

Printing for Pleasure:

Chen Diexian's Literary Enterprise and Popular Magazines in Early 20th Century China

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Abstract

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The thesis focuses on the career and works of Chen Diexian as an entrepreneur and literatus. These works provide a focal point for reflection on the activities of popular writers, publishers, literary magazines, and the business of literature in early 20th Century China. The first chapter examines preceding studies of *The Money Demon*, as well as appreciative poems and prefaces, poem contests, and records of poets. As a more detailed supplement to Michael Hock's theory of "style," it shows how Chen Diexian used poems to form his personal relations and accumulate literary reputation. The second chapter is about the publisher China Library and the correspondence schools for classical literature. Appropriating the theory of "commodifying classical literature," this chapter explores the development of this less known but important

publisher, the designs of its four magazines, and the readership of “Butterfly” literature. The third chapter presents a close reading of *The Money Demon* that illuminates the marginalized status and identity crisis of the “Butterfly” writers. The thesis aims to uncover “hidden” organizations, literary and business activities, and texts in order to further our understanding of “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly Literature”.

Introduction

“Modern” is a catchy term. Ever since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, scholarship on modern Chinese literature has declined to grant “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly Literature” any place in the definition of “the modern” or “modernity.” As a critical rethinking of this grand narrative, it has also been a trend in the academic to recognize and elevate the status of the “Butterfly” literature. Yet little is known about the actual networks and activities categorized under this so-called literary school. This thesis investigates this construct by unravelling Chen Diexian’s career and works. It focuses on the publishers, periodicals, writers, and businesses surrounding him in the first two decades of the 20th century—what I will refer to in the present context as “Early Modern China”. Studies on different periods of Chinese history often attempt to locate the origins of the “modern” within their own era. We might trace it back to the Song dynasty, when bureaucratic institutions for the first time enabled intellectuals to voice dissent without paying with their lives; or back to the Ming dynasty, which witnessed the growth of capitalism and a market economy; or the Qing dynasty, when society experienced profound changes from the time of the Opium War onwards. Mainland Chinese historiography dates the advent of Chinese modernity to May Fourth in 1919, and the birth of modern literature to Lu Xun’s *A Madman’s Diary* in 1918. This grand narrative enshrines May Fourth as an originary point in time, and further draws a congruence between modernity and the West, as well as concepts such as enlightenment, iconoclasm, nationalism, the vernacular, and revolution. It was inevitable that such a narrative would eventually be challenged, particularly by academics in the United States and Taiwan.

The deconstruction of May Fourth narrative in literature can be traced back as early as C. T. Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* in 1961 in which he praises Qian Zhongshu, Eileen Chang and Shen Congwen, as opposed to the literary canon in mainland. Along this line comes with the rewriting of literary history and discussion of modernity. In *Fin-de-siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911*, David Der-wei Wang explore "repressed modernities" in the dimensions of creativity within Chinese literary tradition, the psychological and ideological mechanisms that manipulate writers' perception of modern, and unrecognized genres such as courtesan novels, chivalric and court-case fiction, science fantasy etc. Late Qing and Republican literature appears to be a virgin land and a period that exemplifies "great shift" as well as denouncing the binary narrative of "tradition" to "modern", "old" to "new". Patrick Hanan's essays collected in *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* examine a wide variety of novels in the scope of "intertextuality, imitation, originality and intercultural transmission". In her *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China, 1900-1937*, Lydia He Liu examines how "modernity" and the "West" gain legitimacy in May Fourth literary discourse under the theoretical arch of incommensurability of languages and the process of translating one culture under hypothetical equivalences among languages. Theodore Hutters' *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* probes into intellectual discourses after 1895 on how to accommodate the West in indigenous cultural transformation, with an implication that the May Fourth radicalism left a cultural vacuum by obliterating alternatives of modernity.

"Repressed modernities", with the hope to dismantle the May Fourth grand narrative, becomes an authoritative approach itself in literary criticism. For example, the studies "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies".

“There never was a school of twentieth-century Chinese writers who called themselves the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School, and no single writer has asserted its existence or acknowledged being a member.” Studies on the school never forget to mention this ever since Perry Link’s seminal work *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-century Chinese Cities*. They usually trace the term back to the 1920s and 1930s when it was applied by May Fourth intellectuals as a target to attack in order to establish the canon of modern Chinese literature. This “long-neglected” and despised “school” is important because firstly the writers were popular and their magazines were widely circulated, secondly they reflected the transforming urban life, and thirdly they provide various forms of modernity in literary experiment. Therefore, these studies mainly focus on writers, Shanghai and sentimental writing.

Sentiment, translated from *qing* 情, is structured as part of the narration of “other modernities” against the May Fourth. This discourse first emerged in the criticism of classical literature with the term “lyricism” in Chen Shih-Hsiang’s 陳世驥 article “On Chinese Lyrical Tradition” in 1971. Lyricism, referring to strong personal expression and emphasis on the self and subjectivity, is soon elaborated to cover various art and literary forms over the spans of Chinese culture, as well as devised as a tool to criticize the revolution discourse. Edited by Leo Ou-fan Lee, Jaroslav Průšek’s articles published in 1980 in a collection entitled *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*. The dialectic “lyrical” and “epic”, no matter how exotic or bizarre it may sound, is planted into Chinese literature and developed into an influential stream in the modern context.¹ Lyricism is later used as *shuqing* (抒情) in Chinese,

¹ For example, Ke Qingming (Ko Ch’ing-ming) 柯慶明 and Xiao Chi 蕭馳, eds, *Zhongguo shuqing chuantong de zaifaxian: yige xiandai xueshu sichao de lunwen xuanji* 中國抒情傳統的再發現：一個現代學術思潮的論文選集 (Rediscovering the Chinese lyrical tradition: a critical anthology of a modern intellectual trend) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2009); David Der-wei Wang 王德威, *Xiandai shuqing chuantong silun* 現代抒情傳統四論 (Modern Chinese lyrical tradition: four essays) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2011); Chen Guoqi

invoking tons of discussion and comparison between Chinese and Western poetics. Published in 2015, *The Lyrical in Epic Time – Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949*, David Der-wei Wang discusses lyrical selfhood in Sinophone world under the impact of national crisis as an alternative to understand modernity in political exigency. Chinese lyricism is hence engaged in the “paradigm shift” from New Left theories to “ethical turns”. This “shift” can be discerned in the title of *Revolution of the Heart: A genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* by Haiyan Lee. Published eight years earlier in 2007, with the framework of Michel Foucault’s “genealogy” and Raymond Williams’s “structures of feelings”, the study argues that the discourse of *qing* 情 (feeling, sentiment), nurtured by Confucian, enlightenment and revolutionary structures, is a key trope to imagine a new national community. Late Qing witnessed a flood of writings on *qing*, especially by writers categorized into the “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies”. Also in the attempt to examine how these sentimental writings construct social and political identities for new citizens, an important and main approach by the mainland researchers, is to draw out “new” elements like nationalism as well as “old” forms in storytelling to present the process of “shifting”, rejecting but also embracing and contributing to the “epistemic break” from “tradition” to “modernity”.

The city of Shanghai was the concrete space that once houses this “shift”. Published in 1999, Leo Ou-fan Lee’s *Shanghai Modern: the Flowering of A New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* is a representative work of urban culture in literary study, in which he examines neo-Sensationalist writers in their interaction with the city. Substantial scholarship on Shanghai discusses the construction of urban culture as part of the Chinese experience of modernity in the

陳國球 (K. K. Leonard Chan) and David Der-wei Wang 王德威, eds., *Shuqing zhi xiandaixing* 抒情之現代性 (The modernity of lyricism) (Beijing: Sanlian chubanshe, 2015)

19th and 20th century.² Lives of the city's middle class, or even the emergence and construction of middle class is a vital part of the modernity discussion – not only because they represent the majority of educated Chinese and are considered to be the major force in a modern society, but also because their enormous production in print media makes research possible. Therefore, print culture, a temporary relief from the powerful theoretical approach, becomes a useful tool as well to examine newspapers and magazines. Published in 2001, Denise Gimpel's *Lost Voices of Modernity: A Chinese Popular Fiction Magazine in Context* provides a meticulous example of “descriptive requirements” of studying a journal, and an emphasis on analyzing text in context. Most studies of print culture tend to address materials in perspectives of political and social history.³ Yet another useful direction in print culture for literary studies, especially on writers and editors, is Pierre Bourdieu's “literary field” and cultural production.

Question of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937 by Michel Hockx in 2003 applies “sociology of literature” to discuss the interaction between literary societies and periodicals. “Styles” are created by social implications – writers are defined in literary groups; individual style is bound by a collective will. “Style” is not only a linguistic and aesthetic choice but more about networking, marketing and politics. *Literary Societies of*

² Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: the Flowering of A New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Life in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007); Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, & Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

³ Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: "Shibao" and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872-1912* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asian Center; distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004); Christopher Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese print capitalism, 1876-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Xiaoqing Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2003).

Republican China edited by Kirk Denton and Michel Hockx in 2010 furthers this pursue by trying to offer a comprehensive research. In this sense, literary schools are no longer about features of writing and their corresponding writers, but about social practice. However, when it comes to the “Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly School”, grouped and discussed under this name, these writers and magazines are still trapped in the stagnant water.

Some of these writers are studied individually, if not among the voluminous research on the then “long-neglected” “Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly School” which ultimately leads to the discussion of “repressed modernities”.⁴ These writers are also grouped into the more diverse and loosed Southern Society (*Nanshe* 南社). As personal experience, Zheng Yimei (鄭逸梅) published succinct biographies of them and introductory materials on the society. Fan Boqun (范伯群), as a literary historian for popular literature, in an approach that Hockx tries to abandon, published collection *Libai liu de hudiemeng* 禮拜六的蝴蝶夢 (The Dream of Butterfly for the Saturday School) in which he discusses various styles of the writers in order to differentiate the “Saturday School” from the “Butterfly School”. Chen Jianhua’s (陳建華) collection *Cong geming dao gonghe* 從革命到共和 (From Revolution to Republic) traces the discourse of “revolution” to Zhou Shoujuan (周瘦鵑). Appropriating Habermas’s public sphere, Chen Jianhua shows that Zhou Shoujuan’s *Free Talk* (supplementary of *Shenbao*) and other related

⁴ Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981); *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Essays by Patrick Hanan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). For dissertations on Butterfly fiction and representative writers, see Rey Chow's work on Butterfly fiction (1986), Xueqing Xu's work on short stories by Bao Tianxiao and Zhou Shoujuan (2000), Eileen Chow's study of Zhang Henshui (2000), Jianhua Chen's study of Zhou Shoujuan and the "violet phenomenon" (2002), and Dongming Zhang's study of modern Chinese popular fiction (2005).

publications play an important role in shaping the political and cultural shift. Another writer that attracts attention is Chen Diexian (陳蝶仙). With the translation of *The Money Demon*, Hanan's article in 2000 studies Chen Diexian's romantic writing as the culmination of an autobiographical trend in the Chinese novel. Published in 2015 in the collection *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia*, Eugenia Lean's article "The Butterfly Mark: Chen Diexian, His brand, and Cultural Entrepreneurism in Republican China" analyzes Chen Diexian's multiple identities in literature, industry and science and his building of cultural entrepreneurism in Republican China.

This thesis examines the publishing history, relations among writers, and the business of literature in 1910s. The first Chapter talks about how Chen Diexian accumulated relations in literary circle and broke into the Shanghai market. I would try to avoid the oversimplified term "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School" and analyze these writers' activities and interaction through Chen Diexian's life stories, the derivations of *The Money Demon*, and his early business in literature. The second Chapter follows the theory of "commodifying classical literature" to analyze two interesting organizations that were in the center of these writers. The China Library housed writers who published entertaining literary and classical magazines, and had a close relation with *Shenbao*. Correspondence schools that aimed to teach how to write classical poems, lyrics and drama also reflected the interaction between writers and readers. These first two chapters also take advantage of the lists of subscribers and students to examine readership of literary magazines. The study of readership has been a difficult subject because there are hardly any direct records, and most of the studies were done based on the advertisement and decorations of the magazine. The third chapter examines the themes of sentiment and money to understand the bewilderment and identity crisis that the "middlebrow" literati shared at the time. It explores

the theory of “style” that incorporated literary activities, magazine design, life style and literary societies.

1. Stories and Friends

- 1.1. Circulation of the Stories

In 1914, *The Money Demon* was published in book form in Shanghai, almost twenty years after its original autobiographical stories being circulated in the publishing market and the literary circle. The publication was significant in Chen Diexian’s career path in a way that it signified his official entrance into the Shanghai book market. The novel in three volumes was an interesting materialized form that encapsulated traits and nodes of its circulation routes. The book was published by the China Library in the year after it announced its expansion in business. The preface was an ink-wash painting created by Chen Diexian a decade ago when he was writing the other semi-autobiographical novel. A collection of appreciative poems on the novel by other literati can also be found in the appendix. The postface was a short literary history of the novel by Chen Diexian’s friend Zhou Baihua (周拜花). These fragments will help piece together a more complete picture of how a scholar gained his esteemed literary status and how his name and work became popular in Shanghai.

In “The Autobiographical Romance of Chen Diexian” and the introduction to his translation of *The Money Demon*, Patrick Hanan traced Chen Diexian’s life and his works in chronological order, and did a sophisticated comparison among them in terms of Chen Diexian’s romance in real life.⁵ Chen Diexian focused in romance and composed in different literary forms including novel, opera and poetry. *The Money Demon* is considered to be an “autobiographical

⁵ Chen Diexian remained prolific until around 1917 and 1918 when he went into business and chemical industry, and also when he “ran out of stories” because he did not have romantic relationships with ladies anymore, as Hanan teased at the end of his essay.

romance” by Hanan because of its proximity to Chen Diexian’s real life. Yet what perceived as “autobiography” was manufactured at the time by the author and his inner circle through commentaries, prefaces and poems. Moreover, the main female characters in his romance were made to be seen in literary magazines by having their poems published. Characters from the story got plenty of exposure in the public sphere and yet maintained a certain distance to readers because the stories were known to only closed friends, who also wrote appreciative poems to confirm and retell the romance. It is a carefully designed scheme.

Taohuameng tanci (*Peach Blossom Dream* 桃花夢彈詞)

Taohuameng tanci (*Peach Blossom Dream* 桃花夢彈詞) was an opera in 16 acts written in 1896. It was the earliest elaborate work that depicted Chen Diexian’s youth life and tragic love stories.⁶ The opera was considered to be “premature” by Chen Diexian himself, and as a preceded work that served as a practice to the later “family and love” odyssey.⁷ The prototype of his classic romance was created.

In *Peach Blossom Dream*, the young scholar Qin Baozhu(秦寶珠) was born in an official family. His orphan cousin Hua Wanxiang(花婉香) visited and lived with his family for a short period of time. Baozhu and Wanxiang fell in love with each other. Yet Wanxiang was already promised to another and was forced to leave to get married. Baozhu was so sad that he coughed up blood and became sick in bed for half year. After hearing different sources of unconfirmed information about Wanxiang’s getting married, he set out to look for Wanxiang but he could not

⁶ Parick Hanan, “The Autobiographical Romance of Chen Diexian”, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 202.

⁷ Zuo Pengjun 左彭軍, “Chenxu chuanqi chuanguo jiqi xiangguan shishi kaoshu” 陳栩傳奇創作及相關史實考述, *Shehui kexue* 1 (2014): 177-178.

find her. His condition worsened over time, and he tried to resolve his feelings by indulging in writing.

This is the core of all of Chen Diexian's romance - his unsettled issue with his cousin, which later developed into the girl who looked like his cousin and lived nearby in *The Money Demon*. In a later edited version (published in 1914 on Youxi zazhi) which I will examine in the following, the names of the personae were changed to real names - Baozhu being Chen Diexian, and Wanxiang being Gu Yinglian(顾影怜). The intention of writing an autobiographical romance could not have been more explicit.

This short excerpt of his life resembles a famous plot in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the classic exemplar of literati romance in the form of novel.⁸ In this novel, Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉) and his cousin Lin Daiyu (林黛玉) has a similar love tragedy. Daiyu's parents died when she was young. She moved to live with her grandmother as well as her cousins including Baoyu. Daiyu was portrayed as a talented and melancholy lady who composed fine poems and fell in love with Baoyu. Yet because of the family's instruction, they did not end up together. Baoyu fell sick for long because of sadness. On the night of Baoyu's wedding, Daiyu coughed up blood and passed away.

Chen Diexian wove his own life into the plot and assigned himself his own destiny, and identified himself with characters in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. His love story always begins with his cousin's visit and ends with a tragic departure. On one hand, setting his story in the context of a famous tragedy helps branding his own creation and images. It invokes predisposition of the characters and the literary history of classical romances. On the other hand,

⁸ A traditional Chinese novel, or what roughly translated as "chapter novel". A lot of discussions have been done on the term *xiaoshuo* (小说) - its etymology and its relationship with the western "novel". I would use the term "novel" loosely in this article to refer to the "chapter novel"

his characters are destined to tragedy. He has to follow the plot written out for him long before he started writing. *Peach Blossom Dream* sketched a plot for Chen Diexian's life. On paper, he relived the same story over and over by writing different version of the same plot. He enacted his own play with his lovers and successfully sold the seat. For all his later creations, the stories based on more or less the same plot. It is as if Chen Diexian created the illusion that his life was trapped in the plot. The world for the old style scholar came into stall so he had to find explanations in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. He wrote his stories by following the premeditated plot, as if he was assigning meaning to his destiny. Just as he commented on his first long novel based on the similar plot two years later in the preface of *Destiny of Tears*:

“旁人道似紅樓夢，我本紅樓夢中人。”

“People say that my book resembles the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Yet I am originally from the *Dream of the Red Chamber*.”

In an era when people were craving for novel science fiction and unravelling detective stories, writing a narrative that mirrors Baoyu and Daiyu's story was as hackneyed as it could be. Yet Chen Diexian cleverly shifted the narrative to be about his life experience as an “old style” scholar dealing with pressure from family and the ever changing new society. This feeling of nostalgia of a “purer time” and lack of control resonates with scholars facing the same predicament at the time. In *The Money Demon* and writings of Chen Diexian and writers from his circle, one of the recurrent themes is the infiltration of monetary system, migration from small rural towns to Shanghai and the “evil power” of money over scholars and lovers. The publication of *Peach Blossom Dream* also reflects the endorsement Chen Diexian got when he started his literary career and his inner circle of friends and writers. Since it was an opera, it was presented as a collective work: “comments are by Hua Chishi, lyrics are by Chen Diexian,

rhythms are by Huang Xiaoqiu, and it is edited by He Songhua.” He also appended appreciative poems from 10 other writers, including his wife Zhu Shu(朱恕) and his cousin, the protagonist from the opera Gu Yinglian.⁹ Having the female protagonist published her poems was another interesting touch that serves to bring Gu Yinglian to life - she was a talented lady just like Daiyu. She was in the story, but also jumped out of the book at the end to comment on her own romance. Before becoming a famed literati in Shanghai, Chen Diexian befriended writers in the southern area¹⁰ and presented himself with his congenial writer friends and his talented lovers.

Another interesting phenomenon reflected by *Peach Blossom Dream* is how the opera got published. Chen Diexian worked as an editor and writer for *Daguan bao* (Grand view 大觀報) from 1895 to 1901. He had *Daguan bao* published several of his works as monograph. Usually, a newspaper had its own printing house. By working as an editor, he gained access to its resources and relations, and hence more easily had his works published. So when he changed to a new magazine, his works would be printed by a different publishing house. This came across his literary career until he created his magazine and had his own printing machine in 1918. But in his early years, it is clear that for a writer with limited background and resources in the publishing business, becoming a major editor of a newspaper can help having his own work printed and published in book form.

Leizhu yuan(*Destiny of Tears* 淚珠緣)

⁹ Zuo Pengjun 左彭軍, “Chenxu chuanqi chuanguo jiqi xiangguan shishi kaoshu” 陳栩傳奇創作及相關史實考述, *Shehui kexue* 1 (2014): 177.

¹⁰ By “southern area”, I refer to cities and towns in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Province, as these areas are the hometown to members to the Southern Society(南社). It is worth noted that these literati are mostly from small towns instead of the big city Shanghai. In traditional China, the true value of literature and major force of literary circle resides in towns, not in the big city. Cities are considered tacky and superficial.

In 1898, when Chen Diexian was 19 years old, he wrote *Leizhu yuan* (*Destiny of Tears* 淚珠緣). Among his early works, *Destiny of Tears* was the most influential one and 5000 copies of the book were published. It was a novel that set the basic tone and framework for *The Money Demon*. And it also established Chen Diexian's image as a melancholic scholar with extensive love from the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The postface of *The Money Demon* begins by recognizing this image:

“My old friend Chen Diexian profited from writing romance even when he was very young. Twenty years ago, by imitating *Dream of the Red Chamber*, he wrote *Destiny of Tears* based on the happiness and sorrow of family affairs. The book was once popular. Yet it was full of idealistic embellishment of stories. It was half true and half false.”

Destiny of Tears was far more elaborate and complete than the first few operas that he wrote. And it made explicit connections to *Dream of the Red Chamber* not only through a simple plot and minimal characters, but also through a thorough imitation on the artistic form of the classic. *Destiny of Tears* is an extensive novel with 96 chapters,¹¹ aiming to emulate *Dream of the Red Chamber*.¹² The moment the reader started reading *Destiny of Tears*, they would find themselves with an opening that they are most acquainted with - a dream. The author played with different layers of realities, a very common technique used in traditional novels. At the beginning of *Destiny of Tears*, a scholar fell asleep and found himself in a sophisticated garden. He led himself through the hallways and ended up outside the window of a study. He peeked through the bamboo curtain and incense smoke, and saw a delicate lady practicing calligraphy of *Ode of the Goddess of Luo River*. Following a sudden clink sound, he saw a young man sitting up on the

¹¹ Hanan's informative article examined different versions and editions of *Leizhu yuan*.

¹² Quite a few studies have been done on the comparison between *Leizhu yuan* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, majorly because of the studies on the latter work are enormous, just as awe-inspiringly massive as the amount of researches on Lu Xun.

other side of the room. The refined young man was in an embroidered jacket and wearing a pair of jade butterflies on his neck. Then the scholar tripped himself in the dream and fell back to reality. The intersection of dream and reality sets the novel off with a “half true and half false” world.

Despite using the omnipresent and all-knowing narrator throughout the novel, this dream was depicted in the perspective of the scholar with great details. He led us through the labyrinth and directed our sight. The dream involved all kinds of human senses - myriad of colors, smell of the fragrance, clink of jade - attempting to make it more real. And from the experience of reading *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the readers would have to assume the dream was real and decipher all its implications. This snippet of describing a dream also reflects the fondness of sophisticated objects and the minute details on decorations, which was evidently an imitation of the language of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. As Hanan pointed out, Chen Diexian owes his romanticism from Chinese traditional novels since *Destiny of Tears* was published before the flood of translating novels from West and Japan.¹³

Yet different from all the other traditional romances, Chen Diexian stood out by avidly building his own personal brand - the butterfly image. “Butterfly”, the meaning of his pen name, was a recurring theme in his works and a symbol that signified himself. In the dream depicted in the opening of *Destiny of Tears*, the young man was wearing a pair of jade butterflies on his neck, similar to the Tongling Jade that Jia Baoyu was wearing in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The nativity story of the jade butterflies was revealed later in the book. It was from another dream that the young man’s mother had when she was pregnant with him. She dreamt that a pair of butterflies flied into her bosom. Reaching out to catch the butterflies, she found a pearl in her

¹³ Patrick Hanan, “Introduction,” *The Money Demon* (University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 8

hand. She gave birth right after she woke up from the dream. With a simple or even clumsy stroke, Chen Diexian urgently threw in all the necessary elements into the dream to overlap himself with the young man in *Destiny of Tears*, and with Jia Baoyu in *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Meticulous comparisons have been made between these two works by Chinese scholars from different angles, most of which focused on their literary values, aesthetics, characters, structures and storylines. One representative study is by Fan Boqun. Fan analyzed *Destiny of Tears* in terms of its value in the grand narrative of history of modern Chinese literature. According to Fan, Chen Diexian not only emulated the artistic achievement of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, but also broke the ice of the long-time imitation of the former classic in romance writing and started a new trend with his particular touch to address problems in clan and society.¹⁴

Unravelling conundrums of society became Chen Diexian's characteristic approach of writing about his life. *Destiny of Tears* distinguished itself from other romances with its extensive description about the financial situation that led the big clan to crash. Chen Diexian would go into scrupulous details about how the household spent and managed money. On the surface, it was the luxurious goods, extravagant lifestyle, coveting families' plotting against each other that caused the collapse of the family.¹⁵ Yet Chen Diexian went in depth to unveil the despair caused by money. No one in the household commanded the skill nor the ability to maintain the family business and save the clan from worsening the debts. Chen Diexian laid out the monetary leads that reflected the process of how money dominated people and pushed them

¹⁴ Fan Boqun 範伯群, *Zhongguo jinxindai tongsu wenxue shi* 中國近現代通俗文學史 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 249.

¹⁵ Fan Boqun 範伯群, *Zhongguo jinxindai tongsu wenxue shi* 中國近現代通俗文學史 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 247-251.

onto a irreversible path of doom. It culminated in the last will of the patriarch of the family, the only person in the family who had a clear grasp on the irreparable deficit situation:

“予家自文勝公以後，生齒日增，家用浩大，已成不可收拾之勢。萬豐資本，不過百萬，按之實在，早已支用一空。”¹⁶

“Since the time of Duke Wensheng, our household has more and more mouths to feed. The expense is so huge that it became uncontrollable. The house capital once had almost a million tael, right now was actually used up already.”

As opposed to *Dream of the Red Chamber* which shows a household collapsed because of the political persecution of the court, *Destiny of Tears* shows that a prominent family could perish solely because of its own internal conflicts and dreadful financial situation.¹⁷ It might seem unusual that a literati like Chen Diexian would go into such details to talk about money: the numbers of spending and earning, calculation and bookkeeping. This excessive account of monetary issues represents an important shift in his writing: from attributing the tragedy to the unpredictable fate, to reasoning his stories with the foreseeable trend in society. He was once following the life trajectory of a traditional scholar, selected by the Imperial Examination and on his way to government posts. The abolishment of the examination system and the rise of trading and business gradually drove this once prominent group of scholars to the status of being marginal and irrelevant. Feeling prosecuted by money is another recurrent theme in this group of writers. In 1915, when this story began to serialize in *Shenbao*, the original title of the novel was “The Real Destiny of Tears” - as the real version of *Destiny of Tears*. But as Chen Diexian said in the preface of the book, he realized all the tragedies happened in his life because of the control

¹⁶ *Destiny of Tears, Leizhu yuan* 淚珠緣, Chapter 86.

¹⁷ Hu Chunyan 胡淳艷, “Wo ben hongloulou meng li ren” 我本紅樓夢裏人, *Hongloulou meng xuekan* 3 (2012): 230.

of money over people. He then edited the novel and changed the title to *The Money Demon*. This resonated with a large number of people in his group. In some way, it explained a lot of career choices he made: setting up publishing company, working for newspaper, opening up his own shops and factories. He seemed strayed. Yet it was the realization of his novel all along. The shift from literature to business was not only a choice of career to him, but an answer to all the repetitive tragedies and to live the plot and rebuild his identity. It was realized in a sad tone but presented in a poetic way.

1.2. Friends and Circle

Daguan bao (the *Grand View*) published parts of the *Destiny of Tears* in 1900. Seven years later in 1907, the rest of the novel was published by *Cuili* (Extracting Profit 萃利) Company, which was found and run by Chen Diexian himself.¹⁸ It was the modern publish industry that made it possible for the writer and his close friends to comment on the work repeatedly, which served as a useful method for the dissemination of the story and a propaganda tool that showcase the interaction among popular writers. Writing appreciative poems was by no means original. In fact, it is a common practice among literati in ancient China. Yet Chen Diexian was characteristic in collecting a large number of poems and printed them with the original work, especially the poems created by writers who have their corresponding characters in the romance. And because of the importation of printing technology, the cost of opening up a publication house and producing voluminous copies was greatly reduced, which makes it possible to print books just for “pleasure”, not for utility nor large margin of profit. Before 1913, Chen Diexian mainly worked with local printing house in the Hangzhou area and spent his own

¹⁸ Huang Jinzhu 黃錦珠, “Lun qingmo minchu yanqing xiaoshuo de zhibian yu fazhan” 論清末民初言情小說的質變與發展, *Mingqing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 1 (2002): 209.

money to get his works published. In this early period, publishing books, or fragments of a book, for Chen Diexian was a noble and entertaining cause. It was associated with all kinds of traditional literary activities, making his love stories a kind of high literature. Through these activities, we can catch a glimpse of his inner circles and the way he worked with small publishers. In this section, I will explore the literary games they played over the years around Chen Diexian's *Destiny of Tears* and *The Money Demon*. The practice takes in three forms: writing poems and comments in the preface and postface of the books, Chen Diexian arranging contests for people to compose inscription poems, and composing under the rhymes or tunes of other current works.

As opposed to his later fame in romance novels, Chen Diexian was famous for his poems and dramas in the literary circle. In the first issue of *Zhuzuo lin* (著作林 *Forest of Writing*) in 1906, he was introduced as one of the two main editors for this literary magazine. His photo, along with a teasing snippet about his literati persona was printed on the first page of the magazine:



“香港一枝蘭，浙江一隻蝶，蘭年XXX，蝶年二十七，蘭擅文章，蝶詞曲均有等身大著作，天之未喪斯文也，將以二公為木鐸。乙巳冬。日櫻川三郎題。”

“There is an orchid from Hong Kong, and a butterfly from Zhejiang. The orchid is age XXX years old, the butterfly is twenty-seven. The orchid is good as writing essay, while the butterfly is prolific in lyric poems and dramas. While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, we will follow these two masters as teachers. In the winter of 1906, inscribed by Sakuragawa Saburo.”

The works published by *Forest of Writing* were all classical writings. In the context of the incoming of “new literature”, the purpose of *Forest of Writing* was to “protect the essence of Chinese literature” as proclaimed in the statement of the magazine.¹⁹ With the feminine and witty pen name “butterfly”, Chen Diexian was described as “a butterfly from Zhejiang”. Contrary to the amusing tone when referring to the two main editors as “a butterfly” and “an orchid”, they were regarded as the teacher who can move and enlighten the common people. It seems that the magazine was not only to protect classical literature, but also to educate and lead people through chaos and confusion.

In a later issue of *Forest of Writing*, under the section of “appreciating ancient and current poems and dramas”, Chen Diexian talked about his soliciting inscription for his work.²⁰ In the spring of 1905, he painted the scene where the two lovers in the novel were reunited in the Koto’s house. He started the poem game and solicited works to inscribe on the painting. According to him, while over a hundred people submitted their compositions, only very few of which were *ci* poems and dramas. Then he went on to comment on several contemporary works

¹⁹ “Zhuzuo lin shezhang” 著作林社章, *Zhuzuo lin*, issue 21.

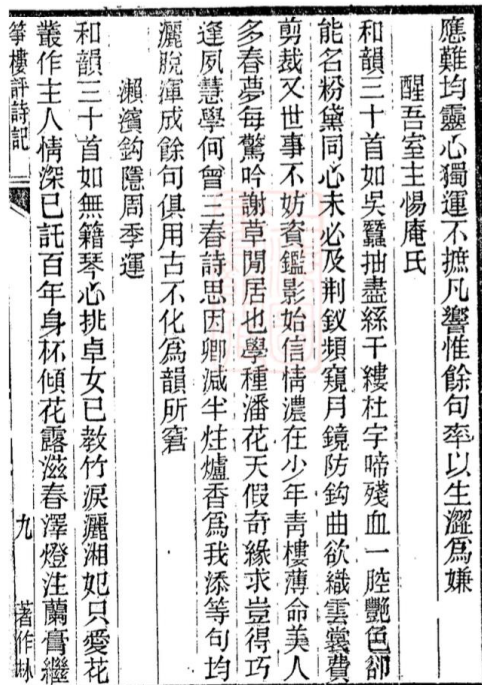
²⁰ “Gujin ciqu pin juan zhi wu” 古今詞曲品卷之五, *Zhuzuo lin*, issue 13.

of the genre, and the specific aesthetic standard of *ci* poem and Yuan drama. In another issue of *Forest of Writing*, Chen Diexian gave a more detailed account of the event.²¹ In the winter of 1903, he painted the scene of “Farewell with Tears at Koto’s House” and solicited works, which was a sensation at that time. Among the works, it was one Scholar Li from Hefei who won the championship. Scholar Li wrote a group of 30 poems in eight-line regulated verse form, following all the prescribed level rhymes. In the summer of 1905, Chen Diexian painted the scene of them reuniting in *The Koto Story*. This time, he also wrote a group of 30 poems following the verse form and rhymes of those by Scholar Li two years ago, and have them published in his new collection of poems. Because of this, the poem game became popular once again and voluminous works in different forms were sent to Chen Diexian. Following this introduction in the *Forest of Writing* was Chen Diexian’s analysis and comment on these works. He would comment on one group of poems by one specific author in a paragraph each time. He would also quoted some of the lines of the submitted poems. In this way, he went over the works author by author, grouping his analysis under the section “Commentary on the Poems of the Koto Story”, which usually took up dozens of pages in one issue of *Forest of Writing*. The comment was written with classical Chinese in a plain and vernacular style. He wrote as if he was mentoring people on how to write a poem, covering technical aspects like rhymes, vocabularies, relations to the painting, as well as aesthetic elements like language, philosophical depth, expressing emotions.

There were three effects of this event and the published commentary by Chen Diexian. Firstly, in the background of calling for vernacular Chinese and popular literature, writing classical poems, once a respected and highly-valued skill, was now in decline. Chen Diexian was

²¹ “Zhenglou pingshi ji” 箏樓評詩記, *Zhuzuo lin*, issue 2.

finding a way to breath new life into composing classical poems, presenting it as a popular, tangible skill that could be practiced. As opposed to the “new poem”, Chen Diexian stressed the rules and techniques in composing, especially on using appropriate rhymes. Secondly, the assessment of poems conveys a diverse artistic taste. The ample quoted lines that were deemed worthy of mentioning, were not just those crafted with flowery allusions or embroidery language, as the hackneyed impression of “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School”. More often than not, the commentary followed would be criticizing the rigid restrictions, and compare them on how to balance the standard techniques with natural poetic expression. Chen Diexian’s evaluation was also perceived as a clear authoritative judgement as in what the aesthetic standards should be. In the next couple of years, Chen Diexian founded a correspondence school to teach common people how to write poems. The above two aspects of the poem game can be viewed as the foreshadowing of his literary education enterprise. Thirdly, the submitted poems were mostly by literati in the Hangzhou and Zhejiang area, a region that was traditionally renowned for its talents in literature and has been exporting writers and editors to the booming book marketing in the neighbouring Shanghai. Chen Diexian was gaining his reputation in this circle, as well as building the network necessary for entering the Shanghai market. In fact, Chen Diexian met Wang Dungen, the editor of *Shenbao*, in the occasion of composing and discussing poems.



(“Record of Appreciating Poems in Koto’s

House” in *Forest of Writing*, issue 2, 1914)

This is a short example of Chen Diexian’s commentary with part of the submitted poems. The author was listed as “Ti’an shi” (楊庵氏), whose original name was Wang Zuxi (王祖錫 1858 - 1908). Wang was a scholar from Zhejiang and he was an expert in appraising calligraphy and painting. Interestingly, just as many of the literati who participated in the poem game, Wang was not listed in any of the “Mandarin and Butterfly School” materials. As opposed to their “immigrants” counterpart in Shanghai, these literati resided outside the city and thus a less known and represented group. It was a transition period for the Chinese society, in which the respected and incorrupt intellectual, and hence the true value of literature, was still considered to be found in the countryside, not in the city. Chen Diexian’s fame as an indigenous literatus among this group could be a solid foundation for his later literary career in Shanghai.

In late Qing period, an admiration for a strictly rhymed and abstruse style of classical Chinese surged, which was later simplified as a target - “old literature”. Wang Zuxi’s section did

not entirely reflect the representative style of the time. Take the first poem in this commentary for example:

“吳蠶抽盡絲千縷，杜宇啼殘血一腔。
艷色卻能名粉黛，同心未必及荆釵。
頻窺月鏡防鈎曲，欲織雲裳費剪裁。”

“Silkworms from the Wu area spin thousands threads of silk,
Cuckoo cries and coughs up blood.
Her beauty distinguishes among lades,
Yet her heart is not as loyal as Jingchai.
Peeking into the mirror made of white stone in case I got old,
Wanting to weave from cloud yet tired of the work.”

The “silkworms from the Wu area” and the “cuckoo cries and coughs up blood” were classic allusions to evoke sadness. Moreover, reading the first two lines together, the works by a specific Tang dynasty poet Li Shangyin (李商隱 813 - 858) would stick out amongst poems that used the allusions. Li Shangyin was famous for his quest of pure beauty in poem, his aesthetically pleasing but difficult language, and the melancholy expression of love. Wang Zuxi drew from two of his most famous poems:

“春蠶到死絲方盡，蠟炬成灰淚始乾。”

“Only when the spring worm died would I stop missing you,
Only when the candle burned into dust would my tears dry.” (From *Untitled* by Li Shangyin)

“莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶，望帝春心托杜鵑。”

“Zhuangzi lost himself in the butterfly dream,

King Wang hoped for spring in cuckoo's crying." (From *Zither* by Li Shangyin)

The theme of unyielding quest for love and exhausted effort denoted by Li Shangyin's poems, aptly fitted into Chen Diexian's painting and the *Koto Story*. The two lovers, namely Chen Diexian and Koto (or his cousin) reunited at Koto's house after years of parting. At this time, they were both married to someone else. The reference to Li Shangyin not only represented an aesthetic choice of embroidery language, but also signified the excruciating process of their romance. The allusion of Jingchai in the fourth line was also related to the plot of Chen Diexian's romance. Jingchai was a Southern drama that depicted the love story of a determined couple who were extremely loyal to each other and gave up wealth, fame, career and even life for love. The lovers ended up together after great ordeals. Wang Zuxi used this in his poem to insinuate the different resolutions and endings in Chen Diexian's story.

The listed poem showed Wang Zuxi's predilection in using allusions heavily, which probably reflected that he was well educated in classical literature even though he was not a poet. Aside from the allusions, the language of the poem was simple and fairly casual. Chen Diexian's criticism complimented on this poem as "free and effortless", but the rest were "too rigid in applying allusions and confined by the rhymes".

As Patrick Hanan pointed out, Chen Diexian did these paintings and the subsequent poem solicitation in accordance to the timeline of his life events, basically the incidents that he regarded as some crisis or turning point of his stories.²² He maximized the theatricality of his life and cleverly exploited it to nurture his network and popularity. His literary journal *Forest of Writing* was also designed to cater for this interest. Unlike most of the literary journals at the time, *Forest of Writing* did not focus on writing novels. Instead, it published poetry and drama,

²² Patrick Hanan, "Introduction," *The Money Demon* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 5.

which established Chen Diexian's unique area of writing, as well as satisfied the need of relating one's root and identity to Chinese traditional culture and literati practices.

In 1900, *Destiny of Tears* was first published in Hangzhou. The first edition of the book included only 16 chapters of the stories.²³ Four poets wrote inscription poems to the book. They were He Chunmao (何春楸), Zhao Zuzhang (趙組章), Chen Diexian himself, and Zhu Suxian (朱素仙), all came from the city of Hangzhou. Each of the former three poets wrote four poems, while Zhu Suxian wrote seven. Still restricted to Chen Diexian's inner circle and in a much less scale, the inscription poems was like the prototype of the later poem games. Published along with the book, their poems were very similar in style: plain language and reference to the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Interestingly, one of the poet Zhu Suxian was Chen Diexian's wife, who was also a persona in the novel. She too weeped for the unfulfilled love of the couple, and did not bother by the fact that her husband was longing for Koto:

“浪說紅樓跡已陳，絳珠依舊謫紅塵。

夜來警幻查仙籍，離恨天下少几人？”

“It is hackneyed to reckless telling the *Red Chamber* story,

The immortal Xiangzhu is still banished into the mortal world.

Late into the night, the immortal Jinghuan checks the Registry,

How many less of the longing couple.”

This poem was a mere reiteration of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which aptly reflected Chen Diexian's theme of writing at the time: sentiment (*qing* 情). Just like all of the other poems in this first edition, it focused only on the main storyline. But Chen Diexian

²³ Lin Chen 林辰, “Leizhuyuan xiaokao” 淚珠緣小考, *Zhongguo guben xiaoshuo*, 755.

probably discovered how he could effectively utilize poems at this point. The later poem games in 1903 and 1905 enjoyed a much publicity, even though they are more or less the rumination of his adolescence romance.

His early literary works were published by two literary journals: the *Grand View* and the *Forest of Writing*. These two short-lived magazines were basically funded and found by Chen Diexian himself, which led him severely in debt. He was simply printing for pleasure. Though successfully accumulated fame as a talented young poet and extensive friendships in the literary circle, his influence was still confined in the Hangzhou area since his magazines did not have a nationwide circulation network. He was so poor that he had to take up official post and gave up his magazines. The old Hangzhou did not have the soil to support the traditional literati practices anymore. To continue his literary career, Chen Diexian needed to find the necessary stepping stones.

1.3. Breaking into Shanghai

A further glance into Chen Diexian's circle before he embarked on the trip to Shanghai provides a more substantial picture of his influence in the Hangzhou area. Chen Diexian published a collection of information on the poem contributors to the magazine at the end of some of the *Forest of Writing*. This section was named "The General Chart of Poets" (*Shijia yilan biao* 詩家一覽表). Each entry recorded the poet's name, style name and the address:

詩家一覽表		丙午春季調查	天虛我生編
姓氏	別號	住址	
潘蘭史	獨立山人	香港中環華字日報館	
周品珊	病鴛	上海迎春坊笑林報館	
楊古韞	蘇盒	新昌縣署	
李仲都	花信樓主	金華水利分府	
李可亭	宜春館主	安慶南水關工賑捐局	
孫芸伯	百花社主	金陵坊口大街億泰和布莊	
孫濬源	白門瘦鶴	同上芸伯之哲嗣	
徐冠羣	澹廬	南通州城內寺街	
孫次青	世上餘人	皖省西門外同康錢莊	

(From *Forest of Writing*, issue 1, 1914)

As listed, the “investigation” was done in the spring of 1906. They were people who submitted poems to the *Forest of Writing*. Though some contributors were known as writer, like Li Hanqiu (李涵秋), Wang Enfu (王恩甫) etc, most of the names were less known and not studied. The diversity of the poets was shown by the listed address. Some of them worked for newspapers - the new vocation for literati, but it did not seem to be the majority. Lots of them worked at a bank or a school. An non-exhaustive list of organizations include the navy, conservancy bureau, shops, universities, translation bureau, post office etc. Quite a number of the address were only street or alley name - probably their home address. With a superficial glance, most of them came from Zhejiang and Jiangsu Province. A few of them were from the neighbouring Anhui Province and big cities like Shanghai and Hong Kong. I was tempted to assume that these contributors once received ample traditional literary education since their poems were accepted and published by *Forest of Writing*. They probably took up different

occupations because the Imperial Examination was abolished. A more detailed record in the later issues of *Forest of Writing* substantiated this assumption.

The above “General Chart of Poets” was published separately at the end of the first four issues and the seventh issue of the *Forest of Writing*, and then it stopped. It resumed under the name “The Record of Fellow-members of Poetry” (*Shijie tongren lu* 詩界同人錄) and published from the 18th issue to the 22nd issue. In the 18th issue, Chen Diexian explained briefly the Record, and called these poets “fellow-members”, a gesture that indicates his intention of considering them as incircle members. The Record was more than just listing, but included snippets of introduction of the poet. It showed that most of them did take the Imperial Examination on different levels and some were still working for the government. Though coming from different organizations, they were addressed as *gongsheng* 貢生, *fusheng* 附生, *lin'gongsheng* 廩貢生, *jiansheng* 監生, *juren* 舉人, *jinshi* 進士 etc, which were different names for scholars completing different levels of Imperial Examination. Following is a sample snippet of the Record:

“李丙榮，字欣然，號樹人，丹徒附貢，法政學堂畢業生，安徽候補縣丞，住安慶習藝工廠。”²⁴

“Li Bing, whose style name is Xinran and etiquette name Shuren, is a *fugong* scholar from Dantu. He is a graduate of the Law and Politics Academy. Right now he is the alternative magistrate for Anhui, living in the Xiyi Factory of Anhui.”

This was the literary circle Chen Diexian had accumulated through poetry before he moved on to the Shanghai market. Michel Hockx redefined the term “style”, which not only

²⁴ *Zhuzuo lin*, issue 21.

includes writing style but also style of life, organization and publication. These poets shared a background in the Imperial Examination system, which once propelled them to study ancient literature to acquire official posts. Even though the skill was gradually rendered useless, it still shaped their identity and became part of their life. Writing appreciative poems for cliché romance was as obsolete as it could be, yet Chen Diexian provided a centralized publication for the emotional outlet for these scholars. Activities or societies that centered around poetry like this were trendy in this period in different big cities, attracting all sorts of literati ranging from high ranking officials, renowned scholars, to middle school teachers and bank clerks. Publishing the records of the members was also a common practice for these poetry societies. It not only consolidated the connections within the group, but also created a community for old-style literati to seek for self-identity and sense of belonging.

Chen Diexian established his connection with Wang Dungen through the same nostalgic method - writing poems. Wang Dungen was from a scholar family. Naturally, he also took the Imperial Examination when he was young, though his interest was always in vernacular novels. Like many literati at the time, he expressed the anxiety of being left out:

“.....世變日亟，居恆鬱鬱不自得，謂生此末世，無以自見于時，誠人生大恨事也.....”²⁵

“...The world is changing ever faster. I am always depressed and cannot be at ease. I always think that it is a huge regret of life that I am living at the end of an era, and have nothing to realize my self in the world.”

²⁵ Rui Heshi 芮和師, Fan Boqu 範伯群 et al. ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), 314.

This account reflected a shared sentiment among scholars who took the Imperial Examinations: what they spent so much to learn and mastered, was not what society was demanding and thus “could not be put into use”.²⁶ With all the befuddlement that Wang had when coping with the change, another appropriate translation for “living at the end of an era” could be “the end of the world”. Wang Dungen founded his own newspaper and later was recruited as editor for *Shenbao*, one of the most circulated newspaper in China at the time. He started the literary supplementary named *Free Talks* (*Ziyou tan* 自由談) for *Shenbao*. *Free Talks* published novels, poems and casual social criticisms from renowned writers, and was regarded as the first and most influential literary supplementary in China.

Wang Dungen was the crucial person that helped Chen Diexian bring his literary career into Shanghai. Wang Dungen revealed their communications in the short biography he wrote for Chen Diexian.²⁷ In the summer of 1911 when Wang Dungen was setting up the *Free Talks* in Shanghai, Chen Diexian submitted his regulated-poems by mail. Having heard about Chen Diexian’s fame and activities regarding poems before, Wang instantly fell for it. After reading the short stories came in mail later, Wang was totally captivated and wrote back to Chen Diexian to express his admiration. “Ever since then, there wasn’t one day without letters coming in.” In the winter of that year, Chen Diexian went to Shanghai to visit Wang Dungen. When they first met, they held each other’s hands like they were in a dream. Chen Diexian told Wang Dungen that he was tired of working for the governor and he wished he could have a place in Shanghai so that he could write poems and novels. Later Wang Dungen became the editor for the China Library and published popular literary periodicals like *The Pastime* and *Saturday*. So he

²⁶ Rui Heshi 芮和師, Fan Boqu 範伯群 et al. ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), 315.

²⁷ Rui Heshi 芮和師, Fan Boqu 範伯群 et al. ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), 316-317..

persuaded his connections in China Library to set up a new monthly magazine called *The Women's World* (1914) and hired Chen Diexian as the editor. According to Wang Dungen, *The Women's World* was well received, especially attracting women writers and audience.

This biographical snippet revealed two important change of event in Chen Diexian's career. The first was that he got in contact with Wang Dungen through writing poems in 1911. Since Wang Dungen was a working editor in Shanghai, Chen Diexian got his novels and poems published on *Shenbao* from time to time, starting to break into the Shanghai periodical market. For two or three years, Chen Diexian was only submitting his work as a freelance writer through Wang Dungen. In the summer of 1913, Chen Diexian started to have the *Money Demony* serialized in *Shenbao*. The novel went viral in Shanghai. The second was he becoming the editor of *The Women's World* in 1914, coinciding with the expansion of the China Library (discussed in the next section). Chen Diexian finally got a long-term and stable job in Shanghai. The magazine was a rather late attempt to exploit the women's share of the book market, since the earliest women magazines were published 10 years ago in Shanghai. Yet Chen Diexian's women magazine distinguished itself with classical literature, focusing again on classical poems and dramas. The China Library targeted a very different audience: it was not modern women working in urban Shanghai, but scholars and ladies indulging in classical literature. Chen Diexian made his way into Shanghai using what he was famous for: writing poems, a strange old-fashioned writing in the new world.

Chen Diexian's life trajectory also reflected two profound effects on Shanghai becoming the "cultural center" of China: the influx of intellectuals from over the country around the Revolution of 1911, and the Southern Society (*Nanshe* 南社) that brought together intellectuals from different fields and dominated the market of newspaper and magazines in Shanghai. As

Zheng Yimei recorded, most of the periodicals in Shanghai at the time were run by members of the Southern Society, a large number of whom were from Wujiang, Wuxian and Jinshan (namely the Jiangsu and Zhejiang area).²⁸ Different groups within the society centered around their respective magazines. For example, *Shenbao* was run by Wang Dungen, Chen Diexian and Zhou Shoujuan, who were all members of Southern Society.²⁹ Joining the society was necessary for Chen Diexian to play the publishing game in Shanghai. Michel Hockx traced the history of literary society back to the late Ming dynasty and its link to the Southern Society in the late Qing period. As he pointed out, the function of literary societies was oriented towards managing periodical publications. It not only provided social opportunities among members but also “sustained the collective image of a group”.³⁰ This collective image was cultivated by their traditional literary events, meetings and gatherings, ordinances, management of the organizations etc, and was regarded as an element of style by Michel Hockx.

2. Commodify Classical Literature

2.1. China Library

The China Library (*Zhonghua tushuguan* 中華圖書館) was an interesting publisher that brought together Wang Dungen’s connection with *Shenbao* and Chen Diexian’s magazine publications. Despite being responsible for some of the most popular literary magazines in 1910s, little did we know about the China Library. By looking into its history, advertisement, publications and the intertextuality among its magazines, this section investigates how similar

²⁸ Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, *Nanshe congtan* 南社叢談 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), 2.

²⁹ Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, *Nanshe congtan* 南社叢談 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), 2.

³⁰ Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 34.

groups of writer operated around the publisher, and carried the same style of blending entertaining and classical literature to gain market share.

Late Qing period witnessed the change of printing technology from woodblock printing to lithography and letterpress printing since 1880s. Lithography was much faster and cheaper compared to woodblock printing. Nurtured by the market of Imperial Examination, it quickly became the major printing method for all the publishers in Shanghai.³¹ Though lithography was a completely new technology imported from the West, the whole printing industry was still developed on the woodblock printing centers and culture.³² The practice of guild was rooted in that culture. Through history, guilds that oversaw printing industry played an important part in mitigating with the government, controlling price, censoring materials and regulating the market.³³ In the early 20th century, Shanghai Lithography Guild (*Shanghai shuye gonghui* 上海書業工會) was the organization that governed the lithography printing business in Shanghai. The active members who were managing the Guild were medium and small lithography publishers. China Library was one of early and core members of the Shanghai Lithography Guild. The record that documented its participation came from the petition of the Guild in 1911 to form a “society of businessman”(shangtuan 商團) within the organization, in the purpose of representing the industry in social and political events. The China Library was listed as one of the 25 representative publishers.³⁴

³¹ Shen Junping 沈俊平, “Wanqing shiyin juye yongshu de shengchan yu liutong” 晚清石印舉業用書的生產與流通, *Journal of Chinese Studies* 57 (2013): 245-274.

³² Cynthia Brokaw, “Commercial Woodblock Publishing in the Qing (1644–1911) and the Transition to Modern Print Technology,” in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 44.

³³ Xu Jingbo 許靜波, “Jindai zhishi shengchan yu chuanbo kongzhi” 近代知識生產與傳播控制, *Chuanbo yu shehui xuekan* 29 (2014): 177-206.

³⁴ Xu Jingbo 許靜波, “Jindai zhishi shengchan yu chuanbo kongzhi” 近代知識生產與傳播控制, *Chuanbo yu shehui xuekan* 29 (2014): 187.

As shown in the colophon pages as well as advertisement in magazines published by China Library, one of the locations of the publisher was at the Chessboard Street (*Qipan jie* 棋盤街) in Shanghai:



(Saturday, 1914 iss1) (*Pastime*, 1914 iss6)

Chessboard Street was the center for publishers that used lithography printing. There were as many as 116 lithography publishers in the late 19th and early 20th century in Shanghai, and most of them were located in the Chessboard Street.³⁵ Chessboard Street was also a booming district for entertainment and business, a center for restaurants, teahouses, brothels, hotels etc. Through 1930s, all kinds of business set up their shops in this prosperous area, including some of the largest publishers like Commercial Press and Zhonghua Book Company (they did not use

³⁵ Shen Junping 沈俊平, “Wanqing shiyin juye yongshu de shengchan yu liutong” 晚清石印舉業用書的生產與流通, *Journal of Chinese Studies* 57 (2013): 253.

lithography printing).³⁶ Like many other publishers at the time, China Library always printed “Chessboard Street” with their own name in the advertisement. It not only indicated an explicit reference to the community of lithography printing business, but also its acceptance of the commercial and entertainment culture burgeoning in Shanghai.

Lithography was gradually giving way to letterpress printing since the abolishment of Imperial Examination in 1905. Since the need for books that were required by the exam would decline, many publishers tried to vie for the market of new textbooks and “new knowledge”, as well as maintain its own distinct nostalgic style - after all, lithography was once the golden age for printing classics, calligraphy and paintings. That conflict came with the transformation of the publisher. In 1913, the China Library opened up a new printing site specializing in letterpress printing technologies to offer more versatile printing service. In the summer of 1913, it advertised its new opening in *Shenbao*:

正明商標
沈午亭啟事
寄紹商輪船股份有限公司股東注意
中華圖書館印刷所開幕廣告
政府節儉策
昨午十時國民進步兩
五大軍事區設五都督官邸
丁商部開部議決定併
裁

三炮名又譯里脫

(From Shenbao 1913-6-29)

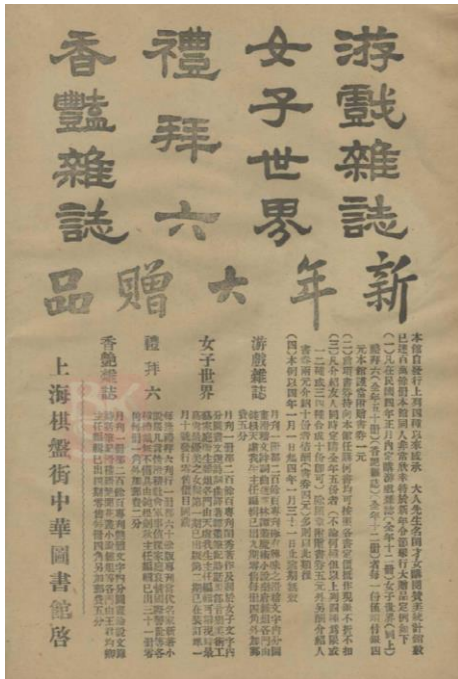
³⁶ Li Xia 黎霞, *Laoshanghai ji: malu chuanqi* 老上海城記: 馬路傳奇 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2010).

“.....加設印刷所，廣聘東西洋國等技師，專制鉛版、石版、[]版、銅版、照相銅版、電氣版、凹凸版、玻璃版，承印各種教科書籍、雜誌、圖畫、銀行鈔票、公司股票、學堂文聘、實業商標、中西月歷、地圖等，兼售各種印書機器、銅模鉛字。各色西洋紙墨，益臻美備。.....”

“...(We are) adding a printing site, recruiting technicians from Japan and the West to specially produce plates of or for topography, lithograph, copper, photography copper plate, electric, letterpress and glass. We provide service in printing textbooks, magazines, paintings, paper bills for banks, stocks for companies, certificates for schools, trademarks for industries, traditional and western calendars, maps etc. We also sell machines that can print books, copper mould and lead blocks. We are also equipped with all kinds of Western paper and traditional paper and ink...”

China Library's business strategy was first to develop better printing technologies from Japan and the West, and second to expand its service to all possible areas. They offered a number of printing technologies, with the combination of lithography and letterpress printing. The varieties of the technologies indicates that the China Library had different departments and division of labor, instead of a family workshop that only would only for the pleasure of enjoying classical literature. The production process of lithography printing was so easy that even small workshop could complete the whole publishing process. In fact, Chen Diexian later even wrote instructions and tips to teach people how to print a book at home, using different lithography technologies. But China Library clearly operated on a different scale especially judging from the services they provided. The past lithography printing mainly focused on printing collections of classical literature. Instead, China Library shifted to new markets and targeted modern education, banks and companies.

As shown by their advertisement and catalogue after the new opening in 1913, they managed to tap into the market of new knowledge even though printing classics was still one of China Library's major business. A catalogue of China Library's available items was usually published at the end of its literary magazines, a large trunk of which were collections of poems and essays written in classical Chinese by famous writers, either contemporary or ancient. The design artwork was minimal on the catalogue, and the book titles seldom changed over the years, almost functioning like the publisher's repertoire. This might give us a rough sense of what China Library was like at the beginning: a traditional lithography publisher concentrated on printing Confucius classics and classical writings by renowned literati. It also produced a more diverse catalogue that included textbooks on mathematics, war strategies, boxing, infantry. Another area that reflected reader's interests were collections of letters that catered for people who were taking popular classes that teach how to write letters. The advertisement for dictionaries stood out among these options. China Library published dictionaries on modern Chinese, Chinese literature and culture, history, geography, German, law etc. A lot of this advertisement would blend with the narration like "with the recent social change", "in the trend of evolution", "knowledge of the world" etc.



(*Women's World*, 1915, iss2)

The four magazines often advertised for each other with overview of the periodicals, introduction of editors and writers, and content previews etc, as well as organize activities to promote sales and advertise together. Although the main editors were different, they sometimes wrote for each other's magazines under different pen names. In the joint advertisement, we can see how each magazine targeted different kinds of literature. *Pastime* was famous for its “playful texts” (*yoxi wen* 游戲文), namely short, casual and witty tales or criticisms. *Saturday* specialized in stories (*xiaoshuo* 小說) in all themes, forms and languages. *Beauty* was branded for “romantic texts” (*yanti wen* 艷體文) - flowery languages and romantic themes. *Women's World* was to publish works by young ladies and woman scholars, especially classical poems. All four magazines aimed for leisure reading. The element of classical literature, especially traditional literary games, was also conspicuous in these magazines except for *Saturday*. Although each magazine had its characteristic, in each issue of *Pastime*, *Beauty* and *Women's World*, a large portion of the magazine was devoted to classical poems, dramas, poetry

criticisms, poetry games and essays. Since they all shared the same illustrator, Ding Song (丁悚), the cover and the designs in these magazines were very similar. Michel Hockx analyzed the cover of the first issue of *Pastime* in terms of “horizontal reading”, to close-read the magazine as a whole, including table of contents, colophon and advertisement. The little old man dressed in traditional literati attire, holding the *Pastime* with a smirk on his face, was like a playful game to interact with the readers. Along with other elements in the magazine, it adopted the comical mode (*huaji* 滑稽) popular in this period, and it also convey the theme of the magazine: “reading the playful journal in a playful way.”³⁷

It seemed that the same artistic style actually permeated the above four magazines, mostly because they shared artist Ding Song, and were published during the same period of time. The figure in the cover who was reading the magazine itself was viewed as a playful game with the readers. Readers could see themselves reading the magazine from the magazine’s cover. One could take a step further and argue that the cover reflected the targeted audience, since so little did we know about the readership of these popular magazines. Yet this “playfulness” was not only limited to the *Pastime*. In the first issue of *Beauty* in 1914, a lady was lying in bed and half asleep. She was holding the *Beauty* magazine - clearly specified by its title. With her relaxed posture, a touch of idleness and leisurement was added to the magazine. Would readers in reality nod off when they read the *Beauty* too? The magazine seemed to be teasing itself and the readers lightheartedly. The self referential image - magazine itself within the magazine, readers looking at the imaginary readers, was very similar to the cover of *Pastime* analyzed by Michel Hockx. The cover of the 5th issue of *Women’s World* had the similar intonation. It depicted a girl who

³⁷ Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 136-140

was opening a door. She was wearing a grey blue traditional dress with a popular high collar. The picture was light up by a lively pink bowknot on her collar. Leaning on to the door, she was staring into the other side of the door where the title “Women’s World” was written, as if she was looking at that world. Ding Song did draw many different styles of covers for these four magazines, though the majority of the figures on cover were conservatively beautiful ladies.



(*Beauty*, 1914 iss1. *Pastime* 1914 iss1, *Saturday*, 1914 iss5. *Women’s World*, 1915 iss5.)

Another style shared by these magazines were the portraits of writers and editors. The photos of the major contributors were printed at the beginning of the magazines. On the one hand, it was an advertisement of the quality of photos that could print with new technologies; on the other hand, it incorporated the images and identities of the writers into the magazine, and created a community of literati around the magazine. Take the first issue of *Pastime* for example. *Pastime* was very bulky and its paper size was larger. After its table of content, there was a translucent white page with main editors names arranged in a circle, right on top of their correspondent portraits in the next page. The varied styles of the writers were revealed by their hairstyle, headwear, attires and facial expressions. They consisted of the core group of editors for China Library, and had close affiliations with *Shenbao*.



(*Pastime* 1914 iss1, *Freedom Magazine*, iss 2)

The writers (clockwise) were Chen Diexian, Cheng Liaoqing, Tong Ailou, Mend Dusheng, Shuaigong, Zhu Shoudie and Wang Dungen (in the center). Compared to his photo in *Forest of Writing* in 1906, Chen Diexian had his queue cut and did not wear the old-style hat. His wire rimmed glasses and hairstyle left a touch of a more modern style. Wang Dungen dressed in a Western style suit and tie, distinguished his Western taste from all the other portraits. Chen Diexian was a famous regular writer Shanghai and core members of literati groups surrounding *Shenbao* and China Library by then. It was after his major contributions in *Pastime* and *Saturday* was he made the editor of *Women's World*. At the time, both of his novels were published as monographs by the China Library, and were advertised in its own magazines and thus reached a wider audience than his time at *Forest of Writing* in Hangzhou.

China Library also had a close relations with the *Free Talk* group of *Shenbao* because of Wang Dungen. Wang worked as the main editor for both China Library and *Shenbao* before he went off to start his business in iron industry. A lot of the novels were first serialized in *Free Talk*, and then published as a monograph by the China Library. In the September of 1913,

previous submissions of criticisms were selected from the *Free Talk* in *Shenbao* to issue a new magazine called the *Freedom Magazine* (*Ziyou zazhi* 自由雜誌). As documented in its colophon page, the *Freedom Magazine* was published by *Shenbao*, but printed and issued by China Library. Its cover was also created by Ding Song same as the four, with the playful self referential picture: a little old guy was holding the *Free Talk* in his hand; he was laughing so hard that his face was twisted; it was taunting the readers that the man was wearing a funny pair of glasses on his pointy nose, with dramatic wrinkles and sparse hair. The *Freedom Magazine* was shortlived, published for only two issues. Then in November, editors and writers reorganized *Freedom Magazine* and found *Pastime* under the China Library.

2.2. Correspondence Schools

Starting in mid 1910s, opening correspondence schools became another trendy and lucrative business for literature. It crossed boundaries of high and low culture; it also saw the sentiment and coat of nationalism and the making of a national language; it involves the largest publishers and numerous literary magazines, as well as their zealous readers; operating outside of official institute of education, it reflected and reshaped people's understanding of the term "literature". This section explores Chen Diexian's correspondence school in late 1910s, the trend of correspondence school in teaching fiction in 1920s, and the general background of Lin Shu's literature courses from 1916 to 1918 and Commercial Press's involvement in this business of literature.

Chen Diexian started to edit and publish *A Tour to Literature* (*Wenyuan daoyou lu* 文學導游錄) in the form of magazine in the summer of 1917. The sequence was also named *Instruction in Literature* (*Wenxue zhinan* 文學指南), went out every two months. Students

needed to pay a certain amount of tuition regularly.³⁸ They would submit their works to Chen Diexian, and he would grade and comment, and mailed his replies back to the students. A *Tour to Literature* was mainly an exhibition of students' achievement and Chen Diexian's comments in the learning process. At the end of each issue, a record of students' information was attached. The information most of the time was merely a street or home address, less detailed than that in the *Forest of Writing*. As Michael Gibbs Hill's comment about the similar students' list of Lin Shu's correspondence school, that the course "was used exactly as it was marketed, for additional education and acquisition of knowledge about literature outside of professional work."³⁹ As Every *Tour* magazine would start with Chen Diexian's "editorial comment", namely a small lecture on the technique of writing poems, essays or drama etc, or a general skill that could be applied to multiple genres. It featured selections of student's submission, along with Chen Diexian's detailed comment, alteration or even recreation. The subjects he set up was of different varieties, including parallel prose (*piansanwen* 駢散文), ancient regulated poems (*gu jintishi* 古近體詩), southern and northern dramas (*nanbeiqu* 南北曲), letters (*chidu* 尺牘), short tales (*biji* 筆記), fiction (*xiaoshuo* 小說), explain in classical prose (*guwen jiangjie* 古文講解), explain in poetry (*shici jiangjie* 詩詞講解), lyric poetry (*tianci* 填詞).

Take the sixth issue published in 1918 for example. Chen Diexian's editorial was the first article in the magazine. The theme of the editorial was about skill of rhyming and tone pattern in lyric poetry (*ci* 詞). He talked about his experience teaching lyric poetry for Lin Shu's correspondence school, saying that it was a shame that the project was short-living and the publishing of the magazine was suspended. Therefore, he decided to teach by himself, using

³⁸ *Wenyuan daoyou lu* 文苑導游錄, iss6, 201.

³⁹ Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 181.

materials from the 白香詞譜 amended by himself as well as the chart on types of sentences based on the work. On top of the main text, there was a space for Chen Diexian's running commentary, styled in the traditional way of annotating worthy text.

The editorial was followed by nine chapters focused on different subjects respectively. The first chapter was on parallel prose. The first article was a student's travel essay written in regulated prose edited (*runwen* 潤文) by Chen Diexian. Following this piece was this original unrevised article printed in smaller font with Chen Diexian's running commentary on top. It was rated as "First Class, 75 points". The subsequent sections that were devoted to a specific genre were formatted in the same way. Since he had to rewrite students' works, the sheer effort he put in was immense. In the drama section, in order to stress the importance of rhyming and tone pattern, each word in the song portion was marked with different symbols to suggest its tone requirement. The Explain sections were interesting as well: readers mailed their questions regarding their own piece, lecture materials, literary theories, interpretation of classics and writing techniques etc., and Chen Diexian would attach his answers following each question. Some questions were longer and more complicated, but some were simply knowledge questions as short as: "What is *tongpu* (銅鋪何解)?" Chen Diexian answered it and quoted a rhapsody from the Yuan dynasty where the term was used. This form of criticizing and teaching literature was similar to his comments on friends and literati's poems in the early *Forest of Writing*, except that he took on a harsher and instructor's tone, his revised version was published, a rating system was imposed and his commentary focused more on technical aspect, and hence shorter. Instead of acquainting with literati, appreciating poetry and building a local scholar community, Chen Diexian established himself as an authoritative mentor and judge in literature, targeting common

people who wanted to get literary education and improve their skills in classical genres through masters who they otherwise had no chance to meet in reality.

Chen Diexian's correspondence school lasted from 1917 to 1918. The whole collections of *A Tour to Literature* was reprinted in 1926 and 1936. In 1921, he edited and published another similar collection called *Xu Gargen Magazine* (*Xuyuan zazhi* 栩園雜誌).⁴⁰ Xu was his name, and Xu Garden was Chen Diexian's etiquette name, which later became the name of the literary workshop Chen Diexian founded with his children and friends. The term "Students from Xu Garden" was used to refer his correspondence school students. As discussed in the first Chapter, Chen Diexian went a far way in advertising his personal life. More than just an etiquette name, Xu Garden was the site of Chen Diexian's "Three-men Corp" - a workshop specializing in translation. So Xu Garden became the symbol for his correspondence school and his own publishing house. The profit from Xu Garden infused the capital of his business and product experiments. After 1918, Xu Garden actually becomes the site for their family factory.⁴¹

Though the origin of correspondence school was from America, critics at the time connected it with the traditional practice of letter communications between masters and their followers in ancient China. In *Student Weekly* (學生周刊) in 1917, Jiang Zhuchao (蔣箸超) wrote a criticism about the burgeoning correspondence school. He said that the term "correspondence", in Chinese, "*hanshou*" (函授), was from the era of Imperial Examination. Young students would fervently mail their eight-legged essays to those who mastered that style of writing, in order to pass the exam to obtain high official positions. Therefore, "correspondence" was all about the technique of writing eight-legged essay and had nothing to

⁴⁰ Zuo Pengjun 左鵬軍, "Chenxu wenyi congpan suokan xiqu ji xiangguan shishi kaobian" 陳栩《文藝叢編》所刊戲曲及相關史實考辨, *Xiju yishu* 2012: 4-14.

⁴¹ *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* 文史資料選輯 80 (Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2000), 217.

do with pursuing thoughts or literature. On the contrary, according to Jiang Zhuchao, the function of correspondence school in the 1910s was totally different in the way that it “uses correspondence to cultivate capable people for the country”, and students were questing for knowledge, not fame. With a passionate nationalist tone, he regarded correspondence school as the hope of covering education all over China.

Chen Diexian took this business in a different perspective. Just as the title of the magazine suggested, he wanted to give students a tour in the field of literature, to instruct them how to write properly. To him, although the school was profitable, he continued his correspondence school out of idealism and pleasure. Therefore, even when he started to get too occupied by his workshop in chemical industry in 1918, he still kept on writing comments and guidance to his old students, with a note that they did not need to pay tuition and he was not accepting new students anymore.⁴² The idea of correspondence school had the side of nationalism, strength and promoting classical literature, while had the other side that it was more personal, and more about sharing pleasure in writing. In the preface written by Chen Diexian in the first issue of *A Tour to Literature*, he wrote about why he took up this business:

“.....生命有盡，而所向無窮，吾知從游諸子，亦將畏難而退，或且觀望不前，甚非所以善導之矣。必也，有一最近之勝境，一聚足而可躋者，其中花木繁綺，樓觀參差，鳥獸魚蟲，山川人物，一一具備，足以供其賞心而悅目者，則比欣然願往，將一領其樂趣，可斷言也，夫此一境非他，即我所謂文苑是也。.....請願為鄉導，以導我從游之人，其不與我同趨向者，則不妨分道而揚鑣。.....吾此書不過一游戲場之入場券耳。”

⁴² *Wenyuan daoyou lu* 文苑導游錄, issue 6, 201.

“...Life is definite, while the path is infinite. I understand that followers will give up because of difficulties, or hesitate to go forward. This is not the reason why I am giving a tour. If I have to define it, it must be a nearest garden where you can get in just taking one step forward. The garden has everything: thriving flowers and trees, soaring buildings, all kinds of beasts and insects, mountains and people. This is enough to please the heart and the eyes, so everyone is happy to go visit to experience the joy. I can assert that this garden is no other than the garden of literature...Please let me give a tour, so that I can guide my followers. Those who are not going the same direction as me, we can just take our own paths....My book is merely a ticket to the entertaining quarters.”

Chen Diexian created the image of a world of literature that encompasses everything. He did not offer to conquer the abstruse classical learning, but purely to teach students to enjoy the pleasure of writing all kinds of genres. Insinuating the surfing criticism and attacks from the “new campaign”, he proposed that people with different views on literature did not need to agree or reconcile. At the end, he teased himself that the instruction he gave was merely a ticket to the entertaining quarter, referring back to their playful magazines and the booming recreation quarters in Shanghai.

The earliest correspondence school in literature might be Arts Society (藝文社), Established in 1914, the school was comprised of six teachers who were famous literati with different specialities. In 1917, they compiled and published students’ work into a bulky magazine. The school taught three main subjects: poetry (*cizhang* 詞章), fiction and drama (*shuobu* 說部), correspondence (*handu* 函牘). Though there are three fields under each subject, students paid for one tael each month for each subject. The works under the field of short stories (*xiaoshuo* 小說) took up the majority of the works in the magazine. The number of genres tagged

to the short stories were enormous, including chivalry, detective, romance, social, ethic, family, comical etc. Although the genres were of great varieties, all of the works were written in literary Chinese. As the faculty repeatedly professed in their prefaces, the purpose of the correspondence school was to preserve classical literature and Chinese traditions.

In 1920s, correspondence school for writing fiction (short stories) sprang up in the market. Many magazines advertised for their courses. In 1921, the famous novelist Wu Shuangre (吳雙熱) advertised in the literary magazine *Bell after Dinner* (*Fanhou zhong* 飯後鐘) to recruit students for fiction exclusively. For beginners, the tuition was three tael for half a month. Zhang Shewo (張捨我) also advertised in the *Red* magazine in 1923 for one that had a more formalized and less personal name called "Shanghai Fiction Specialization School" (*Shanghai xiaoshuo zhuanxiu xuexiao* 上海小說專修學校).⁴³ Students would need to pay twelve tael once and for all. He offered courses like "Anatomy of Fiction", "Specialization in Detective Stories", "Fiction and Philosophy" etc. Apparently, writers saw the profit and trend of correspondence school. Fiction, the genre once regarded lowbrow and mainly for entertaining, now became a formalized subject to teach.

The trend in opening schools for writing fiction might be traced back to Lin Shu's correspondence school (1916 to 1918), the largest in scale and most influential in its kind. Michael Gibbs Hill had a detailed account of the project. It was called *Course on Literature* (*Wenxue jiangyi* 文學講義), and thanks to Lin Shu's fame, it has fifteen renowned scholars as faculty. Lin Shu made his stance about the *Course* clear: it was "the last bastion of national

⁴³ Rui Heshi 芮和師, Fan Boqu 範伯群 et al. ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), 25-26.

culture” and to “save ancient learning from decline...so that the transmission of Chinese writing will not be destroyed”.⁴⁴

Chen Diexian was one of the faculty members. In the magazines that later compiled the materials from the *Course*, Chen Diexian’s articles on writing poetry (both *shi* and *ci*) were lengthy. Experience in Lin Shu’s *Course* must have triggered him to open up his own correspondence school the next year. In his study, Hill concluded that the *Course* mingled authors from high culture with middlebrow, and formed an imagined reading public by upended categories of “popular,” “elite,” “commercial,” and “noncommercial” writers.⁴⁵

3. Style and Identity

3.1. Men of Sentiment and Butterfly

Apart from reiterating his personal life stories in different genres, Chen Diexian used the image of butterfly to brand himself, for both his persona in the literary circle and trademark of his own company. He recruited his families in his literature enterprise and marketing their images and stories as well. Butterfly and its symbol became part of Chen Diexian’s and his family’s style and identity. Chen Diexian’s original personal name was Shousong (壽嵩) and he changed it to Xu (栩), with pen names Diexian (蝶仙 butterfly and celestial) and Tian Xu Wo Sheng (天虛我生 Heaven Bore Me in Vain). This name had a rich cultural connotation coming from *Zhuangzi*:

⁴⁴ Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179.

⁴⁵ Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179.

昔者莊周夢為胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻適志與！不知周也。俄然覺，則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢為胡蝶與，胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。⁴⁶

“Formerly, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt that I was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, feeling that it was enjoying itself. I did not know that it was Zhou. Suddenly I awoke, and was myself again, the veritable Zhou. I did not know whether it had formerly been Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or it was now a butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. But between Zhou and a butterfly there must be a difference. This is a case of what is called the Transformation of Things.”⁴⁷

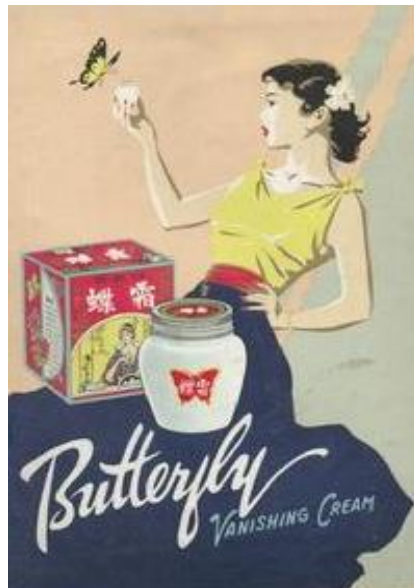
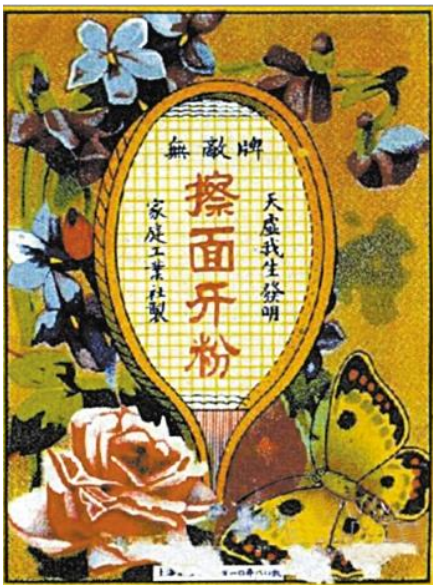
This was a classic snippet about the philosophical concept of “self”. How to differentiate oneself from the butterfly in the dream? How to establish one’s identity in the strange change of era? And in which world are they really living - the one that they imagined to living, or the disillusioned one in reality? All these sentiments fit right into the confusion about literati identity and position in the world. Reading with the pen name Heaven Bore Me in Vain, the names implied a great amount of pessimism shared by literati at the time. Butterfly was associated with the image about self identity. Zhuangzi’s dream questions the existence of reality and perception of self. The butterfly dream resonates with the imagery of a conflicted intellectual in China before 1905: through his whole life, he pursues for an official post by studying Confucian classics and re-taking the Imperial Examination for decades while on the other hand, living up to the recluse principles to stay away from the sophisticated human world; upholding the highest morality to instruct and govern people in a strictly hierarchical society while embracing the deeply rooted misanthropic feeling to transcend human boundaries. The butterfly allusion

⁴⁶ Zhuangzi “*Qiwu lun*” 莊子·齊物論: 14.

⁴⁷ Translation is from *Zhongguo zhhexueshu jihua* 中國哲學書計劃, (<https://ctext.org/>).

trickled down to popular literature and became a handy literary tool to create an alternate universe where injustice case is rectified and tragic love story has a happy ending. In another perfect world, one can live without restraint in virtuality, to be “free”.

In “The Butterfly Mark: Chen Diexian, His Brand and Cultural Entrepreneurism in Republican China”, Eugenia Lean analyzed how Chen Diexian branded himself in a modern culture identity with commodified classical literature and commodified authenticity.⁴⁸ The article revealed how Chen Diexian used butterfly logos, product names, puns, Shanghai dialects, and cultural modernity to build his butterfly trademark and brand. In 1930s, Chen Diexian involved in a series of lawsuits about butterfly trademark, even with the famous actress Hu Die (胡蝶) arguing using her as brand, to vie for the ownership and monopoly of butterfly.



Literary magazines like *Saturday* and *Pastime* were gardens that attracted these butterflies. Many writers and editors used “butterfly” as their pseudonyms, like Zhu Bingdie (朱

⁴⁸ Eugenia Lean, “The Butterfly Mark: Chen Diexian, His Brand and Cultural Entrepreneurism in Republican China” *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65*, ed. Christopher Rea Christopher (Vancouver BC: UBC, 2015), 62-91.

冰蝶), Xu Shoudie (许瘦蝶) etc. Chen Diexian's son, who was a major contributor to the magazines, also used the word "die"(蝶 butterfly) in his own pen name, and was known as Chen Xiaodie (小蝶 little butterfly). His personal name Qu (遽), was also from the above *Zhuangzi* excerpt that originated his father's names. Taking on the butterfly name, Xiaodie was always a part of Chen Diexian's literary enterprise. He and his sister Chen Cuina (陳翠娜) worked at Xu Garden with their father's friends to translate novels over the years. When Xu Garden became a private publishing house, they took on editing and compiling books. Just like many writers at the time, Chen Diexian brought his family members onto paper extensively. Even when she was still very young, his daughter's poems and photos were published in *Women's World*. His son Xiaodie became a famous writer and scholar of classical literature in Shanghai when he was young. The butterfly family and their stories were popular.

A long story named "Record of the Longing Butterflies" (*Hudie xiangsi ji* 蝴蝶相思記) written by Bao Youfu (包柚斧) was published on the second issue of *Saturday* in 1914. The plot was very similar to the first part of Chen Diexian's romance, recounting meticulously the romantic story between a scholar and a lady with dense description of the hero's mental quandary.

The scholar's name was Xu (栩) with a style name Diequ (蝶遽), invoking the stories of Chen Diexian and Chen Xiaodie, as well as the emphatic use of butterfly images. The lady's name was Dienu (蝶奴 butterfly girl) whose birth was described as a butterfly flying into her mother's belly in dream. The allusions in the story seemed to be an allegorical illustration of the butterfly, while the personas and narrative reminded the readers of *The Money Demon*.

The romantic story began with a dream (or a trance by alcohol) and ended with a dream, same as the setting of traditional novel. In the city far from hometown, Diequ ran into his long-parted cousin Dienu and was amazed by her beauty. He was then invited by Dienu's mother to live with them. Spending a lot of time together everyday, Diequ and Dienu secretly fell for each other. When he scholar went back to home for his parents, his cousin left him a small perfume satchel as a token of love. After two months, he came back to live with his cousin's family. Their longing for each other was more intense, but because of social norms, they first only exchanged letters daily to express feelings, later turning into long conversations. Unfortunately, Diequ had to leave again for good because his family arranged for him an official position in another province. Later the scholar learned that she got married, but he still longed for her and waited for her letter day and night, but it never came. One day, he fell asleep and dreamt about his cousin coming to meet him to say farewell. Discovering nothing changed in reality, he went insane, writing the character of "butterfly" for thousands of times.

One distinct difference between this short story and *The Money Demon* is that this story was narrated from an omnipresent view while *The Money Demon* was in first person, really uncommon for novels at the time. Another interesting difference was that "Record of the Longing Butterflies" was more flexible in terms of timeline. The narration of events jumped back and forth on the time, following the scholar's mind. While being a long novel, *The Money Demon* was consistently following the linear timeline.

The description of the heroines in the above two works was similar - they were all talented in literature and abided by Confucius morality. In "Record of the Longing Butterflies", the lady took much more initiative than the scholar. The scholar was drawn into the vortex of emotion and swallowed by the narrative. He accidentally ran into the lady when he was drunk and

day-dreaming. He was clumsy and imbecile compared to the young lady who offered him a cigar and lectured him about civilization of the world after her tour of observing education system in new school. All his action was passive in the story, while the lady directed the development of the story: she wrote him letters, borrowing books, giving him a token of gift, initiating the relationship, asking him to visit and leave, and at the end, cutting off contact for good. All the turning points in the story was triggered by the lady. In compassion, the scholar represented incapability in face of social norms, overwhelmed with thoughts and strong sentiment.

At the end of “Record of the Longing Butterflies”, the author noted that the story was true and that he even used the scholar’s real name. The name Xu (栩), Die(蝶) and Qu(遽), along with the dense butterfly allusions, were obviously referring to Chen Diexian and Chen Xiaodie. The girl in Record was the cousin of the scholar, just like Koto, a far cousin of Chen Diexian. In Record, the scholar could not recognize his cousin because they were apart for years. Chen Diexian and Koto studied together when they were kids until Koto moved away for ten years. Their love story began after Koto and Chen Diexian reunited when he was 16 years old. We can assume that the author of “Record of the Longing Butterflies” appropriated Chen Diexian’s persona and the storyline. By recreating the romance, the author not only helped advertising Chen Diexian’s image and tale, but also blending in his own identity into the scholar. Yet it was uncanny to use Chen Diexian’s son’s name in recounting the romance, almost like inheriting the father’s life story.

The Money Demon presented a more private and intimate experience of the scholar from a first person voice. His name was Shan (珊) (the persona for Chen Diexian), and his cousin was Koto (箏). They spent their innocent childhood together until Koto suddenly moved without notice. Shan was betrothed to another girl, but could not forget Koto. Ten years later, Koto

moved back, living in the neighbouring house of Shan's family. Thus, Shan got a lot of chance to visit Koto and they exchanged love letters and tokens secretly. Shan's mother did not approve of Koto being Shan's wife because of the lower social status of Koto's family. Koto's mother disliked Shan because he did not have much money. After lecturing her about the importance of money over the years, one day Koto's mother drugged her and had her sent to a rich merchant for his pleasure. Koto was devastated and ended up marrying to the merchant. She told Shan afterwards that saving as much as possible from the merchant would be the only way for her to gain her freedom and independence in the world. Shan was very sad, but he agreed on her shrewdness.

This is the first part of *The Money Demon*. Later Shan obeyed his family and married Susu(素素), a name that insinuated his wife Zhu Shu in real life. Koto moved to Hangzhou and led a well provided life, though she was not very happy. Shan once thought about killing himself but gave up because of families. He worked several jobs and lived in different place. Koto even helped him financially when he set up his company. Later Susu learned about her husband's sentiment with Koto. She showed great empathy, even urged him to take Koto as his concubine. But Shan was over this relationship after a decade of longing and obsession.

His earlier work *Destiny of Tears*, the imitation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, represented the vicissitude of a renowned large household and a large setting of hundreds of characters. In comparison, stories in *The Money Demon* was centered around an individual Shan's view. Without arranging the book into chapters, each "block" of story usually began with a point in the timeframe like an entry in diary: "by next year", "that summer", "in the second month of the following year" etc.

At the beginning of the novel as it serialized in *Free Talk*, the author indicated that he wanted to show readers his own experience of love and money: “I, too, used to think of money and love as entirely separate thing. What I failed to realize was that while money cannot be the mediator of love, it can indeed be its nemesis...this deepest and most perfect form of love is the one that is particularly bedeviled by money...Here I shall speak not of the money grubbers of this world, but of my own life, in which money has bedeviled me at every turn.” In the following part, I will explore both the “love” and “money” sides of his story, and how he expressed the conundrum in his most personal description, a very unusual way of writing novel at the time. Writing about feelings and one’s inner most sentiment became a “romantic generation” through 1930s, while looking backwards, “freedom of marriage” was the paradigm of traditional romance even though these terms were layered with a Western connotation in the late Qing. Chen Diexian’s genuinity and generous sharing about his sentiment also became part of his brand. On the other hand, the demon of money has been more and more clear in his stories. Before he finalized the book as *The Money Demon*, it was titled as *The True Destiny of Tears* - merely emphasizing that the story was real. But then Chen Diexian had the moment of realization: every turn of story was about money! So he revised his book to speak about “the truth of the world”. This specific relation of suffering from money can also be read with his career path, with the profit-oriented publishers and book market, and with the decline social status and misplacement of the old generation literati.

My close reading on *The Money Demon* would focus on the end of the first part when Shan and Koto reunited after ten years apart, because this part was the first climax where he first felt controlled by money, and thus had the burst of harsh and complicated sentiment. It was the childhood memories and fondness that foreshadowed their reunion. That longing and

remembrance as kid, seemed to add an innocent overtone to the beginning of their romance. Yet interestingly, it seemed more like he was struggling with violating social norms - he had to convince himself almost subconsciously that his love was pure, and righteous. As Shan later recounted: "I did search my conscience, however. I had never had any improper intentions with regard to Koto; I looked upon her merely as a sister."⁴⁹ This recurrent justification insinuated a powerless man, even when looking back he needed to hide the hypocrisy: he was engaged but he did not have the courage to defy his family, nor did he have the money to rescue Koto from her mother. All he had was love, and overwhelmed sentiment.

Unlike the constant comment resolving to Confucius morality, depiction of the unsettled nerves and naive romantic resulting from secret longing was touching, youthful and refreshing. Koto first moved back when Shan was 16 years old. Shan saw her in passing and recognized her immediately, but did not greet in person fearing that he might be forgotten. He wrote a letter to Koto. Three days later, he received a silk handkerchief embroidered with a Buddhist cross from Koto. With creases though, the handkerchief was immaculate, giving off a sweet fragrance. Shan hid it and became obsessed with it, carrying it with him everywhere. To mask the feminine scent from the handkerchief, he borrowed perfume from his sister-in-law to spray onto his book bag, claiming that he had found silverfish in the books.

Then his mother asked him why not use rue. Rue was a common spray for silverfish in ancient time, and was related to books, poets and classical literature. Yet he answered with a reluctant and sly nonsense: "Rue has an unpleasant smell to it. It's strictly for new brides and dead bodies." Being sneaky, he managed to cover his tracks. Yet he was mocked by one of the

⁴⁹ Patrick Hanan, trans. *The Money Demon* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 74.

servants: “To go sprinkling the sages’ classic with toiletries from a lady’s chamber - that hardly seems suitable.”

This remark was funny and way too telling. Firstly, it exactly described what Shan did - using sages’ classics as cover to indulge in fantasy. Secondly, it revealed what the young boy’s true nature pursued - not the scent of book from classic, but the scent of a lady. It implied his misery: he had to live the world that upholds the classic. Their romance was not regarded legit in this world. And thirdly, it foresaw Chen Diexian’s fate - his poems, *Women’s World*, feminine magazines, the household column and workshop, cosmetics industry - all seemed unsuitably appropriating lady’s image and exploiting lady’s market using his classic education, which would definitely be frowned upon by the sages.

Another side of Shan was his complicated worriedness. After receiving the handkerchief, Shan wrote two lyric lines to Koto. But Koto’s mother found out and had a huge fight with her. After hearing about this, Shan had a length debate with himself. First he hesitated whether he should come over to Koto’s or not. He was so frustrated that he paced around the house and got teased by servants. Then he started to ponder upon his situation - he was disliked by Koto’s mother because he did not give her mother money. Then his thoughts guided him to look back on his whole life, and he realized that he never had to earn anything - he always got what he needed from his mother, he only needed to ask. He realized that he always thought money was filthy, so he did not condescend to get or give money.

After this incidence passed, Shan frequented Koto’s using all kinds of excuse to hide it from his family. Then one day, suddenly he could not get hold of Koto anymore. He found out that Koto was drugged and defiled by the merchant. When he finally managed to see Koto, Koto lost it and could not stop crying. He wrote: “I felt a chill in his heart, and a peculiar ache shot

through my brain and dissolved into a stream of tears down my cheeks. I tried to find words of comfort but could think of none, so I simply hid my face in my sleeve and wept.” This scene was theatrical. The moment when he heard Koto cry, Shan’s sympathy was triggered. Shan’s disclosure of his own feeling was immense in the book. The address was not “the scholar” (*sheng* 生) as what novels would do at the time, to narrate in a third person’s view even though the story was center around the scholar’s experience, like “Record of the Longing Butterflies”. Chen Diexian took on multiple narrators for *The Money Demon*. Most of the time, it was Shan narrating what was happening at the time. Every now and then, the future Shan who wrote the book would surface, and commented on how he was too young to understand how the world works. Outside the book, Chen Diexian painted important scenes from the story, and wrote appreciative poems to match the painting. Then he summoned appreciative poems from his literati friends who illustrated the story again. Long stories like “Record of Longing Butterflies” also recreated Chen Diexian’s romance and joined this storytelling.

3.2. Beggar and Discard

1910s witness the last transient period of the blooming of classical literature. With the conglomerating of popular media and classical literature, writers were “forced” to become a merchant to sell literature, or worse in their mind, to sell themselves. Therefore, the theme of money and freedom emerged in their magazines and books as if they were trying to resolve the dilemma in their stories. Chen Diexian was a representative. The scholar Shan in *The Money Demon* consciously traced his fate and the tragedies around him back to the problem of money. At some point, he might have related himself with Koto: they were all constrained by their families, succumbed to money, and gave up their love. After 1918, Chen Diexian basically stopped writing and devoted all his energy in his chemical business. Being a businessman and

earning money for a living was a disgrace for a traditional scholar, just as Shan thought when he was a kid: “money is filthy!” One could say that *The Money Demon* was just written to explain how he gradually abandoning his profession as a scholar, founding magazines and writing for money, and finally becoming an entrepreneur. After all, he was forced by the money demon. Or even as many studies suggested, his literary activity served to build his company because he established himself as “a man of genuine feelings” as well as the connection to the image of butterfly in his works. Chen Diexian had been in the publishing business for profit even when he was in Hangzhou. One of his early publishing company was named interestingly as “Extracting Profit”(Cuili 萃利). This blatant name was just another joke that mocking himself. He was conflicting.

Writers like Chen Diexian and their literary magazines were grouped as “middlebrow”. They were not high ranking officials or renowned professors from universities. Though occupying the Shanghai popular literature market, they still wanted to withhold their identity as a literatus that linked to the old glorious days. That was probably why small publishers like China Library could find their foothold in Shanghai and printed magazines of classical literature and literary games, for the money, and for the pleasure. 1910s was probably the last moment when they could still enjoy that dream.

Starting in the early 1920s, with nationalism project and the wave of new literature to vie for the book market, those writers were under severe attack. The name “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly” was invented to refer to editors and writers who write for the popular magazines - just as other concepts in history: all different Confucius schools were grouped under a single icon; all kinds of different style of literary Chinese writing summed up as “Classical Chinese”; all dialects were gradually “assimilated” into one national spoken language. The “new and old” demarcation

arose, and sarcastically the “middlebrow” writers were ridiculed as “beggars” and “prostitutes”. One of the harshest attackers in the 1920s was Zheng Zhenduo (鄭振鐸), and his pen name was Xidi (西諦). In 1922, he published “Literary Prostitute”(Wenchang 文娼) in *Literature Decadaily* (*Wenxue xunkan* 文學旬刊). He accused the literati of being prostitute because: they only followed money; their skill was making relations; slandering rivals. And entertaining magazines like *Saturday* and *Red* were merely prostitutes soliciting customers.⁵⁰ Similar outbursts were numerous in magazines like *Literature Decadaily* and the revised *The Short Story Magazine* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報). It is so characteristic that all the compiled historical materials about “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly” would devote a major portion to bitter criticisms collected from that time. Accusing the old style writers of aiming for profit instead of enlightening the general public, these criticism uphold the value of literature in cultivating new citizens, and denying their interest in making money. Though this was also regarded as a conspiracy by popular magazines that the time. In 1922, Xingxing criticized in *Jing Newspaper* (*Jing bao* 晶報) that the “new and old” debate was merely a debate of money. Because even though Commercial Press attacked magazines like *Saturday* and *Pastime* to be “decadent” and “boring”, they were now also recruiting writers to set up the same kind of magazine themselves. If was like a scheme that before pushing forward their own product, they would slander other similar magazines to eliminate competitors.⁵¹

In *Lin Shu Inc*, Michael Gibbs Hill recounted the history of correspondence school division under the Commercial Press. In 1924, it added the subject of “national language”(guoyu

⁵⁰ Wei Shaochang 魏紹昌 ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai yanjiu ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派研究資料 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1962), 40.

⁵¹ Rui Heshi 芮和師, Fan Boqu 範伯群 et al. ed, *Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), 176.

國語) into their courses. In 1938, it selected reputable scholars like Feng Youlan (馮友蘭) and the aforementioned Zheng Zhenduo to teach Chinese philosophy and modern Chinese literature, founded the “College Division”(Daxue bu 大學部) in its Correspondence Division.⁵² While the correspondence school under Commercial Press acquired its fame and high status, the correspondence school run by literati was regarded as a shameless move to collect money.

In terms of social status, they were stuck in the middle: with ample classical education, yet not as high status as scholars and professors. They were regarded as the “middlebrow” (*zhongdeng ren* 中等人). Liu Bannong, the famous literary critic wrote to mock their situation:

“中等人’沒有職業，所以要做紳董，要開函授學校和滑頭學校，要做黑幕派小說，要發行妖孽雜誌。”⁵³

“‘The middlebrow’ has no vocation. Therefore they need to be the gentry, need to open up correspondence schools and deceit schools, need to write exposé novels, need to publish monstrous magazines.”

In terms of modernity, they were also stuck in the middle: they were neither completely “old” or thoroughly “new”. Wang Junqing, the editor of *Beauty* magazine published by the China Library, inscribed his photo with the following amusing self-deprecation in the third issue of the magazine in 1914:

“不新不舊，不隱不仕，不求不忮，不老不少，不生不死，無以名之，廢物而已。”

“Neither new or old, neither recluse or official, do not beg nor envy, neither old nor young, not alive nor dead. I don’t know how to name myself - I am only the discards.”

⁵² Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 185.

⁵³ Liu Bannong 劉半農, “Shili zhuyi yu zhiye jiaoyu” 實利主義與職業教育, *Laoshi shuo le ba* (Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2013), 1-5.

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