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FUSHENG LIU JI:
GAPS, LITERATI IDENTITY, AND MEANING OF ARTISTIC CREATION

By

Hong Huang
B.A., Nanjing University, 1982
M.A., Beijing Foreign Studies University, 1997

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Humanities
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2012

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 17, 2012

By the following Dissertation Committee:

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Robert St. Clair

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,

Mr. Huang Shuiqing

and

Mrs. Zhao Xiumei

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my professors, friends, and family members for their support and help throughout my journey in completing this dissertation. First of all I would like to thank Dr. Annette Allen, my dissertation director, for her continuing academic guidance and encouragement through every stage of my doctoral endeavor. I can never thank her enough for the time and energy she spent on my dissertation draft. I would also like to thank other members of my dissertation committee, including Dr. Li Zeng, Professor Robert N. St. Clair, and Dr. Delin Lai for their longtime support, deep understanding, and unfailing academic help. Professor St Clair's warm encouragement played an important role in choosing Shen Fu and his work as the research topic. Dr. Lai suggested integrating the three factors of this research: literature, social relationship and arts, which had inspired me to view *Fusheng liu ji* from an interdisciplinary perspective. Dr. Zeng's careful reading into the proposal and draft of my dissertation and his insightful suggestions played an essential role in both the first and the last stages of this dissertation. I also wish to thank Dr. Osborne Wiggins and Dr. Allen for introducing to me the theories of Iser, Berger and Luckmman, and Gadamer, as well as the work of James Olney, which has provided me the theoretical foundation of this dissertation. However, I am fully responsible for the understanding and possible mistakes in the applying of the theories in the current research.

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ABSTRACT

FUSHENG LIU JI:

GAPS, LITERATI IDENTITY, AND MEANING OF ARTISTIC CREATION

Hong Huang

November 24, 2011

This study endeavored to provide a new path to understand *Fusheng liu ji* (*Six Chapters of a Floating Life*) by Shen Fu in the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1911). Shen Fu recorded his love story with his wife Chen Yun and his life as a Chinese literatus in his memoir, which had originally six chapters but only four survived. The characteristics of the couple and their artistic way of living were admired so much by many readers, among them was Lin Yutang, who translated *Fusheng liu ji* and used it as demonstration of Taoist philosophy and the Chinese traditional way of living. Although *Fusheng liu ji* is generally known as one of the best autobiographical works in the pre-modern time and loved by readers in and outside of China, some important questions have not been addressed, including the reception history of it, the literati identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and the true meaning of their artistic creations. All these questions are scrutinized and explored in this dissertation.

This study uses several scholars who lived in three periods of time (respectively at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the 1920s through the 1940s, and the 1980s and after) as examples to explore the reception history of *Fusheng liu ji*. This study also analyzes the synchronic context of the book including the location of different gaps in the text and their functions. Further more, this study discusses the literati identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and also on their most courageous creation: the playing of literati throughout their lifetime. By doing so, this study provides an insightful glimpse on the meaning of the Chinese artistic way of living. Wolfgang Iser's theory of "gaps," as well as the social construction of reality theory of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and the thoughts on "play" of Hans-Georg Gadamer, are used as guidelines in this study. The author of the current dissertation hopes this study can facilitate the further understanding of the Chinese mentality and artistic spirit demonstrated in *Fusheng liu ji*.

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CHAPTER I

SHEN FU AND *FUSHENG LIU JI*

Shen Fu 沈復 (1763-1818?), styled Sanbai 三白, lived in the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1911) in Suzhou 蘇州, China. As a “government clerk, a painter, occasional trader, and a tragic lover,”¹ he belonged to low-rank literati who lived in the decaying time of the Qing Dynasty with no hope to realize the literati ideal that his education and mentality aimed at: to become part of the ruling class or the scholar-officials group. With a literati self identity and seeking a literati life style with limited resources, he and his wife Chen Yun 陳芸 (1763-1803), played literati all their life in their home, neglecting their other social roles. In his memoir that titled *Fusheng liu ji* 浮生六記 (six chapters of a floating life), he created a poetic but tragic life story and a unique literary work which earned him a lasting position in Chinese literature.

Shen Fu lived most of his adult life in poverty, and wrote in his late 40's a memoir that consisted of six chapters originally, but only four chapters survived. In these existing chapters, Shen Fu recorded his love story with her cousin and later his wife, their artistic way of living, the happiness and sorrows they went through since they were teens and the tragic early death of Chen Yun after the couple was estranged by Shen Fu's parents and was driven away by the big

¹ Leonard Pratt, and Su-hui Chiang, *Six Records*, 23.

family. Shen Fu also expressed his various interests and knowledge on literature, painting, garden architecture, flower arranging, interior designing, and traveling. Chen Yun was depicted by her husband in the book as a very intelligent woman with deep love for literature and art. Although she never had any formal education, she taught herself reading and writing, and later she was even able to read and write poetry with traditional style. As a woman who lived in China over two hundred years ago, her life sphere was very limited but nevertheless she loved life deeply with artistic spirit and creative wisdom.

The length of *Fusheng liu ji* is very short comparing to most of the autobiographical works in the Western literature tradition. Its chapters are arranged according to the themes instead of synchronically. The language is concise and carefully chosen. Many innovations of Shen Fu have composed the originality and literary achievements of *Fusheng liu ji*.

The present research aims at an interdisciplinary reading of Shen Fu's work from the perspectives of (1) the reader-response theory of Iser, especially his thoughts on "gaps," (2) the social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckmann, and (3) the ideas of Gadamer on play, in order to understand the work of Shen Fu regarding the aspects of his literary achievements, the social relationships and family life in the Qing time, and the meaning of artistic living for individuals such as Shen Fu and Chen Yun.

The current study consists of an introductory chapter that focuses on the general information about Shen Fu and his memoir, including a brief summary

about the different editions in Chinese and the translations of English and other languages of *Fusheng liu ji*, and also the existing scholarship on the book in different times.

In order to establish an understanding of how and why *Fusheng liu ji*, barely surviving as a manuscript of an almost unknown and unsuccessful literatus, arrived at its beloved and most discussed “best-seller” status two hundred years after Shen Fu wrote it, the second chapter examines the reception of this book in three different historical periods, namely the time around its first publication in 1877, the first half of the twentieth century when it became well received, and the time when it is rediscovered and became a classic in the 1980s and after. By doing so, this study discusses what unique characteristics of *Fusheng liu ji* fascinated readers in different times, and how the literary characteristics, the literati values, and the philosophical ideas demonstrated in this work have been conceived and understood by them. Some scholar readers and their works about *Fusheng liu ji* are studied closely to exemplify the reading of this work at their times: Wang Tao 王韜 (1828-1897) in the first period, Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990) and Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976) in the second period, Yue Daiyun 樂黛雲 (1931-) and others in the third period.

Using the gap theory of Wolfgang Iser, the third chapter discusses the gaps and their functions in *Fusheng liu ji* in order to understand the literary achievements of the memoir. The author of this study argues that there are

three different types of gaps, namely the structural, the language, and the cultural gaps existing in Shen Fu's memoir, that invite the reader to explore the meaning of the work and create their own interpretations.

Chapter Four of this dissertation focuses on the literati self identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun. The social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckmann provides some guidelines for the understanding the formation of their literati identity, the function of the "significant others," and what being literati means to Shen Fu and Chen Yun. By analyzing the self identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, this study hopes to explore the relations between the self and society in the Qing time, in order to facilitate understanding of the tragedy depicted in *Fusheng liu ji*.

The fifth chapter discusses the play of literati by Shen Fu and Chen Yun, in order to explore the meaning of artistic living and creations in their life. This chapter examines what roles Shen Fu and Chen Yun played at home and in the society, and how the roles were played. As part-time hermits, they followed their role model Tao Qian 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 365-427) and enjoyed the time they had in nature whenever the circumstances allowed. As artists, they made their small world with resonance and taste that resembles esthetics of literati class in the late imperial time. By being indifferent or shutting themselves away from the other social roles, they demonstrated certain amateurism towards the larger world, but had to suffer all the consequences: they played literati so enthusiastically that they lost themselves in the play.

The conclusion chapter will follow and there the findings of this study will be summarized.

The current study uses *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, the translation of *Fusheng liu ji* by Lin Yutang in 1935 and reprinted in 2009 by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, as the basic text of discussion. For the Chinese edition it uses the edition of the People's Literature Publisher in 1980. All the discussion regarding *Fusheng liu ji* in this study is only based on the four chapters that were discovered and published originally by Yang Yinzhan 楊引傳 (?-?) in 1877.

Ever since *Fusheng liu ji* was published for the first time in 1877, the small book has gone through three major periods in its history of reception. The first period is during late of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The manuscript was found by Yang Yinzhan. Yang and his brother-in law Wang Tao put effort to comment and publish the fragmentary book that caught immediate attention and used as the base for later publishers.

The second period is from the 1920s well through the 1940s. *Fusehng liu ji* caught the attention of some scholars such as Yu Pingbo, Lin Yutang, and won the popularity among the general public through the introduction and admiration of scholars like Yu and Lin. Yu Pingbo thought it a book criticizing the traditional Chinese society and the oppressive big family system that

neglects the rights, freedom and happiness of individuals,² whereas Lin Yutang considered it a book of “the tenderest accounts of wedded love we have ever come across in literature.”³ Lin also believed that “the life of this couple is one of the saddest and yet at the same time ‘gayest’ lives, the type of gaiety that bears sorrow so well.”⁴ The book was republished in Beijing by the publisher Pu She 樸社 in 1924, with a revised punctuation and a chronological table of Shen Fu’s life made by Yu Pingbo. In 1935, Lin Yutang translated the book into English and published in the English journal *T’ien-Hsia Monthly* 天下月刊, and later in 1939, Lin republished his translation of *Fusheng liu ji* together with the Chinese origin as a single book by the publisher Xi Feng She 西風社. From 1924 to 1949, *Fusheng liu ji* had been published by twenty-seven different publishers with some versions reprinted as much as six times.⁵

The book also was introduced to the general public through the modern media of the time, such as the newspaper, magazine, play, and film. In 1943, *Fusheng liu ji* was adapted by Fei Mu 費穆 (1906-1951) to a play that performed more than three hundred times in Shanghai, with some famous actors and actresses of the 1940s. It was also adapted to Yue Opera, the local opera in Zhejiang 浙江 and Jiangsu 江蘇 provinces. In 1947, a film of the same title was made based on the play. Also during this period, because of the

² Yu Pingbo, “Preface for Reprinting *Fusheng liu ji*,” 3.

³ Lin Yutang, *Six Chapter*, xiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁵ <http://baike.baidu.com/view/116847.htm#10>

translation and fondness of scholars such as Lin Yutang, *Fusheng liu ji* was introduced to the Western world and well received. It has translations in English, Japanese, Czech, Italian, French, Swedish, German, and Malay and other languages ever since Lin Yutang's translation of English in 1935. According to Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Lubomír Doležel, the Czech Scholar Prusek translated *Fusheng liu ji* into Czech as early as in 1938, and he retranslated it in 1944. Prusek's translation and introduction are the first Western scholarly works on *Fusheng liu ji*.⁶

The third period is at about 30 years later in 1980s and continued to the 1990s and after. *Fusheng liu ji* met its modern Chinese readers and became even to the extent of a best seller. It was published as a single book by the major Chinese publishers such as the People's Literature Publishing House in 1980; the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 1999 and 2009; Yi Lin Press in 2006. It was also published together with works of the same genre either as classical prose or autobiography. Among such publications is *Guizhong Yi Yu* 閨中憶語 (*Remembrance Words of a Lady's Chamber*), published by Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House in 2006. It is very interesting to notice that most of those republishing in this period are bilingual, with the original classical Chinese and the English translations either of Lin Yutang or Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui; or even three language types, i.e., the classical Chinese, the translation in modern Chinese, and the translation in

⁶ Doleželová-Velingerová and Doležel, "An Early Chinese Confessional Prose," 137-160.

English. Of the one hundred and more different editions of *Fusheng liu ji* published all over the world so far,⁷ three quarters of them were published after 1980. It was marked by the publisher as “*wenxue mingzhu*” (literary classic) or even “*shijie mingzhu*” (world classic) first time in the 1930s,⁸ hence printed as a literary classic ever since. There is a new edition of Lin Yutang’s translation that was published in 2009 by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, with a long foreword written by Lin Yutang’s daughter, Lin Taiyi 林太乙 (1926-2003), who lived and worked in the United States.

The name of Shen Fu and his book is also very familiar to the Chinese students of the secondary school because a section in the second chapter “Xianqing ji qu 閒情記趣” (the little pleasure of life) has been selected and adapted with a title “Tong qu 童趣” (the fun of childhood) to the textbook of the 7th grade in the secondary school for the course of Chinese Language and Literature since about thirty years ago. The textbook is published by the People’s Educational Publishing House which is the most important and official provider for the school textbooks in China. Statistics show that in the year 2000 alone, there were approximately 60,000,000 students in secondary schools all over China.⁹ They probably studied this part of *Fusheng liu ji*, though the excerpt is short and mainly about the amusement of childhood and the

⁷ <http://baike.baidu.com/view/116847.htm#10>

⁸ In 1935, *Fusheng liu ji* was published by The World Publishing Company in Shanghai as one of its “Beautifying literary classic series 美化文學名著叢書.” In 1995, it was published by Huaxia Publishing House as one of its “One hundred Chinese ancient classic novels 中國古典小說名著百篇.” In 2000, it was published by Beijing Publishing House as one of its “One hundred classic novels in Chinese Literature 中國文學小說經典百篇.”

⁹ http://www.edu.cn/20011219/3014655_1.shtml#25

imagination of a child. Perhaps it is not exaggerated to say that every Chinese who went to secondary school during and after the 1980s knows the name of Shen Fu and, at least, a part of *Fusheng liu ji*.

Although the exact number of the copies of *Fusheng liu ji* bought by the contemporary readers in China and in other parts of the world is unknown, it is no doubt that the number is very large, especially after 1980s. The edition published by People's Literature Publishing House in 1980 alone has 100,000 copies in its first printing. The two editions published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 1999 and 2009, have 69,000 copies. According to the online search of the author of this dissertation on January 8th, 2011, there are currently twenty-eight different versions of *Fusheng liu ji* available in www.dangdang.com 當當網, the largest online bookstore in China. In fact, this little memoir of Shen Fu, with all its modern Chinese or English translations and annotations, has been published and republished so many times that it almost became a best seller in our time quietly.

Much has been said about *Fusheng liu ji* after it reappeared during the 1920s. Yu Pingbo, the scholar who repunctuated Shen Fu's book in 1924, tried to understand *Fusheng liu ji* from the point of view of individuals fighting the oppressing feudal family and all its rules and hypocrisy. Yu Pingbo's fondness for the memoir can be demonstrated by his several prefaces written for various printing of *Fusheng liu ji* including the one he wrote for one of the German translations of the book when Yu was eighty-one years old. Of the criticism of

the memoir, most famous is Lin Yutang's remark on Chen Yun, whom Lin praised as "one of the loveliest women in Chinese literature."¹⁰ Finding the way of life of Shen Fu and Chen Yun very close to his understanding of the traditional Chinese culture, Lin Yutang advocated its beauty and wisdom expressed by Shen Fu not only by translating *Fusheng liu ji* into English, but also by citing or reprinting the parts of the book in many different publications.¹¹

Many writers in the 1930s and after also published their critiques for *Fusheng liu ji*. Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑 (1895-1968) wrote a long preface for the edition of the book published by Da Dong Shu Ju in 1931. Apart from analyzing the literary talent of Shen Fu, Zhou also stated the causes of sorrow of Shen Fu and his wife: the economical pressure of the family life and the stubbornness and cruelty of Shen Fu's parents.¹² Qian Gongxia 錢公俠 (1907-1977) wrote a preface for the edition of the book published by Qiming Shu Ju in 1946. Qian is probably the earliest critic to compare Chen Yun to Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 in *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*), one of the best achievements in Qing novels. Qian argued that Chen Yun's tragedy was more moving because she was a real person, and her personality was even more loveable than Lin Daiyu. Qian also believed that the feudal ethical code and feudal-minded people were to be blamed. If Chen Yun lived today, Qian wrote, she would also be persecuted because "we are still far

¹⁰ Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters*, xv.

¹¹ Fang Lu, "Constructing and Reconstructing," 101-116.

¹² Zhou Shoujuan, "*Fusheng liu ji zhuiyan*," iii.

away from the time that can tolerate Yun completely.”¹³ Shi Damu 史大木，Wang Zhenghe 汪正禾，Ye Dejun 葉德均 had all published their study on the life of Shen Fu and his poems and paintings.¹⁴

Because of historical reasons there exists an absence of major critical studies on *Fusheng liu ji* in the mainland China from the 1950s to 1980s. However, according to Huang Qing 黃強, Zhang Huijian 張慧劍 had in 1965 finished a new chronological table of Shen Fu that corrected some mistakes of the table Yu Pingbo made in 1924, and also provided new information about the late life of Shen Fu and his trip to Ryukyu Islands 琉球群島 of Japan. Although Zhang's work was published in 1986, it is still an important progress in the Study of *Fusheng liu ji*.¹⁵

Meanwhile, scholars in other countries had been paying constant attention to *Fusheng liu ji* during that period. Among them, the research of Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Lubomír Doležel in 1972 has done a solid work for the discussing on the literary genre of *Fusheng liu ji* and its historical importance in the development of subjectivism and individualism in Chinese modern literature. Comparing *Fusheng liu ji* with traditional autobiographical works, the confessional poetry, the minor genres of classic prose “*biji* 筆記” including miscellaneous notes, travel sketches, and the *biji* obituary in the Ming and Qing time, Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Lubomír Doležel stated that *Fusheng liu ji* was “an early Chinese confessional prose”, that “prepared

¹³ Qian Gongxia, “*Xin xu*,” iv.

¹⁴ <http://blog.sina.com.cn/tfsr>

¹⁵ Huang Qiang, “*Bu shu*,” 5-7.

grounds for the rise of modern Chinese subjective prose and works with strong autobiographical elements” such as those of Yu Dafu, Ba Jin, Ding Ling, and Guo Moruo.¹⁶ According to Li Zeng, the study of Doleželová and Doležel about *Fusheng liu ji* is very significant, as it continued the research on *Fusheng liu ji* by the Czech sinologist Prusek in 1957,¹⁷ therefore “is one of the reasons why Shen’s work became well-received and very popular in the 1980s and beyond.”¹⁸

Steven Owen in 1986 discussed Shen Fu’s work in his *Remembrances* from the point of view of self-deception. Distinguishing “the way it should have been” with “that is how it was”, Owen argued that Shen Fu confused these two points intentionally, and therefore his creations, no matter the mountain in the tray or the memoir he wrote, were simply “acts of desire and of eternal unsuccessful self-deception.”¹⁹ Some of examples of Shen Fu’s self-deception that Owen quoted and thought absurd and deceptive (such as to call the male sex organ as “luan 卵” or “egg”, or the story of the young boy’s “egg” was bitten by a worm, or the remedy of forcing a duck to breath on the swollen “egg” in order to cure it) are misunderstandings of the Suzhou dialect and the local customs.²⁰ Nevertheless, Owen pointed out some important aspects so far

¹⁶ Ibid, 157.

¹⁷ Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, and Lubomír Doležel, “Chinese Confessional Prose,” 138.

¹⁸ Zeng, personal email on March 16, 2012.

¹⁹ Owen, *Remembrances*, 103.

²⁰ The male sexual organ is still called “luan 卵” literally means “egg” nowadays in the Wu dialect regions. The small children in China, especially boys, often wear “kaidang ku 開檔褲” (open-seat pants) before five years old, therefore their private parts are easily to be bitten by insects (Shen Fu used a convenient explanation “luan wei qiyin suo ha 卵為蚯蚓所哈” to blame the earthworm, however, it could be all kinds of insects) while play on the ground. The remedy of using duck’s saliva to cure swollenness of boys’ sexual organ is still practiced in the countryside of Southern China today, see also Xiao, Yaolin “Qing shen si hai bi jian ru chuan,” in *Movie Review 電影評介* 21 (2009): 105.

neglected by the scholarship of *Fusheng liu ji*, such as whether and why Shen Fu lied in the memoir. These questions are excluded in the range of present research but need to be addressed more thoroughly in the future.

Yue Daiyun 樂黛雲 in 1988 saw Shen Fu as one of the intellectuals in the collapse of the feudal dynasty, and discussed the old and ever frustrating problem of the Chinese intelligentsia: “how to serve without becoming corrupted and how to retain self-respect when out of office or favor.”²¹ Her study is probably the most profound contemporary research work on Shen Fu’s life and his work.²²

Martin W. Huang in his research on the literati identity and its presentation and representation in Qing fictions stated that Shen Fu “was probably the first Chinese writer who, without the aid of a mask, wrote directly about the intimate details of his private life, especially his love for his wife.” He also maintained that *Fusheng liu ji*, the same as *Honglou meng*, is not a confessional work that emphasizing personal guilt.²³

The multitude of scholarly works about *Fusheng liu ji* appeared in the mainland China mainly after the 1980s, especially after 2000. The database of the National Library in Beijing shows that more than 200 articles on *Fusheng liu ji* had been published in Chinese academic journals during the period from 2000 to 2008. Most of the articles discussed *Fusheng liu ji* from the point of view of either the author or the text but not the reader. For example, some

²¹ Cyril Birch, “Postscript,” 143.

²² Yue Daiyun, *Intellectuals*, 38-56

²³ Martin W. Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 108.

articles discussed the life span of Shen Fu, by using the newly found evidence related to Shen Fu in the works of his friends such as Shi Yunyu 石韞玉 (Shi Zhuotang 石琢堂 1755-1837) who was the child friend of Shen Fu and later became his employer after the death of Yun. Others analyzed Shen Fu and his wife's characters described in the book, or examined the beautiful and concise language style Shen Fu used in his work to depict the nature and life around him. Some tried to see Shen Fu and his work in the cultural background of the middle Qing Dynasty, others focused on Chen Yun, who loved literature and had a somewhat awaking self-identity. Some critics even tried to analyze Chen Yun's love for her husband and her feeling towards the young prostitute Hanyuan 憇園 from the point of view of the postmodern queer theory of bisexuality.²⁴

Many scholars also compare *Fusheng liu ji* to other classical or modern novels or autobiographical works such as *Honglou meng*, *Shi shuo xin yu* 世說新語 (A new account of tales of the world), *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 (The plum in the golden vase), *Yingmei'an yi yu* 影梅庵憶語 (Memoirs of the plum shadow hut), *Shafei nüshi de riji* 莎菲女士的日記 (The diary of Ms. Sha Fei), and so on. These researches, on the one hand locating *Fusheng liu ji* in certain literary background and explored its literary roots; on the other hand, they all discovered certain uniqueness and creation of Shen Fu.²⁵

In 2002, Cheng Zhangcan 程章燦 studied the characters of Chen Yun,

²⁴ See Wang Ren'en and Xie Zhihuang, 2005; Huang Yunzhu, 2002; Feng Wen-kun, 2002; Wang Yan, 2008.

²⁵ See Chen Yuxi, 1980; Zhang Ruiqing, 1992 and 1996; Zhang Xiaoqian, 2003; Tian Chongxue, 2002.

analyzed the conflicts between her strong personality and the “female virtues” required by the big family,²⁶ Kuang Yanzi 鄺龔子 pointed out that it was Shen Fu who had encouraged the “emancipation” of the real side of Chen Yun’s character, that eventually led their tragedy for its conflicts with the big family²⁷. Although both the studies of Chang and Kuang mentioned here are in the realm of gender study, they represented the new understanding of *Fusheng liu ji* from a wider background under the influence of the contemporary Western critical theories and practices.

Many researches and PhD dissertations are on Lin Yutang, the first English translator of Shen Fu’s memoir. The original work of Shen Fu and Lin’s translation from the point of view of translation theory or feminist theories were discussed. For example, Fang Lu used one chapter to discuss *Fusheng liu ji* in her dissertation in 2008, analyzed the importance of Chen Yun in Lin’s endeavor to construct the Chinese women’s image.²⁸

However, some important questions remained untouched in the existing scholarship on *Fusheng liu ji*. For example, what makes it possible for *Fusheng liu ji* from a barely surviving manuscript to become a “best seller” in roughly a hundred years? If it is not pure luck, then what in this book appeals to readers of different times? What makes Shen Fu to believe that he is born as a literatus? What makes the couple’s relationship so unusual in their time? Why do Shen Fu and Chen Yun, the marginal members of literati, adhere so

²⁶ Cheng Zhangcan, “Yun de xing xiang fen xi,” 846-858.

²⁷ Kuang Yanzi, “Chen Yun de qing shen zhi lei,” 859-879.

²⁸ Fang Lu, “Constructing and Reconstructing,” 101-152.

stubbornly to the literati ideals and way of life which they are not able to afford? Without answering these questions, the study of *Fusheng liu ji* can only be confined to the beautiful language it used, or the touching love story it told, or the artistic life style it depicted.

The author of the current dissertation wishes to answer the above mentioned questions in the light of certain perspectives of Iser, Berger and Luckmann, and Gadamer. No existing studies including PhD dissertations in English or Chinese were found so far that discussed Shen Fu's memoir from the perspective of Iser's "gaps," or the identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, or the life style of the couple from the perspective of Gadamer's "play." Therefore, this study aims to provide new perspectives and insightful understandings in the interpretation of *Fusheng liu ji*, and to contribute a closer and more profound appreciation of the true spirit of Chinese literature and art.

In order to reach the research goals, the present study concentrates on the reception of *Fusheng liu ji* in the aforementioned three time periods on the one hand, and the following three facets of the memoir on the other: gaps in the text, self identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and the meaning of artistic living in their lifelong playing of literati. Examining the reception of the memoir in the three different times through some case studies can offer historical or diachronic contexts and perspectives in answering the research questions, whereas analyzing the work closely in the three facets will provide the answers with synchronic perspectives or large social-cultural contexts.

CHAPTER II

THE RECEPTION OF *FUSHENG LIU JI*: THREE PERIODS

This chapter will address the reception history of *Fusheng liu ji* in three different historical periods, namely the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century when Shen Fu's memoir was barely known by his readers, the 1920s through 1940s when it gradually became popular via the critiques of Yu Pingbo, the translation and writing of Lin Yutang, the mass media promoting of theater, play and film. The third period started with the republishing of *Fusheng liu ji* in 1980, and with the phenomenal frenzy of English learning and the new and high technology development of computer and Internet. The work of Shen Fu is still going through the process of reappraisal and interpretation.

1. Wang Tao and the first period: 1870s - 1910s

The manuscript of *Fusheng liu ji* was found by Yang Yinzhan whose life was unknown excepting that he selected some memoirs and essays not far from his time and published them in letterpress as a series in the name of *Duwu'an cong chao* 獨悟庵叢鈔 around 1878. Duwu'an is the name of his studio meaning literally "the house where one is enlightened alone," hence his

pen name “Duwu’an ju shi,” the “lay Buddhist lives in the house of being enlightened alone.” The series has four volumes and *Fusheng liu ji* takes the first two volumes. The third volume includes two works named “*Stories of Mr. Jingting*” (*Jingting yi shi* 鏡亭軼事) and “*Limpid Talks of Tianshan Mountain*” (*Tianshan qing bian* 天山清辨), the fourth volume has a book titled “*Random Records of Seeing and Hearing*” (*Wen jian za lu* 聞見雜錄). All of the authors of his selections were already unknown to the public at the time Yang published these works. The themes of the series include memoir and autobiography (*Fusheng liu ji* and *Jingting yi shi*), the way of self cultivating and pursuing longevity (*Tianshan qing bian*), and notes of traveling (*Wen jian za lu*), which are perhaps Yang’s personal favorite topics. Yang wrote a very short preface for *Fusheng liu ji*, in which he said all his friends were infatuated by the work of Shen Fu, however, no one in the town had any idea about who the author was. He also asked his friend Pan Linsheng 潘麐生 to write another preface, and Wang Tao the postscript. Wang is Yang’s brother-in-law, and one of the earliest Chinese journalists and translators. Wang sent Yang his postscript, as well as six poems he found written by Guan Yizuo 管貽蓀, a contemporary literatus of Shen Fu, who was probably the only person known so far who had read and commented the complete book of Shen Fu with six chapters and mentioned the last two chapters in his poems.²⁹ Yang published all these materials together with Shen Fu’s four surviving chapters in 1878,

²⁹ Zhang Jun, “*Fusheng liu ji de ling yi duan gong an*,” *Changzhou ri bao* 常州日報, November 16, 2007.

about seventy years after Shen Fu wrote his small book. The other works of the *Duwu'an cong chao* were forgotten again in time, only *Fusheng liu ji* was republished in 1907 in *Yanlaihong cong bao* 雁來紅叢報, the *Soochow University Annual*, and republished again in 1915 by Wang Junqing 王均卿 (1867-1935), as the part of *Shuo ku* 說庫, the collection of one hundred and seventy short stories from Han through Qing dynasties. Since then, the fragmentary book caught the attention of the general public.

Pan Linsheng's life is also unknown apart from the few words he said in the preface for *Fusheng liu ji*, that his life was unsatisfactory with many regrets, that he had many things in common with Shen Fu, and what Shen Fu said was what Pan wanted to say though he was about sixty years the junior. His comment on *Fushen liu ji* was that the book had all the excellence of some famous literary works of the late Ming and early Qing, such as *Yingmei'an yi yu* of Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611-1693), which was a famous memoir about Mao's life with his concubine Dong Xiaowan 董小宛; the *Wuli xiao zhi* 物理小識 of Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611-1671), a collection of scientific essays; and *Yi jia yan* 一家言 of Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680), a collection of essays on the art of living; and also *Xu Xiake You ji* 徐霞客遊記 of Xu Hongzu 徐弘祖 (1587-1641), which is a collection of diaries of travel. Pan is correct in the sense that *Fushen liu ji* includes all the themes of the above mentioned books, though it is shorter than either of them. Pan also described Shen Fu's work as "heartbroken and beautiful, passionate and touching, and indeed it moved people deeply in the

heart 淒豔秀靈，怡神蕩魄，感人固已深矣。”³⁰

Similar to Pan Linsheng, Wang Tao also referred his personal life in the postscript he wrote for *Fusheng liu ji*. Like Shen Fu, Wang Tao was born in Suzhou, and married quite young in 1847, soon after he failed his civil service examinations.³¹ His wife Yang Bao'ai, the younger sister of Yang Yinzhuang, died at the age of twenty-two in 1850. According to Paul A. Cohen, Wang Tao and his wife “seem to have shared a deep mutual attachment,”³² which is quite unusual in the time of arranged marriages. In the postscript for *Fusheng liu ji*, Wang recalled that he had read the original book of Shen Fu one year before the death of his wife, and had written some words at the back of the book that he considered now an evil prophecy of the death of his wife:

蓋得美婦非數生修不能，而婦之有才有色者，輒為造物所忌，非寡即夭。然才人與才婦曠古不一合，苟合矣，即寡夭焉，何憾！正惟其寡夭焉，而情益深；不然，即百年相守，亦奚裨乎？...美婦得才人，雖死賢於不死。

It takes the cultivation of several incarnations to be able to marry a beautiful woman. The creator is jealous of talented and pretty women; therefore they are either widowed or die early. The gifted scholar and beautiful woman are rarely married to each other, and if they married, they will be either widowed or die early. How pitiful! However, it is because they will end up widowed or die early, their love becomes deeper. If it is not so, what is the benefit even if they were to live together for a hundred years? If a beautiful woman married to a talented scholar but she had to die early, it is better than she lived long but could not to marry to the scholar.³³

Wang Tao copied these words in his postscript for *Fusheng liu ji* in 1877,

³⁰ Pan Linsheng, “*Fusheng liu ji xu*,” 65.

³¹ Wang Lijun, “Wang Tao yan jiu,” 179.

³² Paul A. Cohen, *Tradition and Modernity*, 13.

³³ Wang Tao, “*Fusheng liu ji ba*,” 69, my translation.

twenty-eight years after he first read this book. The life he had with his young wife, a girl grown up in a literati family, is vanished now, just like Shen Fu's happy days with Chen Yun, when they drank wine, wrote poetry, talked about art and literature. "It was not long before everything turned into dreams 曾幾何時，一切皆幻." Here he was echoing the words of Li Bai 李白 (701-762), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), and Shen Fu about the dreamlike life. His father died in 1849, a year later his wife passed away. He wrote an article around 1850 about his feeling of dreams:

Life's successes and failures are over soon enough ... If I could but finish out my allotted span with a long dream, losing myself in sleep, the pleasure I should feel would be boundless."³⁴

Since life was after all nothing but a dream, he would exchange his life time into a long dream. However, as a man "between tradition and modernity," as Cohen called him, Wang Tao on the one hand shared the traditional literati values and life style Shen Fu adhered to; on the other hand, he became one of the "treaty port intellectuals" because of all the changes happening in China in his time. Wang Tao was later regarded as "a famous bourgeois thinker, reformer and educator," and also 'the father of the Chinese news'.³⁵ By the time he wrote the postscript for *Fusheng liu ji*, he already worked for the western missionaries such as Walter Henry Medhurst 麥都思 (1796-1857) in Shanghai, helped him to translate the new Chinese version of Bible in 1853, became a Christian in 1854, and wrote a letter to the Taiping rebels in 1862,

³⁴ Paul A. Cohen, *Tradition and Modernity*, 12.

³⁵ Wang Liquan, "Wang Tao yan jiu," (PhD diss., Peking University, 2003)

suggested them to make friends with the western countries; thus he was wanted by the Qing government as a traitor of the country. He had to hide in the British Consulate in Shanghai, then went to Hong Kong secretly in the same year, and worked there for James Legge 理雅各 (1815-1897) in his translation of the Chinese classics *The Thirteen Canons* 十三經. In 1867 he was invited by Legge to go to Europe and stayed with the Legge's family for more than two years in Scotland. He even gave a speech in Oxford University as the first Chinese scholar ever to present there. In fact, he "was probably the first classically trained Chinese scholar in the modern era to spend a meaningful period of time living in the West."³⁶ In 1870 Wang came back with Legge to Hong Kong, and in 1874 Wang started the first Chinese newspaper, the *Universal Circulating Herald* 循環日報, with the machine he bought from Legge's printing factory. In 1875 he published some of his political essays that brought him fame as a reformer, and he was going to write in the next ten years about eight hundred of such political essays in newspapers to preach the political reform in China.³⁷ When he looked back at the point of writing the postscript for *Fusheng liu ji*, he might feel that his years after the death of his wife were dreamlike indeed.

However, among all his endeavors in literature, translation, politics, journalism, and education, and so on, he valued his literary work the most. He wrote many short stories and essays and published three collections of them in

³⁶ Cohen, *Tradition and Modernity*, 67.

³⁷ Zhang Zhichun. *Wang Tao nian pu*.

his life time. According to Cohen,

These stories, part fact and part fancy, often revolved around the hackneyed Buddhist theme that men reap the consequences of their acts. Modeled in style after the tales of the renowned early Ch'ing writer P'u Sung-ling (1640-1715), they sold well enough in the last decades of the nineteenth century to net their author a not inconsiderable income.³⁸

For his role as translator, his attitude is interesting because he did not take it very seriously though he did help to translate many important works both in the West and in China. As a late Qing literatus trained for the civil service examinations, his failure in becoming the member of the ruling class through the examination is a lifelong trauma for him. To work as a translator for the westerners was not his goal of life but only a convenient way to survive. Living between his literati ideals and western influences, his life is marginal and despised by the society and even by himself. His attitude towards his translation career can be illuminated by his response to his friend Guan Xiaoyi 管小異 who refused to translate the Old Testament for the American missionary Elijah Coleman Bridgman 裨治文 (1801-1861), because it's contradictory to Confucianism. Wang Tao disagreed with Guan:

譯書者彼主其意，我徒塗飾詞句，其悖與否，固於我無涉也。且文士之為彼用者，何嘗肯盡其心力，不過信手塗抹，其理之順逆，詞之鄙晦，皆不任咎也。由是觀之，雖譯之，庸何傷？

The one who wanted to translate a book should take care of the meaning of the translation. I as the translator am only in charge of the polishing of the words, but not the right or wrong of the original. Moreover, the literati who are hired for translation only write randomly without being serious and careful, so the logic of the reason, the clearness of the vocabulary, are all not our concerns and responsibilities. Therefore what

³⁸ Cohen, *Tradition and Modernity*, 73.

is the harm to do the translation? ³⁹

This kind of work ethic has its origin in the literati ideals and values of “the three things that not decay” (*san buxiu* 三不朽), i.e., to establish oneself by virtue, deeds and words, in that the translation for westerners is excluded and therefore it does not deserve to be treated seriously. Shen Fu expressed the same “amateurism” in his memoir that will be further discussed later in this research. In addition to his attitude towards translation, Wang Tao also was not very enthusiastic and serious about his position as a newspaper man though he was in charge of the publishing of *Universal Circulating Herald* 循環日報. In 1875, he hired Hong Shiwei to be the chief commentator, and concentrated on his own literary works: “I am going to use the leisure to edit my lifelong writings 擬以閑中歲月將生平著述略加編輯.”⁴⁰

However, as his political essays started to win him fame as a reformer, a man with political talent and global knowledge, he wrote more for the paper and created his own style of political essays. As Cohen states, when more officials and younger reformers went to Wang Tao for his opinions, his social status moved up and he became successful as a journalist and political essay writer.⁴¹ Finally he partly fulfilled his ambition of establishing himself by words.

Wang Tao published his autobiography “Taoyuan lao min zi zhuan 弢園老民自傳” in *Taoyuan wen lu wai bian* 弢園文錄外編 in 1882, in the same volume

³⁹ Wang Tao. Diary of April 12th, 1859. Quoted in <http://forum.book.sina.com.cn/viewthread.php?tid=2212636&page=1#pid1802106>

⁴⁰ Yi Rong. “Wan Qing zhi shi fen zi de ban bao shi jian: Wang Tao yu *Xun huan ri bao*,” *Guangmin Daily*, Sep. 14th, 2010. <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2010/09-14/2530892.shtml>

⁴¹ Ibid.

with the postscript he wrote for of *Fusheng liu ji*. Some critics believed that Wang, under the influence of *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), had written the first confessional autobiography in the Chinese literary history, and he “became the pioneer in the liberation of the writing style in the late Qing and thus had great influence on the modern autobiographers such as Yu Dafu and so on.”⁴² Wang Tao is much more lucky than Shen Fu, because as some critics pointed out, if Shen Fu’s memoir was published in his lifetime, it “would probably have scandalized the reading public” for its directness in the way the author describing his love stories and his life experiences, the intimate details of his private life.⁴³ While eighteenth century China was still not ready for Shen Fu’s direct self-representation, the late nineteenth century China was more tolerant for Wang Tao’s bold self disclosures and advertising in his autobiography. However, as Martin W. Huang argued that the emphasis of *Fusheng liu ji*, similar to another Qing novel *Honglou meng* of Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1724-1763), is not “the personal guilty” or “a publicizing of one’s sinful self,”⁴⁴ the author of the current study believes that Wang Tao’s autobiography is not really confessional either. Although Wang Tao is a Christian since 1854, his autobiography is closer to the traditional Confucianists’ “self-examination 自省” rather than the true confession of the personal defects and sin. Take brothel visiting as an example. Shen Fu did not feel guilty or criticize himself for his behaviors in Guangdong

⁴² Wang Jiannong and Wang Chengjun. “A Discussion on the Biography of Qing Dynasty,” 98-101

⁴³ Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 151.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

廣東 with the prostitute Xi'er 喜兒, but rather took it as the demonstration of his unconventional free spirit and deep emotional capability. Similar to Shen Fu, Wang Tao also recorded his brothel visiting and heavy drinking behaviors in *Fusan ri ji* 扶桑日記, the diary of his visiting of Japan in 1879, with the same attitude of self-embellishment and self-justifying. In his discussion about the Chinese biography and autobiography, Yang Zhengrun pointed out in 2007 that without the tradition of admitting the sinful nature of human beings as the Christianity does, the so called confessional autobiography in the early twentieth century can only become self-defending and even self-advertising.

In all, Wang Tao can be regarded as the example of the scholar readers in the first period of *Fusheng liu ji* coming into its reception. Wang Tao and his contemporary literati, who were trained in the traditional way and held the literati values and ideals found in Shen Fu's memoir the true person with free spirit they admired, the frank and un-disguised self-disclosure they imitated, the passion for literature, art and nature they shared, the life style they loved but probably not able to perform, and the woman who understood them with the ideal talent and resonance they appreciated. The personal success and writings of Wang Tao also promoted and influenced the reception of *Fusheng liu ji* in the second period.

2. Yu Pingbo, Lin Yutang and the second period: 1920s - 1940s

The reception of the book during the second period should have a lot to

do with what was trendy then, for better or worse, under the influence of the May Fourth movement that took “anti-feudalism,” “anti-Confucianism,” and “the emancipation of the individuals” as the major slogans, and rejected the past completely.⁴⁵ Readers of this time thought *Fusheng liu ji* a book full of the spirit of individualism that fought the control and the callousness towards individuals in the feudal family. As for the scholar readers like Yu Pingbo and Lin Yutang in the iconoclastic time of the 1920s and the more “modernized” 1930s, they appreciated particularly the topic that individuals were suppressed by big feudal family with Confucian ideology and conventions, as well as the highly idealized traditional life style or the pursuit of such a life in the book.

Yu Pingbo played a crucial role in the reception of *Fusheng liu ji* in this period. The two prefaces Yu wrote for the book in 1923 and 1924 caught immediate attention of readers of *Fusheng liu ji*. Yu also contributed his new punctuation for the book, as well as a chronological table for the life of Shen Fu. Being a young scholar on Chinese classical literature and an active writer of the 1920s, his works paved the path for the reading and further publication of this little book. His version of *Fusheng liu ji* became the standard version with his punctuation and the chronological table.

The first preface Yu Pingbo wrote for *Fusheng liu ji* appeared in the weekly paper *Wen Xue* (Literature) on October 29, 1923. The preface published together with the articles of Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931), Zheng

⁴⁵ Yue Daiyun. *Intellectuals*, 58.

Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958), Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948), all were prominent names in the Chinese modern literature. Yu's second preface for *Fusheng liu ji* was published in the same paper, on August 18, 1924.

In his first preface, Yu took *Fusheng liu ji* as a work of attacking feudal family conventions, and addressed the question why the Chinese traditional literature did not produce any great autobiographical works. Under the great tide of the May Fourth Movement, and the influence of all kinds of Western philosophical, ideological, and social theories of the time such as those of Marx, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and so on, the generation of Yu Pingbo, as he said in the first preface, "were poisoned by the foreign evils 本已中了鬼子的毒,"⁴⁶ meaning influenced deeply by the Western thoughts of that area. He was frustrated for the nation's lagging behind of the world and wanted to reject the Chinese tradition completely. Yu Pingbo described the Chinese contemporary society as a "vast desert," without talented artists, without aesthetics in ordinary people's daily living, but ugliness and staleness everywhere. "If I was not born here thus have a relation with China, I did not feel anything that I could affectionately attached with her 若我不生長在此，不和中國發生關係，則真覺得她沒有一點可眷戀的地方在." Yu also described the Chinese literati in general as "not only lacking of a sound historical point of view, but also impoverished in deep historical interests 不但沒有健全的歷史觀念，而且也缺少深厚的歷史興趣," therefore the Chinese autobiographical works are

⁴⁶ Yu Pingbo, "Ni chong yin *Fusheng liu ji* xu," 3, my translation.

embarrassingly poor in quality and few in numbers compared to other countries. In analyzing the causes, he believed that the Confucian feudal family was to be blame because it strangled the creativity of individuals and made them the slave of the family:

縱括言之，中國大多數的家庭的機能，只是穿衣，吃飯，生小孩子，以外便是你我相傾軋，明的為爭奪，暗的為嫉妒，……浮生六記一書，既是表現無量數驚濤駭浪相衝擊中的一個微波的銀痕而已……

To conclude, the majority of the Chinese families, function only in getting cloths and food, and reproducing offspring, then what left is all intriguing and plotting against each other, fighting for apparent benefits, or covered jealousy. ... *Fusheng liu ji* is only an example that demonstrates the subtle mark of a tiny ripple among the enormous huge crushing waves...⁴⁷

Yu also believed that the tragedy of Shen Fu and Chen Yun was caused by the conflict between their will to develop their talent and express their feelings, and the authority and power of social conventions and patriarchal family. Since such conflict in Yu's time was still continuing, he thought the little book of Shen Fu, though not being a perfect autobiographical work, was nevertheless worthy introducing to the readers.

However, in the second preface Yu changed his tone of social criticizing and focused on the literary achievements of *Fusheng liu ji* mainly. He praised Shen Fu as an “unrestrained man with true heart and character 真性情的閒人,” and his book had a “true me” everywhere because of its writer's sincerity and disparagement on fame and profit. Yu also used many “high-end” words to

⁴⁷ Ibid.

praise the book's structure and language:

有千雕百琢一樣的完美，卻不見一點斧鑿痕。猶之佳山佳水明明是公
開的圖畫，然仿佛處處吻合人工的意匠……儼如一塊純美的水晶，只見明
瑩，不見襯露明瑩的顏色，只見精微，不見製作精微的痕跡。

It possesses the perfection as it has been worked on painstakingly
for more than thousands of times, but there is nothing to show the
carving and polishing. Simply as a picture-liking landscape, it is natural
but it fits the artistic intentions everywhere...It is just like a piece of pure
crystal, you can only see its lucidity and beauty, but you can not see its
background color that serves as a contrast; you can see its subtleness,
but you can not see any trace of making it so subtle.⁴⁸

By the time Yu wrote this preface, he was already a young professor
teaching in Peking University and Tsinghua University, and had published
three collections of the “new poetry” in the modern style that was started after
the May Fourth Movement, and he also published an influential research work
Honglou meng bian 紅樓夢辨 on the Qing novel *Honglou meng*. He also
published many works of prose which are among the best works of the modern
literature. No doubt his prefaces were influential and even compass-like in the
reception of *Fusheng liu ji*. In fact, it is probably not exaggerating to say that
the two prefaces, especially the second one that was republished together with
Fusheng liu ji in 1980 by the People's Literature Publishing House, were the
most read and quoted articles among all his writings.

Yu Pingbo also wrote several poems for Shen Fu's paintings and seals in
the 1930s.⁴⁹ In 1981, Yu wrote his third preface for the new German

⁴⁸ Yu Pingbo, “*Fusheng liu ji xin xu*,” 2, my translation.

⁴⁹ Yu Pingbo, “Wei Chen Naiqian ti Shen Sanbai yin zhang,” in *Yu Pingbo quanji di yi juan*, 407.

translation of *Fusheng liu ji* by Hermut Martin 馬漢茂, whose version may have not been published eventually. Yu's preface was published independently in *Xue lin man lu* 學林漫錄 in Beijing in 1983, in which he emphasized again the "true" and "natural" characteristics of the small book, which he took as the secret of its success:

今讀其文，無端悲喜能移我情，家常言語，反若有勝於宏文巨著者，此無他，真與自然而已。言必由衷謂之真，稱意而發謂之自然。雖曰兩端，蓋非二義。

In the reading of this book, its sorrow or happiness can touch my heart, and with its simple language and small size, it surpasses those enormous books with languish words. The reason is simple: it is true and natural. Say what you sincerely wanted to say is to be true, and express your bosom feeling is to be natural. True and natural are two categories but in fact they are the same thing.⁵⁰

True and natural are what Yu Pingbo saw in Shen Fu's memoir, and are important values he cherished as an intellectual who was trained in the traditional way but was facing all the changes in the world and China. In his first poetry collection *The Winter's Night* (*Dong ye* 冬夜), Yu wrote that he believed the real poet was the adult child, man who had not lost his heart of an new-born baby:

我只願隨隨便便的，活活潑潑的，借當代的語言，去表現出自我，在人類中間的我，為愛而活著的我。……“不失赤子之心”的人，才是真正的詩人，不死不朽的詩人。……我只承認他是小孩子的成人。

⁵⁰ Yu Pingbo, "*Fusheng liu ji* De yi ben xu," my translation.

I only desired to use the modern language, to express naturally and vividly myself, the self living among other human beings, the self lives for love.... Only a man, who has a heart of new-born baby, can be considered a real poet, a poet that not dies. ... I call him an adult child.⁵¹

Born in Suzhou, in a famous Qing Scholar-official's family, Yu Pingbo was originally trained for the purpose of participating civil service examinations and carrying forward the family glory. His great grandfather is Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821-1907), the prominent late Qing scholar of Confucian classics, who lived in Suzhou and Hangzhou after his retirement from a official position and had many famous Qing scholars such as Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936), and Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844-1927) as his students. Yu Yue once had lived in the private garden of Shi Yunyu, who was the longtime friend and later magistrate of Shen Fu.⁵² Yu Pingbo's father Yu Biyun 俞陛雲 (1868-1950) is also a high rank scholar-official of the Late Qing and a famous poet and historian in the early modern time. When Yu's great grand father died in 1908, three years after the civil service examinations was officially abandon, Yu Pingbo left Suzhou to Beijing, and graduated from the Peking University when he was only nineteen. In 1917, when Yu was still a student, he married Xu Baoxun 許寶馴 (1895-1982), daughter of his uncle from his mother's side. Xu is four years senior to him, and the couple lived a happy marriage through all the political and economical difficult times for sixty-four years till Xu passed away at the age of eighty-eight.

⁵¹ Yu Pingbo, "Dong ye zi xu," in *Yu Pingbo quanji di yi juan*, 13-14, my translation.

⁵² Yu Pingbo, "Wei Chen Naiqian ti Shen Sanbai yin zhang," in *Yu Pingbo quanji di yi juan*, 399, my translation.

Although the economical and educational backgrounds of Yu Pingbo and Shen Fu are very different, they have many things in common. Like Shen Fu, Yu Pingbo was born in Suzhou and married when he was seventeen, and his wife was his cousin of his mother's side, or to be more accurate, he and his wife had the same grandfather. Yu Pingbo and his wife Xu Baoxun were child friends since early age, and Xu was Yu's little sister, the same as Chen Yun to Shen Fu. Similar to Shen Fu, Yu Pingbo did not like to leave his wife after they were married. Yu went to England for study in 1920, and the whole trip cost about three month by sea, but he stayed in London only thirteen days and went back home. On both of the ways he kept writing poems and letters to his wife. When he finally arrived in Hangzhou and saw his wife again, his feeling must be very similar to Shen Fu, who felt that his soul melted and did not know where his body was.⁵³

Like Chen Yun, Xu Baoxun was also pretty and talented. Xu could sing and perform the Kunqu, a local opera originated in Jiangsu Province, and even was able to compose the Kunqu music. With Yu Pingbo and other friends, they had organized a theater of amateurs that was famous in the 1950s in Beijing in the literary and artistic circles. Xu is also very good in calligraphy and some of Yu's books are hand copied by Xu and published in the style of her handwriting.

Fortunately, Yu Pingbo and Xu Baoxun lived in a large but very loving

⁵³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 019.

family, and enjoyed all their life the close relationship with the in-laws and great-in-laws, with their cousins, their children, and later grand children and great grandchildren. The pressure and hardship they suffered were not from the big family but from the political and ideological situation in China from the end of 1950s through the 1970s. Yu Pingbo was unfairly criticized for his research of *Honglou meng* in late 1950s, and was sent to the countryside in Henan Province together with his seventy-three years old wife in 1969, and was allowed to return to Beijing in 1971. On the sixty years anniversary of their marriage in 1971, Yu wrote a long poem with one hundred lines, “The Song of Relighting the Wedding Candles” (*Chongyuan huazhu ge* 重圓花燭歌) to celebrate their long and loving marriage, as well as to express his deep love and gratitude to his wife. “Labored in the field and clung to one another day and night, we liked two fish help each other in dry rut 負戴相依晨夕新，雙魚涸轍自溫存。”⁵⁴ These lines recorded how the couple lived in the countryside and their affection towards each other after so many years.

According to Wang Shihua 王湜華 in *Hongxue caizi Yu Pingbo* in 2002, Yu carried the habit of writing down his dreams all his life. Many his works are related to his dreams, and his book “*Dreams in a House with an Old Pagoda Tree*” (*Gu huai meng yu* 古槐夢遇) are all about his dreams. In his poetry or prose, he described the eight years he spent with his great grand father Yu Yue as a dream, his time with his parents, his uncle, the father of his wife, and

⁵⁴ Yu Pingbo, “Chongyuan huazhu ge,” in *Yu Pingbo quanji di yi juan*, 582.

his older sisters, his years with his wife, all were dreams because they were happy times but flew away so soon. Sometimes he was lost in his dreams, and could not tell what was dream and what was real. In a diary of 1922, after his short visit to America, he wrote his happiness of arriving home in a dreaming way:

月餘凝想中的好夢，果真捏在手心裏，反空空的不自信起來。我唯有惘惘然，我回來了。

When my dream of the past a few weeks was actually in my hand, I felt kind of emptiness and lost my confidence. What I could do was only saying in confusion: I have come home.⁵⁵

He had been dreaming this moment on his way all the time, and now he was in his dream, and again he felt his happiness was dreaming-like. Yu Pingbo shared the lament of Shen Fu as he echoed the verse of Li Bai and Shu Shi of the illusion-like innate character of happiness and of life itself. Later in a poem he wrote for Shen Fu's seals, he imagined that Shen Fu, when he was writing his experience in Ryukyu Island for the now lost Chapter Five of *Fusheng liu ji*, he would probably also feel that he was in a dream.⁵⁶

In short, what made Yu Pingbo particularly attracted by *Fusheng liu ji*, or what he as a reader discovered his concealed self in the book can be summarized as, firstly, the honest "adult child" struggled to express his desire for happiness and artistic creation that was suppressed by the controlling feudal family; secondly, the true, natural, and unchanging affection between

⁵⁵ Yu Pingbo, "Yuexialaoren ci xia," in *Yu Pingbo quanji di er juan*, 168.

⁵⁶ Yu Pingbo, "Wei Chen Naiqian ti Shen Sanbai yin zhang," in *Yu Pingbo quanji di yi juan*, 399.

husband and wife, and thirdly, the sense of the dream-like life. No matter what kind of life one lived, no matter how long one lived, it is all the same pitifully short, as short as a dream.

When Lin Yutang arrived in New York in 1936, he had five different editions of *Fusheng liu ji* among his most favorite books that he carried them everywhere he went, because this kind of book “nourishes the soul and relaxes the spirit,” and they “celebrate life itself, including the inconsequential wayside flowers.”⁵⁷

Lin Yutang (1895-1976) belongs to the same generation with Yu Pingbo, but his familial and educational background is very different. Born in a Christian family in the countryside of Fujian 福建 Province, he went to a missionary school in Xiamen for his English learning, and then to St. John's University in Shanghai for his bachelor degree. Graduated in 1916, he then taught English in Beijing, and went to Harvard eventually as a graduate student. A year later, for financial reasons he left Harvard and went to France to work for YMCA, and from there he went to the University of Jena in Germany to continue his study. In 1923, Lin received his doctoral degree in Philology from Leipzig University and went back to China. He married Liao Cuifeng 廖翠鳳 (1919-1987), a native of Xiamen 廈門, Fujian.⁵⁸

Lin Yutang spent his years from 1923 to 1936 working in Xiamen, Wuhan, and later in Shanghai, as professor, translator, journalist, writer, compiler of

⁵⁷ Lin Yutang, *Importance of Understanding*, 14.

⁵⁸ Lin Taiyi, “Foreword,” xi.

Chinese and English dictionary, and so on. He started the magazine *Analects* in 1932, and began to write humorous short essays in both Chinese and English. His daughter Lin Taiyi recorded his life in the year of 1934 to 1935:

In 1934 and 1935, he started two more magazines, *This Human World* and *The Cosmic Wind*. Also at this time, Father was writing an English column called "The Little Critic" which appeared in *China Critic* magazine, as well as editing a Chinese dictionary in the style of the Concise Oxford Dictionary. At the same time, he was translating English works into Chinese, such as the biography of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. And he was translating Chinese into English, the most notable work of which was Qing Dynasty author Shen Fu's *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, which was published in bilingual form in Shanghai in 1935.⁵⁹

As one of "modern scholars" with a foreign educational background, bilingual and bicultural competence, and probably also a Puritan work ethic that is very different in comparison with the "amateurism" of the traditional literati, Lin Yutang became the example of the new type of Chinese cultural man who functioned as the bridge between the East and the West. The publishing of *My Country and My People* in 1935 is a milestone in the cultural exchange between China and the world. It published seven editions in just four month, and was praised as "one of the most important and satisfactory books yet written in English on the character, life and philosophy of the Chinese people."⁶⁰ With his many other works including *The Importance of Living*, the number one best-seller of America in 1938, Lin aimed to introduce the Chinese culture to the western world after the jobs the missionaries had done before him, and provided the service of "distilling the philosophy of generations of

⁵⁹ Ibid., v.

⁶⁰ Lin Taiyi, "Foreword," vi.

Chinese sages and presenting it against a modern background, which makes it easily readable and understandable."⁶¹

Much existing scholarship has discussed the role and contribution of Lin Yutang as a new type of intelligentsia in the transformation stage of China's modernization during the 1920s and 1930s. Yu Yingshi pointed out that Lin Yutang's essay writings demonstrated his literary aesthetic and his personality, which represented the Chinese spiritual tradition.⁶² Chen Pingyuan argued that Lin Yutang's literary works were closely followed the ideal of the Gong'an School in the Ming Dynasty 明代 (1368-1644), emphasizing the innate character (*xingling* 性靈) and taste or charm (*qu* 趣) of the writers, and his works, together with the works of Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), Zhou Zuoren 周作人(1885-1967), Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), Zhu Ziqing and more, are among the highest achievement of the New Literature movement that took place during and after the May Fourth Movement.⁶³ Qian Jun discussed Lin's role of negotiating between East and West on the question of modernity, Ha Jin took Lin as one of the Chinese migrant writers and focused on Lin's works after he arrived in the USA in 1936, and Madalina Yuk-Ling Lee discussed Lin Yutang's life and activities from 1928 to 1938 from the point of view of the cultural internationalism and believed that his symmetrical way of importing the West to China and exporting China to the West was the most effective and

⁶¹ Ibid., iv.

⁶² Yu Ying-shih, "Shi lun Lin Yutang," 127-133.

⁶³ Chen Pingyuan, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu*, 340-343.

successful.⁶⁴

Fusheng liu ji is one of the most important works of “exporting China to the West” of Lin Yutang. As the first person to translate *Fusheng liu ji* into English, Lin not only carried the five different versions of the book to America, but also abbreviated, rewrite, retell, or reprinted the story many times in his later works, such as *My country and My People* in 1936, *The Importance of Living* in 1938, *The Wisdom of China and India* in 1955, and *The Importance of Understanding* in 1960. This shows simply how important the little memoir of Shen Fu means to Lin Yutang. However, many researchers of Lin Yutang, when they discuss this work, only focus on the translation technology of Lin Yutang in his dealing of the linguistic and cultural barriers he encountered in interpreting or Shen Fu’s work. Fang Lu’s PhD dissertation is perhaps an exception as she analyzed the significance of *Fusheng liu ji* in Lin Yutang’s work and career, and especially the role of the female protagonist Chen Yun in the construction of Lin Yutang’s female characters in all his later works. After an inter-textual comparison between *Fusheng liu ji* and Lin Yutang’s major works, Fang Lu concluded that Chen Yun “personifies the spirit of the Chinese art of living,” and Shen Fu’s memoir becomes “an ideal companion book to Lin’s *The Importance of Living* (as well as *My Country and My People*),” that helps Lin “to illustrate his own aesthetic ideals and the art of Chinese living to the world.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See Qian Jun, 1996; Ha Jin, 2008; Madalina Yuk-Ling Lee, 2009.

⁶⁵ Lu, Fang. “Constructing and Reconstructing,” 112.

The author of the current study agrees with Fang Lu and maintains that *Fusheng liu ji* was crucial and played a fundamental role in Lin Yutang's "exporting" of the Chinese art of living as the best example or even a demonstration, of what this art of living consists of and how it can be applied in daily life.

What Lin Yutang discovers in Chen Yun and Shen Fu was the strong "innate character" or personality (*xingling*) and the charm "*qu*" demonstrated in *Fusheng liu ji*, which was exactly what the new generation of the Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shi, Zhou Zuoren, and Lin Yutang himself were advocating in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁶ Chen Yun and Shen Fu, lived a humble life in accordance with their innate character and their subtle taste, were experts of art of living, "the art of arts":

For the Chinese have always had geniality, joviality, taste, and finesse ... In China, man knows a great deal about the art of all arts, viz., the art of living. ... Any nation, therefore, that does not know how to eat and enjoy living like the Chinese is uncouth and uncivilized in our eyes.⁶⁷

According to Lin Yutang, the guiding principle of the Chinese art of living is the Taoist reclusive attitude toward worldly success:

They [Daoist romanticists] had an intense love of life which showed itself in their abhorrence of all official life and a stern refusal to make the soul serf to the body. The idle life, so far from being the prerogative of the rich and powerful and successful, was in China an achievement of highmindedness. This highmindedness came from, and was inevitably associated with, a certain sense of detachment toward the drama of life; it came from the quality of being able to see through life's ambitions and follies and the temptations of fame and wealth.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Susan Daruvala, *An Alternative Chinese Response*, 134; Chih-p'ing Chou, *Yuan Hung-tao*, 93; Chen Pingyuan, *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu* 343.

⁶⁷ Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, 323-327.

⁶⁸ Lin Yutang, *Importance of Living*, 152.

Guided by such principle, Shen Fu and Chen Yun lived a life being loyal to their innate character, and with a playful spirit and natural good taste, made their daily living as creative and artistic as possible.

Moreover, this kind of personality and taste is not foreign to the Western reader Lin Yutang was addressing. As a man with American and European educational background, it's not hard for Lin Yutang to link the philosophy and spirit demonstrated by Chen Yun and Shen Fu with the American individualism, with the love of nature and simple life advocated by thinkers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and maybe more particularly, with the ideas of J. E. Springarn, who stressed the importance of self-expression in literature in the 1920s of America. Lin Yutang introduced Springarn to China in the 1930s.⁶⁹

It is also worth mentioning the different aspects of *Fusheng liu ji* Lin Yutang and Yu Pingbo emphasized. While Lin was fascinated by the artistic literati way of living demonstrated in Shen Fu's memoir, Yu Pingbo focused only on the conflict between individuals and feudal family, but hardly mention anything about art of living in all of his three prefaces he wrote for *Fusheng liu ji* in 1923, 1924, and 1981. The reason is perhaps, Yu Pingbo, born in Suzhou in a real "scholar-official" family of the late Qing Dynasty, lived his life, at least a part of it, in this kind of literati life style with his wife Xu Baoxun whose grandfather was also a high-ranking Qing official. Therefore to Yu Pingbo, composing poetry with his wife or friends, visiting family gardens or other

⁶⁹ Madalina Yuk-Ling Lee, "The Intellectual Origins," 75.

scenery places, playing painting or calligraphy or performing Kunqu Opera at leisure, and so on, is part of the daily life and not really some particular actions to be discussed about. On the other end, Lin Yutang had not experienced such literati way of living when he was young or during his years learning and teaching English in Shanghai and Beijing. For Lin Yutang, the encountering with *Fusheng liu ji* and the journey to translate it into English were coincided with his own searching the Chinese aesthetics and art of living. *Fusheng liu ji* functions as a “textbook” of illuminating the Chinese art of living not only to the Western readers, but to Lin Yutang equally well.

Therefore, *Fusheng liu ji* was simply everything Lin Yutang needed in his mission to bridge the West and the East. He once mentioned that he was so happy to encounter a book such as *Fusheng liu ji*, just like some one found “a pearl in an ash can.”⁷⁰ Indeed *Fusheng liu ji* is such a pearl with great multiple values appeared to him at the right time and in the right place.

The English translation of *Fusheng liu ji* by Lin Yutang had its great success in America and other Western countries; however, its influence in China will come about fifty years later in the 1980s and beyond.

During the years of 1940s, *Fusheng liu ji* was adapted into play, Yueju Opera, and film in Shanghai and was continually published by different publishers. The play, adapted and directed by Fei Mu under the same title in 1943, and became a huge success and played for three months in a row. In

⁷⁰ Lin Yutang, *Importance of Living*, v.

1948, the film of the same title was also produced by Fei Mu. The famous actors and actress of the 1940s in Shanghai such as Qiao Qi 喬奇, Lu Biyun 盧碧雲, Shu Shi 舒適, Sha Li 沙莉, Fu Quanxiang 傅全香, Xiao Dangui 筱丹桂, and Xu Yulan 徐玉蘭 had all played the roles of Shen Fu or Chen Yun. Newspapers, such as *Sheng li wu xian dian* 勝利無線電 published the script of the play for its fans. Magazines such as *Tai ping* 太平 and *Hua qiao ping lun* 華僑評論, *Tian xia ban yue kan* 天下半月刊 and so on had all published reviews of the play or the book. Many writers or editors such as Zhou Shoujuan, Qian Gongxia and many more also wrote their prefaces for the later editions of *Fusheng liu ji* published during the 1930s and 1940s. In short, thanks to the efforts of Yu Pingbo, Lin Yutang, and the newly developed mass media including newspaper, magazine, radio, theater and film, Shen Fu and Chen Yun became a phenomenon in the middle of the twentieth century. Perhaps one instant can tell the popularity of the story of Shen Fu and Chen Yun. According to Barma in his book in 2002, the grandmother of Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898-1975), the famous lay Buddhist artist and writer, was said to have her appearance and probably also her personality resembled to Chen Yun. The story of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, their deep love to life and nature, their great effort to live an artistic and creative life even in poverty, their sorrow caused by the feudal family with all its coldness and hypocrisy, were received by the reader of this period with the concept and understanding of the necessity of social changes. However, the popularity of Shen Fu's memoir had

yet to reach its peak fifty years later.

3. Yue Daiyun and the third period: 1980s and beyond

The reader of the third period, influenced by the fundamental social and economical changes since the 1980s, went through a journey of re-discovering Shen Fu's memoir. On the one hand they were surprised by the artistic life style depicted by Shen Fu, which was abandoned and almost totally forgotten by the Chinese people after the Cultural Revolution that lasted from the 1960s till the end of 1970s. On the other hand, similar to the life style, the literary values of the classical works are also to be rediscovered and relearned. The partial inclusion of *Fusheng liu ji* in grade schools' textbooks can exemplify this new tendency. In the process of this rediscovering and relearning, Lin Yutang's translation of *Fusheng liu ji* played a crucial role in the sense to help the reader to see this "ancient classic" from the perspective of another language and another culture. Perhaps it's not exaggerating to say that many readers of this period fell in love with the English version of *Fusheng liu ji* rather than its Chinese version written in classical Chinese. Accompanied by the new trends of the world flooded into China via internet, *Fusheng liu ji* is examined and analyzed under the influence of Western social and literary theories such as postmodernism and feminism, with the new methods, new speed, and new scope of information gathering and sharing in the time of internet. The role of Shen Fu as an intellectual in the late Qing time, the relationship between Shen

Fu and Chen Yun, and the relationship between Chen Yun and other women in the book became the new focuses of reading, and the memoir of Shen Fu obtained new interpretations.

In 1980, after a long gap of more than thirty years, *Fusheng liu ji* was published again in the mainland China by the People's Literature Publishing House with the edition punctuated by Yu Pingbo, also with one of his two prefaces, and the chronological table he made about sixty years ago. Printed 100,000 copies for the first print, this edition marked the third period of the reception history of Shen Fu's memoir. In 1982, the People's Education Publishing House chose a paragraph in the second chapter of *Fusheng liu ji* to be part of the textbook of Chinese language and literature for the seventh-grade students in secondary school all over China. Although the book itself is not required to be read by the students, at least the name of Shen Fu and his vivid record of his childhood fun time which was empowered by the imagination of children became known by millions of Chinese school boys and girls, and many of them would encounter Shen Fu's work again with its English version.

Yue Daiyun, Professor of the Peking University who has been teaching there since 1960s, published in America her *Intellectuals in Chinese Fiction* in 1988. During the time from 1982 to 1984, she worked in the Center for Chinese Studies in University of California, Berkeley. As a "prolonged

meditation on the intellectual's relationship with self and society,"⁷¹ Yue selected *Fusheng liu ji* as one of the five Chinese literary works produced in different times, with the common characteristics of "resisting position with virtue, resisting decorum with emotion" of the intellectuals⁷² in different historical eras in China including Jin Dynasty 晉代 in the third century, late Qing in the eighteenth century, and three stages in the twentieth century. Describing Shen Fu as one of the "intellectuals at an impasse and the collapse of feudal society" as the title of the chapter two of her book goes, Yue Daiyun focuses on Shen Fu's personality and his struggle of resisting in his way confined by his circumstances.

With Yue's Marxist and sociological critical approach as Kallgren stated, and her training in Russian literature and comparative literature, Yue argued that Shen Fu represented the same characteristics of the "superfluous man" of nineteenth-century Russian literature such as Pechorin by Lermontov in the novel *A Hero of Our Time*:

Frustrated throughout their entire lives, these people attempted nothing. Consequently, they held no hope in the future or in their own prospects. ...Cast from society's path and unable to find a place for themselves within society, they felt no need to remain in society. They were not willing to flow with the current and follow the tide, to do things they would rather not do. Frequently they tried, or thought of trying, to change their lots, but their attempts ended in failure, and they became tragic figures, useless to a society they weren't really a part of.⁷³

Clarifying the difference between Shen Fu and the Russian aristocratic Pechorin regarding their social and economical conditions, Yue mentioned the

⁷¹ Joyce K. Kallgren, "Foreword," vii.

⁷² Yue Daiyun, *Intellectuals*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 39.

“passive resistance” Shen Fu expressed to the ruling class and the social convention, such as forbidding the topics of civil service examinations at his house. His love and marriage with his wife Chen Yun, and his love of nature were understood by Yue as the escaping method after his constant failure and powerlessness in the object world.⁷⁴

The literary innovation and achievement of *Fusheng liu ji* were discussed thoroughly by Yue, since the art of autobiography played an important role in the developing of the modern Chinese fiction, and Shen Fu provided an “important model for the portrayal of the sensitive thinker in the modern novel.”⁷⁵ However, Shen Fu, the protagonist that Lin Yutang thought in him “lived the spirit of truth and beauty and the genius for resignation and contentment so characteristic of Chinese culture,”⁷⁶ was given a more realistic, or even negative depiction, in contrast with the other intellectuals of the other historical periods. In fact, among the several types of intellectuals selected by Yue Daiyun, be it the cool and inspiring aristocrats in the Wei and Jin dynasties, or the innocent and self-sacrificing intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s, or the idealistic Communists of Yue’s own generation in the 1950s, Shen Fu was the most weak and pathetic:

The protagonist of *Six Chapters of a Floating life*, living in the last years of feudalism, lacks the strength even to truss a chicken and is ignorant of the ways of the world. When cheated and bullied he lacks the strength to fight back. He tolerantly and without fail yields ground, a weakling who can only escape to nature. But even in the midst of his

⁷⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁵ Cyril Birch, “Postscript,” 141.

⁷⁶ Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters*, xiv.

privation and troubles he continues to appreciate the subtle appeal of Chinese culture.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, Yue Daiyun's critique on Shen Fu is not well known in China because it was published in English and has not been translated into Chinese. Nevertheless, it is one of the most insightful and profound research so far for it reveals the problem of the Chinese traditional intelligentsia in dealing with the relationship between the self and the society.

During the period roughly from 1985 to 1987, the literature movement “*Xun gen* 尋根” (searching for roots) also cast influences on the public's interest in *Fusheng liu ji* of this time. Advocated by writers such as Han Shaogong 韓少功, Zheng Yi 鄭義, Acheng 阿城 and so on, and mostly exemplified by the works of Deng Youmei 鄧友梅, Lu Wenfu 陸文夫, Wang Zengqi 汪曾祺, Feng Jikai 馮驥才, Liu Xinwu 劉心武, Chen Jiangong 陳建功, this movement wanted to return to the tradition in order to find the roots of the contemporary literature that was started mainly after the May Fourth Movement in 1919. According to Zicheng Hong 洪子誠, most of the writers of this movement were “*zhiqing* 知青” who were sent to the countryside “to be educated by the peasants,” and had been denied the opportunity to learn about the Chinese traditional cultural heritage. After they went back to the city and began their literary career as the *zhiqing* writers, they were ashamed of their ignorance about their own tradition, thus wanted very much to be closer to the literary tradition in order to find roots and nutrition there.⁷⁸ Li Zeng in his

⁷⁷ Yue Daiyun, *Intellectuals*, 5.

⁷⁸ Zicheng Hong, *Dalu dangdai wenxueshi xiabian*, 163-184.

study of the films of Zhang Yimou, also pointed out that the writers and artists of the mid and late 1980s, "being rapidly exposed to recently introduced Western literary trends and recently-translated works of Western and other foreign literatures,"

They then embarked on a broad discussion about reassessment of the value of traditional Chinese culture, aiming at criticizing the existing structural character of the nation by relocating the nation's cultural experiences and memories that had been estranged by modern radical ideologies and politics ever since the May Fourth Movement of 1919.⁷⁹

Under the urge of "searching for roots" which implies to "return to the source of Chinese culture, and recovery of a national history obscured and distorted by authoritarian discourse,"⁸⁰ the works of writers such as Hu shi, Zhou Zuoren, Yu Pingbo, Lin Yutang and so on are reprinted and rediscussed, which resulted doubtlessly to the rediscovery of *Fusheng liu ji* and its English translation *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. Although the "roots-seeking" writers did not discuss Shen Fu's memoir directly, the welcoming environment for *Fusheng liu ji* was established. The textbook adaptation of *Fusheng liu ji* for thousands and millions school pupils in the country can be taken as the sign of its future popularity.

In 1999, Lin Yutang's translation of *Fusheng liu ji*, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, was republished by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press or FLTRP in short (from here on FLTRP). This new edition of Lin Yutang's translation had met reader's eagerness of learning English

⁷⁹ Zeng, "Alternate Paeans," 77.

⁸⁰ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, "National Cinema," 110. Quoted in Li Zeng, "Alternate Paeans," 77.

through the translation of classics. To ease the difficulty of the reader in both English and the classical Chinese, FLTRP published the book with a unique format, placed English and Chinese text side by side, accompanied the original Chinese with illustrations on the pages of even numbers. The illustrations were drawn by a young artist who was a native of Jiangnan area and captured the elements of Shen Fu's time and life in the illustrations. This edition had printed so far 64,000 copies. A new edition with 5000 copies was published in 2009, including the "Foreword" written by Lin Yutang's daughter Lin Taiyi, and nineteen photos of Lin and his wife and daughters.

The contribution of the republication of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* to the English learning in general in China, as well as to the research on the achievement of Lin Yutang's translation between Chinese and English is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, accompanied by the popularity of the translation, the preface made by Lin Yutang in 1935 became an important resource of the study of *Fusheng liu ji*. The Chinese art of living, demonstrated by Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and admired and advocated by Lin Yutang in his various books, caught attention by the reader in the 1990s and beyond. If Lin Yutang, the twice nominee of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972 and 1973, did "fall back on this cultivation of the art of living, developed in the Chinese culture to such an extraordinarily high degree,"⁸¹ it is not surprising that the young generation, grown up in the years of economic boost

⁸¹ Cyril Birch, "Postscript," 141.

and social changes brought by the reform and the “open-door policy” of Deng Xiaoping, found very appealing the traditional way of living with its subtleness and good taste, its harmonious relationship with nature, and its artistic creation in ordinary life. Meanwhile, the love story of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, especially Chen Yun, the loveliest woman and ideal wife in Lin Yutang’s words, seemed admirable in a more and more material-seeking, money-oriented society.

Accompanied by the fast developing of the computer technology and the Internet, the reception of *Fusheng liu ji* is facilitated by the new tech and with new characteristics. Netizens and blog entry writers, the new generation of “literati” of our time, compose a great part of the reader of *Fusheng liu ji* nowadays. They introduce and share their own discoveries on the life of Shen Fu and his family or friend, new interpretations of *Fusheng liu ji*, new translations of modern Chinese language, even rewritings of the whole story based on Shen Fu’s memoir.

Tianfeng shangren 天風上人, who published many articles about *Fusheng liu ji* online since 2007, is taken here as the example of the blog entry writers. Possibly a retired university professor, his real name and other information are not given in his blog. Till December 2011 he has about fifty-three entries related to *Fusheng liu ji*, with the majority written by himself and some by his net-friends. In a series titled “Collections of the *Fu* Study 浮學裒談,” Tianfeng shangren discussed different editions of *Fusheng liu ji* he collected, or the articles written in the past of some famous writers or poets

such as Feng Qiyong 馮其庸, Cao Juren 曹聚仁, Gongliu 公劉 who had praised *Fusheng liu ji*, or were the super fans of Chen Yun. Tianfeng shangren is particularly interested in the paintings of Shen Fu that had been seen in the 1940s. He also discussed some important critics of *Fusheng liu ji* done in the 1940s that were not paid attention to and were almost forgotten. For example, he discussed articles written by Ye Dejun 葉德均, Wang Zhenghe 汪正禾, and Shi Damu 史大木, recognizing their credit on the research of Shen Fu's relationship with his friend and later employer Shi Yunyu, and the creditability of some poems that were said to be written by Shen Fu.⁸² By providing the new information and his own rather careful research results, he has become a part of the research circle that is the supplementary of the academic circle within universities and other research institutions.

Tianfeng shangren exemplifies the new generation of “literati” readers the memoir of Shen Fu encounters in our time. Computer technology, multimedia and cyber space in Internet not only provide great advantages in the aspects of the speed and scope of information gathering and sharing, in material storage and organizing, in faster and wider range of interaction and feedback with other “net-friends” (*wang you* 網友) of the same interests, but at the same time also provide a safer environment by allowing the blog writers to stay behind the screen, with a “non-profit” attitude to publish their discoveries and interpretations online. The last aspect has some characteristics similar to

⁸² <http://blog.sina.com.cn/tfsr>

the amateurism of the traditional literati: without the pressure of profit-seeking, they can endeavor (at least theoretically) for what they really love to do.

To conclude, by using some case studies of the readers of the three periods, the author of this study maintains that it was perhaps the kind of rather bold representation of a writer's inner world and deep emotion that attracted the attention of the discovery of the book as well as its readers in the first period of its reception. In the second period, however, the focus of the reader was more on the love story of Shen Fu and his wife, the conflict between individuals and the feudal family, and then the artistic way of living of the protagonists that exemplifies the Chinese traditional wisdom such as the Taoist and the Chan Buddhist 禪宗 (Zen Buddhist) ideals, as well as the elite aesthetics of the Ming and Qing dynasties. During the third period from the 1980s on, *Fusheng liu ji*, especially the personality of the protagonists, the love story and the life style, have been rediscovered and reappraised by a new generation of reader under the influence of post-modern cultural theories, the literature movement of *Xun Gen* and later the power of internet.

Although readers of *Fusheng liu ji* in each period emphasized some different features of the memoir of Shen Fu, some characteristics of the work were appreciated consistently even the social and cultural environments were different. The author of this dissertation states that firstly the literary accomplishments of *Fusheng liu ji* are part of such characteristics, which will be fully discussed in chapter three of this study. Secondly, the traditional literati

way of living including the artistic creations that was depicted in the memoir so enthusiastically and also in such a playful but homely style had won over the favor of readers in the past two hundred years. These features will be fully addressed in the forth and the fifth chapters. Thirdly, the honest way of Shen Fu to disclose his private life, to express his individual true feelings, to record what dreams an ordinary marginal literatus such as he and his wife Chen Yun had, what innate nature and charm they loved profoundly, what hardship they had to face and suffer, and so on, is the most important and unique feature that is appreciated and rediscovered by readers in different times.

According to scholars of Chinese literature, such as Andrew Plaks, *Fusheng liu ji* belongs to the group of autobiographical fictions risen in about the same time as the 'scholar novels' of the Qing Dynasty.⁸³ The autobiographical fiction writers, as Plaks pointed out, used "transparent and unabashed treatments of the self as the fitting subject for public transmission through narrative."⁸⁴ Plaks also believed that many 'scholar-novels' such as *Honglou Meng*, *Rulin Wai shi* 儒林外史 (*The Scholars*), *Yesou Puyan* 野叟曝言 (*The Humble Words of an Old Rustic*) and *Lao Can Youji* 老殘遊記 (*The Travels of Lao Can*) had certain dimension of autobiographical reference.⁸⁵ On the other end, the scholar-novelists, as C. T. Hsia demonstrated by using Li Ruzhen 李汝珍 (c. 1763-1830) as an example, wrote novels "not merely to tell a story but to satisfy their needs for all other kinds of intellectual and literary

⁸³ Andrew H. Plaks, "Towards a Critical Theory," 329.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

self-expression.”⁸⁶

Fusheng liu ji has apparently demonstrated many major characteristics of both the autobiographical fiction and the ‘scholar-novel,’ such as the exploring of the self, and the erudition, the infatuation and appreciation of the Chinese traditional culture, the needs for all kinds of “intellectual and literary self-expression.” This dissertation states that, similar to many autobiographical works and some of the so called ‘scholar-novels’ of the Qing era, *Fusheng liu ji*, however subtle and implicit the way and the language Shen Fu chose to use in telling his stories, has very strong tendency to look inwardly, i.e., to dig into the self of the author deeply, even to the extent of being “transparent and unabashed,” in order to express the author’s inner world, with its self identity, its desire, its unsuccessful struggles between the ideal world and the reality. This is also the reason that Doleželová defined *Fusheng liu ji* as the “early Chinese confessional prose” that left its mark of “subjectivism and individualism;” or the reason that Martin Huang’s remark that Shen Fu “wrote directly about the intimate details of his private life” “without the aid of a mask.”

This unique character of *Fusheng liu ji* can also answer the question why it was not so popular immediately after it was written, and became almost lost not long after Shen Fu died. On the one hand, Shen Fu was a low rank and poor literatus without any means to have his work published apart from probably a few hand-copied manuscripts circling among his friends; on the

⁸⁶ C. T. Hsia, “Reappraisal of *Ching-hua Yuan*,” 269.

other hand, his work “would probably have scandalized the reading public,” as Martin W. Huang pointed out,⁸⁷ owing to its “transparent and unabashed” nature.

Thanks to the publishing of the memoir by Yang Yinzhuan, the same characteristic has attracted readers such as Wang Tao, Yu Pingbo, Lin Yutang, Yue Daiyun and others, who are able to appreciate and reappraise the work of Shen Fu under different social and cultural circumstances. For Wang Tao, it is the free spirit of the marginal literati status of Shen Fu and the early death of Chen Yun that aroused his emotional response on life’s dream-like nature, and hence the eagerness to leave some literary works behind; for Yu Pingbo, it is the suppressed individuals’ struggle to cry out their desires and rights, to live with a “heart of infant 赤子之心” and express oneself without disguise that triggered his lifelong fondness of the book and his efforts to promoting the reading of the memoir; for Lin Yutang, it is the deep love and harmonious relationship between husband and wife, between man and nature, and the search for “charm” and “innate character” in everyday life, as well as the fate of talented but most suppressed women in the traditional society that inspired his mission to introduce the Chinese way of thinking and living to the world; for Yue Daiyun, it is the voice of the Chinese traditional intellectuals, no matter how weak and passive, that she heard convey resisting the power of the conventions and decorum in the decaying years of the feudal society.

⁸⁷ Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 151.

CHAPTER III

GAPS: APPLICATION OF ISER'S THEORY OF GAPS

From an abandoned ancient manuscript to a famous classic for modern time readers all over the world, one marvels at the reception history of *Fusheng liu ji*, and the way it makes “from invisible to eye-catching 由隱而顯,” as Yu Pingbo said in 1981 in his third preface for the small book. Although the size of the work is small, it covers the life journey of the author. The meaning between the condensed lines and between the words is profound, and the space between the segments of the work such as plots, characters, and events, is vast and left open to be filled by the reader. Wolfgang Iser pointed out the reason some literary works lived longer than others:

literary texts are resistant to the course of time, not because they represent eternal values that are supposedly independent of time, but because their structure continually allows the reader to place himself within the world of fiction.⁸⁸

The Reader-response Theory of Iser, especially his idea of the “gaps,” can be very useful in our close reading of the book and discovering its secret as a well-loved work of art.

1. Iser and His Reader-response Theory

⁸⁸ Iser, *Prospecting*, 2.

Reader-response theory, "As its name implies ... focuses on readers' response to literary texts." Although it "covers a good deal of grounds," most of its practitioners believe the indispensable role that the readers play in the meaning construction of reading. Tyson has summarized the beliefs of the movement very clearly: "reader-response theorists share two beliefs: (1) that the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and (2) that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature."⁸⁹ As a counter movement to the New Critics that emphasizes the text only, the reader-response theory advocates the interactions between the text and the reader. According to Tyson, there are roughly five schools under the umbrella of this theory, including transactional, affective stylistics, subjective, psychological, and social reader-response theory, based on the different perspectives to identify the reader, and the ways of the interaction between the two poles, i.e., the text and the reader. Iser is among the transactional school, started by Louise Rosenblatt in the 1930s, who claims that both the text and the reader "are necessary in the production of meaning."⁹⁰

Iser is one of the leading members of the Constance School which started the research of reader- response in Germany in the 1970s. Some scholars prefer to use the Reception Theory instead of the Reader-response

⁸⁹ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 154.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

Theory, because the investigation of Rezeptionsaesthetic, or the “aesthetic of reception,” is what the Constance School advocates and Iser, “focuses particularly on the way in which texts are actively constructed by individual readers through the phenomenology of the reading process.”⁹¹

Robert C. Holub, who put Iser into the category of the Reception Theory, which in his opinion refers to “a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader,”⁹² had made clear his distinction between Iser and other critics of the Reader-response Theory. He believes that the critics of the Reception Theory (including Iser) and those of the theory of Reader-response are different in the following aspects:

- 1) The school of the Reception Theory is a “more cohesive, conscious, and collective undertaking.”
- 2) Many “adherents” to this critical movement are somehow connected with the University of Constance, and they generally publish works on the Poetics and Hermeneutics.
- 3) The scholars of the Reader-response Theory and those of the Reception Theory “lack mutual influence,” and “there has been no contact between the two groups,” although Iser seemed accepted by the both sides.⁹³

Iser himself made clear his definition about the difference between the two theories in question. In *Act of Reading* he told us:

a theory of aesthetic response is confronted with the problem of how

⁹¹ Vincent B. Leitch, *Norton Anthology*, 1670.

⁹² Robert C. Holub, “Preface,” xii.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, xiii.

a hitherto unformulated situation can be processed and, indeed, understood. A theory of reception, on the other hand, always deals with existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature. A theory of response has its root in the text; a theory of reception arises from a history of reader's judgments.⁹⁴

Iser also indicated elsewhere that the German word "Rezeption" has different implications than the English word "reception" because the former means also to generate response. In 1989, he published one of his most important works and titled it as *"Prospecting, From Readers Response to Literary Anthropology,"* in which he chose "reader-response" and "Literary Anthropology" to describe his theory. Together with Jauss and other Constance School critics but emphasizing more on the text, Iser endeavored to illuminate the role of the reader, the interaction between the text and the reader, the process of how the reader participates in the producing of the meaning of a literary work and the significance of literature in general. Later his works are more to the direction of the Literary Anthropology, a theory "that is both an underpinning and an offshoot of reader-response criticism."⁹⁵ What Iser tries to do is to rediscover the value of literature in a fast changing and technically overwhelmed world. He uses the term "Literary Anthropology" to question human being's fundamental need of literature. In his later works such as *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*, Iser asks "why do we need fiction?" He believed that "fictions are inventions enabling humankind to extend itself," and it is a part of our "inherent tendency," i.e., an

⁹⁴ Iser, *Act of Reading*, x.

⁹⁵ Iser, *Prospecting*, xii.

anthropological necessary, to “make the absent present.” Iser pointed out that the task of Literary Anthropology would be

to explain why we find an insatiable pleasure in making ourselves into our own possibilities and why we cannot ---in spite of knowing why it is---cease to play the game of our potentials.”⁹⁶

Although the theory of the Literary Anthropology ceased to be active after Iser, his thoughts of seeing literature from the anthropological perspective are still insightful and inspiring today. Influenced by his teacher Hans-Georg Gadamer, as well as the Czech phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, Iser used the perspectives and the discoveries in the Hermeneutics and Phenomenology to map out the act of reading and the relationship between the text and the reader. His ideas are presented in his four books and many important articles, among them are *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (*Der Implizite Leser: Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett*, 1972), *Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (*Der Akt Des Lesens: Theorie aethetischer Wirkung* 1976), *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (1989), and *The Fictive and Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (*Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie* 1991). His works are regarded as some of the most critical works of the 1970s through 2000's, and will still shed light on the discussion of many fundamental literary and philosophical questions.

In *The Implied Reader*, Iser demonstrates his theory by his study of

⁹⁶ Ibid, 282-285.

some English novels dated from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, including Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and *Henry Esmond*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*. He intends to show how active the reader can be in the composition of the meaning of the literary works. "Reading is not passive or static but a process of discovery, a reader questions, negates, and revises the expectations that the text establishes, filling in what Iser calls 'gaps' in the text and continually modifying his or her interpretation."⁹⁷ Iser thinks that Fielding's novels started the change of the meaning of a literary work from "formulated" to become "clearly wanting to be formulated." In the past, Iser says, "when book and world were regarded as identical, the book formulated its own exemplary meaning, which the reader had only to contemplate;" however, after Fielding, Iser says, "the meaning of the novel is no longer an independent, objective reality; it is something that has to be formulated by the reader," as now "the reader has to produce the meaning for himself, the novel discloses its attitudes through degrees of negation, thwarting the reader's expectations and stimulating him to reflection which in turn creates a counterbalance to the negativity of the text. Out of this whole process emerges the meaning of the novel."⁹⁸

Few years later in *Act of Reading*, Iser constructed a whole set of terms such as "gap," "blank," or "vacancy;" "theme" and "horizon;" "determinacy" and

⁹⁷ Leitch, *Norton Anthology*, 1671.

⁹⁸ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 46.

“indeterminacy,” “negation” and “negativity” and so on, in order to offer “a more programmatic explanation of the reading experience and the ways in which readers process texts.”⁹⁹ To make it simple, it can be said that “gaps” are the empty places between the segments in a text, while “vacancies” are the result of reader’s points of view shifting from different themes. When a theme became a background or horizon, a vacancy appears. Vacancies, together with gaps, are considered to be the factors of the “indeterminacy” in a literary work that makes the participation of the reader possible. “Negations” appear when the reader starts to doubt the social conventions and norms that are depicted and doubted in the literary work, which also triggers the doubt the reader has for him or herself. The former, in Iser’s term, is called the “primary negation,” and the latter, the “secondary negation.” During the whole reading procedure, the reader has to produce the meaning of the text that eventually generates “negativity” which is the virtual world denied by the reality but can be produced in reading. The focus of Iser is the interaction between the text and the reader, and how does all the interactions happen in the reading procedure. As David Albertson summarized in the introduction of Iser for the Stanford University Presidential Lecture Series:

Although reader and text assume similar conventions from reality, texts leave great portions unexplained to the reader, whether as gaps in the narrative or as structural limits of the text’s representation of the world. This basic indeterminacy ‘implies’ the reader and begs her

⁹⁹ Leitch, *Norton Anthology*, 1671.

participation in synthesizing, and indeed living, events of meaning throughout the process of reading.¹⁰⁰

Act of Reading is one of the most important theoretical works of the reader-response theory, and it's also where Iser started to move from the reader-response theory to the meaning of literature from the perspective of anthropology: "the question arises as to the actual function of literature in the overall make-up of man."¹⁰¹ In an interview made by Richard van Oort in 1998, Iser told us the rationale of his endeavor to push his theory to the direction of "Literary Anthropology":

Reading as text processing also means -- and this was an implication which may not have come sufficiently to the fore -- finding out something about the human makeup: namely, the way in which the letters we perceive translate into a stream of imagery in our minds. Therefore reader-response criticism needed further exploration in order to find out something about human dispositions by means of literature.¹⁰²

Several years later in *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* and *The Fictive and Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*, Iser further extrapolates his long time thoughts on the basic purpose of literature, the relationship between the fictive and the imaginary, the anthropological implications of fictionality in general. As Iser told Oort in the interview, the type of fictionality which we encounter in literature is also a way of extending ourselves, and it is the question "why is there this urge of extending ourselves" that Iser wants to explore by his Literary Anthropology.

¹⁰⁰ David Albertson, Stanford Presidential lectures introduction on Iser, <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/iser/>

¹⁰¹ Iser, *Act of Reading*, xi

¹⁰² Richard van Oort, "Interview," http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0302/Iser_int.htm

2. What the Gaps Are

As Chris Anderson points out, “at the heart of Iser’s complex and challenging system is a rather simple idea.”¹⁰³ The theory of Iser can be best exemplified by the statement he made in *The Act of Reading* that “the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author’s text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader.”¹⁰⁴

Iser has made very clear here that the “literary work” is neither the text of the author, nor the “concretization” of the text by the reader. It is something in between, which should not be “reduced to the reality of the text,” meaning it has to be more than the words and images described by the author, but it also cannot be reduced to “the subjectivity of the reader,” meaning that it is somehow controlled by the text, not open for the free subjectivity of the reader. It then will lead to the question of the realization of this “work.” How does it actually happen? What is the thing to control or guide the reader’s concretization? Iser believes that it is the work of the “gaps” which he considered the most important part in the text to invite the readers to participate in the reading and the conversation with the text. The gaps, “chart a course for reading a text by organizing the reader’s participation with their structure of shifting positions. At the same time they compel the reader to

¹⁰³ Chris Anderson, “Teaching Students What Not to Say,” 10-22,

¹⁰⁴ Iser, *Act of Reading*, 21.

complete the structure and thereby produce the aesthetic object.”¹⁰⁵

Iser describes the gaps in *The Implied Reader* as below:

The gaps, indeed, are those very points at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading. Thanks to those “vacant pages,” he can reflect, and through reflection create the motivation through which he can experience the text as a reality.¹⁰⁶

According to Iser, the gaps are the empty places in a literary work that needed to be bridged by the reader in order to finish the conversation between him and the text. The text, a work need to be concretized or realized by the reader, has many gaps left by the author deliberately or unconsciously, for the purpose of inviting the reader to participate in his or her work. Whenever a gap appears, the connection between the segments are broken, and the reader is left alone to use his imagination and life experience to bridge the gaps, and to produce his own picture of the meaning of the literary work. In *Act of Reading*, Iser has given more discussion about the function of the gaps. Quoting Virginia Woolf’s article on Jane Austen, in which Woolf was marveled by the “trivial scenes” in Austen’s work, Iser maintained that:

What is missing from the apparently trivial scenes, the gaps arising out of the dialogues---this is what stimulates the reader into filling the gaps with projections. He is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said. What is said only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said; it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning. But as the unsaid comes to life in the reader’s imagination, so the said “expands” to take on greater significance than might have been supposed: even trivial scenes can seem surprisingly profound....What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought

¹⁰⁵ Holub, *Reception Theory*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 40.

to light.¹⁰⁷

How come the “trivial scenes can seem surprisingly profound”?

According to Iser, it only happens when the reader uses his imagination and makes the “unsaid comes to life.” However, as Iser stated, the reader is not left totally without clue but is trying to discover “what is concealed” under the guideline of “what is revealed.” Iser not only noticed the fact that “it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning,” but also noticed that the “transformation” happened to “the explicit,” i.e., to “what had been said”: it takes on “greater significance than might have been supposed.” By paying attention to both the reader and the text, Iser figured out the secret of great authors such as Jane Austen as well as Virginia Woolf. Their works have profound meaning even if they talk about trivial scenes, because their works have many gaps which invite the reader of different generations to take part in the conversation with the book, to concretize the unsaid, to create their own versions of meaning, to transform the said into something more profound.

However, Iser did not give much information about the details of the “gaps” such as the category, the general characteristics, and how to define them, etc. For instance, are there any differences between “gaps” and “blanks”? If yes, how to distinguish them? Leona Toker endeavored to define “blanks,” “vacancies” and “gaps.” By using Iser’s words and phrases, she concludes that *blanks* are “suspended connectability,” and *vacancies* are “nonthematic

¹⁰⁷ Iser, *Act of Reading*, 169

segments within the referential field of the wandering viewpoint;" they "enable the reader to combine segments into a field by reciprocal modification." As for the *gaps*, they are something located not in the text but between the text and the reader, and functions as a synonym of "the fundamental asymmetry between the text and the reader."¹⁰⁸ Iser himself sometimes uses "gaps," sometimes uses "blanks" in his work, and often he used the two words as synonyms. The reason is perhaps that the German word "leer" has the meaning of "empty," "blank," "vacant," "free," "void," "unseeing," and "spacious" and so on. The present research uses "gaps" and "blanks" as the same thing which invites and stimulates the reader to participate the producing of the meaning in the reading process. By using Iser's theory, the present research intends to work out the interaction between *Fusheng liu ji* and the reader, to adumbrate the process of how the gaps in the text are bridged by the reader and what is the significance this reading process has to the reader.

3. Why There Exist Gaps in *Fusheng Liu Ji*

Fusheng liu ji and his author Shen Fu are actually mysterious and there are many "gaps," in the four surviving chapters that are waiting for the reader to bridge and fulfill. To fill those "empty spaces" and to figure out the "unsaid words" with the imagination and life experience, the reader will become enriched in his understanding the book, the world, and the self. And this,

¹⁰⁸ Leona Toker, *Read the Instruction*, 151-164.

according to Iser, is where the true value of reading and literature lies.

The author of the current dissertation argues that there are three reasons why *Fusheng liu ji* has so many gaps. First, it is a memoir of an almost unknown writer who has practically not left any official record about himself and his wife. As an unsuccessful businessman and clerk of some government officials in the middle Qing time, Shen Fu has no chance to be recorded anywhere apart from some pictures painted by him and mentioned in the poems of friends who are mainly the men of his own class so that makes the chance of the survival of his record even narrower. The historical record for a woman such as Shen Fu's wife Chen Yun is more difficult to track since woman in the Qing time has no official record at all excepting if she is closely related to a wealthy or high-rank official's family by birth or by marriage, or, if she becomes a famous prostitute, or dies as a "*jiefu* 節婦" (widow who maintains her chastity and does not remarry) by for honoring her husband or family. In those cases she is possibly recorded in the memorial of the family, or in the local record of famous persons. Ordinary woman like Chen Yun has little chance to be mentioned in historical records. As Susan Mann pointed out, the study of Chinese women is hard, because women, by contrast to men, "become visible only if historians read between the lines, track down obscure sources, and bring neglected collections to light."¹⁰⁹ Chen Yun, who lost her father when she was only four years old, and married to a "nobody" such as

¹⁰⁹ Susan Mann, "The Male Bond," 601.

Shen Fu who was unable to honor her with his fortune or rank in the office, would never been known by the world if Shen Fu did not write *Fusheng liu ji*. Without the help of almost any historical records, the life of this couple as depicted in this autobiographical work is bound to leave many gaps in the pages and between the lines.

Secondly, it is a book written in the eighteenth-century in classical Chinese which is very different in comparison to the modern Chinese language in terms of language forms such as vocabulary and its usage, grammar, and the rhetorical features including the use of idioms, allusions, and the technique of “*duì'ou* 對偶”, the matching of the phrases or sentences in sound and rhythm, and so on. Moreover, there are also changes of language related to the social and cultural changes. The gaps here are caused by the changing of the connotation of the words, the custom, and the usage of the language along the change of the time. An incident can be used to illustrate this kind of gap. In the beginning of the third chapter “Sorrow 坎坷記愁,” Shen Fu mentioned that his wife was called “*sanniang* 三娘” at first in the family after they were married, but later she was addressed by everyone in the house as “*santaitai* 三太太”:

余雖居長而行三，故上下呼芸為“三娘”，後忽呼為“三太太”。始而戲呼，繼成習慣，甚至尊卑長幼，皆以“三太太”呼之。此家庭之變機歟？

Lin Yutang in his translation in 1935 did not translate the word “*sanniang*” but chose to leave it in the text then gave a note regarding the difference of “*sanniang*” and “*santaitai*” which is subtle but important:

“San” means “number three.” The meaning of “*niang*” and “*t’ait’ai*” varies with local usage, but generally “*niang*” refers to a young married woman in a big household, while “*t’ait’ai*” suggests the mistress of an independent home.¹¹⁰

“*Niang* 娘” in Chinese can mean “young lady” as in “*guniang* 姑娘,” “mother” as in “*dieniang* 爹娘, or “wife” as in “*niangzi* 娘子” in some southern regions in China. The meaning for “*sanniang*” is close to “the third young lady in the house.” When Chen Yun was addressed as “*sanniang*,” she was enjoying the fondness of the in-laws and the whole family as a new member of the family who was also a close relative since she and Shen Fu were cousins; later, her independent thought, capability of dealing with things that normally concerned not women but men only, her artistic way of life, and also the constant financial problems she and Shen Fu encountered had distanced the young lady from her in-laws and everyone else. The meaning of “*taitai* 太太” as “wife” is a rather modern usage started in the 1920s and was popular in the large cities such as Shanghai and Hong Kong. However, in Shen Fu’s time, “*taitai*” is used by servants or other ordinary people to address rich women with luxury lifestyle or ladies of high ranking officials. Therefore “*santaitai*” is ironic in tone since Chen Yun is neither rich nor high in rank, but from a small family with a husband constantly in debt. Shen Fu showed his dislike and suspicion in mentioning this small episode of change of the titles. His feeling about the title was quite accurate because later when coldness and dislike from the in-laws piled up to certain extent, Shen Fu and his wife were driven out of the family

¹¹⁰ Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters*, 129.

and Yun died in illness and poverty without even seeing her own children for the last time. The changed connotation of words such as “sanniang” and “santaitai” can create some indeterminacy that invites the exploration of the reader.

The third cause of the many gaps in *Fusheng liu ji* is because the book was written under the strong influence of the Confucian and Taoist literary traditions that value high “the less is the more” kind of philosophy, and the belief that the true meaning could not, or better not, be conveyed by language. Lao Zi 老子 (B.C.571?-B.C.470?) said in the very beginning of *Dao de jing* 道德經: “The Dao, if it can be told, will not be the eternal Dao. The names, if they can be named, will not be the eternal names 道可道，非常道，名可名，非常名，”¹¹¹ and in Chapter Forty-one: “The great note sounds faint; the great image is without shape 大音希聲，大象無形.”¹¹² Confucius also said in *Analects* he would like to quit speaking because: “Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything? 天何言哉？四時行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉？”¹¹³ Under the influence of the Confucian and Taoist philosophy, one of the major characteristics of the Chinese literary tradition is “reserve of the implicit” or “*hanxu* 含蓄” in Chinese that is considered a mark of perfection in literary works. Steven Owen had translated a famous Qing Dynasty critic Ye Xie 葉燮 (1627-1703) in *Reading in Chinese Literary Thought*:

¹¹¹ Lao Zi, *Dao de jing*, 1.

¹¹² Lao Zi, *The Dao de jing of Lao Zi*, 44.

¹¹³ <http://wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?l=Lunyu&no=466>

詩之至處，妙在含蓄無垠。思致微妙。其寄託在可言不可言之間。其指歸在可解不可解之會。

Where poetry is at its most perfect, its subtlety (*miao*) lies in a boundless reserve of the implicit (*han-hsü*) and in the thought reaching what is faint and indistinct; what is implicit in poetry lies between what can be said and what cannot be said; what it refers to lies at the conjunction between the explicable and the inexplicable; the words seem to be about one thing, while the meaning (*yi*) lies in something else.¹¹⁴

Owen also made the following comment providing us a glimpse of hanxu:

Han-hsü was a very important aesthetic category, implicating not only an intensive depth, a sense that there is more than the surface value of the words, but also extensive affect: it is *han-hsü* that makes a text continue in the readers mind after the words are over.¹¹⁵

What Owen indicated here can be summarized by a Chinese phrase “*Yan you jin er yi wuqiong* 言有盡而意無窮” meaning literally “the words are limited but the meaning is endless.” Six hundred years earlier than Ye Xie, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) already discussed the same topic in his critical work *Remarks on Poetry* (*Liuyi Shihua* 六一詩話):

若意新語工得前人所未道者。斯為善也。必能狀難寫之景。如在目前。含不盡之意。見於言外。然後為至矣。

The very best thing is to have new thoughts and well-crafted diction, to achieve what no one has ever said before. You have to be able to give the manner of a scene that is hard to describe, to bring it as if before your eyes; it must hold inexhaustible thought in reserve, though that appears beyond the words. Only then is it perfect.¹¹⁶

Although both Ouyang Xiu and Ye Xie were talking about poetry, the standard they set for poetry is generally used for all literary works in the history of Chinese ancient literature. The present dissertation does not analyze the

¹¹⁴ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 529.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 531.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 375.

general characteristics of the Chinese literature or indicate how “hanxu” manifested in literary works in Shen Fu’s time, but focuses on the reserve way Shen Fu describes his life stories and the connection between “hanxu” and the gaps in the text of Shen Fu’s work.

Fusheng liu ji is a perfect example of the practice of “hanxu” because Shen Fu balanced well between “what can be said” and “what can not be said,” or between “the explicable” and “the inexplicable.” One instance in Chapter One, “Wedded Bliss 閨房記樂” can demonstrate the characteristic of “hanxu” and the subtle way of writing of Shen Fu, and the “thought that appears beyond the words” or “*yanwaizhiyi* 言外之意” in the work:

既長，嫻女紅，三口仰其十指供給；克昌從師，修脯無缺。

When Yün grew up and had learnt needlework, she was providing for the family of three, and contrived always to pay K’ehch’ang’s tuition fees punctually.¹¹⁷

Shen Fu used only one character “*xian* 嫻” meaning “skilled” to describe Yun’s needlework, perhaps embroidery that is a local specialty of Suzhou area. Instead of describing how diligent she was and how well she supported her family when she was barely a teenaged girl, he only said that “the three mouths in the family relied on the supplying of her ten fingers.” In addition, Shen Fu mentioned another simple fact that K’ehch’ang, Yun’s younger brother, was able to receive education while Yun provided him the tuition fee. Although the words are a few, the reader can figure out the meaning between the lines about Yun’s family background (a weak widowed mother and a little brother),

¹¹⁷ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 004-005.

her strong character, her knowledge and skill in life, and also the respect and admiration Shen Fu had toward her even before they were married. In the Confucian tradition, husbands are always the “heaven” of wives, and women have to be totally subordinate to men. It is abnormal and very rare a man publicly expresses his admiration and respect for his wife; therefore Shen Fu is already rather careful and reserved in his praise of Yun. Nevertheless, his few words here already conveyed his deep feeling towards his wife, and “makes a text continue in the readers mind after the words are over,” as Owen pointed out.

In Chapter Four, “The Joys of Travel 浪遊記快,” Shen Fu also explained in an implicit way on his reason to return home instead of working as a government clerk the place named Jixi 績溪:

未兩載，余與同事不合，拂衣歸裏。...余自績溪之遊，見熱鬧場中卑鄙之狀不堪入目，因易儒為賈。

In less than two years, however, I left the place owing to differences of opinion with some of my colleagues, and returned home. During my stay at Chich'i, I saw how unspeakably dirty politics was and how low men could stoop in official life, which made me decide to change my profession from scholar to businessman.¹¹⁸

Lin Yutang translated “見熱鬧場中卑鄙之狀不堪入目” as “I saw how unspeakably dirty politics was and how low men could stoop in official life” that is much more explicit than Shen Fu’s words. Shen Fu merely used “the bustling place 熱鬧場” to indicate the governmental office or politic in general, and “*beibi zhi zhuang* 卑鄙之狀” meaning “mean and low condition” that for him

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 248-249.

was “*bu kan ru mu* 不堪入目,” “intolerable to the eyes.” Shen Fu didn’t mention with whom he conflicted with, neither the details. However, he used “*fu yi* 拂衣” meaning “angrily flick one’s clothes” to show his indignation. Having in mind the different social statuses of the scholars (*ru* 儒) and the businessmen (*gu* 賈) according to the Confucian tradition, we understand that his decision to become a businessman was not a light one since businessmen were considered low and more unworthy than scholars, although being a *shiye* 師爺, an assistant of some government (*yamen* 衙門) clerk, Shen Fu was not a real scholar yet his job was more close to scholar than any other occupations. We can also imagine how terrible the situation he had suffered in the secretary job. In fact, the words Shen Fu chose to use here is very strong in tone and the most explicit comparing to the vocabulary items he used to describe the family incidents happened between him and his parents and his younger brother, and between Yun and her in-laws. The reserved manner and caginess Shen Fu held when he recorded his family conflicts left many empty spaces in the text that trigger the reader to wonder.

4. Three Different Types of Gaps in *Fusheng Liu Ji*

The present research argues that three types of gaps exist in the memoir of Shen Fu, namely the structural gaps, the language gaps, and the cultural gaps.

(1) The structural gaps

The structural gaps are caused by the selection and the arrangement of the author in writing his memoir. *Fusheng liu ji* is not chronological but has a unique “six-petalled flower shape” that coincides with the shape of a dish holder Yun once designed and made for Shen Fu, “a tray with a plum-blossom design” that “consisted of six deep dishes of white porcelain.”¹¹⁹ We are told that when the tray was placed on the table, it looked like a regular plum blossom; when it was opened, the different vegetables were contained in the six petals of the flower. Each “petal” is independent, but together they make a complete plum flower. Perhaps it was the tray that inspired Shen Fu to create the structure of *Fusheng liu ji*. The book consisted of six chapters arranged according to the themes rather than chronologically, with a brief introduction at the beginning of each chapter and a summary sentence at the end of it. The four survived chapters, as their titles revealed, are centered on four themes or four kinds of feelings: the happiness 樂 of married life, the charm 趣 in idle living, the sorrow 愁 of hardship and poverty, and the joy 快 of traveling. The other two missing chapters, as their remained titles “Zhongshan Ji Li 中山記曆” and “Yang Sheng Ji Dao 養生記道” tell us, are supposed to talk about the experience in the Ryukyu Island (Liuqiu 琉球) that is now Okinawa in Japan, and the ways to live healthily and to persuade longevity. The segments and the chapters are not related by causality, nor the development of the plots, but by the feelings of the major characters, i.e., Shen Fu and his wife. Shen Fu only

¹¹⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 120-121.

chose the episodes expressing the same type of feeling as indicated in the title of every chapter, be it “happiness,” “charm,” or “sorrow” and “joy.” However, each episode in one chapter is arranged orderly according to when it happened, i.e., chronologically. In so doing, the stories told in each chapter are well organized and also easy to be understood in relation to the different themes. Yu Pingbo was so fascinated by the structure of *Fusheng liu ji* that he described the book as “a piece of beautiful landscape of hills and rivers, though utterly nature, it fits perfectly man’s aesthetic tastes 猶之佳山佳水，明明是天開的圖畫，然仿佛處處吻合人工的意匠,” or “a piece of pure crystal, one can see only its limpidness and beauty, but can’t see its trace of artificial craftsman’s work 儼如一塊純美的水晶，只見明瑩，不見襯露明瑩的顏色；只見精微，不見製作精微的痕跡。”¹²⁰

The thematic arrangement of the chapters not only enables Shen Fu to concentrate on his memory of life with Yun, but also allows him to omit or ignore some common aspects and elements of autobiographies he prefers not to talk about. These are the places where the reader encounters the gaps. For example, unlike normal autobiographies, Shen Fu did not provide much information about his family members. Instead, he seems to avoid mentioning them at all. He never said anything about his younger brother excepting that his name is Shen Qitang 沈啟堂, and his wife is from a famous family. Shen Fu did not tell us any stories with his younger brother during their childhood

¹²⁰ Yu Pingbo, “*Fusheng liu ji xin xu*,” 3.

years. He did not say much about his parents and other siblings, either, nor the family's history such as the ancestors and so on. As a person educated as a Confucian scholar, he could never say anything evil about his parents or family members. However, as the reader goes through the four chapters, he or she can eventually mend up the broken links and gets the whole picture: when the cruelty of snobbery and selfishness overwhelmed and dominated the big family, the suffering of a humble and honest couple such as Shen Fu and Chen Yun was heartbreaking. It seemed that only the love between the couple and the love they shared for art and nature were worth-recording in an autobiographical work and that was the exact reason of Shen Fu's writing.

Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890-1969) pointed out that *Fusheng liu ji* is an "exception" in Chinese literary works, because under the restriction of the Confucian "rules of etiquette and ethics 禮法顧忌," traditional literary works scarcely dared to mention the relationship between men and women, especially between husbands and wives.¹²¹ Shen Fu gave a brief explanation on why he had made "the Wedded Bliss" that focused his love stories with his wife as the first chapter of his memoir:

因思《關雎》冠三百篇之首，故列夫婦於首卷；餘以次第及焉。

Since the *Book of Poems* begins with a poem on wedded love, I thought I would begin this book by speaking of my marital relations and then let other matters follow.¹²²

The *Book of Poems* (*Shi Jing* 詩經 or 詩三百) (B.C.1046-B.C.771) is the

¹²¹ Chen Yinque, *Yuan Bai shi jian zheng gao*, 93.

¹²² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 002-003.

first collection of Chinese literature and is said to be edited and compiled by Confucius himself. It becomes one of the Confucian canons in the Han Dynasty 漢代 (B.C.202-220). The first poem in the *Book of Poems* is “Guanju 關雎” (Guan-guan go the ospreys) which is actually not a poem of “wedded love” but love between man and woman in general. It depicted scene of birds mating in the river island, and a pretty good-mannered girl who is considered the ideal wife of a gentleman 君子: “關關雎鳩，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑” that Arthur Waley’s translation goes as “‘Fair, fair,’ cry the ospreys, /on the island in the river. /lovely is this noble lady, /fit bride for our lord.”

Confucius agreed that *The Book of Poems* can be used “to emphasize education and to correct human relationship 重教化，正人倫).” By using “Guanju” and *The Book of Poems* as an example, Shen Fu not only justified his way of organizing the memoir, but also his goal of making the center of his memoir the love he and Yun shared and the life they created in their twenty-three years of marriage. It can also be seen as a demonstration of his deep respect for his wife if we remember that Yun was not a “noble lady” but a girl from a poor family and had to educate herself to read and write.

In Chapter One “Wedded Bliss,” since the theme is “happiness,” Shen Fu focused on moments of happiness in his life with Chen Yun. He talked about their meetings as cousins since they were children, about how they got engaged, and about the “rice soup episode” in which Chen Yun gave him some warm rice soup to drink even though she was not supposed to see him after

their engagement. Followed by the events of their wedding, the departure and reunion of them as the newly wed, Shen Fu told us how they build up their lifelong mutual love and understanding in the first years of their time together that gradually to the extent of “the longer we stayed together, the more passionately attached we became to each other 年愈久而情愈密.”¹²³ Then he recorded different events when Yun dressed up as a man or made excuses of visiting her mother, just for the pleasure to view the local flower-gods festival that was not opened to a woman of an ordinary family, or to visit the Taihu Lake that is not far from their home, but as a woman of that time Yun could only dream of traveling.

The happy feelings Shen Fu demonstrated in this chapter are of various types in nature. It can be the physical attraction and love between the young couple, as Shen Fu described the moment he saw Yun after his three months study for becoming a *shiye* in another city:

及抵家，吾母處問安畢，入房，芸起相迎，握手未通片語，而兩人魂魄恍恍然化煙成霧，覺耳中惺然一響，不知更有此身矣。

When I arrived home, I went to pay my respects to my mother and then entered my room. Yün stood up to welcome me, and we held each other's hands in silence, and it seemed then that our souls had melted away or evaporated like a mist. My ears tingled and I did not know where I was.¹²⁴

It also can be the appreciation and admiration for the intelligence and knowledge of the other part, the deep interests they shared for literature, art,

¹²³ Ibid., 025.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 018-019.

and nature, the simple food and clothes they both liked, the peaceful and lovely garden Canglang Pavilion that they once lived next door, and the fun time they had while drinking wine and composing poems under the moonlight, or observing the sunset and birds in a small boat on the Taihu Lake. But above all is the marital harmony and deep love permeating their daily life:

其癖好與余同，且能察眼意，懂眉語，一舉一動，示之以色，無不頭頭是道。

She had the same tastes and habits as myself, and besides had the talent of reading my wishes by a mere glance or movement of the eyebrow, doing things without being told and doing them to my perfect satisfaction.¹²⁵

Although Shen Fu was talking here how Chen Yun knew his wishes well only but not the vice versa, the reader can judge how things were on the other hand, too. The couple enjoyed and cherished their marriage so much that they repeatedly wished to be husband and wife not only in this life, but also in the endless next lives. They prayed to the gods, they carved seals to be used in their correspondence with the inscription “That we might remain husband and wife from incarnation to incarnation 願生生世世為夫婦,” and they asked a famous painter to paint a picture of the god of matrimony 月下老人, so they could pray to him for their future marriages.¹²⁶

The theme of Chapter Two is “charm” in idleness. Lin Yutang translated the title of this chapter “Xianqing Ji Qu 閒情記趣” as “the little pleasures of life.” “*Xian* 閒” is the opposite of busy “*mang* 忙.” As a person often without a

¹²⁵ Ibid., 044-045.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 026-027; 048-049

formal position in a government branch or doing any other trade, Shen Fu was neither rich nor busy but lived a quiet life that became later poverty-stricken. This is perhaps the reason why he cherished so much every interesting and charming moment in his life. “Qu” in Chinese is a word not only related to fun, but also has the meaning of “interesting,” “charm,” and often associated with “ya 雅” that means good taste. Stephen Owen explains “qu” as “interest,” “excitement,” or “flair.”¹²⁷ Owen has a more detailed explanation on “ya”:

As a stylistic category, *ya* suggests dignity, restraint, and a certain archaic quality... The antonym of *ya* is *su* 俗: “mundane,” “uncouth,” “commonplace,” “vulgar,” “popular,” “low.”¹²⁸

The “little pleasures” or the moments of “qu” in Shen Fu’s memoir are often associated with the aesthetic characteristics of the “high culture” including art and literature. Imagination, uniqueness, dignity, purity, good taste and charm are all appreciated in those episodes that caught Shen Fu’s attention and after so many years they were still vivid and valuable to be recorded in his memoir. For example, the imagination of a child had produced so much fun when Shen Fu was a little boy who spent his days observing beetles in the garden:

於土牆凹凸處，花台小草叢雜處，常蹲其身，使與台齊；定神細視，以叢草為林，以蟲蟻為獸，以土礫凸者為丘，凹者為壑，神遊其中，怡然自得。

Sometimes I would squat by a broken, earthen wall, or by a little bush on a raised flower-bed, with my eyes on the same level as the

¹²⁷ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 586.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 594.

flower-bed itself, and there I would look and look, transforming in my mind the little plot of grass into a forest and the ants and insects into wild animals. The little elevations on the ground became my hills, and the depressed areas became my valleys, and my spirit wandered in that world at leisure.¹²⁹

After he married Chen Yun, they had many delightful moments on arranging flowers, cultivating bonsais, decorating rooms, and enjoy reading and composing poems with good friends. The designing "living flower screen 活花屏" showed the artistic talent and spirit of Chen Yun because it occurred during the time they were driven out by Shen Fu's father, and had to stay with a friend of Chen Yun in the countryside of Wuxi 無錫. In a situation of humiliation and economic hardship, Chen Yun managed to create pieces of artistic work and make their life there more delightful. "Huo 活" means here both "alive" and "movable" that shows the screen is "alive" because unlike the normal screen, the flower on it is not painted but real; on the other hand, it's a movable screen, which is different from a normal plant. The basic idea is to make a frame that can hold a pot of plant such as peas first, and let the plant to grow along the frame and makes the frame a movable screen eventually:

鄉居院曠，夏日逼人。芸教其家作活花屏法，甚妙。...多編數屏，隨意遮攔，恍如綠陰滿窗，透風蔽日，迂回曲折，隨時可更，故曰"活花屏"。

In that country house, the yard was wide open and the glare of the summer sun was very oppressive. Yün taught them a method of making movable screens of growing flowers...One can make several of these things and place them wherever one pleases, before windows or doors, and they will look like living plants, casting their green shade into the house, warding off the sun and yet allowing the wind to come through. They can be placed in any irregular formation, adjustable according to time and circumstances, and are, therefore, called "movable flower

¹²⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 082-083.

screens."¹³⁰

Shen Fu was obviously very fascinated by his wife's creative idea and called it "an excellent arrangement for people staying in the country 此真鄉居之良法也." It's not the first time Shen Fu was amazed by his wife's charm in dealing everyday life with distinguishing artistic taste and ingenious creations. Once he wanted to make an artificial little hill in a tray as a miniature of landscape. He found some pretty yellow pebbles but worried that the putty he needed to finish the little construction would not match the color of the stone. As usual, he asked opinions of Chen Yun, who never let him down in this kind of circumstances. She suggested he grind some pebbles and mix the powder of the stone into the putty so that the color would become united. Shen Fu gladly took her idea and together they built the miniature of a hill in the tray that symbolizes their ideal place of living and they could "imagine oneself transported to some fairy region 神遊其中，如登蓬島."¹³¹

Yun knew how to make even the most common food tasty and special, as Shen Fu recorded. She also had some very uncommonly creative ideas in dealing with small things such as tea:

夏月荷花初開時，晚含而曉放。芸用小紗囊撮茶葉少許，置花心。明早取出，烹天泉水泡之，香韻尤絕。

When the lotus flowers bloom in summer, they close at night and open in the morning. Yün used to put some tea leaves in a little silk bag and place it in the centre of the flower at night. We would take it out the next morning, and make tea with spring water, which would then have a

¹³⁰ Ibid., 106-109.

¹³¹ Ibid., 102-103.

very delicate flavour.¹³²

The words Shen Fu picked for the special tea Yun made is “*xiang yun you jue* 香韻尤絕” meaning “particularly aromatic and charming.” This is what Shen Fu meant by “qu”: uncommonly interesting, exciting, unique and very attractive. The episode of “drinking warm wine in the presence of flowers 對花熱飲” exemplifies most the kind of fun and charm that Shen Fu and Chen Yun were so found of. Shen Fu and his friends wanted to drink warm wine in a field of the Chinese canola flowers, where no restaurants or pubs could be found. They did not like to drink cold wine while enjoying the flowers since the rice wine is best to be drunk as warm, nor the idea of observing flowers first, and then go home to have a warm drink. Finally the ideal of Shen Fu and his friends was realized thanks to the fascinating idea of Chen Yun. She suggested hiring a wonton seller who moved around selling wonton, a kind of boiled dumpling, by carrying his stove and a pan on his shoulder pole. The wonton seller they hired accompanied the group to the field, warmed wine, cooked dishes, made the tea, and even cooked rice soup for Shen Fu and his friends, who spent a wonderful time in a field full of golden flower, drinking, eating, singing, reading poems and relaxing:

先烹茗，飲畢，然後暖酒烹肴。是時風和日麗，遍地黃金，青衫紅袖，越阡度陌，蝶蜂亂飛，令人不飲自醉。... 杯盤狼藉，各已陶然，或坐或臥，或歌或嘯。紅日將頹，余思粥，擔者即為買米煮之，果腹而歸。

First we boiled some tea, and after drinking it, we warmed up the wine and heated up the dishes. The sun was beautiful and the breeze

¹³² Ibid., 124-125.

was gentle, while the yellow rape flowers in the field looked like a stretch of gold, with gaily dressed young men and women passing by the rice fields and bees and butterflies flitting to and fro—a sight which could make one drunk without any liquor... Then the cups, bowls and dishes lay about in great disorder on the ground, while we were already slightly drunk, some sitting and some lying down, and some singing or yelling. When the sun was going down, I wanted to eat congee, and the wonton seller bought some rice and cooked it for us. We then came back with a full belly.¹³³

The “qu” in this episode has two characteristics. On the one hand, it is not “mundane,” “uncouth” or “low,” because to drink wine while enjoying flowers, as an action of good taste and part of the Chinese literary tradition, is an activity that people without money or education on poetry do not care to perform. On the other hand, it is not a matter of money or power, but a matter of spiritual freedom and artistic way of living because there is no place to spend money or exercise power in order to get a drink of warm wine in the field of flowers. The unconquerable artistic imagination and the love of life have made the mundane world so interesting and charming.

In the third chapter, “sorrow” is the theme and all the segments are associated with the economic and social conflicts Shen Fu and Chen Yun had to confront later in their life. Shen Fu started this chapter with the change of title of Chen Yun from “sanniang” to “santaitai,” and believed it was the beginning of the change of family relations. The worst change of the relation happened between Chen Yun and her in-laws. Shen Fu recorded two events in that Chen Yun not only lost favor of her father-in-law, but also became the target of resentfulness of her mother-in-law who was also her aunt. Without the

¹³³ Ibid., 116-119.

support and protection of the parents, the young couple became the vulnerable victim of selfishness and greedy of other members in the family. When Chen Yun became ill, but Shen Fu had no money to support her and their children, their “*chou* 愁”- worries and sorrow- gradually permeated their daily life. To make it worse, Yun became the sworn sister of a young prostitute Hanyuan whom she’d like to have as the concubine for Shen Fu. It laid herself open to ridicule, and certainly gave the in-laws and others an excuse to throw her and Shen Fu out of the family. Since then the couple moved away from Suzhou and lived out of the mercy of their friends and relatives, till Chen Yun died in sickness and poverty. Shen Fu described the moment when he remained in the death room of Chen Yun a week after her burial, wanting only to meet her spirit for one more time, showed the deepest agony of a man who lost his true love:

余乃張燈入室，見鋪設宛然，而音容已杳，不禁心傷淚湧。又恐淚眼模糊，失所欲見，忍淚睜目，坐床而待。撫其所遺舊服，香澤猶存，不覺柔腸寸斷，冥然昏去。

I then went in with a lamp in my hand and saw the room was exactly as she had left it, only my beloved was not there, and tears welled up in my eyes in spite of myself. I was afraid then that with my wet eyes, I should not be able to see her form clearly, and I held back my tears and sat on the bed, waiting for her appearance with wide open eyes. Softly I touched her old dress and smelt the odour of her body which still remained, and was so affected by it that I fainted off.¹³⁴

At that time Shen Fu was so poor that he had no money to bring Yun’s coffin home, so she was buried in a hill in Yangzhou 揚州 that is far away from

¹³⁴ Ibid., 182-183.

her hometown Suzhou. Shen Fu's sorrow seemed endless: soon he lost his father who had left nothing to him; then his son died at age of eighteen. Shen Fu had titled the Chapter Three "Kanke Ji Chou 坎坷記愁" meaning "recorded sorrow in a life full of frustrations." The frustrations and sorrow expressed in each segment piled up to the extent of crushing the spirit and body of a young couple. The reader is left to wonder the reason for that dashed hopes and caused sorrow.

In Chapter Four, "Langyou Ji Kuai 浪遊記快" or The Joys of Travel, Shen Fu recorded many simple joyful moments in travel. By *langyou* 浪遊, Shen Fu meant something different with modern time tourist sightseeing and entertainment. The travel he had occurred when he was hired as a shiye or assistant by some government clerks. Hired not by the government, but by the officials or their clerks, a shiye was paid solely out of the pockets of their employers, therefore the position was never stable. The reputation of the shiye was generally not high because of the corruption of some shiye who tried to become rich by taking bribery. Shen Fu started the career not by his free choice but as the decision of his father Shen Jiafu 沈稼夫 (?-?). In Chapter Four, Shen Fu told us that he started the career formally at age of twenty-five, though he had been familiar with it since his father Shen Jiafu was a shiye all his life. Worried about that Shen Fu was not able to support himself doing other careers, or did not want to support Shen Fu in his study leading to the

civil service examinations 科舉¹³⁵ for the scholars, Shen Jiafu made Shen Fu learning from other shiye first and eventually got his own position. Admitting this was nothing “joyful,” Shen Fu called the year the beginning of his “*Pao shu langyou* 拋書浪遊,” or “throwing away books and traveling from place to place.” According to Li Qiao, Shen Fu was a low rank shiye and did not enjoy his career at all,¹³⁶ as we can see from the segment that he became a businessman in less of two years after he became a shiye in Jixi, Anhui 安徽 province. Although he returned to the career again after his business failed, he could not enjoy his career or making money by being morally low, as some of his colleagues had done. The only thing he liked about being a shiye is the benefit of travel. The career allowed him to travel many places as he worked for different officials and their clerks. However, he was normally not free to wander where he liked, or explore some unknown places, but enjoyed hastily whatever came to his way.

As Shen Fu told us in Chapter Four, he had been to all the provinces in China in his time, excepting only Sichuan 四川, Guizhou 貴州 and Yunnan 雲南. The Joy he discovered in the travel falls into several types. It can be the local festivals and customs of the Suzhou area with its luxuries and bustling city lifestyle, or religious rites in some northern towns such as Jixi in Anhui. It can be the trips accompanied by his short-lived best friend Gu Honggan 顧鴻幹 (1762-1784) who shared the same interests and artistic view with him, or

¹³⁵ The civil service examinations are also called “Imperial Examinations.” However, the Imperial Examinations also includes the examinations for selecting the candidates of military posts.

¹³⁶ Li Qiao, “Shen Sanbai Shiye,” 79-86.

the honest and simple life of the farmers in the peninsula Yongtai Sha 永泰沙, today's Jiulong 久隆鎮 in Qidong 啟東, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province.¹³⁷ The natural beauty of mountains and waters, and the places related to history and literature are mentioned the most, particularly the gardens in different provinces ranging from Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Huibei 湖北, Gansu 甘肅 and Shanxi 陝西.

Being “by nature fond of forming own opinions without regard to what others say 凡事喜獨出己見，不屑隨人是非,” Shen Fu values highly “certain things that others look down upon,” and thinks “nothing of what others prize very highly” in his criticism of paintings, poetry, and natural scenery.¹³⁸ Shen Fu mentioned about fifty gardens or temples he actually visited and voiced for each place his unique and sometimes bold comments. Shizilin 獅子林, for example, is one of the famous gardens in Suzhou even today, and is said to be designed and constructed originally by Ni Zan 倪瓚 (Ni Yunlin 倪雲林 1301-1374), one of the greatest painters of Yuan Dynasty 元代 (1271-1368). Ni lived in Suzhou about 400 years earlier than Shen Fu. However, Shen Fu trusted his own taste and admitted openly that he failed to see its beauty because it “resembles on the whole more a refuse heap of coal ashes bedecked with moss and ant-holes, without any suggestion of the natural rhythm of sweeping hills and towering forests.”¹³⁹ As to the people of Yongtaisha who might be considered uncultivated and low in social ranks,

¹³⁷ Xin Lu, “Shadi Fengqing Lu,” <http://bbs.qidong.gov.cn/read-htm-tid-128447.html>

¹³⁸ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 204-205.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 310-311.

Shen Fu did not try to hide his admiration. Shen Fu went to the place in 1804 for collecting the farm crops for his friend Xia Yishan. Being a piece of land newly merged from the bottom of the Yangtze River, Yongtaisha was then still covered by wild weeds and no streets or much human habitations. Shen Fu went hunting and other activities with the farmers there, and loved the simple and honest people and their life. Although it was a “struggle with the elements of nature, dreary and powerful and wild, like that of primeval times,” however, Shen Fu enjoyed the life and people there so much that he rated it the “pleasantest and most romantic bit of travel” in his life.¹⁴⁰

There are also episodes in this chapter related to his affair with a prostitute named Xi'er whom he met when he was doing business in Guangdong. In Shen Fu's time, visiting prostitutes, seeking their company or entertaining by their singing or dancing and so on were considered harmless or even romantic for literati. Shen Fu obviously did not think his affair with Xi'er was a betrayal to his love for Chen Yun, or anything condemnable, so he recorded this episode as his joy in his travel, too. He recorded with many details about the time he spent with Xi'er, and how Xi'er wanted to commit suicide after he went back home without having bought her as concubine to home. His rationale was probably firstly, he picked her up among other prostitutes because she resembled Chen Yun in her appearance, and secondly, he did not treat her badly as other men would do, but was always

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 308-309.

understanding and gentle towards her and other girls there in the brothel. In Chapter Five of the present dissertation, the relationship between men and women in *Fusheng liu ji* will be looked at more closely and a discussion will be made particularly about Shen Fu and Xi'er.

As was mentioned before, the chapters in *Fusheng liu ji* are organized based on the themes, whereas in each chapter, the segments are arranged chronologically, so the reader has the clue to trace the life of Shen Fu and see how the “happiness,” “charm,” “sorrow” and “joy” themes adumbrated in every chapter. However, the gaps can appear when some segments of “happiness” changed into “sadness” or “worry” all of a sudden, in the middle of a scene of happiness and enjoyment, or some memory of the best time appeared in the middle of the hardships.

For example, when Shen Fu was talking about his first “important” meeting with Chen Yun, and how he was surprised by her poems, he also wrote about his worry for her possible fate of lacking of fortune and leading a short life:

余年十三，隨母歸寧，兩小無猜，得見所作，雖歎其才思雋秀，竊恐其福澤不深。

When I was thirteen years old, I went with my mother to her maiden home and there we met. As we were young innocent children, she allowed me to read her poems. I was quite struck by her talent, but feared that she was too clever to be happy.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 004-005.

Lin Yutang did not translate the words “fuze bu shen 福澤不深” literally. “Fuze” means “luck” and “blessing,” and “bu shen” means “not deep,” therefore shallow or not long lasting. It’s unusual that a boy of barely thirteen years old would admire his female cousin’s talent on poetry and at the same time worry about her life span and destination. The reader was just getting ready to know more about Chen Yun’s talent regarding her lacking of education and a financially supporting family, so Shen Fu’s remark about her fate would be a gap that invites the exploration of the reader. As Shen Fu was talking about Chen Yun’s talent, the reader has to make association between the talented women in Chinese history and their fate. “A woman without talent is a virtuous woman 女子無才便是德” is a saying quoted by Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), a Ming Dynasty scholar in his work *Where Can One Hear the Elders Saying* 安得長者言; therefore earlier than the seventeenth-century, the talented women were already disadvantaged compared with untalented women. Talent in women would cause chaos and unhappiness, so a woman with talent is pitiful, and of bad luck. That was perhaps why Shen Fu felt uneasy with Chen Yun’s talent, though he still married her out of his love for her.

Another example can be found when Shen Fu recorded the miniature hill in an earthen tray by using the pebbles taken from the family tomb. Chen Yun told him to mix the putty with the stone powder so the trace of putty in the hill would not be recognizable. They decorated the hill and its surrounding water with dodder and duckweed, then waited till the autumn when the miniature

landscape became really picture-like and gave them much pleasure to “shen you 神遊” or wander in their imagination:

置之簷下與芸品題：此處宜設水閣，此處宜立茅亭，此處宜鑿六字曰“落花流水之間”；此可以居，此可以釣，此可以眺；胸中丘壑，若將移居者然。

We put this under the eaves, and discussed between ourselves where we should build a covered terrace by the water, where we should put a garden arbour, and where we should put a stone inscription: "Where petals drop and waters flow." And Yün further discussed with me where we could build our home, where we could fish, and where we could go up for a better view of the distance, all so absorbed in it as if we were moving to live in that little imaginary universe.¹⁴²

The hill in a tray captured the spirit of the Chinese landscape paintings 山水畫 since Shen Fu was himself a painter of such paintings. The miniature landscape also symbolized the dream of escaping from the cruel reality. While the reader was enjoying the landscape and imagine what a peaceful life Shen Fu and Chen Yun could have if they could really move to that place, the happy moment ended suddenly:

一夕，貓奴爭食，自簷而墮，連盆與架，頃刻碎之。余歎曰：“即此小經營，尚幹造物忌耶！”兩人不禁淚落。

One night, two cats were fighting for food and fell down over the eaves and accidentally broke the whole thing into pieces, basin and all. I sighed and said, "The gods seem to be jealous of even such a little effort of ours." And we both shed tears.¹⁴³

Stephen Owen also noticed such changes of the feelings, or the repeated happy moments that ended up with sadness and humiliations.

¹⁴² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 102-103.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

However, he analyzed it from the point of view of self-deception. Owen argued that Shen Fu had been always trying “to wriggle out of this world into some idyllic tiny space” but unfortunately, his world is always a toy “that gets broken,” therefore “his little mountain, his marriage to Yün, his memoirs---all are idyllic imitations of something real; they are only cherished artifices, toys.”¹⁴⁴

The author of the current dissertation held that these sudden changes of feelings are structural “gaps” from the point of view of Iser’s theory. If we see the theme of each chapter is a string of a necklace, then the segments are pearls of the same kind shining on the necklace. The necklace becomes different when suddenly a pearl of different type appears, and the reader is left to figure out what is happening and why. Iser would probably have called this kind of jump from one theme to another, or a theme became a background or horizon, the vacancies. In fact, they are just another form of the gap, a factor of the “indeterminacy” in a literary work that invites the participation of the reader. In the reading of the first two chapters of *Fusheng liu ji*, the reader is often alerted or surprised when Shen Fu showed a different kind of “pearl” or deliberately cut off the string. Since the theme is “happiness” and “charm,” the reader is ready to be immersed into the segments of his “wedded bliss” or “little pressures;” then all of a sudden, some unhappy thoughts appeared owing to the interruption of the happy moments, may it be an imagined ghost in the stream where Shen Fu and Chen Yun were drinking wine, enjoying

¹⁴⁴ Owen, *Remembrance*, 103.

moonshine, and composing poetry; or some vicious person in the family who killed Shen Fu's most precious orchid flower by secretly pouring boiled water over it; or some rich barbarians who by force married Hanyuan, the supposed concubine of Shen Fu. In Chapter One, there are all together four sentences expressing the worry that Chen Yun might be unable to live a long life. These "odd" segments are important in the understanding of the work as a whole and are actually the linking points between the different chapters. They are also the points where the reader can ask questions and explore the whole life and its meaning of Shen Fu and Chen Yun as human beings. Self-deceived or not, Shen Fu was trying as much as he could to find the cause of his tragedy. Sometimes he blamed his gifted wife because her talent may invite bad luck and jealousy of the creator, or at least some members of his family; sometimes he blamed himself for being too deep in love with Chen Yun so that was considered unlikely to bring a lasting marriage. When Chen Yun died, he did not know whom to blame so he asked: "Who has caused it 誰致之耶?"¹⁴⁵ As the reasoning of Shen Fu is not so convincing, the reader has to dig out his own answer.

(2) The Language Gaps

According to *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the first chronological Chinese historical work composed during the Warring States Period (B.C.476-B.C.221),

¹⁴⁵ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 178-179.

Confucius once said: “If the language lacks patterning, it will not go far” (*Yan zhi wu wen, xing er bu yuan* 言之無文，行而不遠)¹⁴⁶ The “wen 文” here has the same meaning as “wen 紋,” which means decorative patterns or designs such as lines or grains on a natural or artificial object. The traditional Chinese literary thought represented by Confucius maintained that in writing, in order to express and spread ideas more effectively, “wen” or decorative patterns or designs is necessary. The idioms and allusions, and all the other rhetorical features in literary works, such as *dui’ou* 對偶, the words-matching in sound and meanings, are the part of “wen” to help the writer manifest their inner thoughts.

In the beginning of Chapter One, Shen Fu told the reader that he was not properly educated in his childhood, so what he intended to do with his memoir was only writing down the “real facts and the true sentiments.”¹⁴⁷ However, his education and his way of life allowed him a very unique style and a masterpiece of literary work regarding the language he used in the work. Yu Pingbo loved Shen Fu’s style because of its purity and its abandoning of the “pedantic, redundant, and hypocritical languages 酸語，贅語，道學語”¹⁴⁸ by which he meant the language used by the writers of Shen Fu’s time. Instead of revealing their true feelings, they confined themselves by prevailing Confucian conventions and the “Eight-Legged” style or “Baguwen 八股文” that is rigid and predominant in the Ming and Qing Dynasty.

¹⁴⁶ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 29.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 002-003.

¹⁴⁸ Yu Pingbo, “*Fusheng liu ji xin xu*,” 3.

The language Shen Fu used is classical Chinese 文言文 that is based on the ancient written Chinese and not popular any more after the May 4th Movement in 1919. It can cause many gaps in the text, especially for the modern readers. In addition to the grammar that is very different compared to the modern Chinese, the literary features of classical Chinese includes shorter sentence length, less words, former vocabularies, more frequent use of idioms and allusions, more phrases and sentences matched in sound and sense for rhetoric purpose (dui'ou), and so on. For instance, Shen Fu used only eighteen characters to form short phrases, and made them a condensed poetry-like sentence to describe his feeling when he had to stay away from his young wife shortly after they were married.

每當風生竹院，月上蕉窗，對景懷人，夢魂顛倒。

Whenever the breeze blew past my bamboo courtyard, or the moon shone upon my window behind the green banana leaves, I thought of her and was carried away into a region of dreams.¹⁴⁹

Lin Yutang used very simple and concise words here to translate the sentence that will be much wordy if it was translated into Modern vernacular Chinese. In addition to the length, for rhetoric purpose of dui'ou, Shen Fu used “wind 風” to match “moon 月,” “bamboo 竹” to match “banana 蕉,” “scenery 景” to match “person 人,” and so on. Since the breeze blew and the moon shone almost everyday, Shen Fu was in fact saying how frequently he missed his wife. This short but rather formal and subtle sentence describes well the suffering state of love-sickness of Shen Fu.

¹⁴⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 016-017.

These features produce the conciseness and compactness of the literary work and are bound to add language gaps in the text. The frequent using of idioms, allusions and *dui'ou* produces the implicit spaces in the text. For example, the idiom “Not turning a hair” (*bu dong sheng se* 不動聲色) Shen Fu uses to describe the calm attitude Chen Yun had when she was pawning her jewelry for the food and drink of their literati friends has said much more than a whole page of detailed account. The changing of the connotation of the words, the custom, and the usage of the language can also add gaps that are discussed here. The present research calls the first type of gaps the ones “caused by language forms,” and the second type of gaps “caused by changing of the usage.” In addition to these two types, there is the problem of translation that will be a total different topic of research. This dissertation focuses only on the two types of the language gaps in order to understand what function they have in the text and what the reader can do about them.

1) Gaps caused by language forms: idioms, allusions, and *dui'ou*

(1) idioms

In *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu used many idioms that were common in his time and helped to express his points of view more effectively. For example, in Chapter One, Shen Fu recalled the first time he was given the privilege to read Chen Yun's poems when they were thirteen: “As we were two young innocent children, she allowed me to read her poems 兩小無嫌，得見所作。”¹⁵⁰ “*Liang*

¹⁵⁰ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 004-005.

xiao wu xian 兩小無嫌” is the same as its another more common form “*liang xiao wu cai* 兩小無猜,” and is an idiom used to describe the innocent playmates relations between little boys and girls. It came from the poem “Changgan Xing 長幹行” of the famous Tang Dynasty 唐代 (618-907) poet Li Bai: “*Tongju Changgan Li, liang xiao wu xian cai* 同居長幹裏，兩小無嫌猜.” It depicted a boy and a girl who lived in Changgan neighborhood and were best little friends. Shen Fu and Chen Yun were cousins so they knew each other since very young and that’s why Chen Yun showed him some her poems that were not supposed to be seen by a man since she was an unmarried woman. The trust between the two young persons and their mutual love for poetry is expressed in a strong but compact way by this simple but well known idiom. Also in Chapter One, by using the idiom “*hong an xiang zhuang* 鴻案相莊,” Shen Fu made an analogy between his own love story and the story of Liang Hong and his wife Meng Guang in the Han Dynasty:

鴻案相莊廿有三年，年愈久而情愈密。

And so we remained courteous to each other for twenty-three years of our married life like Liang Hung and Meng Kuang, and the longer we stayed together, the more passionately attached we became to each other”¹⁵¹

The idiom “*hong an xiang zhuang* 鴻案相莊” has another version “*Ju an qi mei* 舉案齊眉,” or “to hold the dish tray level with the brow.” According to *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書, *The History of Later Han* by Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), Meng Guang, respects her husband Liang Hong so much though he was only

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 024-025.

a poor farmer, that every time she served the meal to him, she would hold the tray level with her brow to show her courtesy. The couple was said to treat each other due to a most respectable guest, which leading to one more idiom “*xiang jing ru bin* 相敬如賓.” Since Shen Fu and Chen Yun always respected each other like Liang Hong and Meng Guang did, and since the first name of Chen Yun in Chinese character 芸 means “a fragrant grass,” Shen Fu named the top house he and Chen Yun once lived “Tower of My Guest’s Fragrance (Bin Xiang Ge 賓香閣)” and probably made the inscription of this name on a horizontal board to be hung on the door. “My guest” or “my respected wife” is Chen Yun, and she is the one to make the place fragrant. By the naming of the place, Shen Fu wanted everyone to know that his wife Chen Yun was the one that he respected very much.

In Chapter One alone, Shen Fu used about twenty-eight idioms including:

taiping shengshi 太平盛世 (time of peace and prosperity),

jia tu bi li 家徒壁立 (have nothing but the bare walls in one’s house),

gu pan shen fei 顧盼神飛 (look around with quick intelligence in the eyes and with fine fettle),

Jin nang jia ju 錦囊佳句 (nice pieces of poems in a brocade),

zizi bu juan 孜孜不倦 (persist in one’s work without tiring),

dongfang ji bai 東方既白 (the daytime is coming soon),

er bin si mo 耳鬢斯磨 (play together ear to ear and temple to temple),

xunxun shan you 循循善誘 (be good at giving systematic guidance),
meng hun diandao 夢魂顛倒 (live in daydreams and forget about the normal life),
luohua liushui 落花流水 (dropping flower petals and flowing water),
luotuo bu ji 落拓不羈 (untrammelled by formality and convention) ,
tou tou shi dao 頭頭是道 (well-organized, satisfactory),
hong an xiang zhuang 鴻案相莊 (have mutual respect between husband and wife),
bu qi ran er ran 不期然而然 (happen unexpectedly),
baitou xie lao 白頭偕老 (live in conjugal bliss to an old age),
shengsheng shishi 生生世世 (in different lives, generation after generation),
gong ying bei she 弓影杯蛇 (be very nervous and suspicious),
jing hun wei ding 驚魂未定 (not yet being recovered from fright) ,
baitou bu zhong 白頭不終 (unable to live together till an old age),
tong yan he fa 童顏鶴髮 (hale and hearty, healthy in an old age),
yin guo baoying 因果報應 (karma, one's fate in the next existence determined by one's actions of this life),
du xing juju 獨行踽踽 (walk in solitude and silence),
shui tian yi se 水天一色 (the sky and the water are of the same color, the vast water region),
tingting yu li 亭亭玉立 (of a slim and graceful female figure), and so on. Shen Fu also used several idioms with slightly different characters than the original form, but the same meaning, such as “*ru de yi bao* 如得異寶” instead of “*ru huo zhi bao* 如獲至寶” (as if getting the most valuable treasures), “*Guye xianzi*

姑射仙子” instead of “*Guyeshenren* 姑射神人” (fairies in the Miaogu Mountain, beautiful women), “*le ji zai sheng* 樂極災生” that came from “*le ji sheng bei* 樂極生悲” (extreme joy begets sorrow), and “*gong ying bei she* 弓影杯蛇” that has a more popular form “*bei gong she ying* 杯弓蛇影” (very frightened and suspicious).¹⁵²

These are the idioms Shen Fu used in Chapter One only. In Chapter Two he used about twenty-three idioms, and in Chapter Three and Four, he used respectively twenty-two and twenty-eight idioms. All those idioms used by Shen Fu three hundred years ago are still widely used in the Modern Chinese. On the one hand, the use of great amount of idiom has created a poet-like text with its colorful expressions and its modulation in tune do to words with four syllables (each Chinese character has one syllable, and an idiom normally has four syllables); on the other hand, it also causes some gaps related to the conciseness and compactness of the literary work, because of its generalization or indeterminacy. When an idiom is used, the reader can only have some basic ideas depending on what he knows about the idiom and what the writer is talking about, and then has to use his imagination to get his own concrete pictures. For example, Shen Fu uses only a small paragraph with some idiomatic expressions to describe Chen Yun’s appearance:

其形削肩長項，瘦不露骨，眉彎目秀，顧盼神飛，唯兩齒微露，似非佳相。一種纏綿之態，令入之意也消。

Of a slender figure, she had drooping shoulders and a rather long

¹⁵² The translations of all the idioms in this research are based on *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, Chinese-English edition, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2002.

neck, slim but not to the point of being skinny. Her eyebrows were arched and in her eyes there was a look of quick intelligence and soft refinement. The only defect was that her two front teeth were slightly inclined forward, which was not a mark of good omen. There was an air of tenderness about her which completely fascinated me.¹⁵³

“Dropped shoulders and long neck 削肩長頸,” “slim but not skinny 瘦不露骨,” “arched brows and beautiful eyes 眉彎目秀,” “looking around with fine fettle 顧盼神飛,” “two teeth slightly inclined forward 兩齒微露” and “air of tenderness 纏綿之態” are in fact the total twenty-four characters in the whole memoir regarding Chen Yun’s look. Having dropped shoulders and a long neck in a woman are not considered defects or ugly but rather in accord with the ancient Chinese standards for beauties. In *Song of the Goddess of Luo River* 洛神賦 by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), the goddess was described as having “well-cut dropped shoulders 肩若削成,” and “long and beautiful neck 延頸秀項.” As for arched brows and beautiful eyes, they are considered the features of a beauty since *The Book of Poems*. In the “Songs of Wei,” A beauty in Wei Kingdom had “long and white neck 領如蝤蛸” and “squared forehead and curved brows 螭首蛾眉,” with “nice smiles fascinating and beautiful eyes looking around 巧笑倩兮，美目盼兮.” The Wei beauty had also very neat teeth (齒如瓠犀) that Chen Yun did not have so Shen Fu did not claim that she was a true beauty but confessed that she had an air of tenderness with her that made him keep thinking of her. By reading these descriptions, the reader can only have some basic impressions of Chen Yun as a slender and lovely woman, because these words are not specific but general, particularly the idiom “gu

¹⁵³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 006-007.

pan shen fei 顧盼神飛” that does not provide any concrete information about Chen Yun but can be used to describe any man or woman. However, put it together, the reader can imagine his own “Chen Yun” according to his own standard about the length of the neck, how arch the brows are considered beautiful, what shape her eyes have, and what kind of “tender air” about a woman can fascinate a man. Lin Yutang obviously had no problem of making his image of Chen Yun and thought that she was the “loveliest” woman in Chinese history (since she was a real person) and literature. He went even further to imagine the delight of being her friend, and going to the British Museum with her and seeing the medieval illuminated manuscripts if she were living in England.¹⁵⁴ The image of Chen Yun even becomes an icon-like figure in the beginning of the twentieth-century that Feng Zikai, one of the famous writers and artists in modern China, was said to have a grandmother that had a strong resemblance to Chen Yun in her ethereal appearance¹⁵⁵.

(2) Allusions

In Shen Fu’s work, the use of allusions such as quotations from the famous poems, or from the stories in historical or literary works has the same effect as the use of idioms. In Chapter One Shen Fu quoted Su Shi for clarifying his intention to write the memoir: “Life is like a spring dream which vanishes without a trace 事如春夢了無痕,” therefore in order to express the gratitude to gods for the favor he received in his life, he wanted to put his life

¹⁵⁴ Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters*, xiii.

¹⁵⁵ Geremie R. Barne, *Artistic Exile*, 17.

on record. The title of his memoir came from Li Bai's poem: "*Fusheng ruo meng, wei huan ji he* 浮生若夢，為歡幾何" in which the Tang poet asked: "Our floating life is like a dream; how often can one enjoy oneself?" The other poets Shen Fu quoted including Yuan Shen 元稹 (779-831) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846). Shen Fu told Chen Yun in her deathbed that he would never remarry if she dies, because "It is difficult to be water for one who has seen the great seas, and difficult to be clouds for one who has seen the Yangtze Gorges 曾經滄海難為水，除卻巫山不是雲，"¹⁵⁶ which is written by Yuan Zhen in the memory of his deceased wife. After Chen Yun passed away, Shen Fu mourned in his greatest pain and said: "My anguish will never have an end 綿綿此恨，曷其有極!" that is a shortened use of "heaven and the earth might come to an end, this painful regret would linger forever 天長地久有盡時，此恨綿綿無絕期" written by Bai Juyi in his *Chang Hen Ge* 長恨歌, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. Since both the original poems demonstrated strong feelings and the sorrow caused by death of one's loved one, the allusions Shen Fu used are adequate, powerful, and can emphasize his feelings expressed in these pages.

Many allusions can be found in the conversations Shen Fu and his wife or friends made. They simply demonstrate the speaker's wit and training in literature, and made the conversation with more savor and fun. For instance, in Chapter One, when Shen Fu is making fun of Chen Yun for her fondness of

¹⁵⁶ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 177.

eating preserved “stinking bean-curd 臭乳腐” and pickled cucumbers, he used the allusion of the beetle works in dunghills in order to change into cicada and fly high, and asked her if a beetle she is for loving these stinking food. Chen Yun is witty enough that she not only made an excuse for her eating habits, but also let him to know that she is happy to be able to live in his family, just like a poor beetle changed into a high-flying cicada: “Now I am married into your home, like a beetle that has been transformed into a cicada, but I am still eating it because one should not forget old friends 今至君家，已如蜣螂化蟬，猶喜食之者，不忘本出。”¹⁵⁷ She also convinced him that he would know the nice taste instantly, if he could ignore the smell and eat the pickles. For the stinking food, just like Wu Yan, an ugly but virtuous woman of the Qi Kingdom in the Warring States Period (B.C.475-B.C.221), her virtues can only be understood if one ignores her ugly appearance. Finally Shen Fu ate the pickles and fell in love of the stinking food himself.

The using of allusions also functions as a tactful way to avoid words that are embarrassing or that the speaker does not want to say for certain reasons. For example, when Shen Fu and Chen Yun lived in Yangzhou and were desperately in need of money, Shen Fu said he would go to make “a call to ‘jiang bo’ 將伯之呼,” that is originally from *The Book of Poems*, and used as an euphemism of “asking somebody’s help in finance.” The person Shen Fu had in mind was his brother-in-law Fan Huilai. In the previous episode, Shen Fu

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 040-041.

went to ask the latter to pay back a sum of money he lent to Fan ten years ago, therefore it was not a real “call to Jiangbo.” However this time, he wanted to borrow some money that he might never be able to return. He and Chen Yun all knew how difficult and embarrassing it would be, so Chen Yun suggested him asking his friends instead. Since his friends were all unable to take care of him this time so he went and got the money, after waiting for three days outside of Fan's office.¹⁵⁸

In the episode that they had to leave Suzhou and live with the family Hua, Chen Yun was embarrassed by the women and children of Mrs. Hua's neighborhood, who rushed into their house curiously in order to see the city couple who was driven away by their parents. However, Chen Yun quoted *Taohuayuan ji* 桃花源記 by Tao Qian, said with a tone of self-mocking that she felt like the fisherman who came to the paradise-like place Taohuayuan, the Peach-blossom Spring by accident. Mrs. Hua, replied that her neighbors were ignorant country people that were “easily taken by surprise 少所見而多所怪” that is a phrase came from *Baopuzi* 抱樸子 by the Taoist Ge Hong (284-363?) in the Jin Dynasty. By saying that, Mrs. Hua made her apology and at the same time matched the literary expression of Chen Yun in a modest way.

In the late part of Chapter One, when Chen Yun met Hanyuan and secretly arranged an appointment with her in order to get her as a concubine for Shen Fu, Shen Fu was shocked and doubted the possibility by saying that

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 154-173.

he was a poor scholar “*qiong cuoda* 窮措大” and could not afford a girl that should be kept in a house made of pure gold 金屋貯之. “Qiong cuoda” is a word used by Wang Dingbao 王定保 in Wu Day period (907-960), and “*jin wu cang jiao* 金屋藏嬌” is a story of the Han emperor Wu Di when he was a child, who wanted to build a house of gold to keep his future empress Chen Ajiao. As Chen Yun insisted to make the arrangement, Shen Fu used another allusion to make fun of her: “Are you going to enact the comedy *Lianhsiangpan* of Li Liweng right in our home 卿將效笠翁之《憐香伴》耶?”¹⁵⁹ *Lixiangban* is a drama written by Li Yu that has a theme of friendship and physical attraction between females. Mrs. Cui, in love with Miss Cao and wanted to live together with her, managed to pursue Cao becoming the concubine of her husband. Chen Yun ignored the questions of Shen Fu but told him she and Hanyuan would become sworn sisters first, for this reason Shen Fu had better to “prepare a sacrificial offering for the occasion 備牲牢以待.” “*Shenglao* 牲牢” was used as early as in *The Book of Poems* to mean animals offered as sacrifice to gods, normally including a cow, a goat, and a pig. Chen Yun was obviously joking by using this word because it was impossible to offer “Shenglao” in the occasion of making a prostitute one’s sworn sister. Hanyuan, as the other participate in the episode, used also allusions to express her gratitude to Chen Yun by saying “I should feel greatly honoured if I could come to your home (it’s really like a humble grass getting the chance to be attached to a gorgeous tree) 蒙夫

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 076- 079.

人抬舉，真蓬蒿倚玉樹也。”¹⁶⁰ “*Penghao yi yushu* 蓬蒿倚玉樹” is the same as “*jianjia yi yushu* 蒹葭倚玉樹,” an allusion from *A New Account of Tales of the World* 世說新語 of Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444). By saying so, Hanyuan had not only demonstrated her knowledge in literary works, but also acknowledged her inferiority to Chen Yun in their social and family status.

In all, allusions can create gaps caused by the meaning between the lines, or things unsaid behind what has been said, thus invite “the reader’s actively participating in decoding the allusion according to his or her intertextual reading experience,” as Li Zeng pointed out, because “a true appreciation of an allusion happens when the reader simultaneously activates two or more texts in the new context,”¹⁶¹ i.e., in the reading of *Fusheng liu ji*.

(3) Dui’ou

The using of rhetorical technique dui’ou can also produce language gaps. Dui’ou or the making of poetry-like phrases and sentences that often matched in sense and sound is a common feature in the literary works of Shen Fu’s time, and *Fusheng liu ji* is no exception. As a unique feature of Chinese language, dui’ou is already used in ancient canons such as *The Book of Change* 易經 in about three thousand years ago. To give a simple idea, dui’ou means basically two words, or phrases, or sentences matched as a pair, in both of the forms and contents. For example, *tian* 天 (sky) can be the match of *di* 地 (earth), because both are natural objects; *yueming* 月明 (moon is bright) can be the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 079. In the bracelet is my translation.

¹⁶¹ Zeng, personal email on March 16, 2012.

match of *fengqing* 風清 (wind is fresh), because both are natural phenomenon and have the same grammatical structure. Similarly, *Dajiang nan bei* 大江南北 (south and north of the Yangtze River) can be the match of *Changcheng nei wai* 長城內外 (inside and outside of the Great Wall), and so on. Strictly speaking, the rise and fall of the tone of each character should also follow certain patterns, similar to the way applied to Lü verse 律詩. Dui'ou can be used to compose a poem, or a paragraph, or even the whole article as in its heyday, the Six Dynasties 六朝 (229-589). In Ming and Qing time, dui'ou became the basic training of the scholars in order to pass the Imperial Examinations, because the test form The Eight Legged Essays (Baguwen 八股文) is fundamentally built up on the composing of dui'ou sentences. As a well developed technique, it can be seen in both prose and poetry, and also in everyday life such as the writing of *duilian* 對聯 (antithetical couplets) used to decorate rooms or buildings. People who have literary trainings often “*dui duizi* 對對子” as a game in which one person makes the first part of the couplets, and others have to find it's best match.

To view dui'ou from the perspective of Iser's Gap theory, it can be seen that dui'ou creates more empty spaces between words, phrases and sentences. The symmetry between the couplets, the often profound meanings expressed in the well balanced compact forms, and the modulation in tone while reading aloud, all help to bring to the text its shifting images that producing conciseness and poetic quality. The part that describing the moment

Shen Fu and his wife enjoying the full moon at the Canglang Pavilion can be an example of the use of dui'ou and its effect:

少焉，一輪明月已上林梢，漸覺風生袖底，月到波心，俗慮塵懷，爽然頓釋。

After a while, the moon had already arisen from behind the forest, and the breeze was playing about our sleeves, while the moon's image sparkled in the rippling water, and all worldly cares were banished from our breasts.¹⁶²

There are several pairs of the words that matched in both forms and meanings in this short paragraph. Wind (*feng* 風) vs. moon (*yue* 月), come to (*sheng* 生) vs. arrive (*dao* 到), the end of the sleeve (*xiu di* 袖底) vs. the heart of the wave (*bo xin* 波心), mundane worries (*su lu* 俗慮) vs. secular cares (*chen huai* 塵懷), gradually feel (*jian jue* 漸覺) vs. suddenly disappear (*dun shi* 頓釋), and so on. The well matched pairs of words helped to depict the tranquil scenery and the humble human beings purified by the beauty of nature. If the lines quoted are reading aloud, the well chosen characters make a musical cadence with the rise and fall of the tones as marked below (risen tones marked with “/,” fallen tones with “\;” pauses between words marked with “/”):

Shao 少(\)/yen 焉(/), yi 一(\)/lun 輪(/)/ming 明(/) yue 月(\)/yi 已(\)/shang 上(\)/lin 林(/) shao 梢(/), jian 漸(\)/jue 覺(/)/feng 風(/)/sheng 生(/)/xiu 袖(\) di 底(\), yue 月(\)/dao 到(\)/bo 波(/) xin 心(/), su 俗(\) lu 慮(\)/chen 塵(/) huai 懷(/), shuang 爽(\) ran 然

¹⁶² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 034-035

(↗)/dun 頓(↘)/shi 釋(↘)。

In this passage Shen Fu did not mention many details about what they saw, apart from the moon and the water, as they were sitting on the ground of the Canglang Pavilion that situated at the top of a hill in a garden. As they went on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival, or the Moon Festival in end of September or beginning of October, they would see the largest and brightest moon of the year. They would also have moon-cakes and drinks with them. In reading this passage, one wonders why nobody was inside of that garden excepting Shen Fu and his group. What social status his family had in order to stop other people from coming into the garden at the same night? What were Shen Fu's parents and other family members doing? Why Shen Fu could be spared since it's a family festival? Since the garden is in the middle of the city, did they hear the local people celebrating the night by carrying out the custom of "zou yueliang 走月亮," or "walking under the moonshine"? In addition to these questions, the reader can also wonder what kind of "mundane worries and secular cares" Shen Fu had in his mind that haunted him till the moment he saw the bright moon. If nature would comfort and heal him like that, then what kind of people he was? These might be the questions the reader will ask regarding the empty places caused by the poetic form of language Shen Fu used here.

With some rough ideas of how dui'ou actually practiced in Shen Fu's work, we can look another piece of *Fusheng liu ji* that mixed the use of dui'ou with

idioms and allusions in order to see the implicit spaces between the words created by using these language forms:

諸君子，如梁上之燕，自去自來。芸則拔釵沽酒，不動聲色，良辰美景，不放輕過。今則天各一方，風流雲散，兼之玉碎香埋，不堪回首矣！

These friends came and went as they pleased, like the swallows by the eaves. Yün would take off her hairpin and sell it for wine without a second's thought, for she would not let a beautiful day pass without company. To-day these friends are scattered to the four corners of the earth like clouds dispersed by a storm, and the woman I loved is dead, like broken jade and buried incense. How sad indeed to look back upon these things!¹⁶³

Many idioms used here are also allusions, and some with words matched as pairs in form and contents, since they come from poetry or prose of famous writers in the previous dynasties. For instance, "*bu dong sheng se* 不動聲色" is from a prose of Ouyang Xiu, "*liangchen meijing* 良辰美景" is from a poem of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433), "*tian ge yi fang* 天各一方" is from Su Wu 蘇武 (B.C.140-B.C.60), "*feng liu yun san* 風流雲散" is from Wang Can 王粲 (177-217), and "*bu kan huishou* 不堪回首" is from Dai Shulun 戴叔倫 (732-789). The technique of *dui'ou* is used in "come and go as wish" (*zi qu zi lai* 自去自來), "take off hairpins and sale them for wine" (*ba chai gu jiu* 拔釵沽酒), "wonderful moments and beautiful scenes" (*liangchen meijing* 良辰美景), "wind blows and clouds vanishes" (*feng liu yun san* 風流雲散), and "(beautiful women died) like jade broken and incense buried" (*yu sui xiang mai* 玉碎香埋).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 110-111.

¹⁶⁴ Another translation for "*xiang* 香" is flower which makes more sense.

The words carefully chosen in the quoted short passage produce three layers of meaning. These different layers are in fact different themes shifting from one to another, and bring along with them the empty spaces in between. Firstly, Shen Fu used “*zi qu zi lai* 自去自來” to picture the freedom and fondness his friends enjoyed in his house. They came to paint or share their poems, drink wine or tea and eat delicacies prepared by Yun at no invitations, and they went as they like without having to say goodbyes. Shen Fu recorded about thirteen persons in this chapter, who were painters or people who loved poetry. However, Shen Fu did not mention how he knew them and what social network they shared. The reader may wonder what roles these people played in their family and society, since they were only interested in literature and arts when they were in Shen Fu’s place. If they come to and go from Shen Fu’s house freely, can Shen Fu do the same in their homes? Did they come with their wives? Why not? Did they talk freely to Chen Yun, as the guests of the modern family nowadays talk to the hostess? Did Shen Fu ever go to visit them accompanied by Chen Yun? These are some questions created by the concise form and short phrases used in this passage. Thanks to the “gaps” here, multiple meanings or possibilities of reading could be possible.

Secondly Shen Fu recalled the role Chen Yun played as a hostess, who provided everything their friends needed, even under the circumstance of living in a friend’s house and being short of money constantly. When money was needed urgently for food and beverage for the guests, she would

heroically sell her jewelries instead of complaining or seeking help from her husband, who could not assist anyway. The reader wonders how Yun managed to be “*bu dong sheng se*”, “not turn a hair” as she had not many jewels obviously. What kind of “wonderful moments and beautiful scenes” she “could not let go lightly” even to the extent of exchanging her jewels for wine? Did her in-laws know about it? What would they say if they were informed? Was it a behavior out of vanity for keeping her guests satisfied and gaining “face” for her husband, or an act out of love for artistic way of living? The reader must get the answers and bridge the gaps by himself.

Thirdly, Shen Fu was back to the present and lamented the heartbreaking contrast between past happiness and cruel reality. His friends were gone and his loved woman was dead. The contrast is too strong that indeed “*bu kan hui shou*,” unbearable to recall. We know that Shen Fu’s best friend Gu Honggan died at twenty-two years old. When Shen Fu looked back and wrote these lines, his wife, his father and son were all passed away and his friends, scattered to places he did not know or could not go to meet. However, by contemplating the brutal contrast Shen Fu depicted here, the reader may realize something that Shen Fu hid between the lines: his deep admiration for his wife. Chen Yun was absolutely correct of not letting nice instants in life go lightly, and what she did had been justified by the time. In all, it was her traits and deeds that made the “floating life” of an ordinary man worth of remembering.

As the above detailed analysis manifested, to view the constant use of idioms, allusions, and the technique of dui'ou by Shen Fu from the perspective of Iser can lead to a new understanding of *Fusheng liu ji*. The use of idioms, allusions, and the technique of dui'ou can provide a more layered background for the reading because it provides the different angles and references for the reader, with the very etherealized and poetry-like characteristics. Together they function in producing elements of the indeterminacy, hence the different interpretations of the literary work. It is the reader's task to give meaning to the words and read between the lines according to his own knowledge and familiarity with the idioms and allusions Shen Fu used, with the sound and images carefully chosen by the writer. When certain words are chosen for the reason of matching the sound and meaning of a pair of words, the shift between pictures are created, as well as the vacancies in between. In his gap theory Iser uses poetry to explain vacancies or gaps produced by the shift of themes. He states that in a poem, when one stanza finishes and another stanza begins, the space is produced because of the shift of themes:

The basic idea of theme and horizon can be strikingly illuminated by poems, where the reading of the second stanza occurs against the background or horizon of the first and is conditioned by it. The empty space between stanza 1 and stanza 2 is an invitation to link both together, and thus the reading of stanza 2 is indisputably shaped by what has been read before.¹⁶⁵

As a reader, our reading is not a "smooth continuing process," but a "dynamic process of recreation," as Iser calls it. The heavy use of idioms,

¹⁶⁵ Iser, *Prospecting*, 55.

allusions and dui'ou in *Fusheng liu ji* forced us to go through a series of activities: "we look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject;" this is indeed "the dynamic process of recreation."¹⁶⁶

2) Gaps caused by changing of the usage

Gaps "caused by changing of the usage" are relatively less than the gaps caused by language forms. The reason is that Shen Fu lived in the end of eighteenth-century and the beginning of the nineteenth-century, which as Chen Yinque pointed out, is rather close to the present time¹⁶⁷, so the basic characteristics of the language Shen Fu used was not so different comparing to the written language today. However, the current dissertation maintains that changes in vocabulary related to the changes of custom, social system and economical life can also cause gaps faced by the reader of *Fusheng liu ji*. These changes can be summarized as the following types: the change of the connotations of words, such as commendatory terms and derogatory terms, the change time words and terms of address, and the name of certain things that is time specific. These changes are in fact results of changes in the social, economic and cultural aspects.

In Chapter One Shen Fu recorded how Yun changed his dislike of

¹⁶⁶ Iser, *Implied Reader*, 288.

¹⁶⁷ Chen Yinque, *Yuan Bai shi qian zheng gao*, 93.

stinking food such as preserved bean-curd and cucumber into fondness. He used “*yi wei* 異味”¹⁶⁸ to mean delicious food that is a commendatory usage used in *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 and *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書 already.¹⁶⁹ However, for the nowadays reader, this word means “peculiar smell” that has connotation of unpleasant and stinky. Another example is the word “*lan* 爛” that is nowadays the equivalent of “decomposed,” but Shen Fu used its old meaning of “bright-colored” as in “*lan ru tao li* 爛如桃李,” to describe the beautiful red leaf he saw in the Qianshan Hill.¹⁷⁰ Under such circumstances, the reader has to understand what Shen Fu meant by related those words to other elements of the text and eventually construct the meaning through the context.

The change of time words is interesting because the whole system of counting time one uses now is different what people used in Shen Fu's day. With the traditional lunar calendar 農曆 that had been in full use till the found of the Republic China in 1911, the name of every year, the month, the day and the hour were all counted differently than the solar calendar. For example, Shen Fu wrote the first line of his memoir as “余生乾隆癸未冬十一月二十有二日” means he was born on December 26, 1793, which is the twenty-second day of the eleventh moon in the *guiwei* 癸未 year of Emperor Qian Long (乾隆 1711-1799).¹⁷¹ For counting the hours of the day, the traditional system divides a day and a night into twelve hours instead of twenty-four hours, and

¹⁶⁸ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 042-043.

¹⁶⁹ 《左傳·宣公四年》：“子公之食指動，以示子家曰：‘他日我如此，必嘗異味。’”《後漢書·光武帝紀下》：“往年已勅郡國，異味不得有所獻饗。” <http://hanyu.iciba.com/wiki/464069.shtml#5>

¹⁷⁰ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 314-315.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., *Six Chapters*, 002-003.

uses “*lou* 漏” the water-clock and “*gu* 鼓” the drum to report time. For instance, “*yi lou san xia* 已漏三下,” “*lou yi san di* 漏已三滴” and “*san gu* 三鼓” all have the meaning of mid-night, between eleven o'clock in the evening and one o'clock in the morning. When Shen Fu and Chen Yun were forced to leave their home in Suzhou, they left in the time of “*wu gu* 五鼓” that was about three o'clock in the morning, and arrived the home of Mrs. Hua in Wuxi by boat at “*wu wei zhi jiao* 午未之交” that was about one o'clock in the afternoon the second day.¹⁷²

The more complicated change took place in the terms or titles people to address themselves and the others. As we have to figure out from *Fusheng liu ji*, to address relatives of the other part in the conversation, it's polite to use “*ling* 令” before the subject in question as a way to show respect. For example, “your father” would be “*ling zun* 令尊;” but if it refers to the father of another person who is not the listener in the conversation, the more polite form is “one's *zunren* 尊人.” If the speaker's parent is referred, then the simple word of “my” (*wu* 吾 or *yu* 余) is used to express humbleness, such as “*wu fu* 吾父,” my father, or “*wu mu* 吾母,” my mother. The following pronouns and terms of address are used in Shen Fu's work, but they are no longer used in the contemporary Chinese:

Yu, pu 余, 僕: I, me

Qing 卿: You (to address a woman)

¹⁷² Ibid., *Six Chapters*, 150-153.

Zuxia 足下: You

Qian 妾: I, me

Jun 君: You (to address a man)

Wu fu 吾父: my father

Wu mu 吾母: my mother

Tangshang 堂上: our parents

Ling tang 令堂: Your mother,

Yu zi 余姊: my elder sister

Wu di, yu di 吾弟, 余弟: my younger brother

Ru di 汝弟: your younger brother

Ru xu 汝婿: your husband

Zunren 尊人: one's father

Ci jun 嗣君: one's son

Mei qian 妹倩: husband of younger sister

Gong 公: Sir, Mister

Qu 渠: he, him

One episode in Chapter Three “Sorrow” was in fact caused by the misusing of such addressing words, which unfortunately led to the breakdown of the relation between Chen Yun and her parents-in-law. In a letter to Shen Fu, Chen Yun addressed her mother-in-law as “*ling tang*”, “your mother”, and the father-in-law “*laoren*”, “the old man” or “the old parent.” Shen Fu’s father read the letter, and was so angry of Chen Yun’s wrong terms of address, that he

wrote a letter to Shen Fu for “the height of impudence 悖謬之甚” of Chen Yun. He also sent a special messenger to home with a letter that accused her crime and ordered her dismissal with a “most drastic tone 言甚決絕.” Then days later, he sent the third note and asked Shen Fu and Chen Yun to leave their house together.¹⁷³ What had Chen Yun had done wrong? Were “your mother” and “the old man” the words so mistaken and unforgivable? The reader may be surprised by the tragedy caused by the wrong terms of address and wanted to go deep in the text for the answer. Instead of “your mother” and “the old man,” Chen Yun should have addressed her in-laws “our mother” and “our father” because “*ling tang*” and “*lao ren*” are not proper to be used by a daughter-in-law who is not a stranger but a member of the family. However, Chen Yun’s mistakes were not the terms of address she used, but the advice she gave to Shen Fu related to the servant-concubine of her father-in-law. Chen Yun helped to get that girl under the indirect request of Shen Fu’s father, in that case she lost the love of her mother-in-law; then when Shen Fu’s father became ill, Shen Fu’s mother resented Chen Yun further and thought the illness of her husband was caused by the servant girl. In order to reduce the pressure and resentment she received from Shen Fu’s mother, Chen Yun secretly suggested Shen Fu to arrange the leaving of the servant-concubine. Unfortunately, the letter was read by Shen Fu’s father, and the fact she was calling him “the old man” made the situation even worse. The wrong terms of

¹⁷³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 134-135.

address Chen Yun used became a useful excuse to punish her.

There are many words in *Fusheng liu ji* that are time and place specific. In other words, their usage changed when certain social, economical, and cultural backgrounds changed, therefore they became less frequently used, or even totally disappeared. The current work does not aim to give this kind of change a historical, social, or linguistic explanation, but only to look at them from the point of view of the gaps they produce in reading.

Words such as “*lian gou* 蓮鉤” (lotus hook), “*hudielü* 蝴蝶履” (butterfly shoes), “*jian yu* 肩輿” (sedan chair) are associated with the bound feet of women, the shoes they wear, and the means of transportation they may use. Since the feet-bounding is abandoned a hundred years ago, they became words less used or even unknown. Similar are “*kaolao* 桲栳” (round shaped wicker basket), “*wo guan* 握管” (write with an ink brush), “*bao'er* 鴇兒” (brothel keeper) and “*bengtou* 伴頭” (brothel servant), that are not used any more in general because of the change in social life.

Words like “*yiguan zhi jia* 衣冠之家” (family of scholar), “*wen fa* 文法” (way of writing), “*tang* 湯” (boiled water), “*yi ji wei bian* 易髻為辮” (change hairstyle of female into male’s) are among those that changed meaning partly in accordance with the change in life style and in society. They are not used often now, or used only by their changed meanings. For instance, when Shen Fu said that someone killed his favorite orchid flower by pouring “*gun tang*” over it, he meant “boiled water” instead “boiled soup” that is the meaning of

this word nowadays. When Chen Yun dressed up as a man in order to visit the temple of the water god, she also changed her hairdo from a woman's bun into a man's braid (*yi ji wei bian*), because the men in Qing time wear long braid, whereas bun and braid are generally both for women now.

Some words used as allusions by Shen Fu that were probably popular in his time, but gradually lost their charm and became obscure. For instance, Shen Fu wanted to say "we are cousins" to a Mr. Wang, instead, he used "吾父與君有渭陽之誼" meaning "my father is your uncle from your mother's side" that is dubious and rarely used even in the most literary works today. Other examples including "*Shachili* 沙叱利" (man took other's wife by force), "*zhongkui* 中饋" (food for the family), "*renzi zhi dao* 人子之道" (the way of filial piety), "*reng wei Feng Fu* 仍為馮婦" (take up once old occupation), "*qiu Chisongzi yu shiwai* 求赤松子於世外" (become a Taoist monk), and "*tui xing hua gu* 蛻形化骨" (become a Taoist fairy), and so on.

The change of names of places, such as "Yongtaisha 永泰沙" that is called Jiulong Town 久隆鎮 in Qidong 啟東, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province now is the combined result of linguistic, geographical, and historical changes and is often interesting for the reader. However, this dissertation does not intend to go into details in it because it is not likely causing more difficulties than other changes discussed above.

(3) The Cultural Gaps

According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn in *Culture: A Critical Review* in 1952, there were already one hundred and sixty-four definitions of culture in nearly sixty years ago. However, by “cultural gaps,” the present dissertation held the view of culture of Seelye in 1993, that culture referred here is not “defined as in terms of the fine arts, geography, and history,” but defined by “the wide range of behavior exhibited by our species.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, in talking about the cultural gaps, the current dissertation focuses on the “small/little c culture” that is connected to the way of living, tradition, customs, behavior, social conventions, and value system. The cultural gaps are caused by the differences that the reader discerns in the above mentioned aspects in the reading of the text. When the reader encounters such differences, he has to think critically what those differences meant in the text and what they meant to him.

Compared to the structural gaps and the language gaps, the cultural gaps have the same function as to involve the reader into the conversation with the text, and also to produce the “negations” in the reader. According to Iser, “negation” has two types, the primary and the secondary. The first type of negation is the negation, or doubting, of the social norms:

Norms are social regulations, and when they are transposed into the novel they are automatically deprived of their pragmatic nature. They are set in a new context which changes their function, insofar as they no longer act as social regulations but as the subject of a discussion which, more often than not, ends in a questioning rather than a confirmation of their validity.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ H. N. Seelye, *Teaching culture*, 15-16.

¹⁷⁵ Iser, *Implied Reader*, xii.

When the reader starts to doubt the norms and social conventions that are depicted and doubted in the literary work, it is the beginning of “primary negation,” which also leads to the doubt the reader has for him or herself, in Iser’s term, the “secondary negation,” that is the discovering of his own dispositions. When the reader is invited by the text to imagine his reaction in the given situation, “he is bound to make the necessary adjustments consciously, and this process must in turn make him conscious of himself, of his own conduct, and of the customs and prejudices that condition it,” which will “lead ultimately to his uncovering and correcting the hidden reality of himself.”¹⁷⁶

Iser used one of his favorite examples *Joseph Andrews* by Fielding to illustrate the two “negations.” When the “ideal eighteenth-century man” Abraham Adams is judged by the reader as lacking of discernment and “stupid,” the reader is questioning the “virtues” represented by Adams and how they function in the everyday life. At the same time, the questioning also caused the reader to “link his discovery with his own disposition.”¹⁷⁷ Is the reader secretly the same hypocritical as the people there who judges Adams as a “perfect fool”? Did he degrade himself to the level of the people with worldly cleverness but lacking morality? The doubt of the social norms had led to the discovering of oneself. These are the negations Iser stated, and they can shed light on the cultural gaps the reader encounters in *Fusheng liu ji*.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁷ Iser, *Act of Reading*, 214-219.

The cultural gaps in *Fusheng liu ji* can be categorized into types that are related to two time and place specific questions. The first type of gaps is related to the question “what is good?” that is the manifestation of the value system, norms and conventions of the society. The second type of gaps is related to the question “how do people live their life?” that is the behavior of people in accordance with the first type, and expressed through tradition, customs, and the way of living. The things people in Shen Fu’s time value regarding happiness, virtue, beauty, wealth, health, relationship with gods, with other people and with nature, and so on, are different from the people value nowadays, and so is the way people conduct themselves in the society, such as what to eat, what to play, how to get married, how to die, and etc. The recent news of a young man sold his kidney for the money to buy an iPad2,¹⁷⁸ or a girl wanted to exchange her virginity for an iPhone4¹⁷⁹ are some extreme examples of how much have changed regarding “what is good” and “how do people live their life” since Shen Fu’s time.

From what Shen Fu recorded as “happiness,” “charm,” “joy,” and “sorrow,” we can discern the things he and the people in his time value or dislike. Among the things he valued are love and respect between husband and wife, generosity and sincere care for friends, love for the nature, and love for literature and art. Among the things he detested are greed and low morality in official life, selfishness, snob and betrayal between family members and

¹⁷⁸ <http://tv.video.sina.com.cn/play/115521.html>

¹⁷⁹ <http://video.sina.com.cn/v/b/54513750-2137493453.html>

friends, and injustice in the society in general. From the record of Shen Fu on his life in Xiaoshuanglou 蕭爽樓, we can have a glimpse of what kind of friends he enjoyed and what kind of topics he detested, as well as the way he and his friends entertained themselves.

In Chapter two of *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu recorded some of the happiest moments he spent with Chen Yun and his friends in Xiaoshuanglou, where the couple lived after they were driven away the first time by Shen Fu's father. The friends Shen Fu had in Xiaoshuanglou all love "generosity, free and easy ways, and quietness 慷慨豪爽，風流蘊藉，落拓不羈，澄靜緘默." Among these characteristics, "*fengliu yunji*" or "bearing of romantic charm" and "*luotuo bu ji*" or "acting in free and easy ways" are often used to describe very talented and free-spirited poets such as Li Bai in the Tang Dynasty. "*Kangkai haoshuang*" is a word to describe people who are kind and generous, always ready to help people in need. As Shen Fu often had difficulties in making a living, his generous friends such as Xia Yishan 夏揖山 (?-?) and his brother helped him often. "*Chengjing jianmo*" means quiet, but with an air of purity in heart because "*cheng* 澄" has the meaning of transparency. Shen Fu used this word to describe another friend Shi Zhuheng 史燭衡(?-?) in Chapter Four and called him a real gentleman.

When the friends were around, in order to secure the happy time together, they forbid four topics in conversations. The taboos were: talking about people's official promotions; gossiping about law-suits and current affairs;

discussing the conventional eight-legged essays for the civil service examinations; and playing cards and dice 談官宦升遷，公廨時事，八股時文，看牌擲色。¹⁸⁰ The first three are connected either with Shen Fu's career as a shiye, or with the civil service examinations, while the last one is related to gambling. It is not surprising that Shen Fu did not want to talk anything associated with his career since he never enjoyed it; however, it is interesting for the reader to see that the civil service examinations had no position in Shen Fu's house, though it's a dominant force in the society and particularly in the life of the literati.

Started in the Sui Dynasty in the beginning of the seventh-century, the Imperial Examinations or the civil service examinations "were the primary means of recruitment onto the bureaucracy"¹⁸¹ in Ming and Qing time, and was of the priority in the life of commoners who sought positions in the government of all levels. However, since the sixteenth-century, accompanied by the economic, educational development and the spreading of the commercial printing business, in the lower region of the Yangtze River, literati encountered an intensifying competition among exam sitters, as the result of more people became literates. Some researchers believed that among the three million populations in the Qing time, many were able to read and even write, since "there were enough private and charitable schools by the late Ch'ing to teach basic literacy to between one-third and one-half the males of

¹⁸⁰ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 110-113.

¹⁸¹ Evelyn S. Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations," 3.

school age.”¹⁸² As a result, the competition for the civil service examinations became very fierce and unbearable. Moreover, as Stephen Roddy pointed out, the result of the Imperial Examinations is often “unreliable, especially when government is in the hands of corrupt elements.”¹⁸³ The unsuccessful exam sitters, represented by Fan Jin in “Fan Jin Passed the Imperial Examinations 范進中舉” written by Wu Jinzi 吳敬梓 (1701-1754), became the target of social satire and victim of the examination system. Fan Jin, an unlucky sitter of the civil service examinations in his fifties, went insane in hearing the news that he succeeded in the examination after many years of failures.

On the one hand the examinations became more and more difficult to succeed in, hence the more scarce opportunities of becoming members of the ruling society; on the other hand, there was the danger in politics and other dark sides within bureaucracy. The Qing rulers such as Emperor Qianlong were notorious for carrying out “literary inquisition” (*wenzi yu* 文字獄), or the official persecution of scholars and their family members for their suspected anti-Qing actions in their writings. According to Wong, there were fifty-three cases of literary persecution during Qianlong’s reign (1736–1796).¹⁸⁴ In one such inquisition called “the Case of the History of Ming 明史案” alone, more than seventy people were killed. Frustrated, the young literati turned away “from the orthodox career route to contemplate purposeful activity in other

¹⁸² Wang Lan-yin, “Ming-tai chih she-hsueh,” 24-41; 81-95; 183-193.

¹⁸³ Stephen Roddy, *Literati Identity*, 273.

¹⁸⁴ Kam C. Wong, “Behavior of Qing Law,” 327–374.

realm” including literature and art.¹⁸⁵

As Shen Fu had never succeed even in the first stage of the civil service examinations, he could not be identified as a “scholar,” or a “frustrated cultural man 失意文人.” By following the suit of his father, he became a shiye, a low rank official secretary when he was twenty-five years old. His friends were mostly men like him, who was trained for the civil service examinations but probably never took or never pass them; therefore they can be described more accurately as “lower rank literati.” However, he and his friends shared their dislike of the civil service examinations, particularly the rigid form of the eight legged essays; therefore they decided not to talk any topics associated with the exam and its direct result of becoming government officials. In rejecting these topics, they wanted to assure their time together to be spent on something with more charm and fun, such as painting, or the composing of poetry. Among the thirteen persons mentioned in this part of the memoir, three are painters with whom Shen Fu learned painting. Shen Fu did not mention if the owner of Xiaoshuanglou, Lu Banfang was among the friends that came to and went from their place freely, but Lu was also a painter. They could spend the whole day discussing poetry and painting, or carving seals. If they sold any of their art works, they would share the money for the food and drink.

The way that Shen Fu and his friends entertained themselves is perhaps strange in the point of view of the reader of our time, because its form is

¹⁸⁵ Evelyn S. Rawski, “Economic and Social Foundations,” 13.

ironically examination-like. Shen Fu and his friends made the composing of poetry as a game, and took the form of the Imperial Examinations with someone who performed the role as the examiners and the rest acted as the sitters. The sitters must complete part of the couplets of a poem, under certain requirements and also within the time limit of the burning of an incense stick. The “examiner” picked up the best lines, whose author then became the next “examiner” as reward. The loser had to pay some coins for the meal and rice wine they shared. The game could last whole day and at the end of the day they had enough money to enjoy a nice eating and drinking together, plus the admirable skill of the gifted chef, Chen Yun, who was good at making any ordinary food a delicacy. The participants did not have to take a real exam, but since they were more or less trained to take the Imperial Examinations, their familiarity with the rules and their ability to compose poetry made them competent in the game and made the game exciting. It was also the time when Chen Yun heroically sold her jewelry for exchanging the food and drink for her guests. As a woman, although Chen Yun loved poetry and was quite talented according to Shen Fu, she was excluded from the real exam and other nondomestic worlds in her time. However, she was included in the game by Shen Fu and his friends, with a privilege that her compositions were not to be criticized and she was exempt from fine in order to avoid the embarrassment in her as well as in the “examiners.” Therefore it’s quite natural that she not only participated in the games enthusiastically, but also tried her utmost to keep the

happy time lasting a little longer.

There is considerable indeterminacy between the taboo of conversation on the topics of civil service examinations and the excitement and fun Shen Fu and his friends sensed when they played the game of exams. What are their true feelings towards the examinations? What can they do with their literary skills in composing poems and writing fine prose if not the so called eight-legged essays? Are their contradicted attitudes the reflection of their deep disappointment and lament of the failure of becoming part of the elite ruling class? These questions can be triggered by the gaps here and further explored by the reader of *Fusheng liu ji*.

The relations Shen Fu had with Shen Fu's father and his younger brother Shen Qitang, left many gaps in the text and are worth exploring for the understanding of the family relationships in Shen Fu's time.

Family relationships are one of the central concerns of the Confucianism, and the basic Confucian doctrines such as "Three Bonds and Five Relationships" are based on the family ethics. Three Bonds are the "Ruler over minister 君為臣綱, father over son 父為子綱 and husband over wife 夫為妻綱." Five Relationships are five norms or requirements for the persons involved in a family: the father must be just 父義, the mother must be affectionate 母慈, the elder brother must be friendly 兄友, the younger must be being respectful, and the son must be obedient and filial. Being a patriarchy society for thousands years, the father is the most powerful person in family and is

responsible for the well being of all his children. To be “just” is the appropriate way of being a father, and on the side of the subjects, the son, must be obedient in any circumstances.

Shen Fu was adopted under his father’s decision, by his uncle Shen Sucun, the elder cousin of his father, who did not have children and died young. It is a misery why Shen Fu’s father decided to give up his first son to his dead cousin, and it’s also not clear whether Shen Fu had ever seen his uncle or lived with him. Shen Fu only mentioned that he had the obligation to visit his adopted father’s tomb every spring time. His uncle never left any money to him, as he later mentioned it as a sheer fact. If we compare the way Shen Fu, his elder sister, and his younger brother were treated on their wedding days, it’s very clear that Shen Fu was never treated seriously in the family.

Shen Fu recorded three weddings in *Fusheng liu ji*, and the first two were twisted together oddly. In Chapter One Shen Fu said he married Yun three month after his seventeen years birthday, and only two days before the day that his elder sister got married. She was supposed to have her leaving home banquet one day before her wedding, however, because that day happened to be a “national mourning day,” and no music or entertaining was allowed, so she got the banquet right after Shen Fu’s wedding. Moreover, according to Shen Fu, after he and Yun finished their drink of the symbolic twin cups of wine “*jiaobeijiu* 交杯酒” between the bride and the groom, for the next three days they were all summoned for the service of his elder sister: he had to act as a

modern “brides man” for his sister, meanwhile his own bride or his new wife Yun, had to accompany the female guests or relatives of the family she had barely married into. The newly weds were kept so busy, that the first night they spend together was the third night after their wedding ceremony.

It's odd enough that a family should have two children to be married at such a close schedule, and with the daughter's wedding much more celebrated than the son's, regarding the male-patriarchy structural of the society in the Qing time. The reason of such different weddings for two children of the same family can be discovered by comparing two brides and two grooms. Yun's father died when she was four years old, and Yun had to support her mother and younger brother by her needle work since very young. The man she married, Shen Fu, was adopted by someone dead long ago and left nothing for him to live an independent live. The other bride, Shen Fu's elder sister, being the eldest daughter of a “scholar's family,” married to someone worked in the local government in Jingjiang 靖江, as a accountant in the Salt Bureau, which controlled the salt business, was one of the most profitable and important institutions in Qing time.

Shen Fu's wedding is even shabbier and weightless if is compared to the wedding of his younger brother, Shen Qitang. Shen Fu did not mention whether his family paid money or gifts according to the custom as gestures of welcoming Yun. As Yun's family was poor, to be married into Shen Fu's family was already an honor for her family. However, on Shen Qitang's wedding day,

his wife-to-be asked some extra pearls before she agreed to board the sedan-chair and leave her parents' home. It was Yun who provided her own pearls and helped her mother-in-law to solve the problem. The whole family of Shen Fu also had to move away from the house near Canglang Pavilion to a place called "Cangmixiang 倉米巷," in order to provide Shen Qitang and his wife a larger place. Shen Fu never mentioned the name and the appearance of his sister-in-law, but he revealed that she was a granddaughter of the famous Qing calligrapher Wang Xuzhou 王虛舟 (1668-1743), who was also a high-rank officer in the court of the Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1654-1722). The reader can discern that this time, it was not the bride, but the groom's family honored by making the bond of marriage, although by that time Wang Xuzhou had passed away some forty years before.

Although Shen Fu never accuses his father, Shen Jiafu, of being unjust in his very different ways treating his two sons, the reader can sense it from many things left unsaid. As a man who was very fond of adopting children,¹⁸⁶ Shen Jiafu could "spend money like dirt 揮金如土" for his twenty-six adopted children, but when his elder son had no money to buy medicine for his daughter-in-law, or winter clothes for his grandchildren, he did not show any care. In the episode of Chen Yun's misusing of the terms of address in Chapter Three, the selfishness and the hypocrisy of Shen Jiafu are really shocking, no matter they are judged by the Confucian standard of an appropriate father, or

¹⁸⁶ It is a way more to the necessary of building social connections rather than the act of charity, because the children to be adopted are not necessarily orphans but have their own parents.

by the criteria of a “gentleman” (*junzi* 君子), namely, possesses the noble quality of “benevolence” (*ren* 仁), “righteousness” (*yi* 義), “rites” (*li* 禮), “wisdom” (*zhi* 智), and “trustworthiness” (*xin* 信).” Shen Jiafu did not talk to his wife or his son that he wanted to have a concubine; instead, he told his colleague he needed a servant girl, knowing that the latter would pass the word to Shen Fu, who had to find a servant girl for his father as a way to be filial. When he ordered Shen Fu and Chen Yun to “roll away” the second time, he accused them of being a disgrace to the family by being involved with some low-down people, such as Hanyuan, a prostitute, or some money-loaner. Shen Jiafu also declared that he could put Shen Fu to death, but he could not bear to do it. Therefore although Shen Jiafu knew that Shen Fu had no places to go and Yun had been ill for years, nevertheless he drove them away by the threat that if they did not disappear within three days, he would report to the government and have them prosecuted for their “filial impiety 忤逆,” which in Qing time is a serious crime a son can commit to his parents.¹⁸⁷ Under the pressure of time, the couple had to give away their fourteen years old daughter to a cousin as a “child daughter-in-law,” that was often the equivalent of a young servant or slave. Their little son was left behind in his grandparents’ house. Soon he started his apprentice life at the age of twelve, and died six years later.

Being treated by their father so cruelly, Shen Fu and Chen Yun had no

¹⁸⁷ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 142-143.

way to protest or even explain, because Shen Jiafu had the power that was bestowed to him by the society and the social convention. As a father, the ruler of the family, Shen Jiafu can abuse the power by being unjust (*bu yi* 不義), whereas as a son, the subject and dependent, Shen Fu can not be disobedient or unfilial (*bu xiao* 不孝). Indeed, Shen Fu never said anything to blame his father for causing him all the misfortunes. Moreover, when Shen Jiafu died, Shen Fu blamed himself for his deep sin of unfilial to his father, because Shen Fu “was never able to minister to his (Shen Jiafu’s) pleasure while he was alive, nor able to serve him at his death-bed.”¹⁸⁸

Compared to the direct conflicts Shen Fu had with his father, the conflicts with his younger brother were very implicit. Many had been kept unsaid by Shen Fu. For example, was it Shen Qitang, who killed the orchid flower secretly by pouring boiled water over it because he could not have a share of it? Why he did not tell Shen Fu that their father was very ill and going to die? Why did he sell the family house after Shen Jiafu died? What allowed him to act this way without being punished? The answers to these questions are unsaid by Shen Fu, but are speaking loudly in the text, between the lines.

In sum, the above investigating and analyzing of the structural, language and the cultural gaps in *Fusheng liu ji* demonstrates some distinctive characteristics of this very concise literary work, that is the profound

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 189.

indeterminacy exemplified by the afore-mentioned three types of gaps, which invite constantly the participating of the reader, in discovering the things unsaid, and in constructing the meaning of the work. Just as Iser elucidated, “these gaps give the reader a chance to build his own bridges, relating the different aspects of the object which have thus far been revealed to him.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Iser, *Prospecting*, 9.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATI IDENTITY OF SHEN FU AND CHEN YUN: APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY THEORY

Shen Fu claimed at the beginning of *Fusheng liu ji* that he was born to a "scholar's family 衣冠之家." Such a description usually is given to a family that produced in its history some scholars or officials, such as some one who passed the provincial and national levels of the civil service examinations. However, Shen Fu did not mention any his ancestors who owned official positions or was successful in any levels of the civil service examinations. In Chapter Three of *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu's father also used this phrase to blame Shen Fu for involving himself in a loan trouble. "We belong to a scholars' family; how could we fail to repay a loan from such common people?"¹⁹⁰ By common people, he meant a businessman from Shanxi 山西. Although Shen Fu's father made his living as a shiye, a man who served as a private secretary or assistant of an official or his clerks, still he believed that his social status was higher than a businessman because he was more a literati than the latter was. Shen Fu, also a shiye in most time of his life, seemed had

¹⁹⁰ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 142.

taken for granted that he was a member of literati, no matter how he really felt about his career.

Shen Fu not only believed that he belonged to the literati group, but also lived as a literatus. In *Fusheng liu ji*, he depicted his everyday life as a literatus, including his language of a literatus, his feelings of happiness, fun, sorrow and joy as a literatus, and his philosophical, moral, and artistic values of a literatus. However, since he officially started to learn the career of shiye at the age of eighteen, he probably had never succeeded in any civil service examinations, and was therefore at the margin of the literati group, as a lower rank literatus if we may say so. His wife Chen Yun, taught herself to read and write, also enjoyed what Shen Fu enjoyed as a member of literati, had been all her life the best company and supporter of Shen Fu in his endeavor to carry out his literatus' way of living. According to Shen Fu, he and his wife often compose poems while enjoying the moonshine, or drinking wine in the company of flowers and friends. They make flower arrangements or bonsai at home. They paint pictures or discussed poetry with friends. They visit lakes and gardens together. They have unique literary and artistic opinions and discuss about them tirelessly when they are alone. One wonders how Shen Fu and Chen Yun see themselves and how they appear in the eyes of their family members. The present study will explore the identities of Shen Fu and Chen Yun from the perspectives of the social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckmann. The author of this dissertation maintains that the self-identity of

Shen Fu and Chen Yun are socially constructed; however, the individual's choice and determination also play an important role in the reinforcing and the maintaining of their self-identities and allow them to perform accordingly in their daily practice, and moreover, express their identities in *Fusheng liu ji*, a literary work that fulfilled the need to "make-believe," a human need, as Iser told us, "even when it is known to be what it is."¹⁹¹ This study focuses on Shen Fu's self identity as a literatus, a "man of culture" first, then followed by the discussion of Chen Yun's self-identity as a female literatus in the middle of the Qing Dynasty. The social construction of reality theory will shed light on the questions of how Shen Fu and Chen Yun attained the self-identity of literati, and what it means to them to be a member of literati.

1. Shen Fu's Self Identity as a Literatus

Both "scholar" and "literatus," are often used to translate the Chinese word "*wenren* 文人," "man of culture" literally. "Wenren" is a very vague word and hard to find an equivalent in English. As the opposite of "*wushi* 武士," the military man, it has the origin of "*shi* 士," a social stratum intelligentsia in the ancient dynasties, that is lower than the aristocrats but higher than the commoners. Well educated and usually possessing some special skills, a "shi" serves the aristocrats or sometimes the kings, and enjoys certain privileges. Sometimes they became officials because of their moral values and

¹⁹¹ Iser, *Fictive and the Imaginary*, vii.

knowledge in politics. As the order of “*shi, nong, gong, shang*” shows, the social status of shi or intelligentsia, is higher than farmers, artisans, and businessmen in general.

Since the traditional Chinese education is based on Confucian ideology and philosophy, the literati are also called “the pupils of Confucius,” and their education, especially the training for the civil service examinations in Ming and Qing time, are centered on the Confucian doctrines. Confucianism “has always been seen as the domain of China’s cultural, economic, and political elites,”¹⁹² therefore the Confucian idea of intelligentsia has set the criteria for the literati of different generations to hold in terms of moral standard, ideal personality, political ambitions and ethical norms. Morally and culturally, a shi has to cultivate his virtue with the Confucian canon, to follow the ancient sage and to become “inner sage 內聖,” in other words, becoming a sage-like person inside, in order to reach the political goal of “outer king 外王,” be qualified to rule the outside world as a king. The political ambition of “shi” is also expressed as “ordering the family, governing the country, and pacifying the world” (*qijia, zhiguo, pingtianxia* 齊家治國平天下). In personal dispositions, a shi must be noble and resolute, gentle, kind, respectful, modest, and humble. He has to act according to the Confucian ethic norms such as “three bonds, five relationships,”¹⁹³ “benevolence 仁,” “filial piety 孝,” “loyalty 忠,” and

¹⁹² H. John and Evelyn Nagai Berthrong, *Confucianism*, 7.

¹⁹³ Proposed by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) in the Song Dynasty. Three bonds are: the ruler has authority over the ruled 君為臣綱, father has authority over the son 父為子綱, the husband has authority over the wife 夫為妻綱. Five relationships are: between father and son exists love 父子有親, between husband and wife exists differences

“trustworthiness 信,” and so on. Among all norms and code of conducts, filial piety is the most encouraged because it functions as the stabilizer of the family, hence the foundation of the patriarchal state which is a large family-like institution with the emperor on the top, and demanding the obedience of his subjects as well as providing the protection to his people.

During the two thousands years from Han to Qing, especially during the Song Dynasty 宋代 (960-1279) when the Neo-Confucianism was in its heyday, Confucianism not only “harnessed by the state as a powerful tool in effecting governmental policies,” but also “gained the prominence as the principal curriculum”¹⁹⁴ in the civil service examinations. Cultivating virtue, learning Confucian canon, pursuing success in the various levels of the examinations and finally becoming the member of the ruling class, became the life goal of the literati regardless of birth for generations and generations. For many people who toiled in the long and often frustrating years for preparing themselves for the civil service examinations, the phrases of “there are surely house of gold in books 書中自有黃金屋” and “there are surely beautiful women in books 書中自有顏如玉” by the Song emperor Zhen Zong 真宗 (998-1022), became the only motivation for their hard studies. The consequence is that on the one hand Confucian education and cultural values permeated every aspect of the traditional society; on the other hand, they became the tool of material gain and ladder to climb up in the social status.

夫婦有別, between the old and the younger exists orders 長幼有序, between friends exists credit 朋友有信, between the ruler and the subjects exists righteousness 君臣有義.

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Roddy, *Literati Identity*, 5.

Thus they lost the spiritual meaning in the eyes of many literati who cherished the Confucian moral values and its quest for the personal and social ideals. In doubting the validity of the Song Neo-Confucianism, the late Ming and Qing Scholars and philosophers such as Yan Yuan 顏淵 (1635-1704), Li Gong 李恭 (1659-1733), Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1798), Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777), and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801), and so on, “constantly broke from Song models to create new roles for the literati.”¹⁹⁵

In Shen Fu’s time, shi had already become divided into two types, namely “shi” and “*shidafu* 士大夫.” While the latter means the “scholar-officials” who become the member of the ruling class or has accesses to power by being successful in the civil service examinations, the former means ordinary shi who has been educated in becoming the candidate for the civil service examinations, but may be unable to take the examinations or failed in their tries thus denied for any real chance to serve in the government and become members of the ruling elite. Stephen Roddy used “shi” or “*dushuren*” (readers of books) to refer to “the entire range of educated males during the imperial period.”¹⁹⁶ According to John King Fairbank, “in a country of over 400 million people, a century ago, there were fewer than 20,000 regular imperial officials but roughly 1,25 million scholarly degree-holders.”¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, the number of the people who were educated but not the degree-holders, i.e., those who had never taken any examinations, were even larger. Accompanied

¹⁹⁵ Maram Epstein, “Book Review” on *Literati Identity*, 819.

¹⁹⁶ Stephen Roddy, *Literati Identity*, 237.

¹⁹⁷ John King Fairbank, *New History*, 106.

by the development of education and printing business in the late imperial China, the number of shi expanded to such a large scale that, as Martin W. Huang marked, “nearly all those who could write belonged to the *shi* class.”¹⁹⁸ Consequently, shi is not necessarily a member of the elite any longer, and the identity of shi or literati in all levels regardless of their age and scholarly accomplishments has also gone through various changes. Researchers such as Benjamin Elman, Yu Ying-shih, David Johnson, Evelyn S. Rawski, Shang Wei, Stephen Roddy, and Martin W. Huang and many more have elaborated in their works on the changes of the literati identity of Qing time, and also its expressions in the literary works of authors such as Wu Jingzi, Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠 (1705-1787), Cao Xueqin, Li Ruzhen and so on. According to those studies, the major changes in the aspects of literati identity, their life goals and social status can be summarized as below:

- From moral self-cultivating leading to the social responsibility of bettering the world to the pursuing of aesthetics for personal interest and benefits;
- From member of the ruling society or elite with privileged status to member of lower society under increasing economic pressure and worsen living conditions;
- From the quest of mastering of Confucian canon to the study of evidential knowledge of philology, literature, art, and other pragmatic skills;
- From men of ambitions and success to men of constant failures in all

¹⁹⁸ Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 35.

aspects of life.

The causes of the above mentioned changes are a complex of philosophical, political and economic movements that had been taken place during several centuries from Yuan to Qing time. Martin W. Huang stated that the diminishing opportunity for governmental service, the decline of the Neo-Confucianism and its ideal of sagehood, the increasing social mobility, and the professionalization of learning have made the background for these changes.¹⁹⁹

Huang used in his research three literati to demonstrate the identity changes they were going through. Liu Dakui 劉大魁 (1698-1779), Gong Weizhai 龔未齋 (fl. 1800), and Xia Jingqu, were all literati but were denied the opportunity of becoming an official to serve in the government, because of their failures in taking the civil service examinations. They all had to take the role of secretaries or shiye to make their living. In their literary works, they either expressed their doubt of their social status of whether they being a “*shi*” (literati) or being a “*min*” (commoner); or the frustration of not being able to support themselves or their families, and certainly not being able to execute power as an ancient Confucian “*shi*” could have done theoretically, although they might be equally qualified and ambitious.²⁰⁰

In all, to be a “*wenren*,” or a member of literati in traditional China, means to cultivate oneself with the Confucian virtues of a gentleman, to acquire the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 35.

literati knowledge and skill in poetry, essay writing, ritual and music, to obtain personality that composes of benevolence, righteousness, rites, wisdom, filial piety and trustworthiness, and so on. If all goes well, one becomes a member of the ruling elite and realizes the life goals to seek universal truth, to serve the patriarchal society that is ruled by emperors, to gain personal fame and to benefit one's family, and honor one's ancestors in so doing. If not successful, one can still serve the ruler and the country by becoming a man of literary or artistic creations. Either way, "wenren," being "the man who reads," or "the pupil of Confucius," has always higher social status than people of other occupations, at least theoretically. As the common saying goes, "To be a man who reads is to be on the top of the society; everything else comparing to it becomes low and unworthy of doing 萬般皆下品，惟有讀書高."

As for the case of Shen Fu, he had been born into a literatus' family and had received education as a wenren, so he was assigned by the society the identity of nothing but a literatus. It's interesting to notice that he seemed quite happy with his identity, and "draws them into himself and makes them his meaning."²⁰¹ Although he had the same career as the three above mentioned literati Liu Dakui, Gong Weizhai and Xia Jingqu, he did not complain about his life as a secretary serving to the government officials too much, only in one episode he blamed his unpleasant experience in Jixi to some corrupted colleagues and their unmoral behaviors. In another occasion he said his career

²⁰¹ Peter L. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 15.

allowed him to travel many places in China, but not enable him to travel freely as the way he had wished. The underlining reasons are perhaps related to his “semi-literatus” position. First of all, Shen Fu did not spend so many years as the other three writers did in the preparing of the civil service examinations, but only ended up with constant failures. Shen Fu did not mention anywhere in the memoir that he was a *xiuca* 秀才 who must be succeed in the first level of the examination hence became a degree-holder; therefore Shen Fu was not even qualified for the principal level of civil service examinations, nor the level higher. Although the choice to follow his father’s suit and become a shiye was not a peasant one, but it was not as bitter as the other three writers might feel about this career which was indeed a reminder of their failures at the first place. Besides, Shen Fu’s father made the decision for him to become a shiye, which he had to obey at any circumstances. Secondly, Shen Fu did not enjoy big fame in poetry, letter writing, calligraphy or painting, and so on, as the other three writers did. Take Liu Dakui as an example. Liu was already very famous when he started to sit for the provincial examination for his literary knowledge and prose writings. Later he enjoyed the fame as the “Han Yu 韓愈,” a famous literary figure in Tang Dynasty, of Qing time. He published his prose in the ten volumes *Haifeng xiansheng wenji* 海峰先生文集, and his poetry in the six volumes *Haifeing xiansheng shiji* 海峰先生詩集. Liu was praised by his contemporary scholars such as Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749) and Yaonai 姚鼐 (1732-1815) as one of the founding fathers of Tongcheng school 桐城派, a

literary movement advocating the literary ideal of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 in the Tang Dynasty. Thirdly, Shen Fu had constant problems of getting jobs as a secretary. When he was hired, it was often a low position, and whenever the office had difficulties, he was always more dispensable than his colleagues. It is quite clear that he was neither close to power, nor ambitious in executing the power in his own name, as Xia Jingqu did. In sum, Shen Fu was a “semi-literatus,” or a lower rank member of literati. His understanding of a “wenren” represents those of “pinshi 貧士,” the poor and lower rank scholars, who “barely removed from commoner status”²⁰² and composed the majority of literati in the Qing time.

Despite of the given social, literary, and economic circumstance, Shen Fu was nevertheless a “wenren,” a “man of culture,” because his self-identity was nothing but a “full-literatus,” in contrast to his “semi-literatus” reality. His mentality and behavior was distinguishingly literati-like and was different from that of the other classes, for instance, a businessman, even if he was doing business at the time under the economic pressure. For example, in Chapter Three of *Fusheng liu ji*, he went to Guangdong for about half a year to do business with his cousin. Instead of writing anything about how his business was going during that period, he wrote many pages recording his love affair with the prostitute Xi'er from a local boat brothel. Shen Fu seemed rather content by the fact that all prostitutes in the boat brothel he went loved him for

²⁰² John King Fairbank, *New History*, 103.

being a gentle and kind “wenren” guest. Xi’er, the woman he mostly spent his time and money with, even wanted to commit suicide after learning that he went home and was not coming back to Guangdong again. Inspired by a poem of Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852), the famous Tang poet, Shen Fu wrote “awaking from a half years Yang group dream, I acquired a fickle name among the girls 半年一覺揚幫夢，贏得花船薄倖名”²⁰³ to summarize proudly his experience. Another example is one of his short travels he recorded in the same chapter. When he returned from Guangdong and had been out of jobs for several years, he started to run a shop of calligraphy and paintings with a friend, in the hope of earning some money for his sick wife and two young children. The business was so bad that “the income of the shop for three days was hardly sufficient to meet one day’s expenses,” and he “was hard pressed for money and worried all the time.”²⁰⁴ However, when his friends invited him to visit Western Hill not far from the Suzhou city, he asked his business partner to take care of the shop, and went to the mountain for whole day to enjoy the scenery, temples, good tea and wine with his friends. When the night came, he suggested that they should also enjoy the moonlight with some music, so they went to the top of the hill to a pavilion, where one of them played his zither, and another one played his iron flute till the late in the night. In the morning of the second day, they went further in the mountain to look for a long forgotten Buddhist temple. After they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves and went back to the city, Shen

²⁰³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 281.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

Fu painted for his friends a picture of the temple to memorize this trip.²⁰⁵

These are all doubtless fantastic examples of literati's way of enjoying life, if one looked at them separately without referring to other stories in the book. To be acquainted with women from brothels, especially with those women talented in poetry and arts such as singing and dancing, had been considered traditionally "romantic" and "free-spirited" behavior of literati. Many prominent poets such as Du Mu and Su Shi had written about their love affairs with those girls in their literary works. Both Su Shi in the Tang Dynasty and Mao Xiang, one of the leading literary figures in Ming Dynasty, married some girls from brothel as concubines. Such behavior were not criticized as demonstrations of moral defects of the person, but admired by literati of later generations as sure sign of "tender feelings and unconventional spirit" of wenren. To enjoy the nature whole-heartedly is also a tradition appreciated by literati for centuries. Mountains and rivers are the eternal themes for poetry, prose, landscape painting, bonsai, and garden designing. Landscape poetry and landscape paintings are unique Chinese literary and art genres that had yielded many classics and masterpieces. Indeed, to visit famous mountains and rivers, to be a part of the natural world, to learn from the traveling in scenery spots are encouraged by all philosophical and religious schools in traditional China including Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Enjoying mountains and rivers 遊山玩水 is considered as physically, cognitively, and psychologically

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 280-299.

worth doing by literati of all time.

However, if these examples of Shen Fu's literati practice are linked to other episodes in *Fusheng liu ji* that were happening at the same period, the bright pictures of happy and pure literati-like moments became dim and questionable. In Chapter Three we read, the adventures of Shen Fu in Guangdong happened around the time when he and his wife were living in a place of a friend. Because of the misuse of terms of address by Chen Yun and other misfortunes, they were driven out of the family for the first time. Although they lived there happily and enjoyed many visits from their literati friends, Chen Yun had to sale her jewelry to make the ends meet. Shen Fu was supposed to make some money in Guangdong, in order to settle their financial problem once for all, and he also borrowed money from his literati friends for buying the goods he wanted to sale in Guangdong. Shen Fu did not mention how much money he brought home, only wrote that he spent about a hundred dollars in the boat brothel for Xi'er that he considered not very expensive, and he left Guangdong for home because the keeper of the brothel wanted him to take Xi'er as a concubine for five hundred dollars. After his Guangdong trip, his financial problem was not solved but worsened as he did not have job offers for several years. When the second example took place, Shen Fu and his family were already quite poverty-stricken. Chen Yun was very ill by the time, but refused to take any medicine because she did not have money for her daughter's winter clothes, so the little girl had to wear summer clothes in cold

weather.

Having these larger pictures in mind, one wonders what kind of the real Shen Fu is, because there is obviously some conflicts between his “semi-literatus” status in the real world he lives, and the “full-literatus” mentality that directs his daily performance. How did he attain and maintain his identity as a literatus? What does it mean to be a literatus for him?

According to Berger and Luckmann's theory of social construction of reality, man is a social product and his social knowledge is the result of the dialectic process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization:

Man, because of the peculiar character of his biological makeup, is compelled to externalize himself. Men, collectively, externalize themselves in common activity and thereby produce a human world. This world, including that part of it we call social structure, attains for them the status of objective reality. The same world, as an objective reality, is internalized in socialization, becoming a constituent part of the subjective consciousness of the socialized individual.²⁰⁶

It is society, which “assigns to the individual not only a set of roles but a designated identity.”²⁰⁷ Berger made the procedure clear that man has to become a person, a social product first, and attain his identity during this process, then act in his life what his role and his identity compel him to do:

It is within society, and as a result of social processes, that the individual becomes a person, that he attains and holds onto an identity, and that he carries out the various projects that constitute his life.²⁰⁸

Society, according to Berger and Luckmann, not only forms individual's identity, but also maintains it by various social processes. Socialization, which is included in the process of internalization, played crucial role in the

²⁰⁶ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 81.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

construction of role and identity of the individuals. It has two stages, namely the primary socialization and the secondary socialization. While the former is carried out by parents and other family members, the latter is mainly executed by school teachers and peers and later spouses and friends, and so on, who are named as the “significant others” by Berger and Luckmann. In both the stages, the “significant others” with whom the individual carried out conversations constantly help the individual to locate his place in the world, to appropriate the “objective facticity of the social world” as a “subjective facticity,” and to build up the world in his consciousness.²⁰⁹

As it was mentioned before, Shen Fu had taken for granted that he was a member of the literati and shared its identity “naturally.” In his process of primary socialization, his parents, especially his father, had been the most “significant other” to him. It is no doubt that Shen Fu’s father, being a shiye himself instead of a member of the literati-officials, cherished his own social roles and identity, finished Shen Fu’s primary socialization and shaped his literati identity at the very beginning. Berger and Luckmann explained how this kind of internalization takes place:

The child takes on the significant other’s roles and attitudes, that is, internalizes them and makes them his own. And by this identification with significant others the child becomes capable of identifying himself, of acquiring a subjectively coherent and plausible identity. In other words ... the individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others.²¹⁰

Shen Fu did not mention his education in the childhood that was generally

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 15-17.

²¹⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Constransuction*, 121.

carried out by parents or other family members. As the first male child in the family and lived in the lower Yangtze region, he probably had started formal education that normally at about six²¹¹, and most likely he was sent to some tutors house to learn reading and writing, also had some access to traditional literature heritage. When he was fifteen years old, his father made him a pupil of a famous scholar and private teacher Zhao Xingzhai 趙省齋. Shen Fu followed his teacher first in Kuaiji 會稽, then in Hangzhou 杭州. He not only learned how to write essays from Zhao, but also accompanied the old scholar to visit the latter's family tombs and learned the rituals accordingly, and visited many scenic spots, such as Houshan 吼山 in Kuaiji and the Western Lake 西湖 in Hangzhou. Both Kuaiji and Hangzhou are famous since ancient time for their picture like landscapes. From this time on, traveling in natural mountains and rivers that is a typical literati action became the lifelong hobby of Shen Fu.

Apart from his father and teachers, Shen Fu also had some literati-will-be friends since he was very young. Shi Yunyu, for example, was one of Shen Fu's childhood friends who succeeded in the highest level of the civil service examinations and became Number One Scholar "*zhuangyuan* 狀元" in 1790. His role as a lifelong friend and an employer is discussed by Ye Dejun 葉德均 (1911-1956) in 1944.²¹² The two perhaps studied in the same neighborhood, or at least concerned with what the other one was doing. When Shi Yunyu finally became the member of a "literati-official" through the examinations,

²¹¹ Angela Ki Che Leung, "Elementary Education," 45-51.

²¹² Ye Dejun, "Shi Yunyu yu Shen Sanbai," <http://blog.sina.com.cn/tfsr>, Feb. 02, 2011.

Shen Fu was twenty-seven years old and already a shiye thus was denied the roads to officials forever. However, the success of his old “peer” would certainly serve as an example for the identity and roles of literati. After the death of Chen Yun, Shen Fu followed Shi Yunyu to many places in Shanxi, Hubei, and Shandong as one of his secretaries. Shi Yunyu also wrote several poems for Shen Fu and presented a concubine to him after hearing the death of his son with Chen Yun. It may be said that Shi Yunyu, by providing a position in his office to Shen Fu and also staying friendship with him, had helped the latter maintaining somehow a life and identity as a literatus.

Another friend Gu Honggan though died early at the age of twenty-two, was also a “significant other” of Shen Fu. They met when Shen Fu was learning to become a shiye in Fengxian, a place close to Shanghai, where Gu was also an apprentice. Gu was “by nature a big-hearted, frank and straightforward fellow.” The two became deep in friendship because both had minds “full of noble thoughts” and often “thought of living a quiet life in the mountains.”²¹³ Barely being in their late teens, the two young men were already sense the hardship of a life as shiye in their coming years, and talked about to seek comfort in the nature. The best time they had together was the trip to Hanshan in Suzhou. They went deep in the mountains and found some beautiful and tranquil places they planed to live in the future. When they came home, they picked chrysanthemum flowers that symbolized Taoist spirit of

²¹³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 219.

escaping to nature, to decorate their heads, which was certainly a literati action inspired also by a poem of Du Mu:

塵世難逢開口笑，菊花須插滿頭歸。

As anywhere in the world it's hard to meet warm laughter, one must return to our eternal home with one's head fully decorated with the laughing chrysanthemums.²¹⁴

Many years later, when Shen Fu was forty-six and went up again to the hill he and Honggan once visited, he still thought Honggan as his first and best bosom friend “*zhiji* 知己,” and doubted if he could ever have such a friend again in the vast and indifferent world.

The most important “significant other” in Shen Fu's identity shaping and maintaining is his wife Chen Yun. Cheng Zhangcan and Kuang Yanzi have both discussed the interesting relationship between Shen Fu and Chen Yun. Cheng believed that Chen Yun was to Shen Fu “sometimes a wife, sometimes a friend; sometimes a man, sometimes a woman; sometimes a guest, sometimes a prostitute.”²¹⁵ Kuang argued that their relationship was the combination of love between husband and wife, romance between scholar and prostitute, understanding between bosom friends without to be confined by the difference between man and woman or subject and its subordinate.”²¹⁶ They pictured the essential contents of the relationship of the couple insightfully. However, they did not looking at the meaning of Chen Yun to Shen Fu from the perspective of the “significant other.” Chen Yun, together with Shen Fu's other

²¹⁴ Du Mu, “Jiu ri Qishan deng gao,” 1076-1077, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/159961.htm>, my translation.

²¹⁵ Cheng Zhangcan, “Yun de xingxiang fenxi,” 851.

²¹⁶ Kuang Yanzi. “Chen Yun de qing shen zhi lei,” 866.

“significant others” but eventually became Shen Fu’s only “significant other,” saw to it that the social assigned literati identity of Shen Fu became and maintained as a self appropriated identity.

Chen Yun’s role as the “significant other” can be divided into three stages. Firstly, since she and Shen Fu were cousins and knew him from very young, she did her share in his obtaining of the literati identity, by acknowledging his superiority in poetry. In Chapter One Shen Fu remembered that when they were thirteen, she showed him some of her poems and asked his criticism. She also told Shen Fu that her short pieces and stanzas of poems were not finished because she was waiting for some “friend scholars” who would direct her to complete them. Since she really didn’t have other scholars available to her, she was hinting to Shen Fu her admire towards him as a young scholar.²¹⁷ Since then, Shen Fu had played the role of her tutor in literature and arts all through the years they lived together. Moreover, as Chen Yun was talented, and had good sense in poetry especially, her encouragement was even more meaningful in Shen Fu’s identity as a literatus.

In the second stage of Chen Yun’s role as a “significant other,” she was progressing a lot in literature by her constant conversations about literature and other literati topics with Shen Fu. The couple also entertained themselves by composing poems with friends or alone. As a creative person and by nature spontaneous and playful, Chen Yun had many unique ideas in everyday life

²¹⁷ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 006-007.

which fascinated Shen Fu and enriched his literati way of living. Chen Yun also followed certain code of conduct that the traditional literati also holdfast, such as cultivating self in poetry, value higher knowledge than money, generosity, and trustworthy. In all, she eventually became Shen Fu's equal partner and bosom friend, particularly in carrying out the literati way of life that both of them loved so much. One episode can be used to exemplify her influence to Shen Fu. In Chapter One, Shen Fu described his quarrel with Chen Yun not long after they were married. He was annoyed by Chen Yun's polite manner towards him and joked about of being too polite is to be crafty, and if one was respectful at heart, manners were not necessary. Chen Yun insisted that to be polite and respectful between husband and wife was necessary both at heart and in manners, just as simple as that one could not afford to be respectful at heart towards ones parents but disrespecting them openly. Shen Fu was convinced not only by her argument, but also by her insightfulness, and her straightforwardness, those were also the literati characteristics Shen Fu cherished. From that time on, the two always respected each other and "remained courteous to each other for twenty-three years" of their married life.²¹⁸

The third stage of Chen Yun's role as a "significant other" took place when the couple lived in a poverty-driven life in their late thirties and before she passed away at age of forty. She was in fact the only "significant other" of

²¹⁸ Ibid., 024-025.

him in those years. During the difficult time when Shen Fu had to beg money from his brother-in-law and his shiye friends, Chen Yun was perhaps the only one who still treated him as a worthy literatus and a decent man of culture. They also planned to visit Pingshantang 平山堂, the Gardens of the Song literati-official Ouyang Xiu in Yangzhou, where Shen Fu had served for several months as a shiye. Unfortunately he was laid off again shortly before Chen Yun's death.

As Shen Fu's most important "significant other," Chen Yun had seen through the whole procedure of the forming and maintaining of Shen Fu's identity as a literatus and helped along the way from his youth till middle age. Shen Fu was lucky enough to have her as her "good chamber companion 閨中良友" who built a small world with him and allowed him to be a "full-literati" there. His world as a literatus had been "maintained as subjective reality" by the conversation with the only available significant other, Chen Yun. After her death, the sorrow for Shen Fu was also deeper than a man lost his wife only. Her death caused his literati world "to totter, to lose its subjective plausibility," as Berger's description of the disrupted conversation with the "significant other."²¹⁹

Berger in *The Sacred Canopy* quoted an Arab proverb "Men Forget, God remember" to explain the importance of God as a special "significant other." Society or "other men" are possible to forget who the individual is, thus

²¹⁹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 17.

“powerfully threaten his own recollections of identity.” However, if the individual is certain that at any rate, God will know who the individual is, or “God remember,” then the individual’s “tenuous self-identifications are given a foundation seemingly secure from the shifting reactions of other men.” In such cases, “God then becomes the most reliable and ultimate significant other.”²²⁰

Unfortunately, for men like Shen Fu, this “most reliable and ultimate significant other” is not available. As Derk Bodde had argued, the Chinese people are generally concern less the supernatural world than the world of nature and of men, owing to the influence of Confucianism and its ethics that “has provided the spiritual basis of Chinese civilization.” Another reason is perhaps the ancestor worship, the one most close to religion in terms of forms and feelings, is a family matter that can not develop into a national or international religion.²²¹ Confucius’ attitude towards religion, as it recorded in *The Analectic*, is “respect the ghosts or gods but stay away from them 敬鬼神而遠之.” His rationale is that this life is hard enough to be understood completely, therefore, “not yet understanding life, how can you understand death 未知生，焉知死?” Death, or the life after death, and the supernatural world were not in the concern of Confucius, and he “refused to talk about things such as miracles, super strength, chaos, and spirits 子不語怪力亂神.” The literati tradition is also exclusive of the relationship between man and gods. Without God the “most reliable and ultimate significant other,” without the

²²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²²¹ Derk Bodde, “Dominant Ideas,” 60-71

possibility to hear the words of wisdom from sermons or to pray to gods for comfort and strength like the believers of religions can do, the rest of the “significant others” such as parents, spouses, and friends become even more important and powerful. In Shen Fu's case, the small world he and Chen Yun built becomes their own meaningful world, and he and his wife played the only reliable and ultimate “significant other” mutually. This is even truer for Chen Yun's role and her identity as a female “semi-literati.” This point shall be discussed with more details later.

What does it mean to Shen Fu to be a member of literati? Having no land for the possibility of becoming a farmer, or any skill qualified for other occupations, he was destined to be a wenren; however, even if he was supposed to do business, he was still stuck to his identity as a literatus, because to be a literatus provided meaning to his life. As Shen Fu in *Fusheng liu ji* manifested, all his feelings were woven in accordance with the design of his literati identity, and all his talent and knowledge were worked for the creative literary and artistic activities as a literatus among which *Fusheng liu ji* was the most successful literary work he ever created.

There are two more aspects regarding the function of his literati identity. Firstly, to be a literatus also gave him the excuse indulging himself in every possible opportunity. The trip to Yushan 虞山 Shen Fu had can be used as an example of how he had indulged himself as a literatus in seeking the comfort in the nature. Yushan is a mountain close to Shangyang 上洋, where Shen Fu

went to seek help from a friend who had a position of shiye. Being cut off the family support and out of work again, Shen Fu was living at the time with Chen Yun in the house of her friend Mrs. Hua in Wuxi. Worrying his clothes were too shabby to meet his friend in the government office, Shen Fu met him in a temple's garden instead. The friend generously gave Shen Fu ten dollars after seeing his situation. Instead of going home immediately while his wife was sick and penniless staying in other's home, Shen Fu remembered a nearby scenic spot in the hill of Yushan, and ended up traveling by a boat to the place. He visited Yushan College, drank the famous green tea Biluochun 碧螺春 there, and also climbed to the top of the hill by a hardly trodden road. Quite satisfied upon hearing the admiring words of his guide, he invited him to have some drinks in a small restaurant and went home with a dozen pebbles of brown color he picked up at the hill. He did not mention those pebbles again but possibly planed to use them for some miniature landscape he enjoyed building as type of bonsai. Shen Fu called this trip "a fascinating trip in the midst of sorrow and adversity 愁苦中之快遊."²²²

Another example of Shen Fu's self-indulging is his relationship with Xi'er in Guangdong. Not only this episode is included in the book as part of his "joy of travel," it is also the longest story Shen Fu had told in his memoir. Spending his valuable time and borrowed money for a prostitute, he depicted himself as a tender-hearted and well-behaved and loving wenren, unlike his businessman

²²² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 300-303.

cousin who always had different girls or even had two girls at one time. Shen Fu stuck only to Xi'er and was always very gentle to her: "I did not ask her to sing, or compel her to drink, being most considerate to her, and we felt very happy together." Did he ever feel guilty for his behavior of brothel-going while all the time he was talking how much he loved his wife? Well probably yes, but his reason was that he missed his wife and Xi'er had a face "resembled Yün's under the hazy moonlight." The self-indulging inevitably became narcissism:

Thus I came to know every single one of them there, and when I went up the boat, I was greeted with a chorus of welcome. I had enough to do to give each a courteous reply, and this was a welcome that could not be bought with tens of thousands of dollars.²²³

Moreover, Shen Fu did not only see himself a nice wenren, but also a "hero" when some rascals came to blackmail them, when Shen Fu and his cousin brought the girls to their place that was not proper for a wenren even at that time. In the fighting, Shen Fu kicked the arm of one guy bravely and then the girls escaped.²²⁴ He played a role of "hero rescues beauty 英雄救美" that was a popular literary theme in the Ming and Qing novels. Finally, lust became romantic love affair, immoral behavior became heroic action: both were admirable literati conducts.

Secondly, the literati identity allows Shen Fu to escape the possible outside criticism or inside guiltiness when he was acting in "bad faith," to use another term Berger and Luckmann used in their works. They believe that internalization is not "a one-sided, mechanistic process," but "entails a dialectic

²²³ Ibid., 279.

²²⁴ Ibid., 270-277.

between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity.”²²⁵ However, human beings can overdo it by taking the objectively assigned identity as the total reality but forgetting they are in fact human productions. In such cases they identify themselves completely with the social identities and their social roles, and become alienated with their total self. Berger related the concepts of the “false consciousness” of Marx and Nietzsche with the “bad faith” of Sartre. According to him, bad faith is the “form of false consciousness in which the dialectic between the socialized self and the self in its totality is lost to consciousness.”²²⁶ In other words, if the individual denies the dialectic between the objectively assigned identity and the subjectively appropriated identity, “identifies totally the latter with the former,” then he is “acting in bad faith.” Berger further adumbrates how the individual acts in the bad faith:

One way of defining bad faith is to say that it replaces choice with fictitious necessities. In other words, the individual, who in fact has a choice between different courses of action, posits one of these courses as necessary. ... the individual, faced with the choices of acting or not acting within a certain role “program,” denies this choice on the basis of his identification with the role in question.²²⁷

It is an action that happens too frequently in *Fusheng liu ji* that Shen Fu “replaces choice with fictitious necessities.” In the above mentioned self-indulging behaviors, he could have chosen different actions that were less literati-like but more appropriate to his other roles such as a loving and caring husband and father. He seemed particularly “acting in bad faith” when his wife

²²⁵ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 121.

²²⁶ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 93.

²²⁷ Ibid.

was misunderstood and mistreated by her in-laws. For instance, in the “money-borrowing incident” in Chapter Three, Shen Fu’s brother Shen Qitang borrowed money from a woman in their neighborhood by asking Chen Yun as a guarantor. When Chen Yun wrote to Shen Fu and asked him to urge his brother to return the money, Shen Fu, avoided conflicts with his younger brother, only wrote back to her that “Both father and son are sick and we have no money to pay the loan. Wait till younger brother comes home, and let him take care of it himself.”²²⁸ Later Shen Qitang’s denying the matter caused Chen Yun the target of anger of Shen Fu’s father, who accused her of “borrowing money behind the back of her husband and spread scandals about her brother-in-law,” and led to her punishment of being thrown out of the family. The reason was Shen Fu, being a literatus and following the code of conducts of the Confucian scholars, wanted to be obedient (*xiao* 孝) to his father and friendly (*you* 友) to his younger brother. Not only he did not stand up for his wife, he even gave up passively and cowardly his own rights in the share of the family wealth before and after his father died, because to be morally lofty and upright without degrading oneself for fame and material profit, or “*qinggao* 清高” was also very literati-like. When his father died and his younger brother was going to take everything their father had left, Shen Fu’s response was passively waiting and self-blaming for not being a son of filial piety:

I then kept watch over the coffin in the hall, but throughout the seven weeks for mourning ceremonies, not one in the whole family spoke to me about family affairs or discussed the funeral arrangements with me. I was

²²⁸ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 133.

ashamed of myself for not fulfilling a son's duties and would not ask them questions, either.²²⁹

His acting in bad faith, i.e., acting completely in accordance with his literati identity but not his total self, was most obvious even to the extent of self-deceiving in the episode of Hanyuan, whom Chen Yun wanted to get for him as a concubine. Shen Fu understood very well that the girl was not someone he could afford under his economic and social circumstances; nevertheless, he did not say anything or take any action to stop Chen Yun's fantasy in her friendship with Hanyuan and the over-optimistic arrangement for Shen Fu's marrying Hanyuan as his concubine. In learning that Hanyuan had married to another rich and powerful man, Shen Fu "did not dare" to reveal the truth to his wife, till Chen Yun found out the secret herself and felt very sad for being betrayed by Hanyuan. She suffered not only her lost friendship that meant much more than Shen Fu had understood, but also the resentment from her in-laws for the disgrace she brought to the family by committing her devoted friendship to a prostitute and even became the sworn sister of the latter. Soon after when a "friend" of Shen Fu borrowed money by asking him to be the guarantor and Shen Fu agreed (which was another typical literati-like action but acted in bad faith), but the "friend" ran away with the money and left Shen Fu to deal with the angry creditor, the last straw was added: Shen Fu and Chen Yun had to leave the big family for ever.

Insomuch as the memoir is concerned, Shen Fu had very rarely blamed

²²⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 189.

himself for everything happened to his life. As he stated at the beginning of Chapter Three of *Fusheng liu ji*:

Why is it that there are sorrows and hardships in this life? Usually they are due to one's own fault, but this was not the case with me. I was fond of friendship, proud of keeping my word, and by nature frank and straightforward, for which I eventually suffered.²³⁰

If he was not the one to blame, then there must be something else. In *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu had in many occasions mentioned marks of the bad omen of Chen Yun's short life. From her forward-inclined teeth to the scattered lines of poems she did not finish, from the miniature landscape the couple created together but broken by fighting cats, to the cold the couple caught after a happy night of drinking wine while enjoying the full moon, everything meant to tell the destiny of Chen Yun: She was by fate to die young and had not the luck to be a happy wife all her life. However, the frequently mentioning of Chen Yun's fate was too much to the point that reveals something else: Was Shen Fu also responsible for her early death? Did he ever feel guilty for the relationship with Xi'er that had obviously led to the episode of Hanyuan? Was he to blame for the accusations Chen Yun had to bear but had nobody to speak out for her? The answer is probably "yes." However, Shen Fu's explanation for everything that happened was, apart from the bad fortune of Chen Yun who was too talented, he himself was to be blame for his "romantic love" that was too deep to be auspicious. Indeed he was not to be blamed, because as a member of the literati, to be romantic and free-spirit was

²³⁰ Ibid., 129.

essential and worth of praising. It is clear that the bad faith can function as the shield for him, because his responsibility was taken over by “a fictitious inexorability upon the humanly constructed world,” as Berger insightfully depicted:

The innumerable contingencies of human existence are transformed into inevitable manifestations of universal law. Activity becomes process. Choices become destiny. Men then lived in the world they themselves have made as if they were fated to do so by powers that are quite independent of their own world-constructing enterprises.²³¹

In sum, to be a member of literati, to appropriate completely its identity, to live the way of literati as close as possible, has provided Shen Fu the meaning of his life, and also the bad faith that allowed him to indulge himself and escape the possible guiltiness and criticism from both the inside consciousness and the outside world.

2. Chen Yun's Self Identities as a Female Literatus

Chen Yun was not to be called a female literatus given the condition of her education, her social and economic status before or after she was married. However, from what Shen Fu had written about her, she had a self identity not only confined to the “daughter in-law,” the major role a married woman could play in the imperial time, but also a “real self” as a female literatus. The following part of the dissertation will focus on her behavior as a female literatus first; then followed by an analysis on how she had attained and maintained her literati identity in the given social and family conditions, including what role

²³¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 95.

Shen Fu had played in the procedure of her identity obtaining, what problem and punishment her “real self” had caused her to suffer, and what her relationship with Hanyuan meant to her. Last but not least, the meaning as a member of literati for Chen Yun will also be discussed.

In *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu recorded many thoughts and deeds of Chen Yun as a female literatus. For example, her different ways of treating her jewelry and the old books or pieces of ancient paintings or calligraphy expressed her attitude toward material wealth. She could easily give away her pearls for helping Shen Fu’s parents in Qitang’s marriage, and later exchange her jewels for food and drink for their literati friends without even speaking a word or showing any facial expressions; however, for old books and broken slips of painting, she could spend much time and care:

Whenever she saw odd volumes of books, she would try to sort them out, arrange them in order, and have them rebound properly..²³²

Her love for literature and arts, and the indifference for material wealth were similar to her husband Shen Fu, who was inclined to one of the literati characteristics qinggao, meaning to be morally lofty and upright and showing no interest to wealth and fame. It is in accordance with one of the traditional virtues of Confucian gentleman, that is “willing to suffer poverty while adhering to one’s moral values 安貧樂道,” as Mencius proposed: “to be above the power of riches and honours to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend

²³² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 045.

- these characteristics constitute the great man 富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不能屈。此之謂大丈夫。²³³ As a wife of a poor literatus, a woman who was subordinate in the society, Chen Yun's goal in life perhaps had nothing to do with the great man of Mencius; nevertheless, she never complained the hardship she endured but tried her best to make the simple and difficult life enjoyable, for which Shen Fu was very grateful:

From the time she was married into my home, I had been forced to run about abroad for a living, while she was left without sufficient money, and she never said a word of complaint. When I could stay at home, our sole occupation was the discussion of books and literature.²³⁴

In their twenty-three years of marriage, the couple lived in a harmonious way and was always very close, because Chen Yun had gradually become the passionate comrade and reliable supporter of Shen Fu in whatever endeavor he made as a literatus. As a talented and charming individual, she gave helpful suggestions in his flower arrangement, his miniature landscape designing, his way of decorating home, his gathering with friends, and his visit of the flower fields accompanied by friends, warm meal and warm wines. She also loved to travel and visited the Taihu Lake and other places with him, even went under the disguise as a man. In all so doing, Chen Yun had built up an equal relationship with Shen Fu that is exemplified in the discussion of their relationship in their future incarnations:

余曰：“來世卿當作男，我為女子相從。”

芸曰：“必得不昧今生，方覺有情趣。”

²³³ Mencius, “Teng Wen Gong II”, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-ii>

²³⁴ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 179.

I said: "In the next life, you must be born a man and I will be your wife."

Yun answered: "It will only be quite fun if we can spend this life meaningfully."²³⁵

As we can see from this example and elsewhere, Chen Yun was not an obedient and passive follower of her husband, but an independent person with her own strong opinions expressed directly. Since Chen Yun could write, and since Shen Fu was a little younger than she was and was often away for his occupation, Chen Yun was gradually relied upon by Shen Fu in many family matters. Whenever crisis occurred in their life, it was Shen Fu who listened to her solutions. For example, when Shen Fu's father gave them only three days to leave the family, it was Chen Yun, though very sick, made clear instructions of the efficient arrangements for both the couple and their young children whom they could not take with them.²³⁶ The reason Shen Fu did not abandon his wife in all the difficult years but followed her wherever she had to go was not only because of his love for her, but also because of his dependence on her as a reliable friend and a literati comrade. In sum, Chen Yun had successfully played the role as a female literatus, although mainly inside her small world with Shen Fu as the co-player. When Shen Fu said "Yün was a woman with the heart and talent of a man"²³⁷ after she died, what he meant by "man," should indeed be read as "literatus." It was a comment more from a literati friend rather than from a husband, and he expressed the respect and admiration a man had for his partner and best friend.

²³⁵ Ibid., 046, my translation.

²³⁶ Ibid., 147.

²³⁷ Ibid., 179.

How did Chen Yun attain her self identity as a female literatus and maintain it? The way Chen Yun attained her self identity is quite different with Shen Fu's. Chen Yun was denied the primary socialization as what Shen Fu had when he was a child, because she was a girl. Even if she did have the privilege to be born and raised in a "scholar's family 衣冠之家," she would still be educated from very young as a woman, and her primary socialization, carried out mainly by her widowed mother, was no doubt the confirmation of her role as a woman. She never had formal education, but at age six or seven, her foot binding started to make sure she had a pair of small feet in order to get a good husband. This torture could last several years and could be considered the starting point of her secondary socialization because it's the very strong confirmation both physically and mentally of her social assigned identities.

In Chen Yun's time, women lived at the bottom of the patriarchal society, "almost always subordinate to their husbands and parents-in-law, and barred from participation in nondomestic life."²³⁸ John King Fairbank had discussed about the subjection of women in the imperial time:

The subjection of women was thus a sophisticated and perfected institution like the other Chinese achievements... the inequality between the sexes was buttressed with philosophical underpinnings and long-continued social practices.²³⁹

Fairbank also pointed out that "the Sung philosophers stressed women's inferiority as a basic element of the social order." Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), the

²³⁸ David Johnson, "Communication," 55.

²³⁹ John King Fairbank, *Chinese Revolution*, 68.

most important philosopher and Neo-Confucian in the Song Dynasty, had promoted footbinding as a means to preserve female chastity as women with bound feet can only stay inside of the house most of their time.²⁴⁰ In the Qing time, the Neo-Confucianism was continually carried out by the ruling class and eventually permeated the whole society. As a member of the subordinate group in the imperial China, a woman's education was basically "the Three Follows" and "the Four Virtues"²⁴¹ that enforced women's social status as subject of almost every man in the society. Ban Zhao 班昭 (48-112) had made instructions to her daughters about the "female virtues" in the Han Dynasty, which were followed as norms for women for the next thousands years:

To guard carefully her chastity; to control circumspectly her behavior; in every motion to exhibit modesty; and to model each act on the best usage, this is womanly virtue.

To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others (with much conversation), may be called the characteristics of womanly words.

To wash and scrub filth away; to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean; to wash the head and bathe the body regularly, and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth, may be called the characteristics of womanly bearing.

With whole-hearted devotion to sew and to weave; to love not gossip and silly laughter; in cleanliness and order (to prepare) the wine and food for serving guests, may be called the characteristics of womanly work.²⁴²

C. T. Hsia has pointed out that Ban Zhao "sees no need for any kind of intellectual and artistic education for women and, further, warns against brilliance or showiness." Ban Zhao also agreed that a woman must be

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 69

²⁴¹ The Three Follows: a woman must follow what her father says before she was married; must follow what her husband says after she got married and follows what her son says after her husband dies. The Four Virtues: womanly virtue, womanly words, womanly bearing, and womanly work. See Pan Chao, "Lessons for Women," 24.

²⁴² Ibid.

subordinate to her husband and can not remarry when he dies.²⁴³

Apart from these norms and virtues of women, the footbinding that became popular in the Song Dynasty and continually to be practiced till the first decades of the twentieth-century, is another way to make sure that women were in the subordinate position in the society, which as Fairbank pointed out, was a social engineering that handicapped the female population and made them veritable slaves in general, simply in order to “ensure male domination in a very concrete way.”²⁴⁴

Socialization, according to Berger and Luckmann, is not a once for all but a continuing procedure. As the individual maintaining the identity he obtained and appropriated from his primary socialization mainly charged by his parents, he continually builds up his identity through the conversation he has with all available “significant others” such as peers, teachers and friends in his secondary socialization. When Chen Yun married to Shen Fu and entered his family as a daughter-in-law, she was only seventeen and her secondary socialization mainly took place in the big family.

As a wife of a poor and lower rank literatus, the major social roles of Chen Yun were “good daughter-in law, good wife, and good mother” and so on but never a good poet or female literatus that was almost impossible excepting some women from the ruling elites’ families. However, while Chen Yun continually appropriated her role and identity as a woman, she had gradually

²⁴³ C. T. Hsia, “*Ching-Hua Yuan*,” 288.

²⁴⁴ John King Fairbank, *Chinese Revolution*, 69-73.

appropriated some other identities that was associated her ability to read and write. Chen Yun taught herself reading and writing between her needlework at her early age. It was nothing required for a girl but probably out of her own interest in literature only. Shen Fu wrote about how she stated to read:

She was a very clever girl, for while she was learning to speak, she was taught Po Chüyi's poem, The P'i P'a Player, and could at once repeat it. ... One day, she picked up a copy of the poem The P'i P'a Player from a wastebasket, and from that, with the help of her memory of the lines, she learnt to read word by word. Between her needlework, she gradually learnt to write poetry.²⁴⁵

Though reading aloud and memorizing by heart famous ancient poetry is a common way to entertain and educate children even today, Chen Yun was intelligent and hardworking enough to learn reading and writing through this way to the extent of writing poetry. After she was married, her writing ability hence her literatus consciousness developed because she became the “secretary” of her mother-in-law and wrote letters on the behalf of the latter. To be able to write had made her outstanding in the household or perhaps even her neighborhood, as most women at her time were basically illiterate, even men who were literate could not write, as David Johnson marked: “a substantial number of individuals whose limited schooling had made it possible for them to grasp the meaning of many texts but not to write easily or well.” He calls the distinction between those literates who could not write and those who could write and did it often, “is one of the most significant within the literate realm.”²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 005.

²⁴⁶ David Johnson, “Communication,” 38.

Chen Yun also learned a lot as Shen Fu's "good chamber companion." In the small world they constructed, her way of living and mentality had been gradually influenced by her husband, and also by the fact that she could read, write and discuss literary and artistic topics with Shen Fu as well as his literati friends. As David Johnson pointed out that both the "ability to communicate reciprocally in writing" and "access to the literary tradition" had considerable influence on individual consciousness, we can discern that the constant conversations with Shen Fu, and their habit to exchange letters and writing poems and so on, had provided her different roles and identities apart from the social assigned traditional ones. Therefore, she carefully played her roles according to her social identities; meanwhile, encouraged and helped by her husband, the "significant other" Shen Fu, she diligently cultivated her self identity as a female literatus if the definition of Martin W. Huang for literati that was someone who could write also applies here.

Shen Fu apparently played the role of the "significant other" in the shaping and maintaining of the identities of Chen Yun as a female literatus. Moreover, since Chen Yun had lost her father at four and her mother in her early twenties, also had no teachers and other literati friends, and no God the special and ultimate "significant other," Shen Fu's role became even more crucial. He not only acted as her tutor or teacher in her literature and poetry education, but encouraged her to join his literati way of life and more importantly, accepting her as an equal partner literatus from the very beginning

of their life together. Their equal relationship permeated in their way of speaking to each other, or sitting side by side that was awkward to others but natural for them:

When Yün was sitting and talking with somebody and saw me come, she would rise and move sideways for me to sit down together with her. All this was done naturally almost without any consciousness, and although at first we felt uneasy about it, later on it became a matter of habit.²⁴⁷

The way they treated each other is in fact the way one treated his or her friend. In their small world, Chen Yun was encouraged of living her literati life style with her literati husband, including exchanging honestly opinions on literary and artistic topics, writing letters to each other with the literati formal style, composing poems while drinking wine, and so on. These were all natural for them, but might be awkward or even scandalous in the eyes of the others in the family. The self identity of Chen Yun and her way to live according to her “real self” was accepted only by Shen Fu, but unfortunately, by no one else, because they were in contradiction with her social assigned roles and identities.

From the perspective of the social construction of reality theory, there are some conflicts or discrepancies between the primary and secondary socializations of Chen Yun, which is problematic in terms of the social and self identities. In other words, her primary and secondary socializations did not arrive to a unified result in her social assigned identity and her self appropriated identity. Her social assigned identity was a woman that was

²⁴⁷ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 027.

subject of man, inferior than man and made to serve a man and his parents all her life; her self identity was a female literatus who could read and write, and was able to manage non-domestic matters and relied upon by her husband as a close and equal friend.

According to Berger and Luckmann, what an individual obtained through the primary socialization will be maintained by both the society and the person; however, it is possible that in secondary socialization, “alternative realities and identities appear as subjective options,” but these options are “limited by the social-structural context of the individual.” In other words, the individual realizes that other identities are possible for him or her, although “the social structure does not permit the realization of the subjectively chosen identity,” because this kind of discrepancies will “introduce tensions and unrest into the social structure, threatening the institutional programs and their taken-for-granted reality.” Berger and Luckmann explain further what these kinds of discrepancies lead to:

The subjective chosen identity becomes a fantasy identity, objectified within the individual’s unconsciousness as his “real self.”... The peculiarity of this particular fantasy lies in the objectification, on the level of imagination, of an identity other than the one objectively assigned and previously internalized in primary socialization.²⁴⁸

Chen Yun had probably never dreamed that she had a “real self” of female literatus given her time and circumstances. In her deathbed, Chen Yun regretted that she had tried her best to be a good daughter-in-law all her life,

²⁴⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 157.

but had failed.²⁴⁹ Her talent in poetry and her skill of writing did not help her in playing her other roles, especially the role of “daughter-in-law” in the big family, but estranged her from them, which made her further inclined to her small literati world with Shen Fu but more estranged from her in-laws. The vicious circle finally ruined her life, because as Berger had said, “the social structure does not permit the realization of the subjectively chosen identity.” Virginia Woolf, in talking about the fate of talented women in the sixteenth-century England, had depicted the similar situation Chen Yun went through:

...a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty.²⁵⁰

Social control was what Chen Yun and the sister of Shakespeare were facing and were punished and destroyed by. Society was a human product but eventually became a coercive power: “Society directs, sanctions, controls, and punishes individual conduct. In its most powerful apotheoses, society can even destroy the individual.”²⁵¹

In the patriarchal society Chen Yun lived, her female literatus identity could only become a fantasy but not reality. No matter how hard she and Shen Fu had tried, their small world would not survive under the coercive power of the society. Berger and Luckmann used metaphor of theater to illuminate the difference of “reality” and “dream reality” that can be used to illuminate Chen Yun’s “real self” fantasy. Chen Yun, when she and her husband closed

²⁴⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 173.

²⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, 1023.

²⁵¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 11.

themselves in their “two men’s world,” the curtain rose, they performed the literati roles and played literati games safely and happily; they were “transported to another world” that “may or may not have much to do with the world of everyday life.” They were drinking wine under the moonshine, they were watching sunset and lights from the fishing boats on the lake, they were enjoying chrysanthemums flowers at home and talking about Li Bai and his poems, they were visiting temple festivals while Chen Yun dressed as a man, and so on. However, when the curtain fell, they had to return to reality, to the world that did not allow Chen Yun to realize her identity as a female literatus. They had to pawn their clothes for some money, they had to endure the coldness of the family members and relatives, they had to borrow money from friends, or they had to deal with snobbish servants. Then, “the reality presented on the stage now appears tenuous and ephemeral, however vivid the presentation may have been a few moments previously.”²⁵²

Some episodes in *Fusheng liu ji* gave some warning signals but were ignored by the protagonists. For instance, Shen Fu mentioned that all of a sudden, everybody in the family, including the parents-in-law and the servants, started to call Chen Yun “santaitai” instead of “sanniang.” Shen Fu did not like the change but he and Chen Yun did not do anything to stop it. While “sanniang” shows the fondness to a young wife of the third male child in the big family, “santaitai” pictured a haughty, rich, and high rank lady from an official’s

²⁵² Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 25.

family. According to the social construction of reality theory, “every name implies a nomenclature, which in turn implies a designated social location.”²⁵³ The title “santaitai,” which is ironic for Chen Yun’s social and economic status, was a warning signal to her unacceptable self identity as a literatus: if she wanted to be a “lady” or “taitai,” then her place was not here in this family. Another example also recorded her behavior as “improper” for being a person who spoke frankly and act unconventionally. One day when the whole family was watching a play performed in their house for celebrating the birthday of Shen Fu’s mother, Chen Yun got up and disappeared in her room, because the play, ordered to perform by Shen Fu’s father, was nothing but a sad story that made her heartbroken. When she was asked if she was going to sit inside her room the rest of the day, she replied: “I’ll stay here until some better selection is being played.”

Hearing this, Miss Wang left first and asked my mother to select more cheerful plays like Ch’ihliang and Househ. Then Yün was persuaded to come out and watch the play, which made her happy again.²⁵⁴

In being true to her feelings, Chen Yun had totally forgotten that the play was not meant to entertain her, one of the daughter-in-laws in the family, but Shen Fu’s parents. Moreover, it was Shen Fu’s father who as the patriarch had the right to do whatever he liked. While the other members of the family watched and said nothing, Chen Yun’s action made her outstanding but in an unwelcome way in the eyes of her in-laws. In the way of expressing herself

²⁵³ Ibid., 122.

²⁵⁴ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 037.

honestly, just as a real literatus would do, she had forgotten who she was in the big family. She was one of the women who “entered their husband’s family in the lowest status, servant of their mothers-in-law.”²⁵⁵ It was in fact her “real self” acting in the place of the daughter-in-law that made her behavior improper.

Her direct way of speaking was also reflected in the letter she wrote to Shen Fu in dealing with the problem caused by the servant-concubine of her father-in-law, whom Chen Yun helped Shen Fu to get for his father, but in so doing she was resented by his mother:

“Your mother thinks that old man’s illness is all due to that Yao girl. When he is improving, you should secretly suggest to Yao to say that she is homesick, and I’ll ask her parents to come to Yangchow to take her home. In this way we could wash our hands of the matter.”²⁵⁶

Though it meant to be a private letter to her husband, nevertheless her father-in-law read it. He was so angry that he ordered her to leave his house. They were allowed to return to the family about two years later, and unfortunately were driven out again after another two years. In the departing night, Chen Yun told her daughter who was going to become a “child daughter-in-law” to one of Shen Fu’s cousins, “When you go to your new home, you must try to be a better daughter-in-law than your mother.”²⁵⁷ These were the last words she left to her daughter since they never saw each other again. When Shen Fu quoted the ancient proverb “absence of talent in a woman is synonymous with virtue” at the beginning of Chapter Three “Sorrow,” he

²⁵⁵ John King Fairbank, *Chinese Revolution*, 71.

²⁵⁶ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 135.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

probably had this fatal letter in mind, because it showed the talent or ability of Chen Yun that caused her turbulent life and her early death in the end.

Chen Yun's relationship with Hanyuan can also be understood better from the perspective of her literati self identity. The fact that she wanted to get Shen Fu a "beautiful and resonant" concubine is her "real self" acting in the place of the daughter-in-law and of the wife again. Shen Fu was not as enthusiastic as Chen Yun from the beginning of it, and they had already a son and a daughter so there was no need to get a concubine in order to continue the family line which was the normal excuse for taking concubines. It was Chen Yun, who not only set the standard for choosing concubines for her husband, but also made the arrangement to involve Hanyuan, who was both beautiful and able to read and write poetry to become her sworn sister first, then to accept the jade bracelet as a token for the betrothal. Since then she waited and "not a day passed without her mentioning Hanyuan's name."

Eventually Hanyuan was married by force to some influential person and our arrangements did not come off. And Yün actually died of grief on this account.²⁵⁸

To be addressed as "santaitai" but be laughed at behind her back, Chen Yun suffered not only the financial problem, but also her punishment including the dislike of her in-laws, the isolation among other women who were different or may be envious of her talent and ability. As Shen Fu was constantly away for his job, Chen Yun had to face all the unspoken hardship alone. All these led to the longing for friendship which could only be targeted to another woman

²⁵⁸ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 079.

given her circumstances, and the woman must as the same as she was-a female literatus, beautiful and resonant-a female comrade, a sister who could understand her “real self” and play the role of her another “significant other.” This was the background that Hanyuan, the young prostitute came to the stage and was highlighted.

During the episode of Hanyuan, there are several evidences of that the “real self” or the literati identity of Chen Yun was in full charge. Firstly, the criteria Chen Yun had in choosing a concubine for her husband, “beautiful and resonant,” especially “resonant” is really a literati standard for the characters in a person, a painting, or a piece of literary work.

“Resonance” (*yun* 韻) is originally a word of music, means the harmonious effect of sounds, then it becomes a word to judge the quality of calligraphy and painting, and finally surpasses every ideal and becomes the highest standard of all arts and literature, as well as people’s, especially woman’s inner nature or quality. According to Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 (1910-1998), the most important work discussing “resonance” is *Poetry Eyes From Hidden Stream* (*Qian xi shi yan* 潛溪詩眼) written by Fan Wen 范溫 (?-?), a Song scholar in the twelfth century. Fan not only defines that “resonance” is “‘to have more meaning’ than what is overtly expressed 有餘意之謂韻,” but also stated that “resonance” comes from “‘having more’ than what is expressed 蓋生於有餘.” According to Fan, although *yun* or “resonance” has a long history, it was only in the Jin Dynasty 晉代 (265-420) people started to

talk it apart from its original meaning of sound in music, and it is mainly in the Northern Song, that “resonance” became dominant ideal for all arts including calligraphy, painting, and poetry:

Today we understand that for beauty to be fully realized in any field, “resonance” must be present. If “resonance” is not dominant, the beauty will be lost. This single idea, ‘resonance,’ ... can be used to evaluate all earlier writings in a way that is free of error, and it also surpassed all the other ideals in the arts, and not paling before any or all of them.²⁵⁹

The finest writing, according to Fan, though combines many ideals, must keep them “veiled and hidden,” so that it appears externally simple and bland, but will convey “a flavor that is profound and unending.” In terms of poetry, Fan believes that Tao Qian was the best poet to exemplify the “resonance” in literature:

It’s only Tao Qian who combines together all the marvels yet does not reveal the ‘tip of the sword.’ That is why his poetry is said to appear unadorned but in fact is colorful, to appear emaciated but in fact is sleek and plump, to seem at first disorderly and undisciplined yet upon reading and rereading, one sees that it is exceptional....This is why among all poets, ancient or modern, Tao Qian is the preeminent.²⁶⁰

Fan Wen also applied his concept of “resonance” to the manner and deeds of people. He believed that “The activities of the ancient sages and the meritorious deeds of the ancients all evidence the same quality” as “having more” but not expressing them openly. Fan concluded that “resonance has had uninterrupted presence from ancient to modern times.”²⁶¹

Qian Zhongshu not only introduced Fan’s insightful arguments of Fan Wen, but also stated that Fan Wen was “The first Chinese scholar to take

²⁵⁹ Qian Zhongshu, *Guan Zhui Pian*, 110.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

'resonance' and apply it universally to calligraphy, painting, and poetry." Fan's whole work, though long lost, has been the best in talking about the topic "resonance" regarding comprehensiveness and consistency.²⁶²

Apart from Fan Wen, in talking about "resonance" in calligraphy and painting, Qian quoted painters such as Jing Hao 荆浩 (fl. 895-907) and Han Zhuo 韓拙 (fl. 1095-1125), both believed that "resonance" refers to "depicting forms by hiding and revealing, filing out in a way that is not ordinary." In talking about "resonance" in poetry, Qian quoted Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837-908), Su Shi, and Yan Yu 嚴羽 (fl.1200). For Sikong Tu, "resonance" means "image that lies beyond the imagery and the scene that lies beyond the scenery;" for Su Shi, it refers to "What the viewer or the reader gets beyond the image or apprehends beyond the words." For Yan Yu, "resonance" means "The words come to an end, but their meaning has no end."²⁶³

All the meanings of "resonance" quoted here by Qian are very close to the meaning of another Chinese ideal of all arts, "implicit or reserve" (*hanxu* 含蓄), which was discussed in Chapter Three of this study. When "resonance" is the highest value of beauty in any field, as the "flavor beyond flavor"²⁶⁴ summarized by Shen Hao 沈顥 (ca. 1648-1725), then it is naturally applied to people's character or inner nature, especially for women. If "*mei* 美" or beauty is something said, "*yun*" or "resonance" is "having more" but unsaid. However, when you ready to appreciate it, it's profound and endless. Fan Wen did not

²⁶² Ibid., 112.

²⁶³ Ibid., 106.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

specify what “resonance” means for a woman, whereas Li Yu in the early Qing time, put forward another word for the similar character in a woman, “*taidu* 態度” or “*meitai* 媚態,” which Hanan believed that the English words “charm” and “grace” would do the justice:

Charm in a woman is like the flame in the fire, the glow in the lamp, the luster of jewels and precious metals---something without form rather than with form. It is precisely because it is a thing and yet not a thing, because it is formless and yet seems to possess form, that I call it a transcendent thing. A ‘transcendent thing’ means something uncanny, something that cannot be explained in words.²⁶⁵

Be it “resonance” or “charm,” what Chen Yun was looking for in Hanyuan is really very high regarding the meaning and the historical development of the concept yun. If she was only looking for a concubine for her husband, yun would be unnecessary at all. Indeed she was looking for some literati comrade who had more than outside beauty.

Secondly, Chen Yun’s pledge of sisterhood with a prostitute was also unconventional. It was unnecessary for her to become sworn sister of Hanyuan simply to get the latter as the concubine of Shen Fu. By doing so, she expressed her true feeling towards Hanyuan as a sister-literatus, though it was in fact scandalous in the eyes of others, because it lowered her and her family’s social status. It was also possible that she was inspired by the protagonists in the play *Lianxiangban* who became sworn sisters first and wives of the same husband later. However, the real reason behind this act of indiscretion was more likely the financial problem the couple had been facing

²⁶⁵ Li Yu, “*Taidu*,” 106.

for long. Without the money to satisfy the expectation of Hanyuan's mother, Chen Yun had no other choice but to win the heart of Hanyuan first. Here Chen Yun's talent was quick in action again.

Thirdly, Chen Yun's waiting in the hope that Hanyuan is committed to their sister's bond and love is the most romantic but unrealistic literati way of thinking. She lived in her dream and when the reality finally woke her up, she could never fully recover from the "betray" of Hanyuan, who in fact was only an image she created.

The relationship of Chan Yun and Hanyuan had not been discussed as something special before the 1980s, because to the readers of the generation of Lin Yutang or earlier, men that have more than one wife were not uncommon in their time, especially for the members of the rich or ruling class in the society. To be tolerant to concubines or other women of their husbands, is considered one of the virtues of married women, and moreover, according to the Qing marriage law that was not abandoned until 1930, if a wife is jealous, such as in objecting to her husband taking an additional wife or concubine, the man can divorce her for this reason alone.²⁶⁶ Therefore, Chen Yun only did what a "good wife" would do in her time and nothing special.

However, after the half century social and cultural changes in the Chinese society, and after the long absence of the reader's response aroused by *Fusheng liu ji*, many critics in the 1980s and after either took the episode of

²⁶⁶ *Republic of China's Civil Code* (Part IV) Section 5, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_marriage

Hanyuan as the expression of strong, unselfish love Chen Yun had for her husband, or the erotic homosexual desire between two women, like the two girls depicted by Li Yu in *Lianxianban*, or *Women in Love*, as translated by Patrick Hanan. A few critics even went to the extreme to see the feeling Chen Yun held for Hanyuan from the perspectives of the postmodern queer theory.²⁶⁷

The first opinion, that Chen Yun loved her husband so much that even wanted to get her a “beautiful and resonant” concubine, had aroused criticism and pity for Chen Yun to see her as the victim of the “feudal suppression of women” in the imperial time. Although Chen Yun was already a daring person with the awoken individualism and modern characteristics, she was seen as still deeply confined by the norms and the conventions of the society. Her endeavor to get Hanyuan was seen as efforts to win further love from her husband as a tolerant, unselfish, “one of the loveliest” woman, from the point of view of man. Yu Pingbo, who seemed also agree this kind of opinion, said in his third preface for *Fusheng liu ji* in 1981 that both Chen Yun and Shen Fu made mistakes. For Chen Yun, she mistook her husband’s intension and made sacrifice in order to satisfy his will; as for Shen Fu, he was the one who should be blamed mostly. Yu Pingbo did not further explain why, but perhaps, he had Shen Fu’s trip to Guangdong in mind when he said so. Shen Fu never mentioned if he had talked about Xi’er, the girl from the Guangdong boat brothel he had with Chen Yun. However, it was the concubine of his cousin Xu

²⁶⁷ Wang Yan, “Chen Yun,” 3-6.

Xiufeng brought home from the same trip Shen Fu made, who had solicited Chen Yun's concrete idea of getting her husband a concubine according to her standard. In Chapter Four Shen Fu also said he suggested his cousin bought the girl home instead of staying Guangdong. Anyway, Chen Yun might also hear about Xi'er from their cousin.

Kuang Yanzi's research mentioned some critics who argued that Chen Yun had the homosexual or even bisexual desire for Hanyuan, which Kuang thought should be suspended in the realm of possibility. He also suggested that not to use too eagerly the most modern concepts and reflections in the case of Chen Yun.²⁶⁸ The author of the current study agreed Kuang's arguments, because as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg proposed, we must "view sexual and emotional impulses as part of a continuum or spectrum of affect gradations strongly effected by cultural norms and arrangements, a continuum influenced in part by observed and thus learned behavior." According to Rosenberg, the way we view human love and sexuality with a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality in the twentieth century, is "alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth-century and fundamentally distorts the nature of these women's emotional interaction."²⁶⁹ Although she was talking about the women in the western countries, it is also valid in the way to view the situation in the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century China.

Shen Fu never hinted any erotic love between the two women. When

²⁶⁸ Kuang Yanzi, "Chen Yun de Qing shen zhi lei," 871.

²⁶⁹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Relations between Women," 183.

Chen Yun was invited to see the concubine of Shen Fu's cousin Xu Xiufeng, she already had the ideal image of the future concubine of her husband: a girl both beautiful and resonant. In her opinion, the concubine of Xu was "beautiful but not resonant," whereas the other women in the big family, probably possessed neither beauty nor resonance. When she saw Hanyuan two years later, "they instinctively took to each other like old friends" and Chen Yun told Shen Fu that she had found a girl who had both qualities, and she would make arrangements to get Hanyuan for him. Shen Fu was shocked:

"You know we are not a wealthy family. We can't afford to keep a girl like that, and we are so happily married. Why do you want to find somebody else?"

"But I love her," said Yün smilingly. "You just leave it to me."²⁷⁰

These were the only words in *Fusheng liu ji* Chen Yun talked about her feeling towards Hanyuan. When Shen Fu joked about the play *Lianxiangban* and asked her if Chen Yun wanted to enact the comedy right in their home. Chen Yun gave an affirmative answer.²⁷¹ However, this does not necessarily mean that the love of Chen Yun was a sexual one.

The story of *Lianxiangban* is about two women, Miss Cui and Miss Cao who fell in love to each other during their visit to a temple in the same day. They liked each other so much that they pledged to become husband and wife in their next incarnation. Miss Cui was married already to a Mr. Fan, so she persuaded Miss Cao to marry her husband as a concubine so that they two could live together in this life, too. As the father of Miss Cao hated to see her

²⁷⁰ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 072.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 079.

became a concubine, the two women went through many difficulties and finally lived in the same family as two wives of Mr. Fan, and lived happily as “dreaming the same dream during the night, and making up together in the early morning. Now we can see the beautiful faces of each other in one mirror, and can accompany one another side by side in the heart of the big mention 宵同夢，曉同妝，鏡裏花容並蒂芳，深閨步步相隨唱。”²⁷²

Li Yu was one of the most highly productive and innovative writers and artist in the Qing time. Li Yu had been such an “all around man” that perhaps only the prominent figures in the Renaissance Italy such as Leon Battista Alberti had lived a busy and productive life as he did. Li Yu “pursued a precarious and controversial but intermittently successful career as a free-lance printer, bookdealer, writer, garden architect, and theatrical manager.”²⁷³ Among his ten most famous plays, *Lianxiangban* aroused critiques from the very beginning it came to stage in the seventeenth-century.

Patrick Hanan tended to view the two women in the play, particularly Miss Cui, is interested in erotic love between women, and is “a mastermind who carries out a daring scheme in the interests of her own love.”²⁷⁴ Hanan also believed that the play had made Li Yu to flee because the play’s lesbian (actually bisexual) passion caused such a scandal in the district in Hangzhou where the author lived.²⁷⁵ Eric P. Henry, however, saw the play from the

²⁷² Li Yu, “Scene Ten, Meng xue,” *Lianxiangban*, in *Guoxue zhineng shuku*.

²⁷³ Eric P. Henry, *Chinese Amusement*, xii.

²⁷⁴ Patrick Hanan, *Invention of Li Yu*, 151.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

perspective of pursuing of originality of the author and therefore is “a good example of the strangeness Li Yü revered”:

What Li Yü demanded of himself in nearly every instance was not simply to think of a new plot, but to think of a new type of plot: a story involving some unprecedented situation or relationship having conceptual and structural consequences affecting the whole composition.²⁷⁶

In other words, according to Eric P. Henry, not only the plots in the play, but also the relationship between two women, are the products of the inventive Li Yu who is “obsessive” in new ideas in his writings. Li claimed in *Xianqing ou ji* 閒情偶寄 that he had never done anything of “chewing other men’s spittle and claiming it as the fresh blossoms of my own tongue.”²⁷⁷ At the end of *Lianxiangban*, he did write some final words that the type of the relationship between Miss Cui and Miss Cao had never been described in plays before (獨有此奇人未傳); therefore he endeavored to depict it in *Lianxiangban*. Although ribaldry is a character in Li Yu’s writings, especially his novels and plays, which according to Hanan, is related to Li Yu’s efforts of making a living, the erotic part of same sex love in two women is basically limited to the lines of the female servant when she jokes. The major reason for the two women falling love to each other is they are the same type woman: beautiful and talented, as Li Yu stated at the beginning of the play as introduction: “the real beauty is never jealous towards others who are truly beautiful, and only the real talented person can understand how to cherish the one who is talented 真色何曾忌

²⁷⁶ Henry, *Chinese Amusement*, 170.

²⁷⁷ Li Yu, “Jie piao qie cheng yan,” 48.

色，真才始解憐才。”²⁷⁸ Miss Cao, who loved Miss Cui because of her literary talent, argued how to distinguish love from lust in the play. Her words might be helpful in the understanding of the love between the two women in

Lianxiangban:

From the viewpoint of the heart it is love, but from the viewpoint of the bedchamber it is lust. Only if you set your mind on the illicit bedchamber will you suffer from lovesickness, and even if you die of it, you'll be no romantic lover, just a lustful ghost.²⁷⁹

Miss Cao was ready to die for her romantic love towards Miss Cui and expressed her love by becoming the concubine of her husband: “I could even die for her, so does it really matter marrying her husband as a second wife 死尚死得，還有甚麼依不得？”²⁸⁰ It was this kind of love that Chen Yun was looking for from Hanyuan. What she desperately needed was similar to the “sisterhood” advocated by the modern and post modern feminists such as Rich or Virginia Woolf. Woolf stated that “sometimes women do like women,” because only women can understand other women.²⁸¹ In Chen Yun's circumstances, what she truly wanted from Hanyuan was the “power of sisterhood”, i.e., deep understanding and unconditional support. Unfortunately her hope was thwarted in the late imperial China.

What does it mean for Chen Yun to be a female literatus? It provides meaning for her life, gives channels for the expressing of her love for literature and art, and also her love for her literati husband and friend, Shen Fu. In

²⁷⁸ Li Yu, “Scene One: Introduction,” in *Lianxiangban*, *Guoxue zhi neng shu ku*.

²⁷⁹ Li Yu, *Lianxiangban*, 142.

²⁸⁰ Li Yu, “Scene Ten: Meng xue,” in *Lianxiangban*, *Guoxue zhi neng shu ku*.

²⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, “Chloe liked Olivia,” 1024.

looking back on her life, she realized that she had failed to be a good daughter-in-law though she had tried hard, but she did not regret much because she had times in her life “as happy as a fairy,” the moments she lived as a literatus:

As I look back upon the twenty-three years of our married life, I know that you have loved me and been most considerate to me, in spite of all my faults. I am happy to die with a husband and understanding friend like you and I have no regrets. Yes, I have been as happy as a fairy at times, with my warm cotton clothing and frugal but full meals and the happy home we had.²⁸²

At the end of her life, what she remembered was how they used to enjoy themselves “amongst springs and rocks, as at the Ts'anglang Pavilion and the Hsiaoshuanglou,” not as wife and husband, but two literati instead. Chen Yun's ideal place for this kind of literati life was depicted in the following passage:

Some day we must build a cottage here. We'll buy ten *mow*²⁸³ of ground around the cottage, and see to our servants planting in the fields vegetables and melons to be sold for the expenses of our daily meals. You will paint and I will do embroidery, from which we could make enough money to buy wine for entertaining our friends who will gather here together to compose poems. Thus, clad in simple gowns and eating simple meals, we could live a very happy life together without going anywhere.²⁸⁴

It was also Shen Fu's “Arcadia” or its Chinese counterpart, “the Peach-blossom Spring” of Tao Qian, which has been echoing in the works of Chinese literati for many generations, and it will still seem attractive continually.

²⁸² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 175

²⁸³ “*Mow*” is a unit of land measure. A *mow* equals 666.7 square meters.

²⁸⁴ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 057.

CHAPTER V

PLAY LITERATI: MEANING OF ARTISTIC CREATION

In talking about the experience of art, Hans-Georg Gadamer stated that

“of all the things that confront us in nature and history, it is the work of art that speaks to us most directly. It possesses a mysterious intimacy that grips our entire being, as if there were no distance at all between us and the work and every encounter with it were an encounter with ourselves.”²⁸⁵

What speaks to us directly in *Fusheng liu ji* with all the artistic creations of Shen Fu and Chen Yun? What did those works of art mean for them then and what do they mean for us now? If we look at the memoir from the point of view of Gadamer’s aesthetics, his insight on the ontology of the work of art will help us to realize what the truth *Fusheng liu ji* reveals to us, and also what we can discover about ourselves through this work of art, just as Gadamer pointed out clearly:

The work of art that says something confronts us with ourselves. That is, it expresses something in such a way that what is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed.²⁸⁶

Fusheng liu ji recorded many artistic creations of Shen Fu and Chen Yun.

The couple had indeed made their daily life a work of art. This chapter will focus on the artistic way of living of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, the creations they endeavored and achieved, and argues that among all their creative activities,

²⁸⁵ Richard E. Palmer, *Gadamer Reader*, 124.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

the most important and successful creation is the performance, or, using the term of Gadamer, the play, of literati. Their humble dreams and tender love, their temporary happiness but long-lasting financial struggle, and their artist spirit that lit up their daily life, and so on, were portrayed so well in *Fusheng liu ji*, that they had become the icons or the representatives of the Chinese traditional literati. In their wholehearted play of the literati, they exemplified the Taoist spirit of living as a part of the nature, the artistic imagination in everyday living, and the amateur attitude towards their social roles. Indeed, the two players had made their own life a work of art, and its significance, though might not be defined or understood by the two players, but striking and gripping readers of all time, is how to prolong the short “interval” of life, to make it full and expand, so the failure becomes victory, and instant becomes eternal.

Unfortunately, most of the artistic creations of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, like so many artistic productions of the human beings in history, had already disappeared long ago. The white blossom-shaped dish holder that Chen Yun made for Shen Fu, or the clothes or cups or shoes and all the embroidery works she made for herself and other family members, and the “alive screens” that she created in country home of her friend Mrs. Hua, or the landscape painting Shen Fu painted after his enjoyable trip to the Wuyin Temple, or the seals he carved with the inscription “願生生世世為夫妻” meaning that they wish to remaining husband and wife in endless incarnations, and etc, are all lost in time excepting perhaps only a few landscape paintings and calligraphy

works of Shen Fu, that might still be treasured by some antique collectors or art lovers but unknown to the world. Some artistic works of the couple even perished in the witness of the two. For instance, the beautiful and rare type of orchid flower that they loved so much was killed by someone in the big family pouring hot water on it; the miniature of mountain and river in a basin designed and cultivated by the couple for several months was destroyed by fighting cats in the blink of eyes. In such cases, perhaps the words of the poet Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813-858) of Tang Dynasty can be used to express the emotion of the couple: "This feeling might have become a thing to be remembered, /Only, at the time you were already bewildered and lost 此情可待成追憶，只是當時已惘然。" According to Li Zeng, this couplet demonstrated the "lucid comprehension of life" of the Li Shangyin. Life, with all its love and feelings, happens and disappears. It is indeed dreamlike and unreal, because even at the time when it happens, it is already obscure and confusing.²⁸⁷

Fortunately, the four chapters of *Fusheng liu ji* had survived in which Shen Fu recorded their artistic way of living, the self-presentation of the most important creation of the couple: their playing of literati. It is necessary to make clear that the life of Shen Fu and Chen Yun referred in this chapter is the life depicted in *Fusheng liu ji* only, since the couple had left almost nothing in the historical record apart from this memoir, which is deserved to be considered a work of art. To see their life as the "playing of literati" is to see it in the light of

²⁸⁷ Li Zeng, "Ambiguous and Amiss," 143.

Gadamer's notion of play, such as "art is play"²⁸⁸, or that play is "the mode of work of art"²⁸⁹. The play or theater metaphor was probably already very popular even when William Shakespeare used it in 1599 in his pastoral comedy *As You Like It*. The famous monologue goes as below:

All the world's a stage, /And all the men and women merely players;
/They have their exits and their entrances, /And one man in his time
plays many parts.

The voice of Shakespeare still echoes in our time in the songs of Elvis Presley, Rush, Madonna, and certainly many more. Perhaps Rush's song "Limelight" in 1981 is the version that is most close to Gadamer:

All the world's indeed a stage, /And we are merely players:
/Performers and portrayers, /Each another's audience, /Outside the
gilded cage.²⁹⁰

By using the play metaphor to understand art, Gadamer captured the ontological meaning of play, that is not "a form of disengaged, disinterested exercise of subjectivity, but is rather something that has its own order and structure to which one is given over."²⁹¹ According to Gadamer's writing in the chapters on aesthetics in *Truth and Method*, as well as in "*The Relevance of the Beautiful*" and other his later works, the mode of play is self-presentation; the subjectivity of the play is not player but play itself; and so on. Gadamer's view on play can help us to better understand *Fusheng liu ji* as a work of art and the artistic life of Shen Fu and Chen Yun. Before we discuss how the couple played in their lifelong game acting as literati, the reason why they

²⁸⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 120.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 102

²⁹⁰ See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/As_You_Like_It

²⁹¹ Jeff Malpas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer," <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entransies/gadamer/>

played literati has to be addressed first. It is related to the literati identity of Shen and Chen Yun that was discussed in chapter four of the current dissertation, where the literati identity, including its social construction and meaning in the life of the couple was elaborated in the light of the social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckmann. As a literatus who been denied the road to the ruling class, Shen Fu was a marginal member of the literati, and his wife, Chen Yun, being a woman, and married to a poor literatus, was not a literatus in the eyes of her contemporary people but had also complicated her life by being able to read and write and be fond of the literati way of life. Frequently poverty-stricken, out-cast by their parents and relatives, they were far from the “typical” literati often associated with high rank official’s positions, financial wellbeing and cultural privileges. Nevertheless, Shen Fu and Chen Yun lived their life playing literati wholeheartedly, no matter how frequently the odds were against them. Because to be literati paved them paths to express their love for literature and art, and also their love for each other not only as husband and wife, but also as literati comrades. To be literati allowed them to use their talent and imagination to the fullest extend in order to live up to the literati ideals. It also granted them chances and excuses of indulging themselves in their literati dreams. In the end, it provided meaning of life to the couple, who as Lin Yutang remarked, conducted a humble but happily lived life, which is “the most beautiful thing in the universe.”²⁹²

²⁹² Lin Yutang. “Preface,” xv.

Since playing literati had great significance for Shen Fu and Chen Yun, they played the game with strong commitment and great success. The current chapter firstly focuses on the roles and settings Shen Fu and Chen Yun played, followed by a discussion on the meaning of the artistic creation of Shen Fu and Chen Yun.

1. Three Roles: Part Time Hermit, Artist, and Amateur

Shen Fu and Chen Yun played three roles under the general cover of “literati”: “part time hermit” in nature, artist at home, and amateur in almost everything outside of their home but related to the social, political and economic aspects of life.

(1) Part time hermits in nature

The “part time hermits” refer to the nature-lovers who frequently sought reclusion and comfort in nature, enjoying beautiful mountains and rivers and other natural or even manmade sceneries whenever they had the chances, and with the role model of the real hermits such as Tao Qian in their mind, although never really had the motivation and determination to live the reclusive life as Tao did. The traditional Chinese hermits who escaped from the society had mainly some political reasons. Wolfgang Bauer analyzed the Chinese eremitism and pointed out that the notion of “escape” (*yin* 隱) and “hiding” (*yi* 逸), as well as “solitude” (*du* 獨), is essential in China for eremitism in general. He also concluded that there are three roots for the Chinese eremitism

including (1) the “desire for autonomy” than to “sacrifice oneself for ruler or society;” (2) the “aspiration to save and fulfill one’s life in a natural environment;” and (3) the “retreat out of protest” to an unworthy ruler.²⁹³ While Bauer had the scholar-officials (*shidafu* 士大夫) in mind when he did his research on eremitism, Shen Fu and Chen Yun were only poor and low rank literati playing the role of the “part time hermit,” because they did not possess either the social statues or the fames as those “professional” hermits such as Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊 in the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty 周代 (around B.C.1046), or the Shangshan Si Hao 商山四皓 in the beginning of the Han Dynasty (around B.C.206). They also lacked of the motivation of the above mentioned hermits who wanted to escape from the ruler and the society they believed not worthy of serving, or to seek solitude and peace in the nature. Nevertheless, it is clear that Shen Fu and Chen Yun inherited the Taoist spirit of the hermits that seek to be comforted and nourished in the beautiful and refreshing nature, escaping even if only shortly from their low social status and ever worsening economic conditions.

The most influencing role model of the hermits of all time is Tao Qian, whose poetry and prose of his life as a recluse has been the rich source of inspiration of all the nature lovers in Chinese literature and art. The Peach-blossom Spring, a hermit utopia he had created in his prose “The Peach-blossom Spring 桃花源記,” had inspired poets and artists for centuries,

²⁹³ Wolfgang Bauer, “The Hidden Hero,” 166.

because it had depicted “a remote sanctuary where the inhabitants, isolated from the vicissitudes of the outside world, enjoyed an untrammelled and happy existence.”²⁹⁴ Similar to the pastoral paradise “Arcadia” created by Vigil, the Peach-blossom Spring is also a utopia originated from a work of literature instead of myth or religious archives. In other words, it is a work of art. Its significance for the Chinese literati is very similar as Arcadia has for the Western literature tradition, because it “offered a highly efficient means of presenting contemporary problems in the reflection of their possible solutions.”²⁹⁵ Iser’s description of the importance of Arcadia which “seemed to vouchsafe the immutability of Nature and to offer a solid alternative to the changes of the historical world”²⁹⁶ can be equally adequate for the Peach-blossom Spring. As a recluse who chose to quit the officer’s position in order to live as a farmer and cultivate his true self 養真 in the pure nature, his life is more legendary than anyone else in the Chinese literature regarding the man-nature relations. His most known poem “Gui yuan tian ju, no. 1 歸園田居其一” explains his feeling toward the nature:

From early days / I have been at odds with the world; /My instinctive love is hills and mountains.../Simplicity intact, I have returned to farm.../For long I was a prisoner in a cage/ And now, I have my freedom back again.²⁹⁷

To Tao Qian, withdrawal from the world and returning to the nature was the renewing of his life. Shen Fu and Chen Yun certainly shared his feeling of

²⁹⁴ Geremie R. Barme, “Introduction,” 1.

²⁹⁵ Iser, *Prospecting*, 75.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁹⁷ Tao Qian, “Gui yuan tian ju zhi yi,” 206.

the escaping prisoner and his profound love of nature. However, as poor literati lived in city with their parents and other family members, they had no land to return to and no farms to take care of. What they were able to manage was to visit some scenery places as often as they could. The couple visited some places together, and Shen Fu traveled more places than the ordinary literati since as a “shiye” he traveled often with the officials he served. In Chapter Four of *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu mentioned about fifty single places including temples and historical relics scattered in about eight provinces that he had set foot on. However, the places he and Chen Yun went together were recorded with more details and feelings. As a married woman with bond feet, Chen Yun could not travel freely to any places far away from home. When Shen Fu had to go by boat and pass by Taihu Lake to attend the funeral of his father’s friend, Chen Yun went together secretly in the excuse of visiting her mother. When she finally reached to the Taihu Lake and saw the vastness of the water, she was so happy and proud for herself:

“So this is Taihu!” Yün exclaimed. “I know now how big the universe is, and I have not lived in vain! I think a good many ladies never see such a view in their whole lifetime.”²⁹⁸

Then they went by boat and on the way home stopped at the Bridge of Ten Thousand Years to watch the moon and the lake in the early evening. Shen Fu wrote a most poetic passage about the experience:

陽鳥猶未落山。舟窗盡落，清風徐來，紈扇羅衫，剖瓜解暑。少焉霞

²⁹⁸ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 063.

映橋紅，煙籠柳暗，銀蟾欲上，漁火滿江矣。

The sun had not yet gone down. And we let down all the windows to allow the river breeze to come in, and there, dressed in light silk and holding a silk fan, we sliced a melon to cool ourselves. Soon the evening glow was casting a red hue over the bridge, and the distant haze enveloped the willow trees in twilight. The moon was then coming up, and all along the river we saw a stretch of lights coming from the fishing boats.²⁹⁹

They also had delicious food and wine on the boat in the company of the daughter of the boatman. Such luxuries were short and rare in the couple's life: in fact, this trip was the only real sightseeing trip the couple went together mentioned in the memoir.

Visiting gardens near their home was easier. Canglang Pavilion, the famous garden built and named by the Song literati Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008-1048), was in the neighborhood before the Shen family moved away. The memory of their visiting to the beautiful Canglang often hovered back and became one of the best memories in their life of playing literati.

As a private garden, Canglang Pavilion 滄浪亭 has too many symbolic meanings associated to the literati culture. Surrounded by a creek outside of its gate, it features also with a pavilion named "Canglang Pavilion" on the top of its small hill, hence the name of the entire garden. Su Shunqin bought the long deserted place and built it a garden with the pavilion in the year 1044 and moved there in about 1045. Famous for his poetry and calligraphy works in his time but persecuted for his political opinions, he lost his governmental position and moved to Suzhou from the northern capital Bianjing 汴京, or Kaifeng 開封

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 064-065.

in today's Henan Province. Su Shunqin named his own garden Canglang Pavilion, which came from the ancient folk song quoted in *Meng zi* 孟子, *Chu ci* 楚辭 and also *Shi ji* 史記: “滄浪之水清兮可以濯我纓；滄浪之水濁兮可以濯我足。” The literally meaning is “if the water of Canglang is clean, I can use it to wash my official's hat; if it is dirty, I can use it to wash my feet,” while the true indication is “to serve the ruler if the political time is right, and retire to the nature if things get ugly.” In his collection of poetry *Canglang ji chao* 滄浪集鈔, Su Shunqin also wrote many poems related to the garden and his life as a retired scholar-official there. One of them titled “Visiting the Canglang Pavilion by foot alone 獨步遊滄浪亭” pictured well his garden and his feeling in the nature alone:

花枝低欹草色齊，不可騎入步是宜。時時攜酒祇獨往，醉倒唯有春風知。

The flowering branches are low and the grass is all green, / Horses are no good for the paths so I went by walking. / From now and then I went alone with my wine in hand, / When I became drunk and fell to sleep only the spring breeze would notice.³⁰⁰

The trees, grass in the garden and the spring breeze were not bothered often by horses and carriages that carried important officials on them. They were close and understanding to the poet like his friends; therefore though he was alone in the garden, he was not lonely. In Canglang Pavilion, Su Shunqin had found himself healed spiritually and physically after the defeat in the political battle in which he was only a victim. During the time he stayed in the

³⁰⁰ Su Shunqin, “Da Han chi guo shu,” 121-128, my translation.

Song capital Bianjing after his post was deprived, he had to live very carefully:

"I dared not to displease people, nor to speak out my political opinions. I was only able to agree the others and twist my own heart and minds 不敢犯人顏色，不敢議論時事，隨眾上下，心幟蟠屈不開." However, after he moved to Canglang Pavilion, he had been freed of all the troubles in the office and could relax his body and spirit in nature:

有興則泛小舟出盤閭，吟嘯覽古于江山之間。渚茶野釀足以銷憂，蓴鱸稻蟹足以適口，又多高僧隱君子，佛廟勝絕，家有園林，珍花奇石，曲池高臺，魚鳥留連不覺日暮，遂終此不去。

Whenever I have the desire, I can go by my small boat out of the Pan Gate or the Chang Gate of Suzhou, shouting and sightseeing among the rivers and mountains. The local tea and wine are good enough to make my worries disappear, and the vegetable Chuncai and the fish perch, also rice and crabs can satisfy my taste of food. There are also many great monks and hermits, temples and scenery spots in the region. In my garden, I have trees, rare flowers and rocks, winding ponds and tall buildings. Accompanied by them as well as the birds and fish there, I don't even notice the time goes by. That's why I will end my life here and never want to leave again.³⁰¹

According to Ji Jin, Su Shunqin's life as a recluse living in Canglang Pavilion and his writings about his life there had aroused admiration even envy among his literati friends such as the great literary figures Ouyang Xiu, Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060), Han Wei 韓維 (1017-1098) and so on. They also wrote poems or articles expressing their admiration for Su Shunqin's new life and their love for Canglang Pavilion.³⁰² Su Shunqin was one of the lucky scholar-officials who could afford the luxury of a real garden.

³⁰¹ Ibid, my translation.

³⁰² Ibid, my translation.

Canglang Pavilion had different owners after Su Shunqin, but kept the name and also a famous couplet hang at the front pillars of Canglang Pavilion that was two sentences picked from the poems of Su Shunqin and Ouyang Xiu: “Fresh wind and bright moon are by nature priceless 清風明月本無價” (by Ouyang Xiu) and “water close to us and hills far away all have feelings 近水遠山皆有情” (by Su Shunqin). Every visitor, hermit or not, enjoyed the priceless wind and moon light in the garden, and shared the friendly feeling of the surrounding water and hills. The quiet comfort and refreshing power of nature are always what human beings can seek and find, even in the Chinese classical private gardens, which are in fact literati artistic creations.

Zhou Weiquan pointed out that the designing and building of private gardens in Suzhou and other cities such as Luoyang 洛陽 and Hangzhou can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty, but the major development took place in the Song Dynasty, accompanied and influenced by the achievements in the Chinese painting. To certain extent, many painters were also the garden owners or designers, and the painting theory naturally became the theory of garden designing, too.³⁰³ It is generally acknowledged that “*wenren hua* 文人畫,” the amateur scholar painting, started in the Tang and Song, matured under the creation of the great literati such as Wang Wei 王維 (701-761), Su Shi, and Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107), who were scholar-officials that combine their talents in poetry, calligraphy and painting and became those who possessed

³⁰³ Zhou Weiquan, *Gudian Yuanlin Shi*, 147.

the “three perfections 詩書畫三絕.” When those social elites were guided by the Taoist spirit that emphasizes the importance of nature, and values the oneness of nature and man, the literati painting finally became the unique artistic and philosophical representatives of Chinese culture. Murck and Fong stated the core features of the “wenren hua” that produced by those literati:

Combining painting with poetry and calligraphy, they produced a new kind of art known as amateur scholar painting, which, unlike the realistic narrative mode of the artisan or professional court painters, was an evocation of reality as perceived through the emotional being of the artist.³⁰⁴

Thus the mountains and water, trees and flowers, bamboo huts or wood bridges and so on in those paintings were not the realistic narrative of the real world, but the ideal world of the literati, and they designed their gardens the same way. Tong Jun 童雋 (1900-1983) made clear that “A Chinese garden is indeed a landscape painting in three dimensions, but like Chinese painting, it is subjective.” “It is essentially for contemplation and solitude.”³⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the scholar-officials tried to return to the nature in order to cultivate their spirit as well as escape from the danger in their political life. However, most of them could not live in the country like Tao Qian and endure and hardship he suffered, or live in other remote areas like some Buddhist or Taoist monks had done. Thus private gardens became the substitution of their “Peach-blossom Spring” where they can not only wonder (*ke you* 可遊) and travel (*ke shang* 可行), but also look out and see afar (*ke wang* 可望) and last but not least, to dwell

³⁰⁴ Alfreda Murck and Wen, C. Fong, *Words and Images*, xvi.

³⁰⁵ Tong Jun, “Chinese Gardens,” 222-223.

peacefully (*ke ju* 可居) within their own paradise on the earth, as the Song Dynasty artist Guoxi 郭熙 (ca. 1023-1085) summarized in his painting theory work *Lin quan gao zhi* 林泉高致. In addition, whenever the scholar-officials were summoned by the emperor, they could easily return to the court to serve. This is the ideal life of the “middle hermit 中隱,” coined and advocated by the Tang poet Bai Juyi. The middle hermit, who is neither as the “small hermit” which lives in the deserted place and suffer the poverty and material deprivation, nor as the “great hermit” that lives in the court facing constant political danger, but lives in the man-made nature in the city, the private gardens. Those followers of Bai Juyi in the Tang and late dynasties not only built their private gardens but also produced theories of the garden architecture designing according to their ideal way of the “middle hermit.” In Suzhou alone, there were more than two hundred gardens built in the Ming and Qing time³⁰⁶ that made the cities’ fame of “the earthly paradises” together with its literati painters and beautiful women.

According to Zhou Weiquan, the Song style of gardens have the characteristics including (1) simple scenery but with profound meaning 簡遠; (2) integrated as a whole with few items instead of crowded and trivial 疏朗; (3) elegant and aloof instead of vulgar and low 雅致; and (4) natural and harmonious with the surrounding environment 天然. These characteristics of the Song private gardens are associated with the literati paintings, and are

³⁰⁶ <http://www.ylj.suzhou.gov.cn/English/gardens.htm>

also important and salient in the Ming and Qing gardens.³⁰⁷

Canglang Pavilion exemplifies well the above mentioned features of the classical Chinese garden. When UNESCO named the garden one of the four “masterpieces of Chinese landscape gardens,” because in it “art, nature, and ideas are integrated perfectly to create ensembles of great beauty and peaceful harmony.” It also describes the garden as below:

It is reached across a zigzag stone bridge, when the mountains, covered with old trees and bamboo, suddenly become visible. The square pavilion stands on top of one of the mountains, inscribed with an appropriate text.³⁰⁸

In fact, from what Shen Fu recorded in *Fusheng liu ji*, when he and Chen Yun visited the garden in 1780, what they had seen in the garden is quite the same as the UNESCO description:

We passed a bridge, entered a gate, turned eastwards and followed a zigzag path into the place, where we saw huge grottoes and abundant green trees... The Pavilion stood on the top of a hill. Going up by the steps to the top, one could look around for miles, where in the distance chimney smoke arose from the cottages against the background of clouds of rainbow hues.³⁰⁹

However, Shen Fu took good care of this visit and made arrangements with the watchman of the garden, so there were no other visitors in the evening and thus made the atmosphere more like that they were in their own garden. Although Shen Fu and Chen Yun did not have official positions to quit, no political enemies or persecutions threatening their life, still they felt the same

³⁰⁷ Zhou Wei-quan, *Gudian Yuanlin Shi*, 165.

³⁰⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/813>

³⁰⁹ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 035.

purifying power of the nature as Su Shunqin felt at the same location about seven hundred years before them. The couplet hang in front of them with the words composed by Su Shunqin and his friend Ouyang Xiu reminded them how generous the nature is: the fresh wind and bright moon are always priceless, and the close by rivers and far away mountains are forever friendly and comforting. While they were sitting inside the pavilion and felt they were far away from the mundane world and became the part of the nature, their feeling at that moment would be similar to what Tao Qian had written about his secret of living among people as living in a remote place: You have to detach your mind from the worldly desires and make it “remote” first. Although Canglang Pavilion is in fact in the middle of the city, their literati mind has made it a remote place.

少焉，一輪明月已上林梢，漸覺風生袖底，月到波心，俗慮塵懷，爽然頓釋。

After a while, the moon had already arisen from behind the forest, and the breeze was playing about our sleeves, while the moon's image sparkled in the rippling, and all worldly cares were banished from our breasts.³¹⁰

At this moment, they have become part of the nature. Time and space, the past and the present, nature and human, subject and object, and so on, have become the “One.” This was the beginning of their life of playing literati. Shen Fu and Chen Yun, both were merely eighteen years old, were so

³¹⁰ Ibid.

infatuated by the magic of Canglang Pavilion and what it “said” to them, that they identified themselves with the literati from this point on, and continued their lifelong play of the “part time hermit.”

The summer they spent in a countrywoman’s house in Jingmuqiao was another experience of playing the “part time hermit.” After the big family moved to Cangmixiang, they were not able to visit Canglang Pavilion so easily and Chen Yun’s relationship with the in-laws was getting difficult. When they heard that a peasant woman had a cottage with country views, they went there for a short stay. They did fishing under the shadow of the willow tree in the ponds near by the cottage; they often composed poetry on the top of a mound in the late afternoons; and they drank little wine under the moon and enjoyed the cool night on a bamboo bed outside of the room. They also asked their peasant neighbor to plant along the hedge some chrysanthemums. When the flowers bloomed in the ninth moon of the year, they went again for ten days, “ate crabs in the midst of chrysanthemums and whiled away the whole day.”³¹¹

Chrysanthemum is a flower traditionally associated with the life of hermits, with its nature of blooming in the fall while all other flowers disappear under the cold whether. Also it is generally believed that the flower has power of regenerating energy and prolonging life. Literati as early as Qu Yuan (B.C.340-B.C.278) already took the flower as medical herb or brew wine with it.

³¹¹ Ibid., 055.

But it is especially connected with the life and work of Tao Qian. Susan E. Nelson in her research on chrysanthemum paintings argues that the flower, ever since Tao wrote his lines “Gathering chrysanthemums by the eastern fence, / I catch sight of the Southern Mountain in the distance 采菊東籬下，悠然見南山,” has “remained closely attached to the culture of Tao Qian.” The flower represents “Tao-ness” and has a “literary heritage,” therefore the “making, owning, or admiring a chrysanthemum painting were all ways to assert one’s Tao-like qualities and siphon off some of his prestige.”³¹² Chrysanthemum was Shen Fu’s favorite flower. In *Fusheng liu ji*, he had a whole theory of how to arrange them in bottles and display them at home, that demonstrated his qualification as a literatus who possessed certain “Tao-ness” and was familiar to Tao’s heritage. By planting chrysanthemums even in a place they rent only for a short while, he paid his homage to Tao Qian, and shared Tao’s notion of the “essential meaning 真意” of living close to the nature.

(2) Artists at home

Apart from playing the role of “part time hermits,” Shen Fu and Chen Yun also played the role of artists at their home. What the couple endeavored was to discover and create small beauty and charm on the everyday bases. Living under the unstable income of Shen Fu or maybe the thin allowance from his father, the couple had to limit their life style to the level of low cost and simple;

³¹² Susan E. Nelson, “Revisiting the Eastern Fence,” 441-444.

nevertheless, they made it as elegant and pretty as possible. Their artistic creations in their daily life can be categorized in three fields, namely food, clothing, and home decoration. In the first two chapters of *Fusheng liu ji*, those little artistic creations sparkled here and there, in the dark background of their ever worsening financial situations and often difficult relationship with other family members.

Shen Fu's simple but elegant taste can be seen from his ideas on food, clothing, home decoration, garden designing, and so on. He liked to eat vegetables and wear simple but clean clothes, and "was very keen on keeping the place spotlessly clean."³¹³ As a Qing time literatus, Shen Fu had been trained in a holistic way meaning he not only could read and write, but was also good at poetry, painting, calligraphy, bonsai cultivating, and so on. The description of the ideal painter in the eighteenth century is probably not too far from the picture of Shen Fu:

... remained a humanist, wise and erudite, adept in poetry and versed in calligraphy, seal-carving and other similar pursuits, with his sense and sensibility well attuned to what was, in the broadest terms, around him. Tempered by his wide-ranging experiences, he was also endowed with a keen and searching intelligence which probed the depth of reality and existence.³¹⁴

Later in his life, he started a painting shop in order to support his family. As a poor literatus, he often used his paintings to repay his friends, after he was treated by them for meal or trip. Yu Pingbo stated that the style of painting

³¹³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 111.

³¹⁴ Chou Ju-His, "Painting Theory," 323.

of Shen Fu is belong to the school of the great Yuan painter Ni Zan³¹⁵, whose landscape painting are the best example and the most influential of the literati paintings in terms of its theme of reclusive living and its elegant, lonesome, and mysterious sceneries.

According to Shi Damu, some art collectors had seen Shen Fu's painting and calligraphy work in the 1930s or even later. Tianfeng shangren, a sina.com blogger who did not give his real name, in his blog "Tianfenglou ye hua" provided a picture he believed painted by Shen Fu and was published in the journal *Suzhou Magazine* in 1996.³¹⁶

Shen Fu's ideas of garden were certainly related to his training and taste as a literati painter. The profound understanding of the garden designing was also the result of his intensive traveling as a shiye for career. In the fourth chapter of *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu expressed many of his unique criticisms on gardens he visited. Among those is Shizilin 獅子林 or the "Lion's Forest" in Suzhou, which is said to be designed by the Ni Zan. Shen Fu did not see its beauty because it did not possess natural rhythm that he was looking for in gardens. On the contrary, the Pingshantang 平山堂 garden complex in Yangzhou had won his heart, because "although this entire landscape was built by human labour, it was so ingeniously planned that it looked like a bit of nature 雖全是人功，而奇思幻想，點綴天然." What he valued most was its integration of the individual buildings that were "stretching all the way from the

³¹⁵ Yu Pingbo, "Ti Shen Sanbai hua er jueju," 407.

³¹⁶ http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4a6133db0100ef7.html

city to the hill, with a unity all its own.”³¹⁷

Zong Baihua in his work on the Chinese classical gardens quoted Shen Fu's view about “space” that exemplifies a profound understanding about the art of Chinese classical gardens:

大中見小，小中見大，虛中有實，實中有虛，或藏或露，或淺或深，

不僅在“周、回、曲、折”四字

Try to show the small in the big, and the big in the small, and provide for the real in the unreal and for the unreal in the real. One reveals and conceals alternately, making it sometimes apparent and sometimes hidden. This is not just rhythmic irregularity.³¹⁸

For example, in the space arrangement of Canglang Pavilion, the stone bridge and the zigzag paths toward the top pavilion are the way to “conceal,” and sudden view of the pavilion is the way to “reveal.” The classical gardens often place a piece of big rock to block the view and make the vast space seemed more integrated, which is the example of to “show the small in the big,” or to use side doors and sudden turning of the road to make the small place seemed larger, which is the way to show “the big in the small.” Shen Fu had caught the dynamic relations expressed in the arrangements of the garden space between “big” and “small,” “real” and “unreal,” “reveals” and “conceals,” and “apparent” and “hidden” and etc. Moreover, he had chosen words and terms with accuracy and conciseness in his criticisms. Zong Baihua stated that Shen Fu had in fact captured the general features of the Chinese art. This is perhaps why Shen Fu's opinions on garden quoted very often by the

³¹⁷ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 227.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 099.

researchers on Chinese classical gardens of the later generations.

Apart from his knowledge in poetry, in *Fusheng liu ji* Shen Fu also demonstrated his knowledge and view points on flowers, bonsai, incense burning, local festivals, and games of drinking, and so on. This kind of wide range of interests in the “art of living” is also part of literati tradition. The Ming and Qing literati such as Gao Lian 高濂 (1573-1620), Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 (1585-1645), Li Yu, Cao Xueqin, and Li Ruzhen, and so on, all had written about the above mentioned topics in their works as Shen Fu did. Craig Clunas in his research of such “books about things,” pointed out that “there was a boom in publishing this sort of literature” in the late Ming time, and many books appeared about “paintings, tea, food, prostitutes and all the other luxury commodities available to the late Ming man of fashion and wealth.”³¹⁹ Clunas also quoted the twelve chapters in Wen Zhenheng’s book *Treatise on the Superfluous Things* 長物志 that might provide a rough picture about the contents and concerns of such books:

- (1). Studios and retreats;
- (2). Flowers and trees;
- (3). Water and rocks;
- (4). Birds and fish;
- (5). Calligraphy and painting;
- (6). Tables and couches;
- (7). Vessels and utensils;
- (8). Clothing and adornment;
- (9). Boats and carriages;
- (10). Placing and arrangement;
- (11). Vegetables and fruits;
- (12). Incense and teas.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things*, 36.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

These books, as Joseph Needham maintains, were composed by the literati of Ming and Qing dynasties who “sought no office and lived in seclusion, cultivating plants and writing about them in order to console the heart in bad times and nourish the spirit.”³²¹ Shen Fu, in speaking out his opinions on those topics in *Fusheng liu ji* with similar style and language, had become part of this literati tradition.

The other artist, Chen Yun, was also talented in many things including poetry, embroidery, cooking, and flower arrangement. To make everyday life enjoyable with artistic imaginations and creativities were the most attractive character of Chen Yun. As discussed in previous chapters of this study, Chen Yun had displayed almost in every detail of their daily life her artistic imagination and creativity that often astonished Shen Fu and aroused in him great admirations. For example, as a young girl of thirteen years old, she was able to stand out among all the brightly dressed women of her father’s family, with her old light colored clothes but a pair of new shoes with beautiful embroidery, all made by herself.³²² Her skill of embroidery must be very high since she was able to support her mother and young brother when she was very young. Later she embroidered the whole Buddhist *Prajnaparamita Sutra* 心經, though she was very sick during the time, she finished the embroidery of two hundred and sixty characters in only ten days.³²³

The food the couple loved to eat was mainly the food of the poor people

³²¹ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilizations*, 361.

³²² Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 006.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 141.

of the time, such as vegetables, pickles and congee 粥 (rice soup). What makes this kind of simple and inexpensive food special is the taste of literati and the equal relationship between the couple that demonstrated in their witty conversations about the food. For instance, congee has special meaning to the couple because when they were just engaged, Chen Yun was laughed at by her family members for the bowl of warm congee she kept for her future husband. Later when they had to leave the big family, they also had congee before the final departure. Chen Yun, although was very sick and heartbroken for having to leave their children behind, joked that her life with Shen Fu started with a bowl of congee, and ended with a bowl of congee, too, so if someone were write a play about it, they could entitled it "The Romance of Congee."³²⁴ This joke, made in such a dreadful moment in their life, exemplified her witty character and her courageous spirit that is part of the literati quality.

Chen Yun was good at cooking ordinary food and transforming them surprisingly into delicacy. Even for food as humble as pickles, Chen Yun could make it special with her creative ideas. She made pickled bean-curd more tasteful by mixing it with sesame seed oil and sugar. She also mixed pickled cucumber with pickled bean-curd and called the mixture "the double-flavoured gravy 雙鮮醬."³²⁵ The naming action added some literati flavor to the humble food.

At the beginning of their life together, Shen Fu refused to eat pickles for

³²⁴ Ibid., 151.

³²⁵ Ibid., 043.

disliking their peculiar smell, so he joked that whether Chen Yun was a dog that could not tell bad smells. Chen Yun answered that the pickles were like the ancient woman Wuyan 無鹽 who was ugly but virtuous; once you knew her you would love her virtues and forget about her ugliness. Therefore if people were enjoying the taste of the pickles, they would ignore the smell. She also said to her husband: "I have been a dog for a long time, why don't you try to be one (in order to taste the pickles)?" Shen Fu did as he was told, and fell in love with the pickles from that moment on. Indeed, their love to each other and the equal relationship between them were the best seasoning in the couple's daily life and made the conversations between them so charming with lingering resonance.

Chen Yun's artist talents and creations contributed greatly to the success of their play of literati. Without her enthusiastic and wholehearted participation, without her encouragement and creative suggestions, the whole play would have lost its charm and excitement. She was not only a great playmate of Shen Fu, but also a cheerleader, and more often a team leader. When Cheng Zhangcan argued that the role of Chen Yun to Shen Fu in their relationship was "half wife and half friend, half man and half woman, half guest and half prostitute,"³²⁶ he summarized the unique relationship between the couple, but only forgot to mention the "playmate" role of Chen Yun that was the most important role in their life of playing literati together.

³²⁶ Cheng Zhangcan, "Yun de xingxiang fenxi," 854.

(3) Amateurs regarding their social roles

The third role Shen Fu and Chen Yun played as literati was the sometimes absent-minded, sometimes awkward behaved amateurs in society. Most of the time, they seemed out of touch with the times or incompatible with present needs; therefore in many situations they were helpless people and losers. However, the protagonists seemed not very much worried and never authentically desperate. The amateur attitude Shen Fu and Chen Yun had toward their social roles demonstrated their enthusiasm and commitment in their game of playing literati.

According to Gadamer's play theory, "Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play." He explained that the attraction of play is precisely "the game masters the players," and "holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there."³²⁷

This study holds that the amateur attitude Shen Fu and Chen Yun expressed in their social aspects of their life such as Shen Fu's career as shiye or businessman and Chen Yun's role as daughter-in-law, was in accordance with their understanding of the literati values and their self identity as literati. For them, the degree of being amateurs regarding their careers or roles indeed indicated their degree of being literati. In other words, the more amateurism they demonstrated the closer they became to the ideal and values of literati. Therefore they did not really care whether they succeed or not regarding their

³²⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 61; 103; 106.

mundane effort to be shiye, businessman, good daughter-in-law, or any other role the society imposed on them. They played their game of literati so wholeheartedly that they were lost in their play.

When Kuang Yanzi argued that the couple had forgot their social and family duties in their enjoyment of artistic life and deep love for each other, he was actually looking at the fact that they were so absorbed in the play that they forgot or had no intention to take care other matters in their life.

本身作為父母的三白芸娘，亦在柔情蜜意和蕭爽雅致中虧負了對兒女的撫育責任。……三白和芸娘，終難辭其使一家陷入離散境地的責任。

Sanbai and Yunniang lost themselves in their tender love to each other and their pursuit of unrestrained and elegant life style, had neglected their duty as parents. ... They were responsible for the family's fall into pieces.³²⁸

They were the players who were played by the play. In other words, they did not realize that they were playing literati, but only were drew into the game and absorbed in their life as literati.

Amateurism originally refers to the attitude of the literati towards Chinese painting, especially the landscape painting since the eleventh century. It is generally associated with the so called “differentiation between the professional artisans (*hangjia* 行家) and the amateur scholar painters (*lijia* 隸家)” in the Song Dynasty. The professional painters, receiving orders from patrons such as the emperor or rich merchandisers, emphasized the formal resemblance 形似 in their paintings, and endeavored to develop and master

³²⁸ Kuang Yanzi, “Chen Yun de qing shen zhi lei,” 876, my translation.

related techniques; whereas the amateur scholar painters who on the majority were scholar-officials, painted only to amuse themselves and held that painting and other art forms as way of expressing their personal feelings and aesthetics, and therefore emphasized likeness in spirit 神似, the personality and resonance in their works. For the latter, painting was not something they took as seriously as a career. They were simply “dabbling”³²⁹ in the painting or other artistic activities, in order to express themselves on the one hand, and cultivating the inner self on the other. Their works are called “*wenrenhua*” or “literati painting.” As a result, people paid more attention to the personality of the painter and believed that only a person “of depth and vision, one who was refined by ethics, immersed in learning, and further broadened by his worldly experience, could fashion images of such insight that were worthy to be conveyed in, or through, painting.” On the contrary, the professional painters were considered “to dwell on the superficial.”³³⁰

The Song Dynasty poet Su Shi and his literati friends were all the advocates and practitioners of the *wenrenhua*, and as Willard J. Peterson Martin pointed out, since that time, “landscape was never the same.”³³¹ The amateur scholar painters in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties carried on the same aesthetics and developed it till it was widely accepted as a “credo,” as Wen Fong and Maxwell K. Hearn discussed in their work about Chinese painting. For example, the famous Wu School painters in Suzhou in the Ming

³²⁹ Wen Fong and Maxwell K. Hearn, “Silent Poetry,” 16.

³³⁰ Chou Ju-His, “Painting Theory,” 323.

³³¹ Willard J. Peterson, “Introduction,” 6.

Dynasty, led by Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509) and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559) among others, “valuing personality in a work over technical skill,” “aimed for mastery of performance rather than laborious workmanship.”³³²

According to Zhou Yu, the major differences between the professional painters and the amateur scholar painters include (1) moral character: to satisfy one’s patrons versus to amuse oneself; (2) training: focused on painting alone versus integrated the “three perfections in poetry, calligraphy and painting; (3) method to gain ability in painting: by learning and hard working versus to be born with talent and know how to do it by nature; (4) quality of picture: formal likeness versus spiritual resemblance and resonance.”³³³

This kind of contrast was in fact taken from the perspectives of the amateur scholar painters who were the elite of the society since the eleventh century. Naturally, literati painters believed that they were superior to the professional painters regarding social status, cultural accomplishments, moral levels, and even personal intelligence. As Martin W. Huang noticed, “being an amateur by no means implied a lack of sophistication; rather, it was a symbol of aesthetic aspirations at a higher level.”³³⁴

The profound rational of such belief was associated with the Taoist distinguishing between “the Way” (*Dao* 道) and “the technique” (*ji* 技), to emphasize the pursuing of the metaphysical “Way” instead of the latter. In *Nan hua jing* 南華經 of Zhuang Zi 莊子 (B.C.369-B.C.286), the skills of the

³³² Fong and Hearn, “Silent Poetry,” 48.

³³³ Zhou Yu, “Shenmei Ping,” 17-20.

³³⁴ Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 33

artisans such as the cook Ding 庖丁 would not be praised if it was not elevated to the level of the Tao. The cook Ding, however, in his act of butchering an ox, did his job with his spirit instead of his body, looked with his mind instead of eyes: “perception and understanding cease, and spirit moves where it will.” Judith Berling explored further how this kind of transformation took place from the skill to the art taught by the Way:

By turning their focus away from the social and economic demands of their jobs and the specific rules and techniques that entail, the artisans become mentally free to concentrate on the skill of their craft; they have elevated their work to an art.³³⁵

The belief that the pursuing of skill is inferior also associated with the Confucian premise of “a gentleman should not become a vessel” (*junzi bu qi* 君子不器) that Confucius said in *Analects*. “*Qi* 器” means vessel literally, indicating something useful but is confined to certain purposes only thus limited itself for serving the grander goal. Confucians emphasized that the gentleman who cultivating himself in the hope of attaining “benevolence 仁” and “righteousness 義” and other virtues in order to become a “inside sage outside king” should not confine himself in questing specific skills such as a ordinary craftsman would do. The Wei and Jin scholar He Yan 何晏 (195?-249) understood “*junzi bu qi*” as “every ‘qi’ is suitable for its specific usages; however, a ‘junzi’ must be able to fit all usages everywhere 器者，各周其用，至於君子，無所不施也。”³³⁶ Thus in order to become such all-round gentleman, a ‘junzi’ has to concentrate on the self-cultivation, and avoid

³³⁵ Judith Berling, “Self and Whole,” 112-114.

³³⁶ Wu Ning, http://utcp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/events/pdf/023_Wu_Ning_3rd_BESETO.pdf

focusing on the specific skill and become merely a “vessel.”

These ideas are also connected with another Taoist concept of the usefulness, or to put it in a more accurate way, the usefulness of the uselessness. In Chapter Eleven of *Dao de jing* Lao Zi held that the empty space in things such as axle of a wheel, the vessel, or a house, had made the usefulness of the things possible.

The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends. Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness, that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness.³³⁷

In other words, without “something that is not there,” the “something that is there” can not really function. Zhuang Zi changed the direction from the emptiness of things to the uselessness of the things, and explored further the idea of uselessness by giving examples such as a huge and long lived tree which was good for nothing but preserved its life by its uselessness. Also a badly handicapped man was able to survive from the fate of becoming a soldier because of his useless body. Thus Zhuang Zi concluded:

The mountain by its trees weakens itself. The grease which ministers to the fire fries itself. The cinnamon tree can be eaten, and therefore it is cut down. The varnish tree is useful, and therefore incisions are made in it. All men know the advantage of being useful, but no one knows the advantage of being useless.³³⁸

³³⁷ Lao Zi, *Dao de jing*, <http://nothingistic.org/>

³³⁸ Zhuang Zi, “Ren jian shi,” <http://nothingistic.org/>

Xu Fuguan elaborated on Zhuang Zi's thought about "usefulness of uselessness 無用之用" with its application in society. The criteria of "usefulness" and "uselessness" are part of the social convention and determined by the society. In order to cultivate oneself and obtain the spiritual freedom and satisfaction, one has to be useless in the society thus escape the social control, therefore the useless is in fact the biggest use.³³⁹

Therefore, to be an amateur in painting, or in any other activities the literati involved, is nothing to be ashamed of, but something to be valued with, because it indicates one's literati degree and qualification. Literati shall not pay attention to any professional skills if they do not want to confine themselves as a simple "vessel." Literati are naturally superior to those ordinary artisans who focus on technique instead of the spiritual truth. Literati cherish more the uselessness because it is the biggest use, and so on. In sum, with its historical, philosophical, and artistic baggage, amateurism had become part of the literati tradition and gradually permeated the belief and the practice of literati since the eleventh century. Shen Fu and Chen Yun, being deeply immersed in the literati identity and value, consequently demonstrated their amateurism mainly in their attitudes toward the career of Shen Fu as "shiye" or "businessman," and Chen Yun's role of the "good daughter-in-law."

As discussed everywhere in this study, Shen Fu never loved his career as a shiye from the very beginning. This career is in general a very hard one and

³³⁹ Xu Fuguan, *Zhongguo Yishu Jingshen*, 58.

often with a tarred reputation. Above all, this is the embarrassing choice of the literati who had been excluded from the officialdom because either they were not able to attend or were failed many times in the civil service examinations. In short, to be a shiye is a constant reminder of the failure they suffered, and “a result of unwilling compromise.”³⁴⁰

The job is also difficult because of its half servant half slave nature. Paid not by the government but by the officials or their more important assistants, the salary of shiye depended on the pocket and mood of their employers. On the one hand, the unstable position of shiye had made most of them part of the poverty-stricken population which conflicted totally with their literati self-esteem and expectations; on the other hand, since they were close to power and governmental institutions, some of them often involved in corruption and became the abets of wicked officials. Feng Erkang 馮爾康 pointed out that “the general public and the ‘shiye’ themselves all despise this career 世人與幕客都不齒於作幕.”³⁴¹

Shen Fu often had problem finding a shiye position, and once he found one, he complained about its uninteresting nature and his colleagues of low morality. He never mentioned how hard he was looking for a job but seemed always waiting passively for any chance came to his road. He did not record in *Fusheng liu ji* any actions such as writing letters to his more lucky literati friends for recommendations for a position. Another Qing shiye Xu Jiacun 許葭

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

³⁴¹ Feng Erkang, *Zhuanji yanjiu*, 131.

村 (1769-1856), who was famous for his letter writings and lived in the same time as Shen Fu did, wrote numerous letters in his life time to request the help of his friend and their friends in order to get himself positions to work. In return, Xu Jiacun also wrote many letters to help his shiye friends or their children in their job hunting. This kind of letter writings was very popular and welcome behavior among the Qing shiye circles. Shen Fu certainly had probably done the similar thing but he did not take it as seriously as Xu Jiacun did, nor had he many shiye friends as the latter had, which can also be considered a sign of his amateurism regarding his career.

Another indicator of his amateurism towards his career is his skill as a shiye. Although Li Qiao reckoned that Shen Fu was probably specialized as a “*xing ming* 刑名 *qian liang* 錢糧 shiye” that required some knowledge and training in the law and finance area,³⁴² however, Shen Fu himself seemed not interested in or proud of his professional accomplishments. The longest chapter in *Fushen liu ji* is the fourth chapter in which Shen Fu demonstrated his opinions on gardens and traveling, but not a word about his professional knowledge, excepting only one episode that he helped to set a girl from a poor family free from the trap of an influential man in a lawsuit in Taizhou county 泰州 in Jiangsu.³⁴³ Xu Jiacun, on the contrary, worked with great efforts to improve his writing skill especially for his letter writings; therefore his letters were famous for its style and language, and taken as good models of practical

³⁴² Li Qiao, “Shen Sanbai,” 82.

³⁴³ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 159.

writing for those who wanted to learn to be a professional shiye. The collections of his two hundred and thirty more letters, titled *Qiushuixuan chidu* 秋水軒尺牘, had been published by his literati friends (most of them were also shiye) in 1831 when he was sixty-two years old, and reprinted many times in his life time, so popular that “almost every household had one copy of it.”³⁴⁴ As a result of his fame, he received offers for working much easily than Shen Fu, although he was also a poor shiye all his life with only “wind and moonlight in the pocket instead of money,”³⁴⁵ which is similar to Shen Fu, indicating their righteousness and their distance away from their colleagues who became rich by low moral and illegal activities.

On the one hand Shen Fu had long pauses between jobs, on the other hand, when he wanted to quit, he quit his position without much hesitation. In Chapter Three “Sorrow,” he mentioned that he quit his job in Jixi County for not agreeing with his colleagues. However, it should be made clear that in the later years of his time, since it was so hard to get a job, he did not mention quitting anymore. It was more likely that he was laid off instead of that he chose to leave it. In this kind of situation, he simply ignored those years or months he spent with the job and left no details about those positions in his memoir.

After both Chen Yun and his father passed away, Shen Fu had a position to work for his childhood friend Shi Yunyu. As a successful scholar-official, Shi probably served the role of the “significant other” for Shen Fu, as discussed in

³⁴⁴ Feng Erkang, *Zhuan ji yan jiu*, Beijing, 131.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 133.

the previous chapter of this study. By providing a position of assistant, Shi Yunyu helped Shen Fu during the most difficult time in the life of the latter when he was homeless and penniless. Later, upon hearing that the only son of Shen Fu had died, Shi presented Shen Fu a girl as his concubine to help him out of the grief and also to continue his family line. In their short stay in Tongguan 潼關 city, Shi provided Shen Fu a good house to live that shaped like a boat, so Shi named the studio "An Unanchored Boat." Shen Fu said about this place: "This was the best house I ever lived in during the period I served as a yamen secretary."³⁴⁶ However, Shen Fu worked for his old friend only one year and five months from the ninth moon of 1805 till the second moon in 1807. Then he got a position in Laiyang 萊陽, and left Shi Yunyu's office. It is not so hard to understand why Shen Fu didn't stay in the position longer if the question was looked at from the perspective of his amateurism regarding his career. To be a half friend and half servant required very high professional skill that was certainly very difficult for Shen Fu. As Shi Yunyu's official rank was quite distinguish, he must had many shiye or secretaries, and how to get along with them was also a challenge for Shen Fu. He wrote in Chapter Four about this position that he often spent his time with the family members of Shi Yunyu, mainly concubines and children, and help their constant moving from places to places; while Shi himself, often went alone or with other assistants to his assignments and left his family behind. As a

³⁴⁶ Shen Fu, *Six Chapters*, 327.

longtime friend, the title Shi gave for Shen Fu's house had some quality alike the owner of the house: a boat without being anchored, or a person with a wondering and free spirit. For a literatus, the description of "an unanchored boat" could be taken as a compliment, a metaphor of a free personality; however, In Shen Fu's case, it could have indicated something that might be not very suitable for the position of a shiye, which is another sign of his amateurism.

Shen Fu became a businessman twice in his life but was not successful in either time. First time he went to Guangdong and spent his money and time in the boat brothel there with Xi'er; and second time he opened a painting shop next door to his house with a friend. What he did, as discussed in the previous chapter, was more inclined to literati than businessmen, or put it in other words, he demonstrated his amateurism also in his business career, which means he never really loved or enjoyed the career as a businessman, nor worked hard to become professionally competent and successful. He did not want to be a businessman, and did not think he had to take the career as a businessman seriously. He was "dabbling" in this career only. That was why he was always absent-minded, and "unanchored," drifting between the impossible literati ideal world and the despised commercial world.

It is noticeable that development of amateurism of Chen Yun towards her role as a "good daughter-in-law" is accompanied by the development of her literati identity. She was a very humble and careful daughter-in-law when she

was just married to Shen Fu. Her determination of becoming a good daughter-in-law won the love of the whole family for her, as Shen Fu remembered in Chapter One of *Fusheng liu ji*:

芸作新婦，初甚緘默，終日無怒容，與之言，微笑而已。事上以敬，處下以和，井井然未嘗稍失。每見朝暾上窗，即披衣急起，如有人呼促者然。

As a bride, Yün was very quiet at first. She was never sullen or displeased, and when people spoke to her, she merely smiled. She was respectful towards her superiors and kindly towards those under her. Whatever she did was done well, and it was difficult to find fault with her. When she saw the grey dawn shining in through the window, she would get up and dress herself as if she had been commanded to do so.³⁴⁷

What she feared was to be considered a lazy daughter-in-law by Shen Fu's parents. All her life she wanted to be a good daughter-in-law as she told Shen Fu in her death bed. She did what she understood of the role: she gave up her own pearls to help her mother-in-law to satisfy the need of the other daughter-in-law in the family. She helped to write family letters. She did not explain herself when she was mistaken by her in-laws. These are only few examples mentioned by Shen Fu. However, as she became more and more involved in the playing of literati, she became more an amateur in her role as a good daughter-in-law and gradually distanced away from her original goal, certainly in the eyes of her in-laws. For instance, instead of serving the in-laws and other family members quietly washing and sewing, she spent her time (after she had finished all her housework) collecting pieces of old books and

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 014-015.

paintings, or composing poems with her husband and their friends; Instead of keeping her mouth shut, she openly expressed her dislike for the taste of her father-in-law on the plays he ordered to perform at home; Instead of shutting herself in her room, she made friends with the woman in neighborhood and became the creditor for her brother-in-law to borrow money from the woman; Instead of letting Shen Fu and her in-laws to make decision in choosing a concubine for Shen Fu, she made the decision of picking the young prostitute Hanyuan, and even became the sworn sister of the latter. The episode of Chen Yun dressed up as a man and accompanied Shen Fu to visit the temple of the Dongting Lake in the evening, had pictured a Chen Yun quite different with the image of a timid new daughter-in-law: "She took the mirror and saw herself in it, and burst into crazy laughter for quite a while 芸攬鏡自照，狂笑不已。"³⁴⁸

In short, the more she demonstrated her literati knowledge and ability, the more she distanced herself away from the "virtues of woman," therefore the less professional she became as a "good daughter-in-law" in the eyes of her in-laws. The amateurism she expressed in all of these behaviors had won her the ironic title of "The Third Lady" (santaitai) that was indeed the opposite of "the third daughter-in-law" (sanniang), and revealed her failure in wanting to be a "good daughter-in-law." Direct in speaking and confident in action, she expressed the part of her real nature that was brought out by Shen Fu, as Kuang Yanzi pointed out:

Unfortunately, Shen Fu had gradually emancipated the real

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 060, my translation.

character deep in Chen Yun's nature by his own free and romantic spirit. As results, their love life became splendid and perfect on the one hand, and on the other hand, being contradictory with the Confucian and federal social conventions, they set their foot on the way leading eventually to their tragedy.³⁴⁹

In all, in their life of playing literati, both Shen Fu and Chen Yun had demonstrated their amateurism regarding their careers and social role. One point that has to be made is that the consequences of being amateurs in their social roles are rather different between Shen Fu and Chen Yun. In other words, it was perhaps not such a terrible defect for Shen Fu, since his amateurism could be regarded as his personality and indeed his degree of literati. No matter how unsuccessful was he as a shiye, or a businessman, he was nevertheless a literatus, and his amateurism and failure in the careers he disliked could be considered that his aim was higher than to be an ordinary "vessel." His uselessness in society could have indicated his "usefulness" in some other fields such as to pursuit the self-cultivation. On the contrary, the amateurism that Chen Yun expressed in her role as a daughter-in-law was intolerable and unacceptable totally, because the role of Chen Yun was not to become a female literatus, nor a supportive playmate or friend, nor a loving and charming but independent wife, but an obedient daughter-in-law with the lowest status in the patriarchal family and society, which was the only career possible and acceptable for a woman in Chen Yun's time. To be amateur in this field, is to risk the happiness and life of her children, her husband, and her own, no matter how talented she was in literature and art, no matter how

³⁴⁹ Kuang Yanzi, "Chen Yun de Qing shen zhi lei," 862, my translation.

enthusiastic and creative in life she could be.

2. The Interval Prolonged: Meaning of Artistic Creation

According to Lin Yutang, when Shen Fu named his memoir “six chapters of a floating life,” or *Fusheng liu ji*, he probably had Li Bai’s poem in his mind. Li Bai asked: “Our floating life is like a dream; how often can one enjoy oneself 浮生若夢，為歡幾何？”³⁵⁰ What Li Bai was saying is, if life is like a dream, it is already hard to hold it steady, but life is floating and makes the effort of holding to it even more frustrating. Moreover, in this floating and dreamlike life, the chances of being happy, or, to make ourselves happy (“wei 為” has the meaning of making, doing) are indeed very few. Shen Fu wrote down six chapters originally, however, at least in the four surviving chapters, those happy moments rarely occurred and often were mixed with bitterness. At the beginning of *Fusheng liu ji*, Shen Fu explained his reason of writing down his life and used Su Shi’s (Su Dongpo) poem to echo the title of his memoir:

余生乾隆癸未冬十一月二十有二日，正值太平盛世，且在衣冠之家，
居蘇州滄浪亭畔，天之厚我，可謂至矣。東坡雲：“事如春夢了無痕”，
苟不記之筆墨，未免有辜彼蒼之厚。

I was born in 1763, under the reign of Ch'ienlung, on the twenty-second day of the eleventh moon. The country was then in the heyday of peace and, moreover, I was born in a scholars' family, living by the side of the Ts'anglang Pavilion in Soochow. So altogether I may say the gods have been unusually kind to me. Su Tungp'o said, "Life is like a spring dream which vanishes without a trace." I should be ungrateful to

³⁵⁰ Lin Yutang, "Preface," xiv.

the gods if I did not try to put my life down on record.³⁵¹

The tone of these lines is indeed ironic and bitter. Shen Fu mentioned here two major elements of his beginning as a literatus: time and space. To be born in a peaceful and prosperous era without terrible wars and famines, and to be born in a family in Suzhou that entitled him the social status of a literati, he considered himself very lucky, therefore wanted to repay the favor of gods by writing his memoir. At the age of about forty-eight, after the death of his wife and his son, after all the years of floating around as a shiye and struggling endlessly in poverty, no matter how lucky or unlucky he was, he was determined to put his life down on record, in order to catch some traces of the dreamlike life before it vanishes completely.

When John Henry Newman (1801-1890) wrote his *Apologia*, he expressed the same feeling as what Li Bai and later Shen Fu wanted to convey: "What a dream is life, the days are come and they are gone;" however, as a Catholic Cardinal, Newman directed his lament of the never coming back time to something quite different: "but, so it is, time is nothing except as the seed of eternity."³⁵² What Newman means by "eternity" belongs to a belief system that was not a part of the Chinese literati tradition. When Chinese literati are dealing with the question of life and death, the general attitude is attuned by Confucius' famous saying: "While you do not know life, how can you know about death 未知生，焉知死?" The perspectives of the Taoists, and

³⁵¹ Ibid., 003-004

³⁵² James Olney, *Metaphors*, 231.

the Chinese Buddhist school Chan Zong 禪宗, or the Zen Buddhists, are also very influential in the Chinese people's view about life and death. The Confucians, concentrated at the cultivation of virtues in order to achieve the benevolence 仁 and righteousness 義, they believed that the human beings could transcend the mortality by the "three things that not decay" (*san buxiu*), meaning to establish oneself by virtue, deeds, and words (*li de* 立德, *li gong* 立功, and *li yan* 立言). In other words, the Confucians believe that even if one is to die physically, one is still able to live by what he can achieve as an "inner sage outer king," meaning to cultivate virtue and character, to govern the state and pacify the world, and to write great literary works with lasting glory.

The Taoists, focused on the harmony between the human and nature, held that the relationship between life and death is relative: they are the same phenomenon in different stages. If one follows the natural order to live and die, then he becomes the part of the Way, Dao, and thus attains his immortality: "Above he seeks delight in the Maker; below, he has a friendly regard to those who consider life and death as having neither beginning nor end 上焉與造物者遊，而下與外死生無終始者為友."³⁵³ The story of Zhuang Zi who sat on the ground and sang songs after the death of his wife exemplifies this kind of "equalizing life and death" (*qi sheng si* 齊生死): death is only the next stage of life, there is nothing to be lamented of. Xu Fuguan maintains that Zhuang Zi transcends the question of life and death by the artistic spirit which is in fact the

³⁵³ Zhuang Zi, "Tianxia pian," <http://ctext.org/>

spirit of the Chinese art.³⁵⁴

As for the Chan Buddhists, everybody has the possibility to become Buddha and immortal, as long as he overcomes his ignorance “worming 無明” and obtains enlightenment. Therefore, it is not necessary to read scriptures, worshipping Buddha, or meditating. In everyday life, one can reach to the realm of enlightenment by doing things such as fetching water or cutting firewood. In the instance of enlightenment, one transcends the limit of life and death and thus becomes the immortal Buddha.

According to Tang Yijie 湯一介, although the three philosophical schools namely the Confucianists, the Taoists, and the Chan Buddhists, differ in what they emphasize, they are in common with one aspect: none of them considers death is something to be deeply mourned for, but all of the three takes great pain when their goal is not reached: for the Confucians, it is the failure of cultivating virtue and morality in order to serve the state and become sages; for the Taoists it is the failure of following the natural order and being harmonious with the Way; and for the Chan Buddhists it is the failure of overcoming one's ignorance and achieve enlightenment.³⁵⁵

There is one thing Tang did not mention when he discussed the common features of the Confucians, the Taoists, and the Chan Buddhists regarding the question of life and death. None of the thinkers of those schools directed their view of the mortality of human beings to religious beliefs, like John Henry

³⁵⁴ Xu Fuguan, *Zhongguo Yishu Jingshen*.

³⁵⁵ Tang Yijie, “Sheng si guan nian,” <http://www.transcultures.org/data/detail.php?id=283>

Newman did as mentioned above. The typical Chinese literati's response to the mortality of the human beings is "this life oriented," thus is more similar to what the ancient Greek aphorism "Know thyself," or what Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) told us, "We must learn to endure what we cannot avoid,"³⁵⁶ that is to say, we must understand our limit as human beings, and we can do nothing but learn to endure the fact: *Memento mori*.

Walter Pater has described the question of life and death with another theater metaphor: "Well! We are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more."³⁵⁷ In the Chinese literary tradition, "life is short 人生苦短," and "our days in life are much shorter than our nights in death 晝短夜長," are the repeating themes in the famous *Nineteen Old Poems* 古詩十九首 written by different anonymous authors during the Eastern Han Dynasty 東漢 (25-220), and echoed again and again in the literary works of the later generations. Take SiKong tu as an example. In his *Twenty-Four Categories of Poetry* 二十四詩品, he named "expansive contentment" (*kuangda* 曠達) as one of the categories in poetry, which can also be considered as a type of philosophy in the question of life and death:

生者百歲，相去幾何。歡樂苦短，憂愁實多。何如尊酒，日往煙蘿。

花覆茆簷，疎雨相過。倒酒既盡，杖藜行歌。孰不有古？南山峨峨。

³⁵⁶ James Olney, *Metaphors*, 66.

³⁵⁷ Iser, *Prospecting*, 203.

Life can be only a hundred years---/How far from that are we now?
/Pleasure and joy are terribly brief; /Far greater is sorrow and melancholy.
/Better, with a goblet of wine, /To go off every day into misty vines; /Or
where flowers shades a roof of thatch /With a light rain passing by.
/When the upturned cap is emptied, /He leans on his staff and goes
singing. /To whom does it not occur? --- /South Mountain towering
high.³⁵⁸

According to Stephen Owen, “it” in the last couplet refers to death, and “South Mountain,” “a traditional emblem of the permanent,” is used to be contrasted with the quick vanishing human life. SiKong tu’s example of the “expansive contentment,” an old reclusive man who went into the thatch trees with a cup of wine and started to sing when the cup was emptied---reminds us of Tao Qian. As it was mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, Tao Qian chose to live a reclusive life and cultivate his true self. During all the years of the poverty-stricken country life, among his pine trees and chrysanthemums, Tao did think thoroughly about the question of the mortal condition of human beings and expressed his thoughts most strongly in the poem “Substance, Shadow, and Spirit” (*xing ying shen* 形影神). The unique poem consists three parts. In the first part the Substance talks to the Shadow, and lamented the mortality of man: unlike the heaven and the earth, mountains and rivers, trees and grasses, man lives only a short while and then all of a sudden disappears without even being noticed. Therefore the Substance suggested drinking wine and indulging oneself in pleasure. The second part is the answer of the Shadow to the Substance. The Shadow did not believe that the wine can

³⁵⁸ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 349.

extinct the fire of man's worry of the mortal reality. The Shadow's solution was to do good deeds so to achieve lasting fame by benevolence. The third part of the poem is the words of the Spirit, who took pity of the short-sighted Substance and Shadow, and told them that the nature was indifferent to old or young, good or bad. Tao Qian was perhaps referring to the notions of Lao Zi in *Dao de jing*, that nature did not take sides. It treated everything like straw dogs, which were made for certain rites in ancient time and was cast away after the ceremony completed 天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗。 Since neither drinking wine nor making good deeds would help to solve the problem, then the only alternative was "plunging oneself into the big wave of nature":

甚念傷吾生。正宜委運去。縱浪大化中。不喜亦不懼。應盡便須盡。
無復獨多慮。

Too many thoughts harm my life. What I should do is to surrender myself to the fate. I plunge myself into the big wave of nature and surf accordingly, without neither happiness nor fear. What has to end must end; one shall never worry too much.³⁵⁹

If what the Substance focused on are mainly human instincts, the bodily desires and ignorance, the Shadow stressed the Confucian virtue and good deeds. The Spirit, by denying what the Substance and the Shadow emphasized, advocated the mixed wisdom of the Taoism and the Buddhism. Casting the desires thus feel neither happiness nor fear, one can follow the natural order and become part of the Dao, the Great Way. Finally, Tao Qian

³⁵⁹ Tao Qian, "Xing ying shen," my translation.

seemed had made peace with all his worries and sorrow regarding the mortal condition.

Much has been said about the literary works of Tao Qian since Su Shi in the Song Dynasty. Su Shi, and all his friends in the Yuanyou 元祐 group in the eleventh century, is the most enthusiastic fan of Tao Qian, especially for Tao's "limpid and calm" poetry and his natural and true personality. Su Shi even believed that Tao Qian was his former incarnation: "*Zhi Yuanming, shi qiansheng* 只淵明，是前生." However, Tao Qian's poetry style is only one of his most important creations. Apart from his poetry style, Tao has at least other three very influential creations: the image of a literati hermit, the Utopian Peach-blossom Spring, and the attitude towards the ever haunting question of mortality. The first two creations have been discussed in the first half of this chapter. The author of this dissertation maintains that the third creation of Tao Qian, the attitude of "plunge into the wave of nature and surf accordingly without neither happiness nor fear," has provided the last fortress for the literati between or after their strides to achieve those "three things that not decay." To put it in another way, if the literati ever fail in their effort to establish themselves by virtue, deeds, and words, they still have one last place to retreat to and to be comforted with: the philosophy of "Let it be."

Before Tao Qian could really surrender himself to the great Way, he wrote down his thoughts in poetry and prose. By doing so, he achieved one of the "three things that not decay": to establish himself by words, therefore to

overcome the limit of human beings. This is the promise of literature, the power of artistic creation. In Gadamer's words,

In fact, our fundamental experience as beings subject to time is that all things escape us, that all the events of our lives fade more and more, so that at best they glow with an almost unreal shimmer in the most distant recollection. But the poem does not fade, for the poetic word brings the transience of time to a standstill. It too "stands written," not as a promise, nor as a pledge, but as a saying where its own presence is in play³⁶⁰.

This is why the dream of creating literary works that would not decay had been in the mentality of the Chinese literati ever since the *san buxiu* was put forward for the first time in *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 in around the fourth century before the Common Era. Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) fully appreciated the power of words and wrote the following words that brought him the lasting fame:

蓋文章經國之大業，不朽之盛事。年壽有時而盡，榮樂止乎其身。二者必至之常期，未若文章之無窮。

I would say that literary works are the supreme achievement in the business of state, a splendor that does not decay. A time will come when a person's life ends; glory and pleasure go no further than this body. To carry both to eternity, there is nothing to compare with the unending permanence of the literary work.³⁶¹

As the crown prince and later the emperor of the Wei Dynasty 魏 (220-266), Cao Pi had access to establish himself by all of the three things that would not decay, but he valued words much more than virtue and deeds, and literati of later generations also weighted his literary works more than his political and military achievements. Cao Pi's words, after almost fourteen centuries, still echoed in the writings of Zhang Dai 張岱 (ca. 1597-1671).

³⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Relevance and the Beautiful*, 114.

³⁶¹ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 68.

Zhang was born in a very prestigious family in the Ming Dynasty, and all his grandfather, father and uncles were top scholar-officials of their time. Before the fall of the Ming into the hand of the Manchu, he lived fifty years of a life full of “splendor and frivolous beauty” with all kinds of luxuries, including beautiful concubines and servants, mentions and gardens, horses and carriages, most expensive clothing, food, wine and so on. However, after the fall of the Ming Dynasty, he lost everything: his state vanished, his family was destroyed, he had nowhere to go, and “nothing for even lighting a cooking fire.” The past fifty years “had become one long dream.” The only reason he did not commit suicide was that the history book he was writing was not yet complete.³⁶² In an old age and living an extreme poor life, he wanted to leave something behind with lasting glory. Laughing at himself for his will for “fame and reputation,” he wrote in the preface of his collected essays *Tao an meng yi* 陶庵夢憶:

因歎慧業文人，名心難化，……則其名根一點，堅固如佛家舍利，劫火猛烈，猶燒之不失也。

Thus I sigh for the compassionate literary man who finds it so hard to change a heart concerned with name and reputation:……the speck of attachment to name and reputation will be as hard and firm as the sari, that jewel the Buddhists speak of found in the ashes of a Buddha, which the fiercest blaze of kalpa fires may burn without destroying.³⁶³

What made Zhang Dai and other literati cling desperately to the name and reputation is the hope to achieve immortality by writing. The wish is so

³⁶² Owen, *Remembrances*, 131-141.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 135.

strong, that nothing can destroy it even the blaze of kalpa fires.

About a hundred years after Zhang Dai, Shen Fu also became the part of the literati tradition and sought immortality by words. To poor literati like Shen Fu, “the traditional Confucian ideal of *zhiguopingtianxia* ([to help]) put the state in good order and pacify the world) was almost entirely irrelevant,”³⁶⁴ therefore he wrote down his life of playing literati with his wife Chen Yun, recording all their happiness, pleasure and sorrow, and created a piece of art work based on his other artistic and literary creations, with the hope that they would not lost in the forever floating time. He succeeded.

Gadamer pointed out that “only with the advent of humanism, as the Middle Ages came to an end, ...stepped the creative artist as an *alter deus*—an ‘other God,’ a kind of second God,”³⁶⁵ because the artist, in his creation, has satisfied his needs to transcend the question of life and death, and therefore substitute the religion with art. According to Xu Fuguan, this is the converging point between religion and art. Xu reached the same conclusion as Gadamer’s “second God” when he was discussing the Chinese artistic spirit represented by Zhuang Zi. Xu stated that Zhuang Zi provided a proof of substituting religion with artistic creation in which the division between life and death is disappeared. In the moment of encountering with the art work, one becomes fulfilled, completed, and eternally existing, therefore transcends all the worries and calculations in daily life, as well as the question of life and

³⁶⁴ Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation*, 29.

³⁶⁵ Richard Palmer, *Gadamer Reader*, 207.

death. When man's deepest request for religion is answered so satisfyingly in art, then art and religion become one. This is why art can substitute religion.³⁶⁶

As a literatus, an artist, a creator, Shen Fu's creation of literati life and *Fusheng liu ji* had provided meaning in his drifting life, and had prolonged the interval before the fall of the endless night. As James Olney believed, any creation, divine, artistic, or individual, "will never to be lost from the sum of the universe," and thus "is forever":

Thus the creative moment, whether God in his world, the poet in his poem, or the individual in his self, is the great, continuing act of love that produces something never to be lost from the sum of the universe. We may not, in our divided state, see as eternity, but any creation, divine, artistic, or individual, as Los informs us in Black's Milton, is forever:

The generations of men run on in the tide of Time, /But leave their destin'd lineaments permanent /for ever & ever.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Xu Fuguan. *Zhongguo Yishu Jingshen*, 97.

³⁶⁷ James Olney, *Metaphors*, 315.

CONCLUSION

Yu Pingbo confessed in 1924 that *Fusheng liu ji* “processed a kind of power that could bewilder its reader 確有迷眩人的魔力。”³⁶⁸ The reception history of *Fusheng liu ji* has partly proved its magic, which needs to be taken more seriously and examined more carefully.

This study has endeavored to provide a more profound and insightful understanding of Shen Fu's *Fusheng liu ji* with a historical perspective and a synchronic context. In order to achieve a historical understanding of the fate of *Fusheng liu ji* in the past two hundred years, this study zoomed in on the case studies of responses from scholar readers of three time periods, namely Wang Tao in the end of nineteenth century, Yu Pingbo and Lin Yutang in the 1920s through 1940s, and Yue Daiyun in the 1980s and after. On the synchronic dimension, this study analyzes three aspects of *Fusheng liu ji*: firstly the gaps in the text; secondly the literati identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and thirdly the lifelong play of literati of the couple. By placing *Fusheng liu ji* in this context, this study hopes to examine closely the literary characteristics of the book, the relationship between self and society in Shen Fu's time, and the Chinese way of living demonstrated by the couple's life.

The reception history of *Fusheng liu ji* illuminated by the case studies of

³⁶⁸ Yu Pingbo, “*Fusheng liu ji xin xu*,” 3.

some scholar readers in chapter two of this study provided three important directions of the current research. Firstly, in comparing the diversified interpretations of the reader in different times exemplified by those scholar readers, the literary characteristics of *Fusheng liu ji* were explored by discussing the gaps existing in the text in the light of Iser's theory. This study maintains that because of the indeterminacy created by those gaps the different understandings of the book have become possible. The identification, location, and analysis of the three types of gaps, namely the structural gaps, the language gaps, and the cultural gaps, can help us to further appreciate the literary achievements of *Fusheng liu ji*, as well as its survival and success. Secondly, in comparing and contrasting the various interpretations of the scholar readers in different times, the question of the literati identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun emerged which leads to the third direction of the current study, i.e., the significance of playing literati.

It is interesting to see that the scholar readers taken as examples in this study were attracted to different aspects of Shen Fu's work under their own historical, social and individual circumstances. For example, Wang Tao emphasized the tragic love story of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, and the self-expressive style of writing of *Fusheng liu ji*. Wang saw his own life with his young wife, drinking tea or wine, under moon or in the company of garden flowers, reflected in the life of Shen Fu and Chen Yun. Echoing Shen Fu's lament that life is a short spring dream, Wang Tao nevertheless allowed

himself to lead a life as one of the “treaty port intellectuals” and established himself through his activities as a translator, a newspaper owner, a reform advocate, and especially through his bold and unbashful political essays and also his autobiographical writings.

Thirty years later, Yu Pingbo was fascinated by *Fusheng liu ji*, the autobiographical work of an unknown literatus, and saw in it the crime and operation of the feudal society and its family ethics, and also the individual’s struggle for rights of love and happiness. On the one hand Yu felt unsatisfied by the size of *Fusheng liu ji* in comparison to the numerous and gigantic Western autobiographies; on the other hand, he was attracted by its structure, its language, and its integrated beauty. His own happy marriage perhaps also provided him an emotional attachment with Shen Fu, though Yu’s life journey, under the political, ideological, and literary conditions during his middle and old ages, was very different comparing to Shen Fu’s. However, in all his writings about *Fusheng liu ji*, he did not mention the couple’s life style or their artistic creations.

Lin Yutang, on the contrary, after studying abroad and returning to China in 1928, believed that the life of Shen Fu and Chen Yun demonstrated the Chinese Taoist wisdom and art of living, which he took as his mission to introduce to the world. Translating *Fusheng liu ji* into English was his most important and fundamental work, because in his opinion, Shen Fu, and especially Chen Yun, exemplified the best spirit of Chinese philosophy,

literature and art, as well as the life (though idealized to a certain extent) of ordinary Chinese man and woman. Later Chen Yun became the prototype of female characters created by Lin Yutang, such as Mulan in *Moment in Peking*. Lin Yutang also expressed his admiration for Shen Fu, for his “spirit of truth and beauty and the genius for resignation and contentment so characteristic of Chinese culture.”³⁶⁹

About half century later, when Yue Daiyun wrote her book in Berkeley, USA as a visiting research fellow, she saw the perfect bearing of suffering and sorrow of Shen Fu as an embarrassing weakness of the intellectuals in the ending years of the imperial China. Without any ambition politically or economically, powerless and hopeless, Shen Fu and his type of literati in the eyes of Yue Daiyun were neither harmful nor useful in the world. Despite acknowledging that Shen Fu resisted the social conventions and authority in his own passive way, Yue pictured Shen Fu as the most negative image in her *Intellectuals in Chinese Fiction*, comparing to such figures as Ji Kang 稽康 (223-262) and Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263) in the Jin Dynasty, or the ambitious and self-sacrificing intellectuals in the beginning of the twentieth century depicted in the works of Lu Ling and Mao Dun, or the Communist intellectuals in the 1950s created by Wang Meng.

However, the readers taken for examples in this study have all attracted to Shen Fu's way to express himself in his memoir, or to put it in another way,

³⁶⁹ Lin Yutang, “Preface,” xiv.

to his way to emancipate his individuality in every possible way he could endeavor--be it the disclosure of his private life, or the individual opinion about people and society, art and literature, or the subtle but still bold way to talk about his big family, and so on. The readers of the aforementioned three periods, especially the readers of the first half of the twentieth-century and that of the 1980s and beyond, were particularly fascinated by the work, because they "were awakened and urged to rediscover themselves and a Chinese culture that is authentic and different from the one estranged in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society or by radical politics."³⁷⁰ Therefore they encountered in Shen Fu's work the *Zeitgeist* and the personality they were looking for. This is probably part of the reason that the memoir is not only survived, but also prosperous continually.

To understand the varieties of the interpretations of *Fusheng liu ji*, this study provided a close reading of Shen Fu's memoir and located three types of gaps in the book, including the functions of these gaps and the reason they exist. The structural gaps provided the reader clues to follow the author and get opportunities to engage with the text to construct their own understanding; the language gaps, consisted of the poetic features of the work and had the reader bewildered with its lasting resonance and charm; the cultural gaps, revealed those unsaid truth and invited the reader to bridge them with their own life experiences and also explore themselves and their societies further.

³⁷⁰ Zeng, personal email.

None of the scholar readers in the case studies seemed to have doubted the literati identity of Shen Fu, or the self identity of Chen Yun, which is that of a certain female literatus based on her ability and knowledge in literature and poetry. By mapping the construction of literati identity of Shen Fu and Chen Yun, this study used the social construction of reality theory of Berger and Luckmann, and explored the functions of some “significant others” in the literati identity constructions of Shen Fu and Chen Yun. If Shen Fu’s father and literati friends played important roles in his construction of the literati identity, Chen Yun had been the most important “significant other” in his construction and maintaining of the literati identity, and vice versa. The separate discussions of what it means to be literati for the couple can lead to a better understanding of why they adhered to the mentality and behavior of literati all their lives. The literati identity provided Shen Fu and Chen Yun with a goal of life and directed their behavior in their daily living: they lived a life playing literati with commitment and dedication to be part-time hermits in nature; to be artists in their small world, or to give a cold-shoulder with the attitude of “amateurs” to other social roles they were assigned to, such as businessman, or good daughter-in-law, and so on. By looking at the artistic way of living of the couple in the light of Gadamer’s idea of “play,” this study paved a new path to understand the weakness and the strength of the couple, as well as the meaning of artistic creation in their life: their daily endeavor to artistic creation and also enjoy their creation. In other words, to become literati is both the

means and the ends. Artistic creation provided meaning other than that from religion, and allowed them to live a short but meaningful life. Therefore eventually they could obtain the attitude described by Tao Qian: "Plunging myself into the big wave of nature and surf accordingly, without neither happiness nor fear 縱浪大化中，不喜亦不懼." In this way they overcome the limit of life and achieved eternity, even only partially.

Are Chinese people, to certain extend, all part-time hermits in nature, artists at home, and amateurs towards some roles in the society, just like Shen Fu and Chen Yun two hundred years ago? This can be a question for further study.

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