other words, they let their own poetic ideals of the 1990s fall flat and give their adversaries center stage, albeit in a negative way. Inadvertently, in the *1999 Yearbook* these key figures of the Popular camp testify more to the presence of Intellectual Writing than that of the Popular Standpoint.

Ambivalent Support for the Popular Standpoint

The other contentions by the Popular poets in "Memorandum" of the *1999 Yearbook* do not help. Contrary to N-poets' defence of Intellectual Writing, the Popular poets' attitudes toward the Popular Standpoint somewhat undermine their own position. Cases in point are essays by Xu Jiang and Yi Sha.

Xu Jiang's "No" – Not Just to the Poetry Scene but Also to the Popular Standpoint

Xu Jiang is described by Xi Chuan and Sun Wenbo in the above-discussed essays as a contributor to the Popular camp who heaps abuse on N-poets and Intellectual Writing. As such, Xu's bitter comments on N-Poetry are unsurprising. However, in the essay titled "Dare Say 'No' to the Poetry Scene" 敢对诗坛说 "不",¹⁰⁷ Xu does not look abusive. Instead, he positions himself as a sober-minded poet who rises above the dichotomy

¹⁰⁶ Yang 2000: 575–576.

¹⁰⁷ Yang 2000: 569–570.

between Popular Writing and Intellectual Writing in the Polemic.¹⁰⁸ Xu engages in neither proposition but alleges embarrassing details about the misconduct of the Intellectual camp, namely Wang Jiaxin, Tang Xiaodu, Xi Chuan, and Sun Wenbo,¹⁰⁹ at the Panfeng Conference. As the Popular camp is given only supporting roles in this essay, Xu's criticism of the Intellectual camp appears to be a recognition of its significance as a driving force for the development of poetry of this decade.

Furthermore, Xu distinguishes Hou Ma, Yi Sha, and himself from not only N-poets¹¹⁰ but also Yu Jian and the other poets working with colloquial language since the mid-1980s.¹¹¹ Xu considers himself and the others as anti-colloquial poets 反口语诗人 who have risen in the poetry scene in the 1990s.¹¹² Although he provides no further elaboration on this category and this designation in his essay, Xu questions not only Yu Jian's credibility as a poetry critic, but also the viability of the proposition of the Popular Standpoint. Obviously, it would be hard to accommodate Xu and the others' anti-colloquial tendency in the discourse on colloquial language of the Popular Standpoint.

Yi Sha's Wavering Attention to the Popular Standpoint

Yi Sha also chooses the Panfeng Conference as the starting point for the construction of his arguments made in "So Who Is It Has Gone Mad?" 究竟谁疯了?¹¹³ and "End of the Century: Why the Poets Are Going to War" 世纪末：诗人为什么要打仗。¹¹⁴ He shows his ambition in "End of the Century" by including into his discussion the successive publication of *Portrait* and the *1998 Yearbook*, the Panfeng Conference, and the historical development of poetry on the unofficial scene. The information provided in these two essays is mostly about personalities rather than poetics. To depict personalities, Yi Sha, like N-poets, draws on his experience as evidence, but his application of the experience is different from N-poets': while N-poets use their experience not only to specify the flaws in their rivals' arguments but also to elaborate on their understandings of Intellectual Writing

¹⁰⁸ Yang 2000: 570.

¹⁰⁹ Yang 2000: 569.

¹¹⁰ for which Xu Jiang describes as 泛学院化写作诗人.

¹¹¹ In Xu's rendition, this is 前第三代诗人中的口语诗人.

¹¹² Yang 2000: 570.

¹¹³ Yang 2000: 548–550.

¹¹⁴ Yang 2000: 515–526.

in the 1990s, Yi Sha does neither of these things. Personality defects do not necessarily tarnish a poetical proposition; hence, if N-poets are wicked people, this does not necessarily lead to Intellectual Writing being wicked, or otherwise weakened. And certainly, it does not mean there is a more righteous Popular camp and a valid Popular Standpoint. Thus, Yi Sha appears to be another proponent of the Popular camp who is incapable of improving the validity of the Popular Standpoint in the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s.

As Yi Sha sets personality as the criterion of his criticism, his own personality is also under scrutiny in the second part of “End of the Century.” In the first part, based on a comparison between the selection criteria for *Portrait* and the *1998 Yearbook*, Yi Sha blames Cheng Guangwei for triggering the Polemic. In Yi Sha’s depiction, Cheng is ignorant and narrow-minded, in contrast to the open-minded editorial board of the *1998 Yearbook* that has faith in inclusive selection criteria.¹¹⁵ The second part of “End of the Century” is presented as a documentary record of the Panfeng Conference. Specifically, Yi Sha gives his word of honor by saying:

作为与会者，我感到自己有责任为大家描摹出本次论争的基本脉络，我以诗人的人格担保它的客观性和公正性，同时我也深知我无法提供伪证，因为历史的见证者不只我一个。¹¹⁶

As a participant, I assume my responsibility to depict the overall context of the Polemic for everyone. I promise its objectivity and impartiality on my honor as a poet. In the meantime, I fully understand that I cannot provide false statement, because I am not the only witness of history.

Nevertheless, Yi Sha does not compile the speeches on the conference. He weaves his lines of thinking into his personal recollection of the meeting. In fact, he revives the episodes that Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo refute in “More on the ‘True Face’” and “Clarification,”

¹¹⁵ Yang 2000: 515–518.

¹¹⁶ Yang 2000: 519.

respectively, as fabrications and defamations. The extent to which Yi Sha is being “objective” or “impartial” becomes difficult to assess.

In the third and last part of “End of the Century,” Yi Sha provides his observations on the 1990s poetry scene. Here, in spite of the fact that he is generally associated with the Popular camp, it is by no means apparent that he supports the Popular Standpoint. Like his fellow authors in the Popular camp, he expresses his admiration for Third Generation Poetry of the mid-1980s and his disapproval of the Intellectual Writing of the 1990s.¹¹⁷ However, Yi Sha gives no place to the Popular Standpoint in his overview of the 1990s poetry scene. Instead, similar to Xu Jiang, he has his own designation of the stars on the 1990s poetry scene, mentioning post-colloquial poetry 后口语诗, post-imagery poetry 后意象诗, and post-’70 poets 70后诗人.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Yi Sha identifies himself and several other Popular poets, such as Xu Jiang, Hou Ma, and Zhu Wen, as post-colloquial.¹¹⁹ While Yu Jian carries on about the importance of colloquial language to the Popular Standpoint, Yi Sha contemplates surpassing colloquial language without referencing the Popular Standpoint at all.

Yi Sha’s “Who Is It” does not help to prop up the proposition of the Popular Standpoint either. He grounds this essay on his observation of N-poets and N-critics’ conduct during and after the Panfeng conference. The title of the essay is a direct reference back to Wang Jiaxin’s “More on the ‘True Face’.” Whereas Wang casts doubt on Yu Jian’s sanity,¹²⁰ Yi Sha insists that Xi Chuan is crazier than Yu Jian, more unreasonable than the members of the Popular camp, and completely incomparable to Yi Sha himself as a poet of the 1990s.¹²¹ Yi Sha also criticizes other N-poets and N-critics, namely Chen Chao, Tang Xiaodu, and Sun Wenbo. As a proponent of the Popular camp, Yi Sha’s criticism of N-Poetry is unsurprising; however, the Popular Standpoint only appears a single time, and notably, this is when he quotes Xi Chuan.¹²² Moreover, the only appearance of his fellow Popular authors, such as Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xu Jiang, is when he quotes Sun Wenbo.¹²³ As a result, in fact, in

¹¹⁷ Yang 2000: 523–524.

¹¹⁸ Yang 2000: 525–526.

¹¹⁹ Yang 2000: 525.

¹²⁰ Yang 2000: 544.

¹²¹ Yang 2000: 549.

¹²² Yang 2000: 549.

¹²³ Yang 2000: 550.

“Who Is It,” Yi Sha leaves out the Popular Standpoint but raises only the visibility of N-poets and N-critics, albeit in a disparaging manner.

Xu Jiang’s and Yi Sha’s self-identification as anti- or post-colloquial poets may undermine Yu’s designation of the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s, but their contentions do not completely overturn Yu’s proposition. As Yu has constructed his proposition in two parts – the part that criticizes Intellectual Writing and N-Poetry, which is used to justify its second part, the designation of the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s – Xu Jiang’s and Yi Sha’s contentions endorse the former but negate the latter. While their criticism of N-poets and N-critics make them members of the Popular camp, their contribution to the Popular cause is hardly very spectacular.

A Subtle Undermining of the Popular Standpoint

When the construction of the original proposition of the Popular Standpoint is considered as composed in two parts, Xu Jiang and Yi Sha can be said to at least support half of the proposition. Based on the same qualifying standard, several Popular poets featured in “Memorandum” can be said to show even less support for the proposition. The cases in point are Shen Haobo’s second entry and Hou Ma’s and Han Dong’s entries. Each of them subverts the two-part-structured Popular Standpoint further.

Shen Haobo’s Pluralism

Shen Haobo’s second entry in “Memorandum” is titled “Let the Polemic Sink In” 让争论沉下来.¹²⁴ Like Xu Jiang and Yi Sha, Shen also uses the Panfeng Conference as a lead-in. However, Shen uses it to put forward his disappointment at the development of the Polemic. In this essay, Shen names N-poets, N-critics, Popular poets, and other poets, but he does not associate them to N-Poetry or the Popular Standpoint. Indeed, Shen turns to N-poets and blame them for having failed to address the aesthetic dichotomy proposed in the Popular camp’s contentions. As noted, these dichotomies were falsely created by the Popular camp to wage war on the designation of N-Poetry, but still Shen expects further explanations about them from N-poets and N-critics. Shen’s criticism of N-poets and N-critics is different from that by other proponents of the Popular camp. While the latter

¹²⁴ Yang 2000: 604–606.

criticize N-poets and N-critics and then seek monopolization of their own designation of Poetry of the Nineties, Shen looks for explanations in order to validate the respective poetics of each camp. This reflects that Shen is out of line with the Popular camp's "standard" approach to monopolizing the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s.

Hou Ma's Anonymization

Hou Ma, who is designated by Yu Jian as a colloquial poet, by Xu Jiang as an anti-colloquial poet, and by Yi Sha as a post-colloquial poet, contributes "The 1990s: The Beginning of Professional Writing by Amateur Poets" 90年代：业余诗人专业写作的开始¹²⁵ to the "Memorandum" section of the 1999 *Yearbook*. In this short essay, Hou Ma gives his observation of the 1990s poetry scene. He addresses various issues, including the relations between poets, poetry, culture, and society. Read within the context of "Memorandum," Hou Ma's essay bears a similarity to the arguments by the Popular camp. However, Hou Ma mentions neither Yu Jian's proposition nor Cheng Guangwei's. He even refrains from naming a single individual poet. On the one hand, Hou Ma's writing strategy creates no association between what he labels as "pseudo-poets"¹²⁶ and the Popular camp's shared target, N-poets, or in the Popular camp's term, the Intellectuals. On the other hand, it hardly gives grounds for associating what Hou Ma defines as "poets" with the Popular Standpoint. In terms of seeing the Popular Standpoint as a two-part construction, the gist of Hou Ma's essay maximally differs from Shen Haobo. While Shen reaffirms both N-Poetry and the Popular Standpoint but demolishes the structure of the Popular Standpoint, Hou Ma seems to agree with the entire proposition but reaffirms neither. Moreover, Hou Ma creates no association between the Popular Standpoint and the decade of the 1990s, even though he names this in his essay's title.

Han Dong's Lukewarmness

Han Dong also gives his observation of the 1990s poetry scene in his "A Time That Supposedly Loves Culture" 附庸风雅的时代.¹²⁷ Indeed, Han pays more attention to criticizing the status quo than to promoting his vision of poetry written in the 1990s. Han

¹²⁵ Yang 2000: 567–568.

¹²⁶ Yang 2000: 568.

¹²⁷ Yang 2000: 555–557.

dwells on a particular group's dominance of the discourse on poetry, their obsession with Western culture, and the drawbacks their compositions brings to the poetry scene. Such criticism is similar to that by the other proponents of the Popular camp and against the Intellectuals / N-poets. However, like Hou Ma, Han does not explicitly associate the subject of his criticism with *Portrait*, Cheng Guangwei's designation, or with Intellectual Writing, the Popular camp's target of attack. Specifically, Han chooses to label the subject of his criticism as a group of "old poets" and compares their poetical career with that of Yu Jian's.¹²⁸ At some occasions, Han reframes them as the 1980s poets gaining fame in the 1990s.¹²⁹ In spite of these attributes, Han identifies no individual poets of this group. It turns out that Han offers only veiled support for the Popular proposition's criticism of N-Poetry. He provides only clues to the association between the group of poets that he opposes and those who are criticized by the Popular camp.

Nor does Han Dong make it easy to firmly associate what he calls a new generation of poets with the Popular Standpoint in this essay. On the one hand, Han notes the notion of the Popular only once and barely elaborates on it.¹³⁰ He specifies neither its contributors nor its poetics. Even in his only mention of Yu Jian, instead of associating Yu with the notion of the Popular, Han draws on Yu only to explain the poetical careers of the poets whom he opposes. On the other hand, Han gives only a vague image of what he calls a new generation. Again, Han specifies neither poets nor poetics. As a result, Han not only leaves few clues with regard to the question of how the Popular as mentioned by him relates to the Popular Standpoint proposed by Yu Jian; but he also presents a tenuous connection between his vision of the Popular and the new generation he endorses. In other words, Han cuts off the connections between his ideal of poetry written in the 1990s, his vision of the Popular, and the Popular Standpoint. Han seems uninterested in making this essay an organic contribution to the designation of the Popular Standpoint. While Han sat on the editorial board of the *1998 Yearbook* and is said to have helped set the selection criteria for this anthology,¹³¹ his reluctant attitude – toward not only Intellectual Writing but also the

¹²⁸ Yang 2000: 555.

¹²⁹ Yang 2000: 555–556.

¹³⁰ Yang 2000: 555–557.

¹³¹ Yang 1999: 518–519.

Popular Standpoint – comes across as a retraction of his support for the Popular Standpoint.

Similar damage to the Popular Standpoint can also be found in the above-discussed essays by Hou Ma and Shen Haobo respectively, when their respective contribution to the establishment of the proposition is taken into consideration. While Hou Ma is a member of the editorial board of the *1999 Yearbook*, Shen is an inspiration of the construction of the Popular Standpoint. Their idiosyncratic depiction of the 1990s poetry scene compromises any unity of the Popular Standpoint and the Popular camp.

No Popular Standpoint of the 1990s in “Memorandum”

In “Memorandum” in the *1999 Yearbook*, Popular poets and critics trail into silence about the viability of the Popular Standpoint of the 1990s as this was designated in the *1998 Yearbook*. The essays discussed above take up only a small portion of the overall Popular camp’s contentions for the Polemic, but their inclusion reflects the powerlessness of the Popular proponents to make the two editions of the *Yearbooks* effective contentions and to leverage the Polemic for monopolizing the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s. In other words, even if the Intellectual camp’s rejoinders had not been included in “Memorandum,” the Popular Standpoint would not have been firmly established. The final three essays of “Memorandum” I will discuss here reinforce this impression.

These three essays are by Jiang Hao 蒋浩, Lin Bai 林白, and Zeng Feiye 曾非也. They are names that are not associated with either camp before the Polemic. Their relative outsider observations either support the Intellectual camp’s criticism of the Popular Standpoint or reaffirm the flaws in the Popular camp’s contentions.

In “The Myth of Popular Poetry” 民间诗歌的神话,¹³² Jiang Hao observes the dichotomous assertions in the argumentation of the Popular camp. What N-critic Tang Xiaodu calls ideological criticism is considered as Cultural Revolution-style criticism 文革式批判 here, with the Chinese term Jiang uses for criticism taken from political vocabulary to signal the gravity of the charge (Tang uses 批评, a term that is less heavy in this respect).¹³³ Jiang ends this essay with a suggestion that Yu Jian and his proposition are

¹³² Yang 2000: 563–565.

¹³³ Yang 2000: 564.

deeply entangled in power relations and power struggles themselves,¹³⁴ a characteristic that Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun claim to observe in N-Poetry and dismiss in regard to the Popular Standpoint.

Jiang Hao's criticism of the Popular Standpoint is not countered by Lin Bai's and Zeng Feiye's Popular-inclined essays. In "The Soul's Reflection and Anticipation" 灵魂的回头与仰望, Lin criticizes present-day poetry with vocabulary similar to what Xie Youshun uses in "Inner True Face" and praises the publication of the *1998 Yearbook* and its genuineness and indigenouness. However, in this one-page essay, Lin only talks up the *1998 Yearbook* and leaves the flawed Popular Standpoint unaddressed.¹³⁵ Xie Youshun is also given a role in "Check Out the Action on the Poetry Scene" 看诗坛热闹 by Zeng Feiye. In this essay, which refers to Xie Youshun's "Hurting," Zeng appreciates Xie's personality and talent and sides with his opinion, but he argues that Cheng Guangwei's "Response" is too confusing to grasp.¹³⁶ Notably, Zeng applies inconsistent standards. No matter how plausible Zeng's criteria may be, his confusion over Cheng's argument does not necessarily increase the coherence of the Popular Standpoint. Moreover, his faith in Xie's personality and talent does not improve the theoretical validity of Xie's dichotomous differentiations at all. While the Popular camp does have some supporters, they seem to be more attracted to the Popular camp's style of argumentation than the actual content of their proposition.

The assertiveness in the Popular camp's arguments against Intellectual Writing makes its proponents the louder and more aggressive contestants of the Polemic, but this image comes at the cost of a starkly unclear depiction of the message they seek to convey.

IV. The Resonance of "Memorandum" in *Memorandum*

As seen in "Memorandum," eight of the 22 essays by the Intellectual camp are enough to not only dismantle the Popular Standpoint but also gain the upper hand in monopolizing the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s for their proposition. The other essays in "Section One" of Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo's *Memorandum* reinforce this impression.

¹³⁴ Yang 2000: 565.

¹³⁵ Yang 2000: 586–587.

¹³⁶ Yang 2000: 584–586.

Five of the eight “Memorandum” essays are also included in “Section One” of Wang and Sun’s *Memorandum* (Zhang Shuguang’s “My Standpoint,”¹³⁷ Tang Xiaodu’s “Open Letter,”¹³⁸ Xi Chuan’s “Contemplation,”¹³⁹ Zang Di’s “Knowledge / Intellectual,”¹⁴⁰ and Cheng Guangwei’s “Response”).¹⁴¹ And while Wang and Sun, N-poets from the Intellectual camp, leave out Tang Xiaodu’s “I See...” and their own essays, they include another 13 essays, including one by Wang and one by Sun. The Popular camp’s voices are silenced here, but they are not invisible, as their opinions are noted, examined, and refuted.

In Defence of Intellectual Writing

Notably, Zhang Shuguang’s “My Standpoint” is presented as the opening essay of “Section One” of *Memorandum*. This arrangement echoes Cheng Guangwei’s arrangement of *Portrait*, where Zhang’s poem is chosen as the book’s opening poem. In other words, regardless of the status with which Zhang identifies himself, he is recognized as a contributor to the Intellectual camp by his fellow N-poets. Furthermore, his essay is an effective piece that helps Intellectual Writing gain ground in the Polemic. Aside from the essays by Zhang Shuguang, Xi Chuan, and Zang Di also included in “Memorandum,” the editors of *Memorandum* further provide arguments offered by themselves and other N-poets such as Jiang Tao and Chen Dongdong.

Among these four N-poets, Jiang Tao is the only one not included by Cheng Guangwei in his original proposition of N-Poetry. Jiang is designated as a contributor in the appendix to *Memorandum*,¹⁴² titled “An Outline of Some of the Poetical Vocabulary of the 1990s,” 90年代部分诗学词语梳理 authored by Chen Jun 陈均.¹⁴³ These N-poets all base their allegiance with Intellectual Writing on direct observation of it during the 1990s. Moreover, similar to Zhang Shuguang, they tend to argue against the Popular camp’s assertions and to distinguish poetry written in the 1990s from that of the 1980s, different from Yu Jian’s emphasis on continuity across the decades. More generally, N-poets’ attention to the

¹³⁷ Wang and Sun 2000: 3–9.

¹³⁸ Wang and Sun 2000: 75–81.

¹³⁹ Wang and Sun 2000: 82–84.

¹⁴⁰ Wang and Sun 2000: 42–45.

¹⁴¹ Wang and Sun 2000: 120–125.

¹⁴² Wang and Sun 2000: 400.

¹⁴³ Wang and Sun 2000: 395–404.

association between N-Poetry and the 1990s clearly contrasts with the arguments from the Popular camp. As discussed above, the essays by Yu Jian, Shen Qi, and Xie Youshun fail to provide a plausible account of a real presence of the Popular Standpoint in the 1990s, and this can lead to decreased visibility of the Popular Standpoint in the discourse on the Polemic and, by extension, in the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s. By contrast, the arguments by the aforementioned N-poets protect Intellectual Writing from the same fate.

In spite of all the similarities among these arguments, there are differences. The differences in Wang's, Sun's, and Jiang's respective essays are indicated by their choice to elaborate on different aspects of the N-poetics. Specifically, as illustrated in the title, Sun Wenbo explains "The 1990s as I see Them: Individual Writing, Narrativity, and Other Things" 我理解的 90 年代：个人写作、叙事及其他。¹⁴⁴ As Cheng Guangwei highlights Individual Writing and Narrativity as part of N-poetics, Sun's first-person account supports Cheng's designation. Jiang Tao also touches on Individual Writing and Narrativity in "Dubious Reflection and Possibilities of the Discourse of Reflection"¹⁴⁵ 可疑的反思及反思话语的可能性. Jiang uses these concepts to highlight what he sees as the versatility of Intellectual Writing. Wang Jiaxin, in an essay titled "Intellectual Writing, or 'In Dedication to a Limitless Minority'" 知识分子写作，或曰“献给无限的少数人”，¹⁴⁶ introduces the concepts of the Chinese discursive field 中国话语场, the Chinese experience 中国经验, and intertextual writing 互文性写作 to strengthen his refutation of the Popular camp's criticism of Intellectual Writing's association with domestic authorities and Western influences.¹⁴⁷ While the argumentative differences in the above-discussed Popular poets' essays result in pulling apart the Popular Standpoint, the different emphases in these N-poets' essays turn out to work in accordance with each other and underpin Intellectual Writing.

Chen Dongdong does not link his comments directly to N-poetics, but his essay, "Revisiting Modern Chinese" 回顾现代汉语, brings in a broader history than the 1990s to measure the significance of Intellectual Writing. Designated by Cheng Guangwei as an N-

¹⁴⁴ Wang and Sun 2000: 10–21.

¹⁴⁵ Wang and Sun 2000: 137–150.

¹⁴⁶ 'In Dedication to a Limitless Minority' is an expression borrowed from Zhai Yongming. Indeed, Zhai has written an essay under this title. See: Wang and Sun 2000: 165; Zhai 1997.

¹⁴⁷ Wang and Sun 2000: 151–165.

poet and a proponent of Intellectual Writing since the late 1980s, Chen argues against Yu Jian's promotion of colloquial language and his bias against Western influences in Chinese in this essay. To achieve his goal, Chen starts his essay with a differentiation between the origins of ancient and modern Chinese. Like Yu's, Chen's discussion on language is in danger of being too aggressive and too abstract, but his alternative interpretation of colloquial language directly challenges Yu's opinion. This alternative interpretation includes blurring the alleged boundary between Chinese colloquial language and Western influences in modern Chinese.¹⁴⁸

The N-poets' ability to strategically position Intellectual Writing in essays on various periods and topics present a stark contrast with the Popular camp's inability to explain their vision of poetry in the 1990s.

Not only N-poets but also sympathizers of N-Poetry are better than many of the Popular camp at retaining a clear image of their poetical ideal of the 1990s and its relevance to social realities. Yang Yuanhong's 杨远宏 and Chen Xiaoming's 陈晓明 respective essays in "Section One" are cases in point.¹⁴⁹ Their essays illustrate N-poets' accounts on how Individual Writing, Intellectual Writing, and the other N-poetics are relevant to the decade of the 1990s, with reference to specific poets – third-person observations on N-Poetry in the 1990s, and exactly the thing the Popular Standpoint would have needed most and is sadly without.

Dismantling the Popular Standpoint

The discursive ability of the N-poets is also likely to have contributed to their designation as avant-garde poets in Zhou Zan's essay titled "The 'Writing' of Poetry in 'Knowledge / Intellectual Practice'" "知识实践" 中的诗歌 "写作" .¹⁵⁰ When looking for the avant-garde development of poetry in the 1990s, Zhou lands on essays by Zang Di, Chen Dongdong, Ouyang Jianghe, Xi Chuan, Cheng Guangwei, and Wang Jiaxin. Furthermore, Zhou designates Ouyang Jianghe, Wang Jiaxin, Xi Chuan, Zhong Ming, Zhang Shuguang, and Sun Wenbo as avant-garde poets in the 1990s.¹⁵¹ These poets can also be found in

¹⁴⁸ Wang and Sun 2000: 111–119.

¹⁴⁹ Wang and Sun 2000: 85–92 and 93–110.

¹⁵⁰ Wang and Sun 2000: 46–62.

¹⁵¹ Wang and Sun 2000: 49 and 52.

Cheng Guangwei's original list of N-poets, and many of them are associated with the Intellectual camp during the Polemic. Conclusively, Zhou states that Intellectual Writing and Individual Writing of the 1990s have breathed new life into the 1980s avant-garde experiments.¹⁵² She also criticizes the aggression and arbitrariness of Yu Jian's argumentation for the Popular Standpoint.¹⁵³

Notably, the N-poets' essays cited by Zhou were all published before the Polemic, between 1988 and 1998, reaffirming that N-poets had been discussing N-poetics for many years before the Polemic and outlining the distinctive nature of N-Poetry in their essays (an observation that is central to chapter Four of the present study). In other words, as demonstrated in Zhou's essay, whether or not intentionally so, N-poets made themselves "findable" for scholarly and literary critics. Although Zhou stresses the importance of the poetry itself in designating 1990s avant-garde poetry,¹⁵⁴ she does not cite any of this poetry in her essay. She focuses on N-poetics as the avant-garde of the 1990s on a theoretical level. Zhou Zan's recognition of N-poets as the 1990s avant-garde challenges Shen Qi's argument in "Square Accounts," and it is much more convincing because she offers references and anchors her argument in a specific context.

In terms of dismantling the Popular Standpoint, the other contributors to "Section One" of *Memorandum* also target the Popular camp's style of argumentation. The essays in "Section One" collectively show a remarkable capacity for dissecting the assertions by the Popular camp and revealing the inconsistency behind them. Cases in point are the essays by Xi Du,¹⁵⁵ Yang Xiaobin 杨小滨,¹⁵⁶ Chen Chao,¹⁵⁷ Sang Ke,¹⁵⁸ Cui Weiping 崔卫平,¹⁵⁹ and Geng Zhanchun 耿占春.¹⁶⁰ Though there are differences in style, all these authors take issue with the Popular Standpoint and see the Popular camp's aggressive and arbitrary attitude as the crux of the problem.¹⁶¹ Xi Du, Yang Xiaobin, Sang Ke, and Chen Chao break

¹⁵² Wang and Sun 2000: 47–48 and 61.

¹⁵³ Wang and Sun 2000: 56–61.

¹⁵⁴ Wang and Sun 2000: 49.

¹⁵⁵ Wang and Sun 2000: 22–34.

¹⁵⁶ Wang and Sun 2000: 71–74.

¹⁵⁷ Wang and Sun 2000: 63–70.

¹⁵⁸ Wang and Sun 2000: 35–41.

¹⁵⁹ Wang and Sun 2000: 131–136.

¹⁶⁰ Wang and Sun 2000: 126–130.

¹⁶¹ Wang and Sun 2000: 22, 25, 27, 31, 36, 71, and 135.

down the Popular camp's argumentation for the Popular Standpoint into several subjects and take them down point-by-point; in contrast, Cui Weiping and Geng Zhanchun argue against a single issue. Cui singles out what she sees as the Popular camp's questionable (moral) attitude, and Geng addresses the same issue by arguing against Yu Jian's dichotomy of colloquial and Western language resources. These attackers of the Popular Standpoint in "Section One" of *Memorandum* appear to pay much more attention to the arguments for the Popular Standpoint than its proponents do.

These attackers' full attention to the Popular camp may look similar to the Popular camp's aggressive focus on Intellectual Writing, but the outcomes are different. As the Popular camp tends to tie the (putative) failure of Intellectual Writing to the (equally putative) success of the Popular Standpoint, and as it tends to dedicate most of its argumentation to rationalizing the failure of Intellectual Writing but is unsuccessful in this task, the notion of the Popular Standpoint effectively collapses. As a result, paradoxically, the Popular camp adds to the presence of Intellectual Writing and exposes the weakness of its own Popular Standpoint. In contrast, those who attack it in "Section One" of *Memorandum* invest much less of their energy in dichotomous thinking. They do address Intellectual Writing or other N-poetics when arguing against the Popular camp's black-and-white picture, but their criticism of the Popular camp's argument is just that – rather than a defence of Intellectual Writing.

Moreover, they do not confine themselves to the merits of Intellectual Writing or N-Poetry to argue against the Popular camp's dichotomous thinking. Instead, they tend to draw on diverse examples to compare to or contrast with the unsoundness of the Popular camp's argumentation. For example, to illustrate the aggression and arbitrariness in the rationales behind Popular Writing, these authors draw on American cinema, Borges' interpretation of the Quran, Mao-era poetics, the translation of Buddhist scriptures, Yu Jian's application of Western culture in his poetry, and personal writing experience and contemplations.¹⁶² By compiling these essays into "Section One," the editors of *Memorandum* show that the flaws in the Popular camp's argumentation are fundamental,

¹⁶² Wang and Sun 2000: 133, 23, 71, 128, 67–68, and 39–40.

quite aside from the alleged dichotomy of Popular and Intellectual. At any rate, N-Poetry benefits from the discussion; and the Popular Standpoint is neutralized by it.

V. Conclusion

The Popular camp's contentions don't come anywhere near the Intellectual camp's contentions when it comes to monopolizing the discourse on, and the designation of, poetry written in the 1990s. On the one hand, the Popular camp fails to actually explain the identity, role, and potential of the Popular Standpoint. On the other hand, the Popular camp's loud and aggressive attacks on Intellectual Writing are deflected and leveraged by the Intellectual camp to not only reinforce the relevance between N-Poetry and the 1990s but also question the validity of the Popular Standpoint.

However, the Polemic is merely an event that happened at the end of the 1990s and there is more to the Popular Standpoint's subsequent invisibility and N-Poetry's subsequent dominance in the discourse on poetry written in the 1990s. The developments of the two propositions in the years leading up to the Polemic is equally important. And when we return to the four book-length contentions for clues to such development, it appears that both camps are aware of this. That is reflected by the respective compilations of the "Poetry Theory" sections in the 1998 and 1999 *Yearbooks* and of "Section Two" in *Memorandum*. While the essays discussed above mostly come from "Memorandum" of the 1999 *Yearbook* and "Section One" of *Memorandum*, and were mostly published during the polemic, those included in the "Poetry Theory" sections and "Section Two" of *Memorandum* mostly appeared before the Polemic. Besides, the "Poetry Theory" sections exclude N-Poetry, and "Section Two" excludes the Popular Standpoint. In other words, the proponents of the Popular Standpoint and those of N-Poetry each appear to prepare the reader to see the development of poetry written in the 1990s through their eyes.

In the next chapter we dig further back in time, and turn to their respective representations of the development of poetry written in the 1990s before the Polemic.

Appendix: Charting Relations in the Polemic

My reading of “Memorandum” of Yang Ke’s 1999 *Yearbook* and “Section One” of Wang Jiaxin and Sun Wenbo’s *Memorandum* shows that various contributors to the debate all position themselves in relation to the notion of Poetry of the Nineties by endorsing or dismissing other participants in the Polemic and authors affiliated with either N-Poetry or the Popular Standpoint. Gephi allows us to visually chart this veritable tangle of normative discourse. Green and red lines signify endorsement and dismissal, respectively (the density of relations makes it hard to see the arrowheads, but they are there). Authors whose names appear in grey did not actually contribute to the Polemic themselves.

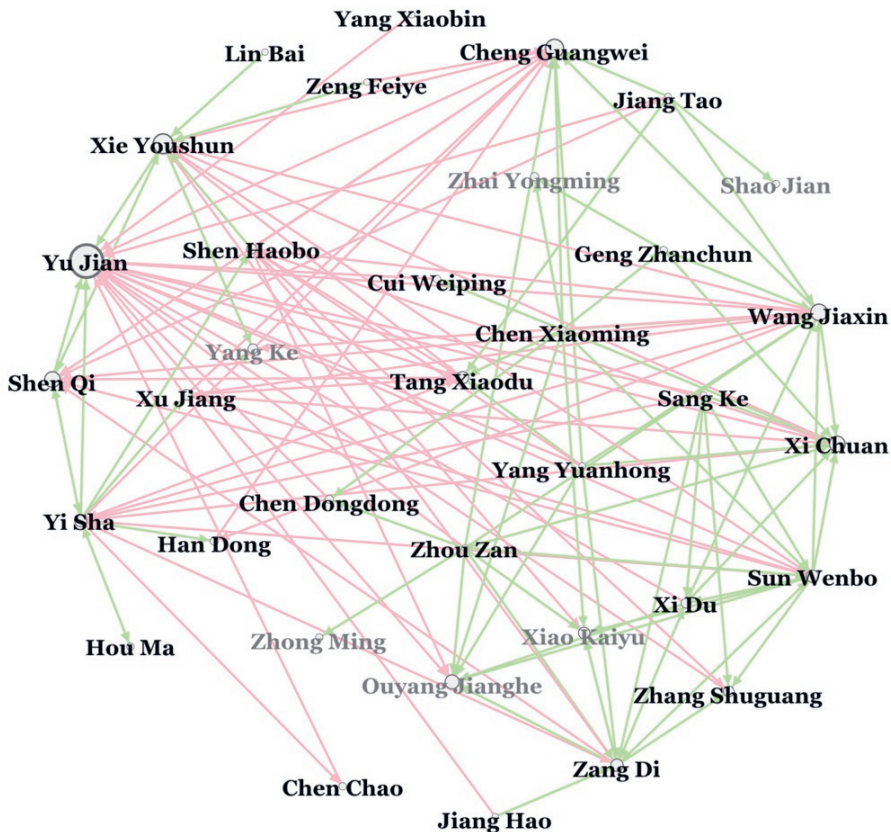


Figure 1 Endorsements and dismissals

In the following, I call attention to three aspects of this dynamic to explore the emergence of the rival camps in the Polemic. First, let's look at the *dismissal* of others as captured in "Section One" of *Memorandum*, which reaffirms the partisan approach taken by editors Wang and Sun. Of the eighteen contributors to "Section One" (names in black) none challenges Cheng Guangwei's views. Instead, they challenge Xie Youshun, Yu Jian, Shen Qi, Yi Sha, Shen Haobo, and Xu Jiang, all of whom are affiliated with the Popular camp. Thus, in essence, the Popular camp's opinions are subject to complete erasure.



Figure 2 Dismissals in "Section One" of *Memorandum*

Second and conversely, linkage between these six Popular authors (names in black) is reaffirmed by individual *endorsements* in “Memorandum” in the 1999 *Yearbook*.

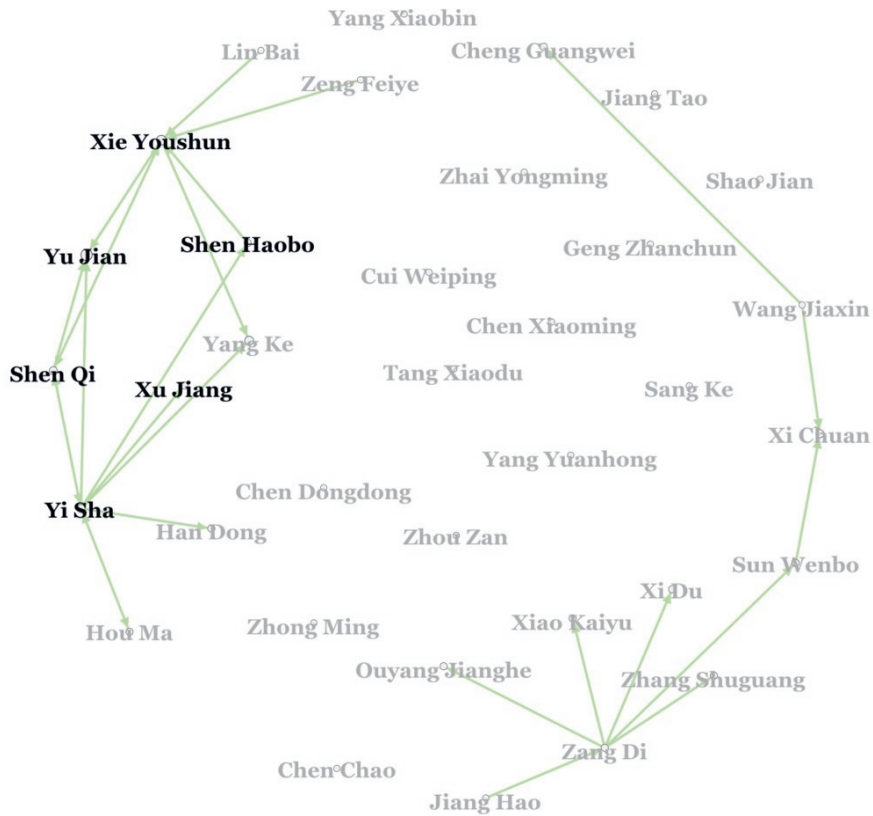


Figure 3 Endorsements in “Memorandum” in the 1999 *Yearbook*

Third, the outline of the Intellectual camp in the above graph can be refined by charting endorsements in “Section One” of *Memorandum*, with its editors’ bias making this an excellent site for the observation of the emergence of the Intellectual camp. The names in black are those endorsed by the contributors to “Section One” and regardless of the perspective taken, the N-poets are a constant presence, reflecting their key importance to the dynamic throughout. (Non-contributor N-poets Zhai Yongming, Zhong Ming, and Ouyang Jianghe are also invoked by the actual contributors.)

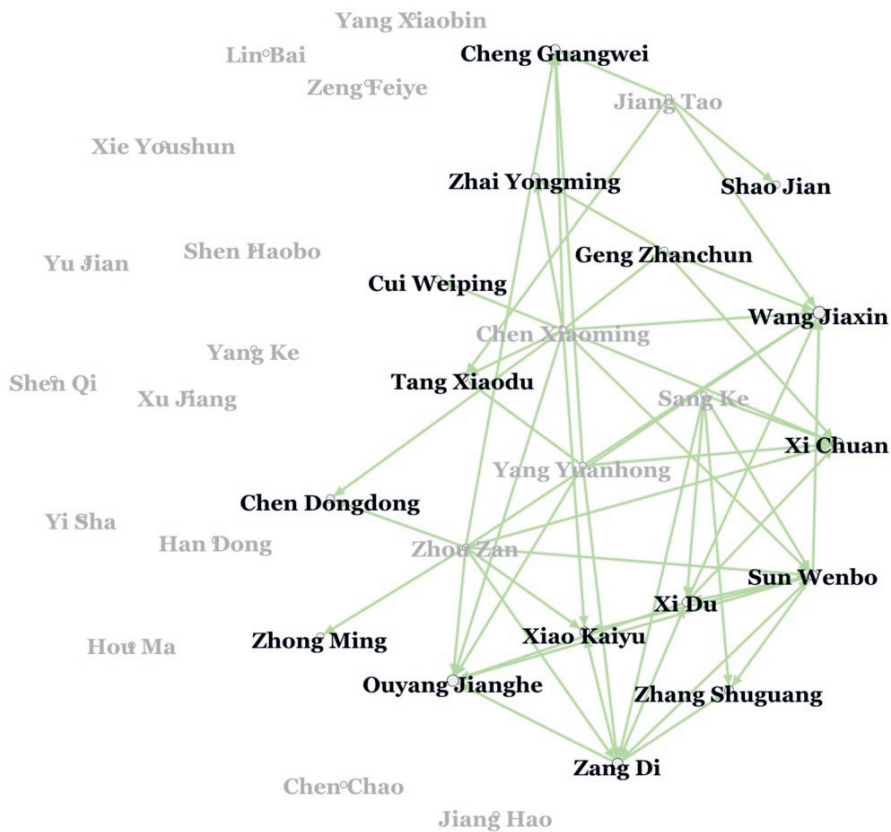


Figure 4 Endorsements in “Section One” of *Memorandum*