# Poetic Reform amidst Political Reform: The Late Qing Woman Poet Xue Shaohui (1866-1911)*

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Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911), courtesy name Xiuyu 秀玉 and styled Nansi 南姒, was an outstanding poet, writer, translator, and educator of the late Qing period. Although her name is yet unknown to modern historiography, her life experience and literary creation were closely related to the changes of late Qing society and the transformation of the Chinese elite.

Xue, her husband Chen Shoupeng 陳壽彭 (1857-ca.1928),[1] and Shoupeng's older brother Chen Jitong 陳季同 (1851-1907) were from gentry families in Minhou 閩侯 county (present-day Fuzhou 福州), Fujian province. All were well educated in the Chinese tradition, but the two Chen brothers also received a substantial amount of Western education at both the Fuzhou Naval Academy and in Europe. Through them, Xue Shaohui absorbed a good deal of fresh foreign knowledge.[2]

During the Reform Movement of 1898 and thereafter, Xue Shaohui, Chen Shoupeng, Chen Jitong, and Jitong's wife, a well-educated French woman, all played extremely important roles. Together, for example, they participated in a broadscale campaign for women's education. After the abrupt termination of the 1898 reforms, Xue and her husband began another collaboration, translating and compiling a number of Western literary, historical and scientific works, and editing newspapers.[3] In accordance with her reform activities, Xue, a prolific and highly regarded poet, produced during her rather short lifetime about 300 *shi* 詩 and 150 *ci* 詞 poems. With these poems, Xue literally chronicled the changes of China's reform era and modified traditional (male) literary forms to express the fresh ideas and sentiments arising during this period. In her works, she also recorded with insightfulness and candor her arguments with men, such as the then leading reformers, Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873-1929), often in a tit-for-tat fashion. Xue also launched arguments with her doting husband regarding issues such as the purpose and

methodology of their cooperative work; and he, for his part, did the same. Thus we have a rare and important set of documents with which to examine gender relationships of the reform era from a variety of angles.[4]

This paper discusses Xue's poetic achievements, focusing on the poetic viewpoints, thematic concerns, reform of forms, and self-presentation in her poems. Through this special study of Xue's case, I intend to examine the reform of poetics amidst the reform of politics as a coherent component of the self-transformation of late Qing intellectual women.

**Xue Shaohui's Perspectives on Knowledge and Literary Creation**

Although ultimately growing into an outstanding literary genius, Xue's beginnings were not promising. She was nearly abandoned by her parents after her birth, at which time the impoverished Xue family already had two daughters and one son. Xue's father, a learned scholar who was also well versed in astrology, divined the newborn's future and was astonished, saying: "This girl surpasses a boy! She will pass down our family learning. How can we abandon her!"[5] The father's expectation should have certainly inspired the daughter's desire for learning. According to Xue's *Nianpu* 年譜 (Chronological biography) compiled by her children, Xue began learning at 5 *sui*, reading the *Nü Lunyü* 女論語 (Analects for women), *Nü Xiaojing* 女孝經 (Classic of filial piety for women), *Nüjie* 女誡 (Instruction to women), and *Nüxue* 女學 (Women's learning) under her father's instructions. At six *sui*, she read the writings of the Four Masters,[6] the *Book of Songs*, and the *Book of Rites*. At seven to eight *sui*, she read historical works during the day and learned from her mother painting, poetry, parallel prose, music, the Kunqu opera, and embroidery at night. At nine *sui*, Xue's mother passed away, and then her father died when she was twelve *sui*. She had to support herself by doing needlework, but she never stopped composing poems. She also assumed her brother's name to participate in a highly intellectual game, the poetry bell,[7] and thus attracted Chen Shoupeng's attention. Her marriage did not stop her from learning. For example, Xue began composing *ci* poems at eighteen *sui*, shortly after the birth of her first son.[8]

Seen in this light, Xue's learning was a process of drawing upon various sources. Her parents had provided her with a solid basis for her knowledge. Their early deaths, although leaving the child in hardship, offered her the freedom to learn as she wished. Moreover, as a young girl, Xue's frequent triumph in the poetry bell game greatly increased her self-confidence. She made her living by doing needlework. Market competition pushed her to constantly improve her skill. All this learning and life experience influenced her literary creation, giving her boldness and competence as she incorporated her broad knowledge into poetic form.

Chen Shoupeng thus describes her talents in his *Brief Biography of My Late Wife, Lady Xue* (*Wangqi Xue gongren zhuanlüe*):

> Her poetic style can be traced back to the late Tang to Yin [Keng], He [Xun], Shen [Yue], and Xie [Tiao]. In writing essays she was particularly skilled in parallel prose, following the style of Xu [Ling] and Yu [Xin] and emulating the way of the Han and the Wei, motivating words with talents. She knew music, and was good at playing pipe and flute. She said: "The beats and rhythm of music are in the heart and hands, not in the notes. People who compose *ci* poems usually follow Zhou Bangyan and Jiang Kui, for their works are mostly in accordance with music. Yet, aren't works of poets such as Su [Shi], Xin [Qiji], Qin [Guan], and Liu [Yong] also in accordance with music? If the singer can handle tunes and the musician can adjust rhythms, then no word cannot be put in music." In art she was good at painting plants and birds. She first imitated the style of Wenshu and Nanlou;[9] then she transferred her painting skill into embroidery, and vice versa. The two coexisted, and one can hardly tell which is which.
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> 其詩由晚唐上溯陰[鏗]、何[遜]、沈[約]、謝[朓]。爲文尤工駢體。由徐[陵]、庾[信]力追漢、魏，能以才氣運辭藻。精音律、善洞簫玉笛，謂："樂音輕重長短、緩急徐疾，在心靈手熟，不在於譜。世之塡詞，喜以清真[周邦彥]、白石[姜夔]爲宗，以其多合樂之作。然蘇[軾]、辛[棄疾]、秦[觀]、柳[永]，何嘗無合樂者？若歌者能體會宮商，樂工能調和節奏，則無一詞不可入樂。"作畫則花草翎毛。初學文叔南樓。既則自出新意，變畫法爲刺繡，又變刺繡爲畫法。二者相並，幾不知孰繡孰畫。[10]

Precisely because of her open attitude towards learning and her ability to mediate different styles, Xue later could also accept Western learning without much hesitation, which consequently enriched her poetic skill in the traditional forms.

Aligned with her principle of learning, her poetic creation incorporated all kinds of schools and styles. Her *shi* poems followed the styles from the Han, Wei, to the Tang and Song;[11] her *ci* poems emulated poets such as Li Qingzhao, Zhou Bangyan, Jiang Kui, Qin Guan, Liu Yong, Su Shi, and Xin Qiji.[12] This sort of broad-ranging approach was extremely difficult in its application. For one thing, how could Xue have borne such a heavy cultural load that covered a five-thousand-year time span and involved thousands of

poets, not to mention the newly imported Western learning? Xue mediated this conflict by drawing on an idea in the *Yijing*, "*qiongli jinxing*" (窮理盡性), which meant "[t]o detail (*qiong*) the profound and sophisticated principles (*li*) of myriad things, and to fully express (*jin*) the nature (*xing*) of each sentient being" (窮極萬物深妙之理，究盡生靈所稟之性).[13] Thus, the selection of genre and style should serve to express human feelings and reflect the principles of things, not, as for most of her contemporary male poets, to set up one's own style. Such was Xue's practical principle of literary creation. Throughout her life, Xue tried her hand at almost all kinds of literary genres and styles—except for *qu* drama, which she only performed—and, in each, achieved notable accomplishment.

Xue therefore set herself in direct conflict with the then mainstream male poetics, which had strong factional tendencies. Yi Zongkui 易宗夔 (b. 1875) observes in the *liyan* (compilation notes) to his *Xin Shishuo* 新世說 (New *Shishuo*):

> The famous Qing Confucian scholars were divided into the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang Schools; the scholarship of the Confucian classics was divided into Han Learning and Song Learning; the ancient-style prose was divided into the Tongcheng and the non-Tongcheng Schools; and poetry was divided into the Han, Wei, Tang, and Song styles. Each marked its own boundaries, extolling itself and disdaining the others.
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> 清代名儒分程朱陸王兩派，經學分漢學宋學兩派，古文分桐城派非桐城派，詩分漢魏唐宋各派。分茅設蕝，入主出奴。[14]

Qian Zhonglian also points out that late Qing poets divided themselves into the following groups:

> One, called the Hu-Xiang school, imitated the styles of the Han, Wei, and Six dynasties, and was headed by Deng Fulun (1828-1893) and Wang Kaiyun (1832-1916). One, from Jiangxi and Fujian, was known as the "Tong-Guang ti"; it followed the Song style and was led by Chen Sanli (1852-1937), Shen Zengzhi (1850-1922), and Chen Yan (1856-1937). One labeled itself the Tang style; it was led by Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) and his disciples Fan Zengxiang (1846-1931) and Yi Shunding. One, imitating the Xikun style, was led by Li Xisheng (1864-1905), Zeng Guangjun, and Cao Yuanzhong. Among them "Tong-Guang ti" was the most prevalent.

> 一是模仿漢魏六朝的湖湘派，以鄧輔綸、王闓運爲首；一是模仿宋詩的江西派和閩派，當時號稱同光體，以陳三立、沈曾植、陳衍爲首；一是標榜唐人風格的，以張之洞爲首，他的門人樊增祥、易順鼎隸屬於這一派；一是模仿西崑體的，以李希聖、曾廣鈞、曹元忠爲首。同光體在這個時期獨佔上風。[15]

The "Tong-Guang ti" predominated in Xue's hometown, Minhou county, inasmuch as its leading figure Chen Yan, as well as two other major poets, Chen Baochen 陳寶琛 (1848-1935), and Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 (1859-1938), were Xue's townspeople. Since Chen Yan was also the Chen brothers' close associate, Xue's poetics could have been easily swayed by this dominant trend. Yet she chose not to take a factional approach, instead opening herself up to all sorts of possibilities in literary creation.

Another facet of Xue's literary thought, namely, that poetry should be a major focus of women's education, directly refuted Liang Qichao's criticism of women's poetry. In 1896, Liang Qichao published "Lun Nüxue" 論女學 (On education for women), attributing China's poverty and weakness to Chinese women's jobless status. He accused Chinese women of being idle and dependent, and advocated women's education in order that "each could feed herself."[16] Based on this pragmatic approach, Liang dismissed women's poetic creation as "frivolous" (*fulang* 浮浪). He commented:

> What people called "talented women" (*cainü*) in the past refers to those who tease the wind and fondle the moon, pluck flowers and caress the grass, and thereupon compose some *ci*- or *shi*-style poems to mourn the spring and lament the parting. That's all. Doing things like this cannot be regarded as learning (*xue*). Even for a man, if he has no other specialties but to take only the poetic creation as his accomplishments, he would be denounced as a frivolous person (*fulang zhi zi*), not to mention a woman! What I mean by learning refers to that which can open up one's mind inside and help one's living outside. . . .

> 古之號稱才女者，則批風抹月，拈花弄草，能爲傷春惜別之語，成詩詞集數卷，斯爲至矣！若此等事，本不能目之爲學。其爲男子，苟無他所學，而專欲以此鳴者，則亦可指爲浮浪之子，靡論婦人也。吾之所謂學者，內之以拓其心胸，外之以助其生計. . .。[17]

This sort of disdain toward women's poetic talent seemed popular among male reformers of the time;[18] even the then famous feminist, Kang Youwei's daughter Kang Tongwei 康同薇, denounced gentry women's "indulgence in poetry" as "learning useless things."[19]

During the campaign to establish the first school for Chinese women, Xue Shaohui fervently rejected both Western and Chinese men's trendy accusation that Chinese women were "two hundred million lazy and useless people," nor would she admit that women's poetic creation amounted to nothing more than being *fulang*.[20] She argued:

> Alas, it has not been easy for women to possess talents. With integrity and sincerity, they have composed gentle and honest poems. The flowery classic [*Book of Songs*] puts the two "South" at the outset, showing an emphasis on the *guofeng* poems [which were mostly composed by women]. Unfortunately, later anthologists, knowing nothing about the Sage's standards of compiling the *Book of Songs*, ignored women's works in their entirety. For some who did include women, they would only attach women's poems to the end of the anthology, among poems by monks and Taoist priests. Isn't this strange? And the editors of these anthologies would not carefully collect women's works. They picked up some dozens of women poets, one or two poems each, and that is all. How does this irresponsible attitude differ from abandoning women's poetry to wild mist and tangling weeds? This is why women's poetic collections were mostly lost.
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> Now the times have changed. Understanding scholars all agree to promote women's education. Yet what they have proposed for women to learn, such as sericulture, needlework, housekeeping, and cooking, does not go beyond the category of women's work (*fugong*) that belongs to their traditional obligation. In talking about [cultivating] women's virtue (*fude*) and women's words (*fuyan*), I don't know what else would be more efficient than [learning how to compose poetry and prose]. Not to achieve women's learning from this [poetry and prose], but from some illusory and extravagant theories, amounts to no less than abandoning women's fragile and tender qualities to wild mist and tangling weeds. The damage would go beyond imagination, more

than destroying women's learning and corrupting women's education!

嗟夫！婦女有才，原非易事。以幽閑貞靜之忱，寫溫柔敦厚之語。葩經以二《南》爲首，所以重國風也。惜後世選詩諸家，不知聖人刪詩體例，往往弗錄閨秀之作。即有之，常附列卷末，與釋道相先後，豈不怪哉？且有搜擇未精，約略纂取百數十家 ，一家存錄一二首，敷衍塞責，即謂已盡。其能與付諸荒煙蔓草湮沒者何異乎？婦女之集，多至弗克流傳，正出于此。

方今世異，有識者咸言興女學。夫女學所尚，蠶績針黹、井臼烹飪諸藝，是爲婦功，皆婦女應有之事。若婦德婦言，舍詩、文、詞外，(末)[未]由見。不由此是求，而求之幽渺夸誕之說，殆將並婦女柔順之質，皆付諸荒煙蔓草而湮沒。微特隳女學、壞女教，其弊誠有不堪設想者矣！[21]

Her defense of Chinese women against men's wrongful accusations does not mean that Xue opposed the idea of establishing a school for women. She embraced the project with great enthusiasm, but from a rather positive perspective. She took it as a great opportunity to explore and cultivate Chinese women's long-ignored talents, in order to prepare them for the country's needs in addition to their domestic duties. Seen in this light, the promotion of women's education and the introduction to the Western system was not intended to change Chinese women from useless to useful, but to make them as versatile and resourceful as men.[22] For this purpose, Xue maintained that the Chinese system of educating women, which Chinese mothers had carried on effectively for centuries, deserved equal attention with the Western system.[23] Poetic creation, as Xue firmly pointed out, was an indispensable component of the Chinese system of educating women, a type of learning (*xue* 學) important in "cultivating one's disposition and feelings" (*taoxie xingqing* 陶寫性情).[24]

Xue's broad-ranging attitude towards learning accorded with her emphasis on women's poetic creation. On the one hand, traditional poetics, which focused on the expression of men's life experience, lacked a ready discourse through which to express women's special life experiences. On the other hand, the long-standing marginalization of women's poetry from the mainstream male system ironically offered women freedom of creation. They did not have to conform to any male poetic rules. Instead, they could establish poetic systems of their own by synthesizing various ways of expression.

**Xue's Poetic Concerns and Corresponding Poetic Reforms**

Few Chinese women writers before Xue Shaohui had covered thematic territory with comparable breadth. Themes that had previously occurred often in women's poems, such as parting, loneliness, flowery mornings and moonlit nights, now retreated to the background, setting out the poet's masterful portrayal of a rapidly changing China and the inner turbulence caused by these changes. The turmoil subverted not only her feelings but also her ink-brush. The poet became wordless—she could not find accurate words to respond to the unfamiliar things that had thronged in. Yet her obstinate personality would not allow her to give up, hence a life-long unabashed struggle between words and meanings. To this day, we can still feel the hardship she endured in weaving those strange, alien images with powerful, heated words.

In Xue's time, scholar-officials advocated "reform in the poetic realm" (*shijie weixin* 詩界維新). Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1837-1905), Liang Qichao, Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑 (1865-1924), and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898) had all argued for a "revolution in the poetic realm" (*shijie geming* 詩界革命). Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 writes:

> The so-called *shijie geming*, to use Liang Qichao's words, was to "change the spirit [of traditional poetry], not its form," to "use old styles in containing new ideas," not to "pile up new terms" (*Poetic Talks from Drinking Ice Studio*). . . . He also said: "If one composes poems today, . . . he must prepare himself from three aspects: first, new ideals, second, new words, and third, to fashion them using the styles of ancient poets. Only then could a poem become a poem" (*Journey to Hawai'i*).[25]

Xue's efforts in her poetic reform were similar to those of Liang and the others, except that she never clearly stated the term *shijie geming* or *shijie weixin*. In other words, she did not intentionally make her poems look "new." She just recorded her experience honestly in response to the changing environment. Since many newly emerged things could not find corresponding expressions in traditional poetics, she had to find her own way, different from that which was familiar to readers. Maybe this was what people would term "new."

Xue's earliest inner turbulence came from her husband's decision to study abroad and his consequent absence. In 1883, Xue was barely 18 *sui* (17 years old), three years into her marriage and one hundred days after the birth of her eldest son. At this happy time for a young wife, the husband suddenly decided to go to Japan. Xue asked:

I heard that in the place of Yingzhou,
Weak water cannot float grass roots.
Immortals had long disappeared;
Tatooed faces swallow each other.
. . .
The elixir is no longer effective;
And where would one find old classics?

我聞瀛州地，
弱水無浮根。
神仙久不作，
雕題相並吞。
. . .
已乏藥餌靈，
安有典墳存？[26]

After staying in Japan for six months, Shoupeng returned home. Three years later, he went to Europe. Xue again questioned her husband's motivation. She wrote:

I heard that the country Da Qin,
Is beyond the White Wolf River.
The Hu boys play the Bili pipes;
The Qiang girls wearing exotic flowers.
Galloping on horses to hunting events;
They often visited each other at fur tents.
Snow piles in the early autumn;
Icy willows hang on frozen branches.
They have different customs;
Their language and writing are not ours.
[So, why should you go, my dear husband?]

側聞大秦國，
已越白狼河。
胡兒吹畢栗，
羌女戴蠻花。
射生牧馬出，
毳幕時相過。
八月見積雪，
凍柳僵枝柯。
習俗與世異，
文翰非吾阿。[27]

Her husband's studying abroad affected Xue in various ways. It subverted her quiet life routine, forcing her to reach out to the world. It also shattered the long-standing myth that China was the center of the world. Although, since the Opium War, the Chinese elite should have already recognized this reality, they hardly accepted it, nor did they closely study it. For example, Xue continued to refer to Japan and Europe with derogatory terms traditionally used for barbarian places, and her depiction of foreign life styles repeated stereotypes of primitive peoples.

Yet, from the aspect of poetics, Xue's two parting poems shattered the conventional structure of this poetic subgenre. Traditionally, a scholar left home for the purpose of pursuing either knowledge or office—things closely related to a gentleman's socially encoded life purpose. Therefore the wife would be expected to accept this sort of parting unconditionally. Now Shoupeng was going to a place other than a gentleman's conventional destination, such as the capital. With her limited knowledge of foreign countries, Xue Shaohui would naturally question her husband's motivation for going abroad. As soon as Xue cast doubts on her husband's motivation, however, she broke the protocol of this sort of poem. These two parting poems set up an example which shows the subtle change of the husband-wife relationship during the reform period, reflecting new factors in both the poetic theme and form.

Her loneliness was soon offset by new knowledge imported from abroad. Caring Shoupeng never failed to send back interesting souvenirs, along with detailed introductions to their cultural and historical origins and backgrounds. Xue Shaohui always responded with a *ci* poem, possibly because its lyric features, in conjunction with the poet's musical sense, might more properly express her tender feelings. Xue also intentionally chose tunes that were originally titled after similar themes. These *ci* poems, composed between 1886 and 1889, while Shoupeng was in Europe, included "To Master Yiru [Shoupeng's courtesy name] for the Buddhist Sūtras Written on Palm Leaves He Sent Back from Ceylon" (Tune: *Rao foge* 繞佛閣 [Around the Buddhist Pavilion]), "To Yiru for the Rubbings of the Ancient Egyptian Stone Carvings He Sent Back" (Tune: *Mu hu sha* 穆護沙 [Solemnly Guarding the Sand]), "Yiru sent back Jewels" (Tune: *Babao zhuang* 八寶妝 [Eight-gem Ornament]), "Gold Watch" (Tune: *Shier shi* 十二時 [Twelve Divisions of a Day]), and so forth.

From these *ci* poems, we can see that Xue obtained knowledge about the world at amazing speed. She followed Shoupeng's journey: "Your sails, blown by the Indian wind, / Must have passed the Red Sea" (計天竺風帆，遙過紅海) (*Rao foge*),[28] using accurate geographical names instead of the archetypal terms that had appeared in her afore-mentioned parting poems. She studied the fall of Egyptian Civilization: "The stone figure differs not

from the bronze camel, / To this day still lying in thorns" (況石人何異銅駝，猶眠荊棘上) (*Mu hu sha*).[29] Her comparison of the Sphinx with the bronze camel, a symbol of Chinese dynastic change, shows an effort to understand foreign history in Chinese terms. She admired the refinement of Swiss watches in correct technical terms: "I can hear the light tick-tock, / Marking each brief moment. / Inside the axis, / Shines the splendor of metal" (但脈脈聞聲輕扣，瞬息能分時候，機軸中，含精金外溢) (*Shier shi*).[30] She even demonstrated knowledge of Western political and legal systems. Below, taking her poem to the tune "Babao zhuang" as an example, I examine how she combined various value and knowledge systems to propose her ideals and understandings of the world.

To the Tune "Babao zhuang"

Yiru sent me several pieces of jewelry. Among them is a pair of gold bracelets inlaid with diamond flowers and birds. They look splendid, … delicate, and elegant. His letter tells that when Napoleon the Third was on the throne, his queen, Eugénie, was in favor. In order to engage Eugénie's friendship, the Queen of Spain sent an envoy to buy diamonds in Holland and chose a French artisan to make [the bracelets], inasmuch as the Dutch artisans were good at cutting diamonds and the French good at making diamond ornaments. After the bracelets were done… the Queen of Spain presented them to the Queen of France. Before long the Spanish exiled their queen, enthroning the Prince of Prussia as their new king. The Queen of France helped the Queen of Spain, and Napoleon the Third declared war with Prussia. This was the Franco-Prussian War. He was defeated and forced to abdicate. The French people surrounded the palace, and the Queen escaped in disguise. All her clothes and jewelry were confiscated by the people and stored in the national warehouse. The Queen sued in order to retrieve them for her pension, but was rejected by the congress. In 1887, the congress made the following decision: "All this jewelry belongs to the Queen of France, not to Eugénie. Since Eugénie is no longer the queen, she has no right to possess these things. Now France, already a democratic (*minzhu*) republic, has no need to preserve the King and Queen's belongings. They should be auctioned and the money should go to the national endowment." All agreed, and more than one thousand items . . . were auctioned in a single day. Yiru paid a great amount for this pair of bracelets. Because

of their connection with French history, he sent them back for my appreciation. What is important for a woman, I believe, is her virtue, not her ornament. Flying Swallow in the Han and Taizhen in the Tang were both famous for their beautiful attire, but where are they now? As for this inauspicious thing, already having gone through the rise and fall of an era, what is there for us to treasure? So I composed the following *ci* lyric in reply to Yiru:

Neither the linked-jade puzzle,
Nor the As-you-wish pearl.
Diamonds in fine cuts, to make gold bracelets.
Well-wrought gold would never decay,
Much less its dazzling splendor.
Imagine the thin-waist foreign queen,
Delicate arms adorned with these gems.
Waving her soldiers to the battlefields,
At a farewell banquet,
Hairpins tinkling.

Yet enemies were fierce,
And people were disheartened.
No intention to fight, they rebelled.
Singing *La Marseillaise*,
Sad songs chorused everywhere.
To avoid disaster,
The queen covered her face with a black veil,
And fled with empty hands.
She begged for her emerald hairpins,
Already scattered, with inlayed flowers.
Only this pair of bracelets left,
Making us sigh, for the change of the world.

八寶妝

繹如寄珍飾數事，內有赤金條脫一對，以鑽石箝爲花鳥，玲瓏光耀，. . . 輕巧工雅。書言拿布侖第三稱帝時，其后歐色尼有寵。西班牙女主欲與結歡，令使臣赴荷蘭選鑽石，覓法之良工鑲配之，因荷蘭精切鑽而法人善箝鑽也。既成，. . . 獻諸后。亡何，西班牙人逐女主，欲立普國王子爲王。后助女主，

拿布侖第三與普齟齬，成普法之戰。法[王]兵敗被廢，國人群起圍宮，后青衣出走 . . . 一切服御皆爲法人所得，藏諸庫。后屢訟，欲取爲贍養費，資議院不許。丁亥，議定：凡茲珍飾，系 法后物，非歐色尼物。今歐色尼既非法后，不應僭有是物。法既立民主，則帝、后之物皆無所用，定價聽人購買資國用。僉曰：“可。” 乃將所藏諸物千餘件 . . . 拍賣，. . . 一夕而盡。繹如以鉅資得此，因與西史有關，寄余品之 。余思婦人在德，非在外飾。漢之飛燕、唐之太真，外紀傳其服飾侈美，今皆安在？況此妖物，已歷盛衰興廢，又何足貴乎？姑填此詞，以報繹如。

玉匪連環，
珠匪如意，
斫粟配成金釧。
百煉金剛原不壞，
況有熒煌光炫。
遙思腰細闕氏，
飾臂輕盈，
行宮祖帳開歡宴。
麾指諸軍行陣，
釵聲交顫。

無奈敵勢披猖，
民心散潰，
倒戈安事鏖戰。
唱麥兒，
悲歌四起；
避劫火，
青紗蒙面。
祗空手逃亡，
乞援翠翹，
零落隨花鈿。
剩繞腕一雙，
令人感歎滄桑變。[31]

Xue takes the standpoint of the French people in criticizing Queen Eugénie. The first stanza begins with two allusions. The jade-link puzzle alludes to the following story:

After King Xiang of Qi died, King Zhao of Qin sent an envoy with a jade-link puzzle to the queen [of King Xiang], saying, “Qi is full

> of wise men. Is there anyone who knows how to solve this puzzle?" The Queen showed the puzzle to all the courtiers, but none knew how to disentangle it. The Queen thereupon used a hammer to break the link. She dismissed the Qin envoy, saying: "I have respectfully solved the puzzle."
>
> 齊襄王卒，秦昭王嘗遣使遺君王后玉連環曰："齊多智，解此環否？" 后示群臣，莫知解者。乃自引椎椎破之，謝秦使曰："謹以解矣！"[32]

The As-you-wish pearl symbolizes Buddhist compassion. If the gold bracelets are neither jade nor pearl, then Eugénie is neither the wise, courageous, and patriotic queen of Qi, nor a compassionate, merciful Buddhist. She throws her people into warfare for a mere arm ornament. The banquet scene is especially satirical: Eugénie waves the French soldiers to the battlefields, with that very bracelet on her arm, small wonder that she willstir up a mutiny.

In the second stanza, Xue transliterates the French revolutionary song, *La Marseillaise*, into Chinese as *Maier* 麥兒, meaning "wheat" and hence clearly alluding to the song *Maixiu* 麥秀, "Wheat sprouts," which laments the fall of a dynasty.[33] Thus, Xue interprets the French people's rebellion as a patriotic campaign. More significantly, Xue introduces the Western democratic, congressional, and legal systems through her poetic account of the event.

Of course, the West not only offered China democracy and a legal system. Along with these ideals came imperial ambitions accompanied by ships and canons. During the 1884 Sino-French War, the French Navy invaded Mawei 馬尾 Harbor in the vicinity of Fuzhou. Most of Shoupeng's schoolmates from the Fujian Navy Academy were killed in action. In 1889, Shoupeng came back from Europe and went with his wife to mourn his dead comrades. On their way they heard from the boat woman a story unknown to the public: although the Mawei battle demolished the Fujian Navy in its entirety, the next morning, the French Navy had encountered a sudden ambush that fatally injured the admiral and forced the French to retreat. This ambush puzzled both the Chinese and the French governments. According to the boat woman's account, the French Navy was attacked by a group of local Fuzhou salt vendors and butchers. The ambushers themselves also died with the French enemies. Who would mourn these common heroes? Xue immediately composed a *ci* poem, in the tune of "Manjiang hong" 滿江紅 (The River Is Red):

Vast, gloomy river and sky,
Remind us of that day
Crocodiles invaded.
In the wind and rain,
With stars flying, thunder roaring,
Ghosts and deities wailed.
Monkeys, cranes, insects, and sands, washed away by waves;
Salt vendors and butchers flocked in like mosquitoes.
Stepping on night tides,
Rowing in the swift currents,
They intended to ambush the enemy.

Creak, creak: the sound of oars
Dampening, the fog and mist;
Cannon balls exploded,
Dragons and snakes hid.
They laughed at those sons of barbarian rulers,
Who could barely breathe.
Although gone with waves and currents,
They once subverted the thundering enemy.
Sank into grass and swamps,
These martyrs of the nation.
Who will collect their souls?

莽莽江天，
憶當日，
鱷魚深入。
風雨裏，
星飛雷吼，
鬼神號泣。
猿鶴蟲沙淘浪去，
販鹽屠豕如蚊集。
踏夜潮，
擊楫出中流，
思偷襲。

咿啞響，
煙霧濕；
砰訇起，
龍蛇蟄。
笑天驕種子，
僅餘呼吸。

縱逐波濤流水逝，
曾翻霹靂雄師戢。
惜沉淪草澤，
國殤魂，
誰搜輯？[34]

Using the tune of "Manjiang hong," the poet paid the highest homage to these common heroes. Not only does the redness of the river in the tune title reconstruct the battle scene of the time, but it also reminds us of the heroic name of the Song patriotic general Yue Fei, to whom a well-known patriotic song was attributed, also to the tune of "Manjiang hong."

Xue's earliest contact with the outside world exposed her to complicated knowledge about the West, making her cautious and critical in accepting Western culture, as attested to by her role in establishing the first girls' school operated by Chinese women (differing from the first Chinese girls' school established by an English missionary in 1844).[35]

Throughout the campaign for women's education, Xue stood out as an independent thinker. Her sharp insights and down-to-earth attitude won support and respect from the Chen brothers as well as other male and female reformers. Lai Mayi and her colleagues incorporated Xue's suggestions into their revision of the curriculum.[36] Many women corroborated Xue's opinions with poems and essays.[37] Xue herself and other major contributors wrote continuously for the first Chinese women's journal, *Nü xuebao* 女學報 (English title: *Chinese Girl's Progress*).[38] Their thematic concerns ranged from women's education, women's rights, and even women's participation in politics, to Shanghai women workers' salaries and working hours. In brief, the entire campaign for women's education proceeded smoothly and rapidly, bringing hope to all the participants in Shanghai, Chinese and foreigners alike.[39]

Meanwhile, in the capital Beijing, the leading reformers Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao convinced Emperor Guangxu to speed up political reforms and thus offended Empress Dowager Cixi (I shall discuss Cixi's complicated role in the reform era in another article). On September 21st, 1898, Cixi terminated the reforms. On September 28th, six leading reformers were executed, including Kang Guangren 康廣仁 (d. 1898), one of the eight initiators and the financial executive of the girls' school, and Tan Sitong, an active supporter of the project.[40] One can imagine how reformers in Shanghai were shocked and devastated upon hearing of Cixi's coup d'état! Xue, however, wrote down the following lines on September 30th, the Mid-autumn Festival, titled "Reading History on the Mid-autumn Night" (*Zhongqiu ye dushi zuo* 中秋夜讀史作):

Disaster and fortune never match each other;
Success and failure only show after the chess game is over.
Grand ambition craves appreciation from the top;
Wisdom bag contains no tactics to protect the royal house.
Was it a real match between the ruler and the subject?
One should cherish the efforts in maintaining family ties.
Last night, staring at the sky, I divined by the North Dipper:
Still, the bright moon shone at the height of autumn.

從來禍福不相侔，
成敗唯看棋局收。
篤志有人欣御李，
智囊無策到安劉。
豈真遇合風雲會，
須惜艱難骨肉謀。
昨夜長天覘北斗，
依然明月照高秋。[41]

One cannot help wondering if Xue was criticizing Kang Youwei: Kang was happy to be appreciated by the emperor, but he did not have the talent to invigorate the falling dynasty. Thus, his relationship with the emperor was not a real match between emperor and capable minister; all he had done was to manipulate the young emperor and undermine his relationship with the empress dowager. Xue lamented the difficulty of maintaining family ties, as though she had sympathy for Cixi.

To be sure, Xue and her family had no connections whatsoever with the emperor or with the empress dowager. Chen Shoupeng, a diligent scholar, indulged himself in reading and writing all his life, never pursuing rank and wealth. His elder brother Chen Jitong, though possessing great talent, was not successful in his political career.[42] This meant that the entire family participated in the 1898 reforms as private scholars. Their attitudes, therefore, become very significant, and deserve our close attention. Reading the entire poem carefully, we can see that Xue had clear ideas about the situation—the emperor failed and the empress dowager regained power. In spite of all this, Xue still said that the chess game was not yet over. Thus, her primary concern was obviously for the reform program itself. Her attitude breaks the delineation that has long dominated scholarship on modern Chinese history between reformers and conservatives, the emperor faction and the empress dowager faction. Xue represents the voice of reformers who did not equate the reform enterprise with the palace power struggle.

Although the reform movement had been dealt a devastating blow, Xue remained optimistic, just like "the bright moon shining at the height of autumn," and soon attempted another way of reform, translating and compiling a number of Western literary, historical, and scientific works with her husband.[43]

While Xue and Shoupeng were in Shanghai and then in Ningbo writing and translating, the 1900 Boxer Rebellion took place. At least five long poems in Xue's *Collected Writings* reflect this event from various aspects: "Reading the *Song History*" (Du Songshi 讀宋史) (1900), "Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital" (Huiluan song 回鑾頌) (1901), "Song of the Old Courtesan" (Laoji xing 老妓行) (1902), "Melody of the Golden Well" (Jinjing qu 金井曲) (1908), and "Song of the Old Woman from Fengtai" (Fengtai lao'ao ge 豐臺老媼歌) (1909).

"Reading the *Song History*" is a seven-character old-style poem. The entire poem is about a divine army destroying demons, obviously alluding to the Boxer Rebellion. The poet describes the incident in a matter-of-fact manner, without pressing a clear value judgment.[44] The tone of the "Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital," written in the following year, is critical of this rebellion, but blames mainly the government's inept handling of the situation. The poet wrote in the preface:

> In this past event the statesmen were bewildered and disobedient; the ministers and the generals were idle and wanton. They wrongly believed in Guo Jing's heresy, who interpreted the eight trigrams in strange and baseless ways; they allowed Zhang Jue to enroll disciples, who confused the essence of the Three Learnings. . . . The barbarian soldiers thereby invaded the capital; the five-colored banners competed to occupy the throne. Who would know how to resist the enemies? Broken guns could not guard our grand fortress.
>
> 曩者臣工奭逆，文武酣嬉。誤信郭京煽術，八卦之奇遁渺冥；坐令張角授徒，三教之珠英混亂。. . . 遂使嗅地占軍，五彩幡爭窺象闕；誰是望塵知敵，半段槍莫守雄關。[45]

Xue's major purpose in composing the "Eulogy to His Majesty" was to create the image of Guangxu as a benevolent Emperor and filial son, thereby restoring his relationship with Cixi. Such an emperor, backed by the empress dowager, could then go back to the capital and reissue the reform: "Obtaining heavenly talents and benefiting from the geographic situation, the Zhou state [referring to the Qing court] can easily reform its system;

esteem the strong trunk, though with weak branches, the imperial enterprise can still be rooted in its old ground."[46] It took great courage to propose such daring suggestions at this sensitive moment. Since Cixi's *coup d'état* on September 21, 1898, she had intended Guangxu's abdication. Many gentry members strongly opposed this idea; among them a leading figure was Jing Yuanshan 經元善, the initiator of the campaign of the girls' school. Jing was therefore put in prison for over a year.[47] As Jing's close associates, the Chen brothers and their families must have been strongly affected by this incident. Although Cixi reconsidered reform after the Boxer Rebellion,[48] even radical scholar-officials were cautious at the moment.[49] Xue, an ordinary housewife, frankly advocated reform. Her forbearance and insistence in preserving what benefited the nation is clearly revealed in this poetic piece.

Xue's other three poems about the Boxer Rebellion reflected women's experiences during the incident. Although the "Golden Well" and the "Old Woman from Fengtai" were written much later, their themes were consistent with that of the "Eulogy to His Majesty." The "Golden Well" imitates Bai Juyi's "Song of Unending Sorrow," recounting the story of Guangxu and his favorite concubine, Zhenfei 珍妃, but is much subtler, similar to the style of Li Shangyin's "Untitled" series. The poet describes Zhenfei's death as a suicide; this disagrees with the broadly circulated version that had Zhenfei killed by Cixi. Compelled by foreign invaders, she jumped into the well to die for her emperor and her country. Thus Xue changed the cause of Zhenfei's death from family conflicts to the sorrow of a nation. Her effort in fixing the relationship between Guangxu and Cixi goes without saying. In "Old Woman from Fengtai" Xue uses a wet-nurse as her mouthpiece to recount the causes of the Boxer Rebellion, blaming the incident on the restlessness of Manchu noblemen. This interpretation involves the power struggle between the Manchu and the Han gentry, and awaits further study.

The "Old Courtesan" is based on the story of Fu Caiyun 傅彩雲 (a.k.a. Sai Jinhua 賽金花) (?-1936), composed between Fan Zengxiang's "Melody of Colored Clouds" (*Caiyun qu* 彩雲曲, hereafter "Former Melody") (1899) and "Later Melody of Colored Clouds" (*Hou Caiyun qu* 後彩雲曲, hereafter "Later Melody") (1904). Fan's "Former Melody" begins with Caiyun's acquaintance with her future husband, the Number One Scholar Hong Jun 洪鈞 (1839-1893), and continues to her resumption of a courtesan identity. His "Later Melody" focuses on Caiyun and the Boxer Rebellion. Xue's poem covers both parts of Caiyun's story. The two poets recount Caiyun's life following similar plots, but in very different tones, as attested to by their narration of the two most important episodes.

The first episode tells about Caiyun's journey to Europe with her husband Hong Jun. Fan's "Former Melody" writes:

Deep in the palace, the emperor was looking for an imperial envoy.
From the place of talents, came the pure and outstanding Master Hong.
He once dreamed of going into the Hun's tent court,
With a smile, the khan's wife listened to his peace proposal.

The envoy's celestial ship sailed to ten thousand *li* away;
Its rainbow flags were accompanied by a colorful *luan* bird.
Known as the refined tiger,[50] his poems were circulated around the world;
Dazzling the startled swans, her hairpins displayed across the ocean.

On Queen Victoria's divine birthday,
Colorful flowers piled up on the Lady's City.
Dragons on the river were all her grandsons;
Barbarian parrots addressed her as the Heavenly Empress.

Envoy coming from the East, repeatedly presented wine.
Sitting also in his brocade carriage, a most beautiful consort.
Rulers gathered to appreciate the dew bestowed by Heaven;
They awarded the envoy a medal with tangled-dragon design.

The fairy Shuangcheng very much pleased the Queen of the West,
In and out the scented palace, fixing her pendants now and then.
Her Majesty and the blue bird frequently exchanged visits;
And they took excursions together twice a month.

Gradually, she changed her dresses into the Western style,
But her accent still retained the Wu girl's charm.
Attending the royal banquets, she had no problem eating seafood;
Responding letters to the hosts, she knew how to write in English

Summoned by the phoenix edict, she entered the cold mirror palace;
Glass reflecting her figure, sitting on the royal dais.
Who could imagine that the grand manner of a female sovereign
Would be regarded equally with a willow branch![51]

深宮欲得皇華史，
才地容齋最清異。
夢入天驕帳殿遊，
閼氏含笑聽和議。

博望仙槎萬裏通，
霓旌難得彩鸞同。
辭賦環球知繡虎，
釵鈿橫海照驚鴻。

女君維亞喬松壽，
夫人城闕花如繡。
河上蛟龍盡外孫，
虜中鸚鵡稱天后。

使節西來屢奉春，
錦車馮嫽亦傾城。
冕旒七毳瞻繁露，
槃敦雙龍贈寶星。

雙成雅得西王意，
出入椒庭整環佩。
妃主青禽時往來，
初三下九同遊戲。

裝束潛隨夷俗更，
語言總愛吳娃媚。
侍食偏能厭海鮮，
報書亦解繙英字。

鳳紙宣來鏡殿寒，
玻璃取影御床寬。
誰知坤媼山河貌，
只與楊枝一例看。

And Xue's poem describes the same episode as follows:

In the eighth month, the envoy embarked on a long voyage,
Taking on a vessel flying single-eagle flags.
Bringing a six-horse imperial carriage and holding a dragon penant,
Their lone ship followed foreign sea birds, between ocean and sky.

In Berlin city, the lovebirds built their nest;
Her official attire, of the pheasant design, dazzled barbarian eyes.
No need to discuss the proper position for a concubine;
This little star shone over the bright moon!

The allies defeated France, now enjoying great reputation,
Headed by the iron-blooded minister and the bearded general.
The white-headed khan still looked handsome and dignified;
The thin-waisted queen appeared heroic and generous.

On the golden dais, Her Majesty received the Heavenly envoy,
Attended by his female consort, in a brocade carriage.
In an oriole voice, she played a capable interpreter;
In elegant handwriting, she translated foreign languages.

Her Majesty was pleased to meet with this young friend.
Treating her to an imperial banquet, with sour cream and raw meat.
In the mirror palace, rare flowers took a photo side by side,
Like two sisters, born to the same parents.

The native people all admired her favored status.
They saw her often at tea parties and ball rooms.
Alas the young officers of primitive places,
Imagined her spring-wind face only through her pictures.

奉使乘槎八月時，
輶軒遠采單鷹旗。
皇華六轡秉龍節，
海天一舸隨鴟夷。

柏林城築鴛鴦闕，
錦雞官誥驕回鶻。
奚須江汜論國風，
竟作小星奪明月。

聯邦破法聲望高，
相國鐵血將軍毛。
可汗頭白尚威武，
閼氏腰細能英豪。
太歲金床見天使，
錦車馮嫽充陪侍。

鶯語善傳通譯辭，
鸞書代解旁行字。

恪尊喜與忘年交，
酪漿腥肉開天庖 。
鏡殿名花偕照影，
儼如姐妹雙同胞。

爰劍種人盡豔羨，
茶筵舞會尋常見。
可憐鼷地骨都侯，
畫圖想識春風面。[52]

The two poets differ in their portrayal of Fu Caiyun's identity and personal features. According to Fan Zengxiang, the charm of this female envoy lay first and foremost in her beautiful appearance and soft, coy Wu accent—an obvious projection of scholar-officials' taste of courtesans onto the Western aristocrats. In describing Caiyun's association with the female ruler Victoria, Fan never failed to bring up her low social status.[53] He compared Caiyun to the fairy Shuangcheng and the blue bird, the two legendary attendants waiting on the Queen Mother of the West (*Xi wangmu* 西王母), an obvious allusion to Victoria. He also exposed Caiyun's courtesan identity using the metaphor of a "willow branch," which could be plucked by any man.[54] Thus, when Queen Victoria took photographs with Courtesan Caiyun at the mirror palace, she lowered her own status. It was precisely because Fan looked down upon Caiyun so much that he made her appear so scandolous in his "Later Melody."

According to Xue, however, Caiyun won appreciation from the German Empress because of her talents in diplomacy. The two took a picture together, looking like two sisters born to the same parents. Such favor from Her Majesty elicited the admiration of the court, where everybody competed to gain her acquaintance. For Xue, Caiyun represented Qing China. Never mind how low her domestic status was, she was accorded equal status with the Western aristocrats in international society.[55] Xue's positive description presaged her portrayal of Caiyun during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. About Caiyun's behavior during this period, Xue wrote:

Before long foreign horses neighed at the imperial palace.
Raging military flags darkened the broad fields.
The old commander of the invaders, with deep blue eyes,
Was among those who once admired her beauty.

Soldiers assaulted women on the capital streets.
In orchid inner chambers, virtuous ladies ambushed like mice.
Only this singing girl courageously stepped forward.[56]
Wearing country folks' cloths, but speaking a foreign language.

The enemy commander, stroking his beard, rose to greet her.
What did he see? The envoy's wife, his old fantasy.
At their later tryst in the palace, they felt as if in a dream;
He ordered soldiers to keep quiet, no more bustle around.

War of Roses was stopped, and treaties signed,
Thanks, it seems, to this willow branch from Zhangtai.
. . .

亡何闕下嘶胡馬，
滾滾旌旗黯原野。
統帥老將碧眼高，
當時曾喚真真者。

捕卒六街擾婦女，
蘭閨淑媛伏如鼠。
偏有冬兒慷慨前，
短衣縛袴能胡語。

酋帥撚須起攜手，
意中喜見使君婦。
鸞殿相逢似夢中，
特令諸軍靜刁鬥。

外使莫爭玫瑰花，
約章似借章台柳。[57]
. . .

About the same event, Fan Zengxiang wrote:

The enemy commander occupied the imperial throne.
In the capital, nine out of ten houses were broken.
The warrior loved women more than wealth;
In this pure autumn, in the cassia hall, he could not sleep.
He heard that a beauty in the brothel quarter,
Spoke German and was good at this language.
. . .

Now Caiyun's bedroom was muddled by the warfare,
Where to find the Wu Mountain, whirling clouds and rain?

Suddenly a letter was sent to her, from the commander.
Then came his person, looking for the blue bird among flowers.
The lady, though aging, still looked attractive and charming.
She changed into a Western dress, to suit the general's taste.
. . .

This wild chick flew into the very wretched palace;
Frivolous foxes fondled each other on the royal dais.
The general led her by hand to the jade terrace,
Enchanted even before they ascended the enchanting tower.
. . .

Peace talk, or war, arguments continued a long time.
Allied troops randomly slaughtered people and animals.
Caiyun, with her little heart of the Budhisattva mercy,
Manipulated the barbarian beasts with her tender hands.

"Do not loot common folks' honest money;
Do not brandish knives, forcing your way with young women."
Now we believe that a femme fatale's words
May surpass an eloquent man in the power of persuasion.

The seventy-year old general was already white-bearded;
The forty-year old lady richly decorated herself.
Since the Franco-Prussian War, years had past;
Old and weak, he was capable neither in bed nor in battlefields.

Among courtesans, was a lustful woman.
With a smile, she toyed with the tiger's beard, kissing his forehead.
. . .
Yet, in the nine temples, gods and deities were enraged.
Purple smoke rose from the jade terrace, at midnight.

Fire horses galloped through phoenix towers;
Gold snakes licked the ceremonial altars.
The two lovebirds jump up in the brocade tent,
Their naked bodies wearing no underwear.
. . .

瓦酋入據儀鸞坐，
鳳城十家九家破。
武夫好色勝貪才，
桂殿秋清少眠臥。

聞道平康有麗人，
能操德語工德文。
. . .
彩雲此際泥秋衾，
雲雨巫山何處尋。

忽報將軍親折簡，
自來花下問青禽。
徐娘雖老猶風致，
巧換西裝稱人意。
. . .

曆亂宮帷飛野雞，
荒唐御座擁狐狸。
將軍攜手瑤階下，
至上迷樓意已迷。
. . .

言和言戰紛紜久，
亂殺平人與雞狗。
彩雲一點菩提心，
操縱夷獠在纖手。

“胠篋休探赤側錢，
操刀莫逼紅顏婦。”
始信傾城哲婦言，
強於辯士儀秦口。

將軍七十虯髯白，
四十秋娘盛釵澤。
普法戰罷又經年，
枕席行師老無力。

女閭中有女登徒，
笑捋虎須親虎額。
. . .

誰知九廟神靈怒，
夜半瑤台生紫霧。

火馬飛馳過鳳樓，
金蛇舔砑燔雞樹。
此時錦帳雙鴛鴦，
皓軀驚起無襦袴。
. . . [58]

According to Xue, it was in order to protect women from the invaders' assault that Caiyun courageously stepped forward, without regard to her own safety. Upon meeting the Commander of the Eight Joined Forces, one of her old admirers in Berlin, Caiyun wore country folks' clothes, without the slightest intention of flirtation. Yet according to Fan Zengxiang, Caiyun was a wild chick, a fox spirit, and a lustful woman of bad taste. She craved sexual encounters even amidst warfare, and shamelessly tried to please the commander of the enemy. She therefore enraged the spirits of the imperial ancestors, causing the blaze in the palace. She rescued people in the capital, merely to show off a femme fatale's power, at no risk to herself.

Why such a big difference? As Xue concludes in her poem:

The *Biographies of Exemplary Women* did not exclude femmes fatales.
Discussions of the Woman's Way should focus on virtue and proper manner.
My poem, about that old courtesan, is composed for the reference
Of the gentlemen who collect folk songs to learn about the world.

《女傳》弗因孽嬖刪，
婦道要論容德美。
一編爲譜《老妓行》，
用告采風士君子。[59]

Xue composed this poem with the clear intention of refuting gentlemen such as Fan Zengxiang. Although Fan's "Later Melody" was not yet written, similar condemnations of Fu Caiyun must have circulated among gentlemen of his sort. According to Xue, if the Han scholar Liu Xiang would not exclude even treacherous women from his *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, modern scholars should also give due account to a complicated but influential character such as Fu Caiyun. Since recounting a life narrative often involves evaluation, Xue and Fan's fundamental difference lies in their standards of *fudao* 婦道, or the Woman's Way.

For Fan, *fudao* means exclusively women's chastity. Since Caiyun, as a courtesan, had already lost her chastity, her life could contribute nothing of moral significance. Fan set up this overtone at the beginning of his "Former Melody": "Since Xi Shi's lake boat harbored in Suzhou, / Trees of female chastity all turned into bending willows" (自從西子湖船住，女貞盡化垂楊樹). [60] Xue attributed a much broader connotation to *fudao*, focusing on *rong* (manner) and *de* (virtue) as she defines:

A woman's manner follows ritual rules,
Not lying in her sensuous appearance.
Good heart sustains her beauty;
Virtue establishes her reputation.

婦容在禮法，
不在貌傾城。
善心以爲窈，
德車稱結旌。[61]

Caiyun behaved properly at diplomatic occasions and should, therefore, be acknowledged as having good manners. She courageously rescued people at her own risk, and hence demonstrated virtue. Although she was far from a traditional chaste woman, she ought at least to receive adequate evaluation. [62] Xue's fair attitude possibly resulted from her concurrent compilation of the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women* (*Waiguo lienü zhuan* 外國列女傳). When writing about other cultures, the Chinese standard could no longer be sustained as the only standard. By the same token, when recounting foreign women's stories, Chinese *fudao* could no longer suffice as the basis for evaluation of merit or chastity. Xue's observation of the moral principles and ideal personalities of Western women inspired her to reconsider the Chinese tradition, and led her to establish her own understanding of the Woman's Way. [63]

In 1907, Xue and her whole family moved to Beijing, where she spent her last four years. Though ill, she never ceased writing. During this period, she focused on seven-character and five-character songs. Likely aware that her life would be over soon, she eagerly picked up these freer styles to register her thoughts. In terms of the thematic concerns, her primary focus was still reform. She wrote in "Miscellaneous Poems about Beijing" (*Beijing zashi* 北京雜詩 ) (No. 3 and No. 4):

The traffic police wear tidy uniforms, on duty in turn;
Vehicles coming and going, no need to announce.
Merchandise richly displayed, waiting for good prices;

Livestock lined up, diligently plough the fields.
Poles transport electricity along highways.
Railroads lead wheels out of the capital.
These pleasant views attract visitors,
Silk whip, shadows of hats, move along on the grass.

Harmonious wind mildly blows into neighborhoods;
Ministries have abolished the clerical system.
At tea parties, officials compete to befriend translators;
Climbing up clouds requires learning foreign languages.
Students mark numbers on their clothes;
Vendors fly color flags in front of their shops.
One thing manifests the Sage's governing:
The court just ended corporal punishment.[64]

更番街子短衣輕，
輦轂無煩警蹕聲。
百貨紛陳求善價，
萬牲羅列勤躬耕。
幡竿掣電排官道，
鐵軌牽輪出禁城。
贏得遊人足清賞，
鞭絲帽影踏莎行。

和風煦拂遍閭閻。
部署於今廢吏胥。
茶會爭交象譯客，
雲程要策蟹行書。
諸生襟袖標軍號，
小販門簷插彩旗。
一事自然稱聖治：
鞭笞已繼肉刑除。

The two poems list a series of otherwise unrelated events, linked by the poet's musical talents. She uses the rigorous style of the seven-character regulated poem to mediate the novel terms and noisy chaos in the modernizing capital, making them read naturally and light-heartedly, revealing her pleasure and optimism.

Xue's poems about the political, economic, educational, and technological changes in the capital, as well as in some other big cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Tianjin, express her positive attitude towards reform and new models of governance. The

complicated motivation of the new governance that Cixi carried out after the Boxer Rebellion awaits more research and discussion. I am here interested in Xue's particular excitement about the end of corporal punishment, which Xue had persistently opposed since her early years. For instance, in 1890, her house in Fuzhou was robbed. After the thief was arrested, she presented a *ci* poem to the magistrate, requesting: "Although the administration has to carry out the law, / Please pass fair and proper sentence, / No need for whipping or flogging" (有司執法雖然也，且持平原情定罪，無勞笞打).[65] In 1898, during the campaign for women's education, Xue published an article in *Nüxue bao*, the first Chinese women's journal, entitled "On the Pertinence of Women's Education to the Principles of Reign" (*Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo* 女教與治道相關說). In this article Xue particularly celebrated Ti Ying 緹縈, a young girl of the Han dynasty who, in order to save her father, appealed to the Emperor Wen to abolish corporal punishment. While conventionally Ti Ying had been praised as a filial daughter, Xue emphasized her influence on Emperor Wen's political decision, and hence set her up as a role model for women's participation in political affairs. Through Ti Ying's example, Xue firmly embedded women's political ambition in their care for human life.[66]

Indeed, Xue's political ideal was founded primarily on such motherly considerations. As she built up her poetics, she also hoped to design an applicable scheme of political reform through epitomizing various programs. She expected that the entire nation could peacefully and smoothly transform itself into a democratic and republican society. In the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women*, she imaginatively transformed the world of Greek and Roman goddesses into an ideal women's republic.[67] Such an ideal can also be found in her poems. Her last long song, "Viewing the Lantern Show at the Front Gate of Beijing City" (*Qianmen guan denghui ge* 前門觀燈會歌), composed half a year before her death, offers us a conclusive view:

> Frosty moonlight shines over withered trees.
> Lanterns, hundreds upon thousands, line up along the road.
> Streets are full of excited people, and pipes blowing loud,
> Like glittering stars on tides, tossing here and there.
> . . .
>
> In the Forbidden City, horses and vehicles block the streets.
> People hold their breath, staring at the light of lanterns.
> I am going home to the east district on a carriage
> But cannot find my way through the crowds.
> . . .

My servant comes to me with the following words:
"The Zhou has chosen a lucky day to reform Heaven's mandate.
The palace has announced the imperial edict, delighting the students.
They are here to celebrate the coming of a prosperous period."

I recall when I lived in Shanghai:
Lamplights bobbing in the Huangpu River from boats anchored during an autumn night.
People were celebrating the hundred-year democracy of France,
But no one there reiterated its once hegemonic ambition.

Ruler and people always form the grand system together,
Managing millet, rice, hemp, silk, and things as such.
Although these lanterns look rather extravagant and luxurious,
Why would scholars criticize this expression of happiness?

A piercing wind suddenly rises, and snowflakes whirl down.
Stars disappear, the moon reclines, and lanterns are extinguished.
Coming home, I light the lamp and write down my poem,
On the night of the sixth day, the tenth month, of the year gengxu (Nov. 7th, 1910).

霜月棱棱照枯樹，
千燈萬燈夾輦路。
人聲鼎沸笳聲粗，
星擁潮翻自來去。
. . .

禁城車馬塞堵牆，
共望燈輝屏呼吸。
我亦乘車返東城，
到此躊躇不得行。
. . .

仆夫攬轡前致辭：
"周命維新幸有期。
金吾傳令諸生喜，
預慶升平報答時。"

我憶曩時居海上，
歇浦秋燈夜蕩漾。

百年民政法蘭西，
不見遺風號霸王。

君民從來合大義，
粟米麻絲盡所事。
燈球揚厲縱鋪張，
處士如何有橫議？

酸風倏起雪花下，
星殘月落燈光謝。
歸去挑燈記苦吟，
庚戌十月乙亥夜。[68]

The lantern show, as Xue recounts here, was possibly held in celebration of two imperial edicts, announced respectively on November 4th and 5th, which proclaimed the opening of parliament in 1913, and appointed courtiers to draft the constitution and organize the cabinet. Students in Beijing naturally gathered to celebrate these court-approved reform programs.[69]

As manifested in this poem, Xue's idea of reform, *weixin*, embraced several value systems. First of all, she advocated "Zhouming weixin" (周命維新), or the Zhou's reform of Heaven's mandate.[70] She thus associated reform with the Chinese tradition, specifically the Zhou tradition that held the Confucian ideal of *wangdao* 王道 (the king's way of benevolence) as the core of governing, in contrast to *badao* 霸道 (hegemony by force) which often resulted from Western political reforms. (As mentioned in this poem, Xue wrote another poem about a Shanghai lantern gathering in 1906, in which she celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution and criticized Napoleon's hegemonic ambition.) Xue then combined the Chinese *wangdao* with French democracy as the ideal political system for China. This grand system (*dayi* 大義), as she proposed, should be built upon cooperation between the ruler and the people, in order to ensure the welfare of all.[71]

Xue's ideal of reform represented the viewpoints of many gentry members during the 1898 reform period. In fact, this group of late Qing gentry, such as the Chen brothers and their female relations, most convincingly discussed China's reform. They were, on the one hand, knowledgeable about Western politics, economics, law, culture, history, military, science, and technology. For example, Chen Jitong was "so familiar with French politics and Napoleonic Law that even the very learned French law scholars could not corner him."[72] Xue Shaohui often referred to French systems for examples of the Western tradition, evidently influenced

by her brother-in-law. On the other hand, these people had received solid training from the Chinese tradition. Chen Shoupeng, after studying abroad, passed the civil service exam and obtained the *juren* degree. They also had practical experience in managing business in a modern society, with skills in finances, diplomacy, education, and journalism. When necessary, they would insist upon the right thing at their own risk. Moreover, they were the first ones to bring women into the center of reform and to bring their voices out to the public through the newly emergent news media.[73]

Their ideas on reform and substantive efforts to move China towards modernity deserve the attention of modern historians. Because of their insistence on gradual change, however, they have long been eclipsed in the telling of modern Chinese history by more radical reformers such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. Thus, regrettably, the rich, complicated 1898 reform movement has been reduced into the Kang-Liang reform saga in modern Chinese historiography.

In the summer of 1911, Xue Shuhui died of a long-term illness. Four months later, the Republican revolution took place. The Chinese intellectual elite replaced a highly refined imperial system with an instant republic, in a way more radical than had been originally proposed by Kang and Liang.

**Self-presentation and Self-transformation in Xue's Poems**

Xue also used her poetry to present images of herself. From these self-presentations, primarily as wife and mother, we may obtain some new understandings of the relationships between men and women and of the ways in which women positioned themselves in society during the 1898 reform period.

As mentioned earlier, Xue was orphaned at a very tender age. Chen himself also lost both parents when he was young. Having heard of Xue's reputation as a poetic prodigy at the poetry bell gatherings, Chen sent a matchmaker to the Xue household, of which the actual head was none other than Xue Shaohui herself. Urged on by her elder sister, Xue accepted the proposal. Seen in this light, the future husband and wife entered the marriage of their own free will, and their expectations of the marriage were of intellectual equality and spiritual communication.[74] Shoupeng's understanding and support enabled Xue to continue her literary creation and scholastic learning. She would take care of the household during the day and, at night, "Study side by side [with Shoupeng] like two friends." Psychologically, therefore, she maintained her young girl's innocence and sincerity, as shown in her "Sentiments in Old Style" (*Guyi* 古意) (ca. 1880-1881):

I
To embroider two flowers on one stalk,
Needs a cocoon of two silkworms.
Never broken is the love silk,
Spring wind clips, but too blunt to cut it.
II
Tender hands pluck pure zither,
Tuning to the melody of narcissus.
He listens at my window;
His eyes meet mine, we smile.
III
He adores peach blossoms;
I like white butterflies.
Understanding needs no words;
It's in my painting, on a round fan.
IV
Elegant calligraphy writes pearls,
Composing the tune of the long-life girl.
Not wanting him to know,
I teach my parrot behind the curtain.

欲繡並蒂花，
先蓄同功繭。
不斷是情絲，
春風鈍刀剪。

纖手弄素琴，
初試水仙調。
郎倚隔窗聽，
相看作一笑。

郎愛碧桃花，
儂喜白蝴蝶。
相喻在無言，
畫上合歡箑。
密字寫珍珠，
譜出長命女。
故不使郎知，
隔簾教鸚鵡。[75]

Xue imitates the daring *yuefu* 樂府 folksongs of the Southern dynasties, expressing the love she shares with Shoupeng. This love, though between a

married couple, sounds more like the infatuated and passionate romance of two young lovers. However, unlike traditional *yuefu*, which usually depict a young girl pleasing her lover with her physical body, Xue attracts her husband through her varied talents. The four poems she wrote respectively depict the young girl's four kinds of talents: embroidery, music, painting, and poetry. She invests each with affectionate sentiment, founded on their mutual understanding.

Precisely because the couple built up their relationship on equal terms, Xue demanded Shoupeng's absolute loyalty. During the period from 1883 to 1889, while Shoupeng was studying in Europe, Xue reminded Shoupeng of his responsibility, in "To My Husband" (*Jiwai* 寄外):

> Do not change because of changing environment;
> Keep on what is difficult, and never give up.
> . . .
> Pines and cypress have their inborn nature,
> Standing firmly, against the coldness of winter.
> . . .
> Let's commemorate Laizi's wife;[76]
> She scolded her husband for abandoning farming.
> Ji's wife happily watered vegetable garden;
> Meng Guang shed off ornaments as a good beginning.[77]
> Alas we are but ordinary husband and wife,
> But we are soul mates, having the same heart.
> . . .
>
> 莫以見異遷，
> 黽勉爲其難。
> . . .
> 松柏有本性，
> 巍然凌歲寒。
> . . .
> 緬懷萊子婦，
> 匪屑輟耕起。
> 冀妻灌園樂，
> 孟光椎結始。
> 嗟嗟夫婦愚，
> 同心是知己。
> . . .[78]

Xue's concern that her husband might transfer his love to some other woman seems to have arisen from her observation of Chen Jitong's personal

life. Jitong had been married to Lady Liu before he met Lai Mayi in Paris, and the two lived together while Liu was still alive. In the summer of 1888, according to the account of Xue's children, Liu "died of a sudden ailment at her natal home (in Fuzhou), and gossip started circulating among relatives."[79] What ailment cost Liu's life, why did she die at her natal home instead of in the Chen household, and what kind of gossip and criticism circulated among relatives? The vague reports leave nagging questions about the circumstances of her death. As the Chen brothers were then in Europe, Xue alone dealt with this difficult situation and suppressed the controversy.[80] Although Xue had enormous respect for Jitong,[81] she evidently did not want to fall prey to a similar situation. This is probably why she made these demands on Shoupeng.

After coming back from Europe, Shoupeng for a while indulged in drinking parties, and often got drunk. Xue admonished him, but to no avail. She then "composed *qu*-lyrics using old *Kunqu* music, and taught the maids how to sing. She herself either played flute or clappers to adjust the beats." Whenever Shoupeng wanted to have a drink with friends, she would set up a banquet and entertain Shoupeng with a singing performance, so as to stop him from going out.[82]

This family story reminds us of a *Shishuo xinyu* episode, recorded in the chapter "Worthy Ladies" (*Xianyuan*). It tells how Lady Liu admonished her husband, the Eastern Jin prime minister Xie An 謝安, not to indulge in women and wine. Lady Liu was famous for being a *dufu* 妒婦 (jealous woman) because of her rigorous discipline of her husband, as recorded in the *Duji* 妒記 (Records of Jealous Women), a work contemporary with the *Shishuo*.[83] Yet the *Shishuo* author listed her among the independent, strong-minded, and talented Wei-Jin worthy women. Judging from various *Shishuo* episodes, the author seems to suggest that this sort of jealousy usually arose from strength of character or sincere feelings for their husbands, from whom they expected an equal response.[84] Whether intentionally or not, Xue emulated Lady Liu, manifesting her grasp of the spirit of the "Worthy Ladies."

In fact, both in poetic creation and in life, Xue intentionally continued the intellectual style of the Six dynasties, typified by the *linxia fengqi* 林下風氣, or "Bamboo Grove Aura."[85] When Chen Jitong first met with Xue Shaohui, then an 18 *sui* young bride, he appraised her as having a natural, sunny, and graceful manner. Xue herself also used this standard to inspire her daughters and evaluate foreign women.[86] Taking *xianyuan* 賢媛 instead of its counterpart, *guixiu* 閨秀, as one's model of self-fashioning was a general trend among the 1898 reform women, who often addressed themselves as *xianyuan* and took the "Bamboo Grove Aura" as the highest compliment for each other.[87]

In her early years, Xue's demands for equal status between husband and wife were concerned mainly with mutual love and understanding. She later broadened these concerns to include equality in conversations and discussions about nations and people. In the two prefaces they each wrote for their cooperative work, the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women*, Xue and Shoupeng openly argued about the standards of classifying and evaluating the Western women.[88] In the poem, "Watching a Circus Show" (*Guan maxi* 觀馬戲) (1909), Xue celebrated this newly imported form of Western performance as the restaging of an ancient and auspicious Chinese scene of peace and prosperity, describing the scene as "myriad beasts dancing in the court" (*baishou wu yu ting* 百獸舞於庭). Shoupeng mocked Xue's optimistic tone, pointing out that the Roman Empire invented this sort of show for directing people's attention away from the real problems of the state.[89] The significance of Xue's honest account of their argument lies not in whose opinion is correct, but in that the wife could and would publicize her argument with her husband on grand matters such as national destiny and people's minds. Evidently emboldened by conversations within the family, Xue became outspoken in public. Seen in this light, the equal status of men and women, which has been taken as a result of Western influence after the May Fourth movement, had already appeared during the 1898 reform era.

As a mother, Xue especially emphasized "mother's teaching" (*mujiao* 母教 or *muxun* 母訓), as exemplified in her two series of poems, "Teaching My Sons" (*Ke'r shi* 課兒詩) (1903) and "Instructing My Daughters" (*Xunnü shi* 訓女詩) (1904). Both advocated equal education for sons and daughters, but with an awareness of their physical and mental differences. These poems associated the education of children with the increasingly intensified global competition in politics, military, and technology. "Teaching My Sons" required her two boys to have the courage to "stand alone against ten thousand enemies" (萬人我獨往), and taught them "not to ignore the foreign bullying" (外侮不可罔).[90] The brief preface to "Instructing My Daughters" pointed out that the poem was written to respond to the call for women's education. This series of poems, drawing upon the *Book of Changes*, made it clear from the outset that "Men and women are born of the grand transformation, / From the same ether, but one translucent and the other opaque" (男女同化生，一氣分清濁). Then, under the general call for women's education, it repeatedly emphasized women's domestic duty. Finally Xue required her daughters, "To treat the young with motherly compassion, / To expand your love according to the actual situation" (慈祥以待下，推愛而准情). She also told them, "The straight Way accomodates most people, / Harmonious music has no hurried sound" (道直可容眾，樂和稀促聲). This expressed her hope that they

would extend their care for family to a much broader space.[91] These expectations of her daughters accorded with Xue's own principles.

Standing at the crossroads of past and present, Chinese and Western, and facing the complicated interaction of these various value systems, Xue's male contemporaries often felt very much perplexed. The situation imposed more hardship on women, since they also had to deal with the conflicts between the inner and outer domains, conventionally assigned to women and men respectively.

For Xue, the conflict came first between her female gender and the traditional male poetics that often disparaged tender and affectionate poems as girlish (*nülang shi* 女郎詩), as of the "style of rouge and powder" (*zhifen qi* 脂粉氣). In 1910, one year before she died, Xue edited her poems, saying: "All my life I have disdained the 'style of rouge and powder.' For the past thirty years, I have tried hard to eliminate it, yet it always comes back to haunt my ink-brush. Alas, how hard is the confinement of our womanhood!"[92] As a woman, however, Xue recognized that she could not separate literary creation from life experience. In her collection of poems, *zhifen qi* never seems a reason for excluding some of her own works. There are even lines such as "Having my hair dressed in a stylish fashion, / I listen to the street vendor, peddling fragrant flowers" (倩人梳就新興髻，聽賣街頭袋袋花).[93] As a matter of fact, Xue hardly tried to conceal her own or other women's female identity in her poems. More often than not, she depicted women's fragile appearance in order to set off their profound inner strength. For instance, in 1905, she wrote the poem "Inscribed on Wu Zhiying's [1868-1934] Calligraphy Scroll of Cursive Style" (*Ti Wu Zhiying caoshu hengfu* 題吳芝英草書橫幅 ) to celebrate this woman calligrapher:

Zhiying is indeed a daughter of the Wu family.
Valiant calligraphy startles wind and rain.
Wielding ink-brush vibrates her hairpin;
Tender wrist sends out sad swans' crying.

芝英亦是吳家女，
筆陣蒼茫動風雨。
想見揮毫鈿釵飛，
腕底哀鴻哭聲苦。[94]

Xue intentionally exposes Zhiying's female identity, typified by her hairpin and tender wrist. Yet, precisely from these delicate descriptions, the reader sees Zhiying's vigorous and compassionate inner world. Her vibrant hairpin reveals her anxiety for people's suffering, and her wrist rapidly

wielding the ink-brush, shows her eagerness to make known people's crying in her writing.

Another inner conflict that beset Xue involved her own understanding of the significance of women's poetic creation, and society's general indifference towards women's poetry. Lying on her deathbed, Xue said to Shoupeng: "Although women's words are not worthy of the attention of the world, I have been with you for a long time, and I recorded our life traces and implanted our emotions and souls in these poems. Each poem resulted from the hardships we both endured. No one knows me better than you do. Please preface this collection for me in the future!"[95] Of course, Xue never doubted the value of her poetry, for otherwise she would not have kept on writing. Seeing most women's works being "abandoned to wild mist and tangling weeds," however, Xue had to trust her works to her life-long soulmate. Shoupeng, for his part, proved his trustworthiness through the attentive editing and publication of his wife's works. Their joint effort shows that, even in a time when "women's words [were] not worthy of the attention of the world," there still existed obstinate women writers and their devoted male proponents. Ironically, modern scholarship about the 1898 reform era appears to have almost entirely forgotten Xue and many other women writers. Only the very few women writers and activists who meet the terms of the male-dominated discourse are portrayed, apparently in order to demonstrate the equality of men and women within this discourse.

The Confucian norm of "inner words do not go out" and women's desire to participate in political affairs caused Xue's biggest conflict. In the preface to "Eulogy to His Majesty Returning to the Capital," Xue wrote:

> Your female subject often stares at the capital from under the Southern Dipper. Diligently obeying the instruction that inner words should not go out, how could she know anything about contemporary affairs? However, having been transformed by Zhou poetry, she intends to serve this peaceful and prosperous time. She only regrets that she does not have the talent of compiling the Han history, for recording the grand events of the court.
>
> 臣妾每依南鬥，仰望京華。深守內言，詎知時局? 仰荷周詩之化，欲答升平；愧無漢史之才，敬書典誥。[96]

After 1897, Xue frequently published her essays of parallel prose in newspapers and journals, most of which commented on political affairs.97 She therefore broke the conventional rules that "women should not speak of

public affairs" (nü bu yan wai) and that "inner words should not go out" (neiyan bu chu).98 Her "Eulogy to His Majesty," in particular, commented directly on the future of the nation and the imperial reign. Xue defended her bold interference in state affairs, saying that she only intended to offer her services. Her sense of responsibility for the nation compelled her to break conventional norms, bravely contributing her ideas for the nation's benefit.

Xue Shaohui's life and work reveal the complexities and contradictions of fin de siecle China. "Liberation" was not a simple process, for Xue or anyone else. Enamored with tradition yet open-minded, strong-willed yet sentimental, rational yet passionate, down-to-earth yet imaginative, Xue exemplified the Chinese "New Woman" well before the term was coined in the New Culture era. A devoted mother, wife, and daughter, she (and others like her) extended these "domestic" notions to embrace the entire nation; her mission, in other words, became one of educating, nurturing, and protecting the Chinese people as a whole. And in the pursuit of this goal, reformers like Xue were eager to embrace any new knowledge and any new values capable of empowering the nation and the people.

## Endnotes

* All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

1. According to Bing Fu's 病夫 (Zeng Pu 曾樸 [1872-1935]) preface to Chen Shoupeng's "Yiru yicong" 繹如譯叢, published in Zeng Pu ed., *Zhen mei shan* 真美善 2.6 (1928), Chen Shoupeng was still alive this year when Zeng went to him to collect his late brother Jitong's works.
2. See Chen Shoupeng, "Wangqi Xue gongren zhuanlüe" 亡妻薛恭人傳略 , and Chen Qiang 陳鏘 , Chen Ying 陳瑩 , and Chen Hong 陳荭 , "Xianbi Xue gongren nianpu" 先妣薛恭人年譜 ; both in Xue Shaohui, *Daiyun lou yiji* 黛韻樓遺集 , including *Shiji* 詩集, 4 *juan*; *Ciji* 詞集, 2 *juan*; *Wenji* 文集 , 2 *juan*; edited by Chen Shoupeng (The Chen family edition, 1914).
3. See Jing Yuanshan 經元善 ed., *Nüxue jiyi chubian* 女學集議初編 (Shanghai: Jing's private edition, 1898); Xue Shaohui, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu" 創設女學堂條議並序, *Qiushi bao* 求是報 9 (December 18, 1897): 6a-7b, and 10 (December 27, 1897): 8a-b; "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo" 女教與治道相關說, *Nü xue bao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a; Lai Mayi and Shen Heqing [Ying] 沈和卿[瑛], "Zhongguo nü xuehui shushu zhangcheng" 中國女學會書塾章程, *Xiang bao* 湘報 64 (May 19, 1898): 254a-255a; Xue Shaohui and Chen Shoupeng, trans., *Bashi ri huanyou ji* 八十日環遊記 [*Around the World*

*in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne] (Shanghai: Jingshi wenshe, 1900); ibid, trans., *Shuangxian ji* 雙線記 [*A Double Thread* by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler] (Shanghai: Zhongwai ribaoguan, 1903); *Waiguo lienü zhuan* 外國列女傳 (Nanjing: Jinling Jiangchu bianyi zongju, 1906); etc.

4. See *Waiguo lienü zhuan*, and Xue, *Daiyun lou yiji*.
5. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 1b.
6. Referring to Confucius 孔子, Yan Hui 顏回, Mencius 孟子, and Zeng Shen 曾參; cf. *Sishi xue* 四氏學 in *Ciyuan* 辭源, s.v. "*Si* 四."
7. The poetry bell (*shizhong* 詩鐘) was invented in Fujian. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu" records that, "The poetry bell started in the Daoguang reign. Our late grandfather and his peers . . . established a club at Wanzai Hall in the Small West Lake, and named it Feishe (Flying Society). They made a box [to contain poems]. Above the box they hung a bell, and linked a hammer to the bell with a string. They then tied a bunch of incense to the middle of the string and the lid of the box to its end. When the incense burnt out, the string broke, the hammer struck the bell, and the box closed. Poems written after this moment could not be put in" (5a-b). Also, according to Yi Zongkui 易宗夔, *Xin Shishuo* 新 世 說 (1918; reprint, Taibei: Mingwen shuju, 1985): "The poetry bell is a variant of "linked verse" [*lianju* 聯句 ] (*juan* 2, 40a-b).
8. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 2b-7a.
9. "Wenshu" possibly refers to the Qing painter Jiang Zhenhong 江 振鴻 (fl. early 19th cent.), a native of Jiangdu (today's Yangzhou, Jiangsu province), who was skilled in landscape and flowers. See Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, *Zhongguo meishu jia renming cidian* 中國美術家人名辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1980), s.v. Jiang. There are several painters with the courtesy name or studio title "Nanlou" found in *Zhongguo meishu jia renming cidian*. Among them the most likely one is probably the Qing woman painter Chen Shu 陳書 (1660-1736) of Xiushui (today's Jiaxing, Zhejiang province), who was skilled in plants, birds, and insects, since Xue always insisted on taking women poets and artists as the primary models for women's education. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," *Qiushi bao* 10 (December 27, 1897): 8a-b.
10. Chen Shoupeng, "Zhuanlüe," 2b-3a.
11. In composing *shi* poems, Xue advocated learning from the "Nineteen Old Poems" and the Tang and Song poets. See her "Poem on Teaching My Sons" (*Ke'er shi* 課兒詩), No. 16, *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 13a-16b.
12. As her brother Xue Yukun 薛裕昆 observed; see his preface to the *Daiyun lou ciji*, 2a.

13. Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (574-648) *shu* 疏 interpretation to the "*qiongli jinxing*" from "Shuokua" 說卦, in *Yijing*, in Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, 2 vols. (1826; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), *juan* 9, 1:93. Xue drew upon this idea in concluding her "Poem on Teaching My Sons," No. 16.
14. Yi Zongkui, *Xin Shishuo*, "Liyan."
15. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, "Qianyan" 前言 to Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, *Renjing lu shicao [jianzhu]* 人境廬詩草[箋注], edited by Qian Zhonglian, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), p. 4.
16. Liang Qichao, "Lun Nüxue," first published in *Shiwu bao* 時務報 23 and 25 (1896), collected in Jing Yuanshan ed., *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 56b-57a. This sort of criticism permeated through men reformers' arguments in promoting women's education; see Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 38b, 39a, 40a, etc.
17. Liang Qichao, "Lun Nüxue," 58a.
18. See, for example, Jing Yuanshan, "Quan Jinlingdu renshi chuangkai nü xuetang qi" 勸金陵都人士創開女學堂啓, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 41a.
19. Kang Tongwei, "Nüxue libi kao" 女學利弊考, *Zhixin bao* 知新報 52 (May 11, 1898), 2b.
20. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," *Qiushi bao* 9 (December 18, 1897): 6a-b. For a detailed discussion of Xue's argument with Liang Qichao, see Nanxiu Qian, "Revitalizing the *Xianyuan* (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms," *Modern China* 29.4 (2003): 425-426.
21. As recounted by Xue's eldest daughter, Chen Yun 陳芸 (1885-1911), in her self-preface to *Xiaodaixuan lunshi shi* 小黛軒論詩詩 (attached to Xue Shaohui's *Daiyun lou yiji*), 1a-b.
22. See Xue, "Chuangshe Nü xuetang tiaoyi bing xu," 6b.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid, 6b-7a.
25. Qian, "Qianyan" to the *Renjing lu shicao jianzhu*, 1:4-5.
26. Xue, "Songwai zhi Riben" 送外之日本 (1883), *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 3a.
27. Xue, "Jiwai" 寄外 [To my husband] (1886), *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 5a.
28. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* A, 9a.
29. Ibid, 9b.
30. Ibid, 15b-16a.
31. Ibid, 14a-15b.
32. *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, "Qice" 齊策 VI, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1985), *juan* 13, 1:472-473.
33. See Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, "Song Weizi shijia" 宋微子世家.
34. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* B, 5a.

35. The first school for women in all China was established in Ningbo in 1844, by the English woman missionary, Miss Aldersey; see Margaret E. Burton, *The Education of Women in China* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), p. 35; Xia Xiaohong 夏 曉 虹, *Wan Qing wenren funü guan* 晚清文人婦女觀 (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1995), p. 18. See these two works for detailed discussions of women's life and women's rights movement during the 1898 reform era. For a detailed account of the 1898 reformers' efforts to establish the first girls' school, see also Xia Xiaohong, "Zhongxi hebi de Shanghai Zhongguo nü xuetang" 中西合璧的上海 "中國女學堂" , *Xueren* 14 (1998): 57-92. For women reformers' function and their different attitudes from men reformers' in the 1898 campaign for women's education, see Nanxiu Qian, "Revitalizing the *Xianyuan* (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms." *Modern China: An International Quarterly of History and Social Science* 29.4 (October 2003): 399-454.
36. See Lai and Shen, "Zhongguo nü xuehui shushu zhangcheng," *Xiang bao* 64 (May 19, 1898): 254a.
37. See Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 15ab, 21b-22a, 44b-45a, 46b-47b.
38. See Xue, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo," *Nü xuebao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a; Du Jikun 杜繼琨, "Zai tan *Nü xuebao*" 再談女學報, *Tushuguan* 4 (Beijing, 1963): 56.
39. See Burton, *The Education of Women in China*, pp. 110-111.
40. See Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞, *Wuxu bianfa shi* 戊戌變法史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 421-423.
41. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 3b.
42. A remarkably learned man and a productive writer, Chen Jitong published 7 books in French to introduce Chinese culture during his decade-long tenure as a diplomat in Europe. His legendary life alone deserves a book-long study on the formation of the self of the Chinese elite in the reform era. For a ground-breaking study of Chen Jitong see Catherine Vance Yeh, "The Life Style of Four *Wenren* in Late Qing Shanghai," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.2 (1997): 419-470. I shall also discuss him in greater detail in my book project on Xue Shaohui and her family.
43. Including two foreign novels: Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's *A Double Thread*. See endnote 3.
44. See Xue, "Du *Songshi*," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 4b.

45. Xue's preface to "Huiluan song," *Wenji*, *juan* 1, 5a-b. Although *song* 頌, or eulogy, originated from the *Shijing*, it was later on often categorized as *wen* (prose).
46. Ibid., 7b.
47. See Jing Yuanshan, *Juyi chuji* 居易初集 (Macao: Jing's private pulication, 1901), *juan* 1, 1a-b; *juan* 2, 47a-49b; 53a-59b.
48. See Meribeth E. Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China, 1898-1912* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 55-57.
49. For example, Huang Zunxian, in a series of poems about Cixi and Guangxu's leaving and returning to Beijing in the Boxer Rebellion incident, never explicitly discussed reform. See his *Renjing lu shicao[ jianzhu]*, *juan* 10-11.
50. "Refined tiger" (*xiuhu* 繡虎) alludes to Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), whose writings are beautiful and full of strength (*Ciyuan* 辭源 , s.v. *Xiu* 繡).
51. Fan, "Caiyun qu," in *Fanshan quanji* 樊山全集, *Xuji* 續集 (1913 ed.), *juan* 9, 4a.
52. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 7a.
53. A more broadly circulated version of the story had Caiyun associated with Queen Victoria's daughter, the German empress. See Sun Zhen 孫震 ed., *Sai Jinhua qiren* 賽金花其人 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1987), p. 143, n. 2. Xue followed this version.
54. For the "Willow branch" allusion, see Xu Yaozuo 許堯佐, "Liushi zhuan" 柳氏傳, collected in *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說, edited by Wang Pijiang 汪辟疆 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1958, 1975), pp. 52-53.
55. To take Chinese and Western women as "sisters born of the same parents" (*tongbao zimei* 同胞姊妹) seemed a common ideal for the 1898 women reformers and their Western proponents (see Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chuban*, 12a). At the first meeting of the women's association, held on December 6, 1897, over 100 Chinese and Western women attended. Chen Jitong and Lai Mayi's daughter Chen Chao 陳超 (Banxian 班仙) composed the following poem: "Sisters meet, Chinese and Western; / Flowers bloom, scarlet and crimson. / For our love of blossoms far and near, / We wish spring breeze here and there" (中西萃薈此堂中，姊妹花開朵朵紅。爲惜天涯有凡卉，欲教到處遍春風). See Jing, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 20b.
56. "Donger" 冬兒 seems to allude to the singing girl Donger in a poem by the Tang poet Zhang Hu 張祜; see *Tangshi jishi* [*jiaojian*] 唐詩紀事[校箋], 2 vols., commentary by Wang Zhongyung 王仲鏞 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1989), 2:1418.

57. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 8a. The Zhangtai willow (*Zhangtai liu* 章台柳) was an often-used Tang poetic image for a courtesan or a concubine; see also Xu Yaozuo, "Liushi zhuan."
58. Fan, "Hou Caiyun qu," as quoted in *Sai Jinhua qiren*, pp. 147-148.
59. Xue, "Laoji xing," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 8b.
60. Fan Zengxiang, "Caiyun qu," *Fanshan xuji*, *juan* 9, 7b.
61. Xue, "Xunnü shi," *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 20a.
62. Shan Shili 單士厘 commented on Xue's "Laoji xing," saying: "This poem is much more detailed and accurate than Fan Zengxiang's "Caiyun qu," comparable to Wu Weiye's 吳偉業 (1609-1671) "Yuanyuan qu" 圓圓曲. Yet phrases such as 'to meet with this young friend' (*wangnian jiao* 忘年交), 'treating her to an imperial banquet' (*kai tianpao* 開天庖), and 'taking a photo side by side' (*xie zhaoying* 偕照影) reveal the poet's ignorance about the protocol on diplomatic occasions. . . . In brief, she was misled by the novel *Niehai hua* 孽海花." Quoted in Qian Zhonglian, *Qingshi jishi* 清詩紀事, 22 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chuban she, 1989), 22:16011-12. Xue composed this poem in 1902, and the author of *Niehai hua*, Zeng Pu, began working on this novel in 1905. Clearly, Xue could not have been misled by Zeng. On the contrary, both Xue and Zeng adopted the story from the same origin—the Chen brothers. From 1888 to 1892, when Hong Jun, along with Fu Caiyun, served as the ambassador to Europe, Jitong and Shoupeng were also there, with Jitong serving as consul to several European countries. Thus the Chen brothers' version of the Fu Caiyun story is comparatively reliable, as can be testified by Xue's accurate account of German history and political systems. Zeng Pu, for his part, acknowledged Chen Jitong as his great inspiration who stimulated his enthusiasm for literature; see Zeng's letter to Hu Shi 胡適, in *Hushi wencun* 胡適文存, vol. 3. (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1920), *juan* 8, 1125-1139. In Chapters 31 to 32 of the *Niehai hua*, Zeng used Jitong's personal life as the basis of creation, describing his triangle relationship with his French wife and English lover. He also mentioned Jitong's acquaintance with Fu Caiyun; see *Niehai hua* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 292-315. Seen in this light, Xue possibly composed the "Laoji xing" under the influence of the Chen brothers, especially Jitong.
63. See Nanxiu Qian, "Classifying the Female West in Chinese: Xue Shaohui and the *Biographies of Exemplary Foreign Women* (*Waiguo lienü zhuan*)." *Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming.
64. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 16b.
65. Xue, *Ciji*, *juan* B, 6b.

66. See Xue, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo," *Nü xuebao* 3 (August 15, 1898): 2a.
67. See "Classifying the Female West in Chinese."
68. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 4, 15a-b.
69. See Guo Tingyi 郭廷以 ed., *Jindai Zhongguo shishi rizhi* 近代中國史事日志, 2 vols. (Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1963), 2:1372-1373.
70. See *Shijing* 詩經, "Wen wang" 文王, *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in Ruan Yuan, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu*, *juan* 16, 1:503.
71. See Xue, "Huangpu tan guandeng ge" 黃埔灘觀燈歌, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 11a-b.
72. Chen Yan et al., *Minhou xianzhi* 閩侯縣志, "Chen Jitong zhuan" 陳季同傳 (1933; Reprint, Taibei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1966), *juan* 69, 38a. Chen Jitong translated the "Liguo lü" 立國律 [Code of the nation], "Jijia lü" 齊家律 [Code of marriage], and "Baoguan lü" 報館律 [Code of journalism] from the Napoleonic Code and had them published on the various issues of the *Qiushi bao* 求是報 (English title: *The International Review*), edited by Chen Jitong, Chen Shoupeng, and Chen Yen, 12 issues, from September 30, 1897 to March 1898, Shanghai.
73. A representative of this group of gentry was the Director of the Shanghai Telegraph Bureau, Jing Yuanshan, who played a crucial role in the 1898 campaign for women's education, among many other reform operations. For his ideas about reform, see his *Nüxue jiyi chubian* and *Juyi chuji*.
74. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 4b-5b.
75. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 1b-2a.
76. Lao Lai and his wife were a recluse-couple of Chu in the Spring and Autumn period, farming in the Meng Mountain. The king of Chu came in person, inviting Lao Lai to serve the court. He agreed, and thus enraged his wife. See Liu Xiang, [*Gu*] *Lienü zhuan* [古]列女傳, "Chu Lao Lai qi" 楚老萊妻, *Congshu jicheng xinbian* ed., *juan* 2, 57a-58b.
77. Meng Guang was a homely girl. When newly married, she richly decorated herself in order to please her husband Liang Hong, only to disappoint Hong who had expected a plain but virtuous wife. Meng Guang thus changed into coarse clothing and they together lived in reclusion ever after. See ibid., "Liang Hong qi" 梁鴻妻, *juan* 8, 249a-b.
78. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 1, 5b.
79. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 7b.
80. Ibid.
81. Xue highly praised Chen Jitong's personal qualities and his contribution to the nation and the people; see her "Ti Wu Zhiying

caoshu hengfu" 題吳芝英草書橫幅 (1905) (*Shiji*, *juan* 3, 6a-b), "Shanghai guo Jingru xionggong guzhai" 上海過敬如兄公故宅 (1907) (*Shiji*, *juan* 3, 14b), and "Jingru xionggong wushi shouchen zhengshi qi" 敬如兄公五十壽辰徵詩啓 (1900?) (*Wenji*, *juan* B, 12a-13b).

82. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 8b.
83. See Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), *Shishuo xinyu* [*jianshu*] 世說新語 [箋疏], commentary by Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), chp. 19, episode 23, text proper and Yu Jiaxi's commentary, 2:694-695.
84. Such as a *Shishuo* episode in the chapter on "Huoni" 惑溺 : "Wang Rong's wife always addressed Rong with the familiar pronoun 'you' [*qing* 卿]. Rong said to her, 'For a wife to address her husband as "you" is disrespectful according to the rules of etiquette [*li* 禮]. Hereafter don't call me that again.' His wife replied, 'But I'm intimate with you and I love you, so I address you as "you." If I didn't address you as "you," who else would address you as "you"?' After that he always tolerated [this usage]" (35/6) (trans. by Richard B. Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976], 488). Yu Ying-shih suggests that the wife's remark, "If I didn't address you as 'you,' who else would address you as 'you'?" reveals a growing jealousy among Wei-Chin women as well as an increasing intimacy between husbands and wives. See his *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun* (Taibei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1980), p. 346. See also my discussion of the Wei-Jin women in my book, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: Shih-shuo hsin-yü and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), chp. 4.
85. The phrase *linxia fengqi*, or the Bamboo Grove aura, characterizes a group of gentlemen, known to later periods as *Zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢, Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove, whose manner and spirit represent the most respected characteristics of the Wei-Jin gentry. As noted in Sun Sheng's *Chin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋: "At the time (ca. 260), the fame of the manner [of the Seven Worthies] was wafted everywhere within the seas. Even down to the present [ca. 350] people continue to intone it" (Liu Jun's 劉峻 [462-521] commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu*, Chapter 23, Episode 1; trans. Mather, 371). This phrase and the terms *xianyuan* and *guixiu* appeared in the following *Shishuo* episode and its chapter title, "Xianyuan," to depict two different kinds of Wei-Jin women: "Xie Xuan held his elder sister, Xie Daoyun, in extremely high regard, while Zhang Xuan constantly sang the praises of his younger sister, and wanted to match her against the other. A nun named Ji went to visit both the Zhang and Xie families. When people asked her which

was superior and which inferior, she replied, 'Lady Wang's (i.e., Xie Daoyun's) spirit and feelings are relaxed and sunny; she certainly has a Bamboo Grove aura (*linxia fengqi*). As for the wife of the Gu family (i.e., Zhang Xuan's sister), her pure heart gleams like jade; without a doubt she's the full flowering of the inner chamber (*guifang zhi xiu*)'" (19/30) (trans. based on Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World*, 355). See also Yu Jiaxi's commentary on this episode. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see my book, *Spirit and Self of Medieval China*, chapter 4.

86. See Xue, "Xunü shi," No. 7 (*Shiji*, *juan* 2, 20a), and "Ti Huaxi nüshi Fushi jixue tu" 題花谿女士富士霽雪圖 (*Shiji*, *juan* 2, 18b).
87. See Jing Yuanshan, *Nüxue jiyi chubian*, 2a, 8b, 10a-b, 12a, 15b, 34a, 50b, 51b, etc.
88. For a detailed discussion, see my paper, "Classifying the Female West in Chinese."
89. See Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 4, 6b-7b.
90. Ibid, *juan* 2, 13a-16b.
91. Ibid, *juan* 2, 19a-21a.
92. Chen Qiang et al., "Nianpu," 13b.
93. Xue, "Youjian" 有見 (1897), *Shiji*, *juan* 2, 2a.
94. Xue, *Shiji*, *juan* 3, 6a-b.
95. Chen Shoupeng, "Preface to the *Daiyun lou yiji*," 1a.
96. Xue, *Wenji*, *juan* A, 8a.
97. See Xue Sihui 薛嗣徽, "Preface to the *Daiyun lou wenji*," 2b.
98. *Liji* 禮記, "Neize" 內則, in Ruan Yuan, ed., *Shisan jing zhushu*, 2: 1462.