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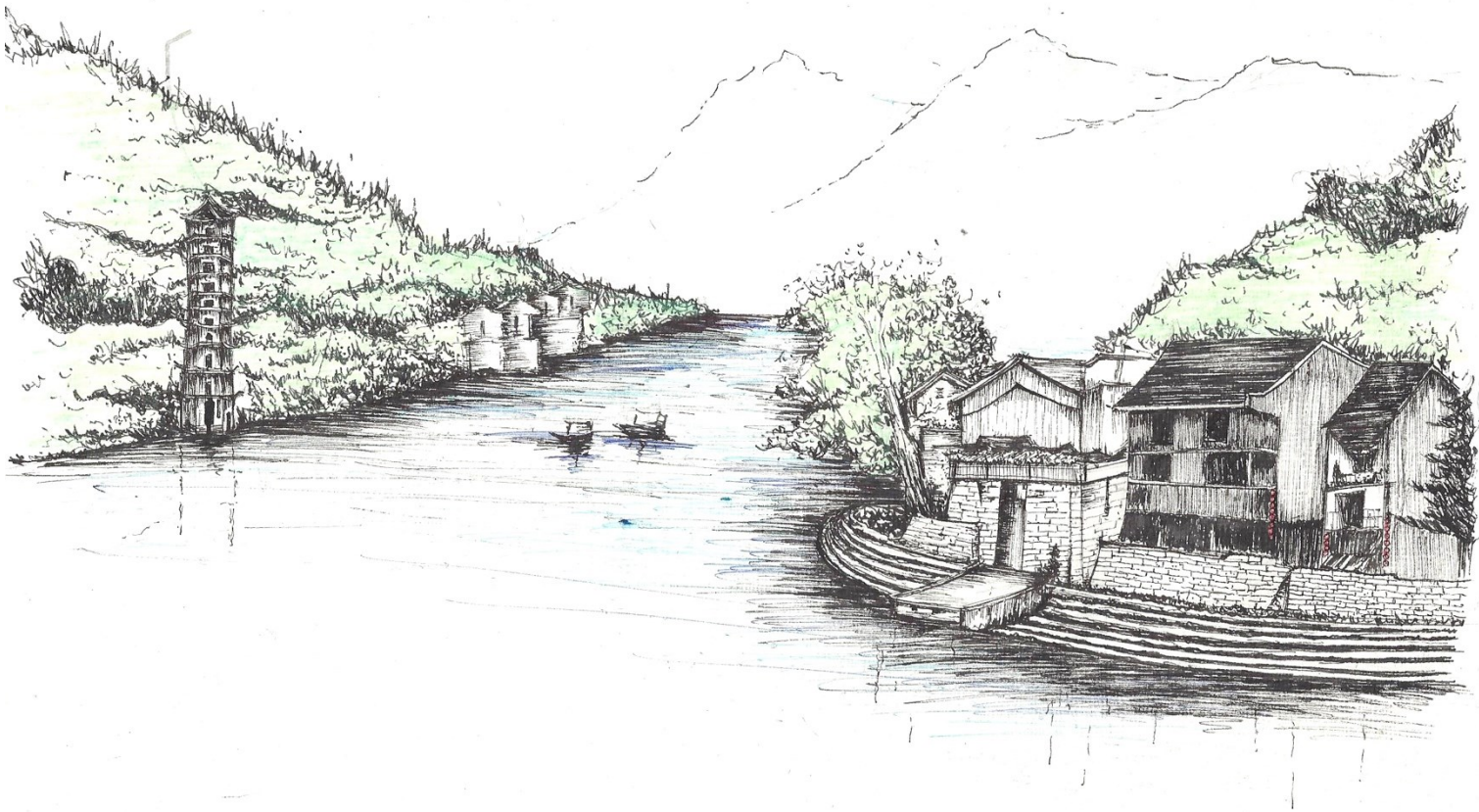
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**Western Influence and the Place of Music
in the Works of Shen Congwen**

Qianwei He



PhD in Comparative Literature

The University of Edinburgh

2016

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. I have published an article, 'Sing a Soundless Song for Beauty: Beauty in Literature and Music through Shen Congwen's Fengzi', in *Beauty: Exploring Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Pierre Wilhelm (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2016), pp. 105–13, which includes some content in Chapter 3.

Signature:

Date:

Qianwei He

Abstract

Shen Congwen [沈从文] (1902 – 1988), the famous Chinese writer most active from the late 1920s to the end of the 1940s, took particular interest in music throughout his literary career. From Shen's earliest works, folksongs feature in his regional stories about West Hunan, his home region. These songs not only provide the stories with a special local colour, but also indicate Shen's strong connection with Western anthropology and psychology. From the mid-1930s, Shen developed a passion for Western classical music. He stated on several occasions that he wished he could use the method of musical composition in his writing, even though he never attempted to learn to compose.

This thesis will investigate Shen's insistence on the assumption that the method of musical composition – especially the use of 'harmony' – would make literary works more beautiful and infinite. Shen's discussion of Western classical music also points to the connection between music and abstraction. In Shen's later career, he seems to be consistently pursuing the beauty of abstraction. At the same time, he writes about 'soundless music', which goes beyond concrete music such as folksongs or Western classical music. In the analysis of Shen's ideas on music, one question remains: what are the possible sources of these ideas? Shen started writing after May Fourth Movement, a movement that massively involved learning from the West. His career thrived while socialising with a group of Chinese writers whose works bear evident marks of Western literature, and some of whom were also the translators of many Western works. Furthermore, Shen's ideas on music appear to reflect those of Western literature, especially modern literature. This thesis will consider possible influences on Shen, starting with an examination of what Shen might have read or known about Western literary ideas. Finally, according to the evidence uncovered in my research, this thesis will propose a comparative study between possible Western sources of influence and Shen's ideas on music, focusing on the influence of Western anthropology, psychology, Goethe (1749 – 1832), French Symbolism, Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), and Joyce (1882 – 1941).

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Introduction

0.1 Research Questions

There are three major questions to be asked in this thesis: 1) What is the place of music in the works of Shen Congwen [沈从文] (1902 – 1988)?¹ 2) How and what did Shen learn about Western literature (including other related disciplines such as psychology)? 3) What is the relationship between this Western influence and Shen's ideas on music?

The question about the relationship between Shen's writing and Western literature is not a new one, but some often-neglected aspects, such as musicality in his works, can offer a better view of the connection between Shen and Western literary ideas. Is that enough, however, to prove a significant influence? This thesis hopes to find the answer is positive. It will propose the study of musicality as a new lens through which to connect modern Chinese with world literatures.

0.2 A Brief Biography of Shen Congwen

Shen Congwen was a famous Chinese writer. He was born in Fenghuang, West Hunan,² a place embodied with the rich cultures of different ethnic groups, predominantly the Miao. When Shen was a teenager, he went to join a troupe which had its regiments on the borders of Hunan, Sichuan and Guizhou Provinces. During the time as a soldier, Shen learned about the May Fourth Movement (1919) in Beijing, and decided to go there to study to be a writer.³

The May Fourth Movement, perhaps the most important movement in China in the first half of the twentieth century, started in Beijing and was mainly led by university teachers and students. In a broader sense, May Fourth movement can be seen as a part of the more general New Culture Movement (1915 – 1925).⁴ The May Fourth Movement constituted a revolution in literature and thought that advocated an objection to tradition, to Confucianism, and to classical Chinese language. In response to this

¹ The Wade-Giles transcription his name is Shen Ts'ung-wen.

² [湘西 (Xiangxi)] This is an area geographically in the west of Hunan Province, nowadays known as Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture [湘西土家族苗族自治州].

³ Shen Congwen, *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen* [《沈从文全集》], ed. by Zhaohe Zhang, 2nd edn, 32 vols (Taiyuan Shi: Beiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2009), Appendix: 6.

⁴ This also includes the New Literature Movement initiated by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu in 1917.

movement, many Chinese writers to write in vernacular language. This completely transformed Chinese literature. A major part of this revolution was to learn from Western literature, thus it encouraged various translations of and introduction to Western literary works.⁵ Shen Congwen arrived in Beijing in 1923. He failed to enter any university by exam, but audited courses, and started to write literary works in the vernacular language. In 1924, with the help of famous writers like Yu Dafu [郁达夫] (1896 – 1945) and Xu Zhimo [徐志摩] (1897 – 1931), Shen began to publish works in periodicals like *Supplement to Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》], *Yu Si* [《语丝》], *Fiction Monthly* [《小说月报》], and so on.⁶ Gradually, he gained his fame as a writer of fiction, especially in short stories.

In 1928, Shen moved to Shanghai, and later Hu Shi [胡适] (1891 – 1962) appointed him lecturer in literature at Wusong China Institute [吴淞公学] (1929). Thereafter, Shen taught in Wuhan University (1930), Qingdao University (1931 – 1933), Southwest University Association [西南联合大学] (1939 – 1947), and Peking University (1949). During his teaching career, he never stopped writing. However, around the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), Shen's works came under sustained political attack. In 1950, under pressure, he made a failed suicide attempt: he never published any more fiction afterwards. Hua-ling Nieh's monograph *Shen Ts'ung-wen* was the first major Shen Congwen biographical work, with some reviews of his works, but the biographic part does not include much after 1949.⁷ J. C. Kinkley⁸ wrote the first biography of Shen Congwen's full life (in English), and later Ling Yu wrote another (in Chinese).⁹ They both interviewed Shen in the course of their research, and this thesis will take the two books as the major biographical background. Both biographies by

⁵ This is the most widely accepted general assessment of the May Fourth Movement, which can be found in almost all researches about modern Chinese literature of this era. For example: Kirk A. Denton, *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945* (Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 2.

This movement (and its approach of learning from Western literature) all types of literature, poetry included.

Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 11-12.

⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, Appendix: 6-7.

⁷ Hua-ling Nieh, *Shen Ts'ung-Wen*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972)

⁸ Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987).

⁹ Ling Yu [凌宇], *A Biography of Shen Congwen: Long Live the Flame of Life* [《沈从文传: 生命之火长明》] (Beijing: Beijing shi yue wen yi chu ban she, 1988).

Kinkley and Ling spoke highly of Shen's works, although, the former is more academic and objective while the latter is sometimes subjective (understandably as both Ling and Shen are from Hunan Province). Moreover, after 1949, mostly due to political reasons, Shen chose to stop creative writing.¹⁰ Therefore, this thesis will only focus on Shen's creative writings before 1949,¹¹ with necessary references to any letters written after 1949 that are related to his career as a writer.

Furthermore, there are numerous studies on other perspectives about Shen Congwen, but the number of studies on music and Western influence in Shen's works is limited. Therefore, the literature review parts of the introduction will have a brief overview of the two aspects of Shen Congwen studies.

0.3 Literature Review on Shen and Music

Music was one of Shen's greatest passions. Following the folksong collection movement in the 1920s, he also published a collection of folksong lyrics gathered from his home region, West Hunan, which provided him with inspiration – he constantly uses the folksongs in his regional novels to create a special local colour.¹² Moreover, it was not only the folk music of his hometown that influenced his writing, but also Western music. From the mid-1930s and on, Shen developed his passion for Western classical music. Even though Shen never attempted to learn to compose, he often suggests in his writing that if he had known how to compose music, he would have used compositional methods to write.¹³

Apart from the concrete music like folksongs and Western classical music, Shen is also keen on discussing about a more abstract form of music in his writing. This sometimes can be a concept of music, music as a general art form, or 'soundless music'. Such discussion often leads to a further argument about the relationship between literature

¹⁰ As put by Wang, 'Shen was no longer recognized as a writer in the socialist regime'. Xiaojue Wang, *Modernity with a Cold War Face: Reimagining the Nation in Chinese Literature across the 1949 Divide*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 55.

¹¹ Primary texts used in this thesis are from *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen*, edited by his wife Zhang Zhaohe, the second edition published in 2009; first edition was published in 2002.

Shen Congwen, *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen* [《沈从文全集》], ed. by Zhaohe Zhang, 2nd edn, 32 vols (Taiyuan Shi: Beiyue wen yi chu ban she, 2009)

¹² The historical background and Shen's use of folk music will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

¹³ Such statements of Shen will be analysed in Chapter 2.

and other arts, as well as arts and humanity. Therefore, music can be an important aspect from which we can investigate Shen's literary aesthetic ideas.

Among the current researches done in English, there is no major work specially focusing on Shen and music. An analysis of folksongs in Shen's writing features in J. C. Kinkley's *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, but it is rather a supporting argument to explain Shen's Regionalism as well as the connection between Shen's use of folksongs and Freudianism.¹⁴ Kinkley's research will provide some reference for my argument in Chapter 1. Kinkley also mentioned Shen's passion for Western classical music,¹⁵ but did not explore its relationship with Shen's writing in any depth.

There are several works on Shen Congwen and music in Chinese, although most of them are only articles without an in-depth and comprehensive analysis. During the course of this research, I will refer to these works in detail. Additionally, often these researches only attend to Shen's use of folk music, or the musicality in his language, for example, Shang Jinlin's 'The Relationship between Shen Congwen's Writing and the Music and Art in West Hunan' [《湘西音乐美术与沈从文创作之关连》]¹⁶ and Li Qiqun's 'The Beautiful Hometown Voice – Analysis of the Musical Beauty in the Language of Shen Congwen's Novels' [《美的乡音——试谈沈从文小说语言的音乐美》] analyse Shen's use of folk music, and the musicality in his language.¹⁷ However, these articles overlook the fact that the categories of music featured in Shen's writing are of great variety, and that to Shen, the musicality in language use is only a small part of the musicality of literature.

There are two more comprehensive recent Chinese works on Shen and music. One is Tan Wenxin's Doctorate thesis 'The Research on Shen Cong-wen's Writing and Music'

¹⁴ Kinkley, *Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, pp. 137-145.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁶ Shang Jinlin [商金林], 'The Relationship between Shen Congwen's Writing and the Music and Art in West Hunan' [《湘西音乐美术与沈从文创作之关连》], *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Science)*, 02 (2008), 99-106.

¹⁷ Li Qiqun [李启群], 'The Beautiful Hometown Voice – Analysis of the Musical Beauty in the Language of Shen Congwen's Novels' [《美的乡音——试谈沈从文小说语言的音乐美》], *Journal of Jishou University (Social Science)*, 03 (1993), 21-26.

[《沈从文的文学创作与音乐》],¹⁸ which is very much a further development on Zeng Feng's article 'Shen Congwen's Writings and Western Classical Music' [《沈从文的文学创作与西方古典音乐》].¹⁹ Both Tan and Zeng's works, especially Tan's, notice Shen's passion for Western classical music and link it with Shen's literary creation. However, these two studies share the same problem, namely that they over-interpret Shen's meaning when Shen writes that he wishes to use the method of musical composition in writing, by mechanically fitting the structure of Shen's novels into that of Western classical music. Reasons why this kind of study is implausible will be discussed in Chapter 2, but the major reason is that Shen never actually learned or even attempted to learn to compose, but only liked to listen as an amateur, thus it is unlikely that he knew about the terms of Western musical structure, let alone applying them into writing.

Another more recent piece of research is Li Xinyi's Doctoral Thesis 'On the Relationship between Shen Congwen and Music from an Interdisciplinary Perspective' [《跨学科视野中的沈从文与音乐关系研究》] (2013).²⁰ In the Literature Review of the thesis, Li criticises Tan's argument for the same reason mentioned above. Li's research, rare in the field, proposes a study of the concept of music in Shen's writing, which is the kind of music beyond any concrete form of music. Li's argument concerning 'soundless music' in Shen's works and its close relationship with Shen's pursuit of abstraction and beauty is worth noticing. However, when Li searches for the root of such ideas, Li limits it within China, arguing that it is the result of West Hunan's shaman worship religion and Taoism. The research fails to notice one important fact that Shen belonged to the May Fourth writers, a group of writers who would discard traditional Chinese thought and turn to Western ideas for inspiration, and that Shen shared a close tie with the Anglo-American and European school of writers in China. It is important that if we examine such an idea of 'soundless music', we can find similar thought in Western literature. Furthermore, since such ideas of Shen are well developed

¹⁸ Tan Wenxin [谭文鑫], 'The Research on Shen Congwen's Writing and Music' [《沈从文的文学创作与音乐》] (Doctorate, Hunan Normal University, 2010).

¹⁹ Zeng Feng [曾锋], 'Shen Congwen's Writing and Western Classical Music' [《沈从文的文学创作与西方古典音乐》], *Comparative Literature in China*, 03 (2009), 17-30.

²⁰ Li Xinyi [李欣仪], 'On the Relationship between Shen Congwen and Music from an Interdisciplinary Perspective' [《跨学科视野中的沈从文与音乐关系研究》] (Doctorate, Xiangtan University, 2012).

after he started to listen to Western classical music, or even maybe because of Western classical music (which Chapter 2 and 3 will discuss), it is unreasonable not to look West. Therefore, this thesis proposes a comprehensive study between the music in Shen's writing and that in Western literature.

0.4 Literature Review on Shen and Western Influence

First of all, Shen Congwen considered himself to be a May Fourth writer, or at least a follower of the movement. This is not only reflected in his career that he wrote in vernacular Chinese, and fictions in different new styles, and free verse, but also reflected in his essays in the 1940s contemplating on the benefits of the May Fourth Movement, such as 'Twenty-one Years after "May Fourth"' [《“五四”二十一年》]²¹ and 'The Re-establishment of Literary Movement' [《文运的重建》].²² In these essays, Shen praises the contribution of the May Fourth Movement to Chinese literature and society, criticises the commercialisation and politicalisation of literature since then, and advocates that writers should carry on the real free spirit of the movement.

Beyond the fact that Shen shows his dislike of traditional Chinese education in his autobiography,²³ Shen's connection with May Fourth Movement and the Chinese writers whose works bear evident marks of Western literature (this will be further explored in Chapter 4) suggests that Shen is likely to have received influence from Western literature.

Given the reasons above, comparative studies conducted on Shen and Western literature are not rare. They examine different aspects and use various methods, comparing Shen with Western literary figures, or comparing Shen's ideas with Western thought. C. T. Hsia was the first scholar who paralleled Shen with several Western writers,²⁴ such as Wordsworth, Yeats, Faulkner for their pastoralism,²⁵ and Mann and

²¹ Shen, *Completed Works*, 14:133-135.

²² *Ibid.*, 12:80-84.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13:251-254.

²⁴ Chih-tsing Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1917-1957*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

²⁵ 'The pastoralism of Shen Ts'ung-wen therefore is on the same moral plane and speaks with the same urgency to modern man as that of Wordsworth, Yeats, and Faulkner.' Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, p. 191.

Proust for their writing style of depicting the inner thoughts of characters.²⁶ Hsia did not give a detailed argument on whether there is influence involved, however, it was Hsia's work that first brought Shen into the vision of critics outside China, and linked Shen with world literature. Following Hsia, Kinkley visited Shen in China several times in 1980s, and his biography of Shen, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* was published in 1987. This book is not only a detailed account of Shen's life and career, but also a critical work that compares Shen with Western thought, especially with cultural anthropology, modern psychology, and several Western philosophers, providing some convincing evidence of possible influence. Kinkley is also one of the pioneers in debating whether Shen belongs to a wider circle of Modernists in world literature. Discussion on this topics has continued ever since, both outside and inside China. Yang Ruiren's 'Review of Studies about Shen Congwen and Foreign Literature in the last 20 years' [《近二十年来国内沈从文与外国文学比较研究述评》] (2000) makes a brief summary of the comparative studies on Shen and Western literature in China in the last two decades of the 20th century. More recent works include some major works like Liu Hongtao's *Shen Congwen's Fiction and Modernism* [《沈从文小说与现代主义》]²⁷ and Yu Zhaoping's book chapter 'Shen Congwen: Rousseauist Romantic Aesthetics' [《沈从文：卢梭式的浪漫主义美学》]²⁸. All these works comment on the similarities between various aspects of Shen's ideas and Western literature, especially in Liu's book, he makes a rather convincing argument about Shen's connection with Western ideological trends including Primitivism and Symbolism. Most of these works focus on Shen's ideas about 'life force' or 'vitality' [生命力] and its root in modern Western literature, which is first shown in his regional works then in the more abstract works in the 1940s, such as in Ling Yu's 'Review on Shen Congwen from the Miao-Han and Chinese-Western Cultural

²⁶ 'In a story like "The Housewife" (1936), which discloses the mind of a happily married woman in a reminiscent mood of morning lassitude, the prose is as distinguished and elaborate in its way as that of Proust or Mann.'

Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, p. 207.

²⁷ Hongtao Liu, *Shen Congwen's Fiction and Modernism* [《沈从文小说与现代主义》] (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji gufen youxian gongsi, 2009).

²⁸ Yu Zhaoping [俞兆平], 'Shen Congwen: Rousseauist Romantic Aesthetics' [《沈从文：卢梭式的浪漫主义美学》], in *Four Models of Romanticism in China: Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, Guo Moruo, and Lin Yutang* [《浪漫主义在中国的四种范式：鲁迅，沈从文，郭沫若，林语堂》] (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2011), pp. 37-100.

Conflict' [《从苗汉文化和中西文化的撞击看沈从文》]²⁹ and Zhao Xueyong's *Shen Congwen and Eastern and Western Culture*.³⁰ Some of these mention the topic of music and Shen's related aesthetics, but the arguments are very scattered or superficial.

The link between literature and music has been strong since the beginning, both in the East and the West. However, in Western literary history, the dynamics between the two arts experienced a sudden change in the nineteenth century, which initiated a heated debate among artists on whether music was the best medium among all arts and 'at the dawn of the twentieth century, music became the vanguard medium of the Modernist aesthetic.'³¹ Considering the importance of music and its relationship with literature in the development of Romantic (also neo-Romantic) and Modern literature in the West, and Shen's deep interest in discussing related aesthetics, there should be a more comprehensive work to examine the place of music in Shen's works and through which to search for the link between Shen and Western literature. This thesis then proposes to do so.

0.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis contains two parts; the first part focuses on how music is portrayed in the works of Shen Congwen, while the second part will explore the relationship between Western literature and the place of music in Shen's works.

Part 1 is divided into three chapters, according to the different kinds of music that are featured in Shen's writings. Quotations by Shen on music are selected from throughout *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen* (32 volumes) to be analysed, in the context of the development of his literary ideas. Chapter 1 will specifically discuss the folk music in Shen's writings, which bears a particular importance in Shen's regional works. Chapter 2 will explore his developing interest in Western classical music, and the role it played in the development of his literary ideas. Chapter 3, furthermore, will examine Shen's ideas on the overall concept of music, especially the idea of music and his philosophy in

²⁹ Ling Yu. 'Review on Shen Congwen from the Miao-Han and Chinese-Western Cultural Conflict' [《从苗汉文化和中西文化的撞击看沈从文》], *Literature and Art Studies*, 2 (1986), 64-72.

³⁰ Zhao Xueyong [赵学勇], *Shen Congwen and Eastern and Western Culture* [《沈从文与东西方文化》], (Lanzhou: Lanzhou University Press, 1990).

³¹ Daniel Albright, *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. by Daniel Albright (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 1.

writing about beauty in literature. The materials used in these three chapters have a rough chronological development, although not always in order, but it will show the changing process of Shen's ideas.

Part 2 has two chapters. Chapter 4 is a transitional chapter which looks at the evidence of Shen's connections with Western literature, either he had read or had possible access to. Following that, Chapter 5 will analyse the selected evidence and factors that may have a close connection to the place of music in Shen's works, combining them with discoveries made through the analysis in the first part of the thesis. The chapter will read closely the selected works, if necessary, of the Western writers and philosophers whom Shen might have known about, but mostly, it will read carefully the translated works of these writers in Chinese and the Chinese criticism on them, and compare those to Shen's writings.

0.6 Methodology

There are two major obstacles my research has encountered, and to solve these problems, this thesis will largely apply the method of close reading.

The first obstacle is that although Shen constantly mentions music in his works and it may link to some very important aesthetical or philosophical ideas, music is still not a dominant subject matter. Therefore, it is only through close readings to the exact content of Shen's writings on music that one can grasp the precise nature of his ideas.

The second is that, while a straightforward parallel comparison between Shen and Western literature without looking at possible influence is not what this thesis aims at, nor can we assume that any similarity between Shen's ideas and Western ideas always suggests direct influence. Mary Orr compares the process of indirect influence to a series of dancers who choreograph their footwork based on that of their precursors, and after imitation, re-invention, and withdrawal, 'the sixth a dance movement [retranslates] the precursor's most original dance step that this appears derivative'.³² In many cases, Shen could be this 'sixth dancer', who holds a strong similarity with one writer despite the indirectness of influence. Thus, while the analyses in the first three chapters will

³² Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 69.

bring up the similarities between Shen and Western literature, Chapter 4 will look at the evidence of what Shen could have read of or known about Western literature, in order to provide the comparison with a more solid basis. However, it is a consistent problem that some evidence is very difficult to track down and that there is a possibility that some seemingly obvious evidence may prove to be misleading or false. As a result, Chapter 5 will require a comparative close reading both of the possible sources Shen may have learned things from and of Shen's works, as this is the best way to verify any evidence found in the previous chapter.

Another essential task of this research is that, in order to conduct it in English, any piece quoted in Chinese will need to be translated to English. While there are already several translations of selected works of Shen published, it is still a small amount compared to the vast 32 volumes of primary source of Shen that this thesis will be looking at. Thus, I will translate anything quoted in this thesis for which there is no published translation, and if I use translations other than my own, it will be specified in footnotes. Furthermore, translators may sometimes alter the meaning of certain phrases, either because of cultural differences between the Chinese and English languages or for the sake of eloquence. However, in order to clarify any concept that affects the understanding of Shen's ideas on music, which may appear as small as a phrase, this thesis will stick to the kind of translation in which meaning comes before anything else. If necessary, when using published translations, I may point out and explain such phrases. After all, according to Julian Wolfreys, 'one must be able to stay nimble as one reflects, and stay on the "surface" whilst reading between lines',³³ but as some translations already tear away that 'surface' from this research, I must go back to the original 'surface' – the text in Chinese – to find the depth implied in the first place.

As for the analyses of music, this thesis will not be engaged in any musical structural study. The reason why such studies are problematic will be explained in Chapter 2. Furthermore, apart from folksongs, the lyrics of songs, if there are any, are also not the centre of this research, as it will be explained throughout the thesis that the meaning of the songs or music is not essential to the argument of this thesis.

³³ Julian Wolfreys, *Reading: Acts of Close Reading in Literary Theory*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 80.

Chapter 1: Folk Music

Shen Congwen was born and grew up in West Hunan, where different ethnic groups, mainly the Han and Miao peoples, live in a rather diverse social environment. Shen accepted a family story which was based on the premise his biological paternal grandmother was a Miao woman. She was sent elsewhere to be remarried after giving birth to an heir to Shen's grandfather, because, at that time, the Miao people were considered by the Han people to be a lower race that could not be included in the family tree of a proper family.³⁴ Shen's mother was a Tujia,³⁵ another ethnic group inhabiting West Hunan, however, Shen seldom distinguishes the Tujia people from the Han in his writing as he does for the Miao. Kinkley suggests that Shen might be 'unclear about the distinction between Tujia and Miao' like many Han people in West Hunan, but he also took a pride in his Miao ancestry and its culture.³⁶ The Miao people's lives and customs in West Hunan are a constant source for and subject of Shen's writing. The Miao, like some other less-modernised ethnicities in China at the time, were famous for their talent at singing and dancing. Their songs are, for Shen, a representation of the life of the locality. In 1926, Shen Congwen published 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk' [《箅人谣曲》], which is a collection of folksongs from Zhen'gan (Fenghuang). From that point onwards, until at least the mid-1930s, many of the elements bearing local colour play an important and even dominant role in Shen's writing, including the repeated use of folk songs collected during his early career. Historically speaking, Shen's collecting of folk songs was probably a response to the 'New Folk Song Movement', initiated in 1918 by Liu Bannong [刘半农] (1891 – 1934), Zhou Zuoren [周作人] (1885 – 1967), Gu Jiegang [顾颉刚] (1893 – 1980), and others. His collection project also coincidentally echoes Shen's homesickness. As early as 1918, Peking University had issued a proposal to encourage teachers and students to collect folk songs around China. At the beginning of the 1920s, 'The Folksong Research Society of Peking University' [北京大学歌谣研究会] was founded, along with related journals, such as *Ballad Weekly* [《歌谣周刊》] and *Supplement to Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》]. Shen

³⁴ Shen Congwen and Wang Yarong [王亚蓉], *Record of Shen Congwen's Talks in His Later Years* [《沈从文晚年口述》], ed. by Yarong Wang, (Xi'an: Shaanxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2003), pp. 121-123.

³⁵ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Congwen arrived in Beijing in 1922 and went on to be an auditing student at Peking University. In 1926 and 1927, two selections of folk songs collected by Shen were published in *Supplement to Morning Post*.³⁷ According to Liu Hongtao, the reason why the Miao culture became part of Shen's writings has much to do with the introduction of Western anthropology and ethnography, as well as the folklore and folk song collecting activity by scholars in Beijing literary circles during the mid- to late 1920s.³⁸ *Ballad Weekly*, from the Folksong Research Society of Peking University, enthusiastically called for the collection of local dialects, folksongs, and folk legends from different places. It might be that the theoretical elaboration of folk culture by Zhou Zuoren, Gu Jiegang, and others helped Shen to discover the literary value of the folk culture of West Hunan.³⁹ This early activity possibly had a long-lasting influence on him. On the one hand, some of the songs he collected appear in his later fictions, the lyrics of which are highly impactful on his narratives, like the songs in *Fengzi* [《凤子》] (1932)⁴⁰ and *The Border Town* [《阿黑小史》] (1933),⁴¹ and he also wrote some poems in folksong style while seeking his own style of writing. On the other hand, it is not only folksongs with specific lyrics that appear in Shen's writings, but also the songs and music Shen describes only as a background that forms the identity of West Hunan. Ever since Shen started collecting folk songs, this genre of music had never faded out in his writings. Intentionally or not, Shen made folk music emblematic of country life. However, folk music in Shen Congwen's works is more than just something that identifies a genre of writing or a group of people. What Shen discovered in this musical tradition of West Hunan was its literary value.

³⁷ Shen Congwen, 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk (Preface)' [《算人谣曲(前言)》], *Morning Post* [《晨报》], 25 December 1926, section Literary Supplement, pp. 59–60.

Shen Congwen, 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk (Sequel)' [《算人谣曲(续)》], *Morning Post* [《晨报》], 27 December 1926, section Literary Supplement, pp. 63–64.

Shen Congwen, 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk (Sequel)' [《算人谣曲(续)》], *Morning Post* [《晨报》], 29 December 1926, section Literary Supplement, pp. 67–68.

The above are published under the pseudonym 'Maobin' [懋彬]

'Selected Songs of Zhen'gan Folk' [《算人谣曲选》] was published continuously in *Supplement to Morning Post* in 6 issues, on 20 August 1927, and from 22 to 26 August 1927, under the pseudonym 'Yuangui' [远桂]. Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:58.

³⁸ Liu, *Shen Congwen's Fiction and Modernism*, p. 41

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

⁴⁰ Song 11 from 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk'. The tenth chapter of *Fengzi* was written in 1937.

⁴¹ Song 3 from 'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk'.

1.1 Folk Music and Primitivism

Traditionally speaking, ‘folk music’ refers to music that is the collective creation of the lower classes, transmitted orally and developed over many years. The topics usually include love, work, daily life, and ritual ceremony. The folk songs most commonly used in Shen’s works include love songs between young people, work songs (usually boat songs),⁴² and songs during rituals. As stated above, Shen Congwen’s collecting of folksongs and application of folk music in his writing stemmed from the ‘New Folk Song Movement’. His activity was influenced by the introduction of Western anthropology and ethnography into China and by Chinese scholars’ goal of building a Chinese academic conceptual framework in this area. They started by introducing and translating Western anthropological, mythological and mythographical works and collecting Chinese folk songs and stories. According to Ma Changyi, the most influential Western figures in China in this area include E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer, Andrew Lang, and Jane Ellen Harrison, among others. Works by these authors that were either introduced or translated include Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*; Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, *Totemism and Exogamy*; Lang’s *Custom and Myth*, *Ritual and Religion*, *Modern Mythology*, and so on.⁴³ In *Shen Congwen’s Vision of Chinese Society and Culture* [《沈从文笔下的中国社会与文化》],⁴⁴ Kinkley also suggests that anthropologists in the early twentieth century had a particular obsession with primitive people and culture, which also had an impact on Shen.⁴⁵ It seems that his use of folk music can be closely related to twentieth-century trends towards interest in primitivism, psychology, and cultural anthropology. However, it is not known for certain which works Shen knew or read. Thus, any relationship between Western anthropology and mythography and Shen’s works is difficult to examine, but it is still possible to begin this comparison by analysing

⁴² The boat songs include folksongs sung by boatmen during their work – rowing, sculling, and tracking.

⁴³ Ma, Changyi [马昌仪], ‘Anthropology School and Modern Chinese Mythology’ [《人类学派与中国近代神话学》], in *Collected Papers on Folk Literature and Art Vol. 1* [《民间文艺集刊》], ed. by Chinese Folk Art Research Society, Shanghai Branch [中国民间文艺研究会上海分会], (Shanghai: Shanghai wen yi chu ban she, 1981), pp. 37-73, (pp. 42-43).

⁴⁴ This is the translation of Kinkley’s doctoral thesis *Shen Ts’ung-wen’s Vision of Republic China* (translated by Yu Jianhua and Shao Huaqiang). As the thesis cannot be obtained, the translation is quoted here.

⁴⁵ J.C. Kinkley, *Shen Ts’ung-wen’s Vision of Republic China* [《沈从文笔下的中国社会与文化》], trans. by Jianhua Yu, and Huaqiang Shao, (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994), p. 60.

how various aspects of primitivism are presented in Shen's works through the use of folk music.

1.1.1 Against Sexual Repression

By the early twentieth century, Han people in China had lived a sexually repressed life under the influence of Confucian morality for hundreds of years. Traditionally, for most Chinese people, marriage was arranged by their parents and matchmakers. After the start of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chinese intellectuals began to call for freedom in marriage, but, as a writer who went to Beijing to follow the 'May Fourth Spirit', Shen Congwen actually 'went well beyond the consensus'.⁴⁶ Urban writers drew their theories from the West; they eulogise love through love poems, with the singing of nightingales and the fragrance of roses (which bear clear traces of Western literary traditions), while other writers fought against sexual repression with exotic colour. Shen brought up exoticism from right within China. The tribal Miao people from Shen's home region, West Hunan, had never adopted Confucian morality: boys and girls were brought up together and young people chose their lovers by singing songs. According to Kinkley, Shen advocated sexual freedom 'because of what he had absorbed of Western theories of abnormal psychology', but Kinkley also admits that 'eroticism as a literary effect must have nourished his imagination well before he was much influenced by Freud'.⁴⁷ After collecting folksongs from his hometown, which are mostly love songs, Shen seems to have found a way to make his characters' love stories more romantic.

'Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk' [《箐人谣曲》], based on lyrics Shen asked his cousin to collect from his fellow soldiers in Zhen'gan, is a collection of folksongs from Fenghuang, West Hunan. It was published towards the end of 1926. There are in total 42 songs (41 solo songs and one antiphonal song), most of which are flirtatious love songs to be sung to the opposite sex or songs containing sexual metaphors. In addition to this collection, the 1927 collection, 'Selected Songs of Zhen'gan Folk' [《箐人谣曲选》], contains nine antiphonal love songs between men and women. Shen explains, in the introduction to the 1927 collection, that 'as long as the song is sung by a man and a woman, the most probable result is that the two approach each other feelingly and

⁴⁶ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

perform that healthy entertainment with leaves as mattress' [‘凡是一男一女来唱的，其结果总多半是互相到感动中接近，用树叶子作褥垫，就举行那种健康的娱乐了’].⁴⁸ Some of these songs are later used in his stories, and, there, the songs do indeed lead to what is customarily supposed to happen. For example, in *A Story of Ah Hei* [《阿黑小史》] (1933), Ah Hei’s lover, Wuming, played the flute, which attracted the girl to his side, and then sang the song:

Dainty younger sister has grown whiter than white,
Her darling has [i.e. I have] grown blacker than black,
When black ink is written on white paper,
Just look, don’t they go together well?⁴⁹

姣妹生得白又白，
情郎生得黑又黑，
黑墨写在白纸上，
你看合色不合色？⁵⁰

The song contains a very simple metaphor that the boy is black ink while the girl is white paper, which implies sexual compatibility. The young lovers were finally together as naturally as writing on white paper with black ink, without being bound by any rules. In this remote place, lovemaking is expected after singing; it is primitive by virtue of being natural. In Shen’s early writings of the 1920s, he does not criticise this kind of behaviour, nor do characters in his stories. Instead, he praises sex itself within this primitive culture. Even prostitutes should not be despised, as they pick their lovers by the songs, no different from others. For instance, in the story ‘Bai Zi’ [《柏子》] (1928), there is such a scene, in which a sailor sang and attracted a prostitute who heard him:

But still there were people with time on their hands and they would hear above all the other sounds of the place the singing of the sailors in the topmasts. Their hearts beat rapidly, for no sooner had a red lantern taken the place of the singing than the singer came to the listener’s side. It was night now. Lamps

⁴⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:24.

⁴⁹ Shen, Congwen, and Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *Imperfect Paradise: stories by Shen Congwen*, trans. by Jeffrey C. Kinkley et al., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), p. 496.

⁵⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:264.

hung on the masts. There was something mysterious in the swift-flowing river at night.⁵¹

在各样匆忙情形中，便正有闲之又闲的一类人在。这些人住到另一个地方，耳朵能超然于一切嘈杂声音以上，听出桅子上人的歌声，——可是心也正忙着，歌声一停止，唱歌地方代替了一盏红风灯以后，那唱歌的人便已到这听歌人的身边了。桅上用红灯，不消说是夜里了。河边夜里不是平常的世界。⁵²

Singing is a channel of erotic communication here. Before the 1930s, this primitive love would never have been censored either from Shen or from other characters in his stories. To obtain a lover by songs is the country folks' tradition: the songs were passed down from fathers to sons and from teachers to apprentices. "They either use their mouth to kiss or to sing songs that praise nature and sexual desire, but not to tell lies, as other Chinese do" [他们的口除了亲嘴就是唱赞美情欲与自然的歌，不像其余中国人还要拿来说谎的],⁵³ as Shen declares in 'Seven Barbarians and the Last Rite of Spring' [《七个野人与最后一个迎春节》] (1929). Here he makes the contrast between the Miao people and other Chinese. Where there is repression, there are twisted relationships, so other Chinese people lie, but the interpersonal relationships among tribal people are more natural and healthy. To describe the connection between singing and love, it is most suitable to quote Shen's words in 'Long Zhu' [《龙朱》] (1929):

Under such customs, a boy who could not sing was in disgrace and a girl who could not sing could not get a good husband. Plucking out one's heart and tendering it to one's lover depended not on money, appearance, family status, or anything of pretence, only on genuine and passionate songs. What was sung was vigorous and happy, or sad, angry irritated, and tearful. In any event, it was still a song. A passionate bird is not a silent bird. A person without the strength and courage to express his love has no hopes to speak of, in any endeavour whatsoever. Such a person is no good!⁵⁴

在此习惯下，一个男子不能唱歌他是种羞辱，一个女子不能唱歌她不会得到好的丈夫。抓出自己的心，放在爱人的面前，方法不是钱，不是貌，不是门阀也不是假装的一切，只有真实热情的歌。所唱的，不

⁵¹ Shen Congwen, *The Chinese Earth: Stories*, trans. by Ching Ti, and Robert Payne, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 15-16.

Ching and Payne's translation of the title is 'Pai Tsu'.

⁵² Shen, *Complete Works*, 9:40

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4:189.

⁵⁴ Shen, trans. Kinkley, in *Odyssey*, pp. 141-142.

拘是健壮乐观，是忧郁，是怒，是恼，是眼泪，总之还是歌。一个多情的鸟绝不是哑。一个人在爱情上无力勇敢自白，那在事业上也是全无希望可言，这样的人决不是好人！⁵⁵

In Shen's words, for tribal people, whether a person is good lover or not should be judged from his or her songs, as passion is all that matters. Many of the tribal Miao customs are now extinct. According to Kinkley, while Shen was writing his stories, the Miao people were being Sinicized, but the ethnographic reports by the year 1933 still indicate 'a rich variety of non-Sinitic customs of the sort with which Shen Congwen's imagination worked'.⁵⁶ In fact, in 'Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid' [《媚金·豹子·与那羊》], written in 1929, Shen adds such comments into the story.

But, as I said, the good customs of this area have died out, the passions of its people have declined, and the women are slowly becoming more like Chinese women. Their affections have shifted to empty and meaningless things like cattle and sheep, gold and silver, so that the importance of love has clearly deteriorated. Beautiful songs and beautiful bodies alike have been supplanted by material things and are no longer valued. Meijin and Baozi probably could not tolerate such false warmth and empty love, even in this fine place. Better, then, to let it be a place of worship after all than have it sullied by the 'love' of modern times.⁵⁷

不过我说过，地方的好习惯是消灭了，民族的热情是下降了，女人也慢慢的像中国女人，把爱情移到牛羊金银虚名虚事上来了，爱情的地位显然已经堕落，美的歌声与美的身体同样被其他物质战胜成为无用的东西了，就是这样好地方供年青人许多方便，恐怕媚金同豹子，也见不惯这些假装的热情与虚伪的恋爱，倒不如还是当成圣地，省得来为现代的爱情脏污好！⁵⁸

This quotation confirms the Sinicisation of the Miao people, and Shen rather abhors and regrets it. However, the custom and legends mould the imagination of this young writer far away from home, and it is this imagination that is inscribed on paper. For Shen Congwen, the singing of folksongs not only is a representation of customs, but also symbolizes the primitive sexual relationship for its own sake, the purity of humanity and the passion for life. The Miao people first sing with their hearts and fall in love,

⁵⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 5:327

⁵⁶ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 139.

⁵⁷ Shen Congwen, 'Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid', trans. by Caroline Mason, in *Imperfect Paradise: stories by Shen Congwen*, ed. by J. C. Kinkley, trans. by J. C. Kinkley et al, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), pp. 81-96 (p. 87).

⁵⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 5:356.

then the affections naturally lead to lovemaking. The adjectives Shen uses to describe primitive singing customs are ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’, while those used to describe the modern Chinese customs are ‘empty’, ‘meaningless’, and ‘false’, as, if singing is no longer the way to pursue love for modern people, then love has ‘deteriorated’.

1.1.2 Country Life and Vitality

One direct consequence of sexual repression is people’s lack of vitality, and this lack of vitality is the object of Shen’s criticism in modern urban society. Yang quotes An Gangqiang, who makes a remark, relating to the works of Shen Congwen, on why he wants to bring back the primitive life-force; like some Western writers, such as Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) and W. B. Yeats (1865 – 1939), whose works

all reflect a kind of criticism of the popular commerce and metropolitan culture from the point of view of regional and traditional culture, which is a common phenomenon in the literature from the late 19th to the 20th century. Shen Congwen is in concord with this world literature chorus.

都体现了一种对流行的商业与都市文化的批评，而这种批评都是从地方的和传统的文化观点进行的，这是十九世纪末到二十世纪世界文学中的一种普遍现象。沈从文正是这个世界文学大合唱中的一个和声。⁵⁹

The writers that An compares to Shen are not only critics of modern society, but also eulogists of primitive forces. The vitality of primitive men erupts in the fight against nature. In modern cities, with the development of advanced technologies, the conflict between Man and Nature is no longer the main conflict that stirs society, and so the vitality born with it is fading. Fighting against Nature, primitives only live life for its own sake and life itself is what Shen worships and views as something beautiful.

The dangerous geographical characteristics of West Hunan force the local people to maintain a specialised group – the boat trackers, who haul the riverboats upstream. The mountains create fast-flowing rivers, making the boat trackers’ work harder and more dangerous. They sing work songs while they are hard at work. The work songs of the boat trackers show every bit of the hardships in life and the difficulty in fighting against

⁵⁹ Yang Ruiren [杨瑞仁], ‘A Summary of the Studies on Shen Congwen and Foreign Literature in China in the Past two Decades’ [《近二十年来国内沈从文与外国文学比较研究述评》], *Foreign Literature Studies* [《外国文学研究》], 4 (2000), 134-139, (p. 138).

Nature. However, for Shen, this is the life to which they are used. They sing the songs without noticing the bitterness and sadness, they almost sing without consciousness:

This singing was an excessive groan, a sigh, a plaintive whine. However, this tune, which became very familiar and could be heard in severe winter and scorching summer, was too common. It could no longer arouse sadness in the local people. No, it could not.

这歌声，只是一种用力过度的呻吟。是叹息。是哀鸣。然而成了一种顶熟习的声调，严冬与大热天全可以听到，太平常了。在众人中也不会为这歌声兴起一种哀感了，不会的。⁶⁰

As someone who has left home for so long and almost become an outsider, Shen can be touched by the sadness and bitterness of the singing which local people stop to notice. Nevertheless, Shen was always able to find beauty and inspiration in these songs. All kinds of songs sung by the boat trackers, for him, are supreme music.

The Border Town [《边城》] (1934) is probably Shen's most famous and widely disseminated work. In the early 1980s, the film director, Ling Zifeng, planned to adapt it into a film. At the beginning of the pre-production work, it seems that Shen was asked to write a theme song for the film and to provide suggestions on its production, according to several letters survive concerning this film, written by Shen to others. In one of the letters, Shen emphasises how the background music should be. He introduces three different kinds of work song sung by the boat trackers and suggests that these songs, combined with the bird chirps of nature can make the most wonderful background music, or, as he puts it 'can be more impressive than any kind of high-brow music' [将比任何高级音乐还更动人].⁶¹ In fact, Shen considers that it is not only the songs that are beautiful but any sound that is related to the boat life on the rivers of his hometown, such as the sound of gongs from faraway boats or even the sound of the motorboat, as all these sounds are music as primitive and vitalised as the work songs. The work songs, along with all the sounds made by humans when they fight against nature, are songs that praise primitive vitality. The same kind of vitality also exist in the fishermen.

⁶⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 2:226.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26:150.

For years, this river had been the scene of this din and glaring light in the battle for survival between the fish in the water and the fishermen in the boats and it would be repeated on each night to come. No longer mystified, I re-entered the cabin, where I went on listening quietly to that monotonous sound. What I had seen seemed like a fight between primitive men and Nature. That sound and firelight resembling the battle of primitive men carried me back four or five thousand years to the past.⁶²

那种声音与光明，正为着水中的鱼与水面的渔人生存的搏战，已在这河面上存在了若干年，且将在接连而来的每个夜晚依然继续存在。我弄明白了，回到舱中以后，依然默听着那个单调的声音。我看到的仿佛是一种原始人与自然战争的情景。那声音，那火光，皆近于原始人类的武器！⁶³

On account of this vitality, bred and preserved in such folksongs, the songs carry a special power that any kind of metropolitan art does not possess. Alan Lomax states that ‘folk and primitive arts, their flinty structure tested at the fireside across the centuries, have always strengthened the more effete traditions of the city. Though somewhat more narrowly dimensioned, their simpler traditions have a germinal vitality and staying power that much cosmopolitan art lacks’.⁶⁴ Shen Congwen brings this primitive life-force into literature and presents it to the modern world. What is his purpose in writing in this way? An’s conclusion can probably offer a clue: Shen Congwen ‘wants to use the power of literature to infuse barbarian blood into the body of the old and rotten Chinese nation, to make the nation excited and young again, so as to compete for survival with other nations on the world stage’. [‘想借文学的力量，把野蛮人的血液注射到老迈龙钟颓废腐败的中华民族身体里去使他兴奋起来，年轻起来，好在世界舞台上与别个民族夺生存权力。’]⁶⁵

As Ling Yu writes, ‘Shen Congwen’s modern thinking is expressed through his view of life, with the theory of “life” as the core’ [‘沈从文的现代意识集中表现为他的以“生命”为核心的人生观。’]⁶⁶ Shen declares in ‘Water and Clouds’ [《水云》]

⁶² Shen Congwen, *Recollections of West Hunan*. Trans. Gladys Yang, (Beijing, China: Panda Books, 1982), p. 57.

⁶³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:248.

⁶⁴ Alan Lomax and Edwin E. Erickson, *Folk song style and culture / with contributions by the cantometrics staff and with the editorial assistance of Edwin E. Erickson*, (Washington: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968). p. 5.

⁶⁵ An, quot. Yang, ‘A Summary’, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Ling Yu, ‘Shen Congwen in the Miao-Han and Eastern-Western Cultural Conflict’, p. 475.

(1943) that 'I have faith in nothing but "life"' ['我是一个对一切无信仰的人，却只信仰“生命”]，⁶⁷ and, I speculate, he regards vitality as the only thing that matters in life. With this attitude, he seldom judges people's lives in West Hunan. He acts as a spectator, who sees everything, records everything, but never interferes. What he does is only to praise the beauty of vitality, even if this vitality involves uncivilised behaviour that is against modern morality or involves the suffering of the lower class, because, on the contrary, it means that they are very much alive. When Shen travelled back to West Hunan in early 1934, he travelled by boat and, during the journey, he wrote letters to his newly married wife. In these letters, he constantly mentions how beautiful the singing and the music of the country people are. He listens, and observes their ways of life. During his journey, he met an amorous boatman and an amorous woman, learned of their sufferings, and heard the woman's singing. Thereafter, he writes,

There was nothing I could do for Yaoyao and I banished the thought of giving the boatman money. I had too much respect for their dreams and wretchedness.⁶⁸ I was not qualified to use money or other means to intervene in their fates or disturb the griefs or joys they should have in their lives.⁶⁹

我不能给那个小妇人什么，也再不作给那水手一点点钱的打算了，我觉得他们的欲望同悲哀都十分神圣，我不配用钱或别的方法渗进他们命运里去，扰乱他们生活上那一分应有的哀乐。⁷⁰

Shen respects their miseries, just as he respects life itself. This, from another point of view, justifies his only faith in vitality.

1.1.3 Ritual Music and Mythology

Western cultural anthropologists' mythological theories have not only influenced Western Modernist writers, but also Chinese writers, even someone like Shen Congwen, who knew no foreign languages and never studied abroad. When scholars such as Zhou Zuoren, Gu Jiegang, Zheng Zhenduo, or Shen Yanbing (also known as Mao Dun) brought Western theories into China, they did not only translate and introduce the theories, but more importantly, they summarised the Western ideas and modified them.

⁶⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:128.

⁶⁸ Here Yang makes a revised translation, but the sentence literally means 'I think their desires and wretchedness sacred'.

⁶⁹ Shen, *Recollections*, trans. by Yang, p. 70.

⁷⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:267.

Then they built specific theories based on the Western ones but with modifications in accordance with Chinese mythological features. Ma Changyi suggests that Chinese scholars have placed great emphasis on the various functions of mythology. For example, Mao Dun regarded mythology as the literature of the primitives. According to this theory, mythology is the most ancient form of literature and the source of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and every other form of art until now.⁷¹ Zhou Zuoren, who wrote a series of essays on mythology in the collection *Book on a Rainy Day* [《雨天的书》], also held a similar view on this matter. He not only agrees that mythology is the literature, philosophy, science, and theology of the primitives, but also confirms that Chinese scholars' interest in mythology is the result of the fact that 'it is superb literature on its own' [他自身是极好的文学].⁷² He suggests that 'myth-writers would become poets in modern times' [神话作家在现代就成了诗人了].⁷³ This accords considerably with Shen's ideas about mythology and primitive religion.

Shen's *Fengzi* [《凤子》] (1932, 1937)⁷⁴ tells a story about an old gentleman living in the city who meets a young man from Zhen'gan, which was Shen's hometown, nowadays known as Fenghuang (meaning Phoenix). The meeting evokes the old man's memory of the place. In the story, after the city dweller has watched the Miao shaman and the village people singing and dancing in a ritual ceremony to entertain the God, he says:

What I just saw was no rite but a piece of superb drama, indescribable. It is the source of poetry, drama, and music, and is the nature of them. The correspondence of sounds, colours, lights, and shadows is weaved into a piece of brocade in which God exists. I, indeed, saw your God in that scene. I thought, what a miracle! Now I know why you talk about God all the time. You have your reasons. I didn't understand until now why China two thousand years ago could have someone like Qu Yuan, who wrote all those gorgeous and miraculous poems. It turns out that he was no more than someone who came here and acted as a recorder of the scenery and people here. Though Qu Yuan has been dead for two thousand years, the source of The Nine Songs remains. I believe that, if there is someone interested, he can still draw fresh spring water from this ancient well!

我刚才看到的并不是什么敬神谢神，完全是一出好戏；一出不可形容不可描绘的好戏。是诗和戏剧音乐的源泉，也是它的本身。声音颜色

⁷¹ Ma, 'Anthropology School and Modern Chinese Mythology', pp. 56-57.

⁷² Zhou Zuoren, *Book on a Rainy Day* [《雨天的书》], (Hong Kong: shi yong shu ju, 1967), p. 249.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁷⁴ The tenth chapter of *Fengzi* was added in 1937.

光影的交错，织就一片云锦，神就存在于全体。在那光景中我俨然见到了你们那个神。我心想，这是一种如何奇迹！我现在才明白你口中不离神的理由。你有理由。我现在才明白为什么二千年前中国会产生一个屈原，写出那么一些美丽神奇的诗歌，原来他不过是一个来到这地方的风景记录人罢了。屈原虽死了两千年，九歌的本事还依然如故。若有人好事，我相信还可从这口古井中，汲取新鲜透明的泉水！⁷⁵

The Songs of Chu [《楚辞》]⁷⁶ written by Qu Yuan [屈原] (c. 340 – 278BC) and other poets was the first collection of Chinese poetry that is not anonymous. It is a collection of poetry that is based on the myths and rites of the State of Chu, which nowadays includes parts of Hubei, Hunan and other surrounding areas. Shen Congwen regards the ritual songs of the Miao people as the original source of *The Songs of Chu*, and, in this collection, *The Nine Songs* is the reproduction of the ritual ceremony. The theory has its basis. Xiong Xiaohui quotes the ancient scholar, Wang Yi, of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

The Nine Songs were written by Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan was banished to this area, and, bearing in mind the anxiety as poison and the forlornness which boils into melancholy, he saw the local folk doing ritual singing and dancing in the ceremony, but their lyrics were of poor quality, so he composed the classics, *The Nine Songs* [...]

《九歌》者，屈原之所作也。屈原放逐窜伏其域，怀忧若毒，愁思沸郁，出见俗人祭祀之礼，歌舞之乐，其辞鄙陋，因为作《九歌》之典 [...]⁷⁷

Xiong then further proves, with textual comparison, that *The Songs of Chu* shares great similarities with ancient Miao folk songs, and that,

in the time of Qu Yuan, the traditional culture of the State of Chu was the culture of sorcery, the magical activities were popular among common people, and the ritual songs would be sung when they honoured gods and ghosts. *The Nine Songs* were the songs sung when the shaman honoured the God.

在屈原时代，楚国传统文化是巫觋文化，民间盛行巫风，祭祀鬼神必用巫歌，《九歌》就是巫师祭神的歌曲。⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:163-64.

⁷⁶ *The Songs of Chu* [《楚辞》] (Chu Ci) originally means the songs of the people in Country Chu during the Warring States (475-222 BC), but the most famous one is by the poet Qu Yuan. The language of *The Songs of Chu* bears the characteristics of the local dialect (nowadays roughly in Hubei Province).

⁷⁷ Xiong Xiaohui [熊晓辉], 'The Culture of Chu Ci and the Folk Songs of the Miao People' [《楚辞文化与苗族民歌》], *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities* (Humanities and Social Sciences), 28.1 (2008), 164-167, (p. 164).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Therefore, the Miao folksongs are indeed the source of *Songs of Chu*, and they will keep being the source of poetry and other arts, if the artists can ‘draw fresh spring water from this ancient well’. In ‘Boats in Changde’ [《常德的船》] (1938), Shen introduces the boat songs in this way: ‘The sailing ceremony and songs reminded people of why *The Songs of Chu* originated here two thousand years ago, and the music has been preserved well until now, unchanged, present and past’ [‘在开船仪式与行船歌声中，使人想起两千年前《楚辞》发生的原因，现在还好好的保留下来，今古如一’].⁷⁹ Under the influence of modern anthropology and mythology, myths and folksongs have inspired the literature of Western poets such as Eliot, Joyce, and Yeats. Like them, Shen firmly believes that he and all writers can find inspiration in folksongs and myths.

In *Fengzi*, Shen Congwen depicts how tribal people perform the ritual ceremony in detail. Ritual music and dances are obviously the major part of the ceremony. In the novel, they sing to greet and embrace the God into the earthly world, they sing the names of ancient gods and heroes to praise them, and then, finally, all the people dance and sing to share their joy with the gods. In this music, the city dweller feels called into the presence of God. He says,

However, after watching the ritual ceremony just now, I then understood that the existence of God is still there, unchanged. Nevertheless, its solemnity and beauty only remain under conditions, and those are the purity of human emotions, the innocence of ideas, and a pastoral environment. Only with such conditions, can God be born and beautify the life of the people, but, without them, God is dead.

但看看刚才的仪式，我才明白神之存在，依然如故。不过它的庄严和美丽，是需要某种条件的，这条件就是人生情感的素朴，观念的单纯，以及环境的牧歌性。神仰赖这种条件方能产生，方能增加人生的美丽。缺少了这些条件，神就灭亡。⁸⁰

Shen called himself a pantheist, writing that ‘a real “atheist” may precisely be a “pantheist” emotionally, because he can feel “God is everywhere” from the existence of new life forms and development’ [‘一个真正“无神论”者，在情绪上或许正恰是个“泛神论”者，因为从新的生命存在与发展，将感到“无处不神”’].⁸¹ Shen

⁷⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:341.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7:163-64.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14:527.

was never religious, but he was interested in every religion. Not only did he draw his materials from primitive religion, but he also alluded to Christianity and Buddhism. He praises God in a pantheistic and primitive way and believes that he can use literature to restore the divinity in the time when ‘God is dead’. It was a topic in Shen’s writings in the 1930s (for example, in *Fengzi*), but it was not until ‘Water and Clouds: How I create stories, and how they create me’ [《水云——我怎么创造故事，故事怎么创造我》] (1943) that he put forward clearly this statement: ‘I, in this era of the disintegration of “God”, still need to make again a praise of light to God, and to write a last lyrical poem prudently when the classical and elegant poetry loses its value and meaning’ [‘我还得在“神”之解体的时代，重新给神作一种光明赞颂。在充满古典庄雅的诗歌失去价值和意义时，来谨慎慎写最后一首抒情诗。’].⁸² Because of his pantheistic attitude, Shen’s purpose is not the restoration of the divinity of one religion, but to restore the worship of the divinity of beauty. What the city dweller in *Fengzi* emphasises is also the ‘solemnity and beauty’ of God. The secularisation of modern society has separated beauty from religion, and has deprived people of their ability to sense the beauty intuitively. Shen uses the primitive ritual religion and its music to recall what is lost in modern times. Shen wishes to ‘equate religion and art functionally and even to name art as the successor to religion after the Death of God’.⁸³ Shen attempts to do this because he believes not only that, for modern people, the aesthetic sensation is about beauty, but also that it calls for the responsibility of art to guide people’s ‘intentions’.⁸⁴ The ritual music from West Hunan nicely provides Shen with a medium to express this intention, as music is something that can reach deep into people’s consciousness and arouse the emotions that are too abstract to be touched; the God of Shen Congwen lives in this abstraction.⁸⁵

⁸² *Ibid.*, 12:128.

⁸³ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 112.

⁸⁴ Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 74.

⁸⁵ This will be further discussed in the later chapters, for example, see below, p. 150.

1.2 Folk Music and Shen's Memory and Imagination of West Hunan

Other than Shen's anthropological, psychological, and aesthetic inclination towards folk music from a writer's point of view, what folk music in West Hunan means to Shen is a connection with home, first and foremost.

1.2.1 Eternal Music and the Living Memory

In Shen's early work, 'Aboard and on Shore' [《船上岸上》] (1927), the author depicts the mental state of the character, who is leaving his hometown, which may well be a loyal reproduction of Shen's own experience when he left home:

We could not help but listen to the song that was like the Magic Flute,⁸⁶ and we could not help but miss every beloved thing in the countryside that was turning further and further away from us. A song like this was the farewell elegy that moved us young people to leave home for a new world to seek knowledge and hope! Gradually the songs changed, just as our boat went down the river, telling us how far away we were from home. We could no longer listen to the unchanged songs at the same spot, not even for a second time!

我们不能不去听那类乎魔笛的歌，我们也不能不有点儿念到渐渐远去的乡下所有各样的亲爱东西。这样的歌，就是载着我们年青人离开家乡向另一个世界找寻知识希望的送别的挽歌！歌声渐渐不同，也像我们船下行一样，是告我们离家乡越远。我们再不能在一个地方听长久不变的歌声，第二次，也不能了！⁸⁷

In this passage, Shen gives at least two points of view: first, the songs of one place are deeply rooted in the local social context of that place, which means the denotative power of the songs is strong for the locals; second, folksongs of one specific place stay unchanged within that area but will never be the same elsewhere.

Folksongs of one geographical area bear distinct features of the place: 'a song style, like other human things, is a part of learned behaviour, common to the people of a culture'.⁸⁸ In the pre-industrial era, since group emigration would require great effort and a long period of time, and there also exist great difficulties in communicating with

⁸⁶ Clearly here the 'magic flute' refers to that in the familiar Western tale, but it is not certain whether it refers to the story 'Die Kinder zu Hameln' in *Grimm's Fairy Tale* or the tale as in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, as the names of both the instruments have the same Chinese translation '笛 (di, flute)'.

⁸⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 2:12.

⁸⁸ Lomax, *Folk song style and culture*, p. 3.

the outside world (especially for people in West Hunan, where the mountains and rivers are great barriers against them getting out), people of one place could develop a very unique culture in language and music. China is a country of highly diverse dialects. In addition, as the content of folksongs substantially reflects all walks of life for local people and, usually, folksongs of one place all have similar tunes, folksongs are deeply rooted in the social context of one particular place. This feature enables folksongs to associate local people with denotative memory and affect these people more than others. No matter which ‘magic flute’ Shen is referring to here (see above, n.86), the main metaphorical meaning is that the music is alluring. However, according to the second half of the sentence, what is alluring is not only the music itself, but also ‘every beloved thing’ that is connected to folksongs.

Therefore, folksongs are connected to one’s memories of one’s hometown. It is the situation for both the characters and the author, Shen Congwen. For the author and his characters, the memory of folk music seems to be more tenacious than that of any other elements from home. In the part of *Fengzhi* written in 1932, the old man from the country says:

In August and September, the sun was burning. Sunshine was spilt into the woods sparsely. In extreme tranquillity, the lumberjacks sang lazily, adjusting the beat according to the rate of lumbering. They were the kind of chestnut trees, with restive and wild leaves, that had balls with spikes which would explode automatically. The hemispheric nuts with hard shells bore a golden black sheen, which made a soft sound when falling to the ground. This was a divine land! Nature creates everything and is ripening everything. The song of the lumbermen lasts eternally, praising the meaning of Nature. Twenty years of time have not erased this image. Now I am fifty-five, and that is the only thing I remember. What a clear impression!

八月九月，焦黄的日头，稀疏地泼了一林阳光，在一切沉静里，山头伐树人的歌声，懒散地唱着，调节到他斧斤的次数。就是那种枝叶倔强朴野的栗树，带刺的球体，自动继续爆炸，半圆形的硬壳果实，乌金色的光泽，落地时微小的声音。这是一种圣境！自然在成熟一切，在创造一切，伐树人的歌声，即在赞美这自然意义中，长久不歇。这境界二十年来没有被时间拭去，可是，我今年已五十五岁了，就记到这个，多明朗的一个印象！⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:101.

As a writer who is also extremely sensitive to sight, sounds, and smell, in Shen Congwen's writing, folk music, sensations, and memories are interlinked. In the quoted paragraph above, the songs of the lumbermen can only be heard in this particular place, the woods; at this particular time of the year, August and September; and, probably, the specific melody or style of singing can only be heard in this place where the chestnuts grow, as the song of the lumbermen in other areas can be different (as a matter of fact, West Hunan abounds in chestnut trees). In this way, when the old man remembered the songs which 'last eternally praising the meaning of Nature', he can picture the whole scene stored in his memory that took form some twenty years ago, including the weather, the colour of the chestnuts, and even the soft sound of the chestnuts falling to the ground. The memory associated with music is more of an impression of the incident than a narration of what happened. Reliving in the songs of the lumbermen, it helps to bring back other sensations to form a more completed scene in the memory. Such memory can more easily cause empathy in people because of the sensory information.

Music involving the memory can restore one a particular scene in the listener's mind, or sometimes music can even help arouse the sensations in the audience while they listen. When the music linked to the memory is heard again, the sensory information that is related to the music can be brought back as well, and therefore the memory is back, too. Nalbantian explains Proust's notion of memory in this way: 'for Proust, true memories are conserved in the framework of sensations; if those sensations are felt again, the memories attached to them are retrieved. Since we know material objects through sensations, they serve as the gateway to real memory'.⁹⁰ While sensations act as the gateway to the past, music can be crucial in arousing sensations. Nalbantian goes on to analyse James Joyce's 'The Dead', in which a Gaelic folk-song helps to retrieve the memory. She says, for Joyce, Dublin is 'a remembered sensation' – 'a new and complex sensation', and that, 'for Joyce, music was a catalyst for memory'.⁹¹ Folk music, in this respect, is even more powerful than other kinds of music due to the fact that folk music is usually played within a specific local event in a specific environment. Thus, the memory brought back with it would be closely connected to every sensation about the specific place and activity. The folk music of Shen's hometown is probably one of the

⁹⁰ Suzanne Nalbantian, *Memory in Literature: from Rousseau to neuroscience*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 70.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-91.

reasons why, even when he is staying far away, he can still depict his hometown with such vividness.

This peculiar function of folk music can be further proved by Shen's personal writing during his journey back to West Hunan in 1934, especially in the piece written about an old couple in Luxi County; 'every time I thought of Luxi County, my memory was immersed in the singing voice of the boatmen. The gentle rain in my mind seemed to humidify my heart. This place had a position in my life history, the mentioning of which always gave me sorrowness and happiness at the same time.' [我平日想到泸溪县时，回忆中就浸透了摇船人催橹的歌声，且为印象中一点儿小雨，仿佛把心也弄湿了。这地方在我生活史中占了一个位置，提起来真使我又痛苦又快乐。]⁹² The memory brought back by the sculling songs through aroused the sensory information – the author's retrieved impression of the wetness and the emotions attached to it.

Every hilltop was plated with gold and there was sculling song all over the river (the singing that made my soul light and that I could never compliment more!). I stood on the boat, reminiscing about the people from the past.

[...]

A pair of sparkly black eyes, a straight nose, and a small mouth—all appeared from the sound of gongs. I forgot about what the long years could mark on people, and just like the characters in the novels, with a child's heart, I got on the riverbank and went into the city. I seemed to be rather familiar with the little houses in a line and the people living in these houses. Though seventeen years had passed, I could still recognize the streets in town and even the smell of it.

每一个山头仍然镀上了金，满河是橹歌浮动，（就是那使我灵魂轻举永远赞美不尽的歌声！）我站在船头，思索到一件旧事，追忆及几个旧人。

[...]

一双发光乌黑的眼珠，一条直直的鼻子，一张小口，从那一槌小锣响声中重现出来。我忘了这分长长岁月在人事上所生的变化，恰同小说书本上角色一样，怀了不可形容的童心，上了堤岸进了城。城中接瓦连椽的小小房子，以及住在这小房子里的人民，我似乎与他们皆十分

⁹² Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:291.

相熟。时间虽已过了十七年，我还能认识城中的道路，辨别城中的气味。⁹³

The first impression of the people in the memory brought back by the music is not the background story, but the appearance of the person, the first impression of a person that can be seen. Then, the first impression of the town is brought back, too, and that is not only the outline of the houses and streets, but, more importantly, the smell of the town. Shen goes on to ask, ‘did I really travel back to the “past”, just like Faust?’⁹⁴ [‘难道我如浮士德一样，当真回到了那个“过去”了吗?’]⁹⁵ In ‘Water and Clouds’ [《水云》], written in 1943, Shen again mentions Faust and the past, writing, ‘I still believe that in this vast world, there are many shapes, colours, sounds, and smells that can excite your sensations from the past and make you young again.’ [‘我还相信这个广大的世界，尚有许多形体、颜色、声音、气味，都可以刺激你过去灵敏的感觉，使你变得真正十分年青。’]⁹⁶ He thinks that it is not merely a recollection in memory, but that he actually steps back into the past.

1.2.2 The Poetic Character in the Identity of West Hunan – Folk Music, Dream, and Poetry

In the critical article, ‘Fiction Writer and Reader’ [《小说作者和读者》] (1940), Shen states,

Personally, I consider fiction to be ‘characters and stories appropriately written down with words’, the concept of which seems simple but is not that simple in reality, because now that it is about characters and stories, it contains two parts: one is the social phenomenon, i.e., the various forms of interpersonal relationship; the other is the dream phenomenon, i.e., the various activities purely existing in the human psyche or consciousness. However, only possessing part one is not enough, as it will possibly turn out to be a daily newspaper story. Having only part two is not enough neither, as it will easily turn into poetry. It is necessary to combine ‘reality’ and ‘dream’, and to decorate and tailor it with words. Only when the two are dealt with appropriately can it then be a fiction.

⁹³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:295.

⁹⁴ Referring to Faust in *Faust* by Goethe.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11:296.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12:128-129.

个人只把小说看成是“用文字很恰当记录下来的人事”，这定义说它简单也并不十分简单。因为既然是人事，就容许包含了两个部分：一是社会现象，即是说人与人相互之间的种种关系；二是梦的现象，即是说人的心或意识的单独种种活动。但是第一部分不大够，它太容易成为日常报纸记事。但是第二部分也不够，它又容易成为诗歌。必须把“现实”和“梦”两种成分相混合，用语言文字来好好装饰、裁剪，处理得极其恰当，方可望成为一个小说。⁹⁷

According to Shen's logic, dream is about human psyche and consciousness, and poetry, if not equating with it, is at least largely about dream. The words 'dream' and 'poetry' are almost everywhere in Shen's writings, as well as 'music', in the same context. It is extremely difficult to define the three terms, but Shen himself thinks that the folksongs he heard in West Hunan are poetry. Therefore, there is obvious poetic character in the rural people of West Hunan, as described by Shen. To examine how poetic they are can offer a possible clue to justify the connection between 'folk music', 'dream', and 'poetry' (here, only folk music will be discussed, as it can be different from other genres of music).

In 'Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid' [《媚金·豹子·与那羊》] (1929), Shen writes, 'the songs of the White-faced Miao girls are even more poetic, more apt to lead you to intoxicated rapture and to dream'.⁹⁸ [但更其是诗，更其容易把情绪引到醉里梦里的，就是白脸苗女人的歌。]⁹⁹ The story of 'Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid' is a love story about a pair of young people who sang to each other and fell in love, and then decided to meet in a cave at night to offer each other the best of love. The 'dream', here, if it refers to the mental activity, should then be of love and sexual desire. What stimulates this dream is apparently the love songs sung by the woman. What is more, as Shen always emphasizes, the Miao people are very good at singing, the songs of 'white-face Miao girls' are the supreme folk songs. It is reasonable to conclude that Shen thinks that good folk songs are poetic.

Many critics, including J. C. Kinkley and Liu Hongtao, argue that Shen was influenced by Freud in his early years of writing. It is possible that Shen intentionally uses dream to indicate love and sexual desire, and folk music always plays an essential part in arousing

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12:65.

⁹⁸ Shen, 'Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid', trans. by Mason, p. 83.

⁹⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 5:352.

this kind of dream. For example, in *The Border Town*, during the night Nuosong sang for the girl, Cuicui, she dreamt a dream. The next morning, she told her grandfather, ‘Grandad, after what you said about serenades, I dreamed that I heard such lovely, haunting singing! I floated everywhere with the sound, and flew half-way up that cliff to pick saxifrage – I just can’t remember who I gave it to.’¹⁰⁰ [‘爷爷，你说唱歌，我昨天就在梦里听到一种顶好听的歌声，又软又缠绵，我象跟了这声音各处飞，飞到对溪悬崖半腰，摘了一大把虎耳草，得到了虎耳草，我可不知道把这个东西交给谁去了。’]¹⁰¹ Once again, the songs arouse love in the young girl’s heart, and no matter how she denied it shyly to others, her dream tells the truth and the saxifrage symbolises the young love.

However, love songs are not the only songs West Hunanese sing. In ‘Imagination of the Street by the River’ [《河街想象》] (1934), which is a letter to Zhang Zhaohe written during Shen’s journey back to Hunan in 1934, he writes, ‘I heard superb singing again, so beautiful. This time, the song was led by a child, especially tender, especially beautiful. If you heard this, you would never ever forget. It was virtually poetry. It was the most euphonic music.’ [‘又听到极好的歌声了，真美。这次是小孩子带头的，特别娇，特别美。你若听到，一辈子也忘不了的。简直是诗。简直是最悦耳的音乐。’]¹⁰² He again offers folksongs the crown of ‘the most euphonic music’ and equates them virtually to poetry. It seems that, beyond the ‘poetic songs’ that the country folk sing (see above, n.98), music can mean much more: it is something that is engraved in the local people’s lifestyle or even their identity – the poetic character that is born with them. In the writings of Shen, even if the country folk are not educated, they sing like poets and talk like poets. More concretely, it is Shen’s imagination of his hometown and its people – they possess seemingly primitive, but most beautiful humanity.

Shen, in later life (1972), wrote to his wife about *The Border Town* and *Long Chu*:

¹⁰⁰ Shen Congwen, *The Border Town and Other Stories*, trans. by Gladys Yang, (Beijing, China: Panda Books, 1981), p. 70.

¹⁰¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 8:122.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11:133.

I wrote some dialogues, close to folksongs, which were regarded as ‘special and poetic’ by some acquaintances more than thirty years ago! In my stories and prose, there also flow poetic emotions, and those are more like poetry than the separate lines written by some ‘famous poets’! I personally think there are melodies in it, and very good ones!

上面凑了些近于山歌的插话，卅多年前熟人就提到不同一般，有诗意！故事散文中也有诗情流注，比许多“大诗人”分行写的更像诗！我自己却以为有音乐旋律在其中，还自以为即很好的乐章。¹⁰³

He imagined the way the country folks talk and made them poetic. As a matter of fact, the characters in West Hunan in his stories sometimes live in a very dreamy state. In ‘The marble carrying boat’ [《石子船》] (1931), Shen describes the boatmen, in their most commonly seen daily life, as people who ‘dreamt ridiculous dreams, and when there was light wind and a bright moon on the water, they forgot about the bitterness in sunshine and rain, singing simple songs and comforting themselves from the dreariness of life.’ [‘作着极其可笑的梦，水面上风清月白时，忘了日晒雨淋的苦，就唱着简单的歌，安慰着自己生活的凄凉而已。’]¹⁰⁴ This kind of life lasts forever, it is just the way they live, as Shen writes:

He went aboard again. He went ashore again. He had absolutely no clear consciousness, as if he were dreaming, because the water was flowing as it always did. The sun was setting, and there was the sound of people hitting a persimmon tree mixed with the singing of stonecutters, which was no different from what it was like in the morning.

他又走到船上去。他又走上岸。完全没有主意，只仿佛是在做梦，因为水还是平时那样的流，太阳已拉斜，山上敲柿子的声音带着石工唱歌声音，也并不同上半天情形两样。¹⁰⁵

It is this dreamy lifestyle that cultivates them into poets in Shen’s imagination. The poetic character is something in the nature of West Hunanese that Shen admires and wishes to inherit.

In ‘Fishing’ [《渔》] (1931), Shen depicts the long-lasting hatred between two families. For centuries, they killed and ate each other because of some trivial affairs that had happened long ago. With time passing by, the sanguinary customs of eating people are

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 23:185.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:232.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:242.

long gone, the hatred almost forgotten, but the story remained. One night during the fishing season, when the twin brothers went fishing, the older brother remembered that their father, in his death bed, asked them to seek revenge. The twin brothers in the story possess opposite characteristics. The older one was a warrior, who still carried the hatred for the other family, but the younger one was a poet, who enjoyed beautiful scenery and wanted to play the flute. He discovered a bunch of sere flowers that he thought had been left by a woman from the other family and sang two love songs:

Thou woman with fair skin and kind heart,
 Don't forget to bring a bouquet even in your dreams,
 Since in this world, there is also a man who dreams,
 When you two meet in dream, you can give it to him.
 [...]

The gentle breeze fondles my face,
 as if I were standing at the door of paradise – at this time,
 I wait for you to open the door.
 Doesn't matter when, it'll never be too late for me.

你脸白心好的女人，
 在梦中也莫忘记带一把花，
 因为这世界，也有做梦的男子。
 无端梦在一处时你可以把花给他。
 [...]

柔软的风摩我的脸，
 我像是站在天堂的门边——这时，
 我等候你来开门，
 不拘那一天我不嫌迟。¹⁰⁶

The 'man who dreams' obviously refers to the singer. His dream was not only about sexual love, but also the long-lost peace between the two families. The flowers left by the woman from the enemy family also indicated her wish for peace. The younger brother found the flowers in a dream-like land, in a place of ultimate tranquillity with only the sounds of nature: 'The earth was now sleeping and the people were as if they were in a dream.' [‘大地正在睡眠，人此时也全如在梦中。’]¹⁰⁷ It was the poetic nature of the younger brother that led him to discover the beauty of the night and the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:276-277.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5:274.

flowers; it was the poet living in his heart who helped him to find the dream.¹⁰⁸ In the end, the elder brother who brandished his blade as if he were killing enemies fished out a bucket of fish.¹⁰⁹ In this story, Shen stresses a few times that while the older brother was talking about revenge, the younger brother had something else – the love of a woman – on his mind. Shen also emphasises a few times how this world at night was sleeping and dreaming. During this night, both of the brothers lived in a dream: the older brother’s dream was of revenge and achievement, and the younger brother’s dream was of love. The story ends, ‘this [fishing] happens once every year, it is like the custom of dragon boat racing for festivals.’ [‘这事情每年有一次，像过节划龙船。’] Thus, the dream also carries on. Which dream does Shen prefer? He portrays in detail how beautifully and poetically the younger brother sang, for example, ‘this was the first time the younger brother came here, and he had just finished his song; the sentiment was as poetic as this place.’ [‘那弟弟是初来，且正唱完歌，情调与这地方同样有诗意。’]¹¹⁰ When describing the twins’ achievement of the night, Shen leaves a rather suggestive remark that makes readers ponder further: ‘that younger man from House Wu brought back nothing but a bunch of withered flowers.’ [‘那吴家年青一点的汉子，他只得一束憔悴的花。’]¹¹¹ The withered flowers may seem unfruitful, but they symbolise the younger brother’s pursuit of timeless love, as they belonged to a woman who had already passed away. One can clearly tell that Shen more favours the younger, and it is his romantic and poetic traits that Shen values. Chapter 5 will comment on how people regress to their primitive selves in dreams (see below, p.158); in this dream-like night, the brothers were doing exactly that – stepping back into their primitive and true selves. If the poet living in the younger brother is in the nature of the West Hunanese, then that is what Shen wants to be inherited and passed on, as it is the best of humanity.

The West Hunan people Shen imagines and writes about in his works are true, pastoral, romantic poets who live in dreams. Shen describes Nuosong, in *The Border Town*, as having ‘the traits of a poet’ [诗人性格],¹¹² but it is this ‘poet’ who won the girl’s love by singing at night. Kinkley, when comparing Shen with Western Romanticists, states that

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5:276.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5:282.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5:279.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5:282.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 8:117.

‘the most obvious Romantic trait of Shen Congwen is fantasy and dream’ [‘沈从文最明显的浪漫主义成分是幻想和梦境’]¹¹³. Without evidence, it is imprudent to conclude that Shen inherits that from Western Romanticism. It is more possible that Shen inherits it from the people of his hometown, whose ancestors were those who had inspired Qu Yuan the great poet, and Shen rediscovered this poetic character with a little help from the West.

Shen’s references to folk music reveal some perspectives of his writings before the mid-1930s. From his use of folk music, it can be glimpsed that these works of Shen are influenced by Primitivism. He draws writing materials from the primitive culture with which he is personally fascinated and which, in every way, can meet the demand for ‘New Literature’ for China. In this time of great transition for the country, most writers wished to convey their ideas, which they regarded as capable of saving China. According to Oakes, Shen Congwen’s regional works before 1934 are about trying to eulogise what can be foreseen as being lost in the modern world, and after 1934, ‘Shen tells us directly what is being lost in West Hunan’¹¹⁴ in a more tragic way. This is probably a reason why references to folk music appear more frequently before the mid-1930s, as folk music symbolises the lost treasures. In this sense, ‘the primitive landscape was a modern construction, a way of knowing what modern progress meant’.¹¹⁵ Shen expresses his wish to find an antidote to modernity, to implant vitality in Chinese people by advocating sexual freedom and primitive power, and he hopes to restore people’s worship of the divine beauty through primitive rites which he considers to be the origin of all the arts.

To convey these ideas, Shen Congwen utilises the art and culture of his hometown, which can be the perfect source of Primitivism. The memory and imagination of West Hunan are applied by Shen in his works most incisively and vividly, with folk music functioning as the gateway. Shen Congwen’s Primitivism is, in some ways, inspired by folk music, which also makes it unique. Although, as Daniel Albright argues, ‘Primitivism in music tends to differ from Primitivism in literature and painting, in that

¹¹³ Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 63.

¹¹⁴ Timothy S.Oakes, ‘Shen Congwen’s Literary Regionalism and the Gendered Landscape of Chinese Modernity’, *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, 77.2 (1995), 93-107 (p. 95).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

the darker side is sometimes minimized¹¹⁶, Shen's Primitivism seems to be closer to that in music in this sense. Shen's ideas about primitive culture can in some ways be justified by the beliefs of Percy Grainger – 'savages are sweeter and more peaceable and artistic than civilized people', 'primitiveness is purity and civilization filthy corruption', and it is great agony to '[see] civilization advance and pass its blighting hand over the world'.¹¹⁷ With folk music as stimulation for the Primitivism in his literature, Shen Congwen finds beauty and poetry.

¹¹⁶ Albright, *Modernism and music*, p. 235.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

Chapter 2: Composed Music

Unlike folk music which is commonly conceptualised as music that evolved and was transmitted orally among lower-class people, or as old music that has no known composers, composed music has a known composer and is most likely to be known and played by educated people in urban centres. For the types of music that will be discussed in this chapter, ‘art music’ may be a more suitable term in most situations. However, some examples in this chapter refer to music that is not ‘artistic’ like Western and Chinese classical music, but often closer to the popular music produced by urban dwellers. Despite their differences with each other, art music and popular music all stand apart from the ‘folk music’ discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, ‘composed music’ seems to be the most suitable and inclusive term to categorise Shen’s references to music that will be included in this chapter.

Another matter needs to be clarified before any further analysis is made: while Shen is known (in fact self-declared) to be a music lover, he was not a musician himself. Therefore, the remarks Shen made on music, however precise or in-depth, can only be understood as insights from an amateur who did not know much about musicology; they cannot be compared to those made by professional musicians, or by music critics with knowledge of musical theories or composition.

In a letter from Shen to his second son Huchu in 1952, he wrote,

I was very fond of music when I was young. Until I was in my twenties, I often dreamed I was a musician; I was extremely moved by my own singing, and would be extraordinarily upset when I woke up. Particularly although I have no deep understanding of music, I am always moved to tears when I encounter a good musical composition.

我小时又极欢喜音乐，直到廿来岁时，还常常也在梦里做个音乐家，唱得自己感动十分，醒后还异常惆怅难过。特别是理解音乐虽不深，一遇到好乐曲，永远是感动得要流泪。¹¹⁸

Later in the 1970s, again in some of his letters, Shen mentioned that he would like to become a composer. For example, in a letter to Peng Zigang and Xu Ying, Shen wrote, ‘If I could have another opportunity to go to music college with music teachers and

¹¹⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 19:305.

students, I would favour the chance to change careers a fourth time, namely to write music. Everything starts from nothing; if I had a year to practice, there would be some achievements' [‘如果还有个什么机会，去和音乐学院师生一道，我肯定还有第四次改业机会，即作曲。还是一切“由无到有”，有个一年把习题时间，也会取得些收成的’].¹¹⁹ While Shen maintained a dream of becoming a musician throughout his life, the type of musician Shen wanted to become when he was young was not exactly the same as the composer he wished to be in his late years. According to Kinkley, ‘particularly after [Shen] could afford a phonograph in the 1940s, he discovered a love of music, including Western classical music’.¹²⁰ He also notes that, during the first years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, ‘distraught, Shen could only take refuge in his Western classical music’.¹²¹ In Kinkley’s email to me, he confirmed that when he visited Shen in the 1980s, Shen was still in love with Western classical music.¹²² Huang Yongyu [黄永玉], a famous Chinese artist and Shen’s cousin’s son, developed a close relationship with Shen when they were both in Beijing. He wrote several pieces and has spoken in public in memory of Shen. In one of the talks, he said:

[Shen’s] understanding of music is a miracle.

...

Cousin¹²³ said, ‘music, the relationship between time and space!’

This is an accurate description. It was something he said 30 years ago.

He liked Mozart, he liked Bach; he also mentioned the composition of their music.

He was a really wise man. He could not read music scores, or even numbered musical notations, but when he talked about music, he had many of his own theories, which were as melodious as music and inspiring.

对音乐的理解，这是个奇迹。

[...]

表叔说：音乐，时间和空间的关系！

这是个准确定律。是他 30 多年前说过的话。

他喜欢莫扎特，喜欢巴哈，从中也提到音乐结构，

他真是个智者，他看不懂乐谱，可能简谱也读不清，你听他谈音乐，一套又一套，和音乐一样好听，发人聪明。¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22:440.

¹²⁰ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 28.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹²² Kinkley, ‘Re: Researching on Shen Congwen’, Message to the author, 2 May 2013, email.

¹²³ Referring to Shen

¹²⁴ Huang Yongyu, ‘The Ordinary Shen Congwen’ [《平常的沈从文》], *Journal of Jishou University (Social Science)*, 03 (1999) 1-4, (p. 3).

As this talk took place at an international Shen Congwen conference in 1998,¹²⁵ here, ‘thirty years ago’ refers to some time from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. This aligns with Kinkley’s statement that Shen started to like Western classical music in the 1940s, and maintained this hobby until the end of his days. So when exactly did Shen start to love Western classical music? One more clue on the timeline of Shen’s taste in music can be found in a letter Shen wrote in 1951:

When reading *The Selected Works of Chairman Mao*, I associated them with various social changes and development over the last three decades of modern history. It is exactly like seventeen years ago when [I] listened to music with Ma Sicong and Liang Zongdai. The three of us listened to the whole collection of Beethoven’s music and other composers for seven hours at a time. Although we all listened with the same ears, it benefitted and impressed upon us each individually. Sicong learned from the composer, the conductor and the instrumental solo performance many things that were not easy for us to acquire. Zongdai gained some impressions on the history of music, something to talk about in the drawing room, as well as something about literary ideas. As for me, I seemed to have not gained much directly, but indirectly, the impact transferred onto some of my later works, especially a few books and short pieces in which there existed the rhythmic process of music. This is also closer to some experiments that translated music to something concrete. While I could understand this [process], I could not tell you how exactly.

而读毛文选时，且更多的联系到近三十年社会和现代史的种种变化与发展。正和过去十七年前，与马思聪、梁宗岱三人同听音乐一样。三个人听了七小时的悲多汶等全套曲子，同是一双耳朵，却各有所得，各有影响。思聪从作曲者，指挥及种种器乐的独奏过程，领会了许多我们不易学习的东西。宗岱得的音乐史中一些欣赏印象，一些在客厅中可以增加谈风的东西，也可能得到些文学思想上的东西。我呢，在直接方面似乎毫无所得，但间接，转化，却影响到此后的一些工作，特别是几本书，一些短篇，其中即充满乐曲中的节奏过程，也近于乐曲转译成为形象的一些试验。但理会到这点，可说不出。¹²⁶

From the timeline of ‘seventeen years ago’ mentioned above, an approximate date that could be extrapolated for the events described would be 1934. Although Shen is not always trustworthy on the accuracy of dates, as Liu Hongtao has pointed out,¹²⁷ the letter at least shows that Shen began to listen to Western classical music around the

¹²⁵ The conference (The 1998 International Shen Congwen Study Conference [98 国际沈从文研究学术讨论会]) was held by the Shen Congwen Centre of Jishou University, from September 29 to October 4, 1998.

¹²⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 19:178.

¹²⁷ Liu, *Shen Congwen’s Fiction and Modernism*, p. 163.

mid-1930s. It also shows that he indeed admitted that Western classical music influenced his later works – though it may be problematic to define this influence because it is ‘indirect’. The previous chapter noted that Shen’s works of fiction containing many references to folk music were mainly written before the mid-1930s. It is possible, then, that there may be some correlation between these two dates.

2.1 A Country Man against City Music

There were some Chinese folk instruments that Shen once tried to play, but he was not skilled. In the interview with Shen in 1981, Kinkley noted that Shen loved to listen to people playing suona¹²⁸ and erhu¹²⁹ when he was young; Shen himself had forgotten that he once played the pipa¹³⁰ to his friend, as referred to in ‘Remembering Xianghe’ [《忆翔鹤》], but as he was a beginner, he played it badly and out of tune. Shen remembered that he learned from Liu Tianhua to play a tune, and he stopped playing before long.¹³¹

In a non-fictional prose work, ‘A Madman’s Correspondence – Letter to a Teacher’ [《狂人书简——给师傅的信》] (1925), Shen mentioned that he had a xiao,¹³² but he broke it when he lost control of his emotions.¹³³ It is also known that when Shen was young, he liked West Hunanese operas and Miao Nuo dramas,¹³⁴ which were constantly mentioned in his works about West Hunan.¹³⁵ This evidence shows that, before Shen developed his passion for Western classical music, the types of music he listened to were mainly folk music, local operas from his home region, and music by traditional Chinese instruments which are also largely used by folk music. These include, for example, the suona, xiao and erhu.

¹²⁸ Suona, or [唢呐], is a traditional Chinese instrument similar to a small trumpet.

¹²⁹ Erhu, or [二胡], is a traditional Chinese string instrument.

¹³⁰ Pipa, or [琵琶], is a traditional Chinese instrument similar to the lute.

¹³¹ Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* [《沈从文传》], trans. by Jiaqin Fu (Beijing: Guo ji wen hua chu ban she, 2005), p. 48.

¹³² Xiao, or [箫], is a traditional Chinese instrument similar to vertical flute.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Nuo Drama, or [傩戏], is a kind of ritual drama (often associated with shaman magic) that can be found in West Hunan as well as some other provinces like Hubei and Jiangxi; the kind of drama involves a lot of singing and dancing.

¹³⁵ Works mentioning Nuo Drama include the poem ‘Redeem a Vow’ [《还愿》], stories like ‘The Love of Shaman’ [《神巫之爱》], *Fengzi* [《凤子》], and so on.

There is only a scattered mentioning of the types of music he liked before 1930 in his writing. Nevertheless, it is in fact easier to pin down what he disliked at the time. Many of Shen's early stories carry elements of autobiography. According to Ling Yu, it was not until 1927 that Shen started to gradually grow out of this type of writing.¹³⁶ Some of his characters' names are similar to his names or pen names used to publish articles; for example, Mr. Huanhu in 'Mr. Huanhu' actually might come from Shen's birth name '岳焕' (yue-huan).¹³⁷ From this aspect, it is possible that the opinions (including musical opinions) of the characters also reflect the author's. The first person narrated fictional work 'My Neighbours' [《我的邻》], written in 1927, complains about noisy musical neighbours, which may truthfully show Shen's life and struggle during that period of time.

From 1924 – 1927, Shen moved between small rooms in flats close to universities and had many student neighbours.¹³⁸ He kept being kicked out by landlords for non-payment although he worked hard trying to earn money from writing. The protagonist in 'My Neighbour' is in the exactly the same situation. He complains about living in a small room with neighbours who are law students and love to play music all the time, which greatly disturbs his writing for survival. What is interesting in this short story is not the fact that the protagonist hates musical noises, but the particular category of music that annoys the protagonist, which will be further described below.

This should first be compared to another non-fictional work written by Shen earlier during this period of time, already mentioned above, 'A Madman's Correspondence – Letter to a Teacher', in which Shen complains about his neighbour, a student, singing at night:

That damn student living in Room No.3 shouts out hideous songs at night, as if there were a ghost clenching his throat. It is like a mournful song a prisoner sings in his cell bed remembering his past in order to escape from reality, which unexpectedly causes me to wonder that if I, or maybe someone else in this flat, died, and he is here singing an elegy!

第三号那个流氓学生，半夜里，像有鬼手扼着他的喉咙似的，干喊那不成腔的歌曲，不但像苦囚在牢床上追怀自己的过去以陶遣眼前的

¹³⁶ Ling Yu, *A Biography of Shen Congwen*, p. 157.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹³⁸ Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *Odyssey*, trans. by Fu, p. 107.

景物而唱的哀歌，竟使我迷迷惘惘，疑心到自己——或别个同寓人死了，他是特意来唱丧歌的！¹³⁹

‘My Neighbours’ is likely to be based on a similar experience. However, in this piece, Shen may have included another kind of music that he disliked, specifically to make the work reflect more than pure complaints. Similar to the ‘elegy’ in ‘A Madman’s Correspondence’, Shen in ‘My Neighbours’ describes the music of the neighbours as follows:

From the annoying disturbance and noise, I saw the samsara of hell, and I knew the many sceneries of hell. I, a living man, with no need of the guidance of the green-faced, the red-haired little demons, or the beast with an ox’s head and horse’s face, travelled around in hell in these days, only led by this soul stirring music.

从这些讨人厌烦纷扰唠叨中，我见到了地狱的轮回，我了解了各样地狱的景致。我是一个活着的人，不靠青脸赤发的小鬼，不靠牛头马面——单只靠这几个天才用他那惊心动魄的音乐引路，我游过地狱一遍了。¹⁴⁰

In ‘My Neighbours’, Shen also informs the reader of the specific title of the piece of music played by the neighbours:

However, if you stayed in the south-facing room, someone in the north-facing room would make noises by pounding every percussion instrument in the room. Among the sounds of stringed, woodwind and percussion instruments, there was also chanting, which always included ‘Ma Pai Occupied Junshan’. Once or twice of the percussion part was not enough, there was more.

I finally gave up reading and started to listen. Before long, ‘Ma Pai Occupied Junshan’ was finished, and the dazhengqin¹⁴¹ was up on stage, playing ‘Plum Blossom Melody - Three Variations’, after the dazhengqin, there was the erhu, and after the erhu, there was the xiao, and after that, there was the bamboo flute...

然而你要涅槃在南房，有人却在北房敲打一切法宝作异声。在一切丝竹金石中，还有那口号；口号总不离马派定军山，“一通鼓二通鼓”播之不足又重来。

¹³⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:41-42.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:36.

¹⁴¹ A traditional Japanese instrument.

放下书吧，就听。但不久，定军山又完场，改为“大正琴”独奏梅花三弄了，“大正琴”奏还有二胡。二胡奏毕有箫，箫之外有笛……¹⁴²

Judging by Shen's later habit of listening to Western classical music on radio or phonograph,¹⁴³ the reason why he complained about the music was not only because it disturbed his work, but more importantly, because what the type of music stood for made him uncomfortable. In the letter 'A Madman's Correspondence', Shen notably tells the reader that the song is 'hideous or out of tune' [不成腔的], and he uses the verb 'shout' [干喊] instead of 'sing' to describe the singer. However, in 'My Neighbours', Shen does not think the music itself is 'hideous', and even calls the players 'geniuses' [天才] (although this may be a little sarcastic). The protagonist, for one moment, makes the decision to leave his work and start listening, which indicates that the music in 'My Neighbours' is in fact not that unbearable. For this reason, it is the category of the music that is the key to understand Shen's dislike of it. 'Ma Pai Occupied Junshan' is a famous piece of Jingju (Peking Opera), and 'Plum Blossom Melody - Three Variations'¹⁴⁴ is an ancient piece for the guqin.¹⁴⁵ Kinkley has suggested several reasons why Shen did not like Peking Opera:

As with Lu Xun, though, fondness for local music and drama translated into disdain for the high-pitched droning of Peking (Northern) opera. Shen disliked the latter both for its musical qualities and its fashionable popularity among the Republican bourgeoisie. No doubt it is psychologically significant that Congwen's father dearly loved Peking opera and wanted his son to become a great opera singer.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Shen, *Complete Works*, 2:36-37

¹⁴³ This is shown in some of his later letters.

For example:

There are four people in the family, but the only appliance we share is a big radio, as well as dozens of records by Beethoven and other composers. We can hear the common understanding in the same music. At the moment, Zhaohe went out to watch the traditional dramas, and the children went to the book store, as for me, I am sitting alone listening to Beethoven's "Romance" to pass New Year's Day, which is just like being with a close friend. 家中四个人，只有个共通使用的器具，即一个大收音机，和几十张贝多芬等片子，能在一种音乐中听出共同理解的东西。这时节兆和出去看旧戏，两个孩子上了书店，我就一个人坐下来听贝多芬作的《罗曼斯》守岁，整合一个亲密好友一样。(1959)

Ibid., 20:277.

Or, see below, n.186.

¹⁴⁴ Traditional guqin music, or called 'Ode to Plum Blossom' [《梅花引》]

¹⁴⁵ [古琴] or guqin, is an ancient Chinese instrument, similar to zither, also known as 'seven-stringed zither'

¹⁴⁶ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 28.

Among the provided reasons, the main reason that arouses the complaints is probably ‘its fashionable popularity among the Republican bourgeoisie’, despite the possibility of other reasons for Shen’s personal loathing of Peking opera. The same reason is also liable to explain why Shen particularly mentions the piece of music ‘Three Variations of Plum Blossom’. According to Jin, in ancient Chinese ideology, guqin is the most superior type of music. Solo music pieces composed for guqin were often played alone by scholars as a way of self-improvement.¹⁴⁷ At that time, from Shen’s perspective, people who played such music belonged to the gentry. Here, Shen’s criteria of being a ‘gentleman’ perhaps are not same as in the West: any self-sufficient city person who is comparatively well educated can be categorised as a gentleman, including well-established writers and scholars, and even some wealthy university students.

In the above works, the pleasure the gentlemen gain from showing off the music they play is contrasted with the bitterness and misery of a countryman who is struggling in a strange big city materially and spiritually. According to Liang, the literati-gentry class was what Shen could not blend in with at that time, and, traditionally, ‘music always remained closely allied with the literary arts, and was frequently overshadowed by literary endeavours in the formal literati-gentry class education’.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, traditional highbrow Chinese music is not the only music Shen associated with upper-class people.

Using a certain type of instrument to indicate a character’s social status is also a common method used in many Western novels. In eighteenth and nineteenth century English novels, the piano is placed ‘at the centre of social change’.¹⁴⁹ In Dickens’s novels, the piano is seen as lady’s music, and it is not right for a gentleman to play the piano unless he is from the lower classes or a music teacher.¹⁵⁰ Emma Sutton also argues that in Virginia Woolf’s earlier fiction, ‘music is a ladylike “accomplishment” – a marker, as it was for many in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of her family’s wealth and

¹⁴⁷ Jin Jie, *Chinese Music*, trans. by Li Wang and Rong Li (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 60-61.

¹⁴⁸ Liang Ming-Yüeh, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*. (New York: Heinrichshofen Edition, 1985), p. 174.

¹⁴⁹ Ehrlich quot. in Emma Sutton, *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music: politics, aesthetics, form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 53.

¹⁵⁰ James T. Lightwood, *Charles Dickens and Music* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1912), p. 33.

social aspirations'.¹⁵¹ In Shen's early works, there are several pieces describing the 'gentleman's life', that feature instruments like piano and violin in their homes. The piano works in a similar way in Shen's early writings, showing the social status of the player, although unlike in Dickens's or Woolf's works, the piano is not presented only as the instrument of ladies. For example, in 'The Gentry Wife' [《绅士的太太》] (1930), the eldest son of the gentleman finds a piano in the living room, plays it and teases the little child to sing. In 'Mr. Huanhu' [《焕乎先生》] (1928), the protagonist is an infamous writer, who dreams of being a famous and wealthy novelist who can afford exquisite drawing equipment and a violin for his imaginary wife, so that the woman 'would often play famous foreign tunes on the violin for him, and accompany him by the big desk while he wrote his novel' [‘自然就常常用这个提琴为他拉有名的外国曲子，让他坐在大写字台边一旁写小说一旁听’].¹⁵² At this time, Shen's knowledge of these Western instruments was rather superficial. It is likely that he liked the sound of these instruments, as there were not many negative comments in his works like those on the music he hated, but instead, these comments were relatively neutral. Meanwhile, Shen did not clarify what these pieces of music are exactly, but only titled them 'famous foreign tunes'. The Chinese word '曲子' (qu zi), here translated as 'tune', is a rather general word, as it can refer to any kind of music and is actually a rather colloquial term. Moreover, the piano mentioned in 'The Gentry Wife' is more likely to be an example of domestic music such as those Shen might have read about in foreign novels, or experienced from being with his gentlemen friends. At that time, Shen would have already listened to some Western music, but as an amateur, the words he used to describe the music show no specific knowledge of Western music. He wrote about this kind of music probably only because it could represent a lifestyle. In fact, Shen read Dickens quite early, even before he went to Beijing.¹⁵³ Another possibility of how Shen learned about this lifestyle is that during that period, many Chinese literary figures copied the Western way, having literature salons and playing music in their drawing rooms. Shen was invited to some of these, but as a 'country man' as he titled himself, he would find it difficult to blend in. Hence, it is possible that Shen acquainted himself with this typical lifestyle and the music involved from other literary works and from real

¹⁵¹ Sutton, *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music*, p. 54.

¹⁵² Shen, *Complete Works*, 2:175.

¹⁵³ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 60.

life friends, though the level of understanding resulted in his stereotypical way of describing Western music.

From these examples, it is clear that the purpose of Shen's use of the kinds of music city people play (or even 'play with') does not lie in his keenness for the melody but in the type of lifestyle the music represents, which was opposite to Shen's own. Whether he sometimes shows hatred towards the lifestyle or sometimes there is a hint of jealousy, it does not change the fact that Shen never belonged to this way of life. Thus, sarcasm towards both the gentry and himself fills his works. Shen writes about these people's music in order to sneer at them. Nevertheless, when describing ballroom dancing music in Shanghai, the abhorrence and sarcasm increases still, targeting the Shanghai school of writers directly:

When the music started, all the dancers stood up in couples, rubbing the heels of their leather shoes on the smooth floor. The musician was dark skinned, as if polished with shoe cream, his face was shining like black gold under the dark red light. Waiters dressed in white shuffled back and forth in the room. Everyone gathered in this room with no reason and performed actions that were seen as ridiculous in each other's eyes. At this moment, outside, someone would stop in the street, and grasp the exoticism from the music in this house as the Shanghai writers would do.

乐声一起，舞女全站起了身，仍然互相搭配对子，在光滑地板上把皮鞋跟擦着，奏乐人黑脸如擦了靴油，在暗红灯下反着乌金的光泽，穿白衣的堂倌们在场上穿来穿去，各人皆如莫名其妙的聚到这一间房子里，作着互相看来很可笑的行动。这时在外面，就有人停顿在街头，从音乐中如上海作家一般的领会这房子里一切异国情调了。¹⁵⁴

The quotation is from 'Night' [《夜》] written in 1930, which reveals Shen's life-long loathing towards the Shanghai school of writers. Shen lived in Shanghai from 1928-1930, where he developed his negative opinion of the culture of this city. In the early and mid-1930s, Shen wrote articles such as 'On "Shanghai School"' [《论“海派”》] (1934) to criticise Shanghai's 'commercial literature'.¹⁵⁵ In Shen's eyes, the playing of Western club music in Shanghai and people's reaction to it clearly showed the city's superficial imitation of Western styles and its distorted self-cognition.

¹⁵⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 5:248.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17:59-61.

All the examples above show that the references to composed music in Shen's early writing are there to indicate the social status of different characters, and to portray a social phenomenon that aims at music's social but not aesthetic value. It seems likely, then, at this stage, Shen Congwen was not very familiar with urban composed music. However, his natural sensitivity to music helped him to achieve a deep understanding of the differences between various styles. His understanding of urban composed music to some degree reflects his overall understanding of city dwellers. In Shen's early career, he seldom expressed any detailed knowledge of this category of music (e.g. melody, tempo, rhythm, etc. or specific influence of music on his writing) in either fiction or letters. This is entirely different from the way he understood folk music in West Hunan: in this, Shen's understanding is that of an insider who grew up in the environment. His descriptions of urban composed music, however, reflect the understanding of an outsider. This is evident in that Shen neither cited the titles of the pieces of urban music (except those cited above, in n.142), nor depicted the beauty of the music itself as he did for the folk music of his home region. For example, when using urban music in his works, Shen refers only to general music categories to convey the image of the characters and the social background of the fiction; detailed descriptions are absent.

On some level, then, Shen Congwen still stubbornly maintained his original 'country man' quality, and viewed composed music from this perspective, at least until the mid-1930s. In fact, the function of some intentionally inserted urban music resembles the function of folk music; like the latter, the former can be used to social ends. For example, Shen uses songs from both categories of music as the basis of romantic love and the way to attract the opposite sex. In the following scene from 'Long Night', which was written in 1924 and published in 1925, Shen describes an urban girl's singing:

Her songs had a pair of silvery white gauze-like wings that could not only fly into the heart of a vulgar man who had bought her song with a few pennies, but also into the heart of that shy young lad who hid behind the yellow locust.

她的歌声是生着一对银白薄纱般翅膀的：不止是能跑到此时同她在一块打住用一块或者两三块洋钱买她歌声的那俗恶男子心中去，并且也跑进那个在洋槐背后胆小腼腆的孩子心里去了！¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:128-129.

The song of the woman not only attracts the man who paid for her song, but someone else who hears it. This is similar to scenes from in ‘Bai Zi’ [《柏子》], where Shen’s characters on the boats in West Hunan are attracted by songs of women as a prelude to the generation of love. There is another similar incident in ‘Mr. Huanhu’:

Here he did not know what to do, but at the other side, the light in the pavilion turned bright, and the singing began lightly, slowly and then louder, as if it were to seduce him. How hard to resist! Gradually, the song drew him out. Watching the light from the balcony, he could see the indistinct figure in the light.

Was she singing for someone? God knows. Might be for someone else in the room, or just for herself, or exactly for this dumb fellow standing in the cold wind on the balcony. This light and slow singing voice was trembling near Mr. Huanhu’s ears. Even if he did not know the meaning, it still made him sad.

在这一边虽无可作为，那边亭子间的灯光却已明亮，歌声轻轻的，缓缓的，越唱越起劲，正像有意来引诱他一样。真是一种难于抵抗的诱引！渐渐的，这歌声，就把他拖到外面去了。从凉台上望对面灯光，则灯光下的人影隐约可见。

这是为谁而唱？真只有天知道了。或者为房中另一个人，或者为她自己，或者就正为这个露立在凉台上让风吹的傻汉子。可是这轻轻的缓缓的歌声，在焕乎先生耳边宕着摇着，不问其用意，仍然只是一种影响，这影响便使他难过。¹⁵⁷

In both pieces, Shen does not explain in detail what songs are sung by the characters, therefore the reader does not know whether those songs are composed by urban musicians or if they are spontaneously invented. These pieces are closer to folk music than other urban music examples in Shen’s work, however these are distinct from the popular love songs in Shanghai, which Shen criticises in the non-fictional piece ‘Discursive Notes on a Trip South’ [《南行杂记》] (1928):

Business students here could only sing those decadent songs, with lyrics like ‘brother my lover’, ‘coming’ ‘a few times’ ‘forget about it’. They constantly repeated the same lyrics, never tiring even after hundreds of times. To judge from the effort they spent on singing these popular tunes, the college students here were all talented artists and art imitators.

这里学生学商科的就能唱这靡靡之音，只听到“情哥哥”“来了”“两下”“拉倒”之声音。且反复其词，大有不厌百回唱之意。从这

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:186

唱小调情绪上看来，这里大学生，便全是天才，艺术家，以及艺术摹拟者了。¹⁵⁸

Shen mocks the college students as ‘artists’ and ‘art imitators’, which implies that he considers that this kind of ‘decadent’ popular music is not real art or valuable in education. Then what kind of art does Shen regard as real art? This chapter hopes to find that out, but before the 1930s, Shen did not seem to think highly of musical education in college. In ‘Mountain Ghost’ [《山鬼》], also written in 1928, Shen regards a professional music education as useless. He writes:

I could guess that this woman was a student of an art college¹⁵⁹ who had come here to live with her brother. People who lived here usually went to the art college nearby, which was really a waste of time and money. [I] heard the person who lived here playing coarse music on the piano all day long, and felt that this did not only spoil his own taste, but also others’ space.

猜测出的是这女人大致是一个艺术大学的学生，同到一个作兄弟的在一处住。住到这类地方，所进的学校，总不外乎附近的艺术学校，这真可以说是糟蹋时间金钱的一件事。听到这一家的主人，成天在钢琴边弹奏顶粗俗的曲子，就觉得这真不但是糟蹋了自己，也同时糟蹋别人的空间。¹⁶⁰

As someone who dreamt of being a musician when he was young, it is intriguing that Shen did not approve of the education and considered it a waste of time and money. In the first example above, the college students are business students who merely keep in fashion by singing the popular songs. The second example is targeted at actual music students, who would become professional musicians. However, Shen’s opinions on them are both negative. Seen from the first example, functionally, the love songs sung by the students can be similar to those love songs sung by Shen’s fellow countrymen or the song sung by the woman in ‘Long Night’ which attracts ‘me’ in the fiction; however, judging from Shen’s attitude, they are different kinds of songs, and metropolitan popular music does not have much aesthetic value. Shen dislikes the metropolitan commercial atmosphere shown in Shanghai. In the second example, Shen is directly attacking the idea of music education itself.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11:79.

¹⁵⁹ These art colleges teach all kinds of arts rather than just visual arts.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:442.

It is notable that both examples above were written in 1928. Ming-Yüeh Liang indicates that ‘in 1927 the first formal Westernised music education institution was established in Shanghai,’ with the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music.¹⁶¹ This means that the Western styled modern college music education in China had only just begun when Shen arrived in Shanghai in 1928. Shen, having never been abroad, might not have been familiar with the Western system of music education in Western countries when the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music was founded. It is mentioned above that Shen seemed to have learned to play the pipa from Liu Tianhua [刘天华] (1895 – 1932), but he soon gave up. Liu Tianhua was teaching in the music research centre of Peking University as early as 1922, and was researching the Western methodology of composition and harmony. However, professional courses like this were normally open only to members of the university’s music society,¹⁶² and there is no evidence to show that Shen attended any of those.

It is therefore very possible that Shen had no idea what these music students were actually studying, and that, at the time, he was not familiar with Western Classical music. This could explain Shen’s 180-degree turn in his attitude towards music education later in life: he might have thought that the purpose of studying music was to produce songs like the unpleasant ones sung by the business students in ‘Discursive Notes on a Trip South’. Outside of Shen’s complete attitude shift regarding music education later in life, the fact that the concept of Western classical music was seldom seen in his works before the mid-1930s also seems to indicate that he was ignorant of Western classical music and Westernised music education in the pre-1930 period. In addition, all of Shen’s profound discussion on Western classical music that remarks on specific pieces of composed music, analysis of music education’s function in society, or the influence of composed music on his writings only appeared after the mid-1930s and only regularly in the 1940s.

Nevertheless, even Shen’s letters in his later life show evidence of his ignorance of Western classical music theories. In the early 1970s, Shen wrote two letters to Dou

¹⁶¹ Liang, *Music of the Billion*, p. 137.

¹⁶² Liu Jingzhi [刘靖之], *Essay Collections of Modern Chinese Music History* [《中國新音樂史論集》], ed. by Jingzhi Liu and Modern Chinese Music History Congresses [中國新音樂史研討會] (Hong Kong: Asian Studies Centre University of Hong Kong, 1986), p. 11.

Dayin who studied music, saying that when he learned how to write, he ‘never received the influence of a “method of novel writing” which was popular at that time, (you [Dou], on the contrary, will definitely be influenced by the method of musical composition), only experimented with different methods.’ [‘从不看当时极流行的什么“小说作法”影响，（你一定会受作曲法影响！）就是用各种不同方式去写’]¹⁶³ However, in another letter to Dou, Shen also said that ‘*if* [he] had some basic knowledge of musical composition [...] and then were to learn for some five years’ [‘如有了作曲的基本知识 [...] 学个五几年’],¹⁶⁴ he could be able to write good music. This shows that despite his interest, he had no actual knowledge of musical composition. Or, to be more specific, what he might have experimented with as ‘knowledge of musical composition’ should be different from that of someone who studies music such as Dou.

Shen’s likely lack of familiarity with Western classical music undermines the possibility for meaningful comparison between the structures of this music and his literary works. This makes some of the key arguments in Tan’s ‘The Research on Shen Cong-wen’s Writing and Music’ [《沈从文的创作与音乐》] untenable. In this doctoral thesis, Tan mainly discusses how Shen applies the structure of Western classical music into the structure of fictional narratives (see above, p.15). The longest chapter argues that Shen imitates the structure of Western classical music in the structure of his works (such as ABA form).¹⁶⁵ The premise of Tan’s arguments with regards to two fictions, ‘The Husband’ [《丈夫》] and ‘Bai Zi’ [《柏子》], is based on one sentence written by Shen stating that he wrote these two works with the attention to ‘the recombination process of music’ [‘音乐中的复合过程’].¹⁶⁶ However, ‘The Husband’ was written in 1930 and ‘Bai Zi’ was written in 1928. Combined with Shen’s later recollection of listening to Western classical music in 1934, it is still unknown whether Shen already had

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23:157.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23:38

¹⁶⁵ Tan suggests Shen’s works like ‘Bai Zi’ uses ABA form in narration, returning to the main theme, which already appears in the beginning of the story, at the end. (Tan, ‘The Researching on Shen Cong-wen’s Writing and Music’, p. 31-33.)

Tan also, using the same method, compares other works of Shen to variation form, sonata form, and symphonic form. However, as both Li Xinyi (see above, p. 15) and I think this comparison lacks a right basis, this thesis will not further explain how Tan carries out the comparison.

¹⁶⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 17:25.

close contact with Western classical music before the mid-1930s, and even in 1934, his reaction was ‘I could understand this [process] but could not tell you exactly’. This means that, he was still an amateur at that time, at least in terms of familiarity with and expertise in Western classical music. Therefore, while Tan’s argument is interesting, the evidence does not entirely support it. Tan only notices the ‘process’ but ignores the more important word ‘recombination’, which is likely to mean organising musical notes rather than writing according to a certain musical form. One of the Chinese new music pioneers, the founder of Shanghai National Conservatory of Music, Xiao Youmei [萧友梅] (1884 – 1940) once wrote, ‘harmonics is not exactly music, but the method of combining sounds; we should use this progressive harmony to create our new music’ [‘和声学并不是音乐，它只是和音的法子，我们要运用这进步的和声来创造我们的新音乐’].¹⁶⁷ If Shen indeed accepted the similar ideas from these musical figures, his ‘method of music composition’ is very possibly harmony, or a way of combination, rather than reference to certain musical forms. Given the evidence, it is unlikely that the sentence Tan highlights is indicative of a deliberate effort by Shen to structure his literature in a specific way.

From the above arguments, it is clear that the most important function of composed music in Shen’s early writing is to indicate the identity, personality and social status of fictional characters. Before 1930, Shen Congwen generally used composed music to indirectly reflect his notions of city life. These opinions are conveyed in many of his works from this period of time, which, while largely fiction, convey an autobiographical side of Shen. Even though often only brought up casually in Shen’s early writings, his use of composed music clearly demonstrates his unfamiliarity with metropolitan society, his revolt against it, and the cultural difference between classes. These appear much less in his writing later, especially after the mid 1930s, partly because of his new found love in Western classical music. His high opinion of folk music never changed, not even after he started to listen to and appreciate Western classical music. However, he does not cease to criticise urban songs. The contrast between urban composed music and folk music in Shen’s writing reveals the cultural contrast between urban and rural areas in China, and his portrait of this contrast roots in his own struggle in self-identity

¹⁶⁷ Xiao Youmei, *The Complete Works of Xiao Youmei*, 2 vols. [《萧友梅全集》] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music College Press, 2004), 1:616.

throughout his life. For example, in Shen's documentary work, *West Hunan* [《湘西》], written in 1938, there is a piece entitled 'Towns upstream of the River Yuan' [《沅水上游几个县分》], where he mentions the changes in rural areas due to urban influence. One change that Shen focuses on is the adoption of urban music among the West Hunanese people. Shen conveys his opinion of this change when he writes that it is, 'not euphonic at all, with strange tunes that were hard to remember' [‘实在不大好听，调子又古怪难记’].¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, even if after 1934, Shen started to listen to Western classical music, it does not mean he receives a technical and systematic influence from it. Shen seldom probes into Western music, and the occasional descriptions only touch the peripheries. Although Shen might have already heard some Western music, without sufficient evidence of how exactly Western classical music influenced Shen, any analysis would be meaningless.

2.2 The Beauty of Harmony

The above analysis shows obvious evidence that Shen Congwen's first contact with Western classical music happened around 1934. Therefore, the influence of Western classical music on Shen's writings after mid-1930s cannot be neglected and is worth researching. From 1930 and on, Shen's works matured – his personal sentiments and complaints were seen less in his writing, instead, he started to ponder more on more profound and hidden emotions of general mankind and the dissection of the beauty and ugliness of humanity. Shen's purpose in coming to Beijing and choosing literature as his career is that he hoped literary revolution could change the fate of China.¹⁶⁹ Especially during the Anti-Japanese war, when Shen was employed as a professor of Southwest University Association in Yunnan and was involved in the editing of text books and teaching materials, he put more emphasis on what kind of things literature and other arts could convey to people, including the educational meaning of literature and other arts for students and even for the future of the nation. At the same time, to some degree, listening to Western classical music also changed his writing style. In the 1940s, Shen started to discuss the eternity of life and the realm of abstraction, especially in his non-fictional prose. Is there any relationship between the sudden change in the Shen's

¹⁶⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 11:391.

¹⁶⁹ Ling Yu, *Biography*, p. 130.

writing style and what Kinkley said about the phonograph Shen acquired in the 1940s and his falling for Western classical music (see above, p. 50)?

Above all, what can be confirmed is that in the works during this period of time, Shen indeed started to list some famous names of Western classical music, like Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. For example, in ‘Green Nightmare’ [《绿魔》] (1943), he writes, ‘Give me some good music, Bach or Mozart, a little would be enough’ [‘给我一点点好的音乐, 巴哈或莫扎克, 只要给我一点点, 就已够了’].¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Shen also started to mention musical terms like ‘harmony’ [‘和声’] and ‘movement’ [‘乐章’] which do not exist in the same way in traditional Chinese music, even if there may be some similar musical phenomena. These terms were brought back from abroad by the Chinese musicians who studied in Western institutes. Although these terms had been taught in music departments in universities since the beginning of the 20th century, it was not until 1929 that Huang Zi [黄自] (1904 – 1938) composed the first Chinese symphony, ‘In Memoriam, Overture for Orchestra’, as his graduation project at Yale University, and first performed in China in 1930.¹⁷¹ In 1930, Huang taught Western methodologies of composition in the above mentioned Shanghai National Conservatory of Music. In 1934, Huang started to co-edit *Music Magazine* [《音乐杂志》], with the president, Xiao Youmei. Before Huang’s death in 1938, he was also writing a textbook on harmony, because he thought there were no good textbooks on such topics in China.¹⁷² These were among the pioneers who started to write Chinese music with Western ways and the introducers of Western music, which means that Western classical music could not have been widely spread in China before then. Besides, as argued previously, none of these musical terms were mentioned by Shen in his early career, thus it is prudent to affirm that no one had taught Shen these.

If it is true that Shen heard about the structure of Western classical music and the concept of harmony from his musical friends, the only evidence that can be found is in the letter mentioned above (see above, n.126) about listening to Western classical music with Ma Sicong [马思聪] (1912 – 1987) and Liang Zongdai [梁宗岱] (1903 – 1983).

¹⁷⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:151

¹⁷¹ Liu, *Modern Chinese Music History*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Shen says, ‘Sicong learned from the composer, the conductor and the instrumental solo performance many things that were not easy for us to acquire’. Nevertheless, ‘not easy for us to acquire’ also suggests that at this time Shen was probably still quite ignorant of musical theories. Shen further explained that he did not get any direct influence from this but only indirect influence in his later works. No matter what kind of influence it is, this again refutes Tan’s argument that his earlier works such as ‘The Husband’ and ‘Bai Zi’ had already been impacted deeply by Western methodologies of composition.

Without guide or learning from books, however much of a genius Shen was he could not have picked up this skill himself. In fact, most of the academic articles on Western composition methods could only have been found in textbooks of music department before 1930s, but there is no evidence showing Shen had audited these courses or that he had read the books. Hence, from the historical facts of the development of modern Chinese music, it is safer to argue that Shen could have gained such knowledge either from friends or reading periodicals like *Music Magazine* around or after the mid-1930s.

However, once Shen knew Western classical music, he noticed the biggest difference between Chinese music and Western music straight away, namely harmony. In ‘Candle Extinguished’ [《烛虚》] (1940), there is such a statement:

The meaning of immortality can be either the continuity of blood or literature and art produced upon various materials. There are also some people who can create a realm from abstraction and in which they become inebriated and thus gain the happiness of immortality.

I do not know much about music, but often want to depict this kind of realm with music. It is because this realm cannot be preserved by any physical material such as words or colours (it is not concrete itself, so certainly cannot be preserved by concrete things). If I *ken*¹⁷³ how to use harmony to compose, I *would* surely be able to write music that *would be* ten times as soul-stirring as my writings are now.

To describe an abstract and beautiful impression, words are not as good as paintings, paintings are not as good as mathematics, and mathematics is not as good as music. This is because most of what is called ‘beautiful impression’ is closer to what is obtained by sensory experience about concrete facts. To preserve this impression using words, it is difficult though not too difficult. Yet the flowing beauty formed by imagination may only be well preserved and

¹⁷³ I italicise the words here to emphasis the conditional tense.

reproduced by music, grand and majestic or gentle and quiet, which is also flowing in abstraction.

[...]

With all that, if there would be a Mozart who could arrange the notes, naturally there could be a soul-stirring movement.

永生意义，或为生命分裂而成子嗣延续，或凭不同材料产生文学艺术。也有人仅仅从抽象产生一种境界，在这种境界中陶醉，于是得到永生快乐的。

我不懂音乐，倒常常想用音乐表现这种境界。正因为这种境界，似乎用文字颜色以及一切坚硬的物质材器通通不易保存（本身极不具体，当然不能用具体之物保存）。如知和声作曲，必可制成比写作十倍深刻完整动人乐章。

表现一抽象美丽印象，文字不如绘画，绘画不如数学，数学似乎又不如音乐。因为大部分所谓“印象动人”，多近于从具体事实感官经验而得到。这印象用文字保存，虽困难尚不十分困难。但由幻想而来的形式流动不居的美，就只有音乐，或宏壮，或柔静，同样在抽象行驶中流动，方可望能将它好好保存并加以重现。

[...]

凡此种种，如由莫扎克用音符排组，自然即可望在人间成惊心动魄鬼神荡志乐章。¹⁷⁴

From this a few of Shen's arguments about music can be summed up: first, music is more capable of creating a realm of abstraction than words; second, to know how to compose you must first know harmony; third, music has fluidity; fourth, music is the permutation and combination of music notes (arrangement of notes). What Shen means is that the creation of this eternal realm of abstraction depends on combining various notes to create harmony, which in a sense happens to echo what Huang Yongyu quoted from Shen: music is the relationship between space (harmony) and time (fluidity).¹⁷⁵ I will discuss the first conclusion further in the next chapter, as this in some way is not only composed music but the concept of music and it may involve the common ground of various categories of music. Here more concrete problems should be dealt with, such as conclusions two, three and four. The musical organisation Shen

¹⁷⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:24-26

¹⁷⁵ Huang Yongyu, 'The Ordinary Shen Congwen', p. 3.

talked about in this piece should be organising musical notes to create a perfect harmony but not necessarily the structural organisation of different music forms. Although ‘movement’ is also stated here, it is difficult to decide whether Shen is referring to the concept of ‘movement’ as in symphony, since in modern Chinese, the word for ‘movement’ – ‘乐章’ (yue zhang) – can also refer to any piece of music. It is more likely that what Shen means by ‘movement’ is only a piece of music rather than a part of a symphony. Shen didn’t formally use terms such as ‘second movement’, ‘third movement’ until the poems he wrote about Beethoven in 1949. He may have learnt about the real meaning of ‘movement’ during the many years of continuous listening and learning. What Shen gained from Western classical music is more likely to be the idea of harmony, which resolves the conflicts by organising musical notes and the resonance created by it. Compared with traditional Chinese music and the folk music Shen was familiar with, the most distinguishing feature of Western classical music is its way of applying harmonics. Shen’s own words ‘if I *knew* how to use harmony to compose’ also imply that what he understands as the method of composition is actually the methodology of harmony.

In Shen’s later works, repetition of the term again indicates that what Shen gained from Western classical music is the harmony and how it integrates different voices. In the letter ‘To View Everything from Understanding and Love’ [《凡事从理解和爱出发》] (1951), Shen writes:

It is good to know music if you want to write short stories, there is some similarity, namely, in terms of organisation. Both music and fiction generate the effect during the process. Struggle is important to politics as harmony is to music. Political battle seeks a common ground in conflicts while harmony seeks a harmonious development in dissonance. Different as they are, they can reach coherence if mediated well, advancing towards the ideal. This is the real art! The highest level of politics and art should be the understanding and practice of the shared advantages of a conductor and a composer, combining the strengths of the two.

写短篇懂乐曲有好处，有些相通地方，即组织。音乐和小说同样是从过程产生效果的。政治中讲斗争，乐曲中重和声。斗争从矛盾中求同，和声则知不同中求谐和发展。唯其不同，调处得法反而有个一致性，向理想奔赴如恐不及。这才真是艺术！政治艺术的最高处，应当

是指挥者与作曲家共同的长处领会，实用，而将两者长处集于一身。

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The emphasis of this paragraph is again what Shen means by ‘organisation’ [‘组织’]. Tan understands this as structural organisation, but in fact, from the context, what Shen means here should be ‘organising sounds’, which is similar to the ‘[arrangement of] notes’ quoted above in ‘Green Nightmare’. What he calls ‘[generating] the effect during the process’ is not equal to the idea that music and fiction can have the same structure (narrative process). Both music and fiction have a certain ‘temporality’ as ‘the score and the book must be “enacted” or “performed”’,¹⁷⁷ which is similar to a process. This process is a different concept from narrative structure – a process from scattered notes to harmony and from conflicts to integration. Although there is a concept of harmony existing in traditional Chinese music, it is not the same harmony as in Western musicology, the one Shen referred to in his writings. The Chinese sense of harmony usually only refers to the five notes (C, D, E, G, A), symbolising ‘the harmony (unity) of Heaven and Earth’ and “harmony” as culturally defined in the intervallic relationship of the perfect fifth’.¹⁷⁸ Shen’s harmony, however, from what is shown in the above quotations, is a way to assemble different sounds, rhythm, and melodies together to form a kind of good music. This, in fact, is closer to the general idea of Western symphony, which requires a composer who can see clearly into the original chaos. Also, the harmony in ancient Chinese music does not require a conductor to conduct various instruments, but the harmony Shen refers to above does.

Shen has a more in-depth explanation of the function of music as displayed in ‘About Lacquer in the Southwest and Other Things’ [《关于西南漆器及其他》] (1949):

[...] there are always two forces fighting [in my mind] – ‘affirmation’ and ‘disavowal’ – chaotic and unruly. Only music can conquer and tame me. A movement that has life and character flows into my ears, and immerses into the depth of the folds of my brain, so that life seems to have fragrance, filled with sad but virtuous emotions and is thus converted completely.

[...] 意识中有“承认”与“否定”两种力量永远在争持，显得混乱而无章次。唯有音乐能征服我，驯柔我。一个有生命有性格的乐章在我

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 19:109.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Peter Martin, *Joyce and Wagner: A Study of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 145.

¹⁷⁸ Liang, *Music of the Billion*, p. 178

耳边流注，逐渐浸入脑中褻折深处时，生命仿佛就有了丁香，充满悲哀与善良情感，而表示完全皈依。¹⁷⁹

Shen's struggle results from the conflict and disharmony formed by the 'affirmation' and 'disavowal' in his mind. The reason why music¹⁸⁰ can 'conquer' and 'tame' him is because only music can unify all the conflicts and form the harmony which gives all chaos good meaning. It is exactly this feature of harmony – that it welcomes conflicts and even disharmony – that makes Shen fascinated with its value.

In the same article, Shen also writes,

[*The Border Town*] was completed under such complicated emotions and particular background. The unemployment of the past, the repression and suffering in life. Such integration of a person's life was absorbed in music and painting, and formed an innocent passion. The melody and the rhythm integrated into a long stream which poured into the form of a literary work and received a complete moulding.

原来是那么情绪复杂背景鲜明中完成的。过去的失业，生活中的压抑、痛苦，以及音乐和图画吸人生命总量，形成的素朴激情，旋律和节度，都融汇而为一道长流，倾注入作品模式中，得到一回完全的铸造。¹⁸¹

About the criticisms of *The Border Town* Shen writes:

Unfortunately, it was not until 1935 that there came a Mr. Liu Xiwei who could taste the poetic lyricism and the anguish of a young man woven in the words and a shape, and saw the picturesque and musical effect. Only this critic figured out a little truth from the surface of the words and the depth of the work.

不幸得很是直到二十四年，才有刘西渭先生，能从《边城》和其他《三三》等短篇中，看出诗的抒情和年青生活心受伤后的痛楚，交织在文字与形式里，如何见出画面并音乐效果。唯有这个批评家从作品深处与文字表面，发掘出那么一点真实。¹⁸²

From the background of how Shen wrote *The Border Town*, one can see that what Shen did was to find passion from chaos and his complicated emotions and then organise and

¹⁷⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 27:21.

¹⁸⁰ Here Shen also uses the word 'movement', thus we can take the music he refers to here as Western classical music, of which he considers harmony an important part.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27:27.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 27:25.

compose them into a piece of work in which even chaos could be beautiful. The key of the creative process does not lie in ‘the melody and the rhythm’, but in the verb ‘integrate’, which indicates an organisation of all the elements. We can then say that the impact of music on Shen is not merely reflected superficially in the form of literature, but rather is a deep-seated and metaphorical ‘harmony’ that corresponds with the ‘struggle’ in politics or chaos in life. The similarity lies in the function of unifying. He then emphasises that the conflicted parties ‘can reach coherence if mediated well’ and that ‘the highest level of politics and art should be understanding the shared advantages of a conductor and a composer, concentrating the strengths in one and putting them into practice’. His idea of ‘mediating’ does not only reflect that the idea of harmony is what he values most in Western music but also shows his political attitude: conflicts are inevitable, but it is how one conducts them and integrates them harmoniously that is important. It is not only about politics, but about much more, or even life itself. For instance, in the poem ‘Obtained from Beethoven’s music’ [《从贝多芬乐曲所得》] (1949), Shen writes:

Melody draws me upward, and upward I go,
 Melody draws me downward, and downward I go.
 All the naïve truth and hyaline wisdom of humanity
 are translated into rhythm and melody,
 into the repeated development, turning life
 from restlessness, contradiction, and chaos,
 gradually into clearness, purity, and integration.

节律引我上升，我上升，
 节律引我下降，我下降，
 人类一切素朴真理和透明智慧，
 通通被译成节奏和旋律，
 于反复发展中，将生命
 由烦躁、矛盾，及混乱，
 逐渐澄清莹碧，纯粹而统一。¹⁸³

Here ‘rhythm’ and ‘melody’ comprise what is generally known as the constituent parts of music, while ‘restlessness’, ‘contradiction’ and ‘chaos’ implies the different sounds of various instruments or the different parts in concerted music with different pitches and tempos, or even dissonance, but it then turns ‘gradually into clearness, purity and

¹⁸³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:216.

integration'. In a real musical situation, it would be the job of a composer and a conductor to integrate these differences. Although Shen does not clearly refer to the harmony in music here, the last two lines present a similar way to how harmony works. From this, we can see how music integrates and cleans.

In fact, Shen also once writes, 'I need some music to clean my brain and let it rest.' [‘我需要一点音乐，来洗洗我这个脑子。’]¹⁸⁴ This feature of music is also one of the reasons why Shen considers music to be a higher art form than literature, as the harmony in music more easily creates resonance in people's minds.

Moreover, Shen considers that music possesses expressiveness. In a letter from Shen to his wife in 1938, he writes:

I am sitting beside the desk, and the radio is playing the most euphonic music, by a female soloist. The sound is clear and gentle. The passion of life is blooming from its innocence. It is like a stream, extremely clean and almost transparent, trickling lazily past the grass, and then white flowers bloom all over the meadow. Tree branches bend down with apricot and plum blossoms. Next is a songlet sung by a Chaliapin¹⁸⁵ style throaty voice, which happens to suit the scene of a long river that can be seen far away from my porch, the water slightly turbid, and with a raft riding down the stream and the man on the raft hitting the water with the oar. Next is a piece by Chopin and there seems to be unreachable sadness in it, which shares the beauty of a hill and valley, similar to his native landscape, only that there is not enough grandeur, seemingly not as good as his native scenery, and especially not as good as what is in front of me.

我坐在写字桌边，收音机中正播送最好听音乐，一个女子的独唱。声音清而婉。单纯中见出生命洋溢。如一湾溪水，极明莹透澈，涓涓面流，流过草地，绿草上开遍白花。且有杏花李花，压枝欲折。接着是个哑喉咙夏里亚宾式短歌，与廊前远望长河，河水微浊，大小木筏乘流而下，弄筏人举橈激水情境正相合。接着是肖邦的曲子，清怨如不可及，有一丘一壑之美，与当地风景倒有相似处。只是派头不足，比当地风景似乎还不如。尤其是不及现前这种情景。¹⁸⁶

This idea of music being perceived as related to scenery may originate first from traditional Chinese music, as traditionally, 'Chinese music adopted nature as its first

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 12:155.

¹⁸⁵ Feodor Chaliapin, Russian opera singer, who has a deep and bass voice.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18:300-301.

theme'.¹⁸⁷ Unlike Western music, the most important harmony existing in Chinese music is the metaphorical harmony between human and nature. The traditional idea must have shaped Shen's imagination. However, music cannot present or describe scenery: the expressiveness of music lies in its ability to stimulate the listener's imagination of scenery. Thus the question remains how Shen judged the expressiveness of different pieces of music. This beautifully written letter contains literary value. The three pieces of music have one thing in common: they probably are all solos. The impression Shen receives from the first two pieces contains obvious fluidity. This is probably the main difference between music and visual art, as visual art is usually a fixed moment of time whereas music can be motional. Although Shen thinks all three pieces 'the most euphonic music', he is rather uncomplimentary of Chopin's music evaluating it as 'not enough grandeur' and 'not as good as his native scene'. The images of the first two are clearly not the kind of scenery that can be described as grand. For Chopin's music, Shen comments that it does express some similar beauty of the area, but not grand enough to match its natural beauty. Then what kind of music can describe the inclusively grand scenery? In 'Postscript to "Ode to "Yulan Magnolia"' [《<白玉兰花引>跋》] (c.1962), Shen writes, 'Common speech and words are not enough to describe the fantasticality and spectacularity of the scenery. Only a grand movement can depict some of its features with the melody of dozens of instruments' [‘景物之幻异、壮美，都不是一般言语文字所能形容。唯有大乐章方能用百十种不同乐器，共同形成的旋律节奏中，描绘出部分特点’].¹⁸⁸ It shows that in Shen's opinion, only the symphonic can rival spectacular natural scenery.

2.3 New Inspiration

Similarly, harmony may be an important reason for Shen to believe in the educational effect of music. He obviously changed his attitude towards music education. As mentioned above, when earlier Shen mentioned a student in art school playing the piano, his remark on this kind of music education was that it was rather negative (see above, n.160). By 1930, Shen's opinion towards music education has slightly changed. The change could be discerned from two letters Shen wrote to his friend, Wang Jizhen

¹⁸⁷ Jin, *Chinese Music*, p. 38

¹⁸⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:302.

[王际真] (1899 – 2001). In the first letter, written on 12th January, 1930, he suggested that ‘it is a good thing that you are going to study music. I hope you can learn to play the violin,¹⁸⁹ since oddly enough for me, I like violin very much, as it is very euphonic’ [你学音乐也真是好事，希望你学提琴，因为我奇怪得很，顶喜欢提琴，以为非常动听].¹⁹⁰ Before long, on the 22nd of January, he wrote another letter to Wang, saying ‘You’d better still play the piano, because music is an international art, whereas calligraphy is no more than a pastime for Chinese gentlemen to achieve self-cultivation and there is not much benefit from it’ [你最好还是弄钢琴，因为音乐是国际的艺术，字，不过是中国绅士们养性息心消遣而已，并无多大益处]¹⁹¹. It was obvious in the second letter that Shen disdained the hobby of Chinese gentlemen. It can also prove that from this moment, he no longer held the theory that music education was useless, and not only that, he also displayed his interest in Western musical instruments. But at that time, Shen did not say why he liked it, he even felt strange for his love of the violin. He changed violin into piano in the second letter, although this did not necessarily mean that he had a rational understanding about the two. It may be merely because he needed a well-known Western musical instrument to compare with the Chinese gentlemen’s boring hobby, as music is more ‘international’.

Shen mentioned musical education again in the 1940s. As a professor, Shen at this point had more responsibility – to educate people and to help design a blueprint for the future of the nation. During this period of time, he listed many existing problems of China and his proposed ways of solving them. He at that time wrote more argumentative articles and non-fictional prose than fiction. This thesis may not allow us to evaluate whether his ideas are right or not, but may give clues to what Shen thought about the social value of music. In Shen’s opinion, music could play an important role in reforming China and he had a specific type of music in mind. In ‘Communicating with Peking’ [《北平通信》] (1947), Shen writes:

The Law of Broadcasting should be rewritten, mostly because there needs to be a fixed time every day to introduce and play famous world classical music. The schedule should ideally be after lunch, for at least two hours. During that

¹⁸⁹ Or it can mean stringed family.

¹⁹⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 18:39.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 18:66.

time, other than students, those from positions above middle-ranking officials of the military, alongside those from other organisations must stay where they are and listen to the music, to clean their souls. Let the noble classical music give them a new form of education.

广播法重新订正，主要是为每日必于一定时期，作世界名曲乐章之介绍与演奏，时间宜在午饭后，至少宜有二小时。届时除学生外，军警宪及各机构中级以上职员，均宜就地就近听取音乐，洗刷灵魂，使此高尚古典音乐，给予以一种新的教育。¹⁹²

To follow that, Shen also comments on what kind of people should serve the new China: ‘all civil servants who cannot respond well to great music and art and only know about playing cards, drinking, and such things, should be treated in hospital, and if they cannot be cured after long, they should be fired.’ [‘凡公务员对伟大音乐高尚美术缺少良好反应，只知玩牌喝酒……者，均得人医院休养治疗，久未治愈，即应离职。’]¹⁹³ Sarcastic as he tries to be here, Shen seems to be sure that noble music could cleanse people’s minds. He is even stricter with college students. In the article ‘Socrates Talks about Beijing’s Need’ [《苏格拉底谈北平所需》] (1948), he writes:

Students in all departments need to receive advanced music training. Those who give no response to great classical music, like noisy popular music, write ugly calligraphy, take foreign names, flatter teachers and seniors and secretly receive political allowances should be diagnosed as neuropaths, as they are mentally sick. They should be specially treated with music, if they cannot be cured, then they should be expelled.

各系学生均得受高级音乐训练，凡对古典伟大音乐无反应，欢喜叽叽呢呢流行曲子，写不美观美术字，取洋名，过分阿谀师长，以及私领政治津贴之学生，均认为神经有病，病在脑系，得就专科音声治疗，治疗不愈，即行开除。¹⁹⁴

All these may be utopian ideas or sarcasm, but Shen clearly declares his scorn for popular music and his affirmation of the educational meaning of music.

The education Shen talks about is not only aimed at individuals, but also at the whole nation. In ‘Welcoming Autumn’ [《迎接秋天》] (1949), he compares China’s future to playing a march:

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 14:356.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14:359.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14:375.

Now a brand new life philosophy is needed in order to relocate jobs – to make sure everyone takes his/her place and musical instrument – so that a piece of march music for new China can be performed. This piece of music will be developed during practice. It cannot neglect the details while being able to grasp the whole picture. It may not be attractive when it is first performed. Inevitably, it will be like playing Beethoven's music on a farm, and it cannot expect to attract the interest of audience sitting in the wrestling field and watching the game. The advantage of the symphony lies in 'the development'. Winter goes and spring comes; ice melts and stream gurgles; there are bird songs and floral fragrance all around. Even in a place burnt by war fire, grass still grows, to cover the cruelty of human beings and whatever they have done, so that vitality will be seen [...] Full-strength cooperation is better than individual research. Granted, music can enable humans to have harmonious emotions, it can only be effective when the composer, the orchestra, and the musicians are all ready to cooperate. I personally wish the organisation of orchestra could be inclusive. However, the reader should know that if I sound ridiculous it is because I care. I am not a musician, I have not much knowledge of music, and I have not much interest in composition; what I have is only passion and concern for the tragic situation of China, to give my service to China's progress.

此时诚需要一种崭新人生哲学，来好好使此多数得重新分工合作，各就地位，各执乐器，各按曲谱，合奏一新中国进行曲。此乐曲在实践中慢慢发展，既能把握大处，又不忽略细节，初初奏来，总不会如何引人注意。或难免如在先农坛附近荒地演奏悲多汶大乐，不可望将天桥有棚座之摔跤场中观众兴趣完全转移。惟交响乐好处全在“发展”，冬去春来，层冰解冻，溪流潺湲，各处均有鸟语花香，即战火焚烧之土地，亦将有青草生长，掩盖去人类残忍与不知所作成之种种，见出盎然生意 [...] 由通力合作追求，比独立探讨为易。惟音乐虽能使人类情感谐和，必乐曲、乐队、乐人、三者齐备而又合作方可期望见出效果。余私意诚深深盼望此乐队之组织，能包罗广大。读者须知，余言如滑稽，殊沉痛。余非乐队众人，音乐知识本不甚高，且对作曲兴趣特少，惟实一种热忱，是中国悲剧场面略换，专以为中国进步作种种服务也。¹⁹⁵

In 'Socrates Talks about Beijing's Need' mentioned above, Shen Congwen first describes a utopian idea and then focuses on putting forward the idea of 'aesthetic education instead of politics'.¹⁹⁶ This idea may be from pioneers in the May Fourth Culture Movement. This idea of Cai Yuanpei, 'aesthetic education instead of religion' derives from the Western philosopher Kant, according to Kinkley.¹⁹⁷ Since Socrates is mentioned in the title, Shen probably knew about Socrates's idea of 'the use of beauty'

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14:397.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14:381.

¹⁹⁷ Kinkley, *Odysssey*, trans by Fu, p. 320.

['美的效用'],¹⁹⁸ and thought that music was beautiful and useful for society. He applies a subtle metaphor here, comparing working people to musicians in an orchestra and the country's future to a symphony. Such idea is in accordance with his stress on harmony as it requires the organisation of different 'sounds'.

Similarly, Shen also defines the writer as both a composer and a conductor, stating, 'what words are to my life, /Is what various notes are to the hands of /A great composer and conductor, /Sensitive and sentient, brimming with vitality in the combination.' ['文字在我生命中, /正如同种种音符在一个伟大作曲家/和指挥者手中一样, /敏感而有情, 在组合中见出生命的洋溢。']¹⁹⁹ Attention should be drawn to the word 'combination': Shen thinks that words and notes, the two kinds of creative art elements, have life and emotion ('sensitive and sentient' in his words), but they need an excellent writer, composer and conductor to bring them to life by placing them in a 'combination', but not a 'narration' (if musical structure can be analogous to fictional narration). This again shows that Shen is not keen on applying musical structure, but only the idea to put various elements together.

When looking into the future of China, Shen expects 'full-strength cooperation', just like the whole orchestra playing the music together. The function of combination, or in fact, organisation, is to let music harmonise with human emotions. Just like the 'harmony' mentioned before, it is the mutual and harmonious emotion that shared between lives, and Shen values it. Therefore, Shen thinks that those people, who do not understand classical music, do not know how to cooperate with others to build a harmonious nation, and thus are useless for the country. In this sense, since classical music could educate people into the idea of harmony, it is beautiful; popular music cannot, so it is ugly.

Classical music not only has an educational function for society, but also serves as education, treatment and guidance for Shen himself. To some degree, in the later period of his career as a writer, classical music almost became a new belief for Shen. Firstly, for

¹⁹⁸ Zhu Guangqian, *A History of Western Aesthetics* [《西方美学史》] (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012), p. 39.

I quote from Zhu, although this is a much later publication, because Shen in 'Socrates' also mentions Zhu's opinion on Socrates. (Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:370.)

¹⁹⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:214.

Shen, music is flowing rather than still, which suggests spiritual freedom. In ‘Green Nightmare’, he writes, ‘the effect of music on me either stops my heart from congealing, or allows me to preserve with a group of sounds the old freedom before I was captured!’ [‘音乐对于我的效果，或者正是不让我的心在生活上凝固，却容许在一组声音上，保留我被捉住以前的自由！’]²⁰⁰ It is music that frees his soul just as spring water melting from the top of the mountain re-vitalises the lives congealed in winter. In 1949, just before the People’s Republic of China was founded, having no political orientation was to Shen’s disadvantage, as people were forced to choose sides, and those who chose to stay in mainland China moved towards Communism. The wonderful country he wanted to participate in building is pushing him to a dead corner step by step. Shen’s works were criticised, as not being in conformity with the trend, and reviled by his fellow writers, readers and students. Shen at that moment was on the edge of desperation and tried to commit suicide in 1949.²⁰¹ After being saved from an attempted suicide, he wrote two poems, ‘The Second Movement – The Third Movement’ and ‘Obtained from Beethoven’s Music’, both of which related to Beethoven’s music, while his mental condition gradually improved. In both poems, Shen speaks of the guiding function of music. In ‘The Second Movement – The Third Movement’, Shen writes, ‘Moving clouds, running water, and flowing music, - with gods / Side by side, together to the emptiness. / All is gradually ascending, steady and certain. / All is gradually appealing, is carding, is guiding.’ [‘流云，流水，和流音，——随同神明 / 同在，还一同流向虚无。 / 一切在逐渐上升，沉着而肯定。 / 在申诉，在梳理，在导引。’]²⁰² The common feature of moving clouds, running water and flowing music is the movement. It is the movement that forms the musical function of guidance. In ‘Obtained from Beethoven’s Music’, Shen again writes, ‘Melody draws me upward, and upward I go. / Melody draws me downward, and downward I go’.²⁰³ These two poems were written at the same time, under similar psychological states, so they can be interpreted as a whole. ‘I follow the music upward and downward, and such ascending and descending suggest the fluctuation of the melody. As the listener to the music, Shen writes, ‘[music] is like water that can drift a giant ship to where it should go’

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12:156.

²⁰¹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 268.

²⁰² Shen, *Completed Works*, 15:213.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 15:216.

['它如水，可以沉浮大舟到它应到的重点去']。²⁰⁴ At this stage of life, Shen was like 'a giant ship', lost at sea, so he drifted without knowing where to go. It was Beethoven's music that guided him to a destination. Then he writes, 'it is like fire that can burn more lives waiting to be burnt' ['它如火，可以燃烧更多待燃烧的生命']。²⁰⁵ One of the 'lives awaiting to be burnt' is suggesting Shen's passion for life, or for his career, whether in creative writing or later in antique studies.²⁰⁶ In the coming days, classical music always serves as the spiritual sustenance of Shen, and the reason could be figured out in 'Obtained from Beethoven's Music':

Music is mistier than anything, but also has
stronger inspiration and adhesiveness than anything,
glueing light dust and vulnerable weeds back to the solid.

music, indeed, has its greatness,
it is told through the universal emotion,
it is fairer and purer than words
and full of friendship and true love.

音乐比一切缥缈，却也比一切
更具强大启示与粘合，
将轻尘弱草重新凝固坚实。

音乐实有它的伟大，
即诉之于共通情感，
比文字语言更公正，纯粹，
又充满人的友爱和至情。²⁰⁷

Music finally led Shen to find faith in life and led his life 'back to the solid' again. He believes in music because music speaks to the universal emotion. There is a resonance in everyone's emotion, and it can be triggered by music. This kind of beauty would touch everyone, but it is not like words. In such historical period, words may separate people as language sticks too close to different arguments.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 15:214.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ The last 4 volumes of *The Complete Works of Shen Congwen* mostly contain his works on Chinese antiques.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15:222.

However, Shen had mentioned long ago that the same music could generate different emotions among different people. In his story ‘An Old Dream’ [《旧梦》] (1928), he writes about a blind man playing a sanxian²⁰⁸ in a hotel – ‘from the sound of the sanxian, I thought of the person who played it and also the people who listened to it. From the point of view of composition and appreciation, I thought of the emotional distance between the writer and the reader’ [‘从三弦子声音，想到弹三弦的人，又想到听三弦的人。从创作与欣赏上，想起作文章与读文章两者心情的距离’].²⁰⁹

The difference is that what Shen had earlier emphasised was the ‘emotional distance’, while later, his emphasis is on the ‘universal emotion’. With such universality, music could touch each human being. Since words have specific and obvious theoretical tendencies, music seems to be the perfect form of art. Music in some way becomes Shen’s spiritual guidance, guiding him to write with a hidden consciousness, as well as an inspiration. In Shen’s words, music stimulates certain feelings that can act as ‘media contact agent’ [‘媒触剂’], ‘gestation period’ [‘酝酿期’] or ‘pregnancy signal’ [‘怀胎信号’] for artistic creations,²¹⁰ and when he was telling his wife about such functions of music, he was listening to Western classical music on a phonograph.

From the 1930s on, Shen was established as a novelist, but in the 1940s, he started to write ‘rhapsodic essays’ instead of fiction, ‘[analysing] urban alienation sympathetically, from within – with more complex language, and more complicated views of man, consciousness, and the universe’.²¹¹ In his later works, Shen does not simply use music instruments to present the social status of a character. If in his earlier career, composed music was a totally strange area, which was not part of his life-style, when he began to appreciate Western classical music, he also truly started to blend this kind of complicated music and its value into his works. He tries to let the music flow in words, being the conductor himself, conducting the disharmony into a harmonious symphony to deal with his troubles. At the same time, Shen’s understanding of the concept of

²⁰⁸ A kind of three-string plucked instrument.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6:103.

²¹⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 23:65.

²¹¹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 185.

harmony can also be considered as a way to extend the thematic and formal range of his writing.

Chapter 3: The Concept of Music

According to the famous painter Huang Yongyu, Shen's first cousin once removed, judging by some of the doodling in his letters, Shen had the potential to become an accomplished painter.²¹² Thus, it is not surprising that Shen was keen on artistic aesthetics. In his writing, especially from the early 1930s, he developed his own comparative discussion about music, literature, and other arts, as well as art and nature. Moreover, from the early 1940s, Shen took this discussion to a philosophical level by either quoting or reflecting the ideas of great writers and thinkers, both Western and Chinese. At the same time, he developed his own ideas, before he abruptly stopped creative writing at the beginning of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949). This transformation in his writing happened during and after the second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945), when many university teachers and students travelled from Beijing to Kunming, Yunnan Province, to avoid the war. There they set up Southwest University Association [西南联大]. Many of the professors at this university were famous writers and translators and some of the students were to become great writers and translators, including some of Shen's own students. When the scholars and students gathered there, they formed reading groups and created new journals. It is likely that discussions with these people, and the reading of their work, contributed to Shen's transition in writing style. Moreover, the change of geographical environment may also have had an impact on Shen's writing. It provided him with natural beauty, similar to that of West Hunan, which he had not seen for years. The beauty of nature is largely addressed in Shen's writing of the 1940s.

²¹² 'Sometimes Cousin Conwen also painted things, which were amazingly charming, but he never admitted those were proper works and hid them away quickly. Sometimes, though, he would tell me happily that he would find some better paper to paint something for me. I knew these promises were hard to be realised. Surely he understood painting very well. Sometimes he mentioned the excellency of some paintings and artefacts which took me years to come to realise.'

[从文表叔有时也画画，那是一种极有韵致的妙物，但他竟然不承认那是正式的作品，很快地收藏起来，但有时又很豪爽地告诉我，哪一天找一些好纸给你画些画。我知道，这种允诺是不容易兑现的。他自然是极懂画的。他提到某些画，某些工艺品高妙之处，我用了许多年才醒悟过来]

Huang Yongyu, *Scenery under the Sun* [《太阳下的风景》] (Hong Kong: San Lian Shu Dian, 1983)

3.1 Music and Nature²¹³

Shen Congwen comes from a remote town in the countryside of the mountainous Southwest China, which is famous for beautiful natural scenery. After Shen moved to Beijing for his writing career, he transferred some of his nostalgia to writing stories set in the rural areas. When Kunming was suffering bombing,²¹⁴ Shen and his family moved to the nearby countryside where they rented a house in Longjie, Chenggong Xian (昆明呈贡县龙街) just outside the city, in May 1939.²¹⁵ According to Ling Yu, once Shen was close to the beautiful natural scenery he had not seen for a long time, he ‘regained his innocence when being face to face with nature again’ [‘再次获得了与自然面对面的单纯’].²¹⁶ In addition to the new inspirations possibly acquired from reading his professor and student friends’ creative works and translations, Shen’s writing career made a new transition. Less plot-oriented novels were published during the decade but many essays were produced, for instance, ‘Candle Extinguished’ [《烛虚》] (1940), ‘Water and Clouds’ [《水云》] (1943) and the collection of essays *Seven-Colour Nightmares* [《七色魔》] (1943 – 1945), etc. These ‘rhapsodic essays’²¹⁷ mostly reflect on his past and current life, the process of his past writings, as well as thoughts on current affairs and occasional storytelling. These are distinctive from his earlier works, both in form and language. Shen himself also noticed his change in his mood, as he wrote in ‘Candle Extinguished’,

At twilight, there is a thrush singing in someone’s bamboo plantation beside the lake, which makes me sad, because I am extremely familiar with these sounds but at the same time, it seems utterly unfamiliar. Twenty years ago, such sounds always took my soul to the cities full of skyscrapers and ablaze with lights, but in fact, at that time, I was just a young hooligan, sitting on a big stone beside River Yuan, watching the clean water and day dreaming. Nowadays I live in my dream I had twenty years ago and feel fed up, but I now understand myself, who is always a countryman. However, the country is very far away.

²¹³ Some content of this section also appears in my article: Qianwei He, ‘Sing a Soundless Song for Beauty: Beauty in Literature and Music through Shen Congwen’s Fengzi’, in *Beauty: Exploring Critical Perspectives*, ed. By Pierre Wilhelm (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2016), pp. 105-113.

²¹⁴ The exact date is not clear, it should be some time after 1938.

²¹⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, Appendix: 24.

²¹⁶ Ling Yu, *Biography*, p. 268.

²¹⁷ Kinkley summarises these essays as ‘rhapsodic’. (Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 185.)

黄昏时闻湖边人家竹园里有画眉鸣啭，使我感觉悲哀。因为这些声音对于我实在极熟悉，又似乎完全陌生。二十年前这种声音常常把我灵魂带向高楼大厦灯火辉煌的城市里，事实上那时节我却是个小流氓，正坐在沅水支流一条小河边大石头上，面对一派清波，做白日梦。如今居然已生活在二十年前的梦境里，而且感到厌倦了，我却明白了自己，始终还是个乡下人。但与乡村已离得很远很远了。²¹⁸

It can be analysed that Shen, despite the acknowledgement of his own success in the city, missed his hometown, which was reminded by the thrush singing and similar natural scenery of the local area. He probably never had the sense of belonging in the cities, however, he was at the same time so different from who he was before. The similar sounds of nature bring him back to the daydream he had 20 years ago, which forms another daydream – back to be a countryman.

Nature, especially including natural sounds, always played an important part both in his life and in his writings. Shen's early writing depicts a faithful image of the beauty of nature as it is blended in the stories, whereas Shen's later writing aims at approaching the unreachable beauty of nature.

Kinkley marks Shen's trip back home in 1934 an important transition of his regional works, and while pre-1934 works show 'a set of memories' of Shen's care-free childhood, the post-1934 regional works turn toward 'harsher "realities"'.²¹⁹ This is because 'in 1935, West Hunan lost all power of self-determination',²²⁰ and Shen saw the harsh realities on his two trips back to West Hunan in 1934 and 1938. Perhaps that also made Shen introspect his own identity and the meaning of the natural beauty to him. The novel *Fengzi* [《凤子》] can be considered as a transition of Shen's creative writing career, as the first nine chapters were written in 1932, and the last chapter 'The Return of God' [《神之再现》] was added in 1937. The main characters in the story are a young man from XX and an old gentleman who has once passed through XX. Both of them have the experience of the city and the countryside, the difference is that one comes from the country and goes to the city and the other travels from the city to the country. The young man from XX moves to Island X, and one day at twilight, he overhears a conversation between a young woman called Fengzi and an older man

²¹⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:22.

²¹⁹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, pp. 228-229.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

during a beautiful seaside sunset. The man describes the beautiful twilight in a rather Baudelairean way as ‘a painting without colour, a song without sound or imitation, and a poem without words’ [‘无颜色可涂抹的画，无声音和摹仿的歌，无文字可写成的诗’],²²¹ but Fengzi’s comment on this description is that she does not understand. To Fengzi, everything is beautiful but it is just natural, so ‘why should [she] be surprised’ [‘为什么要吃惊’]?²²² The man then says, ‘Fengzi, you are young, as long as you are experiencing being alive, you cannot understand what life really means. You will never be surprised by your own amazing beauty.’ [‘凤子，你是年青人，你正在生活，你就不会明白生活。你自己那么惊人的美丽，就从不会自己吃惊。’]²²³ To link this discussion with the beauty of nature, the undertone implies that if ‘nature’ is something you live in, that you cannot truly understand and if you find it easy to access the beauty of nature, you will not be amazed by it. To some degree, it is similar to Shen’s personal experience. As quoted above, when he was close to nature, he had the desire to leave. It was not until he was far away from nature that he realised the beauty of it. Since then, he constantly sought for the appropriate way to describe the supreme beauty of nature. This was also the first time that Shen clearly brought up the concept of ‘colourless painting, soundless music and wordless poetry’. This is essential to the wider idea of Shen on music and literature, and in this chapter as well as Chapter 5, more will be discussed.

From this period of time, Shen Congwen started to pay great attention to the beauty of nature and how to use different arts to present it. As early as 1933, Shen wrote a very interesting novella ‘Three Women’ [《三个女性》], in which three young women (Pujing, Heifeng, and Yiqing) have a discussion about beauty, nature, poetry, and music. It is not too imprudent to guess that similar conversations could happen between Shen and friends, or it could be Shen’s ‘mind-debate’ transferred onto the characters. This is one of Shen’s earliest deep and comprehensive discussions about the relationship of human arts and natural beauty. It is complicated to say which character’s opinion in the

²²¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:88.

²²² *Ibid.*, 7:89.

²²³ *Ibid.*

story is what Shen approves, but it is indicated that Pujing is the relatively more mature and knowledgeable one, while the youngest, Yiqing is rather naïve.

In ‘Three Women’, Heifeng is the one who is good at singing, thus she is asked to sing when the three of them come across a very beautiful twilight near the ocean (similar to the scene in *Fengzi*, which is probably inspired by where Shen was living at that moment – Qing Dao, a coastal city). However, then Heifeng realises that ‘for us to know beauty, to approach beauty, silence is the only suitable way in which we can do so. Humans’ songs, like humans’ words, both are rather simple and insufficient. What can be sung or can be written are no more than the superficial gain and loss, happiness and sadness of life.’ [‘我们认识美，接近美，只有沉默才是最恰当的办法。人类的歌声，同人类的歌声，同人类的文字一样，都那么异常简单和贫乏，能唱出的，能写出的，皆不过是人生浮面的得失哀乐。’]²²⁴ Pujing, who is the most mature of the three and has a more profound knowledge of literature and other arts, comments, ‘to preserve everything now with a song, it is definitely not enough. [...] But when our souls or something similar are being dissolved into a sudden subtle light, we need a song, as only that can dissolve our souls!’ [‘要把目前一切用歌声保留下来，这当然不能够 [...] 不过当我们灵魂或这类东西，正在融解到一霎微妙光色里时，我们得需要一支歌，因为只有它可以融解我们的灵魂！’]²²⁵ Compared to the ‘song without sound or imitation’ mentioned in *Fengzi*, here the song Pujing asks Heifeng to sing in order to ‘dissolve our souls’ is a very specific and concrete type of art.²²⁶

However, when our souls react to the beauty, what such songs (if with sound or imitation) dissolve is our perception that exists in our souls. Therefore, it is necessary to note that this song is not to praise or to ‘preserve’ the beauty of nature, but to serve for ‘us’ or ‘our souls’, which directly transform the inspiration of nature to a kind of personal experience. A song that people can sing, which combines two arts (words and music), is not reproducing the actual beauty of nature but to create a copy of the viewer’s experience – the feelings someone gets seeing the beauty of nature. It is worth noticing that here Shen means ‘songs’, which is not exactly same as ‘music’. Hanslick

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7:363.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Shen seems to value the function of music on people’s souls, whether is to dissolve, or to clean (see above, n.192). This also shows how highly Shen thinks of music.

debates that, although traditionally people argued that music's 'object must be to work on the feelings',²²⁷ music, in fact, 'represents no feelings, either definite or indefinite'.²²⁸ Songs, on the contrary, add the feelings to the music, and in result limit it to a personal experience (no more than 'dissolving our souls'). This is perhaps why Shen not once ponders on the limits of poetry or human language, which again echoes Hanslick's words, '[music's] union with poetry, though enhancing the power of music, does not widen its limits.'²²⁹

It is likely that because *Fengzi* and 'Three Women' were written in a same period of time when Shen held a certain view of aesthetics, these two works share a lot in common from this aspect. Both works express the opinion through characters that poets (it is rather safe to say here that those who Shen calls 'poets' also include writers like himself), who try to praise or to preserve the beauty of nature, are committing a crime, because it is impossible to do it justice. In 'Three Women', Pujing criticises poets because 'beauty is never immovable; it is everywhere. The fewer poets, the more possibility there is for human beings to know beauty and approach beauty.' [美原来就是不固定的，无处不在的，诗人少些，人类一定也更能认识美接近美些。]²³⁰ In *Fengzi*, when the city dweller goes to the countryside and enjoys the beautiful nature God has created, the local officer tells him that,

God is clever. He created all the beautiful things but asked humans to create the language to praise them. Even something as small as the dewdrop is worth of all the poets in history flattering it with language, from which we can see the inability of human beings and the inadequacy of human language.

神是聪明的，他把一切创造的那么美丽，却要人自己去创造赞美言语。即或那么一小点露水，也使我们全历史上所有诗人用言语来阿谀。从这事上我们可以见出人类的无能，与人类的贫乏。²³¹

Here, Shen uses the word 'flatter' [阿谀] to describe the human praise of the wonder of God-created beauty, but the word has the meaning of intentionally saying good things about someone to please the person. Thus, flattering is not equal to presenting

²²⁷ Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Music Aesthetics* (London: Novello and Company Ltd., 1891), p. 18.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²³⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:365.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 7:122.

the real beauty God has created. The city dweller then calls poets ‘guilty’ [‘罪人’], and the local official says:

Sir, sorry, I don’t really understand or respect poets, because I live in nature. As for the poets you’ve described, I know what you mean. In human penal codes, many clauses charge people, but writing poetry is not yet guilty. Undoubtedly, most people, including the one and only God, do not understand what they are doing. Out of their imprudence, they use fragmental words to boldly overpraise everything and explain everything, thus all of them receive the punishment they deserve – eternal loneliness. [...] A good poet is like God’s tongue; he uses the limited words to translate the glory of each corner of the universe. However, his job encounters failure all the time, and with no doubt, even often sullies the uncongealed life he respects.

老师，很抱歉，我不大明白诗也不大尊敬诗人，因为我是一个在自然里生活的人。但照到你所说的诗人，我懂得那对于这种人的意思。在人类刑法中，有许多条款使人犯罪，作诗现在还不是犯罪的一种。但毫无可疑，他们所作的事，却实在是多数人同那唯一的神都无从了解的。由于他们的冒失，用一点七拼八凑而成的文字，过分的大胆去赞美一切，说明一切，所以他们各得了他们应得的惩罚，就是永远孤独。[...] 一个好诗人像一个神的舌人，他能用贫乏的文字，翻出宇宙一角一点的光辉。但他工作常常遭遇失败，甚至于常常玷污到他所尊敬的不能稍稍凝固的生命，那是不比怀疑的了。²³²

Again, the local man is someone who lives in this nature and thinks the kind of praise of nature is not necessary, even is guilty. He calls the poets ‘imprudent’ and believes that their works often ‘[sully]’ the true beauty of nature. There is a clear statement of Shen that nature is divine. In *Fengzi*, local officer puts forward the idea that ‘God is Nature’ [‘神即自然’]²³³ – ‘The only God here is “Nature” – all of nature’s phenomena, nothing artificial, is controlled by him’ [‘神的意义在我们这里只是“自然”，一切生成的现象，不是人为的，由于他来处置’]²³⁴, which means that the God is not any monotheistic God, but a pantheistic God, a God that even a ‘pagan’ [‘异教徒’]²³⁵ will think of when he sees the beauty of nature.

If the beauty of nature is divine, then it is understandable that no human art is sufficient to preserve it, as Pujing in ‘Three Women’ says ‘silence is the only suitable way’ (see

²³² *Ibid.*, 7:122-23

²³³ *Ibid.*, 7:123.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7:88.

above, n.224). Shen here carefully lets Pujing choose the word ‘approach’ beauty but not ‘preserve’. When the young Yiqing suggests that to preserve beauty, ‘if words are not sufficient, a song consisting of a series of sounds and a painting painted with a page of colours could be sufficient’ [‘用文字写成的诗若不济事时，用一串声音组成的一支歌，用一篇颜色描就的一幅画，皆作得到’],²³⁶ Pujing denies it. She then answers, ‘I reckon only memory can store everything. Any impression will be better if pressed on heart than recorded on sheet music or canvas’ [‘我以为只有记忆能保存一切。一件任何东西的印象，刻在心上比保存在曲谱上与画布上总完美些高明些。’].²³⁷ However, what is memory and what is impression? These two are the most abstract concepts. No one can promise to truly transfer his or her memory or impression into a concrete art that fully presents it. Even if it may present something, when a reader, an audience or a viewer meets it, a new impression will be then cast on the latter. Thus, a new memory will be produced. There can never be the same impression. The concrete fine arts humans have, are no more than the ‘imitation’ [‘模仿品’] of nature as Pujing says, ‘art is the perfect imitation of nature and human life’ [‘艺术是自然与人生完美形式的模仿品’]²³⁸. However, Shen does not totally negate the value of human art, as Pujing remarks, ‘there are still more advantages than disadvantages’ [‘它的好处仍然可以胜过坏处’] and as the local officer in *Fengzi* says, ‘God should approve and be content that men can imitate miracles’ [‘人能模仿神迹，神应当同意而快乐的’]²³⁹.

Therefore, the question is what is exactly the best way to approach the divine beauty? After half a decade, when Shen added a new chapter to *Fengzi*, he gave us a clearer answer: ‘some kind of music’ [‘某种音乐’].

The guest from the city, lying in the gauzy netting and covered by a thin quilt smelling like vanilla, was thinking about his current status. [He] felt it was an adventure coming to this peculiar place. The people’s life and ideas are different from those of the metropolitan’s, and at the same time are just so close to nature. Everything is poetry, everything is like painting, everything is brightly distinctive, but again how extremely absurd they can be! Is there a God that creates all this or is there a God created by these people here? The place itself is neither like heaven nor like hell, but more similar to an abstract realm. When we are faced with **some kind**

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:368.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7:369.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7:123.

of music, we often sense the existence of hypostatic things from abstraction. Make a shapeless rocking chair with excitement, joviality and slight melancholy, and emotion or soul would be rocking in this shapeless chair. But now, he transferred from reality into a misted world. Nothing is a dream; it is only a mist that is no different from a dream.

那个城里来的客人，拥着有干草香味的薄绵被，躺在细麻帐子里，思索自己当前的地位。觉得来到这个古怪地方，真是一种奇遇。人的生活与观念，一切和大都市不同，又恰恰如此更接近自然。一切是诗，一切如画，一切鲜明凸出，然而看来又如何绝顶荒谬！是真有个神造就这一切，还是这里一群人造就了一个神？本身所在既不是天堂，也不像地狱，倒是一个类乎抽象的境界。我们和**某种音乐**对面时，常常如同从抽象感到实体的存在，综合兴奋，悦乐，和一点轻微忧郁作成张无形的摇椅，情感或灵魂，就俨然在这张无形椅子上摇荡。目前却从实现中转入迷离。一切不是梦，惟其如此，所得正是与梦无异的迷离。²⁴⁰

What is this ‘some kind of music’? It is certainly not folksongs. As already discussed in the Chapter 1, folk songs presented in *Fengzi* both reflect the natural power of vitality and inspired the early poetry (see above, p.33). To some degree, folksongs are a part of nature rather than a type of art that Shen and other writers are looking for to approach the divine beauty. Nevertheless, while in other stories by Shen there are characters who sing the folksongs and know the lyrics so that the folksongs have specific meaning to them – the folksongs are not simply a form of art but can also be a form of communication – the city dweller in *Fengzi* who goes to Zhen’gan (West Hunan) cannot understand the lyrics. To him, the folksongs can be as abstract as pure music. The local officer introduces some of the local folk songs and the legend that bred these songs to the city dweller, and the latter thinks that ‘this narration was worth listening to, as it was a poem itself’ [‘那种叙述是值得一听的，叙述的本身同时就是一首诗歌’].²⁴¹ Then, their conversation is stopped by someone singing faraway. Before the local officer explains the lyrics, the city dweller reflects that ‘the song was only something massless and intangible flowing in the moonlight’ [‘这歌声只是一片无量无质滑动在月光中的东西’].²⁴²

Without knowing the content of the song, the folk song transforms from something that has social and interpersonal function to a more abstract type of art. Every kind of

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7:151. The bold words are emphasised by me.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7:149.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

art that humans create has a medium; for painting, it is colour and shape; for poetry, it is words and form; for music, it is melody, rhythm, and harmony. It is the materiality of these media that allows people to engage with them. Like when the local officer who explains the folksongs, the city dweller is fascinated by the narrative because there are words that he can understand. He says it is like poetry maybe because there are words as in poetry, something about the beauty of which can be conveyed. But then, without the meaning, he describes the song he hears as 'intangible', which completely takes away the materiality of the folk song and turns it into an abstract concept of music. Therefore, there can be different meanings that folk music from the rural nature can have in the urbanised society. In Shen's works, when the emphasis is on the lyrics, the folk songs reach the urban world with its power of primitive vitality; when the emphasis is on the melody, it can serve as stimulation of memory of the people who are familiar with the melody; however, when it is neither, folk music then just become an essential part of nature, even like bird songs and the silence, which is beyond description and above the material world, and thus one step closer to a 'wordless song' and 'soundless music'. These kinds of 'music' are born in nature but also a way to approach the divine beauty. Nature, therefore, serves as a medium for Shen to approach the realm of abstraction, with the guidance of music.

3.2 Music and Abstraction

To Shen, music seems to be the form of art through which one can enter this abstract realm. According to the analysis in Chapter 2.2, this 'music' is by no means what we usually assume material music to be. Rather, it is something that sits between our material world and the abstract realm Shen writes about. Hanslick remarks that 'music has, indeed, no contents as thus understood; no *subject* in the sense that the subject to be treated is something extraneous to the musical notes', as he puts it with Kahlert's words that music 'admits no "description in words"'.²⁴³ Therefore, music does not express any concept, and composers '[think] and [work] in sound, away from the realities of the external world'.²⁴⁴ It is exactly because music does not express conceptions that it has fewer limits and thus can preserve more, bringing one closer to abstraction and away from reality. However, even though the folk song heard by the city dweller is close to

²⁴³ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 162.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

abstraction, it is still a form of music that one can actually hear. In the passage quoted above (see above, n.240), none of the art forms the city dweller uses to describe his feelings about the place actually exist. As he describes it: ‘everything is poetry, everything is like painting’ and ‘more similar to an abstract realm’. The poetry and the painting here are unreal, so is the music from which he senses ‘the existence of hypostatic things from abstraction’. Thus, in some way, the three arts connect as one in abstraction.

As early as 1932, in the first chapters of *Fengzi*, there is already the notion of ‘wordless poetry, colourless painting and soundless music’ – arts that do not exist in real life but only in abstraction. However, it was not until 1937, in this last chapter added to *Fengzi*, that Shen clearly presents his understanding of abstraction. In the earlier chapters of *Fengzi*, Shen also separates this type of abstract music (or the concept of music) from the recognised human fine arts. Human arts in the material world are just like when people ‘know how a rainbow forms’ [‘明白如何可以成一条虹’],²⁴⁵ they imitate it and create an artificial rainbow. That humans can create arts is because ‘men can imitate miracles’ [‘人能模仿神迹’],²⁴⁶ but it can never surpass the ‘the value of the un-artificial rainbow’ [‘非人力的虹的价值’].²⁴⁷ The un-artificial rainbow is a representative of nature and also can be a metaphor for the beauty people can feel but never truly reproduce with the existing arts. This ‘some kind of music’ is only a concept the writer creates in his mind, which he can never write down in sheet music for performance. Encountering such abstraction, one can only have feelings like ‘excitement’, ‘joviality’ and ‘slight melancholy’, but the source of these emotions cannot be identified. It is like a ‘mist’ and a ‘shapeless rocking chair’ – untouchable. The music that presents this abstraction should be silent.

²⁴⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:123.

If science can create a rainbow in the air, it only shows that human beings are more progressed and cleverer than in the past and they know how a rainbow forms, but the value of the un-artificial rainbow still exists. God should approve and be content that men can imitate miracles.

[科学即或能在空中创造一条虹霓，但不过是人类因为历史进步聪明了一点，明白如何可以成一条虹，但原来那一条非人力的虹的价值还依然存在。人能模仿神迹，神应当同意而快乐的。]

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Here in *Fengzi*, Shen puts forward the concept of abstraction and its relationship with other arts, especially with music. During the next decade, his writing appeared to show an increasing fascination with abstraction, and music is always the key in this realm:

I seem to see the noumenon²⁴⁸ of life. The greenness that surrounds me in the sunshine can symbolise life. Although it is all green, it has different layers. The greenness and greenness overlap each other, but when there is a slight difference in proportion, it then generates variety. This greenness ceaselessly flows in the sunshine, thus it is like a movement of a great piece of music, playing while time is alternating; what is more delicate than the melody is the effect it produces, which neither arouses people's pain or joy of life, nor unfolds despair or hope for life; what it possesses is only a realm, a realm in which it seems that human and nature have reached a harmony, and in this harmony there seems to be a comprehension beyond nature. It must descend to a lower level so that it can match the similar emotion as music can, and to a level even lower than that, where it can deliver the similar feeling as poetry can. The lowering of the levels, however, is only an analogy, because when the sun turns aside, the air becomes gentler, and a thin mist is gradually covering the green plain; the mountaintop in the distance turns from green to yellow, and then from light purple to dark blue. It is just like a man ages from youth to middle age and again from middle to old age. Hairs turn grey on the temples first, and soon they will be as white as snow. Life grows senile, and soon one will reach his/her twilight, when teeth start to fall, and at that time, all the distracting thoughts and delusions will be rinsed away by the time, and a clean and pure ethos will add to one's appearance. When a person lives until this stage, naturally he/she must be simpler and more complete than poetry or music.

我仿佛见到了生命的本体。在阳光下包围于我身边的绿色，也正可用来象征人生。虽同一是个绿色，却有各种层次。绿与绿的重叠，分量比例略微不同时，便产生各式差异。这篇绿色既在阳光下不断流动，因此恰如一个伟大乐曲的章节，在时间交替下进行，比乐律更精微处，是它所产生的效果，并不引起人对于生命的痛苦与悦乐，也不表现出人生的绝望和希望，它有的只是一种境界，在这个境界中时，似乎人与自然完全趋于谐和，在谐和中又若还具有一分突出自然的明悟。必需稍次一个等级，才能和音乐所扇起的情绪相邻，再次一个等级，才能和诗歌所传递的感觉相邻。然而这个层次的降落原只是一种比拟，因为阳光转斜时，空气已更加温柔，那篇绿原中渐渐染上一层薄薄灰雾，远处山头有由绿色变成黄色的，也有由淡紫色变成深蓝色的。正若一个人从壮年移渡到中年，由中年复转成老年，现实鬓毛微斑，随即满头如雪，生命虽日趋衰老，一时不曾见出齿牙摇落的日暮景象，其时生命中杂念与妄想，为岁月漂洗而去尽，一种清静

²⁴⁸ '生命的本体' can also be literally translated into 'life itself' instead of this philosophical term. However, if connected to the argument about Nietzsche and music in Chapter 5 (see below, p.204), 'noumenon' perhaps makes more sense.

纯粹之气，却形于眉宇神情间。人到这个状况下时，自然比诗歌和音乐更见得素朴而完整。²⁴⁹

In this passage taken from ‘Green Nightmare’ [《绿魔》] first written in 1943, Shen compares natural scenery to a piece of great music, which leads towards life and a realm in which there is a great harmony between human and nature. However, the first mention of music in this quotation – ‘a piece of great music’ – should be understood as metaphysical. The realm created by this music is something we cannot hear, something imaginary, and is beyond any kind of human art. Moreover, Shen casts this metaphysical music as the pinnacle of abstraction because ‘what is more delicate than melody is the effect it produces’. This indicates that for this ‘great piece of music’, melody should not be emphasised. Melody is merely the medium for music. For concrete music, there is always a melody that people can either sing or play, but for this ‘great piece of music’, there is nothing. Therefore, the great music Shen refers to is only a medium to access the abstract realm. However, when he writes, ‘it must descend to a lower level so that it can arouse the similar emotion as music can, and to a level even lower than that, where it can deliver the similar feeling as poetry can’, the ‘music’ Shen refers to is the concrete music people can play. This kind of music, unlike the ‘great piece of music’, can exist; it is what we normally know as a human art and is able to arouse a lower level of emotion than that which Shen refers to. Nonetheless, even within human arts, Shen ranks music higher than any other. The difference between the two must be emphasised. Shen’s ideal ‘piece of great music’ that is connected to the abstract realm is comparable to Nietzsche’s thinking, since ‘for Nietzsche, as for Schopenhauer before him, music was not just one art form among many, nor even a superior art form: it was a condition of the human spirit, one of the great constants in the eternal history of mankind’,²⁵⁰ or in other words ‘the Spirit of Music’.

Why is music more capable than other forms of art, in this context, of connecting people with abstraction? Owing to Shen’s fascination with abstraction as something that is ever-dynamic, Yu Zhaoping and Chen Lifeng argue that abstraction is like music that

²⁴⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:137.

²⁵⁰ Enrico Fubini, *History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. by Michael Hatwell (Lymington, Hants, Hong Kong: Typeset at The Spartan Press Ltd., 1991), p. 330.

flows in time.²⁵¹ Although they do not quote the above passage from ‘Green Nightmare’, their argument is very similar to Shen’s description. The greenness of the scenery has its different levels, ‘ceaselessly flow[ing] in the sunshine’, and ‘thus it is just like a movement of a great piece of music, playing while time is alternating’. Shen compares this greenness to life, before presents an image of aging and the new-born purity of old age. He considers old age to be ‘simpler and more complete than poetry or music’. In a way, nature and life combine as one. The harmony they create is similar to the ‘realm’ Shen writes about, which cannot be exactly depicted. Yu and Chen think that Shen’s pursuit of abstraction is actually the discovery of an artistic path to surpass and sublimate human life, or in their words, ‘the pursuit of the beauty of abstraction transforms life from the limited to the infinite’ [‘寻求抽象之美，使生命从有限趋于无限’].²⁵² Their argument is convincing, and there is also much truth in their judgement that Shen is a rare writer, among his Chinese contemporaries, who pursues abstraction so faithfully.²⁵³ However, there is a subtle point when Yu and Chen argue that Shen thinks ‘abstraction is indeed the most complete form of the beauty of life’ [‘抽象才是生命之美最完整的形式’], they believe his way of achieving this form is to depend on words like music.²⁵⁴ Yu and Chen argue that Shen’s ultimate experiment in abstraction is his story, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ [《看虹录》] (1940), in which the characters interweave and the plot is unclear. Yu and Chen think that Shen wrote this novel as a ‘piece of music’ to achieve abstraction. However, they do not clarify whether this piece of music is something concrete that can be played or only a metaphorical form of music to which Shen entrusts his abstraction. Consequently, this argument should be further refined. Yu and Chen think that the abstraction Shen seeks cannot be recorded by words or painting, since these two art forms are rendered in physical media. Contentiously, they argue that abstraction can be recorded by music, as they think the medium of music – melody – is invisible.²⁵⁵ On the one hand, they forget that melody is actually physical (in fact, even sound is physical, too): if there is a melody, there will be

²⁵¹ Yu Zhaoping [俞兆平] and Chen Lifeng [陈立锋], ‘On Shen Congwen’s Meditation on Life and Pursuit of Abstraction’ [《论沈从文的生命沉思与抽象追求》], *Journal of Xiamen University (Arts & Social Sciences)*, 06(2010), 96-104 (p.99).

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

sheet music that people can read and reproduce, which is as concrete as words and colours. On the other hand, they do not fully explore Shen's concept of 'soundless music'. When Shen refers to abstraction being recorded by music, he means 'soundless music' – as he writes 'I am mad. I am mad for abstraction. I see some symbols, a shape, a ball of string, a kind of soundless music, and a wordless poem.' [我正在发疯。为抽象发疯。我看到一些符号，一片形，一把线，一种无声的音乐，无文字的诗歌。]²⁵⁶

Yu and Chen quote a passage from 'Gazing at the Rainbows' to demonstrate that Shen wants to use music like literature to recreate this infinite beauty of life. Their argument is intriguing because it highlights Shen's desire to create an abstract and immortal literature, but at the same time provides a weak point in their argument about what exactly Shen intends to use to create such abstraction, which can be questioned. They quote from Shen:

From the cloudy sky, [one] can read a small piece of literature, in which there are small sighs and silence, colour and fragrance, love and hatred. There is no author. There is no date. There is no story. There is no...but the content is extremely gentle and beautiful. The empty sky is tranquil but as if there was music in the reader's mind; the empty sky is bright blue but the soul of the reader is clean and bright.

可从此云空中，读示一小文，文中有微叹与沉默，色与香，爱与怨。无著者姓名。无年月。无故事。无……然而内容极柔美。虚空静寂，读者灵魂中如有音乐，虚空明蓝，读者灵魂上却光明净洁。²⁵⁷

Yu and Chen think Shen's 'small piece of literature' communicates his belief that, if it can be written like music, literature has the potential to profoundly affect the reader.²⁵⁸ However, it is questionable whether this 'small piece of literature' exists. Reading carefully here, what is to be found in the 'literature' are not words, but sighs, silence, colour, fragrance, love and hatred – abstract things that cannot be touched. A 'real' work of literature should contain words, but Shen's 'small piece of literature' comprises no words. Furthermore, this 'piece of literature' has no author, date of writing or even story. It is definitely a form of literature that can never exist as in a published format.

²⁵⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:43.

²⁵⁷ Shen, quot. in Yu and Chen, 'On Shen Congwen's Meditation on Life and Pursuit of Abstraction', pp. 98-99.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Thus, the music in the reader's soul cannot be recorded on a sheet of music or with sounds. Equally notable is Shen's repeated use of the terms 'empty sky' [‘虚空’] and 'sky' [‘天空’]:

I am mad. I am mad for abstraction. I see some symbols, a shape, a ball of string, a kind of soundless music, and a wordless poem. I see the most complete shape in life well preserved in the abstraction but extinguished before facts.

Who can make the green bamboo into a bow and arrow, shoot it into the sky, and it will never fall down? My imagination is like a long arrow, shot into the sky, that never returns. Where the arrow is going is the vast empty sky that is blue, bright and quiet.

我正在发疯。为抽象发疯。我看到一些符号，一片形，一把线，一种无声的音乐，无文字的诗歌。我看到生命中一种最完整的形式，这一切都在抽象中好好存在，在事实前反而消灭。

有什么人能用绿竹作弓矢，射入天空，永不落下？我之想象，犹如长箭，向天空射去，去即不返。长箭所注，在碧蓝而明静之广大虚空。

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Sky is a perfect symbol for abstraction as it is intangible. However, Shen in a lot of cases uses the word ‘虚空’ (xu kong) to describe a ‘metaphorical’ sky. ‘虚’ (xu) in Chinese means ‘virtual’, or in some case, ‘illusory’, and the character ‘空’ (kong) can both mean ‘emptiness’ or ‘sky’. Thus ‘虚空’ not only means the literal ‘sky’ but moreover it connotes the unreal and intangible. The sky becomes the substitute of abstraction. Another similar symbol is the ocean, a mirror image of the sky. To some degree, Shen's artistic exploration of abstract beauty began near the sea, with his characters in ‘The Three Women’ and *Fengzhi* discussing how to record the beauty of the sunset on the sea (see above, p.86 and p.87).

Shen finds the beauty of abstraction mostly in nature – the mountains, the sky, and the ocean. It is also to be found in the inexpressible beauty of the countryside and rural life. Such beauty can also be seen as a part of nature and, in fact, is the most sacred form of nature. However, after being in the city for two decades, Shen was no longer a man of the countryside. As Yu and Chen put it in their paper, he was transformed into an

²⁵⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:43.

urban gentleman like his other writer friends.²⁶⁰ Therefore, his description of pastoral beauty and life would be influenced by this change of his life. In the 1940s, Shen tried to infuse urban life with rural beauty. His impressions of natural beauty were abstract, and he attempted to interweave this into his writing, using the method which he called ‘method of music composition’ [‘作曲方法’]:

Time passes by, and along with it, life moves and changes; the author and the character in books, separated and together, move on in imagination or in time, and finally gain the complete tranquillity from the extreme chaos. Scientists use the term ‘energy balance’ to explain the phenomenon or situation of the universe’s occasional ‘senselessness of meaning’. As for me, I borrow some short stories that the old people think can usually shine eternally in young life, and annotate those obscure nouns using the method of music composition.

时间流注，生命亦随之而动与变，作者与书中角色，二而一，或在想象的继续中，或在时间的继续中，由极端纷乱终于得到完全宁静。科学家用“热力均衡”一名词来说明宇宙某一时节“意义之失去意义”现象或境界，我即借用老年人认为平常在年青生命中永远若有光辉的几个小故事，用作曲方法为晦涩名词冲作诠释。²⁶¹

As argued in Chapter 2, the ‘method of music composition’ does not refer to the writing of a story according to any kind of musical structure. As Shen puts it, the ‘method of music composition’ is like the ‘energy balance’ in physics, meaning something as abstract as energy can be transferred from one thing to another, but the whole amount of energy will not change. In this case, beauty is the energy. As an author, Shen receives the ‘energy’ from nature and keeps it in his imagination, although this energy is not retained in an ordered fashion, rather it is chaotic. His imagination can then become the arrow shot into the sky (see above, n.259), in other words a total abstraction, and create a realm in which he can gather the energy and put it into words, so that tranquillity is again created. While the ‘energy’ in nature exists in a different form from that in literature, the amount of energy is the same in both because of ‘the principle of energy balance’.²⁶² The amount of energy within this isolated system of literary creation does not change. This energy is abstract and intangible, but it can be transferred from, for example, natural beauty to literary work. It is indeed more like music composition, where musicians take an emotion, process it in their minds and then create music. Such

²⁶⁰ Yu and Chen, p. 103.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16:344.

²⁶² This comes from ‘the law of conservation of energy’ in physics.

music is another form of emotion, for it is as abstract as energy or beauty. Music composition is not like stories, in which objects can be concretely described, nor like paintings where there is also something you can see. Since Shen was no musician, the music is conceptual. He was only applying this idea.

Shen's approach to the method of music composition in literature shares some similarities with Oscar Wilde's (1854 – 1900) ideas. In the postscript to 'Gazing at Rainbows' and 'Accounts of Plucking Stars', Shen quotes Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying': 'lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art'²⁶³ [叙述美而不真事物，乃艺术之正务]。²⁶⁴ The method of music composition serves this untrue beauty. Shen was pursuing both abstract beauty and the immortality of art – only untrue beauty can be immortal. With reference to the 'energy balance', only the 'untrue things' contain the energy because real objects, once transformed, are irreversibly changed. Shen put this idea into his own words:

What is truth? I do not quite understand the difference between truth and untruth in literature, nor can I tell the emotional difference. In literature and art there is only beauty and ugliness, nothing is true or untrue, nor should moral prejudices be blended into it.

什么叫作真？我倒不大明白真和不真在文学上的区别，也不能分辨它在情感上的区别。文学艺术只有美和不美，不能说真和不真，道德的成见，更无从孱杂其间。²⁶⁵

Shen did not only write these comments in essays, but put the theory into practice in his stories, especially in 'Gazing at Rainbows' [《看虹录》]. He considers the musician Ma Sicong and the critic Liu Xiwei [刘西渭, also known as Li Jianwu 李健吾] (1906 – 1982) to be the best readers of this work,²⁶⁶ since they understood *The Border Town* as a piece of music.²⁶⁷ In 'Gazing at Rainbows', Shen challenges the form of story writing – there is no clear plot – and social morality. As the story contains many subtle references

²⁶³ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde/ With an Introduction by Vyryan Holland*, ed. by J.B. Foreman (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1973), pp.970-992 (p. 992).

²⁶⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:344.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12:106-107.

²⁶⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:343.

²⁶⁷ Liu Xiwei, 'The Border Town and Portrait of Eight Steeds' [《<边城>与<八骏图>》], in *Research data on Shen Congwen* [《沈从文研究资料》], eds. by Liu Hongtao, and Yang Ruiren (Tianjin: Tianjin ren min chu ban she, 2006), pp.199-204 (p.201).

to sexual intimacy, it was later criticised as ‘pink literature (pornography)’ [桃红色文学].²⁶⁸ However, communist critics of the time, such as Guo Moruo, did not understand that this story is Shen’s experimental pursuit of artistic divinity and eternity.²⁶⁹ In ‘Gazing at Rainbows’, the character ‘the guest’ [‘客人’] appreciates the beauty of the ‘the hostess’ [‘主人’] and writes a surreal tale (a love story between a hunter and a doe). The story within the story reflects the two characters. ‘The guest’ left the ‘the hostess’ a letter, presumably after sexual intercourse, in which he writes: ‘whiteness is the highest virtue incarnate, but you have already surpassed the meaning of the word.’²⁷⁰ [‘白色本身即是一种最高的道德，你已经超乎了这个道德名辞以上。’]²⁷¹

What Shen seeks to express is what Oscar Wilde called ‘untrue beautiful things’ – for the ‘guest’ in the story, what is ‘revealed before [him] is not simply an immaculate body, but a radiance, a bouquet of flowers, a wondrous cloud.’²⁷² The story of the doe and the hunter is in the story the first person narrator is writing. That person also writes, ‘I know there is a place I can mail this little composition where others will consider it “fiction” and try to ferret out the factual and the fictitious in it. But to me – just a vestige of Life, the remnants of a dream.’²⁷³ [‘我知道这小东西寄到另外一处去，别人便把它当成“小说”，从故事中推究真伪。对于我呢，生命的残余，梦的残余而已。’]²⁷⁴ If it does not matter whether the story is true or factual, but only a beautiful record of dream, then it is indeed as Shen argues: ‘moral prejudices [should not] be blended into it’.

²⁶⁸ Guo Moruo [郭沫若], ‘Repel the Reactionary Art’ [《斥反动文艺》], eds. by Shao Huaqiang [邵华强] in *Research data on Shen Congwen* [《沈从文研究资料》] (Beijing: China Copyright Press, 2011), pp. 153-157 (p.153).

According to Wang, the article ‘should be read as political denunciation rather than as literary criticism’, but it was indeed the ‘posting of this article on Peking University’s campus’ that ‘come to signify nothing less than a totalistic denunciation of Shen’s entire literary oeuvre’, which resulted in his ‘final withdrawal from Literature’.

Wang, *Modernity with a Cold War Face*, p. 88.

²⁶⁹ Yu and Chen, ‘Abstraction’, p. 99.

²⁷⁰ Shen Congwen, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’, trans. by Kinkley, in *Imperfect Paradise*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Kinkley (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), pp.463-481 (p. 476).

²⁷¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:338.

²⁷² Shen, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’, trans. by Kinkley, p. 476.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

²⁷⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:341.

A piece like ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ does not use a recognisable narrative form, but is rather a poetic novel. In many ways, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ reflects the ideas of Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), summarised by the Chinese poet Bei Dao [北岛] (1949 –):

Poetry is the possibility that is impossible to build. Like music, it is the visible record of the invisible desire, is the flesh built by the mystery of soul, and is the sad remnant of everything an artist has loved.

诗歌是不可能造就的可能，和音乐一样，它是看不见欲望的可见的记录，是灵魂的神秘造就的肉体，是一个艺术家所爱过的一切的悲哀遗物。²⁷⁵

Following the main story of ‘the guest’ and ‘the hostess’, a first person narrative voice speaks as the writer: ‘I live wholly in my thoughts, not in the real world. It is as if I use the Abstract to torment my own soul and flesh. It is painful, yet at the same time enjoyable²⁷⁶ [我完全活在一种观念中，并非活在实际世界中。我似乎在用抽象虐待自己肉体 and 灵魂，虽痛苦同时也是享受]’.²⁷⁷ Therefore, a novel like ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ is not simply a novel, but can be considered as a ‘poetic novel’. According to Wu Xiaodong, the concept of the poetic novel comes from French Symbolism, influencing Chinese literature from 1920 on.²⁷⁸ Wu takes Shen as an example of writers who explored poetic novels through both ideas and practice. Further to the ideas proposed in ‘Lyricism of Symbols’ [‘象征的抒情’] and ‘Lyricism of Abstraction’ [‘抽象的抒情’], Shen followed the path of the pioneer of poetic novels – Fei Ming – and wrote his own two poetic novels ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ [《看虹录》] and ‘Accounts of Plucking Stars’ [《摘星录》].²⁷⁹ According to Wu, these Chinese writers followed Western writers such as Proust, Joyce, and Woolf to create the Chinese version of poetic novels. These novels use the unique form of writing largely applying poetic imagery and symbolism, combining it with essay, poetry and other forms of arts.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Bei Dao [北岛], *The Rose of Time* [《时间的玫瑰》] (Nanjing: Jiangsu Wen Yi Chu Ban She, 2009), p. 5.

²⁷⁶ Shen, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’, trans. by Kinkley, p. 480.

²⁷⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:341.

²⁷⁸ Wu Xiaodong [吴晓东], ‘An Exploration in Modern “Poetic Novel”’ [《现代“诗化小说”探索》], *Literary Criticism* [《文学评论》], 01(1997), 118-127 (p. 118).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Chapter 5 of this thesis will explore the extent to which Shen was influenced by these Western writers.

For Shen, it is especially important to connect literature with other forms of art, particularly painting and music. There are many examples where he assembles the three arts together to try to describe something abstract. Sometimes, the three arts are inseparable for Shen. Later in his life, he wrote in a letter to Zhang Zhaohe (1963), ‘all the best poetry, best music and the most appealing paintings almost have the same origin; the only difference is the form and material they associate with’ [‘凡最好的诗歌，最好的音乐，最具感染力的好画，来源几乎完全相同，不同之处只不过是它的结合成形的方式和材料安排而已’].²⁸¹ On one hand, the statement shows that, to Shen, what really matters in great art should not be the form, but the ‘origin’, and from what is analysed above, this origin should be the abstract beauty an artist receives from nature and from life. On the other hand, in the years Shen sought the perfect way to record abstract beauty, he discovered it was probably to combine the concepts of the three arts and go beyond materialised form. Only when the three artforms are combined, can great work be produced. This does not mean a concrete combination, as Shen never specifically suggests a concrete musical structure or uses much painting or visual layout in his writing (unlike Apollinaire’s concrete poetry, for example). What Shen implies is merely the conceptual use of these arts. Shen explored this theory/notion many times and ‘The Portrait of Eight Steeds’ [《八骏图》] (1935) may be an early such experiment. Almost forty years after this novel was written, Shen recalled that:

I remember when ‘The Portrait of Eight Steeds’ was published, many people could not understand it, myself included actually. All the eight horses are like caricatures, only that they have different manifestations and subconscious motivations. Except for these two categories [of my works], there seems to be a third one, which is written as lyrical poetry – or purely ‘art work’, and there are quite a few. Like ‘the two “Accounts”²⁸² you criticised, general readers would only think it is ‘curious’ but could not understand that I was

²⁸¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 21:391.

²⁸² Referring to ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ [《看虹录》] and ‘Accounts of Plucking Stars’ [《摘星录》]. Literally, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ should be translated as ‘Accounts of Gazing at Rainbows’, but in *Imperfect Paradise*, Kinkley translated it as the former, and this thesis uses his translation, thus there is the difference here in titles.

experimenting to create a work by blending the three different creative methods of lyrical poetry, watercolour painting and symphony.

记得写《八骏图》发表时，许多人都看不懂，其实包含本人，八匹马都近于漫画，只是各有不同表现和隐秘不显意识而已。这两大类以外，还似乎有第三类，即纯粹当成“艺术品”抒情诗而作的，有不少篇章。如老兄所批评的“二录”，一般读者多只觉得“还新奇”，而不太看得懂是试验用抒情诗，水彩画，交响乐，三者不同成型法，揉成一个作品的。²⁸³

It seems that the purpose of combining the three arts is to present the subconscious, which even Shen did not truly understand as the author of ‘The Portrait of Eight Steeds’. This presentation of the subconscious is a Symbolist approach to writing, and also a common theory shared by Western Symbolist writers, musicians and painters, which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5. Peter Dayan proposes the idea of ‘interart’, taking the Modernist artists, Whistler, Satie, Apollinaire, Braque, Ponge, and Stravinsky, as explanatory examples for this term. Although these artists may not have directly influenced Shen, he does share similar ideas with them. Dayan believes that ‘no art can justify itself in terms of its own medium’²⁸⁴ and ‘only beyond and between the arts, beyond the reach of any theoretician or any critic, does the truth of art reside’,²⁸⁵ which encapsulates Shen’s artistic intentions. Shen was experimenting to present the true essence of art, the imaginary harmony in that abstract realm. In the pursuit of this harmony, Shen goes far into abstraction between arts, where no one can truly grasp a medium.

What should also be noted is that when Shen summarised his own style of writing (see above, n.283), he titled ‘the two “Accounts”’ as ‘lyrical poetry’ or purely ‘art work’, which brings us back to the term ‘poetic novels’. Poetry (in a modern context) is, arguably, closer to music and painting than any other form of literature. It is perhaps prudent to suggest that, for Shen, ‘poetic novels’ are a form of novelistic ‘interart’, which brings Shen, as a novelist, one step closer to music and painting. Even from the earlier pieces like *Fengzhi* and ‘Three Women’, all writers Shen includes are referred to as ‘poets’. This particular type of writer operates as the recorder of beauty. Owing to the

²⁸³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 24:378.

²⁸⁴ Peter Dayan, *Art as Music, Music as Poetry, Poetry as Art, from Whistler to Stravinsky and Beyond* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2011), p. 21.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

poetic novel's interartistic literary potential, Shen seeks to exploit this form of writing. This kind of art, which is beyond any art and between every art, is the only way to approach abstraction as it can absorb every sensation. Shen reveals his way of writing, difficult for some of his contemporaries to categorise, in 'Water and Clouds' [《水云》], explaining:

From the silent thoughts, I know all the wisdom and power nurtured in life. In the beat of my heart, clearly, there is poetry of the perfect form and fresh rhythm, and music full of soft melody and youthful fantasy.

从默会遐想中，体会到生命中所孕育的智慧和力量。心脏跳跃节奏中，俨然有形式完美韵律清新的诗歌，和调子柔软而充满青春狂想的音乐。²⁸⁶

The ultimate abstraction is in the 'silent thoughts', and it is presented in untouchable music. Therefore, Shen's pursuit of musical effect in literature is actually a pursuit of abstraction.

²⁸⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:93.

Chapter 4 Historical Evidence of Western Influence

The previous three chapters comprised analysis of Shen's use of music, divided into three parts – folk music, composed music, and the concept of music. As proved therein, not all of his ideas come from Chinese literary-philosophical traditions. Due to the occidentalist nature of modern Chinese literature, Shen being one of its key figures, these non-Chinese ideas are most likely borrowed from Western literature. Shen Congwen decided to start his writing career when he learned about the 'May Fourth Movement' (and 'New Culture/Literature Movement'), which began in 1919. He arrived in Beijing around winter in 1922, and chose to write in vernacular Chinese. He thus can be defined as a modern Chinese writer, or even as a 'May Fourth' writer. In modern Chinese literary history, 'May Fourth' represents the enlightenment movement of modern China,²⁸⁷ which relied heavily on learning about Western culture, especially Western literature. Countless Western works were translated and introduced into China at that time. The range of genres and content is unimaginable, considering the information technology available almost a hundred years ago. The aim of this chapter is to find out what Shen might have read or known of Western literature, and based on the result, Chapter 5 will further analyse the possible influence on music in Shen's writing from Western literature.

Shen's reading list must have been vast, including a variety of Western literature. In *Autobiography of Congwen* [《从文自传》] (1934), Shen admits that even before moving to Beijing, he had started to read some translations of Dickens.²⁸⁸ One of his students at South Western Association University (1938-1946), Wang Zengqi [汪曾祺] (1920 – 1997), remembered:

Mr. Shen had many books, and of mixed contents: as well as *The Four Books*, there were books about modern Chinese literature, translations of foreign literatures, sociology and anthropology, Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Freud,

²⁸⁷ It is worth mentioning that the 'enlightenment' of modern China is a different term from the Enlightenment era of English literature. It means from early 20th century, China started to learn from Western science and culture, which aims at enlightening Chinese people with new ideas and technology.

²⁸⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 13:323.

‘I remember Dickens's three books: *Dombey and Son*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist*; I spent two months reading them. I like these books, as they tell me what I need to know. They are not like other books that preach all the time, they record some real life situations.’ [‘我记得迭更司的《冰雪因缘》、《滑稽外史》、《贼史》这三部书，反复约占去了我两个月的时间。我欢喜这种书，因为它告给我的正是我所要明白的。它不像别的书尽说道理，它只记下一些生活现象。’]

Henry James, the history of Taoism, the history of china and porcelain, *Anthology of Costumes*, *The Book of Sugar*, and so on; he had all sorts of each thing. Mr. Shen had read most of these books carefully. He claimed his knowledge as ‘mixed knowledge’.

沈先生书多，而且很杂：除了一般的四部书、中国现代文学、外国文学的译本，社会学、人类学、黑格尔的《小逻辑》，弗洛伊德、亨利·詹姆斯，道教史、陶瓷史、《服饰录》，《糖霜谱》……兼收并蓄，五花八门。这些书，沈先生大都认真读过。沈先生称自己的学问为“杂知识”。²⁸⁹

Of all these books and writers, few are directly quoted in Shen’s works, but the influence may be detectable throughout. At the same time, various literary movements including Modernism were also underway in the West. Undoubtedly, these ideas were brought into China in different ways. Michelle Yeh argues that the birth of modern Chinese poetry ‘coincided with a grand-scale socio-political and cultural reform that challenged and sought to replace the roots of Chinese civilization’.²⁹⁰ On a larger scale, the whole situation of modern Chinese literature challenged the roots of Chinese civilization by introducing Western ideologies. According to Liu Hongtao, modern Chinese literature develops almost synchronously alongside the ideological trends of Western Modernism. For example, the irrationalism theories of Bergson, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Freud were widely disseminated in modern China, and literary schools such as Symbolism, expressionism, and futurism were introduced into China and had considerable impact on modern Chinese writers.²⁹¹ Wang Hui summarises the situation of May Fourth enlightenment as having a historical coherence in attitude and he argues that the attitude lies in the criticism and scepticism against traditional Chinese culture and society. Regarding this argument of Wang’s, Liu thinks that it is reasonable to implicate Shen in this ‘attitude’.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Wang Zengqi, ‘Mr. Shen Congwen in Southwestern Association University’ [《沈从文先生在西南联大》], in *The Complete Works of Wang Zengqi* [《汪曾祺全集》], ed. by Deng Jiuping (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1998), pp.463-470 (p. 467).

²⁹⁰ Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 10.

²⁹¹ Liu Hongtao [刘洪涛], ‘A Revaluation of Shen Cong-wen’s Fictions – With a Review of Shen studies in the past 80 years’ [《沈从文小说价值重估——兼论80年来的沈从文研究》], *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Science)*, 2 (2005), 63-71 (p. 68).

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

In bringing Western ideas into modern China, translations and introductions by various Chinese writers and scholars play the most important part. The influence came in different forms, in books, in journals, or through lectures, debates, and even conversations. It is worth mentioning that the importance of literary journals or literary supplements of newspapers should never be neglected when assessing impact. Many literary movements in modern China started with these periodicals, and attracted writers to publish, discuss, and debate within them. Like many other writers, Shen began his writing career by publishing short works in periodicals, such as *Supplement to Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》] and *The Short Story Magazine* [《小说月报》], and at the same time formed professional friendships sometimes with the related editors and contributors. Evidently, entering the social circle of writers opened doors for Shen and provided a vast source of information.

Not only was Shen a contributor to various periodicals, he was also a devoted editor. Among all the periodicals Shen edited, there came first ‘the literary and artistic supplement’ of *Ta Kung Pao* [《大公报·文艺副刊》].²⁹³ From September 1933 until 1936, Shen Congwen and Yang Zhensheng took charge of the literary and artistic supplement of *Ta Kung Pao*. Zhong Yunqing has conducted a comprehensive study on the editorship and influence on *Ta Kung Pao* for her doctoral research, in which she quotes Xiao Qian [萧乾] (1910 – 1999) (Shen’s successor at *Ta Kung Pao*), who stated that ‘among all books of history of modern Chinese literature, there is no historian who truly looks at the impact and contribution of the literary supplements on the new literature since May Fourth’ [遍翻几部现代中国文学史，看不到哪位文学史家正视过文学副刊对“五四”以来新文学起过的作用，做出的贡献。].²⁹⁴ Zhong thinks that *Ta Kung Pao* became an important literature frontline of north China during

²⁹³ Although *Ta Kung Pao* has this alphabetic title printed on it as well as a French title, *L’Impartial*, there is no fixed translation to 《文艺副刊》 (wen yi fu kan). Zhong translates it as ‘Literary Supplement’, but, at the same time, in addition to 《文艺副刊》 (wen yi fu kan), *Tao Kung Pao* also has 《文学副刊》 (wen xue fu kan), which more suits the translation, ‘Literary Supplement’. Therefore, I translate it as ‘Literary and Artistic Supplement’, according to the literal meaning of the Chinese title. In later description, only ‘*Ta Kung Pao*’ will be used, for simplicity. Also, Zhong uses *Takungpao* rather than *Ta Kung Pao*, but the title in the actual paper is *Ta Kung Pao*, so this thesis uses the latter.

²⁹⁴ Zhong Yunqing [钟蕴晴]. ‘A Study on *Takungpao*’s Literary Supplement of the 1930s and 1940s’ [《〈大公报〉的〈文艺副刊〉和〈文艺〉(1933年—1949年)》], (Doctoral Thesis, Lingnan University, 2008), p. 12.

the 1930s,²⁹⁵ and that most Western scholars have neglected Shen's career as an editor. Ling Yu, in his biography of Shen Congwen also argues that Shen's profile was raised in the 1930s not only because of his achievements in his own writing but also because he was the editor of *Ta Kung Pao's* literary and artistic supplement.²⁹⁶ Zhong then summarises the different phases of Shen's work for *Ta Kung Pao*:

(1) 09/1933 – 08/1935, when he co-edited with Yang Zhensheng [杨振声] (1890 – 1956).²⁹⁷

(2) 09/1935 – 03/1936, when he co-edited with Xiaoqian, four issues a week, and the Sunday issue, titled 'Week Literature' [《星期文艺》] was hosted by Shen.

(3) 04/1936 – 08/1937, when Shen had stepped down and Xiao became the chief editor, although Shen remained involved in editing and commissioning as an 'advisor'.

(4) 10/1946 – 05/1947, when Shen, along with Yang Zhensheng and Feng Zhi, hosted the 'Week Literature' supplement, which was later handed to Feng Zhi, until May 25th, 1947, when it was passed on to Jin Yi.²⁹⁸

Despite the fact that both the contribution of *Ta Kung Pao* to Chinese literature and Shen's devotion to it have been much appreciated by scholars, very few have actually looked into the details of the content of this supplement, as edited by Shen, let alone considered whether Shen could have received any indirect influence from Western literature through reading the articles and contacting the authors as an editor. Borrowing Zhong's words, when Shen took over the supplement, his working space was set up in Beijing, rather than Tianjin where the editorial office of *Ta Kung Pao* was located, meaning that 'Shen communicated mostly with the authors who contributed to the supplement, rather than his colleagues at *Ta Kung Pao*' [‘与沈从文交往最多的是副刊的作者，而非《大公报》同仁。’]²⁹⁹ *Ta Kung Pao's* influence on Chinese literature was not only through encouraging works by new writers, but also through encouraging

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 24.

²⁹⁶ quot. Zhong. '*Takungpao*', p. 15.

²⁹⁷ Although signed by both of them, on the basis of current research, the editing was mainly in the charge of Shen.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the translations of and introductions to foreign literary works: ‘its devotion to the introduction of foreign literature has always been a good tradition of *Ta Kung Pao*’s literary and artistic supplement. [...] In terms of recommending and introducing foreign literature, “literary and artistic supplement” enjoyed an authoritative position’ [‘致力介绍外国文学，是《大公报》文艺副刊的一个良好传统 [...] 《大公报·文艺》在推介外国文学方面，享有权威地位。’].³⁰⁰ Zhong has her reasons for reaching this conclusion. *Ta Kung Pao*, from September 1933 to March 1936, when Shen was in charge, contains introductions to and translations of foreign literary works and theory in every few issues, sometimes in a successive series. It includes almost every genre of literature from various countries (mostly European). At the same time, it also focuses on the discussion and introduction of literary and aesthetic theories, and the tradition continued when *Ta Kung Pao* came back after the war, when Shen Congwen, Zhu Guangqian [朱光潜] (1897 – 1986), and Feng Zhi [冯至] (1905 – 1993) started *Weekly Literature* [《星期文艺》] in *Ta Kung Pao* in 1946.

Therefore, this chapter explores the evidence for Shen’s relationship with Western literature, via quotations from Shen’s primary sources (his creative writings, critical writings, and letters), related sources contemporary with Shen, for example, the works of other writers and scholars with a Western educational background, with whom Shen had close relations, and the periodicals with which he was connected – either those he edited or those in which he published work. An additional criterion has been applied when gathering material. As the main purpose of this thesis is to find out the relationship between Shen’s use of music and Western literature (particularly Modernist literature), anything that clearly has nothing to do with music or Modernism is not included. Nevertheless, there are some difficulties with this study. To begin with, throughout time, especially during wars, many materials may have gone missing or been destroyed. Furthermore, Shen went through various political movements in his almost six-decade-long career and he was affected as a result. Particularly after his suicide attempt in 1949, and after the Cultural Revolution, he became very cautious about what he said or wrote. Western literature has been considered ‘corrupting’ and, during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), it was almost completely wiped out in China, so, when

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

asked about this topic in his later years, it is no surprise that he might have kept some information to himself or that he simply forgot things. Moreover, Shen does not tend to quote systematically. His student, Wang Zengqi, also a writer, when writing a memoir of Shen after his death, said, ‘Mr. Shen had read a lot of books, but he seldom quoted’ [‘沈先生读过很多书，但从不引经据典’].³⁰¹ Last, but not least, Shen was not like many other modern Chinese writers, who were very fluent in certain foreign languages; he knew none. For him to have read something, it would have had to have been in translation, or, sometimes, it is more likely to have been only an introduction or what he had gathered from his conversations with scholarly friends. As a result, some of the ideas can be only second-hand, which means inaccuracy in his information is almost inevitable, and therefore, what we find may be thought of as filtered reception. All these reasons create obstacles for this study, meaning any conclusion taken from this chapter should be taken on the understanding that it can be speculative in parts and there could be more evidence that we cannot find or about which we can never know.

4.1 Western Anthropology

Chapter 1 of this thesis has already touched upon the question of what may have inspired Shen to use West Hunan’s folk tradition as one of his main sources. Kinkley has done extensive research on this point in *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, which, most later researchers take as primary evidence. This chapter, too, will use some of Kinkley’s research as evidence, but hopes to bring out new close readings to show how Shen was influenced in the next chapter. According to Kinkley, Shen started to use the theory of Western mythology and anthropology to design his plots as early as 1926. The inspiration is likely to have come from his friends, Zhou Zuoren and Gu Jiegang, who, along with Liu Bangnong, brought people’s attention to Chinese folk literature. Kinkley also argues that Shen must have been influenced, as well, by Western ethnology, as Shen believed that all arts originated in the needs of primitive people (such as primitive religion),³⁰² as explained in the text of *Fengzi* [《凤子》]. This idea is much celebrated in the West in the nineteenth century and is brought into China by scholars such as the ones mentioned above. It is only plausible that Shen learned from them.

³⁰¹ Wang Zengqi, ‘Mr. Shen Congwen in Southwestern Association University’, p. 464.

³⁰² Kinkley *Vision*, trans. by Yu and Shao, pp. 60-61.

Zhou Zuoren is known as one of the major influences on Shen. In the preface to ‘After Joining the Troop’ [《入伍后》] (1928), Shen writes, ‘there are more than ten witty pieces in this collection; maybe it is rather under the influence of the translations by the Zhou brothers.’³⁰³ This is my first collection of works since 1925, after I started to learn to use punctuation when I arrived in Beijing in 1922’ [‘内十多篇带点诙谐味，或许受二周译文影响相当多，这是一九二二年到北京后，由标点符号学起，到一九二五年开始写作第一本集子。’].³⁰⁴ Between the Zhou brothers, Lu Xun [鲁迅] (1881 – 1936) (born Zhou Shuren [周树人], Zhou Zuoren’s elder brother) is one of the biggest names in modern Chinese literature; as a new starter in the field, it is very likely that Shen read his works and translations in order to learn to write. It also suggests that his brother, Zhou Zuoren’s influence on Shen started from the beginning, and it is very likely that his influence lingered and impacted on more than just Shen’s writing style, but also on other ideas.

In addition to Zhou’s special interest in Greek mythology (he translated many ancient Greek stories), he was also devoted to general mythology around the world from an anthropological perspective. In the 1920s, Zhou Zuoren was a professor at Peking University, and his lectures were very popular among students at the university and those auditing. Kinkley interviewed Feng Zhi (also a contemporary of Shen’s), who remembered auditing Zhou’s courses with Shen.³⁰⁵ It is very possible that, in one of these courses, Shen learned about Western anthropology, and started to draw on materials from his home region: myth, legends, or anecdotes. In 1924, *Ten Day Literature* [《文学旬刊》] (a special issue of *Supplement to Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》]) published the transcript of one of Zhou Zuoren’s lectures – ‘The Interesting Mythology’ [《神话的趣味》], in which Zhou emphasizes the literary value of myth: ‘we should regard myth as literature, because from it we can glimpse the cultural level of primitive people – their childish psychology and ideas’ [‘我们研究神话应把它当做文学看，因为我们由此可以窥测古代野蛮民族的文化的程度，——他们很幼稚的心理和思

³⁰³ Zhou Zuoren and Zhou Shuren, the latter better known by the name Lu Xun.

³⁰⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:453.

³⁰⁵ Kinkley, *Odysey*, p. 315.

想。]。³⁰⁶ Zhou was not only interested in myth, but also interested in using Western anthropological and psychoanalytic approaches to explain myth.

There are many absurd elements in myth; although ancient people constructed explanations in various ways, they are not accurate. It was not until the late 19th century, when Andrew Lang from Britain wrote *Ritual, Myth, and Religion* in 1887 and used an anthropological approach to explain these elements that they made sense, and the explanation is now used by modern ethnologists.

[...]

Here myth can be further explained by psychology. No one has introduced new psychology in China yet. An Austrian doctor, Freud, who wrote a book called *Psychoanalysis*, invented it. In the book, there is a part about myth, which is very valuable. He thinks that, when people's desires cannot be satisfied during the day, as they are bounded by moral and law and cannot be developed, then they will be unveiled in dreams one by one. [...] Therefore, if we could further explain myth using anthropology and psychology, and find proof, it can be interesting.

神话之中有许多怪诞分子，虽历经古人加以种种解说，然都不很确切，直至十九世纪末英人安德鲁兰Andrew Lang – 1887著《神话与宗教》(*Ritual Myth of Religion*)³⁰⁷以人类学法解释才能豁然贯通，为现代民俗学家所采用。

[...]

说到这里可再用心理学来解释神话。心理学(New Psychology)在中国没有人介绍过，是奥大利医士Freud所发明，他著有《析心术》(*Psycho-analysis*)一书，中有一段介绍神话极有价值。他以为人的欲望的要求在平日不能满足，且为道德法律所拘束，势难发展，然在睡时遂一一显现于梦中。[...] 所以我们从人类学说和从心理学更进一步的解释神话，加以证明，是极有趣味的。³⁰⁸

Zhou's interest in psychology and how that influences Shen will be discussed in the next section and next chapter, but Zhou was not the only scholar to focus on Western anthropological theories. In *Supplement to Morning Post*, Jiang Shaoyuan [江绍原] (1898 – 1983) published quite a few works about primitive Chinese customs, and, among these,

³⁰⁶ Zhou Zuoren, Jiang Hua and Wu Jianchan, 'The Interesting Mythology' [《神话的趣味》], *Morning Post* [《晨报》], 5 December 1924, Section Ten Day Literature, pp.1-2.

³⁰⁷ This is the title used in the transcript of Zhou's lecture, but it can only refer to *Ritual, Myth, and Religion*.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

there is a piece, entitled ‘The Documents of the Ministry of Rites and Ceremonies XIII: Blood, Red Blood’ [《礼部文件之八：血，红血》], discussing the use of blood in rituals. In this piece, Jiang mentions the British anthropologist, J. G. Frazer: ‘if you read the work of J. G. Frazer, you will know that ethnicities like Native Americans, ancient Romans and New Guineans, etc. all consider blood “taboo” [“试读J.G. Frazer的著作，便知美洲土著，古罗马人，新几内亚人等等，都是以血为“禁品”的。]’.³⁰⁹ At the same time, Jiang also uses *Morning Post* as a platform to call for the collection of customs; for example, he once published a notice calling for people who know whether there is any restriction on the food young people can eat around China.³¹⁰ In 1926, Shen wrote a letter to Jiang, telling him about a rock fighting custom after the dragon boat competition in his hometown: ‘I can write to you personally concerning something about that kind of fight and the details of before and after the fight. I don’t know, but is there any meaning of it written in some book or from what you heard?’ [我可以写一点有关那种架，打前打后的详细情形给你个人看。不知道，这中亦有什么书上或传说来的意义不？]³¹¹ This letter was quoted by Liu Hongtao to prove that Shen maintained a close relationship to the anthropologists, but it could even mean that Shen was providing the anthropologists with the stories and custom he knew about from his home region, and it suggests that Shen was interested in such anthropological matters. Through asking whether any book gives a meaning to these kinds of customs, Shen suggests that he knew of a book explaining such things; it is very likely to be something Jiang or Zhou introduced, for example, Lang’s books or Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, which inspired many Modernist writers.

Shen also drew on this inspiration in his works. He went on to publish a series of plays imitating folk plays [《拟曲》],³¹² set in his home region using local dialect, in *Morning Post*. Moreover, Shen published a collection of folksongs from his home region, entitled

³⁰⁹ Jiang Shaoyuan, ‘The Documents of the Ministry of Rites and Ceremonies XIII: Blood, Red Blood’ [《礼部文件之八：血，红血》], *Morning Post*, 26 November 1925, Section Literary Supplement, pp. 57-58.

³¹⁰ Jiang Shaoyuan, ‘Call for Submission’ [《征求》], *Morning Post*, 7 July 1926, Section Literary Supplement, p. 12.

³¹¹ Liu, *Shen Congwen’s Fiction and Modernism*, p. 42.

³¹² Shen Congwen, ‘Imitation of a Folk Play’, *Morning Post*, 29 October 1925, Section Literary Supplement, pp. 63-64.

Ibid., 28 November 1925, p. 64.

Songs of the Zhen'gan Folk [《箪人谣曲》], again in *Morning Post*, December 1926. In the preface to this collection of folksongs, Shen explains that, after he arrived in Beijing, he sent letters to his cousin who was still in the troop in West Hunan and asked him to collect these songs from the soldiers. Shen wished to apply these songs in his own writings. In the preface, Shen writes:

Recently, life has forced me to write something. It is very easy to write poems, but I feel extremely awkward using words like 'nightingale' and 'rose'; although I have 'sorrows', it is different from 'velvet', and I do not know if my heart has really broken into 'scattered and fragmented pieces' or has broken any 'heartstrings' – possibly, I am not fated to be a poet. Other than writing poems, I can write fiction, but it is also not practical. It may be because of the different voice I hear, which is shouting that fiction denies the old literature and science, but is building something new. Because I want to see what other people are building, I give up for now.

近来生活到了逼到我非写一点文章不可的境地，做诗是方便极了，但“夜莺”“玫瑰”这类字眼我运用时常感到万分的困窘，虽有“悲哀”，却又与“天鹅绒”异样，心儿是否当真成了“零零碎碎的片子”也不能知，也从不弹断过什么“心的琴弦”，做诗大概是与我无缘了。除了做诗是做小说，但仍然是不成。这或者是正因为听到有那种异样的呼声，正在那里大喊其否认旧文学科学，建设新东西，因为想看看别人建设的是些什么东西，所以气便馁了吧。³¹³

It is unlikely that Shen's activity on folksongs was completely unprompted, as, in 1922, *Ballad Weekly* [《歌谣周刊》] was launched as the platform for the Folksong Research Society of Peking University, publishing collected folksongs and articles about the topic, and. It prompted a frenzy of folksong study. What is more, Zhou Zuoren was one of the founders, and had published several academic articles on the matter. The journal was running when Shen started his career, so it is reasonable to assume that he was inspired by this and found that he had access to the original resources that other writers would not have. Liu Hongtao has also discussed the connection between Shen's use of folksong and the Folksong Research Society of Peking University.³¹⁴ Thus, this thesis will not expend more effort on proving the connection.

However, the paragraph quoted above gives out three messages. Firstly, Shen was familiar with Romantic poetry, even though he did not think of it as a style of poetry

³¹³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:19.

³¹⁴ Liu, *Modernism*, p. 41.

that he could follow. The words Shen lists above are commonly seen in poems written by Chinese Romantic poets who studied abroad and were influenced by Western Romantic poets such as John Keats. Secondly, as far as Shen considered, writing is ‘building something new’, and, at the time, he was not certain what. This is important, as it shows that Shen was certainly not looking back at traditional Chinese literature, but following in the steps of New Literature after May Fourth. Thirdly, maybe not as transparently as the above two points, under the conditions he is describing, publishing this collection of folksongs can be to provide himself with raw materials, as a substitute for ‘rose’, ‘nightingale’, ‘velvet’, and ‘heartstrings’. The paragraph shows that Shen at the time not only intended to be a poet or a novelist, but was also still in the process of learning to write – he [wants] to see what other people are building’. It is interesting that Shen writes as such in the preface to a collection of folksongs. However, in a way, primitive resources can provide Shen with elements to use to ‘build something new’.

Kinkley further explores Shen’s interest in the primitive, which he considers important for defining whether Shen was a Modernist or not. Kinkley distinguishes Shen from Romanticism, although Shen had read Rousseau’s *Confessions*, and Rousseau was admired by many Chinese writers at the time.³¹⁵ He argues that early twentieth-century anthropologists and folklorists did not totally escape from Rousseau’s longing to go back to nature; the sexual freedom among the primitive tribes, in particular, inspired them in modern times, even though they were different from the Romanticists. Although Kinkley doubts that Shen was one of the avant-garde writers, he does agree that Shen must have ‘answered to the call of Modernism’,³¹⁶ as Shen’s use of primitive materials links him to Western anthropologists and Modernism. This argument will be further explored in the next chapter.

4.2 Freud and Western Psychology

The impact of the nihilism and fantastical emotions of Buddhism, mingled with the selected works of ancient Chinese philosophers, developed into the later, extremely morbid, pathogenic, and unhealthy style of works like *Seven-Colour Nightmares*. Yet, what contributed to this development obviously also included the sporadic reflection of works by authors such as Freud and Joyce.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

佛教的虚无主义，幻异情感，和文选诸子学等等的杂糅混合，再发展即成为后来的《七色魔》等极端病态的、邪僻的、不健康的格式。而促成这个发展的，还显然有佛洛伊德、乔依司等等作品支离破碎的反映。³¹⁷

Of the two mentioned above, Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) has the most obvious influence on Shen. In Shen’s later years, many foreign scholars and critics interviewed Shen and his wife, Zhang Zhaohe. In one interview,³¹⁸ when asked whether Shen had been influenced by Freud, Zhang Zhaohe replied, ‘There is influence, more or less; for example, the term, “subconscious”, is in his very early works.’ [‘多少受一些影响，如他很早的文章中就有“潜意识”这个术语。’]³¹⁹ Also, in a letter that his wife wrote to his brother in 1949, she stated, ‘He likes to read *Abnormal Psychology*, and his writing is full of rich association’ [‘他平常喜读《变态心理学》，写文章联想又太丰富。’]³²⁰ In one of Shen’s essays written in 1947 – ‘Sexuality and Politics’ [《性与政治》] – Shen partly agrees with Freud’s theory that everything is related to sexuality (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, see below, p.161), though reserves judgment on Freud’s interpretation of dreams – ‘The most problematic point of this lyric clarification³²¹ is Freud’s interpretation of dreams, in which he gives various symbolic associations’ [‘这种抒情的阐明最有问题处，当为佛氏对于梦的解释，作出种种象征联想’]³²² This statement may refer to Freud’s theory in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The first Chinese translation of it was by Zhang Jingsheng, who turned the book into 52-page condensed version,³²³ but ever since 1920, there were more than a few articles and books about Freud’s interpretation of dreams. According to Zhang Jingyuan, ‘the sexual symbolism of dreams commonly accepted in the West was challenged time and again in Chinese responses to the Freudian interpretation of dreams’ and mostly because of the ‘wide disagreement about the extent to which Freud’s interpretation of dreams privileged sexual content’.³²⁴ Shen’s argument may both come from his own

³¹⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:378.

³¹⁸ Transcribed as ‘Answers to a Swedish Friend’s Questions’ [《答瑞典友人间》]

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17:344

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19:22

³²¹ I think here, with the word ‘抒情的’, whether misused or not, Shen means it is a similar method to lyric poetry, in the way of associations.

³²² *Ibid.*, 14:259

³²³ Zhang Jingyuan, *Psychoanalysis in China: Literary Transformations, 1919-1949*, Cornell East Asia Series ; 55 (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), p. 54.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

understanding of such theory after reading the translation and from other scholar's criticism. As Zhang Zhaohe said, Freud's influence on Shen started early. There is already enough research to show that Shen was influenced by Freud from almost the beginning of his writing career, Kinkley's *Odyssey* being a good example. Kinkley crowns Shen as 'one of the few modern Chinese writers touched by post-Freudian consciousness', as 'he was able to continue engaging his readers with universal dreams of life, love, and death, communicated through shared images at the subconscious level'.³²⁵

As suggested above, Shen indeed read about Freudian theories, although not necessarily exact translations of Freud's works. Thanks to the work of Kinkley, Shao Huaqiang, and Liu Hongtao – research and interviews with Shen – we can get a general idea of what Freud-related and Western psychological works Shen did read.

Shen first learnt about the psychosexuality of Havelock Ellis from Zhou Zuoren in the 1920s.³²⁶ In the letter Shao wrote to Kinkley on 1st of July, 1982, Shao said that, after interviewing Shen and '[jogging] his memory by showing some [psychological works] to him', Shen said that he first discussed Freud with Xu Zhimo.³²⁷ Shao said that these theories were widely introduced in the 1920s, in periodicals like *Light of Learning* [《学灯》] (supplement to *Current News* [《时事新报》]), and *Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》].³²⁸ There are also books written that were inspired by Western psychology, such as Zhang Jingsheng's [张竞生] (1888 – 1970) *Sex Histories* [《性史》] (1926), inspired by Ellis's theories. The book was mentioned in Shen's short story 'Mr. Songzi' [《松子君》] (see below, p.156). In the 1920s, Shen also met and discussed psychology with Xia Yun [夏云] (1904 – 1968), who was a student at Yanjing University, and then Xia's teacher, Lu Zhiwei [陆志韦] (1894 – 1970), who was the Head of the Psychology Department. Shen also gained knowledge of psychological matters from Shi Zhecun [施蛰存] (1905 – 2003) and Fei Ming's (Feng Wenbing) [废名, 冯文炳] (1901 – 1967) novels.³²⁹ However, Shen's major encounter with Freud was not until reading Zhang

³²⁵ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 227.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

Dongsun's [张东荪] (1886 – 1973) *ABC of Psychoanalysis* [《精神分析学ABC》], which he did around 1929–1930, when he taught in the Woosung China Institute [吴淞公学].³³⁰ Other related works Shen may have read, according to Liu include Zhu Guangqian's *Abnormal Psychology* [《变态心理学》]³³¹, the Freudian works translated by Gao Juefu [高觉敷] (1896 – 1993), and Reuben Osborn's *Freud and Marx: a Dialectical Study*. Liu considers psychology also to be one of the Irrationalist sources that Shen took for inspiration.³³²

Kinkley points out some of the Freudian symbols that Shen uses in novels like *The Border Town* [《边城》], usage which Shen admitted to him,³³³ 'After the Rain' [《雨后》] (1928),³³⁴ and 'The Inn' [《旅店》] (1929).³³⁵ There are also some philosophical novels which have been analysed as containing Freudian theories used to review personal lives, like 'Portrait of Eight Steeds' [《八骏图》] (1935) and 'Dr. Ruomo' [《若墨医生》] (1932).³³⁶ Kinkley guesses that this kind of writing style's more frequent appearance after 1931 may have been the result of Zhu Guangqian and Lu Zhiwei's influence while Shen was in Qingdao.³³⁷ The dream and reflex association aspect is shown in stories like 'Huaihua Town' [《槐化镇》] (1926) and *The Border Town* [《边城》].³³⁸ In the 1940s, Shen still thought that fiction should be a combination of dream and facts.³³⁹ Nonetheless, Shen perhaps made most use of Freudian ideas in order to fight against sexual repressions in Chinese cities, which was the result of the reign of Confucian morals in the past two thousand years. Shen learned about Ellis's theory that abnormal mental states resulted from sexual repression.³⁴⁰ Therefore, he let his country people characters have a degree of sexual freedom which was unknown in the cities. Zhou Zuoren's theory about *jus primae noctis* can also be found in *Scenes under*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³³¹ This can only be the same *Abnormal Psychology* book Zhang Zhaohe mentioned in the interview (see above, p.000), and the book will be explored in detail in Chapter 5.

³³² Liu, *Modernism*, p. 38.

³³³ Although some of the symbols Shen claimed to be only a speech of the country people.

³³⁴ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 144.

³³⁵ Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 234.

³³⁶ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, pp. 217-8.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³³⁸ Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 63.

³³⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:65.

³⁴⁰ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 324.

the Moonlight [《月下小景》] (1933).³⁴¹ Kinkley considers *West Hunan* [《湘西》] (1938) to be the climax of Shen's use of Freudianism, in which Shen explained mental disease, the worship of shaman god, and the mythologised things logically, from the perspective of sexual repression.³⁴²

'Subconsciousness' is mentioned in one of Shen's novels in 1925, meaning he already knew about modern psychology at that time.³⁴³ According to Kinkley, 'it was in the 1930s that Shen would build a fuller critique of urban China, buttressed by Social Darwinism, a transcendental view of morality, and finally a Freudian approach that found conventional social mores to be excessively inhibiting'.³⁴⁴ Shen's interest in psychology continues into his later career. In the 1940s, Shen continued to refer to Freud in his articles. Whether Freudianism or Primitivism, what Shen sought was probably vitality or 'life' [‘生命’] (life as in life-force) as he many times talked about. Kinkley has argued that how Shen views life-force is very similar to Bergson's idea of *élan vital*. What that has to do with Shen's Freudian reception will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.3 Western Philosophy

Around the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), the political atmosphere in China was very ambiguous. Numerous debates were going on, into which many writers were drawn, and Shen was no exception, especially when Guo Moruo's [郭沫若] (1892 – 1978) 'Against Reactionary Art and Literature' [《斥反动文艺》] (1948) pushed Shen to the fore. Guo criticised Shen's works, *Accounts of Gazing at Rainbows and Plucking Stars* (sometimes also referred to as two works 'Gazing at Rainbows' [《看虹录》] and 'Accounts of Plucking Stars' [《摘星录》]), as 'pink literature' [‘桃红色’, meaning pornography]³⁴⁵ and suggested that Shen advocated '[literature] beyond the war' [‘与战争无关’] and that 'writers should not be politicians' [‘反对作家从政’].³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, even before Guo, Shen had already been criticised

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 71.

³⁴³ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 80.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁴⁵ Guo Moruo, 'Against Reactionary Art and Literature', p. 153.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

by the Leftist writers. According to Shang Changbao, during this time, Shen, though being totally innocent, was accused of being one of the writers of the ‘School of *The Warring States*’ [‘战国策派’], concerning the problem of Fascism.³⁴⁷ This was because of a periodical called *The Warring States* [《战国策》], which very much favoured the philosophy of Nietzsche. It ran from April 1940 to July 1941 in Kunming, edited by three professors at Yunnan University and Southwestern Association University – Lin Tongji, Chen Quan, and Lei Zonghai – who all once studied in German universities. Whether Shen was also one of the editors is uncertain. Nevertheless, he was, at least, one of the main contributors to the periodical, because quite a few of his works were published in it. One of Shen’s most talked about works among scholars at that time that was published in *The Warring States* is ‘My reading of “About Hero Worship”’ [《读<论英雄崇拜>》] (1940), which argues against Chen Quan’s opinions that China needs a superhero, as presented in his ‘About Hero Worship’ [《论英雄崇拜》].³⁴⁸ Shen’s point was that Chen’s quotations from philosophers – especially Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Kant – were not suitable for the current situation. This was a healthy academic debate, as both sides politely expressed their ideas, but, later, all these writers, including Shen, were targeted as advocating Fascist ideas. As Shi Zhecun recalls,

The biggest mistake Congwen made in his life, I think, was that he co-edited *The Warring States* with Lin Tongji at the beginning of 1940s [...] At that time, in many places in the Communist areas, there were people criticising it as a periodical that advocated Fascist politics and supported Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek)’s dictatorship. I don’t know what happened to this periodical in the end, but Congwen’s reputation was seriously damaged because of it.

从文一生最大的错误,我以为是他在四十年代初期和林同济一起办《战国策》[...]当时大后方各地都有人提出严厉的批评,认为这是一个宣扬法西斯政治,为蒋介石制造独裁理论的刊物。这个刊物的后果不知如何,但从文的名誉却因此而大受损害。³⁴⁹

In addition to what has been discussed above concerning *The Warring States*, Shen mentioned Nietzsche much earlier than the time of *The Warring States*. In his novel,

³⁴⁷ Shang Changbao [商昌宝], ‘The Clean-up Movement in Literature before the Birth of New China’ [《新中国诞生前的文坛清缴运动》], *Twenty-First Century Bimonthly*, 115 (October 2009), 57-64 (p. 59).

³⁴⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:136.

³⁴⁹ Shi Zhecun, ‘About Congwen under the Clouds and Rain of Yunnan and Shanghai’ [《滇云浦雨话从文》], in *Shi Zhecun’s Selected Prose* [《施蛰存散文》], ed. by Liu Ling, (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Wen Yi Chu Ban She, 1999), pp.414-426, (p. 425).

'Knowledge' [《知识》] (1934), a young man from the city is thinking on Nietzsche's words on the 'superman' (*übermensch*) [‘超人’], when he hears the peasants say that life and death are beyond control. This means that Shen had, at least, heard of Nietzsche and his theories when he was in Beijing. Shen also quoted from Nietzsche, for example, in this critical essay, 'Of Conservativeness' [《谈保守》] (1938):

Nietzsche says, 'It is not sufficient to prove a case, we must also tempt or raise men to it: hence the wise man must learn to convey his wisdom; and often in such a manner that it may sound like foolishness'.³⁵⁰ To prove the truth is easily taken as foolish, the silence the intellectual class keeps is similar to approaching such 'foolishness'.

尼采说：“证明一事是不够的，应该讲人们向之引诱下去，或启迪上来，因此一个知识分子应该学着将他的智慧说出来，不碍其好像愚蠢。”实证真理很容易邻于愚蠢，知识阶级对于各事之沉默，即类乎对此“愚蠢”之趋势。³⁵¹

Therefore, Shen, as someone who confidently wrote to dispute Chen's argument on these Western philosophers' ideas, could not have been totally unaware of their theories, and was probably rather familiar, even though it is not possible at the moment to find out exactly what works by Nietzsche Shen read. However, the quotation Shen uses in 'Of Conservativeness', according to Huang, is from Nietzsche's *The Dawn of Day*, and the only translation at Shen's time was by Xu Fancheng, in 1935.³⁵² It is also confirmed by Huang that the translation is from Xu's book.³⁵³ Huang argues convincingly that as *The Dawn of Day* was not one of Nietzsche's works that were in the spotlight at that time, it shows that the range of Nietzsche's works that Shen read was extensive.³⁵⁴

In 'My Study' [《我的学习》], written in 1951 as a self-criticism after he was criticised as someone who used words to bewitch and confuse people's minds and whose works

³⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, trans. by John McFarland Kennedy (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911), p. 278.

³⁵¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 17:259.

³⁵² Huang Huaijun, 'Shen Congwen and Nietzsche' [《沈从文和尼采》], in *Essays on Nietzsche and Chinese Literature* [《尼采与华文文学论文集》], ed. by Chiu-yee Cheung (Singapore: Ba fang wen hua chuang zuo shi, 2013), pp. 49-68 (p. 51).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* [《朝霞》], trans. by Xu Fancheng (Shanghai: shang wu yin shu she, 1935), p. 226.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

were not healthy for a revolutionary China, Shen admitted influence from Gide and Nietzsche:

However, at that time, idealism and materialism, science and metaphysics intruded into my mind without being selected; therefore, their influence on me turned out to be chaotic and disordered. Instead of applying new methodical and rigorous Marxian designs for human society, my modes of thinking were rooted in different sources and it was easier for me to involve personal emotions, showing some fragmental impression and thinking that the individualists Gide and Nietzsche left on me.

但是唯心论和唯物论，科学和玄学，当时却无选择的陆续侵入我观念意识中，因此对我的影响，也就混乱而无章次。思想形式既多方，更容易和个人情感结合，不是马克思条理谨严的，为人类社会的新设计，即个人中心的纪德、尼采遗留一些断片印象感想。³⁵⁵

It is clear that Shen was not very interested in materialism, but, instead, was more concerned with the mind of human beings – ‘the subconscious, and beyond that, the divine’.³⁵⁶ Shen was always interested in different religions – to look for the divine, the ‘living’ – but not in any of the dogmas. Kinkley argues that Shen took ideas from Buddhism: ‘a 1946 work proceeds to link color symbolism to Buddhist allegory’ and ‘Shen had been rewriting Buddhist tales in 1933–34.’³⁵⁷ According to Kinkley, Anthony J. Prince’s definitive study even finds a Buddhist model for one of Shen’s pieces of philosophical fiction, “Knowledge” (1934).³⁵⁸ Shen was definitely not a Buddhist either, as he always referred to the divine force as ‘God’ (神 *shen*), not ‘Buddha’ (佛祖 *fo zu*). Nor does he refer to the ‘Christian God’ (上帝 *shang di*); just god, the divinity. Therefore, it is not culturally determined as Western or Oriental.

Apart from Nietzsche, other Western philosophers Kinkley connects with Shen are Bergson and Kant. In one of the interviews Kinkley conducted with Shen, Shen recounted that he ‘was familiar with Henri Bergson’s theory of *élan vital* and “creative evolution” early on, from Lin Zaiping [林宰平] (1879 – 1960) – perhaps even earlier, from reading with his Uncle Nie in West Hunan’.³⁵⁹ When it comes to aesthetics, Kinkley likes to compare Shen with Kant. In ‘Candle Extinguished’, Shen holds that

³⁵⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:373.

³⁵⁶ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 222.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

ideas like abstraction are ‘better captured in mathematics than writing; better still, in music’,³⁶⁰ and Kinkley traces it to Kant: ‘Kant says this in *The Critique of Judgement*.’³⁶¹ Shen does mention Kant, for example, in ‘My reading of “About Hero Worship”’,³⁶² but Kinkley implies that there is an important influence.

Those mentioned above cannot be the only philosophers about which Shen knew. According to Kinkley, ‘in the 1940s, Shen was reading in Buddhism, classical literature, and, no doubt, Western philosophy, for one of the textbooks he prepared was about logic’.³⁶³ Although the textbook he edited is perhaps now missing, we can certainly assume that Shen did not only read Chinese philosophy but also Western philosophy more widely, and it is very possible that that influenced him. For example, in 1948, he wrote ‘Socrates Discusses What Peking (Beijing) Needs’ [《苏格拉底谈北平所需》], and proposed therein to use aesthetic education to cure moral ills.³⁶⁴ This clear Western philosophical reference (as the title already suggests), according to Kinkley, comes from Cai Yuanpei’s [蔡元培] (1868 – 1940) variation on Kantian idealism.³⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Kinkley argues that Shen’s idealism did not take him down the route of ‘art for art’s sake’, as he still thinks that literature can be used to judge life. He uses the philosophical and abstract ‘beauty’ in his realist works. Beauty is not something that is bound to conventional morals, but something immaterial that should be everywhere, romantic or serious, beautiful or cruel, lovable or hateful. Kinkley suggests that this is also Kantian.³⁶⁶ In *Odyssey*, Kinkley again writes, ‘The transcendent vision that Shen Congwen probably did espouse regarded beauty, and the incompatibility of conventional, often hypocritical, “moral” approaches to life with a higher, aesthetic view. He saw the world idealistically, as being both noumenal (“the Abstract”, he called it) and

³⁶⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:25.

³⁶¹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p.454. Kinkley also thinks this idea of Shen is not consistent: ‘elsewhere, he still argues for literature as the best art form for propelling mankind forward, or, literally, “upward”’. This remains to be discussed, as what I have pointed out in Chapter 3, that Shen might be looking for an abstract art form that combines all.

³⁶² Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:136.

³⁶³ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 210.

³⁶⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:375-6.

³⁶⁵ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 261.

³⁶⁶ Kinkley, *Vision*, pp. 78-79.

phenomenal. He also had a Kantian notion that Noumenal Beauty, the sublime, might exist in what was on the surface ugly and violent'.³⁶⁷

4.4 Western Literature

The debate over whether Shen can be considered a Modernist has been ongoing for more than twenty years within academic circles. Generally, people have now accepted the idea that modernity is evident in Shen's works, but opinions vary on whether it can be defined the same as 'Western Modernism', 'Chinese Modernity', or actually both, closely attached to one another, but different. For example, when Der-wei Wang defined Shen's modernity by his 'lyricism' in 'A History with Feeling: Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Literary Modernity', he also distinguishes Western and Chinese lyricism. Chinese lyricism is not simply a product of Western individualism but is rooted in traditional Chinese literature, and, in Shen's case, can be seen as a rebellion against the mainstream.³⁶⁸ No matter what the conclusion might be, in a larger context, modern Chinese literary criticism cannot stand without some awareness of the existence of Western literary criticism. According to Liu Hongtao, May Fourth writers clearly knew that the ongoing literary trend in the West was 'Neo-Romanticism (Modernism)', but what some of them promoted was already-collapsed, nineteenth century 'Realism'.³⁶⁹ They saw the special conditions attendant upon the development of modern Chinese literature and thought that the different literary trends could work side by side. As a result, Romanticism and Realism both appeared. Starting from 1980s, with the ban on Western Modernist literature lifted, scholars started again to accept that Modernism had once appeared in modern Chinese literature.³⁷⁰ Liu suggests that modern Chinese literature was synchronous with Western Modernism, and in fact, the Irrationalist theories of Bergson, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Freud were widely known in China, while Symbolism, Expressionism, Futurism, and Stream of Consciousness were brought into China and influenced Chinese writers.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 137.

³⁶⁸ David Der-wei Wang, 'A History with Feeling: Lyrical Tradition and Chinese Literary Modernity', *The Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 33(2008), 77-137.

³⁶⁹ Liu, 'A Reevaluation', p. 68.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Considering the question of whether Shen belongs to the Modernist trend, the Franco-Chinese writer, Gao Xingjian, discovered Shen's work in Sweden and was surprised by the modernist element in it, which proved that there was Modernism in China during the first half of the century.³⁷² Shu comments that Shen's modernity meant that his works were ahead of his era of China and happened to fit in the trend of Modernism.³⁷³

However, Liu, being a firm believer in Shen's close relationship with Western Modernism, argues that:

Whether Shen's novels belong to this Modernist trend mainly depends on the tendency of his ideas, rather than on artistic method. [...] Shen, as a matter of fact, is beyond the tradition of Darwinism and Rationalism worshiped by modern Chinese enlightenment literature; he is the most outstanding representative of Chinese Modernism literature.

沈从文小说属于这一现代主义思潮，主要取决于他小说的思想倾向而不是艺术手段[...]沈从文实际上超越了中国现代启蒙文学奉为圭臬的进化论观念和理性崇拜传统，他是中国现代主义文学最杰出的代表。³⁷⁴

Liu not only categorises Shen as a Modernist, but also connects him with Western Irrationalist ideologies and Symbolism.

In his book, *Shen Congwen's Fiction and Modernism* [《沈从文小说与现代主义》], when considering Shen on humanity, Liu overviews the previous research findings:

Viewed in light of existing research findings, the list of connotations of Shen's humanity-vitality system is too broad and vague; it covers everything from Taoism and Confucianism to the Enlightenment and Romanticism of Rousseau and Wordsworth and equates them with the influence of Western Irrationalist trends, which neglects the difference between Chinese and Western, ancient and modern, and also neglects the decisive and prime influence of the Western Irrationalist trend on Shen's writing.

从已有成果看，人们对沈从文人性——生命体系之非理性内涵的资源罗列过于宽泛、将道家、儒家思想与卢梭、华兹华斯的启蒙主义、浪漫主义，当然也包括西方非理性主义思潮的影响等量齐观，忽略了中

³⁷² Shu Gangbo [舒刚波], 'From a Free Person to a Person of Liberalism Thought – Research on the History of Shen Congwen's Influence before the Founding of New China' [《从自由的人到自由主义的思想——建国前沈从文影响史研究》], *Journal of Jishou University (Social Science Edition)*, 29 (2008), 20-24 (p. 24).

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ Liu, 'Reevaluation', p. 68.

西、古今文化形态本质上差异，忽略了西方现代非理性主义时代思潮对沈从文创作的决定性、根本性的影响。³⁷⁵

Except for the Irrationalism and Primitivism, Liu also pays special attention to the relationship between Shen and Western Symbolism. Liu points out that Shen's first encounter with Symbolism can be traced back to the mid-1920s, when he was living in Xishan, Beijing, with Hu Yepin and Ding Ling. Liu quotes from Shen's *Remembering Hu Yepin* [《记胡也频》]: 'Hu Yepin's "poetry style must have got the hint from a poetic style of Li Jinfa"' [胡也频“诗的形式，无疑的从李金发诗一种题材得到暗示”]; Hu's poem, Shen commented, 'having formed another style of poetry' [在诗中另成一风格].³⁷⁶ Liu also points out that Shen's prose poem, 'Laomei, zuohen!' (1926), quotes three poems of Li – 'Under the Moon' [《月下》], 'She' [《她》] and 'Hidden Bitterness' [《幽怨》].³⁷⁷ Since Li Jinfa was the poet who was famous for translating and imitating Baudelaire's poetry, this shows that Shen had at least some indirect contact with French Symbolism.

In fact, Shen's close relationship with the Chinese Symbolists endured even after the 1920s. Apart from the occasional contribution to *Les Contemporains*, and his help for Bian Zhilin [卞之琳] (1910 – 2000) in his early career, Shen's friendship with Liang Zongdai and other poets ought not to be neglected.

While Shen only published a few short works in *Les Contemporains* [《现代》], he was likely to have befriended the editors of *Les Contemporains* after doing so. As Shi Zhecun recalls, 'Congwen stayed in Shanghai for at most three years, and I met him less than ten times. It was not until I started to edit *Les Contemporains*, when I wrote to ask him for articles, that we continued our friendship in letters.' [从文在上海最多三年，我和他见面不到十次。直到我编《现代》杂志，写信去向他索稿，才从书信中继续了友谊。]³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ Liu, *Modernism*, p. 10.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ Shi Zhecun, 'About Congwen under the Clouds and Rain of Yunnan and Shanghai', p. 416.

The connection with *Les Contemporains* proves important to Shen's possible reception of Western Symbolism. The French title of the journal already shows its close relationship with French literature. One of many contributors of *Les Contemporains*, Dai Wangshu [戴望舒] (1905 – 1950), was one of the leading figures in translating and introducing French Symbolism, and *Les Contemporains* became a new platform for him to publish these translations. For example, Dai's translation of Rémy de Gourmont's (1858 – 1915) *Simoné* was published in it. French Symbolism was not the only literary trend that writers in *Les Contemporains* favoured; it also includes translation and introduction of other modern poetry, for example, American Imagism, as well as European Modernist poetry and fiction. Two of the categories of fiction that the magazine favoured, as Lee Hoi Lam points out, were the prose fictions by poets and poetic novels, for example, the Spanish poet, Ramón Pérez de Ayala's 'La Caída de los Limones', the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire's 'La Serviette des poètes', and poetic novel such as Han Ryner's 'Le Vent de la Nuit'.³⁷⁹ In the translation of 'Le Vent de la Nuit', the translator writes that, 'although the words contain no metre, they are full of poetry. He [the author] likes to use original syntax, to make it rhythmic and melodious to read, which is exactly the poetic and musical prose that poets like Baudelaire would advocate' [其文虽无韵律, 却饶诗味, 且常喜用独创之句法, 读之铿锵悦耳, 是即诗人Baudelaire辈所主张之prose poétique et musicale。]³⁸⁰ As a contributor only, it is not certain how many of these translations and introductions Shen actually read, but his relations with *Les Contemporains* writers meant there was much opportunity for Shen to be exposed to such literature.

Especially after Shen started editing *Ta Kung Pao*, the same group of writers contributed much to it, with a similar choice of content. For example, Shi Zhecun published translations of and introductions to W. B. Yeats's poems in both *Ta Kung Pao* and *Les Contemporains*;³⁸¹ Dai Wangshu contributed to *Ta Kung Pao* translations from French and Spanish modern writers, like Arthur Rimbaud and José Díaz Fernández.

³⁷⁹ Hoi Lam Lee [李凯琳], *A Study of Les Contemporains: Translation and Creation* [《〈現代〉雜誌研究：翻譯與創作》] (unpublished Master, Lingnan University, 2008), pp. 27.

³⁸⁰ Li Liwen, quot. Lee, *A Study of Les Contemporains*, pp. 28.

³⁸¹ Shi Zhecun, 'The Song of the Wandering Aengus' [《流浪的安戈思之歌》], *Ta Kung Pao*, Section Literary and Artistic Supplement, 11 July 1934, pp. n.a.

A similar relationship exists between Shen and *Crescent Moon* [《新月》] (1928-1933), which is another important literary magazine in early twentieth-century China, edited by Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo [闻一多] (1899 – 1946), Hu Shi, Liang Shiqiu [梁实秋] (1903 – 1987), Ye Gongchao [叶公超] (1904 – 1981), and others. Among these editors, it is known that Xu Zhimo is considered to be one of Shen's early mentors. According to Kinkley, Xu Zhimo was the one who truly brought Shen into being a professional writer. As the chief editor of *Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》], Xu encouraged Shen and invited him to poetry reading groups (1925-1926).³⁸² It is true that Shen valued their friendship, spoke highly of Xu's writing³⁸³ and when Xu died in an air crash, Shen immediately took a night train to see the last of him. Shen's involvement with *Crescent Moon* perhaps also has much to do with Xu. In Kinkley's opinion, most of Shen's early poems reflect his complex on lyric style, nature metaphor and love; this complex is what Shen shares with the later poets of Crescent Moon Society³⁸⁴ and *Morning Post*. These people were Shen's earliest literary companions.³⁸⁵ *Crescent Moon* contained original writings and translations of poetry, fiction, and literary criticism. Unlike Left-wing magazines, it focuses more on aesthetic perspectives on literature. As with *Les Contemporains*, it is hard to know how much Shen gained from the magazine as a contributor. However, writers from both magazines later contributed to *Ta Kung Pao* with translations and introductions of Western literature and the discussion of literary theories. For instance, Lin Huiyin [林徽因] (1904 – 1955) and Yu Shangyuan [余上沅] (1897 – 1970) published poems and short stories; Ye Gongchao had several critical reviews of Western literature published; Liang Shiqiu discussed about Shakespeare, etc.

In 1936, Dai Wangshu, Bian Zhilin, Liang Zongdai and Feng Zhi started a new magazine called *New Poetry* [《新诗》], which again celebrates modernity in poetry. Nevertheless, all the editors were already active in *Ta Kung Pao* in the field of poetry before that. In 1935, Liang started to host a page – *Poetry Special* [《诗特刊》] – in *Tao Kung Pao* every two weeks, on Friday. It belonged to the literary and artistic supplement

³⁸² Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 82.

³⁸³ For example, 'Learn to be "lyric" from Xu Zhimo's works'[《从徐志摩作品学习“抒情”》], in Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:251-258.

³⁸⁴ Writers who publish often in Crescent Moon are called 'Crescent Moon Society' by critics.

³⁸⁵ Kinkley, *Vision*, p. 59

to *Tao Kung Pao* and started when Shen was still the editor. This, according to Zhang Jieyu, started a new movement in modern Chinese poetry,³⁸⁶ and a large and influential range of poets were involved. Many poets who published in *Crescent Moon* and *Les Contemporains* also published in *Poetry Special*. Shen, as the chief editor of *Tao Kung Pao*'s literary supplement, wrote 'The Old Accounts of New Poetry' [《新诗的旧账》] to introduce the column, in every way echoing and supporting Liang, including Liang's ideas on the form of poetry.³⁸⁷ From this, we can see that, as chief editor, Shen valued discussion about poetics and, thus, must have read what is published in the supplement.

While on this subject, many scholars miss the friendship between Shen Congwen and Liang Zongdai and the influence that this may have had. Shen must have known Liang in or even before 1934. As already stated in Chapter 2, Shen mentioned in a letter 17 years later that he listened to Beethoven with Liang and Ma Sicong in 1934 (see above, n.126). Shen argued with Liang via academic papers in 1937, discussing the use of terms in Chinese literary circles – 'The Discussion about Misusing Terms' [《滥用名词的商榷》] – but their friendship remained to the end of their lives. While Shen was editing *Ta Kung Pao*, Liang contributed many works of translation and criticism. In the letter mentioned above, Shen remarks that 'Zongdai had some appreciation of the history of music, something to talk about in the drawing room, as well as something about literary ideas.' As Liang was apparently very familiar with music, and would very likely have addressed the relation between music and literature, it is worth considering what Liang translated, as well as his own writing. Liang Zongdai was a Chinese translator and poet who studied in Geneva, Paris, Berlin, and Heidelberg. In the mid 1920s, Liang Zongdai met Paul Valéry (1871 – 1945) in Paris. Liang admired Valéry and often visited him in Paris. Valéry later wrote a preface for Liang's French translation of an ancient Chinese poet, Tao Qian [陶潜] (c. 365 – 427). This preface to *Les les poèmes de T'ao Ts'ien* [《法译陶潜诗选序》], was later translated by Wang Yingsheng and also published in *Ta Kung Pao*, No. 109, Mar. 13. Liang pursued the idea of 'pure poetry', and was very interested in poetry, art, and music, and can be considered a student of French Symbolism, in particular, a student of Valéry. In his poetry and poetics, the influence of Valéry is

³⁸⁶ Zhang Jieyu [张洁宇], 'An Experiment and Debate on Rhymes in New Poetry' [《一场关于新诗格律的试验与讨论》], *Journal of Modern Chinese Studies*, 4(2011), 27-37 (p. 29).

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

everywhere. Liang's essay 'About "Eternal Silence" and "Time Passing like Water Flowing"' [《谈“永恒的静”与“逝者如斯”》], was first published in *Ta Kung Pao* and later included in his collection, 'Poetry and Truth II' [《诗与真二集》].³⁸⁸ 'On "Time Passing like Water Flowing"' [《说“逝者如斯夫”》] discusses Pascal's sentence, 'The eternal silence of the infinite space frightens me' [Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie], Valéry's essay 'Variation on the thought: the eternal silence' [Variation sur une Pensée: le Silence éternel], and the Confucian 'Time Passing like Water Flowing'.³⁸⁹ Conveyed in this essay are the searching of 'cosmic poetry' and the idea of 'the abstraction of the concrete, the concretion of the abstract' [具体的抽象化, 抽象的具体化], which resemble Shen Congwen's pursuit of abstraction and the eternity of literature in his later writings, and, as discussed, in previous chapters, the idea of 'music' plays an important role in this. Chapter 5 will explore further Liang's ideas about pure poetry, music, symbolism, and compare these to Shen's ideas.

Liang's other contribution to *Ta Kung Pao* was his introduction and discussion on Goethe. For example, the translation of an excerpt from 'Aphorisms on Nature' (10 November 1934), selected verses from *Faust* ('Lynkeus der Türmer' [《守望者之歌》] 10 November 1934 and 'Mignon' [《迷娘歌》] 19 September 1934), and an article titled 'Goethe and Li Bai: about Poetry' [《歌德与李白——谈诗》] (6 January 1935). In fact, during Shen's editorship, *Ta Kung Pao* published many pieces by or about Goethe, like Li Da's [李达] (1890 – 1966) 'The Features of the Poet Goethe' [《诗人歌德的特色》] Feng Zhi's '“The Artificial Man” in *Faust* – A Brief Discussion about the Natural Philosophy of Goethe' [《浮士德里的“人造人”——略谈歌德的自然哲学》] (27 October 1946), and so on.

Goethe was also one of Shen's all-time favourites. In the preface to the German translation of *Autobiography of Congwen* [《从文自传》], Shen states, 'I still remember, when I first learned to write, reading the Chinese translation of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* left me a deep impression' [还记得我初学用笔时, 读中译歌德的

³⁸⁸ Liang Zongdai, *Collected Works of Liang Zongdai II* [《梁宗岱文集（二）》], ed. by Ma Haidian, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhong Yang Bian Yi Chu Ban She, 2003)

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:124-127.

《少年维特之烦恼》，曾留下了深刻地印象。]³⁹⁰ Shen also quotes Goethe in his early novels. For example, in ‘Past Dreams’ [《旧梦》] (1928), he writes, ‘it seems to be Goethe’s words that, when a woman’s smile cannot stir your heart, her sorrow can still trip you up’ [‘仿佛是歌德说过，女人的笑容已不能在你心中生动摇时，是她的忧愁仍然能够把你绊倒啊！’]³⁹¹

Until the 1940s, Shen still often mentioned Goethe in his works. In ‘Candle Extinguished’ [《烛虚》], he writes:

Those who can use different sensations to catch this kind of beautiful and miraculous shadow will keep this shadow alive in life eternally. Dante, Goethe, Cao Zhi, Li Yu are those few who organise this kind of shadow into words and preserve it completely. Although what each of these people write is different, they inspire the foreign and Chinese of all times in the same way, that is, to be illuminated, conquered, and educated by this instant beauty.

凡知道用各种感觉捕捉住这种美丽神奇光影的，此光影在生命中即终生不灭。但丁、歌德、曹植、李煜便是将这种光影用文字组成形式，保留的比较完整的几个人。这些人写成的作品虽各不相同，所得启示必中外古今如一，即一刹那间被美丽所照耀，所征服，所教育是也。

³⁹²

Also, in ‘Of Progression’ [《谈进步》]:

A word is like a weapon. Only when it is well used, can its power be discovered. It is as Conrad says: ‘Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world’.³⁹³ The same confidence has cultivated Goethe, Nietzsche, Voltaire, Tolstoy, and every giant and master in history that removes the old in order to build the new. [...] Goethe says, in *Conversations of Goethe*, that ‘the greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself’³⁹⁴. How can he limit and isolate himself? He practises one art and uses it skilfully – that is, the art of writing in German. Goethe is never content with the scope of knowledge he can manage, so, in his opinion, ‘a king or a future politician, no matter how extensive the scope of his knowledge is, it is never too much, for being erudite

³⁹⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:406.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6:95.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 12:35.

³⁹³ Joseph Conrad, *A Personal Record* (London: Dent, 1919), p. 6.

³⁹⁴ ‘Thus, too, the painter should be able to distinguish subjects: for it belongs to his department to know what he has to paint, and what to leave unpainted./ “But, when all is said,” observed Goethe, “the greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself.”/ Accordingly, he has, ever since I have been with him, constantly endeavoured to guard me against all distractions, and to concentrate me to a single department’.

Eckermann and Soret, *Conversations of Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford, vol. 1&2 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1850), 1:236.

is his profession. Similarly, a poet should also acquire complicated knowledge, because his subject-matter can concern the whole world. He should know how to use and express these matters'. To understand words, to select words, to organize words in order to deal with the subject-matter is the finest suggestion this writer give us about 'how a writer can be great'.

文字犹如武器，必好好用它，方能见出它的力量。诚如康拉德所说，‘给我相当的字，正确的音，我可以移动世界’。同类信心产生歌德，尼采，服尔太，托尔斯泰，以及历史上一切除旧布新的巨人大师。[...] 歌德在他的谈话录里说，“最大的艺术在限制自己。”³⁹⁵他如何限制自己？就是练习一种艺术，而巧妙的使用它——即写德文的艺术。歌德并不拘束取得知识的范围，所以认为“一个国王或一个未来政治家，不论他的修养如何广博，都不嫌其多；因为渊博是他的职业。同样，诗人也应力求复杂的知识，因为他是以整个世界为题材的。他应该懂得使用并表现这些题材。”明白文字，选择文字，组织文字，来处置题材，是这个作家对于“一个作家其所以能伟大”的良好意见。³⁹⁶

There is sufficient evidence to show that Shen was an admirer of Goethe, although, except for *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, it is hard to know what other works of Goethe Shen read from primary sources. However, similarly, we can look at what was published about Goethe that Shen likely read.

Many of Shen's references to Western writers are disparate; sometimes they take the form of a character's name that is based on a Western novel's character; sometimes it is a character quoting something from a Western work or holding such a book. Kinkley made an overall summary of the foreign, literary names recalled in Shen's fiction:

The foreign literary names recalled by Shen's fictions, through mention of characters whose eponyms are characters in Western literature, are a broad array of mostly Russian and French nineteenth-century fiction and drama masters, those most popular in China at the time: Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Gogol, Gorky; Maupassant, Daudet, France, Flaubert, Gide; Ibsen, Wilde, and Hans Christian Andersen. The works of these authors offer social or plot interests, if not in all cases realism. Some are also notable for their wit [...] [Shen was] preoccupied with Western Romanticism, though he mentions only Rousseau's *Confessions* by name. Shen's long poem 'Dawn,' in which a narrator describes true love to a prostitute, manages to allude not only to the courtesan

³⁹⁵ 朱光潜：‘画家也应有区别题材的知识，因为他那门艺术也要求他懂得什么该画和什么不该画。/歌德说过，“说到究竟，最大的艺术本领在于懂得限制自己的范围，不旁驰博骛。”’ Johann P. Eckermann and Zhu Guanqian, *Conversations of Goethe* [《歌德谈话录》] (Beijing: ren min wen xue chu ban she, 1978), p. 80

³⁹⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:486.

Marguerite and her lover Armand (from *Camille*, by Dumas Fils), but to Goethe's *Young Werther*.³⁹⁷

A good example of 'social or plot interests' is *Alice in China* [《阿丽思中国游记》], written in 1928. This satirical novel brings Alice to China, visiting all the very strange phenomena in China, with the main characters, Alice and John Nuoxi, based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. An example of 'wit' would be Shen's quotation on Oscar Wilde in the afterword to *Accounts of Gazing at Rainbows and Plucking Stars*:

The master of aestheticism, Oscar Wilde, says, 'Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art',³⁹⁸ and 'The superior pleasure in literature is to realise the non-existent'.³⁹⁹

唯美派大师王尔德说：“叙述美而不真事物，乃艺术之正务”，“文学之美妙，即在于能使不生存的人物生存。”⁴⁰⁰

Another Western writer with whom Kinkley associates Shen is James Joyce:

What aroused antipathy towards him during the war itself was his own non-regional writing. [...] These were Shen Congwen's further experiments, influenced by Freud and Joyce. Shen's will to be modern had finally brought him to the frontiers of literary technique itself. He had to fight for toleration of 'difficult' literature [...] Then, as now, it was usually poets who manned the front lines; Shen felt called on to defend Bian Zhilin and He Qifang as early as the summer of 1937. Soon, though, he was hard put to justify his own fiction.⁴⁰¹

'Exactly how Shen absorbed elements of Joyce's style is unclear',⁴⁰² Kinkley states, after he asked Shen about Joyce and Freud in 1980. At this time, Kinkley only knew that 'Bian Zhilin and others had translated only small extracts of Joyce's work by the 1940s', and that 'Shen was quick to acquire new ideas just from hearing about them and from perusing teaching materials prepared by his professor colleagues'.⁴⁰³ As already quoted

³⁹⁷ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 80.

³⁹⁸ Oscar Wilde. 'The Decay of Lying', in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde/ with an Introduction by Vyvyan Holland*, ed. by J.B. Foreman (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1973), p. 992.

³⁹⁹ Oscar Wilde, quot. in 'Mr. Oscar Wilde Again', in *Art and Morality: A Defense of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'*, ed. by Stuart Mason, (London: J. Jacobs, Edgware Road, W, 1908), p. 31.

⁴⁰⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:344.

⁴⁰¹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 254.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 359.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

with the reference to Freud and Nietzsche earlier in this chapter (4.2 and 4.3), Shen did admit to influence from Joyce, though without specification.

More recent research is provided in Zhang Yu's doctoral thesis, *The Odyssey: James Joyce in China*, in which Zhang presents in detail the translation and reception situation of Joyce in China in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Zhang, there were two big waves of Western Modernist translations during this period. The first happened around the time of the May Fourth movement in 1919, following by the second in the 1930s and 1940s, especially during the Southwest University Association era (1938–1946).⁴⁰⁴ Joyce was quite popular in literary circles in the 1930s, appearing in journals like *Western Literature* [《西洋文学》], *Les Contemporains* [《现代》], *Literature and Art Monthly* [《文艺月刊》], and *Literature* [《文学》] as a 'stream of consciousness' writer.⁴⁰⁵ *Ta Kung Pao* also published 'Eveline' from *Dubliners*, translated by Bian Zhilin. After Joyce's death on January 31st, 1941, *Western Literature* published a special edition of Joyce, content including 'Selected Poems of Joyce' [《乔易士诗选》], translated by Song Tifen [宋悌芬]; 'A Painful Case', translated by Guo Rui [郭蕊]; three chapters of *Ulysses*, translated by Wu Xinghua [吴兴华]; and an excerpt from Wilson's review on James Joyce, translated by Zhang Zhilian [张芝联].⁴⁰⁶

Zhang also attempts to make a few brief comparisons between Joyce and Shen:

'The Housewife', written by Shen in 1936, shows Joyce's influence in style and in the psychological state of the female protagonist. The story is about a long-married woman's wool-gathering in bed in the morning:

A glaring golden sunflower is swaying in front of her eyes, the
purplish pistil is always moving, uncatchable. She recalls her life,
which is also like an uncatchable phantom, changing every second.
What is real, what is trustworthy? She cannot tell, she's happy.
Thinking that today is a strange day, she smiles.

沈从文做于1936年的《主妇》对文体和作品女主人公心理的处理就颇见得乔伊斯的影响。这个故事写的是一个结婚多年的女人，一天早上起来在床上的胡思乱想：

⁴⁰⁴ Zhang Yu [张雨], 'The Odyssey: James Joyce in China' [《奥德修斯之旅：乔伊斯在中国》] (doctoral thesis, Sichuan University, 2009), p. 48.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

一朵眩目的金色葵花在眼边直是晃，花蕊紫油油的，老在变动，无从捕捉。她想起她的生活，也正仿佛是一个不可把握的幻影，时刻在那里变化，甚么是真实的，甚么是最可信的，说不清楚，她很快乐。想起今天是个希奇古怪的日子，她笑了。

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Zhang refers to C.T. Hsia's comments on this passage, saying that it shows Western influence. Zhang also believes that the longing for sexual passion, and even an imagination of a rape scene by the female protagonist in 'Rurui' (1941), recalls Molly in *Ulysses*.⁴⁰⁸ Again, in 'Gazing at Rainbows', Shen remarks that 'the Divine lives in our life' ['神在我们生命里'], which Zhang considers similar to Joyce's Bloom and 'H.C.E'.⁴⁰⁹ The style of 'Gazing at Rainbows' is also very interesting: it starts with a description of 'the Shape of One Person's Life in a Twenty-four Hour Period' ['一个人二十四点钟内生命的一种形式'],⁴¹⁰ which seems to be an imitation of the use of time in *Ulysses*. According to Zhang, this piece of work is an attempt to express the thoughts that even Shen could not explain through a very complicated form of writing, and the artistic techniques probe into avant-garde ideology.⁴¹¹

On the topic of stream of consciousness, Kinkley wondered whether Shen had read and been influenced by Marcel Proust.

Yet a psychological microstructure of minutely observed human relations, heightened by subtle images evoking subconscious responses, often underlies his well-made superstructures. And plots so often based [...] on reminiscence turn out on closer analysis to have a nearly Proustian self-consciousness about time. Ultimately the intellectual ethos takes over, giving Shen's writing a modern, if not really an avant-garde, feel.⁴¹²

The above statement is mainly based on Shen's works from the 1940s; Kinkley once, also, states that *Fengzi* [《凤子》] (1932) is 'Proustian'.⁴¹³ Liu Hongtao, likewise, remarks that Shen, like Proust, uses re-narration to change the presentation of his

⁴⁰⁷ Zhang, 'James Joyce', pp. 179-80.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴¹⁰ Shen, *Imperfect Paradise*, trans. by Kinkley, p. 463. Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:327.

⁴¹¹ Zhang, 'James Joyce', pp. 182-3.

⁴¹² Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 211.

⁴¹³ J. C. Kinkley, 'Shen Congwen among the Chinese Modernists', *Monumenta Serica*, 54(2006), 311-341 (p. 331).

novel.⁴¹⁴ In Shen's letter to Kinkley in 1985, he said that he had not read any translation of Proust by the end of the 1930s.⁴¹⁵ However, this does not prevent scholars from speculating.

In fact, even though Kinkley has not received direct confirmation from Shen, Shen must have known about Proust. According to Shen's student at Southwestern Association University, Wang Zengqi:

There was a small lane near Wenlin Tang on Wenlin Street; it seemed to be called Jinji Lane. In a yard of the lane, there was a small building, where lived the students of University Association [...] in which there was a small living room. Often there were classmates coming for tea and chatting, so that it became a small salon. Mr. Shen came quite often. Sometimes, he would invite his friends to talk to everyone. When Mr. Lao She passed Kunming from Chongqing, Mr. Shen invited him to talk about 'fiction and drama'. Mr. Jin Yuelin came too; the title of his talk was 'Fiction and Philosophy'. Mr. Jin worked on philosophy, mainly logic, but he had read many fictions, from Proust to *The Hero of Jianghu*. The title, 'Fiction and Philosophy', was given by Mr. Shen. Unexpectedly, after a long speech, Mr. Jin's conclusion was, 'there is no connection between fiction and philosophy'.

文林街文林堂旁边有一条小巷，大概叫作金鸡巷，巷里的小院中有一座小楼。楼上住着联大的同学 [...] 当中有个小客厅。这小客厅常有熟同学来喝茶聊天，成了一个小小的沙龙。沈先生常来坐坐。有时还把他的朋友也拉来和大家谈谈。老舍先生从重庆过昆明时，沈先生曾拉他来谈过“小说和戏剧”。金岳霖先生也来过，谈的题目是“小说和哲学”。金先生是搞哲学的，主要是搞逻辑的，但是读很多小说，从普鲁斯特到《江湖奇侠》。“小说和哲学”这题目是沈先生给他出的。不料金先生讲了半天，结论却是：“小说和哲学没有关系”。⁴¹⁶

This not only shows that Shen's knowledge of Western writers may be more broad than we know, but it also means that there must have been many other salons like the one that Shen attended, where he may have learned about Western writers, but which is hard to prove. More solid evidence that can prove Shen read Proust is Bian's translation of an excerpt from Proust's 'Du Côté de chez Swann', in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* – 'Le Sommeil et la Memoire' – and an introduction of Proust right under Shen's editorship in 1934.⁴¹⁷ Before Bian Zhilin, Zeng Juezhi published the first long critical introduction

⁴¹⁴ Liu, 'Revaluation', p. 70.

⁴¹⁵ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 351.

⁴¹⁶ Wang Zengqi, 'Mr. Shen Congwen in Southwestern Association University', p. 470.

⁴¹⁷ Bian Zhilin, 'Sleep and Memory' [《睡眠与记忆》], *Ta Kung Pao*, 21 February 1934, Section Literary and Artistic Supplement, pp. n.a.

to Proust in China in *Ta Kung Pao* in summer, 1933, only a few months before Shen took over the supplement and 10 years after Proust's death.⁴¹⁸ Did Shen forget about Proust when Kinkley interviewed him? Or is it because Proust was labelled 'decadent', meaning Shen did not want to admit to having read him under such political conditions?

These questions may never be answered, but Proust is not the only subject about whom such questions could be asked. Much of the evidence in this chapter shows that the question of whether Shen is exposed to Modernism can almost be answered in the positive, but the problem of the exact sources of his reception of Western Modernist works still remains. It is only prudent to select from everything that is available, and then to read between the lines. There are many more modern figures that have repeatedly appeared in *Ta Kung Pao*, in translation or introduction, for example, Flaubert (Li Jianwu published a series of translations and reviews), Mallarmé ('Plainte d'automne', 'Frisson d'hiver', 'Soupir', 'Brise Marine'), Virginia Woolf ('The Russian Point of View', 'In the Orchard', 'Kew Gardens', excerpt from *The Waves*), Paul Verlaine ('Rhapsody'), André Gide ('Le Retour de l'Enfant Prodigue'), Rainer Maria Rilke ('The Lay of the Love and the Death of Cornet Rilke Christoph', 'How Old Timofei Died Singing', 'Letters To A Young Poet', 'The Sonnets to Orpheus: No.9', etc.), Azorín ('Julian Morencos', two stories: 'La Infidente de simisma' and 'Voluptuosidad', excerpt from 'Felix Vargas'), D. H. Lawrence ('Once', 'Smile'), and others. Although not every one of them contributed to Shen's idea of music, it is a reminder that one should not only research the influence of Western literature on Shen by what he wrote or said that he had read.

⁴¹⁸ Zeng Juezhi, 'A Critical Biography of Proust' [《普鲁斯特评传》], *Ta Kung Pao*, 10 July 1933, Section Literary and Artistic Supplement, pp. n.a.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Western Influence in Shen's Writing

This chapter proposes the direction from which this influence came: Western Anthropology, Psychology, philosophy of Idealism and Irrationalism, and European Modernist literature. However, because of the complexity of modern China's reception of Western literature and Shen's own obfuscation concerning the sources of his ideas, the detailed discussion of influence in this chapter may not be limited to the names that have appeared above.

Chapter 4 has found sufficient evidence of Shen's reception of Western ideas. With the findings of the chapter, it is clear that Shen had at least indirect access to the important parts of Modernist literature, but also those literatures and ideas that have great impact on European Modernist literature. This chapter will look into the details of how these Western influences came through translations and introductions to be received in China and by Shen, and through close reading of Shen, to look at how that is related to the music in Shen's writings.

5.1 Anthropology and Mythology

Chapter 1 has already provided enough evidence to show that Shen's use of folksongs could be considered a response to the call of 'Peking University Folksong Association' for a collection, which was probably a result of influence from Western anthropology. Moreover, as already discussed in the previous chapter, writers and scholars like Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Jiang Shaoyuan, Zheng Zhenduo, and others published articles and gave lectures in universities on this subject. Anthropologists in whom Chinese scholars were interested at the time include James Frazer, Andrew Lang, Jane Harrison, and so forth, and almost all of them took a particular interest in mythology.

Zhou Zuoren introduces Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Lily Frazer's *Leaves from the Golden Bough* in his article 'Leaves from the Golden Bough' in *Ta Kung Pao* (21 February 1934). He states that he particularly liked the witch stories.⁴¹⁹ Zhou also was very interested in translating and researching in Greek mythology. During Shen's editorship

⁴¹⁹ The articles is also later included in Zhou's collection *Annotation at Night* [《夜读抄》]. Zhou Zuoren, 'Leaves from the Golden Bough' [《金枝上的叶子》], in *Annotation at Night* [《夜读抄》] (Hong Kong: Shi yong shu ju, 1966), pp. 121–28 (p. 126).

of *Ta Kung Pao*, Zhou published ‘Gods, Heroes, and Men of Ancient Greece’ [《希腊的神与英雄与人》] in it,⁴²⁰ which is an introduction to W. H. D. Rouse’s book of the same title, which Zhou later also translated (1947). Su Xuelin once commented that Shen writes about the Miao tribes in Hunan in his stories, but ‘the images of Miao heroes and heroines remind the reader of Greek mythological figures, like Apollo and Diana, and the plots resemble either ancient legends or Western romantic movies set in Australia and Africa’.⁴²¹ Su is right about the plots resembling ancient legends, although whether there is an influence from Western romantic films remains to be discussed. Not only do the heroes and heroines remind the reader of Greek mythological figures, but Shen especially compares his eponymous character in ‘Long Zhu’ to Apollo: ‘there are many beautiful men born among the Bai’er group of Miao People, as if all the parents from there had been working at carving the statue of Apollo and left the mould of beauty to their sons.’ [‘白耳族苗人中出美男子，仿佛是那地方的父母全会参预过雕塑阿波罗神的工作，因此把美的模型留给儿子了。’]⁴²² Shen could have been familiar with Greek myths, for example, from Zhou Zuoren’s translation of and introduction to the myths. Zhang remarks that:

Shen gets his inspiration from the Greek gods and borrows their images to describe his ‘ideal’ people – the Miaos – living in primitivism. It was a common nineteenth-century belief that primitive culture was freer, a source of vitality that civilization wanted to tap. It is also a Freudian concept that civilization is seen as requiring instinctual repression.⁴²³

Moreover, Shen was also interested in mythology and religion, and he tends to take religious stories as myths, because he never shows any inclination towards being converted to one particular religion. He read Buddhist and Christian tales as myths and wrote stories based on them, such as *Scenes under the Moonlight* [《月下小景》] or ‘Under the Moon’ [《月下》].⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ Zhou Zuoren, ‘Gods, Heroes, and Men of Ancient Greece’ [《希腊的神与英雄与人》], *Ta Kung Pao*, 3 February 1935, section Literary and Artistic Supplement.

⁴²¹ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 145.

⁴²² Shen, *Complete Works*, 5:324.

⁴²³ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 146.

⁴²⁴ *Scenes under the Moonlight* is a collection of nine short stories, the first titled as ‘Scenes under the Moonlight’. Most of them are based on Buddhist tales: ‘they are merely stories, except for “Scenes under the Moonlight”, all of them based on the Buddhist classics quoted in *Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharmā*.’ [‘这只是些故事，除《月下小景》外，全部分皆出自《法苑珠林》所引诸经。’] (Shen,

Nineteenth century anthropologists use folklores as an inspiration, which leads modern writers to join the story-collecting team and use them as writing materials. Shen came from a rich background of folklore and folksongs. He retained the interest until his late career. However, in terms of what anthropological texts Shen had read, it is difficult to pin down. It is not only because Shen never directly quoted, but also because the way Shen responded to Western anthropology was to use resources from his own home region, which maximised the localisation of influence. Moreover, in 1930, Shen co-wrote a book with Sun Lianggong [孙良工] (1894 – 1962) called *The History of Chinese Fiction* [《中国小说史》], and Shen was responsible for the section on mythology. In his outline of Chinese mythology, Shen says:

Where did myths come from? How did myths exist in pre-historical time? [...] Here many people will try to explain by quoting from the Westerners' explanations of myths, but I think that is not suitable. If we can understand what Chinese people's lives were like in pre-historical time, we can easily know how myths became necessary for the primitives in China (and it cannot be entirely different from that of Europe).

怎么样就有神话传说，这神话传说又如何人类有史以前存在？[...] 许多人谈到这里，就靠引一点西洋人对于神话的解释来解释，以我想这是不行的。我们只要明白史前中国人的生活是怎样情形，总很可以了然神话这东西在中国是如何发展为初民时代必然的一件事（且无论如何也不会同欧洲神话全异）了。⁴²⁵

Shen's point is clear here: many Chinese scholars only use Western theories to explain Chinese myths, which he thinks is flawed, but he agrees that the causes of Chinese myths should not be thought of as entirely different from those of European myths. Therefore, it is very much possible that Shen followed the nineteenth-century Western anthropological tradition, learnt about their theories, and intended to apply them but alter them for a Chinese context.

Despite the fact that the influence is undeniable, it is still difficult to track down the exact sources. The only feasible way is to look at the translations that were available at

Complete Works, 9:215)] and the prose poem, 'Under the moon', has quotations from *The Song of Songs* to illustrate a rather symbolic love story. At the beginning of the poem, he quotes 'Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm' (Song of Songs 8:6) [‘求你将我放在你心上如印记，带在你臂上如戳记’ (Shen, *Complete Works*, 1:111)]. At the end, he adopts the style of Christian texts, 'you are blessed, Amen' [‘你们是有福了——阿门’].

⁴²⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:6.

the time, which comprise a vast collection. Liu Xicheng summarises the translations of and introductions to Western Literary Anthropology in China.⁴²⁶ The leading scholars studying anthropology at the time include Lu Xun, Mao Dun [茅盾] (1896 – 1981), Zhou Zuoren, Zhao Jingshen [赵景深] (1902 – 1985), Zhong Jingwen [钟敬文] (1903 – 2002), Zheng Dekun [郑德坤] (1907 – 2001), and Zheng Zhenduo [郑振铎] (1898 – 1958). The main periodical publications can be found in *Ballad Weekly* [《歌谣周刊》], *Morning Post* [《晨报副刊》], and *Yu Si* [《语丝》], and others, of which *Morning Post* had Shen as one of the main contributors, and there are also some works of Shen in *Yu Si*. Thus Shen could have been exposed to these materials. Translated works on Western anthropology and mythology include E. S. Hartland's *Mythology and Folk Tales* (1923), translated by Zhao Jingshen; J. A. MacCulloch's *The Childhood of Fiction* (1933)⁴²⁷, 'A Discussion of Folktales' [《民间故事的探讨》] (1927),⁴²⁸ 'Story about Beast Marriage and Totem' [《兽婚故事与图腾》], translated by Zhou Zuoren; H. R. Haggard and Andrew Lang's *The World's Desire* (1907); Jane Harrison's 'Preface to Greek Mythology' (1926), translated by Zheng Zhenduo; M. R. Cox's *Introduction to Folklore* (1934), translated by Su Bingqi [苏秉琦] (1909 – 1997); J. Frazer's 'The Great Flood',⁴²⁹ and so on. However, it is worth to point out that most of these were merely excerpts or single chapters. Last but not least, in 1931, Li Anzhai [李安宅] translated a chapter from *The Golden Bough* – Chapter 3, from the 1922 edition – entitled 'Sympathetic Magic' [《交感巫术心理学》].⁴³⁰ Then, in 1936, Li continued to translate Bronisław Malinowski's *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, and edited and translated *Magic and Language* [《巫术与语言》]. Li's translation of 'Sympathetic Magic' is important because, while *The Golden Bough* was a major influence on modern Western literature and was mentioned many times by Chinese scholars, Li's was the first whole chapter translation. The lack of widely available thoroughly translated academic materials meant that writers

⁴²⁶ Liu Xicheng [刘锡诚], 'Literature Anthropology School in the History of China's Folk Literature and Arts' [《中国民间文艺学史上的文学人类学派》], *Journal of Hubei Ethnic College (Philosophy and Social Science)*, 4(2004), 54-59.

⁴²⁷ Or Macculloch in the original journal in *Literature Weekly* [《文学周报》]

J.A. Macculloch and Zhao Jingshen, 'A Discussion of Folktales', *Literature Weekly* [《文学周报》], 251-275(1928), 350-360.

⁴²⁸ Excerpt from *The Childhood of Fiction*

⁴²⁹ A Chapter of *Folklore in the Old Testament*.

⁴³⁰ The Chinese title is 《交感巫术的心理学》 (*The Psychology of Sympathetic Magic*)

like Shen Congwen was more likely to have only received vague, guideline-style influence, just like Zheng Zhenduo derives his methodology from *The Golden Bough* when writing *Responsibilities of Ancient Kings and Emperors* [《汤祷篇》], a study in Chinese mythology, custom, and folklores. The book was only written in 1946 and published in 1957, but it is an example of how Western influence was absorbed: *The Golden Bough* functions more as a guide of how to research.⁴³¹ Other examples include Jiang Shaoyuan's *Hair, Beard, and Claws* [《发须爪》] (1928), Cen Jiawu's *History of the Art of Totem* [《图腾艺术史》] (1936), and Ling Chunsheng's *Research in the Totem Culture of She People* [《畚民图腾文化研究》] (1947).

It is not clear whether Shen read Li's translation or not. Nevertheless, it is still worth looking at Li's translation briefly because of its academic importance. In 'Sympathetic Magic', Frazer lists various forms of sympathetic magic from different cultures across the globe. At the beginning of the chapter, Frazer explains the fundamentals of magic in the minds of the primitives, and divides 'Sympathetic Magic' into 'Homeopathic Magic (Law of Similarity)' and 'Contagious Magic (Law of Contact)'. Frazer argues that, 'in short, to him [the primitive magician], magic is always an art, never a science',⁴³² because the idea of science does not exist in the primitive mind. However, there is major disagreement on how to translate this sentence between Li Anzhai's translation and the more recent one. Li's translation is '总而言之，巫术对于他来说永远是艺术，不会是科学',⁴³³ where he translates 'art' into '艺术' (yi shu); while in the recent, complete translation of *The Golden Bough* (2009),⁴³⁴ the translator uses '技艺' (ji yi) to translate 'art'. '艺术' (yi shu) and '技艺' (ji yi) are completely different things; the former means 'art' or 'a way of artistic creation', usually a presentation of artistic ideology, for example,

⁴³¹ Zhou Yutong mentions in the preface to Zheng's *Responsibilities of Ancient Kings and Emperors* that Zheng planned to translate the whole of *The Golden Bough*, but the project failed because of the lack of time and rejections from publishers.

Zheng Zhenduo, *The Complete Works of Zheng Zhenduo* [《郑振铎全集》], 20 vols. (Shijiazhuang: hua shan wen yi chu ban she, 1998), 3:574-5.

⁴³² Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1993), pp. 11-12.

⁴³³ Li Anzhai, *The Psychology of Sympathetic Magic* [《交感巫术的心理学》] (Shanghai: shang wu yin shu guan, 1931), p. 3.

⁴³⁴ The first edition is from 1987, but the sentence has not changed.

J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* [《金枝:巫术与宗教之研究》], trans. by Xu Yuxin[徐育新], Wang Peiji [汪培基], and Zhang Zeshi [张泽石] (Beijing: zhong guo min jian wen yi chu ban she, 1987), p. 20.

painting, music, literature, or suchlike, but the latter means ‘crafts’ or ‘performing skills’. According to Frazer, magic can also be divided into ‘Practical Magic’ and ‘Theoretical Magic’, and the former is ‘false art’, while the latter is ‘false science’; also, most Sympathetic Magic is Practical Magic, which means it is false art.⁴³⁵ If science is on the opposite side from art, then the translation should be more like ‘艺术’ (yi shu) than ‘技艺’ (ji yi). In result, this is also the account of Sympathetic Magic Shen might have encountered.

Sympathetic Magic takes many forms, and differs from culture to culture, even though its forms share the similar basic principles. For example, Homeopathic/Imitative Magic applies the Law of Similarity, which means, to a primitive person, something done to a similar thing or replica of a person would be experienced by the real thing or person.⁴³⁶ This is practiced in many cultures, and the most simple and famous example is voodoo dolls.

In Shen’s ‘Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid’ [《媚金豹子与那羊》] (1929), Baozi is delayed on the way to spend the night with Meijin in a cave, because he is trying to purchase a perfect new-born lamb. If he kills the lamb for the blood, God will then not punish them for taking Meijin’s virginity blood. This is a typical example of Homeopathic Magic, equating the purity of lamb blood to that of the virgin. *The Golden Bough* had been mentioned, long before it was translated by Li, for example, in *Morning Post*, as has already been discussed previously. In that case, Shen could have known about Sympathetic Magic even before the translation’s publication. The story was written in 1928, before Frazer’s ‘Sympathetic Magic’ chapter was translated, but it is a perfect way to show how these folklores are applied in literature.

Hair, Beard, and, Claws by Jiang Shaoyuan was published in March 1928. It is a book about Chinese folk custom related to hair, beard, fingers, and nails (claws).⁴³⁷ It largely applied Frazer’s ideas of ‘Sympathetic Magic’. In the previous chapter, a letter (1926) from Shen to Jiang (see above, n.311), which aims to provide him with an example of a

⁴³⁵ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 11.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴³⁷ Jiang Shaoyuan, *Hair, Beard and Claws: The Custom about Them* [《发须爪——关于它们的风俗》] (Shanghai: kai ming shu dian, 1928)

local custom, is quoted. This suggests that Shen was perhaps active in the pursuits that the anthropologist proposed. It is also reasonable given the time scale, as *Hair, Beard, and Claws* was published in March 1928, and ‘Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid’ was written in December 1928.

It is most important that, in *The Golden Bough*, Frazer discusses the relationship between magic, religion, and science. As he considers magic to be ‘art’ to the primitive magician, art is also involved in this relationship. Frazer argues that magic, religion, and science are three phases of the evolution of human civilisation.⁴³⁸ Shen Congwen in *Fengzi*, written in 1932 (the last chapter in 1937) also touches on the question. The local officer says that the God of the place (West Hunan) does not conflict with science, unlike in Christianity. When the city dweller asks if his belief in God conflicts with his faith in science, the local officer says, ‘science only conflicts with superstition, or is obstructed by superstition, or destroys superstition’ [‘科学只能同迷信相冲突，或被迷信所阻碍，或消灭迷信’],⁴³⁹ which implies that the God of the local officer is not superstition or the object of a religion like Christianity,⁴⁴⁰ but something above that. Apparently, Christianity is a religion that fits in Frazer’s magic-religion-science triangle, but this God does not. The local officer continues to say that ‘here our God is not superstitious, and he does not refuse knowledge; he has nothing to do with science’ [‘在我这里的神并无迷信他不拒绝知识，他同科学无关’].⁴⁴¹ Here by the God/divinity, Shen means the divine power of the beauty of nature: when the city dweller is impressed by the beauty of nature, the local officer says to him, ‘The only God here is Nature – all the natural phenomena, nothing artificial, are controlled by him’ [‘神的意义在我们这里只是“自然”，一切生成的现象，不是人为的，由他来处置’].⁴⁴² Therefore, this is not a dogmatic religion but rather an abstract idea of divinity. In the tenth chapter of *Fengzi*, Shen describes a god-worship rite (the rite itself is another example of Sympathetic Magic: each of a collection of ribbons is marked with a name and, after each ribbon is

⁴³⁸ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 56.

⁴³⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:123.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

‘There is no conflict. Our God here is not as stubborn as the God of Christianity’ [‘这不会有什么矛盾的。我们这地方的神不像基督教那个上帝那么顽固。’]

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

given to the shaman acting as God, it can bless the person of that name), which is praised by the city dweller as the best form of drama: ‘What I just saw was no rite but a piece of superb drama, indescribable. It is the source of poetry, drama and music, and it is the nature of them [...]’.⁴⁴³ Interestingly in *Fengzi*, country people take the rite as magic, but someone like the city dweller takes it as art, and in the end, they both refer to a religion that is primitive but at the same time beyond superstition and even science.

Frazer writes:

The very idea of science is lacking in [the primitive magician’s] undeveloped mind. It is for the philosophic student to trace the train of thought which underlies the magician’s practice; to draw out the few simple threads of which the tangled skein is composed; to disengage the abstract principles from their concrete applications; in short, to discern the spurious science behind the bastard art.⁴⁴⁴

However, in *Fengzi*, facing the primitive magic, the protagonist takes the whole thing (both abstract principles and concrete applications) as art, and the God derives directly from the beauty of it. While Frazer argues the rite/magic is ‘bastard art’, Shen, like many other modern writers, considers it art. The difference is that Frazer is an anthropologist, but Shen, after all, is a writer. They are standing on different grounds, quite similar to the argument between Jiang Shaoyuan and Zhou Zuoren on such matters. In December 1924, Jiang published an article in *Yu Si* to discuss what rite is to modern people. He begins by quoting Zhou Zuoren:

I once heard Mr. Gu Hongming criticise that the translated title of *The Book of Rites* [《礼记》] was not suitable, as he thought of ‘礼’ (li) as ‘art’ rather than ‘rite’. I thought the opinion was cussed at first, but it is, in fact correct, only, here, it means the original rites, and the later rites are all lapsed and thus not worthy of the name

从前听说辜鸿铭先生批评英文《礼记》译名的不妥当，以为“礼”不是 Rite 而是 Art，当时觉得有点乖僻，其实却是对的，不过这是指本来的礼，后来的礼仪礼教都是堕落了的东西，不足当这个称呼了。⁴⁴⁵

By referring to Lewis Spence’s *The Gods of Mexico*, Jiang argues that,

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7:163.

⁴⁴⁴ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁵ Jiang Shaoyuan, ‘The Question of Rites’ [《礼的问题》], *Yu Si* [《语丝》] (1 December 1924), pp. 7-8 (p. 7).

The rites of the primitive are indeed a composite body of culture: if we analyse them from our perspective, there are, at least, the element of what we call 'magic', the element of religion, morality, medicine, and art (in the narrow sense) within them. I believe the true, 'original rites' of China are the same.

野蛮人的礼，的确是文化的复体：若用我们的眼光去分析，其中至少有我们所谓的“法术” (Magic) 的分子，宗教的分子，道德的分子，卫生的分子，还有艺术的（狭义的）分子。我信中国真正：“本来的礼”，也是如此。⁴⁴⁶

In the end, Jiang indicates that the lapsed rites will die out and be replaced by something that involves scientists, philosophers, sociologists, and artists to change life for the better.⁴⁴⁷ Jiang's argument follows Frazer's in showing the evolution of human civilisation.

Zhou answers Jiang's argument that he cannot indicate the specific date of the 'original rites', but it cannot be any time within the past thousand years. As for the later rites, they should be called 'the art of living' ['生活的艺术'].⁴⁴⁸ Kinkley observes that Western ethnography (Kinkley also seems to associate it with Western mythology and anthropology) influenced 'Shen's acceptance of idea that all art had its origins in the needs of ancient primitive man (the original outlet being primitive religion)',⁴⁴⁹ but he has not provided a link between such acceptance and Shen's *Fengzi*, with the novel being a perfect example of such acceptance. For Shen, he has found the living 'original rites' from the Miao people in his home region and recreates in *Fengzi*. He finds the element of art (in the narrow sense), as the magical rites largely involve music and dance. Luo Yiqun remarks on the rites of the Miao people that 'if other ethnic groups go through the evolutionary process of Magic→Religion→Science, the magic of the Miao people develops as Magic→Religion→Art' ['如果说其他民族有巫术→宗教→科学这一进化程序的话，那么苗族巫术的发展顺序只能是巫术→宗教→艺术。']⁴⁵⁰ Luo argues so because the magical rites of the Miao people involve poetry, myths, music, and dance, and so forth, and are imaginative, symbolic, emotional, and visual.⁴⁵¹ He

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 112.

⁴⁵⁰ Luo Yiqun [罗义群], *Perspectives of Magic of Miao People in China* [《中国苗族巫术透视》] (Beijing: Zhong yang min zu xue yuan chu ban she: Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo fa xing, 1993), p. 28.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

thinks that the rites of the Miao are already on the edge of being an art, and are more spiritual than material.⁴⁵² While science conflicts with superstitious religion, science does not conflict with art – and this is why the local officer in Shen's *Fengzi* says that the God there 'has nothing to do with science'; it is the God of art. Shen once hinted to use art as a substitute to religion after the 'death of God', which still exists in some of his essays in the 1940s.⁴⁵³ This is the vision of Shen as a writer, a master of words, but similar vision can be applied to other artists, like musicians and painters. Kinkley suggests that Shen may have taken this idea from Cai Yuanpei's 'aesthetic education to take the place of religion' [‘美育代宗教’], though Shen denied that he was influenced by any of Cai's ethnological or aesthetic thoughts.⁴⁵⁴ If Shen is like many other Modernists who takes the bastard art as art, then he does not have to come to such vision via Cai Yuanpei.

It seems that, in *Fengzi*, the city dweller, or Shen, is being Frazer's 'philosophic student' who finds the abstract principles that are even more advanced than simply religious ideas, and that Shen obviously understands the 'bastard art' as 'art', rather than as 'craft'. For Shen, it is beautiful because it is in the countryside where everything is pure, innocent, and natural, the people who were involved in it are not aware of it as an art. It becomes the source of modern art. In a way, Shen takes a writer's, not an anthropological, approach to Frazer's theory by further romanticising the primitive 'art' (music and dance) of magic. As Jiang Shaoyuan explains, the narrow meaning of art is indeed a part of primitive magic, but Shen takes out of it only the artistic beauty and links it with the divinity so it becomes a suggestion of a higher form of art – the generalised and more abstract meaning of art.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁵³ The death of human being's religious faith has not arrived yet, but word has become more and more flourishing and complicated, and with the progress of printing technology, word has taken the place of spells, being magical. Therefore, even though God is dead, the great [literary] works still keep the divinity; the guard and exposer of them still have the special power. (from 'Of Progress')

[可是人类的宗教情绪，还未到消灭时期，文字日益繁复，又因印刷术的进步，文字便代替了符咒，发生魔力。所以神虽消灭，若干经典，却依然保留它的神性，神或经典的保守者，说明者，还依然有它的特殊权力。] ('Of Progression' [《谈进步》])

Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:479.

⁴⁵⁴ Kinkley, *Vision*, pp. 60-1.

5.2 Western Psychology

From the above analysis, we can see part of the reason why Shen has a particular interest in his home region's art, as that kind of art is very close to the anthropological idea of primitive art. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century Western anthropology is not the only source of such interest; we might expect psychology to be another, especially given Shen's interest in folksongs. In *Psychoanalysis in China: Literary Transformations 1919–1949*, Zhang Jingyuan discusses exactly what from Western psychology was brought into China during the development of modern Chinese literature.⁴⁵⁵ The earliest introduction of Western psychology into China was possibly Wang Guowei's [王国维] (1877 – 1927) translation of 'Outlines of Psychology', by Harold Höffding, in 1907. The term 'unconscious' first came to China in 1919, through *The New Tide* [《新潮》], however, the key discussion about psychology took place after 1920, when Bertrand Russell came to give lectures in China.⁴⁵⁶ There were also translations relating to various psychological theories from then on.

Among all the different schools of Western psychology, Freudianism was obviously the most famous. As Zhang summarises, 'publication on Freud steadily increased from 1920 and in the mid-1930s reached its height'⁴⁵⁷ and 'psychoanalysis was introduced and understood mostly in terms of Freudian theory, the so-called "orthodox" branch of psychoanalysis'.⁴⁵⁸ The most important literary themes associated with Freudianism include sexual repression and the use of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. It is safe to argue that Freudianism, along with other influential factors, contributes greatly to the fact that modern literature, both Western and Chinese, pays much more attention to the matter of 'individual mind'.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁵ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁹ For example, Zhang argues that while dreams are depicted in traditional Chinese literature, they are usually only associated with supernatural spirits or fortune-telling, dreams in modern Chinese literature, because of Freudianism, tell the psychological state of the characters.

Ibid., p. 85.

There are many researches have proven this change from traditional to modern Chinese literature, on the subjectivity and characters' inner world. For instance, Denton has also addressed this matter.

Kirk A. Denton, *Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 31.

When we are looking at the influence of Western psychology on Shen Congwen, we should not only look at Freud, even though Freudianism leaves a deep mark on his works. There are other psychologists Shen may have known, for example, Havelock Ellis (1859 – 1939) and Carl Jung (1875 – 1961). However, as stated in the last chapter, the only two books that Shen read for sure are *ABC of Psychoanalysis* [《精神分析 ABC》] (1929), by Zhang Dongsun and *Abnormal Psychology* [《变态心理学》] (written in 1930; published in 1933) by Zhu Guangqian.

ABC of Psychoanalysis was published as part of a series of textbooks on topics ranging from literature to science written by famous contemporary writers and scholars in China during the period that Shen was teaching in Shanghai. As a university teacher, Shen would have had access to the book. Shen read the book from 1929 to 1930. Shao Huaqiang confirmed this during an interview with Shen.⁴⁶⁰ Although the topic of psychoanalysis had always been popular among Chinese writers, even in the early 1920s – and Shen must have been aware of it before 1929, as already proved in the previous chapter – it is impossible to pin down many other specific sources of Shen's knowledge of it. Nevertheless, there is another book on psychology that Shen read – *Abnormal Psychology*, by the famous Chinese aesthete, Zhu Guangqian, whose close friendship with Shen lasted into old age. Shen taught at Qingdao University from 1931 to 1933 and became Zhu's colleague. *Abnormal Psychology* was written in 1930 and published in 1933. In 1930, Zhu published another book called *Schools of Abnormal Psychology* [《变态心理学派别》]. The former focuses more on various concepts in Abnormal Psychology, with special emphasis on Freud, while the latter is more of a general introduction to different schools of Abnormal Psychology. It is entirely possible that Zhu discussed psychology with Shen, as Shen had previously showed interest in the subject.

Both *ABC of Psychoanalysis* and *Abnormal Psychology* are about the basics of psychology. They are written in academic but simple language, have clear chapter divisions, and would serve very well as textbooks to those who are only just entering the field. More importantly, neither of these two books is solely about Freudianism. Instead, both give detailed explanations of several different psychologists and schools of modern psychology, especially *ABC of Psychoanalysis*. These include The Paris School (J. M.

⁴⁶⁰ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 324.

Charcot), The Nancy School (H. Bernheim), The Neo-Nancy School, Pierre Janet, Freud, Jung, McDougall, Alfred Adler, and Morton Prince. While Zhang Dongsun's book introduces psychological theories in different schools, Zhu first examines the history of psychology, including the general facts concerning different schools, and then the terms of psychology (such as hypnotism and auto-suggestion, hysteria and multiple personality, repression and sub-conscious, dream interpretation, and libido). It is worth mentioning that, for each term or concept, Zhu not only explains it in Freudian terms, but also presents the criticism and development from other psychologists; for example, Jung's re-interpretation of libido as something like Bergson's *élan vital* ('life force'). Therefore, if Shen read these two books, it is inadequate to use only Freudianism to interpret Shen's knowledge of psychology.

5.2.1 Sexual Repression

On the subject of Freud and modern psychology, the main contribution, or the contribution that was most recognised in modern China, was his theory of sexual repression. As mentioned in the first chapter (see p.24), May Fourth writers were trying to free the Chinese people from the sexual repression resulting from over two thousand years of Confucian cultural domination. Also, Freud was not the only psychologist that Chinese writers associated with sexual repression theory at the time; there was, also, Havelock Ellis, for example. Zhou Zuoren, by whom Shen claims to have been influenced, wrote about Ellis and his theory. In his article, 'The Psychology of Sex' [《性的心理》] (1933), Zhou Zuoren starts by criticising the book-burning by Fascists, especially the burning of sexology-related books under the pretext of 'protecting women'. Later, he introduces Ellis's *Studies in The Psychology of Sex*. Zhou approves of Ellis's view that 'it is not necessary to censure or interfere with any behaviour to fulfil sexual desire, however abnormal or even disgusting it is, except in two types of circumstances – medical or legal' ['性欲的满足有些无论怎样异常以至可厌恶，都无责难或干涉的必要，除了两种情形以外，一是关系医学，一是关系法律

的]。⁴⁶¹ Evidently, Zhou Zuoren thinks that it is healthy and even necessary to have books that deal with the once-taboo topic openly and scientifically.

A number of modern Chinese writers wrote works related to sexual repression, for example, *Sinking* [《沉沦》] by Yu Dafu (the first established writer who helped Shen to become a professional) and *Miss Sophie's Diary* [《苏菲女士日记》] by Ding Ling [丁玲] (1904 – 1986) (Shen's friend and one-time flatmate). Zhang, in *Psychoanalysis in China*, concludes that 'Freud usually [is] associated with sexual liberty',⁴⁶² which played an important part in transforming China, as the idea of 'sexual liberty' appears in many relevant fields, such as literature, feminism, and education. Given that many writers and scholars at the time were also educators, they discussed the importance of sex education. For example, Zhang summarises from Zhu Guangqian's 'Freud's Subconscious Theory and Psychoanalysis' [《福鲁德的潜意识说与心理分析》] (1921) that 'the strict demarcation between sexes itself induces children to fantasize unprofitably about sex' and that Zhu argues that 'this repression is where the trouble lies'.⁴⁶³ Sexual repression is something acquired from the social and cultural environment.

Shen came from a more rural and primitive background, different from most other Chinese writers and scholars who were brought up among the urban gentry. While other writers would tend to address the sexual repression in the city, Shen is more likely to take the opposite aspect, the relative freedom in the countryside. In this rural world that he recreates in his stories, country people are under much less repression from Confucianism or from any conservative morals. As already analysed in Chapter 1, country people have many ways to freely express their sexual desires, a particular example being folksongs. Shen's collection of folksongs in 1926 and the application of these in his works shows that he understands the function of the sexual symbols in the folksongs. This thesis is not going to discuss further whether Shen made a faithful presentation anthropologically of rural life in West Hunan or whether it is more of what

⁴⁶¹ Zhou Zuoren, 'The Psychology of Sex' [《性的心理》], *Annotation at Night* [《夜讀抄》], (Hong Kong: Shi yong shu ju, 1966), pp.51-52.

⁴⁶² Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p.33.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.32.

Der-wei Wang calls ‘imaginative nostalgia’,⁴⁶⁴ since there is certainly an element of intentional primitivism.

Technically speaking, country people are not primitive people, but they live in a different cultural environment from their urban counterparts. It can be seen as analogous to a primitive environment. Thus, under such conditions, country people do not hold back emotions like city people do. They follow the instinct to express emotions and sexual desires, for example, through singing. Therefore, unlike Shen’s fellow writers, who described the sexual repression in the city, Shen turned to celebrate passionate country people. Kinkley discusses in some detail the love songs and the regional mating customs Shen describes, and writes that it was through these folksongs that Shen ‘first explored and praised frontier sexuality, deprecating urban repression’.⁴⁶⁵ Kinkley’s translations and explanations of the folksongs are convincing on the account of the sexual freedom expressed in them. Thus, this thesis will not repeat the same argument.

5.2.2 Conscious, Preconscious, Subconscious, and Unconscious

According to Zhu Guangqian in *Abnormal Psychology*, Freud puts much emphasis on ‘instinct’ [‘本能’] and ‘emotion’ [‘情感’], which leads to his famous theory that repression causes the unconscious to exist. Zhu explains sexual repression as follows:

The repressed libido (sexual desire) would not decrease but would be more active instead, collaborating with other similar repressed elements and then forming the so called ‘complexes’; as it invades the conscious, it results in dreams and other abnormal psychological states.

被压抑的性欲潜力不但没有减少而且比从前还更活动，时时勾结类似的被压抑成分，形成所谓“情意综”，不断地向意识明侵暗犯，于是乃有梦和其他心理的变态。⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ ‘His nostalgia refers not so much to a representational effort to enliven the irretrievable past as to a creation of an imaginary past on behalf of the present.’

Dewei Wang, ‘Imaginary Nostalgia: Shen Conwen, Song Zelai, Mo Yan, and Li Yongping’, in *From May Fourth to June Fourth Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. by Ellen Widmer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp.107-132 (p. 107).

⁴⁶⁵ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 142.

⁴⁶⁶ Zhu Guangqian, *Abnormal Psychology* [《变态心理学》], in *Collections of Works on Aesthetics by Zhu Guangqian* [《朱光潜美学文集》], ed. by Hao Mingjian, 5 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai wen yi chu ban she, 1982), i, pp. 333-444 (p. 344).

As said above, description of a person's 'abnormal' psychological activities is a common feature of early twentieth-century Chinese literature (this also symbolises the morbid state of Chinese society), especially as related to sexual desire, and it is most certain that these works are in one way or another influenced by Freud. Shen is not exceptional. In his early career, he produced works like 'Mr. Songzi' [《松子君》] (1926), in which the character reads *Sex Histories* [《性史》]⁴⁶⁷ (1926) and loves to peek into other people's private affairs. However, such works were written during his early career and are still simple in terms of their application of Freudianism, usually only including descriptions of characters' conscious and unconscious sexual desires, sometimes implied in dreams.

In China, the discussion of complexes leads to the formulation of Freudian terms of conscious, preconscious, subconscious, and unconscious, which play an important part in modern literature. The most obvious change is modern literature's great emphasis on characters' psychological activity: 'the chief advocate of Freudianism was a non-aligned liberal journal called *Xiandai*, with a French term, *Les Contemporains*, co-listed as its front page title (1932–1935)'.⁴⁶⁸ As mentioned in the previous chapter, although it is unclear how much Shen was involved in this journal, he was one of the contributors to it. One of the chief editors of *Les Contemporains*, Shi Zhecun, is famous for playing with the conscious and unconscious in his stories, who, along with Liu Na'ou [刘呐鸥] (1905 – 1940) and Mu Shiyong [穆时英] (1912 – 1940), is considered as one of the 'New-Sensationalists' [新感觉派].⁴⁶⁹

Zhu Guangqian explains the preconscious as 'memory that can be replicated' and unconscious as 'the repressed desire', and he states that

Freud does not pay much attention to the difference between conscious and preconscious; instead he sees the conscious as a part of the preconscious. The preconscious is like a dark space while the conscious is like a floating lamp – where it goes, it lights.

⁴⁶⁷ A work by Zhang Jingsheng, based on Freudian theories (see above, p.119).

⁴⁶⁸ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁹ Wang Ning, 'Freudianism and Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature', in *The Reception and Rendition of Freud in China: China's Freudian Slip*, ed. by Jiang Tao and Philip J. Ivanhoe (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 3-23 (pp. 9-12).

佛洛伊德并不着重意识和前意识的分别，他把意识看作前意识的一部分。前意识好比一个黑暗的空间，意识好比一点流动的灯火，火照到什么地方它就亮到什么地方。⁴⁷⁰

According to Zhang, to explain these terms, most Chinese articles at the time about the unconscious ‘introduce the concept of censorship as a metaphor: the censor is described as a guard standing between the unconscious and the conscious and sifting through the elements pressing from the unconscious towards the conscious’.⁴⁷¹ Freudian theory is explained through metaphors and images.⁴⁷²

A more sophisticated work of Shen, which is obviously an application of Freudianism, is ‘The Portrait of Eight Steeds’ [《八骏图》]. In the story, the protagonist, Mr. Dashi, teaches in Qingdao, away from his fiancée, where he meets seven other professors, each of whom, according to Mr. Dashi, has some sort of psychological problem. Thus, Mr. Dashi acts as a ‘doctor’, analysing their mental problems. It is a satirical novel, which shows how these Chinese intellectuals hypocritically keep themselves under such sexual repression while experiencing unhealthy sexual fantasies. Ironically, in the end, this ‘doctor’ becomes a ‘patient’ himself. Kinkley has analysed in detail the sexual repression depicted in it; thus, this thesis will not repeat the details.⁴⁷³ As mentioned above, repression in life also leads to dreams, according to Zhu Guangqian. In Shen’s self-reflective work ‘Water and Clouds’ [《水云》], he admits that ‘The Portrait of Eight Steeds’ ‘is organising a dream, and so as to present the psychological sexual complexes of “humans” under various restrictions, I selected a few different kinds of people, and used speech, behaviour, association, metaphor, and other methods to portray them’. [是在组织一个梦境，至于用来表现“人”在各种限制下所见出的性心理错综情感，我从中抽出式样不同的几种人，用言语、行为、联想、比喻以及其他方式来描写它。]⁴⁷⁴ Comparing this to the quotation at the beginning of this section, Shen was very probably familiar with Zhu’s explanation in *Abnormal Psychology*. The story was published in 1935 and, thus, after the publication of *ABC of Psychoanalysis* and *Abnormal Psychology*. Although, strictly speaking, the first time Shen personally mentioned

⁴⁷⁰ Zhu, *Abnormal Psychology*, p. 393.

⁴⁷¹ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 44.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, pp. 211-215.

⁴⁷⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:101-102.

that he was reading *Abnormal Psychology* is as late as 1938,⁴⁷⁵ this does not mean Shen could not have discussed psychology with Zhu Guangqian at an earlier date or even read a draft of *Abnormal Psychology*. It is also not a coincidence that the story is set at Qingdao University, where Shen worked with Zhu Guangqian.

5.2.3 Collective Unconscious

There are two concepts that Jung explains that differ majorly from Freud, which were emphasised by both Zhang Dongsun and Zhu Guangqian – the unconscious and the libido.

For the unconscious, Zhu compares Jung's theory of collective unconscious with Freud's:

Collective unconscious has great impact on individuals. Not only is instinct a component part of collective unconscious, dream is also a replica of 'primordial imago'; while Freud holds that adults 'regress' into infants in dream, Jung thinks that civilised people 'regress' into primitive people in dream.

集团的潜意识对于个人影响极大，不但本能是集团的潜意识之一成分，即梦也是“原始印象”的复现，佛洛伊德以为成人在梦中“还原”到婴儿；融恩则以为文明人在梦中“还原”到野蛮人。⁴⁷⁶

Therefore, we now need to rethink why Shen loves to write about the Miao people as primitives. While the Han are the reality, the Miao can be the dream. In this way, Chinese people may be able to 'regress' to the instinct they have through fiction set among peoples like the Miao, especially when Shen personally says that fiction consists of facts and dreams.⁴⁷⁷

From this perspective, it also adds another dimension to Shen's story 'Fishing' [《渔》]. As explained in Chapter 1, the younger brother's dream brought him back to a more primitive self, and, if this is understood as Jungian 'regression', it can also be read as a nation's archetype. Even if this is a romanticised primitive vision created by

⁴⁷⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 18:318.

⁴⁷⁶ Zhu, *Abnormal Psychology*, p. 350.

⁴⁷⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:65.

the author, it could also mean that Shen is using literature as a gentle way to reawaken the kind of humanity that is lost under civilisation. According to Zhu Guangqian,

There are some ‘archetypes of thoughts’ in our collective unconscious, and these ‘archetypes of thoughts’ are also a type of ‘primordial imago’.⁴⁷⁸ According to Jung, inventions of scientists and creations of artists all rely on ‘primordial imago’, rather than solely on personal hard work. When common people see their amazing achievement, they think they are ‘divinely blessed’, or that they have muses, but they are only taking advantage of ancestors.

我们的集团潜意识中就有若干“思想原型”，这些“思想原型”也就是一种“原始印象”。在融恩看，科学家的发明和艺术家的创作都凭借“原始印象”，不仅靠个人的努力。一般人看到他们的成绩那么神奇，以为他们是“如有神助”或是得看灵感，其实他们也只是叨祖宗的光。⁴⁷⁹

No matter what inspired Shen to write *Fengzi* [《凤子》], the similarity between what Shen writes in the last chapter of *Fengzi* and this quotation from Zhu is too clear to be omitted. Shen describes the god-worshipping rite as ‘no rite, but a piece of superb drama, indescribable’, ‘the source of poetry, drama, and music’.⁴⁸⁰ Shen not only takes Qu Yuan, the ancient poet, as an example of someone who relied on the something like ‘primordial imagos’ of Jung and became an ‘artist’, as Jung defines it, but also believes that ‘if there is someone interested, he can still draw fresh spring water from this ancient well’.⁴⁸¹ Although Shen has not assigned an origin to this theory, here, the ‘ancient well’ can be seen as another metaphor of what Jung defines as ‘archetypes of thoughts’ or ‘primordial imagos’, only that, in Shen’s West Hunan, this primitive image was still alive, or maybe imaginary and recreated as alive. Shen goes on to describe Qu Yuan as a recorder of the rites.⁴⁸² The rites existed before Qu Yuan or any artist. To quote the discussion between Jiang Shaoyuan and Zhou Zuoren set out previously (see above, p.148), this kind of recorded rite is more like what is called ‘original rites’. In this sense, Qu Yuan is the artist who borrowed the ‘primordial imago’ to create his poetry, and modern writers can keep doing so, as the ‘primordial imago’ or ‘archetype of thought’

⁴⁷⁸ When translating this quotation, I take the English term ‘primordial imago’ directly from Zhang’s, and ‘archetypes of thoughts’ from Zhu (Zhu, *Abnormal Psychology*, p. 398.), as they both include some terms’ English version in brackets.

⁴⁷⁹ Zhu, *Abnormal Psychology*, p. 398.

⁴⁸⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:163.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7:164.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

would continue to live in the Chinese people's 'collective unconscious', as defined by Jung.

On the same matter, Zhang Dongsun explains Jung's theory as below:

He (Jung) regards myths as the products of the primitives. Every ethnicity has its special myths, originating in its primitive era. However, the primordial motives and imagos contained in the myths remain in the hearts of individuals of the ethnicity.

他以为神话是初民的产物。每一种族于其原始时代，都有他特有的神话。但这种神话中所含得根本思路却永久遗传于其中种族中各个人的心内。⁴⁸³

If, in this way, myths can live in individuals' hearts, the gods that exist in the myths can live on. Shen goes on to write in *Fengzi* that, 'after watching the ritual ceremony just now, I then understood that the existence of God is still there, unchanged'.⁴⁸⁴ In the context of *Fengzi*, the 'God' does not relate to a monotheistic system like that of Christianity, but, rather, a concept of gods. If this 'God' can be understood as a part of the archetype of thoughts that remains in people's minds, then there could be another explanation for Shen's insistence on using regional materials. Because of the early twentieth-century historical background, the purpose of modern Chinese literature can never be separated from the purpose of 'reforming China', intellectually, politically, and aesthetically. If Shen's writing on repressed or released sexual desire is a way to free Chinese people from the repression that kills vitality, his constant writing on primitive myths and rituals is a way to reawaken the primordial motives and imagos hidden or forgotten by the Chinese, the somewhat romantic and poetic life-force and humanity, something that is still in the conscious of Miao people but long hidden in the unconscious Han people. The condition that Shen thinks can keep this 'God' alive – 'the purity of human emotions, the innocence of ideas, and a pastoral environment' – may be the real 'archetype' that he wants to preserve.

⁴⁸³ Zhang Dongsun, *ABC of Psychoanalysis* [《精神分析學 ABC》] (Shanghai: ABC publisher, 1929), p. 50.

⁴⁸⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:164.

5.2.4 Jung, Libido, and Life Force

Another concept that Jung defines differently from Freud is ‘libido’. Freud takes libido as ‘sexuality’ but, for Jung, this is too focused. Instead, Jung considers libido to be a kind of life impulse, or life force. The difference between Freud and Jung’s interpretations of libido is important not only because it is a major concept in psychology but also because a lot of Chinese psychologists, including both Zhu Guangqian and Zhang Dongsun, placed special emphasis on it. The concept is important to scholars, especially writers, because it is the key to Freud’s theory of creation. Freud suggests the best way to release the repression of libido is sublimation: ‘the diversion of sexual instinctual forces from sexual aims and their direction to new ones – a process which deserves the name of “sublimation”’.⁴⁸⁵ Jung has a developed theory about sublimation but his definition of libido is different from that of Freud. Zhu Guangqian understands Jung’s definition of libido as ‘the generalised “mental force” or “life force”’ [广义的“心力”或“生活力”] and ‘the potential sexual desire is only part of that’ [性欲的潜力只是其中一部分].⁴⁸⁶

Shen also once expressed an idea similar to Zhu in ‘Sex and Politics’ [《性与政治》] (1947). He opens the article as follows:

When Freud discusses psychoanalysis, he relates human activities all to one word – ‘sex’ – and considers all the desire and will is correspondent and linked with ‘sex’ [...] According to my old friend, Xia Fuxin, who has translated his works, this word used by the master has a broad meaning. Although it is about sexual desire, it is not only limited to the obvious lust between men and women or to actual sexual behaviours. Sometimes, the meaning of the word is almost similar to what the ancient Chinese saint says: the ‘xing’ in ‘Man’s nature, and the way of Heaven, cannot be heard’,⁴⁸⁷ which is almost a lyrical illustration of the concept.

佛洛伊德谈心理分析，把人类活动的基因，都归纳到一个“性”字上去，以为一切愿望与动力都和“性”相会通，相联结[...]据翻译过他作品的夏斧心老友说，这位大师用的字眼意义实相当宽泛，虽不离性欲，也不拘男女明显性欲意识和短兵相接行为。有时竟和中国老圣人

⁴⁸⁵ Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud and James Strachey, *The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 319.

⁴⁸⁶ Zhu, *Abnormal Psychology*, p. 350.

⁴⁸⁷ Confucius, ‘Book V: Kung-Yê Ch'ang’, in *Confucian Analects*, trans. by James Legge <http://www.cnculture.net/ebook/jing/sishu/lunyu_en/05.html> [access 3 April 2016]

说的性含义相差不多，也即是“性与天道不可得而闻”的性，已近于抒情的阐明。⁴⁸⁸

Xia Fuxin [夏斧心] (also known as Xia Yun [夏云]) was a professor of psychology, one of Shen's earliest scholarly friends (see above, p.119). The connection shows that Shen must have known the term 'libido', perhaps from Xia, and understood it not only in the literal sense of 'sex'. By the ancient Chinese saint, he means Confucius. In this sentence, '性' (xing) is the same character in both 'human nature/humanity' [人性 (ren xing)] and 'sex' [xing 性]. If understood as 'human nature', it is one step closer to 'life force'.

If we combine Jung's revised definition of 'libido' with his 'collective unconscious', it seems that, although Shen claimed that he had received influence from Freud, he was, in fact, influenced by more than just Freud. Jung must also have had influence, if only indirectly.

Also, according to Zhang Dongsun:

Freud emphasised sublimation [...]; thus, from the point of view of psychiatry, he advocates sublimation, which means making someone dedicated to art or music, in order to vent their depression. [...] To conclude, this kind of sublimation is about taming the unconscious instinct, driving out its savagery, and turning it into something noble and pure, so that it can join the realm of consciousness.

佛洛德则注重于特别的移升 [...] 所以佛洛德从精神病学的见地上，主张移升。就是使这个个人或专心于美术，或专心于音乐，把他得忧郁的情绪，移在此处发泄出来 [...] 总之，这种移升，乃是把不自觉的本能加以驯化，去其野性，而改为高尚洁净的，于是便能加入于自觉的心意境界内。⁴⁸⁹

In Freudian theory, most of depression originates in a repressed libido (or general sexual desire). Freud thinks that one way to vent this repression is to sublimate it to artistic creation: 'mastering it [sexual instinct] by sublimation, by deflecting the sexual instinctual forces away from their sexual aim to higher cultural aims'.⁴⁹⁰ Jung develops the theory and argues that life impulse, which is similar to Bergson's 'life force' (see

⁴⁸⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 14:259.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁹⁰ Sigmund Freud, '“Civilized” Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness', in *The Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1953-74), (9:177-204), p. 193.

below, p.164), stimulates the creation of art.⁴⁹¹ ‘Life force’ [‘生命力’],⁴⁹² which Shen repeatedly mentions, seems to be the same as Jung’s life impulse. Libido appears in the form of ‘sexuality’ in Shen’s earlier novels, or as the more abstract ‘vitality/life force’ in later works. In other words, the changing of Shen’s fundamental concept of inspiration shows Shen’s changing understanding of ‘sublimation’ [‘移升’] and the ‘libido’ in psychological theories.

5.2.5 Daydreaming, Art Creation, and Appreciation of Art

Freud, in his essay ‘Creative Writers and Day-dreaming’, argues that writing is also a way of fulfilling personal desires that are not fulfilled in real life, and thus, in a way, is an altered and disguised version of day-dreaming.⁴⁹³ According to Zhang in *Psychoanalysis in China*, as early as in the 1920s, Freud’s theory of creativity and sexuality was widely accepted among Chinese intellectuals.⁴⁹⁴ Freud writes that ‘it may even be that not a little of this effect [the aesthetic pleasure a creative writer affords us] is due to the writer’s enabling us henceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame’.⁴⁹⁵ While Freud’s argument might seem compelling in many cases, if not all, it also limits the creation of writers to within the boundary of individual ego and sexual desires. Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880 – 1923) argues that Freud fails to touch ‘the essence of literature – its aesthetic value’.⁴⁹⁶ According to Kuriyagawa,

What I am most unsatisfied with is that he falsely relates everything to ‘sexual desire’, which stems from a scientist’s habit of looking at things only from one perspective [...] but, as far as I am concerned [...] it is adequate to see this as the leaps and bounds of life-force in the most general way.

⁴⁹¹ Zhang, *ABC of Psychoanalysis*, p. 46.

⁴⁹² The Chinese word ‘生命’ (sheng ming) means ‘life’, ‘力’ (li) means ‘force’, thus ‘生命力’ literally means ‘force of life’, in other word ‘vitality’. However, as many times, it is associated with the concept ‘生命’ (sheng ming) by Shen, the translation ‘life force’ would be clearer in order to show the connection between the Chinese words ‘生命’ (sheng ming) and ‘生命力’ (sheng ming li).

⁴⁹³ Sigmund Freud, ‘Creative Writers and Day-dreaming’, in *The Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1953-74), (9:141-154).

⁴⁹⁴ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 59.

⁴⁹⁵ Freud, ‘Creative Writers and Day-dreaming’, p. 153.

⁴⁹⁶ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 61.

但我所最觉得不满意的是他将那一切都归于“性底渴望”里的偏见，部分底单从一方面来看事物的科学家癖。[...]但在我自己[...]以为将这看作最广意义上的生命力的突进跳跃，是妥当的。⁴⁹⁷

This theory is very similar to Bergson's *élan vital*, and Kuriyagawa refers to Henri Bergson at the beginning of the book, explaining *élan vital* as something that:

Seeking to expand itself in leaps and bounds, is opposed by the forces of society and morality. Such conflict creates pain, the pain of living. Literature is an expression of this pure life-force, temporarily freed of external pressure, whereas, in life, the forward striving energy is bound by its opposing forces [...]⁴⁹⁸

This 'pain of living' can be seen as an expanded notion of the repression in Freud's theory, which also extended the aesthetic value of literature to the result of a more abstract force than sexual desire. This view is more in accordance with Jung's theory than with Freud's. According to Zhang Dongsun:

Bergson sees life impulse as fireworks. Every sparkle is a small life split from a big one, and this small life has the same nature as the big one, bursting forth like it. Therefore, the nature of life resembles fireworks, although every boom is different. Jung also holds that psychological force is the same thing as life force... It can be seen that, for Jung, 'desire' is life impulse, but not merely sexual desire. In short, life impulse is the origin, and sexual desire is nothing but one way of expression.

柏格森把生命的冲动看作像花砲一样。每一火花即是大生命中分出来的一个小生命。而这个小生命亦同具大生命的性质，依然是向前乱冲。所以生命本性就是好像放花炮一样，总是一放而不同。荣格亦以为精神力和生命力是一件东西...可见荣格以“欲”即视为生命的冲动，不单是性欲。简言之，即生命的冲动是本源；而性欲不过其表现之一种罢了。⁴⁹⁹

The theme of 'life force' appears in Shen's works many times. If this is from either Jung or Bergson, it is difficult to know which author he encountered first. Kinkley suggests that Shen 'was familiar with Henri Bergson's theory of *élan vital* and "creative evolution" early on, from Lin Zaiping – perhaps even earlier, from reading with his Uncle Nie in West Hunan'.⁵⁰⁰ If Shen had indeed known *élan vital* so early, he did not exhibit much of

⁴⁹⁷ Kuriyagawa Hakuson and Zhou Shuren (Lu Xun), *The Symbol of Angst; Out of the Ivory Tower* [《苦悶的象徵；出了象牙之塔》] (Taipei: Ming Shao Chu Ban, 2000), p. 65.

⁴⁹⁸ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 61.

⁴⁹⁹ Zhang, *ABC of Psychoanalysis*, p. 46.

⁵⁰⁰ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 224.

it in his early works, in the 1920s, but much more so from the 1930s onwards. Perhaps reading Zhang Dongsun's work on psychology helped Shen to put these ideas together. Zhang's comparison between libido and Bergson's *élan vital*, as quoted above, is in fact, not new, and it leaves open the possibility that Shen may have had more sources. As early as the 1920s, Lu Xun introduced and translated *The Symbol of Angst* [《苦闷的象征》] (1924), by the Japanese scholar Kuriyagawa Hakuson.⁵⁰¹ In the preface to the translation, Lu Xun points out the difference between Bergson and Freud: 'Freud attributes the life-force to sexuality, whereas Hakuson stresses impetus and leaping force of life'.⁵⁰²

As one of the most significant figures in modern Chinese history, Lu Xun's words had weight. It is important to note the difference between Shen's early writing and later – each part seems to be presenting each part of the quotation above, chronologically. In Shen's earlier works, life-force mostly means sexuality without the repression; in other words, the vitality shown in city-dwellers' fight against sexual repression or country people's freedom in sexuality. However, in his later works, Shen more often adheres to the idea that it means 'impetus and leaping force of life', especially in terms of the close relationship it has with creation in arts:

That of life which is respectable and appreciable is its surprising force. What might present the force? Taking it seriously, a poet selects his words, a painter chooses his colours, a musician notates his music, a thinker speculates, and a politician deals with the current problems.

生命可尊敬处同可赞赏处，全在它魄力的惊人。表现魄力是什么？一个诗人很严肃的选择他的文字，一个画家很严肃的配合他的颜色，一个音乐家很严肃的注意他的曲谱，一个思想家严肃的去思索，一个政治家严肃的去处理当前难题。⁵⁰³

What life needs is only craziness towards the lights and shadows of this world because life itself comes from the sunshine and the rain; it is like the flame, hot and bright.

⁵⁰¹ Feng Zikai also had a version of the translation around the same time, but, as Lu Xun had a bigger impact on Chinese literature, and especially as Shen acknowledged that he used to read Lu Xun's translations (see above, n.304), this thesis will use Lu Xun's version.

⁵⁰² Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 60.

⁵⁰³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 9:167-8. (1932)

生命所需，惟对于现世之光影疯狂而已。因生命本身，从阳光雨露而来，即如火焰，有热有光。⁵⁰⁴

Such life force, for Shen, exists before individuals, as it ‘comes from the sunshine and the rain’, is powerful and necessary, as an essential element of the universe, and is what causes the creation of art. Freud’s libido is somewhat scientifically explainable, and behind it, there is meaning of desire to be expressed. However, here, Shen does not take art as a mean to express or represent the force exactly, but arrangement of the elements at hand, for it is the matter rather than the meaning that is more important, and because the life force is more abstract than libido. It has no exact meaning, but simply the existence of it matters.

According to Zhang, *The Symbol of Angst’s* reception in China ‘can reveal much about the Chinese reaction to the Freudian theory of creativity’,⁵⁰⁵ but this book is about far more than just Freudian theories. It is also likely that Shen came across Lu Xun’s translation of *Symbol of Angst* at some later point, if not immediately after it was translated in 1922. When Lu Xun died in 1936, a heated discussion about his literary contribution took place in China. Although Shen never developed a close friendship with Lu Xun, he admitted that he had been influenced by him since his early career (see above, p.113). It is not surprising that people started to re-read Lu Xun after his death, and it is possible that Shen somehow read *The Symbol of Angst* afterwards and re-thought what libido meant for artistic creativity. Nevertheless, even if Shen did not read *The Symbol of Angst* directly via Lu Xun’s translation, given its importance among modern Chinese writers, it is plausible that Shen learnt of it indirectly.

Meanwhile, the striking similarity between Shen and Kuriyagawa can also be seen from Shen’s later interest in the state of daydreaming.

Our life can be purified and refined through daydreaming because it distances itself from real life. In daydreaming, we can gaze, meditate, criticize, and understand reality. Our life therefore can be deepened, reinforced, and enlarged. Only dreaming can sweep out the dusty ideas of real life and straighten this disordered, disunited, and muddled world into a complete,

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 12:32. (1941)

⁵⁰⁵ Zhang, *Psychoanalysis in China*, p. 59.

orderly, unified world. Only in this dream life can we enter a pure, peaceful state of mind and therefore reach the sublimity of Art which reflects life.⁵⁰⁶

According to Zhang, Kuriyagawa's Japanese Buddhist background influenced his view of Freud's theory of daydreaming, which is thus closer to a state of Zen meditation. While Freud's day-dreaming mostly consists of fantasising after unsatisfied wishes, which one would usually be ashamed of fulfilling, Kuriyagawa's day-dreaming is a form of self-reflection and thus connecting oneself with an abstract but unified world. In Shen's *The Border Town*, the protagonist Cuicui has daydreams,⁵⁰⁷ which are perhaps the products of her sexual desire as a young woman. Similar daydreaming scenes also appear in earlier works like 'Mr. Huanhu' [《焕乎先生》].⁵⁰⁸ However, both are typical Freudian daydreams, arising out of sexual repression. One of Shen's later works, 'Life' [《生命》], according to Liu Hongtao, bears the influence both from Freud and Kuriyagawa's daydreaming,⁵⁰⁹ but Liu provides no further explanation on the matter. 'Life' is a non-fictional prose work that looks deep into his own mind,⁵¹⁰ much like a meditation, and this kind of daydreaming is more like that conceived by Kuriyagawa.

⁵⁰⁶ Kuriyagawa, quoted by Zhang.

Ibid., p. 63.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Sometimes, as if disinclined for company, she sits all alone on a rock staring raptly at a cloud or star in the sky. [...] She is blooming like a flower and has reached the age when each month something wonderful and mysterious happens to her, making her pensive and dreamy.' Yang, *The Border Town*, p. 36-37.

[她有时仿佛孤独了一点，爱坐在岩石上去，向天空一片云一颗星凝眸。[...] 这女孩子身体既发育得很完全，在本身上因年龄自然而来的一种“奇事”，到月就来，也使他多了些思索。] Shen, *Complete Works*, 8:90.

Here in the Chinese, Shen only implies that Cuicui is absorbed in her own thoughts, but Yang's translation emphasises the 'dreamy' side of it.

In fact, in many other versions of *The Border Town* published in Chinese, there is an extra half sentence to this line – [...] which gave her more pensiveness, and more dreams[‘也使他多了些思索，多了些梦’], which indicates these dreams are daydreams.

For example:

Shen Congwen, *The Border Town* [《边城》], Modern Chinese Literature Classic [中国现代文学名家经典] (Xiamen: lu jiang chu ban she, 2002), p. 29.

⁵⁰⁸ The protagonist Mr. Huanhu often sits by the window and daydreams about women, and the original title of the work is 'A New Dream' [《新梦》].

Shen, *Complete Works*, 2:161-188.

⁵⁰⁹ Liu Hongtao, *Modern Chinese Literature and Its Global Vision* [《二十世纪中国文学的世界视野》] (Taipei: Xiu wei zi xun ke ji gu fen you xian gong si, 2010), p. 151.

⁵¹⁰ At the beginning of 'Life', Shen suggests that he is acting like either a philosopher or a fool, to 'inspect one's own life outside from one's own life' [‘离开自己的生活来检视自己的生活’]. In the essay, Shen implies (very subtly) that he recorded and polished one dream (about sexual desire) of his into a literary piece, but as it was perhaps not, by social standards, moral, thus he destroyed it. However, other than this, this short essay is more like a meditation about his life, the society, and an abstract realm. Therefore, I can understand why Liu makes such comment.

Kuriyagawa explains the psychology of the writer's state of composition as 'daydreaming', as it is unrealistic and reveals the writer's unconscious self. It is almost like an unconscious self-reflection. As previously quoted in Chapter 3 (see above, n.218), in *Candle Extinguished* [《烛虚》], Shen clears his mind through a kind of 'daydreaming' and realises that he '[is] always a countryman'. Interestingly, surrounded by the same sounds and scenery of 20 years ago, Shen steps back into the daydream he had then – being an urban man – something that he could not fulfil then, but now, the same environment creates a new daydream that he could fulfil no more – turning back to a countryman. In such a daydream, he meditates and brings inspection of his own life into a bigger universe. The sense of meditation and 'self-reflection', contained in works like 'Water and Clouds' [《水云》], *Candle Extinguished*, 'Life' [《生命》], and *Seven Colour Nightmares* [《七色魔》], is very important to Shen's transition in writing style.⁵¹¹

In Shen's 1940s works mentioned above, he is keen on discussing literary creativity, which is not only about fulfilling wishes but, in a larger sense, about how one can connect oneself with the infinite universe through artistic creation that is born out of the life-force. To Kuriyagawa, life force does not only mean human life; he explains 'life' as 'the great life of the universe' [‘宇宙人生的大生命’], which he also equates with Jung's 'unconscious':

It is only when we hold fast to the individual self that we are conscious of 'self', but, if we reach the realm of 'pormatman/mahatma (bigger-self)', which is dissolved into the universe, then we enter the state of 'anatta' (no-self/selflessness). One's unconscious is the same [as the bigger-self].

譬如我们拘守着小我的时候，才有“我”这一个意识，但如达了和宇宙天地浑融冥合的大我之域，也即入了无我的境界。无意识和这正相同。⁵¹²

Kuriyagawa explains the Western concepts through Buddhist terms, that, while the conscious binds people within the self, it is the unconscious that links one with the

Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:42-45.

⁵¹¹ Kinkley considers that in these essays written during the war years, Shen wrote less fictional works, but 'was fundamentally at odds with the spirit of the times – meditating, in rhapsodic essays, about drawing nearer to his God', and that he 'was able now to analyse urban alienation sympathetically, from within – with more complex language, and more complicated views of man, consciousness, and the universe'. (Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 185.)

⁵¹² Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 65.

‘greater life in the universe’. The life-force, or life-impulse, Jung’s revised definition of libido, exists in the unconscious. Artists use that force and create works of art; thus such works of art are connected to the greater universe.

Kuriyagawa argues that the sum of what psychologists call ‘the unconscious’, ‘preconscious’ and ‘conscious’ means nothing less than the content of life.⁵¹³ Imagining a tree, he holds that every leaf, every flower, and every fruit has its individual life, because the tree is alive,⁵¹⁴ and explains through the Belgian poet Charles Van Lerberghe’s poem, ‘La Chanson d’Eva’, that ‘the appreciation of all kinds of art, which is also the sense of resonance, is founded upon generality, universality, and permanence’ [‘一切艺术的鉴赏即共鸣感，就以这普通性、共通性、永久性作为基础而成立的。’].⁵¹⁵ What is implied by Kuriyagawa is that true art forms a resonance between the artist and the appreciator, and then, at the same time, creates a resonance between the individual life and the greater life. Such art is universal and timeless. Shen also addressed a similar argument. In ‘About Calligraphy’ [《谈写字》] (1937), he writes that ‘whether calligraphy counts as art or not still is a question. The reason is that it lacks universality between people or stability in time’ [‘写字算不算得艺术，本来是一个问题。原因是它在人与人之间少共通性，在时间上又少固定性’].⁵¹⁶ In other words, Shen also considers ‘universality’ and ‘being timeless’ to be essential to art. On the matter of what universality is in art, Kuriyagawa states that, ‘when the real life existing at the root of oneself crosses with the great life of the universe, real art appreciation is then established’ [‘待到在自我的根柢中的真正生命和宇宙大生命相交感，真的艺术鉴赏乃于是成之’].⁵¹⁷ Universality leads to the crossing of individual life and the greater universe, whether it is between human and nature, human and the universe, or human and art, in order to reach ‘anatta’; the key is to be truly immersed in the unconscious and in the universe.

In *Candle Extinguished*, Shen remarks on the ‘beauty’ he finds in life – ‘this kind of beauty is maybe created by God’s hand. A piece of copper, a stone, a string, or a combination

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 31:124.

⁵¹⁷ Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 69.

of sound: they are small, but, from them, one can see the greatness and the wholeness of the world' [这种美或由上帝造物之手所产生，一片铜，一块石头，一把线，一组声音，其物虽小，可以见世界之大，并见世界之全].⁵¹⁸ This is very similar to Kuriyagawa's synecdoche, using leaves, flowers, and fruit, and their connection to the tree. While they all have individual existences, the reason for their existence is the existence of the tree. We can see the bigger world because of the universality that exists between the smaller things and the universe. Kuriyagawa slowly develops his thinking, through Freud and Jung's psychological idea of conscious and unconscious, until reaching such a conclusion, but on the basis, we can now say, that it is tightly connected to Jung's collective unconscious – in daydreams, one goes back to the origin which is shared by a race, or even to a larger notion of life itself. To create art is to reach into this unconscious and catch the 'lights and shadows' that life needs; such art would be infinite. Shen writes:

The flash of the shooting star and the lightning passes in a moment and creates a beautiful sacred realm in reality, as do human beings. A smile and a frown can also create the same sacred realm. If one knows how to capture these beautiful and magical lights and shadows through various senses, the lights and shadows will never be extinguished.

流星闪电刹那即逝，即从此显示一种美丽的圣境，人亦相同。一微笑，一皱眉，无不同样可以现出那种圣境。一个人的手足眉发在比一闪即逝更缥缈的印象中，既无不可以见出造物者手艺之无比精巧。凡知道用各种感觉捕捉这种美丽神奇光影的，此光影在生命中即众生不灭。⁵¹⁹

In this paragraph, Shen perfects his portrayal of Kuriyagawa's concept of being a 'appreciator' [鉴赏者], intentionally or not. According to Kuriyagawa, what an appreciator gains is not knowledge, but wisdom, not fact, but truth, and sees the infinite within the finite.⁵²⁰ Shen's 'sacred realm' that flashes by is precisely such truth. To some extent, while the reader is the 'appreciator' of literature, the writer is the 'appreciator' of the world and the universe. The writer being the appreciator of the world, they take on the role of catching such truth and making it infinite. Kuriyagawa condenses the psychology of the 'appreciator' into four steps – 'cognition' [理知作用], 'sensation'

⁵¹⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:34-35.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12:34-35.

⁵²⁰ Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 69.

['感觉作用'], 'the reflection of sensation' ['感觉的心像'], and 'idea, emotion, spirit, and Heart Qi'⁵²¹ ['情绪思想、精神、心气'],⁵²² which in other words, can be understood as '[knowing] how to capture these beautiful and magical lights and shadows with various senses' and thus reach the infinite. Kuriyagawa especially explains senses by giving the examples of Keats and Baudelaire.⁵²³

However, one thing differentiates Kuriyagawa and Shen. For Kuriyagawa, in the literature of the world throughout history, the most important element of sensation is the music that can be picked up through the ears.⁵²⁴ He dedicates the success of poetry to musicality (the audible), as he holds that visual and aural senses are the most important among the five, although he cites Baudelaire as an exception, as he combines all senses.

In the steps of 'appreciation' described above, Kuriyagawa holds that musicality (the audible) matters most at the second step. At the third step, when it comes to the mind-reflection of the reader, it is Kuriyagawa's view that the work should touch the reader's emotion, and it should permeate from the externality of the symbols to the internality of the reader's unconscious: 'only when the stimulative power of suggestion touches the content of life and arouses the resonance there can the appreciation of art be founded'. [在那刺激底暗示力触着了生命的内容的时候, 在那里唤起了共鸣感来, 而文艺的鉴赏这才成立。]⁵²⁵ Then, it comes to the fourth step, where it forms a resonance between the unconscious of the writer and that of the reader. In the last step of 'appreciation' ['鉴赏'], Kuriyagawa comments that 'it is not until this step that the content in the writer's unconscious reaches the reader and resonates with the chord deep at their heart, which then fulfils the ultimate goal'. [到这里, 作者的无意识心理的内容, 这才传到读者那边, 在心地深处的琴弦上唤起反响来, 于是暗示遂达了最后的目的]⁵²⁶

⁵²¹ A term from Chinese medicine, generally it refers to medical terms concerning heart function, but also has metaphorical meanings concerning mental activities.

⁵²² Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, pp. 70-75.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

Interestingly, when Kuriyagawa uses examples to illustrate the importance of musicality (the audible) to people's senses, he compares Japanese poetry with the 'three stringed instrument' ['三弦和琴'] to demonstrate the importance of the audible beauty.⁵²⁷

Nevertheless, it is worth considering that no matter how faithful Lu Xun's translation is, the original Japanese sound is changed, but the reader can still be moved by the beauty of the poem, which forms a paradox. However, if the audible musicality of words is also seen as a symbolic expression, the paradox is resolvable. For Kuriyagawa, Baudelaire is an exception.⁵²⁸ Baudelaire's 'correspondances', in a way, articulates Kuriyagawa's 'universality'. The synaesthesia of Baudelaire is a more direct expression of the symbolised mind-reflection of the writer and, because senses are closer to both writer and reader's mind-reflection than other elements in poetry, the 'universality' is thus more easily accessed, in which 'musicality' is not sound alone, but all the senses. Therefore, the key in making the process of appreciation work is to create a metaphorical music that can let both writer and reader access such universality.

It seems that, at first, Kuriyagawa is discussing actual, materialised music, but, somehow, here he means something that is the same as Shen's metaphorical music, as described in Chapter 3. According to Shen, 'there are also people who can reach a realm simply through abstraction and, immersed in this realm, find the happiness of being immortal. I do not possess the knowledge of music, but often want to use music to present this realm'. ['也有人仅仅从抽象产生一种境界，在这种境界中陶醉，于是得到永生快乐的。我不懂音乐，倒常常想用音乐表现这种境界。']⁵²⁹ For Shen, such a realm of abstraction often also means the ultimate beauty, and that which literature and all arts aim at preserving. According to Hanslick, while 'the painter or the poet gleams in contemplating the beautiful in Nature, the composer has to draw from his own fertile imagination'.⁵³⁰ The realm some people reach through abstraction should also live in the imagination; thus, music is the best way to present it. Shen even further abstracts the way of passing on beauty as a 'the principle of energy balance', using the 'method of music composition' (see above, p.99). The argument there already shows that, to Shen, the 'method of music composition' conserves the abstraction at both

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵²⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:35.

⁵³⁰ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 155.

ends, the beauty and the presentation of beauty. Interestingly, Kuriyagawa holds that there is a ‘fine frenzy’ inside the writer’s unconscious, which will burst out against the repression;⁵³¹ this idea echoes Shen’s theory – frenzy is energy after all. Although it seems to differ on the surface, Shen is talking about the same thing as Kuriyagawa: ‘appreciation’ [‘鉴赏’] as ‘creation of resonance’ [‘共鸣底创作’].⁵³²

As Kuriyagawa writes, ‘when it is outgoing from life to the surface of the conscious, it is the creation of the writer; when it is ingoing from the surface of the conscious to the content of life, it is the creation of resonance, also known as **appreciation**’. [‘就是从生命的内容突出，向意识心理的表面出去的是作家的产生底创作；从意识心理的表面进去，向生命的内容突入的是共鸣底创作即鉴赏。’]⁵³³ Meanwhile, Shen declares that ‘the position I am standing in is completely the position of **an appreciator** of art. What I comprehend is merely a shape of life [...] The only thing that can represent this elevated, beautiful emotion of mine should be the first-class music’. [‘我所处的地位，完全是一个艺术**鉴赏家**的地位。我理会的只是一种生命的形式 [...]唯一可以重现我这种崇高美丽情感的，应当是第一等音乐。’]⁵³⁴ What Kuriyagawa presents is a moving process of art appreciation, and the link between music composition and music appreciation best illustrates such a motional process. As music must be played, and a listener must closely follow the composer’s thoughts – ‘this perpetual giving and receiving takes place unconsciously’.⁵³⁵ Shen is a writer, and so he is thus a creator of art, but, at the same time, he says he is ‘an appreciator of art’. The process of appreciation does not then only move in one direction, but in a circle, and Shen wishes he could use music to complete this circle.

Moreover, what Shen means here by art is ‘a shape of life’, but the shape of life is, in fact, shapeless. Such art, then, is not materialised art, but abstract, or, more specifically, a kind of art created by the life-impulse. The life-impulse, or life-force, can be both the stimulation of art creation and the art that is awaiting appreciation. ‘A shape of life’

⁵³¹ Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 50.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p.77.

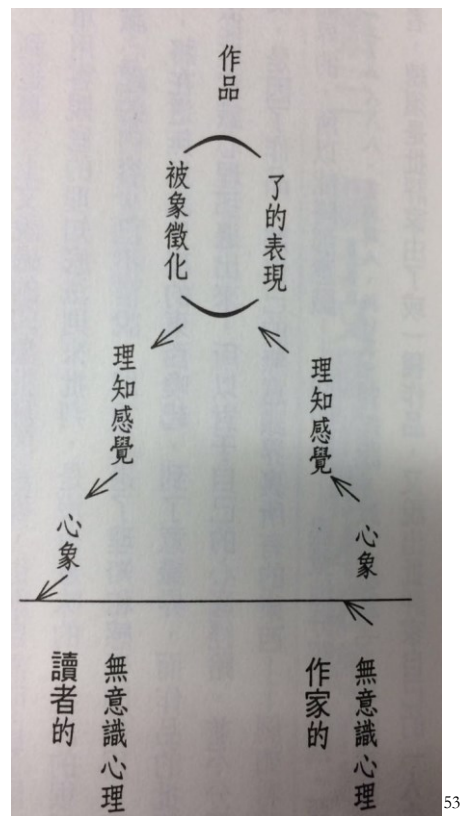
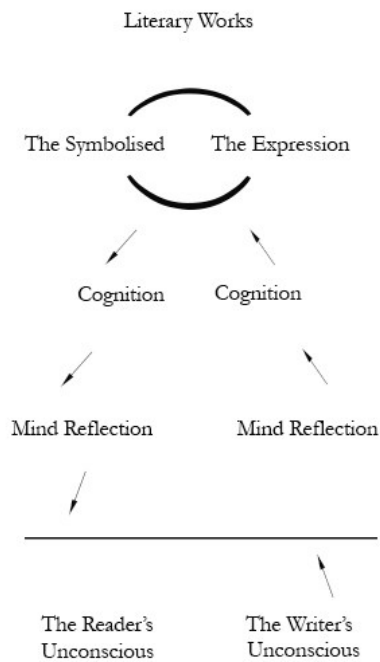
⁵³⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:117. I emphasise ‘an appreciator’, as I believe that Shen’s use of the same exact word as used by Lu Xun in his translation of Kuriyagawa’s term can indicate that Shen is most likely to have known about such theories.

⁵³⁵ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 135.

exists in all lives, and it touches the unconscious which, as mentioned above, is similar to 'no-self' (see above, p. 168), and connects with the universe. Material music, standing out among all arts, is known as nationless, or as Shen puts it, 'international' (see above, n. 191), as 'sounds themselves are the untranslatable and original tongue'.⁵³⁶ It is also interesting that Shen shows great interest in music from another culture (Western classical music, instrumental music). Music, in his view then, is in a relatively closer position to being universal.

What Shen means by 'the first-class music' recalls the Western Classical music by which he was fascinated. As analysed in Chapter 2, what Shen finds beautiful in Western Classical music and wants to use in literature is the 'harmony' from the organisation of words; it is metaphorical, as Shen is not a musician. Shen did not know much about musical theory, but he could have 'the unconscious' that the metaphorical music has produced in his heart, also known as what Kuriyagawa called 'the echo' on 'the chord at [the reader's] heart' (see above, n.526). Kuriyagawa clearly explains his theory of literary creation and appreciation through a diagram:

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.



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Between the writer's cognition and the final literary work, there exists 'the expression'. Thus, if real, acoustic music exists, it should be part of 'the expression'. However, what exists in the writer's unconscious or reflects in the reader's unconscious cannot be the real music. It can only be the common beat that they share and that would finally emerge conceptually as 'the first-class music'. If one put 'the first-class music' in this diagram, it should be placed around and above 'literary works', but it resonates all the way down to both the writer and reader's unconscious.

Coincidentally or not, there is the pulse wave that can be an analogy to human life-force and, meanwhile, there is the sound wave of music. The pulse wave keeps life going while the wave of music that exists in the literary work is also the life of it. When the pulse of the 'life-force' of the writer and reader reaches a 'syntony', the 'resonance' described by Kuriyagawa is thus achieved. This connects the layers of development that begin in psychology – libido, life-impulse, and music. Kuriyagawa's theory thus is reflected in the similar ideas contained in Shen's works.

⁵³⁷ Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 77.

With regards to the difference concerning what music is to literature, they meant the same – the urge of artistic creation is the beautiful, leaping life-force. For Kinkley, seemingly, Shen’s idea of this derives from Bergson’s *élan vital* (see above, p.124), in which Kinkley has a sound basis. Yet one has to admit that Shen may either have learned about Bergson from Zhang Dongsun and Zhu Guangqian’s introduction related to psychology, or from Lu Xun’s translation of Kuriyagawa: ‘many modern thinkers hold, similarly, that the force of life is the essence of being alive in the world: it is like lightning, like running water flowing at great speed, abruptly, almost carelessly, incessantly pressing forward.’ [将那闪电似的，奔流似的，蓦地，而且几乎是胡乱地突进不息的生命的力，看为人间生活的根本者，是许多近代的思想家所一致的]。⁵³⁸ This means that Shen’s ideas may have had many sources. These finally result in abstract pieces written by Shen, like ‘Candle Extinguished’. What the extinguished candle produced is exactly the light and heat that symbolises, again, the life-force. Kuriyagawa finds the meaning of ‘the force of life’ in Bergson, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bernard-Shaw, Carpenter and Russell.⁵³⁹ It is not certain whether Shen read Kuriyagawa or not, but what is presented in Shen’s works about life-force and art show massive similarity with what Kuriyagawa explains and also illustrates with his own ideas. If this is what many modern Chinese writers accept as the relationship between Western psychology and creative writing, then Shen is definitely one of them, and there is an undeniable link between such ideas and Shen’s use of music.

From the argument above, it is evident that Shen started from the more scientific side of Freudianism and anthropology, providing the Western theories with living examples. In his regional works, Shen presents the primitive side of the culture of West Hunan and uses folk songs to romanticise primitivism to a great extent. The theory of libido (from Freud’s sexual desire to Jung’s life impulse) leads Shen to regard ‘first-class music’ [第一等的音乐] as the most perfect way to illustrate the beauty of life. If music can create ‘universality’ between the writer and the universe, reader and writer, then literary works can be eternally alive. Although the influence can clearly be traced back to Kuriyagawa, his translator, Lu Xun, does not hold music in high regard. In *Yu Si* [《语

⁵³⁸ Kuriyagawa, *The Symbol of Angst*, p. 22.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

丝》], Lu Xun published an article, titled “‘Music?’” [《“音乐”?》], which mocks Xu Zhimo, who in another article regards himself a ‘mystic’ and believes that ‘there is music in everything’.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, if Shen had known about Kuriyagawa, Shen’s ideas about music are not from the translator, but from the text, or there may be other influences that Shen combines with Kuriyagawa’s.

5.3 Goethe

Although much of Shen’s use of music, as discussed in the previous chapters, seems to be a Modernist touch (if this can be defined), the Romantic influence cannot be entirely forgotten. Modern Chinese literature’s situation differs from that of West European literature, as Romanticism (Neo-Romanticism) and Modernism arrived almost concurrently in China; thus, their influence is composite.⁵⁴¹

As suggested in Chapter 4, Shen acknowledged direct influence from Goethe, since he read the translation of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* at the beginning of his writing career.⁵⁴² Shen may have also read *Faust* later, as he referred to Faust in some of his works.⁵⁴³ Shen considered Goethe one of best writers in the world whose works live immortal.⁵⁴⁴

There are definitely suggestions of Goethe’s *Sorrows of the Young Werther* in Shen’s works, especially in the way Goethe describes the beauty of the countryside. It is peaceful, lively and pure: ‘When I sit there, the patriarchal ways come vividly to life about me, and I see them, all the ancestral fathers, making friends and counting by the spring, and I sense

⁵⁴⁰ Lu Xun, ‘“Music?”’ [《“音乐”?》], *Yu Si* [《语丝》], 5(1924), (p. 4-5)

⁵⁴¹ McDougall explains this in her chapter ‘Romanticism and Neo-Romanticism’ in *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919-1925*, and she also remarks that ‘the development of literary movements in China [was] very nearly parallel and cotemporary with movements in other countries, such as England and America.’

Bonnie S. McDougall, *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919-1925*, East Asian Cultural Studies Series; Nos. 14-15 (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1971), pp. 85-146.

Bonnie S. McDougall, ‘The Impact of Western Literary Trends’, in *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, ed. by Merle Goldman (Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 37–62 (p. 60).

⁵⁴² ‘I remember when I first learnt to be a writer, I read the Chinese translation of Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and had a deep impression.’ [‘还记得我初学用笔时，读中译歌德的《少年维特之烦恼》，曾留下了深刻印象。’]

Shen Congwen, *Complete Works*, 16:406.

⁵⁴³ ‘Could it be that I’m back in “the past” like Faust?’ [‘难道我如浮士德一样，当真回到了那个“过去”了吗?’] (11:309) and 12:139

⁵⁴⁴ See Chapter 4, n.392.

the benevolent spirits that watch over springs and wells'.⁵⁴⁵ Although the German and Chinese countrysides are distinct, the kind of ancientness is shared between the works of Goethe and Shen. Modern Chinese literature since May Fourth turns its back against classical Chinese literature, Shen being a part of it, it is more likely that he acquired such ancientness from Western literature, rather than from Chinese pastoral poetry.⁵⁴⁶ The sense of the ancient can also be found in the works of many modern Western writers, especially those who descend from Romantic traditions. For example, as O'Leary explains, '[Yeats and Rilke] left an oeuvre that follows a trajectory from a lush late Romanticism, nourished by local roots – Prague, Sligo – through an increasing problematisation of that initial position, towards a plateau in which the heritage of Romanticism emerges with new authority and grandeur at the very heart of twentieth-century thought and experience'.⁵⁴⁷

Both Yeats and Rilke were featured in *Ta Kung Pao* while Shen was chief editor. By Rilke especially, quite a few short pieces are translated in *Ta Kung Pao* (see above, p.139). Shen did once say (to himself), 'be prepared for your career – use a pen, to preserve the form of spending your life in the twentieth century as the last Romantic, and to end this syndrome of emotional infection of this era' [‘正好准备你的事业，即用一支笔，来好好的保留最后一个浪漫派在二十世纪生命挥霍的形式，也结束这个时代这种情感发炎的症候。’].⁵⁴⁸ Shen wrote this when he was reviewing his own life, being from the country and learning in a city; what he wanted was to 'write a glorious eulogy to God in this era when “God”⁵⁴⁹ is dead' [在“神”之解题的时代，重新给神作一种光明的赞颂。].⁵⁵⁰ Shen, in fact, was not writing a eulogy to any specific god, but to

⁵⁴⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 27.

⁵⁴⁶ Although almost all researches on May Fourth Movement address this literary phenomenon more or less, but McDougall makes it clear through the case of one of the leaders of May Fourth, Hu Shi: 'even the moderate Hu Shih [spelling variation of Hu Shi] in particular was quite vividly aware that [...] classical literature had to be vigorously attacked by the advocates of the vernacular if the latter were to survive at all.' Shen, as we can see, not only continues to advocate May Fourth spirit after decades (see above, p.16), but also writes in vernacular language.

McDougall, *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories*, p.7.

⁵⁴⁷ Joseph S. O'Leary, 'The Palm of Beauty: Yeats, Rilke, Joyce', *Journal of Irish Studies*, 21 (2006), 36-48 (p. 36).

⁵⁴⁸ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:127.

⁵⁴⁹ In Chinese, except for using for quotes, quotation marks can also be used for specific terms, for emphasis, or to express the irony of the word. Here, Shen uses quotation mark on the 'God' that is dead to suggest the difference between this superstitious 'God' of religion and a more abstract divinity.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12:128.

the tradition, the ‘ancestral fathers’ and the ‘benevolent spirits’ that Goethe saw in the countryside.

Both Shen and Goethe suggest that the beauty of countryside is so natural that there is no need for human arts to add unnecessary descriptions to it, and, in fact, human arts are also incapable in such things. In both ‘Three Women’ and *Fengzi*, quoted in Chapter 3, Shen expresses similar ideas through the characters when they are facing the beauty of nature (see Chapter 3, p.88): ‘the fewer poets, the more possibility there is for human beings to know beauty and approach beauty.’⁵⁵¹ Also in *Fengzi*, the protagonist says that the great ancient Chinese poet, Qu Yuan, ‘was no more than someone who came here and acted as a recorder of the scenery and people here’.⁵⁵² In *Werther*, Goethe writes:

what I told you recently concerning painting is doubtless also true of poetry: what counts is that one perceives excellence and dares to give it expression, which sounds little but is in fact a great deal. Today I witnessed a scene which, if written down, plainly and exactly, would be the loveliest idyll the world has ever seen; but why trouble with poetry and scenes and idylls? Must we go tinkering about with Nature before we can enjoy it?⁵⁵³

Both *Fengzi* and *Werther* are in first person narration, providing a strong sense of author giving way to the protagonist. Although Goethe appeared very early in Shen’s development as a writer, his influence on Shen perhaps lasted until the end of his writing career, part of the reason being that different versions of Goethe’s works were translated into Chinese one after another, and he continued to inspire Chinese writers. Goethe, as a Romantic writer, is not only celebrated by the ‘Romanticists’ in China, but also by Symbolists like Liang Zongdai, and is often allied with music. In 1934, according to a letter from Shen to his wife already mentioned in Chapter 2, he listened to Beethoven with Liang Zongdai and Ma Sicong.⁵⁵⁴ Shen mentions Beethoven quite a few times in his works in the 1940s; it is possible that he came across Beethoven while listening with Liang, and was inspired. Liang visited Romain Rolland in 1931, and, in 1942, translated his *Goethe and Beethoven*, which applauds Goethe’s strong connection with music – ‘A Goethe is a musician in poetry, just as a Beethoven is a poet in

⁵⁵¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:365.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 7:163.

⁵⁵³ Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁵⁴ Shen, *Complete Works*, 19:178.

music'.⁵⁵⁵ Similarly for Shen, his novella *The Border Town* was praised by Liu Xiwei as 'a poem, a love song sung by Nuosong to Cuicui' [‘一首诗，是二老唱给翠翠的情歌’].⁵⁵⁶ Shen considers Liu the only critic who 'could figure out a little truth from the surface of the words and the depth of the work' [‘从作品深处与文字表面，发掘出那么一点真实’].⁵⁵⁷ Both Goethe and Shen are considered to be figures who create in one medium from another medium. Shen values such a review, which shows that he is probably looking to create something that is art in general, and outside physical art (art that is in no particular medium) – the 'truth [underneath] the surface of the words and [in] the depth of the work'.

As someone standing in between the two arts, Goethe's opinion on the limit of the art of sound matters, as suggested by Rolland:

Did Goethe lay down any limits to the expressive and descriptive powers of the art of sound? No; when in 1818 Adalbert Schoepke asked him, 'What limits of expression in music?' Goethe answered, 'It is the great and noble privilege of music to create a mood within us without using ordinary exterior means for the purpose'. [...] Goethe recognized that music is privileged to go further than reason, and to penetrate regions forever closed to speech and analytic intelligence. In his conversations with Eckermann on 'demoniacal matters' he referred to the unconscious or subconscious poetry, for the comprehension of which intelligence and reason prove insufficient, and continued:

'The same applies, in the highest degree of music, because music occupies so lofty a plane that reason cannot approach it; from music emanates an influence which dominates all, an influence of which no man may give an account'.⁵⁵⁸

Before the 17th century, music is bound up with *logos*, 'language as the expression of human reason'.⁵⁵⁹ By 19th century, music had broken the link with language, and according to Dahlhaus, 'in the esthetics of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche, i.e., the reigning theory of art in the second half of the [19th] century, music was considered

⁵⁵⁵ Romain Rolland, trans. G.A. Pfister and E.S. Kemp, *Goethe and Beethoven*, (New York/London: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 157.

⁵⁵⁶ Liu, Xiwei. 'The Border Town and Portrait of Eight Steeds' [《边城与八骏图》], in *Research data on Shen Congwen* [《沈从文研究资料》], eds. Hongtao Liu, and Ruiren Yang, (Tianjin: Tianjin ren min chu ban she, 2006), pp. 199-204.

⁵⁵⁷ Shen, *Complete Works*, 27:25.

⁵⁵⁸ Romain Rolland, trans. G.A. Pfister and E.S. Kemp, *Goethe and Beethoven*, p. 127-128.

⁵⁵⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 8.

to be an expression of the “essence” of things, as opposes to the language of concepts that cleaved to mere “appearance”.⁵⁶⁰ Thus music has the value that is inaccessible to language and reason, but closer to true beauty. Such idea developed through theorists like E. T. A. Hoffman and Eduard Hanslick, but can also be found in Goethe. To Goethe, music is limitless because it goes beyond reason and outer description. It reaches beyond our rationality, but touches our subconscious.

Goethe gives the exact reason why some writers are so fascinated with music, and Shen is one of them. Scholars have examined Irrationalism in Shen’s work. For example, Liu Hongtao dedicates a chapter to the topic of ‘Shen Congwen and Irrationalism’, arguing that Shen’s Irrationalism results mainly from Primitivism and Freudianism.⁵⁶¹ Perhaps we should not neglect the role of music, or the idea of music, played on Shen’s source of inspiration. Interestingly, in Liang’s Chinese translation of Rolland’s *Goethe and Beethoven*, there is a slight difference from the English translation above. In the Chinese version (but not in the English translation quoted above), Goethe’s answer to Schoepke opens with a more absolute answer – ‘nothing and everything’ [‘绝无与一切’] – which is followed by the explanation that ‘nothing’ means nothing exterior can be received, while ‘everything’ means everything interior can be felt.⁵⁶²

From January 1949, Shen suffered from a serious mental disorder because of the political attacks; he was brought back to life from an attempted suicide. In 1949, he wrote three poems during his recovery. Two of them were about listening to Beethoven. In ‘Obtained from the Music of Beethoven’ [《从悲多汶乐曲所得》], which is free verse with no particular form or rhyme, he declares: ‘Music is mistier than all, but compared to everything else/It shows greater inspiration and is more adhesion, /It can firmly re-solidify the weak’ [‘音乐比一切缥缈，却也比一切/更具强大启示与粘合， /将轻尘弱草重新凝固坚实。’]⁵⁶³ Music is misty because it uses no ‘ordinary exterior means for the purpose’, but it inspires and adheres better because ‘it [creates] mood within us’, as Goethe suggests, or, more specifically, as Bonds explains, ‘[it

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁶¹ Liu, *Shen Congwen’s Fiction and Modernism*, pp. 29-43.

⁵⁶² Liang, *Collected Works*, 4:456.

⁵⁶³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:222.

projects] the dynamics of feelings'.⁵⁶⁴ It is very likely that Shen not only learnt about Beethoven from Liang, but also learnt about the power of music from Goethe, and through Liang's translation. What is more, also in 'Obtained from the Music of Beethoven', Shen writes:

Melody draws me upward, and upward I go,
Melody draws me downward, and downward I go.
All the naïve truth and hyaline wisdom of humanity
are translated into rhythm and melody,
into the repeated development, turning life
from restlessness, contradiction, and chaos,
gradually into clearness, purity, and integration.

节律引我上升，我上升，
节律引我下降，我下降，
人类一切朴素真理和透明只会，
通通被译成节奏和旋律，
于反复发展中，将生命
由烦躁、矛盾，及混乱，
逐渐澄清莹碧，纯粹而统一。⁵⁶⁵

This shows how much Beethoven and music in general influenced him. This small stanza precisely reminds one of 'Chorus Mysticus' from *Faust*: 'All that is ephemeral, / Is only an allegory; / The insufficient, / Here, becomes event; / The indescribable, / Here, is done: / The eternal feminine / Draws us upward'.⁵⁶⁶ As already noted above, his chorus is also used in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Since there were many translations of *Faust* into Chinese at the time, it is uncertain which version Shen read. However, the 'Chorus Mysticus' that ends *Faust*'s story was given prominence in Liang Zongdai's 'Li Bai and Goethe', first published in *Ta Kung Pao* (January 1935), where he compared the Tang Dynasty poet to Goethe: '一切消逝的/不过是象征; /那不美满的/在这里完成; /不可言喻的/在这里实行; /永恒的女性/引我们上升。'⁵⁶⁷

Liang's translation 'draws us upward' ['引我们上升'] shares great similarity with Shen's 'draws me upward' ['引我上升'], which is not a common Chinese expression. In Guo

⁵⁶⁴ Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 141.

⁵⁶⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:216. Also quoted in Chapter 2, see above p.73.

⁵⁶⁶ Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 107.

⁵⁶⁷ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:103

Moruo's translation, this was translated into something more like 'guides us to go' [‘领导我们走’],⁵⁶⁸ which contains no sense of 'upward' [上升]. Guo translated the second volume of *Faust* in 1947. The resemblance between Liang's translation and Shen's use of the phrase leads me to believe that Shen at least read this fragment translated by Liang. Interestingly enough, Shen's situation in 1949 was much like Faust's when the play begins – he had talent, hard work, and hope, but this was destroyed by Communist critiques and his own students' imputation. He attempted suicide, but he was saved not by the devil, nor through being taken up to redemption by angels, but by music, or rather, by the mood created within him by music, and this is closely related to his guidance in music appreciation: Goethe indirectly, and maybe Liang directly, as the translator.

5.4 French Symbolism

It is already discussed in Chapter 4 that Shen stayed close with some of the Chinese Symbolist poets as well as magazines that features much on Symbolism. It is also a known fact that the Symbolists and their advocates such as Dai Wangshu, Bian Zhilin, Liang Zongdai, Feng Zhi, and so forth, have greatly impacted the development of Modern Chinese literature, especially poetry. At the same time, Romantic poets like Xu Zhimo also occasionally joined the discussion and translation of Symbolists, such as Charles Baudelaire. In the translation of 'Une Chanson', Xu also provided an introduction to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and remarked that 'I believe that the substrate of the universe, the substrate of human life, the substrate of every visible subject or invisible idea is, and only is, music – the splendid music.' [‘我深信宇宙的底质，人生的底质，一切有形的事物与无形的思想的底质——只是音乐，绝妙的音乐。’]⁵⁶⁹ While Xu also mentions the metrics in Baudelaire, he apparently focuses on Baudelaire's inner music, or 'inaudible music'. Xu claims that 'not only can I hear music with sounds, I can also hear music without sounds (it actually has sounds, but you cannot hear)'. [‘我不仅会听有音的乐，我也会听无音的乐（其实也有音就是你听不见）。’]⁵⁷⁰ Shen more than once mentions soundless music, as already pointed out in

⁵⁶⁸ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust (Volume 2)* [《浮士德(第二部)》], trans. by Guo Moruo (Beijing: People's Literature Publication, 1978), p. 380.

⁵⁶⁹ Xu Zhimo, 'Une Chanson' [《死尸》], *Yu Si* [《语丝》], 3(1924), 5-7, (p. 6).

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3; for example, ‘I am being mad. I am mad for abstraction. I see some symbols, a form, a ball of string, a kind of soundless music and a wordless poem’. [‘我正在发疯。为抽象发疯。我看到一些符号，一片形，一把线，一种无声的音乐，无文字的诗歌。’]⁵⁷¹ Bringing in what Rolland writes about a poet as a musician, and musician as a poet, what is this soundless music? It is poetry and it is painting, like what Xu describes as ‘sounds’ in Baudelaire’s poetry – ‘the tone and colour of his poetry is like the blueness reflected in the beams of setting sunlight – distant, bleak, and sinking’. [‘他诗的音调与色彩像是夕阳余烬里反射出来的青芒——辽远的，惨淡的，往下沉的。’]⁵⁷²

Xu goes on to describe another kind of music in poetry, ‘imaginary music’:

For music, as long as you listen – the chirps near water, the swallows chatting in between the beams, the sound of water flowing through the valley, the soundwaves of the woods – as long as you have the ears to listen, when you can hear it, ‘hearing’ means ‘understanding’ [...] It is all in your imagination.

但音乐原只要你听：水边的虫叫，梁间的燕语，山壑里的水响，松林里的涛声——都只要你有耳朵听，你真能听时，这“听”便是“懂”。[...] 都在你自己的想像里。⁵⁷³

Here, while the sound of the words is only the audible sound that the reader can actually hear, there is also a metaphorical music the reader can hear in their imagination. Xu continues to explain that,

Therefore, the real essence of the poetry does not live in the words’ literal meaning, but in its subtle, uncatchable syllables; what he (Baudelaire) provokes is not your skin [...] but your uncatchable soul – like falling in love – the touching of the lips is only a symbol, what really connects are your souls.

所以诗的真妙处不在他的字义里，却在他的不可捉摸的音节里；他刺戟着也不是你的皮肤 [...] 却是你自己一样不可捉摸的魂灵——像恋爱似的，两对唇皮的接触只是一个象征；真相接触的，真相结合的，是你们的魂灵。⁵⁷⁴

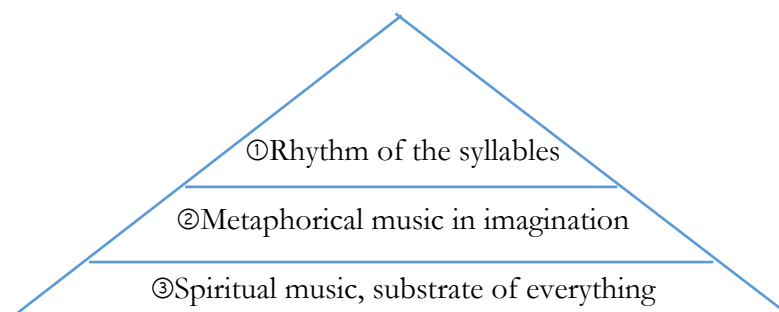
⁵⁷¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:43.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

After Xu published this article, it drew criticism from not only Lu Xun, but also Liu Fu [刘复, also known as Liu Bannong 刘半农], who sarcastically gave four speculations concerning Xu's theory: 1) Xu has a microphone in his ears; 2) Xu can hear sounds in the distance; 3) Xu is sensitive to ultrasonic sounds; 4) Xu has something that is not yet invented in his ears that can make sounds for him.⁵⁷⁵ Such criticism only shows that Liu Fu does not understand that hearing here does not mean receiving sounds, but understanding, so the essence of Xu's imaginary music is not in the sounds at all. Combined with what Xu says at the end of the introduction about the substrate of everything that is music, we can roughly divide what Xu thinks as music into three levels:



①The rhythm of the syllables is ‘the literal sound that can be heard’.

②The music the reader of the poem would imagine in his/her mind according to his/her understanding, completely belonging only to the reader.

③The deepest and most profound level of music is the music that flows between the reader and the writer, the substrate of everything, which is soundless, but completely based on something like what Kuriyagawa may have called ‘universality’ [‘共通性’].

As Shen almost considered him to be a mentor (see above, p.130), it is very likely that Shen would have gathered similar thoughts from Xu Zhimo. As much as Xu cares about the audible musicality in poetry (for example, when Xu introduces Keats's ‘Ode

⁵⁷⁵ Liu Fu, ‘The Ears of Mr. Xu Zhimo’ [《徐志摩先生的耳朵》], *Yu Si* [《语丝》], 3(1925), 6-7.

to Nightingale’,⁵⁷⁶ he focuses on both the sound and the meaning beyond it), what he could have passed onto Shen would not have been that kind of musicality, the main argument being that Shen is much more of a novelist or prose writer than a poet. Shen wrote poems, but in a very small quantity. Most of them are collected and translated folksongs and free verse; only in his later years (post 1949) did he compose poems in traditional Chinese poetic forms. In consequence, what Shen could possibly have learned from such words of Xu Zhimo is potentially exactly what Lu Xun mocks – ‘everything is music’.

However, Xu Zhimo died early, in 1931, before most texts by Shen that contain such ideas were written. It is most possible that Shen could have re-read the Romantic master’s works after his death, but there could also be other influences, one of them being that of Liang Zongdai.

In the letter mentioned above about listening to Beethoven, Shen describes Ma learning something about composing, conducting, and instruments, which Liang and Shen did not understand, and Liang having some ‘literary ideas’.⁵⁷⁷ What kind of literary ideas could those be? Only through Liang’s own works can we find out about this. Shen himself did not learn anything directly, but only ‘transferred [it] onto [his] later works, especially a few books and short pieces, in which there existed the rhythmic process of music, which is also closer to some experiments in translating music into something

⁵⁷⁶ ‘He is the nightingale; the nightingale is him. When the nightingale sings low, he sings low, and when the nightingale sings loud, he sings loud [...] The dark night is filled with music – so he rushes to the epilogue with the word and sound “forlorn” to return to the motive [...] The connection of sounds and tones and the turning of it are also very natural; in the end, he mixes the two opposite motives, and finishes with the waking (reality) and dream (the imaginary world). It is like throwing a stone into the deep pond of the valley, and you hear the loud, clear, and consonant sound, with lingering aftersound in the valley [...] The music is finished, the dream has ended, the blood is dried up, the nightingale is dead! But the aftertaste will always echo lightly in the universe...’ [‘他就是夜莺；夜莺就是他。夜莺低唱时他也低唱，高唱时他也高唱[...]黑夜里已经充塞了音乐——所以在这里最高的急调尾声一个字音 forlorn 里转回到那一个动机[...]音调的接合，转变处也极其自然；最后揉合那两个相反的动机，用醒（现世界）与梦（想象世界）结束全文，像拿一块石子掷入山壑内得深潭里，你听那音响又清切又谐和，余音还在山壑里回荡[...]音乐完了，梦醒了，血呕尽了，夜莺死了！但他得余韵却弱弱的永远在宇宙间回响着...’]

Xu Zhimo, *Complete Works of Xu Zhimo* [《徐志摩全集》] (Hong Kong: Shang wu yin shu guan Xianggang fen guan, 1983), 3:78.

⁵⁷⁷ ‘Sicong learned from the composer, the conductor, and the instrumental solo process many things that were not easy for us to acquire. Zongdai had some appreciation of the history of music, something to talk about in the drawing room as well as something about literary ideas’.

Shen, *Complete Works*, 19:178.

concrete'.⁵⁷⁸ It is unlikely that Shen would have been influenced by any theory of composition, or of musical techniques, described by Ma, which he did not understand at the time, but it is quite possible that Liang's 'literary ideas' came through in Shen's work in the end.

First, how did Liang describe Beethoven?

What exactly is the melody and tone of Beethoven's *Symphony No.3* like?
Extremely slow, extremely deep, intermittent, drop by drop, like a deep sigh, like a sobbing, like the heavy sorrowful steps of mourners; no, it is almost like the water dripping from the ancient wall of a bottomless cave, drip by drip, till it touches the deepest part of your heart, and arouses a sad but sacred horrible emotion, which is exactly what Yao Nai would call the art of 'yin',⁵⁷⁹ but it is sublime! It is sublime art!

贝多芬《第三交响曲》这节底旋律和音调究竟是怎样的呢？缓极了，低沉极了，断断续续的，点点滴滴的，像长叹，像啜泣，像送殡者底沉重而凄迟的步伐，不，简直像无底深洞底古壁上的水漏一样，一滴一滴地滴到你心坎深处，引起一种悲凉而又带神圣的恐怖心情，正是属于姚姬传之所谓“阴”的艺术；然而 sublime 呀！究竟不失其为 sublime 的艺术呀！⁵⁸⁰

Much like Xu Zhimo's description of Baudelaire's poetry, appreciation of Beethoven's music develops through the actual sound – 'extremely slow, extremely deep, intermittent, drop by drop' – to the metaphorical music in the listener's imagination, 'like a deep sigh, like a sobbing, like the heavy sorrowful steps of mourners...'. If music has any function of description, it only exists in the listener's mind as metaphorical music. At last, the music goes into one's heart and one's soul, having started from the musician's soul and thus finally making the connection. The connection is spiritually sublime. Therefore, we can observe that this is why Xu Zhimo finds Baudelaire's poetry musical. This is a subtle and interesting observation, as they share the process of 'appreciation' [‘鉴赏’], much as Kuriyagawa illustrates: the appreciation of art is founded

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ Yao Nai (or Yao Jichuan), a late 18th-century to early 19th-century Chinese scholar, had a theory, in which he categorised arts into four types – 'masculine' 'strong' 'feminine' 'gentle' [‘阳’‘刚’‘阴’‘柔’] – or, roughly, into two types of 'virile' [‘阳刚’] and 'effeminate' [‘阴柔’]. It has nothing to do with genders, but the former means a majestic type of art and the latter means a more graceful type and that 'the charm of the music will linger and the meaning of the music is deep and far-reaching' [‘韵味深远’].

Zhu Rongzhi [朱荣智], *The First Lesson of Literature* [《文學的第一堂課》] (Taipei: Shu Quan, 2004), p. 204.

⁵⁸⁰ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:114

when the unconscious of the author and that of the reader bring about resonance. Baudelaire's poetry produces it by the correspondences created by the symbols. The resonance, in Liang's words, is created by 'the water dripping from the ancient wall of a bottomless cave'. It is of course uncertain whether Liang also made such a description to Shen while they were listening to Beethoven together, but it is certainly a start to examine Shen's relationship with how Symbolism sees literature and music.

When it comes to poetry, music is an absolute condition: if the author does not pay attention to music or does not put any effort into it, if the author's ears are insensitive, and if, in the composition of the poem, rhythm, meter, or music holds no important position which is equivalent to the meaning, then we must have no hope for this man, who wants to sing without feeling the need to and who offers only the words that suggest other words.

Que s'il s'agit d'un poème, la condition musicale est absolue: si l'auteur n'a pas compté avec elle, spéculé sur elle; si l'on observe que son Oreille n'a été que passive, et que les rythmes, les accents et les timbres n'ont pas pris dans la composition du poème une importance substantielle, équivalente à celle du sens, - il faut désespérer de cet homme qui veut chanter sans trop sentir la nécessité de le faire, et tous les mots qu'il offre suggèrent d'autres mots.⁵⁸¹

Liang certainly agrees with the necessity for music in poetry, just as he thinks Valéry's poetry has the most beautiful rhythms. However, the music in poetry has much more significance than metrics to Liang (and perhaps Valéry, too). Although the audible music is important, the actual music is truth. In *Poetry and Truth* [《诗与真》], completed in 1934, Liang writes, 'truth is the only profound basis of poetry, and poetry is the most supreme and ultimate realisation of truth'. [‘真是诗唯一深固的始基，诗是真底最高与最终的实现。’]⁵⁸² Although, for him, truth is far away and difficult to reach, the joy lies in a poet's pursuit of truth, just like 'the magical beauty of a song is in the process of the ups and downs, and the quickness and slowness of the melody, but not when the tune is finished'. [‘一首歌底美妙在于音韵底抑扬舒卷底程序，而不在于曲终响歇之后。’]⁵⁸³ It follows that a poet is always in the process of approaching truth; there is a form of poetry, like 'the ups and downs, the quickness and slowness of the melody',

⁵⁸¹ Valéry and Liang, *Collected Works*, 1:139.

⁵⁸² Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:5

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* 2:6.

which contains the truth, at least, so Liang considers, which still awaits after the tune fades.

To Liang, Valéry is the master of poetry, as he sets out:

Yet if he is happy only with discovery, but pursues not the expression, or expresses, but not with the skills of an architect or craftsman, the rocking emotion of a musician to build a crystal palace to sing and cry for, he is barely a poet but a mere philosopher. [...] The sentiments, the sighs, of common poets are no more than the flowers and weeds that decorate the way to the temple of truth, despite every flower and weed exhibiting to him a deep world; they are but the wood and rock that build the sacred temple, despite every piece of wood and rock carrying the soundless music.

可是倘若他只安于发见而不求表现，或表现而不能以建筑家意匠的手腕，音乐家震荡的情绪，来建造一座能歌能泣的水晶宫殿，他还不过是哲学家而不是诗人。[...] 一般诗人所不胜眷恋萦回，叹息吟咏者，对于我们底诗人，却只是点缀到真底圣寺沿途底花草。虽然这一花一草都为他展示一个深沉的世界；却只是构成巍峨的圣寺的木石，虽然这一木一石都满载无声的音乐。⁵⁸⁴

The first half of this statement presents Liang's argument concerning the two important elements of poetry: the form of the poem and the discovery (of truth). The second part focuses on 'the truth'. For Liang, the momentary sentiments of a poet can be used, but to a greater poet, such as Valéry, these are merely decorations and 'masonry'. Liang is also suggesting what these trivial things are carrying, 'a deep world', and 'soundless music', from which he entitled Valéry a great Symbolist. To common poets, flowers, the moon, birds, or any other image are nothing but a momentary sentiment, but to Symbolists, these things carry 'a deep world' and 'soundless music' because they lead to greater truth. Therefore, 'a deep world' and 'soundless music' indicate the symbolised.

Liang goes on to suggest that Valéry is a student of Mallarmé, who knows how to use words to create music: 'the creator of music that is the most subtle, most rich, most original, and with most complicated words'. [‘那最精微，最丰富，最新颖，最复杂的字的音乐底创造者。’] He says that 'to use words to create music, that is to say, to sublimate poetry to the pure realm of music, is the common intention of all Symbolists, despite their division in approaches'. [‘把文字要创造音乐，就是说，把诗提到音乐

⁵⁸⁴ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:8.

底纯粹的境界，正是一般象征诗人在殊途中共同的倾向。〕⁵⁸⁵ To Liang, a good Symbolist, like Valéry, should not only master the architectural beauty of poetry, but also lead the reader to discover the essence in the poetry through a process of ‘recreating’ [‘重新创造’].⁵⁸⁶ A good poem should not be in only one medium, but should stand outside the art form. A good poem should be ‘a painting full of sweetness, fragrance, songs, and dances, but not a photograph that only has a shape’ [‘充满了甘、芳、歌、舞的图画，不是徒具外表与粗形的照相’]⁵⁸⁷, and it should be able to ‘guide the reader deep into the secrets of the universe and to feel the same pulse between me and the universe’. [引导我们深入宇宙底隐秘，使我们感到我与宇宙间底脉搏之跳动]⁵⁸⁸ Is Shen, therefore, a Symbolist?

The only time Shen directly addresses the question of being a Symbolist is in ‘The Housewife’ [《主妇》] (1945), where he writes that ‘someone says I am a Symbolist, and I will not argue. Maybe he was referring to me as a person, not my writings, but what is written resembles its writer, so fair enough’. [所以有人说我是一个象征主义者，我从不分辨。他指的也许是人，不是文章。然而“文如其人”，也马马虎虎。]⁵⁸⁹ Liu Hongtao uses this to prove that Shen related himself with Symbolism.⁵⁹⁰ However, it does not necessarily mean that he admitted to be a Symbolist. First, ‘The Housewife’ was published and later anthologised as a work of fiction, although the characters seem to indicate Shen and his wife (for example, their wedding anniversary, like that of the characters, is September 9th). Second, Shen’s undertone in this quote suggests an almost self-mocking denial – ‘as a person, not my writings [...] fair enough’. It may be a little imprudent to state that Shen claims to be a Symbolist, based on this statement in a work of ‘fiction’, semi-autobiographic though it may be. However, Shen was never far away from the group of Symbolists among Chinese writers. Also, according to Liu Hongtao, in his early career, Shen wrote poems like ‘Dream’ [《梦》] (1926) and ‘Untitled’ [《无题》] (1926), which resemble Baudelaire (or via the Chinese

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:20.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:22

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:314.

⁵⁹⁰ Liu, *The World View of Twentieth Century Chinese Literature*, p. 147.

poet Li Jinfā [李金发], 1900 – 1976) and imply Shen's contact with Symbolism.⁵⁹¹ Although not directly shown in Shen's poetry, the themes of 'human arts not able to describe beauty' and 'soundless music' also occupy Li Jinfā's poetry. For instance, as Li Jinfā writes in 'Gentleness' [《温柔》], 'I play all the music, / but nothing can please your ears; / I painted all the colours, /but cannot illustrate your beauty' [‘我奏尽音乐之声, /无以悦你耳; /染了一切颜色, /无以描你的美丽。’],⁵⁹² and, in 'Love and Hate' [《爱憎》], 'Our hearts are full of soundless music, / like the shaking of the light air in space.' [‘我们的心充满无音之乐, /如空间轻气的颤动。’]⁵⁹³ It is almost certain that this idea was borrowed from French Symbolists by Li Jinfā, although not exactly certain which one, as Li was very familiar with many French Symbolists. He even quotes Verlaine (1844 – 1896) (who also wrote the famous *Romances sans paroles*) to start this very poem, 'Soyons scandaleux sans plus nous gêner',⁵⁹⁴ from Verlaine's *Chansons pour elle*. In Chapter 3, I have already discussed, in detail, Shen's expressions of such Symbolist and intermedia related quotations, such as '[it] was a painting without colour, a song without sound or imitation, and a poem without words',⁵⁹⁵ and 'we know beauty, approach beauty, but silence is the only suitable way in which we can do so. Humans' songs, like humans' words, are both rather simple and poor. What can be sung or written is no more than the superficial gain and loss, happiness and sadness of life'.⁵⁹⁶ Therefore, it is very likely that the similar ideas present in Shen's works have their roots in French Symbolism.

It seems that Shen stands always on the edge of Symbolism. Yet, if Liang considers 'using words to create music' a prime shared intention of Symbolists, maybe Shen's works could be examined from this angle.

In 1935, Liang started to host a column entitled *Poetry Special* [《诗特刊》] in *Tao Kung Pao*, under Shen's editorship. This, according to Zhang Jieyu, started a new movement

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.148.

⁵⁹² Li Jinfā, 'Gentleness' [《温柔》], in Chinese Poetry Database [中华诗库] <http://www.shigeku.org/shiku/xs/lijinfa.htm#7> [access 13 September 2015]

⁵⁹³ Li Jinfā, 'Love and Hate' [《爱憎》], in Chinese Poetry Database [中华诗库] <http://www.shigeku.org/shiku/xs/lijinfa.htm#7> [access 13 September 2015]

⁵⁹⁴ The quote is in French, and Li quotes as 'Soyons scandaleux sans plus vous gêner', to be exact.

⁵⁹⁵ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:88.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:363.

in modern Chinese poetry, and a large and influential range of poets were involved, including Symbolists like Bian Zhilin and Dai Wangshu. Zhang Jieyu suggests that Shen, as the chief editor of *Tao Kung Pao*'s 'Artistic and Literature Supplement', wrote 'The Old Accounts of New Poetry' [《新诗的旧账》] to introduce the column, in every way echoing and supporting Liang, including Liang's ideas on the form of poetry.⁵⁹⁷ Like Liang, Shen asserts that, 'if poetry wants its effect, words and form can help it' [诗要效果, 词藻与形式能帮助它完成效果]. Together, Liang and other participating poets, as well as the editors of *Ta Kung Pao*, were trying to create a new experimental field for 'pure poetry' which could bridge traditional Chinese poetry, Western poetry, and Chinese New Poetry.⁵⁹⁸ As mentioned above, although Shen did write some poems, he is never seen as a poet. His early free verses, except for a few, bear obvious marks of imitation. That makes his involvement with the poets and poetic movement, as described Zhang Jieyu, intriguing, as he had no intention of being a poet at that time.

As shown in the diagram above, musicality in poetry can be the physical musicality as well as what is beyond the material elements of poetry. As the chief editor of *Tao Kung Pao*, Shen was inevitably at least a witness to the discussion, and it makes one wonder if there is anything about such discussion that may have influenced Shen's prose writing. Baudelaire asks rhetorically, 'who has not, in bouts of ambition, dreamt this miracle, a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme, supple and choppy enough to accommodate the lyrical movement of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the bump and lurch of consciousness?'⁵⁹⁹ Thus according to him, what determines if literature is poetic or not depends on whether it is musical, and such musicality has nothing to do with form, rhythm or rhyme.

Among the discussions in *Poetry Special*, opinions differ, as Zhang Jieyu points out. For example, Luo Niansheng, by comparing Chinese poetry to classical English poetry, holds that the key to the metrical pattern of Chinese New Poetry should depend on 'the meter determined by the stressed and unstressed syllables' rather than 'ping-ze' ([平仄]: level and oblique tone).⁶⁰⁰ So, should poets use metrics to create audible music in

⁵⁹⁷ Zhang, 'An Experiment and Debate on Rhymes in New Poetry', p. 29.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, trans. by Martin Sorrell (Surrey: Oneworld Classics Ltd., 2010), p. 3.

⁶⁰⁰ Zhang, 'An Experiment and Debate on Rhymes in New Poetry', p. 31.

poetry? No; Ye Gongchao, quoted by Zhang, thinks that ‘music is the ideal type of art, because only in music can form and content be united’ [‘音乐是一种最理想的艺术，因为唯有在音乐里形式与内容是根本合一的’].⁶⁰¹ However, to French Symbolists like Mallarmé, actual pieces of music are not the issue in such circumstances; instead, ‘music’ means ‘the idea or category of music’.⁶⁰² As for words, Ye thinks that, although words have shape, sound, and meaning, the most important element is meaning; the rest are only the media to express meaning.⁶⁰³ Luo and Ye together represent two sides of the argument – poetry should be metrics-focused or meaning-focused. However, Liang, in addition to his emphasis on metrics (including ping-ze), also says that a single word has no individual value, but is only an element in poetry, and that, according to Mallarmé, ‘a line in poetry consists of a group of words that have magical power and are complete, brand new, and unfamiliar to its original language’ [‘一句诗是由几个字组成的一个完全，簇新，与原来的语言陌生并具有符咒力量的字。’].⁶⁰⁴ According to Acquisto, ‘Mallarmé highlights the gap between sound and sense [...] to privilege the sound of a poetic word in order to highlight poetic musicality’.⁶⁰⁵ The sound of a poetic word is not the same thing as poetic musicality, in Luo and Ye’s thinking. A poet has to focus on the power of words and language, but in order to create inaudible music. Shen also pays great attention to the ‘magical power of words’ [‘文字的魔力’]: ‘painting needs colour and it needs the painter to know how to blend colours. If a writer does not pay attention to the use of words, then he/she cannot express good thinking even when there is any’ [‘作画需要颜色且需要会调弄颜色。一个作家不注意文字，有好思想也表达不出这种好思想。’].⁶⁰⁶ Liang and Shen mean similar things, that artists should know how to use their materials. However, Liang indicates that the meaning of words in poetry does not come from the literal meaning of a single word, but from ‘organisation’⁶⁰⁷ of the words. At the same time, as an advocate of ‘pure poetry’, Liang sets out its definition in ‘About Poetry’ [《谈诗》]:

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰² Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Aldershot, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 48-49.

⁶⁰³ Zhang, ‘An Experiment and Debate on Rhymes in New Poetry’, p. 31.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music*, p. 47.

⁶⁰⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 18:204.

⁶⁰⁷ Such term of ‘organisation’ as discussed in Chapter 2.

The so-called pure poetry discards all objective landscape writing, narration, reasoning, and over-sentimental emotions, and only depends on the elements that form its body – music and colour – to bring about a suggestive power almost like a spell, in order to arouse the reaction of our senses and imagination, and to redeem our souls into a spiritual and bright heavenly realm. Like music, it is an absolutely independent, absolutely freer and purer and more immortal universe than reality; its own phonology (metrics) and colours are its inherent reason for existence.

所谓纯诗，便是摒除一切客观的写景，叙事，说理以至感伤的情调，而纯粹凭藉那构成它底形体的原素——音乐和色彩——产生一种符咒似的暗示力，以唤起我们感官与想像底感应，而超度我们底灵魂到一种神游物表的光明极乐的境域。像音乐一样，它自己成为一个绝对独立，绝对自由，比现世更纯粹，更不朽的宇宙；它本身音韵和色彩底密切混合便是它底固有的存在理由。⁶⁰⁸

This does not mean that poets should actually use notes and paints to create pure poetry, but rather to sway the magical power of words to create ‘music and colour’, which then become the elements of pure poetry. What Zhang Jieyu points out perceptively in this definition is that Liang uses ‘like music’ rather than ‘through music’, which means that Liang never means to equate music with metrics.⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, Liang has no intention of applying the form of music to the form of poetry. More importantly, Liang considers poetry as parallel to music, rather than an art form that depends on music. The music here is soundless. In 1972, Shen wrote a letter to his wife, reviewing some of his old works:

My stories and proses have the essence of poetry, they are even more like poetry than many ‘great poets’! I personally think there is melody of music in them; they are very good pieces of music as far as I am concerned! Yet not many professionals in music would agree.

故事散文中也有诗情流注，比许多“大诗人”分行写的更像诗！我自己却以为有音乐旋律在其中，还自以为即很好的乐章！可是很少有搞音乐的内行认可。⁶¹⁰

Here, Shen considers good poetry to be music, and it echoes with Baudelaire’s ideal to have poetic prose that is music in it. However, this must not be sounding music but soundless music, as stories and proses even lack the sounding musicality of

⁶⁰⁸ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:87

⁶⁰⁹ Zhang, ‘An Experiment and Debate’, p. 33.

⁶¹⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 23:185.

conventional poetry. Shen sometimes even goes a step further from common poets, in that he tries to create a piece of art that combines all media; as already analysed in Chapter 3 (see above, p.104), Shen experiments with ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ and ‘Accounts of Plucking Stars’ by ‘blending the three different creative methods of lyrical poetry, watercolour painting, and symphony’⁶¹¹ to create pure art, which is more similar to Liang’s idea of pure poetry, which hovers in between, yet beyond, all.

Zhang Jieyu makes another interesting argument that Liang’s theory of pure poetry, which follows his mentor Valéry, aims at a higher form of literary ideal: Liang suggests that poets should use metrics to improve pure poetry’s musicality, and, in order to achieve that, a poet needs to consider the special features of the Chinese language. He argues that, by combining principles of poetry of the West and of the East, this highest standard of pure poetry could be achieved.⁶¹²

However, what exactly is this highest state of art and who can be the judge of it? Zhang does not give a clear answer. Maybe it is true that this state is not entirely unreachable, as Liang suggests in his description of Valéry’s poetry:

It does not indirectly knock on the door of our understanding, but, instead, it directly tells us the secrets of our perception and imagination, though perhaps not plainly. On this matter, the poetry of Valéry, we may say, has already reached music, the purest and highest state of art.

它并不是间接叩我们底理解之门，而是直接地，虽然不一定清晰地，诉诸我们底感觉和现象之堂奥。在这一点上，梵乐希底诗，我们可以说，已经达到音乐，那最纯粹，也许是最高的艺术底境界了。⁶¹³

This recalls Goethe’s idea, discussed previously, that ‘music [creates] mood’, and it echoes what Suzanne Bernard writes, ‘true music, capable of speaking to the mind more than to the senses, is poetry’.⁶¹⁴ True music and true poetry, are both ‘the purest and highest state of art’. Other than Valéry, Liang may have never crowned anyone so clearly with this honour. Modest or not, Liang thinks that he himself is still on the way to the state of art, or the state of truth, as suggested previously, rather than having

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24:378.

⁶¹² Zhang, ‘An Experiment and Debate’, pp. 34-36.

⁶¹³ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:20.

⁶¹⁴ Suzanne Bernard, quoted and trans. by Acquistio, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music*, p. 56.

achieved it. Whether an unreachable ideal or not for Liang, this state of poetry is definitely even harder for Shen to achieve as a novelist in this context.

Since the topic of ‘music as the ideal state of art’ is a central discussion in *Poetry Special*, we have reason to believe that Shen witnessed these discussions and then formed his own thoughts.

Shen praises music as the highest form of art several times – ‘to describe an abstract and beautiful impression, words are not as good as paintings, paintings are not as good as mathematics, and mathematics is not as good as music.’⁶¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, in his later career, he constantly declares that, if he had been able to become a musician, he would have the best way to preserve beauty. This, we can now see, may have much to do with Symbolist ideas. Shen’s ideas on music and words, the individual and the universe, resemble Liang’s ideas. Shen may have had other sources, like the Symbolists in Southwestern University Association from 1938–1946, but Liang is the easiest source to pin down. After all, if Shen could recall their session listening to music and literary ideas being shared about seventeen years previously, Liang’s ideas could have been very influential.

As Shen sets out in ‘The Lyricism of Abstraction’ [《抽象的抒情》]:

When life is developing, change is normality, conflict is normality, and destruction is normality. Life itself cannot congeal. When it congeals, it is then near death or actually dies. Only by transferring it to words, to images, to musical notes, to rhythm, can one form of life or one state of life be congealed, and it will produce another kind of existence and continuity of life, through a long time and distant space, connecting with another person from another time or another place, with no barrier.

生命在发展中，变化是常态，矛盾是常态，毁灭是常态。生命本身不能凝固，凝固即近于死亡或真正死亡。惟转化为文字，为形象，为音符，为节奏，可望将生命某一种形式，某一种状态，凝固下来，形成生命另外一种存在和延续，通过长长的时间，通过遥遥的空间，让另外一时另一地生存的人，彼此生命流注，无有阻隔。⁶¹⁶

Just as Beethoven kills harmonious sounds to create something else, writers can congeal one state with words, sentence it to death but give it another form of existence. Such

⁶¹⁵ Refer to Chapter 2.

⁶¹⁶ Shen, *Complete Works*, 16:527.

ideas have developed from Beethoven to the French Symbolists, and were, apparently, received by Shen.

At the same time, while explaining Baudelaire's 'Correspondances', Liang states that 'all the objects and phenomena of the universe [...] are only a link on the infinite life chain, sharing the same pulse and blood' ['宇宙间一切事物和现象 [...] 其实只是无限之生底链上的每个圈儿, 同一的脉搏和血液在里面绵延不绝地跳动和流通着'],⁶¹⁷ because,

the diverse world is no more than the incarnation of the spirit of the universe: where life reaches, it changes into various phenomena and shows through every visible thing in the Flower Garland;⁶¹⁸ such process, as we know, originally is an important prime motive of life.

这大千世界不过是宇宙底大灵底化身: 生机到处, 它便幻化和表现为万千的气象与华严的色相一一表现, 我们知道, 原是生底一种重要的原动力。⁶¹⁹

Liang perhaps finds the similarity between Baudelaire and Oriental Buddhism, just like Kuriyagawa, but he understands Symbolism deeply. For Liang, 'the way of Symbolism can be explained by one word – correspondence' ['象征之道也可以一以贯之, 曰, “契合”而已。]。⁶²⁰ I believe that Baudelaire's 'correspondence' and Kuriyagawa's 'universality' ['共通性'] are connected, or, in fact, mean the same thing. They both work, according to Liang, through the pulse that all lives in the universe share, as if echoing the same sound wave. In 'Obtained from the Music of Beethoven', Shen declares 'music, indeed, has its greatness, / it is told through the **universal**⁶²¹ emotion, / it is fairer and purer than words /and full of friendship and true love.' [音乐实有它的伟大, /即诉之于**共通**情感, /比文字语言更公正, 纯粹, /又充满人的友爱和至情。]。⁶²² I believe that, here, Shen's 'universal emotion' ['共通情感'] comes from

⁶¹⁷ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:70-71

⁶¹⁸ Buddhist term, refers to that in *Flower Garland Sutra*, also known as *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which expresses the idea that the cosmos is in fact realms containing realms, infinitely: 'All in One, One in All. The All melts into a single whole.'

Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History* (New York; London: Prentice Hall Macmillan, 1994), p. 47.

⁶¹⁹ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:70-71

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:68.

⁶²¹ I believe here the word 'universal' ['共通 (gong tong)'] comes from 'universality' ['共通性 (gong tong xing)'].

⁶²² Shen, *Complete Works*, 15:222.

Kuriyagawa's 'universality' [‘共通性’]. Music is fairer and purer than words because it connects lives; it passes through senses rather than through rationality.

Both Liang and Shen imply that we are nothing but one part of the universe, and, when they mention life, it is not only a person's actual life, but also, more metaphorically, a greater life. For Shen, life cannot be congealed because the pulse needs to be carried on. Through music, or the kind of poetry that is 'like music', this life can reach further.

Therefore, Liang Zongdai can be considered a very important influence on Shen's understanding of Symbolism and the relationship between words and music. Shen may have gained a perceptual understanding of Symbolism through poets like Li Jinfu, in order to know how to use images to indicate something else. He may also have gained a broad idea from Xu Zhimo that 'everything is music'. He may have read works of writers like Goethe and feared that no human art can capture beauty. However, being an editor of *Ta Kung Pao's* 'Literary and Artistic Supplement' and a friend of Liang, Shen achieved a more rational and systematic idea of Symbolism and music from Liang's theories, and pushed his own works into a more abstract universe.

5.5 Nietzsche

Liang Zongdai first started to publish works in *Ta Kung Pao* in 1934, therefore Shen should have known him since then. However, most of Shen's works that show his influence appear from both the late 1930s, and then the early 1940s. While Shen may have taken a few years to absorb Liang's ideas into his own writings, there may have been other influences. There is, for example, one that Shen mentioned in particular: Nietzsche.

In Huang Huaijun's conference paper, 'Shen Congwen and Nietzsche' [《沈从文与尼采》], he presents a very detailed list of when, where, and what Shen has quoted from, or mentioned concerning, Nietzsche.⁶²³ In his analysis, Shen not only sees Nietzsche as a philosopher, but, more importantly, as a writer and an aesthete.⁶²⁴ What Huang has brought up is Shen's acceptance of Nietzsche's 'will to power' and his admiration of the

⁶²³ See to Chapter 4.

⁶²⁴ Huang Huaijun, 'Shen Congwen and Nietzsche', pp. 50-51.

primitive life force.⁶²⁵ However, Huang mostly focuses on Shen's uses of Nietzsche's 'superman' theory and on his use of Nietzsche to enlighten Chinese society using words, and lacks a thorough analysis of how Shen was influenced by Nietzsche aesthetically, let alone on the matter of music.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche repeatedly mentions Dionysian music. Although there was no complete Chinese translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* until the 1980s, there were different Chinese translations of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,⁶²⁶ in which Zarathustra represents the spirit of Dionysus. Additionally, many scholars mentioned *The Birth of Tragedy* and Dionysian music in their works, such as Zhu Guangqian.⁶²⁷

Nietzsche's Dionysian theory not only calls for celebration of the life force, but also connects music with it. According to Kathleen Higgins, Dionysian awareness could be restored by music: 'specifically, it has the power to communicate the Dionysian sense that fundamentally existence – all that is entailed by "being alive" – is something that the listener can share with others'.⁶²⁸ This links in with what was discussed previously about Kuriyagawa's theory of life impulse. Another reason why music can restore this Dionysian sense is because this kind of music can arouse the human unconsciousness of being alive to consciousness. The life-impulse that is shared between all beings is in one way or another what Higgins means by 'existence'. This kind of life-force lives in Shen's works about the Miao people. Shen finds the life-force that the philosophers describe in his own home region, which modernity had yet to reach. For example, in *Fengzi*, Shen writes about the countryside of the Miao, which contrasts the modern city:

But here everything is alive. There is life everywhere. This life is flowing in every quiet corner, overflowing from everyone's heart. Everything is forever tranquil, it only needs a little bit of singing from someone, and the singing will have a pair of shapeless wings and fly away. Anywhere touched by the

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶²⁶ Huang Huaijun [黄怀军], 'Modern Chinese Writers and F. Nietzsche' [《中国现代作家与尼采》] (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sichuan, 2007), Appendix 1.

⁶²⁷ For example, Zhu Guangqian's *The Psychology of Tragedy: a critical study of various theories of tragic pleasure* (1933), which was later translated and collected in *Collections of Works on Aesthetics by Zhu Guangqian* [《朱光潜美学文集》]. In the preface of the Chinese translation of *The Psychology of Tragedy*, Zhu admits what take rooted in his mind are 'the spirits of Dionysus and Apollo.' [‘尼采的《悲剧的诞生》中的酒神精神和日神精神。’]

Zhu, *Collections of Works on Aesthetics*, 5:286.

⁶²⁸ Kathleen Higgins. 'Nietzsche on Music', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4(1986), pp. 663-672 (pp. 666-667).

singing, there will be light and happiness. Only when I come here do I understand that I am alive, and understand the obscure things I read from books.

可是这地方到处都是活的，到处都是生命，这生命洋溢于每一个最僻静的角隅，泛滥到各个人的心上，一切永远是安静的，但只需要一个人一点点的歌声，这歌声就生了无形的翅膀各处飞去，凡属歌声所及处，就有光辉与快乐。我到这里才明白我是一个活人，且明白许多书上永远说得模糊的种种。⁶²⁹

In fact, the gathering in which the Miao people sing and dance is an Oriental reappearance of Dionysian music and dance in modern times. Shen knows that either the folk music that he depicts in his regional works that brings people together in a natural world or the abstract music (the first-class music) Shen would use to represent ‘the shape of life’⁶³⁰ carries Nietzsche’s Dionysian sense. According to Kinkley, in Shen’s works, there are two types of life force: ‘living’ [生活 *sheng huo*] – ‘man’s existence as an animal, seeking food and sex’ – and ‘life’ [生命力 *sheng ming li*] – ‘that which seeks “the Abstract”’.⁶³¹

Shen gives an example of Miao gathering in ‘Mountain Ghost’ [《山鬼》]:

When it comes to a singing gathering, those single young men are in spotlight. They need to be nifty, and need to know the tricks of making children laugh as well as unintentionally taking old women’s tears and young girls’ love. Those who win the most mountain berries and sweet potatoes from children are the folksong masters. To light the fire of love in young girls’ hearts, folksongs are like lamp wicks (the position of art was already placed rather high in a primitive society).

遇到唱山歌时节，这里只有那少壮孤身长年的分的。又要俏皮，又要逗小孩子笑，又同时能在无意中掠取当场老婆子的眼泪与青年少女的爱情的把戏，是算长年们最拿手的山歌。得小孩们山莓红薯一类供养最多，是教山歌的师傅，把少女心中的爱情的火把燃起来，除了山歌是像除了引线灯芯一类东西。（艺术的地位，在一个原始社会里，无形中得到较高安置了。）⁶³²

This kind of music has one purpose – seeking a partner – which serves Kinkley’s first type of life force. This is a fine example of Dionysian music. In this kind of musical

⁶²⁹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 7:139.

⁶³⁰ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:117.

⁶³¹ Kinkley, *Odyssey*, p. 222.

⁶³² Shen, *Complete Works*, 3:347-348.

environment, people could free their true selves and pursue love without bounds. The comment in the bracket added by Shen confirms his high esteem of art in a primitive society. This kind of Dionysian music is indispensable in a primitive world, and in order to create a primitive condition, such music is also requisite. Cox explains through Nietzsche's words, "The Dionysian [music] affirms "the mysterious primordial unity", "the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being".⁶³³ For Western writers, myths, especially ancient Greek myths, as the root of Western civilisation, are often used in creating such primordial unity, while, Shen goes back to an environment which is similar to that in Western mythology and primitive society (as stated previously, Shen considers Chinese and Western mythology share the similar causes of development; see above, n.425). Shen's fascination with such music results from his realisation of the 'fusion' between his 'shattered self' and the 'primal being'. Such realisation was developed only after Shen went to Beijing and encountered various May Fourth literary works which involve the import of Western materials. His study of the related literature inspired him and finally led him to touch upon the fundamental 'existence' – the essence of life, the force of life.

As already shown in Chapter 1, there are three types of folksongs that frequently appear in Shen's regional works: the love songs, the work songs, and the ritual songs. Love songs and work songs celebrate the most primal existence, as they are for seeking sex and survival, representing 'the shape of life' as Kinkley categorises as the first type of life force. Quoted in Chapter 1, Shen writes: 'that sound, that fire, it is close to a weapon of primitive people' [那声音, 那火光, 皆近于原始人类的武器] (see above, n.63). Work songs, as well as the noise people make while working, are considered powerful by Shen. Such power is born in nature, but also against nature, and will finally die out in industrial modern society.

Because of the widely available introductions to and discussions of Nietzsche, his ideas concerning Dionysian music, the dancing and singing associating the ancient gods must have been made known in China.⁶³⁴ While Shen may have been inspired by the

⁶³³ Christoph Cox, 'Nietzsche, Dionysus, and the Ontology of Music' in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006), p. 495-514 (pp. 500).

⁶³⁴ This thesis is not going to do a detailed study of exactly how much Nietzsche was translated and discussed in China, but Shen observed the students in Beijing were very interested in Nietzsche as early as

anthropologists to use folksongs, the similarity between some folksongs Shen writes about and Nietzsche's Dionysian music is undeniable. It is thus possible that Shen also derived his ideas from Nietzsche, via the introductions and translations, to describe very similar ritual music from West Hunan:

The shaman changed into a satin robe, red as blood, with a pair of cyan felted shoes, a copper sword, an ox horn, and a magic object made of multi-colour silk [...]. His assistant rolled the drums and arose the gongs, and when he lit three clay crackers, the shaman entered the stage, all dressed. He started by blowing into the carved ox horn, which could control the forces of nature and summon the demons and gods. The sound, shrill and rising, spread throughout the wilderness until it reached heaven. The shaman danced and knelt around the altar with a slow and solemn posture, while he sang with a low and sad voice. He echoed it with the grand sound of the golden drums, dancing and singing.

巫师换上了鲜红如血的缎袍，穿上了青绒鞋，拿一把铜剑，一个牛角，一件用杂色缙帛作成的法物 [...] 助手擂鼓鸣金，放了三个土炮，巫师就全幅披挂的上了场。起始吹角，吹动那个呼风唤雨召鬼乐神的镂花牛角，声音凄厉而激扬，散播原野，上通天庭。用一种缓慢而严肃的姿式，向斗坛跪拜舞蹈。且用一种低郁歌声，应和宏壮的金鼓声，且舞且唱。⁶³⁵

The second rite was a god-summoning, performed by the shaman's two assistants. The gods would come from different directions, so the two assistants were wearing short embroidered clothes, depicting the clouds. They somersaulted agilely and beautifully, to present the flowing auspicious clouds. They sang songs to entertain the gods and called out the legendary names (many of the names were those of the heroes and wise men in history; every name would arouse a chorus of cheering from around the stage). They then chanted the names of the sacred mountains and places, praising the beauty of them, but concluding with the hospitality and love of the local people for the gods, urging the latter to join the people at this fine time.

第二趟法事是迎神，由两个巫师助手表演。诸神既从各方面前来参加，所以两个助手各换上一件短短绣花衣服，象征天空云彩，在场中用各种轻便优美姿式前后翻着筋斗，表示神之前进时五彩祥云流动。一面引喉唱歌娱神，且提出种种神名。（多数是历史上的英雄贤士，每提出一个名字时，场坪四隅和声的必用欢呼表示敬意。）又唱出各种灵山圣境的名称，且颂扬它的好处，然后归结却以为一切好处都不

1923 (Shen, *Complete Works*, 27:414), and in the 1940s, Nietzsche was repeatedly featured in the journal, *Warring States*, which Shen was associated with (see above, p.122).

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7:159.

及当地人对神的亲洽和敬爱，乘好天良夜来这里人神同悦更有意思。

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Such music is beyond reason, and falls in with what Nietzsche describes as Dionysian: it is intoxicating and instinctual; it is pure sensation and a celebration of nature; it kills individuality and boundaries; it is no longer a mere creation by the artist, but a gathering full of vitality. The celebration of Dionysian music in Nietzsche's philosophy has inspired modern Western, as well as Chinese, writers. Liang Zongdai translated Pierre Louÿs's *Le Crépuscule des Nymphes*:

The God, the God appeared!

[...]

'O Dionysus!' said she,

The sea immersed in the clear dark night.

The God stretched out five fingers and spoke in a voice deep and tender.

'Get up! I am the awakening.

Get up! I am the life.

Give me your hand...

Come with me...

This is the Way to Eternal Peace ...'⁶³⁷

神，神显现了。

[...]

“翟阿尼梭斯啊！”她说，

幽明的夜浸着海面。

神把五指向前伸，带着严肃而慈怜的声音说：

“起来！我是醒悟。

起来！我是生命。

挽着我底手……

随我来……

这是永久安息的路了……”⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:160.

⁶³⁷ Le Dieu, le Dieu parut!

[...]

«O Dionysos!», dit-elle.

La nuit claire et sombre était dans la mer.

Le Dieu tendit les doigts en avant et parla, d'une voix grave et tendre.

«Lève-toi! Je suis le réveil.

Lève-toi! Je suis la vie.

Donne-moi la main...

Viens avec moi...

Voici le Chemin de la Paix Eternelle...»

Pierre Louÿs, 'Ariane, ou le chemin de la paix éternelle', in *Le Crépuscule des Nymphes*

<<http://www.mediterranees.net/romans/nymphes/ariane.html>> [accessed 7 January 2016]

The English translation is mine.

⁶³⁸ Liang, *Collected Works*, 4:330.

The god who is ‘reawakening’ and ‘life’ is like the gods in Shen’s *Fengzi*. With all the translations of Nietzsche and the literary works relevant to his ideas available to Shen, it is not surprising that Shen would bring scenes from his home region that echo Nietzsche’s ideas to modern Chinese literature. The music described in the quotations from *Fengzi* brings people to the highest position, to approach the divine, and is driven by the will to power.

Nietzsche’s ideas on music stem from those of Schopenhauer; they both hold that ‘music directly objectifies the struggles of the will, which – as the reality behind the phenomenal world – is in a constant state of turbulence within itself.’⁶³⁹ In the Schopenhauer-Nietzsche line of philosophy, people see the noumenal world through the will, which can be expressed through music, as ‘music is the representation of the chaotic noumenal world bursting into the ordered phenomenal one’.⁶⁴⁰ According to Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, while other arts are ‘a copy of a phenomenon’, music is ‘an immediate copy of the will itself’.⁶⁴¹ Therefore, Nietzsche believes that, although music does not illustrate or describe any phenomenal fact, it affects people much more deeply than any other kind of art, because it resembles the nuance of will. Or, as Higgins puts it, ‘music [...] directly expresses the ground of being that underlines all existence’.⁶⁴²

When discussing why music is crucial to Nietzsche, Benson remarks:⁶⁴³

First, Nietzsche thinks that music allows us to face the tragedy of human existence, not so much in the sense of a diversion [...] but as a means of ‘speaking’ about life. There are things that can be ‘said’ musically – or perhaps sung – that cannot be said philosophically. Second, though closely related, Nietzsche makes an important distinction between ‘little reason’ (which we could term conscious reason) and ‘great reason’ (which we could term unconscious reason or the body). [...] And, as it turns out, whereas words communicate to reason, music communicates to the body. Further, that language is always metaphorical – and so never delivers to us the ‘thing itself’ –

⁶³⁹ Kathleen Higgins. ‘Nietzsche on Music’, p.668.

⁶⁴⁰ Linda L. Williams, *Nietzsche’s Mirror: The World as Will to Power* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p.5.

⁶⁴¹ Nietzsche, quoted in Williams, *Nietzsche’s Mirror: The World as Will to Power*, p.6.

⁶⁴² Higgins, ‘Nietzsche on Music’, p. 670.

⁶⁴³ Bruce Ellis Benson, ‘Nietzsche’s Musical Askesis for Resisting Decadence’, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 34(2007), 28-46 (pp. 30).

makes music all the more significant (because Nietzsche thinks it has a directness unlike that of language).

Third, music proves ecstatic for Nietzsche. It has the power to take us out of ourselves, both to allow us to see the world in a different way and also to transform us. [...] Fourth, Nietzsche believes that music has a ‘swaying’ power over us, not merely emotionally but even intellectually. ‘With tones,’ he writes, ‘one can seduce people into every error and every truth’. Fifth, and most important, music can restore the order of the soul [...]⁶⁴⁴

In short, music does not speak through explanation but strikes directly at our unconscious and soul. In Shen’s writing, what Shen intends to use music to present is not the phenomenal world, but rather the noumenal world. What is the noumenal world? It is will. It may be chaotic, but it is the reflection of a writer’s mind rather than ‘facts’. Such an idea of using music to present the noumenal appears in Shen’s ‘Green Nightmare’, quoted in Chapter 3, that only the noumenal of life is like ‘a great piece of music’ (see above, n.248). Interestingly, in ‘Three Women’, which is also addressed in Chapter 3, Shen particularly uses the word ‘preserve’ beauty, rather than ‘describe’ (see above, p.87). Now, we can examine this other quotation from Shen:

The meaning of immortality can be either the continuity of blood, or literature and art produced upon various materials. There are also some people who can create a realm from abstraction and in which they become inebriated and thus gain the happiness of immortality.

I do not know much about music, but often want to display this kind of realm with music. It is because this realm cannot be **preserved** by any physical material, such as words or colours (it is not concrete itself, so certainly cannot be preserved by concrete things). If I knew how to use harmonics to compose, I would be able to write music that is ten times as soul-stirring as my writings are now.

To display an abstract and beautiful impression, words are not as good as paintings, paintings are not as good as mathematics, and mathematics is not as good as music. This is because most of what is called ‘beautiful impression’ is closer to what is obtained by sensory experience about concrete facts. To **preserve** this impression using words, it is difficult, though not too difficult. Yet the flowing beauty formed by imagination may only be well-preserved

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and reproduced by music, grand and majestic or gentle and quiet, which is also flowing in abstraction.⁶⁴⁵

Again, Shen uses ‘preserve’ rather than ‘describe’, because music has no descriptive function. Music may be able to ‘display’, but it is still a much more sensory method than to ‘describe’ with words. Also, what Shen is trying to preserve is not a concrete fact, but an abstract impression. As for impression, it cannot be found in the phenomenal world, but only exists in the noumenal world. To achieve this purpose, according to Shen, one needs to grasp the use of harmony.

If the music Nietzsche defines (Dionysian music) can preserve the beauty of the world, it does not only preserve one part of it, but the nature of the world as a whole. According to Nietzsche, ‘the very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general) is carefully excluded as un-Apollonian: namely, emotional power of the tone, the uniform flow of the *melos*, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony’.⁶⁴⁶

If we recall what has been analysed in Chapter 2, Shen, in his writing in the 1940s, was fascinated by the idea of harmony. Shen was never a musician, and knew no rule of practical harmony. What harmony is to him lies in its symbolic meaning. Harmony is the symbolised form, and such form, to both Shen and Nietzsche, means ‘the thing itself’. “‘The price of being an artist’”, said Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, including himself, “is that one perceives what all non-artists call ‘form’ as the ‘thing itself’”,⁶⁴⁷ as quoted by Dahlhaus, who regards this statement as ‘a fundamental aesthetic experience of nineteenth century “modernism”’: the experience that form in art, rather than being a mere manifestation of a thought or a feeling, is a thought in itself’.⁶⁴⁸ To Shen, harmony is the form of music, and thus the content. The material, then, does not matter: it is the form of music, but, at the same time, it is soundless music, colourless painting, and wordless poetry. Shen’s idea again echoes Nietzsche’s as well as the Symbolists’, for example, Verlaine’s *Romances sans paroles*. This can also be perfectly explained by what Louÿs writes in *Le Crépuscule des Nymphes* (translated to Chinese by Liang):

⁶⁴⁵ See above, n.174. The bold words are emphasised by me.

⁶⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Clifton P. Fadiman (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1995), p. 7.

⁶⁴⁷ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, p. 152.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Do not tear the Form because it hides in it the Invisible. We know that there are lovely nymphs locked in these trees, yet when the woodcutter cuts it open, the hamadryad is already dead. We know that behind us there are dancing satyrs and divine nude spirits, but do not turn around: everything would have already disappeared.⁶⁴⁹

切莫把外形撕破，因为它所蕴藏的是无形。我们都知道这些大树里面住了许多绰约的女神，可是樵夫把树儿劈开时，她们早已憔悴死了。我们都知道我们底背后有许多山精和裸体的野灵舞蹈着：但是我们只要一回头，什么都隐灭了。⁶⁵⁰

The truth lives in such form; it is also in the symbols. It cannot be explained but it is the real music. On the subject of Dionysian dithyramb, Nietzsche declares:

The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols; for once the entire Symbolism of the body is called into play, not the mere Symbolism of the lips, face, and speech, but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement. Thereupon the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward, particularly those of music, in rhythmic, dynamics, and harmony.⁶⁵¹

Shen calls for the harmony, not only because of what has been said about Liang Zongdai's 'organisation' of words to create a good poem, but, more importantly, because of a way by which an individual should be connected to the whole world. According to Higgins,

Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer's analysis to the extent that he believes that music expresses the nature of the world as a whole in its operations, rather than expressing particular experiences understood from an individual perspective. [...] Nietzsche argues that music alone can invest myths with the power to convey the Dionysian wisdom that, despite suffering, individual existence is joyous and powerful because it is grounded in the basic unity of all that lives.⁶⁵²

This idea is also not far from what Liang states about humanity being one note of Nature's symphony:

⁶⁴⁹ Il ne faut pas déchirer les Formes, car elles ne cachent que l'Invisible. Nous savons qu'il y a dans ces arbres d'adorables nymphes enfermées, et pourtant quand le bûcheron les ouvre, l'hamadryade est déjà morte. Nous savons qu'il y a derrière nous des satyres dansants et des nudités divines, mais il ne faut pas nous retourner: tout aurait déjà disparu.

Pierre Louÿs, 'Léda, ou la Louange des bienheureuses ténèbres', in *Le Crépuscule des Nymphes* <<http://www.mediterranees.net/romans/nymphes/leda.html>> [accessed 7 January 2016]

⁶⁵⁰ Liang, *Works of Liang Zongdai*, 4:323.

⁶⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 7.

⁶⁵² Higgins, 'Nietzsche on Music', p. 669.

A beam of sunshine, a piece of falling flower, the slightest turbulence of the universe and the countless big or small objects and phenomena in front of us all affect our spiritual life momentarily, remind us of our relationship with the universe, and confirm to us that we are but one note in Nature's symphony – separated, it will lose its reason for existence; together, it can never redeem the meaning of an individual but, at the same time, possess the beautiful music that permeates the stars.

一线阳光，一片飞花，宇宙底最轻微的动荡，和我们眼前无量数的重大或幽微的事物与现象，无不时时刻刻在影响我们底精神生活，及提醒我们和宇宙底关系，使我们确认我们只是大自然底交响乐里的一个音波：离，它要完全失掉它存在的理由；合，它将不独恢复一己底意义，并且兼有那磅礴星辰的妙乐的。⁶⁵³

Higgins writes, 'Nietzsche contends that the sense of membership in a larger world, as it is directly transmitted to the listener in music, is actually a fundamental element involved in all linguistic meaning, though an element that we simply assume preconsciously',⁶⁵⁴ which echoes with what Liang states above. Anything, as small as dust, connects with the universe, like notes in a symphony. It is now clear why, being a life-long fan of music, Shen only seeks in Western classical music to reify the abstract impression in his mind, because he is looking for 'harmony', which is, rather, symbolic and invented by Modernism, but different from the traditional Greek idea of harmony or the technical term in musicology.

5.6 James Joyce

As Chapter 4 already proved, Shen admits to influence from James Joyce. It is also true there have been translations and introductions of Joyce published in journals. The first person who introduced Joyce to China in 1922 was in fact Xu Zhimo,⁶⁵⁵ who was an important figure in Shen's career. However, Xu only briefly introduced *Ulysses*, complimenting Molly's monologue as 'a pure prose', and 'like a big piece of white silk dropping down, a big waterfall hanging upside down, with no traces, what a great work by a great writer' ['像一大匹白罗披泻，一大卷瀑布倒挂，丝毫不露痕迹，真大手笔。']⁶⁵⁶ However, Zhang also points out the mistake of Xu who thought the monologue of Molly to be over 100 pages, while, when it was published in 1922, it was

⁶⁵³ Liang, *Collected Works*, 2:74-75

⁶⁵⁴ Higgins, 'Nietzsche on Music', p. 671.

⁶⁵⁵ Zhang, 'Joyce in China', p. 51.

⁶⁵⁶ Quoted by Zhang, 'Joyce in China', pp. 51-52.

only 46 pages, which caused Zhang to conclude that Xu was not familiar with the book, or, at least, had not read the original work thoroughly.⁶⁵⁷ Wang Yougui also notes that during the long period between 1922 and 1977, there were scarcely enough translations of works by Joyce to let Chinese readers truly understand his importance and greatness. According to Wang, before 1977, ‘the image of Joyce seems to have become a phantom, a ghost, just like what always happens in his novels. To most Chinese writers and translators, he was only a symbol or a monster, without flesh or blood, without life’. [‘乔伊斯本人的面目也就像他自己小说中经常出现的那样, 似乎成为一个幻影, 一个幽灵。对绝大多数中国文学家和翻译家来说, 他只是一个没有血肉、没有生命的符号或怪物。’]⁶⁵⁸ The scattered introductions of Joyce make him such a symbol of ‘stream of consciousness’ or ‘psychological novels’; he was often introduced alongside Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust. For example, this is how Zhao Jingshen introduced him in 1931, ‘he completely gave himself in to the trend of unconsciousness’ [‘他把自己完全交付给了潜意识的潮流’].⁶⁵⁹

Therefore, seeing Shen admitting the influence from Joyce (see above, n.317) makes one wonder where he learned about Joyce and what he had read. As Shen knew no English, he would have to rely on published translations or on introductions by friends. From the historical facts Zhang and Wang have gathered, they would not be sufficient to make a decisive influence on Shen. If Shen’s shift of writing style in the 1940s is related to Joyce, then only two resources would have been available from which he could have learned about Joyce – his colleagues and students in Kunming (Southwestern University Association) and the Joyce-related articles published during the time. The former is very hard to define, as there is no record, but the latter may also reflect the former, as most of the writers and translators at the time also taught in universities: what is taught can show the trend of publications and vice-versa. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the periodical *Western Literature* [《西洋文学》] contributed much to the not so many existing translations of Joyce (see above, p.136). Among these pieces, ‘Selected Poems of Joyce’, translated by Song Tifen includes Poem V (‘Lean out of the window /

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶⁵⁸ Wang Yougui [王友贵], ‘Joyce in China: 1922-1999’ [《乔伊斯在中国:1922 — 1999》], *Comparative Literature in China*, 2(2000), p. 79-91 (pp.86).

⁶⁵⁹ Zhang, ‘Joyce in China’, p. 54.

Goldenhair [...] and Poem XXXV ('All day I hear the noise of waters / Making moan [...]), from *Chamber Music*, and 'Tutto è Sciolto'.⁶⁶⁰ The three chapters of *Ulysses* (Chapter 2, 14, and 18) translated by Wu Xinghua are not complete, each only covering a very small part from each chapter.⁶⁶¹ What is left are two short stories from *Dubliners*: 'A Painful Case', translated by Guorui in 1941, and 'Eveline' (two different translations in *Ta Kung Pao*: November 17th 1934 by Bian Zhilin, and November 12th 1946 by Wang Zuoliang, after *Ta Kung Pao* resumed following the Sino-Japanese War). It is very unlikely that *Ulysses* could have left any remarkable impact on Shen, if so little of it had been translated; the traces then should lie mostly in *Dubliners* and the pieces of introductions of James Joyce.

According to Shen's own words, what could possibly show an influence from Joyce is *Seven-Colour Nightmares* [《七色魔》] and he calls such influence 'sporadic' (see above, n.317). Scholars researching the relations between Shen and Western literature are wont to quote this statement; however, the clearest link one can actually find is the explanation at the very start of 'Gazing at Rainbows' [《看虹录》]: 'The Shape of One Person's Life in a Twenty-four Hour Period' [‘一个人二十四点钟内生命的一种形式’],⁶⁶² resembling *Ulysses*, which also unfolds in twenty-four hours. Zhang's remarks quoted previously (see above, p.137) on the connection between Shen's 'The Housewife' (1936), 'Rurui' (1941), and Joyce are implausible. 'The Housewife' indeed has the protagonist relating herself to an image of a sunflower and starting to wander in her memory and thoughts, which bears a clear mark of stream of consciousness. However, as mentioned above, Joyce's technique of stream of consciousness is often referred to alongside other writers who use the technique: the influence could be from Proust or Woolf, as both of them were featured in *Ta Kung Pao*. As for Rurui's sexual desire and the connection with Molly, a connection is possible, but also uncertain, as it is already proved that Shen was deeply influenced by psychology and that fighting against sexual repression is a heated topic in early 20th-century China, which means it is probably more likely to be an influence from Freud. Thus, it is possible that Joyce's

⁶⁶⁰ James Joyce, 'Selected Poems of James Joyce' [《乔易士诗选》], trans. by Song Tifen, *Western Literature* [《西洋文学》], 7(1941), 5.

⁶⁶¹ James Joyce, 'Three Excepts from Ulysses' [《友律色斯插话三节》], trans. by Wu Xinghua, *Western Literature* [《西洋文学》], 7(1941), 14-21.

⁶⁶² Shen, *Imperfect Paradise*, trans. by Kinkely, p. 463. Shen, *Complete Works*, 10:327.

influence on Shen remains only at the level of a broad idea of stream of consciousness, which takes reader into the flow of the consciousness of the characters rather than a clear objective plotline.

The most detailed introduction to Joyce that Shen is likely to have read is Zhang Zhilian's translation of an excerpt from Edmund Wilson's review of James Joyce in *Axel's Castle*. It mentions *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but puts the emphasis on *Ulysses*. The translated piece of 'James Joyce' [《乔易士论》] writes:

But Joyce has undertaken in [*Ulysses*] not merely to render, with the last accuracy and beauty, the actual sights and sounds among which his people move, but, showing us the world as his characters perceive it, to find the unique vocabulary and rhythm which will represent the thoughts of each. [...] Joyce takes us thus directly into the consciousness of his characters [...] He has, in [*Ulysses*], exploited together, as no writer had thought to do before, the resources both of Symbolism and of Naturalism.⁶⁶³

乔易士不但要以绝对的准确和优美写出他的人物所看见的东西和发出的声音，而且，为了要让我们知道他们心中的世界，他要找到能代表每个人的思想的独一无二的字汇和节奏。[...] 这样乔易士把我们直接带到他人物的意识中去。[...] 在友律色斯里面，他同时利用了象征主义和自然主义的方法，以前[哪]一个作家也没有想到这样去做过。⁶⁶⁴

This comment comes the closest to musicalising Joyce's work in the translated part of the review. Wilson gives brief explanations on how different vocabulary and rhythm work for different characters in *Ulysses*, but, even if Shen read Wilson in translation, he could not have imitated the actual rhythm of language used in *Ulysses*, as too little of the book had been translated at this point. Besides, Shen does not specialise in using such a method for distinguishing characters. Thus, it is more likely that Shen learned something about the 'resources both of Symbolism and Naturalism', and experimented with them. Wilson went on to compare Joyce with Proust, explaining the why he considers Joyce's works involve both Symbolism and Naturalism. According to him, Proust's novel represents 'a falling over into decadence of psychological fiction' and fails to be objective where it should be, while 'Joyce's grasp on his objective world never

⁶⁶³ Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (New York; London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 203-204.

⁶⁶⁴ Edmund Wilson, 'James Joyce (Excerpt)' [《乔易士论(节选)》], trans. by Zhang Zhilian [张芝联], *Western Literature* [《西洋文学》], 7(1941), 22-31 (pp. 29).

slips'.⁶⁶⁵ By this account, most of Shen's works from the 1940s, obscure though they may be, are more towards Joyce in style. For example, in *Ulysses*, 'we know what popular songs they sang', and, in Shen's 'Accounts of Plucking Stars' [《摘星录》], we know what books the characters read which were popular at the time. 'Gazing at Rainbows', which, as mentioned above, has a special link with *Ulysses*, is, in fact, closer to Proust from this perspective. The novel has no names for its characters; it happens during twenty-four hours, but the time is blurred and the story unfolds through the dialogues and letters, as well as through 'my' consciousness and memory; in the end, it is then revealed to be a story 'I' wrote (but we do not know if the story written by 'me' is really what happened to 'me' or is a dream or imagination), as 'I' wrote, 'but to me – just a vestige of Life, the remnants of a dream'.⁶⁶⁶ As already pointed out in Chapter 3, this is an experiment in the poetic novel that some modern Chinese writers tried to create (see above, p.103). 'Gazing at Rainbows' is completely subjective, leaving out everything that could tell the facts from the world like the details of Dublin in *Ulysses*. Thus, although it may show that Shen knew about *Ulysses*, it is not entirely an imitation of it.

The point being made here is that in spite of the admitted influence from Joyce, the influence is more likely to be at the level of the method of stream of consciousness, the overall concentration on the interior monologue, the multidirectional flowing of the consciousness of the characters, and the pursuit of abstraction. All these are also shared by other modern writers, such as Proust and Woolf. However, in terms of music, these writers, including Shen, share more, although such similarity does not necessarily arise from Shen having read specific works by these writers. The previous parts of this Chapter prove that Shen was under the impact of a consistent line of European literary tradition, from Goethe, to Cultural Anthropology and Modern Psychology (both of which massively influenced the development of modern literature), from the philosophy that praises the Will and life force, to Symbolism. Therefore, it is not surprising that Shen also share some aspects of writing with those writers under the same impact.

One thing that these writers have in common is perhaps they all seek the art that surpasses all. Erich Heller suggests that 'the music of modern Europe is the one and only art in which it surpassed the achievement of former ages. This is no accident of

⁶⁶⁵ Wilson, *Axel's Castle*, p. 204.

⁶⁶⁶ See above, n.273.

history: it is speechless triumph of the spirit in a world of words without deeds and deeds without words'.⁶⁶⁷ Shen, on the other side of the world, because of the import of European literature and China's forced entry into the modern world, echoes modern European writers. Admitting that Shen's use of music and its related terminology is not always explicit or coherent (as shown in the analysis in the first three Chapters of this thesis), generally speaking, he shares with the Modernists the reason for his fascination with music as the prior art with which to present the world (especially regarding the concept of music in his later career): 'man's withdrawn and disintegrating inner life can, it seems, be rendered only, or more richly, by music with its ambiguous "reality"'.⁶⁶⁸ Hepburn, when discussing the music in *Dubliners* (with a link to *Ulysses*), suggests that 'the universe that music summons appeals to the ear, like language; unlike language, music does not designate objects in the world. [...] As Bloom notes in *Ulysses* as he listens to strummed piano chords, "Might be what you like, till you hear the words"'.⁶⁶⁹ Music with words on the one hand is more than words as it also contains what can be only expressed through undescriptive melody, but on the other hand, the words limit the music, and lock it to the meaning. Echoing Bloom, Shen in his later career expresses an idea of music that is more than just folksongs or other songs; he gradually turns towards music without words, just as 'Mendelssohn claims that the meaning of music is too precise for language to capture'.⁶⁷⁰

Such ideas, for Shen, became clearer in the 1940s, due to complicated historical and personal contexts. He was at this time a much more established writer than at the start of his career, and certainly would like to seek new frontiers in using words, to create a literature that can be considered music. He claims that 'the effect of music on me either stops my heart from congealing, or allows me to preserve with a group of sounds the old freedom from before I was captured!' [‘音乐对于我的效果，或者正式不让我的心在生活上凝固，却容许在一组声音上，保留我捉住以前的自由！’]⁶⁷¹ The 1940s was an intricate era for Shen, and during this time, he started to feel the limits of

⁶⁶⁷ Erich Heller, quot. by Daniel Melnick, 'Fullness of Dissonance: Music and Reader's Experience of Modern Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2 (1979), 209-222 (p. 210).

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁹ Allan Hepburn, 'Noise, Music, Voice, *Dubliners*', in *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*, ed. by Sebastian D. G Knowles (New York; London: Garland Pub, 1999), pp. 189-212 (pp. 204-205).

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁶⁷¹ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:156.

language so he constantly turned to music, as ‘music communicates in excess of a language; it imparts more than can be taken in or deciphered’⁶⁷² and, in this way, music could again give him ‘the freedom’. On one hand, this was during the most severe war in China’s history, followed by the Civil War that would tear up the country; Shen, now as an established writer and educator, was concerned with the country’s fate but, at the same time, worried that literature (something that, since May Fourth, had transformed the country) would be taken over by politics and so-called morals. On the other hand, after years of being self-contemptuous as a ‘countryman’, Shen had now become a professor in South Western University Association; in a way, he was, according to his earlier definition, among the gentry. However, being back once again in the countryside in Yunnan made him ponder the question of who he was and there was also a growing crack in his marriage. All of this is indicated in the collection of proses, *Seven-colour Nightmare* [《七色魔》], which contains self-reflections on his works and life, memories of the past, thoughts on things happening in the present, and even a re-telling of a Buddhist tale he had read (‘Cyan Nightmare’ [《青色魔》]). It is written in a highly ‘stream-of-consciousness’ way and is full of symbols. At the end of ‘Cyan Nightmare’, Shen writes:

It is darkness before me; the night falls. At the edge of the sky, there is a purple cloud burning. Everything is almost symbol. Emotion originates from a symbol of life. The quirkiness of it is its integration with the incidences in life, and its integrated and quirky shape afterwards. Its existence is neither fixed nor repeatable, but if, to use an abstract word to demonstrate it, – ‘belief’ – it has an eternal meaning. Faith lives forever. [...]

There is an imaginary purple fire burning, and keeping burning in a life with belief, in my life, and in many people’s lives – I understand, I know. But what awaits destruction? Is it the impure individual love and hatred, or the majority’s stupidity and confusion? I ask you, my reader.

跟前一片黑，天已垂暮。天末有一片紫云在燃烧。一切都近于象征。情感原出于一种生命的象征，离奇处是它在人生偶然中的结合。以及结合后的完整而离奇形式。它的存在实无固定性，亦少再现性，然而若付于一个抽象名词上去求实证时，“信仰”，却有它永远的意义。信仰永存。 [...]

⁶⁷² Allan Hepburn, ‘Noise, Music, Voice, Dubliners’, p. 205.

有一点想像的紫火在燃烧中，在有信仰的生命里继续燃烧中；在我生命里也在许多人生命里，我明白，我知道。但是待毁灭的是什么？是个人不纯粹的爱和恨，还是多数的愚蠢和困惑？我问你读者。⁶⁷³

‘Cyan Nightmare’ is the last piece within *Seven-colour Nightmares*, and, with all the dissonance that is happening in life and in mind, in reality and in imagination, Shen finally reaches an abstract belief, burning like fire, and yet asks the question of what it is burning down. For Shen, who may have learnt from Xu Zhimo long ago that ‘everything is music’, the music of modern life does not come in consonance only:

I can hear the noise of an engine combating the air, up high. This is not a simple piece of music. In this semple tune, there is contained the passionate fantasy of poets through the thousands of years and the accuracy and coldness of modern technology, complicatedly blended with the cruelty of war. This phenomenon can only come to existence with a little beautiful emotion of the poets, a pile of math formulae, dozens of kinds of new alloys, and some national dignity generated by modern wars.

我耳边有发动机在高空搏击空气的声响。这不是一种简单音乐，单纯调子中，实包含有前年来诗人的热狂幻想，与现代技术的准确冷静，再加上战争残忍情感相柔和的复杂矛盾。这点诗人美丽的情绪，与一堆数学上的公式，三五十种新的合金，以及一点儿现代战争所争持的民族尊严感，方共同作成这个现象。⁶⁷⁴

In the above quotation, Shen sharply summarises modernity into a piece of music, in which every sound is clashing with another, conflicting, forming dissonance everywhere. Facing such dissonance, Shen reflects that he ‘[tries] to re-mould abstraction using abstraction’ [‘企图用抽象重铸抽象’], while the majority of society ‘tries to rebuild facts from facts’ [‘企图由事实重造事实’].⁶⁷⁵ While the former is ‘a fruitless adventure’ [‘无结果的冒险’], the latter is ‘an emotionless world’ [‘无情感的世故’].⁶⁷⁶

Nevertheless, part of the so-called ‘fruitless adventure’ is the writing of the controversial works like ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ – an abstract remoulding of the abstract imagination or reality.

⁶⁷³ Shen, *Complete Works*, 12:190.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12:165. (‘White Nightmare’ [《白魔》])

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12:190. (‘Cyan Nightmare’ [《青色魔》])

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

According to Melnick, ‘modern fiction formulates the disintegrating shape of human time, with its analogously musical pattern – allusive and suggestive, open-ended and ambiguous, rhythmic and charged with meaning’; and ‘the profounder insight of dissonance sensibility is that modern novel would draw the reader into a new relationship to fiction’.⁶⁷⁷ In such sense, Shen also belongs to the same group of writers Melnick describes. By this point, Shen’s novels are a long way from traditional storytelling mode. When the old social and moral experience would not work now in the disordered modern context, Shen wraps up the dissonance in this world and in his mind into a fragmented narration. As already discussed in Chapter 3, ‘Gazing at Rainbows’ received disastrous criticism, and was labelled as pornography. However, this is exactly the alienation created between the Modernist writer and the reader. This novel is ‘allusive and suggestive, open-ended and ambiguous’; it is not about what is true or what is not, and is not about preaching values, just as Shen writes in the novel: ‘whiteness is the highest virtue incarnate, but you have already surpassed the meaning of the word’.⁶⁷⁸ Therefore, at this point, music in Shen’s works no longer means only what type of music he wove into the story, but the story itself, similar to all the modern novels Melnick analyses, has ‘its analogously musical pattern’, and is ‘rhythmic and charged with meaning’. In this way, Shen stands alongside the Modernist novelists such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, and so on. Shen may have received ‘sporadic’ influence from Joyce, but such influence has a much more complex origin – with or without Shen’s own awareness – an origin which also begets other Modern writers.

⁶⁷⁷ Daniel Melnick, ‘Fullness of Dissonance’, p. 212.

⁶⁷⁸ See above, n. 270, Chapter 3.

Conclusion

The discussion in this thesis proves the importance of the place of music in Shen Congwen's writing. It serves as a gateway to show the various aspects and even the development of Shen's literary ideas.

Shen's encounter with music started with folk music from his beloved home region, West Hunan. Inspired by Western psychology and the Chinese cultural anthropologists who followed Western anthropological approaches, when Shen became a writer, he revisited folk music. He uses the lyrics of folksongs and their background culture to fight against sexual repression, and he uses folk music to show the primitive vitality of the people in West Hunan, as well as their closeness with the divinity through arts.

Other than folk music, Shen pays particular attention to Western classical music.

Evidence shows that Shen could not have had enough knowledge of Western classical music to influence his literary ideas until the mid-1930s, and even after that, having not learned anything about composing or Western musical theory, he could not have used any specific musical technique in writing. That leads to the question of what is 'the method of music composition', or more specifically, the 'harmony', that Shen wishes to use in literary composition. My research argues that what Shen means is a kind of metaphorical harmony, and the concept of music, an art that is in between different arts, which is an abstract art rather than the material art we have.

Shen's ideas and different approaches to both folk music and Western classical music are, in fact, interlinked, although other researchers often put them in two completely different categories. Shen's interests in folk music and Western classical music share the common ground of beauty, whether it is the beauty of vitality or the life force shown in the people who sing the folksongs, or the ultimate beauty of nature and universe that Shen wishes to preserve with 'the first-class music'. After all, 'nature has given man but the organs and the inclination to sing, together with the faculty to create a musical system, having its roots in the simplest relations of sound'.⁶⁷⁹ Just as the music system roots in the natural relations of sound, the beauty of the life force or even the horrible beauty of modern chaos is born in the pure beauty of nature, but man in turn

⁶⁷⁹ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 147.

continuously seeks to use arts to preserve such beauty, with music in its most abstract form being the supreme kind.

Shen has never clearly or lengthily demonstrated his ideas about music, but these ideas can be traced in fragments of Shen's writing throughout his career. This thesis picks them out and analyses them to reveal Shen's aesthetic thoughts. During the process, some of these revelations show traces of similarities to some Western thought. Although there are difficulties as well as constant uncertainty in finding Shen's connection with Western thought, my research manages to find substantive evidence for it. Especially through looking at Shen's editorship of *Ta Kung Pao*, I have been at least able to show that Shen has been exposed to a large quantity of translations of and introductions to Western literature, particularly Western modern literature. Shen was very likely to have received Western influence indirectly from other Chinese writers, for example, Liang Zongdai, whom other researches have neglected as someone who had a potential impact on Shen.

Based on the found evidence, this thesis has carried out a comparison between Shen's writing and the Western sources or the secondary sources Shen might have read from the aspects of music analysed previously. All in all, Shen receives influence from a wider Western modern literary tradition than merely literature texts. The reception takes the indirect way through other Chinese writers and scholars. Shen's ideas about music are not consistent or systematic, and are not modelled on any particular established theory, but they reflect or echo some thoughts of Western literary trends. This is not coincidental. China only largely started to import Western literatures after May Fourth Movement, and the fact that Shen read widely results in that he must have taken fragmentary ideas from different theories and been influenced by different authors. It is very difficult to define the exact process of influence but Shen's ideas stand within the great literary tradition of the part of modern Western literature which takes roots in the development of modern anthropology and psychology, the Romantic writers such as Goethe, the school of philosophers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson, who value the Will and the power of life force, and the writers who seek the realm of abstraction.

The ideas of these philosophers, scholars, and writers who directly or indirectly influenced Shen have one thing in common – the emphasis on the life force. The anthropologists explain the life force from the primitive culture and the psychologists such as Freud and Jung look for its place in the human unconscious, while the writers and philosophers look for ways to preserve it, especially in this chaotic modern society. Kuriyagawa connects all of them in his work *The Symbol of Angst*, in the way that he thinks if the writer can present the life force, which lives in the writer's unconscious, then the works will also reach the reader's unconscious, and thus form the full process of creation-appreciation. Kuriyagawa calls it 'creation of resonance', which is similar to how music works, that the content of life will resonate with the chord deep at heart. Shen's aesthetic ideas are similar to what Kuriyagawa describes, and Shen thinks the best way of representing life is 'first-class music'. The difference was, while Kuriyagawa mostly means material music, Shen further expands the music to a concept of music, or abstract music, as it is soundless.

The French Symbolists indirectly, through the Chinese Symbolists, for example, Liang Zongdai, shaped Shen's thought on soundless music. This concept is very important to Shen's later works, especially the ones in the 1940s. Like the Symbolists, Shen considers music the best way to preserve the abstract beauty, and speaking as a writer himself, such beauty should be achieved by using words to reach a place between all arts and find soundless music. Such abstraction suggested by the symbols contains the truth, and the essence of life. It is also a shared idea of figures like Goethe and Nietzsche that music expresses the essence of things, the noumenal world. Similar ideas not only live in Shen, but also in many other Western Modernist writers, such as James Joyce, whom some researchers consider to have influenced Shen. However, as concluded above, if Shen and Joyce share the same sources of their ideas, the similarities between them do not have to be because of direct influence. This thesis also does not aim at defining whether Shen is a Modernist or not, as I do not see much meaning in labelling him, but my research does reveal a mode of literary reception. If certain ideas (for example, the ideas about musicality) can be taken as one of the traits of the literary works of an author, and if we can compare it to a genetic trait of human beings (for example, the ability to roll one's tongue), then in a similar way, the source material can be seen as the first generation in a genetic line. Some of the traits are determined by a single dominant

gene, while some others by a single recessive gene. If someone has a dominant gene, the trait that is determined by it will be visible, but a dominant phenotype can also show on a person who either has two dominant genes or has one dominant and one recessive gene. The recessive gene is hidden, in this case, but it can still be passed on to the offspring. However, if, in the coalition of the next generation, two people each carrying one dominant gene and one recessive gene meet, there is a possibility that their child can end up having two recessive genes to show a recessive phenotype. The point here is, while some traits can be stubbornly visible in every generation, there are some that exist in the first generation, will disappear in the next, and only show after a few generations. Now, when it comes to literary ideas, it is similar.⁶⁸⁰

Literary works are like people, and while people possess various traits that, as a combination, determine who they are, literary works contain various ideas. Some ideas are like traits determined by dominant genes, and when they are inherited by the descended works, they are easily visible. However, there are some ideas, that are visible in the original literary works, but in their 'descended works' of the next generation – translations, introductions, an imitated work, or a coalition with other works – they are like the recessive genes that are overpowered by dominant genes, still existing, but covered by other ideas. That is often not a conscious choice, but sometimes because of language and cultural difference, or a switch of attention. They will be visible if you take them out to analyse, much like doing a genetic blood test. Therefore, among the second generation of these works, there will be different works containing the same or similar ideas, like carrying the recessive genes. Then, in the third generation, there will be works that pick up both the recessive genes when that particular trait determined by them suddenly become very visible.

For someone like Shen, who could not read any original Western works, his works would at least be among the third generation of works. Thus, some of the ideas, as shown in my thesis, are inherited in a linear way, visible in the possible second hand

⁶⁸⁰ Genetic Criticism is not a new concept. For example, *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* gives a rather detailed and critical analysis of such method of literary criticism. This kind of criticism usually involves close textual readings of the writing process. However, while my research may have started from a similar kind of close reading, it eventually goes beyond the texts and looks at the ideas in between the words, and the above analogy between literary ideas and genes is my understanding of 'genetic', Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden, *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

sources Shen read. Nevertheless, there are other ideas, that seem to share great similarities with Western literature and thought, but we meet obstacles when tracing the intermediary agency that links Shen with the West. In these cases, it is possible that Shen picked up the unnoticeable ideas from different second or even later generations of works, and in his works, these ideas appear. From the perspectives of these ideas (for example, from the perspective of music), Shen's works show more similarities with the source materials than the intermediate agencies. Also, in the last case of comparison in Chapter 5, scholars wonder about the similarities between Shen and Joyce, or Proust. However, as the thesis has shown, Shen's ideas come from a combination of many different origins in Western Modernist literature; so do Joyce or Proust's ideas. In a sense, their works partly share the same ancestry, and it is as if these works carry the same recessive genes which eventually show up as a recessive phenotype. They are like distant cousins who bear one or a few striking similarities in their traits. Their ideas echo each other, but it is not obvious when we search for a direct influence. In this mode of literary reception, the place of music acts as one of the traits that we can examine and do a 'genetic test', which enables us to see the influence better than viewing Shen's works from a wider angle.

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