ABSTRACT

A native of Hubei province, Wen Yiduo began his education in the Chinese classics. Later his exposure to Western literature and his appreciation of the good elements of the West enabled him to combine the best of the West with those of the East. A poet, an artist, a scholar and last but not least, a patriot, Wen Yiduo's poetry also reflects his political and social consciousness. However, his most outstanding achievement, which is also his contribution to Chinese literature, is found in his formulation of important theories on poetic form. Unlike most theorists who usually stop short of putting their principles to practice, Wen made his mark most assuredly when he put his theories to the test to show the world and his critics that he was sincere in his effort to cure the "deformed" poetry of his time. The result was a volume of poems The Dead Water of which the poem of the same title was, in his own words, a 'masterpiece' for it was his first most successful experiment.

In this Academic Exercise, my main concern is his theory of poetry as expounded in his work "The Form of Poetry". To enhance a better understanding of this theory of poetry, an exploration of the influence of Western literature, in particular, the influence of Western poetical form, is made. A good example of his Western influence can be found in the essay "The Form of Poetry" where he deliberately avoided translating the word "form" into his vernacular language. A second example that strongly supports my assertion of Western influence is his use of the syllabic form that closely
resembles the Prosodic foot of Western poetry.

The second part of this paper is devoted to an analysis of Wen Yiduo's poetry as influenced by his reading of Western poetry in his collections, The Red Candles and The Dead Water. His Western influence ranged from the period of the Romantics, the Victorians to the early Twentieth Century American and British writers.

Scholars and critics of Chinese literary works have claimed the influence of Western literature on Wen Yiduo's work. However, as yet, no one has examined the extent of this influence and recorded this particular feature of his work in his vernacular language. I hope that this Academic Exercise will contribute in a small way to generate interest in this area of his work.