CONNOTATORS, BLENDED SPACES, AND FIGURES OF GRAMMAR: REFLECTIONS ON TRADITIONAL CHINESE POETICS THROUGH A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF SU MANSHU'S POETRY

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Abstract: This essay probes into the craft and criteria of traditional Chinese poetry through a study of Su Manshu's poetry. Su Manshu has been praised as one of the last representative figures of classical Chinese poetry, while his distinctive poetic techniques rendered him a precursor of the New Literary Movement in the early years of the Republic of China. A semiotic examination of Su Manshu's poetry and its intricate relationship with tradition and transformation in Late Qing literary arena makes an ideal case study of the criteria of classical Chinese poetry. Su Manshu's poetry is interwoven with connotative elaboration —allusions, metaphors and multifarious figures of speech. Meanwhile, function words, colloquial markers and illocutionary acts play in its "less poetic" grammar, making it the construction of both archaic and modern transmutations in the era of paradigm shifts. The approaches of semiotics and linguistics are expected to offer novel perspectives of the poet, providing a methodology hitherto rarely used, if ever, in studies of Chinese poetics.

Introduction

When it comes to the question of demarcating poetry from "non-poetry" in the Chinese literary context, accounts differ, and opinions vary. It is widely accepted, however, that the principles of Chinese poetic criticism underwent a tremendous change with the rise of vernacular poetry in early 20th century. Su Manshu 蘇曼殊 (1884-1918) has been praised as one of the last representative figures of classical Chinese poetry. (Xie 1998, 151) His poetry [1] incorporates diverse legacies of quintessence from Chinese literary tradition, and his distinctive word organization renders him a precursor of the New Literary Movement in the early years of the Republic of China. Su Manshu's poetry is interwoven with connotative elaboration —traditional allusions, metaphors and multifarious figures of speech, while function words, colloquial markers and illocutionary acts play in its "less poetic" grammar, making it a kind of construction of both archaic and modern transmutations in the era of paradigm shifts of Chinese literature.

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[1] In discussing Su Manshu and classical Chinese poetry, the term "poetry" refers to the specific genre of *shi* poetry in classical Chinese literature that belongs to the mainstream of "highbrow literature". All Su Manshu's poems cited in the essay are in Chinese are from Liu Yazi, ed. *The Collected Works of Su Manshu* (Beijing: China Bookstore Press, 1921, 1985).

In this regard, a study of Su Manshu's poetry is suitable for reflections on the criteria of appraisal of classical Chinese poetry. This essay reads Su Manshu's poetry as discursive sign-systems with a special design. The approaches of semiotics and linguistics are expected to offer new perspectives, and provide a methodology hitherto rarely used, if ever, in studies of Chinese poetics. It explicates how classical Chinese diction participates in the syntactical and rhetoric mechanism of classical poetry, analyzes how it contributes to the processes of mapping and blending of conceptual spaces, and examines how Su Manshu constructs the spatio-temporal configurations and contextualizes subjectivity through literary discourse, thus reviewing the sociolect of classical Chinese poetry in a new light.

I.   The Coding of the Langue in Su Manshu's Poetry

Su Manshu's poems have been widely considered to have affected the readers with their genuine emotions and beautiful language. Prior to him, pioneers of the poetic revolution in the late Qing Dynasty, Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905) for instance, had spared no effort in applying vernacular and loan words in composition. Compared with Huang's radical experiment, Su Manshu's poetry seems more conservative in terms of rhyme, rhythm, imagery and diction, and the tribute to distinguished poets in the past demonstrated therein makes it markedly divergent from the upcoming vernacular poetry. However, Su Manshu did elaborate new motifs and themes with a kind of quasi-prosaic grammar. Xie Mian 謝冕 (b. 1932), one of the leading contemporary critics of poetry, spoke highly of Su Manshu as "the last poet who made the ultimate endeavor on traditional poetic forms in the history of Chinese poetry", and referred to his works as "the last peak of classical poetry." (Xie 1998, 151)

In fact, Su Manshu was not particularly known for his learning of traditional China, though he was a productive translator of British, French and Indian literature on the other hand. Notwithstanding that, Su Manshu's poetry managed to carry on the torch from classical Chinese poets and served as a herald of the forthcoming literary trend.

How should we properly characterize this kind of traditional yet unconventional poetry then? The transformation of thoughts and the shift of paradigms never accomplish anything at one stroke. To delve into the twists and turns of these complicated historical phenomena of Chinese literature, the perspective of linguistic poetics, though less adopted, may enable us to have the access to insightful knowledge. Semio-linguistics and cognitive linguistics are to be

applied in this essay. From the perspective of semio-linguistics, Su Manshu's poetry is first and foremost a primary modeling system mediated by classical Chinese written language and is at the same time also a secondary modeling system restrained by the genre codes and deviated from patterns of ordinary language (Lotman, 1977a). Mostly in the form of seven-charactered quatrains, Su Manshu's poems bear acoustic euphony for the phonetic modulations, a necessary trait of traditional poetry, though not necessarily enough to make any writing poetic in itself.

Poetry is usually considered as highly condensed and polished language. It is often said that there is an end to the words, but not to the message and meaning therein. Poetry, whether "old" or "new", is semiotically a connotative system with its plane of expression constituted by a signifying system. The signifiers of connotation, which Roland Barthes calls "connotators", are made up of signs (signifiers and signified united) of the denoted system (Barthes, 1968, 89-91). "Whatever the manner in which it 'caps' the denoted message, connotation does not exhaust it: there always remains 'something denoted' and the continuous and scattered signs, naturalized by the denoted language which carries them." (Barthes, 1968, 92)

In Su Manshu's poems, the ambience, the mood, and the sentiment of poetry denoted by "archetypal nouns" meaning "close approximations of universals" (Kao and Mei), are indeed brought about by the extensive connotation of culture-specific ideologemes which, blending with conceptual spaces, create a mediated poetic entity. The image of the *xiao* (簫), a kind of longitudinal, end-blown bamboo-flute known in Japan as the *shakuhachi* (尺八), is one the poet is affectionate with, as shown in the following examples:

"春雨樓頭尺八簫"
'Spring rain on the chamber upstairs, mournful is the flute's melody.
("Occasional Poems, No. 1" Liu and Su 1993, 159)

"深院何人弄碧簫"
In this deep courtyard, who is playing the green jade flute?
("Nineteen Miscellaneous Poems Written during My Sojourn in Japan, No. 8"
ibid., 257)

"猛憶玉人明月下，悄無人處學吹簫。"
Suddenly I recall to mind the fair lady—how in the bright moonlight, / she learned to play the flute softly when no one was around.   ("Written in Wu, Using the Rhymes in I-sheng's Poems, No.7" ibid., 223)

Since the story of Xiao Shi 蕭史 and Nong Yu 弄玉 was recorded in *Biographies of the Immortals* 列仙傳 in the Western Han Dynasty, flute-playing has become a classic motif in literature. It was particularly with the Tang dynasty poet Du Mu's 杜牧 poem, "To Han Chuo, Magistrate of Yangzhou," that this motif is closely related to the sentiment of missing a lover. The object *xiao* has been loaded with fixed connotations in Chinese poetry. It would be a vague statement that poets of younger generations simply "borrowed" this imagery from their predecessors, which may defocus the discussion.

More precisely, flute-playing takes part in the *langue* (in Ferdinand de Saussure's sense of the word) of the intertextual activities that can help mold the contextual implication of the poem (not necessarily that of the poet) as a landmark. So is the motif of "lotus-gathering" (採蓮). In the poem "No Title", Su Manshu wrote, "Since then, I do not know: Is it my soul or my dream-self / That paddles with her across the stream on a lotus-gathering boat?" So popular is the *yuefu* ballad "The Tune of West Bar" that the action of lotus-gathering has become an *indexical* sign for confiding affection to a lover:

> I start to play with lotus seeds beyond,
> Which grow in the water fresh and green.
> I hold the lotus seeds in my broad sleeves,
> As a keepsake for my love both day and night.   (Wang 2008, 188-189)

Homophonic puns are applied in this ballad, as "蓮子" (lotus seeds) and "憐子" (to adore you) are homonyms. The anonymous poet also plays a similar paronomasia with the character "清" (clear and fresh) in "清如水" for "情" ("affection"). The cultural-specific connotation of "lotus-gathering" frees this phrase from the pragmatic restrictions within the context of the poem "No Title". On the contrary, it affects the understanding and reception of other constituents in this text. The poetic diction "lotus-gathering" not only conveys a semantic *message* to the reader, but also becomes a *code* (in Roman Jakobson's sense of the word, Jakobson 1987, 66) for writers following the tradition in transmitting the connotative message to ideal readers.
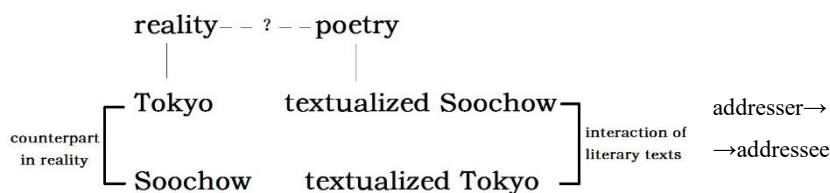
Su Manshu likes to incorporate and naturalize noted dictions or lines of former poets into his own poems, whereas the allusions he sometimes applies defamiliarize such linguistic units from their surrounding in terms of semantic implication. We may also say that, though coming from the same *language* of Chinese literature, the poetic dictions and the allusions bear diverse functions in his poetry. The poetic heritage of Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858),

Lu You 陸游 (1125-1210), and among his more recent predecessors, Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (*alias* Ding'an 定庵, 1792-1841), are particularly cherished by Su Manshu. In "Nineteen Miscellaneous Poems Written during My Sojourn in Japan, No.10", Su wrote, "Suddenly I recall Ding'an's sad, mournful verse: / 'In her three existences[2], she dreams of Soochow, its flowers and foliage'."(Liu and Su 1993, 257) In "Miscellaneous Poems of the Jihai Year, No.255", Gong Zuzhen recounts the wandering life of his mistress, Lingxiao 靈簫, that in her three existences, she dreams of Soochow (Suzhou), and its flowers and foliage.
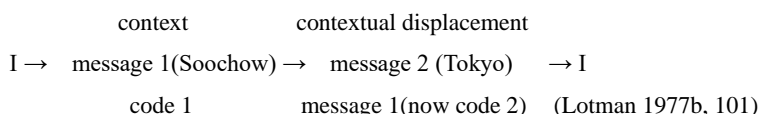
The quotation of this line in Su's poem is not an act of simple borrowing; he adds emotional modifiers ("sad, mournful") and foregrounds the action ("recall suddenly"). This action "outside" the content of the utterance marks the intense desire to invite Gong for a spiritual conversation. Su Manshu first met the Japanese musician Fūko Hyakusuke in 1909 and wrote several emotional poems ("half rouge specks and half tear stains") during the year. For the poet who visited Japan again five years later, his sad parting with Fūko was already a thing of the past. Still, Fūko's music tugged at Su's heart strings. Su Manshu sympathized with Fūko, but like Gong Zizhen, he did not tie the knot with the confidante eventually. When Su Manshu paid tribute to Gong's poem in his own, he also incorporated the (con)text of his predecessor's life experiences into his. Su's close friend Liu Yazi 柳亞子 disclosed in his poem that "in the new poem the history of overwhelming sorrow is recounted, / not for Lingxiao but for the zither." (Liu, 1985, 316) In 1914, Su Manshu heard someone playing the zither again at a waterside pavilion in Tokyo, and he was reminded of Gong's sad and mournful poem.

It seemed the addresser in the poem recalled a similar scene in the water-bound town of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, the same location as the city of Soochow, where Manshu used to dwell. In fact, the imaginative space summoned by the enunciator is not solely Soochow. Tokyo does not appear in the text, and it cannot be understood without understanding both contexts for Gong Zizhen and Su Manshu. Lingxiao's hometown was also Soochow. She ended up as an entertainer in an alien land, which was why Gong mentioned Soochow in his poem lamenting her wandering life. To understand the transformation of the denoted locale, the mental processing through intertextual spaces is required as follows:

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[2] It refers to the Buddhist concept of the three states of existence or incarnations—the past, the present and the future. See Liu Wuji's annotation about it.

reality– – ? – –poetry

┌── Tokyo   textualized Soochow ┐   addresser→

counterpart
in reality   interaction of
literary texts

└── Soochow   textualized Tokyo ┘   →addressee

Therefore, the denoted locale "Soochow" acts as a trigger for reminiscence in Tokyo. The addresser's real intention is betrayed through this indexical sign. While addressing the audience, he is also speaking to himself. The contexts shift and new information is generated through this process of auto-communication. This internal speech of the addresser can be described as follows:

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
& \text{context} & \text{contextual displacement} \\
I \rightarrow & \text{message 1(Soochow)} \rightarrow & \text{message 2 (Tokyo)} \quad \rightarrow I \\
& \text{code 1} & \text{message 1(now code 2)} \quad \text{(Lotman 1977b, 101)}
\end{array}
$$

A frequenter of Japan, Su Manshu likes to depict cherry blossom, which has been celebrated in Japan for many centuries and holds a very particular place in Japanese culture. in his poetry. In "The Fallen Cherry Blossoms", behind the imagery of fallen petals, the action of burying the flowers and the remorse for losing the beloved one make a treasure-trove of both Japanese and Chinese literature. "Cherry blossom" is such a powerful intertextual operator that has garnered abundant pragmatic presupposition from Japanese culture. Meanwhile, readers would easily spot dictions of *déjà vu* if they have read Li Shangyin's poem "Untitled" and "The Song of Burying the Fallen Flowers" in Cao Xueqin's 曹雪芹 novel, *The Story of the Stone* 石頭記. It matters little whether the image of the fallen cherry blossoms refers to a real scene.

The Japanese aesthetic tradition of *mono no aware* (物の哀れ), combined with the typical Chinese ideological pursuit of empathy and (sometimes) oneness of object and self, highlights a virtual stage where dialogues are held among Japanese *waka* poets, Li Shangyin, and Cao Xueqin. Interlocutors from various universes converse with one another in the virtual space of poetry. To sum up, the mood or ambience ("意境"), held dear by traditional Chinese aesthetics, is usually brought about by the extensive connotation of culture-specific ideologemes and, being blended with conceptual spaces, creates a mediated poetic entity. Su Manshu likes to borrow, and occasionally retrofit, noted dictions and allusions from the past.

When poets of later generations like him wrote about the action "to bury fallen blossoms", this semantically loaded verbal phrase has a clear pragmatic purpose: the connotation it carries helps to construct the implied context of the new utterance, sometimes serving as a constraint. Allusion is widely known as a figure of speech often used in poetry. To be more specific, an allusion serves as a code for writers borrowing it from predecessors, and it transmits the connotative message decipherable to ideal readers; sometimes the allusion alienates itself pragmatically from other units of the whole text as something de-familarized and thereby poetic.

II. "Painting in Poetry" and Mental Space Mapping

Traditional Chinese painting is usually referred to as "silent poetry"; the two art forms are generally presumed to be governed by the same fundamental laws ("詩畫一律說"). We recognize that Chinese classical poetry and painting are similar in terms of the aesthetic appeal, the mentality of the poet and the artist, and the themes and objects of their creations, while they have different codes and signification systems. For instance, a man of letters may like to compose a poem about his own painting or that of others, and the poem is then written down at the corner of the painting, making it a sub-genre of classical poetry.

The verbal message of this poem is often able to articulate some of the visual content of the painting, and the poetic signs contained in the poem may generate connotative signification in due course. It is also widely acknowledged that poems come into being in the combination of units by all manner of means on the axis of syntagmata, while a painter must display every element of the content on the synchronic plane.

As a poet Su Manshu is adept at using color words (or words with strong implications of color) to enhance the visual impact of textualized images or scenes. This is an efficient technique that makes the enunciated things picturesque. In particular, Su favors the combination of white, green and red, as shown in the following examples:

> Dense white clouds embrace Thunder Peak,
> Wintry plum blossoms crimson in the snow.
> （"Written During My Stay at White Clouds Monastery on West Lake" Liu and Su, 1993, 151）

> Deep under the willow's shade the horse treads proudly;
> An endless stretch of silvery sand pursues the ebbing tide.

The ice-flag atop a thatched store signals a nearby market.
Red leaves all over the mountain, the lasses gather them as firewood.
("Passing by Kamata" ibid., 181)

Travelers point at a distance to Lord Cheng's stone tablet,
Where white sand and green pines merge at the edge of the sunset.
("Visiting Yen-P'ing's Birthplace at Hirato" ibid., 193)

Like a fairy treading the waves she comes, her skin white as snow:
A red leaf in hand, she asks me to inscribe a poem for her.
("Occasional poems, No. 4" ibid.,161)

With white streams and green mountains, one's thoughts do not end— A light mist veils the
human world as well as the sky above.
In the red clay temple, as wind gently wafts and rain drizzles,
One sees not the returning monk but only home coming swallows.
("Written in Wu, using the rhymes in I-sheng's poems No.18" ibid., 221)

Once a scene is articulated in poetry, its signification is subject to the coding regulations in phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and rhetoric aspects. The positioning and functioning of verbal signs and their coded structures are tremendously different from those of visual arts, so is the case with the readers' perceptual process. Even though a small part of Chinese characters may be regarded as pictographs, the functions of these signs are far from being pictorial once they are integrated into a hierarchy of linguistic and cognitive relations. The aesthetic reception of the "visuality" in poetry can only be realized through the interaction and integration of conceptual spaces / domains in the parlance of cognitive linguistics. The sequential order of imageries and settings on the axis of syntagmata helps to contrive the force-dynamics and image-schemata of classical poetry.

Su Manshu is skilled in creating multi-dimensional configurations wherein the temporal domains of history and the present are evoked in succession, or rather, the space of reality and the space of imagination are superimposed. They operate together with indexical signs[3] of various cultures like Chinese, Japanese, Indian or European to construct a mediated hypothetical space which we may call a poetic one. In "Visiting the Pond of Compassionate Sentiments, Sent to Elder Brother Chung", Su writes,

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[3] As Han-liang Chang argues in his essay "Mental Space Mapping in Classical Chinese Poetry: A Cognitive Approach", the commonly assumed iconicity in classical Chinese poetry should be more properly called poetic indexicality rather than iconicity. (Chang, Han-liang 2011, 251)

白紗輕羅薄幾重，
石闌橋畔小池東。
胡姬善解離人意，
笑指芙蕖寂寞紅。

White gauze sleeves, so thin, how many layers are there?
By the stone railing on the bridge, east of the small pond,
There is a Tartar girl who knows best the thoughts of a wandering man—
Smiling, she points to a wide-open lotus bloom, blushing alone.
(Liu and Su 1993, 197)

A literal, word-for-word rendition of the last line are as follows:

| 笑	指	芙蕖	寂寞	紅
Smile	point to	lotus flower	solitary/silent	red

Red is the color of the lotus flower. The word "寂寞" has two meanings, solitary or silent, which may refer to the mood of the Tartar girl or the single flower, or both. Empathy (移情) is a popular rhetorical device in classical Chinese poetry to indicate the natural correspondence between human and physics (nature), and it is generally accepted that every word of scenery is a word of sentiment. Furthermore, "solitary red" is a cultural-specific expression in contrast with the case in English culture. In retrospect, the word "red" does not naturally indicate loneliness in the corpus of classical Chinese literature.

This "archetypal" or "primitive" term must be set in relation to other components to generate such contextual signification. In many cases, the word "red" refers to beautiful / beloved woman for the rouge as a synecdoche. The imagery of "solitary flower" has been used to imply the loneliness of woman, and a famous illustration is the Tang dynasty poet Yuan Zhen's 元積 "The Country Palace":

寥落古行宮
宮花寂寞紅
白頭宮女在
閑坐説玄宗

Here empty is the country palace, empty like a dream
In loneliness and quiet the red imperial flowers gleam,
Some white-haired, palace chambermaids are chatting,
Chatting about the dead and gone Hsüanchung (Xuanzong) regime.
(Lin Yutang 2015, 144)

In the case above, the gleaming flowers look lonely, and so are the viewers of the flowers. In Su Manshu's poem, red is the color of solitude because the Tartar girl looking at the lotus blossom feels solitary, so does the speaker who is parting with her as is implied in the third line. The girl bears analogical traits with the blossom in the poetic tradition and has built a relationship with this object with an action "pointing to" the textualized reality; a new mediated poetic space thus emerges as follows:
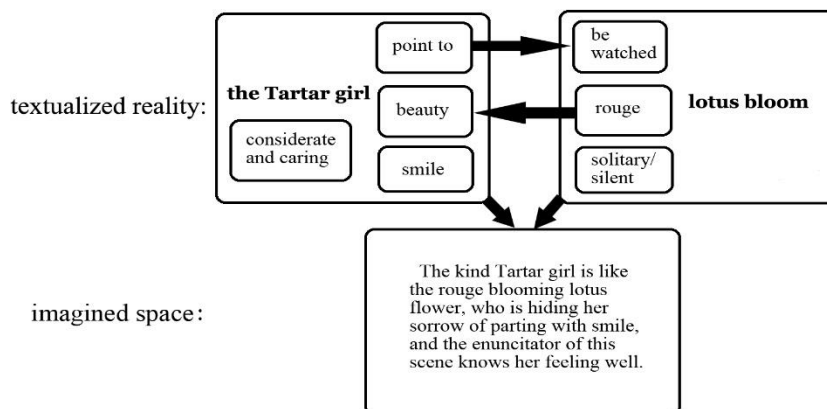
The "thymic category" (Greimas and Fontanille) of the meaning of "smile" (笑) is euphoria, while the meaning of "lonely" (寂寞), dysphoria. They are assembled in the fourth line of the poem as antitheses, augmenting the passional effect of the disjunction between the discursive subject and the object. This is also achieved through the reader's mental space integration.

    Synaesthesia is another traditional rhetorical device in classical Chinese poetry. It can also be regarded as a technique of blending conceptual spaces that are constructed through auditory, visual, and tactile perceptions. In the third and the fourth lines of "Written During My Stay at White Clouds Monastery on West Lake", Su Manshu writes,

齋罷垂垂渾入定
庵前潭影落疎鐘

My meal of vegetables over, I sink slowly into meditation;
Scattered sound of temple bells falls on shadows in the pool.
(Liu and Su 1993, 151)

In the fourth line, a picturesque scene is depicted. Again, the following is a literal,

word-for-word rendition of the line:

庵	前	潭	影	落	疎	鐘
temple	front	pool	shadow	fall	scattered	bell

"Temple" is landmark 1; "shadows in the pool" is trajector 1 which immediately becomes landmark 2. Sound of "scattered bells" makes trajector 2. The word "scattered" is a modifier for the frequency of the ringing of the bell, which cannot be reflected in water like architectural constructions or plants. The bell coordinates with the temple in the semantic field, and the temple helps to locate the source of the bell. A bell is placed in a fixed spot, but "scattered tolls" can evoke vast "time space" and "space space" in the parlance of Peter Stockwell (2002, 96). The sound also implies the listener, and a hypothetical space of the *chan* is thus blended with the former two spaces.

The time space is not a homogeneous one but a nested structure—the physical time and the religious time. In short, it is not just the depiction of imageries and scenes that makes Su Manshu's poetry picturesque. By blending conceptual spaces that are constructed through auditory, visual, tactile senses as well as physical and psychological perceptions, Su Manshu's poetry, as illustrated in the above-discussed poem, presents a vivid and dynamic *Umwelt*, a mediated space that is poetry *per se*.

III. Figures of Speech and Figures of Grammar

While incorporating legacies from Chinese literary tradition, Su Manshu's poetry is commended by Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896-1945) as "having a fresh and modern flavor". (Yu 2007, 281) Besides Yu's comment, we may have a glimpse of how Su's poetry was lauded by another renowned writer of a younger generation, Shi Zhecun 施蟄存 (1905-2003), who wrote in his foreword to *Reprint of Poetry of the Swallow Niche*, "Su Manshu was the most loved poet before and after the Revolution of 1911. He was a member of the South Society… each one [of his poem] has lasting affective charm. I was also one of his admirers at the time. I could recite almost every poem of his." (Shi 1994, 220)

A popular history of Chinese literature from two leading literary historians, Zhang Peiheng 章培恒 (1934-2011) and Luo Yuming 駱玉明 (b. 1951) suggests that such a "modern flavor" in Su's poetry mainly refers to its style of bold expression of emotions in natural language, and that Su's works "do not utilize novel or odd concepts, but reveal a fresh

breath out of traditional forms. At the time when the oppression of outmoded ideology began to crumble but its clout was still powerful, young people who were eager for freedom and liberation of their feelings felt resonance of souls from Su Manshu's passionate, beautiful and sorrowful mood of poetry." (Zhang and Luo 2004, 592) The "fresh and modern flavor" is reflected on the content plane in two aspects. Far from being an other-worldly recluse, Su shows deep concern for the nation and the people in his works which echoes the modern reform of Chinese Buddhism; though addressed as the Reverend Manshu, he tends to confess his own life experiences and personal thoughts in many of his poems, in which the first-person singular speaker comes across as one weighed down by the dilemma between secular love and religious belief. Passion between men and women is a forbidden theme in Buddhist literature throughout history.

One may say that fighting against the lingering affection for the beloved woman is a trial for a person pursuing Buddhist practice, but Su writes about his helpless sorrow in such a straightforward and genuine way as has rarely been done before. An individual subject is foregrounded by the enunciator's self-interrogation. Through the form of traditional poetry, the strong emotions flow, and a "personal history" is articulated with macro-history on the side. The transformation of content coincides with that of expression, and these two are complementary to each other.

Su Manshu pours out his heart with reformed grammatical structures. The imageries in his poems are often accompanied by markers of colloquial discourse, and the grammar running through the lines looks quite similar with that of daily spoken language in his time. It may be said that Su practiced the style of "I write what comes out of my mouth" (我手寫我口), a motto of the Poetry Revolution in late Qing dynasty. Prior to that, the Chinese written language, let alone poetry, follows completely different rules from spoken Chinese. We shall further argue that these diverse grammatical contrivances, interacting with semantic contiguities and transitions, bring in alternative poetic effects in Su's poetry.

Su Manshu's poetry is often organized in a kind of "prosaic" grammar, almost identical with that of daily colloquial language. The overwhelming majority of his poems are composed in seven-charactered quatrains. As there are seven characters in each line, complex sentences and clauses as well as grammatical materials like conjunctions, auxiliaries and interjections are practicable, whereas in four- or five-charactered poems of classical Chinese poetry, syntactic expletives are usually *erased*. There are no morphological changes in Chinese language, and a word may serve as multiple parts of speech.

It's not surprising that most words of a classical four- or five-charactered poem may seem to be nouns or noun phrases, as they also bear meanings of corresponding verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, and as syntactic components they function as subjects, predicates, and attributive, etc. Notwithstanding that, poets would seldom, if ever, adopt the grammatical texture and contrivances so exuberantly as Su did with the form of the seven-charactered quatrain.

In addition, the first- and second-person pronouns are not much favored by traditional poets in the past, but they are frequently used together with interrogative pronouns and interrogative adverbs to manifest different speech acts in Su's poetry. Some of his poems write about the speaker's self-disclosure, some others seem to invite a specific addressée into the dialogic situation while making the readers empathetic. The grammar patterns of poems translated by Su Manshu and poems of his own appear in stark contrast, as displayed in the following examples:

A.
Target text:
皇　　濤　　瀾汗
adj.　　n.　　n.
big　waves　flood
靈　　海　　黝　冥
adj.　　n.　　adj.　adj.
mystical sea　　black　dark
萬　　艘　　　　鼓　楫
numeral measure word　v.　　n.
10,000 m.w. of ship　　swing paddle
泛　　若　　輕　萍
adj.　　prep.　adj.　n.
floating　like　light　duckweed

Source text: Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean –roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
(excerptfrom George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*,1921, 71)

B.
Source text:
禪　　心　　一　　任　　蛾眉　　　　　　妒
A *chan*　mind　totally　allow　moth-browed (beauties)　envy
佛　　說　　原來　　　怨　　是　　親
Buddha　say　originally　grudge　is　affection
雨　　笠　　　　　　煙　蓑　　　　　歸去也，
rain　bamboo/straw hat mist straw/palm-bark rain cloak return modal particle

與　人　無　愛　亦　無　　嗔
with people without love also without　hatred
("Addressed to the *Koto* Player, No.2")

> A *chan* mind tolerates the envy of moth-browed beauties –
> In Buddha's precept affection and anger are the same in origin.
> Wearing a bamboo hat of rain and a leaf cloak of mist. I'll return home
> With no trace of love or hatred for my fellow men. (Liu and Su, 1993, 171)

It can be seen from the above that coordinate construction and complex sentence can be carried out in a seven-charactered line, while to compose a four-charactered verse, a poet may have to split the simple SVO pattern into two lines, or adopt the mainstream craft of amalgamating NPs which may be seem as imageries while rejecting function words. As Chinese is not an inflexional language, numbers, cases, tenses, voices, aspects, and moods are typically performed by conjunctions, auxiliaries, and interjections which also help to fulfill the emotive or phatic function in prosaic language.

Lin Geng 林庚 (1910-2006), a renowned scholar of Tang Poetry, has pointed out that a major signal of progression in poetic language is the removal of function words which are indispensable in prosaic writing. "*Zhi* (之), *hu* (乎), *zhe* (者), *ye* (也), *yi* (矣), *yan* (焉), *zai* (哉)[4] and so forth, can all be omitted in the five-charactered poems since the Qi and Liang Dynasties.[5] This is by no means a simple matter, as we just imagine how difficult and awkward it will be if we remove every *de* (的) – the equivalent of *zhi* in contemporary vernacular poetry, and the thing will be clear. This is purely a matter of poetic language, and it has never happened in prose." (Lin Geng 2011, 90-91)

The words that can be saved in classical poems are not all function words, as Lin Geng has mentioned; a line without a verb is nothing surprising, yet it is only justifiable in poetry. This tradition of composition may also have something to do with the general sense of "painting in poetry". As François Cheng has posited, the poets of the Tang introduced the notion of fullness and emptiness to poetry; "The concept is most evident in the manner in which they make use of 'full words' (verbs and substantives) and 'empty words' (such as personal pronouns, prepositions, comparatives, grammatical particles, etc.). By the *omission*

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[4] These are typical interjections to express the declarative, the exclamative, the interrogative or the imperative mood; zhi and hu also bear the function of structural auxiliary. Zhe can be a pronoun and ye an adverb. Yan can otherwise function as a pronoun, a conjunction or a preposition. Zai can also serve as a notional word.
[5] It refers to the two consecutive regimes in southern China that existed from 479 AD to 557 AD.

of personal pronouns and other empty words, and by the reuse of certain empty words as full words, the poet puts into motion an internal opposition within the language, and a de-ruling of the nature of the signs." (Cheng 1982, 15)

Poetry forms its special grammar in every language. In Chinese classical poetry, complex sentence patterns and function words were never popular. The most favorable design is the juxtaposition of notional words depicting imageries and scenes. Personal pronouns are used infrequently, let alone other types of relational units. The order of the parts of speech is flexible, as illustrated in the famous and highly praised lines from Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) and Huang Tingjian 黄庭堅 (1045-1105):

> A.
> 香　　稻　　啄　　餘　　鸚鵡　粒
> fragrant　paddy　peck　remain parrot　grains
> The parrots pecked at the remained fragrant paddy grains,
> 碧　　　梧　　棲 老　鳳凰　　枝
> emerald sycamore perch old phoenix branch
> The phoenixes perched on the greenish branches of the old sycamore.
> ("Inspirations in Autumn No.8" by Du Fu, my translation)

> B.
> 桃　　李　春　風　一杯　酒
> Peach plum spring breeze a cup of wine
> 江　　湖[6] 夜　雨　十　年　燈
> river lake night rain ten years lamp
>
> Xu Yuanchong's translation:
> A cup of wine beneath peach trees in vernal breeze;
> Ten lonely years by the lamplight in rainy night.
> ("To Huang Jifu" by Huang Tingjian, Xu 1995, 339)

The divergence between Su Manshu's seven-charactered poem and the canonized samples of the form is clear. Su is skilled in exploiting grammatical words to build up coordinate constructions and compound sentences, in addition to forming SVO or subject-predicate sentences in a natural word order, which decrease greatly the shifts and admixtures of parts of speech. Personal pronouns are frequently used together with interrogative pronouns and interrogative adverbs, foregrounding an enunciator with the strong desire of speaking and overflowing feelings. Occasional use of inverted sentences also makes the grammar of Su's

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[6] The compound word "江湖" ("rivers and lakes"), made up of two morphemes, metaphorically refers to the milieu independent of mainstream society and out of reach of the law.

poetry appear to be similar to spoken language and prose writing, eliminating the semantic vagueness and ambiguity. The pattern of seven-charactered verse enables the poet to narrow the discrepancy between written language and spoken language and between *belles-lettres* and vernacular literature[7] in the longer syntagma that classical versification allows.

The practice of the style of "I write what comes out of mouth" does not mean that Su Manshu's poems thereby turn out to be prosaic; they all follow the rules of prosody in the first place. More importantly, Su brings into play a variety of figures of grammar, which are "*les metataxes*" in the parlance of Group μ, or what Paul de Man called the "rhetorizations of grammar" and "figures generated by syntactical paradigms" (de Man 1979, 15). A particularly prominent feature of Su's poetry is the strong subjective intervention deployed by personal pronouns plus interrogatives. The components of lexical and grammatical aspects find their widest applications in performing illocutionary acts of assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives, particularly in rhetorical questions and exclamatory sentences, juxtaposing spaces of reality and imagination, of the present and the absent.

In regard to the "metasememe", the "metatax" plus the "metalogism" (Groupe μ), Su Manshu employs skillfully antithesis, oxymoron, hyperbole, irony and rhetorical questions, among other figures of speech, creating the gap between literal meaning and pragmatic signification while highlighting emotive twists and turns, as are shown in "To Elder Brother Chung as I Pass Wakamatsu-Cho Stirred by Emotions",

契闊死生君莫問，
行雲流水一孤僧。
無端狂笑無端哭，
縱有歡腸已似冰。

Ask not whether our parting is for life or death!
A lonely monk, I wander like a floating cloud and flowing water.
For no reason at all, I madly laugh then loudly wail.
Even if I have a joyous heart, it is as cold as ice. (Liu and Su 1993, 187)

In "Occasional Poems, No. 10", Su Manshu writes, "Nine years I faced the wall to attain Buddhahood. / Returning home with a monk's staff, I regret to have met you." (Liu and Su, 1993,163), the word "regret" (悔) undoes the long-haul practice of Buddhism, pulling the

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[7] Two genres to represent them respectively in Chinese literature are traditional poetry and colloquial story. For the latter, the script for story-telling, *huaben*, is written in vernacular and larded with the stock expressions of professional storytellers.

monk away from *satori*. A similar case is in the lines: "I could only give back to you, dear one, an alms-bowl of unfeeling tears, / Regretting I did not meet you before my head was shaven." (ibid., 161) The word "unfeeling" (無情) reveals an irretrievably broken heart. In "Nineteen Miscellaneous Poems Written during My Sojourn in Japan, No. 17", Su writes down the couplet: "Empty mountains, gurgling streams, no trace of human life— / Where is the lovely lady with her songs of lamentation?" (ibid., 263)

The *Umwelt* of "non-self" (*anatta* in Buddhist terminology) without any trace of human life is intruded by the inquiry for the lovely lady with songs of lamentation. As Jakobson has posited, in verbal art, linguistic fictions are fully realized; "formal meanings" find their widest applications in poetry as the most formalized manifestation of language. (1987, 124) The goal of classical rhetoric is to move the audience and win them over with pathos, ethos, and logos. Su has achieved these two ends of rhetoric in his poetry, while the truth of logic is suspended and substituted by the pragmatic-emotional effects of plausibility. Organized in "quasi-prosaic" grammar, the components of lexical and grammatical aspects enter mutual relationships to realize abundant rhetoric performances in Su's poems and render them poetic.

IV. The Sociolect of Classical Chinese Poetry Revisited

Looking back on the history of Chinese literature, it is clear that poetry was granted with the central position in the literary arena before the 20th century, but there was never a well-defined demarcation line between the "poetic" and the "unpoetic". Being a special deployment of language, the discursive system of poetry is always in the dialectic and interaction with discourse of other genres. Most of Su Manshu's poems were composed before the New Literary Movement in the early years of the Republic of China, and in the broad sense, they followed the sociolect of the old times.

Holding a selective view of the traditional repertoire, Su encoded the text creatively while incorporating new information in his idiolect; he adopted function words frequently and highlighted illocutionary acts to compose lyrical poetry in the Buddhist context. He did not overuse loanwords from transliteration as the poets of the late Qing Dynasty had done in the Poetry Revolution, but rather maintained and promoted the classical versification in the phonetic, semantic, and rhetoric aspects which were regarded as obsolete by the upcoming generation of the New Literary Movement. The old sociolect did not completely vanish after

the 'May 4th Movement but participated in the various idiolects which partook in producing the new sociolect as well.

Su Manshu's practice of "I write what comes out of mouth" and that of "incorporating fresh ambience with old style" (以舊風格含新意境) echoed the call of the Poetic Revolution in the late Qing dynasty, but looked "old" in terms of rhyme, rhythm, imagery and diction; it heralded the further transformation of the literary sociolect, while the inheritance and tributes to distinguished poets in the history demonstrated in Manshu's poems rendered them widely divergent from the vernacular poetry that rose after 1917. In this regard, the criticism of Su's poetry has varied with the coordinate system it is measured in.

Bearing such an intricate relationship with the archaic and the innovative in Late Qing literary arena, Su Manshu's poetry is suitable, as I have argued at the beginning, for reflecting upon the criteria of appraisal of classical Chinese poetry. From the analysis above, it may be inferred that the "mood" held dear by traditional Chinese critics of poetics and aesthetics is usually brought about by the extensive connotation of culture-specific ideologemes, and by blending conceptual spaces to create a mediated poetic one. Being widely known as a figure of speech, allusion serves as a code for writers borrowing it from predecessors and it transmits the connotative message decipherable to ideal readers; sometimes the allusion alienates itself pragmatically from other units of the whole text as something unfamiliar.

By blending conceptual spaces that are constructed through auditory, visual, tactile senses as well as physical and psychological perceptions, Su Manshu's poetry presents a vivid and dynamic *Umwelt*, a mediated space that is poetry. Organized in "quasi-prosaic" grammar, the components of lexical and grammatical aspects enter into mutual relationships to realize abundant rhetoric performances in his poems and render them poetic.

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