



The Poetics of Decadence: Chinese Poetry of the Southern Dynasties and Late Tang Periods (SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture) (Suny Series, Chinese Philosophy & Culture)

Fusheng Wu

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This intertextual study of decadent (tuifei) poetry demystifies it by using tuifei as a critical term and by situating it within a conventional system of signs. The Poetics of Decadence focuses on four major poets during the Southern Dynasties (420-869) and Late Tang Periods (826-904) when decadent poetry was produced in great quantity, namely Xiao Gang, Li He, Wen Tingyun, and Li Shangyin. The author argues that decadent poetry challenged the canonical concept and practice of poetry as established by "The Great Preface" to The Book of Songs and by the poetry of the Han, Wei, and Jin periods. In so doing, decadent poetry formed a poetic genre with a unique, complex, and self-reflexive verbal system. The rich and complex nature of decadent poetry gives it remarkable resilience in the face of violent condemnation by traditional criticism and allows its successful negotiation with and integration into the canonical tradition. Decadent poetry is not a marginal trend as it has been commonly perceived, but rather a vital part of the Chinese poetic tradition.

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