A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SHAO XUNMEI'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Shao Xunmei has been marginalized in the study of modern Chinese poetry because he established his own poetic world seething with decadence and replete with hedonism. To give a fuller representation of the history of modern Chinese poetry, it is important to elucidate the poetic world of understudied poets such as Shao Xunmei.

Shao's collection of essays, *Fire and Flesh* and the essay entitled "The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poetry" form the basis of Shao's poetics in which he shows his extensive knowledge of various foreign poetry styles. This extensive knowledge allowed him to create his own unique style.

Shao Xunmei's own poetics is embodied in his preface to his collection of poems, *Twenty-Five Poems*. The influence of foreign poetics and his own knowledge of poetry are crystallized, and Shao makes several points in this preface. Shao highlights the "best order" the most because it denotes the achievement of a perfect union between the content and the form, blending traditional Chinese poetics with foreign poetics. Shao asserted that the subject and the language are inclined to change according to changes of the epoch with the advent of modern civilization. As a result, Shao further believed that a poet should participate in reforming mankind by
portraying the new epoch with new languages.

Shao's poetics can be represented by three of his individualistic collections of poems: *Heaven and May*, *Flower-like Evil*, and *Twenty Five Poems*. From the works of these three collections of poems, it is possible to draw three underlying themes concerning his views on poet, decadent love and Christianity. Shao stressed the duty of a poet in the new epoch in his poetics. Secondly, Shao also made a noteworthy point on the coexistence of the contrasting images of decadence and Christianity, each representing the terrestrial and the celestial world respectively.

Even though Shao creates unique poetic world with exceptional images in his poem, Shao have formalist attitude in common with other formalist poets. Shao makes attempt to realize his form-oriented poetics by creating diverse forms ranging from sonnet to blank verse.
Dedicated to my mother
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Shao Xunmei (1906-1968) is a little known Chinese “decadent” poet. In his decadence and aestheticism, he is at odds with the mainstream of modern Chinese literature, which favored the social duty of the writer and the use of literature for historical transformation. Shao had a diverse career. He was an essayist, translator, publisher, in addition to being a poet (Lee 241-242). He devoted himself to developing new forms of Chinese poetry and to introducing foreign poetry as a translator and publisher. Although he was a very active figure in creative writing, publishing, and translation, not much is known about him. Li Guangde believes that Shao has been marginalized because of the influence of leftist political thought that prevailed in China, especially after 1949. In the People’s Republic of China, poets who did not adhere to state-sponsored literary standards were treated unfairly and even persecuted. In this political climate, Shao’s decadent poetry was buried in oblivion, and to a large degree remains that way today (58).

Like many intellectuals in the Republican period (1911-1949), Shao studied abroad, and that experience made an indelible mark on his versatile careers and literary tendencies. His literary inclinations tended toward exoticism and were shaped
in Europe, where he was exposed to various aspects of Western culture. When he arrived in Europe in 1923, he became so fascinated by the Greek poetess Sappho’s beauty after seeing her portrait that he tried by all means available to get an English version of her collection of poems. Through reading her poems, he discovered formal similarities in styles between her poems and traditional Chinese poetry. The poems in his first collection, *Heaven and May* (Tiantang yu wuyue), are considered Shao’s attempt at writing poetry in Sapphics (Li 59-60).

In 1924, Shao was admitted into Cambridge University in England and assiduously studied English literature. There, he discovered renowned literary works from many western countries such as France, America, Germany, and Italy that helped to stir in him a great interest in Western Romanticism and modernist poetry. His great interest in western literatures, especially poetry, and his deep understanding and mastery over English served as a solid foundation for creation of a new poetry and for translations in his later life (Li 60).

After his returning to China in 1927, Shao married Sheng Peiyu, who was the granddaughter of a famous industrialist who was active during the late Qing reform movement. But Shao became more renowned for his open relationship with his American mistress, Emily Hahn, a reporter for the *New Yorker* and author of *The Soong Sisters*. He helped her publications in many ways (Lee 242).

Shao Xunmei’s entered the Chinese literary world by joining literary groups and publishing literary journals and by forming friendships with many renowned writers of the days such as Xu Zhimo, Shen Congwen, and Lin Yutang. On his way back to China from Europe in 1927, Shao acquired a copy of a new literary journal,
Shihou (Sphinx 獅吼).¹ Although he had already acquired an enthusiasm for aesthetic decadence during his stay in Europe, Shao was deeply impressed by the journal’s “art for art’s sake” inclination and Beardsley-inspired illustrations. This was a turning point in his literary career, during which “art for art’s sake” and aesthetic decadence is a recurring theme. As soon as he returned to Shanghai, he went directly to the office of the journal Shihou and befriended all of its editors (Hutt 124). Shao affiliated himself with the Sphinx Society and eventually led this group as an editor. His leadership marked the foundation of a new era for the Sphinx Society. Under Shao’s guidance, the Sphinx Society, moved from a state of unproductiveness to a state of flourishment in aesthetic decadence. In May 1927, after publishing only two issues of monthly Shihou, Shao suspended publication. But in 1928, Shao opened the Golden House Bookstore and took charge of restoring the publication of Shihou on a bimonthly basis. This journal created a sensation in the literary circles of Shanghai. After publishing 12 issues, Shao stopped its publication and founded Jinwu yuekan (The Golden Chamber monthly), which attracted more supporters and editors. Around the time the publication of Jinwu yuekan ended in 1930, the Sphinx Society broke up. Irrespective of the rise and fall of the society, Shao Xunmei’s own writing progressed. His collection of poems, Flower-Like Evil (Hua yiban de zuí’é) and collection of essays, Fire and Flesh (Huo yu rou), were published by Jinwu Bookstore in 1928. He published other works in Shihou (Jie 225-227).

¹ Shihou is the literary journal of Sphinx society established by Teng Gu and other writers in 1924. The Shihoushe continued until early 1930s (Jie 226).
Around the same time as his collection of poems were published, Shao was asked to participate in the Crescent Moon Society\(^2\) as an editor for the *Crescent Moon Monthly* (Xinyue yuekan) established in March 1928 while Shao was still active with *The Golden Chamber Monthly* (Hutt 135). He accepted the offer and quickly became one of the core figures of this magazine. He actively participated in all the activities of Crescent Moon Society, including poetry writing and publishing (Li 60). However, with Xu Zhimo’s unexpected death in November 1931, Shao felt the need to separate himself from other members even though his financial support and status in the editorial group weighed heavily. Finally the magazine was suspended in June 1933 after a dispute among its members (Hutt 135).

When it comes to political tendency and artistic value, Shao Xunmei seems not only to have shared ideals with the other members of the Crescent Moon Society but also to have been deeply influenced by them. As for his political tendency, he belonged to the liberal and upper petit-bourgeois class with democratic affiliations, like Xu Zhimo and Wen Yiduo along with most of Crescentists (Li 61). Therefore, the Crescent Moon was considered the only literary group opposed to the leftist literary movement of the 1930s. Shao, along with his associate Crescentists, advocated art for art’s sake, exalting “high literary quality, its struggle for literary independence and freedom and for a literature of fine quality, that is, the placing of artistic values above political needs” (Tung 38-39).

\(^2\) The Crescent Moon Society was the influential literary group whose members included prominent writers that studied abroad in England and the United States such as Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo Wen Yiduo, Liang Shiqiu, Shen Congwen, and Luo Longji. The early period of the Crescent Moon Society is from 1924 to 1928 and the second period is from 1928 to 1933 during which the Crescent Moon started to draw attention (Tung 1).
As a poet, Shao Xunmei published three collections of poems, *Heaven and May*, *Flower-like Evil*, and *Twenty-Five Poems* (Shi ershiwu shou) throughout literary career. Shao Xunmei’s aesthetic decadent and form-oriented disposition embodied in his collections of poems was built up through important roles he played in the Sphinx Society and the Crescent Moon Society. Therefore, Shao’s poetry should be judged on their own merit and in terms of Shao’s relations to the societies he had joined, not by the standard of Chinese socialist ideology and politics.

Although a significant poet, Shao was more distinguished for his publishing career. He published three popular magazines: *Epoch Pictorial Magazine* (Shidai huabao), *Epoch Cartoons* (Shidai manhua), and *Epoch Cinema* (Shidai dianying) (Lee 144). He also dealt with political issues through publications such as *Free Speech* (Ziyou tan), along with its sister publication in English, *Candid Comment*, and *T’ien Hsia Monthly* (Hutt 137-138). According to Lin Dazu, Lin Dazu and Shao were co-editors of humorous and readable journal, *The Analects* (Lin 113). As such Shao greatly contributed to *The Analects* as a writer, editor, and publisher.

Shao’s fabulous publishing career declined with the Japanese invasion of Shanghai. To resolve financial embarrassment after using up his family wealth during the war, Shao not only wrote three detective novels a month but also printed pornography. After the establishment of People’s Republic, Shao donated his family land, including his printing plant, to the new government. He attempted to support his family by translating Western works such as Shelly’s *Prometheus Unbound*, Twain’s

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3 Wu Lilian, “Du lianpian jilu: Zhang Kebiao tanhua de wenzhang yougan,” *Huzhou shizhuan xuebao*, 1985.2: 20, Quoted on page 139 in Hutt’s article “La maison d’or-The sumptuous World of Shao Xunmei.”
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and Tagore's The Home and the World in his last years. Shao, who had been imprisoned for his "complex connection" with the political rightist with resulting loss of his health, passed away at home in 1968 (Hutt 139-140).

Shao's unorthodox style was often criticized by contemporary critics because of the erotic quality of the poems in Flower-Like Evil, but one of his contemporaries, the writer Shen Congwen, looked more positively on Shao's poetry and pointed out its key features: "His poems are created from the emotional odes to the senses. They are in praise of beauty, and expressions of the hedonistic pleasures found within this aestheticism." Even though some critics considered the hedonistic aspects of Shao's poems worthy of appraisal, Lu Xun, the leading writer of the New Culture movement, satirized Shao's background and marriage to a wealthy in his essay "Denglong shu shiyi" (A supplement to 'The art of success') and critically implied that Shao employed a substitute writer in his essay "Gezhong juanban" (All kinds of people buying into an official post). In order to defend himself, Shao asked his cell-mate Jia Zhifang to write an essay to clarify that Lu Xun's assertion of employing a ghost writer was a total misunderstanding in 1960.

Shao established his own unique poetic world in the Chinese literary field of the late 1920s and 1930s. In its absence of politics and relative disinterest in social issues, his poetry is strikingly different from that of leftist writers. Compared to other modernist poets, Shao’s poetic styles also stand out. Dai Wangshu's poetry, for

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4 Shen Congwen, Xin wenxue daxi (Shanghai: Liangyou Tushu Gongsi, 1935), vol 1, p.34, Quoted on page 118 in Hutt's article "La Maison d'or—The Sumptuous world of Shao Xunmei."


6 Ibid. pp. 264-265.
example, tends to explore the inner world of contemplation to the exclusion of the outer world. His poems employ noticeable technical devices, which might be common characteristic of Chinese modernist poetry in 1920s and 1930s. Shao’s poems, however, are dedicated to revealing the lyrical self’s sensual pleasure rather than any inner meditation. Even though it is difficult to regard Shao’s poems as utilitarian, some of his poems do focus on the poet’s duty in the new epoch. As a result, Shao’s poems can be placed somewhere between totally utilitarian poems and apolitical aesthetic poems.

Only very recently have a few scholars turned their attention to the understudied Shao Xunmei. These scholars seek to reexamine politically distorted views of Shao. This thesis makes use of three previous works on Shao Xunmei. None of them, however, presents a systematic analysis of Shao’s poetry, which is what I attempt in this thesis. For instance, Hutt’s article, “La Maison D’or—The Sumptuous World of Shao Xunmei,” mainly presents a biography of Shao Xunmei; there are only a few critical evaluations of his poems. The section on Shao Xunmei in Leo Ou-Fan Lee’s Shanghai Modern elaborates Shao’s biography, the basis of his poetics, and a few individual poems. But, given the limited space devoted to Shao, Lee does not delve deeply into Shao’s poetic world. Li Guangde’s article, “An Essay on Shao Xunmei’s Poems and Poetics” introduces Shao’s biography, his poems, and his poetics. However, it limits itself to pointing out only the works and poetics of Shao’s that he considered important.

Taking a more systematic approach to Shao’s poems and poetics than previous works, this thesis aims to examine Shao’s poetic world from a general
perspective. As such, this thesis deals with Shao’s poetics and his individual poems respectively and then tries to see the interrelation between the poetics and poems.
CHAPTER 2

SHAO XUNMEI’S POETICS

2.1. Shao Xunmei’s Lyricism—Centering on Aestheticism

In Ancient Greek, a lyric was characterized as “a song to be sung to the
accompaniment of a lyre (lyra)” (Cuddon 481). In the modern sense, a lyric refers to,
by and large, a “short poem expressing the feeling and thoughts of a single speaker
(who may sometimes be an invented character and not necessarily the poet)” (Baldick
125). An enormous diversity is intrinsically possible in the lyric because it can
encompass broad types of verses (Cuddon 481). Shao’s collections of essays, Fire and
Flesh and the essay entitled “The General Survey of Modern American Circles of
Poetry” (Xiandai meiguo shitan gaiguan) is based on knowledge of a huge range of
lyrics and illustrate not only the dominant multiple foreign influences on Shao but
also his discerning insight on the history of Western verse, including ancient Greek
poems, ancient Roman poems, French and British poems in the nineteenth century,
and American poems in the twentieth century, all of which may be classified as lyrics.
The essays to be discussed in this chapter reveal Shao’s personal examination of
various foreign verses in the lyrical tradition. It is my intention to show how he used
these foreign lyrics to lay a foundation for his own poetics. In other words, analyzing

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the poetics reflected in *Fire and Flesh* and “The General Survey of Modern American Circles of Poetry” will reveal how foreign poetics influenced the formation of Shao’s own poetics, as he developed them in the preface to *Twenty Five Poems*.

2.1.1. Lyricism and Love Poems—Internal Mimesis of Sound and Imagery: Sappho and Catullus

Different from recited epics and spoken drama, lyric poetry has a strong musical character that allows it to be sung. Lyric poetry, more than other forms of poetry, is composed of musical elements such as meter, rhyme, cadence, and consonance, which are structural evidence of its melodic origin. There have been various definitions on the characteristics of lyric other than musical factors. A lyric should also be short and express subjective feelings. In sum, the modern definition is that “a lyric is a type of poetry which is mechanically representational of a musical architecture and which is thematically representational of the poet’s sensibility as evidenced in a fusion of conception and image” (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 713-715). In this sense, Frye characterizes “the lyric [as] an internal mimesis of sound and imagery” (250).

In the *Fire and Flesh*, Shao Xunmei introduces two well-known and influential lyricists in the Western literature of antiquity, Sappho and Catullus, who wrote love poems that may be considered representative of the category of lyric poetry. Along with many of her contemporary Greek poets, Sappho begins the history of European love poetry by moving from the thoughtful epic style of the previous period to an emotional personal voice. Sappho’s poetry has the tendency to express
emotions of love towards beautiful girls, though she was a married woman who had a
daughter of her own. Because of this attention to beautiful girls, her sexuality has
become an issue (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 706). In the case of the Roman poetry
that succeeded Greek love poetry, Catullus was not only “the first Latin writer to
adapt elegy for love themes,” but also respected and copied Sappho. He expressed the
painful feeling induced by his infatuation with the violent noblewoman Clodia and
also wrote of gentle love towards a boy, Juventius (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 707).

In the first essay of *Fire and Flesh*, Shao Xunmei introduces Sappho to his
readers through the form of a dialogue between Xunmei and Pengshi, described as a
“friend.” In fact, Pengshi⁷ is one of Shao Xunmei’s pennames, and the use of this
color makes this essay a unique form of self-dialogue between Xunmei and his
alterego rather than a dialogue between friends. That Pengshi is indeed Xunmei
himself may be seen from the essay with the passage about Pengshi noticing
Xunmei’s confusing manner as a host (4). It is more likely that Xunmei’s love toward
Sappho is expressed and accentuated by the self-dialogue, which seems to confirm
what he thinks about Sappho and what he knows. That is, the self-dialogue is a
sincere internal confession.

This essay starts with Pengshi’s visit to Xunmei’s den on a rainy day. Pengshi
is carrying Xunmei’s collection of poems, *Heaven and May*. His eyes fall on a bust of
Sappho that Xunmei has in his den. Xunmei then introduces Sappho to Pengshi in
emotionally-charged language, describing her as the only poetess-sage of all time and

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⁷ See Jie Zhixi. Mei de pianzhi- Zhongguo xiandai weimei-tuipei zhuyi wenxue sichao yanjiu.
place. Xunmei admits that much about her life is unclear because of the absence of detailed biographical accounts. What is known comes piecing together information gathered from various literary sources (6). The limited information that he has about Sappho makes Xunmei skeptical about her poetry. He says that about 190 fragments of here verses were discovered, but only two or three of them were complete. By quoting Meleager that “though few, all are roses,” Xunmei draws attention to quality, not the quantity, of her poetry (16).

According to Suidas, Xunmei tells us, Sappho was born in Mytilene of Lesbos in about 630 B.C. Sappho and her contemporaries, Alcaeus and Pittacus, became known between 612 B.C. and 608 B.C. Based on some literary sources, Xunmei surmises that she was still alive in 572 B.C. (12-13). Sappho’s birthplace, Lesbos, was an important center of Greek culture. Being born in such a center could influence the birth of famous poets (Snyder 2).

Xunmei delves into Sappho’s private life, centering on her love affairs and family. She was infamously rumored to have drowned herself because of her disappointment in love with the poet Phaon and to have had homosexual relationships with her female students. These somewhat striking rumors surrounding her make Pengshi more curious about Sappho. Sappho’s parents were wealthy aristocrats, Slamandronymos and Cleis, and she had three brothers, but Xunmei only talks only about Charaxus, who ran a wine business and was deeply in love with a prostitute, Doricha (Shao, 7-8). Xunmei says it is probable that her husband was Cercylas (13) and her daughter was Cleis, named after her mother, according to the Greek custom (7). Concerning the rumors, Xunmei states that even though there are no facts
confirming her homosexuality, her poetry about her female friend is very passionate. But, he also claims that the Phaon scandal was fabricated (13-14).

Xunmei puts Sappho’s poems into five categories. The first is ode,\(^8\) which are eulogies for and pleas to both men and gods. The second is lyric, which is characterized by anxiety, revelation of emotion, and calls for happiness. The third is the marriage song, which is chorused by congratulators at a banquet. The purpose of this is to praise and urge the bride and groom’s virtue and happiness on that evening. This was one of the Greek wedding programs. The fourth is epic, which recounts the past. The fifth is political poems, which she wrote the least (16-17).

Regarding features of Sappho’s poetry, Xunmei declares that her poetry is abundant with colors (an original characteristic of Greek poets), emotional enthusiasm,\(^9\) and tonal beauty. Because of these qualities, Xunmei tells us, Byron exclaims in his poem Don Juan, “the isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung” (16). And because Sappho’s language is “clear but far from cold,” Robinson likens Sappho’s language to “a sea of glass” and “a sea of glass mingled with fire.” Robinson not only quotes Byron’s line in Don Juan mentioned above but also Swinburne’s “Sapphics,” supports that Sappho “shone a light of fire as a crown

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\(^8\) An ode is a lyric poem characterized by “an elaborated stanza-structure, a marked formality and stateliness in tone and style, and lofty sentiments and thoughts.” Sappho and Alcaeus’ odes are considered to be the earliest odes. See Cuddon, J. A. 608.

\(^9\) The main theme of Sappho’s poems is the ardor of love. For the first time in literary history, love is called “bitter-sweet.” Sappho’s love poems are hailed as her most persuasive in terms of how fascinatingly the sound and suggestion are used in her poems, and because they are so much like a “physiological treatise” (Robinson 57). Even though personal emotion permeates every aspect of her poetry on the whole, Sappho’s scope of theme goes beyond mere individual emotions of love. Nearly every human emotions, from a grudge to a wail, was sensed and expressed by Sappho (Robinson 58-59). In addition, Sappho likes birds and flowers so much that her love of charming nature was expressed in her poems (Robinson 62-67).
for ever” (53). As described above, it seems that Shao underlines the natural
revelation of human emotion in Sappho’s poems. This emotional enthusiasm he
favored in Sappho becomes the main principle of his own poetics and in his poetry.

Xunmei includes in this essay on Sappho his Chinese translations of her
fragments. We are first given a translation of “Ode to Nereid,” in which Sappho
criticizes her brother regarding the scandal with a prostitute. What Xunmei remarks as
the tender affection of beautiful syllable in the original text highlights the simple and
pure but deep emotion. He stresses that the beauty of the original Greek text cannot be
conveyed in a translation into Chinese (10). Xunmei introduces another poem of
Sappho’s “Ode to Aphrodite,” which was written in Sapphics.10

Xunmei mentions the possibility of Sappho’s homosexual love between
women in Lesbos. Sappho was also admired and adored by young males and famous
poets like Alcaeus. Sappho and Alcaeus discussed some phrases from Aristotle’s
Rhetorics (14). The dialogue between them is itself a poem identified as “The Loves
of Sappho and Alcaeus” (Reynolds, 63). In this fragment, the metaphor of “the violet
hair” seems to be employed for praising not her hair but her godly capability of
writing poems, expressing Alcaeus’ respect for Sappho (Snyder 4).

Xunmei says that his favorite among the fragments of Sappho is “Hymn for
Aphrodite” (fragment 31). This poem portrays the trembling moment of a lover
looking at the object of her affection, placing the lover in a state of paralysis with

10 Sapphics, lyric verses in a Greek metre named after Sappho. Sapphic verse uses stanzas of four lines,
the first three having eleven syllables, the last having five. In the first three lines, the sequence of five
metrical feet is: trochee; trochee or spondee: dactyl; trochee; trochee or spondee. In the fourth line, a
dactyl is followed by a trochee or a spondee (Baldick, 198).
interweaving emotion and physical reaction. Despite being almost dead, the lover paradoxically feels satisfied and elated. We learn that Snyder states that this fragment was a renowned poem in the ancient world. The Roman poet, Catullus, bases one of his lyrics on the beginning part of Sappho’s fragment 31, although Catullus’s poem is thought of as less powerful than that of Sappho (19).

Browning and Burns remind Shao Xunmei of Catullus as the master of love poetry (68). Catullus is referred to as the first Latin writer to adapt elegy for love themes among the Romans (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 706). Shao regards the period from 60 B.C. to A.D.17 as the prime period of Latin poetry, when the great poets as well as the great heroes such as Caesar and Cicero had a lively time with poetry.

Shao classifies the poems of this time into three periods, and each period has its own characteristics. In the first period, he regards Lucretius and Catullus as representative poets. Their poems are characterized by plain sentences and deep and sincere emotion, like music coming from the heart and natural beauty without decoration. This kind of artistic expression could be considered innate and not artificial (69).

Vergil and Horace, writes Shao, are typical poets of the second period (69). Vergil was born in 70 B.C. and Horace in 65. According to Shao, the characteristic of their poems is mature artistic expression. They were careful about both contents and form. They believed that the structure of expression in the poems of the preceding period was a bit too simple to incite enthusiastic feelings in readers. Thus, they paid greater attention to form so they could accomplish their purpose (69).
Ultimately, says Shao, Virgil and Horace failed, and it was not until the poetry of the third period that profound transformation occurred. Shao says that the typical poet of the third period is Ovid. His poetry is exquisite; he made an effort to polish expressions and emotion more than the poets in the second period. Shao elaborates that excessive polishing of the language of his poems results from what he calls “trying hard to avoid the pure color of the poem in a negative sense” (69).

By linking the cyclical history of Latin poetry to the history of traditional Chinese poetry from the *Shijing* (Book of odes) to Ming dynasty poetry, Shao discusses a universal nature of poetry. Since the evolution of poetry is cyclical, poems have their own eternal status. Even though form varies with fashion, the starting point of the contents is always one thing. Shao believes that knowing poetry is an important part of life and a reason for existence. The emotional impulse and the leap in life are the motivations behind the eternal existence of life, so the poetry that manifests true life exists forever (70).

Catullus’ poetry fits in well with Shao’s poetics insofar as his poetry is the true manifestation of life and exclusively emotional. Catullus expresses emotion directly without recourse to metaphors such as grass or trees. That is, “the sight strikes a chord in one’s heart” (70). To Shao, Catullus’ poetry is characterized by intuition, plain writing, and pure thought. Even a simple-minded person realizes and feels his sincerity of emotion immediately upon reading. The more carefully a complex-minded person tastes his poems, the more the person will notice his magic and be moved. Hence, Shao argues that “this is real love poetry, real poetry, this is Catullus’ greatness” (70-71).
Shao stresses that Catullus was so imbued with emotion that the greater part of his poems are love poems. Of his poems, two of them are written for mourning over his deceased brother and the rest are written for his lover, the wanton woman, Clodia. His poems range from first love to disappointed love to jealousy to curses to begging forgiveness to unifying of sweetness to swearing of bitterness. In brief, Shao thinks the diverse emotions in his poems reflect the history of Catullus’ real emotional life (71-72).

In his love poetry, Catullus calls Clodia a Lesbian because Catullus worshiped Sappho of Lesbos in hopes that Clodia might somehow replace Sappho. Catullus’ admiration for Sappho is the same as Swinburne’s; he regards Sappho as his predecessor, and his poetry was greatly influenced by hers. Shao maintains that Catullus’ poetry was among all the Latin poetry the most influenced by Greek poems. For Catullus, there would be no ode, mourning song, chorus wedding song, or lyrical love poem without Greek color. Even though there are only 110 of his poems extant, Shao dares to say every Western lyricist was directly or indirectly influenced by Catullus (72).

Shao introduces two of Catullus’s poems. The first, the most eulogized, was written when his lover’s sparrow died. Shao mentions that this poem was quoted and imitated by others. Regretting that his translation cannot convey the beauty of the original Latin text, he praises the depth of emotion and the profound meaning embedded within it that makes it untouchable to most people. Deceased bird was the object of affection for Clodia’s lover. And, the bird is associated with her lover and deeply understands Clodia’s sorrow, so that the deceased bird hesitates to leave her,
which might be likened to Catullus himself. In addition, the death of the bird reminds him of the unavoidable horror he feels about his imminent death. Catullus was pained by Clodia’s reddened eyes. Shao finds the empathy of Catullus for the deceased bird to originate in his wellspring of deep love (74-75). Shao claims that the second poem he quotes, which was dedicated to Clodia, reveals very vivid fire-like love. Catullus’s strong but unsatisfied desire makes him imagine an everlasting night during which he could give her innumerable kisses, and he is scared about their burning love being detested by others (75).

Sappho and Catullus infused their poems with strong emotions; they wrote mainly love poems replete with lyrical self’s natural emotion. It seems that Shao’s love of ancient Greek and Roman poetry became the basis of formation of his poetics which attaches importance to the natural emotion of the expressive lyrical self.

2.1.2. Aestheticism: Gautier, Swinburne, and Verlaine

In a broad sense, Aestheticism, which has existed throughout history, signifies a “devotion to beauty” in the arts and to other objects around us. Nevertheless, the word ‘aestheticism’ emerged in the nineteenth century to mean “certain ideas about life and art—ideas which then assumed a distinct form, and presented a new and serious challenge to more traditional and conventional ideas” (John 1969, 1). Then, there emerge dissimilar but interconnected features of Aestheticism as “a view of life — the idea of treating life ‘in the spirit of art,’” “a view of art — ‘art for art’s sake,’” and “a characteristic of actual work of art and literature” (Johnson 1). These latter views of Aestheticism assert that art should be self-sufficient as an end in itself and
not have any utility outside its own existence. They also assert that art needs to do away with didacticism, political commitment, propaganda, or morality (Cuddon 11). In this sense, “the end of a work of art is simply to exist in its formal perfection: that is, to be beautiful and to be contemplated as an end in itself” (Abrams 3).

The roots of German Aestheticism can be traced back to the works of Romantic German writers such as Kant, Schelling, Goethe, and Schiller, who agreed on the autonomy of art (Cuddon 11). The earliest self-conscious movement of French Aestheticism started with Théophile Gautier’s preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835), which humorously denounces the notion that art could be useful (Abrams 3). Thereafter, influenced by Gautier and Poe, Baudelaire developed an aesthetic movement advocating “the sovereignty of the creative imagination and the aspiration to apprehend an ultimate reality through the perceptions of the senses” (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 10-11). This movement was taken up by the French symbolists such as Mallarmé and Verlaine, who attempted to “communicate concentrated feelings by the use of evocative symbols rather than by rational statement, and they also tried to refine and purify language to obtain intimations of the ineffable and the transcendent” (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 11). Aestheticism in England can be regarded as a synthesis of both indigenous elements and French impact (Preminger and Brogan, eds., 11). During the Victorian era in England, Swinburne, under the influence of Baudelaire, declared an art for art’s sake theory. Walter Pater, who was an influential person within this stream of thought, went further to maintain the view that “life itself should be treated in the spirit of art” (Cuddon 12). Shao deals with some of these key figures of Western Aestheticism—Swinburne, Gautier, and Verlaine—in the Fire and
Flesh, which suggests that Shao’s poetics was formed under the influence of Aestheticism and that he selected the poets whose tendencies suited his poetics.

Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) was a great connoisseur of literature, art, and music who as both poet and critic had a tremendous impact on his contemporaries in French literature (Magill vol.2, 551). He is considered a precursor of the Parnassians, a literary group in France in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a reaction against romanticism, subjectivism, and artistic socialism (Cuddon 639),¹¹ Parnassians were mainly characterized by “impassivity, impersonality, the cult of form.” Form was the quintessence of art for the Parnassians (Hollier, ed. 774).

In the preface to his novel Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835), Gautier exclaims, “Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless; everything useful is ugly” (39). He believed that art has value in and of itself, so art should not be used for any utilitarian purpose. In 1856, Gautier further publicized his belief in art for art’s sake through his position as an editor of the journal, L’Artiste (Magill vol.2, 552).

In an unusual move, Shao Xunmei introduces in Fire and Flesh a translation of Arthur Symons’s essay about Gautier originally published in his Symbolist Movement in Literature. In the note attached to his translation, Shao explains that since Swinburne admired Gautier’s slogan “l’art pour l’art,” he had hoped to write an essay about Gautier but did not manage to do so. Because Symons’s writing is considered to be the most precise, appropriate, simple, and direct among critics of Gautier, he decide to translate this essay instead (67). Shao seems to have simply adopted Symons’s views of Gautier instead of developing his own.

¹¹ It is said that the works of the Parnassians signify the prevalent inclination of French poetry among Romantics and Symbolists. See Preminger and Brogan, eds. 880.
Part of the preface of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is introduced in Symons’ essay. Gautier puts forward in this section of the preface his views on the tension between body and soul: “my rebellious body will not acknowledge the supremacy of the soul, and my flesh will not endure to be mortified” (Shao 62). His reaction against spirituality is represented by three things that he likes: “gold, marble, and purple, (respectively representing) brilliance, solidity, and color” (Shao 62). Specifically, Gautier adored everlasting things: “the body, as generation after generation refreshes it, the world, as it is restored and rebuilt, and then gems, and hewn stone, and carved ivory, and woven tapestry” (Shao 64-65). Like the body and the world, Gautier pursued verse for its “solid, strictly limited, resistant form” (Shao 65), staying unchangeable and imperishable. Musicality, the abundance of color, and the solidity of form are of primary concern to Gautier (Shao 65).

Gautier contends that poets must describe the world concretely without being disturbed by any emotion to create poetry with impersonal imagery (Cuddon 639-640). As the leading member of the Parnassians, he shows a clear preference for form over content. Symons claims that Gautier’s truth is literally conveyed via stunning clearness of language in his verse (102). This lack of spiritual and sentimental factors in his poems was targeted for criticism, but the beauty of language and the perfection of form were invariably valued despite changes in poetic trends (Magill vol.2, 556).

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) is well known as one of the principal lyric poets of the Victorian era (Magill vol.3, 1397). His literary career got started when he attended Balliol College of Oxford. At that time, he was introduced to the Pre-Raphaelites and captivated by them. From then on Swinburne started to write
poems and plays in Pre-Raphaelite style and learned the principle of “art for art’s sake” from them (Casidy 53-68). Swinburne was greatly influenced by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a London painter and poet in the Pre-Raphaelit school and a follower of the “art for art’s sake” philosophy (Casidy 38-39).

Shao Xunmei introduces Swinburne’s *Atalanta in Calydon*, published in 1865 and the masterpiece that brought the title of great poet to Swinburne, and “Chastelard,” which is the first part of a dramatic trilogy he published later in the same year. The rest of the trilogy was “Bothwell” and “Mary Stuart,” published in 1874 and in 1881, respectively (21). *Atalanta* was praised by critics but failed to attract public attention. Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads*, which appeared in 1866, ranges from lyrical and meditative poems to narratives to dramatic monologues (Baugh 1440). Shao Xunmei argues that this collection of poems was the subject of both the most praise and the most censure. Swinburne abandoned preexisting rules and created a unique style. With his burning spirit, he objected to all autocratic politics and hypocritical morality, illustrating in his poetry the thoughts and opinions that people dared not express (21). Through this collection, Swinburne became renowned throughout Europe and even in the United States. He subsequently published numerous works, but Shao points out that the collections of poems *Songs Before Sunrise* and the verse drama *Tristram of Lyonesse* received the praise of the press, but his only novel, *Love’s Cross Currents*, and the prose *William Blake* were not successful.

Shao Xunmei draws attention to the “abnormal” life of Swinburne as a way of explaining the unusual characteristics of his poetry. Faithful to his romantic character,
which did not allow him to be restricted by the bridle of marriage, he remained unmarried all his life. He did suffer pain from disappointed love, however, which resulted in *A Leave-Taking* and other works. His heavy drinking brought about pneumonia, which finally caused his death (22). Shao quotes lines bursting with the emptiness of love, life, and death from “Hymn to Proserpine” and “Garden of Proserpine” (23), lines that resonate with “the fury of the loser and the resentment of the person in despair” (24).

To Shao Xunmei, the underlying features of Swinburne’s poems are pagan and immoral tendencies, based on his skeptical view of life, as well as the mysterious musicality of his meter. Shao introduces Swinburne’s pagan attitude by quoting “Supreme Evil, God” from *Atalanta* and notes further that Swinburne negates the idea that God created everything in “Hymn for Man.” Shao sees Swinburne as objecting to religion and regarding God as his opponent. While admitting to the immorality of some lines of Swinburne’s poetry, Shao asserts that it is simply irrational to decide a poet’s moral character based purely on his poetry because all poets writing unethical poems are not necessarily unethical and all poets writing ethical poems are not necessarily ethical. In addition, Shao states that ordinary people not only confuse the sense of beauty and wanton impulse but also misunderstand a revolt against a system that fetters liberty as a resistance that advocates barbarous acts. Thus, he emphasizes that a scholarly approach is essential for appreciating Swinburne’s immoral verse. Besides, he regards Swinburne as a literary genius whose unruliness in poems should be understood as such and excused. Only people having scholarship are able to understand and criticize inappropriate allusion (literary quotation).
Other than allusion in his poems, Shao states it is even more difficult to understand his mysterious metrical music. Shao acclaims Swinburne’s finesse in repeating vowels, consonants, many sounds, characters, lines, and meanings in one line or several lines. Swinburne was totally gifted in language, having superb skills in repetition (22-28).

Shao goes further into individual works and collections of poems that he regards as the greatest among Swinburne’s works; that is, Atalanta in Calydon, The First Series of Poems and Ballads, and Songs before Sunrise. Atalanta in Calydon is universally applauded by critics as one of Swinburne’s preeminent works (Cassidy 85). It is based upon the epic the “Iliad,” so it is close to myth; however, the myth is renewed with different kinds of music, color, and the strong emotion of Swinburne (Shao 29). The protagonists’ destiny is exquisitely delineated as a superb tragedy. The queen of Calydon, Althaea, who is destined for an unavoidable tragedy, condemns her son, Meleager, to death as the price of his defensible murdering of his two uncles, Teseus and Plexippus (Cassidy 90-91). Chew states that “in Atalanta in Calydon the pseudo-Hellenism was detached from modern issues, but the bitter fatalism of the tragedy—the essential nobility of helpless man in the presence of malignant fate—was a direct challenge to the religious ideas of Victorian England” (Baugh ed. 1445). Notably, Shao cites a passage of chorus that articulates “the philosophy of despair” and resentment toward God about his creation and destruction. This philosophy of his culminates in condemnation of “the supreme evil, God” (Shao 31-33).

While Shao emphasizes the excellence of Swinburne’s masterpiece, Atalanta, Swinburne’s later Poems and Ballads (1866) rather than Atalanta was hailed more
enthusiastically by common people (31-33). Shao equates *Poems and Ballads* with *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) of Baudelaire, for not only giving rise to many attacks and tremendous uproar but also for greatly influencing contemporary writers and later generations. Shao sees these two figures as having occupied crucial places in the history of culture. They were revolutionaries liberating literature from the shackles of religion, morals, and customs. They were the masters of creation who advocated beautiful, emotional, musical, and sweet verses. In particular, they sought out offensive odors: truth out of falsehood, goodness out of evil, beauty out of ugliness, the interesting out of a depressed life, happiness out of the worried world. This was epitomized in “to seek console out of evil” (19-20). It seems that Shao dialectically understood the oppositional nature of Swinburne’s lyricism as well as the contrasting concepts that characterize our lives.

Shao classifies the 62 verses of *Poems and Ballads* into nine categories: pre-Raphaelite verse (e.g. “Ballade of Life”), decorated verse with pre-Raphaelite influence (e.g. “Before the Mirror”), dramatized monologues (e.g. “Félie”), political poems (e.g. “Song in the Time of Revolution”), eulogies (e.g. “Ode to Victor Hugo”), classical poems (e.g. “Pheadra”), poems on death and morality (e.g. “Hymn to Proserpine”), emotional poems (e.g. “Anactoria”), and poems of direct experience (e.g. “Triumph of Time”) (33-34).

Shao points out how much Swinburne adored women and how he articulated his passion towards women. Women with the scent of a flower were, he thought, like a serpent with a fatal beauty. Even so, women constituted his very existence itself to such a degree that he could die or live for them (34-35).
Among the works in *Ballads and Poems*, Shao points out the exaltation of common people in “Laus Veneris,” “Hymn to Proserpine,” “Anactoria,” “Triumph of Time,” and “A Match.” In “Laus Veneris,” which means the praise of Venus, Shao quotes Lafcadio Hearn’s (1850-1904) essays on Swinburne. Hearn states that this poem is the most characteristic poem in all Swinburne’s works and “the most interesting version in any modern language of the old medieval story” (160).

Swinburne based the poem on the story in a French book published in 1530. The plot portrays a knight called Tannhause, who falls in love with Venus, one of the classical goddesses worship of whom was banned by Christian priests. After Tannhause returns to Rome, he asks the Pope to forgive him, but the Pope declines his request since his crime was so sinful. However, God shows mercy. Swinburne focuses on the emotion of the knight after coming back from Rome, not the event itself. He was hopeless but his love and worship for Venus comforts him. His love and worship for Venus are interwoven with fear of hell and regret for his behavior. Hearn stresses that the spirit of rebellion of the pre-Raphaelite school was put into this poem. In this poem, the knight even asks God to respect Venus and questions whether His mother was less beautiful than Venus, which is an outright blasphemy (Hearn 160-162). Swinburne clearly did not regard God as inviolable holiness (Shao 37).

Shao also introduces *Anacotria*, which was written in a tone like that of Sappho’s poetry. As Shao puts it, “Torrential thought, continuous poetic flavor, and copious music express the joy in depression, the sympathy in wrath, and the desire in frustration in *Anacotria*” (Shao 38).
It seems that Shao puts more weight on Swinburne’s *Songs Before Sunrise* than *Poems and Ballads*. Shao thinks the change caused by Swinburne’s meeting with Mazzini transformed the decadent poet of the earlier period into the great revolutionary poet of the later period (40). *Songs before Sunrise*, published in 1871, includes 38 poems and is divided into revolutionary poems and those that praise freedom. Shao contends that Swinburne sought not only national revolution but also a world revolution. In effect, he sought freedom of the spirit as well as freedom of the body. Moreover, he tried to fight against multiple injustices; he cried out for the poor; he complained of unfairness for weak countries, destroyed races, and every repressed thing; he cursed fierce and tyrannical rulers, feudal ethics, and God imprisoning everything (41). Shao’s preference for Swinburne’s revolution-oriented attitude adds a new dimension to Shao’s poetics. Although he advocates aestheticism and favors aesthetic writers such as Gautier, Swinburne, and Verlaine, it seems that in also praising Swinburne’s political poems Shao had perhaps been influenced by the literary theory of the leftists, which had a prominent place in cultural circles by the late 1920s. As we will see, this preference for socially-engaged writing finds a place in Shao’s poetics as “reform” theory.

Shao compares the passionate emotion about women of *Poems and Ballads* with the shouting for liberty of *Songs Before Sunrise*. Shao attributes the achievement of *Songs Before Sunrise* to inspiration from meeting and associating with Mazzini, a great Italian revolutionary in the latter part of 19th century (42).

Swinburne displays profound admirations for his friends such as Mazzini, Baudelaire, Hugo, and so on. His ardent love could embrace people, objects, images,
unreal thoughts, despair, or sympathy. He loves things without regard to their relative superiority or inferiority; everything is identical to him. Everything is the object of love for him. It is only natural then that most verses of Songs Before Sunrise consist of odes to Italy at his first sight of Italy. To Swinburne, freedom was life itself like the brightness in the darkness and like the omnipotent and enormous goodness (43-44).

Swinburne’s strong hope for freedom and equality is to create a world of Great Harmony. What he really wanted to achieve by crying out against injustice was to construct a world of Great Harmony by destroying what he calls an empire. After examining the role of literature in revolution in Western civilization, Shao looks for examples in Chinese literature of a close relationship between the epoch and literature and laments that great works have not appeared in the great epoch that is contemporary China (46-47).

One of Paul Verlaine’s (1844-1896) great successes might be his mastery over the art of suggestion and allusion, a mastery that is best exemplified in his numerous short poems (Sorrel! xxv). However, Shao Xunmei focuses on the life of Verlaine in order to understand the characteristics of his personality and poems. In the first place, Shao Xunmei calls Paul Verlaine “a believer between the thieves’ den and the temple” (53),\(^\text{12}\) an idea he derives from George Moore’s Memoirs of My Dead Life. Regarding Verlaine, Moore states:

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\(^{12}\) When Shao quotes and translates the writing about Verlaine from George Moore’s Memoirs of My Dead Life, he used this expression. Yet this expression does not seem a literal translation, but a free translation with his own point of view. Based on the original text regarding this part, Moore’s companion asks if he is a priest or was ever a priest. Then Moore says, “No, but he believes in priests, which is worse” (Moore, 94).
The singer of the sweetest verses in the French language this is, a sort of ambling song like a robin's. The robin confesses his little soul from a twig; his song is but a tracery of his soul and with the same simplicity Verlaine traces his, without troubling to enquire if what he traces is good or ill. A lecher, a crapulous and bestial fellow at times, at other times a poet, a visionary, the only poet that Catholicism has produced since Dante. (94-95)

Shao quotes this passage to support his claim that Verlaine was a rare poet who subtly expresses a dual spirituality, which encompasses both excessive self-indulgence and humble religion, with the musicality of a bird song. Shao doubts if Verlaine's faith and religion were expressed in Sagesse even after he was known to have converted to Catholicism (60).

Shao identifies Verlaine as a hedonist rather than a tragic poet. Shao thinks the tragic point of his life is conversely his hedonist point. Verlaine experienced an unhappy marriage, along with indulgence in sensual pursuits and other forbidden desires, vagabondage, eighteen months of imprisonment, disease, poverty, and beggary. It appears that these experiences were enough to make him love and understand his life a little more. To Verlaine, an uninteresting life is much more sorrowful than the sorrow of death. Shao contends Verlaine was a hedonist enjoying his distresses and even sublimating them into his raptures. Also, Verlaine as a hedonist ignored every hypocrisy of society and respected only himself and the spirit of himself. He experienced ups and downs in his life, but he was never overcome by the
power of fate. Shao quotes Kuriyagawa Hakuson (厨川白村)’s interpretation in *Coming out from the Ivory Tower* (象牙の塔と出てで) that hedonism allows for a deeper understanding of everything, accompanied by sharp senses, sensitive emotions, and abundant vitality. Shao tries to find the great tendency of Verlaine in terms of hedonism with sensitivity to everything (51-55).

Shao emphasizes the musicality of Verlaine’s verse, acclaiming his tonal sense of spirit. He also attributes to Verlaine the capability of hearing something the most people have yet to hear or cannot hear.

Before Verlaine, French poetry was dominated by poetic rhetoric. Hugo and Baudelaire developed the subtle musicality of French poetry, but even they were unable to overcome the prevalent power of rhetoric (56). Verlaine’s stress on musicality and resistance against rhetoric was enunciated in the verse *L’Art Poetique*, which rebounded with musicality, delicacy, and nuance for good poetry (Sorrell 296). Verlaine noticed the relative liberty of English verse due to less stern grammar in English language, and he tried to reform French verse to so as to develop its musicality. His poems are characterized by their lucid tone, complete form, and enthusiastic emotion. Consequently, Shao even calls Verlaine the crystallization of Hugo, Gautier, and Baudelaire (57).

Gautier, Swinburne, and Verlaine, described in this section, can be categorized as promoters of Aestheticism. Based on Shao’s translation of Symons work on Gautier, Gautier clings to the perfect form and is not influenced by any emotion, and through this he achieves clear and beautiful lyrics. In Swinburne’s case, Shao focuses on Swinburne’s pagan and revolutionary attitude of his poems and their musicality. Shao
emphasizes Verlaine’s hedonistic tendency and the beautiful musicality of his poems, with their lucid tone, complete form, and enthusiastic emotion. Shao points out different aspects of the three literary figures categorized under Aestheticism. Shao draws from each in the formation of his own poetics. He takes the “perfect form” theory of Gautier and the musicality and enthusiastic emotions from Swinburne and Verlaine. Consequently, Shao’s eclectic borrowing allows him to promote a poetics that highlights at once the form and emotion of a poem. Shao’s emphasis on Swinburne’s revolutionary theory places him between aestheticism and the leftist group.

2.2. The General Survey of the Modern American Circle of Poets

Shao Xunmei published “The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poets (Xiandai Meiguoshitan gaiguan)” in Xiandai (1934). He claims that modern American poetry began with the publication of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse (Chicago, 1912- ), edited by Harriet Monroe. He classified the poems that have appeared since then into six categories: rural verse, urban verse, lyric, imagist verse, modernist verse, and cosmopolitan verse, and he regarded Leaves of Grass by Whitman (1819-92) as the seed of those various modern styles. Shao describes the various tendencies of modern American poetry since 1912, emphasizing that these poems have definite connections with earlier poems. In this sense, it seems that Shao’s conception of modernity in explaining modern American poetry is concerned more with “temporal

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13 This is regarded as one of the fundamental essays forming his own poetics (Li 71).
modernity” rather than “the value of modernity.” Consequently, Shao covers many
different themes under the category of modern poems: rural verse describes the rural
people and scenery with language understood in the countryside; urban verse
expresses the development of industrial civilization and fierce commercial
competition; lyric utilizes an older style, etc (Lee 78). Shao explains each style,
showing their different expressions of object and purpose and how they react to the
times, though they share a tendency to pursue a free or relatively free style.

Shao uses the term “rural verse,” or the verse of the common people in the
countryside, rather than idyll (875). He introduces E. A. Robinson (1869-1935),14 R.
Frost (1874-1963), and E. L. Masters (1869-1950) as the representative poets of rural
verse. Regarding Robinson, Shao points out that his specialty is portrayal of figures
and expression of character. The real and live poems resulting from Robinson’s clear,
coherent, simple, and easy expressions are devoted to portraying rural people’s natural
everyday lifestyle (876). Shao describes Robinson’s poetry as so humorous that it
touches the audience, and the figures in the poetry are described in a lively style that
conveys their appearances and thoughts as well as sounds and movements and that
attracts the audience’s attention. Shao compares Frost with Robinson. Like Robinson,
Frost also wrote realistically, but he was undemonstrative: Robinson is characterized
by movement, warmth, and tightness as opposed to the stillness, coldness, and relief
of Frost. Also, whereas Robinson describes a figure and expresses its character, Frost
describes the land and expresses its charms. Shao likens Robinson’s poetry to movies

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14 Shao marks it A. E. Ronbinson, but it must be a mistake.
and Frost’s to painting. However, Shao regards Frost’s reality as refined rather than an unrefined, raw picture (877).

Unlike Robinson’s enthusiastic emotion or Frost’s empty philosophy, Masters’ poems are characterized by detailed observation and true techniques of writing with resulting recounting of all customs and habits of rural lifestyle. Instead of portraying some story or manifesting some mystery, Masters’ poems are composed of conversations between old village women, simple thoughts of farmers, or floating sounds in the streets and lanes. Readers of his poems can understand the actual life of ordinary people and the greatness of the open county through the regional color and rural scenery. This style is exemplified in his *Spoon River Anthology* (878).

Shao generalizes that the urban poem is characterized by crude written language, themes related to the city, and syllables with explosive power. Also, poets simply deliver their idea to their readers rather than enlighten them about something. Shao introduces Carl Sandberg (1878-1967) and Hart Crane (1899-1932) as the exemplary poets of urban poetry. Carl Sandberg, the founder of urban poetry and famous for his *Chicago Poems*, wrote poems using simple language and popular sayings but in a powerful tone. This combination of the simple and powerful left some with the impression that Sandburg’s poetry is superficial, but Shao exalts the mature technique of his poetry, which conveyed ideas through structure (879). In the case of Hart Crane, Shao states that Crane explicitly wrote about cities and eulogized industrial civilization. Separating himself from the Romantics, Crane personified inanimate objects such as airships, generators, and iron bridges (880).
Shao characterizes lyric as poetry written in old styles and conforming to traditional rules and forms. He sees the appeal of this poetry in its familiarity; for Shao, commonly-heard sounds can easily tug at people’s heartstrings. Shao introduces Conrad Aiken, Sara Teasdale (1884-1933), and Elinor Wylie (1885-1928) as American poets representing this lyric tendency. These poets may have thought that new content could be expressed in old forms, and that using new forms would disrupt traditional poetic quality. On the other hand, Shao says that these poets keenly felt the tremendous changes of the epoch towards more vivid and straightforward expressive style. He regards this tendency to be somewhat typical of modern American poetry (880).

Shao Xunmei characterizes Imagism as having freer movement, more tonal precision, and more transparency than the styles discussed above. Imagism was fashioned both in England and America as a self-conscious literary movement, one that was influenced by Greek and Hebrew poetry, the Parnassians, and the symbolism of France. Like the Parnassians and French Symbolism, Imagists opposed wild Romanticism. Shao explains that T. E. Hulme (1883-1917), the leading member of the British Imagist movement, showed bitter hatred toward Romanticism and their classical attitude (882). Shao characterizes Hulme’s ideas about modern poetry as “destroying the idea of people like God,” “removing naturalness and the blind worship of infiniteness,” and “exact, clear, and concrete portrayal” (883). Shao borrows from Hulme in delineating the Imagist style: precise wording, making new sounds for new ideas, presenting images, creating hard and clear poetry, and concentrating ideas (883).
In addition to T. E. Hulme, Shao introduces a number of leading Imagists, such as Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound (1885-1972), D.H. Lawrence, F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle (known as H.D.) (1886-1961), and J. G. Flecher (1886-1950). Among them, Shao highlights H.D. by praising her as the poet who best adheres to the purity of the Imagist ideal. In one of her poems, Shao notices the perfect interweaving of personal emotion with external succinctness and internal transparency. This might be considered to be the core of Imagism, as Shao conceives it. Comparing her with other Imagistic poets, Shao puts an emphasis on her struggling to maintain Imagistic verse and purifying her technique with more precise ideas (884).

Generally, T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) is well known as a representative American modernist poet. Oddly, Shao classifies T.S. Eliot as a “cosmopolitan” rather than a modernist. Instead, Shao regards E. E. Cummings, Robert Graves, and Laura Riding as modernists. It seems that modernism, as Shao comprehends it, is inclined toward technique and a preference for novelty. Shao states that these three poets on conveying the feature and function of the words in verse. Over time, words develop multiple associations, thus making it difficult to understand the real and single meaning of a poem. These poets sought to allow the reader direct access to the exact meaning directly through the arrangement and pronunciation of the poetry. Shao critically states that this method of expression of making play with the characters causes them to overlook other factors of the poetry. Therefore, Shao thinks this kind of poetry is only good as a reference for theory (885-886).

While Shao critically accepts “modernism,” he endows cosmopolitan verse with positive value. At first, he introduces Pound and T. S. Eliot, who as founders of
“literary internationalism” transcended the era by embracing foreign trends and influences in a quest for progress. Shao calls this “cosmopolitanism” rather than literary internationalism. As a justification, Shao states,

Their works are not limited by time. To them, lexicon, attitude, subject matter, form, and tone are just means. What they manifest, convey, and move in us is the “nature of emotion.” Lexicon, attitude, subject matter, form, and tone can all be changed; however, the nature of emotion is not changed through the ages. They discovered only factor of the verse. All history is their experience; the whole cosmos is their vision: the emotion they manifest is not the representative of emotion but the emotion itself. (886)

Shao highly esteems cosmopolitan poetry for its manifestation of universal emotions that transcend epoch and cosmos.

Shao Xunmei centers on technical aspects rather than theme when dealing with T. S. Eliot’s greatest poem, *The Waste Land*. It is considered cosmopolitan poetry because of its employment of allusions, associations, an intermittent story, foreign characters, tonal patterns, and rhyme schemes. Shao regards the way Eliot employs allusions as uniquely creative; *The Waste Land* alludes to some 35 individual works, and the allusions are employed in multiple ways. Since Eliot believed “real creativeness is development,” his employment of allusion constitutes in itself a development of technique (887). Shao states that allusion in modern poems can be elitist because only the authors can apprehend many of the individual associations.
However, he thinks Eliot avoids this problem through a sincere attention to allusion. The intermittent story of *The Waste Land* is explained not as “telling a story” but as “the character of telling a story” (888). The universal nature of human existence is illustrated through the intermittent story, Shao says, by bringing ancient people into the modern context (888). Shao also contends that while many poets are fond of adopting foreign languages to display their eruditeness and to portray exotic sentiment, Eliot and Pound use them to make their expressions rich and as a way of developing their technique, as they do with allusion. Exotic expressions can have an adverse effect on the reader’s feeling by making poems hard to understand. Shao asserts that all factors of the verse mentioned, even tones and rhymes, consist of a coherent blending of content and form. Shao sees that the various tones and rhymes tried in *The Waste Land* reveal “order without structure” and “balance without weight” (889).

In the conclusion of this essay, Shao explains his thoughts on the relationship between writers, readers, and the economy by dividing the American circle of poets into two types: those who chose some object for their writing and those who write only for themselves. Shao further classifies modern writers into extroverts and introverts. Being an extrovert is a way of living in society that caters to people’s interest and achieves commercial success, whereas being an introvert is considered an attitude of living in the modern society that is hard for readers to appreciate and does not attract their attention because it articulates the poet’s own character. Shao asserts that the former is fashionable and temporary but the latter is modern and perpetual. Simultaneously, Shao illustrates that for the success of art, economic encouragement
is necessary to some extent so that art is not separated from the people. Shao Xunmei believed that art should be appreciated by the people (889-890).

2.3. The Poetics of the “Preface” to Twenty-Five Poems

Shao’s poetics are developed in three important essays. Perhaps most significant of those essays is the preface to his collection Twenty-Five Poems, which explicitly reveals his own views on poetry. In the essay, Shao develops several key points, which were influenced by foreign poetics and the modern civilization imported into China at the time.

Shao pursues “perfection of form” as the ultimate purpose of creation. This emphasis on form is inspired by Gautier’s words: “the perfection of form is the greatest moral conduct” (x). As such, Shao believes that a true poet should have his/her own “best order,” which refers to Coleridge’s “best wording in best order” (x). Shao supports the idea that the arrangement of expressions, rhyme, and rhythm helps readers appreciate poetry by pointing out that tonal patterns, the number of characters, and an end rhyme in old-style poetry played this kind of role. The dividing line (fenhang) and foot (yinchi) are regarded as new foreign techniques that enrich the New Poetry. Shao believes that the old technique of tonal patterns, which restricts poetry, should be abolished (x). The perfection of form based on “best order” should be interpreted not only in terms of the form but also in terms of content. This kind of “best order” connotes the arrangement of expression and harmony of musicality, both

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15 Li Guangde introduces three kinds of important essays in Shao’s discussion of the art of poetry: (1) “The Survey of Modern American Poetry” published in Xiandai (1934.10); “Preface” to Twenty Five Poems; and “Poetry Chronicle,” published in English in Tianxia (1936.10) (71).
of which suit emotional expression. Through this, his “best order” finally reaches the stage of perfect harmony of content and form (Li 73). Shao’s poetics of form of poetry is established as the perfect combination of content and form, synthesizing Chinese and foreign poetics.

In terms of the techniques of poetry, Shao is drawn to the complex effects and symbols of poetry. According to Diliya, whom Shao cites in this preface, “All of poems always have complications (quzhe) more or less: we have never had clear poems” (xi). Based on this idea, Shao accepts the original nature of poetry as complex effects and symbols. On the other hand, in order to facilitate criticism of poetry, Diliya divides poetry into clear and complicated poetry, and Shao interprets the two categories. Overly clear poetry is regarded as “expository poetry,” or near prose, which uses obvious language without implications. Shao thinks the adjectives employed in clear poetry are metaphors at most. However, once the wording produces the effect of a symbol, poetry gets complicated. Regarding the relationship between metaphor, description, and symbol, Shao states, “Description and metaphor are provisional symbols. Symbol is eternal description and metaphor; all great poetry has a kind of permanent symbolic character” (11). For Shao, the function and effects of symbols in poetry are of greater value than those of metaphor and description.

Considering relationships between readers and complicated poetry, Shao contends that readers must make a great and sincere effort to appreciate complicated poetry in order not to shrink away from it. Here, he also points to the important relationship between

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16 This is a reference to some Western critic, but I have been unable to trace the Chinese transliteration to the original name.
readers and literary works, as he does in "The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poetry."

Another significant point of Shao’s poetics is the subject matter of poetry in light of the change of epoch. According to Shao, limited transportation made it somewhat impossible for a poet to go beyond the boundary of his/her hometown before modern civilization appeared, so the subject matter of poetry was limited mostly to the beauty of nature and animals. Under this circumstance, the subject matter remained aloof from politics and material pursuits. Shao then discusses the major changes in all aspects of life that resulted from modern material civilization and permeates all aspects of life, including fast transportation, skyscrapers, and a sharper sense of feeling.

Shao concedes that the alteration of subject matter and development of form are unavoidable phenomena in modern times. In this respect, it is inevitable that all adjectives and abstract nouns change the meaning they previously had, and new poets need to create a new lexicon and blend unharmonious things together with the "almighty power of God." Therefore, Shao believes the mission of the poet is to "reform" (dianhua) (xii-xiii). Different from old poets, the mission of the new poet lies in transforming mankind, using new language and portraying a new epoch and not in expressing himself (Li 71). In this regard, Shao’s poetics is typical of Chinese criticism in the first half of the twentieth century. The intellectuals who belonged to Literary Research Association, for example, advocated an art for life’s sake literature that critically reflected the reality of their society. However, Shao’s poetics cannot be said to be didactic because it does not suggest any specific reform in new epoch.
The three works on Western poetry described in previous sections are closely related to Shao’s poetics. Shao’s notion of “perfection of form” relates to Gautier’s theory, introduced by Shao in *Fire and Flesh*, and constitutes the main principle of Shao’s own poetics. The musicality of Swinburne and Verlaine influences Shao’s emphasis on the arrangement of expressions, rhyme, and rhythm in his preface to *Twenty Five Poems*. The emotional enthusiasm pursued by the four poets Sappho, Catullus, Swinburne, and Verlaine is incorporated in the theory of cosmopolitan poetry in “The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poets.” As a result, Shao’s argument in his preface to *Twenty-Five Poems*, with its emphasis on the perfect form harmonious with emotion expressed by various formal techniques, can be considered a generalization and crystallization of the ideas Shao introduces in *Fire and Flesh* and “The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poets.”

More important, his poetics is closely related to the “The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poets” in that he highlights not only the combination of form and content but also the change of subject matter in modern times, as well as the relationship between works and readers. It is obvious that in the 1930s Shao tried to promote a new Chinese poetry that would be in tune with the changing times by referring to examples from Western literature.
CHAPTER 3

TERRESTRIAL AND CELESTIAL WORLD

3.1. The Description of the Collection of Poems: *Heaven and May, Flower-Like Evil, Twenty-Five Poems*

Shao Xunmei’s three collections of poems, *Heaven and May* (1926), *Flower-Like Evil* (1928), and *Twenty-Five Poems* (1936), present poetry whose features are distinctly different from that of his contemporaries. As seen in its title, *Heaven and May* consists of two separate parts, one of which is titled “Heaven” and the other “May.” *Heaven and May*, again as suggest by the subtitles, contains poems with two tendencies, religious poems in the “Heaven” section and relatively perverse poems in the “May” section. Along with many new poems, *Flower-Like Evil* republishes 15 of the poems from the “May” section of *Heaven and May. Twenty-Five Poems*, his last collection of poems, presents his most refined and comprehensive verses.

As for Shao’s first collection, *Heaven and May*, it is possible to trace Shao’s trip from Europe to China through his notes of the places where he wrote his poems, such as Cambridge, Paris, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the China Sea. The poems in the “Heaven” section tend to show exotic and Christian imageries, obviously influenced by Shao’s exposure to alien cultures.
The sexually overt description of the verses in the “May” section are striking enough to have caused repercussions in the literary world. Hutt says that this collection of decadent poem created a sensation (112). Considering the fact that his contemporary literary world valued the ‘the author’s own emotional experience’ (Lee, 248; quoted in Hutt 113). Hutt regards these poems as full to the brim with excessive fervor.

Shao’s second collection of poems, *Flower-Like Evil*, a revised edition of *Heaven and May*, is closely related to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* in terms of decadence. The Decadent movement, which was closely related to Aestheticism, was ignited by the appearance of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1857. The essential idea of Decadence, pronounced by Gautier’s preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal* and by Baudelaire, is in total opposition to “nature” in favor of pursuing drugs, cosmetics, sexual experimentations, and conscious reversal of canonical moral, social, and artistic norms (Abrams 54-55). Under the influence of Baudelaire, Shao Xunmei’s decadent literary tendencies are divorced from those of mainstream May Fourth writers and manifest a unique style in the contemporary literary world.¹⁷

For these reasons, the criticism of his heterodox *Flower-Like Evil* was harsh enough to irritate Shao. The critics mainly censured his use of bodily images, such as women’s flesh and breasts, as not only unclear in conveying the poetry’s meaning but as decadent and pornographic. In response, Shao charged the critics with a lack of

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¹⁷ Regarding the Chinese tradition of decadence, Wu Fusheng views decadent poetry in Chinese tradition as challenging the canon deviating from the standard, concerning what literature should be. The canonical tenet of Chinese tradition puts an emphasis on "spontaneity, naturalness, transparency of expression, and sociopolitical responsibility and moral seriousness of content" (4). Although Wu does not simply apply their canons to the poems as artistic technique-oriented rather than the medium to carry didactic responsibility, the decadent poetry is critical of established literary tradition (3-6).
understanding of the text and their prosaic nature (Hutt 118). Shao’s sensuality, which
smacked of individual hedonism, was simply too exceptional to be appreciated by
critics leaning toward utilitarianism.

The verses in Twenty-Five Poems are characterized by experimentation in
manifold forms from blank verse to sonnet to dialogue. This formalistic
experimentation is well backed by the long preface to this collection in which Shao’s
poetics is delivered. In addition, the works of Twenty-Five Poems covers diverse
subject matters ranging from profound inner world to nature, Christianity, and
sensuous actions, bringing the form and the poetic technique to perfection. Therefore, it
is possible to consider Shao’s poetic talents, including all facets of form and content,
as best displayed in Twenty-Five Poems.

3.2. Imagery

Imagery as a general term covers the use of language to represent objects,
actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory
experience. “Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense
perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal
description, by allusion, or in the vehicles (the secondary references) of its similes and
metaphors” (Abrams 121). Poetic imagery functions systematically to represent the
meanings of each work. The repetition of imagery in a poem can be central to the
poem’s meaning.

Imagery in Shao Xunmei’s three collections of poems can be divided into
three categories: images of poets, images of decadent love, and Christian imagery.
Approaching Shao’s poetry from the perspective of imagery is useful way of exploring his poetic world. I begin with the “images of poets” category because it is rare in modern Chinese poetry and because Shao emphasizes the role of poets in his preface to Twenty-Five Poems.

3.2.1 Images of Poets

Poets appear as one of the significant kinds of images in Shao’s poetry. Through this use of images of poets, Shao reveals his favor for poets and poetry. Sappho, whom Shao adored, becomes one of the dominant images of a poet in his poems. Sappho of Lesbos, the earliest and greatest poetess in Western literature, was promoted as the tenth Muse, even by Plato. Her life has been transmitted through myths: “desperate lover of girls, suicidal mistress of a younger man, head mistress of a girl’s school, symbol of the Eternal Feminine” (Snyder I). Shao Xunmei introduces Sappho in two poems that take her name as their titles: “Sappho” (Shafei), which is included in “Heaven” section of the Heaven and May, and “Sappho” (Shafei), from the “May” section of Heaven and May and is reprinted in Flower-Like Evil. This shows his great love toward Sappho and suggests her influence on his poems.

The Sappho in the first of these poems is described in terms of her actual life, but she is also imbued with multiple sensual images that derive from the many legends about her. The first line of the poem, “The scent of lotus leaf scatters green color” (81), evokes a synaesthesia of olfactory and visual images that mingle a profuse fragrance with greenness. In this fragrant milieu, the rose of love as passionate as the sun seemingly symbolizes Sappho and paints something on the “sky-
like paper.” “Malicious May,” which is described in the poem as hot charcoal fire, might represent the time of sprouting love. “Warmth kisses the sprouts of love” represents the initiating of love by the amalgamation of tactile image, hotness, organic images, and kisses. Sappho’s love is described in her poems, and in order to signify the delicate and pure beauty of the odes of Sappho, Shao Xunmei likens them to a “virgin on her wedding bed” (82).

In this poem, Shao introduces the Rock of Leukas, which is renowned as the place from which Sappho leaped into the sea out of desperate love for the ferryman Phaon (Snyder 4). Her songs on the Rock of Leukas, symbolizing love, sound beautiful, to such an extent that it makes “the turbulent wave” sleep and even dazes “heartless pebbles.” Besides, Shao suggests that Sappho’s homosexual love with girls in Lesbos is evitable burning evil, red like blood. In this line, the immorality of homosexual love is highlighted with the visual image of the color of blood. Ultimately, Shao tries to express the pain felt by Sappho by employing auditory effect of the empty space; otherwise, she would be more painful. The reason for this is probably because Shao loves the overflowing pain in Sappho’s poetry.

The second “Sappho” poem describes Sappho as a woman of the senses, which is Shao Xunmei’s object of affection:

You are perfume awakened from a fiery bed,
Your naked virgin’s body like a bright moon,
I do not see your flesh holding within it fiery blood,
But you are like a rose blooming in my heart.18

你这从花床中醒来的香气,
也像那处女的明月般裸体—

18 This is Hutt’s translation on page 117 in his article, “The Sumptuous World of Shao Xunmei.”
我不见你包着火血的肌肤，
你却像玫瑰般开在我心里。

The shape and scent of the rose is likened to Sappho’s feminine beauty. Shao portrays Sappho as a fragrance that cannot be held, as a virgin naked body but one that is distant and untouchable like the moon. But Sappho is also a rose blooming in the poet’s heart. This poem is dominated by the rose, which embodies Shao’s youthful and enthusiastic ardor toward Sappho (22). Shao may have borrowed the metaphor of flowers as women from Sappho’s verses, but this was also a common trope in traditional Chinese poetry.

A. C. Swinburne, whom we have seen he greatly admired, also appears as an image in Shao’s poetry. Shao begins the poem, “To Swinburne” (23) in Flower-Like Evil, with plain description of the relationship between Sappho, Swinburne, and himself since Sappho influenced both Swinburne and Shao.

You are Sappho’s brother, so am I
Our parents are the gods who made Venus—
The sunset, the rainbow, the tail of the peacock and the feather of the phoenix,
The birth of all beauties is our parents.

You like her, so do I, and I like you too;
We all yearn for love, for love’s secret;
We like the pure union of blood and flesh;
And we like the poison of sacred nectar, and the bittersweet.

Ah, we are like three wild flowers blooming on a deserted mountain,
We let nobody plant us in a pot or put us in a vase;
We’ve come from dust, and to dust we shall return.
Our hope is to remain in dust forever.¹⁹

你是莎菲的哥哥我是她的弟弟。

¹⁹ This is Hsu’s translation on page 121 in his book Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry.
With Sappho at the center, Shao delineates a relationship between Sappho, Swinburne, and himself as siblings whose parent is the God who made Venus in Swinburne’s “Laus Veneris.” Venus, one of old divinities banned by Christian priests, symbolizes the rejection of God. However, this is paradoxical when considering the fact that it is the God himself who made Venus, and this paradoxical atmosphere pervades these three pagan figures of Sappho, Swinburne, and Shao Xunmei. Ironically, Shao elevates God as the Creator who made everything beautiful, such as sunsets, rainbows, the tails of the peacock, and the feathers of the phoenix. The significance of God’s almightiness is presented since the peacock represents the solar wheel of immortality and its tale suggests the “starry sky” in Christian tradition (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 742). The phoenix symbolizes the cycle of regeneration, resurrection and immortality, so it parallels Christ’s resurrection and his celestial character (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 752).

In the second stanza, Shao characterizes the common affinity of love—a pure blending of flesh and blood—between the three poets. Paradoxically, their sensual
love might be poisonous nectar with a bittersweet taste. Also, Shao likens himself, Sappho, and Swinburne to wild flowers on a deserted mountain that want to remain in mud rather than be domesticated (23). Shao emphasizes the three poet's common origin and wild tendencies characterized by a divine naturalness.

Shao reveals his affinities toward some Western poets in the exotically entitled "Anch’io sono pitore! (I am also an artist!)" (1927, 151). Shao dreams about Western poets: Sappho, Swinburne, Keats, Verlaine, Burns, Baudelaire; yet, he tells us, he does not see Byron, Shelly, Shakespeare, Homer, nor Goethe in his dream.

In dream I see standing by the pedestal of Appollo
Small birds sing around the pedestal of roses.
Sappho plucks her fairy lyre:
Swinburne holds his fire-like luster of love.

Keats wakes and ardently listens to a nightingale.
Tears flowing backward and bitters the sweet heart.
He is a shepherd crouching on the grass,
Moon virgin tremblingly approaches and kisses secretly;

Ah, this natural picturesque musicality.
Is Verlaine's verse that reveals his soul,
This much refined new wind, southern transformation.
Having marrow of scenery with the color of green.

You, frank and friendly farmer, Burns,
Even with tears in your eyes you always smile,
Ah, pleasure is sweet, sadness is not bitter either,
Love in the country has natural local color;

Next to bean-like small lamp is Baudelaire,
Are you a degenerated demon in heaven?
You write the poem with your flesh and blood,
How can you, a demon, create in this world?

I do not see Byron, Shelly, and Shakespeare;
Nor see Homer who is the forefather of poems;
Goethe who loves the loving friend's loving wife,
Merely oppressed lonely beneath time.
我梦见立在爱普老的座旁，
玫瑰花的座周有小鸟歌唱；
莎莉拔弹着她七絃的仙琴；
史文朋抱着他火般的爱光；

济慈正睡醒了痴听着夜莺，
倒流的泪染苦了甜蜜的心。
他是个牧羊儿在草上横卧，
月娘战战兢兢地过来偷吻；

啊这自然的图画的音乐的，
是万撮的灵魂吐出的诗句，
彼多文的新风南的变形吓，
又有着瓜绿的风景的神髓。

你这坦直多情的田夫彭思，
含泪时的你也总带着笑意，
啊快乐是甜的忧愁也不苦，
乡村里的爱有天然的风味；

豆般的烟灯边的是包特蕾，
你是不是天上堕落的魔鬼；
你把你的肉你的血做了诗，
你这妖儿岂也在地下生产？

我不见拜伦雪诿莎士比亚；
也不见诗歌的祖宗的荷马；
那爱爱友的爱妻的哥德吓，
只孤单单地压在时光之下。

In beginning, with its fantastic mood of the dream, Shao conjures up the
dominant images of Sappho and Swinburne, the former by plucking her lyre and the
latter with his fire-like luster of love. Shao prioritizes Sappho and Swinburne.

In the subsequent stanzas, Shao introduces other poets. At first, he introduces
the English Romantic poet, John Keats (1795-1821). Shao portrays Keats’s love of
nature and country and his delicate romantic emotion, the theme embedded in one of
his odes, “Ode to a Nightingale.” Verlaine is described as a poet who was able to
fulfill spiritual literary impressionism with musicality appealing to the senses like a
landscape painting. Shao seems to have affection for the poems of the Scott, Robert
Burns (1759-1796), who, like a farmer full of tenderness and tranquil emotion, never
losing sight of pleasure. In contrast, Baudelaire (1821-1867) is depicted as a degraded
demon writing poems with his flesh and blood.

Images of poets in Shao’s poetry are also used to pursue the theme of the role
of poets in the epoch. “Poet and Jesus” (Shiren yu Yesu) contrasts the image of Jesus
with that of a poet in the mundane world. Whereas a poet is considered a common
being conceived by human intervention, Jesus Christ, to whom Virgin Mary gave
birth, is the Son of God, and he is burdened with special mission in the world. Shao
Xunmei repeats “the poet with father and mother” to emphasize that the poet is bound
by the terrestrial existence. Jesus Christ has been thought of as the blend of two
images of heaven and earth, both “divine and human.” This double image is signified
by “Fire and Air by his descent into Hell and his ascension into Heaven” (Chevalier
and Gheerbrant 192). In this poem, Shao claims that the mission of a poet is more
crucial than Jesus’s mission, which is to believe his ascension into heaven, not to
believe his descent into Hell; the poet should help people create heaven on earth for
themselves, simultaneously destroying this hell in the world. As Shao indicates in his
preface to Twenty-Five Poems, he suggests in this poem that he means to reform
mankind in the new epoch (1936 xii-xiii). By contrasting the mission of Jesus Christ
and the poet, Shao highlights the difficulty of a poet in a worldly existence to trust
himself or a madman like himself. The mission of Jesus Christ is that of Holy Son, but the mission of the poet is lowered to the level of idiot’s soliloquy, signifying the absurdity of the poet’s mission. While Jesus Christ rises to Heaven leaving human pain behind, the poet suffers from being a poet in the world and drinking his own tears. The poet even laughs at the immortality of Jesus Christ’s spirit because Jesus Christ escaped from the realm of the terrestrial world. Judging from this poem, it is possible to state that Shao was very concerned about the important transformative role of the poet in the new epoch (1926, 97-99).

“Dedicated to a Poet” (Zeng yi shiren), in Twenty-Five Poems, shows Shao’s anticipation for the poet of next generation:

If there is a poet again after one hundred years,
He will certainly be unlike me, or you;
Gently hold tight his flexible body,
He does not know whether this is dusk or spring.

Ah, he cannot remember me, nor you again.
He cannot read out our words and phrases again:
I am a lunatic in his eyes.
You are a sex maniac made of powder and rouge.

Yet perhaps there will be a morning after a dream,
When he smells the fragrance of rose next to his pillow,
He can stretch into his cotton-padded mattress, and
Take out two books of poems from hundred years ago.

假使一百年後再有個詩人，
他一定不像我，也不像你；
溫柔捆緊他靈活的身體，
他認不得這是黃昏這是春。

啊，他再不會記得我，記得你。他再不會念我們的詞句：
在他眼睛裡，我是个疯子，
你是个搽粉点胭脂的花痴。
但是也许有个梦後的早晨，
枕边闻到了蔷薇的香气，
他竟会伸进他 褥底里。
抽出两册一百年前的诗本。

Shao is worried that a future poet who has problems with delicate recognition might label him a lunatic and his colleague libertines, suggesting that Shao and his colleagues pursue sensual pleasure. It seems that Shao is skeptical about the existence of poets in the future. If anything, these poets might exclude Shao and his colleague’s aesthetic tendency. Nevertheless, in the last stanza Shao projects his hope that the future poet will recognize that true poetry existed in the past (presumably Shao’s poem or any other aesthetic poems) and will cherish these aesthetic tendencies. Shao seems to think of aestheticism as the direction future poets will take.

Psychoanalytic theory presumes that dreams symbolize the dreamer’s latent psychology. Dreams have often been used in literature to reflect the minds of actual characters. “Xunmei’s Dream” (Xunmei de meng), a title that has obvious autobiographical overtones, might be a reflection of Shao’s inner world expressed as a sobering process from a magically beautiful dream. “Xunmei’s Dream” consists of three parts. The first part is the coming of dream; the second part is illusion of dream; the third part is the reality of dream. In the beginning, warm tender dream, personified as a female emerging from a lotus, approaches the soul of the lyrical self.

Came out from light red and light green lotus
Warm dream, she leans close to my soul.
She is light as a cloud, I wonder why she
Does not fly to zenith or hide in the deep pond.
I remember her bringing present full of hope
And Tiptoeing into an abyss of disappointment; and with personal affection
Went to awaken a sleeping virgin who is hard to waken,
Makes her from long barking of dogs listen to the crowing of cocks.

The lyrical self is aware that the dream is the messenger of hope and regards it as a means of awakening people rather than as a potion that induces sleep.

Although the second sequence begins with the lyrical self’s discontent of the dream for not appearing often to the lyrical self, the lyrical self’s dream of illusion and hope unfolds in the second sequence.

Yet she does not come to me often, perhaps
She guesses wrongly my bedtime at night.
I like to let sun accompany my sleep, I hope
Nightingale will not disturb my tired and slumberous mind,
Taking advantage of this space within an eyewink, I can
Go through the garden gate, all flowers there can
Use their color and fragrance to make the songs and Poems, to soften up the spring morning by singing
At last, Leaving one string behind, I believe
She is still going to play her enchanting sound of fragments,
(there is more perfect melody and emotion in the fragments.)
Even if your ears locked away that you cannot hear any sound,
There is fire in this string, she will
Torture you, torture you and burn your solidness as hard as iron rock to ashes.

但是我这里她不常来到,想是
她猜不準我夜晚上床的时辰.
我爱让太阳伴了我睡,我愿
夜莺不再搅扰我倦眠的心神,
也许乘了这一忽的空间,我会
走进一个园门,那里的花都能
把他们的色彩芬芳编成歌曲，
做成诗，去唱软那春天的早晨
就算是剩下了一根弦，我相信
她还是要弹出她屑碎的迷音，
（这屑碎里面有更完全的缛绵）
任你能锁住了你的耳朵不听，
怎奈这一根弦里有火，她竟会
煎你，熬你，烧烂你铁石的坚硬

The lyrical self emphasizes all-powerful emotional musicality generated by beautiful flowers melting even the hardest of minds. The lyrical self tries to evoke the poetic character from the flower by the sky:

At that time I definitely will pluck her up and help the sky conceive her poet. In the flesh of the poet, there is no soiled sprout, The embryo is of course a pure crystal, Before long, as if falling in love with green leaves, it turns into green jadeite, As if falling in love with red flower, it becomes bright corals: Thus God has a second son, The Bible is modified again in the peaceful temple.

那时我一定要把她摘采下来,
帮助了天去为她的诗人怀孕.
诗人的肉里没有污浊的秧苗，
胚胎当然是一块纯粹的水晶，
将来爱上了绿叶便变成翡翠，
爱上了红花便像珊瑚般妍明：
於是上帝又有了第二个儿子，
清凈的庙堂里重换一本圣经。

The essence of the omnipotent flower lies in the capability of making a poet as pure as a crystal. Without the influence of green leaves or red flowers, the crystal naturally sublimates into jadeite or coral. The lyrical self endows the poet with the position of being God's second son (5).
The lyrical self acknowledges what he depicts above as his hope and thought. In the third sequence the dream really comes to him. However, dream brings the lyrical self to the forest, which is at the edge of heaven yet near the center of hell. In the forest, the lyrical self sees branches that he had already kissed, grass on which he had already sat, and the shade of a flower on which he had laid himself. Spring water reminds him of his previous bath. And the mountain valley rings with the sound of his first song. Embodying all these things, the forest seems to be the reminder of the lyrical self’s immature but ardent initiation as a poet (5-6). All these things in the forest also recognize him and say to Xunmei:

In spring we don’t see you; in spring we see not your letter
In the fall we long for your return;
After winter is gone, your voice is still not there.
You know, heaven created us to let you chant;
Without you, we are joyless.
Come! Decorate for us, lie for us. For us decorate, for us lie,
Let people regard us as immortals.

春天不见你；夏天不见你的信；
在秋天我们都盼着你的归来；
冬天去了，也还没有你的声音。
你知道，天生了我们，要你吟咏；
没有了你，我们就没有了欢欣。
来吧，为我们装饰，为我们说説，
让人家当我们是一个个仙人。

Heeding their appeal, the lyrical self’s whole body immediately boils, and he realizes perfectly his own fate as a poet. He has to wake up because the palace of immortals is not the place to stay. The creatures in his dream inspire him to write ornamental poems containing natural creatures. Xunmei’s aspiration or repressed
desire to be a poet writing aesthetic poems is expressed through dreams. Therefore, as implied in the autobiographical title, this poem embodies Shao Xunmei’s own poetics.

3.2.2. Decadent Love

Explicitly described sensual pleasures constitute the central imagery of Shao’s poems. Through the unabashed use of sensual imagery, Shao expresses the natural desires of human beings. His use of sensual imagery is far more extreme that most modern Chinese poetry and is one of his unique contributions.

According to the Book of Baruch: “Erotic Desire and its satisfaction is the key to the origin of the world. Disappointment in love and the revenge which follows in its wake are the root of all the evil and the selfishness in this world. The whole history is the work of love. Beings seek and find one another; separate and hurt one another; and in the end, comes acute suffering which leads to renunciation” (Cirlot, 185). In this regard, the erotic decadent love associated with evil spirits in Shao’s poems might sprout from frustrated desire. Thus, Shao’s sensual poems show a whole range of human life from the human nature as the origin of the world to disappointment of love to being evil to rejection.

“Prologue” (Xu qu) in Flower-Like Evil is very similar to its counterpart in Heaven and May. The poem expresses the dominant inclination of Flower-Like Evil:

I also knew that everything between heaven and earth comes to an end; In the end, stretching of leaves breaks the solitude of the forest. Originally asleep with death; yet waking this moment, Is this not the seduction of color, the incitation of sounds, the evil of movement?

These devastated fates, tainted and corrupted spirits,
Spread on the desolate earth like the abandoned bones of corpses;  
Later, drowned and sunk in the ocean and chewed by water bugs,  
Ah, better to be firewood to burn this ice-cold life.

我也知道了，天地间什么都有个结束；  
最后，树叶的尔伸也破了林中的寂寞。  
原是和死同一睡著的;但这须臾的醒，  
莫非是色的诱惑，声的怂恿，动的罪恶？

这些摧残的命运，污浊的堕落的灵魂。  
像是遗弃的尸骸乱铺在凄凉的地心;  
将来溺沉在海洋里给鱼虫去咀嚼吧，  
啊，不如当柴炭去烧燃那冰冷的人生。

Shao senses the exquisite movement of leaves stretching in the lonely forest  
where anything can be perceived. Visual seduction, auditory provocation, and evil  
action are all powerful enough to wake leaves from a death-like sleep. However, the  
fate of fallen leaves corrupted by seduction is the miserable plight of deserted bones  
of the dead. The whole process from waking of leaves to their natural extinction is  
filled with a cursed atmosphere. It is more probable that Shao likens the transition of  
leaves to the life of a human being ravaged by fate. The depressed mood of this poem,  
which is a kind of prologue to Flower-Like Evil, indicates that this collection is based  
on Shao’s negative attitude toward life itself.

Being the vibrant and colorful season, spring carries the scent of flower  
imbued even with the odor of flesh. Shao epitomizes the dominant corporeal mood of  
Flower-Like Evil in the short poem, “Spring” (Chun) (17).

Ah, the scent of flower of this time always carries the odor of flesh.  
Even silent light rain also contains sensual feeling.  
Cleansed hate sees its own evil skin and muscle,  
Ah, how can the body’s bright red color be scrubbed off?
啊这时的花香总带着肉气，
不说话的雨丝也含着淫意；
沐浴恨见自己的罪的肌腐，
啊身上的绯红怎能擦掉去？

Even the silent light rain contains sensual feeling in this vibrant season of spring. Desire is powerful force that cannot be erased. The image of spring, replete with the twisting passion with the smell of flesh, directs Shao Xunmei’s decadent love poems toward evil.

In this regard, the most flowery and vivid month, May, full of lustful fresh green, symbolizes an overflowing desire that is out of one’s control. Shao’s poem “May” (Wuyue) best expresses this sprouting of sinful desire:

Ah, passionate May is burning again,
Evil comes from the kiss of virgin;
Sweet tears always seduce me
To kiss her breasts with trembling lips.

Here life is endless like death,
Like the pleasant fear on a wedding night;
If she is not a white rose,
Then she is redder than red blood.

Ah, this fire-like and flesh-like
Bright darkness and laughing tears,
Is the spirit of the spirit of my love;
Is the foe of the foe of my hatred.

Heaven has just opened the big gate,
God! I am not the person entering,
I already got consoled in hell,
I had dreamed of waking up during the short night (6-7).

啊欲情的五月又在燃烧，
罪恶在处女的吻中生了；
甜蜜的泪汁总引诱着我
将颤抖的唇亲她的乳壕。

这里的生命像死般无穷，
像是新婚晚快乐的惶恐：
要是她不是朵白的玫瑰，
那么她将比血的血更红。

啊这火一般的肉一般的
光明的暗暗嘻笑的哭泣，
是我恋爱的灵魂的灵魂；
是我怨恨的仇敌的仇敌。

天堂正开好了两扇大门，
上帝吓我不是送去的人。
我在地狱里已得到安慰，
我在短夜中会梦见醒。

May is replete with irresistible desire to physically and sinfully touch a
virgin’s body. Although the inescapable nervousness of pleasure has not gone away, she is more a sensuous rose than expected when compared with passionate red and pure white. By “Bright darkness and laughing tears,” Shao describes the paradoxical nature of the carnal world, which is neither completely bright nor dark, neither joyful nor sad. This contradictory state exists as “the spirit of the spirit of my love” and is emphasized by “the foe of the foe of my hatred.” Even though the gate of Heaven is open to him, he would like to remain in hell enjoying sensual pleasure, preferring it to spiritual relief. Here, it seems, Shao shows his sensuality by refusing to enter heaven and to separate the terrestrial and celestial worlds.

Shao’s poem “Madonna Mia” is reminiscent of Swinburne’s poem of the same title yet also dissimilar to it. Swinburne’s “Madonna Mia” conveys the image of goddess of antiquity with golden hair. Shao depicts the voluptuous Madonna as an
object of affection, accentuated with images of the femme fatale\textsuperscript{20} and even a woman beautiful enough to cause the downfall of a country.

Ah, eyebrow shaped like the moon, teeth like stars,
You fascinated this world, adore you all my life;
Ah, when you open and close your lips the color of pomegranate,
How many people having soul is going to lose their spirit.

You are Xishi, you are the virgin in washed yarn;
You are poisonous boa, you are the strangeness of killing people:
Life induces you, you come to induce life,
Ah, they want to throw away their lives for you.

Afraid of what, sexual desire which is sharp like bee’s sting?
Stabbing the mind full of desire, dripping blood?
I possessed you, I will kiss you and kiss again.
I will forget dawning of a new morning after thousands of nights.

啊，月儿样的眉星般的牙齿，
你迷尽了一世，一世为你痴；
啊，当你开闭你石榴色的嘴唇，
多少有灵魂的，便失去了灵魂。

你是西施，你是浣纱的处女；
你是毒蟒，你是杀人的妖异；
生命消受你，你便来消受生命；
啊，他们愿意的愿意为你牺牲。

怕甚，像蜂针般尖利的欲情？
刺著快乐的心儿，流血涔涔？
我有了你，我便要一吻而再吻，
我将忘却天夜之后，复有天明。

From this poem, we see Shao’s preference for beauty. In another text, Shao wrote on beauty: “it cannot be said that Jesus’ virgin mother can be called beautiful,
and bewitching Salome cannot be called beautiful."^{21} His preference for beauty may include the artistic penchant for Shao which is considered decadent by other critics. It is certain that Shao preferred prostitutes over virgins and Salome over Mary in terms of his perception of beauty and art. Shao’s attraction for the wanton woman continuously appears in his poetry as a personification of lustful decadence (Lee 254). In the second stanza, tempting woman’s fatal beauty is embodied in the image of Xishi, a renowned beauty of ancient China, and a poisonous serpent that murders people. After all, keen sexual desire of the lyrical self stabs the mind, which implies the physical union of male and female. The male speaker indulges himself by kissing her endlessly.

A subversive and even more alluring image of woman appears in “Our Empress” (Women de huanghou):

Why are you annoyed by people’s criticism?  
This is the time to dance your belly dance.  
In the repenting world, there is no sage who is not interested in sex.  
Empress, our empress.

You, lovely woman like wolf and fox;  
You already need not kiss with your lips,  
Your sweet-smelly teeth are lethal to people.  
Empress, our empress.

Regardless of whether one is prophet or a brother or father?  
All males will worship the lower part of your body.  
Ah, please rescue us from ethics.  
Empress, our empress.

为什你因人们的指摘而愤恨？

^{21} Shao Xunmei, “Guanyu Huayiban de zuĩ’er de piping,” Shihou 1 (revived issue, July 1928), 3.
^{22} As for Xishi, Tsung su says, “Whether Xishi was the direct cause of Fuchai’s downfall, history does not give a clear answer. But the story of Xishi is just another illustration of the pitfalls and perdition the female allurement begets.” See Li, Yu-ning ed. Images of Women in Chinese Literature (Indiana: University of Indianapolis Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 46.
这正是你跳你肚脐舞的时辰，
净罪界中没有不好色的圣人。
皇后，我们的皇后。

你这似狼似狐的可爱的妇人；
你已毋庸将你的嘴唇来亲吻，
你口齿的芬芳便毒尽了众生。
皇后，我们的皇后。

管什么先知管什么哥哥爸爸？
男性的都将向你的下体膜拜。
啊将我们从道德中救出来吧。
皇后，我们的皇后。

Shao emphasizes that the fatal and immoral power of sexual desire can even lead to incest. Shao’s hyperbolic description of immoral sexual desire culminates in “Rescue us from morality” (13). He wants to release people constrained by old-fashioned morality. Although the empress is pictured as some sort of femme fatale, Shao also endows her with enough omnipotence to liberate people from the shackles of morality that obstruct them from feeling their natural sexual desires. Shao’s strong hope and expectation toward her reverberates in the line “Empress, our empress,” which ends each stanza. The poem culminates with the word “rescue,” which shows how much Shao is concerned with the burden of moral shackles (12-13).

Shao describes in his poetry the sexual act. “Decadent Love” (Tuijiadang de ai) describes the coupling of clouds, figuratively suggesting human sexual relation.

Sleeping in the white cloud on the heaven,
Accompanied by him is absolutely not his lover;
Probably is instigation of pleasure,
They also hug tightly and kiss.

Ah, coupling with this cloud,
With another he becomes also intertwined,
In the midst of such music and color,
He has thus lost his soul.  

睡在天床上的白云，
伴着他的並不是他的恋人；
许是快乐的怂恿吧，
他们竟也拥抱了紧紧亲吻。

啊和这一朵交合了，
又去和那一朵 缠绵地厮混；
在这音韵的色彩里，
便如此吓消灭了他的灵魂

In the middle of this coupling, the white cloud loses even his soul. This licentious lovemaking reaches a dispirited climax. Because the cloud can be so easily scattered and remolded, it effectively incarnates the love that only pursues the satisfaction of its own sexual desire.

In the “Moon and Cloud” (Yue he yun) the covert but insatiable desire is projected onto the moon and a cloud. The moon symbolizes “the passive but fertile principle, night, moistness, the subconscious, imagination, parapsychology, dreams, receptivity, woman and all that shifting, ephemeral” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 672) and a cloud symbolizes water and fertility (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 208).

Love in the moon, nothing is in the cloud;
Although, one has one’s gentleness?
Ah, it's a pity not to hold moon and cloud.
Let them weigh who is heavy, who is light.

One, has eyes like tadpole,
One, has cherry lips not hurt by stabbing yet.
Ah, two immortals envying demon,
Permit me, permit me alone to swallow?

I already had pink evil, very much;

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23 The second stanza is Lee's translation on page 252 in his book *Shanghai Modern*.  
64
Grey desire, never satisfied.
Ah, why my world possessed,
possessed her, possessed her possessed her again?

The cloud is described as an enthralling object that no one has touched as yet.
The lyrical self longs to swallow these seductive objects that even the immortals envy.
Innumerable desires like unripe evil cannot be satisfied, and the unconscious desire of
lyrical self is never satiated. The lyrical self languishes because of desires created by a
woman’s invasion into his world that cannot be filled.

“Flower-Like Evil” (Huayiban de zui’è), as the title would indicate, is not only
representative of the collection Flower-Like Evil, but it is also the crystallization of
this collection and embodies the double image of the sacred and the perverse. A
goddess appears in the bright morning soaked in sweet dew. The sweet dew is likened
to the sweet tears of a virgin on her wedding night and also to the boiling sweat of a
licentious woman’s body after erotic love (49).
The holy and mysterious images of a woman likened to a goddess are pictured in subsequent stanzas. A loving daughter of God, an immortal demon, she descended from heaven 22 years before and has dwelled in the terrestrial world as a sing-song girl. She plucks a pipa made of copper that is so powerful that its sounds resurrect the dead. Her singing can break the solitude of the night; it can even call to an old spirit to leave its grave to the world; it makes grieved people listen to pleasure (50).

Afterwards, the agony of leading a salacious existence gets expressed in the woman’s prayers to her father, God. She prays to him in a trembling voice “like wavering moonlight,” like a bloody sunlight coloring a plaster wall, and the red color painted on her dazzling white face; her prayer is ineffably sincere, like red color dying everything white. She asks God to forgive her for committing “flower-like evil,” a fatal temptation like a demon who throws people into a muddle (51).

Because of her “flower-like evil,” she realizes that she cannot avoid the people cursing her fox-like allurement with hearts of snakes and scorpions. She asks God if this is due to her own sin. Even though she does not think of herself as guilty, she cannot help feeling distressed because of others’ censure. At the same time, she has a group of followers advocating for her and loving her constantly. Their subversive reaction to her is manifold; one of them stirs up his own sexual feeling with his/her disorderly eyebrows, dampened eyes, bright red face, and trembling lips even though trapped in the world like in a cage; one of them gets exhausted from petting the woman all night and falls asleep on her breast; one of them incessantly exclaims physical love to be a poem or a painting, so that a momentary eternity is formed with the pleasure of immortal death, and about spring without winter, summer and autumn;
one of them brags to his friend that his 100 narcotized days with her felt like a spring of 100 years; one asks if the touch of lips produces only the joy of sweet marriage and anger of painful separation and demise and concludes that every emotion in life gets mixed together like soy sauce in spite of the impossibility of interpreting the secret of life (52-54). Since she is strongly supported by her followers, who expressively reveal their desire, she might escape from the feeling of guilty resulted from “flower-like evil.”

When God hears what the followers relate, he says, “The evil agonies are the glory of life; Ah, everything is but the illusion of ‘oneself.’ You should return to your own heavenly palace.” Faced with God’s skeptical attitude about passions, she prefers being “the slave of life”; that is, both the object and the projection of passion. Even with all of its mysteries, the celestial world may not necessarily be a place endowed with so much pleasure. At this point, the earthy world and the heavenly world get demarcated by fleshly pleasure and her wavering between the two worlds leans decidedly toward the terrestrial. There is a complete separation between the world of body and the world of soul (54-55).

Shao’s decadent images of love are strikingly unprecedented examples of sensual pleasure in modern Chinese poetry. Even though Shao seems to have succeeded in expressing sexual desire through the description of sexual acts and images of tempting women, the evil spirit immanent in sexual desire and negative image of femme fatale as an object of affection imply limitation of expressing sexual desire or frustration of his desire for Shao because of the restrictions imposed by the ethics of his time.
3.2.3. Christian Imagery

Christian imagery, with a variety of connotations, emerged in various literary genres in the twentieth century Chinese literature. Reflecting the relationship between Christian culture and the spirit of modern Chinese literature, Xu Zhenglin elaborates on three points: pursuit of religion, moralization of religious emotion, and spiritual inquiry (21-26). Xu states that even though God (*shangdi* or *shen*) appears as literary images in the May Fourth period, these literary images of God still conveyed the perfect and distinct Christian image of the God and disclosed the approved religious notion in the mind of poets. Numerous Christian images in unique forms appear in the poetry after the mid-1920s. For instance, most poets belonging to the Crescent Moon Society touched upon the image of “God” and other poets, Li Jinfu and Hu Yepin, also portrayed the image of God in their poems. In the poems written by Li and Hu, God is considered not as a spiritual image of religion but as an emotional image jammed with literary meaning. In modern Chinese poetry, God is generally presented with the original religious content. Xu attributes this secularization of the image of God in literature to the weakness of poets’ religious knowledge (21-22). Although the image of God has stirred only a faint emotion in Chinese poetry, the image of Jesus Christ exerted a huge influence. Based on Chen Duxiu’s essay, “Christianity and the Chinese People”, Xu sees the modern Chinese view of Christ as that of sublime sacrificial spirit, the great forgiving spirit, and the spirit of equality and fraternity. Accordingly, Xu contends that God and Jesus have significance to modern Chinese writers as cultural values rather than religious ones (22-23).
Secondly, Xu claims that the moralization of religious emotion is expressed as “love,” humanitarianism, and an ethical critique. Technically, some individual religious writers were not effective in persuading other modern writers to pursue religious spirit and character in reality (23).

Thirdly, there were two forms of inquiries on the soul: repentance and prayer. The pervading psychology of the authors was to accept Christianity at the levels of spirit and ethics. From Christianity, Chinese intellectuals embraced the philosophy of “love” or the reason to tranquilize and substantiate their spirit. However, the intellectuals advocated religion as a means rather than an end. Specifically, their purpose was neither to achieve “the supreme happiness” through mysterious religious experience nor to free oneself and the people from misery through faith and religion. Their ultimate goal was to use religion to purify emotion and to enhance the courage to fight misery and darkness. Deriving ethics from a religious creed, esteeming the function of spirit and awakening by spirit, and opening up the human mind to employ influential methods are three spiritual pursuits of modern Chinese writers and also characteristics of religious thought in modern Chinese literature (24).

As indicated above, Christian imagery in modern Chinese literature was not adopted solely to convey religious meaning. Instead, it was employed as a literary device for communicating what authors were concerned about. Hence, Christian imagery in modern Chinese literature thus varies greatly depending on the writer and his/her context rather than being absolute in any religious sense. In this regard, the Christian imagery used by the aesthete, Shao Xunmei, may be distinguished from Christian imagery seen in other literary works in modern China.

69
“Heaven” (Tiantang), in *Heaven and May*, is a long poem composed of three sections. In the first section, the lyrical self’s skeptical attitude toward God unfolds. To the lyrical self, heaven is merely a “dry and dull” place, no different from a “beautiful grave” because there is no worldly pleasure to be found there. The lyrical self blames God for locking up all enticements. Heaven is described as an authoritarian place where everything is dedicated to God, and everything is sacrificed to become his slave, with love toward God being mandatory. The female celestial, being the singer of the lunar palace, beats the ice-cold chime stone, plays the gloomy bamboo flute, sings the song that does not enter his ears, and chants poetry that does not move him. The lyrical self criticizes God’s indifference toward music that touches all people. Heaven is an insipid place where nothing moves (1-3).

In the next sequence, the lyrical self seriously inquires about God’s thoughts on the dichotomy between the pleasures in the heaven and the sufferings of the world. The lyrical self claims that “the suffering of the world is the suffering that gives comfort” (5) and the pleasure of heaven is only the powdered elixir of life taken by people when they are not dead. The lyrical self views the enjoyment of heaven as something superfluous or meaningless. Hence, the lyrical self even declines God’s love, considering it to be fire that consumes all water. As a result, water succumbs to death because of its love for fire. God is symbolized as fire and the lyrical self is symbolized as water to make the clear contrast between God’s world and this world (4-6).

The second section portrays God’s creation of the Garden of Eden in plain and repetitive language. God causes flowers to bloom using soft breezes and dews. The
flowers then bear fruit, which falls on the land, and decays, but new sprouts bloom into trees. These processes are resumed through the grace of God’s love, and the Garden of Eden is created (6-11). The apple, referring to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that triggers the fall of men, is used to designate the state of being free and content with one’s lot. The image of the apple is repeatedly combined with modifying words “free” and “content with one’s lot.” Then, the lyrical self criticizes God’s exclusiveness in locking the gate of the Garden of Eden to prevent humans from entering and taking the fruits. Moreover, God deprives humans of what they already own and shuts them up in the Garden (12-13).

It gets worse in the third section. Satan is guarding the entrance of the Garden of Eden. Cunning and skilled in enticement, Satan is powerful enough to walk on the wall like a snake, run wildly like a horse, swim in the water like a fish, and soar in the sky like a bird. But God is the Master of this almighty Satan (14-15).

In front of the Garden, there are two people who are sexually distinct but lack the instincts of a man and woman—Adam and Eve. The lyrical self strongly reprimands God for producing creatures that are alive but like the dead do not know the meaning of pleasure, agony, disgrace, and so on (16-17).

On a day when the atmosphere is ripe for temptation, Satan, like the snake in the Bible, tempts Adam and Eve to taste the apple in the Garden. Satan gently opens the gate of the Garden and secretly goes under the shade of a tree; he sings a song that penetrates ears and chants a poem that moves people, contrasting with the female

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24 The Abbe E. Bertrand states the apple is considered the fruit of knowledge and of freedom, so that “‘to eat the apple’ meant to them abuse of the intellect to gain knowledge of evil, abuse of the senses to lust after evil and abuse of freedom to commit evil’. Quoted in The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, 36.
celestial’s song and poem mentioned in the first section. Upon hearing this moving music, Adam’s face starts to burn and Eve’s heart begins to beat fast, making them feel what it is to be really human. Overwhelmed by the beauty of songs and poetry, they enter the gate of the Garden, seeking music and poetry (18-20). The function of music and poetry is to inspire people’s natural emotions and enjoyment.

In the garden, even the color of fruit induces the secretion of saliva or bodily fluid. As they further taste the fruit, they know love before pleasure, agony, disgrace and so on, because the apple was created through God’s love (21). At this point, the lyrical self claims that all emotions of man originate from God’s love toward man.

As indicated above, Shao employs the famous stories in the Bible, which makes this poem very exotic (for a Chinese readership). However, the introduction of the stories in the Bible is ironically used to convey Shao’s pagan attitude toward God and heaven. It is unusual that the dominant pagan theme of the whole passage is undermined at the end of the poem, where Shao seems to support the notion that all human emotions originate from God’s love. Because Shao’s pagan attitude was borrowed from other western poets, such as Swinburne or Verlaine, it is possible that he does not hold a firm idea about Christianity.

Shao’s pagan attitude is found in another poem. “I Have To Be Also Like a Little Worm Content With One’s Lot” (Wo zhide yexiang yizhi zhizude xiaochong), from *Heaven and May*, expresses resentment toward God for excessive display of his omnipotence. When the lyrical self is thirsty for love, the “golden-shoed sun” and “marble Venus de Milo” are like Longjing tea. The lyrical self is desperate for love and likened to a sprout growing from land fed by devilishly seductive rain and dew.
with seminal fluid. The lyrical self says, “When sweet, evil is sweet, I have escaped from hell to come to this den-of-monsters of hell” (72). The lyrical self suffers from an evil-like bittersweet love, which is unable to escape from the state of being in hell.

The discerning, capricious, romantic, and agnostic character of nature, the lyrical self blames the Master of desire for deceiving him into believing in the everlasting life, beauty, and nature. Although God himself flashes his omnipotence, the lyrical self has not seen his mark in the world, and he derides God for only having four pieces of clothes—one wet, one dry, one bright, and one dark—symbolizing the dispensation of nature. Despite God’s omnipotence, the lyrical self thinks that God cannot come to the Louvre (the poem was written there) and the Moulin Rouge, which are human-constructed places of art and sensual pleasure, respectively. The lyrical self has trouble with the instantaneous and ephemeral character of creation, including love (72-74).

Another negative image of God appears in a different poem. In “Song” (Ge), from *Flower-Like Evil*, God is described as effeminate and as deceived by the devil.

How many flowers withered,
How many leaves fell.
How many trees withered,
Ah, our God.

April brought May,
October drove September out,
Green color changed into white snow,
Ah, our God.

Depression and pleasure are harmonized
Demon will deceive god,
Immortal love got sick,
Ah our God.
多少夺花儿谢了，
多少张叶儿落了，
多少株树儿枯了，
啊我们的上帝。

四月带来了五月，
十月赶走了九月，
青色变成了白雪，
啊我们的上帝。

忧愁与快乐和了，
魔鬼将天神骗了，
不死的爱情病了，
啊我们的上帝。

In the first stanza, withered flowers and trees and fallen leaves create a dreary feeling in anticipation of the weakened God, which might signify the frailty of life. The weak image of God resonates with a morose refrain “Ah, our God” in the last line of each stanza. The change of season in the second stanza is indicated by the change of color from green to snow white. And, while the depression and the pleasure are maintained in a harmonious state, a demon deceives God. This results in the slow suffocation of immortal love. God is reduced to a commonplace existence with the loss of perpetual love (2-3).

The lyrical self of “Voice” (Shengyin), in the Twenty-Five Poems, hears a strange voice in a thunderstorm during a summer night; it says that the lyrical self has taken the wrong route in the same way that it is impossible to find a rainbow in white clouds and there is no shadow of the peach blossom in the green leaves of the willow. This morning, a nameless angel drops off an ordinary letter. It is written in intoxicating characters that symbolize confusing news; the angel endows the lyrical
self with happiness, but also gives him calamity much more fearful than happiness.

With unspoken reasons, God forbids the flying of those with wings, loving someone with emotion, and the singing of an unprepared song by someone infatuated (13-14).

However, poetry cannot end like God’s unfinished story. As she (poetry) asks for a reply, the lyrical self answers:

I say I like happiness and am afraid of calamity;
After all, philosophy is not the expectations of a virgin.
The horror of white hair cannot be compared to the bright redness of cherry,
She wants me to speak in idioms I have forgotten,
She wants me to believe one delicate flower is of no use
She herself can wither seasonal bullying and humiliation;
Yet, I am afraid of, I am afraid of exposing
My solemn hypocrisy and devastated innocence with my sympathy (15).

我说我喜欢幸福怕灾害；
究竟哲学不是处女的期望，
白髮的恐怖不比樱桃的豔红，
她要我讲出我遗忘了的成语，
她要我相信一朵娇弱的花不用
节后的欺侮她自己会凋零；
但是,我怕,我怕让同情揭穿了
我庄严的虚伪一个摧残了的
天真。

In this part, the lyrical self is overcome with a vague fear. The lyrical self seems to be a hedonist, yet hesitates to disclose his own disgrace. At this point, under the influence of alcohol, the lyrical self might offer an unexpected written confession.

Although it might be only a memorized poem,
A familiar word, a familiar painting;
But they are all as if the arrowhead takes aim at the target,
Shot and they hit the target in the center.
At this time, only Jesus can say to you, all
Comfort, revenges and love all rest upon that nail.
Things may become an ado, tears may be like rain,
Emotion may be like wind, oneself may have no views.
For the first time you can see soul and body
Each says words each dare not say.
Fortunately, despair is frequent guest at your home,
You cannot dispense with him just as people cannot dispense with souls,
Soul cannot dispense with love, love cannot dispense with you (16-17).

略也许只一首背熟的诗,
一个想熟的字, 张著熟的画;
可是他们都会像箭头瞄准了
箭靶. 一射就射中最里面的一点.
这时候, 只有耶稣会对你说话一切的
安慰, 报酬和爱都在那一校钉上.
事情就会阔大, 眼泪像雨.
情感会像风, 自己会没有主张.
你便会第一次见到灵魂和肉体
各自说出各自不敢说的话.
好在忧愁是你家常作的客,
你少不掉他, 正如人少不掉灵魂,
灵魂少不掉爱, 爱少不掉你.

Even though the poem may not be a novel one, it hits the mark on human thoughts,
which might be the poetic tendency the lyrical self has in mind. In this sense, it may
be construed that the lyrical self presumes every human emotion to originate with
Christ’s crucifixion. Every emotion induced during this self-sacrificing moment of
Jesus separates the body from the soul and produces something without any hindrance.
Moreover, the lyrical self signifies the essence of soul imbued with love.

The representative Christian imagery found throughout Shao Xunmei’s poems
tend to project the lyrical self’s negation of and discontentment with the Christian
world of God insofar as God does not allow the expression of human nature or
instinct. It seems that Shao’s pagan disposition has something to do with the
inclination of poets such as Swinburne and Verlaine dealt with in Fire and Flesh.
Influenced by these poets, Shao might have tried to advocate autonomous human being not confined by God. In sum, it is possible to understand Christian images in Shao’s poem as a literary device, and certainly not an advocacy of Christianity.

3.3. Forms

Shao Xunmei experimented with various forms in his poems. Especially in his last collection of poems, *Twenty-Five Poems*, he tries to make a synthesis of a variety of poems. Shao classifies each poem in the *Twenty-Five Poems*: “Woman” (Nüren) as four-line poetry, “Voice” (Shengyin) and “Nature’s command” (Ziran de mingling) as unrhymed pentameter, “Undisputed Faith” as unrhymed tetrameter, and “Sky and Earth” (Tian he di) as sonnet, for example. Shao states that his experimentation with meter is not formal but qualitative. For instance, he illustrates that the characteristic of unrhymed pentameter is the extension of what he calls an emotionally inciting view. This form is more flexible and capable of complicated changes. Even with disconnections, the spirit is coherent, so it is possible for the readers to resume reading after a pause and enjoy the kaleidoscopic changes. The unrhymed tetrameter is less flexible, but it is intimate, plain, and simple, thus creating a more innocent mood. As for the sonnet, Shao sees it as the most complete and refined form, like the Chinese quatrain. On the other hand, the sonnet is more changeable than the quatrain, so Shao thinks it is more suitable to the techniques of modern poetry, which sought liberation from the formal regulations of ancient forms (1936 viii-ix).
As an experiment in poetic forms, “Woman” (Nüren), consisting of 8 lines in two separated stanzas, is made in a structure with exactly the same number of characters per line. However, the emotions in these two stanzas oppose one another.

I deeply respect you, woman, I deeply respect you exactly like
I deeply respect a short poem written by people in Tang dynasty—
You use gentle level tone and clear-cut oblique tone,
To tie up my each sentence and each character.

I doubt you, woman, I doubt you exactly like
I doubt brilliant rainbow in the sky-
I don’t know your blush is for me,
Or for another hot dream.

我敬重你, 女人, 我敬重你正像
我敬重一首唐人的小诗—
你用温润的平声干脆的仄声,
来縆缚住我的一句一字.

我疑心你, 女人, 我疑心你正像
我疑心一弯灿烂的天虹—
我不知道你的脸红是为了我,
还是为了另外一个热梦.

While in the first stanza the lyrical self shows deep respect for a woman, in the second stanza it expresses mistrust toward her. In the first stanza, the lyrical self likens the deep respect for a woman to his respect for short poems of the Tang dynasty. The lyrical self regards the woman and poems from the Tang dynasty in the same light and writes that the woman restricts him like the tonal regulation of these poems. On the other hand, the second stanza depicts the lyrical self’s distrusting feeling about the woman. He questions whether her blush expresses feeling toward him or another person. These two stanzas have the same form yet they have contrasting emotional contents about a woman, denoting the repression of the ancient tonal patterns.
Shao also writes in blank verse featuring the absence of rhymes. Blank verse is ideal for long poems since it allows easy delivery of an idea free from the restriction of length. In addition, “the omission of rhyme promoted continuity, sustained articulation, enjambment, and relatively natural word order” (Preminger and Brogan 138). In his blank verse, Shao uses both unrhymed pentameter and unrhymed tetrameter.

Shao points to two very long poems, “Voice” and “Nature’s Command,” as examples of unrhymed pentameter. The long unrhymed pentameter is characterized by variable and complex changes like “turbulent water flowing down the valley” (1936, ix). Shao tries to illustrate how blank verse is suited for expression of poet’s idea to make touching discourse in the long form. The structural form of “Nature’s Command” is more apparent pentameter than “Voice,” with each line of “Nature’s Command” being consistently made up of five feet without separation of stanza.

Nature’s/command, / power of /choice/ is hers.
If only/she hopes, / she can/ lay down/ her mind
In the middle of/ huge roc’s/ wings/ to fly up/ to the blue sky,
She also/ can follow/ the sharp eyed/ old eagle/
The shoot/ is not willing to/ be a relaxed arrow;/ she also can
Let the white crane/ bring/ her/ on a smooth trip/, trip/
To the highest/ in clouds/, overlooking/ arrogantly/ again (1936, 22).
The group/can be crazy /to pursue/ her/ friend.

自然的/命令/选择的/权柄/是她的.
只要/她愿意/她可以/安置/她的心
在大鹏鸟的/翅膀/中间/飞上/青天,
她也可以/跟随/最眼快的/老鹰
射/那不肯/放松的/一箭;/她也可以
让白鸽/带了/她/平稳地/旅行./ 旅行
到顶高的/云端/再骄傲地/俯瞰
那一羣/会疯癲地/追求/她的/朋友。

In the first part of this poem, the unknown female, represented as the mythical roc, has almighty authority to command the order of nature. If she wants to, she can fly in the sky, speed to catch up with the eagle, and travel to the highest clouds of the sky.

The transcendental ability attributed to her in the first part changes in the ninth line, where she cannot endure the harshness of the wintry wind. Even though she can sing until the nightingale becomes dumb and can see peacock putting away the colored screen with her nearsighted eyes, people feel sorry for her tranquility and solitude like an island enveloped in a light fog. Within her boundaries, there is no wind and even river animals do not move.

From the twenty-first lines, the tranquil and secret atmosphere unfolds. In the waking morning, if the dewdrop covers her transparent dream, and embraces it, would she be able to endure and not sweat from this forceful embrace. Nobody is willing to break this palpitating scene. However, the intention of lyrical self is only to shackle her hands, legs, eyes and lips and confine her on the thirty-third sky so that her voice will not be carried down to the world.

In the next stage, the lyrical self moves on to the innocent nature of the bird. It is possible to lie to the phoenix that is full of vanity or fierce crow with all sorts of exaggerations. However, since the innocent bird is incapable of seeing that someone it loves might deceive her, it is not possible for lyrical self to deceive her as if deceiving other birds such as phoenix or crow.

In the end, the lyrical self emphasizes not to deceive the innocent bird and let
her enjoy the stroke of the spring wind, and let her understand the old big universe
that have not treated her badly or been weary of her chanting.

As Shao Xunmei mentions in the self-preface to Twenty-Five Poems,
“Nature’s Command” as an unrhymed pentameter reveals the variable change in the
flow of poetry. The image of the bird is illustrated from various angles ranging from
her almightiness to her irresistible innocence, with frequent change.

Regarding the unrhymed tetrameter, Shao characterizes it as being less
changeable, lengthy, and monotonous in form. In this regard, Shao maintains that
tetrameter is intimate, plain, and simple, suitable to the innocent mood of the work.
According to Shao, the unrhymed tetrameter shows the contrasted tendencies
compared to the unrhymed pentameter.

“Undisputed Faith” (1936, 29) is an example of unrhymed tetrameter. The first
part of this poem is as follows.

不要/过分地/怀疑/我朋友.
诚心地/我要/装饰/这墙壁,
但是/我有/太多的/名作
会使/主人/惊异/这镜框里
时常/有不可/预言的/变换.

Do not/ suspect/ my friend/ excessively.
Sincerely/ I will/ decorate/ this wall,
But/I have/too many/masterpieces
It may/surprise/my host/in this picture frame
There are/often/unpredictable/changes.
It seems that the lyrical self is a curator who tries to embellish the gallery which senses little transformation of each picture over time. It is interesting to note that the word ‘shichang’ (时常) is repeatedly employed at each turning point in the poem.

The change of the color of the picture is likened to spring, which cannot be reluctant to leave winter, and snow with no fixed shape is free to move about a big sphere and never avoided the domination of the nature. The change of the color is regarded as a kind of the irresistible change of nature over time.

Subsequently, the lyrical self often places tempting picture to stimulate the host to remind him/her of the disloyalty of his bedroom. Also, the lyrical self often put up the insipid sketch since it is faster than time, and the momentary pleasure needs to be relished in coldness and stillness. But, the instant pleasure does not say life is death because death is a kind of permit for an extension, and you may appeal for someone through the power of God or human beings.

The lyrical self places the most innocent works that are not appointed and nameless. The lyrical self reduces them to the architecture of line and color and the creator has never cared for the failure or success of the work. With these things, the lyrical self tries to probe the truth while saying that the fabrication by means of using another person’s name produces illusions leading to the feeling of trouble and unnecessary surplus. The lyrical self deplores everything he is able to do is to comfort the nature with artificial works. Compared with unrhymed pentameter, Shao’s unrhymed tetrameter has relatively simple and invariable mood maintaining a consistent theme in the poem.
Next, even though the sonnet is definitely an imported Western form, it seems that Shao’s sonnet does not follow the rhyme and structure of the Western sonnet.\(^{25}\) Shao’s sonnet, “Sky and Earth” (Tian he di), for example, consists of fourteen lines divided into four parts without regard to the form of the Western sonnet, such as the Italian or English sonnet. This sonnet is divided into two successive quatrains, one couplet and a concluding quatrain, which correspond to introduction, development, turn, and conclusion.

Immortal, please excuse my absurd stubbornness.  
Waking or sleeping I always look at you; the reason is  
I engraved your image early,  
Imprint countless printing on my soul.  
Eulogizing you, I’m not concerned whether you listen or not,  
Shout accurately like a cock’s cry at noon;  
For me each second is daytime,  
Each second makes my voice higher.

请原谅我这荒荡的固执, 仙人.  
醒时睡时我总看见你; 原因是  
我早把你的形象刻成了印子,  
打上无数的印花在我的灵魂.  
我对你的颂扬, 不管你听不听,  
准确地喊叫着像正午的鸡啼;  
为我每一秒钟就是一个昼时,  
每一秒钟又会加高我的嗓音.

\(^{25}\) Haft examines interrelation between English sonnet, Chinese sonnet, and lūshi. He shows that the modern Chinese sonnets have as Vertical Bindig Elements: the overall fixed number of lines:14; rhyme of one sort or another; and identifiable strophic groupings, again of one sort or another. As for other the classical Chinese lūshi element, parallelism, he says “parallelism does not often occur in the modern Chinese sonnet”. Thus, he thinks “the great difference with respect to the lūshi is that in the modern poem, the use of this feature is optional ”. Regarding fifth element of the lūshi, tone contrast, many Chinese poets still uses tones, but it is usual for tones to be concealed by other linguistic factors having more contrastive value (2000, 210-211). Therefore, it seems that Chinese sonnet is eclectic form of English sonnet, and traditional Chinese lūshi, so that it is more flexible form than English sonnet or lūshi.
From the two quatrains making up the introduction and development, it is possible to notice rhyming \textit{abbcddbf}, which does not belong to the western rhyme scheme of the sonnet, such as \textit{abbaabba} and \textit{ababcdc} (Abrams 290). In the quatrain used in the introduction, the lyrical self who is an immortal discloses his overwhelming affection toward “you” all the time since he carves “your image” and imprints them numerously on his soul. Moreover, this sincere adoration is put into an irresistible and energetic action in the second quatrain as a development section of the poem; the lyrical self accurately shouts extolment about ‘you’ as if a cock’s cry exactly at noon and is crazy enough to shout every moment as if every second is a noon.

In the following couplet that corresponds to the turn of the poem, the lyrical self does not hope that his object of affection comes down from the sky and thunderbolt alerts every creature. Next, in the concluding quatrain, the only thing the lyrical self wishes is to make people busy enjoying their own cheerfulness in spring, and small wind will coolly deliver the news that sky and earth finally will be continuous some day.

Putting the turn and conclusion together, it is probable that the lyrical self makes an emphasis on the disconnection of the sky and earth. Even if terrestrial being admires celestial being and knows how influential the celestial being is, the lyrical self accepts that the sky and earth representing terrestrial being and celestial being will continue to have their own respective boundaries and not be infringed by each other.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Shao Xunmei has been marginalized in the study of modern Chinese poetry because he established his own poetic world seething with decadence and replete with hedonism. To give a fuller representation of the history of modern Chinese poetry, it is important to elucidate the poetic world of understudied poets such as Shao Xunmei, tracing the achievements of his lifetime characterized by distinctive poems, introduction of foreign poems and a variety of other activities as a writer.

Shao’s collection of essays, *Fire and Flesh* and the essay entitled “The General Survey of Modern American Circle of Poetry” form the basis of Shao’s poetics in which Shao shows his extensive knowledge of various poetic styles ranging from ancient Greek poems to European poems of the nineteenth century to American poems of the twentieth century. He used this extensive knowledge as a foundation for the creation of his own unique style.

The introduction of five poets Sappho, Catullus, Gautier, Swinburne, and Verlaine in *Fire and Flesh* signifies Shao’s love for lyric poetry under the strong influence of aestheticism and further shows Shao’s preference for them. Of the five poets, Sappho and Catullus can be categorized as the masters of lyrical love poems in 85
the Western literature of antiquity. The others mentioned in *Fire and Flesh*, Gautier, Swinburne and Verlaine, can be categorized as the promoters of Aestheticism. Shao inserts the Chinese translation of Arthur Symons’ essay about Gautier in his book *Symbolist Movement in Literature*. According to Symons, Gautier clings to the perfect form which is not influenced by any emotion, and through this he achieves clear and beautiful lyrics. Shao makes Gautier’s form oriented attitude his foundation of poetics. Shao Xunmei focuses on Swinburne’s pagan and revolutionary attitude of his poems. He regards pagan attitude of Swinburne’s poems as an artistic point of view and Swinburne’s revolutionary attitude might affect the formation of Shao’s utilitarian poetics. Also, Shao emphasizes Swinburne’s musicality resulting from the use of mysterious meter and repetition of sounds, characters, and lines. It seems that Swinburne’s pagan attitude and poetic musicality are concretely reflected into Shao’s individual poems.

Like Swinburne, Shao gives importance to Verlaine’s unusual life and his poetic musicality. As a real hedonist, Verlaine enjoyed even hisanguishes and sublimated them into a state of ecstasy. In addition, Shao highlights the beauty in the musicality of Verlaine’s verses which gave his poems lucid tone, complete form, and enthusiastic emotion. Accordingly, Shao’s hedonism revealed in his sensual pleasure of his poems seems to have been influenced by Verlaine’s tendency.

In another article representing Shao’s poetics, “The General Survey of the Modern American Circle of Poets,” Shao surveyed a variety of modern American poetry of the twentieth century since 1912, classifying it into 6 categories: rural verse, urban verse, lyric, imagist verse, modernist verse, and cosmopolitan verse. For each
poem, Shao paid attention to different expressions of object, purpose, and reaction to the epoch while maintaining a free style. Shao further states that the cosmopolitan poetry deserves to be valued since it embodies the eternal emotion of human beings that transcends epoch and cosmos. This shows the main point of Shao’s poetics is the real revelation of individual emotion. Shao also mentions the relationship between writers, readers and even economy, which indicates that Shao’s outlook on art is not separate from the people. While Shao’s introduction of poets in Fire and Flesh is limited to the mere introduction of diverse poets, he develops a more concrete and general idea of his poetics in this article.

Shao Xunmei’s own poetics is embodied in his preface to his collection of poems, Twenty-Five Poems. In this collection, the influence of foreign poetics and his own knowledge of poetry are crystallized, and Shao makes several points in his preface. Among these points, Shao highlights the “best order” the most because it denotes the achievement of a perfect union between the content and the form, blending traditional Chinese poetics with foreign poetics. When it comes to the subject and the language of poetry, Shao asserts that the subject and the language are inclined to change according to changes of the epoch with the advent of modern civilization. As a result, Shao believes that a poet should participate in reforming mankind by portraying the new epoch with new languages. However, Shao suggests only an ambiguous idea of reforming mankind, so his poetics might be regarded as an imperfect utilitarian poetics. At this point, Shao’s poetics is the blending of pure aestheticism of art for art’s sake and utilitarian literary theory.
Shao's poetics in the works mentioned above can be represented by three of his clear-cut individualistic collections of poems: *Heaven and May*, *Flower-Like Evil*, and *Twenty-Five Poems*. From the works of three collections of poems, it is possible to draw three representative themes concerning his views on poet, decadent love and Christian imagery, which makes his poetry very unique compared to other modern poetry. Shao stresses the duty of a poet in the new epoch in his poetics. To effect, he not only quotes various Western poets in his poems but also connotes the significance of a poet's active role in building heaven in the world for humanity. Even though it is unusual to take "poets" as a subject matter compared to most other modern poetry, Shao does not suggest a concrete role for the poet.

Shao also makes a noteworthy point on the coexistence of the contrasting images of decadence and Christianity, each representing the terrestrial and the celestial world respectively. The carnal thirst expressed well using sensual languages in the poems embodies the autonomy of irresistible human nature or desire with resulting separation of terrestrial world from that of celestial world. In this sense, it is natural that the use of Christian imagery as a literary device rather than as an expression of religious belief indicates pagan attitude of lyrical self and its dissatisfaction with the Christian world where God's control over manifestation of human nature is absolute.

Even though Shao creates unique poetic world with exceptional images in his poem. Shao have formalist attitude in common with other formalist poets. Shao makes attempt to realize his form-oriented poetics by creating diverse forms ranging from sonnet to blank verse.
Considering Shao’s various literary activities within literary societies along with his poetics and works, his whole literary career may be construed as an organic procedure of expressing his point of view that the literature should reflect basic human emotion. His strong literary inclination towards pursuing autonomy of human emotion might be the main reason behind his stance against the stream of May Fourth movement of his contemporary times. His stance against the May Fourth movement was shared by the aesthetic decadent group of poets to which he belonged. As such, the group formed a separate stream that opposed the mainstream ideology of the Republican period. On the other hand, Shao’s utilitarian poetics, which emphasizes the duty of the poet in new epoch, makes his poetic identity more eclectic. It is for this reason that it is necessary to examine Shao’s literary activities and works in more detail as well as his colleagues’ activities and their literary thoughts to confirm their claim of art for art’s sake in order to how Shao’s poetics and poems can be situated between the main stream and the non-main stream literary tendency during the Republican period.
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GLOSARRY

Diliya
Denglongshu shiyi
Fenghang
Fuchai
Hu yepin
Gezhong Juanban
Jinwu Yuekan
Jueshi
Li Jinfu
Lin Yutang
Pengshi
Shangdi
Shao Xunmei
Shen
Shen Congwen
Sheng Peiyu
Shidai huabao
Shidai Manhua
Shidai Dianying
Shihou
Tianxia
Wen YYiduo
Xinyue yuekan
Xishi
Xu Zhimo
Yinchi
Ziyoutan

谛里雅
登龙术拾遗
分行
夫差
胡也频
各种捐班
金屋月刊
绝诗
李金发
林语堂
朋史
上帝
邵洵美
神
沈从文
盛佩玉
时代画报
时代漫画
时代电影
狮吼
天下
闻一多
新月月刊
西施
徐志摩
音尺
自由谈