

The Condition of Music and Anglophone Influences in the Poetry of Shao Xunmei

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Series in Literary Studies



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Declaration

This book is based on my PhD thesis “The Condition of Music and Anglophone Influences in the Poetry of Shao Xunmei”.

Abstract

Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-1968), a Chinese poet, publisher and translator, has long been marginalized by contemporary criticism. His unique poetics, especially when it comes to the condition of music in poetry, remains largely unexamined. Shao aspires to reach the condition of music in poetry, which bears a resemblance to three Anglophone writers whom he applauds: Algernon Charles Swinburne, Edith Sitwell and George Augustus Moore. This book will examine how the three writers influenced Shao, and how the influences help shape Shao's idea of the condition of music in poetry.

Swinburne's conception of harmony denotes the union of meaning and sound, which greatly influenced Shao. Both Shao and Swinburne consider nature as the perfect paradigm for harmony, and they both see the nightingale as the ideal symbol for harmony. Both poets like to merge Sappho and the nightingale in their poetic practices, and the merging of Sappho—the incarnation of poetry—and the nightingale—the ideal symbol for harmony—represents an idea that poetry could reach the condition of harmony, to which both Shao and Swinburne aspire.

Sitwell puts forth the conception of poetry as “the sister of horticulture”.¹ She also comes up with a notion of texture as a state of interweave in the union of meaning and sound. Shao takes in the two conceptions and adds a twist of human physiology to them. Both Sitwell and Shao consider the flower as an incarnation of music. But Shao's flower symbol often has features that allude to female sexual organs, which presents an idiosyncratic union of flower-woman. Sexual consummation with the flower-woman seems to him a way that leads to the reproduction of music in poetry.

Moore comes up with the notion of pure poetry, which requires the removal of the conception of the body in poetry. Shao assimilates this notion and attempts to reach pure poetry through replacing the dialectic of the body with the dialogic of voices. This replacement remedies the idiosyncrasy evident in Shao's poems influenced by Sitwell and frees the woman from being the instrumentalized other of “I”. Moore's conception of pure poetry denotes an ideal, primordial unity of arts, in which music and poetry are one. However, Shao realizes this state could only be approached indefinitely and never be reached ontologically. Poetry and music, or poetry and other art forms, would always be in a dialogic process with no definite closure. The strategy that he

¹ Edith Sitwell, *Aspects of Modern Poetry* (London: Duckworth, 1934), 180.

comes up with is to play with the traversing between unity and diversity, that is, between pure poetry and poetry/music.

Preface

By
Peter Dayan

One of the many reasons for the persistent eurocentrism of Comparative Literature has been simply that the astonishing richness and diversity of literary modernism in China during the years before the Second World War has not been thoroughly explored. Even in China, it has not had the recognition it deserves. Obviously, this is partially due to reasons of political history. Certainly, the tale of China's great early 20th-century literary innovators cannot be told without an appreciation of how it ended; and Tian Jin offers a powerful narrative of the crushing of a poetic career. However, what we need most is an understanding of how poetry was developing in China before 1940, recovering the impulses, beliefs, ambitions, aspirations, optimisms, endless reversals, and equally endless creativity of the time. That is what Tian Jin provides, through the fascinating example of Shao Xunmei.

This is a great service to Chinese literary history. It is also a great service to Comparative Literature, which needs to know more about how East and West interacted in this crucial period. For the first time in the history of world literature, innovations in poetic form – free verse and prose poetry – were sweeping the entire world within a few decades; but it is not enough to see this in terms of influence or importation. As Tian Jin shows, it interacted with the literary and social forces already at work in China to produce something unique, uniquely Chinese, never static, and refracted through the powerful and vigorously opposed personalities of the poets who took up the new challenges. The poetry of Shao Xunmei really is extraordinary, not only in its quality but in its sheer difference – and its evolution. Another of the merits of Tian Jin's work is to bring out the profound workings of that evolution, particularly in relation to gender, to the gendering of voices and roles in poetry. He shows that the changes in Shao's poetic voices engaged his very notion of what poetry could be. This, as ever, he roots firmly in the historical time period in which they were occurring. But they are also very topical for us today. We have by no means finished grappling with the question of the gendering of poetic genius, and the apparently inherent tendency to misogyny of the great poetic tradition.

Nor have we finished grappling with the question at the heart of this study: the condition of music in poetry. What do poets mean when they talk about music? What definition of the word do they have in mind when they imply that their poetry is musical? The academic field of Word and Music Studies has, over

the past thirty years, begun to take apart some of the more simplistic answers that often occur to us; and to show how, for at least two centuries, poets have been well aware of the subtleties, sleights of hand, and productive deceptions at work in the intertwining of the two arts. Tian Jin, building on this, adds another dimension. He shows us what happens when a concept of music created in Romantic Europe is brought into a dynamic relationship with the poetry of China, where that concept had not yet presided over the creation of a new musical tradition. The intricate relationship between the poetry and the music of Shao Xunmei cannot be explained simply by reference to the music he knew; Tian Jin tells us why.

But after all, if this study seems to me so important, that is mainly because Shao's poetry is so compelling, so attractive, so – if I may use an unfashionable word – beautiful. It deserves the attention it gets here, not only because of its historical importance in the development of world literature, but because that importance is in proportion to its poetic quality. Literary criticism cannot do justice to poetic quality unless the critical writing is itself poetic. This is especially true where the poet is likely to be unknown to the readers of the critical work. Shao is relatively little known in China, I am told. He is certainly very little known in the West. I suspect that many of the likely readers of the present volume will be people interested in world literature, literary modernism, and Word and Music Studies, who will not be able to read Shao's poetry in the Chinese original. A vital qualification to write such a book is, therefore, the ability to bring alive in English, and the translations of the original verse, the quality of Shao's own writing. This Tian Jin does superbly. His own voice is, to me, unmistakably that of a true poetic writer. His translations of Shao's poems have the power of poetry. Like his critical writing, they embody the in-betweenness of the best tradition of literary translation as of Comparative Literature. Tian Jin's text never gives the impression it is aiming to be a transparent window onto Shao and his time. It knows that to write about poetry must be to collaborate in the production of poetry, in our own time. The condition of music and Anglophone influences are at work in the writing of Tian Jin as they are in that of Shao Xunmei, and that makes this book worth reading.

Peter Dayan
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Introduction

0.1 A short biography of Shao Xunmei

In 1906, Shao Xunmei was born Shao Yunlong 邵云龙 to a declining family of government officials in Shanghai. His grandfather Shao Youlian 邵友濂 was appointed in the late Qing dynasty as the primary counselor (Toudeng canzan 头等参赞) to negotiate the return of the Yili 伊犁 region¹ conquered by Russia during the Dungan Revolt (Tongzhi huibian 同治回变),² and later the viceroy (Xunfu 巡抚) of Taiwan. His natural father Shao Heng 邵恒 was one of the most notorious dandies in Shanghai who squandered money and indulged in gambling. As Shao Yi 邵颐, the elder brother of Shao Heng, died young without an heir, Shao Youlian commanded in his last words that the eldest son of Shao Heng must be given to Mrs. Shi 史氏,³ the widow of Shao Yi in order to maintain his lineage. Hence Shao Yunlong was adopted by Mrs. Shi and made the heir of the family.

The ethnicity of the family is rather unclear, as the systematic identification, classification and cartography of ethnic groups in China was done much later by the Communist government during 1949-1979. Regarding the family's ancestry, Shao's daughter Shao Xiaohong 邵绛红 writes: "On the mantelshelf in our living room there is a glass cabinet covered with silk. I heard that what's in it is the Family Tree of Shao. I've never seen it open. It gave me a sense of mystery. Then decades passed, and the glass cabinet has long disappeared." ("我家客厅壁炉架上有一只蒙了绸布的玻璃柜，听说里面摆的是《邵氏宗谱》。我从没见打开过，它给我一种神秘感。后来，风风雨雨几十年，那玻璃柜也不知去向了。")⁴ She recalls that Shao once told her: "Our ancestor Shao Kangjie was Arabian. Because of his notable deeds, the emperor awarded him the name Shao. In Yuyao, our ancestral hall has a stele with Arabic on it." ("我们的祖先邵

¹ The majority of this region has become at the present day Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (Yili Hasake zizhizhou 伊犁哈萨克自治州).

² An ethnic and religious war fought between Han and Muslim minorities in central and western China during 1862-1877.

³ Her full name is unknown.

⁴ Shao Xiaohong, *Tiansheng de shiren—wode baba Shao Xunmei* 天生的诗人—我的爸爸邵洵美 [A Natural Born Poet: My Father Shao Xunmei] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2015), 2.

康节是阿拉伯人。因为他有功，皇帝赐他姓邵。在余姚我们祠堂里的碑有阿拉伯文。”⁵ But she later claimed that this might be a joke he made.⁶

Shao was educated by private tutors before he attended Shanghai St. John's High School, which was affiliated with St. John's University founded by the Episcopal Church in 1879. It is unclear to what extent the teaching of Christianity was incorporated into the school's coursework. According to the three biographies of Shao,⁷ he never explicitly identified himself as a Christian and his religious views seem rather ambiguous. But it is clear that he is not unfamiliar with Christian texts, symbols and rituals. And as St John's taught most courses in English, it laid a solid foundation for his future acquaintance with Anglophone poetry.

Later Shao transferred to *Nanyang lukuang xuexiao* 南洋路矿学校, which was affiliated with *Nanyang gongxue* 南洋公学, a university founded by the famous industrialist Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣怀.⁸ As a family arrangement, Shao got engaged to Sheng's granddaughter Sheng Peiyu 盛佩玉 at the age of 17. This was a typical example of the alliance of ex-Qing officials and thriving industrial tycoons in the Republic of China. According to *My Father Shao Xunmei*, Shao changed his given name from Yunlong to Xunmei as he found out the name of his fiancée Peiyu 佩玉 (which can be literally translated as “adorned jade”) appears in a poem entitled “Songs of Zheng: There is a Woman in the Carriage” (Zhengfeng-younü tongche 郑风·有女同车) from the *Book of Songs* (Shijing 诗经).⁹ Hence he chose from the poem a juxtaposing term to be his name: Xunmei 洵美, which means in the context “indeed beautiful”. However, a man changing

⁵ Ibid., 441.

⁶ Ibid., 443. The validity of her claim is in need of further examination.

⁷ Besides *My Father Shao Xunmei*, 1) Sheng Peiyu 盛佩玉, *Shengshi jiazu: Shao Xunmei yu wo* 盛氏家族: 邵洵美与我 [The Clan of Sheng: Shao Xunmei and Me] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2012) and 2) Lin Qi 林淇, *Haishang caizi—Shao Xunmei zhuan* 海上才子—邵洵美传 [Genius on the Sea: A Biography of Shao Xunmei] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2002).

⁸ Sheng Xuanhuai (1844-1916) was a businessman and statesman. He was a renowned figure in the Self-Strengthening Movement (Yangwu yundong 洋务运动), a movement from 1861 to 1895 supported by Qing government to learn Western technologies to help industrialize and modernize China.

⁹ The sentence with Peiyu's name is “佩玉锵锵，洵美且都” (Peiyu qiangqiang, xunmei qiedu), which can be translated as “clanging adorned jade, indeed beautiful and refined”. Ibid., 21-22. The *Book of Songs*, also translated as the *Classic of Poetry*, is the oldest collection of Chinese poetry. It includes 311 poems from the eleventh to the sixth century before Christ. The authors of these poems are unknown.

his given name for his fiancée is not a common practice in China. It could be a romantic, spontaneous idea of Shao, as *My Father Shao Xunmei* suggests. Or it could be a calculated action with an intent of flattery, as the family of Shao was losing its prestige while that of Sheng reached its vertex. Whichever way it is, the coalition of the two families provided Shao with an economic freedom most literati at the time could not obtain, while it also planted a mine for some left-wing attacks in the future.

In 1924 Shao went to Cambridge to study economics, but he soon found out his zest lay in literature. He made some bold attempts at translating and writing poetry, which will be dealt with at length in the first chapter of this book. In 1925 Shao visited Paris for the first time and happened to meet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩,¹⁰ the cornerstone of the Crescent Moon Society (Xinyue she 新月社)¹¹ which had just become famous. In 1926 Shao left for Paris during the university vacation and enrolled as a part-time student at the École des Beaux-Arts.¹² During his stay, he met Xu Beihong 徐悲鸿,¹³ the yet-to-be painter who then

¹⁰ Xu Zhimo (1897-1931) was one of the most famous Chinese poets of the early twentieth century. He was educated in Beijing University, Clark University and the University of Cambridge. He attended Cambridge from 1921 to 1922, and therefore Shao did not get to meet him in England. Xu's most critically-acclaimed works include the poetry collections *Zhimo's Poems* (Zhimo de shi 志摩的诗) (1924) and *A Night in Florence* (Feilengcui de yiyeyue 翡冷翠的一夜) (1927). At the age of 34, he died in an airplane crash amid gossips of a love triangle between him, his second wife Lu Xiaoman 陆小曼 and Lin Huiyin 林徽因, an architect and writer who was also married. Apart from that, his relationship with Pearl S. Buck is sometimes under vague suspicion for the interest of gossip. Xu is also loosely associated with the Bloomsbury Group for his attachment to Roger Fry and G. L. Dickinson.

¹¹ The Crescent Moon Society is an influential literary society founded by Xu Zhimo in 1923, named after "The Crescent Moon", a poem by Rabindranath Tagore. Other members of the society include Hu Shi 胡适, Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, Shen Congwen 沈从文, Wen Yiduo 闻一多, Chen Mengjia 陈梦家 and Pan Guangdan 潘光旦. Some of these authors, such as Xu and Liang, are also considered a part of the Crescent Moon group (Xinyue pai 新月派), a school of poetry that is generally in favor of "art for art's sake". They used the newspaper *Supplements to Morning News* (Chenbao fukan 晨报副刊), and the journals *Crescent Moon* (Xinyue 新月) and *Poetry* (Shikan 诗刊) as the platforms for their views, mostly on arts and sometimes also on politics. It ceased operation in 1933.

¹² Heinrich Fruehauf, *Urban Exoticism in Modern Chinese Literature, 1910-1933* (Diss. University of Chicago, 1990), 230.

¹³ Xu Beihong (1895-1953) was one of the most famous Chinese painters in the twentieth century, who is known for his Chinese ink paintings. He was educated in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

acquainted him with the Celestial Dog Club (Tianguou hui 天狗会),¹⁴ a loosely formed arts society with the group of Zhang Daofan 张道藩,¹⁵ Liu Jiwen 刘纪文,¹⁶ Sun Peicang 孙佩苍,¹⁷ Guo Youshou 郭有守¹⁸ and Xie Shoukang 谢寿康¹⁹. The name of the club draws inspiration from the ancient Greek Cynics and the members were mostly Paris-based Chinese students. They frequented the cultural scenes of Paris such as the relocated Le Chat Noir²⁰ on Boulevard de Clichy and were interested in bringing cabaret culture to China.²¹ The acquaintance with Xu Beihong and the Celestial Dog Club deepened Shao's understanding of literature and its cultural underpinning. Life in Paris also provided him with some training in French, though it could be deduced from the biographies that his acquisition of French never reached the same level as his English.

Later in 1926, Shao was informed of fire damage to one of his important family properties. He was forced to drop out of Cambridge and return to Shanghai to cope with the family business. On Shao's way back from England to Shanghai, he stayed at Singapore briefly and came across a literary journal called *New Epoch* (Xinjiyuan 新纪元), created by a group of Shanghai-based writers under the name of the Sphinx Club (Shihou she 狮吼社):²² Teng Gu 腾固,²³

¹⁴ The name of the Celestial Dog Club also satirizes the Celestial Horse Club (Tianma hui 天马会), a society of painters formed in 1919. The latter includes members such as Jiang Xiaojian 江小鹮, Ding Song 丁悚 and Wang Yachen 汪亚尘.

¹⁵ Zhang Daofan (1897-1968) was a politician and art critic. He was educated in the University of London and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

¹⁶ Liu Jiwen (1890-1957) was a statesman. He was educated in The London School of Economics and Political Science.

¹⁷ Sun Peicang (1890-1942) was a statesman who was educated in the École des Beaux-Arts.

¹⁸ Guo Youshou (1901-1977) was a statesman educated in Université de Paris.

¹⁹ Xie Shoukang (1897-1974) was a literary critic. He was educated in Université Libre de Bruxelles and L'École Libre des Sciences Politiques.

²⁰ Le Chat Noir was a famous cabaret in Paris whose patrons include Paul Verlaine and Claude Debussy. Its first site opened from 1881 to 1897. Its last site opened in 1907 and was popular in the 20s.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

²² The Sphinx Club started in July 1924 when *Sphinx Fortnightly* (Shihou banyuekan 狮吼半月刊) was launched. The club ended in September 1930, when *La Maison D'Or Monthly* (Jinwu yuekan 金屋月刊) ceased publication.

²³ Teng Gu (1901-1941) was a writer and literary critic. He was educated in Universität zu Berlin. His critically-acclaimed works include two collections of short novels entitled *Murals* (Bihua 壁画) (1924) and *Extra-marital* (Waiyu 外遇) (1928).

Zhang Kebiao 章克标²⁴ and Fang Guangdao 方光焘.²⁵ This journal had a hunger for Baudelaire, Verlaine and Wilde, which is in line with Shao's personal taste. After he came back to Shanghai, he managed to meet Teng and gradually became acquainted with the Sphinx Club. Some of his earliest works were published in *Tusu* (屠苏), another journal edited by the Sphinx Club after *New Epoch* ceased publication. As Teng soon proceeded to pursue a political career and *Tusu* closed down, Shao took over the role of editor-in-chief and wielded his financial capability to support the publication of three journals: *Sphinx Monthly* (Shihou yuekan 狮吼月刊) from May 1927 to March 1928, *Sphinx Fortnightly* (Shihou banyuekan 狮吼半月刊) from July 1928 to December 1928, and *La Maison D'Or Monthly* (Jinwu yuekan 金屋月刊) from Jan 1929 to Sep 1930. These journals mainly feature poetry and prose contributed by writers associated with the Sphinx Club, as well as translated poems and short stories. These journals served as a platform for Shao's experiments in poetics and literary translation, which led to his publication of *Fire and Flesh* (Huo yu rou 火与肉), an anthology of critical essays in 1928.²⁶ In the same year, he published *Roses and Roses* (Yiduoduo meigui 一朵朵玫瑰), a collection of translated poems.²⁷ In 1927 Shao published his first poetry collection *Heaven and May*

²⁴ Zhang Kebiao (1900-2007) was a writer and publisher. He was educated in Kyoto Imperial University. He helped establish Times Publishing House (Shidai tushu gongsi 时代图书公司), one of the biggest publishers in the 30s.

²⁵ Fang Guangtao (1898-1964) was a linguist and writer. He was educated in Université de Lyon. His famous works include linguistic essays "System and Method" (Tixi yu fangfa 体系与方法) (1939) and "Does discourse have class?" (Yanyu you jieixing ma 言语有阶级性吗?) (1959).

²⁶ In the dedication Shao cites "Hands that sting like fire" from Swinburne's "Before Dawn", which might be the inspiration for the title *Fire and Flesh*. The anthology includes "Gautier" (Gaodai 高蒂蔼), which Shao describes as his translation of an essay of Arthur Symons on Gautier (the source text is unknown), and five essays written by Shao: "Sappho" (Shafu 莎弗) which talks about Sappho; "Catullus's Love poems" (Jiaduoluosi de qingshi 迦多罗斯的情诗) that dwells on Gaius Valerius Catullus (c. 84 - c. 54 BC), a poet of the late Roman Republic; "Swinburne" (Shiwenpeng 史文朋) and "Songs before Sunrise" (Richuqian zhi ge 日出前之歌) that pivot on Swinburne; as well as "A Sort of Cross Between a Thieves' Kitchen and a Presbytery" (Zeiku yu shengmiao zhijian de xintu 贼窟与圣庙之间的信徒) which focuses on Verlaine and the title of which comes from chapter VII of Moore's *Memoirs of My Dead Life*. In the foreword of the anthology Shao also mentions he is drafting an essay on Baudelaire, which he hopes could be included in a future reprint. It seems that it never happened.

²⁷ The anthology includes translations of poems written by Sappho, Catullus, Verlaine, Gautier, Dante and Christina Rossetti, Swinburne, Hardy and Sara Teasdale.

(Tiantang yu wuyue 天堂与五月), and in the next year came the second collection *Flower-like Evil* (Huayiban de zui'e 花一般的罪恶). After this, his focus shifted to poetry criticism and it was not until 1936 that his third collection *Twenty-five Poems*²⁸ (Shi ershiwushou 诗二十五首) was published.

Shao and Sheng Peiyu officially got married in 1927. In 1935 Shao got acquainted with Emily Hahn, an American columnist living in Shanghai. According to the biography *Emily Hahn in Shanghai* (Xiangmeili zai Shanghai 项美丽在上海),²⁹ their friendship soon morphed into an affair. This relationship was approved by Sheng as she regarded Hahn merely as a concubine he kept. After the Japanese army conquered Shanghai in 1937, Hahn and Shao's family moved to Avenue Joffre in the French Concession. The relationship eventually came to a halt in 1939. Hahn left Shanghai and their correspondence was cut off by the war. It was not until 1945 that they managed to exchange letters again.

Shao lost many of his book stores and publishing houses in the Japanese-conquered Shanghai. After the Communist Party came to power in 1949, his family wealth shrank drastically. He stopped writing poetry and tried to make a living by translating Anglophone literature, such as Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, *Queen Mab*, Byron's *The Age of Bronze* and Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (co-translated with She Guitang 余贵堂). In 1958 Shao was put in prison accused of being an imperialist spy. Wang Pu writes that what triggered his imprisonment might be that Shao wrote a letter to Hahn, who was then back in America, and tried to borrow money for his sixth brother Shao Yunxiang 邵云骧, who was poverty-stricken in Hong Kong. The letter never got out of China for it was intercepted by the police.³⁰ In 1962 Shao was released, but being impoverished, he again tried to ask Hahn for help in 1966, the year when the Cultural Revolution began. Although he submitted a copy to the police in advance and stated the purpose of the letter, still it could not be delivered.³¹ Two years later, he died in poverty.

However, Shao's correspondence with Hahn might not be the only reason that led to his interrogation and imprisonment. In the 1920s, Shao had a few

²⁸ The title bears a resemblance to Tristan Tzara's poetry collection *Vingt-cinq poèmes* in 1918. However, Shao never mentions Tzara in his works and it is unclear whether this is simply a coincidence.

²⁹ Wang Pu 王璞, *Xiangmeili zai Shanghai* 项美丽在上海 [Emily Hahn in Shanghai] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 292.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 292.

disputes with left-wing writers. His publications instigated a profusion of ironic attacks from Lu Xun 鲁迅,³² probably the most studied modern Chinese writer:

Mr. Shao Xunmei is a so-called “poet”,³³ and the grandson-in-law of the famous tycoon “Sheng Gongbao”.³⁴ If one wants to splash foul water on the head of “such a person”, it’s quite understandable. But I do think being a writer is ultimately different from arranging “an extravagant funeral procession”. Even if the writer hires a huge flock of supporters who pave the way with gongs and drums to boost his works, it’s still an empty street afterwards. But for “an extravagant funeral procession”, after several decades there’ll still be folks talking about it. If extremely poor, one certainly can’t write. But gold and silver are not the seeds of literature either and so it would be better to use the money to buy some land along the Yangtze River. Yet a rich fellow sometimes gets this wrong and thinks that since money makes the world go round, then it can also make him a good writer. Money makes the world go round, maybe even the universe, but it won’t make you a good writer, and the poetry of the poet Shao Xunmei demonstrates this.

邵洵美先生是所谓 “诗人”，又是有名的巨富 “盛宫保”的孙婿，将污秽泼在 “这般东西”的头上，原也十分平常的。但我以为作文人究竟和 “大出丧”有些不同，即使雇得一大群帮闲，开锣喝道，过后仍是一条空街，还不及 “大出丧”的虽在数十年后，有时还有几个市侩传颂。穷极，文是不能工的，可是金银又并非文章的根苗，它最好还是买长江沿岸的田地。然而富家儿总不免常常误解，以为钱可使鬼，就也可以通文。使鬼，

³² Lu Xun (1881-1936) was an influential writer and literary critic. He studied medicine in Japan but eventually turned to literature. His most famous works include collections of short stories *Call to Arms* (Nahan 呐喊) (1923), *Wandering* (Panghuang 彷徨) (1926) and *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue 中国小说史略) (1923). He helped found the League of Left-wing Writers (Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng 中国左翼作家联盟), often abbreviated as Left League (Zuolian 左联), which was formed in 1930 with the aid of the Communist Party. Other important members include Mao Dun 茅盾, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Ding Ling 丁玲. The purpose of the League was to advance the development of proletarian literature.

³³ Here Lu Xun uses inverted commas to quote phrases from Shao’s article “Literati Have No Jobs” (Wenren wuhang 文人无行) in the second issue of the journal *Conversations of Ten Days* (Shiri tan 十日谈), published in August 1933.

³⁴ Sheng Gongbao 盛宫保 is an honorable title of Sheng Xuanhuai.

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