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Preface

Victor H. Mair

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The papers in this volume were submitted as part of the requirements for my course on "Chinese Prose and Poetry" in the fall semester of 2018. Although not all thirty or so members of the class were women, all eight of the authors whose papers were selected for this volume are. So it is perhaps not entirely surprising that most of the papers in this collection are related to women's issues in one way or another. Yet that in no way makes them stereotypical or monotonous. Quite the contrary: even though I've been teaching this course for decades, I was stunned by the unusual topics the students came up with for their papers.

Consider these intriguing themes: a comparison of ideas of femininity in Homer's Greek epics with those in Tang dynasty tales; the education of women, with rules for their fidelity and domesticity, prescribed in the first century AD, as contrasted with those from turn of the twentieth century; representations of gender in the *Poetry Classic (Shi jing)* of the second half of the first millennium BC as rendered by two of the most outstanding translators of the late nineteenth century and the first two-thirds of the twentieth century; and a discussion of the contributions of the greatest woman poet and one of the most distinguished male poets of the Song dynasty to the establishment of a new genre of verse in that pivotal age.

Other papers focus on such bizarre topics as the "ineffable liquid glance" of alluring women, on the meanings of particular hair ornaments, and on such grotesque subjects as the custom of eating the first-born son, as described in ancient Chinese essays.

Given such an unusual array of topics, I invite readers to go directly to the eight fresh, fascinating papers gathered here. I'm sure that you'll enjoy them as much as I did.

SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES OF CHINESE PROSE AND POETRY

“Can a Woman Be Too Cautious?”:
A Social Norms Defense of Marital Institutions and Feminine Purity
in Pan Chao’s *Lessons for Women*

Megan Foo

Pan Chao’s *Lessons for Women* (女誡) was written as a treatise on proper conduct for girls of marriageable age during the Eastern Han dynasty, and it eventually achieved widespread recognition during the late Ming and Qing dynasties. In her text, Pan outlines seven lessons by which women should abide: humility, knowledge of the roles of husbands and wives, respect and caution, womanly qualifications, wholehearted devotion, implicit obedience, and harmony with younger in-laws. Pan’s lessons reveal the precarious status and position of women should they not abide by these instructions, underscoring the high normative expectations Han Chinese society enforced for women. Pan’s language shows the strength of the socially conditioned preference that women adhere to these lessons, because the only alternative to obedience is incurring disgrace and humiliation. Through the use of allusion and comparison, Pan delineates a reference network in which social disgrace poses a strong deterrent effect, with violations of proper conduct making a woman liable to marital, societal, and spiritual punishments.

In *Lessons for Women*, the institution of marriage is depicted as one with clearly differentiated roles for husbands and wives. Pan describes the way the marriage relationship, which she exalts as the “great principle of Heaven and Earth” (“信天地之弘义”), connects individuals with gods and ancestors, utilizing a host of allusions to bring a high spiritual context to her argument (Swann 1932; Mair 1996, 536)¹. Specifically, she refers to classical texts including *Rites* (礼记) and the *Classic Book of Poetry’s* (诗经) “First Ode” to showcase the way in which these texts bestow high reverence on the marital

¹ Comments from N. L. Swann throughout are quoted from Mair (1996). Nancy Lee Swann was a Sinologist, whose accomplishments include being the curator of the Princeton University Gest Memorial Chinese Library and publishing *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*. She also is the translator for the *Lessons for Women* text used in this paper.

institution (Mair 1996, 536). More specifically, the institution of marriage and its need for unique roles apportioned to husband and wife are grounded in Confucian ideals and bound by the concept of the *yin-yang* (阴阳), showing that marriage is spiritually ordained and sacred. Pan's allusion to the *yin-yang* is an exhibition of the difference and uniqueness of male and female identity that is conferred not by arbitrary social assignment, but by one's spiritual identity and position. Thus, she believes that these differences in identity are encoded in the natural order. Elaborating on the connection of the *yin-yang* to marriage, Pan argues that men and women have different sources of honor; the man is valued for his strength and the woman for her gentleness. The significance of the *yin-yang* in marriage also extends to a functional level; symbolically, the *yang* serves best when rigid, while the *yin* serves best when yielding. Invoking this image, Pan concludes that husbands and wives must strive to emulate the *yin-yang* principles and symbolism in their marriages. Practically, this requires husbands to "control" ("御") their wives. Yet, while the verb "control" has connotations of subjugation and oppression, Pan uses it to encourage men to take the role of a leader in the family and to lead their wives and family in a steady, dignified manner (Swann 1932; Mair 1996, 536). Men are called upon to "stop short of anger," because otherwise they are "certain to beat their wives" ("忿怒不止，楚挞从之") (Mair 1996, 537). Pan does not condone abuse or entitled wrath; she is establishing the idea that men and women are to treat each other with respect, and that this form of respect may require refraining from immediate desires like lashing out in anger. The fact that Pan also discusses wife-beating as an undesirable outcome highlights the extent to which wife-beating was a severe, widespread problem she noticed within marriages.

In contrast, women are encouraged to serve their husbands and family with respect and generosity. The clearly complementary roles of leadership and service within a family enhance Pan's alignment of the *yin-yang* with family responsibility, and are not to be mistaken for stratified hierarchies between husbands and wives. Just like men, women are instructed not to act on their immediate desires, but rather "suppress contempt for their husbands" ("侮夫不节，谴呵从之") so as to avoid rebuking and scolding their husbands (Swann 1932; Mair 1996, 537). Pan does not seek to keep women in a position of inferiority relative to their husbands; her main argument is that women should respect their husbands and that rebuking their husbands does not show the deference necessary for a harmonious marriage.

Overall, Pan argues that, in order to effectively fulfill the noble marital ideals epitomized in the

yin-yang, hard work and emotional sacrifice are extremely important. Men are called to work hard in leading the family and women in serving the family, with neither of these purportedly less sacred from a *yin-yang* standpoint than the other. However, the allusion to the *yin-yang* augurs that should a husband or wife violate the proper code of conduct by failing to uphold the ideals that the *yin-yang* projects, there are consequences of a spiritual magnitude.

Moreover, Pan asserts that upholding the institution of marriage entails respect for and harmony with members of the extended family. For the woman, this is an extension of Pan's aforementioned call to be useful in serving one's family members. This requires wives to adopt a position of meekness and humility relative to her husband and in-laws, and to see her extended family as more important than she is. Yet, despite the negative connotations of this submission from a contemporary reading of the text, Pan underscores the moral virtue inherent in this posture of submission. She classifies women's meekness as being integral to the fulfillment of her role in the family, and that this action of "yielding" is the only way to accommodate a man's "firmness" ("然则修身莫若敬，避强莫若顺。") (Mair 1996, 536).

This role of submission is engrained in historical customs: Pan alludes to three ancient customs regarding the treatment of newborn girls, and elaborates on the way these customs codify submission as intrinsic to womanhood (Mair 1996, 535). These customs are: to place the female child on the floor beneath the bed, to give her a potsherd as a toy, and to give an offering to the girl's ancestors as a public announcement of her birth. The first custom cements the girl's position as "lowly and weak" ("明其卑弱"), which spurs her to exercise humility before others, particularly as a future married woman (Mair 1996, 535). The second custom accents how potsherds, commonly used as spindle weights, are a symbol of the woman's duty to "practice labor and consider her primary duty to be industrious" ("明其习劳，主执勤也") (Mair 1995, 535). Finally, the third custom ties the girl to her family members, and highlights her role as someone who should lead and continue ancestral worship in the home. In all of these customs, women receive a high calling to eschew the pursuit of self-interest, but instead to be long-suffering in her observance of duty for her family. Work is a necessity in a woman's life, and women are instructed to be committed to domestic tasks to the best of their abilities; the performance of these tasks communicates the woman's duty as one of submission to her family.

As Pan summarizes it, an ideal relationship between husband and wife "is based upon harmony

and intimacy, and conjugal love is grounded in proper union” (“夫为夫妇者，义以和亲，恩以好合”) (Mair 1996, 537). This image of a marriage is based on peace and love, but Pan emphasizes that this ideal is hard-won and will require prudence, self-restraint, and a knowledge of one’s proper position. A successful marriage union demands avoidance of division at all costs, and Pan is realistic in her depiction of how ending divisions and tensions can be burdensome in its heavy requirement of sacrifice.

In addition to focusing on the distinct roles assigned to spouses and the importance of maintaining conjugal harmony, Pan discusses the idea that purity is a standard that women must uphold in order to eliminate any chance of public disgrace. Pan’s discussion of feminine purity focuses on both outer and inner purity, accentuating the high moral standards to which she asks women to aspire. *Lessons for Women* presents outward purity as a natural outcome of inner purity, and the two outer forms of purity Pan focuses on are purity of actions and purity of words. Purity of actions is manifested in the woman’s responsibility to “cleanse and purify and arrange in order the wine and the food for the offerings to the ancestors” (“洁齐酒食，以供祖宗，是谓继祭祀也”) (Mair 1996, 535); here, the verbs “cleanse” and “purify” show that women are always to be associated with cleanliness and freedom from immorality. Because women are responsible for the sacred task of worshipping one’s ancestors, they are invariably tethered to their families, and purity serves as the link between oneself and one’s ancestors.

Another critical manifestation of purity is sexual purity; firstly, women are instructed to guard their “chastity carefully” (“清闲贞静”) and must not “dress conspicuously” (“出无冶容”) or emphasize their femininity to “attract attention” outside the home (“出则窈窕作态”) (Mair 1996, 537–539). With the command to women to “guard” their chastity, Pan imbues the text with a cautionary note, warning women against acting on their own desires or other men’s lust, highlighting the predatory atmosphere of the social sphere she discusses. Secondly, women are prohibited from exercising sexual liberties with their husbands out of fear of licentiousness. Pan believes that other activities related to cleanliness and purification that women must undertake include “washing,” “scrubbing,” and “cleaning filth” from bodies and physical spaces (“盥浣尘秽”) (Mair 1996, 537).

Furthermore, Pan exhorts women to pursue purity of words. This is manifest in her command that a girl should adopt a “purity and quietness of spirit, and attend to her own affairs” (“清静自守”) (Mair 1996, 535). Women should not be involved with gossip (“无好戏笑”), as indulgence in silly, banal

conversation belies personal imprudence (Mair 1996, 535, 538). This indictment against gossip emphasizes how one's speech reveals one's character, effectively reinforcing the high moral standards to which women are held accountable. Thus, women's conversations should not center on idle gossip because a patriarchal society hopes to silence a woman's voice, but because such conversations are symptomatic of impure thoughts and an inability to practice sound moral values related to speech. Pan's belief is that words must always be chosen and examined, and that these words reveal the depth of prudence within a person; therefore, vulgar language should be avoided. This dual focus on the content and frequency of a woman's speech showcases the microscopic lens under which women are investigated in the society Pan delineates, because words can activate or destroy interactions, and they also reveal aspects of a negative moral character. Pan describes a reference network in which failing to abide by ways of purity has severe personal, social, and moral implications.

In conclusion, the social and moral norms highlighted in Pan Chao's *Lessons for Women* are symptomatic of a reference network that holds virtue to be the most important form of human morality, and male headship to be the main organizing principle of a marriage and family unit. Pan Chao encourages women to remember that loyalty, authority, and purity should be a wife's lifelong responsibility, and these moral foundations should not be summarily dismissed in today's significantly more liberal culture, which places heavy emphasis on women's agency, often in lieu of familial togetherness and marital stability. Pan's emphasis on familial harmony and purity should not be perceived as a patriarchal society's weaponization of the institution of marriage as a means of subjecting women to perpetual oppression, but as a compelling case for prudence and self-sacrifice.

Nevertheless, Pan's focus on the nature of public humiliation and disgrace reveals the unforgiving world in which women lived; whether it be in the private sphere or the in-laws' home or in the outer social environs, women had no choice but to tiptoe around sensitive interactions, and to be as cautious as they could possibly be.

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Representing Gender in the *Shijing*:
A Comparison of the Translations of Arthur Waley and James Legge

Kristina Horn

The process of translating literature into another language creates a power dynamic in which the responsibility for conveying the essence of the literary work is shifted from the author to the translator. While every good translator works to ensure that the essence of the piece is properly presented to its audience, conveying the author's intended meaning becomes especially difficult when the author is no longer alive and when the piece predates the modern era. Cultural and historical references lose their meaning in the hands of unskilled translators.

However, even in the case of esteemed and skilled translators, word choices are important in determining the meaning of the literary piece to the reader, because the writer and reader have different cultures and languages. For example, when translating a piece from Chinese to English, a character may lose its original intended meaning in Chinese and instead gain a new unintended meaning in English. Therefore, semantics becomes extremely important during the translation process.

In order to examine the ways in which different translations affect how readers understand literary pieces, I will compare and contrast James Legge's and Arthur Waley's respective translations of the *Shijing* (Poetry classic)—and more specifically, their translations of Poem 6, Poem 23, and Poem 76—to see how gender is represented differently through the words they used in their English translations. I will argue that while their translations of words pertaining to gender differ—and therefore blur the original intention behind the poem—their similar translations of expressions of female sexuality and sexual agency convey the original moral values and lessons intended by the authors.

POEM 6 (桃夭 TAO YAO) — “PEACH-TREE”

Perhaps the clearest example of the way in which Waley’s and Legge’s different translation methods affect the representation of gender and sexuality in the *Shijing* can be found in Poem 6. This poem describes the beauty of a newly married bride who is preparing to take on the responsibilities of being a wife and a future mother. This woman is highly idealized in the sense that not only will she take good care of the house for her husband and family, but that also her beauty and fertility are compared to that of a peach-tree. When reading the two translations of this poem, it immediately becomes clear that Waley and Legge have two very different interpretations of Poem 6.

In the very first line of the poem, Waley’s translation states “Buxom is the peach-tree.” The use of the word “buxom” carries very obvious sexual connotations regarding what this “ideal bride” must possess. This translation greatly differs from Legge’s translation of line one which states “The peach tree is young and elegant.”² Legge avoids overtly sexual references and presents the bride as a refined woman.³ Through vastly different translations of the first line, Waley and Legge create different undertones for Poem 6—Waley presenting a woman as valued for her body and sexuality and Legge presenting a woman who is valued for her youth and refinement. These undertones persist throughout the poem and are especially seen in lines six and nine. In line six, Legge suggests that the woman will be fertile and produce many children, by saying: “Abundant will be its fruits,”⁴ while Waley continues to emphasize the physical sexual health of the woman with “How its fruit swells!”⁵ Additionally, Legge’s

1 Arthur Waley and Joseph R. Allen, *The Book of Songs* (New York, Grove Press, 1996), 8.

2 James Legge, trans., *Shijing, Book of Odes* (Dragon Reader, 2014), location 175.

3 Interestingly, when we look at the Korean translation of the *Shijing*, this line is rendered as “Poksunga namu örin kaji Poksakkot hwaltchak p’ida,” which can be translated as “The peach tree branches are young, and the peach blossoms are in full bloom.” While there is a certain sense of biological maturity that is implied by “full bloom,” the poem does not explicitly reference the woman’s breasts as in Waley’s translation. See Kongja, Si-gyöng, Hagojae, 2016: <http://www.krpia.co.kr/product/main?plctId=PLCT00006701#none>.

4 Legge, *Shijing, Book of Odes*, location 175.

5 Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 8.

use of the word “luxuriant” to describe the leaves of the peach tree in line nine continues this narrative of a refined woman that is not found in Waley’s translation that references the leaves as “thick.”⁶

Waley and Legge present two very different representations of the “ideal” new bride in Poem 6. Yet they emphasize different aspects of a woman considered ideal by men. Waley’s sexual undertones throughout the poem place importance on not only the physical appearance of a woman’s body, but also on her sexual health. Words such as “buxom” suggest a certain level of sexual maturity that is associated with a healthy level of fertility. This translation places emphasis on women as mothers in that sexual reproduction was a necessary quality for a woman to have in order to produce heirs for her husband and family. In contrast, Legge’s emphasis on “elegance” stresses that a woman must be morally refined and adhere to certain social standards. Although these two translations seem to contradict one another—women as sexual beings for reproduction versus women following strict moral codes—these translations actually complement one another by presenting a man’s need for a moral woman who can bear children and then raise these children to hold socially acceptable values.

POEM 23 (野有死麕 YE YOU SI JUN)—“IN THE WILDS IS A DEAD DOE”

Poem 23 centers around a man seducing a lady into having sex with him in the woods. The poem ends with the lady telling the man not to remove her clothing for fear that her dog will hear them and alert others to the sexual encounter taking place. Even though the last lines of the poem insinuate that the lady is hesitant to have sex due to her fear of others finding out, the imagery of the dead doe in the woods more soberly suggests a metaphorical death to her innocence and virginity. Additionally, according to Waley, this continued reference to a dead deer holds cultural importance in that, “If people find a dead deer in the woods, they cover it up piously with rushes. But there are men who ‘kill’ a girl, in the sense that they seduce her and then fail to ‘cover up’ the damage by marrying her.”⁷

Waley and Legge both convey the social fear that surrounds the sexual encounter in Poem 23. However, men and women are represented differently in the two translations. In Waley’s translation,

6 Found in Legge, *Shijing, Book of Odes*, location 206, and in Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 8.

7 Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 20.

lines three and four show a lady who is “longing for the spring” being seduced by a “fair knight.”⁸ This “longing for the spring” suggests a longing for growth or change of some kind, and it becomes clear in line four that this longing is related to sex. The lady “longing for the spring” possesses sexual desires that she hopes will bloom or grow, just as nature grows in the spring. The imagery of a woman “blooming” at the time of sexual maturity mirrors the aforementioned imagery used in Poem 6 and reinforces the sexual connotation of the lines in Poem 23. While Waley portrays the woman as experiencing a sexual awakening, her desires are undermined by his stating “a fair knight seduced her.”⁹ Here the man is portrayed as the initiator of the sexual experience, therefore making the man the active pursuer of sex and the woman the passive object of seduction.

Legge’s translations of lines three and four present the same “young lady” with sexual desires “natural to the spring,” but instead of a knight—associated with medieval European warfare and chivalry—Legge states that “a fine gentleman would lead her astray.”¹⁰ While the connotations of a “fine gentleman” makes the man appear to be less of an aggressor, the man is still portrayed as the initiator of the sexual experience, who is morally corrupting the young lady through sex. Both translations show a woman expressing sexual desire, but both shift the sexual agency away from the woman and instead portray her as being passively seduced by the man.

The last three lines of Poem 23 are the most telling in that this is the point at which the reader finally hears from the young lady. In Waley’s translation, the lady says, “Heigh, not so hasty, not so rough; Heigh, do not touch my handkerchief. Take care, or the dog will bark.”¹¹ The use of the words “hasty” and “rough” regarding the man reinforce the notion of the man being the aggressive and active sexual initiator in this encounter. However, Legge’s translation shows a softer version of this man by having the woman say, “Slowly; gently; gently; Do not move my handkerchief; Do not make my dog bark.”¹² Legge’s use of “slowly” and “gently” suggests that she asks for less aggressiveness, but also parallels

8 Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 20.

9 Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 20.

10 Legge, *Shijing, Book of Odes*, location 521.

11 Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 20.

12 Legge, trans., *Shijing, Book of Odes*, location 552.

Waley's translation in that the poem itself is portraying the man as the "seducer" and the woman as the "seduced."

It is key that, while the man in the poem is portrayed differently by Legge and Waley, both translations still convey the fact that women had very limited sexual agency. Not only are women portrayed as objects of seduction, but this fear of others finding out about a woman's sexual experience conveys the moral pressure placed on women by society to abstain from sex. Outside of the social and cultural institution of marriage, a woman without her virginity was the equivalent of a dead deer. Regardless of whether that woman possesses sexual desires, she does not possess sexual agency outside of marriage.

POEM 76 (將仲子 JIANG ZHONG ZI) — "I BEG YOU, ZHONG ZI"

While these two aforementioned poems show the ways in which Waley's and Legge's translations differed in conveying gender and sexuality, these differences are not found in their translations of Poem 76. According to Joseph R. Allen, Poem 76 is part of a subsection of the section known as "Airs of the State" called "Airs of Zheng," which were known for being licentious due to their portrayals of female desire.¹³

Poem 76 is a poem written from the perspective of a girl who is begging her lover not to come to her house. While the girl expresses throughout the poem the idea that she wants to see her lover, she fears the judgment of her family and society. The poem is comprised of three verses that mirror each other in that: they open with the girl begging her lover not to come, she notes that if he does come he will surely break a plant near her home, and while she does not care about the plant, she fears that this would raise suspicion. The essence of Waley's and Legge's translations both show that the girl is not scared about the destruction of nature, but rather she fears what others will say when they find out about her lover. Waley translates lines three through five of Poem 76 as: "Do not break the willows we have planted. Not that I mind about the willows, but I am afraid of my father and mother."¹⁴ While there are minor differences between the translations, Legge's translation of lines three through five captures

¹³ Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 64.

¹⁴ Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 65.

the same sense of longing and fear by stating, “Do not break my willow trees. Do I care for them? But I fear my parents.”¹⁵ Both poems continue to reference different types of plants—including mulberry trees, sandalwood trees, and hardwood trees—as well as other people that the girl fears, including her brothers. Each reference to nature is countered by a reference to a group of people who will judge the girl for her sexuality.

This juxtaposition of the girl disregarding any fear for nature or natural forces—in that she is not concerned about her lover injuring himself by climbing through all of these plants, nor is she concerned with the well-being of nature itself—against her fear of anyone finding out that she has a lover, shows the immense amount of societal pressure placed on women. This girl is neither concerned with what nature can do to her, nor what she can do to destroy nature, but instead she fears what people can say about her in regard to her sexuality. It is not natural forces that scare her, but rather societal forces produced by humans. Although the girl expresses a longing and desire for her lover, this desire is overpowered by her awareness of her lack of sexual agency. Both translations show that even the structure of the poem captures the social oppression that this girl feels by having one line of sexual desire contrasted by seven lines of her fear of being shamed by others in each verse of the poem.¹⁶ It is important to note as well that this girl’s lover clearly wants to be with her and has no regard for the judgment of others—to the point that one can assume that he does not feel any societal pressure regarding his sexuality. While this girl is aware of the shame that sex could bring upon her, her lover needs to be begged to remember these social constraints. Both translations show that while women possessed sexual awareness and desire, they did not possess sexual agency, especially in comparison to their male counterparts.

¹⁵ Legge, trans., *Shijing, Book of Odes*, location 1934.

¹⁶ The sixth line of every verse is the same for all three verses. In terms of translation, Waley’s says, “Zhong Zi I dearly love,” and Legge’s says, “You, O Zhong, are to be loved.” These lines are the only lines within the eight-lined verses that reference desire, with all the other lines expressing fear. In Waley and Allen, *The Book of Songs*, 65, and Legge, *Shijing*, location 1934–1935.

CONCLUSION

Overall, while Waley's and Legge's translations similarly represent female sexual agency, their translations differ greatly in their representations of men and women. As seen in poems 6 and 23, Waley emphasizes women's bodies and fertility as their most idealized qualities and represents men as dominant seducers who actively pursue sex with women. While Waley emphasizes the physical bodies of women in his translations, Legge emphasizes the moral and social expectations of women. Additionally, while Legge portrays men as less aggressive initiators of sex than does Waley, his emphasis on moral virtue is seen in his representing men as seducers who lead moral women astray.

While Waley and Legge contrast in their portrayals of gender, they converge at their representations of sexual agency in relation to women. In all three poems, it is clear that women's sexual agency is owned by society and is only given to women once they are married. In both Poem 23 and Poem 76, women do not possess the sexual agency to act on their sexual desire without social consequences. It is only in Poem 6 that we see a married woman being described in a sexual manner, in the case of Waley, and in terms of her fertility, more so in the case of Legge. Through their portrayals of men and women, Legge and Waley make the point that sexual agency — and whether one would actively pursue sex or passively receive sex — was directly correlated to the gender of the individual.

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Different Views of Woman's Education in the Han Dynasty and the Late Qing Dynasty
through the Lens of Ban Zhao's *Lessons for Women*
and Liang Qichao's *On Woman's Education*

Iris (Yue) Hou

There are two famous passages on woman's education written at different times in Chinese history. The first is *Lessons for Women* 女誡, produced by Ban Zhao early in the second century and considered to be one of the earliest articles focusing on women's issues. The other is *On Woman's Education* 論女學, composed by Liang Qichao 梁啟超. This article was included in *The General Discussion on Reform* 變法通議, which was published in 1897 to state the necessity of reform in wide-ranging aspects of Chinese society. Nearly a thousand years separate them; triggered as they were by different motivations, these two articles reflect contrasting concerns and attitudes towards women's issues.

First I introduce the differing backgrounds of these two articles. *Lessons for Women* was originally Ban Zhao's teachings for her daughters, who were going to get married before having been taught proper manners as wives. This composition intended to tell them how to behave properly in their husbands' families. It later went into wide circulation and became the referenced instruction manual for women who were to be wives. In contrast, Liang Qichao's article was composed with a more patriotic motivation after China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. By that time, some advanced western theories had been introduced into China, and Liang Qichao was one of the first individuals to advocate strongly that the Chinese people should learn from the western world. Based on this premise, he denied many outdated traditional ideas and put forward new requirements for women in modern society. Therefore, we can see that the two articles have different views on many specific issues.

The first and essential question is whether man and woman are born equal, on which the two authors offered completely different points of view. Ban Zhao did not think the different genders should live and be treated equally at all. She stated that "(We should) lay the (female) baby below the bed

plainly indicating that she is lowly and weak, and should regard it as her primary duty to humble herself before others.” When a female infant was born, people should make her feel that she was fated to be subordinated and without privilege. Men, it was seen, were born privileged and dominant while women were born humiliated and must be initiated in such a way as to show their own weakness, and to know that they must obey men.

In contrast, Liang held an entirely different opinion. He first made a strong argument that “men and women are equal as human beings, therefore, how could they be treated differently when it came to whether they should have an occupation or not?”² Then he called for learning the theory of gender equality from advanced societies, such as the United States, the most thriving nation in the western world, and Japan, the most rapidly developing country in the east. The theory of gender equality was widely spread in these two countries at that time.³ Liang Qichao completely rejected the outdated mindset of “male superiority and female inferiority” in ancient China and believed that women should be treated the same as men. Only by accepting this concept could China become a strong and powerful nation.

Secondly, Ban Zhao and Liang Qichao held different opinions about the most important things in a woman's life. Since Ban Zhao's article was for women who were becoming new wives, she inevitably puts more emphasis on the household. She stated that the best women should want “with wholehearted devotion to sew and to weave, to love not gossip and silly laughter, in cleanliness and order to prepare the wine and food for serving guests.”⁴ She said that women were supposed to serve for men's activities, but could not participate in these activities themselves due to their subordinate status. Their task was to achieve the simplest work of weaving and the most basic assisting. But Liang Qichao would not agree

1 Victor H. Mair, *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 535. Translated by Mair. The original texts: “臥之床下，明其卑弱，主下人也。”

2 Liang Qichao and He Guangyu, *Bian Fa Tong Yi* (Beijing: Hua xia chu ban she, 2002), pp. 88–89. Translated by myself. The original texts: “等是人也，何以或有業或無業。”

3 Liang and He, *Bian Fa Tong Yi*, p. 97. Translated by myself. The original texts: “西方全盛之國，莫美若。東方新興之國，莫日本若。男女平權之論，大倡於美，而漸行於日本。”

4 Mair, *Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 538.. Translated by Mair. The original texts: “專心紡績，不好戲笑，潔齊酒食，以奉賓客，是謂婦功。”

with her at all. He believed that not only should women have their occupations the same as men, but also they should also be capable of making a living on their own instead of depending their whole lives on their husbands. He regarded this as the foundation of a prosperous nation. Otherwise, they would become a burden to a modern society, where the men would have to feed a whole population twice the number of themselves.⁵ Ban Zhao placed her emphasis on the stability of the family, while Liang Qichao was more concerned about national prosperity. This is due to their different milieus and historical environments.

The third question is why woman's education should be important at all. Ban Zhao attributed the reason to marriage and family relationships. In her view, women should be educated and taught proper and graceful behavior as wives in order to serve the purpose of pleasing her parents-in-law and winning a good reputation—for not only herself but also her original family. Otherwise, she would be hated by her new family and become their burden, and that of her original family as well. But Liang Qichao gave his answer from a completely different perspective:

Therefore, two things are of prime importance for governing a country. They are: to make people's mindset upright, and to welcome more and more talented people (to the government). The essence of these two is a good elementary education, which is mostly based on the mother's teaching. And the mothers need woman's education (before they become mothers). According to this, woman's education is the decisive matter for the country's survival and future.⁶

He argued that woman's education is the essential basis of the country's development. This analysis is logically forced. In order to emphasize the importance of woman's education, he overstated the effect of home education provided by mothers. On the other hand, he stressed that "as for children's education, mothers are more functional than fathers. Children are more influenced by mothers on their

⁵ Liang and He, *Bian Fa Tong Yi*, p. 91.

⁶ Liang and He, *Bian Fa Tong Yi*, p. 92. "故治天下之大本二，曰：正人心，廣人才。而二者之本，必自蒙養始；蒙養之本，必自母教始；母教之本，必自婦學始。故婦學實天下存亡強弱之大原也。" Translated by myself.

temperament and hobbies.”⁷ But what we should note is that this reality is caused by the traditional division of labor that “men are in charge of the outside and women are in charge of the inside.” If men and women are completely equal and women take on the same jobs as men, as he had described in the previous paragraph, then the traditional view of “women are in charge of inside” would be broken. Thus, the mother’s education would no longer have obvious advantages in raising children over the father’s. So we can see that there is actually a certain contradiction in Liang Qichao’s viewpoint. In addition, Liang Qichao also said that because it is important for a woman to have a job, they need to be educated well before they take on these jobs. That is another reason he provided to prove the necessity of woman’s education.

Due to their different motivations, two passages respectively mention different specific aspects. Ban Zhao’s article puts more weight on a woman’s personal life, and she makes no mention of the social position and status of women generally. Liang Qichao did not talk about a woman’s marriage, family relationships or their expected behavior. He dissected the historical reasons as to why men and women are treated and live differently. But Ban Zhao thought it was obvious that men and women are unequal, so that their difference in status needed no explanation.

In sum, generally, *Lessons for Women* focuses more on the way women were expected to behave, while *On Woman’s Education* emphasizes the importance of educating women.

Lessons for Women provides a traditional standard for woman’s conduct in ancient China. It was considered to be a moralistic text that advises women to be compliant and respectful towards advancing the greater purpose of maintaining familial harmony, a highly regarded concept in ancient China. But due to its narrowly regarding women as subordinates of men, we consider Ban Zhao’s ideas as very outdated today. Moreover, even in the Han dynasty, what the article describes is only for the elite class, while women from lower classes were in a different situation.

On Woman’s Education, considered as the birth of Chinese feminism by some sociologists, reflects the brand-new requirements and expectations of women during a transformative period for the

⁷ Liang and He, *Bian Fa Tong Yi*, p. 91. “孩提之童，母亲于父，其性情嗜好，惟妇人能因势而利导之。” Translated by myself.

nation.⁸ Liang Qichao took a great many new ideas from the west, and he strongly advocated equality between men and women, especially their equivalent responsibility to society. But his article also has its shortcomings. His arguments all serve a political purpose, and its potential readers were the ruling class, not ordinary individuals. Thus, his argument was so general and idealized that it was detached from reality. In his outlook, women were always considered as a collective instead of individuals. He made no mention of the specific detailed issues of women's daily lives. But all in all, from these two articles, we still can see great changes over time in people's attitudes towards woman's education.

⁸ Lydia H. Li, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, eds., *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* (Columbia University Press, 2013). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/liu-16290>.

The Use of Hair Ornaments in Chinese Poetry

Jiayi Li

This article introduces five types of hair ornaments, explains what they look and how they function, and shows the ways in which each evokes specific notional or contextual associations with certain images or emotions in Chinese poetry. As hair ornaments are mostly worn by women, while the poems' authors are of the opposite gender, they are perceived from "the outside," that is, from their visual form rather than the experience of the wearer. Their use and meanings derive from the social customs surrounding them. Eventually they themselves became conventional symbols, externally signaling interior states. As mentioned by James J. Y. Liu in *The Art of Chinese Poetry*,¹ these projections may be common knowledge among readers with similar experiences or sensibility; however, there is no guarantee that those associations will be universally understood, and the level of familiarity may vary due to the experience of the individual reader. Thus, in translating to another language, it is necessary to reveal the unspoken connotations, if one is to pass on the full meaning of the poetry.

In this article I will try to introduce the cultural background of these hair ornaments, reveal how their emotional implications have formed, and share sample poems to illustrate each case. While it would take too much space to address all the categories of hair ornaments or enumerate all the possible interpretations, I hope this brief discussion can serve as a first step towards a deeper understanding of these poets and their intentions when they employ such symbols.

The first and most fundamental hair ornament in ancient China is the *ji* 笄, which, in the simple form of a stick, was used as a hair pin for buns. According to the *Li Ji* 礼记 (Book of Rites),² a girl who is

¹ James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

² Xu Chao and Zengcai An, *Li Ji: The Book of Rites: Selected and Translated by Xu Chao; Translated into English by Lao An. Di 1 ban* (Jinan: Shandong you yi chu ban she, 1999).

engaged can put on a hairpin around the age of fifteen, while one who is not engaged can put on a hairpin at age twenty, to signify to others her approaching adulthood.

The threshold and ceremony are then called “*ji ji*” 及笄 or “*ji li*,” 笄礼 (rituals celebrating girls who can braid their hair and thus claim adolescence), alluding to their maturity or eligibility for marriage. In poetry, it is very common to comment on the *ji* as it signals a young and innocent girl reaching adolescence. Below is a quotation from a poem, one among many written to celebrate royal weddings. In the poem, there are two rituals happening: one on the personal level, in that the princess has reached age fifteen, and one on the national level, to celebrate the marriage.

奉和太子纳妃太平公主出降 【郭正一】

桂宫初服冕，兰掖早升笄。礼盛亲迎晋，声芬出降齐。
金龟开瑞钮，宝翟上仙袿。转扇承宵月，扬旌照夕蜺。

Pair Song For the Wedding of Crown Prince and Princess Taiping, by Guo Zheng Yi

While [the crown prince] is putting on the robe in the emperor's house
[The Princess Taiping] is celebrating reaching adolescence.
The grand ceremony celebrating the marriage,
The beautiful sound accompanying the wedding,
His majesty wearing golden turtle and jade seal,
Her highness decorating herself with precious feathers and marvelous clothes,
[The celebration continues] with the gentleman shaking their fans to receive the moonshine
And the people waving flags to reflect the sunset.

—Translated by Jiayi Li

A more complicated hair ornament, derived from the *ji*, is *zan* 簪, which takes a similar form but might have more varied shapes on one end of the stick. While the *ji* is specifically related to the female in a literary portrait, the *zan* is more universally applied across gender and generally perceived

as a way of conforming to social standards. *Zan* is particularly seen as a symbol of dignity—as criminals or outlaws can no longer use *zan*, they must wear their hair unbound. On another level, the wives of emperors can also be banned from using it, as a punishment for misdemeanors. In 列女传 (Exemplary women of early China: The *Lienü zhuan* of Liu Xiang),³ there is recorded an incident in which King Xuan of Zhou was late for one of his daily meetings. His empress, abashed, took off her *zan* and apologized for causing the king to be too fond of women and thus less attentive towards his work. The idiom “*Tuo Zan Dai Zui*” 脱簪待罪, which translates to “taking off the hairpin and waiting for the verdict of the crime,” thus originated as describing a situation in which someone punishes himself.

春望【杜甫】

Spring Gaze, by Du Fu

国破山河在

The nation is ruined, but mountains and rivers remain.

城春草木深

This spring the city is deep in weeds and brush.

感时花溅泪

Touched by the times even flowers weep tears.

恨别鸟惊心

Fearing leaving the birds' tangled hearts.

烽火连三月

Watch-tower fires have been burning for three months

家书抵万金

To get a note from home would cost ten thousand gold.

白头搔更短

Scratching my white hair thinner

浑欲不胜簪

Seething hopes all in a trembling hairpin.

—Translated by Gary Snyder⁴

In this famous poem, Du Fu not only reflects on his disappointing political effort to serve the government as a high-ranking official, but also reveals a deep concern about the status of the nation. The country is falling apart, with continuous warfare, a quite disgraceful moment, especially because the Tang dynasty had earlier attained the nation's peak in wealth and prosperity. The poet, who is also

³ Anne Behnke Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁴ In Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 97.

losing his neat appearance, shares this loss of dignity in his own person—he can hardly keep his hairpin in his gray hair. A sense of becoming reconciled to loss and also of remorse is conveyed in the last sentence.

The third hair ornament, *chai* 钗, or “paired hairpin,” has two teeth to fix into the hair; it was often used in ancient China to symbolize love, a couple, or the marriage state. Because it is paired, it was usually presented as a gift, with the intention that each of the pair would be held by one partner as a commitment. To add to the auspicious blessing, a phoenix, symbol of virtue, is often used to decorate the *chai* 钗, to foretell a peaceful and prosperous marriage; hence the word *chai* (paired hairpin) is often associated with *feng* 凤 (phoenix). Conversely, the splitting of the *chai* is used to symbolize divorce or events in dramatic love stories. Literary works like “Zi Chai Ji” 紫钗记 (The legend of the purple hairpin)⁵ refers in its title to a young couple falling in love and then falling apart, all witnessed by a pair of purple hairpins.⁶

The poem “Butterfly,” by the poet Li Shangying, presents a vivid, interesting perspective for inquiring about love. Li Shangying is known for his ambiguity and indirectness, and in that context this poem is a rare case: it explicitly banter with the girl, asking her for whom she is dressing up. The identity of the mysterious lover is never provided, but readers are convinced by the poem that this girl has someone close to her heart who makes her happy.

蝶三首（二）【李商隐】

长眉画了绣帘开，碧玉行收白玉台。为问翠钗钗上凤，不知香颈为谁回。

Three Poems about a Butterfly [the second], by Li Shang Ying

[When the lady] finished drawing her long eyebrows,
Her maid came, opened the curtain, and cleaned the dressing table;

⁵ Tang Xianzu and Jin Mao, *Zi Chai Ji: 2 Juan* ([Shanghai]: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she), n199.

⁶ The sorrowful “Chai Tou Feng” 钗头凤 (Phoenix hairpin) by Lu You and Tang Wan is considered by many to be one of the most famous tragedies in Chinese literary history, but, because it is technically a work of prose, it is not discussed here.

I want to ask the phoenix decoration on the jade hairpin:

Who will receive the favor of the fair lady, when she turns around to see that person?

— translated by Jiayi Li

The next hair ornament to discuss is *shu* 梳, or *bi* 篦, which stands for the comb that is used for untangling or arranging the hair. Usually the *shu* has fewer teeth and wider spaces between them, while the *bi* has more densely located, narrower teeth. Both can be used to groom the hair and then are inserted to keep it in place. In ancient China, although people did not bathe frequently, they did pay attention to their hair in order to show that they were well kept and clean. Hence, they would carry the comb with them all the time and brush off the dust. Because of this action, *shu* and *bi* have gradually come to be associated with the meaning of "cleanliness." This implication has further developed into a sense of "loneliness or aloofness," as when a person faces himself at the end of day.

宫词【王建】

玉蝉金雀三层插，翠髻高丛绿鬓虚。舞处春风吹落地，归来别赐一头梳。

The Poem from the Palace, by Wang Jian

Multiple layers of precious hair ornaments like jade cicada and gold sparrow,
The bright and strong hair ties up, or turns into various styles
In the court, when the lady dances, the wind blows down and time passes by,
Now when the lady returns, she is awarded with a head of new combs.

— translated by Jiayi Li

In his poetry Wang Jian showed deep empathy with the ladies serving in the royal palace, such that he composed over one hundred poems about their lives. This poem presents a dramatic contrast between "on and off," "young and old," and "being loved then being lonely," in which the first two sentences are about the excessive hair ornaments worn when a lady competes to receive the most attention and love, while the last two sentences depict her return to the simplest of lives, with just one comb.

The last hair ornament, *buyao* 步摇, which translates literally as “shaking at every step,” is one of the most delicate and ostentatiously attractive of hair ornaments. It is usually entangled with dangling jewelry pieces like jade or ruby beads, and it is often used by the favorite concubine in a powerful or rich family. Just imagine a stunning, wondrous lady gracefully moving while the beads on the *buyao* on her head slightly bob as her cherished body leans forward—how can men not be attracted by this dynamic vision? In the *Quan Tang Shi* 全唐诗,⁷ the word *buyao* appears seventeen times, and each time it signals an erotic, if not seductive, meaning. The most famous example may be the following:

长恨歌 【白居易】

云鬓花颜金步摇，芙蓉帐暖度春宵。春宵苦短日高起，从此君王不早朝。

Song of Everlasting Sorrow, by Bo Juyi

She had a florid face and cloud-soft hair adorned with glittering golden beads that swayed, behind bedchamber curtains painted with lotus, springtime passion was in play;

Springtime passion made speed of night and in no time the sun had risen high. The Emperor stopped attending the morning assembly on state affairs.

—Translated in an anonymous source

In the above I have briefly described the various types of Chinese hair ornaments and the ways in which they have been used in Chinese poetry, whether to invoke certain associations based on social norms, or to evoke emotional states, all evolving from a common cultural heritage. While in such poems interpretations may vary, it is evident that looking closely into the specific background, connotations, and references to earlier contexts of such ornaments will help the reader perceive the intentions behind the poetry.

⁷ Peng Dingqiu, *Quan Tang Shi. Di 1 ban* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1960).

Su Shi, Li Qingzhao, and the Development of the Song Lyric

Chenfeng Wang

The song lyric (*ci*), as a poetic genre, arose from the tradition of using stanzas to fit banquet music (*yan yue*); these were international tunes that had made their way to China during the Tang dynasty, with a few Chinese folk songs to add variety. From the middle Tang to the early Northern Song dynasty, early song lyrics were in large part written to be performed orally. Their contents were always associated with women in boudoirs or entertainment quarters. Writers, using a generalized voice, presented universal situations, which were not assumed to be connected in any direct way with their personal lives. This genre was held in low repute during these early years, as its content was erotic and frivolous, and because it was for entertainment, rather than serious purposes. Although more than a few literati engaged in the writing of song lyrics, they treated it as merely a diversion or amusement. The song lyric was commonly referred to with the pejorative term “trifling lyrics” (*xiao ci*).¹ Even the most accomplished writers of song lyrics rigorously excluded their works in this genre from their literary anthologies, because to be known as a composer of song lyrics was not respectable.

As time went by, the form, content, and functions of song lyrics gradually changed during the Northern Song Dynasty. In this process, through the literati’s composing practices, the genre moved from a musical form to a literary one. Both Su Shi (1037–1101) and Li Qingzhao (1084–c. 1151) were significant figures during this important stage of development. Although their views and practices might seem different from one another, in reality they played similar roles in advancing the poetic quality of the genre of song lyrics, bringing it into accord with the literati’s aesthetic standards, and elevating it to an alternative status, that of *shi* poetry.

¹ V. H. Mair, *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 316.

Su Shi left no critical or theoretical writings on song lyrics,² which means that while he composed prolific works in this genre, he neither thought highly of it, nor augmented its standing intentionally. After having been put in prison because of his poetry and prose works, Su Shi was banished to Huangzhou. From this exile, the amount of *shi* poetry he wrote decreased sharply. Instead, he turned to the genre of song lyrics, which was too unworthy for his enemies to take notice of, but which could be a new outlet for him to express his personal emotions. In doing this, he changed the genre substantially, by “using the method of *shi* to compose *ci*” (*yi shi wei ci*).³ We can see three examples of these changes in Su Shi’s writing from this period. Firstly, he replaced the general and fictive persona formerly seen in banquet lyrics with the autobiographical voice of *shi* tradition. Secondly, he broadened the scope of *ci* to include serious themes, the use of which was formerly limited to *shi*. Thirdly, he used the techniques of *shi* in the composing of *ci*; for example, by adding prefaces and allusions. Two of his famous *ci* works appear below, to illustrate these features.

Tune: “Calming Windswept Waves”⁴

Prefatory note: On the seventh day of the third month, I was caught in a downpour en route to Sandy Lake. Those carrying the rain gear had gone ahead. My companions all felt downhearted, but I didn’t. Presently it became fine, and I wrote these lines.

Listen not to the rain piercing the woods, pelting the leaves!

I might as well stroll leisurely along

Making verses impromptu and whistling at ease.

More relaxing than a saddle are straw sandals and bamboo staff.

Why be afraid

To spend my whole life with abandon,

² R. C. Egan and S. Su, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994), 317.

³ The phrase was put forward by Chen Shidao when he summarized Su Shi’s lyric works. See Shidao Chen, *Houshan Shi Hua* (Houshan’s notes on poets and poetry) (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1987), 285 (陳師道，後山詩話，欽定四庫全書，集部九，詩文評類，上海：上海古籍出版社，1987，1478 冊，285 頁).

⁴ Mair, *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 320–321.

In straw raincape, in mist and rain?
A keen spring wind sobers me up from wine, leaves me with
 A bit of chill,
Now I see the slanting sun beckoning to me
From the top of the hill.
I turn my eyes to the scene of the late storm, and
 Go back!
I say, to where you will be troubled
By neither rain nor shine.

—Translated by Jiaosheng Wang

定風波⁵

三月七日，沙湖道中遇雨。雨具先去，同行皆狼狽，余獨不覺。已而遂晴，故作此詞。

莫聽穿林打葉聲。何妨吟嘯且徐行。竹杖芒鞋輕勝馬。誰怕？一蓑煙雨任平生。
料峭春風吹酒醒。微冷。山頭斜照卻相迎。回首向來蕭灑處。歸去。也無風雨也無晴。

Tune: "A Riverside Town"⁶

Hunting at Mi-chou

Left hand leading a yellow hound,
In the right a gray falcon,
I feel rejuvenated with the vigor of youth.

5 Tongqing Zou, Shi Su, and Zongtang Wang. *Su Shi Ci Bian Nian Jiao Zhu* (A chronological collection of Su Shi's *ci* works with annotations) (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2016), 365 (鄒同慶, 王宗堂:《蘇軾詞編年校註》, 北京: 中華書局, 2016, 第三五六頁).

6 Mair, *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 321–322.

Cavalrymen in sable coats and helmets of brocade
Cross the thousand-tricent level ridge in one powerful sweep.
Let the whole town turn out at the prefect's clarion call,
To watch him shoot the tiger at bay,
Emulate the prowess of King Sun of Wu!
Now I have drunk my fill,
My spirits rise to their highest:
What though my temples are streaked with gray?
When will be dispatched here
An envoy with the imperial tally?
I am all impatience to bend my bow like a full moon,
And, aiming northwest, shoot down the Wolf
Running riot in the sky!

—Translated by Jiaosheng Wang

江城子⁷

獵詞

老夫聊發少年狂。左牽黃。右擎蒼。錦帽貂裘、千騎卷平岡。為報傾城隨太守，親射虎，看孫郎。
酒酣胸膽尚開張。鬢微霜。又何妨。持節雲中、何日遣馮唐？會挽雕弓如滿月，西北望，射天狼。

The first piece comes with a prefatory note, and the second with a subtitle, as was common with other forms of poetry. In this way, Su Shi explicitly tied his compositions to specific occasions on which they were written; thus, the song lyrics would come to be read as derived from the experience of the

⁷ 鄒同慶, 王宗堂:《蘇軾詞編年校註》, 北京: 中華書局, 2016, 第一四六至一四七頁。Tongqing Zou, Shi Su, and Zongtang Wang. *Su Shi ci bian nian jiao zhu* (A chronological collection of Su Shi's *ci* works with annotations) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2016), 146–147.

author, and no longer as stylized inventions for banquet entertainment. From the specific times and spaces described in these pieces, we can identify the highly personal voice of the historical figure Su Shi, who was demoted to minor posts far removed from the capital. In the second piece, Su Shi used allusions to liken himself to King Sun of Wu, who bravely attacked a tiger with his halberd when his horse was injured by it, and with Wei Shang, who was pardoned by the court when an envoy with the imperial tally was dispatched to his place. Through these allusions, Su Shi expressed his hope and confidence. His sorrow at being exiled was alleviated by the rejuvenating experience of hunting with his fellow townspeople, and he believed that, with talent and prowess similar to that of King Sun, he would also be pardoned by the court and serve one day to defend his country.

By injecting the author's voice and by linking the feelings he experiences on these occasions to the larger turns in the author's life, the contents of these two pieces strikingly move away from feminine beauty and romantic love, which are the conventional subjects of the former banquet lyrics. Su Shi openly expressed his unrestrained character, optimistic attitude, and ambitious aspirations in his song lyrics, as literati traditionally did in *shi* poetry. As one of the most important maxims in Chinese poetic tradition has it, "poetry is to express one's innermost intent" (*shi yan zhi*)⁸; the song lyric, after being transformed by Su Shi, also became a vehicle for expressing one's innermost ideals and aspirations. Moreover, in this new style of song lyrics, Su Shi not only expresses his feelings, but also transcends those feelings philosophically. In the last stanza of the first piece, he conveys a sense that if one acquires peace and calm in his inner world, he will never be troubled by the outside world—rain or shine, adversity or prosperity. This kind of transcendence elevated the profundity of lyric songs further.

Unlike Su Shi, who did not actually put forward any theory or criticism to justify his "using the method of *shi* to compose *ci*," Li Qingzhao wrote a critique called "On Song Lyrics" (*ci lun*)⁹ to seriously discuss this genre. In this essay, she surveys the genre from its beginnings as a popular form of entertainment during the Tang dynasty to the generation of writers who preceded her, presents her

8 See J. J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 70–76.

9 See 李清照著，黃墨谷輯校：《重輯李清照集》，北京：中華書局，2009，卷四，第五三至五七頁。Qingzhao Li and Mogu Huang, *Chong Ji Li Qingzhao Ji* (A re-compilation of Li Qingzhao's works) (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 2009), 53–57.

views on the distinctive prosodic features of the form, and offers a bold critique on the leading writers of the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song period, challenging their accomplishments and indicating their weaknesses, respectively.

In Li Qingzhao's view, Su Shi's learning "plumbed the extremes of heaven and humankind," but his song lyrics "read like nothing more than *shi* poetry that has not been properly polished."¹⁰ Why is this? She explains:

It is because while *shi* poetry distinguishes between "level" and "oblique" tones, the song lyric distinguishes five notes. It also distinguishes five tones, six musical modes, and the difference between "clear" and "turgid," and "light" and "heavy" syllables. Moreover, the tunes known today as "Sound after Sound: Long Form," "Blossoms in the Rain," and "Enjoying the Darting Oriole" may, in addition to using the "level" tone rhyme, also use the "entering" tone rhyme. "Spring in the Jade Tower" originally required the "level" tone rhyme, but it may also use the "rising" or the "falling" tone rhymes, as well as the "entering" tone rhymes. Songs that originally required the "deflected" tone rhymes, may still accord with the rules if written to "rising" tone rhymes. But if a writer sets them to "entering" tone rhymes, they become impossible to sing.¹¹

In examining Li Qingzhao's criticism and explanation, it seems obvious that the feature she most identifies with the song lyric is musicality: the genre is not only characterized by uneven line lengths, but more importantly, it has strictly determined rhyme and tone schemes, which ensure its performability. From about Su Shi's time, the song lyric grew gradually detached from its original musical form and approached an independent literary form. The ever-widening divergence of Su Shi's lyric works from the original banquet songs put him distinctly on the literary side. However, by

¹⁰ R. Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent: The Poet Li Qingzhao and Her History in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 77–78.

emphasizing the musicality of the song lyric, did Li Qingzhao really try to drag the genre back to the musical side?

In her essay, Li Qingzhao clearly points out that "this form of writing is a field unto itself."¹² She criticizes Su Shi's lyric works (along with Wang Anshi's and Zeng Gong's), not only for the places in which it departs from the tonal conventions of the chosen tune, but also because he (and Wang and Zeng) did not understand the distinctive generic features of *ci*, which are entirely different from *shi* or prose. Li Qingzhao defines the genre and sets several essential standards for its composition and evaluation not only by stating what it should be, but also by offering negative examples to show what it is not. For Liu Yong, she approves of the fact that "his works meet the prosodic rules," but despises the fact that "his diction is down in the dirt."¹³ For Wang Anshi and Zeng Gong, she simply asserts that, although their writings "resemble the style of Western Han period," their song lyrics "cannot be read."¹⁴ As for Yan Jidao, He Zhu, and Qin Guan, Li Qingzhao regards them as truly understanding the unique rhyme and tone schemes of the genre. But "Yan's works suffer from lack of narrative exposition," "He's works suffer from inadequate substance and classical style," and "Qin cares only about emotions and has too few literary allusions."¹⁵

Through studying Li Qingzhao's critiques of these distinguished writers, we can construct what she sees as the ideal song lyric. Aside from tonal conventions, it should have narrative exposition, classical weightiness, and proper allusions. These standards she sets for the song lyric are crucial for us to understand her true intentions: for all of these are, in fact, features of a good literary work (as typically shown in other forms of literature), but not features of a good song, which, on the contrary, should be colloquial, plain, and fluent in order to be easily sung, understood, and spread. In this sense, the ideal lyric works Li Qingzhao advocates actually are more closely related to other literary forms than the older song forms. Nevertheless, Li Qingzhao still insists on the distinctive musicality of the song lyric, though this does not necessarily mean that *ci* should return to the form it took during banquet oral

¹² Ibid., 78.

¹³ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

¹⁵ Ibid.

performances. Rather, the musicality she emphasizes here should be understood as a convention of phonological patterning of the genre; that is to say, the genre should keep the unique prosodic features and the strict rhyme and tone schemes, which are entirely different from those of *shi*, and are crucial in bringing the lyrics into accord with tunes. When composing lyrics works, literati are not expected to refer to the level and oblique tones of *shi*, but are expected to understand the five notes, five tones, six musical modes, and different kinds of syllables in *ci* tunes, and comply with the distinctive prosodic rules of *ci*. Thus, Li Qingzhao did not really mean to drag *ci* back to its original musical form, but rather to endow it with new literary features and establish its uniqueness, including its difference from *shi*.

Let us then consider Li Qingzhao's criticism of Liu Yong. Frequenting entertainment quarters and writing lyrics for courtesans, Liu Yong used colloquial and even vulgar language to depict romance and love in his works. Li Qingzhao was against this kind of writing, which means that in her opinion, the diction of song lyrics should be elegant and delicate. By indicating this standard, she elevates the song lyric into a refined literary culture, acceptable to the class of elite literati, as it can meet their aesthetic taste.

Lastly, Li Qingzhao's criticism of Wang Anshi and Zeng Gong implies her views on the typical theme of this genre. The prose works of these two great scholars resemble the exemplary works of the Western Han Dynasty, which had long been considered the model for all Confucian, didactic prose writing. But the didactic prose writing should not be used as the model for song lyric writing. The song lyric writing, as Li Qingzhao suggests, is not at all didactic, and is not necessarily connected to romance with courtesans. What, then, should be the theme of this genre? We can address this question by looking at Li Qingzhao's own lyric works, most of which have strong emotive connotations. Just like Su Shi, Li Qingzhao added subtitles to her lyric works and injected her autobiographical voice into them. But as a woman who lived between the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, Li Qingzhao's thoughts and sentiments were very different from those of Su Shi. She expressed her subtle emotions, rather than great aspirations or philosophical reflections, in her lyric works. In her early years, she wrote warmly of the joys she shared with her husband; after she experienced the fall of Northern Song and the death of her husband, she wrote eloquently of her suffering and sadness during her widowhood. Thus, the emotional theme should also be included in the uniqueness of the song lyric for which Li Qingzhao advocates.

From the analysis above, we can summarize that in Li Qingzhao's view, the song lyric (*ci*) is an independent poetic genre with its distinctive tone, diction, theme, and style. It is metrical, refined, emotional, and delicate. Although insisting on the generic nature of the song lyric, Li Qingzhao indicated that she did not want it to return to its original musical form, and she did not argue for the intrinsic characteristics that had been determined by its original setting either. On the contrary, she is on the same side as Su Shi, supporting *ci* moving from its original musical form to a refined literary form. She argues for the legitimacy and seriousness of the genre, which occupies a separate aesthetic space from other literary forms, but which should share an equally high status with them.

Su Shi blurred the boundary between *shi* and *ci*, and thus changed the low stature of the song lyric by raising its poetic quality. Li Qingzhao reestablished the boundary between *shi* and *ci*, and thus achieved a similar effect by emphasizing its unique prosodic features, emotional themes, and elegant and lyrical style. By moving from songs to more refined literary forms, the song lyric was elevated to a major alternative to *shi* poetry in the Song Dynasty. Both Su Shi and Li Qingzhao, despite their different views and practices, helped to advance this development. It is the changes made to this genre by literati such as Su Shi and Li Qingzhao that kept it vital across time.

Tracing *Qiubo*:
The Use of River Imagery in the Portrayal of Female Eyes
in Classical Chinese Poetry

Yuxin (Vivian) Wen

In modern Chinese, *qiubo* (秋波) has become a ubiquitous symbol for the beauty of female eyes both in literary and popular expressions: as gay and as bright as the stream of the fall, a pair of female eyes, like a moving body of water, continue to charm, to inspire – and if we may extend the metaphor further – to *drown* the male gaze.

This paper traces some of the earliest occurrences of river imagery as female eyes in classical Chinese poetry, and explores the ways in which the use of *qiubo* evokes its beauty: its brightness, its lucidity and more importantly, a sense of fluid movement found in the female eyes in tension with the fixation of the male gaze – after all, the trope conjured by the male literati of ancient China is not without misogyny. While focusing on the specific references to the river of the *fall* season in Bai Juyi (白居易)'s “Zheng”(筝), Li He (李贺)'s “Tang Erge” (唐儿歌) and Wei Zhuang (韦庄)'s “Qin Fu Yin” (秦妇吟), the paper also traces the more general use of water metaphors found in earlier works such as “Chuci · Zhaohun” (楚辞·招魂) and Cao Zhi (曹植)'s “Luo Shen Fu” (洛神赋). The paper further examines the cases where the *qiubo* metaphor starts to acquire a more flirtatious and scheming connotation, such as in Li Yu (李煜)'s “Pusa Man” (菩萨蛮).

While the male gaze is a modern concept that was only formalized by the Western feminist film critics in 1975 – most eminently, in Laura Mulvey's essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” – a patriarchal perspective largely dominated the classical Chinese canon even before any label was created.¹ Yet the modern analytical vocabulary provides a conceptual tool that inspires a closer look at

¹ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (October 1975): 6–18.

the power dynamics between the male poet and the female object, revealed through their respective agency to “see.” With the portrayal of their charming eyes framed under the stare and the language of the male, do the females merely function as sexual objects for male visual pleasure, or do they have the agency to overturn the gaze and assert the power of their beauty?

Some cases from the Tang Dynasty, most predominantly marked by Bai Juyi’s “Zheng,” attest to the way in which the trope of *quishui* (秋水, the fall water) may be employed by the male poet to elevate the beauty of the female without being necessarily molesting; interestingly, it shows that *quishui* may even be used as a praising term for the handsomeness of a male. Before *quibo* became a more popular metonym for female eyes, Bai Juyi coined the phrase, *jianquishui* (剪秋水) (“shuang(双)mou(眸)jian(剪)qui(秋)shui(水), shi(十)zhi(指)bo(剥)chun(春)cong(葱), “Two gazes slicing through fall water, ten fingers peeling spring scallions” in “Zheng”) to give power to female eyes, which was arguably directly cited later by Tang poets such as Li He (“yi(一)shuang(双)tong(瞳)ren(仁)jian(剪)qui(秋)shui(水),” “A pair of irises slicing through fall water” in “Tang Erge”) and Wei Zhuang (“xi(西)lin(邻)you(有)nü(女)zhen(真)xian(仙)zi(子), yi(一)cun(寸)heng(横)bo(波)jian(剪)qui(秋)shui(水),” “The lady of the west neighborhood is a true goddess, an inch of eyelines slicing through fall water,” in “Qin Fu Yin”). Though functioning in differing contexts, the phrase *jianquishui* activates an activeness and sharpness of its subject, the female eyes (“shuang(双)mou(眸),” “yi(一)shuang(双)tong(瞳)ren(仁),” and “yi(一)cun(寸)heng(横)bo(波): the crisp and forceful verb “slice/cut” (*jian*) is juxtaposed with the formless and intangible *quishui*. In Bai Juyi’s “shuang(双)mou(眸)jian(剪)qui(秋)shui(水),” the female eyes (“shuang(双)mou(眸)”) are not the river itself, but rather the source that induces the movement in the river and its ripples, thus potentially the agency on the female’s side. It is important to note the context of Bai Juyi’s “Zheng:” instead of unapologetically seeking the sexual pleasure of male spectatorship, the poem exemplifies the poet’s habitual sympathy with the female music performers who thrived at the bottom of society – which echoes his more famous example, “Pipa Xing” – thus being more sympathetic than misogynistic. With the description of the female “Zheng” player’s moving eyes in the leading line, the poem goes on to celebrate her music-playing skills while sympathizing with her for life experiences that were unfortunate but for which she is not necessarily self-pitying; for example, “zhu(珠)lian(联)qian(千)pai(拍)sui(碎), dao(刀)jie(截)yi(一)sheng(声)zhong(终)” is rather

assertive: taking charge of one’s life through musical expression. Hence, the overall theme and context of Bai Juyi’s “Zheng” – in which the *qiushui* trope is embedded – suggests that “the male gaze” in classical Chinese poetry could be sympathetic and be genuinely moved by the beauty and character of female eyes, acknowledging the agency of their owners.

Interestingly, while Li He’s “yi(一)shuang(双)tong(瞳)ren(仁)jian(剪)qiu(秋)shui(水)” is popularly interpreted as one of the examples that directly adopts Bai Juyi’s “jian(剪)qiu(秋)shui(水)” motif to represent female beauty, a more well-versed scholar would notice that the poem of “Tang Erge” celebrates the handsomeness of a male – Tanger(唐儿), the son of Dubingong(杜邕公) and a Tang princess – instead of a stereotypical female. In the line “gu(骨)zhong(重)shen(神)han(寒)tian(天)miao(庙)qi(器),yi(一)shuang(双)tong(瞳)ren(仁)jian(剪)qiu(秋)shui(水),” the active verb in *jianqiushui* has acquired an even greater sense of assertion, accentuated by the masculinity of the heavily built body (“gu(骨)zhong(重),” “hefty bones”) and stern countenance (“shen(神)han(寒”). In this way, the Tang expressions of *jianqiushui* demonstrate a potential to transcend the modern category of the uncompromisingly misogynistic “male gaze” in its queer association with both genders, even evoking an empowerment of the object through words.

Nevertheless, the tonal range of *jianqiushui* goes beyond sympathy and praise, and the connotation further shifts in the context of other Tang poems. The gender dynamics encapsulated in the usage of *jianqiushui* becomes more complex in Wei Zhuang’s “Qin Fu Yin,” a lengthy, narrative, almost “epic” poem by the late Tang poet, which recounts the tragedy and human suffering during *huang(黄)chao(巢)qi(起)yi(义)*, a revolution at the end of Tang dynasty (875–884), through the perspective of a female (“Qin(秦)fu(妇),” a Qin dynasty woman) among the people who were running for their lives. The poet makes arbitrary spatial references to the four directions, (“dong(东)lin(邻),” “xi(西)lin(邻),” “nan(南)lin(邻),” “bei(北)lin(邻),” “the neighborhood of east, west, south and north”) to emphasize the widely-spread suffering, and the trope *qianqiushui* is found in the description of a lady of the west, whose beauty is deeply entangled with a tragic, innocent, short life.

In an explicit narrative that evokes physical and sexual violence, unlike the assertive eyes of Li He’s Tanger or Bai Juyi’s Zheng player, Wei Zhuang’s *jianqiushui* evokes a rather vulnerable beauty that is subordinated to male domination. While the male poet seeks to employ the persona of the female placed among the people to offer a more sympathetic account of history, the narrative cannot escape

the framework of the male viewership; instead of drowning the male viewer through her charming eyes likened to water, the young girl's life is extinguished under the unequivocal force of “dao(刀)xia(下)si(死),” “perished beneath the sword.” In this way, the power of *jian* (slice) is undercut by *dao* (sword). The trope of *qianqiushui* thus serves the male gaze – however reluctantly and lamentably – instead of overturning the male gaze.

The three instances of *qianqiushui* from the Tang Dynasty offer a comprehensive tonal range of the trope of female eyes, while reminding us of the patriarchal reality of classical China. In the case of Bai Juyi's “Zheng,” one may also argue that the male literatus's sympathy is ultimately positioned from a privileged gendered viewpoint that never really gives voice to the female, for all his sympathetic imagination; the ending of the poem falls back on Bai Juyi's own nod to himself (“qie(且)ting(听)ying(应)de(得)zai(在), lao(老)er(耳)wei(未)duo(多)long(聋),” “My aged ears are not desensitized” in “Zheng”). Indeed, both within and preceding the Tang dynasty, the portrayal of female eyes is more often charged with at least some hints of misogyny. Before the Tang, we find traces of female eyes implicitly or explicitly likened to water – though not necessarily the “fall” water – which attest to a long-standing fascination with female eyes as something moving and “watery.”

The privileged male viewership is apparent and unapologetic in “Chuci·Zhaohun” (楚辞·招魂) (“xi(媵)guang(光)miao(眇)shi(视) · mu(目)ceng(曾)bo(波)suo(些),”), which reveals an explicitly molesting context that portrays professional dancing ladies who serve the male persona, with a detailed account of their tantalizing physical characteristics caressed under the male gaze. The visual description extends from the eyes of the female to the hair, their dance movements to their make-up. While both “xi(媵)guang(光)” and “miao(眇)shi(视)” indicate ways of looking, one possible modern equivalent for “ceng(曾)” is “ceng(层),” which means layers or waves of water – *Chuci* thus represents one of the earliest examples of using an explicit water metaphor for female eyes, which emphasizes the multiplicity of dynamics, as if the static eyes contain an inherent sense of movement, perhaps the power to move the poet. Nevertheless, as argued above, the context assumes the misogynistic tone of the particular poem, and the agency after all lies with the male who actively sees, if not imagines, and then writes. Another pre-Tang example could be Cao Zhi (曹植)'s “Luo Shen Fu”(洛神赋) (“zhuàn(转)mian(眄)liú(流)jīng(精),”), where, in the portrayal of the eyes of an imagined goddess, the water image is implied rather than stated; the verb “liú(流),” to flow, evokes the sense of moving water

to demonstrate how the female eyes are so spirited that any minimal movement of the eyeballs (“mian(眄),” a slanted glance) will spill their beauty and spirit (“jing(精)”).

Although the image of *qiubo* may originate as a more neutral expression of beauty in the form of *qiushui* or other water metaphors, it later acquired a potentially flirtatious and scheming connotation, arguably after the Tang dynasty. For example, the modern expression “an(暗)song(送)qiu(秋)bo(波)” (usually translated as “making eyes at someone”) often implies a secretiveness. Perhaps such a trajectory finds its origin in Li Yü’s “Pusa Man” (菩萨蛮) (“yan(眼)se(色)an(暗)xiang(相)gou(钩), qiu(秋)bo(波)heng(横)yu(欲)liu(流),” “glances quietly hook up with each other, the fall water overflows”): in the story of the secretive meeting of two lovers, the male viewpoint is not only *framing* the poem, but also expressed *within* the poem through the interaction between the female and male. Hence, in this brief example, we find evidence of the modern popularized expression of *qiubo* depicting female eyes, and an idealized woman unashamed of her affection for the male lover, thus playing into a more misogynistic depiction of women.

Tracing the popular expression of *qiubo* as female eyes before and after Tang dynasty, as guided by the modern concept of the “male gaze,” leads to intriguing discoveries of the gender dynamics in classical Chinese poetry embedded in the motif of “seeing.” It is important to examine the contexts in which the trope of the water imagery is employed to notice the range of tonal possibilities that *qiubo/qiushui* can encompass, and find traces of the usages in which its modern connotations might have originated. While the exact chronology of the usage of the trope is difficult to pinpoint and our interpretation of the classical Chinese is inescapably filtered through a modern perspective, we could postulate a trajectory of the use of the metaphor based on the surviving texts, a term that has been passed on through the history of classical Chinese poetry – which remains largely patriarchal.

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The Treatment of Femininity in Homer's *Odyssey* and Tang Dynasty Tales

Jia Cheng (Elisa) Xu

Homer, of the ancient Western tradition, and Xue Yusi, of the Chinese Tang dynasty, each describes an encounter between an enigmatic and magical female demon (respectively Circe and San Niang Zi) and a superior male protagonist (Odysseus and Zhao Jihe). In both tales, the hero's lesser companions fall prey to the enchantress's seductions and are turned into animals. This parallel progression in both Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, and Xue's tale, *Ban Qiao San Niang Zi*, illustrates the writers' attempts to tackle an understanding of the relationship between the sexes. In this paper, I delineate how the feminine force is not so much misunderstood as it is uneasily dismissed in the writers' accounts of women as magical forces whose powers are left fundamentally mysterious.

Odysseus and Zhao Jihe are introduced as displaying a level of enlightenment higher than that of most men. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus's male companions are enchanted by Circe through her beautiful singing and weaving, "succumbing to a lower appetite," and are turned into brutes (425–426).¹ Unlike them, Odysseus "recognized the danger [of Circe's drugs and wand]," confronting the reality behind her charms (426).² In *San Niang Zi*, the guests at San Niangzi's inn drank until they were "drowsy with wine" (290).³ They woke up at dawn and consumed the buckwheat cakes carefully placed for them by San Niang Zis—and then suddenly all fell to the ground and "brayed like donkeys" (291).⁴ Zhao Jihe's

1 Charles Segal, "Circean Temptations: Homer, Vergil, Ovid," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 99, 1968, pp. 419–442, JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2935855, 425-426.

2 Ibid.

3 William H. Nienhauser, Jr., *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2016), p. 290.

4 Ibid., 291.

enlightenment is manifested in his following the Tang dynasty's established social morals, such as abstinence from alcohol: "As a general rule, Jihe did not drink wine, but he still took part in the talk and laughter" (290). Both works of literature portray the male protagonists as models of the "ideal" human male who has the capability to conquer a "magical" woman.

As part of being an "enlightened" man, one must show oneself superior to the "manly" folly of being seduced by womanly charms and beauty. Homer appeals to the reader by displaying Odysseus's masculinity through the aid of Hermes. Once Hermes has explained that the trick to conquering Circe is to accept nothing at all on her terms, but to assert one's masculinity and threaten to run her through with the sword, Homer had her eating out of his hand, like one of her own transformed creatures—a gazelle, perhaps, or a sinuo.⁵ In the Tang tale, Zhao Jihe's personal attributes have proved him outstanding. Jihe relies on his sober-minded alertness, showcasing the dangers of alcohol as perceived by the Tang people (315–316).⁶ Both Homer and Xue Yusi highlight a contradiction in the disparity in quality of manliness between the protagonists versus their companions, further humanizing men while also demonizing and distancing women from their "humanness."

The two enlightened men fully assert their humanity by taming the "demon." Once Odysseus threatens Circe with his sword, a undeniably phallic symbol, he demonstrates an archetypal conflict between the sexes. Odysseus affirms that his heroism is rooted in retaining an ideal human shape and quality, which echoes the poem's opening line, in which he is recognized by his proper name, as he seldom is in this strange world (426).⁷ Circe's demonic qualities are tamed through Odysseus's grand display of manliness; her charms are shown to be in vain. In Zhao Jihe's case, Xue Yu Si has the protagonist ride San Niang Zi as a donkey for many years: "he dominates a woman who had made a practice of devaluing man" (318).⁸ By turning San Niang Zi's magic against her, then proceeding to utilize her demonic shape, Zhao Jihe asserts an ultimate patriarchal dynamic: "...[Circe] actually serves an

5 Yvonne Rodax, "In Defense of Circe," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1971, pp. 581–596, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26443289.

6 Nienhauser, *Tang Dynasty Tales*, 315–316.

7 Segal, "Circean Temptations," *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2935855, 426.

8 Nienhauser, *Tang Dynasty Tales*, 318.

important purpose as Zhao's mount" (318).⁹ The reader seems to lose all access to any humanity within a powerful female character.

However, the portrayal of women as magical in the first place shows a curiosity about the feminine power, or a certain un-equalizing fear of it. In both pieces of literature, the reader senses a strain between the female's demonic versus human displays. Circe has been presented as both a beneficent sorceress and symbol of evil and temptation.¹⁰ With the goddess providing Odysseus refuge at her island for a year, Homer introduces an unresolved tension between her "manipulative" powers and womanly hospitality, nevertheless concluding with Odysseus's masculine force overcoming Circe's multiple modes of femininity. In San Niang Zi's case, although Xue Yu Si refrains from establishing her character in any depth, her power of mystification is shown through Zhao Jihe's sentiments toward the woman: "...he envied Third Lady her magical methods" (291).¹¹ Zhao Jihe's envy of San Niangzi potentially reflects a Tang societal illusionment with a "woman"'s inherent mystery, which males eventually disregard and even conquer: Zhao, despite never figuring out San Niang Zi's methods, uses her magic against her.

The outcomes in the cases of both Circe and San Niang Zi activate pitying reactions from the reader, reacting to the ways women with "supernatural powers" are treated. Circe watches her lover leave from her island, and the sorceress is left alone once again. San Niang Zi is ridden as a donkey for years before an old man recognizes her for who she is and asks for Zhao to "have mercy on her" and release her (318).¹² The time period in which Zhao controlled San Niang Zi is described as "lengthy and satisfying" (318), prompting the reader to feel a sense of sympathy for her objectification.¹³ The fact that we feel pity for the magical women humanizes them, but the emotion evoked is ultimately more suggestive of our sympathy towards foreign entities, such as animals, rather than our compassion for equal human beings.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Richard Hawley, "Folklore," *Folklore*, vol. 107, 1996, pp. 117–118, JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1260933.

¹¹ Nienhauser, *Tang Dynasty Tales*, 291.

¹² Ibid., 318.

¹³ Ibid.

Although both Homer and Xue's portrayals of the dynamic between a superior male versus a magical female show a societal uneasiness towards the capacity of women, society's assumption of a woman's powers as "demonic" diminishes the female character's ultimate relevance. The male protagonists are championed for their enlightenment and become symbols for heroic morale, reaffirming societal assertions of male dominance during the eras in which the tales were written. It is difficult for us, as modern readers, to hold back our progressive perceptions of female and male interaction while reading these pieces, but we can still find interest in how these writers incorporate magic to reconcile a woman's complex potential.

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Rethinking the Custom of “Eating the First Son” in Ancient China

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Ancient Chinese history abounds with customs that are considered bizarre or even macabre in present-day China. Although it is widely accepted that these strange customs were based on the primitive beliefs of an ancient people, it still seems scarcely conceivable that there was once such a gruesome custom described as:

昔者越之東有軛沐之國者，其長子生則解而食之，謂之宜弟。

Formerly, to the east of Yue, there was the county of the Kaimu. When a first son was born, they cut him up and ate him. They call this “fitting for the younger brother.” (*Mozi* 墨子: *Jieyang Xia* 節葬下 [Moderation in funerals III])¹

One may query the validity of this report and suspect that it might be a fictitious example given by the author, or wonder whether, alternatively, its authenticity could be proved by concrete evidence from other kinds of sources to exclude the possibility that this alleged custom was based on a rumor. As it turns out, the custom is well documented and can be corroborated by several other records:

魯陽文君語子墨子曰：‘楚之南有啖人之國者橋，其國之長子生，則鮮而食之，謂之宜弟。美，則以遺其君，君喜則賞其父。豈不惡俗哉？’子墨子曰：

¹ Mo Di (Ian Johnston, ed. and trans.), *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 227.

‘雖中國之俗，亦猶是也。殺其父而賞其子，何以異食其子而賞其父者哉？苟不用仁義，何以非夷人食其子也？’

Prince Wen of Luyang spoke to Master Mo Zi, saying: “To the south of Chu there is the county, Qiao, in which the eating of people occurs. In that county, when the first son is born, he is eaten alive. This is said to be a protection for younger brothers. If he tastes good, then he is offered to the prince, and if the prince is pleased, he rewards the father. How is this not an evil custom?” (*Mozi* 墨子: *Lu Wen* 魯問 [Lu’s questions])²

In *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書 (The Book of the Later Han), this custom was recorded as:

其西有噉人國，生首子輒解而食之，謂之宜弟。味旨，則以遺其君，君喜而賞其父。取妻美，則讓其兄。今烏滸人是也。

To the west of it there is a county in which the eating of people occurs. In that county, when the first son is born, they cut him up and eat him. This is said to be a protection for younger brothers. If he tastes good, then he is offered to the prince and if the prince is pleased, he rewards the father. If a man marries a beautiful wife, he offers his wife to his elder brother. They are now the people of Wu Hu. (*Hou Han Shu* 後漢書: *Nanman Zhuan* 南蠻傳 [Treatise on the South Barbarians])

Other evidence can be found in *Lie Zi* 列子, *Han Shu* 漢書 and also in *Han Ji* 漢紀, among others. This peculiar phenomenon, which was recorded in well-known essays that were written by venerable literati, has long been noticed and discussed by scholars.

A conventional explanation of this custom is that it was a preventive method to preserve the consanguinity of a family. A woman who came to the family of her newly-married husband after their marriage and became pregnant for the first time might be suspected of carrying the child of another

² Mo Di, “*The Mozi: A Complete Translation*,” 707.

man, and thus one not related to her current husband, that was conceived before their marriage. As a result, the first-born child would be abandoned in order to avoid the risk of raising another family's son.³ This explanation makes sense to some extent, especially with regard to the importance of primogeniture in ancient Chinese society. However, it is probably a fallacious explanation since it cannot explain the reason the first-born son had to be dissected and eaten.

Lü Simian 呂思勉 believes that the children killed in this circumstance have something in common with the prisoners of war who were killed and then served as human sacrifices during the Spring and Autumn Period in the states of Zhu 邾 and Lu 魯. Although this explanation sheds light on the possible relationship with the sacrificial victims in ancient rituals and inspires other scholars not to fix their attention solely on an isolated phenomenon, it oversimplifies the explanation of this custom since it applies a single mechanism to two different customs, which is tantamount to ignoring the disparity between the first-born son in a family and the prisoners of a war, and thus the essential aspect of this custom would be concealed by a simplistic interpretation.

Among all the stories concerning "eating the first son," the best-known one is about Yi Ya 易牙, who cooked his eldest son for Duke Huan 桓公:

公曰：「惟烝嬰兒之未嘗」，於是烝其首子而獻之公，人情非不愛其子也，於子之不愛，將何有於公？

When you told him: "The only thing that I have not tasted is braised baby," then Yi Ya cooked his eldest son to treat you. According to the nature of human beings, everyone loves his own children. If Yi Ya was so cruel as to kill his own son, could this kind of

³ Among the scholars who hold this opinion is Zhang Binglin 章炳麟, and he explains this phenomenon thus: "婦初來也，疑挾他姓遺腹以至，故生子則棄長而畜稚。" ("The woman who just married and came [to her new family] would be doubted since she might have an illegitimate child in her womb. Hence the family would abandon the first son and raise his younger brothers.") See Zhang Binglin 章炳麟, *Zhang Taiyan Quanji* 章太炎全集 (The complete works of Zhang Taiyan) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Press, 1984), 367.




person really be good to you? (*Guan Zi* 管子: *Xiao Cheng* 小稱 [On enumerating insignificant mistakes])⁴

This story also appears in *Han Fei Zi* 韓非子, *Huai Nan Zi* 淮南子, and other sources. Modern scholar Yang Shuda 楊樹達 claims that this story could be regarded as one item of evidence proving that Yi Ya was not originally from the State of Qi (齊國), since, according to ancient writings, only people in the eastern part of Yue 越, the southern part of Chu 楚, and the western part of Qiang 羌 had the custom of killing their first-born sons. It suggests that, if Yi Ya “braised” his son and presented him to Duke Huan of Qi, the practice was exactly in accordance with the custom described as “if he tastes good, then he is offered to the prince, and if the prince is pleased, he rewards the father” (“美則以遺其君,君喜則賞其父”), which was considered to be a custom of the “barbarians,” according to extant records. In other words, he believes that the custom of killing one’s first son and offering him to the prince was a barbarous custom followed only by the inferior peoples capable of acting so merely to please the ruler.

Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, inspired by Western anthropological studies, asserts that killing and eating the first-born son was a religious custom that corresponded to the custom of offering the new harvest to the gods in rituals, which explains the reason this custom was thought to be beneficial to the younger brothers of the first-born son. As a part of the ritual, eating the child was inextricably bound to the custom of sharing the sacrifices that were offered to the gods with the gods who were being worshipped. This explanation is comparatively well-founded and more convincing, since it attributes the reason of this unbelievably brutal custom to ritual traditions that were more widely based and comprehensible, but it lacks valid evidence from ancient Chinese records to prove a concrete connection between this custom and religious rituals.

We should also remember that we are at a far greater temporal and geographic remove from this custom than the authors who documented this strange phenomenon. In rethinking this appalling custom as recorded in ancient Chinese essays, we should step away from its contentious nature and the endeavor to find the most plausible explanation and an undisputed construal of this custom; instead we should use it as a vantage point from which to re-examine other concerns.

⁴ Guanzi 管子 and Zhai Jiangyue 翟江月, *Guan Zi* 管子 (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005), 739.

First, the etymology of the character “孟” should thus be re-examined regarding this bizarre custom: is it misleading to interpret the character “孟” as a composite phonogram (“形聲字”) as it is explained in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (說文解字 [Explanation of simple and compound graphs])? According to *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, the character “孟”  means “elder,” and it has been used to refer to the eldest child in a family⁵; meanwhile, as a composite phonogram, the composition of the component graph “孟” consists of the upper part “子” , which means “son,” and the lower part “皿” , which serves as the phonetic part to indicate the sound of “孟.”

However, is it possible that the character 孟 is in fact a composite ideogram (會意字)? According to Xia Lu 夏淥, since both the upper part “子” and the lower part “皿” are hieroglyphic (“皿” means “the container for eating”), the character “孟” as their combination may refer to “to put the son in a vessel in order to cook and eat him.” It then would correspond to the custom of eating the first son as recorded in these essays, which could manifest the relationship between the first son in a family and the cannibal tradition.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the custom of eating the first son has always been regarded as a custom of the “barbarians,” and all records of this custom were documented in essays written by the self-proclaimed “non-barbarian” people. This fact provides us a way to understand the perspectives of the “non-barbarian” people towards the so-called “barbarian” people and to understand their mutual influence. As one scholar argues in an article, the representation of the custom of eating the first son in so-called “barbarian” areas might be the result of Mo Zi’s misinterpretation of a funeral custom.⁶ According to archaeological and ethnographic studies, there was a funeral custom in ancient south China in which people dismembered the body of a child who had died young before burying him/her,

5 When referring to “the eldest child in a family,” “孟” often appears together with “仲” (“zhong,” the second-eldest child), “叔” (“shu,” the third eldest child), and “季” (“ji,” the youngest child).

6 Pan Shixiong 潘世雄, “Shiji Zhong ‘yidi’ zhi shuo kaoshi—jian shi Guangxi Yongning Dingsi Shan Xinshiqi Shidai yizhi zhijie zang 史籍中‘宜弟’之說考釋——兼釋廣西邕寧頂嶺山新石器時代遺址肢解葬” (Textual research on “To benefit the younger brother” in historical accounts—with explanations on the dismemberment funeral at Mount Dingsi in Yongning of Guangxi in the Neolithic Age), *Guangxi Minzu Yanjiu 廣西民族研究 (Research on the Ethnonyms of Guangxi)*, 4 (2004): 121–123.

because otherwise the ferocious ghost of that child was believed to be very dangerous to later newborns, which explains why the dismemberment would benefit the younger brothers.

This argument reminds us to think in another way: when rethinking reports on the custom of eating the first son, should we conceive of it as an atrocious act of brutality, or as a lurid piece of creative misinterpretation? In other words, it is noteworthy that the narrators of this custom were limited to the self-proclaimed “non-barbarian” people, which may well be the reason that an undisputed explanation of this custom has been suspended for centuries.

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