THE LYRICS OF ZHOU BANGYAN (1056-1121): IN BETWEEN POPULAR AND ELITE CULTURES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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2014

Abstract

Successfully synthesizing all previous styles of the lyric, or *ci*, Zhou Bangyan’s (1056-1121) poems oscillate between contrasting qualities in regard to aesthetics (ya and su), generic development (zheng and bian), circulation (musicality and textuality), and literary value (assumed female voice and male voice, lyrical mode and narrative mode, and the explicit and the implicit). These qualities emerged during the evolution of the lyric genre from common songs to a specialized and elegant form of art. This evolution, promoted by the interaction of popular culture and elite tradition, paralleled the canonization of the lyric genre. Therefore, to investigate Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, I situate them within these contrasting qualities; in doing so, I attempt to demonstrate the uniqueness and significance of Zhou Bangyan’s poems in the development and canonization of the lyric genre.

This dissertation contains six chapters. Chapter One outlines the six pairs of contrasting qualities associated with popular culture and literati tradition that existed in the course of the development of the lyric genre. These contrasting qualities serve as the overall framework for discussing Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics in the following chapters. Chapter Two studies Zhou Bangyan’s life, with a focus on how biographical factors shaped his perspective about the lyric genre. Chapter
Three examines various methods through which Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were circulated during the Song Dynasty, including through the performance of singing girls, anthologies compiled by the literati, and prosodic manuals of lyric meters annotated by musicians. Chapter Four focuses on the issue of lyrical voice, demonstrating how Zhou Bangyan deviated from the assumed female persona tradition by writing lyrics from the viewpoint of a male. It also analyzes the absence of the lyrical self in some of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics on objects. Chapter Five studies how Zhou Bangyan explored the narrative mode generally found in common songs and how he developed complicated narrative techniques typical of literati lyrics. The last chapter investigates Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics with a focus on lyric structure, temporal sequence, point of view, and intertextuality, revealing the emphasis of these lyrics on an implicit style.
Acknowledgments

I am profoundly indebted to Professor Graham Sanders, who has guided me throughout my entire Ph.D. program, scrutinized the final product sentence by sentence, and suggested innumerable improvements. My sincere gratitude also goes to Professor Johanna Liu, whose intellectual insight, perceptive criticism, and constant encouragement and confidence in me have made the completion of my doctoral studies and my dissertation possible. Professor Vincent Shen, with his expertise on Chinese culture, has been very helpful in my graduate studies. Professor Grace Fong, as External Examiner, provided a wealth of useful comments and criticisms. Last but not least, I am thankful for my parents and my elder sister for their moral and logistical support.
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Introduction

Admired by traditional critics as an outstanding synthesizer of all previous styles of *ci* 詞 (lyrics), Zhou Bangyan 周邦彥 (1056-1121) is recognized for two distinct qualities of his lyrics, which are characterized by the elegance and erudition valued by literati as well as the popular elements preferred by ordinary people. This synthetic style contributed to the prevalence of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), as evinced by the Southern Song (1127-1279) poet Chen Yu’s 陳郁 (1184-1275) remark in his Cangyi huayu 藏一話腴: “In the past two hundred years Meicheng [Zhou Bangyan] has been unrivaled in lyrics. Noblemen, scholars, urban commoners, and courtesans are all fond of his verses.” A poet who enjoyed great popularity calls for investigation. The unique style and wide circulation of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics can best be understood in the light of the interplay between popular culture and literati tradition, an interplay that is embodied in the mutual relations of the concepts of *su* 俗 (commonness) and *ya* 雅 (elegance).

Commonness and elegance are complicated concepts that are still subject to debate. I will present a detailed discussion about their connotations and development as aesthetic concepts in Chapter One. Prior to doing so, I need to point out that this pair of concepts does not refer solely to the aesthetic standards of literature; they are also connected with the increased social mobility that occurred during the Song Dynasty. When a large number of people moved up the social

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2 美成...二百年來，以樂府獨步。貴人、學士、市儇、妓女，皆知美成詞為可愛。Chen Yu 陳郁, *Cangyi huayu* 藏一話腴, *wai bian juan shang*. *Siku quanshu* ed. All English translations are mine unless otherwise noted. I thank Professor Graham Sanders and Professor Grace Fong for their critiques and suggestions.

3 *Su*, meaning literally common, ordinary, or vulgar, is about the daily life of ordinary people. *Ya* literally means refined, elegant, or proper. In my dissertation, *su* and *ya* have variant meanings in specific context, thus I shall use different translations accordingly.

4 Two fundamental changes in Chinese society during the passage from the Tang to the Song Dynasty are the collapse of the eupatrid system and the development of the civil examination system. These changes greatly increased mobility between the classes because by the late eleventh century, the founding elite and the professional elite (who disproportionately held government posts at the beginning of the Song Dynasty) dissolved as distinguishable social groups. These elite populations were replaced by a multitudinous elite class consisting of educated scholars, scholar-officials, examination candidates, examination degree-holders not yet assigned to an official post, local tutors, and retired officials. Officials selected through the imperial exams became dominant in the bureaucracy. Many individuals, such as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), moved from low social status to political prominence through success in the exam. For a discussion of the social
ladder through the civil examination system, these people simultaneously attempted, by means of promoting the concept of elegance, to elevate the literary status of the lyric, which was closely connected with the daily lives of ordinary people. The literati derived inspiration from the common people’s song, which was a marginalized and new form of poetry, to compose lyrics in a refined style, as the Chinese scholar Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 points out. With the literati’s sustained involvement in lyric production, the lyric genre evolved from a kind of popular song composed by entertainers and circulated among ordinary people through courtesans’ performances to an elegant and specialized literary art circulated in the elite circle through written texts. This process of canonization—a process through which the lyric was elevated from a marginalized and minor poetry form to a serious and respectable genre—paralleled a shift of emphasis “from oral performance to written text.” This emphasis on the written text is evinced in the literary aspects of the lyric, namely the aspects of lyrical voice, narration, and style. Therefore, the issues of commonness and elegance are intertwined with multiple facets of the lyric genre, involving various pairs of contrasting concepts, including zheng 正 (classic) and bian 變 (deviation) in the context of generic development; musicality and textuality in the context of circulation; as well as assumed female voice and autobiographical male voice, the lyrical mode and narrative mode, and the explicit style and the implicit style in the literary context. My dissertation will thus examine all these facets so as to attain a thorough


5 Zheng Zhenduo explains that most of the serious Chinese literary genres were developed from folk literature. In this process of development, the literati class elevated the originally coarse form to a canonical status by enhancing its literary refinement and sophistication. See Zheng Zhenduo, Zhongguo suwenxue shi 中國俗文學史. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1984 (rpt. Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), pp. 2-3.

6 The term “elite” refers to a group or class of persons or a member of such a group or class who enjoyed superior intellectual and often social status. The elite community in the Northern Song consisted of educated scholars, scholar-officials, examination candidates, examination degree-holders not yet assigned to an official post, local tutors, and retired officials. It also included members of the imperial family who were generally well-educated. In this dissertation, the term “elite” includes literati, scholars, and orthodox critics.


8 Zheng literally means correct, standardized, or major, while bian means change. In the context of traditional Chinese poetry criticism, zheng has the meaning of being classical, canonical, serious, and elegant and bian, the opposite of zheng, means being deviated or marginalized. My translations of these terms in my dissertation vary according to the context.
understanding of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics as being positioned and developing between the contexts of the popular culture and literati tradition.

Zhou Bangyan’s serious compositional attitude toward the lyric indicated a step toward the canonization of the genre. Due to its undesirable connection with a more popular, “vulgar” origin, elitists viewed the lyric genre as a minor craft for entertainment purposes. We can find abundant records and anecdotes about the literati’s negative views and slighting attitudes toward the lyric. Zhou Bangyan, different from most of his contemporaries, treated his lyrics in a serious and academic manner similar to the way that he treated the orthodox shi. He made full use of his intellectual knowledge and compositional techniques to develop an elegant style characterized by strong musicality and artistic sophistication, which profoundly influenced the orthodox school of lyricists for many centuries.

Because they reached a balance between music and text, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics appealed to a wide range of audiences consisting of both common people and literati. Serving in the Emperor Huizong’s 徽宗 (r. 1100-1126) court as a musician, Zhou Bangyan enhanced the musicality of his lyrics by producing and standardizing a great number of lyric tunes, most of which became models for lyricists of later times. Though the tradition of courtesan performance of lyrics started to diminish during his time, Zhou Bangyan composed his lyrics for the courtesan’s performance. Different from songs by ordinary people, Zhou Bangyan’s works usually display a wide foraging of material from traditional Chinese literature. The wide spread of Zhou’s lyrics is attested by the diversified circulation channels of these lyrics during the Song Dynasty and ensuing centuries, namely the performance of these lyrics by singing girls, the prosodic manuals of lyric meters used by Zhou annotated by musicians, and collections of Zhou’s lyrics compiled by the literati. Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were repeatedly performed by courtesans during his own lifetime and during the Southern Song Dynasty. After the music tradition of the performance of lyrics was lost, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were used by literati as prosodic manuals. The Song

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9 This negative attitude lasted until the Northern Song, as evidenced by the works of major lyricists such as Yan Shu 晏殊 (991-1055), Ouyang Xiu 欧陽修 (1007-1073), and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105).

10 Some of Su Shi’s 蘇軾 (1036-1101) lyric poems started to be dissociated from the music. This can be viewed as the starting point of the diminishment of the courtesan performance tradition.
literati also compiled several annotated editions of his lyrics for both singing girls and literati. These three kinds of circulation channels, both oral and written, ensured the survival and pervasiveness of Zhou’s lyrics.

As an elite member excelling in a canonical literary genre such as *shi* and rhapsody (*fu* 賦), Zhou Bangyan also paid special attention to the literary aspects of his lyrics. Besides strong musicality, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics are also famous for their complicated compositional principles and diversified compositional devices, with the most noteworthy being the use of lyrical voice, narration, and style. In these aspects, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics demonstrate unique features akin to the literati lyrics of the Southern Song orthodox school. His lyrics were dissociated from the assumed female persona tradition that is closely connected with the context of courtesan performances at entertainment quarters. In his lyrics about love and women, he assumes a male speaker, thus a more frankly autobiographical voice characteristic of *shi* poetry is present. This transition is consistent with an important dictum embodied in the Chinese literary tradition – a serious literary work ought to faithfully reflect an actual experience or emotion of the poet. In regard to narration, Zhou Bangyan borrowed a strong narrative element from popular culture and developed it into a highly complicated technique. His lyrics differ from common songs of the era in that they feature an implicit style. Though some of his verses focus on an explicit mode of expression in accord with common people’s taste, the majority of his lyrics lack immediacy and become implicit through the use of complicated compositional principles and diversified literary devices. This new trend emphasizing an implicit mode of expression was further developed by the Southern Song lyricists Jiang Kui 姜夔 (ca. 1155-ca. 1221) and Wu Wenying 吳文英 (ca. 1200-ca. 1260), and became the most evident aesthetic feature of the orthodox school in the Southern Song.

Because of his profound influence on the lyric genre, Zhou Bangyan has received much academic attention in China since the nineteenth century. Articles and books on his life and lyrics are too numerous to all be taken into account. I have, however, tried to credit all the works that are directly quoted or that have significantly influenced my study. The critic of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) Wang Guowei’s 王國維 (1877-1927) “Qingzhen xiansheng yishi” 清真先生遺事 is a pioneering study of Zhou Bangyan’s life. It provides an evidential study of fragmented records scattered among various historical works, gazetteers, non-official historical
writings, and literati notes to patch together a rough sketch of Zhou’s life. A recent study by two Chinese scholars, Sun Hong 孫虹 and Xue Ruisheng 薛瑞生, provides a more accurate and detailed chronological biography of Zhou Bangyan. It also clarifies some long-lasting points of debate about Zhou’s life. One important conclusion is that Zhou Bangyan never assumed the position of superintendent of Da sheng fu 大晟府 (the Grand Music Bureau), as a result of which we must redefine Zhou Bangyan’s relation with this national music institute.11 The leading contemporary Chinese scholars of the lyric, Wu Shichang 吳世昌 and Chia-ying Yeh Chao 叶嘉瑩 are noteworthy for their unique perspectives. In his Cilin Xinhua 詞林新話, Wu discusses the narrative elements in Zhou’s lyrics.12 In a number of essays on Zhou Bangyan’s individual lyric poems, Yeh examines the aesthetic qualities of these poems and argues that Zhou’s practice indicates a critical transition in the compositional approach to lyrics – a transition from spontaneous writing to careful arrangement that relies more heavily on the poet’s intellectual knowledge and compositional capacity. She also finds stylistic similarities between Zhou’s poems and those of the Southern Song elite lyricists, both of which are characterized by their implicit style.13

Given Zhou Bangyan’s critical role in the development of the lyric, he is an understudied poet in the Western academy. There are no books focused solely on his works. In his Major Lyricists of the Northern Sung, A.D. 960-1126 (a pioneering book about lyrics published in 1974), James J. Y. Liu dedicates one chapter to examining four poems by Zhou Bangyan, concentrating on subject matter and Zhou’s innovations in language. Liu states that “Chou [Zhou] is notable for his ability to write in a predominantly elegant style, while freely using colloquialisms without being vulgar on the one hand, and frequently resorting to allusions and derivations without becoming bookish on the other.”14 In his essay “The Songs of Chou Pang-yen” published in the

James Hightower briefly outlines Zhou’s life, examines the allegorical reading imposed on his lyrics by traditional critics, and touches upon the issue of narrative content. He suggests that “it seems best not to subject Chou Pang-yen’s [Zhou Bangyan’s] songs to allegorical exegesis.”¹⁵ Robert Hale Smitheram’s doctoral dissertation “The Lyrics of Zhou Bangyan (1056-1121)” is also an important study. He interprets Zhou’s lyrics in the framework of a “communicative act” that, as an intentional act, encompasses all uses of language by characterizing the context of communication as various features or roles, such as author, author’s text, and interpreter, etc.¹⁶ Smitheram concludes that Zhou’s greatest contributions lie in the successful fusion in his lyrics of the speaker with historical figures by means of a free, indirect style as well as by altering the temporal and spatial qualities of the past in his reflections upon regret.¹⁷ In his book entitled The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China, Ronald Egan investigates the male viewpoint of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics. Egan particularly reveals Zhou Bangyan’s focus on the romantic aspects of men’s sentimental life, stating that it can be viewed as “a first in Chinese literary history, as no major literary genre had ever before been entrusted with such subject matter and tone.”¹⁸

Existing studies of Zhou Bangyan in Chinese mainly focus on investigating Zhou’s life and providing commentary on and exegesis of Zhou’s individual poems. A large amount of scholarship provides close readings of Zhou’s poems, but in many cases, these readings are biographical and, quite often, they are not organized in a systematic manner. Western scholars have focused on literary analyses of Zhou’s poems, but none of them examine these poems in relation to the popular and elite cultures, though they occasionally touch on this issue. This dissertation will therefore integrate studies by these scholars, particularly the discussion of the lyrical voice in Zhou Bangyan’s poems by Smitheram and Egan, the focus on Zhou’s implicit style by Chia-ying Yeh Chao, and the narrative mode of Zhou’s poems examined by Wu Shichang. Furthermore, it will both complement and reach beyond existing studies of Zhou

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¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 316-17.
Bangyan by providing a new and systematic approach to studying Zhou’s works within the context of the interrelation between the popular and elite cultures of the Song Dynasty.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the significance of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics by focusing on how they intermingle between popular and elite cultures. I hope to reveal how Zhou Bangyan, as an elite writer, abides by the oral performance tradition by enhancing elements of musicality and narrative. I intend, moreover, to demonstrate how he innovatively explores the literary dimension and thus lays the cornerstone for the lyric in its evolvement into a self-conscious and sophisticated genre. By situating Zhou’s poems at a transitional point in the lyric’s development (the point when the oral performance tradition from which the genre grew started to diminish and more attention was given to the literary aspects), I will argue that Zhou reached a balance between the popular culture and elite tradition, and that his practice plays a fundamental role in canonizing the lyric genre.

My perspective in this study is mainly framed within traditional Chinese literary theories, especially the traditional poetic concerns of ya and su, and zheng and bian, which will be elaborated into a framework of analysis in Chapter One. In the course of my research of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, I will borrow critical terms from Western theories, including Herbert Gans’ (1927-) theory of taste cultures and Gérard Genette’s (1930-) narratological theory of tense. These critical terms will be introduced in Chapters One, Four, and Five as my research proceeds. This study does not devote extensive space to the outer factors that are germane to the practice of lyric writing, although Chapter Three addresses the circulation of Zhou’s poems during his lifetime and the ensuing Southern Song Dynasty. Instead, my research concentrates on the text of Zhou’s poems by presenting an analysis of the literary rhetoric for which Zhou gained his fame as a synthesizer of diverse styles of lyrics.

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter One investigates how the lyric oscillated between contrasting qualities, including ya and su, zheng and bian, musicality and textuality, lyrical mode and narrative mode, the assumed female voice and male voice, as well as the implicit and the explicit. These groups of contrasting qualities are germane to the transformation of the lyric driven by the popular culture and elite tradition. Popular culture promoted the emergence of a new art form, the lyric, which was peripheral to the classical shi poetry. When literati were increasingly involved in this marginalized poetry form, they advocated the concept
of ya, which reflects the literary ideology traditionally associated with shi. Such ideology emphasized moral-didactic function and literary artistry. In this way, the literati canonized the marginalized lyric form. This process of canonization paralleled a transition of emphasis from musicality to literary aspects, which led to the literati’s increasing emphasis on sophisticated literary devices and implicit poetic rhetoric. Being a critical lyricist in the evolution of the lyric genre, Zhou Bangyan’s works embody all the above-mentioned contrasting qualities. Therefore, through comparing these pairs of contrasting terms, I attempt to capture what changes took place in the evolution of the lyric, and based on these comparisons I will investigate the significance of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics in following chapters.

Chapter Two outlines Zhou Bangyan’s life, with a focus on how the biographical factors, including his personality, education, and experience, fashioned his elite concepts of the lyric as well as contributed to his success as a synthesizer of the popular and elite cultures. Chapter Three examines various transmission channels of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics during the Song Dynasty, including the performance of singing girls, anthologies compiled by the literati, and prosodic manuals of lyric meters annotated by musicians. The diversified channels show that Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics still firmly stay within the performance tradition and are also influenced by the elite culture. In addition to their strong musicality, Zhou Bangyan’s songs are noted for a high degree of artistic sophistication and implicit mode of expression. The subsequent three chapters thus focus on the literary aspect of Zhou Bangyan’s poems. Chapter Four discusses the issue of lyrical voice, demonstrating how Zhou Bangyan deviated from the assumed female persona tradition by writing lyrics from the viewpoint of a male. It also analyzes the absence of the lyrical self in some of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics on objects. Chapter Five studies how Zhou Bangyan explored the narrative elements common in popular songs as well as developed complicated narrative techniques typical of literati lyrics. Chapter Six investigates the style of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics from the aspects of lyric structure, temporal sequence, point of view, and intertextuality.
Chapter 1
Artistic Contrasts in Song Lyrics

The lyric genre has long been viewed as a serious and respectable poetry form that has been compared to the classical *shi* poetry since the Southern Song Dynasty. But this viewpoint distorts the truth somewhat, for until the Northern Song, the lyric, notorious for its association with the entertainment quarters and its unabashedly amatory content, was still belittled by orthodox critics merely as a tool to seek fun at banquets. The elevation of the lyric’s literary status evidently shows that this poetry form witnessed a fundamental change motivated by the mutual influences of the popular and elite cultures during the Song Dynasty. This change is a process through which the Song literati attempted to pull the lyric away from its common origin and enhance the literary refinement and elegance in their lyrics. This process occurred throughout the development of the Song lyric. Therefore, the main argument of this dissertation is focused on the interaction between the two contrasting terms *su* 俗 (a quality connected with the lyric’s initial origin with, and wide spread among, common people) and *ya* 雅 (the aesthetic value pursued by elite lyricists).

The lyric’s evolution from songs for common people to a refined and specialized art of the elite circle coincided with its canonization. In the context of traditional Chinese poetic criticism, the critical terms *zheng* 正 (classic) and *bian* 變 (deviation from the classic) are used to describe this canonization. The literati’s participation in the lyric composition played a pivotal role in the genre’s canonization. They imposed on the peripheral lyric form Confucian literary ideology that applied to the canonical *shi* poetry but lacked in common songs. Such literary ideology includes the dictum of *shi yan zhi* 詩言志 (poetry expresses the heart’s intent)\(^1\) and elite aesthetic standards. By promoting the elegant style that echoes the Confucian literary ideology and disparaging the common style, the elite writers and critics canonized their refined and elegant works as *zheng* and devalued works in other styles as *bian*.

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The elitization and canonization of the lyric influenced several perspectives of this genre, with the most remarkable being its circulation and literary value. To examine the influenced perspectives, I will draw a pair of contrasts for each perspective to indicate its different attributes in different development stages. Though the attributes in various stages are not mutually exclusive and quite often intercommunicated with each other, a contrast between them will be meaningful for analytical purposes. After analyzing ya and su as well as zheng and bian, the next pair of contrasting terms I shall analyse will be musicality and textuality. This pair of terms involves the circulation of the lyric. Common songs and refined lyrics differ in their circulation channels. The former spread through courtesan’s oral performances, thus strong musicality was of utmost importance; the latter increasingly emphasized their literary aspect, thus relied more on written text to circulate. In the process of the lyric’s elitization and canonization, we can discern a shift of emphasis from musicality to textuality. This shift of emphasis resulted in more attention to the literary aspect of the lyric, which I will discuss from the perspective of the relationship between three pairs of terms – lyrical and narrative mode, assumed female voice and male voice, and the explicit and the implicit. Oscillating between these contrasting attributes, literati lyrics became more refined and complicated and less natural, thus gradually losing their appeal to a wide range of the common audience.

Admired as a synthesizer of all previous styles of lyrics and a bridge linking the lyrics of the Northern and Southern Song, Zhou Bangyan’s works are most remarkable for their perfect fusion of the above contrasting qualities that are associated with popular culture and the elite tradition. Intermingling with each other, these qualities are embodied in the composition, performance, and circulation of Zhou Bangyan’s works. By investigating Zhou’s practice and works within the context of an interplay between the contrasting qualities, I attempt to reveal the significance of Zhou’s works in the elitization and canonization of the lyric genre.

This chapter examines the six groups of contrasting terms, which serve as the overall framework for discussing Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics in following chapters. Among the above discussed six groups of terms, the interaction between ya and su function as my main argument that runs through my dissertation to unite all the other five groups of terms. The common songs and refined lyrics are characterized by distinct attributes in five perspectives. The next two pair of terms I shall discuss, zheng and bian, musicality and textuality, are about the general perspectives of the history and circulation of the lyric genre till the Song Dynasty. The last three
pairs of terms are relatively narrower, with their focus on the literary aspect of the lyric genre. In the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss the six pairs of contrasting terms sequentially.

1 Ya 雅 vs. Su 俗

Ya and su not only refer to two distinct styles – the refined and evocative literati style and the straightforward common style – they are also the aesthetic value embodied in these styles. As I have pointed out in note three of the introduction, in this dissertation su refers to the quality associated with lyric songs that prevailed among ordinary people – being common, popular, and sometimes “vulgar.” Ya, the opposite of su, means the refined and elegant quality typical of elite lyricists’ works. The lyric’s evolution coincided with its oscillation between the two distinct aesthetic values and an increasing emphasis on the elegant style. When investigating this change, I find that the sociologist Herbert Gans’ theory of taste cultures is helpful. Based on his observations of the news media and the entertainment media in American society since WWII, Gans divides American culture into five taste cultures ranging from “high culture” at the top to “quasi-folk low culture” at the bottom. “Taste cultures reflect the class and particular educational attributes of their publics.”² High culture refers to the class-based taste culture of the well-educated elite; popular culture, on the contrary, is a taste culture chosen by poorly educated people.³ Low culture retains more elements of folk culture than any other culture. High culture “perceives itself as setting aesthetic standards and supplying the proper culture for the entire society.”⁴ The standards of high culture are explicit, influential, legitimated, and even codified. The dominance of high culture criticism encourages obeisance to the aesthetic standards of the high culture, especially among people who seek to move up the social ladder.⁵ Gans’ discussion implies that high culture tends to be more sophisticated and thus require more aesthetic training than low culture. To apply Gans’ theory to investigate the change of aesthetic values of the lyric, I will draw relative distinctions between the refined and evocative literati style and the straightforward common style.

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³ Ibid., p. 10, x.
⁴ Ibid., p. 78.
⁵ Ibid., p. 117.
It has been widely accepted that the original authors of lyrics were unknown or that the authors were the performers themselves. Few lyrics by these commoners were preserved, except for a small number of non-literati lyrics kept in the Dunhuang grottos, as well as folk lyrics that were scattered among various anecdotes, stories, or miscellaneous writings. The Tang songs discovered in the Dunhuang grottos are considered the closest to the popular style. However, scholars believe that some of these songs that were recorded anonymously were authored or edited by the literati, because the compositions appear to be written by well-educated lyric poets who imitated the popular style. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that many Dunhuang songs bear obvious characteristics of common songs, including colloquialisms, dialogues, sequential narratives, and direct expression of emotion. These features are rare and often absent from the refined literati lyrics of later times.

The literati had complicated feelings about the emerging common songs. On one hand, because a great number of literati moved up the social ladder from the bottom, they were familiar with and interested in the songs that prevailed among common people. Writing lyrics became their lifelong interest; some literati were even addicted to the “vulgar” style of the common song, which is characterized by its directness, colloquialism, and occasional eroticism. Typical examples of such literati are Liu Yong 柳永 (987-1053), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1073), and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105). On the other hand, there existed a sharp contrast between the literati and the popular cultures. The elite critics despised the presence of non-elit factors in the realms of lyrics. Literati who wrote common-song-styled lyrics suffered particularly harsh ridicule from orthodox critics. According to Wu Zeng 吳曾 (fl. 1127-1160), Liu Yong was repeatedly denied an official post because of his “vulgar” lyrics. Yan Shu 晏殊 (991-1055),

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who was considered as sustaining a decorous tone in his compositions, condemned Liu Yong’s lyrics for their excessive femininity and eroticism.\(^9\)

This contrast between popular and literati cultures was seemingly mediated by the late Northern Song, particularly during Huizong’s reign. During Song times, the ruling class actively promoted a new popular music, *yan yue*燕樂 (banquet music), the music of lyrics. The two Song emperors Taizong 太宗 (r. 976-997) and Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023-1063) were extremely interested in this new music and continually encouraged the *jiaofang* 教坊 (the official music school) to adopt hundreds of new tunes, which were said to be quite different from music of the Tang and Five Dynasties.\(^10\) Generally interested in the arts, the Emperor Huizong was an ardent promoter of elegant music. In 1105, he established a national music institute, the Grand Music Bureau, to glorify his reign through new rituals and elegant musical works.\(^11\) The Bureau recruited musicians and literati to standardize and promote rituals, court music, and elegant music. It collected and collated ancient and popular works of music, examined and approved the temperament of the songs, as well as composed and regulated various tune patterns. During the Zhenghe era (1111-1118), the Emperor promoted these standardized elegant music works by ordering that they be performed throughout the empire.\(^12\)

The Grand Music Bureau greatly improved the circulation of elegant banquet music. In the Tang Dynasty, many banquet music tunes existed, as shown by the 324 tune titles recorded in *Jiaofang ji* 教坊記.\(^13\) However, among these tunes, only 79 were transformed into lyric tunes during the Tang, and just 40 tunes were converted during the Song.\(^14\) Obviously, a large portion of these tunes had already disappeared by the Song era. As the national music institution, the Grand

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9 Zhang Shunmin 張舜民 (late 11th century), *Hua man la 畫墁錄*, *Siku quanshu* ed.

10 According to the “Yue zhi” 樂志 of *Songshi* 宋史, Taizong invented hundreds of new tunes and Renzong 54 tunes. Tuotuo 脫陀 et al. *Songshi*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977, juan 142, p. 3356. *Jiao fang* is the official school for music, dance, and theater in pre-modern China. From the Tang to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it existed for more than 1000 years. *Jiao fang* was set up by the Emperor Gaozu of Tang (r. 618-626) with the purpose to teach music, theater, and dance for court entertainment. Besides elegant music, *jiao fang* also played banquet music and other popular music. During the Song era, *jiao fang* sometimes also refers to entertainment quarters where courtesans offered performance.

11 *Songshi*, juan 129, p. 3002.


Music Bureau played an important role in searching out and preserving old banquet music tunes. It is recorded that Huizong once ordered people to search for the old banquet music tunes throughout the country. These people found two Tang tunes, *Huangdi yan* 黃帝鹽 and *Lizhi xiang* 荔枝香, which were performed in a temple located in Hengshan 衡山 (in today’s Hunan Province). These two tunes were different from Song Dynasty tunes in the aspects of the musical instruments used, the performance apparel, and the musical mode. 15 *Huangdi yan* was an old tune submitted to the Tang emperor by Cochinchina (today’s Vietnam). Because it was too archaic, the Bureau did not use it. *Lizhi xiang*, due to its elegant melody, was promoted throughout the empire by the Bureau after being collated and polished. 16

The Grand Music Bureau elevated the status of lyrics by endowing them with a political function similar to that of *shi* poetry. The Bureau required that lots of lyrics be written for various social occasions and court ceremonies. Lyricists serving in the Bureau were ordered to compose lyrics to tunes of designated key signatures every month. These lyrics were generally used to laud Huizong and the splendor of his reign or eulogize various auspicious phenomena or events at Huizong’s court. 17 Chao Duanli 晁端禮 (1046-1113), for example, left as many as fourteen lyrics of this category. Moqi Yong 萬俟詠 (fl. 1086-1135) had eight lyrics, nearly one third of his twenty-seven extant lyrics. Other lyricists serving in the Bureau, such as Jiang Han 江漢 (fl. 1113-1135), also left some similar lyrics, though their collections have been lost. The court literati, such as Wang Anzhong 王安中 (1075-1134) and Cao Zu 曹祖 (fl. 1121), also composed this kind of lyrics. These lyrics were performed for various secular and essential functions of the court, including imperial auditions and state banquets. In performance, the stylistic features and aesthetics of this kind of court banquet music “were probably similar to those of vernacular entertainment musics of the time.” 18 In the functional aspect, this type of lyrics became more comparable to the serious *shi* poetry.

16 Shen Zuozhe 沈作喆 (fl. 1147), *Yu jian* 寓簡, juan 8. *Siku quanshu* ed.
17 For a detailed discussion about the auspicious phenomena at Huizong’s court, see Peter C. Sturman’s “Cranes above Kai fung: the Auspicious Image at the Court of Huizong.” *Ars Orientalis*, 20 (1990): 33-68.
It is interesting that in spite of effort on the part of the elite to canonize the lyric, the lyrics in the common style witnessed a golden age of prevalence among the elite circle during the late Northern Song because Huizong indulged himself in secular pleasurable pursuits. Different from his predecessor Renzong, who valued proper elegance in conduct and was said to remove Liu Yong’s name from the list of successful candidates of examination because of Liu’s “vulgar” lyrics, Huizong welcomed this kind of lyrics. He himself wrote a song using strongly colloquial expressions. Some of the high-ranking officials during the Huizong’s era, such as the chancellor 李邦彦 李邦彥 (?:1130), were famous for producing lyrics in a comical and frivolous style for court amusement. Cao Zu, a lyricist of the Grand Music Bureau, wrote several hundred jocular songs that were extremely popular in the Zhenghe era. It is recorded that when people heard these songs, they shook with laughter. Cao Zu was imitated by many writers and thus regarded as the chief of the comical and frivolous lyricists. Anecdotes abound that deal with the prevalence of “vulgar” songs in the late Northern Song. In the Xuanhe era (1119-1125), songs employing the colloquial and vulgar language prevailed in the capital. Both the uncultured urban dwellers and scholar-officials sang these songs.

Responding to the resurgence of such unrefined songs among literati, orthodox critics chose to defend the reputation of the lyric by denouncing them from a Confucian viewpoint. They criticized the licentiousness and hedonism of these songs, viewing them as a sign of moral decay. At the same time, these orthodox critics canonized the lyric genre by advocating the concept of ya. From the late Tang onward, literati had consciously kept working to pull the genre away from its low origins associated with banquets and entertainment quarters; however, it was not until after the mid-Northern Song Dynasty that the notion of yaci (elegant lyrics, refined lyrics), which will be discussed later in this section, became one of the central focuses of the

20 QSC 2/897-98.
21 Songshi, juan 352.
22 Wang Zhuo 王灼, *Biji manzhi 碧鷄漫志* (CHCB ed.), p. 84. Few of Cao Zu’s jocular lyrics have been preserved, partly because of an imperial decree during the Southern Song Dynasty ordering that the printing blocks of Cao Zu’s lyrics be destroyed.
lyric genre. This phenomena resulted from the ruling class’s positive attitude towards lyrics and the increasing participation of the elite in lyric writing.

The Song elites were renowned for their penchant for elegance, both in the arts and in their way of life. This penchant for elegance affected their attitude towards the lyric genre. Lyric anthologies compiled during this period reflected the literati’s efforts to advocate the concept of ya. Shen Xianglong 沈祥龍 (fl. 1898) stated that “the Song people often used the word ‘elegance’ to name their lyric selections.”

“Yangchun baixue” 陽春白雪 (sunny spring, white snow), a synonym for elegant songs, was also a popular title of literati lyric anthologies. It was common practice for literati to exclude the pieces they believed to be inelegant when they compiled lyric collections. In 1146, the scholar-official Zeng Zao 曾慥 (?-1155) compiled the earliest extant Song lyric anthology, Yuefu yaci 樂府雅詞 (Elegant lyrics of Yuefu). In the preface, he writes: “I compile the famous lyricists’ works I have collected into a book. … Rejecting those touching on jocularity, I name the anthology Yuefu yaci.” This book includes works by fifty Song lyricists, including Ouyang Xiu 奧揚休, Zhou Bangyan 周邦鴻, and Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-ca. 1155). However, Zeng excluded works by Yan Shu 晏几道 (ca. 1030 - ca. 1106), Liu Yong 劉永, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1036-1101), Huang Tingjian 黃廷堅, and Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100); obviously, these poems did not qualify as yaci according to his criteria. He also deleted some of Ouyang Xiu’s licentious lyrics, claiming that certain scoundrels composed these erotic songs and attributed them to Ouyang Xiu. Zeng Zao’s practice reminds us of the fact that the definition


26 Examples include one anthology Yangchun baixue 陽春白雪 compiled by Zhao Wenli 趙聞禮 and two individual ci collections, Chen Dewu 陳德武’s Baixue yiyin 白雪遺音 and Mi Youren 米友仁’s Yangchun ji 陽春集.

27 For a detailed discussion about the expurgation practice in ci compilations, see Lap Lam, “Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Reputation of Ci,” pp. 32-40.


29 當時小人或作艷曲，繆為公詞，今悉刪除。 Zeng Zao, Yuefu yaci, Preface. Ronald C. Egan ascertains the authenticity of these controversial songs, which were written in a bold and explicit language on the subject of romantic affairs. He believes the
of yaci is not fixed. Some of the lyricists rejected by Zeng Zao have been viewed as orthodox lyricists by other elite critics. Furthermore, Zeng Zao compiled a selection solely of Su Shi’s lyrics, though his contemporaries generally thought Su’s lyrics were not refined enough.

Yaci is a product of “high culture” that was preferred by the well-educated elite of the society; thus it reflects the aesthetic value the elite maintained when they wrote or discussed lyrics. This value was shaped by Confucian literary ideology, particularly Confucian shi poetics. First of all, the most important theory that proponents of yaci have developed is that lyrics should be distinct from shi. Li Qingzhao makes a famous statement in her “Ci lun”词论: “The lyric is a distinct discipline [from shi].” Her statement shows her attempt to define the blurred boundary between the two. She suggests lyricists pay attention to the lyric’s unique metrical form and uses Su Shi’s poems as a negative example. A critic of an older generation, Chao Buzhi晁補之 (1053-1110), also expresses similar viewpoints. According to them, Su Shi’s and Huang Tingjian’s lyrics did not qualify as yaci for they failed to conform to tonal regulations of lyric tune patterns. Elitist critics also insisted that the lyric and shi should be different in the aspect of thematic range. The Confucian perspective on literature emphasizes that shi poetry ought to perform a certain public function of social criticism or protest. Therefore, shi is generally about important public issues or serious thoughts, such as a poet’s political ambitions, concerns over the current issues, historical consciousness, or philosophical views, etc. The lyric, on the contrary, should follow the tradition set up by the influential literati lyric anthology Huajian ji花


30 These rejected lyricists include Yan Shu, Yan Jidao, and Qin Guan, to name a few.


32 至晏元献, 欧阳永叔, 苏子瞻, 学际天人, 作为小歌词, 直如酌蛎水于大海, 然皆句读不葺之诗而。 When it came to Yan Yuanxian [Yan Shu], Ouyang Yongshu [Ouyang Xiu], and Su Zizhan [Su Shi], their scholarship reached the bounds of heaven and the human – for them to write a little song lyric was just like drawing a ladle of water from the ocean. Yet [what they wrote] was all nothing more than shi with uneven caesurae and line-breaks.

33 Wu Zeng, Nenggaizhai manlu, p. 469.
間集 and focus on a relatively narrower poetic world, for example, romantic affairs and private feelings.\textsuperscript{34}

Many modern scholars have criticized this conservative concept of generic distinction.\textsuperscript{35} Nevertheless, we must realize that it was a strategy traditional elitist critics used to defend lyrics against the orthodox \textit{shi} genre. By focusing on a narrower range of themes, lyrics gained an independent generic identity. In this sense, we can say that this generic discrimination is reasonable and successful. Accepted and adopted by the elite lyricists, this strategy helped the lyric genre to attain its full florescence in the Southern Song. Wang Guowei realized that the essence of this strategy is that “the realm of \textit{shi} is broad; the utterance of expressions in \textit{ci} is prolonged.”\textsuperscript{36} Repeatedly writing on a limited range of topics enabled lyricists to treat these topics with greater depth and subtlety. It also facilitated the exploration of the verbal potentials of lyrics as a poetic medium to their fullest degree.

Thematically, we can observe that many Song literati believed \textit{yaci} should center on \textit{qing} 情, i.e., subtle private feelings or sensibilities, which can be sentimental love, groundless ennui, nostalgic mood, or enlightenment about nature. Li Zhiyi pointed out the Northern Song literati revered the \textit{Huajian ji} as the exemplary work.\textsuperscript{37} The late Southern Song critic Zhang Yan 張炎 (1248-1320?) expressed his strong preference for feminine lyrics: “the \textit{ci} is more delicate than the \textit{shi} poetry since it dallies with the ‘wind and moon’ [i.e., romantic feelings], shaping and expressing one’s sensibility and emotions. As its sound is produced from the tongues of the sing-song girls, it is acceptable to be closer to [romantic] feelings.”\textsuperscript{38} The Song orthodox critics proposed that feminine themes and the exquisite delicate style associated with these themes were the natural


\textsuperscript{36} 詩之境闊,詞之言長. Wang Guowei, \textit{Renjian cihua} 人間詞話 (CHCB ed.), p. 4258.

\textsuperscript{37} Li Zhiyi, “Ba Wu Sidao xiaoci.” \textit{Tang Song ciji xuba huibian}, p. 36.

color of the lyrics. This is in spite of the fact that during the Five Dynasties and the early Song, literati regarded lyrics as an art of \textit{xiaodao} specifically because of their feminine features. When Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) broadened the original definition of \textit{zhi} 志, which had been limited to a much narrower political and ethical referent by the Han exegesis of the \textit{Shijing}, by stating that “\textit{shi} traces \textit{qing} [the affections] and is sensuously beautiful,”\textsuperscript{39} \textit{qing} became a more recognized theme in \textit{shi} than it previously had been.\textsuperscript{40} By claiming that lyrics follow from an individual’s private emotions, orthodox critics established and canonized the lyric’s generic identity. This strategy was particularly successful during the Song era since by this time, \textit{shi} had become increasingly philosophical.

Second, though \textit{yaci} follows from the private emotions, it ought not to go beyond propriety. This is based on the Confucian literary tradition, which devalues any licentious works. Literati believed that what was to be learned through \textit{shi} ought to be “gentleness and propriety.”\textsuperscript{41} The Great Preface to the \textit{Shijing} states that “the changed feng [\textit{shi}] arises from the affections, but ends in conformity to rites and moral principles.”\textsuperscript{42} Confucius praised “Guan ju” for it was “expressive of enjoyment without being licentious, and of grief without being hurtfully excessive.”\textsuperscript{43} This concept of moral correctness also applied to \textit{yaci}. Zhang Yan proposes a very similar principle: “If one can shun frivolous and erotic sentiments and enjoy romantic feelings without being excessive, then one conforms to the ideal passed down since the Han and Wei \textit{Yuefu} ballads.”\textsuperscript{44} He insists that “once lyrics are enslaved by erotic sentiments, the tone of


\textsuperscript{40} Stephen Owen, \textit{Readings in Chinese Literary Thought}, pp. 130-31.


\textsuperscript{42} 變風發乎情，止乎禮義。 Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 comm. Kong Yingda 孔穎達 subcomm. \textit{Maoshi zhushu} 毛詩註疏. \textit{Siku quanshu} ed. juan 1.


\textsuperscript{44} 若能屏去浮艷，樂而不淫，是亦漢魏樂府遺意。 Zhang Yan, \textit{Ciyuan}, p. 264.
elegance and moral correctness will be lost.” Following this principle, he cites Liu Yong, Kang Yuzhi 康與之 (fl. 1127), and Zhou Bangyan as negative examples.

Third, *yaci* should be literary – both its composition and reception require adequate intellectual competence. This intellectual dimension resulted from the fact that the Song literati had been increasingly engaged in lyric composition and had gradually accepted it as a serious literary form. Orthodox critics emphasized the lyric should be written in an implicit and elusive way to elicit meanings beyond the text, claiming a piece of excellent lyric poem should invite interpretation as a political allegory. This feature of implicit meaning will be discussed in greater detail later.

The last, but not least important, criterion for *yaci* is a perfect combination of music and words. From the mid-Northern Song onward some literati lyrics started to dissociate themselves from music, as demonstrated in some of Su Shi’s verses. Most of the Song critics criticized this trend because they believed that strong musicality was one of the critical features that differentiated the lyric from *shi*. Out of this concern, they suggested lyricists pay attention to both the musical and literary qualities of their lyrics.

The formal features of *yaci* should reflect its aesthetic value, as discussed above. The Song critics Wang Zhuo 王灼 (fl. 1149), Shen Yifu 沈義父 (?-after 1297), and Zhang Yan all voiced their opinions about the specific formal criteria for *yaci*. Shen Yifu’s four principles are considered to encapsulate the contemporary concept of *yaci*. However, their discussions are not systematic. Based on the extant Song discourses about lyrics and research by modern

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45 一為情所役,則失其雅正之音。 Zhang Yan, *Ciyuan*, p. 266.
46 Su Shi’s contemporaries criticized his lyrics because these lyrics lacked musicality.
48 Shen Yifu enumerates four principles of lyric writing formulated by the famous lyricist Wu Wenying and suggests that they should be used as criteria for the elegant lyric: “The tones of words should be in harmony with the music, otherwise the writing will be *shi* poetry in long and short lines. The diction should be elegant, otherwise it will resemble that of *chanling* popular songs. The use of words should not be too explicit, as explicitness is blunt and abrupt, lacking deep and lingering flavor. The articulation should not be too lofty, for loftiness leads to wildness and eccentricity which will lose delicate expression.” 音律欲其協,不協則成長短之詩。下字欲其雅,不雅則近乎纏令之體。用字不可太露,露則直突而無深長之味。發意不可太高,高則狂怪而失柔婉之意。 Shen Yifu, *Yuefu Zhimi*, p. 277. Trans. Lap Lam, “Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Repurtaion of *Ci,*” p. 28.
scholars, I briefly summarize in the following paragraph the formal criteria for yaci that were adopted by the majority of the Song literati. 49

Yaci ought to preserve a delicate restraint, so a direct mode of expression is not preferred. Rhetoric of implicit meaning, 50 elusive language, affective images, and allusions are all critical characteristics that led to a complicated and ambiguous interpretation of the text. It is undesirable to leave the veins of a poem exposed for the poem will become shallow and simple. The use of colloquialisms and slang is seen as either unacceptable or at least should be restricted. Amorous sentimentalism and emotionalism should be repudiated to prevent lyrics from going beyond propriety.

Suci is a product of popular culture chosen by poorly educated people. Since su means the qualities associated with the popular tradition, the basic meaning of suci is songs written by and circulated among poorly educated common people, such as merchants, craftsmen, and entertainers including courtesans. The elites believed a lack of moral correctness and literary quality was one of the most important features of common songs; therefore, suci also referred to literati lyrics if these lyrics imitated common songs by depicting sensuous love directly and explicitly, or if they were written in a masculine or jocular style. 51 Liu Yong and Huang Tingjian’s lyrics were denounced as a kind of suci because of these reasons. 52 Suci is characterized by coarse language and abundant colloquialisms or even slang. Authors usually expressed their feelings explicitly and narrated stories in a straightforward and chronological way. The lyrical structure is relatively simple. In suci, narrative elements play a far more important role than in literati lyrics and dialogues are frequently used.

49 Lap Lam summarizes some principal criteria of elegance based on the extant Song discourses on lyrics. Lyrics with emotional excess or lyrics written in a jocular vein and in the heroic abandon style were considered inelegant. According to the conventional critics of the Song and their successors in later dynasties, the elegant style of lyric writing should follow tonal regulations strictly and preserve a delicate restraint. See Lam, “Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Repurtaion of Ci,” pp. 23-32. Grace Fong also discusses the qualities of yaci in Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 48-51.

50 Kang-i Sun Chang, The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u poetry: From Late T’ang to Northern Song, pp. 35-42.

51 I shall translate the second category of suci as “vulgar” lyrics to emphasize its stylistic distinction. In addition to the two categories of lyrics I list, the Chinese scholars He Chunhuan 何春環 and He Zunpei 何尊沛 suggest the literati’s lyrics describing worldly affairs should also be regarded as suci. He Chunhuan, He Zunpei, “Guanyu suci gainian de jieding” 關於俗词概念的界定. Xueshu Yanjiu, 2(2007): 138.

2 Zheng 正 (Classic) and Bian 變 (Deviation)

The elite critics viewed the elegant style as the only orthodox style for lyric composition; thus the promotion of elegance paralleled the canonization of the lyric, which is inseparable from the poetic concepts zheng and bian. In Chinese poetic tradition, this pair of concepts was used to describe the dynamic evolution of a genre, focusing on how a peripheral constituent art form or element gradually moved into the mainstream of the genre and attained a canonized status. It was applied in the context of music, ritual, and poetry. The shi poetic concept bian was raised up for the first time in “the Great Preface to the Shijing.” Originally referred to the degenerate shi poems of a period of decline in the Shijing, thus their purpose was often to satirize the rulers rather than to praise them. The exact definitions of zheng and bian kept changing, but in a purely literary context, “cheng [zheng] might represent the norm of some genre, the pien [bian] would be a falling away from that norm.”

If zheng stands for the orthodox and proper state of shi, such as a state that emphasizes the moral-didactic function of shi poems, then bian, on the contrary, can be used to describe poems about private feelings and amorous sentiments. The lyric critics borrowed, consciously or not, these concepts from the shi poetic tradition and applied them to the lyric. In the context of lyric criticism, zheng and bian were endowed with different connotations in regards to their thematic and stylistic aspects.

The lyric, especially in its early stage, encompasses a wide range of themes. The topics of love and women appear frequently in the anonymous Dunhuang songs, but they are by no means the dominant subjects. In addition to lonely women and homesick frontier soldiers, there are a variety of other personae represented, including traveling merchants, loyal officials, monks, recluses, etc. The extant songs show that the Tang people used these songs to preach Buddhism, explain military tactics, spread the Book of Filial Piety, and teach medical knowledge. Patriotic feelings and heroic exuberance are a common topic in Dunhuang songs, though they were rarely

53 Lap Lam and Pauline Yu present good discussions about the strenuous effort of the elite to canonize the lyric through enhancing the refinement of taste and artistic quality of the lyric. See Lap Lam, “Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Reputation of Ci,” also see Pauline Yu’s “Song Lyrics and the Canon: A Look at Anthologies of Tzu’u” in Voices of the Song Lyric in China, pp. 70-103. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.


55 Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, p. 47. For different connotations of zheng and bian, see Liu Wenzhong’s discussion in his Zhengbian, tongbian, xinbian 正變 通變 新變. Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 2005.
touched upon by literati lyricists before Su Shi. Tang songs set to the tunes *Po zhen yue* 破陣樂 (breaking through the enemy array), *Ding xi fan* 定西番 (pacifying the western barbarians), and *Ding feng bo* 定風波 (suppressing the disturbance) generally express masculine feelings, as the tune titles suggest. The Tang songs written to the popular tune *Ding feng bo*, for example, describe Confucian scholars’ desire to bring peace back to the empire as well as build up military establishments.\(^{56}\)

Influenced by this common song tradition, the traditionally educated and aristocratic literati during the Tang era also employed the newly emerging lyric form as a vehicle for serious sentiments and political expressions. A set of songs surrounding those attributed to the Emperor Zhaozong of Tang Dynasty, Li Ye 李曄 (867-904), is a good example. When the emperor was forced to flee from the capital in 896, he composed three songs to the tune *Pusa man* 菩薩蠻 to express his predicament on the throne.\(^{57}\) These songs gained widespread circulation through both oral and written means. People from a broad social spectrum responded to the emperor with their own songs to the same tune.\(^{58}\) Writing about serious sentiments and political aspirations, the early lyrics were comparable to *shi* in the functional aspect. Negative views toward the lyric were not common among the elite class during this time.

The appearance of *Huajian ji* in the tenth century set up a tradition for the lyric characterized by a narrow thematic scope and feminine style. As Ouyang Jiong 欧陽炯 (896-971), an official and poet in the Later Shu court (934-965), states in his preface to *Huajian ji*, the purpose of the anthology is to provide singing girls with songs for entertainment at banquets. To fulfill this purpose, love and the depiction of women became the major topics; furthermore, the female-voiced songs form a stable repertory. According to Anna M. Shields, this *Huajian ji* tradition originated within the romantic literature of the late Tang, which was being shaped by popular musical entertainments and courtesan culture.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{57}\) Wang Zhuo, *Biji manzhi*, p. 82.

\(^{58}\) *QIWDC* 844-46. Only a small portion of this large body of similar songs was preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts. For a detailed discussion about these songs, see Marsha L. Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*, pp. 136-41.

\(^{59}\) Anna M. Shields makes a detailed discussion about the romantic literature in *Crafting A Collection: the Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian Ji*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006, pp. 30-47.
Ouyang’s preface reveals his effort to differentiate lyrics from shi poetry. Though the lyric genre had existed for more than two centuries by the Late Tang, few literati were devoted to it. Most Tang literati composed lyrics purely out of an interest in metrical experimentation by imitating common songs.⁶⁰ They also tended to compose songs in the same way that they composed the Recent Style poetry. Consequently, there were barely any differences between those two forms of poetry, except for their musical characteristics. To differentiate the new songs from shi, which was used by poets to “expresses the heart’s intent,”⁶¹ Ouyang defines the lyric form as an elegant game played between singing girls and literati at banquets.

*Huajian ji* led the genre in the direction towards a narrower scope of themes by focusing on romantic feelings and feminine beauty. To defend lyric composition as a refined activity within the Shu court, Ouyang Jiong attempts to situate the *Huajian ji* within a genealogy of love poetry that consists of the *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 collection and Palace Style poetry. However, the latter two were considered too hedonistic in theme and decadent in style for proper Confucian society. Furthermore, as Hans H. Frankel points out, love poetry is outside the mainstream of Chinese literature.⁶² As a result, though Ouyang Jiong successfully justifies the literati’s participation in lyric composition, the lyric stayed outside the mainstream of poetry due to the extremely narrow scope of themes and excessive femininity or even eroticism in *Huajian ji*.⁶³

From the late Tang onwards, most literati followed the tradition set up by the *Huajian ji*, but the orthodox critics relegated the lyric to a trivial and informal status. They viewed the lyric as shiyu 詩余 (superfluity of shi), xiaoci 小詞 (little lyrics), or xiaodao 小道 (a lesser path of literary practice, a minor craft), indicating the lyric did not acquire the same prestige as orthodox shi poetry and prose. Believing it might damage the reputations of those who practiced it, few elite writers include lyrics in their literary collections. Ronald C. Egan finds that “there is no evidence that any of the major early song lyric writers of the period bothered to compile or edit a

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⁶⁰ Marsha L. Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*, p. 73.
⁶³ For detailed discussions about Ouyang Jiong’s preface, see Pauline Yu’s “Song Lyrics and the Canon: A Look at Anthologies of Tz’u,” pp. 73-75; Anna M. Shields, *Crafting A Collection: the Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian Ji*, pp. 149-58.
collection of his own works." He also points out that "there is a conspicuous shortage of prefaces, colophons, and other critical writings about the genre," and "[this] pervasive silence that is maintained regarding the genre" reflects the lyric's low repute.

The repute of lyrics improved somewhat in the late Northern Song, though the majority of literati lyrics still remained within the *Huajian* tradition. The silence regarding the lyric began to break down after the 1070s. Literati, including Yan Jidao, He Zhu 賀鑄 (1052-1125), Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044-1130), and Moqi Yong, compiled their own lyric collections or included lyrics in their own literary collections. Huang Shang and Yan Jidao also wrote a preface to their own lyric collections. More literati expressed their critical opinions about lyrics. Su Shi and Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053-1101) made fragmented critical remarks about lyrics; Huang Tingjian, Li Zhiyi 李之儀 (d. ca. 1115), 张耒 (1054-1114), and Zhou Bangyan wrote a preface to other's lyrics collection; Chao Buzhi and Yang Hui 楊繪 (1032-1116) wrote the earliest *cihua* 詞話 (remarks on lyrics). Yan Jidao's preface to his own collected lyrics demonstrates an "overriding tone of high seriousness and deep ethical engagement" with which a lyricist dealt with his lyric collections. These facts show that by the late Northern Song a substantial number of major lyricists and critics started to treat the feminine lyric as a serious rather than leisure activity, in the same way they treated the traditionally orthodox literary writings *shi* poetry and prose.

When the unorthodox *Huajian* tradition gradually gained canonical status, the elite critics regarded Su Shi’s lyrics in a masculine style as a new unorthodox form. Dissatisfied with the feminine and lachrymose style, Su Shi created a new intellectualized language for the lyric. His

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65 Ibid., p. 246.
66 Ibid.
68 In addition to those written by authors for their own collections, Zhang Huimin’s 張惠民 *Songdai cixue ziliao huibian* 宋代詞學資料彙編 is a convenient reference source for Song critical materials on the lyric. Zhang Huimin. *Songdai cixue ziliao huibian*. Shantou: Shantou daxue chubanshe, 1993.
extensive uses of historical allusions, a poetic device common in *shi* poetry. Su Shi also widened the thematic range of the genre by introducing serious sentiments and political expressions into his lyric writing. His practice is in accord with classical *shi* poetics, in that both focus on poetry’s public functions. The modern scholars therefore view Su’s innovation as an important step to elevate the lyric’s status. However, the orthodox critics in the Song Dynasty thought that Su’s lyrics were so masculine that they were unsuitable for conventional feminine performance. Even Su Shi’s pupils, Chen Shidao, Chao Buzhi, and Zhang Lei 张耒 (1054-1114), and the famous female lyricist Li Qingzhao thought that Su’s lyrics were a deviation from the orthodox tradition because Su treated lyrics in the same way as *shi*, thus blurring the boundary between the two. Because of this generic bias, Su’s *haofang* 豪放 (heroic abandon) school never became the mainstream during the Song Dynasty.

### 3 Musicality and Textuality

The lyric is the integration of music and text. Its canonization paralleled a shift of emphasis from musicality to textuality, the latter of which is closely connected to the literary worth of the lyric genre. If we situate a lyric poem on a spectrum ranging from the common style of ordinary people’s songs to the elegant style of literati compositions, we may find that literati lyrics tend to employ more diversified literary devices and more complicated compositional principles. Therefore, a higher level of literary complexity generally signifies a higher degree of elegance.

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70 The Jiangxi school of poetry highly values the functions of textual allusions by proposing that every word of a good poem must have a tradition of previous usage. For studies of the Jiangxi School of *shi* poetry and the representative poet Huang Tingjian, see Kōjirō Yoshikawa’s 吉川幸次郎 An Introduction to Sung Poetry, Burton Watson trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 138-139; also see David Palumbo-Liu’s The Poetics of Appropriation: the Literary Theory and Practice of Huang Tingjian. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.


In its early stage, lyrics are songs circulated among common people, mainly through performances by commercial and registered entertainers, and were therefore characterized with a strong musicality that comes from performance. During the transmission of the common songs, the participants, including the writers, performers, and the audience, were uneducated or semi-educated, thus these songs are direct, simple, and replete with colloquial language. As Lap Lam points out, initially “the cultural value of the ci was secondary to music, and entertainment was its primary concern.”

To serve their practical function as a form of entertainment, literati lyrics from the Tang till the Northern Song Dynasty fit the music well though they are also very literary. Anecdotes abound that deal with the interaction between the literati and singing girls as well as the prevalence of literati lyrics among courtesans, common people, and the elite circle during this period of time. Literati lyrics were generally introduced to the audience through live performance. Many lyrics were written for courtesans to sing, probably dashed off at entertainment quarters. Though these songs may have been written down and possibly published at a later time, they were simultaneously transmitted through oral performance. Another interesting indicator of the prevalence of literati lyrics is the widely acknowledged nicknames of poets after lyric lines they had written. These poets include Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061), Zhang Xian 張先 (990-1078), Liu Yong, Qin Guan, and He Zhu. This coining of nicknames suggests the high literary excellence of a poet’s verse; it also testifies to the fact that the verse was circulated so widely that the poet was recognized and remembered for it.

Though orthodox critics insisted that strong musicality was a fundamental criterion of elegant lyrics, literati lyrics gradually became dissociated from music and the public audience. We can detect the initiation of this trend in some of Su Shi’s lyrics. This trend became evident during the Southern Song. One important reason for this phenomenon is the literati lyric’s lack of musicality and increasing literary sophistication. A great number of lyric melodies popular in the Northern Song had been lost by the Southern Song. The Southern Song literati did not produce many new lyric tunes like the Northern Song poets did. Even Jiang Kui and Wu

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75 Ronald Egan discusses this phenomenon and treats it as evidence of the Song people’s fascination with the lyric. Ronald Egan, The problem of beauty, pp. 248-50.
Wenying, who were famous for their musical talent, did not create many new tunes. It is clear the Southern Song literati used fewer singable lyric tunes even though they composed far more lyrics than the Northern Song lyricists. Furthermore, many Southern Song literati did not understand music, so they filled in words by following the metrical patterns of their predecessors’ works. Shen Yifu noticed this situation: “Lyricists of the older generation [i.e., lyricists of the early and middle Southern Song] composed many good lyrics. However, since [the song words] do not harmonize with the melody, nobody sings these lyrics. The lyrics performed in the brothels or public houses were mainly composed for profit by musicians from jiaofang, or common people in the market-place. People love to sing these lyrics simply because the words match well with the melody. If we examine the language and diction, they do not make any sense at all.” So in the Southern Song, there was significant bifurcation between literati lyrics and lyrics performed in the market place. The former tended to be exquisite but unsingable, while the latter were suitable for performance but coarse in diction. Some critics even stated that most of the Southern Song literati lyrics were unsingable except for the works of Jiang Kui, Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298), and Zhang Yan.

The dissociation of literati lyrics from music is partially caused by the change of these lyric’s function. In the Northern Song, most of the major lyricists were officials who were familiar with the entertainment quarters. A considerable portion of their works aim at appealing to a wide range of people at entertainment quarters, hence they blend popular interests with cultured tastes. Lyrics by Ouyang Xiu, Liu Yong, Qin Guan, and Zhou Bangyan are all good examples. The literati lyric’s function was different during the Southern Song. Many influential lyricists, such as Jiang Kui and Wu Wenying, were drifting recluse-lyricists who lived off the patronage of high officials. Even though they failed to enter officialdom or remained mired in its lower ranks, they

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76 According to Shi Yidui’s research, Xin Qiji wrote more than six hundred lyrics with only 93 tune patterns, most of which are old tunes from earlier times. Shi Yidui 施議對, Ci yu yinyue guanxi yanjiu 詞與音樂關係研究. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008, p. 113. Liu Yong used 150 tune patterns in more than two hundred lyrics. Wu Xionghe, Tang Song Ci tonglun, p. 193.

77 前輩好詞甚多,往往不協律腔,所以無人唱。如秦樓楚館所歌之詞,多是教坊樂工及市井做賺人所作,只緣音律不差,故多唱之。求其下語用字,全不可讀。Shen Yifu, Yuefu Zhimi, p. 281.

78 “Qingzhen [Zhou Bangyan], Baishi [Jiang Kui], Caocuang [Zhou Mi], and Yutian [Zhang Yan] were the orthodox Song lyrics…. Their songs were all singable. The lyrics by other authors were unsingable. These authors just filled in words according to the four tones.” 宋詞以清真，白石，草窗，玉田四家為正宗…凡此四家之詞無不可歌。其余則或不可歌，不過按調填詞於四聲。Zhao Han 趙涵, “Suijin cixu” 碎金詞敘. Sun Kesiang 孫克強, Tang Song ren cihua 唐宋人詞話. Zhengzhou: He'nan wenyi chubanshe, 1999, p. 383.
had the opportunity to share the extravagance of the most prominent people in high society. Since they quite often composed lyrics at the request of their patrons or to cater to the latter’s taste, their works focused more on refined artistic pursuit rather than on popularity among people of different classes.

The literati increasingly relied on their household singing girls rather than the registered courtesans or commercial courtesans to perform their lyrics during the Southern Song era. Supported and encouraged by the ruling class, keeping household performers was a fashion for the wealthy class even during the Northern Song. There is a long list of officials, scholars, literati, and artists who maintained their own household musicians and singing girls. It was common practice for a household performer to be trained to perform her master’s lyrics. In order to please the master’s guests, she often needed to learn and perform the guests’ songs too. It is recorded that when Yan Shu hosted a dinner in honor of Zhang Xian, Yan ordered his singing girls to sing Zhang Xian’s new lyrics. Yan Jidao recalled how his friend’s singing girls performed their lyrics: “At the beginning, Shen Lianshu, twelfth in his generation, and Chen Junlong, tenth in his generation, had household singing girls named Lian, Hong, Ping, and Yun, who sampled unaccompanied songs to entertain guests. When we got a piece [of a lyric], we gave it to them. Holding wine cups, the three of us listened to their songs. It was such a pleasant pastime.” Zhou Bangyan’s *Lanling wang* 蘭陵王 was circulated during the Southern Song by the singing girls of the chancellor Zhao Ding 赵鼎 (1085-1147), who obtained the music score from a musician serving in the Grand Music Bureau. Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207) also liked to

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80 To weaken the military and so prevent anyone else rising to power as he did, the emperor Taizu of Song, Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (r. 960-976), encouraged his subjects to “keep lots of savings, purchase farmlands and houses for children, and to raise singing girls for company for the rest of one’s life.” “Biography of Shi Shouxin” 石守信傳, *Songshi, juan* 250, p. 8810.

81 This list includes Ouyang Xiu, Han Qi 韓琦 (1008-1075), Zhang Xian 張先 (990-1078), and Su Shi of the Northern Song and Fang Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193), Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207), and Jiang Kui of the Southern Song, just to name a few.

82 “Gently beating time with the fragrant wood, / she sings all his new songs.” 緩拍香檀，唱徹伊家新製。 Zhang Xian 張先, *Bi mudan* 碧牡丹. *QSC* 1/84. The anecdote is found in Wang Wei’s 王倉 *Daoshan qinghua* 道山清話, *Siku quanshu ed*.

have his singing girls sing his lyrics when he hosted a banquet.\textsuperscript{84} During the Southern Song, many professional literati lyricists, such as Jiang Kui and Wu Wenying, composed lyrics when their patrons demanded them. Their lyrics were, therefore, generally performed on private occasions, such as banquets hosted by their patrons or their friends. As a result, household singing girls played a more important role in transmitting literati lyrics.

Since household performers, rather than the public courtesans, became the major channel through which to spread the literati lyrics, especially those pieces set to newly invented tunes, literati lyrics were spread mainly in the circles of literati and officialdom. Consequently, they gradually lost their appeal in popular culture. According to Zhang Yan, only around twenty years after Wu Wenying’s death, Wu’s new tune \textit{Xizi zhuang man} 西子妝慢 was unsingable due to an incomplete music score even though the literati were still attracted by the tune’s carefully designed metrical pattern.\textsuperscript{85} Jiang Kui was good at producing new tunes, but his lyrics were so lofty and elegant that they were mainly played during feasts and gatherings with his patrons or friends. It is evident that literati lyrics did not prevail among the non-elite classes in the Southern Song as they did in the Northern Song.

The prevailing \textit{ci she} 詞社 (lyric clubs) during the Southern Song transformed lyrics into a sophisticated pastime for literati after the genre gradually lost its song-performance channel. The Qing critic Zhou Ji 周濟 (1781-1839) points out this change: “In the Northern Song, lyrics were randomly composed to meet the needs of song performances; in the Southern Song, they were composed to meet the needs of [lyric] clubs.”\textsuperscript{86} As one of a wide variety of social clubs for affluent people, a lyric club consisted of a selective circle of people who enjoyed lyrics. In such a circle, people composed and exchanged lyrics, seeking out each other’s company. Instead of following the \textit{Huajian} convention of assuming female voices, the lyricists wrote in their own voices for various social occasions. They used lyrics to describe day excursions, depict objects and sceneries, celebrate birthdays, or send off friends. Lyrics composed for these occasions

\textsuperscript{84} 傅軒有詞名，每燕必命侍妓歌其所作，特好歌《賀新郎》一詞。\textit{Yue Ke 岳柯, Tingshi 程史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, p. 38.}

\textsuperscript{85} Zhang Yan, “Xizi zhuang man xu” 西子妝慢序. \textit{QSC 5/3475.}

\textsuperscript{86} 北宋有無謂之詞以應歌，南宋有無謂之詞以應社. \textit{Zhou Ji, Jiecun zhai lunci zazhu 介存齋論詞雜著 (CHCB ed.), p. 1629.}
demonstrated a high degree of literary sophistication, while possibly being singable at the same time. For example, members of Xihu yinshe 西湖吟社 (West Lake lyric club), including Zhou Mi, Yang Zuan 楊繹 (fl. 1241), and Li Penglao 李彭老, composed lyrics in a refined and elegant way. Yuefu buti 樂府補題, an anthology of yongwu ci 詠物詞 (lyrics on objects) by Yuezhong cishe 越中詞社 (Shaoxing lyric club) dated 1279 was characterized by ambiguity, dense allusiveness, and allegorical representations.

When the Song literati shifted their emphasis from oral performance to written text, lyric anthologies and collections became the most important transmission media of the lyric. The early anthologies, such as Huajian ji and Zunqian ji 尊前集, were song books. Many individual lyric collections were also compiled for the use of singing girls. In these collections, poems were often arranged according to the musical mode to act as a convenient reference for the singing girls. Other lyric anthologies classified poems under various thematic categories and indicated the specific musical mode to which each poem belonged. This arrangement also helped musicians and courtesans to easily locate suitable lyrics for any occasion. Song Xiangfeng 宋翔鳳 (1776-1860) clearly describes this arrangement: “The anthology Caotang [shiyu] is designed for singing. It adds subtitles such as ‘spring scenery’ and ‘summer scenery’, and this results in categorizing the poems into groups. This arrangement makes it easier for the singing girls to find suitable songs to use in performances when they entertain guests throughout various times and occasions. The subtitles of ‘auspicious feasts’ or ‘birthday celebration’ are also for this purpose. The diction of these songs is at times different from those collected in the

87 Xihu yinshe was a lyric club consisted of lyricists active in Lin’an during the late Southern Song. For details about lyric clubs of the Southern Song and early Yuan Dynasty, see Gao Lihu 高利華, “Songji liang Zhe lu ciren jieshe liuyong zhi feng,” 宋季兩浙路詞人結社聯詠之風, Wenzue Pinglun 文學評論, 2 (2009): 46-50.


89 [Jinlian ji] categorizes poems according to the musical mode for the use of singing girls. It aims to follow the tradition of Zunqian [ji]. 各分宮調, 以供歌唱, 其意欲為《尊前》之續. Zhu Xiaozaìg 朱孝臧, “Jinlian ji ba” 金奩集跋, Tang Song ciji xuba huibiian, pp. 6-7.

90 Wen Tingyun’s Jinlian ji 金奩集, Zhang Xian’s Zhang Ziye ji 張子野集, Liu Yong’s Yuezhang ji 楊章集, as well as Yangchun baixue 阳春白雪, and Yuefu yaci are examples.

91 Zunqian ji and Caotang shiyu 草堂詩余 are examples. Jiang Kui too indicates the musical mode for all his invented tunes in his Baishi daoren gequ 白石道人歌曲.
lyricists’ complete works in that [the former] is simpler and rougher. From the viewpoint of men of letters, the anthology deserves only a laugh. However, it was necessary for courtesans at the time.”92 Apparently, the compiler replaced some uncommon phrases with easier ones so that the less educated courtesans could understand the lyrics. In the Southern Song, lyric anthologies were still used as song books, but at the same time they also served the purpose of promoting the concept of elegance and enhancing literary artistry. Literati named their anthologies with the word “ya” and excluded jocular, licentious, or masculine lyrics from the collections. They thought these verses were not worthy of being transmitted to posterity because they did not qualify as elegant lyrics. As Lap Lam points out, many lyric anthologies of this period functioned as tools to fulfill literati strategies of elevating the status of lyrics as a genre.93

Common songs and literati lyrics are different in style and aesthetic value. As I have pointed out, in the process of the lyric being elevated to a canonized status, the level of literary sophistication signifies the degree of elegance. Zhou Bangyan’s contribution to the canonization of the lyric lies in his innovative exploration of the literary aspects of the lyric, such as the aspects of narration and style. Since a number of studies have been produced with regard to the aesthetic features of common songs and literati lyrics, the following part will not attempt to present a comprehensive discussion of this issue. Instead, it will focus on the narration and style aspects for which Zhou Bangyan’s compositions are most noted.

4 The Assumed Female Voice and the Male Voice

The poetic voice of the lyric has been an issue of great attention because the genre is strongly marked by the frequent presence of an assumed female voice although literati lyrics were composed almost exclusively by male poets. As Grace Fong points out, the female-voiced songs “are often anonymous and have folk or popular origins.”94 We can find ample examples in Southern Dynasties (420-589) yuefu 樂府 folk songs. This kind of folk songs influenced the elite male poets of the Qi (479-502) and Liang (502-557) Dynasties, as evidenced by their

92 《草堂》一集，蓋以徵歌而設，故別題春景，夏景等名，使隨時即景，歌以娛客。題吉席壽慶，更是此意。其中詞語，間與集本不同，其不同恆平俗，亦以便歌。以文人觀之，適當一笑，而當時歌伎，則必需此也。Song Xiangfeng, Yuefu yulun 樂府余論 (CHCB ed.), p. 2500.
93 Lap Lam, “Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Repurtaion of Ci.”

THIS TRADITION OF ASSUMED FEMALE VOICE WAS DEVELOPED IN THE WORLD OF MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT, WITH WHICH THE LYRIC HAS CLOSE AFFINITIES. THE ANONYMOUS TANG SONGS WERE LIKELY PRODUCED BY THE PERFORMERS THEMSELVES; THE HUAJIAN JI, BEING AN ANTHOLOGY OF LITERATI COMPOSITIONS, ALSO PLACES SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ENTERTAINMENT FUNCTION OF THE GENRE. ACCORDING TO OUyang Jiong’s PREFACE TO THE HUAJIAN JI, THE SONGS INCLUDED IN THE ANTHOLOGY WERE COMPOSED TO BE PERFORMED BY COURTESANS AT BANQUETS.97 LITERATI BELIEVED THAT LYRICS WRITTEN BY MALE POETS IN AN ASSUMED FEMALE VOICE WERE MORE SUITABLE FOR SINGING GIRLS TO EXPRESS ROMANTIC FEELINGS DURING THEIR PERFORMANCE.98 THE CURRENT OF THE HUAJIAN JI STRENGTHENED THE TRADITION AMONG LITERATI OF WRITING LYRICS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE XIAOLING (SHORT LYRICS) FORM,99 FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A FEMALE PERSONA. WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS,100 THE CORE OF LITERATI LYRIC COMPOSITION UNTIL THE MID-NORTHERN SONG HAD STAYED WITHIN THIS ORTHODOX XIAOLING TRADITION.


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98 Zhang Yan, Ciyouan, pp. 263-64.
99 Traditional critics divide lyrics into three categories: xiaoling, containing fifty-nine characters or less; zhongdiao (medium-length lyrics), containing sixty to ninety characters; and manci (man song, also called changdiao, long lyrics), containing ninety-one characters or more. Wang Li 王力, Shici gelü 詩詞格律. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000, p. 78. Xiaoling and manci have distinct courses of development. Kang i Sun Chang presents a comprehensive discussion about this issue in her book The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u poetry: From Late T’ang to Northern Song.
100 The male persona appears occasionally in early literati lyrics. Among the early literati lyricists, Wei Zhuang, for instance, composed a series of lyrics to the tune Pusa man 菩薩蠻 in the first-person male voice. These lyrics are usually read as autobiographical poems expressing his personal feelings. QTWDC 152-55.
particular, featured a high degree of “universality” in Ronald Egan’s term: lyricists wrote them to musical tunes so that they could be performed repeatedly on similar occasions in different times and places. Female courtesans are the object, speakers, and performers of these lyrics, while their own voices were blurred under the fictive female persona. Nor can these sentimental banquet songs, focusing on experience and feelings of a female persona in love, be viewed as an authentic lyrical utterance of the male poet himself. It is true that they provide opportunities for male authors “to give expression to feminine feelings from deep within their masculine unconsciousness – feelings that they could never have expressed or even suggested in their formal, moralistic, and socially sanctioned compositions.” However, in more cases, these songs are strikingly formulaic and unrecognizable, singing of generalized situations and stuffed with clichés and repetitive images. This peculiar tradition is not consistent with the Confucian literary ideology that applied to canonical shi. As Victor Mair observes, in China “any literary writing was thought to reflect, at least in a general way, a person’s character and experiences.”

However, the inner chamber theme in early literati lyrics by male poets is almost always written from the viewpoint of a deserted woman, so it is difficult to find any direct connection between the writing and the author. The authentic voices of the male poets thus disappear under the assumed female persona, and no autobiographical elements or personal experience about the poet can be inferred from such kind of lyrics.

When the lyric moved gradually away from this low origin associated with banquet entertainment toward a refined and canonized art, the poetic voice of the lyric underwent a transition. This transition echoed a traditional Chinese reader’s expectation that literature should be connected with the character of the writer. The prevalence of manci 慢詞 (man song, also called changdiao 長調, long lyrics) poems quickened this transition during the Northern Song. A major reason is that the tradition of using a fictive female persona and assumed female voice was fashioned by the literati lyricists through the anthology Huajian ji, which uses the xiaoling form exclusively; therefore, literati were less fettered by this particular elite tradition when they

wrote lyrics in the longer manci form, which had been ignored by literati for centuries by the tenth century. In the songs by the great manci master Liu Yong, we witness this change in lyrical voice: his famous song set to the tune Feng qi wu 鳳棲梧 depicts a man’s unbreakable love for a girl from the viewpoint of the man.\textsuperscript{104} However, such pieces are not dominant in Liu Yong’s corpus of lyrics. A large portion of his lyrics about romantic feelings, including man songs, still remains in the tradition of assumed female persona.

As Ronald Egan indicates, in the last decades of the Northern Song period, there emerged with new frequency lyrics that “feature a male persona, speaker, or point of view.”\textsuperscript{105} Among the lyricists of this period, Su Shi is the most radical. He consciously rejected the boudoir theme and the feminine aesthetics associated with this theme, which were dominant in the tradition of literati lyrics, by initiating the male-voiced, masculine haofang mode. He even provided in the preface he added to his lyrics detailed background information of his poems, including the date, location, people, and events. By doing so, his poems invite an autobiographical reading and were credited with cleansing in one stroke the dyed silks and perfumed rouge, and getting rid of the overtly romantic and sentimental feelings.\textsuperscript{106} Though Su’s lyrics were regarded by the orthodox critics as unorthodox for their thematic scope and masculine style (which broke from the tradition of literati lyrics set up by the Huajian ji), Su’s innovation in lyrical voice is an important step toward the canonization of the lyric.

5 The Lyrical Mode and the Narrative Mode

Common or folk songs feature strong narrative elements. Such narrative-styled songs abound in the Shijing and the yuefu ballads of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Like all these anonymous songs for the common people from previous times, the anonymous Dunhuang songs are also noted for their narrative elements and dramatic tendencies. The development of narrative mode in common songs is closely connected with the oral performance tradition of popular literature, since the narrative or dramatic mode is effective in drawing relatively uneducated audiences and satisfying their pursuit of instant pleasure derived from an interesting

\textsuperscript{104} QSC 1/25, no. 2.

\textsuperscript{105} Ronald Egan, The Problem of Beauty, p. 327

\textsuperscript{106} 一洗綺羅香澤之態，擺脫綢繆婉轉之度。 Hu Yin 胡寅, “Jiubian ji xu” 酒邊集序, Tang Song ciji xuba huibian, p. 117.
and dramatic story. 107 Regarding the narrative mode in Dunhuang songs, Kang-i Sun Chang has offered an insightful discussion:

Whereas the literati tz’u songs are characterized almost exclusively by the lyrical mode, the popular songs contain a variety of modes – narrative, dramatic, and lyrical. In fact, a major portion of the Tun-huang songs is narrative or dramatic, rather than lyrical, in nature. By “lyrical poem” I mean a sustained expression of the poet’s emotions, felt in the present, such that external realities are shaped and molded to form part of the artistic world of the self and the present. The dramatic or the narrative modes, on the other hand, focus on the presentation of a concrete human encounter or the development of an event. 108

As she and another Chinese scholar, Ren Erbei 任二北 (1897-1991), have noticed, a unique formal device of song cycle (聯章 lian zhang) is employed in Dunhuang Songs to achieve a dramatic or narrative effect. According to Ren, a song cycle consists of songs in the same tune pattern and each of the song serves as an integral part to narrate a story. 109 The song cycle to the tune Dao lian zi 抢練子, for instance, narrates the story of Mengjiangnü in temporal sequence. 110 Another song cycle to the tune Chang xiangsi 長相思 narrate three short stories with three songs. These stories are interconnected with each other for they each present an experience of traveling merchants. The last line of each song (“This is an example of …”) suggests the performance nature of the songs and produces an effect of admonishing the audience. 111

Dialogue as an important narrative technique is frequently used in Dunhuang songs. It considerably enhances the dramatic effect of the songs. The song cycle to the tune Nan ge zi 南歌子, 112 which narrates an interesting episode between a wife and her jealous husband, consists

107 Lap Lam, “High versus Low: Elite Criticism and Popular Lyrics,” p. 76.
110 QTWDC 888-89.
111 QTWDC 936-37.
112 QTWDC 926-27.
of dialogues between the two characters. In this song cycle, each individual song presents the
direct speech of a character. Ren Erbei labels this technique yan gushi 演故事, which Kang-i
Sun Chang translates as “perform the story,” and estimates that one out of six songs in the
Dunhuang songs belongs to this category of song cycles.\textsuperscript{113} Lap Lam studies this song cycle as
“a form of oral performance,” indicating the two characters would be played by one or two
singers.\textsuperscript{114} Like the song cycle Nan ge zi, some individual songs are also written in the form of
dialogues, with each stanza presenting a character’s speech. The Dunhuang song to the tune Que
ta zhi 鵲踏枝, for example, presents dialogues between a lonely woman and a personified
magpie.\textsuperscript{115} The device of dialogue manifests narrative dimensions and, as Kang-i Sun Chang
claims, considerably heightens the effect of dramatic action.\textsuperscript{116} In these songs or song cycles,
the narrator retreats into the background so that the characters can speak in their own voices. As
Lap Lam concludes, the artistry of these songs is rough, but their purpose is to amuse the
audience in an instant and humorous manner.\textsuperscript{117} Obviously, these narrative-style songs are
arranged in a format suitable for performance.

The compilation of the Huajian ji signifies that an obvious binary subdivision in the mode of
poetic expression took place between the common songs and literati compositions. Most of the
lyrics in the Huajian ji each involve a narrative element,\textsuperscript{118} possibly because they were
composed in the oral performance context. However, compared with Dunhuang songs, literati
lyrics generally do not focus on narrating a story. The works of the orthodox lyricist Wen
Tingyun are characterized by the insufficiency of narrative content. He set up a tradition of
highly imagistic expression for literati lyrics. In his lyrics, he loved to list a series of images
without revealing a logical or causal sequence. Many of his lyrics contain a minimum of, or
even no, descriptions about a character’s actions. Few verbs are used. As a result, no narrative

\textsuperscript{113} Kang-i Sun Chang, \textit{The Evolution of Chinese Tz‘u Poetry: from Late T’ang to Northern Sung}, p. 19; Ren Erbei, \textit{Dunhuang qu chutan}, p. 303.
\textsuperscript{114} Lap Lam, “High versus Low: Elite Criticism and Popular Lyrics,” pp. 70-72.
\textsuperscript{115} QTWDC 935-36.
\textsuperscript{116} Kang-i Sun Chang, \textit{The Evolution of Chinese Tz‘u poetry: from Late T’ang to Northern Song}, pp. 20-21.
\textsuperscript{117} Lap Lam, “High versus Low: Elite Criticism and Popular Lyrics,” p. 72.
\textsuperscript{118} Wu Shichang, \textit{Cilin xinhua}, p. 166.
frame or line is discernible. This feature is also noticeable in lyrics of other Huajian poets. Ouyang Jiong’s lyric to the tune Geng lou chang 更漏長 is an extreme example. It completely lacks narrative content and only presents the evocative setting. No human actions and emotions are projected. We can view this poem as the extreme end of the spectrum moving away from dramatic or narrative popular poetry.

Though some literati, such as Wen Tingyun, consciously rejected the narrative component, many more poets incorporated it into their lyrics. Wei Zhuang 韋庄 (836-910), Li Yu 李煜 (937-978), and Liu Yong are good examples of this practice. Like common songs, their lyrics often narrate a story in relatively simple structure. These lyricists tended to outline events by providing explicit temporal and spatial information so readers could easily reconstruct the story. This compositional technique is called by some traditional critics baimiao 白描 (plain sketch), a term derived from Chinese painting. Wei Zhuang is the first literati lyricist to make heavy use of this technique. Liu Yong developed the devices of line-leading words (lingzi 領字) and puchen 舖陳 (exhaustive exposition) or puxu 舖敘 (extended and detailed narration) to explore narrative elements in his manci poems, but in terms of structure, Liu Yong’s lyrics “still follow the traditional linear, straightforward approach.” Contributing innovatively to the development of the narrative tendency respectively, their practice prepared the way for the further innovations undertaken by Zhou Bangyan.

6 The Explicit and the Implicit

To instantly attract as many audiences as possible at a public occasion, common songs were generally composed in an explicit manner. The explicit mode of expression is one of the most salient aesthetic features of common songs. Dunhuang songs, for example, abound with plain diction, expressive phrases, and simple metaphors. The poetic voice in these songs often makes

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120 QTWDC 464.


explicit statements to assert its own independent existence. The extant Tang lyrics attributed to literati such as Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842) are also stylistically close to explicit and direct common songs. We can hardly find the sophisticated techniques that might have been expected in refined literati poems of later times, suggesting the influence of folk song traditions on the Tang literati’s compositions.

Wen Tingyun’s lyrics represent the extreme opposite end of the spectrum because they move away from the explicit and straightforward common songs. Avoiding direct expressions of emotion, he depicts women or scenery in a detached tone. The lyrical voice is not obvious in his poems. Instead, it is implied through the juxtaposition of various compatible images. Kang-i Sun Chang raises the notion of the “rhetoric of implicit meaning” when she describes this unique mode of expression. As Marsha Wagner points out, the process of interpreting the implicit associations of the juxtaposed images in Wen’s poems “encourages the audience to participate in the emotional or psychological state being evoked by the poem.”

It is these verses of refined and evocative style that shaped the literati lyrics of later times.

Most literati lyrics fall between these two extremes. Some lyricists, such as Wei Zhuang, Li Yu, Liu Yong, and Su Shi, adopted the explicit mode of expression of common songs. Very often, they used explicit statements that were used in common songs to express strong emotions. Their songs are characterized by an uninterrupted flow of syntax and a fully-expressed poetic voice. Other literati’s works exemplify a stylistic tendency to be more implicit. These lyricists include Zhou Bangyan, Jiang Kui, Wu Wenying, and the loyalist-lyricists during the post-Southern Song Dynasty. The insufficiency of a logical or causal sequence combined with an implicit expression of emotion makes their lyrics subject to various and differing interpretations.

When the oral performance tradition was gradually abandoned and more emphasis was placed upon the literary aspects of the lyric, the orthodox critics proposed an implicit mode of expression. This doctrine reflected the influence of traditional shi poetics on lyrics. Liu Xie 刘勰 (fl. 5th century) expresses an important literary concept of yin 隱 (latent, recondite): “The latent is the layered significance that lies beyond the text. … The latent is fully accomplished in

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123 Kang-i Sun Chang, The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u poetry: From Late T’ang to Northern Song, pp. 35-42.
complex and multiple concepts." According to him, shi should be written in a literary and elusive way to elicit a haunting message in readers’ mind for them to contemplate. This haunting message is generated by multiple layers of meanings or concepts conveyed or implied in the text. The layered meanings of a text often results in an allegorical reading, as we find in the allegorical exegesis of the Shijing and Chuci. Such a highly cultured compositional approach proposed by Liu Xiu was also reiterated by lyric critics. Huang Shang is the first to impose upon the lyric allegorical reading traditionally applied to the Shijing. Zhang Lei praised his contemporary He Zhu’s lyrics as “hidden and terse like poems by Qu [Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-278 BC)] and Song [Yu 宋玉],” which were generally interpreted as political allegories by traditional scholars. In addition, Wang Zhuo finds that works by He Zhu and Zhou Bangyan demonstrate the quality of elusiveness: “How can [we say that] Liu Yong understood Li sao? Only He Fanghui [He Zhu] and Zhou Meicheng [Zhou Bangyan] obtained it at times.” Hu Yin 胡寅 (1098-1156), by averring that the lyric is an offshoot of the Chuci 楚辭 and Shijing, tried to establish a positive lineage of historical antecedents for the lyric genre. Since these antecedents are featured with affective images and elusive language that invite allegorical interpretation, the lyric is also considered to be subject to such readings. Obviously, all these critics believed that a refined poem should be composed in an implicit manner so as to rouse the reader’s subtle and prolonged associations beyond the immediate sense of the words.

The emphasis on an implicit style is the result of the maturation of the lyric form and is consistent with literati aesthetic standards. Because they were still deeply influenced by the oral-performance tradition and aimed at appealing to a wider range or audience, the lyrics of the Northern Song focused on immediacy rather than rhetoric and form; thus they tended to be more

128 柳何敢知世間有離騷，惟賀方回，周美成時時得之。 Wang Zuo, Biji manzhi, p. 84.
natural, straightforward, and explicit.\textsuperscript{131} It seems as if these lyrics were not the result of painstaking effort but rather of a flow of natural emotion. A large portion of Northern Song xiaoling lyrics express momentary feelings, which are so subtle and transitory that quite often their nuance can only be communicated through impressionistic descriptions. Because of its brevity, a xiaoling poem is more concentrated and focuses on one aspect of a situation. The longer manci form, on the contrary, allows room for complexities of mood and diversified poetic elements; therefore, it demands a well-organized structure. The structure of earlier literati man songs was relatively simple and straightforward, but in the Southern Song Dynasty, literati man songs gradually lost their transparent and spontaneous qualities when literati increasingly relied on complicated rhetoric devices to compose lyrics. This trend was developed to its fullest degree in the hands of the Southern Song lyricists Jiang Kui and Wu Wenying, whose works are featured by the heavy use of literary devices, including metonymy, textual allusion, syntactical inversion, etc. Having almost completely lost the immediacy of appeal to readers, such lyrics were viewed by critics as ge (opaque, implicit).\textsuperscript{132}

This completes the review of the contrasting attributes in the six perspectives of the lyric during its evolution till the Song period. Let us now turn to an examination of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics between the popular culture and literati tradition and, to be specific, examine how his lyrics oscillate between the contrasting attributes of zheng and bian, musicality and textuality, poetic and narrative tendency, the assumed female voice and the male voice, and the implicit and explicit, respectively, in the following five chapters. By situating Zhou’s lyrics within the contrasting attributes of manifold perspectives, I attempt to detect the unique role of his lyrics in canonizing the lyric through establishing an elegant style emulated by innumerous literati of later times.

\textsuperscript{131} Lap Lam, “High versus Low: Elite Criticism and Popular Lyrics,” p. 61.

\textsuperscript{132} Wang Guowei, Renjian cihua, pp. 4248-49. Grace Fong defines ge as a poetic sensibility that “is most apparent in a certain semantic ambiguity arising from the implicit embodiment of emotion in imagery, the use of a more complex language involving frequent allusions and metonyms, and a denser syntax.” Grace Fong, Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry, p. 41.
Chapter 2
Biography

Zhou Bangyan (courtesy name Meicheng 美成, style name Qingzhen Hermit 清真居士) has been regarded by many critics as a lyric master, akin to Liu Yong and Su Shi, who changed the direction in which the genre developed. His lyrics are not as straightforward and “vulgar” as Liu Yong’s, nor do they resemble Su Shi’s masculine style. Zhou’s greatest achievement is that he developed a unique style that absorbed the merits of both popular songs and literati lyrics. The formation of this unique style is closely connected to Zhou Bangyan’s background, including his family, personality, education, political career, and private life. This information will shed light not only upon Zhou Bangyan’s disposition, which influences his behavior throughout his life, but also his basic capital that contributed to his literary achievements. By investigating Zhou’s disposition and basic capital, we can understand both his effort to achieve a balance between the high and low culture when faced with the existing generic conventions and deviations in lyric composition and performance as well as the crucial role he played in the process of canonization of lyrics.

Though Zhou Bangyan is recognized as one of the most important lyricists in Chinese history, very limited information is available about his life. Songshi 宋史 and two other Song source books, Dongdu shilüe 東都事略 and Xianchun Lin’an zhi 咸淳臨安志, provide brief descriptions of his life. Based on these descriptions and other fragments of historical records scattered among various gazetteers, non-official historical writings and literati notes, Chinese scholars throughout the centuries have labored to provide a rough overview of Zhou Bangyan’s entire life. Among these scholars, the most noteworthy are Wang Guowei, Sun Hong, and Xue Ruisheng, whom I have mentioned in Introduction. The existence of their study relieves me of the need to provide certain background material that might otherwise be necessary and allows me to focus on an aspect of Zhou Bangyan’s works within the cultural context that has been noted but rarely explored in any depth.

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Due to insufficient source material, many basic questions about Zhou Bangyan’s life still remain unresolved. It is also impossible for us to obtain information about his life from his literary works other than his lyrics, for his complete works were lost by the time of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and may have been lost earlier. In addition, we cannot rely on his lyrics and rhapsodies because these two types of composition generally do not say much about the author, even though his lyrics, at times, may contain oblique references to his own experiences. Consequently, the reliable data about Zhou Bangyan’s life can only provide very basic data on his personality and cultural capital. Because of this, we have to, at times, rely on the prudent use of anecdotes to examine Zhou Bangyan’s life. Below is an extremely popular anecdote about Zhou Bangyan.

The Emperor [Huizong] favored Li Shishi’s house with a visit, where it happened that Zhou Bangyan had preceded him. When he learned it was the Emperor who had come, Bangyan hid under the bed. The Emperor had brought with him a fresh orange which, he said, had just been sent up from the South. He joked with Shishi while Bangyan listened to everything they said and then put it into his song set to the tune Shaonian you …

[On another occasion] Li Shishi sang this song, and the Emperor asked who wrote it. She said, “It is Zhou Bangyan’s song.”

The Emperor was very angry. At court he summoned Cai Jing and said, “The Tax Inspector of Kaifeng,^{2} Zhou Bangyan – I understand he has not sent in any returns. Why has the Mayor not reported it?”

Cai Jing did not know what to say in reply, and said, “Let me go summon the Mayor and ask him; then I will come back to report.”

When the Mayor arrived, Cai told him the Emperor’s request. The Mayor said, “But Zhou Bangyan’s returns are especially large.”

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^{2} No other records show Zhou Bangyan had ever held such a position.
Cai said, “It is the Emperor’s wish. All you can do is to banish him to satisfy the Emperor.”

Zhou Bangyan was dismissed from office and told to get out of the city at once. A day or so later the Emperor again favored Li Shishi with a visit, but did not find her at home. When he asked, he was told she had gone to see off Tax Inspector Zhou. The Emperor had been relieved to think that Bangyan was out of the city, and since he was already in her house, he sat down and waited. After a long time Li Shishi finally came back, with sorrowful face and tearful eyes, obviously overcome with grief.

“Where have you been?” the Emperor asked furiously.

“I deserve to die for it, but when I learned that Zhou Bangyan was banished from the capital, I thought I might bring him a cup of wine to drink at parting. I did not know Your Majesty was coming.”

“Did he write a song?”

“There is one to the tune *Lanling wang.*” This is the piece starting with the line “A line of reflected willows.”

“Sing it for me.”

“Let me offer you a cup of wine while I sing it to pledge your health.”

When the song was done, the Emperor was so delighted. He recalled Zhou Bangyan and made him Supervisor of the Grand Music Bureau.³

Later Zhou Bangyan’s official career culminated in the position of Rescript of the Grand Music Bureau. Zhou Bangyan gained his fame as an exemplary lyricist and everyone praised his lyrics. However, nobody knows that Zhou Bangyan’s prose is also worthy of reading. He composed “Biandu fu” (Rhapsody on the Capital Bian). His essays, memorials, and miscellaneous writings are all masterworks. However,

³ Sun Hong’s research shows Zhou Bangyan never held this position. Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Qingzhen shiji xinzheng,” pp. 66-74.
these writings have been overshadowed by Zhou Bangyan’s overwhelming fame as an excellent lyricist.4

道君幸李師師家，偶周邦彥先在焉。知道君至，遂匿於床下。道君自攜新橙一顆云江南初進來，遂與師師謔語，邦彥悉聞之，隱括成《少年遊》云……師師因歌此詞。道君問誰作，李師師奏云：“周邦彥詞。”道君大怒，坐朝宣諭蔡京云：“開封府有監稅周邦彥者，聞課額不登，如何京尹不按發來？”蔡京罔知所以，奏云：“容臣退朝，呼京尹叩問，續得複奏。”京尹至，蔡以御前聖旨諭之。京尹云：“惟周邦彥課額增羞。”蔡云：“上意如此，只得還就。”將上得旨：“周邦彥職事廢弛，可日下押出國門。”隔一二日，道君複幸李師師家，不見李師師，問其家，知送周監稅。道君方以邦彥出國門為喜，既至不遇。坐久，至更初，李始歸，愁眉淚睫，憔悴可掬。道君大怒云：“尔去那裡去？”李奏：“臣妾萬死，知周邦彥得罪，押出國門，略致一杯相別，不知官家來。”道君問：“曾有詞否？”李奏云：“有《蘭陵王》詞。”今“柳蔭直”者是也。道君云：“唱一遍看。”李奏云：“容臣妾奉一杯，歌此詞為官家壽。”曲終，道君大喜，複召為大晟樂正。後官至大晟樂樂府待制。邦彥以詞行，當時皆稱美成詞，殊不知美成文章大有可觀，作《汴都賦》，如牋奏雜著，皆是傑作，可惜以詞掩其他文也。

This story was recorded by a Southern Song anecdotist Zhang Duanyi 張端義 (1177-1241) in his Gui’er ji 貴耳集. It also appears in other Song literati’s notes with some modifications.5 This anecdote has spread so widely that, even today, it continues to be presented through various media to audiences. Although it is almost surely apocryphal,6 like many other anecdotes about Zhou Bangyan, it does reveal some essential features of Zhou’s life.

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5 Zhou Mi, Haoranzhai yatan 浩然齋雅談. juan xia. Siku quanshu ed. Another version is quoted by Shen Xiong 沈雄 from Chen Hu’s 陳鵠 Jijiu xuwen 耆舊續聞 in his Gujin cihua 古今詞話 (CHCB ed.), p. 779.

1 A Non-conformist

The Li Shishi anecdote portrays Zhou Bangyan as a non-conformist. Though the romantic story narrated in this anecdote is apocryphal, it is true that Zhou Bangyan spent much time in the company of courtesans and developed a close relationship with them, at least during his early years. Such a romantic lifestyle was common in the bustling metropolises of Bianjing (present-day Kaifeng) and Hangzhou, the cities where Zhou Bangyan grew up and lived. Zhou Bangyan spent his first twenty-two years in his hometown Qiantang (today’s Hangzhou) before he left for the capital Bianjing, where he lived for the following nine years.

Serving as the capital and seat of the imperial government during the Northern and Southern Song respectively, both Bianjing and Hangzhou (Lin’an in the Southern Song) were among the largest cities in the world. By 1100, the civilian population within Bianjing was 1.05 million, with a total population of 1.4 million if the army stationed there was included. Hangzhou had more than 400,000 inhabitants during the late 12th century. Owing to a booming commodity economy, these cities were developed beyond administrative purposes into centers of trade and industry.

The urban society of the cities was very prosperous. After the curfew was abolished in 1063, marketplaces in Bianjing were open every hour of the day. Lively activity in the markets did not begin to wane until the evening meal of the day. A wide variety of social clubs for affluent people became popular, and there were dozens of clubs in Hangzhou City alone. There were lavish garden spaces designed for those wishing to stroll, and people often took their boats out on the lake to entertain guests or to stage boat races. People in urban areas enjoyed theatrical drama on stage, restaurants that offered a variety of regional cooking, as well as lavish clothing and apparel sold in the markets. Also, both urban and rural people engaged in seasonal festivities and religious holidays throughout the year.

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The entertainment quarters of Bianjing, Hangzhou, and other big cities were highly developed during this period. Stephen H. West asserts that Bianjing was the first real center where the performing arts became “an industry, a conglomerate involving theatre, gambling, prostitution, and food.”¹⁰ The entertainment quarters featured more than a hundred performers including actors, storytellers, fortunetellers, acrobats, and puppeteers, as well as tea houses and restaurants. It is recorded that Bianjing had more than fifty entertainment quarters and Lin’an had at least thirty-two.¹¹ Some of the theatres located in these pleasure districts were large enough to entertain audiences of several thousand, drawing huge crowds that were composed of people from every class. Games and entertainment were an all-day affair. Wine houses were everywhere, and the taverns and singing girl houses were open until two o’clock in the morning.¹²

In these entertainment quarters, the strict social morals and formalities otherwise prevalent in the society could be largely ignored. Though the audience and clients were composed of royal family members, government officials, scholars, and wealthy people, the entertainers and actors were generally from the lowest social groups in society. Courtesans were active in the markets. A great number of registered and commercial courtesans performed to amuse guests in wine houses, teashops, theatres, and restaurants. Their clients included the distinguished literati of the time, such as Ouyang Xiu, Liu Yong, Zhang Xian, and Qin Guan, to name just a few. It was common for the literati-clients to write lyrics for courtesans, and many government officials also had a close relationship with courtesans. During the Xining era (1068-1077), when Zu Wuze 祖無擇 (1006-1085), the Manager of the affairs of Hangzhou, was put into jail because of bribery, he was also charged with having sex with a registered courtesan, which was forbidden in the Song era.¹³

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The prosperous, mundane, and romantic world of the entertainment quarters profoundly influenced Zhou Bangyan’s personality. In his personal life, he was known as an eccentric and a romantic, and these tendencies found expression in his lyrics as well as his lifestyle. The official biographies of Zhou Bangyan all describe him as having a liberal attitude towards ethical formalities, as well as a particularly romantic life when he was young. Because of his distaste for tradition and authority, he was not highly regarded in his hometown. Though we do not have detailed information about Zhou Bangyan’s early years, it is reasonable for us to assume that he was extremely familiar with the flourishing pleasure quarters and that he enjoyed the company of courtesans. Zhou Bangyan spent most of his first thirty-one years in Qiantang and Bianjing, first as a student in the National University 太學 and then as an acting director 試太學正. He therefore had an abundance of spare time to frequent the entertainment quarters. Some scholars suspect that Zhou Bangyan was not enrolled in the National University until 1082, so it is possible that he spent most of his time in the entertainment quarters during his first three or four years in Bianjing.\textsuperscript{14} Anecdotes abound about Zhou’s romantic affairs with courtesans; from these anecdotes, it can be inferred that he led a somewhat dissolute life.

Zhou Bangyan’s frequent companionship with courtesans is featured in his compositions. His lyrics about romantic affairs hint that he fell in love with more than one courtesan, though, generally, the descriptions of the female personas in these lyrics are not specific, with the only exception being \textit{Dian jiang chun} 點絳脣.\textsuperscript{15} It is recorded that when Zhou Bangyan went to Suzhou in 1108, he visited an army courtesan called Yue Chuyun 岳楚雲, who was his favorite courtesan many years ago. Knowing that Yue had been married for several years, Zhou composed a poem set to the tune \textit{Dian jiang chun} when he met Yue Chuyun’s younger sister at a prefect’s banquet the next day.\textsuperscript{16} Spending much of his life in the company of courtesans, Zhou Bangyan composed, probably dashed off at parties, many songs for them to sing.

Zhou Bangyan’s relationship with Su Shi and his followers indicates that he had an unconventional mind. When Zhou Bangyan was a teenager in Qiantang, Su Shi was already the

\textsuperscript{14} Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Qingzhen shiji xinzheng,” p. 42.
\textsuperscript{15} QSC 2/615.
\textsuperscript{16} Wang Zhuo, \textit{Biji manzhi}, p. 90.
leading figure in the circle of literati. Su Shi’s high official standing combined with his literary fame led him to live an extremely active social life. During his term of office in Hangzhou, he got acquainted with and befriended many literati, including Chao Duanyou 晁端友 (1029-1075) and Zhou Bangyan’s uncle, Zhou Bin 周邠. Chao Duanyou’s son, Chao Buzhi, who accompanied his father in Hangzhou, presented an article about Hangzhou’s scenery to Su Shi through his father. With this article Chao Buzhi won Su Shi’s appreciation and became one of his four loyal disciples. Unlike Chao Buzhi, Zhou Bangyan never showed any interest in Su Shi or his society of friends, even though Zhou Bangyan was very fond of and good at literary writings. One possible reason is that he travelled to Jingzhou and Chang’an from 1073 to 1075, thus missing the opportunity to meet Su Shi when the latter was in Hangzhou; however, it is still unusual that there are no records that show any connection between the two, especially because Zhou Bangyan’s uncle was Su Shi’s friend.

There are several possible reasons for Zhou’s unusual behavior. First, it is reasonable for us to surmise that Zhou Bangyan was very confident about his literary talent. Being a gifted young man, he did not show his admiration of the leading literati of his time. His later practice demonstrated that in literary composition he had unique perceptions and established his own standards. Second, his behavior could possibly be explained by the different political stance that Zhou Bangyan took compared to that of Su Shi. Starting in the mid-Northern Song, the promulgation of the reform laws and measures polarized the political world and forced the literati to take sides. Su Shi and his disciples were all supporters of the Old or Conservative Party, which was against Wang Anshi’s radical socioeconomic reforms. Zhou Bin also opposed the reforms. Zhou Bangyan, on the contrary, praised the reforms in his “Rhapsody on the

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17 Songshi, juan 444, p. 13111.
18 Su Shi was in Hangzhou from 1072 to 1074. Zhou Bangyan left Hangzhou for Jingzhou 荆州 in the spring of 1073. He did not return to Hangzhou until late autumn of 1075. See Sun Hong, “Qingzhen shiji xinzheng,” p. 99.
19 In the face of the weakness on the part of the central government and the military threat from the nomad tribes living along China’s northern borders, the intellectuals of the Northern Song debated on how to solve the problem. The New or Reform faction, led by Wang Anshi, implemented a number of far-reaching reforms, but often with disastrous results. The Old or Conservative faction, headed by Sima Guang 司馬光, preferred a slow and measured approach to change, feeling that all too often it was the common people who suffered most in the execution of quick reforms. For a discussion of the reforms, see Tzu-chien Liu’s Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and His New Policies. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959, pp. 1-10.
20 Zhou Bin was punished because he was against the reform measures. Xianchun Lin’an zhi, juan 66, p. 3959. Li Tao, Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian, juan 301, p. 7333.
Capital Bian.” Some scholars believe that Zhou Bangyan was a committed member of the Reform Party.  

Third, Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng’s recent research suggests that Zhou Bangyan probably lacked moral values in his later years. This could be the reason why Zhou Bangyan was ignored by Su Shi and his followers. However, the second and third viewpoints cannot explain Su Shi and his followers’ indifferent attitude towards Zhou during Zhou’s early and middle years.

2 Moderately Successful Official Career

During his early years, Zhou Bangyan’s career in officialdom was not very successful. From 1084 to 1087, he remained as a second-class instructor at the National University, and then, without further promotion, he was transferred to a provincial instructor position in Luzhou (today’s Hefei County, Anhui Province). This transfer was obviously a severe blow to Zhou Bangyan. Throughout the following nine years, he held minor provincial posts, first in Luzhou and then in Lishui County (in Jiangsu Province). In “Chongjin Biandu fu biao” 重進汴都賦表, which he submitted to the Emperor Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1086-1100) in 1098, he recalled this experience bitterly when he wrote: “I was ill-fated and unlucky, and soon encountered vicissitudes. Unable to accommodate myself to the times, I was dismissed and set adrift, several years all by myself.”

Zhou Bangyan implied that the polarized political climate during Shenzong’s reign (r. 1067-1085) and the return to power of the Conservative Party at the beginning of Zhezong’s reign caused his dismissal from the National University and demotion to the provinces.

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22 Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Qingzhen ji jiaozhu”, preface.


24 With regard to this dismissal from the National University, scholars have provided different explanations. Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng believe this transfer of positions was regular and normal, while Shen Songqing thinks it was due to the fall of the Reform Party, which Zhou Bangyan supported. See Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Preface,” pp. 8-11, “Qingzhen shiji xinzhen,” pp. 47-49. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu; Shen Songqing 沈松勤, Cijia zhiguan: Zhou Bangyan zhuo 詞家之冠: 周邦彥傳. Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2006, pp. 47-58.
Zhou Bangyan’s experience as a drifting scholar-official was reflected in his lyrics. Since he moved around from place to place for several years as a low official, Zhou Bangyan found himself among low-rank subordinates, and his frustration over his unfulfilled ambitions found expression in his poems about wretched and lonely wanderers. A large portion of his extant lyrics include themes about travelers’ loneliness on the road, nostalgic moments in strange lands, and a desire to withdraw from official life.

After reaching middle age, Zhou Bangyan experienced continuous promotions. In 1097, one year after the reversal of political fortunes that brought the Reform Party back into power under Zhezong’s reign, he was recalled by the Emperor to be the Recorder of the Directorate of Education. Over the next fourteen years, Zhou Bangyan held a succession of academic posts in the central government, including that of Proofreader of the Palace Library, Editor of the Palace Library, Vice Director of the Bureau of Evaluations, Vice Minister of the Court of the Imperial Regalia, Vice Minister of the Court of the Imperial Clan, and culminating in the position of Director of the Palace Library. The latter was his highest appointment.

During Huizong’s reign, Zhou Bangyan became a high official, and, as a result, his social circles in this period were comprised of people from established high-ranking bureaucracy. He gained the appreciation of Emperor Huizong, who designated him a compiler of *Wuli xinyi* (The new observances for the five rituals). A compilation of new court rituals in over a thousand chapters, this work was an important part of Huizong’s attempt to glorify his reign. Extant documents show that Zhou kept close contact with people in high positions of power, including Chancellor Cai Jing (1047-1126) and Superintendent of the Grand Music Bureau, Liu Bing. After becoming an established high-ranking official, Zhou Bangyan was able to

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25 Scholars have different opinions on how Zhou stepped in high office after 1097. Wang Guowei believes that Zhou did not belong to any party, thus his promotion was normal. Shen Songqing states that Zhou Bangyan was a supporter of the Reform Party and benefited from the resurgence of the Party. Sun Hong, however, insists that Zhou was promoted frequently because he attached himself to the notorious Chancellor Cai Jing. See Wang Guowei, “Qingzhen xiansheng yishi,” *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, pp. 462-63; Shen Songqing, *Cijia zhiguan: Zhou Bangyan zhuang*, pp. 64-84; Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Preface,” pp. 11-12. “Qingzhen shiji xinzheng,” pp. 56-66, *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*.

26 Though Zhou Bangyan is one of the compilers, his name was not included in the memorial accompanying the compilation’s presentation to the Emperor Huizong. Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng think this was because by that time Zhou Bangyan had already been transferred to a new post. Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, “Qingzhen shiji xinzheng,” *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, pp. 53-56.
participate in the extravagance of the most powerful people in high society. His relatively comfortable life and academic involvement at various national organizations are reflected in the stylistic features of some of his lyrics. In addition to including delicate and restrained characteristics of traditional lyrics, Zhou Bangyan’s verses are also vigorous, decorous, and dignified, demonstrating lushness and canonical gravity. As a scholar-official devoted to promoting rituals and high culture, Zhou Bangyan, despite his early years in the entertainment quarters, imbued his compositions with the elegance and refinement valued by the elite class.

3 Musical Talent

Like Liu Yong, Zhou Bangyan was also an expert in music. It is worth noting that both were famous for their mode of dissolute living, especially during their early years. Obviously, their musical knowledge was largely derived from their frequent interaction with singing girls and musicians from the entertainment quarters. According to Xianchun Lin’an zhi, Zhou Bangyan was so confident about his competence in music that, by naming his hall Guqu 頻曲 (paying attention to the melody), he compared himself to the music expert Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175-210), who was also a military general and strategist serving under the warlords Sun Ce and Sun Quan in the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220).27

Zhou Bangyan was familiar with the new popular melodies and helped to enrich and promote lyric tunes by using some of the new popular tunes in his lyric compositions. Of the total eighty-seven tunes Zhou Bangyan used in his Pianyu ji 片玉集, only one fourth evolved from music tunes of earlier times and the rest were new tunes that had emerged during the Song era.28 His adoption and improvement of the tune Lizhi xiang is a good example to illustrate how he absorbed new popular music. Before Zhou Bangyan, only Liu Yong had written one poem to this popular tune Lizhi xiang. It is obvious that Liu Yong turned Lizhi xiang into a lyric tune because of his musical talent and familiarity with popular music. Zhou Bangyan followed Liu

27 Zhou Yu was an expert in music. He was so sensitive to melodies that he could detect the errors of a performance even after he had drunk a lot. Every time when he found the error, he always turned to look at the performers. Consequently, people said: “If there is an error of the music, the Young Zhou will definitely pay attention to it.” 瑜少精意于音乐。虽三爵之后，其有阙误。瑜必知之，知之必顾，故时人谣曰：“曲有误，周郎顾。” Chen Shou 陈寿, Sanguo zhi 三国志. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959, juan 54, p. 1265.

Yong by composing one poem to the same tune. Based on this tune, he developed another new tune, *Lizhi xiang jin* 荔枝香近. According to *Qingding cipu* 欽定詞譜 and *Quan Songci* 全宋詞, the Southern Song lyricists composed more than ten poems to these two tunes by modeling on Liu Yong’s and Zhou Bangyan’s works. During the Huizong period, as I mentioned in the Introduction section, the Grand Music Bureau collected the old Tang tune *Lizhi xiang* and had it polished and promoted throughout the empire. In this way, Zhou Bangyan adopted the tune after the Bureau turned it from popular music into elegant music acceptable to the elite class. It is clear that Zhou Bangyan was a quick learner of new popular tunes and there was a close interaction between Zhou and the Grand Music Bureau.

Zhou Bangyan’s ability to compose new tunes was widely recognized. Of the 127 lyrics in the core group, thirty-nine new tunes were used, which is forty-five percent of the total eighty-seven tunes. If we take into consideration all the 197 lyrics attributed to Zhou Bangyan, the number of new tunes rises to forty-nine, which amounts to forty percent of the total one hundred and twenty-two tunes used. Zhou therefore became one of the most prolific composers of new lyric tunes during the Song Dynasty, second only to Liu Yong. Though Zhou Bangyan did not produce as many new tunes as Liu Yong did, his tunes were much more influential than Liu’s. One important reason is, as Kang-i Sun Chang indicates, no two of Liu Yong’s man songs written to the same tune have identical metrical patterns. This irregularity could have been an obstacle for the literati who lacked musical knowledge to use Liu’s songs as standard metrical patterns. Zhou Bangyan’s tunes, because of their refined and elegant qualities as well as their

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29 Zhou Bangyan renamed the tune “Lizhi xiang jin” 荔枝香近. The lyric is the same as Liu Yong’s “Lizhi xiang” except that the last character of the upper stanza is missing. *QSC* 2/596.


31 According to Wu Zeyu 吳則虞, there are two textual traditions for Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics. One is *Xiangzhu Zhou Meicheng Pianyu ji* 評註周美成片玉集 compiled by Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍, which includes 127 poems. The other is *Pianyu ci* 片玉詞 compiled by Qiang Huan 強煥, which includes 194 poems. Wu Zeyu made a thorough investigation about different versions of Zhou’s collection. For his research, see “Banben kaobian” 版本考辯 in Wu Zeyu comm. *Qingzhen ji* 清真集. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, pp. 169-182. Many scholars have noticed that the total number of lyrics attributed to Zhou Bangyan kept on growing throughout the centuries. Wang Guowei, after examining different editions of Zhou Bangyan’s collections, found Chen’s *Pianyu ji* to be the most reliable. Robert Hale Smithiram supported Wang’s opinion, and called the 127 poems collected in *Pianyu ji* as the core group of Zhou’s lyrics. Robert Hale Smithiram, “The Lyrics of Zhou Bangyan (1056-1121),” pp. 79-85. I agree with their viewpoints and in this research, I will focus on the 127 lyrics in the core group.

32 See Appendix.

unified format, found wide acceptance in high culture circles. Almost all of his new tunes were widely used by lyricists of later times.

Zhou Bangyan often composed new tunes by himself. His masterpiece *Liu chou* 六醜 displays his outstanding musical gifts.\(^{34}\) According to an anecdote, Zhou Bangyan took six segments from different tunes to compose the new tune *Liu chou*.\(^{35}\) These segments are all melodious but difficult to sing. This creative technique is similar to the poetry compositional skill *ji ju* 集句, which involves composing a poem in such a way that the whole poem is made up of lines taken verbatim from earlier poems. *Liu chou* shows that Zhou Bangyan had solid musical knowledge and was very familiar with a large number of lyric tunes.

Zhou Bangyan also produced new tunes through a more complicated method. Unlike Liu Yong, who simply repeated or lengthened a stanza to create new lyric tunes, Zhou Bangyan frequently employed the technique of *fan diao* 犯調 (transient modulation) to develop new tunes. Transient modulation is a term used in Chinese classical music. It involves changing the musical mode within one song, generally two or three times. To employ this technique, the composer must have a high degree of competence in musicology because only specific modes can be used together. The musical mode of Zhou Bangyan’s new tune *Linglong si fan* 玲瓏四犯 changes three times.\(^{36}\) *Hua fan* 花犯 and *Ce fan* 側犯 are two new tunes developed with this technique.\(^{37}\) Though a tune with transient modulation becomes more melodious, it is also more challenging for composers to harmonize between different modes.

In some cases, Zhou Bangyan cooperated with other people to compose new tunes. Wang Zhuo has a record of this: “A person from Jiangnan knew music very well and often composed new tunes by himself. Zhou Meicheng [Zhou Bangyan] was acquainted with him. Every time when this person produced a new tune, [Zhou] wrote song words to the tune. As a result, Zhou’s lyric

\(^{34}\) *QSC* 2/610.
\(^{35}\) Feng Jinbo 馮金伯, *Ciyuan cuibian* 詞宛萃編 (*CHCB* ed.), p.2266.
\(^{36}\) *QSC* 2/597.
\(^{37}\) *QSC* 2/609-10, 602.
collection contains many new tunes.”

The person Wang Zhuo mentioned was probably a musician or a music expert in the entertainment quarters. Though Zhou Bangyan did not compose the tunes, he had to know the music well such that he could write lyrics for the tunes.

4 Literary Talent

Zhou Bangyan’s hometown of Hangzhou was a city rich in the literary tradition. Since the tenth century, this city had been one of the great centers of culture in southern China. It drew scholars from all over China. During the Tang and Song time, numerous accomplished poets, including Bai Juyi, Pan Lang 潘阆 (10th century), Zhang Xian, Liu Yong, Su Shi, Lu You 陆游 (1125-1210), and Xin Qiji, came to live in this city. Thanks to its beautiful natural scenery, glorious history, and prosperous urban culture, Hangzhou has always been among the most important sources of inspiration for Chinese poets. Su Shi’s poetry on the West Lake, the most popular attraction in Hangzhou, is still chanted today. Legend has it that Liu Yong’s lyric poem about Hangzhou’s picturesque landscape and luxurious life (which was written to the tune of Wang hai chao 望海潮) was so famous that the Jurchen ruler wanted to invade southern China when he read the poem.

Zhou Bangyan’s upbringing inculcated in him his identity as a man of literature. His father Zhou Yuan 周原 did not obtain a jinshi degree, but was capable of writing poems and amassed a large collection of books. Zhou Bangyan’s uncle, Zhou Bin, obtained his jinshi degree in 1063. Zhou Bin had good relationships with Su Shi. In the Xining period, Zhou Bin was assigned to the position of Magistrate of Qiantang County and became a subordinate of Su Shi, who was then the Controller-general of Hangzhou. They joined the same poetry club and exchanged poems with each other. Zhou Bin also came into close contact with other members of Su Shi’s circle of friends, including Qin Guan, Chao Buzhi, and the monk-poet Daoqian 道潛. Influenced

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38 江南某氏者解音律，時時度曲。周美成與有瓜葛，每得一解，即為制詞，故周集中多新聲。Wang Zhuo, Biji manzhi, p. 86.


41 Su Shi composed several poems to Zhou Bin. See Xianchun Lin’an zhi, juan 66, p. 3959; QSS 792/9177-78.
by his father and uncle, Zhou Bangyan read extensively when he was a child. He was particularly interested in history, philosophy, the Daoist classics, and literary writings.

Though Zhou Bangyan was well-known for his lyrics, he also excelled in shi poetry, prose, and calligraphy.42 Chao Buzhi and Zhang Lei admitted that their shi poems could not match Zhou Bangyan’s.43 As suggested in the anecdote about Li Shishi, Zhou’s outstanding literary talent changed his life. In 1084, he presented a seven thousand character “Rhapsody on the Capital Bian” 汴都賦 to the Emperor Shenzong to eulogize the emperor’s reforms. At the time, the emperor was eager to find good literary writings to glorify his new policies. He promoted many literati, such as Qian Changqing 錢長卿 and Jian Zhoufu 蹇周輔, for their outstanding political writings. To reward Zhou Bangyan’s enthusiasm, erudition, and poetic skill, the emperor promoted Zhou Bangyan from a student in the National University to a second-class instructor in the Academy. It is recorded that hundreds of students in the National University presented writings, but only Zhou Bangyan’s rhapsody attracted the emperor’s attention. Having successfully gained the emperor’s favor, Zhou Bangyan emerged as an eminent man of learning, and at once his literary fame spread throughout the empire.44 Shenzong’s two successors, Zhezong and Huizong, also noticed Zhou Bangyan’s “Rhapsody on the Capital Bian.” In 1098, Zhezong asked Zhou Bangyan for a copy of “Rhapsody on the Capital Bian,” which Zhou supplied.45

Zhou Bangyan’s rhapsody displays a deep knowledge of classic texts and Chinese histories, as well as outstanding rhetorical and lexical skills. Following the tradition of the capitals’ rhapsodies of Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) and Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139), Zhou’s rhapsody provides an expanded description of terrains, palaces, hunting parks, markets, and prominent buildings of the capital. It also praises the accomplishments of a series of reforms promoted by the emperor that sought to build up national wealth and military power. The rhapsody is highlighted by the use of florid language and archaic characters. An entry recorded in Wenxian tongkao 文獻通考

43 Chen Yu, Cangyi huayu, wai bian juan shang, Siku quanshu ed.
45 See Xianchun Lin ‘an zhi. juan 66, p. 3959; Songshi, juan 444, p. 13126.
demons demonstrates that to read such highly literary writing was a challenge, even for established scholar-officials. When the rhapsody was submitted, the emperor had it read aloud. It was generally the chancellor’s duty to fulfill this task. However, assuming that the rhapsody might be full of unusual characters, the chancellor passed it down to the next official, who, out of the same concern, made the same decision. Finally, Li Qingchen 李清臣 completed this task. He recited the rhapsody aloud as though the characters were all familiar. However, when asked how he knew so many unusual characters, he replied that he was just pronouncing them according to the phonetic elements in each graph.  

Thanks to his remarkable literary competence, Zhou Bangyan held university and library positions most of his life, and also participated in the compilation of important ritual works. His literary capital made him one of the most erudite lyricists of the Song Dynasty, and many of his works clearly draw from a wide cross-section of traditional Chinese literature.

Zhou Bangyan started to write lyrics when he was a teenager. According to Sun Hong, Zhou probably composed his earliest extant lyric, a xiaoling poem set to the tune Nan xiang zi 南鄉子, in 1069 at the age of fourteen. Though this poem is not remarkable in his collection, it contains vivid descriptions and textual allusions typical of Zhou’s lyrics. The two xiaoling poems to the tune Shaonian you 少年遊, which Zhou composed in 1072 at the age of seventeen, are among the best of Zhou’s lyrics. These lyrics show that although Zhou Bangyan’s early compositions were mainly in xiaoling form, he was already able to aptly apply various poetic devices. The well-organized structure and strong narrative element exemplified in these poems indicate that Zhou Bangyan started his exploration of new poetic dimensions in his early years.

5 A Defender of the Literati Tradition

Though Zhou Bangyan’s lyric composition was deeply influenced by popular culture and appealed to a popular audience, he always considered himself a member of the intellectual elite. The most important evidence for this was his attitude toward the distinct poetic forms of shi and


47 Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 579. QSC 2628, no 4.

48 Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 579. QSC 2/599.

49 For the date of the poem, see Sun Hong’s discussion in Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 579.
lyrics. As mentioned before, in order to defend lyrics against the orthodox shi genre, the literati lyricists of the ninth century adopted a conservative concept of generic distinction between shi and lyrics. By the early Northern Song, the literati lyric form was used almost solely to explore a relatively narrower poetic world (for example, an individual’s private world) that was usually characterized by feminine, sentimental, and sometimes feeble qualities.

Zhou Bangyan firmly carried on this literati tradition of a generic distinction between shi and lyrics. He never composed a single lyric poem that can be categorized as the masculine haofang style, for such poems blur the boundary between shi and lyrics. Thematically, he strictly limited his lyrics within the scope of the Huajian school. His attitude was conservative compared to that of Su Shi, Zhou’s senior by twenty years, who attempted to widen the thematic scope of lyrics. This caused some critics to think that Zhou’s lyrics lack the lofty aspirations and ideological depth that was found in Su Shi and Jiang Kui’s works. Many modern scholars also criticize Zhou for being indifferent to the country’s political situation. This disapproval reveals a partial truth. However, we must realize that Zhou Bangyan appeared to have been insisting on the distinct identity of the lyric genre.

Though Zhou Bangyan’s complete works have been lost, it is still evident that his shi poetry is very distinct from his lyrics. His shi poem Tian ci bai 天賜白 (The White Horse Bestowed by Heaven) clearly manifests this distinction. When Zhou Bangyan studied at the National University, the Song army was defeated by the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227) and, consequently, Yongle city (located in today’s Mizhi County, Shanxi Province) fell into enemy hands in 1082. Hearing the news, Zhou Bangyan composed Tian ci bai. The poem narrates the military event and describes the disastrous scene of the battlefield. Ascribing the failure to the opinionated commander Xu Xi and his impractical military strategy, Zhou satirizes the

50 Zhang Yan, Ci yuan, p. 266. Wang Guowei, Renjian cihua, p. 4246.
52 Some eighty years after Zhou Bangyan’s death, Lou Yao compiled Zhou’s shi poetry and prose into a collection of twenty-four juan. It was printed during the Jiatai period (1201-1205) according to Chen Zhensun. This collection and the three others listed in Song Dynasty catalog are all lost. Lou Yao’s preface says that although much of Zhou’s work was lost at the time of the Jin invasion, his songs survive. Only a minor portion of his shi, wen, and rhapsody are preserved. Lou Yao, “Qingzhen xiansheng wenji xu,” Gongkui ji, juan 51. Siku quanshu ed.
commanders and laments the miserable fate of the soldiers. In another shi poem, *Xue Hou ma* 薛侯馬 (Xue Hou’s horse), composed in the same period, Zhou Bangyan expresses his sympathy for the unfortunate experience of the rejected hero, Xue Hou. Below are selected lines from the two poems:

The wax ball flew out, the army took leave of the Emperor;  
In front of the tent, the sturdy men all wept tears that fell like rain.  
Digging sand until reaching rocks, they found no water;  
One hundred thousand people in chaos, they were like thirsty ants.

*(Tian ci bai, QSS 1188/13423-424)*

蠟丸飛出辭大家，  
帳下健兒紛雨泣。  
鑿沙到石終無水，  
擾擾萬人如渴蟻。

Every night he tossed away in markets a thousand in gold;  
In the daytime he lay in the hotel room, listening to the drum of plays.  
The frontier soldiers viewed death as a common thing.  
Taking leave of their families with laughter, they marched to battle!

*(Xue hou ma, QSS 1188/13423)*

千金夜出酬市兒，

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54 For details of this military failure, see *Songshi, juan* 486, pp. 14011-012.  
55 In ancient China, confidential letters or orders were sealed in a wax ball.
These two ancient style poems bear little resemblance to Zhou’s lyrics. In terms of theme and style, they are like the masculine and vigorous frontier poetry of the Tang. The representation of violence in Tian ci bai is particularly impressive. Zhou’s extant forty-two shi poems span a wide range of topics and vary in style. He wrote frontier poetry, idyllic poetry, historical poetry, and poetry of the marvelous. Like many writers of the Song period, he tended to convey philosophical discussions and reasoning in his shi poems. His extant wen also varies in terms of themes and genres, while his famous “Rhapsody on the Capital Bian” shows he was very sensitive to the political climate.

Zhou Bangyan’s extant shi and wen, though not numerous, prove that he was not indifferent to the deterioration of the country’s military and political situation in his time, as many modern critics have asserted. Instead he employed the more public genres of shi and wen to deal with political issues, while using lyrics to express private affections and feelings. Some may think that this attitude of generic distinction is conservative, but the fact is that Zhou’s practice found great acceptance and popularity among people of all levels of society.

There is no doubt that, like Liu Yong and Su Shi, Zhou Bangyan also reformed the lyric genre. He explored many novel compositional principles and poetic devices that profoundly changed the genre. However, he was different from Liu and Su in that he was a milder reformer. On one hand, he learned from popular songs but eliminated coarseness and vulgarity; on the other hand, he emphasized intellectuality without being bookish and masculine. He attempted to synthesize all previous styles and reach a balance between the aesthetic dichotomies associated with the popular or elite traditions. As a result, by the late Southern Song, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics had been tremendously popular for almost two centuries among people of all levels.

Zhou Bangyan had a penchant for elegant lyrics. We cannot find his discussion about the lyric genre since his complete works have been long lost, but it is recorded that he wrote a preface to his friend Moqi Yong’s lyric collection:
Yayan [Moqi Yong] at first divided his lyrics into two categories, “elegant lyrics” and “the sensual,” and named the collection Shengxuan lizao (Superb Grass, Ornate Diction). Later when he entered officialdom, he eliminated “the sensual” category for they are too low. He then compiled the remaining poems and recategorized them into five groups: “compositions written upon imperial command,” “wind, moon, and rouge,” “snow, moon, wind, and flower,” “rouge and talent,” and “miscellaneous.” Zhou Meicheng named this collection Dasheng ji (Great Music).56

[萬俟]雅言初自集分兩体，曰“雅詞”，曰“側艷”，目之曰《勝萱麗藻》。后召試入官，以側艷体無聊太甚，削去之。再編成集，分為五体，曰“應製”、曰“風月脂粉”、曰“雪月風花”、曰“脂粉才情”、曰“雜類”。周美成目之曰《大聲集》。

[Moqi Yong] excelled in metrical patterns and styled himself Lyric Recluse. When he served as a Composer in the Grand Music Bureau during the Chongning period (1102-1106), he composed lyrics to [tunes of] designated key signatures every month, so his collection abounds with lyrics written upon the emperor’s order. He had a five-juan collection Great Music with a preface by Zhou Meicheng. Shangu [Huang Tingjian] also praised him as the lyricist of his generation.57

[莫俟詠]精于音律，自號詞隱。崇寧中充大晟府制撰，依月用律制詞，故多應制。所作有《大聲集》五卷，周美成為序，山谷亦稱之為一代詞人。

Apparently Moqi’s new collection, Great Music, reflects the aesthetic standards of elegant lyrics, though both the collection and Zhou Bangyan’s preface have been lost. We can tell from the compilation that both the original and edited versions of the collection contain many lyrics about love, women, and romantic affairs, which the Song literati believed to be orthodox. However, some sensual or even erotic poems were eliminated from Moqi’s new collection for they go beyond propriety. Moqi served in the Grand Music Bureau and composed a large number of lyrics for official usage, thus he was certainly one of the literati who set the standards for elegant

lyrics. As numerous predecessors did, Moqi deleted the poems he considered to be vulgar after he became an official lyricist because such vulgar lyrics may have disgraced his fame and sullied the reputation of the lyric genre. There is no way for us to know what Zhou Bangyan’s preface talks about in detail, but it is safe to believe that Zhou Bangyan advocated the elegant style in lyric writing by giving the book the title *Great Music*. This phrase *dasheng* 大聲 is derived from *Zhuang Zi*: “Great music is lost on the ears of the villagers, but play them ‘The Breaking of the Willow’ or ‘Bright Flowers’ and they grin from ear to ear.”\(^\text{58}\) According to Cheng Xuanyaing’s 成玄英 sub-commentary, “The Breaking of the Willow” and “Bright Flowers” are local vulgar ditties, while “Great Music” refers to elegant music of ancient times.\(^\text{59}\) Comparing Moqi’s lyrics on romantic feelings to ancient elegant music, Zhou Bangyan acknowledged that elegant lyrics should express such feelings in a proper manner.

Zhou Bangyan treated lyrics very seriously. Licentious or erotic lyrics are almost absent in the 127 poems that make up the core group that are confidently attributed to him. Even in the one hundred and eighty odd lyrics attributed to him, such vulgar lyrics count for less than three percent. This percentage is surprisingly small considering the fact that it was common practice for literati to write this kind of lyrics. Zhou rarely depicted erotic scenes,\(^\text{60}\) which we can find readily in Liu Yong’s and Huang Tingjian’s collections. As I discussed in Chapter One, influenced by the Emperor Huizong, many lyricists produced lyrics in a comical and frivolous style for court entertainment. However, of all the lyrics by Zhou Bangyan, there is not one in such an explicitly vulgar style. It is also remarkable that none of Zhou’s extant lyrics praise the illusionary prosperity under Huizong’s reign, though it was the fashion for literati, particularly those serving in the Grand Music Bureau or the emperor’s court, to do so in order to please the emperor, who was extremely eager to glorify his achievements. The following record reveals Zhou Bangyan’s attitude towards this kind of lyric poems:


\(^{60}\) The only exception is *Qing yu an* 青玉案, which is not in the 127 poems of the core group. *QSC* 2/622-23.
Fond of Meicheng’s talent, the Emperor Huizong wanted to keep him. On account of many recent auspicious signs being submitted, the emperor decided to eulogize them with lyrics. He then ordered Cai Yuanchang [Cai Jing] to ask [Zhou Bangyan]. Zhou Bangyan said: “I am already old and regret the writings of my youth.”

徽宗喜美成之才，意將留行，且以近者祥瑞沓至，將使播之樂府，命蔡元長微叩之。邦彥云：“某老矣，頗悔少作。”

Zhou Bangyan’s refusal was probably motivated by his intention to maintain his moral integrity, as some critics claim; another possible reason is that he believed it was improper to employ lyrics in public and political occasions. Due to Zhou Bangyan’s serious attitude toward the lyric genre, his collection demonstrates a much more homogeneous quality when compared with his contemporaries. This is also an important reason why critics view Zhou’s lyrics as a model of elegant style.

Through the above discussion of Zhou Bangyan’s life, we obtain a basic understanding about his personality and cultural capital. Zhou Bangyan had an untrammeled spirit in both his personal life and his literary compositions. He was very familiar with entertainment cultures, from which he derived his musical knowledge as well as his inspiration. Zhou Bangyan’s identity as a man of literature was imparted in him by his upbringing. His success in his political career and continuous academic involvement at national organizations made him an ardent promoter of elegant literature. All these biographical factors shaped Zhou Bangyan’s poetic idea of treating the lyric as a form of serious, elegant, and specialized writing. This idea is embodied in the composition of his lyrics, which will be thoroughly investigated in Chapters Four through Six.

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61 Zhou Mi, Haoranzhai Yatan. juan xia. Siku quanshu ed.
Chapter 3
Circulation of Zhou Bangyan’s Lyrics

The Southern Song orthodox critics treated Zhou Bangyan’s poems as quintessential elegant lyrics, while abundant records show that courtesans and common people performed his lyrics throughout the Song Dynasty. This chapter will examine how Zhou’s lyrics were circulated among different groups of people through various media, revealing that strong musicality and high literary quality together contributed to the prevalence of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics throughout different levels of society.

1 Performance of Zhou Bangyan’s Lyrics in the Song Era

The circulation of lyrics relied heavily on courtesans’ performance during the Song period when the lyric music was extant. It is therefore necessary to discuss the musical quality of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics before we examine how his lyrics were accepted. However, due to the unavailability of the lyric music, I shall draw on research by Chinese scholars and original sources to make a few general observations.

It seemed that Zhou Bangyan was not very interested in using existing popular lyric tunes even though he was quite familiar with them. According to research by two Chinese scholars, Liu Zunming 劉尊明 and Wang Zhaopeng 王兆鵬, the top ten most frequently used lyric tunes were Huan xi sha 浣溪沙, Shui diao ge tou 水調歌頭, Zhe gu tian 鶴鶴天, Niannu jiao 念奴嬌, Pusa man 菩薩蠻, Man jiang hong 滿江紅, Die lian hua 蝶戀花, Xi jiang yue 西江月, Ling jiang xian 臨江仙, and Qin yuan chun 沁園春. However, lyrics set to these tunes only comprise a minor portion of the total corpus of Zhou’s lyrics. Seventeen of his lyrics use four of the above ten tunes: one is set to the tune Man jiang hong, ten to Huan xi sha, five to Die lian hua, and one to Pusa man. These lyrics only account for thirteen percent of Zhou’s total 127 lyrics in the core group, while the four tunes are less than five percent of the total eighty-seven tunes used by

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2 QSC 2/598, 2/600-01, 2/603, 2/611, 2/612, 2/614, 2/615, 2/624-25.
Zhou Bangyan. Zhou Bangyan’s selection of lyric tunes showed he was, to some extent, independent from the popular fashion. By composing both music and song words by himself, he achieved a greater integration of the two, which was essential to the development of his unique style. This explains why Zhou’s most successful and influential lyrics are generally those written to his self-composed tunes.

Zhou Bangyan tried to shun lyric tunes of a “vulgar” style. Though the lyric music popular during the Song has been lost, records show that some tunes were more likely to be used for frivolous or comical lyrics than others. The popular tune Pin ling 品令 is an example. Songs to this tune are generally comical, and they prevailed among courtesans and people from the low class. This tune was particularly popular during Huizong’s reign since it became fashionable to compose frivolous and comical songs at that time. Li Zhi 李廌 (1059-1109) wrote a song to this tune to tease an old man skilled at singing.³ Another tune, Hui bo ci 回波詞 (also known as Hui bo yue 回波樂), was also a popular tune that was often used for fun. A Tang song set to this tune by an entertainer ridicules the henpecked husbands, Pei Tan 貔談 and the emperor Zhongzong 唐中宗 (656-710).⁴ During the Song Dynasty, people followed the Tang tradition. The poet Cao Zu once composed a comical song to this tune to entertain the Emperor Huizong. It is very possible that such tunes were generally not used for traditional themes about love and women. Zhou Bangyan did not compose songs to such tunes. Though a song written to a popular jocular style tune Hong chuang jiong 紅窗迥 is attributed to Zhou, it is not in the core group.⁵ Furthermore, Zhou Bangyan does not use any comical words in this poem; instead, he depicts a lonely girl in spring with colloquial language and slang terms. Zhou’s attitude towards tunes of the “heroic abandon” masculine style also shows his insistence on elegance. Man jiang hong 滿江紅 was a popular tune often used to express political aspirations or similar typically masculine feelings. Liu Yong, Su Shi, and Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1142) all wrote lyrics to the tune Man jiang hong in the masculine style. Zhou Bangyan’s song to this tune is an exception. It

³ Ibid., 2/637.
⁴ QTWDC 5.
⁵ QSC 2/619.
describes a neglected woman and, correspondingly, uses rhyming words in a different tone.\(^6\) Strictly speaking, the tune used by Zhou Bangyan is a variant of the tune used by other Northern Song lyricists, but many Southern Song lyricists chose Zhou’s version of *Man jiāng hóng* when writing lyrics to this melody. A song to this tune by Xin Qiji, the exemplary lyricist of the *haofang* school, depicts a lonely woman in the late spring, suggesting feelings of loneliness and lovesickness.\(^7\)

Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were among the most popular throughout the Song Dynasty. Owing to his knowledge of music and his ability as a composer, his lyrics are melodious and rhythmically harmonious, they therefore spread quickly among his contemporaries. The circulation of his song written to the tune *Lanlíng wāng* 蘭陵王 illustrates the popularity of Zhou’s lyrics.\(^8\)

During the early years of Shaoxing period (1131-1162) Zhou Qingzhen’s song on willows *Lanlíng wāng man* [or *Lanlíng wāng*] prevailed in the capital [Lin’an]. The [performers] in both the West Tower and the Southern Entertainment Quarter sang it.\(^9\) Because the song has three stanzas, it is also called *Weichéng sāndiē* [“the song of Weichéng: three stanzas”]. The sound at the end of the song is so strident and clear that only the experienced flute masters of the imperial school were able to maintain the tempo for the singers. The song was transmitted from Zhao Zhongjian [Zhao Ding].\(^10\) In the ninth month of the first year in Jianyan period (1127), Zhao Zhongjian fled to the south of Yangtze River.\(^11\) When he moored at Yizhen ferry [today’s Yizheng city, Jiangsu Province], he encountered a person who used to be a tune-adjuster of the Grand Music Bureau during the Xuanhe period. From him Zhao


\(^8\) *Ibid.* 2/611.

\(^9\) The West Tower was one of the eight famous government-sponsored wine houses. The Southern Entertainment Quarter was one of entertainment quarters. Both were located in the capital Lin’an. See Zhou Mi, *Wulin jiushi, juan* 6, pp. 117-18, *Dongjing menghua lu* (wai sichong).

\(^10\) Zhao Ding was the chancellor of the Southern Song.

\(^11\) In 1127, the Song lost control of northern China to the Jin Dynasty. The Song court retreated south of the Yangtze River and established the Southern Song Dynasty. Gaozong re-established his seat of government in Lin’an. Large numbers of refugees flooded into southern China from the conquered north.
Zhongjian obtained the music score [of Lanling wang] used in the royal palace. Zhao then had his household performers practice the song and it spread widely thereafter.\footnote{Feng Jinbo, Ciyuan cuibian, p. 2270.}

紹興初, 都下盛行周清真詠柳《蘭陵王慢》, 西樓南瓦皆歌之, 謂之“渭城三疊”, 以周詞凡三換頭, 至末段, 聲尤激越, 惟教坊老笛師能倚之以節歌者。其譜傳自趙忠簡家。忠簡于建炎丁未九月[南渡, 泊舟儀真江口, 遇宣和大晟樂府協律郎某, 叩獲九重故譜, 因令家伎習之, 遂流傳于外。}

The tune \textit{Lanling wang} was composed by Zhou Bangyan. We are unable to date the song with accuracy, and it is not known exactly when it was adopted by the Grand Music Bureau. What we know is that it was played by the Bureau at court ceremonies and other official occasions during the late years of the Northern Song era, possibly when Zhou Bangyan was still living. Since Zhou Bangyan was acquainted with many figures serving in the Grand Music Bureau, including the superintendent Liu Bin and the lyricist Moqi Yong, the Bureau was likely familiar with Zhou’s lyrics; hence it is very possible that the Bureau adopted Zhou’s \textit{Lanling wang} after this song had circulated widely among the common people.

\textit{Lanling wang} gained favor among the elite class, who were responsible for promoting elegant banquet music in the empire. These people included royal family members, high-ranking officials, as well as official lyricists and musicians. Obviously, the elite of literary tastes viewed \textit{Lanling wang} as an elegant lyrical piece. Although the official music institute practiced \textit{Lanling wang}, it probably did not publish its score. Therefore, as with countless other popular lyric tunes of the Northern Song, \textit{Lanling wang} might well have died out when Jin forces entered the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng on January 9, 1127 and captured Huizong, his son (Emperor Qinzong (r. 1126-1127)), as well as the entire imperial court and harem, who were later shipped north.

People from different levels of the society helped to keep and spread \textit{Lanling wang} during this turbulence and subsequent times. In the ninth month of 1127, when he escaped to southern China with hundreds of thousands of Song subjects, Zhao Ding met a musician of the Grand Music Bureau, from whom he obtained the music score of \textit{Lanling wang} used in the Bureau.
Zhao Ding, who later became the chancellor, kept his own singing girls and asked them to practice the song. These singing girls’ performances at banquets hosted by Zhao Ding made *Lanling wang* known to more elite people, who further spread the song through their own singing girls, and finally, the commercial courtesans learned it and sang it in the entertainment quarters. Through the performances of registered courtesans, singing girls, and commercial courtesans, *Lanling wang* was no longer limited to the narrow audience that consisted of people who attended the imperial court, official occasions, or banquets of the nobles. It spread to a much wider audience composed of noblemen, officials, literati, merchants, craftsmen, and other urban dwellers. As a result, in around ten years, most of the urban dwellers knew this song and all the performers around the capital Lin’an sang it. More strikingly, this prevalence lasted throughout Song times, as shown in the following record by Li Lailao 李莱老 (fl. 1260):

> [Deng] Shuanglian excelled at singing Zhou Meicheng’s song *Lanling wang*. She was also able to play flute to accompany the singer. A generation of entertainers, including those serving in the government and army, all learned Zhou’s song from her. In the entertainment quarters, people compared Zhou’s song to [Wang Wei’s 王維 (701-761)] *Weicheng sandie*. When people hosted parting banquets at taverns, they sang both songs.

> [鄧]雙蓮能歌周美成兰陵王曲，并能擫笛倚之。衙前和顾前钧容直一辈人，皆从渠授技周词。瓦子中以方渭城三叠。旗亭送别，并歌是词。

Wang Wei’s *Weicheng qu* is one of the most popular parting songs in the Tang. People in the Southern Song compared Zhou Bangyan’s *Lanling wang* to this celebrated Tang poem, calling Zhou’s song *Weicheng sandie*, a name derived from Wang Wei’s *Yangguan sandie*. This shows that, by the Southern Song, Zhou’s lyrics had already achieved the same popularity and canonized status as Wang Wei’s poem.

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13 It refers to Wang Wei’s poem *Sending off Mr. Yuan, Second of His Generation, on a Mission to Anxi* 送元二使安西. It is also known as *Weicheng qu* 萊城曲 (*song of Weicheng*) and *Yangguan sandie* 陽關三疊 (*Song of Yangguan: three stanzas*). Being one of the most famous of all Tang poems, it describes the parting scene in Weicheng and expressed the pain of parting and separation. During the Tang it generally was used as a parting song. QTS 128/1306-07.

14 Feng Jinbo, *Ciyuan cuibian*, p. 2076.
The ideal combination of text and music contributed to the prevalence of *Lanling wang*. Being viewed as typical of the best of Zhou Bangyan’s songs, *Lanling wang* presents a poetic world that perfectly fuses scenes and feelings at the moment of parting. The poetic world created in the text is both general, by means of the blurred persona (see Chapter Six for a detailed discussion), and specific, by means of its function as a parting song to be performed at particular occasions. When Zhou Bangyan composed the tune, he must have considered how to make the music fit well with the tonal qualities of the text as well as how to enhance the auditory effects of the song. Though the music of this song is lost, the above records suggest that the melody *Lanling wang* is so complicated and challenging that it demanded more effort on the part of the performers to master. Those who could perform this song became legends. Deng Shuanglian, for example, was able to sing and play this song, and all entertainers flocked to learn from her. After listening to Deng’s song, Li Lailao’s friend He Yinglong 何應龍 wrote a poem to eulogize her artistry of performance.15

Since Zhou Bangyan’s songs became an exemplar of literary taste in the early Southern Song, a courtesan was viewed as a precious pearl or jade if she was able to sing one or two of Zhou Bangyan’s songs.16 Sixty years after Zhou Bangyan’s death, courtesans in Lishui County, where Zhou served as the magistrate from 1093 to 1096, started their performance at banquets with Zhou Bangyan’s songs.17 Wu Wenying recorded that when he parted from friends at Wujiang 吳江 (in Jiangsu Province), his townsman Zhao Bo’s 趙簿 household performers consecutively performed several songs by Zhou Bangyan.18

Zhou Bangyan’s songs were still sung by singing girls even after the Southern Song Dynasty was conquered. The following two entries by Zhang Yan provide strong evidence of this.

Ms. Che Xiuqing from the Wu area is outstanding in the entertainment quarters. She is good at singing Meicheng’s songs and can catch the sound and intent in them. Every time I listen to her singing, I always love and sigh over it.  

中吳車氏號秀卿，樂部中之翹楚者。歌美成曲，得其音旨，余每聽輒愛嘆不能已。

Shen Meijiao used to be a courtesan in Hangzhou. One day I encountered her in the capital [of the Yuan Dynasty, Dadu, modern Beijing]. Holding wine cups in hand, we exchanged greetings and consoled each other. Shen Meijiao was still able to sing two songs by Zhou Qingzhen, Yi nan wang and Tai cheng lu [i.e., Qi tian yue 齊天樂], …

沈梅嬌, 杭妓也。忽於京都見之，把酒相勞苦，猶能歌周清真《意難忘》、《臺城路》二曲，…

We should remember that in the Southern Song, most lyric melodies of the Northern Song had already disappeared or changed; thus many lyrics were no longer singable. Contrary to these “dead” songs, Zhou’s verses demonstrate surprising vitality. His melodies were kept and spread through the entertainment quarters and by generations of courtesans. Zhang Yan met Shen Meijiao when he travelled north to Dadu in the year 1290 or 1291, one hundred and seventy years after Zhou Bangyan’s death. Courtesans not only preserved and transmitted Zhou’s songs for a long period of time, by offering performances from Hangzhou to Dadu, they also broadened the spatial dimension in which Zhou’s songs were repeatedly played, appreciated, and circulated.

The long-lasting life of Qi tian yue partially resulted from the tonal and metrical qualities of the text. Many critics have noticed that Zhou Bangyan was the first to differentiate between all four tones instead of simply between level and deflected tones in the selection of rhymes and tonal

contracts. He is also remarkable for the degree of sophistication in the use of tonal dynamic in his lyrics. His new tune Qi tian yue, for instance, demonstrates his skillful use of words of “rising” tone 上 and “falling” tone 去. Generally speaking, “rising” tone is slow, soft, and long-lasting, and the pitch of the sound is low; “falling” tone is sonorous, intense, and forceful, and the pitch of the sound is high. The modern lyric scholar Long Yusheng 龍榆生 (1902-1966) was able to discern that in Qi tian yue, lines 2, 10, 11, and 13 are metrically irregular lines, which require certain syllables to be in “falling” tone. The two line-leading words tan 嘆 (sigh) and zheng 正 (just) are also in the “falling” tone, as required. Zhou Bangyan also made heavy use of disyllabic phrases consisting of one “falling” tone character and one “rising” tone character: jing yan 靜掩, shang you 尚有, wei shui 渭水, tiao yuan 眺遠, zui dao 醉倒, and zhao lian 照斂. Among these phrases, jing yan, tiao yuan, and zhao lian cannot be replaced by characters of other tones. With these words and phrases, the lyrics make the melody sound long-lasting with frequent inflection, thus successfully creating emotional color that combines a relaxed mood with a deep melancholy. Because Zhou Bangyan paid special attention to the auditory qualities of the words so that they would match with the music perfectly, Qi tian yue found favor in the eyes of courtesans and singing girls.

Both the elite class and common people contributed to the canonization of Zhou Bangyan’s poems. Quite often his lyrics were so influential that people regarded them as a symbol of the specific setting or occasion for which the lyric was composed. His Lanling wang was sung by countless people at parting banquets, as if to sing this song was a social ritual on such occasions. Zhou Bangyan’s other masterpiece written to the tune Xi he 西河, on remembering Jinling 金陵 (present-day Nanjing), was canonized by literati in a similar way. The poem, set to the tune composed by Zhou Bangyan himself, expresses the poet’s thoughts about history when viewing


25 QSC 2/612.
the sight of the old city of Jinling. Derived from three prior poems about Jinling but transforming lines from these poems as if they were his own, this song achieves a high degree of integration that is imaginative and original. Regarding it as one of the best poems on Jinling, people kept singing it all through the Song, as evidenced by its mention in the following songs by different Southern Song lyricists.

_Qing ping yue_ 清平樂 by Liu Guo 劉過 (1154-1206):

> I recall the bygone glory of Jinling,
> When you sing, please do not sing Xi he.

(QSC 3/2157)

我自金陵懷古，

唱時休唱西河。

_Da sheng yue_ 大聖樂 by Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁 (1232-1297):

> Here where I am sad:
> The setting sun, the alleys and lanes –
> Someone is singing Xi he.

(QSC 5/3214)

傷心處，

斜陽巷陌，

人唱西河。

_Feng ru song_ 風入松 by Zhang Yan:

26 Zhang Yan, Ciyuan, p. 266.
Swallows flying in ordinary alleys and lanes:

Beside the wine cup, please do not sing Xi he.

燕子尋常巷陌，
酒邊莫唱西河。

All of the above lines allude to the following lines from Zhou Bangyan’s Xi he:

Swallows, not knowing what age it is now,
Entering houses in ordinary alleys and lanes.
They face one another, as if talking about rise and decline-
Under the setting sun.

燕子不知何世。
入尋常、巷陌人家，
相對如說興亡，
斜陽裏。

Meanwhile, Zhou Bangyan’s lines are derived from the Tang poet Liu Yuxi’s Wuyi xiang 烏衣巷:

Beside Red Sparrow Bridge the wild grasses flower.
Into Black Robe Lane the evening sun slants.
Swallows which used to lodge with Wang and Xie
Now fly to the houses of ordinary folk.27

(\textit{QTS} 365/4117)

朱雀橋邊野草花

烏衣巷里夕陽斜

舊時王謝堂前燕

飛入尋常百姓家

By recontextualizing the elements of Liu’s poem--swallows, lanes, and the setting sun--in \textit{Xi he}, Zhou Bangyan uses these elements to identify the old city of Jinling. These elements make an allusion effective when they are recognized by readers (or listeners) familiar with Chinese poetry. Readers thus instantly recall a memory about the bygone glory of the old city, which is evoked by Liu Yuxi’s poem, though the lyricist might just be describing the scenery right in front of him. In this way, these symbolic elements add a strong sense of history to Zhou’s poem. Unlike Liu’s objective description, Zhou attributes human emotions to the personified swallows: they do not know what era it is now and appear to talk about the vicissitudes of the world. Fusing the symbolic elements with his subjective emotions, Zhou’s song not only describes the scenery and history of Jinling, it also expresses a mood of melancholy about bygone times and the vanished glory of Wang and Xie clans in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (316-420). Such a mood is intensified in lyrics by the later Southern Song lyricists, for they were experiencing what the Eastern Jin had experienced--the weak empire was threatened by the northern enemy but could do nothing to stop the deterioration. It is no wonder that people kept on singing \textit{Xi he} while poets could not bear to hear it.

\textit{Xi he} was transformed into a new canonical literary work for later poets during the Song era. Its canonization was seen in later lyricists’ songs. \textit{Xi he} incorporates elements borrowed from Liu’s \textit{Wuyi xiang} and internalizes them, thus creating a new poetic world independent from, but associated with, the alluded poem. In songs of the Southern Song literati, \textit{Xi he} is repeatedly

mentioned together with the elements Zhou borrowed from Liu’s poem to identify the place of Jinling, showing that all these elements, including Xi he itself, have formed a chain of connotations for the place Jinling in Chinese poetry. In Xi he, the elements borrowed from Liu’s poem and the city of Jinling become inseparable.

Literati reception of Zhou Bangyan’s songs is sometimes demonstrated in an unexpected way. The following funny anecdote indicates that literati were familiar with Zhou’s lyrics and quoted them in their daily lives.

During the reform carried out in the Jiading period (1208-1224), the court summoned retired officials. A distinguished master assumed an important position. Though he was hospitable to his guests, he failed to help them. One day he asked a guest: “Every time when someone comes to visit me with gifts, I always go out at once to welcome him. Never have I neglected a single guest. How do people talk about me?” The guest was a humorous person and replied, “Since you assumed this important position, people outside have all sung [Zhou Bangyan’s] song Zhu ying yao hong.” The chancellor asked, “Why?” The guest quoted the last line [of the upper stanza] from the song, “We have met several times, but it is still useless; it would have been better if we had not met.” They then looked at each other and laughed.

Zhu ying yao hong depicts an abandoned woman, but in this anecdote, this poem is presented in a totally different way. The setting is switched from entertainment quarters, banquets, or other occasions of gaiety to a formal one. The participants are not courtesans with their clients. They are replaced by a high-ranking official and his guest. The change of setting and participants

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28 QSC 2/629.
causes a change of both the mode and the understanding of the communication. The participants did not play wine games while singing the song; instead, they used the song to discuss a serious issue about the official’s political fame. Unlike the relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere between courtesans and their clients, there is a sense of embarrassment and dissatisfaction under the seemingly harmonious connection between the participants. By taking lines out of context and forcing another meaning, the guest used the text as a weapon to ridicule the official in a euphemistic way. The verse line he quoted no longer expresses parting sorrow, but describes the political predicament with which the official and his guest were faced. The guest therefore presented a traditional verse line about love in a novel way by transforming the romantic into the ridiculous. What makes this anecdote more interesting is that Zhou Bangyan refused to compose songs of a frivolous and comical style throughout his life; but in this anecdote, his serious writing is decoded exactly in such a light and humorous manner.

2 Collection of Zhou Bangyan’s Lyrics

Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics survived the warfare and turbulence of the 1120s, though most of his works other than lyrics were lost.30 Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (1913-1977) thoroughly examined records about Zhou Bangyan’s individual lyric collections throughout the centuries, finding at least eleven Song editions, which rank first among collections of the Song lyricists. The earliest version was printed in the Shaoxing period (1131-1162), shortly after Zhou Bangyan died.31

The Song collections of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were books to be used by singers, though Zhou Bangyan was not responsible for the compilation. One of the earliest extant collections, Xiangzhu Zhou Meicheng Pianyu ji 詩註周美成片玉集 (with a preface dated 1211), divides lyrics into thematic groups including the four seasons, special subjects, and miscellaneous songs. The musical mode of each song is also identified. This arrangement made the collection into a songbook with convenient reference for singing girls.32 James Hightower believes that the songs

30 Lou Yao, “Qingzhen xiansheng wenji xu.” Gongkui ji. Zhou Bangyan’s extant shi, wen, and fu can be found in Luo Kanglie’s Zhou Bangyan shiwen jicun 周邦彥詩文輯存 (Hong Kong: Yishan shuwu, 1980) and Cixue zazu 詞學雜俎 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1999); Jiang Zhelun’s Zhou Bangyan ji 周邦彥集 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1983) and Zhou Bangyan xuanji 周邦彥選.


included in this collection were still sung when it was put together.\textsuperscript{33} Another Song edition, with a preface dated 1180, was also compiled to “pass on learning of lyrics as well as to enable people to sing these songs.”\textsuperscript{34}

At least three annotated collections of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were compiled during the Song. They are \textit{Xiangzhu Zhou Meicheng Pianyu ji} annotated by Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (fl. 1211), \textit{Zhu Qingzhen ci}註清真詞 by Cao Biao 曹杓, and \textit{Zhouci jijie}周詞集解. Only Chen Yuanlong’s edition survived through the ages.\textsuperscript{35} These collections are among the earliest annotated collections of lyrics. They were used to help courtesans to understand Zhou’s verses. Liu Su’s 劉肅 preface to Chen Yuanlong’s edition discusses Chen’s motivation to annotate Zhou’s lyrics: “[Chen Yuanlong] is dissatisfied with the existing annotations because they are too sketchy and shallow. He therefore wrote extensive annotations to Zhou Bangyan’s poems so singers can understand the textual allusions as well as thoroughly comprehend their meanings.”\textsuperscript{36}

Though Chen Yuanlong’s annotations were created for singing girls, they were also very valuable to the literati. By the Southern Song, it had been recognized that Zhou’s lyrics are highly erudite and among the finest of their kind. Liu Su praises Zhou’s erudition and elegance: “With his erudition Zhou Meicheng devoted himself to the long-and-short lines [i.e. the lyrics]. His verses are dense, decorous, and retain canonical richness. His style has been admired [by his epigones]. Quoting phrases widely and encompassing ancient and current [literary works], he borrows diction and executed his ideas in such a way that every word has a tradition of previous usage. He is truly the best poet.”\textsuperscript{37} More than eighty years after Zhou Bangyan’s death, Lou Yao 樂鑰 (1137-1213) collated and annotated Zhou Bangyan’s complete works. He found it a challenging task and admired Zhou Bangyan’s erudition: “[When I] ponder his language, [I find that] the
words of Confucian classics, historical writings, and works of all the schools of the learned are brought under his brush as if they were his own words. How hard he has worked and how much effort he has devoted to it!” Lou Yao admitted that because Zhou’s works are rich in textual allusions, he had difficulties understanding some challenging parts, even after he had reviewed the text three times. 38

Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics qualify as yaci in that they were transmitted through both oral means via courtesans and written means via literati. The market value of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics encouraged literati to popularize them among courtesans by making these complicated verses easier to understand. Literati exegesis quickened the circulation of Zhou’s lyrics among non-elite people. The annotated editions played a crucial role in transmitting Zhou Bangyan’s concept of ya, as evidenced by countless followers who imitated Zhou’s style and learned his compositional techniques throughout the centuries.

3 Quasi-prosodic Manual of Lyric Meters

Shao Ruipeng 邵瑞彭 (1887-1937) confidently avers that “nobody can be more meticulous than Du [Fu 杜甫 (712-770)] about the metrical pattern of shi, while nobody can be more meticulous than Zhou [Bangyan] about the metrical pattern of ci.” 39 As an expert in music, Zhou Bangyan paid special attention to the match between the tonal quality of each syllable and the corresponding notes of the melody.

Zhou Bangyan was famous for his skillful use of the four tones. He showed exceptional ability to match the syllables’ tones with the corresponding music notes. Most lyricists generally only distinguished level tones from oblique tones, while Zhou Bangyan differentiated among the three different oblique tones. When analyzing Zhou’s new tune Rao fo ge 繞佛閣, 40 Xia Chengtao 夏承譞 (1900-1986) found that each character’s tone was in accord with the corresponding note of

38 及詳味其辭，經史百家之言，盤屈于筆下，若自己出，一何用功之深而致力之精耶！… 為之校讎三數過，猶未敢以為盡。Lou Yao, “Qingzhen xiansheng wenji xu.” Gongkui ji.


40 QSC 2/614.
the lyric tune. As the first person to write lyrics in this way, Zhou was followed by the Southern Song musician-lyricists Fang Qianli 方千里 (fl. 1122) and Wu Wenying.\textsuperscript{41}

As Kang-i Sun Chang states, Zhou Bangyan avoided using the device of *chen zi* 襯字 (additional words) in an attempt to create a poetic genre distinguishable from the popular lyric songs. *Chen zi* are words that are randomly added during a performance. The practice of adding *chen zi* had its origin in the popular song tradition and was never discontinued. For example, literati fond of popular songs, such as Liu Yong, added *chen zi* to songs, so no two of his *man* songs to the same tune have identical metrical patterns.\textsuperscript{42} Zhou Bangyan, on the contrary, erased such differences by avoiding *chen zi*; hence, his lyrics are bound to have identical metrical patterns and length.

Zhou Bangyan’s practice greatly regulated lyric meters. Due to the lack of an efficient recording system, music, which formed the basis of metrical patterns of lyrics, changed quickly and often died out easily. Under such circumstances, metrical patterns became the sole principle that guided the practice of filling in words. Even when the lyric music still existed, many lyricists did not fill in words according to the music because they lacked sufficient knowledge to do so.\textsuperscript{43}

Therefore, a safe and efficient solution was to follow the metrical patterns of exemplary predecessors’ lyrics. Because of this, Zhou Bangyan’s songs and his regulated lyric meters became a widely used model for later lyricists. The Southern Song musician Yang Zuan added music scores to Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics in his *Quanfa Zhou Meicheng ci* 圈法周美成詞, aiming to use it as a handbook of lyric tunes.\textsuperscript{44} Shen Yifu famously states that “people should follow Qingzhen to compose lyrics because Qingzhen knew music the most and was devoid of even a tiniest trace of marketplace aura. … *Zhou ci jijie* is the best for beginners.”\textsuperscript{45} The lyric tunes used by Zhou, including his self-composed works, were popular. It is estimated that about

\textsuperscript{41} For detailed discussion of the poem, see Long Yusheng, *Cixue shijiang*, p. 150. Xia Chengtao, “Tang Song ci zisheng zhi yanbian,” *Tang Song ci latong*, pp. 52-83.

\textsuperscript{42} Kang-i Sun Chang believes it is because Liu Yong’s “handling of metrical patterns had its origin … in the popular song tradition,” i.e. to add 襯字 (additional words) or even *chen ju* 襯句 (additional sentences) to individual songs during performance. Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u Poetry: from Late T’ang to Northern Sung*, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{43} The Southern Song lyricists Lu You 陸遊 (1125-1210) and Liu Guo are examples.

\textsuperscript{44} This book has been lost. It is recorded in Zhang Yan’s *Ci yuan*, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{45} 凡作詞當以清真為主。蓋清真最為知音，且無一點市井氣，下字運意，皆有法度，往往自唐、宋諸賢詩句中來，而不用經史中生硬字面，此所以為冠絕也。學者看詞，當以周詞集解為冠。 *Shen Yifu, Yuefu zhimi*, pp. 277-78.
eighty-five percent of lyric tunes in Zhou’s collection can find works in response by later lyricists.46

Due to their complicated metrical patterns and uniformity, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were viewed by literati as infallible laws.47 According to one survey, Southern Song lyricists retrospectively wrote a total of 333 lyrics to match Zhou’s songs. This number ranks the highest among all the Song lyricists imitated in this way.48 Three of these lyricists, Fang Qianli, Yang Zemin 楊澤民, and Chen Yunping 陳允平, matched almost all of Zhou’s poems.49 They copied Zhou’s metrical patterns almost syllable for syllable and tone for tone. Since the Southern Song, Zhou Bangyan’s works have been used as models in prosodic manuals of lyric meters throughout the centuries. In total, the Song literati produced thirty-four lyrics to his new tune Lanling wang.50 The Southern Song musician Wu Wenying employed more than sixty tunes that were adopted or produced by Zhou Bangyan.51 With the standard metrical patterns developed by Zhou Bangyan and other musician-lyricists, a great number of literati devoted their lives to lyric composition even though they had very limited knowledge of banquet music. As a result, Zhou’s lyrics helped the literati’s compositions to be increasingly dissociated from the music, although Zhou Bangyan himself may have never expected this to happen.

47 Cai Songyun, Keting cilun, p. 4900.
49 Because they used different editions of Zhou Bangyan’s lyric collections, the number of poems they matched thus varies.
Chapter 4
The Lyrical Voice

As a representative lyricist of the late Northern Song, Zhou Bangyan is known for two distinct changes in the lyrical voice of his poetry. His love songs and compositions that describe tender romantic attachment almost completely break from the tradition of an assumed female persona. In this type of song, Zhou Bangyan shifts away from speaking under the guise of the voice of a female protagonist; instead, he speaks in a male voice and focuses on his emotional or psychological state. This change signifies that Zhou Bangyan did not compose his lyrics solely for entertainment purposes at banquets, although all his songs were singable. Another important change is embodied in his lyrics on objects. He explores the potential of this relatively new sub-genre by adopting an implicit lyrical voice, therefore shifting the focus of his lyrics from the poetic self to the object described. This type of lyrics on objects is thus characterized by a sophisticated descriptive approach in that they are replete with poetic devices, such as metonymy and textual allusions.

1 The Issue of Gender

As I have discussed in Chapter One, some of Liu Yong’s lyrics about love are written in a first-person male voice rather than the assumed female voice. This transition in lyrical voice is much more evident in Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics. More than sixty percent of his lyrics are about love affairs and romantic feelings. His treatment of these traditional themes differs in accordance with the different lyric forms he would adopt. His xiaoling poems are very traditional in both subject matter and compositional technique – about forty-five percent deal with the inner chamber theme and are written from the detached third-person point of view. These themes constitute less than seven percent of his longer songs. It is clear that Zhou Bangyan was influenced by the literati xiaoling tradition of the Huajian School. It is remarkable that although almost all of his songs are singable, only one is in a first-person voice of a female persona.¹ More than eighty percent of his man songs, which combine the themes of lost love with the sorrow of travel, are written in the first-person and from the viewpoint of a male persona.

¹ It is a medium-length song Gui qu nan 常去難. QSC 2/612.
Although Liu Yong’s lyrics started to create a change in perspective, it is in Zhou Bangyan’s love songs, especially his man songs, that the male persona gains the dominant position. Zhou Bangyan’s songs depict every aspect of love a man experiences: how he falls in love with a woman, longs for her, parts from her, and finally loses her or is abandoned by her. Unlike other songs of this genre, these songs are not written under the guise of the voice of a female protagonist; instead, they focus on the direct depiction of the male persona’s actions and mental attitudes.

To the tune *Jie lian huan*

1 Such bitter feelings are without expression –

   I sigh that she’s gone all right

   Too far for letters.

   Even if clever fingers could undo the linked rings,

5 [The past events are] dissipated like wind, stopped like rain,

   Like mist lifting, clouds thinning.

   The Swallow Hall is empty

   And dark dust seals all the strings.

   I think of roots moved and leaves shed:

10 They all are, long ago,

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2 It alludes to the smart empress of the State of Qi, who, when required by an envoy of the State of Qin to undo linked rings of carved jade, undid them by smashing them to pieces. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 188.

3 The Swallow Hall was located in Pengcheng (present-day Xuzhou). It was the place where Zhang Jianfeng 張建封 (735-800) is said to have kept the singing girl Guan Panpan 關盼盼 (785-820), who remained there for more than ten years, faithful after Zhang’s death. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 188. In this song the allusion refers to a place where the female lover lived alone and implies the absence of this female lover who has departed; it does not necessarily imply the death of the male lover.
Red peonies she planted herself.

On the island the iris gradually grows,4

But I suppose the boat is near some other shore

With her off at the end of the world.

15 Vain to recollect the letters she wrote long ago:

Idle talk, idle words –

I would like to burn up the whole lot of them.

When spring comes back to the river landing

I hope she will send me a spray of southern plum blossom,5

20 And henceforth for the rest of my life

When there are flowers and wine,

I will weep for her.6

(QSC 2/597)

解連環

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5 It alludes to the present of a branch of plum blossoms sent by Lu Kai 陸凱 to his friend Fan Ye 范曄 with the poem: “I break a plum branch when the postman comes, / To sent to someone in Longtou. / There’s nothing much here in Jiangnan, / I shall just give you this branch of spring.” 折梅逢驛使，寄與隴頭人。江南無所有，聊寄一枝春。cf. Luo Kanglie, Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian 周邦彥清真集箋. Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian Hong Kong fendian, 1985, p. 211.

怨懷無託。

嘆情人斷絕，

信音遙邈。

縱妙手、能解連環，

似風散雨收，

霧輕雲薄。

燕子樓空，

暗塵鎖、一牀弦索。

想移根換葉。

盡是舊時，

手種紅藥。

汀洲漸生杜若。

料舟依岸曲，

人在天角。

谩記得、當日音書，

把閒語閒言，

待總燒卻。

水驛春廽，
This song presents a man’s brooding from his point of view. The first-person pronoun 我 in line 19 “confirm[s] retentionally [should be “retrospectively”] that the objectivities and states-of-affairs projected before the occurrence of the first-person pronoun 我 are indeed those of the speaker.” As for the speaker’s gender, there are definite clues in the text itself. First, the allusion in line 4 projects a female who undid the linked rings. Second, the allusion in lines 7 and 8 posits a male speaker. The Swallow Hall is the place where a female lived alone, and the abandoned musical instruments she used to play for her beloved shows she has left for a long time. Third, lines 13, 14, and 19 project a male speaker waiting for a message from a person in a faraway place, who, based on the first two clues, is the absent girl. Lacking any indications of shift in point of view, the consistent presence of a male speaker can be assumed.

The role of gender is reversed in Jie lian huan. In a typical lyric song about romantic feelings, the female, rather than the male, is abandoned and suffers from her unrequited love for the male, a tradition that is inverted in Jie lian huan. Here, the male is assumed to play the role of the one who is deserted. Lines 2 and 3 suggest that the woman chose to end their relationship or possibly just left suddenly. The man’s mental state also implies that he has been deserted. Feeling deeply resentful towards the absent lover, he is thinking of burning her letters; however, he cannot make up his mind to do so, for doing so would mean cutting the only bond that ties them together (lines 15 to 17). He is eagerly waiting for more letters from her, which will probably never come (line 19), and he wallows in the memory of their bygone love (the last three

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7 QSC 2/597.
8 James Hightower states this song shifts “from objective third-person narrative to first-person (the woman’s) brooding.” He is misled by the subtitle “A woman’s Feelings,” which is absent in some versions. Furthermore, such general subtitles were possibly added by the compilers rather than Zhou Bangyan himself. James Hightower, “Songs of Chou Pang-yen.” pp. 260-61.
9 Smitheram, p. 108.
The woman’s sudden departure leaves the man in a state of deep sorrow. He finds no way to share his grief but keeps on thinking of her – remembering past events with her, imagining the current state of her old house, and vainly expecting a letter from her. Unable to control what has happened, he is passive and helpless in his relationship with the girl.

*Jie lian huan* is probably an extreme case, but Zhou Bangyan’s songs construct abundant images of men suffering from lost love through the use of male-voiced speakers. Some of the men expect to see their absent beloveds once more; some wallow in the grief of separation, dwelling on the past and savoring the feeling of loneliness; and some revisit the old places, trying to find some trace of the bygone love. It is remarkable that in Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, the male personae are more important than the female ones and receive much more attention from the poet.

Partially due to the presence of the male speaker, Zhou Bangyan’s love songs, particularly his *man* songs, are distinguishable from those of his predecessors. It is noteworthy that like most previous love songs, Zhou’s songs are filled with familiar images and ornate qualifiers, many of which might even be considered clichéd. The places that are depicted are often very common. Zhou Bangyan, unlike Su Shi, rarely wrote a preface to provide information regarding the composition of the song. In this way, Zhou Bangyan’s compositions are very traditional in that they are full of generalized situations. However, these songs do not give an impression of being weary repetitions of each other. It seems as if the poet often derived his inspiration from his own experiences. By means of the device of the male persona, a male poet can relate his experiences and express his feelings in a much more natural and spontaneous way. By erasing the sense of detachment arising from the assumed female voice, the male persona makes the stories narrated in the songs more like the male poet’s authentic personal experiences rather than fictional ones. In this sense, we can view Zhou’s male-voiced love songs as pure lyrical utterances of the poet himself. Exactly because of this feature, some critics believe that “Zhou Bangyan’s works are full of references to his own experiences,” though more often than not their argument is too speculative.

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11 Smitheram, p. 183.
Influenced by Liu Yong and Su Shi, Zhou Bangyan continued the exploration of the lyrical voice. Rejecting the masculine mode initiated by Su Shi, Zhou Bangyan’s innovation is much milder. Through a first-person male speaker, Zhou Bangyan depicts the emotional nuances of love experienced by men to the fullest degree. As Ronald Egan concludes, Zhou Bangyan’s use of the male voice demonstrates that his song lyric “reaches full maturity as a vehicle to explore the human experience of love, among both genders.” Zhou Bangyan’s break with the assumed female persona tradition resulted from his serious attitude toward the lyric genre, showing that he, at a certain point in his career, stopped perceiving lyrics purely as a tool for entertainment purposes. This attitude is consistent with one of the most important assumptions embodied in the Chinese literary tradition: that serious literary writing ought to more or less reflect some actual experience or emotion of the writer. Zhou Bangyan’s practice is a big step toward the canonization of the lyric genre, while the more frankly male voice increasingly encourages autobiographical interpretations previously not imposed on lyrics.

2 Lyrics on Objects

Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, particularly his lyrics on objects, demonstrate another remarkable change in lyrical voice, a change from the explicit voice to the implicit voice. Devoting much energy to this sub-genre, Zhou Bangyan wrote a total of eighteen pieces that fit within this sub-genre, which, with the exception of Su Shi’s, were unequalled in the Northern Song period. Of these lyrics, three in xiaoleng form are mediocre works, but the longer pieces about objects have exerted a profound influence on later lyricists’ works within this sub-genre.

We can classify Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics on objects into two groups according to the features of the lyrical voice presented. Poems of the first group exhibit a fusion of the poet’s inner feeling and the perceived object. These songs feature an explicit lyrical voice. We can name this group human-oriented yongwu lyrics. Zhou Bangyan’s famous songs Lanling wang on willows and Liu chou on roses belong to this group. His Hua fan is also typical of human-oriented yongwu songs.

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13 Ronald Egan, p. 347.

14 They are songs written to the tunes Ce fan (QSC 2/602), Hong lin qin jin (2, QSC 2/608), Dao fan (QSC 2/609), Da pu (QSC 2/609), Yu zhu xing (QSC 2/609), Hua fan (QSC 2/609-10), Chou nu er (QSC 2/610), Shui long yin (QSC 2/610), Liu chou (QSC 2/610), Lanling wang (QSC 2/611), Die lian hua (4, QSC 2/611), San bu yue (QSC 2/612), Pusa man (QSC 2/612), and Pin ling (QSC 2/612). If we take all songs attributed to Zhou Bangyan into consideration, this number rises to about twenty-five.
To the tune *Hua fan*

Plum blossoms

1 The whitewashed wall is low,

Plum blossoms dazzle my eyes

With the same charming flavors as before.

Slightly studded with dewdrops

5 As if all the powder washed away,

[They are] like unequalled beauties.

Last year leaning on the tree, I heartily admired the blooms alone,

Over sumptuous food cradled in crystal dishes.

But I pity more

10 The tall flowery tree strewn with snow:

An incense rack perfuming a white quilt hung on it.

This year I see the blooms come late and in haste.

They seem to be regretful in the encounter,

As if withered away with the grief of parting.

15 Long I gaze at them, chanting verse lines:

On the moss, the wind will strew the petals.
Soon I’ll see the crisp fruits ripened for wine,

Yet I will be far down an empty river amid hazy waves.

I can only dream a long twig aloof,

20 Slanting its reflection on the water at dusk.

(QSC 2/609-10)

花犯

梅花

粉牆低，
梅花照眼，
依然舊風味。
露痕輕綴。疑淨洗鉛華，
無限佳麗。去年勝賞曾孤倚。
冰盤同宴喜。
更可惜，
雪中高樹，
香篝薰素被。
今年對花最匆匆，
相逢似有恨。
依依愁顇。
吟望久，
青苔上，旋看飛墜。
相將見，脆丸薦酒，
人正在，空江煙浪裏。
但夢想，一枝瀟灑，
黃昏斜照水。

This song depicts plum blossoms, but its theme is a traveler’s sorrow. This feeling is evoked by the image of plum blossoms perceived by the traveler, who is also the poetic self. He draws an obvious metaphorical relationship between the blossoms and himself. Through the phrases yi ran 依然 (same) and jiu 舊 (before) in line 3, together with qu nian 去年 (last year) and ceng 曾 (formerly) in line 7, he reiterates that he saw these same plum trees last year. This familiar scene reminds him that last year nobody accompanied him when he enjoyed the beautiful blossoms and exquisite dishes, which is exactly what is happening in the present within the poem. The trees and blossoms are as gorgeous as before, and the poetic self, also, still lives alone in the same place. Nothing is different this year. In the second stanza, another metaphorical equation is implied. In the poetic self’s imagination, the blossoms will fade and plum fruits will ripen in the near future; by that time he, too, will have left the place where he is now lodged in. Therefore, both the blossoms and the poetic self will, in different ways, have to leave this familiar place. At the same time, the future is equalized with the present on certain levels of contrast. Having spent two winters in this place, the poetic self has already become emotionally attached to it. The trees will blossom next year, but the poetic self may never come back again; therefore, this particular
moment, when he and these plum blossoms meet at this place, is irrecoverable. When he recalls these past events in the future, these familiar plum trees surrounding this temporary lodging place will become part of his memory and appear only in his dreams. This contrast between the human experience of the present and the future is strengthened by the sameness of the physical environment in the present and the future, creating an emotional pain that the poetic self cannot alleviate.

The lyrical self is the center of the song. In this song, there is a narrative progression concerning the lyrical self’s personal experience. A series of verbs, which includes yi 疑 (suspect), yi 倚 (lean on), dui 對 (face), yin wang 吟望 (chant and gaze), kan 看 (look), and meng xiang 夢想 (dream), represents the frequent intrusion of the lyrical self. He reflects on the emotional experiences associated with plum blossoms, and the plum blossoms, real or fictional, are used to evoke his innermost feelings. The blossoms remind the poetic self of his loneliness, representing his memories of a brief period in his life, and console him in his dreams. They too are a metaphor of the poetic self, for both are in solitude and have to leave this familiar place. Throughout the poem, the poet’s lyrical self controls the poetic act. He is engaged in acts of recollection and imagination that create a network of lyrical and temporal complexity; he is also positioned at the intersections of various dimensions of time. On the contrary, the plum blossoms remain subordinated to the subjective quality of the lyrical self’s emotional experiences.

We can discern a distinct lyrical voice in Hua fan. Throughout the poem, the descriptive and narrative components are interrupted by expressive statements that contribute to the intensity of the lyrical voice and emphasize the personal tone of the lyric song. These phrases are gu 孤 (alone), xi 喜 (delight), ke xi 可惜 (pity), cong cong 匆匆 (hasty), and chou cui 愁頓 (sorrowful). The expressions demonstrate a cluster of contiguous properties, signifying a whole spectrum of feelings – loneliness, regret, sorrow, and occasionally joy and delight. These feelings are clearly identified as the poetic self’s inner state rather than the inner state of the blossoms. In line 13, the phrase you hen 有恨 (regretful) is used to describe the blossoms, which could indicate their subjective quality. However, the modifier si 似 (seem) before the phrase reveals that this subjective quality is imposed on the blossoms by the poetic self, and hence, the blossoms still remain as components of the inner state of the poetic self.
Because of its strong personal tone, traditional critics approach *Hua fan* from a biographical point of view, although no personal experience is alluded to whatsoever in the text. They believe this song is about Zhou Bangyan’s real-life experience or reflects Zhou’s frustration in regards to his unsuccessful official career. The modern scholar Luo Kanglie assumes that it was composed in the winter of 1095, or shortly thereafter, on the occasion of Zhou Bangyan’s recall to the capital after ten years of exile in the provinces. Although many critics do not accept Luo Kanglie’s viewpoint, this biographical reading shows that Zhou’s lyric poems have been freed from the tradition of an assumed female voice, and many readers look for autobiographical details in these poems.

Not all Zhou Bangyan’s poems on objects are composed in this mode. In the second group of poems outlined below, the strong personal tone usually found in Chinese poetry disappears. The object, instead of the lyrical self’s feelings, becomes the center of the song. I therefore call this group object-oriented *yongwu* lyrics. Zhou Bangyan’s other poem on plum blossoms belongs to this group.

To the tune *Chou nu er*

**Plum blossoms**

1 Having delicate skin, truly a goddess.

She comes to accompany ice and frost –

Washing away all the “yellow-lead powder,”

Her clean face bears no make-up.

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18 It alludes to a story in *Zhuangzi* 庄子: “There is an immortal living on faraway Gu-ye Mountain, with skin like ice or snow, and gentle and shy like a young girl.” Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 33. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 145.
To look for the blossoms there is no need to hold a silver candle:\(^{20}\)

Their fragrance is caught in the dark.\(^{21}\)

By a desolate pond,

She sheds the fallen flowers on Princess Shouyang.\(^{22}\)

(QSC 2/610)

醜奴兒

梅花

肌膚綽約真仙子，

來伴冰霜。

19 It alludes to Lady Guoguo 虢國夫人 of the Tang, who, according to “History of Concubine Yang” 楊太真外傳, was so confident about her own beauty that she did not wear make-up even when she went to see the emperor. cf. Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian, p. 101.

20 This line is derived from Su Shi’s shi poem Chinese crab-apple 海棠詩: “For fear that the flowers will go to sleep towards deep night/[I] light a tall candle to shine on their crimson glory.” 只恐夜深花睡去，故燒高燭照紅妝. QSS 805/933. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 145.

21 It is derived from several earlier poems. One is Su Ziqing’s 蘇子卿 Fallen plum blossoms 梅花落: “Simply saying flowers are like snow/ they do not recognize fragrance comes out [from flowers];” 祇言花是雪，不悟有香來。Another poem is Liu Huan’s 劉緩 Respectfully presented to Mr. Liu on the poem “Celebrities take a delight in beauties” 敬酬劉長史詠名士悅傾城詩: “Looking in distance it seems to be blossoms;/ smelling the fragrance [I] realize here comes another spring.” 遙見疑發花，聞香知異春. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 145.

22 It refers to a story of Princess Shouyang of the Song (420–479) recorded in Taiping yulan 太平御覽, juan 30 (Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994, p. 256): “Princess Shouyang is a daughter of emperor Wu of the Song Dynasty (reign 420-422). During the People Festival, she slept under the eaves in Hanzhang Palace. A plum blossom fell on the princess’ forehead and formed a five-petaled mark that could not be wiped off. The queen commanded that the mark be preserved. Three days later the mark was washed away. Feeling this event was remarkable, the court ladies all imitated the princess. This is the origin of today’s plum-blossom make-up.” 宋武帝女壽陽公主，人日臥于含章殿檐下。梅花落公主額上，成五出之花，拂之不去。皇后留之，看得几時。經三日，洗之乃落。宮女奇其異，競效為之，今梅花妝是也. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 146. QSC 2/610.
洗盡鉛黃，
素面初無一點粧。

尋花不用持銀燭，
暗裏聞香。

零落池塘。
分付餘妍與壽陽。

In this *xiaoling* poem, the strong personal tone disappears. Aiming to depict the blossoms in detail, the lyrical self carefully maintains an objective and detached stance by preventing himself from stepping into the center of the poem, which stays focused on the blossoms. No expressive phrase is present, and no actions are performed. The verbs *xun* 寻 (look for), *chi* 持 (hold), and *wen* 聞 (smell) in lines 5 and 6 suggest that the lyrical self performs a series of actions. However, it is more reasonable to take “a man,” rather than “the man,” meaning the lyrical self, as the experiencing subject, for these two lines do not describe the lyrical self’s individual experience but, rather, explain mankind’s experience of the blossoms on a generalized and universal level.

The shift in the poet’s attention to objects results in greater emphasis on descriptive mode. If we see *Hua fan* and other human-oriented *yongwu* lyricss as Chinese paintings in a *xie yi* 寫意 style (literally, sketching thoughts, i.e., the interpretive and freely expressive style), then *Chou nu er* is more like a painting in a *gong bi* 工筆 style (a careful realistic technique using highly meticulous brushstrokes to delineate details very precisely without independent or expressive variation). It attempts to catch the features of white blossoms: their exquisite texture is like the delicate skin of a goddess, their white petals are as pure and clean as a beauty’s face with no makeup, their fragrance appeals to people even in darkness, and they share their beauty with the princess. If we compare *Chou nu er* and *Hua fan*, we can easily find that *Chou nu er* presents a much more detailed description of the blossoms than *Hua fan*, although the former is in the shorter *xiaoling* form.
*Chou nu er* demonstrates diversified and complicated descriptive techniques typical of object-oriented *yongwu* lyrics. Zhou Bangyan does not depict the blossoms in a straightforward way; rather, he employs various literary devices to highlight the qualities of the white plum blossoms. Through literary allusions to the goddess in *Zhuangzi* and Lady Guoguo of the Tang period, he creates metaphorical relations between the blossoms and beautiful women, with the focus on the delicate texture and white color of the blossoms. By alluding to the anecdote about Princess Shouyang and poems on plum blossoms, Zhou indicates the object he is writing about without directly mentioning its name. The lower stanza is adapted from Lin Bu’s 林逋 (967-1028) famous couplet about plum blossoms: “Dappled shadows slant across the clear shallow water; / Gloomy fragrance floats at dusk in dim moonlight.”23 Zhou chooses the elements of water, fragrance, and dusk from the couplet and incorporates them in his songs with some variations. These elements associated with plum blossoms enable well-trained Chinese readers to immediately realize what the lyricist is attempting to convey and to make a connection between Zhou Bangyan’s text and the poetic world created in the text to which it alludes. By means of these literary devices, a vivid image of plum blossoms – as pure, delicate, fragrant, and aloof – is portrayed.

Zhou Bangyan’s exploration of the new form of lyrics on objects is more extensive in his *man* songs, as we can observe in the following piece:

To the tune *Shuí lóng yín*

Pear blossoms

1A The white skin might dread the lingering cold.

Under the sun they stand on a land of green grass.

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B [The pear blossoms in] Fanchuan Garden and the sun each shining upon the other.\(^{24}\)

[The pear trees] on Lingguan Mount obscuring the path:\(^{25}\)

5 The remnant reds\(^{26}\) all would shun them.

C By the terrace where fire is passed,\(^{27}\)

Amid the wind and rain that envy the flowers,

The Changmen Palace is locked deeply.\(^{28}\)

The window curtains are lowered, half-wet:

10 A sprig in hand

Really elicits tears at dawn.\(^{29}\)

B’ Another world in breeze and moonlight -

Blossoms everywhere, the garden is filled with songs and music.\(^{30}\)

\(^{24}\) According to *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, Fanchuan is a garden of the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty famous for its pear trees. *Yiwen leiju*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982, jian 86, pp. 1473-74. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 77.

\(^{25}\) Lingguan Mount, located in today’s Baoxing County in Sichuan province, is well known for pears. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 77.

\(^{26}\) This phrase refers to flowers other than pear blossoms.

\(^{27}\) The Cold Food Festival occurs a few days before the solar date known as Qingming (about 5th Apr.). It represents a period of fasting when no fires are lit. The festival concludes with the ceremonial passing of the fire from the palace.

\(^{28}\) This line alludes to the story of Empress Chen, who, having fallen from favor with the Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 140-87 B.C.), was banished to the Changmen Palace. It is also derived from Liu Changqing’s *Sorrow of Changmen* 長門怨: “Why is Changmen Palace locked? The pearl curtain hangs. The fragrant grass grows out of the idle land, the pear blossoms appear on old boughs.” 何事長門閉? 珠簾隻自垂。蕙草生閑地, 梨花發舊枝。*QTS* 148/1511. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 78.

\(^{29}\) This is derived from a line from Bai Juyi’s 白居易 *Song of everlasting sorrow* 長恨歌 about the love story of the Imperial Consort Yang: “Her jade-like face crisscrossed with lonely tears, Like a spray of pear blossoms in spring wet with rain.” 玉容寂寞淚闌干, 梨花一枝春帶雨。*QTS* 435/4816-20. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 78.

\(^{30}\) This refers to the academy of music during the Tang, which was located in the Pear Garden. See Liu Xu 劉昫 et. al. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975, jian 28, p. 1051. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 79.
All the red-lead powder has disappeared:

The blossoms are like Consort Pan before she drank wine.\(^{31}\)

Or Zhaojun who just rose up.\(^{32}\)

Snowy waves turn in the air.\(^{33}\)

Powdered skirts whiten the night.\(^{34}\)

They do not make a spring.

Regretfully the jade-like face has disappeared,\(^{35}\)

Vainly nephrite flowers are beautiful.\(^{36}\)

With whom shall I vie for beauty?\(^{37}\)

\(QSC\ 2/610\)

水龍吟

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\(^{31}\) This line alludes to Consort Pan of the Qi Dynasty (479-502), who, when requested by the emperor, playfully sold wine in the royal palace. After she dies, she remained as white as if she were still alive. See Li Yanshou 李延壽 (7th century), *Nanshi* 南史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975, juan 5, p. 155. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 79.

\(^{32}\) This line alludes to Wang Zhaojun, an ignored concubine of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty (r. 48-33 B.C.). When the emperor asked his harem who would like to be married to a chieftain of the Xiongnu tribes on the northern border, Wang Zhaojun recommended herself. When she rose up from among other palace ladies, her beauty dazzled everyone. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 79.

\(^{33}\) This is derived from Han Yu’s 韓愈 *On plum blossoms, sent to Zhang, eleventh in rank* 李花贈張十一署: “Harassed by wind and rain, they surpass the snow. / The boundless waves turn in the air.” 風揉雨練雪羞比，波濤翻空杳無涘。*QTS* 338/3791. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, pp. 79-80.

\(^{34}\) This is derived from Wang Anshi’s *Sent to lady Cat* 寄蔡氏女子: “Plum blossoms whiten the night, peach blossoms dazzle the eyes.” 積李兮綾夜，崇桃兮炫晝。 cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 80.

\(^{35}\) This is derived from a line from Bai Juyi’s *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*: “Beneath the soil of the Mawei Slope, / the jade-like face, having died in vain, is no longer seen.” 馬嵬坡下泥土中，不見玉顔空死處。 The Mawei Slope was the place where the Imperial Consort Yang (719-756) was put to death. *QTS* 435/4816-20. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 80.

\(^{36}\) Different opinions exist about what the phrase “nephrite flowers” refers to. It may refer to snow, flowers, or a courtesan called Qiongying. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 80. I treat it as a metaphorical term of snow; thus it forms an antithesis with the preceding line on the semantic level.

\(^{37}\) Because there are no personal pronouns, this line can also be translated as “with whom shall they vie for beauty?” This reading turns the last three lines into the lyrical self’s comment on pear blossoms.
梨花

素肌應怯餘寒，
豔陽佔立青蕪地。
樊川照日，
靈關遮路，
殘紅斂避。
傳火樓臺，
烛花風雨，
長門深閉。
亞簾櫳半濕，
一枝在手，
偏勾引、黃昏淚。

別有風前月底。
布繁英、滿園歌吹。
朱鉛退盡，
潘妃卻酒，
昭君乍起。
雪浪翻空，

粉裳縞夜，

不成春意。

恨玉容不見，

瓊英謾好，

與何人比。

In this song, the lyrical self is almost absent except in line 10, which describes the action of holding a sprig of blossoms. This action suggests the participation of the lyrical self, but again, as in Chou nu er, it is equally possible that this line is about an action performed by “any” person, that is, it is about an experience on a generalized and universal level. Throughout the song, the lyrical self remains as an objective observer, detached from the object described, which is the center of the lyrical self’s attention. Such a compositional stance is rare in lyrics that do not assume a female persona.

The lyrical self’s own voice is blurred under the personified objects. Throughout the song, the lyrical self does not utter emotive phrases in his own voice except for the modal verb ying 應 (might) in the first line, which obliquely indicates a subjective speculation of the lyrical self. To hide his own voice, the lyrical self transfers attributes and actions to personified objects. Consequently, literary devices such as personification, metaphor, and transference of feelings are intricately laced throughout the poem: the pear blossoms’ white skin feels cold (line 1), other flowers shun pear blossoms humbly (line 5), the wind and rain envy pear blossoms (line 7), a sprig of pear blossoms weeps at dusk (line 11), the pear blossoms even have the desire to compete with others (lines 20 to 22). As James J. Y. Liu stated, the transference of feelings to objects allows a poet to externalize his own emotions and make them objects of aesthetic

38 The word hen 悔 (regretful) in line twenty is a little tricky. The strophe led by this word can be interpreted as an exclamation uttered by the lyrical self or by the pear blossoms, but the second reading heightens the effect.
contemplation. Zhou Bangyan’s great mastery of the complex interplay between objective
description and transference of feelings makes Shui long yin an exemplary object-oriented
yongwu song.

Shui long yin demonstrates the sophisticated art of description. Its longer form allows room for
the puchen (extended and detailed exposition) approach typical of the rhapsody genre. As a
writer conversant with the rhapsody, Zhou Bangyan incorporated this technique in his lyrics. By
means of the puchen approach, Zhou Bangyan catches the features of the described objects from
eyery possible angle. The two antitheses, in lines 3 to 4 and lines 17 to 18, portray grand
pictures of blossoms on a larger scale. The lyricist chooses hyperbolic expressions, such as zhao
ri 照日 (dazzle the sun), zhe lu 遮路 (obscure the path), xue lang fan kong 雪浪翻空 (snowy
waves turn in the air), and gao ye 細夜 (whiten the night), to highlight the splendor of blossoms.
After drawing a grand picture of thousands of blossoms, Zhou Bangyan diversified his
description by turning his attention in lines 10 and 11 to a much smaller object – a sprig of
blossoms with raindrops on it. Like a camera zooming in on something being filmed or
photographed, Zhou Bangyan’s description gives a close-up picture of the sprig, cross-projecting
the raindrops on it as tears of an abandoned beauty.

Through a nexus of diversified temporal and spatial characteristics, Zhou Bangyan amplifies the
poetic dimension and thus portrays pear blossoms beyond the limitation of time and space. For
convenience, I insert a letter at the beginning of certain lines to indicate the temporal transition.
In the upper stanza, the poet unfolds his description in a chronological order, from early spring
(A), to a spring day (B), and finally to the Cold Food Festival in early April (C). The second
stanza, through the phrase bie you 別有 (another) in line 12, brings the description back to an
earlier time in the form of a recollection or imagination. Therefore, an anachrony, which is
discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative, is constituted.41 We can
designate the letter B’ to this anachrony for it could be any spring night located between A and C.

40 Liu Yong borrowed this approach from rhapsodies fu. The longer form of the rhapsody describes a subject conclusively and is
usually meant to impress and display.
or one specific spring night during the High Tang. By adding B’, Zhou Bangyan doubles the poetic dimension, and, in doing so, he generates ample room to develop complex descriptions. Through frequent temporal transitions, Zhou Bangyan depicts pear blossoms being together at various times and locations: young petals in chilly early spring, spectacular blooming pear forests in the warm sunshine, falling flowers in the April wind and rain, and pear blossoms in the bustling Pear Garden during the Tang.

Making heavy use of allusions is another important method to enhance description. *Shui long yin* has a total of twelve textual allusions and derivations, five of which are about pear blossoms. Some allusions, such as those to Fanchuan Garden and Lingguan Mount, perform a function similar to that of metonymy. By means of allusions to the places that are famous for pear blossoms, the poet touches upon the object described without mentioning it directly and, at the same time, evokes the reader’s imagination about the spectacular pear forests associated with these places. Allusions to beautiful women form a series of metaphorical relations between the blossoms and human beauties. Legends about the beauties add color to the perceived objects: the falling petals are as sad as the abandoned Empress Chen and Imperial Consort Yang, while the blooming pear blossoms are as dazzlingly beautiful as the beauties Zhaojun and the Imperial Consort Pan. Allusions are also frequently used to expand temporal and spatial dimensions, as we have noted. The allusions to Fanchuan, Lingguan, the Pear Garden, and historical figures fuse different periods of time and geographical locations. The Pear Garden, for example, symbolizes happiness and a golden age of the Tang; similarly, the blooming pear trees in springtime, with their spectacular appearance, symbolize the golden time in their one-year life cycle. Thus a metaphorical equation is achieved, and a sense of history, which would be absent otherwise, is signified. By blurring the boundary between past and present, the poet attributes a certain degree of universality to the object he describes.

Zhou Bangyan’s object-oriented *yongwu* songs led to a new development in poetic objectivity. In these songs, the lyrical self is almost invisible and the voice appears to be silenced. Because the poet consciously hides the spontaneous and more frankly autobiographical voice, it is impossible for readers to impose autobiographical interpretations on such lyrics. The emotions

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42 For the eleven allusions, see notes 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35. For the five allusions to pear blossoms, see notes 24, 25, 28, 29, and 30.
are thus not identified as the poet’s inner state but embodied in the objects described through devices such as literary allusion, personification, and transference of feelings. When yongwu lyrics were freed from the traditional notion that literature is connected with the character of the writer, the symbolic quality that encourages an allegorical rather than autobiographical reading became increasingly evident in Southern Song lyrics.
Chapter 5
The Narrative Mode

As I have discussed in Chapter One, the narrative mode was initially characteristic of common songs. Though it appeared in early literati compositions, it was subordinated to the lyrical and descriptive modes. The development of the manci form triggered the literati’s interest in this previously neglected mode, for the length of the manci form invites more diversified modes of expression to support the lyrical voice. Being the first master of the manci form, Liu Yong explored the narrative mode and elevated its importance in his songs. Traditional critics noticed this change, stating that Liu Yong’s lyrics “surpass those of his predecessors in narrating a story.”

Liu Yong’s contribution to the development of the narrative mode mainly lies in his exploration of the puchen approach (i.e., the extended narrative-descriptive approach). His man songs do not focus on one aspect of a situation, as is often the case in xiaoling poems. Instead, sustained depictions of a character’s actions are combined with elaborate scenic descriptions and abundant expressive statements. In his man song to the tunes Qi shi 威氏 and Ye ban yue 夜半樂, the progression of the narration parallels continuous visual and mental experiences. Fusing various poetic modes together through the extended narrative-descriptive approach, Liu Yong narrates a relatively complete story in great detail.

Zhou Bangyan derives his inspiration for the exploration of the narrative mode directly from Liu Yong. Being the second master of the puchen approach following Liu, Zhou employed it to its fullest degree by recasting and elevating Liu Yong’s technique. Through a comparison between the two poets’ narrative-style poems, which will be presented in the second section of this chapter, we can see Zhou Bangyan’s innovations in regards to the existing narrative mode. This mode was relatively simple in structure and straightforward in statements in the common songs and compositions of earlier literati poets. Liu Yong’s lyrics also generally relate a story in a

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2 QSC 1/170. For detailed discussions about this poem, see James J. Y. Liu, Major Lyricists of the Northern Sung, p. 73; Kang-i Sun Chang, p. 138.
relatively simple linear sequence. His lyric to the tune *Lang tao sha man* 浪淘沙慢 features frequent transitions between different temporal dimensions, but this poem is an isolated example. In Zhou Bangyan’s works, however, the narrative mode involves far more temporal dimensions in a more complicated manner than the lyrics of his predecessors. Through the works of Liu Yong and Zhou Bangyan, narrative content became significant in literati lyrics. Zhou’s lyrics are noted for their abundant narrative content: in his 127 lyrics of the core group, more than ninety songs present a story, a plot, or a narrative lineage; of these ninety-odd songs, more than thirty narrate a relatively complete story. It is through his works that the narrative mode gained an unprecedented level of importance in the composition of literati lyrics.

Since the narrative mode is germane to common songs, it is natural that in some of Zhou Bangyan’s works, particularly in his *xiaoling* poems, this mode is utilized in a manner similar to that of common songs. Zhou’s frequent use of the narrative devices of direct speech and dialogue shows the influence of the tradition of common songs on his compositions. I will first examine how Zhou Bangyan maintained this tradition and imposed literati aesthetic value on it.

1 Device of Direct Speech

Dialogue or quasi-dialogue is used in some of Zhou Bangyan’s *xiaoling* poems as the main or even only narrative technique. As with the *Dunhuang* song *Que ta zhi*, these *xiaoling* poems present the speeches of two characters in two stanzas. Direct speeches bring a strong dramatic tendency and a quality of immediacy to Zhou’s poems, making them more like popular songs.

To the tune *Yu mei ren*

1 “About to depart in the lamplight, still I am lingering.

Broken-hearted: the vermilion door will be far.

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3 *QSC* 1/210.
4 They are *xiaoling* poems to the tunes *Yi jiu you (QSC* 2/599), *Huan xi sha (QSC* 2/615), *Yin chun yue (QSC* 2/616), *Yu lou chun (QSC* 2/616), and *Yu mei ren (QSC* 2/618).
There’s no need for a red rain [of tears] to bathe your fragrant cheeks,
I will return by the time the wild roses fade.”

“Dancing waist and song clapper keep time in idle moments;
Just letting others watch.
See the coal embers in the golden brazier –
Don’t let your love so easily become like cold ashes!”

(QSC 2/618)

虞美人

燈前欲去仍留戀。
腸斷朱扉遠。
未須紅雨洗香腮。
待得薔薇花謝、便歸來。

舞腰歌版閒時按。
一任傍人看。

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5 This alludes to Du Mu’s poem Present upon parting, “Do not weep before the mirror, / By the time the wild roses fade I will return.” 用鏡前空有淚，薔薇花謝即歸來。 QTS 8/5994. cf. Luo Kanglie, Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian, p. 197.

金爐應見舊殘煤。
莫使恩情容易、似寒灰。

This song presents a dialogue between two lovers. Smitheram interprets this song as having two distinct voices, one male (lines 3 and 4) and one female (lines 7 and 8), along with a narrator (lines 1, 2, 5, and 6). It is also reasonable to treat the whole stanza as a character’s direct speech. Modal verbs, such as \( yu \) (about to), \( ren \) (let), and \( mo \) (don’t), along with the temporal deictic \( dai \) \( de \) (by the time ...) show that the description involves the characters’ inner thoughts. The upper stanza projects a male speaker through the two expressions in line 3, \( hong \) \( yu \) (red rain, i.e., female’s tears) and \( xiang \) \( sai \) (fragrant cheeks), which are clichés used to describe a female as perceived by a male. The lower stanza projects a female speaker through line 6 and the expression \( en \) \( qing \) (love, kindness) in line 8, both implying a female’s inferior status in a romantic relationship.

The characteristics of the two characters become increasingly apparent through their direct speeches. Before their separation, the departing male promises to return as early as possible. The female, obviously a singing girl, has more concerns. She swears to be loyal to her love even though she has to give performances to entertain male guests. The phrase \( Yi \) \( ren \) (let) in line 6 shows that the girl is emotionally detached from the pleasures of the “vanity fair”; it also demonstrates the girl’s inability to escape from such a world and her firm determination to resist any temptations. This line becomes more powerful if we treat it as the girl’s speech rather than the narrator’s description. The last two lines reflect the girl’s fear: knowing that men are always exposed to countless temptations, she is afraid her lover will soon lose interest in her. Her fear reveals a sense of incapability to control her own fate, making her vow of loyalty much more powerful.

To the tune \textit{Huan xi sha}

\footnote{Smitheram, pp. 124-25.}
“If it is not because I have broken my date with Xiaoniang,\(^8\)
Then why am I so ready to depart from Chang’an?\(^9\)
I am afraid, in advance, that traces of her sorrowful rouged tears on the clothes have dried.”

“This secluded hall is deep and expansive; lamp flames blaze for good luck.
The small stove is near by, the wine cups are large.
For you I will take off your homeward saddle outside the gate.”

(QSC 2/615)

浣溪沙

不為蕭娘舊約寒。

何因容易別長安。

預愁衣上粉痕乾。

幽閣深沈燈焰喜，

小爐鄰近酒盃寬。

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\(^8\) Xiaoniang is a name commonly used to refer to a singing girl.

\(^9\) In lyrics, Chang’an is often used as a generic reference to the capital city of the Song Dynasty.
We can easily identify two distinct speakers in this song although all the personal pronouns in the English translation except jun 君 (you, a masculine second-person pronoun) in the last line are absent in the Chinese text. The upper stanza is a male character’s monologue. The phrase feng hen 粉痕 (the traces of rouged tears) in line 3 shows a female image posited as an object perceived by the male for it seems unlikely that a female would describe herself in such terms.

The conjunctive pattern “bu wei 不為 (if it is not because) … he yin 何因 (then why) …” in line 1 and the strongly colloquial expression rong yi 容易 (easily, ready) in line 2 obviously involve an interior sense of self-questioning, which is more like a context for a first-person narrative. The lower stanza projects a female speaker through the masculine second-person pronoun jun 君, whom she addresses in the last line.

It is noteworthy that unlike Yu mei ren, this song presents a quasi-dialogue rather than a real one. The two speakers’ direct speeches do not occur in the same spatial-temporal dimension. The man is in the capital city when he utters his feelings. Yu chou 預愁 (be afraid in advance) in line 3 shows that it is some time after he has broken his date with the girl and before he returns to meet her again. The girl’s speech occurs when she welcomes the man home. Apparently, there is some lapse of time between the two characters’ acts of narrating. However, their speeches echo each other. The man’s speech expresses his anxiety related to returning to meet the woman, while the woman expresses her delight when the man returns, and in this sense they are similar to a real dialogue. The man’s words show he made a date with the girl some time ago, but he later left her temporarily to go to the capital city, possibly to make a living, and consequently, he failed to keep his date. The girl, he imagines, is anxiously awaiting his return. The man’s words are echoed by the word gui 歸 (return, back) in the last line. After being absent for some time, the man comes back to see the girl. With the help of this quasi-dialogue device, readers experience a greater intensity of temporal compression than they otherwise would.

Both Yu mei ren and Huan xi sha bear strong relevance to oral performance. As I have discussed in Chapter One, in Dunhuang songs, dialogue is frequently used as a device of oral performance. The song to the tune Que ta zhi and the song cycle to the tune Nan ge zi are typical examples. Though, besides the Dunhuang songs, few common songs employing this technique have been
kept, it is safe for us to believe a large number of this kind of songs once existed and circulated among the ordinary people. Zhou Bangyan’s songs are obviously influenced by this oral performance tradition. In *Yu mei ren* and *Huan xi sha*, the two voices indicate there are two characters, possibly performed by two singers during the performance. The frequent occurrence of colloquial expressions also enhances immediacy between the performers and the audiences.

A common feature of *Yu mei ren* and *Huan xi sha* is the occurrence of a covert or absent narrator. According to Seymour Chatman (1928- ), a narrator can be overt or not overt, depending on the degree to which he is present in the story he tells. An overt narrator can be a real character, or an intrusive outside party, appearing and intervening in the narrative, often speaking directly to the reader or making comments. A covert narrator, on the contrary, may be hidden or absent, as in some of Hemingway’s or Dorothy Parker’s stories containing only dialogue and uncommented-upon action. Gerald Prince, too, gives clear definitions of “intrusive narrator,” which is also called “overt narrator” and “absent narrator,” in his *A Dictionary of Narratology*. An “intrusive narrator” is “a narrator commenting in his or her own voice on the situations and events presented, their presentation, or its context; a narrator relying on and characterized by commentarial excursuses or intrusions.” An “absent narrator,” according to Prince, is “a maximally covert narrator; an impersonal narrator; a narrator presenting situations and events with minimum narratorial mediation and in no way referring to a narrating self or a narrating activity.”

The narrator’s function in *Yu mei ren* and *Huan xi sha* is different from that in most of Zhou Bangyan’s narrative-style songs. The narrator does not appear throughout the text; he no longer acts as a bystander to tell what he sees and hears; his duty is simply to record honestly what the characters talk about. The narrator’s mediation exists only in the ellipsis: the narrator decides whether to elide or keep the specific parts of a narration. This compositional approach is rare in literati’s poems. We can find some examples of a covert narrator in folk songs, such as *Ji*

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12 Gérard Genette proposes four basic forms of narrative movement: ellipsis, summary, scene and pause. Ellipsis, or strictly speaking, temporal ellipsis, refers to a certain period of story time elided in a narrative, in which the pseudo-time of the narrative is less than the story time. Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 86-112.
ming 鷄鳴 in the Shjing, Shang shan cai miwu 上山採靡蕪 in yuefu of the Han Dynasty, and the Dunhuang song Que tao zhi, to name a few. In these folk songs, the narrating instance is reduced to silence and the narrator’s function is completely to communicate through the dialogues. This folk song tradition is followed by Zhou Bangyan, whose Yu mei ren reminds us of folk love songs through the strong dramatic effect generated by the dialogue between characters.

The lack of traces of the narrating instance and the occurrence of a considerable lapse of time between the two direct speeches result in more questions being posed of Huan xi sha than of other similar poems. Lacking an obvious narrator, to which traditional readers had become so accustomed, Huan xi sha demands more effort on the part of readers to add missing information in their process of interpreting. Some critics think the first stanza is about a bygone love and the second stanza about a new one, so the name xiaoniang 蕭娘 mentioned in the first stanza is not the female speaker projected in the second stanza.13 However, this interpretation makes the male character inconsistent, given that he is sad about the old relationship with xiaoniang, how could he be so in love with another girl? Smitheram’s analysis is also problematic. He believes the whole song is spoken by a female character, but he fails to explain the obvious inconsistencies in point of view in lines 1, 3, 4, and 5.14 Due to the lack of an overt narrator and temporal indicators as well as the ambiguity of the word wei 為 in the first line, the love story narrated in the lyric can actually be interpreted in three ways. My translation illustrates the first reading. The man has broken his date with the girl, Xiaoninag. To resolve the problems in their relationship, he left Chang’an in a hurry for the city where the girl lives. The word wei is interpreted as “because.” In the second reading, the man has not broken his date with Xiaoniang, who is not in Chang’an. He thus leaves Chang’an in a hurry to meet with her as promised. Therefore, the word wei is interpreted as “in order to.” The last reading interprets wei as “because” but Xiaoniang stays in Chang’an. The man, having missed a date with her, left the city in a state of loss but returns after some time.

14 Smitheram, pp.112-13.
*Huan xi sha* shows Zhou Bangyan’s exceptional skill at narrating a story. By making a small change to the dialogue device through inserting the lapse of time between different characters’ speeches, he turns a common narrative song into a complex piece of art. His creative use of direct speech is even more evident in the following poem mentioned in the anecdote about Li Shishi.

To the tune *Shaonian you*

1. A Bingzhou knife like water,
   Salt of Wu surpassing snow.\(^{15}\)
   Slender fingers peel the new orange.
   The brocade bed-curtain has just grown warm

5. And beast-shaped incense keeps emitting aroma
   As they sit face to face adjusting a *sheng*.\(^{16}\)

   In a low voice she asks, “Where will you spend the night?
   The third watch has already sounded from the city wall,
   And a horse would slip on the thick frost.

10. Best not leave.
   Few people will be out so late.”\(^{17}\)

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\(^{15}\) Bingzhou and the Wu area are famous for product of knives and salt respectively. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 177.

\(^{16}\) The *sheng* is a kind of pan pipes.

少年游

並刀如水，
吳鹽勝雪，
織手破新橙。
錦幄初溫，
獸煙不斷，
相對坐調笙。

低聲問嚮誰行宿，
城上已三更。
馬滑霜濃，
不如休去，
直是少人行。

This narrative-style xiaoling poem is a marvel of verbal economy. Its upper stanza provides a setting for the romantic episode. The two parallel couplets (lines 1-2, 4-5) depict inanimate objects in a woman’s room, reflecting a leisurely and aristocratic milieu. The elegance of the objects suggests the owner’s mode of extravagant living and her eagerness to please the guest. She uses her best food to treat the guest, and keeps her room warm and fragrant to make him feel
comfortable. The two lines independent of couplets depict the characters. Line 3 reinforces the importance of the guest because the girl herself peels a fresh orange for him. Line 6 describes their preparation before a performance. This trivial detail suggests that the two people are intimate and share an interest in music. The phrase chu wen 初溫 (has just grown warm) in line 4 and the action tiao sheng 調笙 (adjust a sheng) in line 6 suggest it is early in the evening and the performance has not started yet. Through the condensed view of an indoor setting and the characters’ actions, Zhou Bangyan successfully creates a relaxed and romantic atmosphere between the two figures.

The essence of the narrative lies in the lower stanza, which mainly consists of the girl’s speech. By providing more details and implying the characters’ further actions, her speech enriches and continues the story. Based on her question in line 7, we can tell the relationship between the two is that of a courtesan and her favorite client. She asks the question because it is already eleven o’clock at night (the third watch), as mentioned in line 8. Apparently, the man has spent most of the night with the girl but has not yet decided whether to spend the rest of the night with her, so the purpose of the girl’s question is to persuade him to stay. Her following description about the outside condition serves this purpose – it is already late on a cold night, the roads are covered with thick frost, and few people are outside at this time. The song ends with her invitation to the man, leaving the story open to different possible endings.

Zhou Bangyan portrays the female character vividly through her speech. As a courtesan, she is sensitive to her client’s emotions and capable of communicating with him in a pleasing way. Feeling that the man will possibly leave, she asks where he might go. Noticing his hesitation, she tries to persuade him to stay. However, she expresses her wish in a roundabout way. Her first step is to highlight the warmth and comfort of her room by describing the harsh outdoor environment, and then she reminds the man that it is inconvenient and hazardous to ride home so late on such a cold night. Only after she has elaborated all these negative factors does she explicitly make her invitation to the man, and because she presents her argument from the perspective of the man, her words seem particularly convincing.

Although in Shaonian you, Zhou Bangyan uses the device of direct speech typical of popular songs, this poem demonstrates an aesthetic quality of holding emotions in reserve. Zhou does not depict an erotic scene so common in lyrics about love affairs. The poem ends right after the
courtesan invites the man to stay the night with her, therefore evoking a romantic mood while avoiding explicitly erotic sentiments at the same time. Partly because the work is “morally correct,” many critics have considered this short lyric a superb work. Zhou Ji refers to it with a famous comment: “It is an excellent work in the basic character [of the lyric genre], for the intrinsic essence of the song lyric is right at this point. If the poem goes even a little bit further, it will fall to the graceless way of Shangu [Huang Tingjian].” Wang Youhua 王又華 contrasts Zhou’s elegance with Liu Yong’s emotional excess, claiming Liu Yong will definitely describe what will happen after the girl’s invitation. Featuring a daring use of a dialogue device common in popular songs while at the same time maintaining the literati aesthetic value of holding emotions in reserve, Shaonian you has become one of the most celebrated of Zhou Bangyan’s poems.

2 Complicated Narrative Structure

Zhou Bangyan followed the narrative tradition of common songs and composed a few poems in the similar style. However, his contribution lies mainly in his lyrical exploration of the narrative mode with greater complexity and refinement. The narrative structure he developed often makes his narrative-style verses highly literary and complicated, and such a kind of verse represents an unprecedented achievement of narrative art in literati lyrics. To show Zhou’s contributions, I will first examine the following three songs – two by earlier poets and one by Zhou Bangyan for comparison:

To the tune Lin jiang xian

by Xu Changtu 徐昌圖 (fl. 965)

1 Having finished the toast at the parting pavilion, I left for the west:

In my floating life I have long hated to be like a drifting weed.

When I looked back, layers of misty willows gradually emerged.

Through pale clouds, a solitary goose flew far away:

5  In a cold day, the dusk sky turns red.

Where will the painted boat moor tonight?

The tides will be calm; the moon on the Huai River will be dim.

After sobering up from drinking, people are quiet: how can I bear such strong sorrow?

A flickering lamp, a dream on the solitary pillow:

10  Light waves, wind of the fifth watch.

(QTWDC 731)

臨江仙

飲散離亭西去，
浮生長恨飄蓬。
回頭煙柳漸重重。
淡雲孤雁遠，
寒日暮天紅。

今夜畫船何處，
A cicada is droning sadly in the cold,

[I] face the roadside pavilion in the evening:

A sudden rain has just stopped.

I am listless at the parting banquet outside the city gate.

We linger late, but the magnolia boat is waiting for me to depart.

Hand in hand, we look at each other’s tearful eyes:

Speechless, we are choked with sobs.

I think of my long journey – a thousand miles of misty waves stretching ahead;

Amid thick evening haze, the southern sky is boundless.

From old time, tender natures lament separation.
How can I bear it in such a desolate, cold autumn season!

Tonight where shall I be when I awaken from drunken sleep?

A willowy bank: the morning breeze and the fading moon.

I will be away for several years this time,

All fine days and beautiful scenes will become meaningless.

Even if I have a thousand kinds of tender sentiments,

To whom shall I express them?

(QSC 1/21)

雨霖鈴

寒蟬淒切。

對長亭晚，

驟雨初歇。

都門帳飲無緒，

留戀處、蘭舟催發。

執手相看淚眼，

竟無語凝噎。

念去去、千里煙波，

暮靄沈沈楚天闊。
多情自古傷離別。

更那堪、冷落清秋節。

今宵酒醒何處，

楊柳岸、曉風殘月。

此去經年，

應是良辰、好景虛設。

便縱有、千種風情，

更與何人說。

To the tune *Lang tao sha*

by Zhou Bangyan

1 Morning clouds were heavy,

Frost stiffened the grass on the shore,

Mist hid the battlements of the city wall.

On the south road the well-oiled carriage was ready to depart,

5 At the east gate the parting cup all at once stood empty.
Just brushing the face, hanging willow wands can be tied into knots.\textsuperscript{20} 
And, concealing rouged tears, with her own jade hands she broke one off.
Now on the bank of the Han she wonders where the wild goose flies –\textsuperscript{21}
For so long there’s been no word of him.

10 Full of feeling
Within my gaze, the land is far and the sky broad,
Here where the dew is cold, the wind fresh,
And the place empty of people, the cold water-clock sobs.
Sighing that there are a myriad things that cannot be forgotten,

15 But hardest of all is to separate so easily.
The green wine cup is not yet empty,
And I rely on that broken cloud to hold back
The setting moon beside the western tower.
The silken girdle’s sheen is gone; the patterned quilt is laid away,

20 The linked rings undone, the old perfume dispersed in a moment.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} It is derived from Wen Tingyun’s \textit{On willows 题柳} “A thousand willow wands brush the face” 柳柳千条拂面丝. \textit{QTS} 578/6722. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, p. 302.

\textsuperscript{21} This alludes to the story of Zheng Jiaofu 郑交甫. According to \textit{Liexian zhuan 列仙傳}, Zheng met two women along the banks of the Han River. These women were actually goddesses and each gave Zheng one large pearl. Before Zheng had walked ten paces, both the women and the pearls had vanished. Wang Shumin 王叔岷 coll. \textit{Liexian zhuan jiaojian 列仙傳校箋}. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007, \textit{juan} 1, p. 52. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, p. 303. Smitheram translates this line as “I think about those departed geese from the banks of the Han and where they have gone; So much time has passed and yet no word.” p. 207.

\textsuperscript{22} This alludes to a story of the smart empress of the State of Qi, who, when required by an envoy of the State of Qin to undo linked rings of carved jade, undid them by smashing them to pieces. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, p. 188.
My sad song goes on until the jasper pot is quite knocked to bits.\(^{23}\)

I hate it that spring departs without making a future date,

Playing with the night scene

Vainly leaving behind just pear petal snow on the ground.\(^{24}\)

\((QSC\ 2/598-599)\)

浪淘沙

晝陰重，
霜凋岸草，
霧隱城堞。
南陌脂車待發。
東門帳飲乍闋。
正拂面垂楊堪繫結。
掩紅淚、玉手親折。
念漢浦離鴻去何許，
經時信音絕。


情切。

望中地遠天闊。

嘯露冷風清，

無人處，耿耿寒漏咽。

嗟萬事難忘，

惟是輕別。

翠尊未竭。

憑斷雲留取，

西樓殘月。

羅帶光銷紋衾疊。

連環解、舊香頓歇。

怨歌永、瓊壺敲盡缺。

恨春去、不與人期，

弄夜色，

空餘滿地梨花雪。

These three parting songs clearly demonstrate the evolutionary process of narrating techniques in literati lyrics. *Lin jiang xian* by Xu Changtu is a *xiaoling* song composed around the mid-tenth century. It is organized in a very traditional and classical way. The upper stanza narrates events or depicts scenery while the lower stanza expresses feelings. Containing the only two narrative lines (lines 1 and 3), the first strophe serves as an aspect of the setting, where the event is a
departure after a parting drink and the mood is generated through a manipulation of the imagery – like a drifting weed, the lyrical self is forced to lead a floating life; the layers of willow branches, which the Song people plucked off to give the departing traveler as a gift, symbolize the everlasting parting sorrow. Lines 3 to 5 describe what the lyrical self sees on a boat, while the lower stanza focuses on his bitterness of parting sorrow. Liu Yong’s *Yu lin ling* is a *man* song. Different from the concise description in *xiaoling* poems, it provides an extended narrative-descriptive passage about the parting scene and the feelings associated with it. This extended narrative-descriptive approach, known as the *puchen* approach that I discussed in Chapter One, is one of Liu Yong’s most important achievements in *man* songs. It laid the cornerstone for the evolution of lyrics into a mature genre. However, Liu Yong’s narrative-descriptive approach is still relatively simple and straightforward. Influenced by the popular song tradition, he tended to narrate a story in chronological order, and generally, a linear time sequence is provided. Many of his lyrics are composed in “a tripartite procedure that begins with the present moment, moves on to depict the past, and returns to the present at the end.” In *Yu lin ling*, Liu Yong presents a narrative frame in chronological order – at dusk, the departing traveler has almost finished the toast at a parting pavilion; reluctant to leave his beloved, he lingers on although the boatman is ready for departure; at this moment of parting, he anticipates his lovesickness and loneliness after the separation. Here Liu Yong used the same principle as Xu Changtu to arrange the two stanzas; therefore, in terms of overall structure, Liu Yong’s *man* songs are still akin to *xiaoling* songs.

Zhou Bangyan’s *Lang tao sha* is far more complex than the above two songs. As in *Yu lin ling*, the first stanza of *Lang tao sha* offers a detailed description of the parting scene. However, different from that found in Liu Yong’s chronological narration, Zhou Bangyan skillfully turns the parting scene into a past event with the phrase *jing shi* 経時 (for a long time) in line 9, which suggests a considerable lapse of time between the parting scene and the lyrical self’s activities described in the second stanza. Because the poet does not clarify the temporal dimension of the

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25 See Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u Poetry: from Late T’ang to Northern Sung* (Chapter 4) and James J. Y. Liu, *Major Lyricists of the Northern Sung* (Chapter 2) for discussions about Liu Yong’s lyrics.

events described until the end of the first stanza, readers experience a more challenging reading process. They realize at the sight of the phrase *jing shi* that the first stanza is set in the past; therefore, they have to go back to re-read and re-interpret the text. Zhou Bangyan also breaks with the tradition of stanzaic transition by constantly intermingling expressive, descriptive, and narrative elements throughout the poem. In *Lang tao sha*, the lower stanza continues the narrative progression. After he departed from his beloved, the lyrical self spends many a sleepless night and sings to vent his loneliness and anguish.

Zhou Bangyan further developed the *puchen* approach by changing the simple structure of linear progression. His song set to the tune *Zhu ying yao hong* is an interesting experiment, showing how he consciously incorporated diversified narrative approaches into his lyrics:

To the tune *Zhu ying yao hong*

1 Her fragrant face evenly rouged;
Her black eyebrows carefully painted: her palace-style makeup was light.

The heavenly bestowed spirit of gaiety

Was all in her charming eyes.

5 For long she has entrapped my heart:
At the banquet she looked back frequently.

We have met several times,

But it is still useless;

It would have been better if we had not met.

27 Robert Smitheram points out that the temporal adverbs in the first stanza lead readers to believe that the parting scene described is situated in the present moment. pp. 208-09.

28 *QSC* 2/629.
The candle light waved its shadow.

Late after the banquet: the spring night was short.

Who would sing the song of *Yang Pass* at that time?

The parting sorrow – she is far at the end of the world.

How can I bear that the cloud disappears and the rain stops.

Leaning on the railing, my eyes are full of tears in the east wind.

After crabapples blossom,

When swallows fly back:

A deep courtyard at dusk.

(QSC 2/629)

燭影搖紅

芳臉勻紅，

黛眉巧畫宮妝淺。

風流天付與精神，

全在嬌波眼。

早是縈心可慣。

嚮尊前、頻頻顧眄。

幾回相見，
見了還休，
爭如不見。  

燭影搖紅，
夜闌飲散春宵短。
當時誰會唱陽關，
離恨天涯遠。
爭奈雲收雨散。
憑闌干、東風淚滿。
海棠開後，
燕子來時，
黃昏深院。

Zhou Bangyan’s song is based on a shorter piece by Wang Shen 王詵 (fl. 1069), a prince consort who married a younger sister of Emperor Zhezong:

To the tune Yi gu ren

The candle light waving its shadow, it has turned late in the night.
Having just sobered up, I am listless.
Who will sing for me the song of Yang Pass before the wine cup?
The parting sorrow – she is far at the end of the world.
How can I bear that the cloud disappears and the rain stops.

Leaning on the railing, my eyes are full of tears in the east wind.

After crabapples blossom,

When swallows fly back:

A deep courtyard at dusk.

(QSC 1/273)

憶故人

燭影搖紅向夜闌，
乍酒醒、心情懶。
尊前誰為唱《陽關》，
離恨天涯遠。

無奈雲沈雨散。
憑欄杆、東風淚眼。
海棠開後，
燕子來時，
黃昏庭院。
It is recorded that the Emperor Huizong appreciated Wang’s song but felt it lacked narrative or discursive structure, so he ordered Zhou Bangyan to revise it. Zhou Bangyan then elaborated Wang’s *xiaoling* poem of fifty characters into a *man* song of ninety-six characters, almost doubling the length. He named this new tune *Zhu ying yao hong*. Comparing the two songs, we see that Wang’s *xiaoling* song, which describes the poet’s persona’s inner feelings after parting with his/her beloved, becomes the second stanza of Zhou’s *man* song.

What Zhou Bangyan does is to strengthen narrative elements through detailed description. The upper stanza first depicts the woman’s image perceived by the male persona and then explains his inner thoughts. The first two lines imply the girl’s beauty through her fashionable and elegant makeup, and the next two lines focus on her charming eyes. The poem then shifts from the girl’s appearance to her actions and emotions. At banquets, she frequently looks back at the male persona, showing she has already fallen in love with him. Deeply in love with the girl, the man always feels that such happy times are fleeting. Presenting the joy of love from different angles, the first stanza serves as a foil to the sad end of the love story.

Zhou Bangyan creates a “history” of the love story. Wang’s short song is more concentrated and lacks narrative content. It focuses on description of the persona’s sorrow and loneliness. The reference to the love story is oblique. Zhou Bangyan, on the contrary, narrates a relatively complete love story from the lovers’ joyful meeting to the sad separation and finally to the everlasting love-sickness. The time span of the love story is considerably long, as suggested by the temporal deictics phrase *dang shi* (at that time) in line 12. By fusing lyrical, descriptive, and narrative modes, Zhou Bangyan greatly enriches the content of the song. Although *Zhu ying yao hong* is not among the best of Zhou’s lyrics, it fully demonstrates the unique approach Zhou Bangyan developed to narrate a story.

Complicated lyrical structure, particularly multiple temporal dimensions, is a significant feature of Zhou’s narrative-style lyrics. In this part, I will utilize Gérard Genette’s narratological theory of tense, particularly of order, to analyze the temporal quality of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics. The theory of tense deals with temporal relations between narrative text and story. According to Genette, one essential aspect of tense is connections between the temporal order of succession of

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the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal orders of their arrangement in the narrative. The effect of anachrony refers to all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative. Genette’s theory is very useful for elucidating how Zhou Bangyan uses anachronies in his lyrics to create a sense of subjective time based on emotional perceptions of events in memory and imagination. The following *xiaoling* poem exemplifies this feature.

To the tune *Shaonian you*

Written at Jingzhou

1 Grey morning clouds scattered a light drizzle:
   A pavilion in pale spring.
   Willows wept and flowers cried.
   Thick mud was on the city’s nine streets.

5 Swallows flew slowly outside the gate.

   Now the sun brightens the gilded chamber,
   Spring is sporting on the top of peach branches.
   It is unlike the days of old
   When the small bridge was buffeted by the storm,

10 The deep regret and grief were only known to us.

*(QSC 2/599)*

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少年遊

荊州作

朝雲漠漠散輕絲。
樓閣淡春姿。
柳泣花啼，
九街泥重，
門外燕飛遲。

而今麗日明金屋，
春色在桃枝。
不似當時，
小橋衝雨，
幽恨兩人知。

This song has only fifty characters. Within that limited space, Zhou Bangyan does not present a love story in chronological order; instead, he moves swiftly between the past and present. The upper stanza depicts a dreary day in spring. The lack of any temporal sign in the upper stanza leads readers to believe that the immediate experience of the speaker is unfolding, a “now” moment. But the temporal phrase er jing 而今 (now) at the beginning of the lower stanza brings readers to the real “now,” telling them that the upper stanza actually describes a bygone scene.
This temporal shift is followed immediately by another one in line 8, when the temporal adverb dang shi 當時 (that time) brings readers back to an earlier temporal dimension, the one associated with the upper stanza. Through Zhou Bangyan’s careful arrangement, a relatively complete love story is delineated: some time ago, the lovers were forced to leave each other in a rainy spring day; now in spring again, they reunite and are enjoying the happiness.

Zhou Bangyan narrates a love story through a chain of images portrayed from human-oriented perspectives. The personified images in line 3, weeping willows and crying flowers, seem to be sensitive to the emotional atmosphere. Swallows flying clumsily due to the humid weather are also imagined to share human emotions – they move slowly as if they are sad. In contrast to the depressed emotion suggested by these images and the physical environment, a light-hearted atmosphere is conveyed through the bright spring scene described in lines 6 and 7. The persona’s feeling of melancholy in the past is not explicitly indicated until the occurrence of the phrase you hen 幽恨 (deep regret and grief) in the very last line. Through a series of images, this lyric relates a love story and presents different feelings developed along the narrative line.

To the tune Guo Qinlou

Night scene

1A/C The water bathes the clear moon.

Leaves rustle in the cool breeze.

The sound of horses on the path has just stopped.

A When she leant idly on the well rail

5 And laughing tried to catch a darting firefly,

She spoiled the fragile painted silk fan.\(^{31}\)

\(^{31}\) This refers to Autumn eve 秋夕 by Du Mu: “Silver candle light chills the painted screen in an autumn night; / A silk fan in hand, the maid swats a firefly.” 銀燭秋光冷畫屏，輕羅小扇撲流螢. QTS 8/5940. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p.249.
Everything is quiet in the night, long I’ve leant on the rail:
So sad that I cannot go to sleep,
Until the water-clock runs out I stand.

I sigh that the flowery years are gone in the wink of an eye:
Today she is a thousand miles away
Out of reach of dreams, too far for letters.

No use to tell me her hair dreads the jade comb,
Her face faded in the metal mirror,
And gradually she no longer cares to make herself up in style.

After the plum wind the ground is humid,
From the rainbow rain the moss is damp,
And all those dancing reds are changed.

Who will believe it’s for her I am so listless--

A talent-spent Jiang Yan,
A grief-stricken Xun Qian.
But in the Bright River’s light

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32 Jiang Yan (444-505) was a famous poet and rhapsody writer in the Southern Dynasty (479-534). It is said one night Jiang Yan dreamt a man asked him to return a colorful writing brush which the man had lent to him many years before. From then on Jiang Yan’s brilliant creative power soon faded away. Li Yanshou, Nanshi, juan 59, p. 1451. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 250.

33 According to Shishuo xinyu, Xun Can 句叅 (i.e. Xun Fengqian) and his wife were extremely devoted to each other. After his wife died, Xun Can soon died of a broken heart. Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World, p. 485. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, pp. 250-51.
I can still see a few scattered stars.34

(QSC 2/602)

過秦樓

夜景

水浴清蟾，
葉喧涼吹，
巷陌馬聲初斷。
閒依露井，
笑撲流螢，
惹破畫羅輕扇。
人靜夜久憑闌，
愁不歸眠，
立殘更箭。
歎年華一瞬，
人今千里，
夢沈書遠。

空見說、鬢怯瓊梳
容銷金鏡，
漸懶趁時勻染。
梅風地溽，
虹雨苔滋，
一架舞紅都變。
誰信無憀，
為伊才減江淹，
情傷荀倩。
但、明河影下，
還看稀星數點。

This song creates a network of temporal complexity. Based on the temporal dimensions, we can divide this song into five sections: lines 1 to 3 (A/C, past or present), 4 to 6 (A, past), 7 to 12 (C, present), 13 to 15 (C’, present, but through other’s words), 16 to 18 (B, a period of time between A and C), and 19 to 23 (C, present). This song covers a time span from an autumn night in the past to a current autumn night. This time span involves acts of memory and imagination after the speaker hears from his beloved, thus he deals with various time frames, including the parallel sections C and C’.

Without clear temporal deictics, temporal transitions in Guo qin lou are achieved mainly through the more indirect means of strong semantic-projectional elements. The speaker’s lament over the bygone flowery years in line 10 suggests a considerable lapse of time, while line 11 reinforces the temporal and spatial distance between the event in his memory, that is, the event described in
lines 4 to 6, and the current reality. The words *jian* 漸 (gradually) in line 15 and *bian* 變 (change) in line 18 indicate that when time elapses, the natural world has changed; the speaker’s beloved, too, might have experienced changes both physically and psychologically.

*Guo qin lou* relates a story by juxtaposing many fragments of bygone scenes about autumn nights. An autumn night evokes the speaker’s memory of a similar night a long time ago, when he watched her swatting merrily at fireflies under the clear sky. This pleasant memory is in contrast to his current status, when he leans against the well railing, savoring his loneliness and parting sorrow. The natural world in the two autumn evenings seems to be unchanged, but the animate world and human world have undergone great vicissitudes. Moss grows everywhere while flowers have faded in the rain and wind. Her face too has become haggard because of the parting sorrow. The song ends with the image of the speaker standing still and looking at the clear sky, suggesting his everlasting regret and melancholy.

To the tune *Bai xing yue man*

**Autumn thoughts**

1A  The night hurries on the watch,
    The light dust was cleared by the dew.
    The moon is dim in a tiny and secluded lane in the pleasant quarters.
    A bamboo balustrade, a lamp by the window:

5  I knew this was Qiuniang’s courtyard.35
    When we met and laughed,
    She was like a nephrite twig and a jade tree,

35 This alludes to Du Mu’s poem *Du Qiuniang* 杜秋娘 (*QTS* 8/5938-39). Qiuniang is a generic reference to a courtesan. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 203.
Shining under the warm sun and rosy clouds.
Her water-like eyes and orchid affection

10 Were rare to find throughout my life.

D1 In the picture I saw her familiar face in the spring breeze again.

D1:B Who knows that since I came to the jade terrace,
I lingered around the light rain and warm clouds;

C But painfully they scattered when blown by the wind.

15D2:E I imagine in the remote coldness I will lodge in an inn empty of people:
Serried doors are barred; under the broken walls autumn insects drone.

D3 How can I bear this strand of longing
That keeps lingering across streams and mountains.

(QSC 2/613)

拜星月慢

秋思

夜色催更，
清塵收露，
小曲幽坊月暗。
竹檣燈鬲，
識秋娘庭院。

笑相遇，

似覺瓊枝玉樹，

暖日明霞光爛。

水眄蘭情，

總平生稀見。

畫圖中、舊識春風面。

誰知道、自到瑤臺畔。

眷戀雨潤雲溫，

苦驚風吹散。

念荒寒、寄宿無人館。

重門閉、敗壁秋蟲歎。

怎奈向、一縷相思，

隔溪山不斷。

This song has a greater number of temporal segments than the songs we have analyzed so far. It is noteworthy that this song contains only one temporal adverb, Zi 自 (since) in line 12, thus the temporal relations between various narrative sections are projected mainly through semantic
collocations. In this song, we can recognize seven sections distributed among five temporal segments. These segments are the following, in chronological order: (A) their first meeting; (B) their happy time; (C) the separation; (D) current moment; (E) the envisaged future.

Zhou Bangyan does not narrate the story in chronological order. Partly due to the fact that the Chinese language does not indicate verbal tense, Bai xing yue man, like Shaonian you and Guo Qinlou, starts with a narrative section that constitutes a temporal orientation apparently situated in the present moment, leading the readers to believe that the happy scene depicted is unfolding “now.” This impression is maintained until section D1, which indicates a lapse of time through the adjective jiu 舊 (old, familiar). Therefore, section A is temporally retrospective in relation to the temporal segment D1. In the next line (line 12), the phrase shei zhi dao 誰知道 (who knows), which indicates that something unexpected has happened, introduces section B. Therefore, section B is also temporally retrospective in relation to D1. Section C pushes the temporal segments A and B further back into the past. The verbs and verbal phrases of mentation and emotion shei zhi dao, nian 念 (imagine) and 怎奈向 (how can I bear) in sections D1, D2, and D3 reveal the speaker’s mental attitudes, giving a temporal immediacy when clear temporal reference is absent. Consequently, sections D1, D2, and D3 can be treated as being located at the same temporal level and coordinating with each other. They become the base position of the narrative.

A narrative line temporally subordinate to the base position D is developed in sections A, B, C, and E. These sections project anachronies in relation to the base position in the form of flashback, recollection, anticipation, or flashforward. Inferring from these anachronies, we can reconstitute a complete love story. The story starts from the male persona’s first meeting with the girl and the subsequent happy time, goes through the ultimate sad separation and sorrow after the separation, and ends with the male persona’s anticipation of a gloomy future.

The four songs we have discussed, Zhu ying yao hong, Lang tao sha, Guo qin lou, and Bai xing yue man, all juxtapose the inactive image of the speaker with narrative sections projected in the

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36 This character zi can also be interpreted as “by herself” according to the way the Chinese scholars punctuate line twelve. In this case, line twelve can be translated as “Who knows that she came to the jade terrace by herself.” However, whichever translation we take, the temporal dimension of this line remains the same.
form of flashback, recollection, and flashforward. Apparently, this is Zhou Bangyan’s favorite compositional approach. Of his 127 poems in the core group, twenty-nine are composed in this way.\(^{37}\) Quite often the person’a thoughts serve as a tenuous thread on which a story and nuances of feeling are developed. The juxtaposition of an image of the persona with episodes of various temporal dimensions makes it easy for the narrator to switch between different temporal dimensions, thereby greatly expanding the poetic world. Such an arrangement also enriches the aesthetic experience of the text. When collocated with the painful reality and the gloomy future, the joyful past episode becomes more poignant for being in the past; it provides no comfort for the present or promise for the future.

Zhou’s lyrics are characterized by the frequent occurrence of narrative anachronies, particularly analepses in the form of recollections and flashbacks. Forty-five poems out of the 127 core poems contain analepses. With this device, Zhou’s lyrics extend the intensity of the persona’s direct experience at a present moment over a much longer time span. As a result, his lyrics are able to narrate a complete love story in a more detailed way than any other literati lyrics before him.

Zhou Bangyan’s skillful control of the temporal aspects of the poetic world is also demonstrated in his frequent use of parallel spatial orientations, that is, the juxtaposition of two spatial orientations, both located in “now.” One of the two orientations is real, where the speaker is in; the other is projected through the speaker’s imagination, and it is where the speaker’s beloved is. Parallel spatial orientations appear in twenty-five poems.\(^{38}\) In thirteen poems, they appear together with analepses. Through the device of parallel spatial orientations, Zhou Bangyan narrates a story from a different perspective. He highlights the sorrow of separation, for the act


of imagination not only reveals the speaker’s strong longing for his absent lover, but also projects such feelings onto the imagined haggard female.

Zhou Bangyan’s exploration of new narrating approaches greatly enhances the literary quality of his lyrics. When he infused complex narrative factors into his lyrics, he changed the sequential progression common in popular songs and earlier literati lyrics. Consequently, his narrative-style lyrics bear no resemblance to popular songs; instead, they embody a quality of fragmentation and juxtaposition, which is further developed in works by later lyricists.
During the late Northern Song, the lyric genre experienced a transition from the explicit style of the Northern Song to the implicit style of the Southern Song. As a key figure of this stylistic transition, Zhou Bangyan composed lyrics in both the Northern Song and Southern Song styles. Some of his lyrics can be viewed as typical Northern Song lyrics, characterized by direct description, an intense lyrical voice, and explicit emotional rhetoric. In these lyrics, he did not rely as much on literary devices such as metonymy and textual allusion, which we have frequently encountered in his object-oriented yongwu lyrics. Instead, he depicted objects and sentiments in a direct and natural way, as we find in the following example:

The morning sun dries the overnight raindrops on the lotus leaves,

Clear and round on the water’s surface.

One by one, the lotus blooms stand up with ease and swing in the breeze.

(\textit{Su mu zhe} 蘇幕遮, \textit{QSC 2/603})

葉上初陽乾宿雨，

水面清圓，

一一風荷舉。

Here Zhou Bangyan uses two adjectives, \textit{qing} 清 (clear) and \textit{yuan} 圓 (round), to project the impression of lush lotus leaves. The phrase \textit{yi yi} 一一 (one by one) and the verb \textit{ju} 興 (lift, hold up) have an immediate impact and bring to the reader’s eye innumerable lotus flowers standing on slim stems over the water, gently dancing in the breeze. Because of its strong visual appeal, this song has been viewed as a masterpiece of spontaneous art. Wang Guowei states that this
song “really obtains the spirit and essence of lotus” and thus surpasses Jiang Kui’s songs on lotuses, which, in contrast, seem opaque.¹

Like other lyricists of the Northern Song Dynasty, Zhou Bangyan would sometimes express romantic feelings in a straightforward and frank way. Explicit expressions of strong emotion, such as those expressed in the following poem, are remarkable even in Northern Song literati lyrics.

But bitterest of all would be that my dreaming spirit

Will not go to her side tonight

……

If heaven would only let us have a moment’s time together—

Then what harm could it do?

(Feng liu zi, QSC 2/595)

最苦夢魂，

今宵不到伊行。

……

天便教人，

霎時廝見何妨。

For the rest of my life

When there are flowers and wine,

¹此真能得荷之神理者。覺白石念奴嬌、惜紅衣二詞，猶有隔霧看花之恨。Wang Guowei, Renjian cihua, p. 4247.
I will weep for her.

(Jie lian huan, QSC 2/597)

拚今生，
對花對酒，
為伊淚落。

So much upset!
It is just because at that night
I fell in love with her all at once!

(Qing chun gong 慶春宮, QSC 2/606-607)

許多煩惱，
祗為當時，
一嚥留情。

Obviously, these open sentimental expressions have their origin in common song traditions. Lacking ornament and literary devices, these kinds of verse lines are more like natural utterances of the poet’s lyrical self and thus have been praised by critics throughout the centuries as spontaneous and pure. At the same time, some influential critics of the Southern Song, such as Shen Yifu and Zhang Yan, criticized these songs. Both Shen and Zhang were passionate

2 These comments are found in Shen Qian’s 沈謙 Tianci zashuo 填詞雜說 (CHCB ed.), p. 634; Wang Guowei’s Renjian cihua, p. 4257; Kuang Zhouyi’s 況周頤 Huifeng cihua 惠風詞話 (CHCB ed.), p. 4428; and Yu Pingbo’s 俞平伯 Qingzhen cishi 清真詞詳 (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1949), p. 67.
advocates of elegant lyrics. Shen Yifu was deeply influenced by Wu Wenying, whose writings are characterized by their opaqueness. As a result, these critics manifested a strong dislike for straightforward and explicit modes of expression, stating that the above songs lacked a lingering overtone and subtlety and thus do not qualify as elegant lyrics.³

Though Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were influenced by the common song tradition, his compositions represent the start of a new aesthetic trend toward opaqueness. The Qing critic Chen Tingzhuo 陳廷焯 made the following famous remark about the quality of Zhou’s lyrics: “Meicheng’s [Zhou Bangyan] poetic thoughts are extremely profound, yet held in reserve all the time. It is not easy to comprehend the concept of his lyrics on a first reading. … Meicheng’s poetic thought is beyond the words and no trace is left. It is highly regrettable that people cannot recognize [his thought].”⁴ Wang Guowei disparages Zhou’s works because they lack the spontaneity typical of Northern Song lyrics.⁵ This feature makes Zhou’s songs unique in Northern Song and signifies an important transition in the compositional method of lyrics. Before Zhou Bangyan, lyricists normally expressed emotional nuances in a natural and spontaneous way and the structure of their lyrics was relatively simple. In contrast, Zhou Bangyan relied heavily on his profound scholarly knowledge to write his lyrics.⁶ He developed diversified literary devices and complicated compositional principles that contributed to the implicit style of his lyrics.

1 Puchen and Duncuo

As I have shown in Chapter 4, when reading Liu Yong and Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, we frequently encounter the approach of puchen (extended exposition). However, the two poets differed radically from each other in their use of this approach. Unlike Liu Yong’s straightforward description and chronological narration, Zhou’s compositions are noted for their feature of duncuo 頓挫 (abrupt transition), a compositional technique developed by Zhou Bangyan. This term was expressed by Chen Tingzhuo. Occuring many times in Chen’s Baiyuzhai cihua 白雨齋

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³ Zhang Yan, Ciyan, p. 266. Shen Yifu, Yuefu zhimi, p. 279.

⁴ 美成詞極其感慨，而無處不鬱，令人不能遽窺其旨……美成意佘言外，而痕跡消融，人苦不能領略。Chen Tingzhuo, Baiyuzhai cihua 白雨齋詞話 (CHCB ed.), p. 3787.

⁵ Wang Guowei, Renjian cihua, p. 4273. Wang Guowei makes apparently contradictory comments about Zhou Bangyan in Renjian cihua and other writings on lyrics. Scholars have tried to explain this inconsistency in his attitude. Some believe it is because Wang’s taste changed over time, while others try to reconcile Wang’s opposing perspectives.

The meaning of the phrase *duncuo* varies with the context. It may refer to a pause and transition in rhythm or melody. In other cases, it refers to a compositional approach or aesthetic quality. For the latter meaning, Chen provides an explanation when he analyzes the changing flow of emotion in Zhou Bangyan’s lyric poem written to the tune *Man tingfang* 滿庭芳:7

“From time to time, there exists an inconsistency between the beginning and ending in Meicheng’s lyrics. It is exactly where the marvelous point of *duncuo* lies.”8 According to Chen’s explanation, *duncuo* refers to frequent and often sudden turns in narration or emotional state of mind. In Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, it is often used together with the *puchen* approach to produce the effect of opaqueness. It breaks up the onward flow of an expanded description, thus providing significant moments of pause and creating tension and discontinuity. In such cases, readers experience a more challenging reading process. In addition to *Man tingfang*, many of Zhou’s lyrics manifest the feature of abrupt and frequent transitions.

To the tune *Da pu*

Spring Rain

1 With last night’s mist clearing,

Spring birds being silent,

Now and then driving rain beats on the high-roofed chamber.

Those “green pennants” over the wall-top

Have finished washing off their “white-lead powder”;

6 The tender branches brushing against each other.

Moisture presses on the zither strings;

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7 *QSC* 2/601-02.
8 美成詞有前後若不相蒙者，正是頓挫之妙。Chen Tingzhuo, *Baiyuzhai cihua*, p. 3788.
Cold invades the bed-screen.

Spider webs are stuck by the wind to the bamboo curtains.

At the post station where no one is about,

I hear the incessant dripping at the eaves.

I drift off into a weary sleep,

But to no avail, sorrow so extreme suddenly jolts me awake;

Dreams so fleeting cannot be remembered.

I pity myself for this hushed loneliness.

This traveler is eager to return home.

But what immediately comes to mind are the flowing torrents which turn aside carriage wheels.

And how can I bear Yu Xin’s haggard anguish,\(^9\)

Wei Jie’s emaciated frailty;\(^10\)

Even on everyday occasions it is easy to feel distress in one’s heart,

So no wonder that the traveler to Pingyang

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\(^9\) Yu Xin (513-581) was a scholar-official serving in the Liang (502-557), Western Wei (535-557), and Northern Zhou (557-581) Dynasties at different periods of time. Initially, he was an official of the Liang state, the third of the Southern dynasties (420-589). In 554, when he was sent as an ambassador of Liang to Chang’an in the Western Wei, which ruled northern China, he was held in Chang’an for the rest of his life. Forced to live in the north, he was often extremely homesick and composed “The lament on south China” 哀江南賦. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 110. Li Yanshou, *Bei Shi*, juan 83, p. 2793-94.

\(^10\) *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü* has the following description about Wei Jie: “When Wei Chieh [Wei Jie] was going down (in 312) to the capital […], people had long since heard of his reputation, and onlookers were lined up along the road like a wall. Chieh had previously suffered from an emaciating illness and his body could not endure exertion. As a consequence he became sick and died, and his contemporaries claimed people had ‘stared Wei Chieh to death.’” Richard B. Mather trans. *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, p. 312. cf. Zhou Bangyan *Qingzhen ji jian*, p. 200.
Wept upon hearing the flute’s sad song.\(^{11}\)

All the more desolate in this kingdom of green grass,\(^{12}\)

Where petals like red specks of rice cover the ground,

And cherries outside the gate are as big as peas.

With whom can I share a candle on evening promenades?\(^{13}\)

\(\text{(QSC 2/609)}\)

對宿煙收，
春禽靜，
飛雨時鳴高屋，
牆頭青玉旆，
洗鉛霜都盡，
嫩梢相觸。

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\(^{11}\) The two lines allude to Ma Rong 馬融 (79-166). When Ma heard a flute song at Pingyang, he missed his friends at Luoyang, from whom he had long been separated. See the preface to his composition, “Fu on the transverse flute” 長笛賦, \textit{Wenxuan, juan} 18. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, pp. 110-11.

\(^{12}\) This image is derived from Wen Tingyun’s poem \textit{A moonlit night on the spring river} 春江花月夜, “The singing of ‘Jade Tree [and the Flowers of the Rear Court]’ has finished, sea clouds are black; the flower garden suddenly becomes a kingdom of green grass.” 玉樹歌闌海雲黑，花庭忽作青蕪國。\textit{QTS} 576/6707. Trans. Smitheram, p. 215, n. 19. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, p. 111.

\(^{13}\) Trans. Smitheram, pp. 180-81. This line alludes to the \textit{Nineteen old poems of the Han} 古詩十九首, “Since the day is short and you hate the long night, why not take the torch and go wandering?” 夕短苦夜長，何不秉燭遊？cf. \textit{Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian}, p. 200.
潤逼琴絲，
寒侵枕障，
蟲網吹黏簾竹。
郵亭無人處，
聽簷聲不斷，
困眠初熟。
奈愁極頓驚，
夢輕難記，
自憐幽獨。

行人歸意速。
最先念、流潦妨車轂。
怎奈嚮、蘭成顦顇，
衛玠清羸，
等閒時、易傷心目。
未怪平陽客，
雙淚落、笛中哀曲。
況蕭索、青蕪國。
紅糝鋪地，
In this *man* song, Zhou Bangyan demonstrates his skill of employing a *puchen* approach by displaying multiple layers of emotion states. The poetic self’s ennui stems from his journey away from home. Though he is eager to return home (line 16), his first concern is the difficulty of fulfilling this wish (line 17). In deep nostalgia, he has to bear the sorrow of separation until he becomes haggard, like Yu Xin and Wei Jie (lines 18 and 19). His loneliness makes him extremely sensitive. This sensitivity is such that a sad flute song can bring him to tears (lines 20 and 21). Furthermore, his feelings of nostalgia and regret are deepened by the bygone spring and reach a climax when he sadly realizes that no one accompanies him in this lovely spring night (lines 23 to 26).

The poetic self’s subtle nuances of feeling are intensified through expanded descriptions of his emotional response to the external world. The poem depicts the surrounding scenery perceived by the persona. A spring shower confines him to an inn. What he sees after waking up is colored by his emotions and attitude. The verbs *bi* 逼 (press on) in line 7, *qin* 侵 (invade) in line 8, and *nian* 黏 (stick) in line 9 and their objects bring forth a tone of discomfort, passiveness, and helplessness caused by the cold wet weather, which could be considered symbolic of the ruthless forces that have ravaged the lyrical self’s life. His emotional state completely blends into the surrounding scenery. Carriage wheels, a sad flute song, fallen flowers, new cherries, and even a lovely spring night make him aware of his emotional suffering in this environment.

Zhou Bangyan inherited the tradition of line-leading words to organize long passages developed by Liu Yong. As Kang-i Sun Chang states, Liu Yong used line-leading words, such as verbs of thoughts, primarily for the purpose of indicating various layers of poetic acts. He also created another category of line-leading words, *dui* 對 (face) and *jian* 漸 (gradually), to refer to perceptual impressions of natural images. Da pu starts with the line-leading word *dui* 對 (face) to introduce the perceptions of the lyrical self, and the scenic description extends through the

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first nine lines. A series of images is thus presented as if a long scroll painting is slowly being unfolded in front of the lyrical self. As a result, the upper stanza of *Da pu*, like Liu Yong’s *man* songs, maintains a continuous flow of syntax and develops a structure in which detailed delineation of images gives the effect of expansion.

Zhou Bangyan’s reform of Liu Yong’s line-leading words tradition effectively enhances the *duncuo* quality of his lyrics. Liu Yong generally used line-leading words to express feelings in a straightforward manner. In contrast, in a single poem, Zhou Bangyan employed a series of line-leading words to indicate concessive or adversative coordination. In *Da pu*, the line-leading phrases *奈* *nai* (but to no avail) in line 13, *怎奈嚮* *zen nai xiang* (how can I bear) in line 18, *况* *kuang* (all the more) in line 23, and the phrase *最先念* *zui xian nian* (what immediately comes to mind) in line 17 all indicate an obvious transition in the persona’s emotional state. They frame blocks of language and serve as conjunctives through which an impression of syntax of adversative coordination is enhanced. Such line-leading words also help to form a poetic structure in which complex feelings of concessive and adversative relations are developed, giving readers a strong sense of abruptness and unexpectedness that would otherwise be absent.

Zhou Bangyan tended to conclude a song with a line indicating the poetic persona’s inner thoughts after a long descriptive passage. The contrast between the seemingly detached description and the expressive ending enhances the experience of reading Zhou’s lyrics. Readers may faintly feel the mood conveyed through the natural description on a first reading, but it is not until after they read the very last line that they comprehend what the poet is trying to express through the text.

To the tune *Huan xi sha*

1 After the rain, the remaining wet flowers have not flown away.

Through a beaded-curtain, the slanting sunlight comes in.

After stealing [flower’s] fragrance to make honey, the bees fly back.

No one is about in the gilt chamber: the wind-blown bamboo in disarray.

All day clothes are on a cage to be dried: the aroma of aloeswood incense is faint.

In this spring season there might be a moment when you miss that person.

(QSC 2/600)

浣溪沙

雨過殘紅濕未飛。

珠簾一桁透斜暉。

遊蜂釀蜜竊香歸。

金屋無人風竹亂，

衣篝盡日水沈微。

一春須有憶人時。

Each line of the poem, except the last one, paints a picture from a detached third-person point of view. These pictures are permeated with soft colors, fading lights, and faint scents. There is a connection between the late spring scene and its corresponding mood. Nothing is overemphasized and thus the emotion is subdued. The late spring, faded flowers, and the setting sun may suggest a touch of sadness about passing time as well as a human’s bygone prime, as expressed by the contrast between busy bees and rustling bamboo with their dynamic power and
the static and solitary state of the persona, whose existence is obliquely referred to through the
descriptions about the indoor scene. The vague emotion becomes more explicit in the last line,
though the persona seems to enjoy this lonely and solitary life, he or she may at times think of
his or her beloved who has been gone for so long.

Huan xi sha clearly demonstrates how Zhou Bangyan paid special attention to structural
arrangement even in the short traditional xiaoling form to enhance the quality of duncuo. This
song is like xiaoling poems by the early Northern Song poets Yan Shu and Ouyang Xiu in that
Zhou hints at the mood in the first five lines by juxtaposing a series of images. But Zhou
attempted to reveal the poetic thought of the verse in the last line. In this way, the last line unites
all the seemingly irrelevant fragments of images that in turn enhance the poetic power of the last
line.

To the tune Ge pu lian jin pai

Written at Guye Pavilion in the Zhongshan County garden while
seeking a respite from the summer heat

1 Young bamboos shake their emerald parasols.17
A winding path leads to a quiet secluded place.
Summer fruits ripen – fresh and crisp:
Golden balls fall, the startled bird flies away.

5 The dense fog hides the grass on the shore.
Frogs croak.

16 Four xiaoling lyrics in the third-person point of view employ a similar device. They are written to the tunes Qiu rui xiang (QSC 2/599), Yu jia ao (QSC 2/600), Huan xi sha (QSC 2/600), and Su zhong qing (QSC 2/604).

17 The image “emerald parasols” is derived from Du Mu’s Huaqing Palace, thirty rhymes 華清宮三十韻. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu, p. 46.
A sudden downpour pitter-patters on the pond.

A tiny pavilion on the water;

[Looking] through water covered by broken duckweed.

10 Flowers by the eaves and the curtain’s reflection are upside down.

Silk-turbaned, feather fan in hand,

Sleepily I am lying beside the north window on a clear morning.

The Wu Mountains on the screen: they enter my dream easily.

Waking up suddenly,

15 I am still south of the Yangtze River.

(QSC 2/602)

隔浦蓮近拍

中山縣圃姑射亭避暑作

新篁搖動翠葆。

曲徑通深窈。

夏果收新脆，

金丸落、驚飛鳥。

濃霧迷岸草。

蛙聲鬧。
驟雨鳴池沼。

水亭小。

浮萍破處，

檐花簾影顛倒。

綸巾羽扇，

困臥北牀清曉。

屏裏吳山夢自到。

驚覺。

依然身在江表。

Zhou Bangyan demonstrates his exceptional ability of using the puchen approach to depict scenery in this song. He uses the first ten lines, almost two thirds of the song, to describe the summer scenery. His description starts from the luxuriant summer plants; moves through the pond; and ends at a pavilion, where human activities are introduced. This description is like a camera, capturing everything it encounters. The first ten lines contain a series of images, such as bamboos, parasols, a path, fruits, balls, a bird, fog, grass, shore, frogs, rain, a pond, a pavilion, water, duckweeds, flowers, eaves, and curtains. Zhou Bangyan highlights the summer season with modifiers, such as 新 (young), 翠 (emerald), 脆 (crisp), and 濃 (dense), and seasonal phenomenon, such as new bamboo and croaking frogs. Because he employs verbs in almost every line, he paints a picture that is dynamic though most of the images are of inanimate objects. The picture is also colorful (green bamboos and golden fruits) and full of sounds of falling fruits, croaking frogs, and pitter-pattering rain. Catching as many details as possible, Zhou Bangyan successfully restores summer scenery in his poem.
Zhou Bangyan expresses feelings with the *duncuo* approach. Though the natural world is presented in a seemingly detached perspective, it is subordinated to human feelings. The dense fog and sudden rain in the upper stanza is inconsistent with the “clear morning” in the lower stanza, suggesting the scene described is possibly not what the poet saw in the prefecture garden after he woke up. This inconsistency is solved by introducing the Wu Mountains on the screen. This line is important to understand the whole poem because the Wu Mountains are located in Zhou Bangyan’s hometown, Hangzhou. The poet thinks of his hometown and becomes lost in nostalgia. The Wu Mountains on the screen remind him of his hometown, so when he falls asleep, the mountains on the screen, which are similar to the Wu Mountains and the prefecture garden, merge with each other in his dream. This nostalgic mood is further intensified in the last line, when the poet realizes that, to his disappointment, he is still in a foreign land after waking up from a sweet dream. After a long passage including expansive and objective descriptions, the poet hints at his nostalgic mood at the very end of the poem, thus producing a strong effect of *duncuo*.

To the tune Ye you gong

1 The leaves fell down, the setting sun shone on the water.

   Light waves heave, rippling away for a thousand *li*.

   On a bridge, the piercing wind stung my eyes.18

   Long I stood there,

5 Watching at dusk

   The market turn aglow with lights.

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18 This alludes to Li He’s 李賀 (790-816) poem *Song of the bronze immortal bidding farewell to Han* 金銅仙人辭漢歌, “The piercing wind at the East Gate stings the statue’s eyes” 東關酸風射眸子. *QTS* 391/4403. *Cf. Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 348.
By the cold window of an old house,
I listen to a few wutong leaves taking their fall by the well.
Not lingering in the warmth under the thin quilt, time and again I rise.

Yet who would know that
It is all for a letter from Xiaoniang.\(^{19}\)

\((QSC \, 2/607)\)

夜遊宮

葉下斜陽照水。
捲輕浪、沈沈千里。
橋上酸風射眸子。
立多時，
看黃昏，
燈火市

古屋寒牀底。
聽幾片、井桐飛墜。
不戀單衾再三起。

\(^{19}\) This alludes to the Tang poet Yang Juyuan’s 杨巨源 poem Cuiniang 崔娘詩, “A gifted young man of gaiety has lots of spring thoughts, his heart is broken for a letter from Xiaoniang.” 風流才子多春思，腸斷蕭娘一紙書。\(QTS\, 333/3737.\) cf. Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian, p. 184.
This song uses suspense and tension as its main elements. The whole poem, excluding the last line, attempts to build up tension. The image of the man standing on a bridge to gaze at the boisterous market in the distance implies his loneliness and perhaps his disappointment after waiting for a long time. Such feelings are reinforced in the lower stanza. Deep at night, he tosses and turns. Even the warmth of the quilt cannot prevent him from rising time and again. Clearly, he is in a very agitated state of mind. Until this point, Zhou Bangyan has fully depicted the man’s pain and anguish without providing any explanation. He leaves readers hanging, trying to figure out what has happened to the man. In this way, Zhou Bangyan keeps his readers in suspense.

The last line brings on an emotional climax that all the preceding lines have been preparing for. Unlike the detached stance taken in Huan xi sha, in Ye you gong the speaker, if not the poetic persona himself, is more emotionally involved in the narrated events, as if it is about the narrator’s own personal experience. When he admits that all his upset and concerns are for a woman, he can no longer conceal his emotions. The last line seemingly neutralizes the feeling of tension that arises throughout the reading process, but it also raises more questions. What is the letter about? Why does the man act like this after receiving the letter? What will happen next? This is the point when the character and the story reach a new level of complexity.

2 Complicated Temporal Sequence

Prior to Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, it was common for a lyrical self to be engaged in an act of recollection. As we have noticed, Liu Yong, for instance, often composed his lyrics in a tripartite present-past-present procedure. But in Zhou’s works, we find the fullest development of a combination of different kinds of anachronies. Zhou Bangyan loved to shift frequently between multiple temporal dimensions within a single poem. More than forty songs in the core group involve a memory, a past temporal quality. More than one fourth of his songs contain as

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20 This song can also be interpreted as from the third-person point of view for there are no personal pronouns in the Chinese text.
many as three or even four temporal positions. Frequent temporal transitions make Zhou Bangyan’s songs very complicated narratives. Such transitions can occur anywhere within a poem, not necessarily at the beginning of the lower stanza. This feature is discernible even in Zhou’s xiaoling poems, which have relatively simple temporal qualities.

Before Zhou Bangyan, the master lyricist Liu Yong set up a tradition of stanzaic transitions in man songs. He often employed the first strophe of the second stanza to conclude what had previously been said in the first stanza. This type of stanzaic transition “is deliberately emphasized by hypotaxes (either temporal or explanatory) placed at the beginning of the second stanza.” We can see this particular device as an indispensable component of the linear time sequence displayed in Liu Yong’s songs.

Zhou Bangyan completely broke away from this man song tradition. It is worth noting that there is a tendency in his songs for “a marked shift in time or scene to occur in other places than between stanzas where one expects.” His Zhu ying yao hong illustrates this feature. Though only one temporal transition occurs in this song, it occurs in line 12 rather than at the beginning of the lower stanza (line 10). The temporal expression dang shi (at that time) in line 12 pushes a series of objectivities and states of affairs described in the above lines back into the past. This temporal transition also indicates a transition in mood from boisterous merriment to gentle sadness. Occurring right after the description of gaiety rather than at a pause between two stanzas, this transition helps to provide a striking contrast between the joyful past and sorrowful present. Since a stanza is a self-contained musical unit and generally also a syntactic and semantic unit, Zhou Bangyan’s arrangement in Zhu ying yao hong indicates his effort, conscious or not, to ignore the formal conventions connected with music in order to enhance the literary appeal of his poems.

One of the most evident features of Zhou’s lyrics is the occurrence of temporal transitions near the very end of the lyric. In Ge pu lian jin pai, I have pointed out that the sole temporal

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21 They are poems set to the tunes Suo chuang han (QSC 2/595), Qi tian yue (QSC 2/605), Sai huan chun (QSC 2/605-06), Dao fan (QSC 2/609), Hua fan (QSC 2/609-10), Bai xing yue man (QSC 2/613), Yuchi bei (QSC 2/614), Yi nan wang (QSC 2/616) and Ye fei que (QSC 2/617).


transition occurs in the second last line (line 14). The expression *jing jue* (awake suddenly) in this line indicates that the scenery described above is actually what the poet sees after he awakes, therefore, except for the last two lines, the poem is actually a prolepsis.24 Another example is the *xiaoling* poem *Shaonian you* mentioned in the Li Shishi anecdote. The second temporal transition occurs in the third last line, linking today’s pleasant spring scene with the dreary rainy day many years ago when the lovers separated; the unexpected transition further sweetens the joy of their reunion. This late occurrence creates a strong sense of abruptness that greatly enriches the experience of Zhou’s lyrics.

Zhou Bangyan often started a song with retrospection without explicitly indicating its past temporal quality. He employed this device in eleven songs in the core group.25 Quite often these “flashback” analepses reach very large textual dimensions – it is common that a whole stanza is used to narrate a past event, as in *Shaonian you*26 and *Bai xing yue man*;27 sometimes, more than half of a poem is about a memory, as in the case of *Zhu ying yao hong*.28 The temporal transition is generally indicated by temporal phrases such as *dang shi* 當時 (*Zhu ying yao hong*), *er jin* 而今 (*Shaonian you*), *jin* 今 (*Guo Qinlou*), *jing shi* 經時 (*Lang tao sha*), and *zi* 自 (*Bai xing yue man*).

The critic Zhou Ji makes an important remark about the device of the late occurrence of temporal transition: “[In *Bai xing yue man*] it is all recalling the past but Zhou Bangyan puts it in a realistic way [i.e., to treat the past event as if it is occurring right now]. If you read only the first stanza, you will suspect it is an exposition organized chronologically. After the stanzaic transition [the poem] continues with counterintuitive twists and turns. Other poets absolutely do not have such ability.”29 In Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, the recalling analepses suggest a comparison

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24 As defined by Gérard Genette, prolepsis is a form of anachrony. It indicates any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 40.


26 *QSC* 2/599, no. 2.

27 *QSC* 2/613.

28 *QSC* 2/629.

29 全是追思，卻純用實寫，但讀前半闋，幾疑是賦也。換頭再為加倍跌宕之，他人萬萬無此力量。周季, *Song sijia cixuan*, p. 10.
between present and past, since the moment of reminiscence is always euphoric even if it revives a past that in itself was painful. This comparison is further enhanced through the large textual dimensions of the recalling analepses. Because of the late occurrence of temporal expressions, the retrospection is seemingly situated in the present moment. The elaboration of descriptive details intensifies the feelings of realness. After writing a long descriptive passage, Zhou Bangyan reminded readers of the past temporal quality of the projected objectivities and state of affairs, bringing them back to the real “now.” Very often the temporal flow after the temporal transition is quickened.

*Zhu ying yao hong* is an example of late temporal transition. Its first eleven lines depict a woman’s pretty complexion. After the temporal transition in line 12, “Who would sing the song of *Yang Pass* at that time?,” the song uses the last six lines to relate the ensuing separation and the parting sorrow. Line 14, “How can I bear that the cloud disappears and the rain stops,” describes the bygone love in a highly metaphorical and concise way. Zhou Bangyan also employed late temporal transition in *Bai xing yue man*. The first stanza of this poem describes a memory of the night when the male persona met the woman for the first time, but Zhou Bangyan did not specify the temporal quality until at the beginning of the second stanza, “In the picture I saw her familiar face in the spring breeze again.” The descriptive passage about the past event is elaborate and rich in details, with the focus on the elegant environment and the woman’s graceful manner. Readers experience a greater intensity of temporal compression in the second stanza for it covers five temporal positions that are all temporally prospective in relation to the first ten lines. Zhou Bangyan uses the phrases *yu run yun wen* 雨潤雲溫 (the light rain and warm clouds) in line 13 and *feng cui san* 風吹散 (be blown away by the wind) in line 14 as metaphors for sweet love and ensuing bitter separation, respectively. By compressing events happening during a long period of time into lines 14 and 15, the effect is to emphasize the unpredictability of fate.

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30 *QSC* 2/629.
31 *QSC* 2/613.
It is worth noting that on a first reading the difficulty of Zhou’s lyrics comes from the systematic way that he eliminates the most elementary temporal indicators, so that a reader must supply them in order to comprehend the poem, as evidenced in the lyric below.

To the tune *Du jiang yun*

1. Low in the clear sky misty mountains across the Ch’u plains;
   Warm weather sends the wild ducks back,
   Rising in ranks from the level sand,
   And surprisingly, spring is there before the eyes all at once.
   When, I wonder,
   Did it work its way, twisting and turning, to the mountain house,
   Dabbing fragrance and spreading color,
   Lavishing powder and jewelry, to make every flower lovelier than the last?

10. Thousands of willow threads along the road

    Grow to hide the crows.

    What a pity
    The clear river flows east
    While the painted boat goes west,
    Headed for Ch’ang-an under the sun.

15. One worries that when the party is done
The wind will blow the boat’s flag down,

And waves will splash their caps.

Tonight beneath the crescent moon

Beside the water station

Anchored deep inside the reeds and rushes

I am overwhelmed by sadness.

From time to time I trim the lamp myself.  

(QSC 2/596)

渡江雲

晴嵐低楚甸，

暖廼鳴翼，

陣勢起平沙。

驟驚春在眼，

借問何時，

委曲到山家。

塗香暈色，

盛粉飾，爭作妍華。

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千萬絲、陌頭楊柳，
漸漸可藏鴉。

c堪嗟。

c清江東注，
畫舸西流，
指長安日下。

c愁宴闌，
風翻旗尾，
潮濕烏紗。

c今宵正對初弦月，
傍水驛，
深艤蒹葭。

c沈恨處，
時時自剔燈花。

 Critics have different opinions on the temporal setting of this song. Some scholars hold that Zhou utilized the device of late temporal transition to relate an experience of traveling by boat in spring.33 Others find a temporal inconsistency in this song.34 The division arises from the

34 Chen Ting 陳霆, Zhushantang cihua 渚山堂詞話 (CHCB ed.), pp. 373-74.
natural description in line 20. The upper stanza of the poem depicts a spring scene, while the lower stanza describes what the persona sees and feels when he moors on a water station at night. Readers’ impressions of the luxuriant spring season lasts until they read, in line 20, the phrase jian jia 蒹葭 (the reeds and rushes), an image generally associated with the autumn season in Chinese poetry. The phrase jin xiao 今宵 (tonight) in line 18 explicitly indicates that to be specific, this autumn night, is the narrative starting point from which the text is launched with a movement of coming-and-going. There is a temporal inconsistency between the two stanzas, and the lack of temporal conjunctive words also generates this inconsistency.

This temporal inconsistency puzzles readers and they are forced to resolve it by filling in the missing information. First, the temporal relation between the two stanzas should be clarified. One solution to this problem is to define the first stanza as retrospective, thus temporally subordinate, to the second one. In this case, an anachrony is constituted. However, this interpretation only partly resolves the inconsistency. In the first stanza, natural description predominates. It does not project a human being, except in lines 4 and 5 through the verbs jing 驚 (surprise) and wen 問 (ask, wonder). These verbs articulate the persona’s mental attitudes and thus make the depiction of the scene more like an immediate experience of the character rather than a distant memory. Another solution could be to treat the inconsistency as an ellipsis of time that passes between the two stanzas. The ellipsis is not an anachrony but is instead an acceleration of the narrative. Since the spring scene is beyond the range of the poetic self’s immediate vision when he moors in an autumn night, this song depicts two events.

No matter which interpretation we accept of the temporal relation between the two stanzas, we must ask ourselves: why did Zhou Bangyan compose Du jiang yun in such a way? The inconsistency in temporal quality is paralleled by an inconsistency in the depicted scene and its corresponding mood. The natural description is subordinated to the subjective qualities of the persona’s experience. When the persona’s emotional state of mind is changing and complicated, the natural world perceived by the persona is colored by his or her emotion and consequently seems to be inconsistent. The upper stanza focuses on a spring scene. The weather turns warm.

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36 Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, p.43.
The wild ducks become active. Plants bloom. Willow branches grow longer. At the same time, a complex mood of surprise, appreciation, and loss is developed. The verbs jing (surprise) and wen (ask, wonder) in lines 4 and 5 add a tone of uneasiness to the vibrant spring scene. They show the persona has not realized that spring is coming, so it feels to him as if spring comes all at once. In the lower stanza, the dim moon light and tall reeds and rushes, no matter what their temporal setting might be, are more like an autumnal scene. This cheerless picture gives a sense of desolateness and loneliness that is expressed through the phrase chen hen (deep sadness) and the image of the persona trimming the lamp silently at the end of the lyric.

Because of the inconsistencies in both temporal and semantic terms, Du jiang yun has invited interpretation as a political allegory. James Hightower is correct to say that in general it seems best to not subject Zhou Bangyan’s songs to allegorical exegesis, but it maybe useful to consider Du jiang yun in allegorical terms. Though researchers are unable to date the song with precision, it was possibly written sometime before Zhou was promoted and recalled back to the capital. From this understanding, Zhou Bangyan is seen to have composed this poem in order to express his mixed feelings about the capricious political climate in the late Northern Song. The perceived world is colored by his emotional attitude. Just as spring brings back colors of joy and blossoms, the Reform Party’s return to power brought hope to the demoted officials, including Zhou Bangyan. The poet travelled west to the capital, where a seemingly bright future was awaiting him. The lively spring scene could symbolize the active but somewhat chaotic political environment in which everyone was eager to find an opportunity to advance in their political careers. At the same time, the poet’s feelings about the changes in the political situation were complicated. Of course, he welcomed this favorable change, but at the same time he was surprised at its early occurrence. Having been a victim of intense factional conflicts in the court, Zhou Bangyan knew well about the uncertainty and unpredictability of the


38 Many researchers, including Chen Xun, Chen Si, Luo Kanglie, Chia-ying Yeh Chao, Wang Qiang, Sun Anbang, and Sun Hong, interpret this song as a political allegory. I am indebted to Yeh Chia-ying for her insightful discussion regarding this poem in her article “The Political Message in Zhou Bangyan’s Ci to ‘Du Jiang Yun’.” Hou Mingjun trans. Albert Leong ed. Oregon studies in Chinese and Russian culture. New York: P. Lang, 1990, pp. 27-35.

39 Chen Si states that this song was composed in 1116, one year before Zhou Bangyan was recalled back to the capital for the second time. Luo Kanglie believes it was around the year 1097 when Zhou was recalled back for the first time. Chen Si, “Qingzhen jushi nianpu,” Sun Hong and Xue Ruisheng, Qingzhen ji jiaochu. p. 483. Luo Kanglie, Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian. p. 180.
political climate. When he returned to the capital by water, the boat sailing upriver against the current reminded him of the hardships and unexpected setbacks in his career. Lines 16 and 17 allude to certain sinister developments, while the phrase *chao jian wu sha* 潮濺烏紗 (waves will splash their official caps) turns the scenic description into a concern about the perils of officialdom.

To the tune *Ye fei que*

Parting sorrow

1A On the river bridge where I saw her off:

How goes this cool night?

The moon was setting afar, casting its last splendor.

On the bronze plate the candle had wept away all its tears.

5 The thick cold dewdrops wet our clothes.

The parting banquet was about to be over.

We checked the ferry station’s watch drum in the wind

And Orion at the top of a tree.

B The horse knew my thoughts,

10 Walking slowly though I flipped the whip.

11 A distant road is winding across the wildness.

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40 It is derived from “Ting liao” 庭燎 in the *ShiJing*: “How goes the night?” 夜如何其. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 96.
Gradually people’s chatter faded away.

I brought home nothing but melancholy.

Unexpectedly I pass by this same place again:
The fallen hair ornaments are seen no more;
The slanting path is obscured.
The pulse and barley
Are almost a person’s height in the setting sun.

I can only pace to and fro and gather grass to sit on.

Sighing and pouring a libation,

I gaze at the west sky as far as I can see.

夜飛鵲

別情

河橋送人處，
涼夜何其。
斜月遠墮餘輝。
銅盤燭淚已流盡，
霏霏涼露霑衣。
相將散離會，
探風前津鼓，
樹杪參旗。
華驄會意，
縱揚鞭，亦自行遲。
迢遞路廽清野，
人語漸無聞，
空帶愁歸。
何意重經前地，
遺細不見，
斜徑都迷。
兔葵燕麥，
嚮殘陽，欲與人齊。
但徘徊班草，
欷歔酹酒，
極望天西。

A very important feature of this song is that the temporal reference is deliberately disrupted. Since this song contains only one word indicating a temporal transition, the adverb *chong* 重 (again) in line 14, other temporal shifts have to be inferred from their context. In this song, we can identify three narrative segments. The first segment describes a parting scene from lines 1 to 8 (segment A). We can tell from the images of the setting moon, cold dewdrops, and Orion below the top of a tree that the traveler departed at dawn. The second segment (lines 9 to 13) is
about what the persona experienced after the traveler’s departure (segment B). The last segment is from lines 14 to 21. It relates a later return to the same place at dusk (segment C). There is an apparent lapse of time between segments B and C.

Once again, division arises over the interpretation of the temporal relation between segments B and C. Some critics think that the song describes a temporal continuum from the departure at night to the next morning. Others believe there is a temporal break. Considering the fact that it rarely took a whole day to see travelers off, the latter interpretation is more logical. Taking line 14 as the turning point between the past and the present, we can reconstitute the story. The man passes by a place at dusk, finding he has been here before. The familiar place reminds him of a woman who has departed, who possibly, accompanied by him, has been here too. He recalls the parting scene, trying to find some trace left by the woman. However, her fallen hair ornaments have long disappeared. The obscured path, tall pulse, and barley show this place has been desolate for a long time. This too suggests that the woman has gone forever, as have all moments they shared.

It has been widely recognized that Zhou Bangyan was especially concerned with the temporal aspect in his man songs. Actually, his shorter songs also demonstrate a surprising degree of complexity in temporal structure. The poem written to the tune Chui si diao is a good example.

To the tune Chui si diao

1A  (Though dressed in) spun gold and kingfisher feathers,

It was only with her make-up complete that one saw the beauty of her eyebrows.

Languidly leaning by the embroidered curtain,

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41 Tang Guizhang holds this viewpoint in his Tang Song Ci jianshi 唐宋詞簡釋, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981, p. 129. Wu Shichang too makes a similar reading in his Cilin xinhua, pp. 187-88. Wu chooses the phrase xie yang 斜陽 (the slanting sun), a variant of can yang 殘陽 (the setting sun, twilight) in line 18, to support his argument, for xie yang may refer to either morning light or twilight. However, only one version uses xie yang. See Wu Zeyu comm. Qingzhen ji, p. 59.

She watched the dancing wind-blown catkins.

As for how much sorrow she felt,

It was all conveyed to the phoenix strings and goose bridges.

Spring would soon pass.

On the park-land road to the celestial city,

Gilded carriages were like a flowing stream.

From time to time they met one another on that flower strewn path.

A companion of bygone outings

Has returned to his old haunts.

Her gate is barred against the wind and rain,

While swallows converse on the beams.

I ask them, “Is she at home?”

(QSC 2/601)

垂絲釣

縷金翠羽。

妝成纖見眉嫵。

倦倚繡簾，

看舞風絮。
愁幾許。
寄鳳絲鴈柱。
春將暮。
嚮層城苑路。
鈿車似水，
時時花徑相遇。
舊游伴侶。
還到曾來處。
門掩風和雨。
梁間燕語。
問那人在否。

On first reading, line 7 leads one to believe that this song tells a story occurring in spring. The poem also describes natural images of the spring season: *feng xu* 風絮 (wind-blown catkins) in line 4 and *liang jian yan* 梁間燕 (swallows on the beams) in line 14. The reiteration of the spring imagery creates an illusion that this song narrates a series of events in chronological order and these events all occur in the same spring season. If we scrutinize the poem, however, we will find it is very vague in temporal settings. Phrases, including *Jiu you* 舊游 (bygone outings) in line 11, *huan* 還 (once again) and *ceng lai chu* 曾來處 (old haunts) in line 12, explicitly indicate the past. But the temporal sequence of the whole poem still remains unclear. The
available temporal transitional indicators do not provide sufficient information for us to reconstitute the complete love story.

We have to infer the temporal sequence from the text. According to the mood generated by the description, this poem can be divided into three narrative segments: A (lines 1 to 6), B (lines 7 to 10), and C (lines 11 to 14). The poem begins with an image of a sad woman (segment A), followed by a description of the lovers’ tryst (segment B), and ends with the man’s disappointing return to her old house where she is no longer to be found (segment C). Correspondingly, the mood changes from melancholy to delight and finally to disappointment imbued with a tone of loss. Obviously, segment B is temporally retrospective in relation to A, for the woman’s sorrow is caused by her separation from her beloved. Since in A the lovers are together in late spring while the time of B (also in spring) is earlier than A, it is very possible that A occurs at least one year after B.

We find no hint about the relationship between A and C. In this poem, narrative discourse inverts the order of events without saying so. This vagueness makes the whole love story open to different readings. The woman possibly stays in the house for some time after the man has left, savoring her sorrowful loneliness. When the man returns to look for her several years later, nobody is there. It is also possible that segments A and C took place in the same time period. The poet juxtaposed the two images of the separated lovers for dramatic effect – they miss each other but have to suffer the separation from each other. We may even take A as the man’s imagination. When he realizes his departure has made her suffer, his loss and melancholy are intensified.

3 The Vague Point of View

Another challenge readers have to deal with when reading Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics is the vague point of view. In some poems, this vagueness is caused by the lack of definite clues as to the gender of the speaker in the original Chinese text.

To the tune *Linglong si fan*

1 Luxuriant plum and peach blossoms:
Young Pan of a former time

Took care of spring beauties.  

Since I left Heyang

I have been missing your dewy face in the mist.

The hair at my temple is dotted with frost because of haggard anguish.

Thinking of you, my dreaming spirit flies away.

I sigh that not until painted railings and jade-paved stairs have all changed,

Can we have an opportunity to meet again.

Late at night she secretly unfolded the fragrant silk mat.

By a dark window the lush plant is in a drunken sleep.

Floating flowers and unrestrained pistils are my acquaintances,

But I have never looked at any of them.

Do not ask about the past color and fragrance,

Simply remember her fragrant heart.

Once more

A sudden violent storm

Scatters us.

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44 Young Pan refers to the prominent rhapsody writer Pan Yue 潘岳 (247-300) in the Western Jin Dynasty (266-316). When he was the magistrate of Heyang, he planted numerous peach trees. cf. Qingzhen ji jiaochu, p. 194.
玲瓏四犯

穠李夭桃，
是舊日潘郎，
親試春豔。
自別河陽，
長負露房煙臉。
顦顇鬢點吳霜，
念想夢魂飛亂。
歎畫闌玉砌都換。
纔始有緣重見。

夜深偷展香羅薦。
暗牀前、醉眠薰薈。
浮花浪蕊都相識，
誰更曾抬眼。
休問舊色舊香，
但認取、芳心一點。
Before I proceed to analyze this song, it is necessary for me to review Robert Smitheram’s discussion about the point of view in Zhou’s lyric to the tune *Huan jing yue* 返京樂.\(^{45}\) First, a lyric with a first-person narrator often involves “a high degree of interior dialogue and imagination,” for such “sustained internalization of feelings, imaginations, hopes, and fears, is an unlikely context for a third-person … narrative.”\(^{46}\) Second, a first-person speaker would refer to part of his narrative without explaining it, in the same way that a person would talk about his own experience. Smitheram terms this feature as the “hidden sides” effect.\(^{47}\) Since a considerable number of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics do not provide clear indicators about the speaker’s point of view, Smitheram’s conclusion is helpful for my study.

In *Linglong si fan*, the first eleven lines project a male persona. In line 2, the speaker refers to himself as Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300), a prominent poet in the Western Jin Dynasty (266–316). Lines 1-3 invite a double-level reading. On the surface, the text alludes to Pan Yue planting a large number of peach trees at Heyang; on the allegorical level, it also can be interpreted that the male persona prizes his beloved as Pan would prize his peach trees. The allusion to Pan Yue also projects onto the male speaker in *Linglong si fan* attributes of the historical figure Pan Yue, who was well known for his handsome appearance, sentimental personality, and love for his wife. These attributes are echoed in the following lines of the first stanza.\(^{48}\) The first eleven lines involve sustained descriptions of the persona’s emotional and psychological state. The phrases *jiu ri* 舊日 (a former time) in line 2, the

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\(^{45}\) *QSC* 2/596-97.

\(^{46}\) Smitheram, pp. 115-16.

\(^{47}\) Smitheram, p. 117.

\(^{48}\) For the usage and function of historical figures in Zhou’s lyrics, Smitheram provides a good discussion in his dissertation, pp. 127-44.
conjunction word **zi** 自 (since) in line 4, the verb of emotional response **tan** 歎 (sigh) in line 8, and the adverb **cai** 纔 (not until) in line 9 altogether involve an interior and subjective sense of time, which generally suggests a first-person narrator. The first eleven lines contain several images of substitution, such as **nong li yao tao** 樓李夭桃 (luxuriant prune and peach blossoms) in line 1, **chun yan** 春豔 (spring beauties) in line 3, **lu fang yan nian** 露房煙臉 (dewy face in the mist) in line 5, and **cong qian** 葱蒨 (lush plant) in line 11. These are clichés used to depict a beautiful woman from a man’s point of view. No doubt in the first eleven lines, a male speaker is constituted. The woman is a passive and silent object projected by the male speaker. She does not have her own voice.

Lines 12 to 15 are vague in terms of point of view. This is because this group of lines is different from the lines discussed above in several ways. Unlike the internalization of feelings and imagination in the preceding lines, lines 14 and 15 are powerful imperatives, indicating an externalization of hope and determination, so lines 12 to 15 are more akin to real speech. Furthermore, these four lines are a statement that could be made by either a man or a woman, for we cannot find definite clues regarding the gender of the speaker. My translation treats the four lines as a monologue by the man. If we take these four lines as a direct speech by the woman, the translation of the lower stanza would be the following:

12  “Floating flowers and unrestrained pistils are my acquaintances,

       But I have never lifted my eyes.

       Do not ask about the past color and fragrance,

       Simply remember my fragrant heart.”

Here we have a quasi-dialogue between the two characters when they meet again after many years of separation. When the man laments over his haggardness due to the sorrow of separation, she states that while many singing girls are flirtatious, she never changes her mind. Realizing that she too has pined away since they separated, she begs the man not to ask about her bygone beauty anymore, for what he values should be her sincere affection for him. Her request reveals her fear of being replaced by someone else. This is another merit of the second reading. Taking
the four lines as the woman’s direct speech, we can discern from it the woman’s humbleness, which enhances the dramatic effect and develops subtle nuances of feelings.

To the tune Ying chun yue

Accompanied by courtesans

1. The flowering beauties dazzle the spring willows.

I recall at a banquet we held hands secretly.

At the interval during singing and dancing she came to me:

“Sober up! You didn’t drink a lot.”

5. A new incense bag with embroidered sole mates,

Right beside me, it gives off perfume just at that moment.

Why do you return home on such a moonlit night?

“It is because he follows after my carriage all the way.”

(QSC 2/616)

迎春樂

攜妓

人人花豔明春柳。

憶筵上、偷攜手。
This song is similar to *Linglong si fan* in that the speaker’s point of view is partially indeterminate. The vagueness in the speaker’s point of view is caused by quasi-dialogues. The first three lines posit a first-person speaker through the verb *yi* 憶 (recall). The phrase *lai xiang jiu* 来相就 (come to [me]) suggests a male speaker because at a banquet singing girls commonly play an active role, singing, dancing, and offering wine to male guests. However, the participation of the male speaker is only obliquely constituted, thus a detached third-person narrator is also possibly projected in lines 1 to 3. Line 4 is clearly a singing girl’s speech.

In the lower stanza, the narrator of lines 5 and 6 is even more vague. These lines lack strong semantic-projectional elements that could suggest the speaker’s gender. They could posit any speaker – the man, the woman, or an overt narrator. The last two lines consist of a question and an answer, but we are uncertain about who the speakers are. The last line should be in the girl’s voice judging from the third-person pronoun *ta* 他 and the phrase *sui che hou* 隨車後 (following the carriage). In ancient times, women travelled in a carriage while men rode on horseback, therefore the third-person pronoun *ta* 他 (he) refers to the man. Since the girl uses a third-person pronoun in her answer to refer to the man following after her carriage, the man cannot be the person who asks the question; therefore, line 7 should be in the voice of either the girl (asking a rhetorical question) or a narrator.
In some other poems, the speaker’s identity shifts frequently and suddenly without explicit indications. This inconsistency in point of view provides possibilities of multiple readings and greatly enriches the aesthetic experience of Zhou’s lyrics. This explains why Zhou Bangyan’s best lyrics are often vague in point of view. Zhou’s masterpiece, *Lang tao sha*, is a good example. This *man* song contains no pronouns in the Chinese text. There are only three oblique references to the speaker. The first one is in line 7: “And, concealing rouged tears, with her own jade hands she broke one off.” The phrases with ornate qualifiers *hong lei* 紅涙 (rouged tears) and *yu shou* 玉手 (jade hands) show that the description is from the man’s point of view; he saw the woman snapping off a willow wand. This line also tells us that the man is about to leave because during the Song the custom prevailed of breaking off a willow wand and giving it to the departing traveler. Based on this fact, we have the second indicator in line 8: “Now on the bank of the Han she wonders where the wild goose flies.” *Li hong* 離鴻 (departing goose) is a metonymy of travelers (the man who has left in this song). This phrase suggests lines 8 and 9 are from the woman’s point of view. The last clue appears in line 21: “My sad song goes on until the jasper pot is quite knocked to bits.” The action of knocking the jasper pot until it is broken is masculine.50

The appearance of these oblique clues does not make the poem less vague. Due to the lack of clear and sufficient indications of who the speaker is, readers experience unexpected shifts in point of view. They are not sure that the speaker is male until they find the first clue in line 7. Unexpectedly, this man’s point of view shifts to the woman’s point of view in the next line. It is not clear when the female speaker switches back to the male speaker projected in line 21, thus the descriptions from lines 10 to 20 could project either speaker. This possible existence of dual speakers is sustained almost throughout the rest of the lyric.

The possibility of dual speakers plays an important role in turning Zhou’s poem into a network of complexity in temporal quality and speakers’ points of view. By projecting speakers of both genders in an indefinite way, *Lang tao sha* comprehends different emotional nuances beyond temporal and spatial boundaries, thus effectively fusing the feelings of a departing traveler with

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49 QSC 2/598-599.

50 See Chapter Five, n. 23.
the lover sending him off. Because of the perfect fusion of various kinds of poetic elements, 

*Lang tao sha* is praised as integrated and natural.\(^{51}\)

To the tune *Lanling wang*

*Willows*

1 A line of reflected willows:

Every misty thread flaunting green.

On the Sui dyke seen how many times!

Brushing the water, floating fluff: the setting for departure.

5 *(I/He) climb(s) for a view of the hometown,*

Unrecognized,

A traveler weary of city splendors.

At the parting station

Year in, year out

10 They must have plucked over a thousand feet of those lithe branches.

*(I/He) muse(s) on events long past,*

As once again with wine and sad string’s accompaniment

The lamp shines on the parting feast,

\(^{51}\) Chen Tingzhuo, *Baiyuzhai cihua*, p. 3789.
When pear blossoms and elm fire presage the time of Cold Food;

15 Sad when the wind is swift as an arrow
And half the punting pole is in the warm waves
In a moment any number of way stations are far behind
As (I/you) look back at someone standing on the north shore.

Grief

20 Sorrow piled on sorrow;
Slowly river water winding around another bank,
Forts at ferry stations became quiet.
The sun slowly, slowly slanting, and everywhere the spring.
Remember now holding hands in the moon pavilion

25 Listening to flute sounds on the dewy bridge –
Lost in these onetime things
Like a dream.
Tears secretly fall.\(^2\)

(QSC 2/611)

蘭陵王

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柳

柳陰直。

煙裏絲絲弄碧。

隋堤上、曾見幾番，

拂水飄綿送行色。

登臨望故國。

誰識。

京華倦客。

長亭路，

年去歲來，

應折柔條過千尺。

閒尋舊蹤跡。

又酒趁哀弦，

燈照離席。

梨花榆火催寒食。

愁一箭風快，

半篙波暖，
回頭迢遞便數驛。  
望人在天北。  
悽惻。  
恨堆積。  
漸別浦縈廽，  
津堠岑寂。  
斜陽冉冉春無極。  
念月榭攜手，  
露橋聞笛。  
沈思前事，  
似夢裏，  
淚暗滴。  

One of Zhou’s most successful and popular lyrics, Lanling wang is also the vaguest. James Hightower points out the extreme vagueness in the speaker’s point of view when he translates this song: “There is no way of knowing whether the poem was composed when its author was leaving the capital, or on the occasion of someone else’s departure, or as a recollection of something in the past. It is not clear whether those parting are friends or lovers; nothing suggests the gender of the one standing on the shore, or of the one on the boat. There is no first-person
pronoun (which makes the poem awkward to translate into English); even the two third-person pronouns are supplied by the translator.”

This poem does not contain a single personal pronoun. This is not rare in Zhou’s lyrics. Of the 127 poems of the core group, only sixteen (less than thirteen percent) contain personal pronouns. This percentage increases to twenty-two in his man songs, that is ten out of the total forty-six man songs contain personal pronouns. The reason for this is that long songs’ unusual length demands a fusion of various poetic modes in an elaborate way and, as a result, it becomes much more difficult to avoid using personal pronouns completely. Even so, Zhou Bangyan chose not to use personal pronouns in most of his man songs. His choice contributes to the vague quality of his songs.

The lack of personal pronouns makes the song difficult to understand. Hightower’s translation assumes the poem is in the third-person voice, while my translation assumes the first-person voice, though I do not insist on a single and consistent point of view. The personal pronouns in bold in the English translation are missing in the Chinese text. My choice is based on several reasons. First, the phrases ceng jian 曾見 (have seen) in line 3 and qian shi 前事 (the onetime things) in line 26 produce the so-called “hidden sides” effect through assumptions about shared or presupposed information. A third-person speaker would hardly refer to an objective narrative in such a fashion. Second, this poem demonstrates sustained focus on internalized feelings, imagination, and recollection, which is an unlikely context for a third-person narrative. The verbs of mental perception chou 忧 (sorrow) in line 15, nian 念 (remember) in line 24, and chen si 沈思 (ponder, muse) in line 26 demonstrate a high degree of psychological activities. Hightower’s treatments reduce the Chinese text’s immediacy of appeal. This also makes the occurrence of the second-person pronoun in line 18, which is added by Hightower, rather illogical.

Another reason for the vague point of view is the oblique references to different speakers. The first stanza does not project a specific speaker. Lines 3 and 4 seem to project a person who sees off his friends and the departing traveler, who would also see the willows, while line 5 might project a departing traveler, for, generally, the traveler rather than the people sending him off

would climb for a view of the hometown. However, it is unclear who the “traveler weary of city splendors” is. He has been interpreted as the traveler who feels disappointed and regretful when he leaves the city and also as the person who will stay in the city for, at the parting scene, the feelings of nostalgia and grief hang over him. In the second stanza, the speaker is the traveler because lines 15 to 18 tell the story of the direct experience of the traveler. For the rest of the lyric, it is difficult to determine which speaker is projected. Lines 19 to 22 at the beginning of the third stanza continue with the traveler’s boat journey and his increasing sadness, which leads to the recollection of the past at the end. If the speaker-narrator is the person who remains, then the traveler’s journey is seen through the speaker-narrator’s imagination.

Throughout the centuries, there has been much debate among scholars about the poem’s inconsistency in point of view. Zhou Ji and the modern scholar Liu Yisheng 刘逸生 think the poem was composed when a traveler sent off another traveler. Wu Shichang disagrees with Zhou Ji’s reading. Luo Kanglie states that Zhou Bangyan wrote it when he left the capital. James Hightower and the Chinese scholar Wang Qiang treat it as a detached description in the voice of a third person. In my view, it is not a satisfactory solution to adopt a single and consistent point of view. Zhou Ji’s theory is the most influential, though it too has been attacked. Actually, we can take a more flexible reading strategy on this issue. What Zhou Bangyan wanted to express in this poem are the complex emotions experienced at partings. We should notice that this song does not relate one single event. By indicating that the parting scene has occurred on the Sui dyke repeatedly through the centuries in lines 4, 9, 10, and 12, the poet transforms a specific private experience into a much broader context in which the emotional complexity produces resonance in readers.

The inconsistency in point of view results from the poet’s attempt to catch subtle nuances of feelings. Such feelings of sadness, regret, and nostalgia at parting can be felt by everyone, not limited to the traveler or the one who sees him or her off. The person sending friends off could

55 Wu Shichang, Cilin xinhua, pp. 183-84.
56 Luo Kanglie, Zhou Bangyan Qinzen ji jian, p. 163.
be the traveler himself on another occasion. Therefore, in *Lanling wang* these two figures are indistinguishable. This poem can be interpreted as depicting a person’s feelings on different occasions. It is possible that a dual speaker exists because the text refuses to project a specific speaker. By positing an ambiguous speaker, this poem is effective in making personal feelings universal.

4 Intertextuality

Zhou Bangyan was famous for his ability to borrow and transform prior texts. Although in his personal and political life, Zhou Bangyan kept a distance from Su Shi and his followers, he was influenced by their literary practice and theory. One example is that his lyrics are characterized by erudition and rich textual allusions. He used prior verse lines in such a creative and natural way that many critics claimed that these lines seemed to belong to him. Zhou Bangyan’s practice paralleled the prevalence of the literary theory developed by the *shi* poets of the Jiangxi School. When alluding to a male figure, historical or fictional, Zhou Bangyan often focused on the features of poetic genius, musical refinement, and romantic sentiment embodied in such figures. His practice is quite different from Su Shi, who often highlighted the heroic deeds and political aspirations of the historical people alluded to, as evidenced by Su’s lyrics to the tunes *Shui diao ge tou* and *Jiang cheng zi*. Consequently, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics are consistent with the feminine tradition of the genre, while Su’s break away from that tradition by emphasizing masculine feelings. Bangyan’s writing represents an important step in elevating the status of lyrics and a crucial transition in the lyric tradition. Most of his lyrics are not a natural utterance of inner emotion or a sudden burst of inspiration, but a serious craft of writing, as with *shi* poetry in the Song, embodying his power of knowledge and learning.

Critics have already recognized that one of the most notable characteristics of Zhou Bangyan’s songs is the high frequency of textual allusions. In his *xiaoling* poem *Chou nu er*, for example, five lines out of eight allude to prior literary writings. Such writings include Daoist classics,

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58 Chen Zhengsun, *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, p. 618.
59 *QSC* 1/280, no. 1; 299, no. 2. Smitheram finds that by referring to historical figures, Zhou Bangyan fused the interior experience of the speaker with the historical and cultural reality associated with the historical figures, thus giving his poetic expression a certain historical depth. Smitheram, pp. 130-35.
60 *QSC* 2/610.
anecdotes, and shi poems. Zhou Bangyan was a master of adaptation, a composing technique through which a whole poem consists of lines adapted from earlier poetry or prose.\(^{61}\) His Xi he is an excellent example of adaptation based on three poems about Jinling.\(^{62}\) He combined lines and phrases from these earlier poems with his own ideas so perfectly that critics have claimed it is one of the best among lyrics about history.\(^{63}\) His Rui long yin\(^{64}\) and Guo Qinlou\(^{65}\) are also adapted from Tang poems, but they both demonstrate startling originality at the same time.\(^{66}\) In this sense, Liu Su stated that whatever words Zhou Bangyan used must have a tradition of previous usage.\(^{67}\)

Zhou Bangyan’s extensive use of allusions represents a new tendency of the lyric genre toward careful arrangement and erudition. Common songs and traditional xiaoling poems were composed in a spontaneous way and few textual allusions were used, as shown by verses before the mid-Northern Song. Sometimes, Zhou’s allusions may become trite and stale through overuse, devolving into mere cliché, such as jin wu 金屋 (gilt chamber) for a female’s room and zhang tai 章台 or xiang mo 巷陌 for entertainment quarters. But in more cases, his allusions may only make sense in the light of prior textual knowledge. This device can add fun to the reading process, but for the uninitiated it can make Zhou’s poems seem dense and hard to decipher. The following strophe in the poem Shui long yin, which I discussed in Chapter Four, is a good example.

Snowy waves turn in the air,\(^ {68}\)

Powdered skirts whiten the night.\(^ {69}\)

\(^{61}\) James J. Y. Liu, Major Lyricists of the Northern Sung, A.D. 960-1126, p. 6.

\(^{62}\) QSC 2/612. These three poems are Li Shangyin’s 李商隱 (813-858) Mo chou 莫愁 (QTS 539/6181), Liu Yuxi’s Shitou cheng 石頭城 (QTS 365/4117) and Wuyi xiang (QTS 365/4117). cf. Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen ji jian, pp. 111-12.

\(^{63}\) Chen Tingzhuo makes this statement in his Yunshao ji. See Sun Keqiang and Yang Chuanqing ed. “Yunshao ji jiping zhiyi,” p. 57.

\(^{64}\) QSC 2/595.

\(^{65}\) QSC 2/602.

\(^{66}\) For the detailed analysis of the three songs, see Hightower, “Songs of Chou Pang-yen,” pp. 233-72.

\(^{67}\) 言言皆有来歴。 Liu Su, “Xu,” Xiangzhu Zhou Meicheng Pianyu ji.

\(^{68}\) This is derived from Han Yu’s On plum blossoms, sent to Zhang, eleventh in rank: “Harassed by wind and rain, they surpass the snow. / The boundless waves turn in the air.” QTS 338/3791. cf. Qingzhen ji jiao zhu, pp. 79-80.
They do not make a spring.

(QSC 2/610)

雪浪翻空，

粉裳縞夜，

不成春意。

If readers cannot recognize the alluded texts, they would have difficulty understanding this strophe, as shown by most of modern scholars’ annotations for this lyric poem. *Shui long yin* depicts white pear blossoms from the beginning to line 16, thus it is natural for most readers to think that this strophe (lines 17 to 19 in *Shui long yin*) also describes pear blossoms. However, this reading does not fit into the general context of the song. Since in the upper stanza all other blossoms are described as feeling ugly before the pear blossoms’ unequaled beauty, the line “They [pear blossoms] do not make a spring” would be confusing.

This inconsistency can only be solved through a correct decoding of the two allusions in this strophe. The first two lines of this strophe are transformed from two shi poems by Han Yu and Wang Anshi, respectively. Both lines in the alluded texts describe white plum blossoms with the emphasis on the dazzling white color, thus the metaphorical phrase *xue lang fan kong* 雪浪翻空 (snowy waves turn in the air) and the causative phrase *gao ye* 縞夜 (whiten the night) become specific codes solely for white plum blossoms in Chinese poetry. In this reading, the above strophe is consistent with the rest of the poem. Although plum blossoms are dazzlingly beautiful, they cannot compete with pear blossoms. In this sense, the white plum blossoms serve as a foil to the white pear blossoms. This example shows the interactions between texts. According to the French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes (1915-1980), a text is “

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69 This is derived from Wang Anshi’s *Sent to lady Cai*: “plum blossoms whiten the night, peach blossoms dazzle the eyes.” *QSS* 538/6483. cf. *Qingzhen ji jiaozhu*, p. 80.
multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.”

In the textual matrix, “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” The meaning of a text exists in relation to other texts, thus it is not conveyed directly from writer to reader; instead it is mediated through codes generated by other texts. These codes are embodied in the specific textual allusions used by the writer and only become effective when readers successfully recognize them. Because what the poet attempts to express actually does not reside in Zhou’s text, readers are forced to refer to both this text and the alluded text to decode it. Through the fixed code of xue lang fan kong and gao ye, an aspect of the plum blossom is selected to identify it, and it is this shared aspect that makes the allusions evocative to readers with adequate literary competence.

The textual allusions bring forth different layers of meaning, greatly enriching the poetic world generated by the text. Zhou’s Shui long yin, a springtime poem about looking for a lost brothel love, has been interpreted by traditional critics as political allegory because of the double allusion. His Feng liu zì, though not subject to allegorical interpretation, develops a complex mood through textual allusions.

To the tune Feng liu zì

1 By a small pond newly green,

Windblown blinds move –

Splintered shadows dance in the slanting sunlight.

I envy them, coming and going about the gilt chamber,

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72 Ibid., pp. 66-69.

73 For the detailed discussion of this poem, see Hightower, “Songs of Chou Pang-yen,” pp. 242-45.

74 Xin Lù 新緑 (New Green) is the name given by Zhou to a small pond in the magistrate’s residence of Lishui County. cf. Qiang Huan, “Xu,” Píanya cì.
Those nesting swallows of the past.

Ground flowers spread and intertwine\textsuperscript{75}

About last season’s mossy wall.

From how deep within the phoenix curtains of the painted apartment,

I once heard the playing of strings and pipes:

Wishing to speak I held back;

Worries betrayed the loving promise.

Beginning to sing she choked up;

Sorrow rested on the brimful cup of wine.

From afar I know that she has put on fresh make-up.

Opening the vermilion door to her room,

She will wait alone for the moon at the western chamber.

But hardest of all would be that my dreaming spirit

Will not go to her side tonight

I ask when you will get word to me —

Love letters or secret assignations

By sending along Qin’s mirror,

\textsuperscript{75} “Ground flowers” refers to moss according to Li He’s poem \textit{Song of the bronze immortal bidding farewell to Han}: “In the thirty-six palaces, ground-flowers are emerald.” \textit{QTS} 391/4403. cf. \textit{Qingzhen ji jiaozhu}, p. 18.
Or secretly exchanging Han’s fragrant sachet.

If heaven would only let us have a moment’s time together--

What harm could it do?^{76}

(QSC 2/595)

風流子

新綠小池塘。

風簾動，

碎影舞斜陽。

羡金屋去來，

舊時巢燕，

土花繚繞，

前度莓牆。

繡閣裏、鳳幃深幾許，

曾聽得理絃簧。

欲說又休，

慮乖芳信，

未歌先咽，

^{76} Trans. Smitheram, pp. 266-67.
愁近清觴。

遙知新妝了，
開朱戶，
應自待月西廂。
最苦夢魂，
今宵不到伊行。
問、甚時說與，
佳音密耗，
寄将秦鏡，
偷換韓香。
天便教人，
霎時廝見何妨

There are four important allusions in this song. *Jin wu* 金屋 (gilt chamber) in line 4 alludes to a story about Ajiao 阿嬌. As recorded in *Hanwu gushi* 漢武故事, when the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (r. 141-87 B.C.) was a boy, he was asked on one occasion whether he would like to marry Ajiao. He answered, “If I could marry Ajiao, I would keep her in a gilt chamber.” Line 16 is derived from the romantic assignation between Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 and the young scholar Zhang 張生. Cui had sent Zhang the following poem: “To wait for the moon I am sitting in the
western chamber; / To greet the wind, I have left the door ajar.\textsuperscript{77} Line 21 is about Qin Jia 秦嘉 (fl. 147), a Chinese poet of the Eastern Han Dynasty. He and his wife had a very harmonious relationship. When he was promoted to the post of commandery supervisor at the capital Luoyang, and summoned to take up an appointment there, his wife fell ill and had to stay at home. He sent her many gifts, including a mirror and a series of poems, expressing his sorrow at their separation and longing for reunion.\textsuperscript{78} Line 22 refers to an illicit love affair between Han Shou 韓壽 and the daughter of Jia Chong 賈充. Jia Chong had been given a special fragrance that lingered on the body for a month and his daughter had secretly given some of it to her lover, Han Shou. When Jia Chong found Han Shou was wearing this fragrance, he knew Han was involved with his daughter. Jia had the matter kept secret and married his daughter to Han Shou.\textsuperscript{79}

Through incorporating and recontextualizing elements of prior texts, this text assumes new meanings and denotations. The four allusions discussed above all are about romantic love, while the second and fourth ones are particularly about forbidden love. As aristocratic women, both Jia Chong’s daughter and Cui Yingying fell in love with young men without their parents’ permission, so they could only meet their lovers secretly. This special connotation embodied in these allusions implies that the romantic relationship depicted in Feng liu zi is not proper according to social norms. Possibly because of the forbidden nature of their love, the male persona is forced to leave the girl. By putting the alluded event in a new context, Zhou Bangyan leaves the literary allusion to the readers to make an interpretation. An anecdote about this particular piece shows how an industrious reader interpreted this song: “When Zhou Meicheng was the magistrate of Lishui in Jiangning Prefecture, the registrar’s wife was beautiful and intelligent. Meicheng often drank with her at banquets. The popular song ‘Feng liu zi’ is about this. ‘Newly green’ and ‘waiting for the moon’ are names of pavilions and rooms in the


According to the anecdote, “Feng liu zi” describes Zhou Bangyan’s love for his subordinate’s wife. Though this anecdote is almost certainly apocryphal, it does echo the implied elements of the textual allusions, i.e., the described love does not comply with ethical rules.

Zhou Bangyan’s works demonstrate a transitional style between the explicit and the implicit. He conforms to the oral performance tradition, writing about traditional themes and absorbing the popular elements of common songs. However, his talent lies in presenting these old themes in original ways. Successfully cumulating the delicate restraint quality of literati xiaoling poems, the narrative-descriptive approach developed by Liu Yong, and the intellectual traits of Su Shi’s lyrics, he explores and further develops ample rhetorical devices and compositional principles, with the aim to enhance the refined and implicit quality of the lyric. His pioneering exploration of literary rhetoric laid the cornerstone for the lyric in its evolvement into a highly specialized and sophisticated genre.

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80 周美成為江寧府溧水令，主簿之室有色而慧，美成每款洽於尊席之間，世所傳《風流子》詞，蓋所寓意焉。…… 新緑、待月皆簿廳亭軒之名也。Wang Mingqing 王明清, Huichen lu 揮塵錄. yuhua juan 2. Siku quanshu ed.

81 See Wang Guowei’s “Qingzhen xiansheng yishi,” Qingzhen ji jiaochu. p. 452.
Conclusion

Critics throughout the centuries have admired Zhou Bangyan as the founder of elegant lyrics. Surprisingly, unlike other elite lyricists who are also well known for their elegant works, Zhou Bangyan found his great acceptance and popularity among the non-elite people of the Song Dynasty. Zhou’s success stems from his skillful fusion of different factors associated with the popular and elite cultures. By reviewing his lyrics in light of the interaction between these cultures of the Song Dynasty, this dissertation aims to demonstrate the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and literary significance of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics.

In the course of my research of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics in relation to the popular and elite cultures, I realized that the following three points – the dynamic process of interactions between the two cultures, the extensive transmission of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics, and the influence of Zhou’s rhetoric – are interrelated and particularly noteworthy. The culmination of the active cross-cultural interactions promoted the wide transmission of Zhou’s lyrics, through which the implicit rhetoric of Zhou’s lyrics became his biggest legacy. In this conclusion, I will discuss these three points successively.

First, during the late Northern Song Dynasty, the relation between the popular and elite cultures became more complicated – their interactions remained strong while a polarization between them became discernible. Such a complicated relation was indicated by the dramatic oscillation of the lyric genre between the two cultures. On the one hand, the lyrics in the common styles prevailed among elite circles. The tradition of courtesan performance of lyrics developed in the entertainment quarters was still going strong, as can be seen by the fact that most literati lyrics of the period under discussion were composed within this tradition, regardless of whether they were written in a “vulgar” style. On the other hand, this tradition of courtesan performance started to diminish, as evinced by some of Su Shi’s masculine lyrics, which started to shift their emphasis towards literary aspects. This trend continued and became increasingly conspicuous during the Southern Song, ultimately resulting in the complete dissociation of the lyric genre from music and oral performance.

In such a convoluted cultural milieu, members of the literati differed from each other in their perspectives and strategies regarding the genre. They debated about the criteria of elegant lyrics
and canonical lyrics but could hardly reach agreement. To varying degrees, they all followed the
common song tradition but did so in radically different manners. Some were genuinely devoted
to the popular culture, composing a large number of lyrics in common styles; some wrote
“vulgar” lyrics, but just to show off their versatility with diversified styles. More literati raised
and adhered strictly to the elite aesthetic standards imposed on the lyrics, attempting to elevate
the form away from its low origin. Some more radical poets even explored masculine lyrics
rarely found in previous literati works. In this way, while literati’s perspectives and practices
were not consistent, and were quite often contradictory, with each other; together they fashioned
the lyric genre of later times.

The second point is that the diverse channels through which Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics were
transmitted among different groups of people demonstrate his exceptional ability to maintain a
balance between contrasting qualities associated with the popular and elite cultures. Circulating
among publics with different aesthetic preferences, Zhou’s works embodied diverse qualities that
satisfied these publics’ aesthetic pursuits. The elites valued the literary achievements of Zhou’s
lyrics, common people were attracted by these poems’ strong musicality and narrative trend,
while musicians appreciated their meticulously designed melodies and metrical patterns. These
publics all played important roles in the dynamic process of the circulation of Zhou Bangyan’s
lyrics. Entertainers spread Zhou’s songs on public occasions through their oral performances;
the literati and musicians facilitated the transmission of these songs by publishing annotated
editions. The increasing popularity generated more profits, which in turn led to an even
quickened and enlarged circulation of Zhou’s lyrics.

The spread of literary works is not limited to the circulation of their physical texts; it is also the
circulation of the cultural, aesthetic, and literary value exemplified in these works. As several
Western scholars have implied, extensive dissemination of texts possibly results in “a
standardization of knowledge.” Zhou Bangyan’s poems are a good example. The compiler of a
Song edition of Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics stated that the purpose of the compilation is to “pass on

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1 Martin Hofmann points out that some scholars, including Ronald Egan, Charles Hartman, and Anne E. McLaren, “explore
whether the increasing availability of texts, be it in printed or other form, led to a diversification or a standardization of
knowledge” in their individual studies about the circulation of various Chinese texts. See Martin Hofmann’s review of the book
For the studies by Egan, Hartman, McLaren, see Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerdt ed. Knowledge and Text Production in An
These collections, especially the annotated editions, make Zhou’s literary thought accessible to audiences. As Zhou held the prestige of having the highest number of editions of lyric collections during the Song Dynasty, the aesthetic standard and literary thought embodied in his lyrics became familiar to a wide range of audiences, including entertainers, who were supposed to be indifferent to elite aesthetics. As a consequence of the increasing accessibility of Zhou’s poems and the dissemination of Zhou’s lyric poetics, literati emulated Zhou’s style while courtesans were applauded for being able to sing Zhou Bangyan’s songs.

The prevalence of Zhou’s poems throughout the Song society is a unique cultural phenomenon, for it could only have occurred at a specific developmental stage of the lyric form. As I have discussed in Chapter Three, during the Song Dynasty, Zhou’s lyrics were transmitted through three major channels: performances by courtesans, quasi-prosodic manuals by musicians, and compilations by the literati. The availability of these channels implies a certain developmental stage of the lyric. The first channel would only have been available when the oral performance tradition was still alive; the second would have been meaningful when this tradition had diminished or completely disappeared; the last would be useful only when the lyric had developed into an art of literary sophistication. It is noteworthy that during the late Northern Song, the oral performance tradition, though previously strong, began to weaken, and literati increasingly focused on the literary aspect of lyrics. Emerging during this transitional period as a lyricist and emphasizing both musicality and textuality, Zhou Bangyan’s works gained more circulating opportunities through more channels than any other lyricists. Few Northern Song lyricists’ works, including those by the musician lyricist Liu Yong, were chosen to be used as a prosodic manual. The works of lyricists during this period are relatively spontaneous and explicit, thus not many annotated collections were produced. During the Southern Song, owing to the disappearance of lyric music, most of literati lyrics were unsingable and thus lost the performance channel accessible to the wide range of ordinary audiences. In terms of diverse circulation channels, Zhou Bangyan is unrivalled among literati lyricists.

The last point I would like to discuss is the influence of Zhou Bangyan’s rhetoric. Zhou

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3 Cai Songyun, Keting cilun 柯亭詞論 (CHCB ed.), p. 4900.
Bangyan’s works signify an important transition in the development of the lyric genre from spontaneous directness to studied opaqueness. He composed lyrics with serious thought and careful arrangement, as I have demonstrated in Chapters Four through Six. Like Wen Tingyun (who explored a so-called “rhetoric of implicit meaning” for the xiaoling form), Zhou Bangyan developed a “new rhetoric of implicit meaning” for the longer manci form. This new rhetoric is characterized by insufficient or vague referential data, abrupt transitions in narration, implicit temporal order, and inconsistent points of view. It produces an implicit, fragmented, and incoherent quality, as a result of which Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics are not readily understood. James Hightower notices this feature: “Chou Pang-yen’s [Zhou Bangyan’s] songs are not all puzzles, but most of them are complex.” Some of Zhou’s most complicated songs can only be deciphered by professional critics and well-educated readers.

We should be aware that although Zhou Bangyan initiated a new aesthetic trend emphasizing the implicit quality, some of his lyrics are still spontaneous and explicit. It is true that he often omitted temporal indicators and pronouns, but only in rare cases did he not provide any clues for readers. For most of his lyrics, readers can comprehend the narrative progression after repeated readings and careful analysis. Such lyrics are very different from the difficult Southern Song lyrics by Jiang Kui and Wu Wenying. Zhou’s songs are more implicit than works of other Northern Song lyricist due to his heavy use of rhetorical devices; but when compared with the implicit Southern Song lyrics, they are relatively natural and explicit, remaining appealing to non-elite people. Adapting merits of common songs and previous literati lyrics, Zhou developed a style that links the lyrics of the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties.

Reviewing the above three points, I find that Zhou Bangyan’s works and their transmission, being a cultural phenomena, are unique in the developmental history of the lyric genre. The sustained interactions between the popular and elite cultures reached their climax during the late Northern Song era, resulting in fundamental changes of both cultures. Active during this transitional period, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics reflected both the intermingling and polarization of the popular and elite cultures – being the last literati conversant with the entertainment culture and courtesan performance tradition, he found the greatest popularity among different publics;

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4 Kang-i Sun Chang, The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u poetry: From Late T’ang to Northern Song, pp. 35-42.
being the first literati who paid special attention to the rhetoric and form of the *man* song, his poems have far-reaching implications for lyrics of post-Northern Song eras.

From the Southern Song onward, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics became model works of canonical elegant style. They satisfy most of the criteria for *yaci* proposed by the Song critics (especially those of the Southern Song), suggesting that these critics were deeply influenced by Zhou’s compositions. Yin Huan 尹煥 (fl. 1231) accords Zhou the highest honors among his contemporaries: “If one were to seek models of lyricists of the Song period, he will find Zhou Bangyan in the past and Wu Wenyong of our age.”

Many influential lyricists of later times derived their respective styles from Zhou Bangyan. They explored the compositional approaches developed by Zhou Bangyan to their fullest degree and ultimately turned the lyric genre into a highly sophisticated art focusing on verbal artifice. Some critics dismissed their works, sometimes even together with Zhou Bangyan’s poems, as formalism and empty of content. But the blame for the indulgences in the sophistication and artistry of the style of later lyricists cannot be laid at the feet of Zhou Bangyan; as James Y. J. Liu claims, Zhou Bangyan’s lyrics “are enough to convince one that he is concerned not only with formal beauty but with the exploration of emotional experiences.”

One limitation of this study is its relatively narrow focus. Due to the length of this dissertation and time constraints, this study examines Zhou Bangyan’s text itself. While reference is provided at times to the social and cultural factors in the development of the lyric genre, this dissertation does not elaborate on the social and cultural history of the Song Dynasty. As a result of the insufficient source material, the discussion of Zhou Bangyan’s music is limited. The period this study focuses on is limited to the Song Dynasty, especially the later Northern Song era, thus it does not investigate Zhou Bangyan’s influence on the lyrics of later eras. These problems suggest a variety of research directions that need to be pursued to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the uniqueness and significance of Zhou Bangyan’s poems.

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—— *Ciyuan* 詞源. Tang Guizhang ed. *Cihua congbian*.


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Abbreviations

CHCB  Cihua congbian.  Tang Guizhang ed.

QSC  Quan Songci.  Tang Guizhang ed.

QSS  Quan Songshi.  Beijing Daxue Guwenxian Yanjiusuo ed.

QTS  Quan Tangshi.  Peng Dingqiu et. al. ed.

QTWDC  Quan Tang Wudai ci.  Zeng Zhaomin and Chao Jiping ed.
Appendix

Zhou Bangyan’s New Tunes

39 new tunes in the core group:

*Rui long yin* 瑞龍吟 (*QSC* 2/595)

*Suo chuang han* 瑣窗寒 (*QSC* 2/595)

*Du jiang yun* 渡江雲 (*QSC* 2/596)

*Lizhi xiang jin* 荔支香近 (*QSC* 2/596)

*Huan jing yue* 還京樂 (*QSC* 2/596-97)

*Sao hua you* 掃花遊 (i.e. *Sao di hua* 掃地花, *QSC* 2/597)

*Jie lian huan* 解連環 (*QSC* 2/597)

*Linglong si fan* 玲瓏四犯 (*QSC* 2/597)

*Dang feng yin* 丹鳳吟 (*QSC* 2/597-98)

*Yi jiu you* 憶舊遊 (*QSC* 2/599)

*Chui si diao* 垂絲釣 (*QSC* 2/601)

*Ge pu lian jin pai* 隔浦蓮近拍 (i.e. *Ge pu lian* 隔浦蓮, *QSC* 2/602)

*Ce fan* 側犯 (*QSC* 2/602)

*Sai weng yin* 塞翁吟 (*QSC* 2/603)

*Hua xu yin* 華胥引 (*QSC* 2/604)
Yan qing du 宴清都 (QSC 2/604)

Si yuan zhu 四園竹 (QSC 2/604)

Qi tian yue 齊天樂 (QSC 2/605)

Hui lan fang yin 惠蘭芳引 (QSC 2/605)

Ding xiang jie 丁香結 (QSC 2/606)

Di zhou di yi 氐州第一 (QSC 2/606)

Jie die xie 解蹀躞 (QSC 2/606)

Qing chun gong 慶春宮 (QSC 2/606-07)

Hong lin qin jin 紅林檎近 (QSC 2/608)

Jie yu hua 解語花 (QSC 2/608)

Dao fan 倒犯 (QSC 2/609)

Da pu 大酺 (QSC 2/609)

Yu Zhu xin 玉燭新 (QSC 2/609)

Hua fan 花犯 (QSC 2/609-10)

Liu chou 六醜 (QSC 2/610)

Lanling wang 蘭陵王 (QSC 2/611)

Xi he 西河 (QSC 2/612)

Qi liao yuan 繽寮怨 (QSC 2/613)

Bai xin yue man 拜新月慢 (i.e. Bai xin yue 拜星月, QSC 2/613)
Rao fo ge 絕佛閣 (QSC 2/614)

Yi nan wang 意難忘 (QSC 2/616)

Hong luo ao 紅羅讙 (QSC 2/616)

Ye fei que 夜飛鶯 (QSC 2/617)

Feng lai chao 鳳來朝 (QSC 2/617)

The additional new tunes:

Yu tuan er 玉團兒 (QSC 2/618)

Yi jian mei 一剪梅 (QSC 2/623)

Shuang tou lian 雙頭蓮 (QSC 2/623)

Da you 大有 (QSC 2/623)

Wang li chun 萬里春 (QSC 2/627)

Huan xi sha man 浣溪沙慢 (QSC 2/628-29)

Fen die er man 粉蝶兒慢 (QSC 2/619)

Yue xia di 月下笛 (QSC 2/621)

Zhu ying yao hong 燭影搖紅 (QSC 2/629)

Qing fang bing di lian 青房并蒂蓮 (QSC 2/621)