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THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE “NINETEEN OLD POEMS”

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Introduction

The “Gushi shijiu shou” 古詩十九首 or “Nineteen Old Poems” have traditionally been considered among the earliest as well as finest examples of five-syllable verse.¹ This group of Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) poems includes works on a variety of subjects and themes, in a number of different voices or personas. There are poems of separation and parting from wife to husband (no. 8), traveler’s laments (no. 19), love lyrics (no. 6), and a poem on a married former courtesan (no. 2). Several pieces reflect the frustrations of men aspiring for the upper class; men thwarted in their hopes and ambitions and driven by a sense of *carpe diem* to the pleasures of wine, women, and song (no. 13). Although the “Nineteen Old Poems” appear at the beginning of the five-syllable *shi* tradition, they possess qualities that made them, in their way, at least the equal of later, more sophisticated verse. Critics have long praised the natural lyricism and direct, genuine emotions of these pieces. Their quiet, refined simplicity was often singled out and admired. In the Ming dynasty, Xie Zhen 謝榛 wrote:

Shi poems from those of Su Wu 蘇武 (ca. 140 B.C.–60 B.C.) and Li Ling 李陵 (?–74 B.C.) to the “Nineteen Old Poems” are in the ancient style and of the loftiest tone. The lines are balanced, the meaning far reaching. There is no striving for difficult diction; in their naturalness they surpass human effort.²

Traditionally, the “Nineteen Old Poems” were seen as marking a crucial stage in the development from the folk songs of the Han *yuefu* 樂府 to the immediate ancestors of the classic five-syllable *shi* 詩 tradition. Given their song-like lyric qualities and their place at the beginning of a tradition, it was natural for critics to compare the “Nineteen Old Poems” to the lyrics of the *Shi jing*. Again and again one finds critics linking these sets of poems:

The “Nineteen Old Poems” were not the product of a single author, a single period, or a single place. Following in the line of the “Three Hundred Poems” (e.g. *Shi jing*), they became the ancestors of five-syllable verse. They probably arose during the Eastern Han. Their diction is relaxed; their language and thoughts honest and sincere. They continued the heritage of the *Shi jing* poets. Their role in the evolution of poetry was pivotal, and scholars must read them. It is with these poems that five-syllable verse emerged and the *Shi jing* style (i.e. four-syllable verse) disappeared.³

The "Nineteen Old Poems" thus are a seminal group of poems not only for their intrinsic literary qualities, but because of their historical position in the poetic tradition. Much critical concern has naturally focused on the dates and authorship of these pieces. Unfortunately, the lack of direct evidence has left the origins of the "Nineteen Old Poems" in a cloud, arousing controversy and debate that continues to this day. Over the centuries a number of names have been attached to and theories advanced about these poems. The "Nineteen Old Poems" first appear as a group in the *Wen xuan* 文選 (juan 29), from which they received the title by which they are now known. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), the editor of the *Wen xuan*, did not speculate on their authorship, simply describing them as *gushi*, or "old poems" (a term, during the Six Dynasties, that ordinarily referred to Han works). In the *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠, however, Xiao Tong's contemporary, Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583), attributed eight of the "Nineteen Old Poems" to the Western Han writer Mei Sheng 枚乘 (?–140 B.C.).⁴ Attributions in the *Yutai xinyong* are, however, notoriously uncritical. There is no corroborating evidence to confirm Xu Ling's attribution, and it was by no means universally accepted by his contemporaries.⁵ Other names, including Cao Zhi 曹直 (192–232), Wang Can 王粲 (177–217), Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139), and Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–92), also became linked to the "Nineteen Old Poems."⁶ When and how these names first became attached to the "Nineteen Old Poems" is unclear. But the process no doubt began with the recognition that these lyrics were different from and more sophisticated than the folk songs associated with Han *yuefu*. Readers thus assumed them to be literary poems by literary authors. The various traditional attributions were probably informed speculation—given they are not *yuefu*, who could have composed them? The names mentioned are all well known Han and Jian'an poets, and are "reasonable" guesses. Zhang Heng and Cai Yong both composed early examples of literati five-syllable verse; the Jian'an poets, Cao Zhi and Wang Can, were heavily influenced by the Han *gushi* tradition. Some of Cao Zhi's poems, in particular, are very close to the *gushi* style.⁷ There is no apparent basis for any of these attributions, however, and as will be explained below, many reasons to doubt them. Traditional critics were divided on the question of authorship, and modern scholars are virtually unanimous in recognizing the "Nineteen Old Poems" poems as anonymous.

Although the "Nineteen Old Poems" are now considered anonymous, we can still attempt to date them and identify the *nature* of their authorship, rather than the actual authors. Modern scholars have made some tentative suggestions, but in the case of authorship, they are not convincing. Here I will offer an alternative theory that derives from the crucial question of the generic nature of these works. Are they literary poems or are they actual song lyrics—words originally set to music? The answer to this question has important implications for the problem of authorship. I will suggest that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are the lyrics to popular songs of the Eastern Han Dynasty and that they were created by professional singers and musicians. Because of a lack of direct evidence, such an assertion is difficult to prove, but by approaching the issue from different directions and adopting new methods and concepts, I think it can be convincingly demonstrated that these poems are song lyrics.

I will begin by reviewing the theories of modern scholars (most of whom maintain that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are anonymous literary poems composed by the literati [*wenren* 文人]—the literate, educated members of the upper strata of society) and explaining the weaknesses of their arguments. Although there is some stylistic evidence that appears to support their conclusions, this evidence can be explained and interpreted in a very different way. In addition, the historical context suggests that Han literati poets were not capable of composing poems with the qualities of and at the level of the "Nineteen Old Poems." A comparison of the "Nineteen Old Poems" to specific literati works will show important differences in approach and style. The underlying flaw in the approach of modern as well as traditional scholars has been the assumption that poetry is *either* "folk" (*minjian* 民間) or literati. Because the "Nineteen Old Poems" are clearly not folk poems they have been assumed to be literati works. Instead we should recognize that the body of Chinese poetry reflects a continuum of levels, and that between simple folk song and sophisticated literary verse there existed popular songs that reflect aspects of both "high" and "low" levels of society and tradition. Recent studies have shown the origins of genres such as *jueju* 絕句 and *ci* 詞 in Six Dynasties and Tang popular song.⁸ These examples suggest the possibility of a parallel phenomenon during the Han, and this study will demonstrate that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are best understood as belonging to this popular tradition. Evidence such as their compositional structure, the use of oral formula, and their similarity to known Han song lyrics will show that they are in fact songs. Other evidence will show that they are specifically *popular* songs (rather than folk songs), for example, stylistic evidence (e.g. level of diction, use of "allusions"), themes, setting, occasions, and mood. Such songs most probably were composed by the professional musicians and singers who performed them. That the "Nineteen Old Poems" are popular songs has important implications for our understanding of Han poetry and the rise of the *shi* tradition. The "Nineteen Old Poems" are extremely close in style to other anonymous *gushi* from the Han, ranging from poems traditionally attributed to Li Ling and Su Wu to some of the more sophisticated examples of Han *yuefu*. This suggests that many of the Han *gushi*, including the "Nineteen Old Poems," are remnants of what must have been a large corpus of Eastern Han popular songs that flourished just prior to the rise of the great Jian'an poets, literati poets who owed a tremendous debt to these songs.

Modern Scholarship

Because of Zhong Rong's attribution of a number of the "Nineteen Old Poems" to the Western Han poet, Mei Sheng, the dating of these poems has always been a matter of controversy. Most scholars now agree that an early Western Han date (206 B.C.–25 A.D.) would be extremely improbable, and that these poems should date from the middle to late Eastern Han. Although much of the evidence is circumstantial and often debated, taken as a body it is strong.⁹ The strongest argument for this dating is the relative maturity and sophistication of these lyrics, suggesting a later place in literary history. There is no indication that during the early Western Han five-syllable *shi* had developed to a level that would allow the appearance of the "Nineteen Old Poems." The earliest datable examples

of five-syllable "verse" (mid-Western Han) are brief, sub-literary songs and ditties recorded in the *Han shu* 漢書.¹⁰ The "Nineteen Old Poems" are also more advanced than the many folk songs found in the Han *yuefu* corpus.¹¹ Comparing the best known and typical folk songs of the Han *yuefu* (there is actually a wide range and variety of songs in the *yuefu* corpus) to the "Nineteen Old Poems," we find in the latter a more refined use of five-syllable meter, a more sophisticated diction and use of allusion, as well as strikingly different concerns. This suggests that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are the product of a later, different type of authorship.¹² On the other hand, the "Nineteen Old Poems" also differ from the poems of the Jian'an poets, whose five-syllable lyrics represent the first great blossoming of purely literati five-syllable verse. It is obvious, however, that the Jian'an poets were very much in debt to the "Nineteen Old Poems" and/or poems like them.¹³ The "Nineteen Old Poems" thus represent an important stage of transition from the folk songs of the Han *yuefu* to the literati *shi* of Jian'an. Given the extant evidence there can be little doubt that these poems date from the middle to the second half of the Eastern Han.¹⁴

Modern critics are in agreement in rejecting the various traditional attributions. It is generally accepted that the "Nineteen Old Poems" originally were the work of anonymous composers from various times, and that they came to be grouped together through the process of anthologizing. Given the paucity of evidence, many critics have declined to further discuss the identity of their authorship. Others, however, have attempted to speculate on the nature of their authorship. Many feel that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are *wenren* works that are based on *minjian* or folk literature. Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, for example, has suggested that they are *wenren* works written in imitation (*fangzuo* 仿作) of *yuefu* lyrics.¹⁵ This theory has proven extremely attractive because it seems to best account for the blend of folk and literati elements found in these poems. The simplicity and naturalness of their style, the directness of their thoughts and emotions, and the voices and themes we find in many of these works seem to reflect their folk origins. It is these features and qualities that have led critics to so often liken the "Nineteen Old Poems" to the "Guo feng" 國風 lyrics of the *Shi jing*. But comparing these poems to Han folk songs, we also find clear differences. The Han *yuefu* corpus includes primitive rhymes as well as examples of folk narrative ballads of a type that has been identified and studied in various cultures (for example, "Jiangnan" 江南 ["South of the River"] and "Moshang sang" ["Mulberry Along the Road"], respectively).¹⁶ The simple qualities of such songs are worlds away from the purely lyrical verse of the "Nineteen Old Poems," works, that on the whole, are far more refined and sophisticated than folk verse. Critics have often noted the relative maturity of the five-syllable meter and a use of allusion that indicates a familiarity with the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* 楚辭. In addition to their advanced style and diction, the themes, settings, and voices found in several of the "Nineteen Old Poems" also indicate that they originated in higher social circles. Although love poems and poems of separation included in the "Nineteen Old Poems" are characteristic of folk or popular verse, there are also descriptions of a banquet party (no. 4), the performance of professional dancers and musicians (no. 12), and mention of the aristocracy and the mansions and

palaces of Luoyang (no. 3). Several of the lyrics are in the voice of what appear to be frustrated, would-be officials (no. 4). Thus style, theme, and references to settings in at least some of the "Nineteen Old Poems" indicate they are products of a world very different from that which produced the *yuefu* folk songs and ballads.

The suggestion that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are *wenren* imitations or adaptations of folk songs is attractive at first glance, especially in light of the apparent lack of viable alternative explanations. Further questioning, however, reveals serious difficulties with this hypothesis. We can begin by asking if Eastern Han literati poets were in fact capable of producing verse such as the "Nineteen Old Poems." The nature and history of the poetic tradition suggests that it is highly unlikely. It is well known that Chinese poetry is essentially lyric poetry; that it is dominated by poems that are actual song lyrics or genres that evolved from song lyrics. Throughout the literary tradition we can trace the development of poetic genres from folk and popular song traditions into literary genres. At some point in this evolution there is usually a crucial transition stage when the literati begin to imitate folk and popular song and initiate the transformation into literary verse. Ordinarily these early efforts are characterized by their tentativeness and by certain literati touches. They are often obviously imitative in nature, and can be fairly described as "stiff" or "awkward." Although in some cases, the literati can also bring in a greater level of sophistication both in sentiment and style, there often is a certain "artificial" quality to these works—the literati imitations simply do not sound as "genuine" in their emotions as the earlier works. The *gongti* 宮體 or "palace style" flavor that one finds in early literati imitations of Southern Dynasty *yuefu* and the early literati *ci* found in the *Huajian ji* 花間集 (preface 940 A.D.) are examples of a typical literati touch.¹⁷ The critics, however, have always admired the "Nineteen Old Poems" precisely for their refined fluidity, their genuine emotion, and their naturalness—Xie Zhen marveling at how they seemed to be beyond human effort (*ziran guo ren* 自然過人) is typical. The qualities that distinguish the "Nineteen Old Poems" appear to conflict with what we know about literati imitation. In addition, the historical context strongly suggests that the literati were not yet in a position to compose such fluid, advanced verse.

During the Eastern Han, the literati *shi* tradition was still at a primitive stage. Four-syllable meter and poems in various types of Chu 楚 style meters were still dominant. There are few authentic examples of five-syllable verse, and those that are extant conform to what one would expect at this early stage. For the most part they are imitative, crude, and stiff. Ban Gu's (32–92) "Yongshi" 詠史 ("Poem on History") is in a simple style that owes much to the folk ballad.¹⁸ Zhong Rong (?–c.a. 518) described it as "wooden, unrefined" (*zhi mu wu wen* 質木無文).¹⁹ Zhang Heng's (78–139) "Tongsheng ge" 同聲歌 ("Song of Harmony") is an imitation of a relatively explicit type of love or marriage song which bears little resemblance, in style or theme, to any of the "Nineteen Old Poems."²⁰ Li Yan's 酈炎 (150–177) two "Jian zhi shi" 見志詩 ("Expressing My Will") are important early examples of five-syllable verse used for a serious, personal purpose. But again, they are rather wooden, and very

different from anything seen in the "Nineteen Old Poems."²¹ In addition to these pieces, there are several examples of *yuefu* imitations, for example, Xin Yannian's 辛延年 (n.d.) "Yulin lang" 羽林郎 ("Gentleman of the Palace Guard") and Song Zihou's 宋子侯 (n.d.) "Dong Jiaorao" 董嬌饒. These pieces were composed in a simple, folk ballad narrative style, and bear no resemblance whatsoever to the "Nineteen Old Poems."²²

These literati poems offer no evidence to indicate that Eastern Han *wenren* would have been likely to or capable of composing the "Nineteen Old Poems." For the most part we see among the literati a literary genre at its beginning stages, with only a few primitive, scattered efforts using the new five-syllable meter. The "Nineteen Old Poems" are of a perfection and maturity that clearly distinguishes them from these early literati efforts. Could the "Nineteen Old Poems" be exceptional pieces—extraordinary works by a single gifted *wenren* poet or group of poets? It is extremely unlikely. It has long been accepted that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are the product of varied composers from different times. Moreover, evidence suggests that these poems were not exceptional works, but examples of a vast corpus of Han poems remarkably identical in style and level. For example, one can find a number of similar poems among the works attributed to Li Ling (?–74 B.C.) and Su Wu (ca. 140–60 B.C.); traditional critics often speak of these poems in the same breath with the "Nineteen Old Poems" (e.g. Xie Zhen).²³ Most of these poems are in a relatively refined, fluid five-syllable meter, and as in the case of the "Nineteen Old Poems," a major theme is parting and separation. Compare "Yu Su Wu" 與蘇武 ("To Su Wu") no. 1 and "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 1:

Good times pass and never return,	良時不再至
Parting happens in an instant;	離別在須臾
We linger a while at the edge of the road,	屏營衢路側
Hold hands, hesitate on the outskirts;	執手野踟躕
I raise my head toward the floating clouds,	仰視浮雲馳
How swiftly they race past each other;	奄忽互相踰
Wind and waves, and then suddenly we are lost to each other,	風波一失所
Each on the other end of the sky;	各在天一隅
Our parting will be a lengthy one,	長當從此別
Let us stand here for a little while;	且復立斯須
I wish I could go with the morning wind,	欲因晨風發
And escort you further with my humble person. ²⁴	送子以賤軀
On and on, further and further,	行行重行行
Our's is a separation of the living;	與君生別離

Between us there lies 10,000 <i>li</i> ,	相去萬餘里
Each of us at the other edge of the sky;	各在天一涯
The roads between us are difficult and long,	道路阻且長
Who knows when we will meet again?	會面安可知
The barbarian horse leans into the north wind,	胡馬依北風
The birds of <i>Yue</i> nest on southern branches;	越鳥巢南枝
Day by day the distance grows farther,	相去日已遠
And day by day my sash grows looser;	衣帶日已緩
Floating clouds blocks the white sun,	浮雲蔽白日
The wanderer does not think of returning;	遊子不顧反
Thinking of you makes me old,	思君令人老
Months and years have suddenly passed;	歲月忽已晚
Forget it, I won't speak of it anymore,	棄捐勿復道
Take care and eat a good meal.	努力加餐飯

no. 1²⁵

These two poems are identical in their basic theme, style, and lyric approach. There is even a strong resemblance in some of the phraseology. The Li Ling poem could have been included with the "Nineteen Old Poems" and readers would not know the difference.

Although the above two works are clearly of a very different type than *yuefu* titles such as "Jiangnan" and "Moshang sang," the Han *yuefu* corpus also includes examples of more sophisticated five-syllable works that closely resemble the "Nineteen Old Poems." Compare, for example, the two laments, "Shang ge xing" 傷歌行 ("Song of Sorrow") and "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 19. They open with the respective quatrains:

How brightly shines the pure white moon,	昭昭素月明
Its brilliant glow lighting my bed;	暉光燭我床
Sleep is difficult for a person with worries,	憂人不能寐
How long the night lasts when one is awake. ²⁶	耿耿夜何長

The glowing moon so brilliant,	明月何皎皎
Shines upon my gauze curtained bed;	照我羅床幃
Thoughts and worries, I cannot sleep,	憂愁不能寐
I take my robe, rise, and pace.	攬衣起徘徊

from no. 19

Again we see identical styles, themes, imagery, and striking similarities of language. It should also be noted that Zhong Rong mentions a group of 45 *gushi* in the *Shi pin*,²⁷ and that a number of anonymous Han *gushi* still extant bear strong resemblance to the "Gushi shijiu shou." The *Yutai xinyong* opens with a set of eight *gushi* ("Gushi ba shou" 古詩八首 ["Eight Old Poems"]) whose style, content, and approach are consistent with the "Nineteen Old Poems" (in fact, four of the pieces are also included in the *Wen xuan* grouping of nineteen poems). Number 7 of the "Eight Old Poems" is a poem of separation. The situation described in this poem—the separation caused by the demands of career, and the worries of the one left behind—is a common one in the Han *gushi*:

It is sad parting from family and friends,	悲與親友別
My insides choke it is hard to speak;	氣結不能言
I send you off with words of care,	贈子已自愛
The road is long and it will be difficult to meet again;	道遠會見難
Life is so short,	人生無幾時
And in that time it is filled with troubles;	顛沛在其間
I worry that you are leaving me behind,	念子棄我去
That there will be someone new in your heart;	新心有所歡
You have set your mind on the blue clouds above,	結志青雲上
When will you return? ²⁸	何時復來還

The similarity in topics, themes, meter, diction, and style to be found in some of the Su Wu and Li Ling poems, certain Han *yuefu*, the "Nineteen Old Poems," and other anonymous Han *gushi* shows that during the Eastern Han there existed a well established corpus of anonymous five-syllable poems of a consistently high level of diction and style. In the following section of this study, I will attempt to explain the reasons for the similarities among these groups of poems. Here I want to emphasize that when we compare the extant examples of this corpus to the isolated, tentative, sometimes primitive literati five-syllable lyrics of the Eastern Han it is clear that the literati, at least as we know them, were simply incapable of such verse. The hypothesis of modern scholars who suggest that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are literati imitations or adaptations of folk verse thus appears highly problematic. While there are extant examples of Han *wenren yuefu* verse that are clearly imitations or adaptations (e.g. pieces by Zhang Heng, Xin Yannian, and Song Zihou), they bear little resemblance to the lyrics found among the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other similar works. It should again be stressed that this is consistent with literary history. Literati imitation is an important step in the transformation of a folk or popular genre into a high literati genre, but ordinarily it is easy to distinguish. The literati inevitably have their own approach and touch. The *gongti* style quatrains of the Southern Dynasties aristocracy and literati and the Tang *ci* of the *Huajian ji* are clearly

different from their immediate folk and popular song predecessors—the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* and Tang songs of the type that were preserved at Dunhuang. The differences between Han *wenren* verse and folk or popular verse are equally distinct.

In addition to the literati pieces mentioned above, however, there are two revealing sets of literati five-syllable poems that exist "parallel" with the "Nineteen Old Poems," and bear certain similarities to these works. Yet significant differences strongly suggest that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are of a different category of verse. In his rhapsody, "Ci shi ji xie fu" 刺世疾邪賦 ("Rhapsody Criticizing the Ills of this World"), Zhao Yi 趙壹 (late Eastern Han) describes the decline of society since antiquity and the corruption of his own day. At the conclusion Zhao Yi appends two five-syllable poems. The first poem, labeled a *shi* 詩, is recited by a guest from Qin (Qin *ke* 秦客), and is then followed by a song (*ge* 歌) recited by a scholar from Lu (Lu *sheng* 魯生). The latter piece is quoted below:

For the powerful everything is easy,	勢家多所宜
They spit and it turns into pearls;	欬唾自成珠
Those dressed in hemp must harbor their "jewels,"	被褐懷金玉
Thoroughwort and melilotus turn into straw; ²⁹	蘭蕙化為芻
It is only the worthy that are enlightened,	賢者雖獨悟
But they are surrounded by fools;	所困在群愚
It's best then to stick to one's lot,	且各守爾分
Don't rush around in vain;	勿復空馳驅
Alas, oh Alas!	哀哉復哀哉
This is fate. ³⁰	此是命矣夫

Among certain "Nineteen Old Poems" one can find passages with a similar flavor of lament and protest:

A man's life lasts a single generation—	人生寄一世
As brief as a puff of dust.	奄忽若飄塵
Why not march forward,	何不策高足
And take command of the important roads and fords?	先據要路津
Why stay mired in lowliness and poverty,	無爲守窮賤
Constantly troubled and pained?	轆轤長苦辛

from no. 4

Such passages are one of the reasons critics have felt that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are literati works. It is clear that this piece cannot be a folk poem; one does sense that at least some of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and Zhao Yi's

laments are products of a common age and environment. The differences between these works, however, are instructive. Though they share the same five-syllable meter, Zhao Yi's poems are prosaic, almost crude in style when compared to the "Nineteen Old Poems."³¹ They are direct, vehement works of protest and lament; Zhao Yi is writing in a literati tradition that goes back to Qu Yuan. The "Nineteen Old Poems" on the other hand are more lyrical and refined, they "sing." The difference is not just a matter of style. The contrasting moods and attitudes found in these poems are also revealing. Zhao Yi concludes his piece with lines that have a "Confucian" flavor: "Alas, oh alas! / This is fate." He has protested; now he explains it and accepts it as fate. In the "Nineteen Old Poems" the answer to the frustrations of the world is again and again wine, women, and song. The *carpe diem* theme is expressed with a passion unequalled in the literary tradition (with the possible exception of Li Bo). It is a very different kind of reaction to contemporary realities; one that goes beyond the limits that ordinarily bound the literati tradition. The style and language, the purpose, and the basic attitude and approach of Zhao Yi's poems clearly bear the marks of literati authorship. Strongly contrasting with the "Nineteen Old Poems," they are another kind of evidence that suggests that these poems must be the product of a different kind of "authorship."

Perhaps the finest, most advanced example of Eastern Han literati five-syllable verse is the set of three parting poems that Qin Jia (fl. mid-2nd century) composed to his wife when they were separated by her illness and the demands of his office.³² Of the extant Han literati verse, these poems most closely resemble the type of verse seen in the "Nineteen Old Poems." They were composed in relatively mature, fluid five-syllable meter, and the topic and occasion of the poems—love poems written upon separation—parallel those found in the "Nineteen Old Poems." Below is the first of the series of three poems:

Human life is like the morning dew,	人生譬朝露
In this short life so much obstacle and pain;	居世多屯蹇
Worries and troubles always arriving,	憂艱長早至
Happiness and togetherness always delayed.	歡會常苦晚
I think of how the duties of office,	念當奉時役
Took me farther from you day by day;	去爾日遙遠
I sent a carriage to bring you back,	遣車迎子還
Empty it went and empty it came.	空往復空返
Reading your letter I feel sad,	省書情懷愴
There is food before me, but I cannot eat;	臨食不能飯
Alone I sit in an empty room,	獨坐空房中
Who is there to urge me on?	誰與相勸勉
The nights are long, I cannot sleep,	長夜不能眠

My head on the pillow, I toss and turn;	伏枕獨展轉
All these worries go round like an unbroken bracelet,	憂來如尋環
'Not a mat,' 'can't be rolled and put away.'	匪席不可卷

"Poems to My Wife" no. 1 ("Zeng fu shi")³³

There are numerous passages from Qin Jia's set of poems that are strongly reminiscent of the "Nineteen Old Poems." Compare the opening quatrain of the above poem to these lines from "Nineteen Old Poems" no. 13:

Swiftly, swiftly the seasons change,	浩浩陰陽移
The years of one's life are like the morning dew;	年命如朝露
Man's life is as sudden as a traveler's stop,	人生忽如寄
It cannot be compared to metal or stone.	壽無金石固

There are other examples of phrases and motifs in Qin Jia's poems that are similar to those that occur in Han *yuefu* and *gushi* as well as in the "Nineteen Old Poems":

I become farther from you day by day.	去爾日遙遠
from "Zeng fu shi" no. 1	

We become more distant day by day.	相去日已遠
from "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 1	

Each day I am farther and farther from home.	離家日趨遠
from "Gu ge: 'Qiu feng xiaoxiao chou sha ren'" 古歌: 秋風蕭蕭愁殺人 ("Old Song: 'The soughing of the autumn wind, its sadness kills'") ³⁴	

The River is broad, and there are no bridges or boats.	河廣無舟梁
from "Zeng fu shi" no. 2	

The waters of the River are deep, and there is no bridge.	河水深無梁
from "Gushi: 'Bu chu cheng dongmen'" 古詩: 步出城東門 ("Old Poem: 'Walking out the Eastern Gate'") ³⁵	

The thematic and stylistic similarities found in Qin Jia's poems, the "Nineteen Old Poems," and other Han anonymous verse may appear to suggest that the "Nineteen Old Poems" could be of *wenren* authorship. It seems to me, however, that despite these similarities, the overall nature and effect of Qin Jia's lyrics differ from the "Nineteen Old Poems" in subtle but important ways. Several features of the "Zeng fu shi" mark them as *wenren* works. Fundamental is the fact that they are rooted in specific actual events—they belong to a distinct time and place, and reflect the thoughts and feelings of an identifiable individual. They are a series of poems an official wrote to his wife when his duties and her illness caused their separation. While it is true that almost all of the

"Nineteen Old Poems" are in the first person and that many narrate a single event, there is an overall sense of vagueness and anonymity to these pieces. The "Nineteen Old Poems" include many poems of separation, but precise circumstances are generally left unstated (cf. no. 1, as well as the "Yu Su Wu" poem discussed above). Many of the situations and images found in these poems are stock figures repeated in variation. They lack the specific personal details that are scattered through Qin Jia's series of poems. One is moved by the feelings and thoughts of the "Nineteen Old Poems," but one is not impressed by the individual character or identity of their composer. As will be discussed below, a number of critics have commented on the anonymity of style found in the "Nineteen Old Poems." In this respect then, Qin Jia's lyrics are closer to the typical *wenren* poem which is often rooted in a specific occasion, may be addressed to a specific person, and reflects the identity of its author.³⁶ The "Nineteen Old Poems," on the other hand, are closer to the folk song tradition in their anonymous quality. If my ideas are correct, this is because they were songs sung over and over by various anonymous singers to varying audiences.

Certain other features also suggest that Qin Jia's works are the product of different, more sophisticated authorship. The very fact that Qin Jia composed a series of poems is evidence of an approach to poetry unknown to the composers of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other anonymous Han poems. Also striking is his use of allusion. Many modern scholars have pointed to allusions to the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* in the "Nineteen Old Poems" as evidence of literati authorship. While it is true that such allusions indicate familiarity with these works, with perhaps one or two exceptions, the allusions found in the "Nineteen Old Poems" are allusions in only the most rudimentary sense. For the most part they simply borrow or rework certain phrases. For example, no. 1 contains the phrase *sheng bie li* 生別離 ("living parting") which can also be found in the *Chu ci* ("Jiu ge" 九歌: "Shao siming" 少司命 ["The Nine Songs": "The Little Lord of Lives"])." ³⁷ The fact that this phrase was used earlier in the *Chu ci* is, however, basically irrelevant to our understanding and appreciation of the later poem. In some cases they simply appear to be referring to common lore and need not be traced directly to the *Shi jing* or *Chu ci*. The reader ordinarily can understand the lines the allusions occur in, even if unaware of the origins of the line or phrase.

Qin Jia's allusions to the *Shi jing* are different in nature. He concludes the first poem of his series by combining two phrases from *Shi jing* no. 26, "My heart is not a mat / to be rolled up and stored away" ("*Wo xin fei xi / bu ke juan ye*" 我心非席 / 不可卷也). Qin Jia's line, which comes at the crucial conclusion of the piece, cannot be understood without thorough knowledge of the original poem. The role and weight of his allusion is much greater than what we ordinarily see in the "Nineteen Old Poems." Another significant example of allusion occurs in the third poem. After describing gifts presented to his wife, there is the couplet, "The *Shi* poet was moved by the quince / And answered with a gift of agate stones." ("*Shi ren gan mugua / nai yu da yao qiong*" 詩人感木瓜 / 乃欲答瑤瓊). Here Qin Jia is alluding to *Shi jing* no. 64. What is striking is that he is not simply borrowing

a line or idea. He is also identifying with the author of the *Shi jing* poem. The linking of poet to poem, of looking to the individual behind the poem, is a common literati approach to poetry. There are many similar examples of allusion in later literati verse. One does not find anything quite like it in the "Nineteen Old Poems" or other anonymous Han *shi*. The depth of Qin Jia's familiarity with the *Shi jing* and the assumption of an equal familiarity on the part of his readers (beginning with his wife), together with the relatively sophisticated use of allusion, further distinguishes Qin Jia's poems from the "Nineteen Old Poems."

Although Qin Jia's poems differ in significant ways from the "Nineteen Old Poems," their obvious similarities suggest that Qin Jia was familiar with these works and/or pieces very much like them. Diény has in fact suggested that his poems, "seem the pale imitation of an established style."³⁸ In trying to understand the relationship between these poems, and the nature of Qin Jia's works, we must remember that Qin Jia was an exceptional figure. Although we know little about his life, the simple fact that most of his extant poems are love poems is striking. True love poems, particularly poems to one's wife, were extremely rare in the literati *shi* tradition; up until the Tang they were practically non-existent. On the other hand, love has always been a major topic of folk and popular verse, and is an important theme in the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other Han *gushi*. When Qin Jia was moved to write his poems to his wife it was this tradition he naturally drew upon to best express his feelings. There were, after all, few precedents to follow in the literati tradition.³⁹ But though he adopted the style, diction, and meter of these anonymous works down to the use of certain stock phrases and motifs, he also inevitably added certain touches that betray his own particular background and approach. If Qin Jia's name were not attached to his poems, we would still suspect they were literati works. Despite their similarities to the "Nineteen Old Poems," certain features of Qin Jia's work reveal a *wenren* touch and flavor. Again, this has important implications for the authorship of the "Nineteen Old Poems." If these poems were also by *wenren*, one would expect similar evidence of this literati touch. The differences between the two sets of lyrics provides further evidence to suggest that we must look elsewhere for the authorship of the "Nineteen Old Poems."⁴⁰

The contrast of the stylistic qualities that distinguish the "Nineteen Old Poems" and literati imitation; the historical state of literati five-syllable *shi* during the Eastern Han; and the various contrasting attitudes and approaches seen in literati works and the "Nineteen Old Poems" all strongly suggest that these poems cannot be of literati authorship. It is also clear that they cannot be considered folk verse. But if the "Nineteen Old Poems" are not *minjian* or *wenren* works, or *wenren* imitations of *minjian* lyrics, what are they and who are they by? One of the obstacles to solving this problem has been our conceptions of traditional Chinese society and culture. We have been too quick to categorize objects as products of either low/folk or high/literati traditions. And even though some scholars have pointed out the gradations and varieties of culture, we have been slow to apply this idea to concrete phenomena. In the case of Chinese poetry we must realize that there were many types and levels of verse, and that they reflect different levels and aspects of society. The "Nineteen Old Poems" may exhibit *minjian* and *wenren*

features, not because they are imitations or adaptations, but because they are the product of a stratum of society and culture that lies between these two poles. An attempt to bridge the gap between these two poles can be found in Ma Maoyuan's study of the "Nineteen Old Poems." Ma Maoyuan also suggests that they are literati works (though he does not characterize them as imitations).⁴¹ He is careful to point out, however, that the *wenren* of the "Nineteen Old Poems" were not upper-class *wenren*, but low, unsuccessful literati (*chenlun shiyi de wenren* 沈淪失意的文人). This would explain the mood and themes of some of these poems, which express the frustrations of these disappointed literati. It would also seem to better account for the language and style of the "Nineteen Old Poems." These "lower" *wenren* would presumably be closer and thus more receptive to the influences of the folk tradition. Ma Maoyuan realized the weaknesses of the modern theories and instinctively looked for a different source that would better explain the varied qualities of the "Nineteen Old Poems." His suggestion is insightful and at first attractive. By identifying a different level and type of *wenren*, he eliminates many of the questions raised by the usual literati adaptation/imitation hypothesis.

Despite the attractiveness of Ma Maoyuan's suggestion, it also has serious weaknesses. The "Nineteen Old Poems" appear to be examples of a large corpus of Eastern Han five-syllable verse. We would thus have to assume the existence of a certain class of literati composing a significant body of advanced verse in a relatively unified style and approach that differed significantly from the tentative, primitive efforts of known literati writers. This is difficult when we have little if any concrete knowledge about these literati. We do not even know to what extent they existed. Moreover, there is no evidence to tie them to this body of verse. Ma's hypothesis is largely theoretical. Aware of the weaknesses of current explanations, he essentially "invents" the existence of a more likely group of authors. One of the essential features of Chinese poetry, however, is that ordinarily it is a social practice. Be it a song sung for an audience, an exam poem, a parting poem to a friend, or a palace *yongwu* poem, poetry was usually produced by certain types of persons for concrete purposes and on specific, customary occasions. Poems are the product of a social environment and this environment shapes the nature of the poetry. We have already seen indications that the "Nineteen Old Poems" were not "private" poems. These poems along with other Han *gushi* are of a mature, consistent style and clearly composed of a pool of shared stock phrases, imagery, and themes. Ma Maoyuan's theory fails to explain the circumstances in which such poems could have been composed. It is not grounded in any known realities. Who were these "lower" *wenren* poets? How did they come to compose such a fine body of poetry? To whom, on what occasion, and for what purposes were these poems composed? Ma Maoyuan's theory does not answer these questions. Although we should not entirely eliminate his conjecture, its weaknesses suggest that we continue to search for other possibilities.

The Tradition of Popular Song

For the Chinese, music has always had two different sides. There was proper, "classical" music; this music was refined (*ya* 雅), correct (*zheng* 正), and had roots in antiquity (*gu* 古). This was the music that was the complement to ritual and performed at court; the music extolled by moralists and philosophers.⁴² But there was also improper music; music that was "licentious" (*yin* 淫), new (*xin* 新), corrupting, and often described as the "sounds of Zheng" (*Zheng sheng* 鄭聲). Despite the warnings of the moralists, it was the latter type of music—popular music—that most people listened to and enjoyed:

Marquis Wen of Wei asked Tzu-hsia, "When I don my ritual regalia and listen to the ancient music (古樂), the only thing I fear is that I will keel over [from boredom]. But when I listen to the tones of Cheng and Wei, I never feel the least bit sated with it. May I be so bold as to ask why the ancient music is that way when the new (新樂) is not?"⁴³

These attitudes toward music should not strike us as unusual. There are similar dichotomies in the West between classical and popular music. Here also, popular music, be it blues, jazz, or rock and roll, has often been condemned as a threat to morals and society. And as in our own tradition of popular music, in China we also see the same patterns of musical fashions in which the new replaces the old, only to be replaced itself when it becomes old and passe. Where we part with the Chinese is in the crucial role that music has had in shaping their literary tradition. The rise of new genres and subgenres of poetry can almost always be traced back to the emergence of new kinds of music and song. These literary genres ordinarily did not originate in proper music, but rather the type of music that was meant for pleasure. Music was the most important form of entertainment in traditional China, and it was primarily songs meant for entertainment that were the immediate precursors of the newly developing literary genres.

Popular songs as seen in later traditions such as the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* and Tang popular songs are relatively well documented and understood. Our knowledge of these traditions may help us understand popular song during the Han. To begin with, they help to distinguish between folk and popular traditions. Compare, for example, the following two Southern Dynasties *yuefu*:

From Jiangling to Yangzhou,	江陵去揚州
It's three thousand three hundred <i>li</i> ;	三千三百里
We've gone one thousand three hundred <i>li</i> ,	已行一千三
Still two thousand left to go.	所有二千在

"Aonong ge" 懊儂歌 no. 3 ("Song of Sorrow")⁴⁴

The heat is at its height, still, not a puff of breeze,	暑盛盡無風
Summer clouds now rise with evening's slow approach;	夏雲薄暮起

Together, hand-in-hand, under leaves dense and dark,
Beside floating melons and cooling crimson plums.

攜手密葉下
浮瓜沈朱李

"Zi ye si shi ge, xia" 子夜四時歌, 夏 no. 9 ("Four Seasons 'Zi ye' Song, Summer")⁴⁵

The first poem may be a simple boatman's song. The second poem is a sophisticated love poem. Nothing is directly stated; the composer of this lyric was content to evoke a rich, sensual scene. The approach to the lyric is more subtle and refined than that seen in a folk song. As the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* appear to date from over a period of two hundred years, the variety of types of songs and levels of sophistication should not be a surprise. Although the lyrics are anonymous, one can trace their development from folk song to popular song as they rose from the lower to the highest levels of society.⁴⁶ There are a number of other love songs from the Southern Dynasties of a similar level of sophistication. Some scholars have suggested that these more advanced pieces are the result of extensive literary reworking and editing. But this suggestion is not necessary. The sophistication of songs such as the one quoted above is readily understandable when we consider who may have created such songs and the intended audience. Descriptions tell us of palace ladies, professional singers, and musicians who performed in the court and in the homes of the wealthy.⁴⁷ There is also evidence of the urban origins of many songs, certain examples of which reflect the lives of singing girls and merchants. The results of this mixture of low and high elements are visible in a number of lyrics. In these lyrics one can find the direct feeling and freshness of a folk or popular song, but also a refinement and a sharpness that shows an awareness of the art of words. The musicians and singers who performed for the upper classes were clearly influenced by the high literary tradition and the demands and taste of their audience.

Similar patterns can be found in the evolution of *ci* poetry. In her study of the origins of the *ci*, Marsha Wagner traces this genre back to popular song, in particular the music of Tang courtesans and other entertainers which penetrated various levels of society including the courts. Eventually the literati who had close contacts with the singing girls learned the new forms and began the transformation of song into literary genre.⁴⁸ The result was a blend of popular and elite culture similar to that found in the Southern Dynasties *yuefu*:

The development of T'ang *tz'u* poetry provides an illuminating illustration of the gradations within popular culture and elite culture and the frequent interaction between the two.⁴⁹

This blend was a result of the same type of environment and demands that shaped the Southern Dynasties *yuefu*—the entertainment needs of the urban and wealthy classes. During the Tang such music was categorized as *yan yue* 燕樂 or banquet music:

Banquet music was used primarily for entertainment at official or private banquets in the residences of aristocrats and well-to-do people, as well as in wineshops, song houses, and

brothels, and the song lyrics set to these tunes were sung largely—though, until the Sung dynasty, not exclusively—by singing girls.⁵⁰

It is not always easy to draw an absolute line between folk and popular song; there is overlap. Folk music could be collected and used for entertainment—no doubt this is the primary reason so much has survived. But it is clear that one of the features of folk songs is that they tend to originate in traditional rural society, and that these origins are usually obvious in every aspect from their content to their style. At the other extreme, popular music is primarily a product of urban society, of the courts, and of the homes of the aristocratic and the wealthy. Such songs were pervasive at even the highest levels of society. It was the music of banquets, of parties, of the entertainment quarters, and was often performed by professional musicians and singers. There were limits to which traditional folk songs could meet the demands of an urban and aristocratic audience. Popular music was the new music created for this audience. Such songs may be based upon folk traditions (and/or been stimulated by foreign influence), but they reflect their very different environment and audience. They are more sophisticated in their style and in their emotions, and the settings and topics mentioned in these songs often clearly indicate their urban origins.

The evidence and patterns seen in Southern Dynasties *yuefu* and Tang popular song are clues to understanding the popular song tradition of the Han. I will suggest that during the Han similar types of popular music arose from the same demands and conditions that produced the songs of the Tang and Southern Dynasties. One could expect such music to exhibit a style and level of sophistication corresponding to that of the later traditions. And I will argue that the blend of folk, popular, and elite elements seen in the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other anonymous Han *gushi* best fits what one would expect of a Han popular song tradition.

Popular Song During the Han

Popular music flourished during the Han. Around the middle of the Western Han, Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 B.C.) either established or greatly expanded the Music Bureau (*yuefu*).⁵¹ The duties of the Music Bureau were varied, ranging from collecting songs to providing music for court banquets and religious services. It is apparent, however, that its activities often revolved around entertaining, and involved various types of popular music.⁵² The Music Bureau rapidly expanded and by 70 B.C. there were efforts to limit the Bureau which finally culminated in its abolition by Emperor Ai 哀 (r. 7–1 B.C.) in 7 B.C.⁵³ It was the association of the Music Bureau with extravagance and "improper" music (i.e. popular music) that led to its eventual downfall. We see the Music Bureau and its music condemned in the typical manner:

From the Talents (*cai ren* 才人) of the women's quarters (*yiting* 掖庭) to the Music Bureau of the Shanglin Palace, all brought the music of Zheng into the court.⁵⁴

By the time of Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33–7 B.C.), popular music was especially flourishing and the *Han shu* mentions aristocratic families competing with the Emperor for singing girls (*nüyue* 女樂).⁵⁵ Finally, the Music Bureau was abolished:

The sounds of Zheng are licentious and disturbed proper music. The sage kings thus banished it, and so shall the Music Bureau be abolished.⁵⁶

The efforts to suppress popular music did not succeed. Although the Music Bureau was abolished, other offices continued its work, and it continued to flourish during the Eastern Han.⁵⁷ The passion for such music was too far ingrained at various levels of society. The *Han shu* notes that even after the abolishment of the Music Bureau the situation continued to decline since everyone from commoners to the powerful and wealthy continued to be just as addicted to it as before.⁵⁸

What was this popular music like? Although the music to Han popular song no longer survives, there are a number of descriptions of singing and dancing found in the contemporary literature. One of the most common topics found in the "Nineteen Old Poems" is music and singers. There are descriptions of singing and dancing, of the emotions stirred by music at a banquet, of the experience of listening to a performer:

There are many fine women in Yan and Zhao,	燕趙多佳人
Beauties with complexions of jade;	美者顏如玉
Wearing garments of delicate gauze,	被服羅裳衣
By the doorways they practice their "Pure" melodies (<i>qingqu</i>);	當戶理清曲
The sounds begin with such mournfulness,	音響一何悲
The urgent strings betray the tightened stops.	絃急知柱促

From no. 12

On this day a fine banquet,	今日良宴會
Our delight is difficult to express.	歡樂難具陳
Strumming the zither the music begins to soar,	彈箏奮逸響
The new sounds (<i>xinsheng</i>) enter the realm of the sublime.	新聲妙入神
A noble singer singing lofty words,	令德唱高言
We know the song and hear its truth;	識曲聽其真
Our hearts are united with shared longings,	齊心同所願
Harboring our thoughts, we leave them unexpressed.	含意俱未申

From no. 4

In the northwest there is a high tower,	西北有高樓
Its top even with the floating clouds;	上與浮雲齊
With windows latticed and damask-curtained,	交疏結綺窗
Three flights of steps lead to its belvedere.	阿閣三重階
From its heights come the sounds of strings and song,	上有絃歌聲
How sad the notes and tones;	音響一何悲
Who could possibly have created this tune?	誰能爲此曲
No one but the wife of Qi Liang.	無乃杞梁妻
The <i>qing shang</i> tones float upward with the wind,	清商隨風發
At mid-song she repeats and lingers;	中曲正徘徊
She sighs three times with each strumming on the strings,	一彈再三歎
There is an added sorrow to her frustration and sadness.	慷慨有餘哀
It is not the singer's pain that I pity,	不惜歌者苦
What wounds is that few understand her song;	但傷知音稀
I wish we could become a pair of swans,	願爲雙鳴鶴
Spread our wings, and soar up high.	奮翅起高飛

no. 5

These descriptions are matched by several valuable accounts of popular music in the *fu* 賦 or rhapsodies of the Han and the early Six Dynasties. In the "Western Metropolis Rhapsody" ("Xi jing fu" 西京賦), Zhang Heng describes an emperor's visit to a pleasure lodge to enjoy the delights of women and music:

They snuggled together on a narrow mat in the center of the hall,	促中堂之陝坐
And feathered goblets made the rounds countless times.	羽觴行而無算
Rarely seen dances were performed in succession;	祕舞更奏
Marvelous talents showed off their skills.	妙材騁伎
Their bewitching magic was more seductive than that of Xia Ji;	妖蠱豔夫夏姬
Their beautiful voices were sweeter than that of Master Yu.	美聲暢於虞氏
At first they advanced slowly, with figures so thin,	始徐進而羸形
They seemed unable to support their gossamer silks.	似不任乎羅綺
Singing the "Pure Shang," they suddenly whirled;	嚼清商而卻轉
Evermore charming and graceful they arched their backs.	增嬋娟以此豸

From "Xi jing fu"⁵⁹

Zhang Heng's "Southern Capital Rhapsody" (Nan du fu 南都賦) contains several descriptions of music and dancing in upper-class settings, including music at a clan banquet and a performance (quoted below) that appears to be part of Lustration Festival activities (?):

Lads from Qi begin to sing,	齊童唱兮
And girls from Zhao dress their lines.	列趙女
Seated, they sing the Southern Airs;	坐南歌兮
Standing, they perform the dance of Zheng....	起鄭舞

The mounting grief of the Nine Autumn lament saddens the heart;	結九秋之增傷
The twists and turns of the "Western Jing" stir wistful feelings.	怨西荆之折盤
Strumming the <i>zheng</i> , blowing the <i>sheng</i> ,	彈箏吹笙
They perform fresh tunes (<i>xin sheng</i>) one after another.	更爲新聲
A widow sadly moans;	寡婦悲吟
The giant fowl mournfully shrieks.	鷄雞哀鳴
The listeners heave sullen sighs.	作者悽歎
Their souls are shaken, their spirits are wounded. ⁶⁰	蕩魂傷精

These and other similar descriptions of Han music are complimentary to the accounts found in the "Nineteen Old Poems." They tell us of distinctive types or styles of music that were performed in palaces and mansions of the upper-class by professional troupes of musicians and singers. Many of the performers were women who danced while they sang. These descriptions are also consistent with accounts of popular music from the Southern Dynasties and the Tang. It is clear that this *xin sheng* or *qing shang* music was different from proper, ritual music.⁶¹ Judging from the evidence offered by the "Nineteen Old Poems" and rhapsodies—the settings mentioned, the type of performers, certain themes, and the type of audience they would appeal to—it can be best described as popular music meant for a sophisticated, upper-class audience. And it was criticized in the same terms that popular music was traditionally condemned—as the "music of Zheng." From the above descriptions we learn of the qualities and effects of this music. It could be sensual music—it was sometimes likened to the music of Zheng and Wei (proverbial immoderate, licentious music). Huan Tan describes it as "flowing" (*liu* 流).⁶² It was also extremely lyrical and emotional. In "Nineteen Old Poems" no. 5 the narrator speaks of sensing the pain of the singer through her song; Zhang Heng describes the shaken, wounded souls of an audience listening to *xin sheng*. One thinks of the "sad songs" of our own popular tradition.⁶³ Also, like our popular songs, the "currency" or the "modernness" of this music was prized. The very term, *xin sheng* (literally, the "new," or "latest sounds"), distinguished it from older, traditional music.⁶⁴

The above accounts illustrate how pervasive popular song was during the Han, and hint at the qualities of this music and song. Unfortunately the music to these songs does not survive. While we do have a significant body of Han song lyrics that are generically referred to as *yuefu*, there is little evidence to directly link specific lyrics to the Music Bureau or to the many descriptions of the "new music" we have seen above. There is little reason to doubt, however, that the popular music of the Han must have included many of the *yuefu* songs whose lyrics are still extant. It is also clear, however, that the music and songs we have seen described included songs more sophisticated than the true folk songs that we tend to associate with the *yuefu* corpus. It is difficult to imagine the kind of audiences mentioned above as being satisfied with repeated performances of songs such as "Jiangnan" and "Moshang sang." It is very unlikely that such folk songs could have consistently entertained and communicated to the urban, aristocratic audience that has been indicated in the various descriptions. They would hardly seem capable of evoking the kind of extreme emotions associated with the new music. The music mentioned must have been a more modern, sophisticated type of popular music whose content and style met the tastes and demands of the upper classes.

We must remember, however, that the Han *yuefu* corpus encompasses a wide variety and range of songs, some of which are better categorized as popular rather than folk song. Their content, their occasions, and their settings are more consistent with extant descriptions of popular music. The example of "Shang ge xing" was mentioned earlier, but there are a number of other *yuefu* titles that cannot be folk songs. "Shan zai xing" 善哉行, for example, is a banquet song with allusions to elixirs and the immortal, Wang Qiao 王喬.⁶⁵ In addition to these *yuefu* titles, however, the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other Han *gushi* also appear to fit the description of popular song. When we consider the content of these poems, the settings mentioned, and the general level of style, they as a whole, are far more consistent with the portrayals cited above. I will thus argue that as we see different levels of song in, for example, the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* ranging from simple folk song to sophisticated popular songs, so can we identify a parallel range of levels in Han song lyrics, with works such as the "Nineteen Old Poems" representing the culmination of the Han song lyric tradition.

The "Nineteen Old Poems" as Popular Songs

The crucial question is the generic nature of the "Nineteen Old Poems." Are they literary poems or song lyrics? As we have seen, throughout the critical tradition, almost all scholars have thought them to be literary poems composed by *wenren*.⁶⁶ This despite the fact that many critics have recognized similarities between the "Nineteen Old Poems" (and other Han *gushi*) and *yuefu* verse. A few scholars have suggested that they must be song lyrics. For the most part, however, they have been ignored. In the eighteenth century Zhu Qian 朱乾 maintained, "The 'Nineteen Old Poems' are ancient *yuefu*" (i.e. they are true song lyrics).⁶⁷ Yu Guanying, after analyzing the structure and style of the "Nineteen Old Poems," concurs with this conclusion. He has pointed out a

number of features that suggest the "Nineteen Old Poems" are oral literature, originally set to music.⁶⁸ They include:

A) The "piecemeal" structure of some of the poems that appear to be composed of extremely loosely linked blocks or sections of verse. "Nineteen Old Poems" no. 12, for example, appears to be made up of two distinct lyrics. This combining and deleting of verses from different pieces may be evidence of oral improvisation on the part of a performer and/or an attempt to match lyrics to a certain type and length of music. One often finds similar structures in *yuefu* verse.⁶⁹

B) The extremely common use of familiar motifs and stock phrases. Not only do we find shared lines and phrases within the "Nineteen Old Poems" themselves, a number of these motifs and formula also occur in Han *yuefu*, the Li Ling, Su Wu poems, and other *gushi*:

A traveler arrived from a far away place,	客從遠方來
He gave to me a letter.	遺我一書札
from no. 17	

A traveler arrived from a far away place,	客從遠方來
He gave to me a piece of silk.	遺我一端綺
from no.18	

A traveler arrived from a far away place,	客從遠方來
He gave to me a letter in a carp shaped box.	遺我雙鯉魚
from "Yin ma Changcheng ku xing" 飲馬長城窟行 ("Watering Horses at the Long Wall Spring") ⁷⁰	

I wish we could become a pair of swans,	願為雙鳴鶴
Spread our wings, and soar up high.	奮翅起高飛
from no. 5	

I wish we could become a pair of swans,	願為雙黃鵠
And I could soar beside you and send you off.	送子俱遠飛
from "Shi si shou" 詩四首 no. 2 ("Four Poems") ⁷¹	

I pick them, but to give to whom?	采之欲遺誰
The one I love is far away.	所思在遠道

Occurs in both no. 6 and "Gushi: xin shu lan hui pa" 古詩：新樹蘭蕙葩 ("Old Poem: 'I have newly planted thoroughwort and melilotus'")⁷²

These are only a few examples of an impressive number of stock phrases and lines found in the "Nineteen Old Poems."⁷³ The use of stock phrases and motifs is an important feature of oral literature, and suggests that the "Nineteen Old Poems" were song lyrics.

C) The hazy distinction between Han *yuefu* and *gushi*. Lyrics listed as a *gushi* in one source are listed as *yuefu* in another. "Nineteen Old Poems" no. 13, for example, is included in the *Yuefu shiji* (juan 61) under the title "Qu che Shangdongmen xing" 驅車上東門行 ("Driving My Chariot Through Upper-Eastern Gate"). There are several other such examples, and it has lead some scholars to suggest that the *gushi* of the Han may simply be *yuefu* or song lyrics that became separated from their tune titles (or possibly were lyrics that were never given titles).⁷⁴

D) The many references to and images of music and dancing that occur in the "Nineteen Old Poems" (they also appear in *yuefu* and other *gushi*). Such images will naturally occur in popular music. Our own popular song tradition contains hundreds of songs about dancing and singing. In one *gushi*, the singer actually opens by announcing his performance, "You who sit before me, hush / Listen to the words of my song."⁷⁵

And again, it is important to note that in addition to the internal and structural evidence noted above, the Han *yuefu* corpus includes several pieces that are virtually identical to the "Nineteen Old Poems" (and other *gushi*) in style and approach. A *yuefu* such as "Shang ge xing" with its relatively refined, advanced five-syllable meter; first person lyric (vs. narrative) approach; natural, direct diction; and strongly emotional tone and mood, could easily be grouped with the "Gushi shijiu shou." Other examples of *yuefu* poems that are similar to the "Gushi shijiu shou" include some of the lyrics under the title "Chang ge xing" 長歌行 ("Long Song"; nos. 1 and 3).⁷⁶ The third lyric is a wanderer's lament whose mood, language, and imagery matches that of several of the "Nineteen Old Poems." It even contains phrases and images that allude to and echo several *Shi jing* poems (no. 32 and no. 28) in the same manner of some of the "Gushi shijiu shou."⁷⁷ In his recent study of *yuefu* poetry, Joseph Allen compares the "Nineteen Old Poems" to several other *yuefu* titles, and notes their close affinities in language, images, and motifs. He concludes that they belong to a shared "literary system" and that in an intratextual sense they should be considered *yuefu*.⁷⁸ That known *yuefu* are so similar to the "Nineteen Old Poems" suggests that the latter are also song lyrics.

Recognizing that the "Nineteen Old Poems" were actual song lyrics, and more precisely, the words to popular songs brings us closer to solving the problem of their "authorship." As discussed above, there are a number of reasons to argue against literati authorship; identifying the "Nineteen Old Poems" as song lyrics only strengthens this argument. We would have to assume the existence of a number of gifted literati with a talent for song writing (in the most advanced style) and/or (given the evidence of oral improvisation) performing. Everything we know about traditional Chinese society suggests this would have been an extremely rare combination. The obvious solution to the problem of "authorship" is to suggest that these lyrics were composed (to at least some degree orally) by the professional musicians and singers themselves. This solution dismisses the dilemma of folk vs. literati

authorship. The apparently diverse, "contradictory" qualities of the "Nineteen Old Poems" are not the result of literati imitation of folk verse, but rather a natural blend of qualities found in a popular tradition that lies between and drew upon both the folk and literati traditions. Many of the features of these poems that appear to suggest they are literati works—the mature use of five-syllable meter, the "allusions" to the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci*, and some of the themes and voices seen in the "Nineteen Old Poems"—are better explained as features one would expect of popular songs created by professional singers and musicians. Were these musicians and singers, in fact, capable of such fine, advanced verse? Admittedly, there are a number of questions that need to be addressed, but the available evidence shows that it would be difficult to identify a more likely group of "authors."⁷⁹

Although we know little about the anonymous popular musicians and performers of the Han, the few descriptions that do exist suggest some obvious, but important conclusions. To begin with, there is the simple fact of their existence. Music was an important part of life in traditional China. It was the most popular form of entertainment, and for some men and especially women it was their profession. Descriptions of popular music from different periods such as the Han, Six Dynasties, Tang, and Song are remarkably consistent. Although there must have been a variety of types and levels of music and musicians, literary sources tell us that some of these professional performers entertained at the highest levels of society including the palaces of the emperor and the mansions of the wealthy aristocracy. We know, in fact, that troupes of musicians were kept in these homes as well as in the palaces.⁸⁰ The social status of these popular musicians and performers was, of course, very low. Entertainers did not come from the upper-levels of society. In this respect their art and their traditions must have had deep roots in the folk tradition. We must not, however, forget the environment in which some of these musicians were trained and performed. They were not untutored folk musicians, but the highest of professional performers. Based in the capital, with its palaces, urban culture, and aristocracy, these musicians were exposed to "high culture." In this environment they were, no doubt, encouraged to develop new, more refined music to meet the demands of their sophisticated audience. Some of the features of the Han *gushi* that have led critics to suggest literati authorship appear, in fact, to be consistent with what one would expect of the lyrics to this new music.

In her study of Han *yuefu*, Anne Birrell compares "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 15 and the *yuefu* song, "Ximen xing" 西門行 ("West Gate Ballad"). The two titles appear to be two different versions of a basic poem. Both are laments of the shortness of life that turn to the theme of *carpe diem* that is so common in the "Nineteen Old Poems." They share a number of lines in common, for example:

Day is brief; the bitter night long,
Why not take a candle and roam?

晝短苦夜長
何不秉燭遊

Life is brief, not even a hundred years,

生年(人生)不滿百

But always the worries and troubles of a thousand.⁸¹

常懷千歲憂

The two poems differ, however, in their meter. The *yuefu* is in a *zayan* 雜言 or mixed line length meter, while the "Gushi shijiu shou" is in the more refined, polished five-syllable meter. This leads Birrell to conclude that the *yuefu* was an oral piece composed by an amateur, and the "Gushi shijiu shou" was a literary piece composed by a professional poet.⁸² Other critics have drawn identical conclusions based upon the typical meters of *gushi* and *yuefu*. We have already seen, however, that there is an obvious flaw with this argument. Although there is a tendency to associate *zayan* with *yuefu* verse, five-syllable meter is quite common among *yuefu* poems. Sometimes the five-syllable meter found in *yuefu* can be relatively plain and simple as in the case of the narrative style of "Moshang sang." Yet we have also seen that there are a number of anonymous *yuefu* titles which utilize a more sophisticated five-syllable meter that is indistinguishable from that of the "Nineteen Old Poems." The different levels of styles in the *yuefu* corpus certainly reflect different stages in the evolution of five-syllable meter. It was only natural that five-syllable meter should evolve from the simple, rustic style seen in folk ballads to the more fluid, refined medium seen in what I am suggesting are popular songs. In his *Wenzhang liubie* 文章流別, the Jin dynasty anthologist, Zhi Yu 摯虞 (d. 311), specifically mentions that five-syllable meter was favored for comic verse and popular music (*paixie changyue* 俳諧倡樂).⁸³ Although Zhi Yu's statement is late, it helps to confirm our conclusion that popular musician/singers did employ five-syllable meter. Given their environment, their training, and their audience, they were certainly capable of and likely to have created the level of verse seen in the "Nineteen Old Poems." Thus the more refined style does not necessarily suggest *wenren* authorship. In fact, it may argue against it. As was discussed earlier, when we actually look at *wenren* verse from the Han we find that it was at an early, relatively primitive stage.

Scholars have often pointed to references in the "Nineteen Old Poems" to the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* as evidence of literati authorship. But one would expect an at least rudimentary (in most cases, probably oral) knowledge of these works among these upper-echelon capital musicians and singers. We discussed examples of these "allusions" earlier. They were not particularly sophisticated and as a whole differ in quality from typical literati use of allusion. In general singers and musicians must have drawn upon these earlier works in the same way they utilized stock phrases and lines and motifs from the current folk and popular traditions. I think this, rather than *wenren* "allusion," best explains most references to these "texts" in the "Nineteen Old Poems." In addition, we have even seen instances of some anonymous *yuefu* lyrics alluding to the *Shi jing* which again suggests that knowledge of these works was not the exclusive province of the literati. A vivid example of how singers may have been exposed to the *Shi jing*, and of the interaction of "high" and "low" culture occurs in a description of a banquet scene in Zhang Heng's "Nandu fu":

The serving maids bewitching and charming,

侍者蠱媚

Wear kerchiefs and capes fresh and bright.	巾幘鮮明
Dressed in garments of sundry kinds,	被服雜錯
They walk with flowery allure.	履躡華英
These clever talents vivacious and witty,	儇才齊敏
Offer the cups and pass the goblets.	受爵傳觴
Pledges and toasts are exchanged;	獻酬既交
They observe ritual decorum and never lose control.	率禮無違
Musicians strum their zithers, finger their flutes,	彈琴擲簫
And the sound of flowing melodies lingers in the air.	流風徘徊
As the clear <i>jue</i> turns to <i>zhi</i> ,	清角發徵
The listeners are struck by mounting sadness.	聽者增哀
The guests chant, "When drunk, return home!"	客賦醉言歸
The host declares, "The dew is not yet dry."	主稱露未晞
They continue joyous feasting day and night,	接歡宴於日夜
Ending with fine demeanor, yet merry and gay. ⁸⁴	終愷樂之令儀

Here we see popular musicians and talented, witty serving girls performing at a banquet while host and guest recite phrases based upon lines from the *Shi jing*.⁸⁵ It would not have taken much effort for musicians and singers to follow their example and incorporate such lines and phrases into their own work.

Perhaps the major difficulty with accepting the "Nineteen Old Poems" as popular songs composed by popular singers and musicians is the content and voices found in *some* of these lyrics. The love songs, songs of traveling and parting, and a song about a former singing girl are, of course, entirely consistent with what one would expect of popular song. But a number of pieces are clearly set in upper-class environments and express *wenren* frustrations and concerns. It is these lyrics that have helped to convince critics of their literati authorship. Although the reasoning of the critics is natural, and consistent in the context of the literary tradition, it may be nonetheless flawed. It is true that in the *wenren* tradition, a poem composed in the first-person is ordinarily a work about oneself. Thus it was only natural for critics to assume that a first-person lyric expressing the frustrations of a *wenren* was composed by a *wenren*. In the case of popular song, however, the identify of composer and the voice or persona of the lyric is not nearly as direct. A popular singer often sang what tradition handed down and what fashion dictated. It is important to remember that a popular singer performed for an audience—to sing directly of one's own life and concerns would have been the exception rather than the rule. When a song was composed in the persona of a suffering *wenren* (which the capital must have been full of) it was probably because this is what appealed to the capital audience. Neither should one mistake the various other personae who appear in the "Nineteen Old Poems"

and other *gushi* with their composer/singers. A lyric in which a wife sings of separation from her husband or a traveler of his loneliness, was not necessarily by that wife or by that traveler. Again, one need only think of our own popular song tradition to realize how utterly convincingly a composer/singer may sing of certain events and emotions that may have little direct relation to his or her personal life. All the country-western songs about truck driving were composed by song writers and singers, not truckers. Admittedly, one cannot rule out the possibility that on occasion *wenren* may have had a more direct role in the composition of certain pieces. Perhaps there were certain frustrated, "lower" *wenren* who had close contacts with and direct influence upon the entertainers. Perhaps in certain exceptional cases there were *wenren* musicians, e.g. a frustrated literati with musical talent turned composer (as a few composers of trucking songs possibly were former truckers). But such cases would have been rare. Ordinarily the social divisions between entertainer and *wenren* were strict. Moreover, lyric composition is a specialized art that demands certain talents and training that most *wenren* would have lacked. It is difficult to imagine literati playing a major role in the composition of what appears to have been a large corpus of popular songs.

Other features of the "Nineteen Old Poems"—their settings and occasions, but also their overall mood and feeling—are also consistent with the suggestion that they were popular songs composed by professional musicians. One of the most important topics of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and the Su Wu and Li Ling poems is parting and separation. There are songs that describe the separation of man and wife (no. 18), the loneliness of a wanderer longing for home (no. 14), and also a number of poems that appear to be actual parting poems.⁸⁶ One can imagine several reasons for the popularity of this theme. To begin with, much of the urban audience ranging from merchants to ambitious young scholars in the capital were travelers away from home. But it also appears that some of these songs may have actually been performed on the occasion of parting. It is well known of course that parting was an important theme and occasion in the tradition of literati poetry. But there is also evidence that music and songs of parting were important parting traditions. In fact, it was probably the custom of parting songs that largely inspired the literati tradition of parting verse. Many of the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* are parting songs and there are descriptions of performances of these songs at parting banquets.⁸⁷ Evidence for the Han is much slighter, but we have seen a number of examples of poems of separation and parting. In one of the parting poems attributed to Su Wu there are specific references to singing and parting (see below). Such internal evidence and the example of the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* suggest that the many examples of Han songs of separation and parting reflect a practice of music performed at partings.

What must have been another important occasion for the performance of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other *gushi* was various types of parties and banquets (including parting banquets). Banquets have always been an occasion for the performance of popular music and dancing. During the Tang, popular music was described literally as "banquet music" (*yan yue*). Some of the Han *yuefu* are clearly banquet songs; the example of "Shan zai xing"

was mentioned above. According to the *Sui shu* 隋書, during the Eastern Han, one of the four major categories of music (speaking of court music) was *huangmen guchui yue* 黃門鼓吹樂 ("music of the palace bandsmen") which was described as the music that the Emperor used while feasting his ministers.⁸⁸ There are a number of Han descriptions of banquets and musical performance, most notably those contained in the "Nineteen Old Poems" and various other *gushi*.⁸⁹ "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 4 opens with the announcement of a banquet and then proceeds with a description of the music that is performed. The motifs of banqueting and music occurs throughout the corpus of these poems. Below is the opening section of a Su Wu parting poem which mentions music and may have been performed at a party:

A swan upon its distant way,	黃鵠一遠別
Hesitates and looks back for a thousand <i>li</i> ;	千里顧徘徊
A tartar horse separated from its herd,	胡馬失其群
Is filled with constant longing;	思心常依依
How much more so a pair flying dragons,	何況雙飛龍
Whose wings will soon turn away;	羽翼臨當乖
Grateful we are for stringed songs,	幸有絃歌曲
To express the depths of our hearts;	可以喻中懷
Let me sing a "Wanderer's Song,"	請爲遊子吟
Clear and fine and sad;	泠泠一何悲
Strings and winds sharp and clear,	絲竹厲清聲
Full of sorrow and frustration;	慷慨有餘哀
And when the "Long Song" is at its height,	長歌正激烈
Our hearts suffer and break;	中心愴以摧
I want to sing a <i>qing shang</i> song,	欲展清商曲
I think how you will not return... ⁹⁰	念子不能歸

We saw earlier a *gushi* in which the singer opens by addressing his audience and asking them to hush. This and the many other references to and descriptions of performances in these poems suggests that they are themselves lyrics to the type of songs they so often describe.

That the "Nineteen Old Poems" were popular songs sung for entertainment at parties and song houses helps to explain the overall mood and approach of many of the poems. Critics have commented on the frustration, the extreme passions, and the prevalent mood of *carpe diem* in the "Gushi shijiu shou." Most have attempted to link it to historical conditions during the late Eastern Han when the dynasty was in decline. I think this conclusion is

correct to a degree, but one should also consider the essential nature of the genre. Popular songs were performed under circumstances that encouraged an unrestrained expression of feelings. Again and again we find songs urging the audience to "seize the day": "Forget your troubles, let yourself go, / Why hold back?" (no. 12). Performed at banquets, parties, and houses of entertainment at which friends gathered to feast, drink, and lament and forget the troubles of the day, they were a kind of release or catharsis for their audience.⁹¹ We saw above, several descriptions of the powerful emotional effects of popular music; Zhang Heng spoke of the sadness of music and shaken souls and wounded spirits. I think we can recognize in such descriptions the moods and feelings found in the "Nineteen Old Poems." The sadness and strength of emotions in these songs were part of their attraction. In these pieces one can sense the sadness that has always drawn listeners of various times and cultures to "sad songs." Confucians have always criticized popular music as being *yin* or lascivious. Although this word could refer to the eroticism of such music which often touched on themes of love and were performed by singing girls, it also may have referred to the extremes and excess of emotions to be found in popular songs. They did not adhere to the Confucian ideal of "*ai er bu shang*" 哀而不傷 ("grief without wounding"). Zhao Yi's poem in which he lamented the times was forceful and blunt, yet it concluded with the typical *wenren* restraint: he protests but accepts it as fate. In the "Nineteen Old Poems" the answers are wine, women, and song; they go beyond the proper limits and this is part of their aesthetic. They reveal an approach to life and art very different than that of the typical literati poem, and these differences in attitude and approach are rooted in their generic differences. Many literati may have enjoyed listening to such songs, but few would have been capable of composing them. Among other reasons, their basic heritage and training would have inhibited them.⁹²

We have seen how a number of the qualities and features of the "Nineteen Old Poems"—ranging from their structure to their overall mood—suggest that they are popular songs. At this point I will attempt to explain some admittedly less definable qualities that lay at the heart of the "magic" of the "Gushi shijiu shou." Through the centuries critics have marveled at these works. They have admired their genuine emotions, their refined naturalness, and their universality—qualities that have given these lyrics a special aura. Because the critics were not aware of the true nature of the "Nineteen Old Poems" they had difficulty explaining why these poems were what they were, and had the effects that they did. It is not possible to analyze entirely the magic of a poem, but once we recognize that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are popular songs, we can begin to understand the basis for their unique beauty and qualities.

It is no coincidence that critics have so often likened the "Nineteen Old Poems" to the *Shi jing* and, in particular the lyrics of the "Guo feng." These poems also were, in origin, the lyrics to folk and popular song. Although traditional critics were not very clear about the true identity of these two groups of poems (which were separated not only by a vast gulf in time, but by extreme differences in language, style, and structure), they instinctively felt their "kinship." The poems affected them in certain similar ways. This is not to say that all song

lyrics will possess the qualities we find in the "Nineteen Old Poems" or *Shi jing*. One can suggest, however, that certain kinds of songs have a potential to develop such qualities and that this potential is closely linked to the basic nature of songs. These qualities help explain why the poetry of a song lyric affects us in ways very different than a literary poem by Li Bo or Du Fu. The issue of song lyric vs literary poem is, of course, complex and immense. It is not a task that will be confronted in this study. Here I will only briefly touch on certain qualities that critics have returned to again and again in their descriptions of the "Nineteen Old Poems"—their "naturalness" and their "universality"—and show how these qualities are linked to their basic generic nature.

The concept of "naturalness" is, of course, difficult to define. For us, what is important is to understand the context in which such a term or others like it were used in regard to "The Nineteen Old Poems." When later traditional critics read these poems they were judging them in the context of an immense poetic tradition that was comprised primarily of literary poems. Many of these poems exhibit astounding degrees of technical sophistication and difficulty and can only be read with the aid of extensive commentaries. Some of these poems were written for a variety of practical motives and social purposes (e.g. to display one's learning, praise one's superiors, pass exams etc.). In such a tradition, "The Nineteen Old Poems" stood out. They were described as: "genuine" (*zhen* 真), "straightforward, direct" (*pingping dao chu* 平平道出), "natural" (*tianran* 天然, *ziran* 自然, *tianlai* 天籁).⁹³ They seemed to be an "artless" art:

It is said that the "Feng" and "Ya" poems of the *Shi jing* and the "Nineteen Old Poems" are without method (*jufa* 句法). This is not true. They are of the highest method—it is simply that the steps cannot be traced.⁹⁴

As always, the critics were extremely sensitive to the effects of poetry. What they did not understand is why the "Nineteen Old Poems" possess the qualities that they do. The answer to this question must begin with the basic nature of the poems, the fact that they are song lyrics. It is, after all, difficult to think of an art more "natural" than folk or popular song. The language of a song lyric is of necessity, simple, direct, with a natural rhythm and fluidity. These qualities may range in different types and levels of songs, but they are inherent in the genre. Songs are to varying degrees a type of oral literature. A song can be personal, but it is also a public, performance art. A singer sings to and for an audience using a relatively simple, direct language. Songs may possess varying degrees of refinement and sophistication, but ordinarily they will not have the craft, and intricacy of most literary verse. The clear, fluid language so admired in the "Nineteen Old Poems" is precisely the type of language one would expect to find in popular lyrics produced by musicians who performed for a sophisticated audience.

Another related quality that the "Nineteen Old Poems" have been praised for is their universality: "The reason that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are literature for a thousand years is that they are able to speak of the feelings that all men have in common..."⁹⁵ This quality also has as its basis the fundamental nature of song lyric. Again, I am not suggesting that all popular songs are universal or that a literary poem cannot be universal, only that we can identify

in folk and popular song certain features that may encourage such a quality. This universality is closely linked to the "anonymous" quality of the "Nineteen Old Poems." As Zhu Ziqing expressed it, "During this period the personality of the poets still had yet to emerge..."⁹⁶ Zhu Ziqing explained that since the "Nineteen Old Poems" were *wenren* imitations of folk verse, it was only natural that they were anonymous both in fact and in their style. The Qing critic, Jin Shengtān 金聖嘆, however, thought it reflected a deliberate attitude and approach on the part of the authors:

These poems are nothing less than the ancestors (*zong* 宗) of rhymed verse. That [the poets] should attain such exquisite thoughts and lovely style, yet not even bother to leave their names to the world—such an attitude (*nian* 念) puts us present scribblers to shame. It is this attitude that in fact lies at the root of the beauty of the ancients and their art.⁹⁷

In a lyric tradition in which literary poems were the statements of a distinct individual, the anonymity and universal qualities of what were traditionally assumed to be literati poems was striking. Jin Shengtān saw the anonymity of the "Nineteen Old Poems" as a kind of moral virtue on the part of the authors that in turn resulted in certain aesthetic qualities. But again, these features of the "Gushi shijiu shou" are simply explained by the fact that they are songs. Singers ordinarily did not sing of themselves. Theirs was primarily an oral tradition that in large part consisted of handed-down verses, stock phrases and motifs, and was performed for an audience. In a sense, a song was a sort of communal art in which the singer/composer's own personality was usually submerged. One can compare the relationship of singer and song to that of an actor and his role. Each attempts to create a convincing persona with their performance, and each puts a part of themselves in their art. But one should not confuse this persona with the performer. Despite the fact that a lyric may be in the first person, narrate a specific event, and give the effect of being personal and real (this, after all, is the goal of the performance), there will naturally be an absence of individual identity and personality. Qin Jia's poems to his wife are so instructive because while they were deeply in debt to the style and approach of the "Nineteen Old Poems" they were also rooted in actual event, and the poet inevitably imbued his lyrics with an individual presence and touch that distinguishes them from popular song. The "Nineteen Old Poems" are universal not only because of their exquisite quality, but because it is practically an inherent feature of the genre. The "Nineteen Old Poems" were not, like many literary poems, the work of one distinct individual to another, but lyrics sung by singers to an audience.

The unique qualities and beauty we find in the "Nineteen Old Poems" inevitably disappeared as five-syllable verse evolved from song lyric into literary poetry. During the Jian'an period, with the emergence of writers such as Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), Cao Zhi, and other poets, *wenren* verse began to flourish. Jian'an would eventually become recognized as one of the great ages in the *shi* tradition. One would not confuse, however, one of the "Gu shi shijiu shou" with a literati poem from this period. Literati verse could still be clumsy and primitive; clearly they

were still struggling to adapt the form. Cao Cao's *yuefu* verse, for example, was worlds away from the fluidity and naturalness of the "Nineteen Old Poems." Other clear hallmarks of literati style include a more sophisticated diction (e.g. extensive use of parallelism) and extensive use of allusion. And again there is the strong individual voice that is such an essential aspect of the literati tradition. Cao Zhi, the greatest poet of this period, was strongly influenced by the "Nineteen Old Poems" (and/or other poems like them). His "Za shi" 雜詩 (*Wen xuan*, *juan* 29), for example, are among the most successful adaptations of the Han *gushi* style. But again there is a difference. In most cases, they are distinguished by the presence of the author's voice and personality. There is the individual *qi* 氣 and strength that is so prized in Jian'an verse, and of course this was a great advance in the development of five-syllable verse. There are also individual strokes of genius and invention that cannot be found in "collectively" composed songs. But there is also a kind of loss. The naturalness, the simplicity, and the fluidity of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other Han *gushi* that critics have always admired disappears. The Ming critic, Hu Yinglin, touched on this loss in his discussions of the evolution of the *shi* tradition:

Coming to the "Nineteen Old Poems" and various other miscellaneous poems, we find they simply followed their words and completed their rhymes, and following their rhymes achieved their intentions. Rhetorical embellishment and *qi gu* 氣骨 (spirit, bone) can hardly be identified, yet the images and scenes glisten; feelings and intentions are deep and subtle. They truly can make ghosts and spirits weep; move Heaven and Earth. Coming to and following the Wei, one finds literature evolving and styles develop according to the individual. Poets such as Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Wang Can, Lu Ji, Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300), Zhang Xie 張協 (?–307), and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) excelled at descriptive language; Liu Zhen 劉楨 (?–217), Zuo Si 左思 (c.a. 250–c.a.305), Liu Kun 劉琨 (271–318), and Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414–466) excelled with their *qi*. The poet who was possessed of both qualities was Cao Zhi; nevertheless, the magic of the ancient poems (*gushi* 古詩) was never seen again.⁹⁸

The "Nineteen Old Poems" and other examples of the Han *gushi* tradition were the culmination of a long process of evolution in which Han folk song gradually developed into popular song. These songs certainly had roots in the folk tradition, but in their present form are the products of the palaces, mansions, and entertainment establishments of the capital. In them we find a blend of elements from both the lower and upper levels of society together with the inherent qualities of song lyric. They attained a kind of balance and perfection—simple and direct, yet subtle and refined—that early literati *shi* paled against. This was to be expected. We should recognize that this early literati verse was in fact a beginning step of a new stage in the *shi* tradition. Although very much in debt to folk and popular song, literati *shi* was a fundamentally different type of verse by a different type of author. Their early efforts represent a new beginning, and the awkward, tentative quality we find in their works is only

natural. Of course, the literati would add their own elements to the tradition and eventually take it to new and different directions and heights. These new directions were inevitable and necessary for the development of the *shi* tradition. But, at times, one cannot but agree with Hu Yinglin, and recognize that in this progress there also was an inevitable loss.

Critics sensed in the "Nineteen Old Poems," a kind of wholeness and purity that reminded them of the *Shi jing*.⁹⁹ Untainted by craft, ego or motive, "beyond human effort," such poetry seemed to represent a pristine beginning, to possess an innocence or "goodness" from which there had been a fall. But the magic of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and the *Shi jing* can, at least in part, be explained by their nature. To some degree, we could discover similar qualities in many of our own folk and popular songs. As we have seen, there are simple, concrete reasons for a song's apparent lack of craft and ego. And when the basic nature of a lyric tradition shifts, as happened during the late Eastern Han, so does its qualities. The "fall" of poetry from purity and naturalness into craft and individual voice was the inevitable result of a process in which song was transformed into literary verse.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The suggestion that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are popular songs composed by professional musicians and singers may at first seem striking. On the other hand, theories that maintain they are literati works are equally lacking in direct evidence, and as has been shown, pose serious difficulties. When we examine the literary context and carefully compare Han examples of *wenren* verse to the "Nineteen Old Poems," it is clear that the literati were not capable or likely to have composed these works. Although there is little direct evidence to confirm that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are the lyrics to popular song, the circumstantial evidence is strong. No single type of evidence is convincing in itself, but taken together it is overwhelming. We know that popular song flourished during the Han. We have descriptions of the performers, settings, and audience, as well as some hints as to the qualities and effects of these songs. The compositional structure of the "Nineteen Old Poems" and their use of oral formula strongly indicate that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are in fact song lyrics. Although critics have always seen the relative sophistication of the "Nineteen Old Poems" as evidence of literati authorship, this sophistication can be better explained by the fact that the "Nineteen Old Poems" are, more precisely, the lyrics to popular songs. Their place during the Han is parallel to the popular songs of the Six Dynasties and Tang. They are not folk songs, but songs sung in the cities and palaces for the entertainment of the upper classes. They will naturally have a relative sophistication that reflects their environment and the demands of their audience. Throughout this study I have stressed that Chinese poetry was a social practice, and that the features of an individual genre should reflect the concrete influence of its environment. In various aspects, the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other Han *gushi*, conform to what we would expect from popular song. In addition to the relative sophistication of their style and content, the occasions mentioned such as banquets and parting are occasions during which popular songs were performed. The

moods and feelings expressed and especially the theme of *carpe diem* are also closely linked to popular song. There are several descriptions of the sadness and passions aroused by popular song, and they match the extreme feelings found in many of the "Nineteen Old Poems," feelings that have led many critics to conclude that they reflect a dynasty in decline. Finally, some of the less definable qualities of the "Nineteen Old Poems"—their naturalness and their universality—qualities that critics long admired but could not explain, are best understood, at least in part, as rooted in the inherent qualities of the genre.

The "Nineteen Old Poems" are only one example of the important place of popular song lyrics in the poetic tradition. We have noted that the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* and the songs preserved at Dunhuang include sophisticated works that can be described as popular songs. These songs are of a level akin to the "Nineteen Old Poems."¹⁰¹ And as the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* led to the *jueju* and Tang popular song to *ci*, the Han *gushi* tradition led to the five-syllable verse of Jian'an.¹⁰² In the case of both the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* and the "Nineteen Old Poems," modern critics have suggested that because of their relative refinement and ornateness, they were the product of extensive literati editing and rewriting. But such explanations are unnecessary, and obscure the place of popular song in the poetic tradition. In the case of the Southern Dynasty *yuefu* and later the Tang lyrics from Dunhuang, the basic identity of the poems presents no major problems. They are songs lyrics. The "Nineteen Old Poems," however, have always been a mystery. Modern explanations of these lyrics as *wenren* adaptations or imitations of folk songs are a sort of compromise that attempts to account for their mix of seemingly divergent qualities. As we have seen, however, identifying the "Nineteen Old Poems," and in fact many other anonymous Eastern Han *gushi*, as the surviving lyrics of a popular music tradition, best explains the qualities of these works, and fits in with basic patterns of the poetic tradition. Popular songs have their own unique beauty and qualities, and they have played crucial roles in the poetic tradition. We should recognize these works, and acknowledge the contributions of the musicians and singers who created them to the cultural tradition.

Notes

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¹ There are numerous studies and translations of the "Nineteen Old Poems." For an extensive collection of traditional commentaries, see Sui Shusen 隋樹森, *Gushi shijiu shou jishi* 古詩十九首集釋 (1958; rpt. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1989). Helpful introductory studies include Zhang Qingzhong 張清鐘, *Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangxi yu yanjiu* 古詩十九首彙說賞析與研究 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1988) and Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元, *Gushi shijiu shou chu tan* 古詩十九首初探 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin, 1981). The latter work is especially valuable for its extensive collection of critical comments gathered from *shihua* 詩話, prefaces, anthologies etc. Studies together with complete translations of these poems can be found in Jean-Pierre Diény, *Les Dix-Neuf Poèmes Anciens* (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, 1963) and Kenneth P. H. Ho, *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* (Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh, 1977). The latter two works include useful bibliographies.

² Xie Zhen (1495–1575), *Siming shihua* 四溟詩話 4.1205, in Ding Fubao 丁福保, comp., *Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983).

³ Liu Guangfen 劉光賁 (Qing), *Gushi shijiu shou zhu* 古詩十九首注, in Sui Shusen, *Gushi shijiu shou jishi* 3.124. See also the discussions in Xu Xueyi (1563–1633), *Shiyuan bianti* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987) 3.57. The earliest critic to link the "Nineteen Old Poems" with the *Shi jing* was Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 (?–c.a. 518). See Chen Yanjie 陳延傑, comm., *Shi pin zhu* 詩品注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1980), *juan* A.17.

⁴ They are included among a series of nine *zashi* 雜詩 under his name. See Xu Ling (507–583), comp., *Yutai xinyong jian zhu* 玉臺新詠箋注, 2 vols., commentary by Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 and Cheng Yan 程琰 (Qing Dynasty); edited by Mu Kehong 穆克宏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985) 1.16–21. For a complete translation of this text, see Anne Birrell, trans., *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

⁵ Not only did Xiao Tong regard them as anonymous, the early "Nineteen Old Poems" imitations by Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) and Liu Shuo 劉鑠 (431–453), which include imitations of the pieces that Xu Ling attributed to Mei Sheng, are simply entitled *ni gushi* 擬古詩 or *ni gu*. This would indicate they did not know the authorship of the pieces they were imitating. See Lu Ji, "Ni gushi shier shou" 擬古詩十二首 ("Twelve Poems in Imitation of *Gushi*") and Liu Shuo, "Ni gu er shou" 擬古二首 ("Two Poems in the Old Style"), in Xiao Tong, et al., eds., *Wen*

xuan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986) 30.1426–29 and 31.1444–45, respectively. In the preface to the *Shi pin* ("Zong lun" 總論, p. 1), Zhong Rong, speaking of the Han *gushi* tradition in general, says, "The origins of the old poems are distant and obscure; it is difficult to be certain of authorship and dates." Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465–ca. 520), in the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, mentions the Mei Sheng attribution, but he is clearly hesitant when he does it: "The 'Old Poems' are beautiful, some are said to be by Mei Sheng. The piece, 'Lone Bamboo' ('Gu zhu' 孤竹 [no. 8]), is by Fu Yi 傅毅 (?–ca. 90 A.D.). Judging by their style, could one say they are the products of both Han dynasties?" See Wang Liqi 王利器, ed., *Wenxin diaolong jiaozheng* 文心雕龍校証 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980) 6.35. Doubts about the Mei Sheng attribution would continue throughout the tradition. In his commentary to the *Wen xuan*, Li Shan 李善 (ca. 630–690) notes, "their authorship is unknown; some are said to be by Mei Sheng, but one doubts that this can be proven." See *Wen xuan* 29.1343.

⁶ As we have seen, Liu Xie attributes one piece to Fu Yi. Zhong Rong notes that Cao Zhi and Wang Can were suspected to have composed some Han *gushi* (an example of which is one of the "Nineteen Old Poems" [no. 14]); *Shi pin zhu*, juan A.17. Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) mentions that, in addition to Mei Sheng, Zhang Heng and Cai Yong were considered possible authors, but comments that it is impossible to determine. See Wang Shizhen, *Yiyuan zhiyan* 藝苑卮言 2.978, in Ding Fubao, ed., *Lidai shihua xubian*.

⁷ Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) points out numerous examples of Cao Zhi's lines being directly influenced by the "Nineteen Old Poems." He then comments that while the Han poems are "natural" (*ziran* 自然), the Wei poems are "constructed" (*zaozuo* 造作), and so the superior merits of the former are obvious. See *Shi sou* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), "Neipian" 2.30.

⁸ See Daniel Hsieh, "The Origins and Development of *Jueju* Verse" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1991); Charles Houston Egan, "One Note, Three Echoes: The Development of the Pentasyllabic Quatrain" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1991); Marsha Wagner, *The Lotus Boat: The Origins of Chinese Tz'u Poetry in T'ang Popular Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

⁹ For a helpful summary of the arguments and evidence, see Zhang Qingzhong, *Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangxi yu yanjiu*, pp. 131–36. Among the evidence cited by scholars for this dating is 1) the mention of Luoyang, the Eastern Han capital (25–220 A.D.), in several songs; 2) the apparent violation of Western Han taboo words; and 3) the mood of frustration and the sense of *carpe diem* found in several of the songs which would seem to reflect a dynasty in decline.

¹⁰ James Robert Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature: Outlines and Biographies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 61.

¹¹ In his recent study of *yuefu* poetry, Joseph R. Allen has pointed out problems in defining and delineating the corpus of *yuefu* verse. For example, with the possible exception of ritual type songs, none of the extant *yuefu* titles assumed to be from the Han can be linked to the Music Bureau. It is clear that many of our ideas about what constitutes *yuefu* verse have been shaped by later works, in particular, the great Song Dynasty anthology, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (n.d.). As the concept of the *yuefu* genre gradually evolved, almost any song could be categorized as a *yuefu*, and song lyrics thought to be from the Han became known as Han *yuefu*. Allen has also pointed out that there are also problems in dating these anonymous songs and characterizing their exact nature. See Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992), pp. 37–68. Despite these misgivings, we can still speak of a body of Han folk and popular songs which traditionally and in modern times have been generically referred to as *yuefu* (I will continue to use this term in this general generic sense). I do not think there is any reason to suspect the "authenticity" of most of what are commonly thought to be Han songs. It is true that some pieces are more reliably "attributed" than others, for example, the anonymous folk song type lyrics that Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) recorded in the "Yue zhi" 樂志 chapter of the *Song shu* 宋書 and labeled as being Han (see the songs included in *juan* 21 and 22). Shen Yue explicitly describes certain titles as "street songs and ditties from the Han" (though he does not use the term *yuefu*). See Shen Yue, comp., *Song shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 19.549. For a basic introduction to the *yuefu* genre, see Hans Frankel, "Yüeh-fu Poetry," in Cyril Birch, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 69–107. For a recent study of Han *yuefu*, see Anne Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of China* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

¹² The anonymous Han *yuefu* appear to have flourished from the latter part of the Western Han into the Eastern Han. Admittedly, the dates are difficult to determine. To begin with, the extant corpus contains a variety of types of songs of varying levels of sophistication. No doubt they were created over a period of time. Although the concrete evidence is scarce, many modern scholars suggest that most extant *yuefu* of the folk song type are from the Eastern Han. This assumption is based upon the content, style (the relatively sophisticated style found in some pieces, in particular the increasing use of five-syllable meter), and internal evidence (e.g. the mention of certain place names). See Wang Yunxi 王運熙, "Handai de suyue he minge" 漢代的俗樂和民歌, in *Yuefu shi luncong* 樂府詩論叢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), pp. 70–72. Although the evidence is admittedly tenuous, there is little reason to doubt the general conclusion. However, I do not see any need to rule out the possibility that some pieces may date from the latter part of the Western Han. A recent study, for example, has suggested that the famous ballad, "Moshang sang" 陌上桑, may date as early as the middle of the Western Han, see Joseph Roe Allen III, "From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of the Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48.2 (1988): 324.

¹³ See the "Ku-shih shih-chiu shou" entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed. and comp. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (1986; 2nd rev. ed. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1988), p. 490.

¹⁴ Although most critics argue for a late Eastern Han dating (primarily on the grounds of the prevailing mood of many of the pieces), Liang Qichao 梁啟超 has suggested a range of dates ranging from 120–170 A.D. See Liang Qichao, *Zhongguo zhi meiwen ji qi lishi* 中國之美文及其歷史 (1936; rpt. Taipei: Taiwan zhonghua shuju, 1968) 9.113. The evidence of Qin Jia's 秦嘉 (fl. mid-2nd century) "Zeng fu shi" 贈婦詩 ("Poems to My Wife"; to be discussed below) also indicates that the "Nineteen Old Poems" may be slightly earlier than has been suggested by most modern scholars. Diény has suggested an even earlier range of Eastern Han dates—from the time of Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) to Qin Jia. See Jean-Pierre Diény, *Les Dix-Neuf Poèmes Anciens*, pp. 186–87. It should be noted that several critics still maintain that a least some of the "Nineteen Old Poems" may date from the Western Han, see Sui Shusen, *Gushi shijiu shou jishi* 1.1–13; Zhang Qingzhong, *Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangxi yu yanjiu*, pp. 145–153.

¹⁵ Zhu Ziqing, "Gushi shijiu shou shi" 古詩十九首釋, in *Gu shige jianshi san zhong* 古詩歌箋釋三種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), p. 220. See also, Zhang Qingzhong, *Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangxi yu yanjiu*, p. 156; Kenneth P. H. Ho suggests that they are folk songs modified by literati, see *The Nineteen Ancient Poems*, p. 13. Jean-Pierre Diény argues, "...the early authors of the *gushi* poetry found literary materials whose elements they arranged into orderly forms. Most of the "Nineteen Old Poems" are merely skillful rewritings of formulas derived from the repertoire of court entertainers." See Diény, *Aux origines de la poésie classique en Chine: Étude sur la poésie lyrique à l'époque des Han* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 3, cited in Allen, *In the Voice of Others*, p. 98.

¹⁶ Both of these titles are recorded in the *Song shu* (21.604–5 and 21.617). "Jiangnan" may have originated as a sort of "harvesting" song:

In Jiangnan one can pick lotus,
Lotus with pads so round and full;
And amongst the pads are playing fish,
And east of the pads are playing fish,
And west of the pads are playing fish,
And south of the pads are playing fish,
And north of the pads are playing fish.

江南可採蓮
蓮葉何田田
魚戲蓮葉間
魚戲蓮葉東
魚戲蓮葉西
魚戲蓮葉南
魚戲蓮葉北

"Moshang sang" is a classic narrative ballad that has been translated and studied by Hans Frankel. In his *yuefu* studies, Hans Frankel often adopts a comparative approach and has identified the many features shared by Western and Chinese ballads. See Frankel, "Yüeh-fu Poetry"; "The Formulaic Language of the Chinese Ballad 'Southeast Fly the Peacocks'," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 39 (1969): 219–44; "The Relation Between Narrator and Characters in *Yuefu* Ballads," *Chinoperl Papers* 13 (1984–85): 107–27. For a recent study of "Moshang sang" and its later imitations, see Joseph Roe Allen III, "From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of the Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry."

¹⁷ For a translation of this work, see Lois Fusek, trans., *Among the Flowers: The Hua-chien chi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹⁸ Lu Qinli 遼欽立, comp., *Xian Qin Han Wei Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983) [hereafter Lu Qinli], p. 170. It should be noted that the authenticity of this poem has been questioned. According to Lu Qinli, the earliest source of this poem is the *Shi ji zheng yi* 史記正義 (Tang).

¹⁹ *Shi pin zhu*, "Zonglun," p. 1.

²⁰ First recorded in the *Yutai xinyong* 1.28–29; see also, Lu Qinli, p. 178–79; R.H. Van Gulik quotes this song in his *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (1961; rpt. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), p. 73.

²¹ Lu Qinli, p. 182–83. First recorded in his *Hou Han shu* biography.

²² "Yulin lang," for example, is a five-syllable narrative ballad that in style and content is modeled after the "Moshang sang" type ballad. It tells the story of a bar girl who, like the heroine Luofu, rebuffs the advances of a more powerful man. It opens with the following lines:

There once was a slave of the great Huo family,	昔有霍家奴
With the surname Feng and the given name Zidu;	姓馮名子都
Taking advantage of the general's (Huo Guang) power,	依倚將軍勢
He flirted with a foreign wine shop girl.	調笑酒家胡
This foreign maiden of fifteen years,	胡姬年十五
Was alone on a spring day minding the jars...	春日獨當壚

The earliest source of this poem (and "Dong Jiaorao") is the *Yutai xinyong* (1.23–24; 1.26–27). See also Lu Qinli, p. 198–99.

²³ I am referring primarily to the poems included in the *Wen xuan* and *Yutai xinyong*. There are other titles found in later anthologies such as the *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 (Tang?). Lu Qinli (pp. 336–42) has conveniently gathered the various pieces together. The authenticity of the poems attributed to Li Ling and Su Wu has long been debated. Most modern critics agree that the traditional attributions cannot be correct. For a brief account of the

discussion, see David Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), v.1, p. 35.

²⁴ *Wen xuan* 29.1352.

²⁵ Texts of the "Gushi shijiu shou" are from *Wen xuan* 29.1343–50.

²⁶ "Shang ge xing" is included in the *Wen xuan* (27.1278–79) as an anonymous "Gu yuefu" 古樂府. It should be noted that in the *Yutai xinyong* (2.68) this piece is attributed to Cao Rui 曹叡 (204–239), Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty. Again, however, the *Wen xuan* is a far more reliable source, and Guo Maoqian lists the piece as anonymous. Guo Maoqian (Song), comp., *Yuefu shi ji*, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979) 62.897.

²⁷ *Shi pin zhu*, juan A.17.

²⁸ *Yutai xinyong* 1.5. Compare "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 7: We used to be friends of equal footing, / Now he has risen and stretched his wings; / He has forgotten how we used to hold hands, / And cast me aside like an old footprint.

²⁹ In this couplet, Zhao Yi is saying that the wise and the talented are unrecognized and neglected. "Jewels" (literally, "gold and jade") symbolize talent; fragrant plants are symbols of worthy men.

³⁰ *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 [398–446](Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963) 80B.2631.

³¹ Hu Yinglin describes Zhao Yi's poems: "the lines are vulgar and common, they are the lowest examples of Han five-syllable verse." See *Shi sou*, "Waipian" 1.130.

³² "Zeng fu shi san shou" 贈婦詩三首; the earliest source of these poems is the *Yutai xinyong* 1.30–31; see also, Lu Qinli, pp. 186–87.

³³ *Yutai xinyong* 1.30; Lu Qinli, p. 186.

³⁴ Lu Qinli, p. 289. The earliest extant source of this poem is the *Xuan shi shi yi* 選詩拾遺 (compiled by Yang Shen 楊慎 [1488–1559]).

³⁵ Lu Qinli, p. 336. The earliest extant source of this poem is the *Gushi leiyuan* 古詩類苑 (compiled by Zhang Zhixiang 張之象 [1496–1577]).

³⁶ Stephen Owen has compared the style of Qin Jia's verse to the "Nineteen Old Poems": "...it is more literary than the 'Nineteen Old Poems.' It uses the conventional images and phrases of the 'old poems,' but it is also much more specific in the situation it describes." See Stephen Owen, trans. and ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), p. 254.

³⁷ For a more sophisticated example of allusion in the "Nineteen Old Poems" see no. 12. In this piece the poet refers to two *Shi jing* pieces, "Chen feng" 晨風 (no. 132) and "Xi shuai" 蟋蟀 (no. 114) by their titles.

³⁸ Diény, *Les Dix-Neuf Poèmes Anciens*, p. 184.

³⁹ Qin Jia's other extant "Zeng fu shi" (*Yutai xinyong* 9.396; Lu Qinli, p. 186) was composed in four-syllable verse. Xu Shu's 徐淑 (Qin Jia's wife), "In Answer to Qin Jia" ("Da Qin Jia shi" 答秦嘉詩; *Yutai xinyong* 1.32; Lu Qinli, p. 188) was composed in Chu song style. These were the common literati *shi* meters during this period. Qin Jia must have found them limiting and awkward for the poems he intended to compose, and so his adventurous but fitting use of five-syllable meter.

⁴⁰ Note also the implications of Qin Jia's poems for the dating of the "Nineteen Old Poems." Most scholars have suggested that they are products of the late Eastern Han (late 2nd century). Qin Jia's poems, composed during the middle of the 2nd century, suggest that lyrics such as those found in the "Nineteen Old Poems" were flourishing at least as early as the mid-2nd century. See Jean-Pierre Diény, *Les Dix-Neuf Poèmes Anciens*, p. 184.

⁴¹ Ma Maoyuan, *Gushi shijiu shou chu tan*, pp. 16, 19, 32–33.

⁴² For study of the concept and ideology of music in early China, see Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1982).

⁴³ "Yue ji" 樂記 cited in DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two*, p. 94. For the original passage, see "Yue ji" in *Li ji xun zuan* 禮記訓纂 19.18B, SBBY.

⁴⁴ *Yuefu shiji* 46.667.

⁴⁵ *Yuefu shiji* 44.646.

⁴⁶ See Hsieh, "The Origins and Development of *Jueju* Verse," pp. 246–374.

⁴⁷ There are a number of accounts of the popularity of music and dancing during this period and the important place they had in life at various levels of society:

During the days of Yongming (483–494), for a period of about ten years, the common people were not alarmed by the sound of cocks crowing or dogs barking. Cities and towns flourished and gentlemen and ladies lived lives of prosperity and ease. Amidst peach blossoms and green waters, beneath autumn moons and among spring breezes, there were sounds of singing and dancing and the sight of richly colored clothing and beautiful make-up. The crowds would number in the hundreds.

In courts, palaces, and the homes of the wealthy, the aristocracy and the nobility promoted and patronized the new popular music by keeping large stables of singing girls (*ji* 妓) and frequenting the entertainment houses:

Emperors would make gifts of *ji* to those in their favor. The bureaucrats followed the fashion of keeping *ji* and became decadent. Princes, generals and ministers kept as many singing girls as their chambers would accommodate. Rich merchants and enterprising traders owned hoards of

dancing girls. They bragged to each other of their possessions, and competed for the girls with all the possible avidity. Prohibitory laws were to no avail. This was what corrupted public morals.

See, respectively, Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537), comp., *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (1972; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983) 53.913; Pei Ziye 裴子野 (467–528), *Song lue* 宋略 cited in Du You 杜佑 (735–812), comp., *Tong dian* 通典 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935) 141.736. Translation of the latter passage is from Chan Man Sing, "The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties (420–589)—A Critical Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1984), p. 291, note 80.

⁴⁸ See Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*. Other recent studies of *ci* have also emphasized the roots of *ci* in popular music performed by courtesans and professional musicians and the influence of this music upon literati composers. See, for example, the essays contained in Pauline Yu, ed., *Voices of the Song Lyric in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴⁹ Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Shuen-fu Lin, "The Formation of a Distinct Generic Identity for Tz'u," in Pauline Yu, ed., *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, p. 13. For brief discussions of *yan yue*, see Shuen-fu Lin, pp. 12–14; Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*, pp. 63–65.

⁵¹ Whether the Emperor actually created or expanded the Music Bureau as well as the precise dates of his actions (either 120 B.C. or around 114 B.C.) are problems that have long been debated. For a brief summary of the discussion, see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of China*, p. 5. For a more extensive review of the history of the Music Bureau, see Birrell, "Mythmaking and Yüeh-fu: Popular Songs and Ballads of Early Imperial China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109.2 (1989): 223–35.

⁵² In addition to the Music Bureau, the other major office of music was that of the *taiyue ling* 太樂令 (Grand Director of Music). The *taiyue ling* appears to have been in charge of providing music for court sacrifices and other ceremonies, and was under the jurisdiction of the *taichang* 太常, Chamberlin for Ceremonial. The Music Bureau was under the direction of the *shaofu* 少府, Chamberlin for Palace Revenues, which was charged with providing for the emperor's personal needs.

⁵³ For an account of the various music offices during the Han and later, see the essays in Wang Yunxi, *Yuefu shi luncong*. For the political history of the Music Bureau, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 193–210.

⁵⁴ Ban Gu (32 A.D.–92 A.D.), comp., *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 22.1071. By this time Zheng *sheng* does not necessarily refer to the actual music of Zheng. Rather it is a generic term for "improper" (i.e. popular music). This passage is discussed in Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 206–07.

⁵⁵ *Han shu* 22.1072.

⁵⁶ *Han shu* 11.335. At the time of its abolishment, the Music Bureau was immense. Altogether there were 829 singers, musicians, and other staff members, over half of whom were to be dismissed since their talents were not in accord with canonical practice or theirs was the music of Zheng and Wei (other members were to be absorbed by the *taiyue*). See *Han shu* 22.1072–74; Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 208–09.

⁵⁷ Most notably the office of the *chenghua ling* 承華令 (Director of Palace Entertainments) who was in charge of the Palace Band (*huangmen guchui* 黃門鼓吹). Wang Yunxi discusses the history of this office in several of the essays included in *Yuefu shi luncong*.

⁵⁸ *Han shu* 22.1074. In addition to "official" criticism of popular music, however, one should note the refreshing views of Huan Tan 桓譚 (43 B.C.–28 A.D.), the author of the *Xin lun* 新論. Huan Tan had displayed a talent for music at an early age (his father had served as a *taiyue ling*) and served in various capacities as a music official. His biography specifically notes that he was fond of music for entertainment (*chang yue* 倡樂), and Huan appears to have been serving as the Director of the Music Bureau when it was abolished (Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, pp. xvii, 118; note that Pokora translates *chang yue* as "singers and musicians"). As a musician and a contemporary official of music, Huan Tan offers a unique perspective of the new music. Instead of condemning, he championed it (his views no doubt reflect the feelings of the majority of listeners of his day):

Yang Ziyun 楊子雲 (Yang Xiong 楊雄 [53 B.C.–18 A.D.]) was a man of great talent, but he didn't understand music. I have become quite distant from refined music (*ya yue*) and turned to the new tunes (*xin nong* 新弄). Ziyun said, "It is easy to be good at things that are shallow; it is difficult to comprehend that which is deep. It is fitting that you do not care for proper music (literally *ya song* 雅頌) and take delight in the sounds of Zheng."

Huan Tan, *Xin lun*, in Yan Kejun 嚴可均, comp., *Quan Hou Han wen* 全後漢文 (in his *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 [1815; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959]) 15.3a (p. 549); for another translation, see Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, pp. 118–19. Huan Tan's biography can be found in *Hou Han shu* 28A.955–62. For a study of Huan Tan and the *Xin lun*, see Timoteus Pokora, trans., *Hsin-lun (New Treatise) and Other Writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1975). For an account of Huan Tan's career in music, see Pokora, "The Life of Huan T'an," *Archiv Orientalni* 31.1 (1963): 57–66.

⁵⁹ *Wen xuan* 2.78 Translation by David Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, v. 1, p. 237.

⁶⁰ *Wen xuan* 4.157–58 Translation by David Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, v.1, pp. 326–27.

⁶¹ The term *qing shang* (literally, "pure *shang*") originally was a technical term that referred to a distinct category of music. The origins and precise meaning of the term have long been debated. It and variations such as *qing qu* 清曲 do appear, however, to refer to popular music. It is often mentioned in descriptions of popular music and performances of the kind seen above. For example, in his commentary to Zhang Heng's "Western Metropolis Rhapsody," Xue Zong 薛綜 (d. 243) simply explains *qing shang* as Zheng yin 鄭音 (*Wen xuan* 2.78). Wang Yunxi describes the term *qing yue* 清樂 as eventually becoming a general term for popular music (*su yue* 俗樂) of the Han and later the Six Dynasties. See Wang Yunxi, "Qing yue kaolue" 清樂考略, in *Yuefu shi luncong*, pp. 11–38.

⁶² Huan Tan, *Xin lun* 14.5b (p. 544).

⁶³ Roberta Flack, for example, in "Killing Me Softly With His Song," describing the experience of listening to a singer who sings her "life with his words," and knows her "dark despair." The song was made popular by Roberta Flack in the early 1970s. The actual song writers are Norman Gimbel and Charles Fox. The strong, almost violent emotions that can be aroused by music and song are occasionally described in popular song lyrics. For another example, see the Southern Dynasty *yuefu*, "Shangsheng ge" 上聲歌 ("High Pitched Song") no. 2 (*Yuefu shiji* 45.655; Lu Qinli, p. 1049):

When you played the "Shang sheng" song,	郎作上聲曲
You tightened the bridge, and the song turned sad;	柱促使弦哀
Like the rush of the autumn wind	譬如秋風急
It hit and tore my heart.	觸遇傷懷

⁶⁴ David Knechtges explains that during the Han, *xin sheng* was commonly used as a synonym for the music of Zheng and Wei, see *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, v. 1, p. 326.

⁶⁵ This piece first appears in the *Song shu* (21.616). For a translation and discussion, see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, pp. 80–82. See also Yu Guanying's 余冠英 comments in his *Yuefu shi xuan* 樂府詩選 (1950?; rpt. Taipei: Huazheng shuju, 1980), p. 23.

⁶⁶ The very title of these pieces must have reinforced the notion of literati authorship. Songs often have tune titles whereas the "Nineteen Old Poems" are called *shi*. It is true that originally *shi* referred to song lyrics, but eventually *shi* came to refer more and more to literary poems and were distinguished from song lyrics or direct imitations of song lyrics which were categorized as *yuefu*. Although the dividing line was not always strict, by the Six Dynasties this convention appears to have been firmly established and one presumes that hearing the term *gushi* most readers would have automatically assumed the "Nineteen Old Poems" were literary works. It should be remembered, however, that the label *gushi* must have been appended much later to these works. The title cannot be

used as evidence of their origins. We do not know what the original titles were or if they even had titles. If the "Nineteen Old Poems" had tune titles this would, of course, be conclusive evidence they were song lyrics. But the absence of any titles does not mean they were not song lyrics. The many songs included in the *Shi jing* are another example of title-less song lyrics (present titles were added later).

⁶⁷ Zhu Qian (Qing), *Yuefu zhengyi* 樂府正義, quoted in Yu Guanying, *Yuefu shi xuan*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ See Yu Guanying, *Yuefu shi xuan*, pp. 10–12. Although Zhang Qingzhong acknowledges the evidence that suggests the "Gushi shijiu shou," like *yuefu*, are song lyrics, because he feels that they are *wenren* works, he is reluctant to accept this conclusion; see *Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangxi yu yanjiu*, pp. 116–17.

⁶⁹ The Qing scholar, Fei Xihuang 費錫璜, noted and explained the block-like composition of Han *yuefu* and *gushi* in his *Han shi zong shuo* 漢詩總說; quoted in Ma Maoyuan, p. 174. For a study of this phenomena, see Yu Guanying, "Yuefu geci de pincou yu fenge" 樂府歌辭的拼湊和分割, in his *Han Wei Liuchao shi luncong* 漢魏六朝詩論叢 (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian chubanshe, 1956), pp. 26–38.

⁷⁰ *Wen xuan* 27.1278; Lu Qinli, p. 192.

⁷¹ Traditionally attributed to Su Wu. *Wen xuan* 29.1355; Lu Qinli, p. 338.

⁷² Lu Qinli, p. 336. According to Lu, the earliest source of this work is the *Gushi leiyan*.

⁷³ One of the tasks of the commentators has been to identify the "sources" of these phrases and lines. For example, Zhang Qingzhong's notes for "Gushi shijiu shou" no. 1 trace various lines and phrases to the *Shi jing*, *Chu ci*, poems attributed to Li Ling and Su Wu, and various *yuefu*. See Zhang Qingzhong, pp. 2–3. The efforts of such commentators show that the creators of the "Nineteen Old Poems" worked with a body of formulas and motifs that they shared with *yuefu* verse and other Han *shi*.

⁷⁴ For other examples of the "Nineteen Old Poems" labeled as *yuefu* and *yuefu* listed as *gushi*, see Zhang Qingzhong, *Gushi shijiu shou*, pp. 125–26.

⁷⁵ "Gushi bashou" no. 6; *Yutai xinyong* 1.4; Lu Qinli, p. 334.

⁷⁶ The *Yuefu shiji* (30.442–43) includes three anonymous lyrics under this title. The first lyric is in the *Wen xuan* (27.1279–80). The last two lyrics were originally listed as a single piece; modern editors have divided it into two. It should be noted that the *Yiwen leiju* quotes six lines that are almost identical to the first six lines of the third lyric, and attributes them to Cao Pi; see Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641), comp., *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1969) 27.484. For translation and discussion of these pieces, see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, pp. 68–69, 83–84, 142–43.

⁷⁷ Birrell (p. 142) points out the allusions to the *Shi jing*.

⁷⁸ Allen, *In the Voice of Others*, pp. 81–98.

⁷⁹ Hans Frankel has noted the existence of literate or semi-literate professional singers and their role as intermediaries between the lower and higher strata of society during the Han and Six Dynasties, see "Six Dynasties. *Yüeh-fu* and Their Singers," *Journal of the Chinese Teachers Association* 13.3 (1978): 189–96.

⁸⁰ "The wives and concubines of the nobles sometimes numbered in the hundreds; wealthy officials and individuals (*haofu limin* 豪富吏民) kept up to dozens of singers." See *Han shu* 72.3071.

⁸¹ The first couplet cited is identical in both pieces; in the second couplet "Ximen xing" has *ren sheng* 人生 instead of *sheng nian* 生年 for "life." The *Yuefu shiji* (37.549) contains two versions of "Ximen xing." I am quoting from the shorter, second version. Birrell (pp. 89–93) translates and compares both poems.

⁸² See Birrell, p. 16. It is not clear what Birrell means by "professional poet." I do think it is possible, even probable, that the "Nineteen Old Poems" and other *gushi* were edited or "cleaned up" by early compilers of these works, but not to the extent that one could consider these compilers as authors. Song lyrics almost inevitably undergo some sort of editing when they are transcribed. For example, one often finds *yuefu* titles that exist in long versions and short versions. Although the relationship between these versions is not clear, the shorter versions tend to be neater and more concise, eliminating what on paper appears to be "extraneous" material. The longer version of "Baitou yin" 白頭吟 ("White Hair Lament"), for example, concludes with what appears to be a formulaic musician's salutation that has nothing to do with the content of the main lyric. This conclusion is absent in the short version. Thus the "Nineteen Old Poems" may similarly be cleaned up transcriptions of longer performance versions. The long version of "Baitou yin" first appears in the *Song shu* (21.622–23); the shorter version in the *Yutai xinyong* (1.14–15); see also *Yuefu shiji* (41.600). For a translation and discussion of both versions of "Baitou yin," see Birrell, pp. 154–58.

⁸³ Zhi Yu, *Wenzhang liubie lun* 文章流別論 in *Wenlun jiangshu* 文論講疏, ed. by Xu Wenyu 許文雨 (1937; rpt. Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1967), p. 74. Another intriguing aspect of Zhi Yu's comments on meter is that in addition to mentioning comic verse and popular music, he also mentions *yuefu* in the generic sense. This is extremely interesting because it appears to imply that *yuefu* were not simply song lyrics, but a kind of song lyric and there were other kinds of song lyrics which were under the category of comic verse and popular music. Although it is difficult to know what exactly Zhi Yu was thinking when he distinguished between the two, it may suggest recognition of different types or levels of song. Perhaps *yuefu* tended to be thought of as folk songs and *paixie changyue* as more sophisticated popular songs. This, admittedly, is speculative. It does at least appear, however, that there were other songs besides those categorized as *yuefu*, and thus while a lyric might not be thought of as a *yuefu* it could still be a song.

⁸⁴ Translation by Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, p. 325. For original text, see "Nandu fu" (*Wen xuan* 4.156–57).

⁸⁵ For the lines chanted by guests and host, see *Shi jing* no. 298 and 174, respectively.

⁸⁶ See, for example, the three "Yu Su Wu" poems included in the *Wen xuan* (29.1352–53).

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the performance of the Southern *yuefu* at parting banquets and the theme of parting and separation in these lyrics, see Chan Man Sing, "The Western Songs (Xiqu) of the Southern Dynasties (420–589)—A Critical Study," pp. 140–41, 163–72.

⁸⁸ Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) and Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666), et al., comps., *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 13.286. Wang Yunxi describes this category of music as consisting of popular music (*su yue*), see *Yuefu shi luncong*, p. 65.

⁸⁹ See also the description of drinking and music at a banquet in Zhang Heng's "Nandu fu" quoted above.

⁹⁰ Su Wu, "Shi si shou" 詩 ("Four Poems") no. 2; *Wen xuan* 29.1354–55.

⁹¹ Birrell (p. 78–79) has noted the link of the theme of *carpe diem* and feasting. Again, there are obvious parallels with our own popular tradition. Music and dancing are essential elements of any party, and the mood or theme of *carpe diem* is an important one in various types of popular music, but especially rock and roll:

It might be one o'clock and it might be three,
Time don't mean that much to me;
I ain't felt this good since I don't when,
And I might not feel this good again;
So come on and let the good times roll,
We gonna stay here till we sooth our souls,
If it takes all night long.

from Sam Cook, "Good Times"

⁹² *Carpe diem* was not a major theme in the tradition of literati verse, at least not in the extreme form seen in the "Gushi shijiu shou." The major exception was, of course, Li Bo. It does occur in some Jian'an poetry; this, no doubt, largely due to the direct influence of the Han *yuefu* and *gushi* lyrics. It appears that the drinking and feasting verse of the Jian'an poets may have been, at least in part, a development from the tradition of popular music and banquets. For a study of this verse, see Robert Joe Cutter, "Cao Zhi's (192–232) Symposium Poems," *Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, and Reviews* 6 (1984): 1–32.

⁹³ Such adjectives run through out critical comments on the "Gushi shijiu shou." I have simply selected a few while reading through the collections of comments found in Sui Shusen (*juan* 4) and Ma Maoyuan, pp. 144–96. Hu Yinglin and Xu Xueyi have extensively discussed the "Gushi shijiu shou" in their *shihua*. They consistently stress the naturalness and lack of craft in these works. For their comments, see especially *Shi sou*, "Neipian" 2.25–30; *Shiyuan bianti* 3.56–59.

⁹⁴ Wang Shizhen, *Yiyuan zhiyan* 1.964.

⁹⁵ Chen Zuoming 陳祚明 (Qing), *Caishutang gushi xuan* 采菽堂古詩選; quoted in Sui Shusen, *Gushi shijiu shou jishi* 4.5.

⁹⁶ Zhu Ziqing, "Gushi shijiu shou shi," p. 220.

⁹⁷ Jin Shengtan, *Gushi jie* 古詩解 5.1, in *Jin Shengtan quanji* 金聖嘆全集 (Shanghai jinwentang, n.d.). Quoted in Sui Shusen, *Gushi shijiu shou jishi* 4.6.

⁹⁸ Hu Yinglin, *Shi sou*, "Neipian" 2.25. For other similar opinions on the changes that took place in poetry following the "Nineteen Old Poems," see Fang Zushen 方祖桑, *Hanshi yanjiu* 漢詩研究 (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1967), p. 29.

⁹⁹ It is striking that many traditional critics interpreted the "Nineteen Old Poems" allegorically in the manner of *Shi jing* exegesis. See the commentaries collected in Sui Shusen, *Gushi shijiu shou ji shi*.

¹⁰⁰ C.f. Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1798):

Poems without titles are natural (*tian lai* 天籟, "nature's sounds"); poems with titles are man-made (*ren lai* 人籟, "man-made sounds"). Natural poems are easy; man-made poems are hard. The "Three Hundred Poems" and "Nineteen Old Poems" are all title-less works (it was later men who took the first few words from these works and turned them into titles), and so they are master works of a thousand years. After the Han and Wei, the title came first and then the poem. It was then that individual character began to seep in (*xingqing jianli* 性情漸漓).

Yuan Mei, *Suiyuan shihua* 隨園詩話 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1960) 7.228 (cited in Ma Maoyuan, *Gushi shijiu shou chu tan*, p. 182).

¹⁰¹ On several occasions I have quoted passages from American popular songs: a song sung by Roberta Flack as an example of the motif of music in popular song and the extreme emotional effects of popular music; a song by Sam Cook to illustrate the mood of *carpe diem*. There are in the Han *gushi* parallels not only with later Chinese popular songs but with popular song traditions of other cultures.

¹⁰² The full extent of the debt of the Jian'an poets to the Han *gushi* tradition has yet to be fully appreciated. Before the Jian'an poets, the literati *shi* tradition was still extremely primitive, then the Jian'an poets suddenly appear and the tradition flourishes. It is at first difficult to explain. The influence of folk verse was of course important, but perhaps even more crucial is the *gushi* tradition. It was the Han *gushi* tradition that furnished the basic style and diction for much of Jian'an verse, as well as major themes and occasions. It should be noted that Jian'an poets such as the Cao's were still closely linked to musical traditions. Cao Cao's concubine (the mother of Cao Zhi and Cao Pi) was an entertainer-courtesan, and it appears that at least some of their verse was set to music. Frankel has commented on their interest in music and musicians. See his "The Development of Han and Wei *Yueh-*

fu as a High Literary Genre," in Shuen-fu Lin and Steven Owen, eds., *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 284–85.

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