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Lyricism, the Veneration of Feeling, and Narrative Techniques in the Poetry Talks of the Southern Society*

Abstract This paper examines the voluminous “poetry talks” (*shihua*) written by Southern Society (Nanshe) members and focuses on two tendencies in these discourses: The general cult of sentimentality and the narrative strategy on women’s poetry. These poetic discourses succeeded the language of traditional literary criticism, but also exhibited ideals of the new epoch. As a rebellion to the Qing imperial standard on measured and learned poetry, Southern Society poets took instead as their role models eccentric and iconoclastic poets who “venerated feelings.” The cult of sentimentality continued the trend of individual liberation from the late Ming and further showed a collective discourse that promoted a new kind of revolutionary subjectivity. These authors were also fond of collecting sentimental stories about female poets. More than being traditional “talented women,” these poets exhibited a diversity of female roles in an era of liberation.

Keywords Southern Society (Nanshe), poetry talks (*shihua*), veneration of feelings, lyric tradition, female poetry

Comprised of over a thousand members, almost exclusively cultural and social elites, the Southern Society (Nanshe 南社, 1909–23) was the largest literary community in modern China. Its influence was extensive, especially in terms of subjects, writing styles, and lyric language, as well as its means of

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dissemination. In all of these aspects, it is an important index for understanding modern Chinese literary culture.

Poetry makes up 77% of the 18,635 works collected in the *Collected Carvings of the Southern Society* (*Nanshe congke* 南社叢刻)¹ and was the major genre of writing by Southern Society members. However, possibly due to the limits of its collected genres (*shi* 詩 and *ci* 詞 poetry and *guwen* 古文 prose), Society members could not use it to exchange their opinions on poetics or to illustrate on their theories of poetic compositions. In my work, I have gone through over one hundred journals which Society members have helped in either editing or contributing, and have discovered that Society members used the form of “poetry talks” (*shihua* 詩話) extensively to express their innermost selves and their claims about the decline of the nation.² These works created a new kind of form and style, which was distinct from previous works on poetics or selections of poetry, thus they are extremely valuable for researchers. Therefore, this essay will use these poetry talks to analyze the Society’s tradition of “venerating feeling” (*zunqing* 尊情) and their narrative strategies, to gain a deeper understanding of modern poetry talks, and to get a better look at the nature of poetic culture in this transforming world.

Hu Pu’an 胡樸安 (1878–1947) once said of the Southern Society, “Though its members come from diverse backgrounds, their aims are one” and divided Society members into five types: the “strong-hearted,” the “staunch,” the “spirited,” “those thwarted by the Manchurian Qing government,” and “those who had no path to fame and fortune.”³ The main political goal of the Southern Society was to oppose the Qing government and later the presidency and monarchy of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916). Since the Society had many members, to analyze its conventions of composition, the easiest starting point is its chairman Liu Yazi 柳亞子 (1887–1958). Liu once said in his essay “Fifty-Seven Years” 五十七年, “In 1902, Gong Zizhen 龔自珍

¹ *Nanshe congke* is the most important collection of the Southern Society’s works, and poetry was its most important component. See Lin Hsiang-ling, *Nanshe wenxue zonglun*, 261–68, 309–572.

² [Translator’s Note] “Poetry talks” is a genre of literary criticism dating back to the eleventh century, usually comprised of brief, informal discussions of individual poems, poets, and poetic composition. On the origins of this genre, see Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty*, 60–108.

³ Hu Pu’an, “Zixu” 自序, in *Nanshe congxuan*, 15.

(1792–1841) and Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929) could be called my literary teachers, the people whom I admired most in terms of their thinking.”⁴ This was the key period in which Liu Yazi’s revolutionary thinking arose. It was this year that Liu Yazi went to places such as Wujiang and Suzhou to take the county, prefectural, and circuit examinations (*xiankao*, *fukao*, *daokao* 縣考、府考、道考), and when he first came into contact with new types of publications such as *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (New people’s magazine) and *Qingyi bao* 清議報 (The China discussion). It was also at this time that he read Liang Qichao’s imitation of Gong Zizhen’s “Lyrics on Sleep” 寢詞 in Liang’s series “Poems in their Original Contexts” 本事詩, with its “unforgettable feeling.” Incredibly drawn to the work, Liu said that Gong was “an exceptional gentleman whose work is startlingly gorgeous and extremely worthy of admiration.”⁵ Liu Yazi in his teens was writing many untitled and “Fragrant Boudoir Poems” 香奩詩 in “imitation of Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–58), Han Wo 韓偓 (844–923), Wang Cihui 王次回 (1593–1642), and Huang Zhongze 黃仲則 (1749–83),” among others.⁶ But from 1898 to 1903, Liang Qichao and Gong Zizhen quickly became his “two idols.”

When we look at the entire Southern Society from the perspective of Liu Yazi’s aims for writing and his use of emotion, we may argue that Liang Qichao and Gong Zizhen exerted an enormous influence on the Southern Society’s poetry and poetics. The external representation of the Southern Society relied on a sort of revolutionary gallantry and political lyricism, but its internal tenderness was expressed through writing on women. Though these two parts seem to be contrary modes of expression, in terms of core communal values, they in fact reveal the unique atmosphere of the political expression of feelings. The main questions of this paper are: Why would the Southern Society “poetry talks” “express feelings” (*shuqing* 抒情)? How did they express feelings? How do they construct a foundation for the “veneration of feelings” (*zunqing*)? In doing so, I aim to trace the trajectory of modern poetic culture.

⁴ Liu Yazi, “Wushiqi nian” 五十七年 (Fifty-seven years), in Liu Wuji and Liu Wufei eds., *Zizhuan, nianpu, riji*, 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 144–47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

From the “Expression of Feelings” to the “Veneration of Feelings”

In his 1957 essay “Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature,” Jaroslav Průšek (1906–80) argued that the shift in Chinese literature from lyric (poetry) to epic (novel) was related to the psychological factors of subjectivization and individualization which brought about the lyricism (*shuqing jingshen* 抒情精神 in Chinese translation) so pronounced in modernity.⁷ Průšek actively constructed a lyrical tradition in Chinese literature, which has been very influential in Sinological circles. In the last ten years, Sinologists have continued to discuss and explore this lyrical tradition. Earlier scholars like Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946), Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898–1948), and others also contributed much to establishing a Chinese lyrical tradition. But the one who truly founded a discursive genealogy of the lyrical tradition was Chen Shih-hsiang 陳世驥 (1912–71).⁸

Yan Kunyang 顏崑陽 believes that Chen Shih-hsiang’s discussion of the lyrical tradition “exerted a deep influence on the study of Chinese literature in Taiwan, the U.S., and several other Chinese cultural regions.” He argues that Ko Ch’ing-ming 柯慶明, Tsai Ying-chun 蔡英俊, Lü Zhenghui 呂正惠, Cheung Suk-Hong 張淑香, Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, Cheng Yu-yu 鄭毓瑜, Liao Tung-liang 廖棟樑, Xiao Chi 蕭馳, Yu-kung Kao 高友工, Kang-i Sun Chang 孫康宜, Shuen-fu Lin 林順夫, Stephen Owen, Andrew Plaks, and Leonard K. K. Chan are all participants in this discourse, who “can be said to have constructed a ‘discursive genealogy,’ creating a kind of ‘interpretive model.’”⁹ He writes:

The most important question in Chen Shih-hsiang’s discourse on the “lyrical tradition” is this: On the one hand, in terms of “theory,” it reveals a mixing of basic concepts and its interpretive aims are not

⁷ Jaroslav Průšek, “Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature,” in Leo Ou-fan Lee ed., *The Lyrical and the Epic*, 1–28.

⁸ Chen Shih-hsiang originally delivered his thoughts as an address to the Association for Asian Studies under the title “On Chinese Lyrical Tradition.” Yu-kung Kao traces the later foundations of the discourse of the Chinese lyrical tradition in his “Zhongguo wenhua shi zhong de shuqing chuantong.”

⁹ Yan Kunyang, “Hunrong, jiaoshe, yanbian dao bieyong, fenliu, buti.”

consistent; on the other hand, in terms of facts, it hyperbolically claims as part of the “lyric” several forms of Chinese literature clearly marked as “narrative,” such as the great *fu* of the Han dynasty as well as the drama and fiction which arose after the Song.¹⁰

Yan claims that the inheritors of the discourse of the lyrical tradition have not been able to stick close to real literary phenomena, thus he proposes to construct a “comprehensive literary history.” David Der-wei Wang is one of the most representative scholars to have been influenced by Chen Shih-shiang’s discursive genealogy. Wang’s *Modern Chinese Lyrical Tradition: Four Essays*¹¹ is an investigation of the lyrical tradition and Chinese modernity, describing the lyrical tradition’s expansion into a modern system of literary interpretation, and is completely concordant with Průšek’s theory. For another example, Leonard K. K. Chan’s *Essays on Chinese Lyricism*,¹² a collection of several of his works, continued to enlarge the ranks of Chinese lyricism. In 2014, Wang and Chan co-edited the volume *Modernity of the Lyric: The Discourse of the Lyrical Tradition and the Study of Chinese Literature*,¹³ which continued to establish the legitimacy of such discussions of the lyrical tradition.

Gong Pengcheng has also noted the paradox of “the lyrical tradition” being a “non-existent tradition.”¹⁴ He maintains that Chen Shih-hsiang views Chinese poetry through the model of the Western lyric, even to the point of exaggerating its lyrical characteristics, and that Chen’s theory has major problems in terms of methodology, perspective, and thought. Zhang Chuntian 張春田 has a different view of the relationship between the lyrical tradition and the literature of the Southern Society:

There is a very close relationship between the Southern Society and the lyrical tradition. The lyricism was not only realized in the romantic behavior of the “passionate monk” Su Manshu 蘇曼殊 (1884–1918); it

¹⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹¹ Published in Chinese as *Xiandai “shuqing chuantong” silun*.

¹² Published in Chinese as Chen Guoqiu, *Shuqing Zhongguo lun*.

¹³ Published in Chinese as Chen Guoqiu and Wang Dewei eds., *Shuqing zhi xiandaixing: Shuqing chuantong lunshu yu Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu*.

¹⁴ Gong Pengcheng, “Bu cunzai de chuantong.”

also involved a complex entanglement of history and memory, the body and the world, the emotional and the rational, and thus can be seen in the undertaking and the sense of [national] trauma found in the Southern Society. In the works of the Southern Society we see manifested a continuation of and return to the classic meaning of the lyrical tradition. To a great degree, we can say that the Southern Society is an emotional community, even a rather sentimental community. But within this community, there are different veins of lyricism.¹⁵

Zhang expounds upon the lyrical vision of the Southern Society and their poetry, arguing for an intimate connection between the Southern Society and the lyrical tradition: They are not only “an emotional community” but also a “rather sentimental community.” This view is indeed reasonable, as it provides us insight into the Southern Society’s anti-Qing and anti-Yuan Shikai views. But it fails to explain the unique modernity of the Southern Society, including its views on the female experience, its mournful laments over the early deaths of female writers, and the appearance of a volume of “poetry talks” mostly compiled from these women’s writings.

In fact, so-called “lyricism” (*shuqing*) stresses the alleviation (*shujie* 抒解) and expression (*shufa* 抒發) of feeling (*qing* 情), and there is a direct relationship between theorists’ attitudes toward “feelings” and the standards by which they evaluate poetry. Whether poetry is taken to be “the expression of feelings” (*shuqing*) or “the articulation of intent” (*yanzhi* 言志), it must serve to sing of one’s inner feelings. Thus, Liu Xie 劉勰 (fifth cent.) said, “Poetry is grasping, grasping one’s character and inner feelings” 詩，持也，持人性情，¹⁶ and “for the sake of feelings, one should be concise, clear, and accurate to reality” 爲情者要約而寫真。¹⁷ Jiaoran 皎然 (720?–98) said, “the supreme achievement in the Way [of poetry] lies in that [the reader] sees only the inner feelings and character [of the author,] and not his words” 但見情性，不睹文字，蓋詣道之極也。¹⁸ Yan Yu 嚴羽 (1192?–1245?) said, “Poetry is the articulations of one’s inner feelings and character” 詩者，吟詠情性也。¹⁹

¹⁵ Zhang Chuntian, “Shuqing chuantong yu xiandai qinggan zhengzhi,” 676.

¹⁶ Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong zhushi*, “Chapter 6: An Elucidation of Poetry” 明詩第六, 83.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, “Chapter 31: Emotion and Embellishment” 情采第三十一, 600.

¹⁸ Jiaoran, *Shishi*, 5.

¹⁹ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua*, 21.

In order to demonstrate the existence of a lyrical tradition in China, Tsai Ying-chun said:

There are two spiritual prototypes for the construction of a Chinese lyrical tradition: the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Songs of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭). The *Odes* depicts a natural, idyllic landscape by means of its plain, straightforward emotions, and the implied satisfaction and pleasure contained therein become a kind of spiritual yearning and index. The *Songs of Chu*, on the other hand, reveal the individual's entanglements and barriers between the finite and the infinite through its impassioned mood, and its loneliness and yearning endow the lyrical tradition with cultural depth and power.²⁰

Comparing the words above with the works of Gong Zizhen, revered by the Southern Society, we find that they point to an aesthetic characteristic that has become common in the modern era—sorrow. Such an outpouring of sorrow is closely related to a cluster of words centered around the concept of *fen* 憤 (“indignation”): “sorrowful indignation” (*beifen* 悲憤), “righteous indignation” (*gufen* 孤憤), “concerned indignation” (*youfen* 憂憤), and “discontented indignation” (*yuanfen* 怨憤). Feelings of patriotism and pity for young beauties became acceptable, and at times intertwined. The former was a manifestation of the emotions of generosity and excitement, while the latter showed direct obedience to natural desires. They both dismissed rhetorical flourish and strived to avoid falling into the rut of polished words. For this reason, although the appearance of lyricism in the Southern Society was a response to the necessities of the time, it is the *vereneration* of feelings that was the main line of their emotional genealogy. And this, the veneration of feelings, is also the key word through which we should view modern poetic culture.

Gong Zizhen in the Southern Society's Poetry Talks

This section is focused on locating the direct predecessors to the Southern

²⁰ Tsai Ying-chun, “Shuqing jingshen yu shuqing chuantong,” 98.

Society's veneration of feelings, namely: What was its most recent source of inspiration?

Mao Guangsheng 冒廣生 (1873–1959) once said, “Ever since 1888, Gong Zizhen's writings have circulated widely; they were especially revered by the Southern Society.”²¹ Since many Southern Society members were earlier supporters of the Late Qing Reform school, their writings contain no lack of imitations of Liang Qichao's *Remarks on Poetry from the Ice-Drinking Studio* (*Yinbingshi shihua* 飲冰室詩話). But the Southern Society's poetry talks were based on the veneration of feelings: Did this originally from Gong Zizhen, or was it directly passed down from Liang Qichao? Chen Guanghong believes that the Southern Society was influenced by the revolutionary concepts of people such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Washington, and Napoleon, as advocated in the “Record of Poetry, Prose, and Song” (*Shi wen ci suilu* 詩文辭隨錄) and the “Collection of the Tides of Poetry” (*Shijie chaoyin ji* 詩界潮音集) columns in the journals *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin congbao*. Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Hugo, Schiller, and Goethe, he says, influenced the Southern Society in their “value of the pursuit of the absolute self and individual experience, feeling and expressing themselves with intense fervor through the imagination.” Thus, “after they had set up their anti-Qing cultural nationalism, they found in the popular poetry of Gong Zizhen a deep ideological background to match their own in terms of his emotional experience and his means of expression.”²² What Chen is implying here is extremely subtle: The establishment of the Southern Society subconsciously succeeded the Southern Ming's anti-Qing agenda, but a “dialogic relationship” existed between the late Ming and the late Qing,²³ and this was echoed in the Southern Society's tradition of venerating Gong Zizhen and venerating feelings, which further reveals the Southern Society's succession of late Ming intellectual trends.

As for Gong Zizhen's views on “the veneration of feelings,” he writes the following in his “Self-Preface to *Poems in Long and Short Lines*”

²¹ *Niehaihua xianhua* 孽海花閒話, in *Gujin* 古今 41–50 (February 2–July 1, 1944), quoted in Mao Heting, *Niehaihua xianhua*, 16.

²² Chen Guanghong, “Gong Zizhen yu Zhongguo shuqing wenxue de qian xiandai zhuanxing,” 142.

²³ Chen Pingyuan, Wang Dewei and Shang Wei eds., *Wan Ming yu wan Qing: Lishi chuancheng yu wenhua chuangxin*, 617.

(“Changduanyan zixu” 長短言自序):

As for the things called “feelings (*qing*),” I have often had a mind to dig them up. When I could not dig them up, I would indulge them. When indulging them was not enough, I would venerate them. For what reason have I written *Poems in Long and Short Lines*? Because feelings should be venerated? How are feelings to be venerated? Not stopping them is veneration, not taking refuge in them is veneration, circumscribing them without circumscribing them is veneration, indicating them without indicating them is veneration, and delighting or sorrowing in them without delighting or sorrowing in them is veneration. How are feelings to be let forth? They are to be let forth in sound.²⁴

Gong Zizhen honors the expression of an individual’s natural emotions, believes that feelings should not be restrained or limited, and emphasizes the free blossoming of feelings and thoughts. “Indulging feelings” (*youqing* 宥情), written at the age of nineteen, offers a debate on feelings between the characters A, B, C, D, and E, in the end deciding that feelings “must be indulged for now.” Only in his “Self-Preface” does he finally state that the goal of “Indulging Feelings” is “venerating feelings.” This can be seen in the nearly forty poems of barely restrained grief he expresses in bidding farewell to courtesans, collected in his “Miscellaneous Poems of 1839” (*Jihai zashi* 己亥雜詩). The Southern Society, with its love for Gong Zizhen, valued the release of personal emotion and did not limit themselves to feelings of collective, unrestrained grief. Rather, when we look at the Southern Society’s attitude toward women who were “wise early on,” “skilled in poetry,” and who “crafted lyrics” in their poetry talks, we find despair and pity over these women’s cruel fates. But when confronted with the new wave of modern women, the Southern Society also held onto the ideal of traditional female virtue, in which a woman should follow her husband or father into death to express her loyalty. This led to a contradiction between their desire to control women and to support their rights, but it also led them to a better understanding of modern culture.

²⁴ Gong Zizhen, *Gong Zizhen quanji*, 232.

The influence of Liang Qichao on the Southern Society's poetry talks can mainly be seen in the general impression we get from modern poetry talks, including the principles by which they selected poems, their dissemination tactics, the topics they wrote on, their means of expression, and their use of new words. Liang, in his advocacy for the Poetic Revolution, aimed at the practical. It was not until his publication of "Emotion Expressed in Chinese Verse" ("Zhongguo yunwen litou suo biao xian de qinggan" 中國韻文裏頭所表現的情感) in 1922 that he formally announced his focus on the use of emotions, but by this time, the Southern Society was already on the brink of dissolution. Thus, the Southern Society's tradition of "venerating feeling" was rooted in Gong Zizhen more than Liang Qichao.

Literary inquisition had become intense since the early Qing. The Qianlong Emperor, as part of an official crackdown on the standards of the poetry criticism, personally laid down "the principle of gentleness, generousness, and concord" for *The Best of Tang and Song Poetry* (*Tang Song shi chun* 唐宋詩醇), an imperial anthology, and remarked "my favor toward Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769) began with poetry and ended with poetry."²⁵ Thus, the Southern Society did not admire those who championed the suppression of feelings, such as Shen Deqian, "the highest standard of gentleness and honesty,"²⁶ or Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733–1818), "whose poetry was short in the expression of character or feelings."²⁷ The intense involvement of the central powers led to the primacy of "scholars' poetry" (*xueren zhi shi* 學人之詩), which emphasized erudition and learning rather than individuality, passion, and instinct. Once the environment became conducive to emotional release, it was necessary for the Southern Society to find alternative models. They promoted the "Theory of Inner Spirit" (*xingling shuo* 性靈說) of Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–98), who said that "poetry is born of feeling" and "Being a poet, I have not lost the mind of a newborn."²⁸ They were also advocates of the brash, manic Huang Zhongze 黃仲則 (1749–83), who wrote the couplet "Sorrowful drinking and mad singing I have borne half my life / Reading

²⁵ Yuan Mei, "Taizi taishi libu shangshu Shen Wenque gong shendao bei" 太子太師禮部尚書沈文愨公神道碑 (Funeral inscription for Shen Wenque, the imperial teacher of the crown prince and director in the Ministry of Rites), 1217.

²⁶ Quoted in Ye Xie, *Yuanshi*, 191.

²⁷ Hong Liangji, *Beijing shihua*, 1.21.

²⁸ Yuan Mei, *Yuan Mei quanji*, 71.

books and girding swords accomplish nothing” 痛飲狂歌負半生，讀書擊劍兩無成。²⁹ In the otherwise genteel world of Qing poetry, these writers comprised an undercurrent of eccentricity—exactly the sort of model the Southern Society needed.

Kurata Sadayoshi once gave four main reasons for the Southern Society’s intense love for Gong Zizhen: 1) “the charm of novel, unusual, light-hearted, and wondrous expressions,” 2) “their resonance with his bravery and passion,” 3) “his deep roots in the southeast—a similar sensibility of subtle regret [over the Manchu’s conquest],” and 4) “eroticism and ornate language—the free revelation of love and common feelings.”³⁰ Looking at the *Nanshe congke*, I have also noted the Southern Society members’ practice of “collecting Gong’s lines [into a new poem]” (*ji Gong* 集龔). The purpose was not just to exhibit their friendly exchanges with fellow members, but it was also used to express their emotions or mourning for the dead—all these were articulated through an identification to Gong.³¹ When we look at Gong’s “Miscellaneous Poems of 1839” from the perspective of “the veneration of feelings,” we must be careful to take note of his individualized, ornately-worded personal feelings: One in five of his “Miscellaneous Poems of 1839” are love poems, over 61 pieces involving Xiaoyun 小雲 and Lingxiao 靈簫, two courtesans he met on his long trip home.³² If the writing of indignation is the main theme of Gong’s works, then the construction of the inner emotion of love is their secondary theme.

The Southern Society’s poetry talks contain many examples of imitators of both of these themes. For example, the *Snowbank Poetry Talks* (*Xueya shihua* 雪厓詩話) of Lei Tieya 雷鐵厓 (1873–1920) (which has only five entries in total) tells that the poem he wrote for Yu E 俞鏗 (1887–1936)—who was “upright and prudent all his life, and never knew the cramped and crooked”—was actually “a work of eroticism” (*xiangyan zhi zuo* 香豔之作). Then he “commands the rest to match the poem in rhyme” in order that Yu E may feel the charm of late Tang poets Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (817–70) and Li

²⁹ Huang Jingren, “Chongjiu hou shiri zuizhong ci Qian Qilu yun zengbie” 重九後十日醉中次錢企盧韻贈別 (Bidding farewell by matching the rhyme of a poem by Qian Qilu in drunkenness, ten days after the double ninth day), *Liangdangxuan quanji*, 143.

³⁰ See Kurata Sadayoshi, *Chūgoku kindai shi no kenkyū*, 523.

³¹ Lin Hsiang-ling, *Nanshe wenxue zonglun*, 392–405.

³² Shen Jianjiang, “Zunqing zhuzhao xia de yinqing,” 133–36.

Shangyin.³³ In his *Poetry Talks of the Southern Society* (*Nanshe shihua* 南社詩話), Hu Pu'an records Gao Xu's 高旭 (1877–1925) first summons a party for “a picture of discussing swords before the flowers,” which reads:

At that banquet, we chatted according to our minds. The poetry we wrote was completed as soon as we pulled out our brushes. There are always a great many drinking games at banquets, including calling on courtesans to liven things up. [. . .] After a day of plum-wine, as spirits grew bolder and talk increased, I playfully wrote a quatrain which read:

燕燕鶯鶯稱盛會	All the swallows and all the orioles call it a grand gathering;
酒酣耳熱氣豪粗	Tipsy with alcohol, our ears hot, the atmosphere bold and crude.
把杯笑問高天子	Grabbing a cup, I laugh and ask of His Highness, Gao the Son of Heaven (aka. Gao Xu):
能向花前說劍無	Could he discuss swords before the flowers or not? ³⁴

The Southern Society both “loved the nation” and “loved flowers (euphemism for courtesans),” sought both martial valor and tender passion. Both revolution and romance, together, were important goals of the Southern Society. Needless to say, the espouse of eroticism to patriotism is a tradition initiated by Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340 BCE–278 BCE), in whose “Encountering Sorrow” (*Lisao* 離騷) “fragrant herbs and beauty” (*xiangcao meiren* 香草美人) served as metaphors for his unyielding virtue and loyalty. In going back to the roots of the political metaphor, the Southern Society believed they should follow the emotions of one’s inmost heart and compose via the veneration of those feelings. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain “the intellectuals’ tradition of ‘longing for beauty’” and “the deep influence of Gong Zizhen.”³⁵

³³ Lin Hsiang-ling, *Fansi, zhuisuo yu xinmai: Nanshe yanjiu waibian*, 481–86.

³⁴ Man Zhao and Hu Pu’an, *Nanshe shihua*, 116.

³⁵ Gong Pengcheng, “Xiagu yu rouqing” 俠骨與柔情 (Heroic bones and tender emotions), in *Jindai sixiangshi sanlun*, 116.

Zhou Shi and the Veneration of Feelings in the Southern Society's Poetry Talks

Zhou Shi 周實 (1885–1911) was an early member of the Southern Society. His *Poetry Talks of an Inexhaustible Hut* (*Wujin'an shihua* 無盡庵詩話) is comprised of 70 passages in two fascicles, and, according to its preface, was composed in 1906. The poems he discussed include ancient and recent works. It can be generally divided into two sections, “Sorrowful Melancholy over Contemporary Affairs” (*youshi minsu* 憂時憫俗) and “Joyful Gaiety to Foster One's Nature” (*taoqing shuxing* 陶情淑性). The preface first quotes from Du Fu's “Given to Magistrate Liu of Huayang” (“Yi Huayang Liu-shaofu” 貽華陽柳少府): “The minor skill of writing / Is not venerable compared to the Way” 文章一小技，於道未爲尊, and then uses this to explain his views on poetry:

If its aims are rooted in the “articulating the intent” of the court of the Emperor Yu or the “lack of error” of Confucius, then poetry is what the gentleman uses to express his inner feelings and set forth the meaning of the Way, and it shall never be abandoned among the realm of men for even a single day Of changes in the world, there are differences in rise and fall, order and chaos, life and death, gathering and scattering; of the human heart, there are differences in delight and anger, joy and sorrow, happiness and worry, anguish and ease. All humans are rooted in these feelings, and when they are put into poetry, such poetry can be used not only to see the hearts of individuals, but also to observe the changes of their world.³⁶

The opening of this passage quotes from the time of the sages—“the court of Emperor Yu” and the foremost sage Confucius—and follows their fundamental concepts for interpreting the *Book of Odes*, namely “articulating the intent” (*yanzhi* 言志) and “lack of error” (*wuxie* 無邪). The following phrase “to express his inner feeling and set forth the meaning of the Way” doubtlessly makes it a part of the lyrical tradition, i.e., the tradition of expressing feelings in poetry. But in Zhou's preface, one must also “observe the changes of the world” corresponding to differences in emotion before

³⁶ Zhou Shi, “Zixu” 自序, in *Wujin'an yi ji*, 145.

one can “put them into poetry,” poetry which will properly “venerate the Way.” In this way, Zhou Shi criticizes the Qing schools dedicated to protecting lineages and focusing on meter and prosody, calling them “poetry’s slaves.” Instead, the standard he uses for selected works to include in his poetry talks is that they be “works of heroic pathos and knotty sorrow.”

For example, in remembrance of the early death of his close female friend Tang Yin 棠隱, Zhou Shi wrote “A Short Biography of Ms. Tang Yin,” which included some of his own poems expressing his thoughts and feelings for her. One such poem, “Sitting in Silence” (“Mozuo” 默坐), reads:

已被形骸累	Already wearied by your physical form,
還來蠻觸爭	Still I come fight over it like the Man and Chu. ³⁷
娥眉如此好	Your moth-brows this lovely,
蚊睫可憐生	Your mosquito-lashes pitiable.
莊叟空齊物	In vain Old Zhuang treated things as equal;
龔生善宥情	Good it was for Mr. Gong to indulge feelings.
宵長眠不得	The night is long, and I can't sleep:
和月數殘更	I count off the last night's watch with the moon. ³⁸

This poem describes a physical form of life wearied in body and mind. Although she is beautiful, she cannot in the end escape the fate of being “pitiable.” The third couplet describes Zhuangzi’s aloof transcendence and compares it to Gong Zizhen’s “indulging feelings.” Thus, the speaker cannot dispel the emotions bothering him, and so he finds it hard to sleep at night. Many other poems present Zhou Shi as being worn down by his feelings, resorting to the helpless formula of imploring Heaven and expressing his feelings in poetry. Apart from this, he also laments over the world’s changes: Poems such as “Expelling Weariness” (“Qumen” 驅悶), “Composed While Lodging in the Commandery Guesthouse” (“Juncheng keshe oufu” 郡城客舍偶賦), and “Stirred by Events” (“Ganshi” 感事) reveal his anger, and befit the

³⁷ [Translator’s Note] Line 2 alludes to a story from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in which two kingdoms, called Man and Chu, reside on the two horns of a snail and continually fight over territory. See Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 25.891–92.

³⁸ Zhou Shi, *Wujin’an yi ji*, 47.

abundance of standard patriotic sentiment in modern poetry.

In poems such as “Sitting Alone on a Summer Night” (“Xiaye duzuo” 夏夜獨坐), “Expelling Weariness,” and “On an Autumn Birchleaf Pear” (“Yong qiutang” 詠秋棠), Zhou Shi speaks of his antisocial tendencies and the difficulties of expressing the depths of his inner feelings. In this vein, we see how his quotations of others’ poems and his extracts from his own work in *Poetry Talks from an Inexhaustible Hut* ultimately find their basis in the veneration of feelings. Poems such as “Stirred at the Yellow River” (“Hehuang yougan” 河湟有感) and “Looking at a Strange Stone while Climbing Yashan” (“Deng Yashan guan qishi” 登崖山觀奇石) criticize those who serve the Manchus and forgotten their Chinese blood, comparing them to Zhang Hongfan 張弘範 (1238–80), who capitulated to the Yuan dynasty after the collapse of the Song:

When I read their words, my hair stands up, my flesh shudders—I want to cry but my tears have dried up, I want to rage but my liver’s already burst. Alas! One Zhang Hongfan can be put to death, but when all the world is flooded with Zhang Hongfans, it’s impossible to put them all to death. [. . .] There is nothing so despicable among the flora and fauna.³⁹

In this passage, Zhou Shi informs us of his standard for evaluating works. Aside from testing to see if the subject matter accords with human emotion and if the means of expression are natural, he also stresses the importance of the poet’s character. Thus, when he mentions a capitulator like Zhang Hongfan, he finds nothing worthy of comparably harsh criticism among the flora and fauna of the natural realm. Additionally, when he quotes poems by precursor poets, he describes them with words like “deep pain,” “worthy of song and worthy of tears,” “tragic and bleak,” “wracked deep with sorrow,” “grieving the chaos of the times,” “embracing the scent of chivalry within a dusty wind,” “heroic pathos,” and “embracing the melancholy of a fluttering orchid.” We can see that Zhou Shi starts from emotion in his discussions of poetry, a clear mark of the veneration of feelings.

Zhou Shi believed that one who writes poetry must have integrity and

³⁹ Zhou Shi, *Wujin’an yi ji, shihua*, 147.

insight, only then could he achieve “no weakness in diction.” Though Yuan Mei stressed inner feelings, he erred in his “obscenity and over-familiarity,” which was “a pestilence to poetry” and did not live up to the standard of “longing without error” from the *Book of Odes*. Admitting that it was impossible to write poetry talks which have surveyed the works of all poets, he instead focused on the veneration of feeling, guided by a quote from the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記): “Feelings are stirred within, then find form in sound” 情動於中，故形於聲, hoping to clearly express natural feelings. He also held that the right way was “to foresee peril during periods of abundance, and to bear in mind disorder during times of grief” 憂盛而危明，哀時而念亂. Regarding “moaning when free of illness, delighting in the midst of affliction” 無病而呻，有憂而喜, he maintained that if one didn’t understand human feelings, one couldn’t put them into words and write poetry. When one writes of contemporaries’ emotions, one should avoid the woeful language of the “prisoners of poetry” and thus avoid losing “all of his own inner feelings.” For this reason, he rejected “difficult” poetic composition and the exquisite crafting of couplets, advocating instead for the writing of exhortative poetry while in dire straits. He recorded, for instance, poems by the murdered early Ming Emperor Jianwen (r. 1399–1402), the martyred female poet Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907), and the “wronged” Lady Wang of Julu 鉅鹿王氏女 as exemplary poems composed in hardship, sometimes before one’s violent death, to restore the emotional dimension of history.

Zhou Shi considered emotions to be unique to humans and therefore the essence of humanity. In his essay “A Record of the Veneration of Feeling” (“Zunqing lu” 尊情錄), he argues, “Among all animals, only humans have complex emotions”; while young, “we have already been harassed by the demon of feeling, laughing and crying for no reason, feeling joy or worry at the wrong times.” In his view, humans’ feelings differ in accordance with environment, time, and circumstance, so that even if we “grow older and know to regret,” we will only “try to hold it back with our strength,” but “the more we hold it back, the stronger it becomes, and the more we suppress it, the more it thrives.” Zhou Shi tells us to “follow the words of Gong Zizhen, which are millions of times more effective than medicine” and publicly acknowledges that his concept of the veneration of feelings is nothing more than a “repeated untangling” of what Gong Zizhen wrote. Taking it a step

further, he said that desire could not simply be given free reign, but feelings must be venerated, that in a world in chaos we absolutely must not use our strength to dig up the roots of feelings and destroy the seeds of feelings. His hope was that:

In the world rapidly declining into chaos, in which the human heart is corrupted daily, my generation would take up the changing customs as their duty, and should especially offer up our whole bodies from head to toe and bare our very insides, to show each other our true character and inmost feelings. If one be incapable of this, though he has superior talent or learning, I would look upon him as cold-blooded. From here on, not only shall I not suppress my feelings, I shall indulge feelings, I shall venerate feelings. I wish that all men and women, here and abroad, would indulge and venerate their feelings as I do!⁴⁰

We can see here the process of Zhou Shi moving from “indulging feelings” to “venerating feelings,” finally taking the veneration of feelings as the guiding norm of poetry, as the standard for judgment of the human heart. In addition to expounding a basic theory of the veneration of feelings, he argues that the projection of human emotions onto phenomena can shed light on the nature of the mind.

Although Zhou Shi “did not deign to see himself as a poet” and “did not want to end this life being simply a ‘poet’,” he established the foundation for the Southern Society’s tradition of the veneration of feelings. Bai Jian believes that Zhou Shi was influenced by Yuan Mei.⁴¹ While the two definitely overlap at points, in terms of their method for expressing feelings, the details of Zhou and Yuan’s “veneration of feelings” are not the same.

Modern Poetics in Light of the Southern Society’s Poetry Talks

On the whole, the Southern Society’s poetry talks modeled themselves on “displaying feeling” (*xianqing* 顯情), “emphasizing feeling” (*zhongqing* 重情),

⁴⁰ Zhou Shi, *Wujin’an yi ji*, 181.

⁴¹ Bai Jian, “Cong *Wujin’an shihua* kan Zhou Shi de shixue guan.”

“writing out feeling” (*xieqing* 寫情), and “expressing feeling” (*shuqing* 抒情) (i.e., lyricism), quoting many poems that contain emotional language, a strategy the writers of the poetry talks used to promote their own abundant emotions. If there are poets who had talents or unusual behaviors, but were not accounted for by their contemporaries, then they would deliberately write biographies for these forgotten poets.

Let us look at a few examples. The *Poetry Talks from the Cultivating Stillness Studio* (*Xijingzhai shihua* 習靜齋詩話) by Fang Tingkai 方廷楷 (?–pre-1929)⁴² emphasizes the relationship between education and disposition, maintaining that only after both valuing one’s disposition and attaining an education can one begin to achieve a new kind of poetry. The *Poetry Talks from a Lesser Samatha Room* (*Xiaoshemoshi shihua* 小奢摩室詩話) by Wang Zhongqi 王鐘麒 (1880–1914)⁴³ values works of inner feelings and includes many deeply moving poems of mourning. The *Poetry Evaluations* (*Ping shi* 平詩) of Zhu Yuanchu 朱鴛雛 (1897–1921)⁴⁴ advocates for setting forth one’s true inner feelings, criticizing the New School (i.e., modern vernacular) poets for directly relying on Gong Zizhen while lacking the latter’s unique scholarly sentiments. The *Poetry Talks of the Regret-Clad Hut* (*Zhuangchou’an shihua* 裝愁齋詩話) by Li Huaishuang 李懷霜 (?–pre-1937)⁴⁵ records the anecdotes of women fighting against their “evil mothers-in-law,” displaying the noble character of these women. The *Outline of Poetics* (*Shixue gangyao* 詩學綱要) by Chen Qubing 陳去病 (1874–1933) discusses the meaning of the word “poetry” as the means by which one clearly manifests what’s on the mind, drawing on the theories of Confucius and Liu Xie; he argues that human feeling must be expressed at appropriate times, and that poetry should “uphold a person’s inner nature.” The *Poetry Talks South of the Nest* (*Chaonan shihua* 巢南詩話),⁴⁶ also by Chen Qubing, talks of how Pan Jiang’s 潘江 “feelings are piercingly bleak, remnants of ‘Drooping Millet’

⁴² These poetry talks were collected between 1905 and 1909. They have been published as Fang Tingkai, *Xijingzhai shihua*.

⁴³ Published in *Minhu bao* 民呼報, May 15 and July 24, 1909; see also *Minhu bao*, October 18, 19, and 21; and November 8, 10, and 16, 1909.

⁴⁴ Published in *Minguo ribao* 民國日報, July 9, 1917.

⁴⁵ Published in *Minquan su* 民權素, September 15, 1915.

⁴⁶ *Chaonan shihua* was first published in November 1929, see *Jiangsu geming bowuguan yuekan*, nos. 4–7, 9; it has also been collected in Chen Qubing *quanji*, ce 3, 1273–1302.

(‘Shuli’ 黍離) and ‘Barley Ear’ (‘Maixiu’ 麥秀).⁴⁷ The *Poetics of Describing the Heart* (*Shixue shuyi* 詩學述臆) by Ye Chucang 葉楚傖 (1887–1946)⁴⁸ discusses how poetry comes from feelings, but because everyone’s experience of joy and sorrow is different, “it is hard to compose by following its measures.” The *Poetry Talks at a Mountain Spring* (*Zaishanquan shihua* 在山泉詩話) by Pan Feisheng 潘飛聲 (1858–1934)⁴⁹ shows admiration for works of personality and romantic charm, using “exquisite” (*gongli* 工麗), “erotic” (*xiangyan* 香豔), “elegant” (*qingli* 清麗), “seductive” (*yanye* 艷冶), and such words to talk about poetry, which reveals the importance of feeling and authenticity in his view of poetry. The *Poetry Talks from a Rain-Listening Tower* (*Tingyulou shihua* 聽雨樓詩話) by Jiang Zhuchao 蔣箸超 (1881–1937)⁵⁰ emphasizes that “poetry is used to speak of inner feelings,” believing that well-crafted verses are at the poet’s fingertips. All of these examples reveal how “feelings” were ubiquitous in the Southern Society’s “poetry talks.”

Let us now look more closely at the *Poetry Talks from the Studio of Renewal* (*Gengshengzhai shihua* 更生齋詩話) by Zhou Zhongmu 周仲穆 (1870–1914).⁵¹ These poetry talks are characterized by their “indignation at the error of using a random assortment of modern words in poetry” and their “vehement repudiation of the nonsensical theories of the Literary Revolution.” Regarding the first of these statements, Zhou maintains that the ancients took their guiding principle to be that “poetry can have the flavor of philosophy, but not words of philosophy.” In opposition to the modern practice of putting modern neologism into their poetry, he proposed to study intensively and thoroughly master the tradition, in order to create “a unique

⁴⁷ [Translator’s Note] I.e., songs that reflect a state that has lost legitimacy. “Drooping Millet” is the name of a poem in the classic *Book of Odes*, said to be about seeing the remnants of an old temple. “Barley Ear” is the name of a song said to be composed by the sage Jizi 箕子 upon seeing the ruins of the palace of the defunct Shang dynasty in remote antiquity.

⁴⁸ The content of *Shixue shuyi* can be divided into three parts: debating form, opening up meter, and conveying meaning. See *Guoxue yanjiushe, Guoxue huibian*.

⁴⁹ Published in the *Huazi ribao* 華字日報 of Hong Kong, “Guangzhi ban” 廣智版, February–August 1905, over the course of half a year. It has now been included in He Zao, *Gujin wenyi congshu*, vol. 2, 1593–2188.

⁵⁰ Collected in the *Zhuchao congkan* edition 箸超叢刊本 (Shanghai: Minquan chubanshe, 1921); see also *Wenxue yanjiushe shekan* 文學研究社社刊 (Bulletin of the literary study society) 1923, nos. 6 and 10.

⁵¹ First published around 1910, collected in *Gengshengzhai quanji*, vol. 2.

and wondrous realm.” Regarding his repudiation of the Literary Revolution, he criticized his contemporaries’ valorization of this movement or the use of the conversational style (*yulu ti* 語錄體) in poetry, which shared the exact flaws of Song Poetry’s platitudes. He thus emphasized that “poetry gives voice to feeling through sound.” When Zhou discusses the praiseworthiness of having the flavor of philosophy and putting feelings into sound, it seems like this has nothing to do with the veneration of feelings. However, when we look at the poems recorded in his collected works (the *Collection from the Studio of Renewal* [*Gengshengzhai quanji* 更生齋全集]), we frequently find the use of the word *qing*. This cannot be coincidence. Zhou writes:

With profound ideals must come works, which merge sonorous sound, a loose and swaying appearance, and a hazy appeal. What is within the so-called “store place of reason” is the free-flowing swagger of famous literati.⁵²

Of the poems he mentions, Zhou often asks himself, “If read repeatedly, will it bring tears or not?” Upon seeing that the hearts of modern people are not like the ancients’, he can do nothing but “roll up the scroll with a sigh and let the tears fall like rain” 掩卷喟然淚如雨。Thus, we can find traces of Zhou’s advocacy for the veneration of feelings, even if this is not an obvious theme in his work.

Another example is the *Collected Talks of the Grand Unity* (*Taiyi conghua* 太一叢話) by Ning Tiaoyuan 甯調元 (1883–1913),⁵³ which mainly records works by anti-Qing intellectuals of the late Ming and early Qing. Aside from detailing the group portrait of those anti-Qing heroes who died in battle, hung themselves, or went into reclusion, we find many sorrowful words at the end of the collection, works in mournful and impassioned styles. For example, there are his comments on the Southern Ming martyr Xia Wanchun’s 夏完淳 (1631–1647) “Poem on Events” (“*Jishi shi*” 即事詩), “Sent to My Mother”

⁵² Zhou Zhongmu, *Gengsheng quanji, shihua*, 1–2.

⁵³ Originally titled *Traces of Bluebloods* 碧血痕, Ning later continued it under the name *Collected Talks of the Great Ultimate* 太一叢話 from 1910 to 1911 in the *Diguo ribao* 帝國日報 (Empire daily), later edited into five fascicles in 1915. The most commonly used modern versions are the one collected in *Ning Tiaoyuan ji* (293–389) and the separately issued *Taiyi conghua*.

(“Jimu” 寄母), and “Sent to My Wife” (“Jinei” 寄內), of which he says that “the air of tragic indignation cannot be held in check.” He also says of Gao Xu’s two stanzas on “Autumn Feelings” (“Qiugan” 秋感), “the meaning is deep pain—all the feelings of his life and the resentment of the nation are put into them,” expressing the bitterness of the revolution and the noble ambitions in his breast. Ning’s *Poetry Talks of the Nation* (*Minzu shihua* 民族詩話) is also focused on recording the works of anti-Qing intellectuals of the late Ming and can be seen as a sort of sister work to the *Collected Talks of the Grand Unity*. Ning Tiaoyuan further collected poems in imitation of the *Songs of Chu*, which seem to make an explicit connection between those who died for their country and Qu Yuan, an editorial choice that expressed his own passions.

Since the late Qing, female consciousness had gradually been on the rise, and the position of women had tended to improve. The prominent Southern Society members Chen Qubing, Liu Yazhi, and Gao Xu were all advocates for modern women’s rights. The Southern Society’s poetry talks, such as the *Transmitted Rhymes of a Lit Candle* (*Ranzhi yuyun* 然脂餘韻) by Wang Yunzhang 王蘊章 (1884–1942), the *Poetry Talks of a Green Moss Lodge* (*Lümiwuguan shihua* 綠蘼蕪館詩話) by Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑 (1895–1968), the *Ladies’ Poetry Talks* (*Funü shihua* 婦女詩話) by Yao Min’ai 姚民哀 (1893–1938), the *Poetry Talks of the Chamber of Sharpened Sword* (*Mojianshi suibi* 磨劍室隨筆) by Liu Yazhi, the *Poetry Talks of the Jade Terrace* (*Yutai shihua* 玉臺詩話) by Hu Pu’an, and the *Boudoir Flowers’ Poetry Talks* (*Guixiu shihua* 閨秀詩話) by Chen Xu 陳栩 (1879–1940), frequently mention the lives of female authors in the midst of their evaluations of poetry. They express great sympathy for those women who died young, and reveal a sense of pity for those who killed themselves upon the death of their husbands in order to express their loyalty, those who died of illness, and those who died from seeking sanctuary. Chen Xu’s *Boudoir Flowers’ Poetry Talks* collects the work of some 41 female poets from the Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang area. Most of these women were skilled in the arts of embroidery, painting, and poetry, but suffered unhappy fates, since “Heaven, jealous of their talents, made it so.” Yan Shuhui 嚴淑暉 “was an intelligent child” and “skilled in composing poetry” but died when she was just eighteen. She is mentioned in the *Boudoir Flowers’ Poetry Talks* and the *Transmitted Rhymes of a Lit Candle*, both

of which lament her passing. Chen Xu's *Boudoir Flowers' Poetry Talks* describes her with words such as "having talent and much feeling," "mournful and moving," and "so full of pathos that I cry several times when reading her." Thus, these poetry talks belong to the collections of passionate language and personal relationships found in the tradition of venerating feelings.⁵⁴

Another example is the poetry recorded in Hu Pu'an's *Poetry Talks of the Jade Terrace*,⁵⁵ which includes the works of many female poets who were "naturally quick," "clever in endowment," and "endowed with intelligence." In Wang Yunzhang's *Transmitted Rhymes of a Lit Candle*,⁵⁶ we find the works of such women everywhere, works which "chill the heart and spleen upon reading" and "read with overwhelming sorrow." Aside from making the men of the Southern Society "pity" and "sigh over" their unjust fates, the premature deaths of these women who were "wise early on," "skilled in poetry," and who "crafted lyrics" also fit well with the theory of the veneration of feelings, since female poets' works tended to be rich in emotions. Thus, although the main target of the *Ladies' Poetry Talks* of Yao Min'ai⁵⁷ is traditional boudoir-lament poetry, it does so with a twist. Yao tells us that "the proper melodies of the boudoir have affection which is very graceful, with the goal to be resentful without being angry." In this way he is able to transform the characteristics of graceful feminine poetry into the "longing without error" of the veneration of feelings.

The *Collected Works of Modern Women (Jin furen ji 今婦人集)* by Pang Shubo 龐樹柏 (1884–1916)⁵⁸ mainly collects writings by modern "extraordinary women," but it also contains remembrances of their moral conduct by his contemporaries. It is perhaps the most important source for the history of modern women. The women included in this collection studied abroad, participated in the revolution, debated in newspapers, or established women's schools, or else they nobly sacrificed themselves for the sake of

⁵⁴ [Editor's Note] It may not be uninteresting to note that most of these authors were also popular novelists categorized as the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School (*yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派).

⁵⁵ Published in *Nüzi zazhi* 女子雜誌, 1915, 1.1.

⁵⁶ Originally published monthly at *Hanfenlou* 涵芬樓, edited into book form in 1918.

⁵⁷ In *Funü xunkan huibian* 婦女旬刊匯編, 1925–26.

⁵⁸ Published in *Nüzi zazhi*, 1915–19.

their parents or husbands. Most were skilled in poetry, painting, and embroidery. A majority were participants in, supporters of, or martyrs for the revolution. These poetry talks are mainly focused on the writings of female poets, but because the topics are diverse, it calls them “modern” women instead of boudoir poets, thus more apt to capture the image of the woman in the changing modern world. While some were involved in politics, others committed suicide out of loyalty to their deceased husbands, and Pang records all of them out of his veneration of feelings. Thus, defining itself against traditional women’s restrained position and character, it simultaneously displays the transgressive attitudes of both the traditionalists and innovators of the modern era.

Conclusion

Liu Yazhi once said “Take a look at the country today: It is the world of the Southern Society” 請看今日之域中，竟是南社的天下。⁵⁹ Although it is widely understood that poetry served as the fountainhead for the Southern Society, their view of poetics, as seen and explicated in their poetry talks, has been a topic neglected by scholars. This despite the fact that these views were practiced and promoted by the Southern Society’s members who were often in control of modern media. Southern Society poets wrote in imitation of Gong Zizhen’s ideal of “bravery and passion,” sometimes exhorting one another to have a spirit of “fearing the lack of valor among the lakes and rivers” 江湖俠骨恐無多, and would “collect Gong’s lines” with the goal of describing their emotions and mourning the dead. Apart from being a way to honor Gong Zizhen, this poetry was also one of the most important methods for the circulation of emotions within the Southern Society.⁶⁰

Cai Zhenchu 蔡鎮楚 once said, “The Southern Society’s poetry talks are the earliest and most prominent poetry talks of Republican China.”⁶¹ In recent years, my work has looked at their flood of monographs, micro-volumes, and journal publications. I have so far unearthed quite a few

⁵⁹ Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe congfan*, 2–3.

⁶⁰ Lin Hsiang-ling, *Nanshe wenxue zonglun*, 392–405.

⁶¹ Cai Zhenchu, “Xu” 序, *Zhongguo shihua shi*, 316.

valuable materials related to the Southern Society's poetry talks⁶² and analyzed the poetry talks of individuals such as Gao Xu, Lin Gengbai 林庚白 (1896–1941), Lei Tiewa, and Ning Tiaoyuan,⁶³ but there is still much to be done to construct a history of modern poetics. In terms of this paper, future researchers can further examine the correspondences between the Southern Society's literary works and their criticism. Aside from looking at interior emotions such as their response to societal changes, the influence of Gong Zizhen, their pity for young female writers, and their laments over the changing of time, we could investigate the relationship between the Southern Society's poetry talks and figures such as Qu Yuan and Yuan Mei, as well as the unique characteristics of individual poetry talks. All of these topics are worthy of further research.

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⁶² Lin Hsiang-lin, *Nanshe shihua kaoshu*.

⁶³ Lin Hsiang-lin, *Fansi, zhuisuo yu xinmai: Nanshe yanjiu waibian*, 321–492.

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