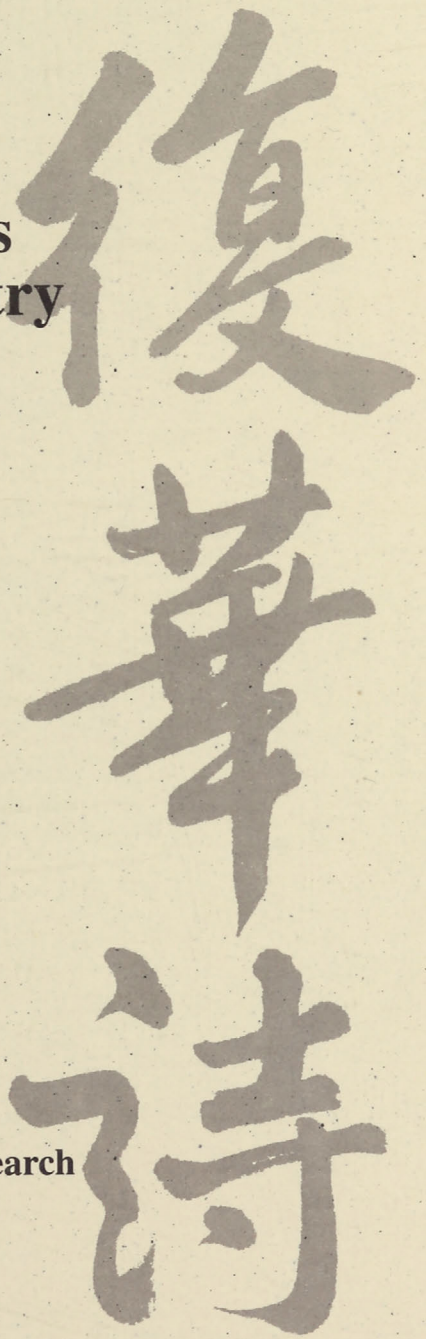
Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry



Centre for East Asian Research
McGill University

Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry

Volume I

Grace S. Fong, Editor

Centre for East Asian Research
McGill University

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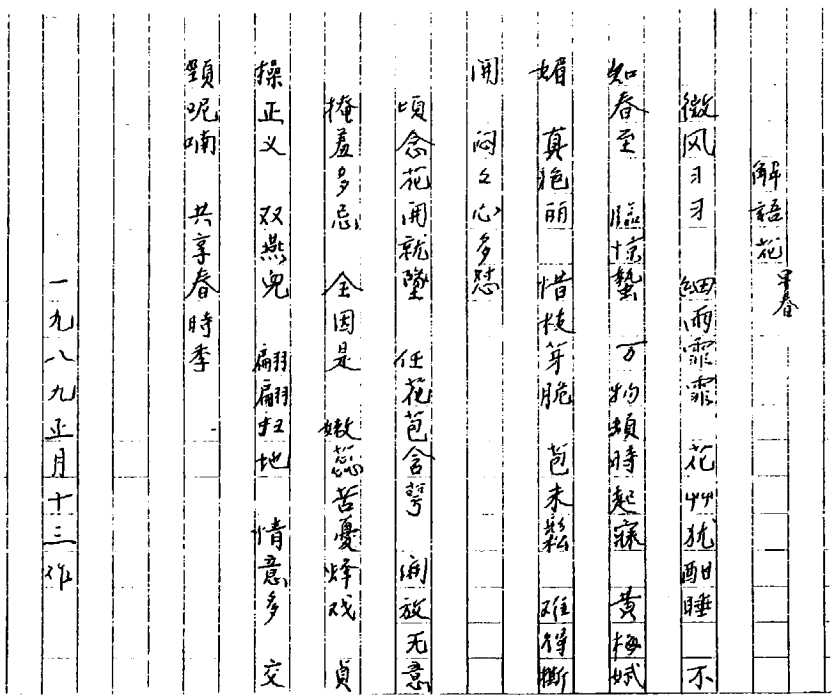
Dedicated to

Professor Paul Stanislaus Hsiang (1915-2000)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一九八九年月十三日

Contents

Foreword

This volume inaugurates a new series of essays on Chinese poetry. The three essays included here are based on lectures presented at McGill University, Montreal, between 1999 and 2000 and sponsored by the Centre for East Asian Research and the Department of East Asian Studies. The series owes its existence to a generous endowment by the late Professor Paul Stanislaus Hsiang who, in the last years of his life, moved from the United States to Canada. Among various other projects, he sought ways to foster the development of research on, and the writing of Chinese poetry, one of his great passions, in order to bring about what he hoped would be a "renaissance of Chinese poetry" (*Fu huashi*). McGill is fortunate that he chose to realize his dream through a donation to the university. The field of Chinese poetry as a whole will undoubtedly benefit from his great generosity. Indeed, his remarkable gift would appear to be the first in North America, and perhaps in the Western world, specifically dedicated to the promotion of Chinese poetry in an academic environment.

Professor Paul Stanislaus Kao Hsiang was born in Yuanling, in western Hunan province, China, on August 16, 1915. It was an area in which the Catholic missionary order of the Passionists was active and Paul converted, remaining a deeply committed Christian throughout his life. Since Hunan was a site of major conflicts in the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, the missionaries and their congregations were swept up in the turmoil. Fr. Caspar Caulfield (*Only a Beginning: The Passionists in China, 1921-1931*, 1990) provides a detailed account of these years from the Passionist point of view in which he mentions Paul Hsiang. It was not the safest of locations to pursue a life dedicated to the Church and so he emigrated to the United States to pursue his studies, eventually receiving his doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Catholic University of America in 1949. His dissertation "The Catholic Missions in China during the Middle Ages (1294-1368)" focused especially on the life and mission of John of Montecorvino (born ca. 1247) at the court of the Mongol emperors and considered the reasons for the disappearance of the Catholic missions in Ming China before the arrival of Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century.

Professor Hsiang's academic career in the United States spanned more than twenty years and he taught at a number of institutions, most notably Seton Hall University. In his research, he concentrated on western philosophy [*Meiguo sixiang shi* (A History of American Thought) (Taibei: Xuesheng shuju, 1972)], as well as early Chinese philosophy. In 1973 he published *The Making of a Catholic Priest* in Taiwan in commemoration of

Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Priestly Celibacy". In Taiwan he also served as a personal secretary of Paul, Cardinal Yu Pin. After his retirement, he wrote numerous poems in both Chinese and English, a notable example of the latter being "An Epic Song of Canada" that he wrote under the name P.S. Highward (1996). He passed away in April 2000, in Montreal, regrettably only having had the opportunity to attend one of the lectures of the series he had started with his gift. McGill University looks forward to many years of promoting research on Chinese poetry in the memory of the late Professor Paul Hsiang.

Robin D.S. Yates

Editor's Note

The essays in this volume initiate the publication of the *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* endowed by the generosity of the late Professor Paul Hsiang.

The inaugural lecture was delivered by Professor Kang-i Sun Chang in April 1999. In it, she examines the cultural phenomenon of unprecedented strong support of women's writings and their publication by male literati of the Ming and Qing periods. She discusses the reasons and motivations behind this male interest in endorsing and collecting women's poetry. In particular, she explores the changing gender association of the quality of *qing* (purity) from the Six Dynasties to the Ming-Qing period, and how this quality came to play an important role in the characterization and canonization of women's poetry.

Professor Shuen-fu Lin gave the second lecture in the series in November 1999, the only occasion when Professor Paul Hsiang was able to be present. By examining key aspects of several important early Chinese dream theories, Professor Lin sets up a framework for reading the literary and philosophical meanings of *ci* (song lyrics) by Yan Jidao, Su Shi, and Wu Wenying from the Song period (960-1279) that depict or thematize the interplay between reality and illusion in dreams or dreaming.

My paper was presented in April 2000, less than a week before Professor Hsiang's passing. In it, I examine the social and physical space occupied by concubines in the polygynous system of Ming-Qing China and how some among this group of women of low social status were able to transform their marginalized space into a domain of literary and artistic productivity. I analyze in particular the poetry of the concubine Shen Cai of the eighteenth century to demonstrate this self-transformation.

The Hsiang Lecture Series will continue to invite speakers to present current research and scholarship on Chinese poetry and publish the papers in the *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry*. For technical and other help in the various stages of producing this first volume, I would like to thank in particular Kenneth Dean, Robin Yates, Andrea Rosenberg, Han Zhenhu, Ding Jie, Huang Qiaole, Miranda Gass-Donnelly, and Shaun Rein.

Grace S. Fong

Gender and Canonicity: Ming-Qing Women Poets in the Eyes of the Male Literati

Kang-i Sun Chang (孫 康 宜)
Yale University

This paper touches on the problem of gender and canon-formation in the context of the Ming-Qing literati culture, and especially on how the literati's view of women brought about the changing status of the canon. In recent years the "canon" of literature has become a focus of literary debate in America, largely due to the influence of multiculturalism. But of course the idea of canon is a very old one; it is as old as literature itself. Since ancient times readers of all cultures have been studying the so-called "great works" in literature, although it was only in recent years that people began to consciously ask questions about the canon. Such questions include, for example, what makes literature great? What makes great literature worth reading? What determines our judgment of what is "aesthetic"? What are the main differences between great works and minor works? Should the canon represent universal experiences, or experiences of certain groups of people? Is "difference" the main reason for women's exclusion from the literary canon?

Many of these questions have been raised by feminist critics, who prefer to view canonicity as a political and social choice rather than as purely aesthetic judgment.[1] In my study of gender and canonicity in Ming-Qing literature, I was naturally inspired by these views. But I have also come to realize that the basic idea and the intention associated with the process of canon-formation in Ming-Qing China are quite unique, such that they cannot be fully explained by modern feminist criticism. Indeed, the question of gender and canonicity is more complex than it appears. And I think culture is still at the center of such complexity. Do people think about such questions differently when their cultural experiences are different? How do distinct cultures shape ideas differently about the relationship between men and women? In what way do people in other cultures talk about these issues differently? To answer these questions, we must always look at the full range of the cultural implications in each case.

Let me turn to the example of the Ming-Qing literati culture for emphasis. From years of research in this area, I have found that one of the most distinctive phenomena of this culture is the male literati's overwhelming support of contemporary women poets.[2] These men greatly admired the talent of women, and their keen interest in reading, editing, compiling and evaluating the poetry of women was unprecedented. Starting with the late Ming (i.e., late 16th century), many literati made their life-long careers as vigorous supporters of women's publishing, advocating the public influence of female talents, and ensuring writing women's "right" to literary fame. It can be said that theirs is a special kind of "literati culture" in which the literary men, with their idealized notion of the feminine, helped create China's first episode of "women's studies," or studies by men as inspired by the writings and lives of women. Central to this "women's studies" was the notion of canonicity in literature, because these men actively pursued new ways to bring the marginalized women to the canonical position. In particular, they attempted to revise critical techniques and priorities in literary judgment and, in many cases, created new literary criteria by which women's writings could be reread.

As I have written elsewhere, numerous male editors and compilers of the Ming-Qing period undertook the task of canonizing women's writings by comparing their anthologies of women poets to the classical canon, the *Shijing* 詩 經, and by repeatedly emphasizing that the authors of many *Shijing* poems were women.[3] This strategy of linking literary works to the *Shijing* (Classic of Poetry), the earliest poetic anthology which is reputed to have been compiled by Confucius, has had a long legacy in the Chinese commentary tradition. Ever since the Han scholar Wang Yi 王 逸 (fl. 110-120) began to place Qu Yuan's 屈 原 *Li Sao* 離 騷 (4th century BCE) in the tradition of the *Shijing*, Chinese poets and commentators throughout the dynasties consistently employed the same method of canonization—that is, using early Confucian classics like the *Shijing* as common signposts for further expansion of the canon.[4] As Wendell Harris says in his article on canonicity, "all interpretation of texts depends on a community's sharing interpretive strategies."[5] The Ming-Qing literati's strategy in canonizing women writers was precisely to bring women's works into the mainstream of the interpretive community. These literati not only used the *Shijing* as a source of canonical authority but also looked up to Qu Yuan's *Li Sao* as a model for women's works. For example, the *Female Sao* (Nüsao 女 騷), an anthology of women's poetry compiled by Qu Juesheng 瞿 覺 生 in 1618, reflected the very philosophy of this approach. In his preface to the *Nüsao*, the male literatus Zhao Shiyong 趙 時 用 calls attention to the significance of "change" (*bian* 變) in the evolution of literature, claiming that poetic forms have changed greatly from the *feng* 風 and *ya* 雅 of the *Shijing*—

no doubt with the implication that the poetic canon should be expanded to include a much wider spectrum of styles and works, including those by women. Such a strategy of canonization certainly recalls Liu Xie's 劉勰 treatment of the *Li Sao*. In his attempt to canonize Qu Yuan, the Six Dynasties critic Liu Xie claims, in his *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍, that his goal is not only to demonstrate how the literary mind "has its origin in the *dao*, takes the sage as its model, [and] finds the main forms in the Classics. . .," but also to "show changes in the *Sao*."[6] Clearly Liu Xie found in *Li Sao*, and in the entire collection of the *Chuci* 楚辭, the awakening of a new spirit that helped create new aesthetic criteria in literature.

The purpose of this paper, however, is not to continue discussing how Ming-Qing men attempted to canonize women through the compilation of poetry anthologies, a topic which I have already explored extensively in a previous article, but rather to ask some new questions: Why did Ming-Qing literati begin to show such interest in women's writings? Did their enchantment with women's works come from a desire to redefine themselves or to construct a new verbal world? Moreover, I propose to explore how Ming-Qing men developed their "women's studies" in view of their literati (*wenren* 文人) culture, and whether their support of women might well have been part of a long-repressed desire on the part of the traditional Chinese *wenren*. Examining the relationship between Ming-Qing literati and women poets, I also hope to discover if the questions of gender and canon can be used as a bifocal lens to help focus the study of Ming-Qing literature and culture as a whole.

First, there was a new development in Ming-Qing literati culture which engendered a rather unique attitude toward life and society in general: the literati, with their growing dissatisfaction and contempt for the examination system (and particularly their deep disdain for the eight-legged essay required in the examinations),[7] had gradually developed a sense of withdrawal from the conventional world of political involvement. Confronting the undesirable world of officialdom, many unhappy literati—though not necessarily humbled by their destitution—had begun to feel themselves somewhat "marginalized."[8] Ironically it was these "marginalized" literati who eventually took up the responsibility of canonizing women in literature. As they began to feel more and more frustrated, these literati became independent artists and writers who constructed a self-contained world in which love, emotion, friendship, and aesthetic taste became the guiding principles of life. Prominent examples of such men include Zhang Chao 張潮 (1650-after 1707), the author of *You mengying* 幽夢影; Zou Yi 鄒漪, the compiler of *Hongjiao ji* 紅蕉集; Wang Shilu 王士祿 (1626-1673), the brother of Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634-1711) and editor of *Ranzhi ji* 然脂集; Zhao Shijie

趙世杰, the anthologist who published the famous *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 in 1628; and Shi Zhenlin 史震林 (1693-ca.1779), whose *Xiqing sanji* 西青散記 provided a moving record of the woman poet He Shuangqing 賀雙卿.[9] All these men professed to an obsession (*pi* 癖 or *shi* 嗜) with women's lives and writings, and their enchantment with femininity in fact reinforced their sense of self-feminization. According to Shi Zhenlin, one of life's two tragedies is not being able to meet a true *jiaren* (a woman of talent and beauty); the other is not being able to find a friend who understands the worth of one's writing. This tendency to favor talented and beautiful women reminds us of the novelist Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 who, perhaps in his desire to escape the conventional world, also developed a kind of nostalgia for the aesthetic world of the feminine.[10] As Cao says in the opening chapter of the *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢, his book grows out of his desire to recount the "actions and motives" of a "number of females" whom he spent half a lifetime studying with his "own eyes and ears."[11]

It should be mentioned that the famous *Xiangyan congshu* 香艷叢書 (Miscellaneous Writings on Femininity),[12] though not specifically confined to works produced in the Ming-Qing era, perhaps reflects most thoroughly the aesthetic and non-pragmatic approach characteristic of this literati culture. Indeed, femininity (or *xiangyan* in Chinese) had become a significant preoccupation of Ming-Qing literati, and in their general admiration for women they especially appreciated the female talents.[13] These literati devoted themselves to collecting women's works, both ancient and contemporary. By their painstaking reconstructions, they not only helped contemporary women to gain literary fame but also rescued from historical obscurity those female figures whose lives had thus far remained hidden from history because previous literary historians rarely recognized their existence. Thus, the very frustration which caused them to feel "marginalized," the very obsession which led them into the world of the feminine and self-feminization, the very energy which made it possible for them to lead lives of self-contentment—all these same forces they now put at the disposal of women poets and their causes. In the preface to his anthology of women's poetry *Hongjiao ji*, Zou Yi quite aptly describes this combination of forces:

> I have been a man of many regrets, and I love to indulge myself in the works of women. I've traveled to Wu and Yue, trying to bring together [as many poems by women as possible] . . .[14]

僕本恨人，癖耽奩製，薄遊吳越，加意網羅 .....

There can be no doubt that in their enthusiastic support of women, Ming-Qing literati also viewed the situation of marginalized female talent as a reminder of their own marginality. Above all, they sympathized greatly with these talented women for their lack of recognition in literature. In fact, it was the realization that women had been largely left out of anthologies and literary histories which first prompted late Ming literati to engage in the compilation of women's anthologies. For example, Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅, a pioneer in such endeavors, devoted his life to collecting women's writings mainly because of his desire to bring justice to generations of literary women. In his anthology *Shi nü shi* 詩女史 (Poetic Works of Female Scribes) published sometime during the mid-16th century, Tian Yiheng argued that it was the anthologists' fault that women's names remained so obscure in literary history, because women's literary accomplishments since antiquity was no less than men's.[15] Similarly, Qu Juesheng, the compiler of *Nü Sao*, claimed that women's poetic works should be read and remembered forever and that their literary immortality would be like that of the Confucian "classics and edicts."[16] All these views reflect the desire of late Ming literati to have women's writings preserved, remembered, and canonized in the cultural memory.

By far the strongest argument these men made concerning women's works was that female poetry epitomizes the very quality of "*qing*" 清 (purity), a quality prerequisite of all great poetry. They believed that women were naturally endowed with this quality of "purity," whereas contemporary male poets—in their attempt to pursue stylistic effectiveness and artificiality—had gradually lost this important poetic element. Thus, Zou Yi said "the humor of the cosmic *qing shu* [the pure and the gentle] does not occur in males, but it does in females" (乾坤清淑之氣不鍾男子，而鍾女子).[17] And Zhong Xing 鍾惺, the famous late Ming poet and critic, urged people to open their eyes to the distinctive power of *qing* in women's poetry:

> As for those great women poets—both ancient and modern—their poetry has come from true feeling and is deeply rooted in nature. They rarely imitate others, and know no petty factions. . . This is all because of their quality of *qing*. This *qing* gives rise to wisdom. . . Certainly men, despite their artistic skills [*qiao*], are far inferior to women. . .[18]

若乎古今名媛，則發乎情，根乎性，未嘗擬作，亦不知派...唯清故也，清則慧...男子之巧，洵不及婦人矣。

What is interesting is that by upholding *qing* as a female attribute, the late Ming literati radically revised the traditional definition of *qing*, which in the context of ancient philosophy and literature was often meant to refer to the excellence of the male gender. In ancient China, *qing* was a concept directly opposed to that of *zhuo* 濁 (murkiness)—if *qing* was thought to represent the quality of *yanggang* 陽 剛 (masculine strength), then *zhuo* was used to stand for *yinrou* 陰 柔 (female gentleness). The former refers to heaven and the power of time, which is forever light-giving, active, and bright; the latter symbolizes earth and the complementary, dark impulse of space. Generally *qing*, as opposed to *zhuo*, is being given a more positive value because it not only symbolizes one's outward beauty (mostly male) but also is supposed to embody the moral value of one's inner virtue. Thus, it was no accident that "*qing*" became an important criterion for evaluating people in the "pure talk" (*qingtan* 清 談) vogue of the Wei-Jin Period (220-420).[19] The pervasiveness of this custom can be found in the book *Shishuo xinyu* 世 說 新 語, where numerous examples of exemplary male figures embodying the quality of *qing* are recorded. For example, the virtuous Wang Yan 王 衍 was compared to a thousand-foot high mountain cliff which is described as being "pure and towering" (*qingzhi* 清 峙). The tall and handsome Ji Kang 嵇 康 was praised as "pure and lofty" (*qingju* 清 舉). Du Hongzhi 杜 弘 治, the grandson of the famous Du Yu 杜 預, was lauded for his "splendid and pure" (*biaoxian qingling* 標 鮮 清 令) demeanor.[20]

This notion of *qing* was of course not consciously conceived in gender terms, but it was applied mainly to men because most members of the literary and political circles of the time were male. The dominant image of *qing* can be said to be a reflection of the true spirit of the Wei-Jin aesthetics; it concerns not only the appearance of beauty itself but also its ideals. Naturally this *qing* soon made its way into the realm of literature and came to stand for an important literary style, one which was to be distinguished from the murky *zhuo*. Cao Pi 曹 丕, Emperor Wen of the Wei, once said, "In literature *qi* is the dominant factor. *Qi* has its normative forms—either pure (*qing*) or murky (*zhuo*). It is not to be brought forth by force."[21] (文 以 氣 爲 主，氣 之 清 濁 有 體，不 可 力 強 而 致). Thus, like *qi* (breath) in a person, *qing* is a manifestation of a natural endowment and cannot be learned. However, it can be nurtured, provided that the individual poet's temperament is compatible with the principle of purity. To be sure, it was this style of *qing* which served as the model of poetry-

writing for many Chinese—as Liu Xie observed in his *Wenxin diaolong*, "in five-character line verse, a derived form, the most important elements are purity and beauty" (五言流調，則清麗居宗).[22] In his poem "In an Old Style" ("*Gufeng*" 古風), Li Bai 李白 also said, "In our own hallowed age, we have returned to antiquity/Our majestic monarch values purity and truth"[23] (聖代復元古，垂衣貴清眞). Indeed, for centuries, *qing* had become the enduring principle of aesthetic and moral perfection which male poets continued to look up to. Moreover, the assumption was that only canonical male figures in the past could serve as true models of *qing*.

Then, suddenly, late Ming literati like Zhong Xing and Zhao Shijie began to introduce an entirely new interpretation of the *qing* aesthetic—namely, that women's innate qualities were more closely associated with *qing* and hence their poetic works could serve as better models for writing. As such, they represented a revolutionary shift in aesthetic and moral values. Like most of his male contemporaries, Zhong Xing based his argument upon a rereading of traditional discourse. According to the conventional interpretation, *qing* embodies both beauty and goodness—in other words, it is through *qing* that morality can be expressed in a spontaneous and elegant form. Instead, Zhong Xing claimed that the feminine quality of "naturalness" (*ziran* 自然) intimately links a woman with the essential elements of beauty and goodness, and is thus more illustrative of *qing*. Just because women's daily experiences are closer to the "natural" state of things, he insists, female poets tend to write from true feelings that are "rooted in nature." Just because women have no pragmatic concerns for writing poetry and are free from partisan views caused by "petty factions," their works are bound to contain a more genuine spirit of poetry. And precisely because of their lack of social experiences, women are freer to develop their poetic imagination and powers of concentration.

However convincing the Ming-Qing literati's argument about *qing* in women may have been, they obviously succeeded in elevating the position of female poets by stressing the "purity" of their works, which in men's view was closer to the classical conception of *qing* and could be used to purge male poetry of its contaminated elements, such as *qiao* 巧 (artistry). In other words, this call for purification came from a strong and recognized need to chasten contemporary poetry.

The fact that male literati favored the quality of *qing* in women gave Ming-Qing female poets a particular confidence in themselves and certainly a great deal of incentive in writing poetry. Knowing that their poems would be read and appreciated, an unprecedented number of women made a career out of writing and publishing—the 3,000 or so women's anthologies and collections produced during the Ming-Qing period are clear indications that

female writers were consciously seeking an audience. Indeed, we have evidence that Ming-Qing women enjoyed editing and publishing, and some particularly renowned professional women and artists like Huang Yuanjie 黃媛介 and others were even invited by men to write prefaces for their own publications.[24] Huang Yuanjie's preface to Li Yu's 李漁 *Yizhong yuan* 意中緣 (Ideal Love Matches) demonstrates how a preface by a female talent could help promote a male author's work, when female literary traits were identified as pure and lofty.[25]

In this connection, it is important to note that while late Ming literati became more and more absorbed in the feminine culture, many women poets began to develop a lifestyle typical of the educated male. Like male literati, these women cultivated an interest in the arts, and especially in activities that were non-pragmatic in nature—such as exchanging poems with friends (both male and female), painting and calligraphy, and traveling for leisure. In their poetry these women emphasized the spontaneous expression of feelings and deliberately refrained from a "feminine" style, which they called "*zhifen qi*" 脂粉氣. It was the famous woman anthologist Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621-ca. 1706) who proclaimed, "Women who cannot rid their poetry of the feminine style are those who are incapable of removing themselves from old habits"[26] (女人不能脫脂粉氣，自是沿習未出耳). In her evaluation of the woman poet Zhu Yingzhen 朱應禎, Wang Duanshu praised Zhu for her ability to avoid the contaminating influence of the feminine style (*zhifen qi*), and especially for her style of "superb elegance" (*xiuya* 秀雅), which reminds us of the pure style of *qing*.[27] Later during the Qing, the woman poet Xi Peilan 席佩蘭 also called for a natural (*ziran*) poetry based on one's "innate disposition" (*xingqing* 性情),[28] obviously under the influence of her teacher Yuan Mei 袁枚 who insisted on the principle of *xingling* 性靈 (spontaneous self-expression) in poetry. Likewise, a few years later, the female critic Shen Shanbao 沈善寶, in her book of criticism *Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話, again suggested the importance of a pure, spontaneous poetry characterized by *shenyun* 神韻 (spiritual resonance), a term which she must have borrowed from the early Qing poet Wang Shizhen.[29]

Looking back on the Ming-Qing male literati's and women poets' enthusiasm for a "natural" poetry rooted in *qing*, we cannot help noticing how similar their approaches were. These were serious poets and critics; they all sought to take back from nature what belonged to poetry. They all shared the burden of an attempt to purify poetry and they all believed in the power of simple language and an ideal return to the classical. Undoubtedly this was the first time in Chinese literary history that men and women shared a belief in a similar tenet in the writing of poetry. In *qing* the "marginalized" literati found

their idealized notion of the feminine, while women poets gained from it a new sense of wholeness and balance derived from the joining of the male and female perspectives. Perhaps we can say that the Ming-Qing rereading of *qing* was only part of the literati's (and women's) desire to erase the gender opposition in the traditional cultural realm. Though out of context, this revision of *qing* can be compared to the concept of "androgyny" in Western philosophy and aesthetics, in the sense that it refers to the ideal synthesis of male and female.[30] In this new definition of *qing*, the *yin* and *yang* elements were not only viewed as being complementary to each other, but each went through a process of transformation and adjustment that culturally redefined the male and female.

Insofar as *qing* was understood as being a "neutralizer" of gender distinctions, it might have helped some Ming-Qing women to perceive the conventional opposition of "talent" (*cai* 才) and "virtue" (*de* 德) in a new light. The common saying that "a woman without talent is a woman of virtue"(女子無才便是德) had apparently bothered many female poets, such that they often found it necessary to use the "discourse of women's virtue" to defend their talent as well as their active involvement in literary activities.[31] This is because under the influence of orthodox Confucianism some women (and men) believed that talent itself could impair one's virtue.[32] However, the growing recognition of *qing* as a female attribute provided new insight: since *qing* originally referred both to a natural writing style and the inner virtue of the poet, it could be reasoned that what is produced by a female poet in writing – that is, the natural expression of her "pure" mind—was a reflection of her virtue. It could further be argued that not only is a women's literary talent not an obstacle to her virtue, but, instead, a stimulus to her moral convictions. Thus, the famous woman poet and artist Wu Qi 吳 琪 says in her preface to Zou Yi's *Hong jiao ji*, "writing can never be harmful to a woman's moral integrity."[33] Perhaps it was this new confidence in themselves which led Ming-Qing women to produce an unprecedented amount of poetry, and to devote themselves to compiling women's anthologies (which often included their own works) as a way of bringing women into the literary canon.

In this context, Ming-Qing China readily reminds one of 18th and 19th century England when women writers entered the literary profession in record numbers. Like the Ming-Qing female poets, British women novelists were extremely prolific and a great many of them entered the literary market. However, unlike the Ming-Qing women, British women novelists in the 18th and 19th century did not meet with the general approval of their male peers, and consequently few received practical support or help from them. In fact, according to Elaine Showalter, a gender war between male and female authors ignited during this time, especially when men began to

feel threatened by what they perceived to be a "female literary invasion" in which women novelists seemed to be "engaged in a kind of aggressive conspiracy to rob men of their markets, steal their subject matter, and snatch away their young lady readers. . . ."[34] Under the pressure of competition, many male intellectuals claimed that women were unable to write great novels because of their "inexperience in life," their "sexual innocence," and the fact that they would "always be imitators and never innovators."[35] Even Robert Southey, the great British poet laureate, proclaimed: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be."[36]

It was in the context of this predominantly male world that British "feminist" writers were born. These feminists rejected the conventional code of female self-sacrifice, insisted on their independence, participated in the suffrage movement, and tried to break down the male "monopoly" of publishing by establishing their own publishing outlets.[37] There were of course other female writers who used different strategies to cope with male prejudice and hostility, such as adopting male pseudonyms to avoid discrimination, explaining their need for relief from financial crises, or justifying their writing and literary activities as deeds of self-sacrifice—the last of these strategies serves to remind us of the Ming-Qing women's discourse of "virtue" (*de*) which they used to neutralize and overcome the *cai/de* dichotomy in an attempt to legitimize their writing.

The success story of the British women novelists tells us that most of their strategies seem to have worked, for modern readers well remember the great examples of Jane Austen, the Brontës, and George Eliot. After all, it is these few canonical women authors, along with male novelists like Charles Dickens and William Thackeray, who cause us to regard 19th century England as the Age of the Novel. However, as Elaine Showalter has argued, the impression of female greatness in this case might have come from a general misconception about women's literary history, which only acknowledges the contributions of a few great authors at the expense of lesser authors:

> Criticism of women novelists, while focusing on these happy few, has ignored those who are not "great," and left them out of anthologies, histories, textbooks, and theories. Having lost sight of the minor novelists, who were the links in the chain that bound one generation to the next, we have not had a very clear understanding of the continuities in women's writing. . .[38]

It is because of this incorrect view of women writers, Showalter emphasizes, that the diversity of English women novelists has been reduced to a tiny band of the "great."[39]

This problematic notion of the "great" as pointed out by Showalter seems to contrast sharply with the all-inclusive policy of many Ming-Qing poetry anthologies, in which both major and minor authors were meant to be included. In fact, in the minds of Ming-Qing anthologists, the exhaustive approach was the only good approach for them to use if they were to demonstrate the extraordinary range of women's writings from ancient times. The term *caiguan* 采觀 (collecting), which the late Ming literati used to describe the general policy of their anthologies of women's poetry, refers precisely to a sweeping, all-encompassing procedure of "collecting all," including unearthing lost works by women.

Thus, regarding the "all-inclusive" approach of Wang Duanshu's *Mingyuan shiwei* (which includes works by about 1,000 women poets), Wang's husband Ding Shengzhao 丁聖肇 explained: "Why did my wife Yuying [Duanshu] compile this *Mingyuan shiwei*? It is because she cannot bear to see excellent poems by women of our times vanish like mist and grass."[40] Obviously, as early as the late Ming, Chinese poets and scholars, both male and female, were already aware of the danger of losing sight of women's literary works—especially works of minor female figures which might later be hard to retrieve. In other words, the Ming-Qing literati and female writers, in their common attempt to promote women, seem to have done their best to rewrite women's literary history by adopting a broadly based strategy and preservation mechanisms. Fortunately, many of the anthologies of women's poetry compiled in the Ming and Qing are still available in libraries in the U.S., Mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, and elsewhere.

Most curious of all, however, is the fact that Ming-Qing women poets (many of whom had already distinguished themselves as canonical authors in their own times) have been almost completely ignored by literary historians of the twentieth century. Indeed, it is only recently that critics, inspired by contemporary feminist scholarship, have begun to read these works. It has been observed by Maureen Robertson that Liu Dajie's critically acclaimed history of premodern Chinese literature mentions only five women writers and none of them from the Ming and Qing dynasties.[41] Until recently, most modern texts of literary criticism have mentioned Tang and Song women poets like Xue Tao 薛濤, Li Qingzhao 李清照 and Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑眞—like fulfilling the "quota" of a modern-day committee[42]—without taking Ming-Qing women poets into consideration. Even those individuals who have read the collected works of some Ming-Qing women often project their gender biases into their evaluations. For example, the eminent historian Hu Shi 胡適 said, "Although there have been so many women writers in the last three hundred years, their contributions are unfortunately quite minimal. In most cases, their works are without value."[43]

Under the influence of contemporary multiculturalism, one is tempted to interpret such biases as coming from the patriarchal ideology which always tends to marginalize women. According to Paul Lauter, the New Critics' strategy of "marginalizing" the woman poet Edna St. Vincent Millay is a good example of how a patriarchal ideology can trap people within their own biases.[44] Or, as Hazard Adams has explained, some critics view this kind of prejudice as contributing to the "power criteria" at work in the process of our constructing canons.[45] But critics like Harold Bloom would never agree with such an interpretation; for Bloom, great authors are made canonical mainly because of the "aesthetic value" found in their works, without any connection with the power factor.[46] Thus, the so-called "cultural wars" in America today have gradually focused on the question of canon-formation and its relation to gender and class.

However, canonicity is itself a mixed concept, a complex phenomenon not easily reduced to the simple principles of aesthetics and power. I am more concerned about how the canon has changed in literature, and how certain writers can stand the test of time and how some others cannot. In the words of the European scholar Ernst Robert Curtius, "it would be a useful task for literary science to determine how the canon of antique authors has changed from 1500 to the present, i.e., how it has diminished."[47] In his study of American literature, Richard H. Brodhead uses Hawthorne as an example to illustrate the "vicissitudes" of an author's rise and fall. He says:

> Like his rise, Hawthorne's decline was intimately connected to a broader action of canon-construction in America. His decay presents a historical locus in which to study the questions raised by canonical degradation in general: by what process canons get dislodged or drained of force; what happens to the work such canons had included when it loses this system's cultural backing; and what the effects are for possible followers when authors get displaced from traditional positions of influence.[48]

All of which is to show how canon-formation and canonical decline are intimately linked to the whole cultural sphere of a particular period in history. In order to study the rise and decline of a certain author (or groups of authors) in time, we need to take all of the cultural, social and political factors into consideration. Brodhead's detailed study of Hawthorne demonstrates that literary traditions are never made accidentally.

But certainly, canonicity is also about selection and choices. As Louise Bernikow has said, "what is commonly called literary history is actually a record of choices. Which writers have survived their time and

which have not depends upon who notices them and chose to record the notice."[49] If so, can we say that the general neglect of Ming-Qing women poets is caused by the gender biases of our modern-day historians and literary scholars who chose not to record their "notice" of these female talents? Or is it simply a result of our changing critical considerations whereby canonical inclusions and exclusions have to depend on our new cultural expectations and possibly the demands of our times? Or is it because our idealization of canonical ancient authors has become so overwhelming that we have ignored poets of the immediate past—that is, poets of Ming-Qing times? Any answers to such questions may be inconclusive. But however inconclusive they may be, canonicity itself exhibits the kind of power the critical community possesses. Today, as we try to reinterpret the Ming-Qing literati culture and its connection with the "vicissitudes" of the female poets' position in literature, we should be particularly aware of the tremendous power and cultural burden which have been placed upon us.

Note

A different version of this paper was presented at the International Symposium, "New Directions in the Study of Late Imperial Literature and History," Organized by the Department of History at National Chung Cheng University and the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Arizona (Taipei, Taiwan, April 30-May 2, 1999). I am deeply grateful to Grace Fong, Robin Yates, and William R. Schultz who offered many useful suggestions for revision.

Endnotes

1. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, "Canon," in their *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 73-75. See also articles by Joanna Russ, Lillian S. Robinson, and Paul Lauter in this anthology, pp. 97-150.
2. Of course, there were men who opposed women publishing poetry, Zhang Xuecheng being the most obvious representative. But in general, the Ming-Qing male literati's support of contemporary women poets was quite unprecedented.

3. See my "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and their Selection Strategies," in Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 147, 150; "Ming-Qing Women Poets and the Notions of 'Talent' and 'Morality'," in Theodore Huters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu, eds., *Culture & State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 238.
4. See Wang Yi, *Li Sao jing zhang ju*, 離騷經章句 in Hong Xingzu, 洪興祖 ed., *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (rpt., Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1973), pp. 10-84.
5. Wendell V. Harris, "Canonicity," *PMLA* (January, 1991), p. 116.
6. See "Xuzhi 序志", Chapter 50 in *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍注, ed. and commentary by Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (Beijing, Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1978), II: 727.
7. See *juan* 16 of Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 *Rizhi lu* 日知錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985).
8. For the idea of the "marginalized literati," see Kang Zhengguo 康正果, "Bianyuan wenren de cainü qingjie ji qi suo chuanda de shiyi" 邊緣文人的才女情結及其所傳達的詩意, in his *Jiaozhi de bianyuan: Zhengzhi he xingbie* 交織的邊緣：政治和性別 (Taipei: Dongda, 1997), pp. 171-202.
9. There has been a continuing interest in He Shuangqing in recent years. See, for example, Grace Fong, "De-Constructing a Feminine Ideal in the Eighteenth Century: 'Random Records of West-Green' and the Story of Shuangqing," in Widmer and Chang ed., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, pp. 264-281; Kang Zhengguo, "Bianyuan wenren de cainü qingjie ji qi suo chuanda de shiyi," in his *Jiaozhi de bianyuan*, pp. 171-202; Du Fangqin 杜芳琴, *He Shuangqing ji* 賀雙卿集 (Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1993); Chou Wan-yao 周婉窈, "Xiaoshan chuanqi" 綃山傳奇, *Xinshixue* 新史學, 7 (1996): 159-197; Sunhee Kim Gertz and Paul S. Ropp, "Literary Women, Fiction, and Marginalization: Nicolette and Shuangqing," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 35.3 (1998):219-254.
10. Right after the completion of this paper, I was pleased to read Sunhee Kim Gertz and Paul S. Ropp's article where, in a footnote, they also mentioned Cao Xueqin and Shi Zhenlin in the same context of literati culture: "Cao and Shi also seem to share a near-religious devotion to

the aesthetic realm. Aesthetic beauty may be created in the mind to compensate for suffering and disappointment in "the real world," but both these authors affirm the coequal reality . . . of the aesthetic and the material worlds...." (Gertz and Ropp, "Literary Women, Fiction, and Marginalization: Nicolette and Shuangqing", p. 254).

11. *The Story of the Stone*, trans. by David Hawkes (New York: Penguin, 1973), I:50.
12. Chong Tianzi 蟲天子 (pseudonym), ed., *Xiangyan congshu* 香艷叢書 (1909-1911; rpt. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1992), 5 vols.
13. Although in modern context the term *xiangyan* often has connotations of or emphasis on sensuality and eroticim, *xiangyan* in the Ming-Qing context does not necessarily carry such meaning. Moreover, to the Ming-Qing literati, any literary work related to women could be considered *xiangyan*, provided that it is also characterized by ornate diction and flowery imagery.
14. Hu Wenkai 胡文楷, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao* 歷代婦女著作考, rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), p. 898.
15. Hu Wenkai, p. 876.
16. Hu Wenkai, p. 885.
17. Hu Wenkai, p. 897.
18. Zhong Xing, preface to his *Mingyuan shigui* 名媛詩歸, N.p., late Wanli Period.
19. See Huang Kejian 黃克劍, "'*Qing*'—Wei Jin renwu pinzao zhong de yige zhongyao shenmei fanchou" 清—魏晉人物品藻中的一個重要審美範疇, *Fujian luntan* 福建論壇, vol. 5 (1985); Zhang Hongsheng 張宏生, *Jianghu shipai yanjiu* 江湖詩派研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), p. 125.
20. See Chapters on "*Shangyu*" 賞譽 and "*Rongzhi*" 容止, in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962).
21. Translation adopted, with minor modification, from Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Council on East Asian Studies, 1992), p. 65.
22. "Mingshi" 明詩, Chapter 6 of *Wenxin diaolong*, in Fan Wenlan, ed., I:67.
23. Translated by Victor H. Mair, *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. by Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 205.

24. See a discussion of the notion of "dandeng nüshi" 擔簦女史 (Professional Women), in Yu-chih Lai, "Longing for Landing: A study on the Image of 'Water' in Huang Yuan-chieh's Poetry" (seminar paper).
25. See Huang Yuanjie's preface to Li Yu's *Yizhong yuan*, in *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, rev. ed., (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992): 4:318.
26. Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *Mingyuan shiwei* 名媛詩緯, 4.12b. For a discussion of this point, see also Zhong Huiling 鍾慧玲, *Qingdai nüshiren yanjiu* 清代女詩人研究, Ph.D. diss. (Zhengzhi daxue, Taiwan, 1981), p. 261.
27. Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 4.12b.
28. Xi Peilan 席佩蘭, *Changzhen ge ji* 長眞閣集, *juan* 4. See also Zhong Huiling, *Qingdai nüshiren yanjiu*, pp. 264-265.
29. See Shen Shanbao 沈善寶, *Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話, *juan* 4, in *Qing shihua fangyi chubian* 清詩話訪佚初編, ed. by Du Songbo 杜松柏 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1987), 9:167. It is obvious that in her concept of poetry Shen Shanbao was greatly influenced by Wang Shizhen, as may be seen in her reference to Wang Shizhen's *Yuyang Shihua* 漁洋詩話. See, for example, her *Mingyuan shihua*, *juan* 2, in *Qing shihua fangyi chubian*, 9:59.
30. For the notion of androgyny in Western philosophy and aesthetics, see Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 21-22. For the idea of "cultural androgyny" in the Ming-Qing literati culture, see my "Zou xiang 'nannü shuangxing' de lixiang: nüxing shiren zai Ming Qing wenren zhong de diwei" 走向"男女雙性"的理想：女性詩人在明清文人中的地位, in my *Gudian yu xiandai de nüxing chanshi* 古典與現代的女性闡釋 (Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1998), pp. 72-84.
31. For the "discourse on women's virtue," see Maureen Robertson, "Changing the Subject: Gender and Self-Inscription in Authors' Prefaces and 'Shi' Poetry," in Widmer and Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, pp. 181-189. For the *cai/de* dispute concerning Ming-Qing women, see also Clara Wing-Chung Ho (Lau Wing-Chung 劉詠聰), *De cai se quan: Lun Zhongguo gudai nüxing* 德才色權：論中國古代女性 (Taipei: Maitian, 1998), pp. 165-309. Also, in her recent paper, Ellen Widmer observes that from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the 1790s Chinese

women were more reluctant to display their writing skills, perhaps due to the common emphasis on virtue rather than talent. (See her "From Wang Duanshu to Yun Zhu: The Changing Face of Women's Book Culture in Qing China," a paper presented at the Conference, "From Late Ming to the Late Qing: Dynastic Decline and Cultural Innovation," Columbia University, November 7, 1998.)

32. See my "Ming Qing Women Poets and the Notions of 'Talent' and "Morality'," in Huters, Wong and Yu, eds., *Culture & State in Chinese History*, pp. 236-258.
33. In *Qingdai mingyuan wenyuan* 清代名媛文苑, as cited in Zhong Huiling, *Qingdai nüshiren yanjiu*, p. 246.
34. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from the Brontës to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 39, 75.
35. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, pp. 79, 26, 3.
36. Quoted in Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 55.
37. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 30-31.
38. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 7.
39. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 7.
40. *Mingyuan shiwei*, Vol. 1, *juan* 1, 1a. See also my "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and their Selection Strategies," in Widmer and Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, p. 158.
41. Maureen Robertson, "Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 64.
42. Kang Zhengguo 康正果, *Nüquan zhuyi yu wenxue* 女權主義與文學 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994), p. 76.
43. Hu Shi 胡適, *Sanbai nian zhong de nüzuojia* 三百年中的女作家, in *Hui Shi zuopin ji* 胡適作品集, No. 14 (Taipei: Yuanliu, 1986), p. 167.
44. Paul Lauter, "Caste, Class, and Canon" (1981/87), in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, rev. ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 140-141.
45. Hazard Adams, "Canons: Literary Criteria/Power Criteria," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (Summer 1988): 748-764.
46. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994), p. 1.

47. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 263.
48. Richard H. Brohead, *The School of Hawthorne* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 201.
49. Louis Bernikow, "The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America, 1552-1950 (New York, 1974), p. 3. I am indebted to Elaine Showalter for a reminder of the existence of this source; see her *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 36.

Through a Window of Dreams: Reality and Illusion in the Song Lyrics of the Song Dynasty

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I should like to begin my paper by way of a passage from perhaps the most celebrated of all Spanish plays, called *Life Is A Dream* by Calderon de la Barca who lived from 1600 to 1681.[1] Calderon de la Barca closes Act II of his play with the protagonist's passionate soliloquy in which we find the following lines:

> What is this life? A frenzy, an illusion.
> A shadow, a delirium, a fiction.
> The greatest good's but little, and this life
> Is but a dream, and dreams are only dreams.[2]

Powerfully expressed here is the theme of comparing life to a dream, a theme frequently found in the poetry of the Baroque period in the West.[3] However, the Baroque poets do not have the monopoly on the view that "We are such stuff as dreams are made on,"[4] to borrow a line from Shakespeare. Comparing life to a dream is an old theme not at all uncommonly found in other literary traditions. Chinese writers through the ages, for instance, can actually claim more than their fair share in the representations of human life as an illusion.

In this paper, I would like to examine a few literary dreams that may or may not have been based on actual dream experiences but are constructed by writers to fit into the contexts of their works for particular aesthetic or philosophical purposes. My focus will be on sample works by three major poets of the *ci* 詞, or "song lyrics" of the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE): Yan Jidao 晏 幾 道 (fl. late 11th century CE), Su Shi 蘇 軾 (1037-1101 CE), and Wu Wenying 吳 文 英 (fl. mid-13th century CE). I shall take into consideration both traditional Chinese dream theory and the artistic development of the song lyrics as a literary genre.

Let me begin with a brief review of traditional dream theory which bear special relevance to the depiction of dreams in classical poetry. I shall focus on the ideas of three people which are representative in Chinese dream culture.[5] The three scholars are: the ancient Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi 莊 子 (ca. 369-286 BCE), the scholar Yue Guang 樂 廣 (d. 304 CE) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and the scholar-official-literatus Su Shi of the Song Dynasty.

Zhuangzi is the first thinker in the tradition to offer important observations on the nature of dreaming.[6] In the chapter entitled "Qiwulun" 齊 物 論 or "Discourse on Evening Things Out," Zhuangzi says, "During sleep, the paths of souls cross (*hunjiao* 魂 交); during wakefulness, the body opens (*xingkai* 形 開)."[7] As argued here, in the waking state, the body is open to things in the external world and interacts with them. In the sleep state, the body remains in a closed condition, allowing the soul to wander off and come into contact with souls or spirits of other people or things.[8] The crossing of the paths of souls results in dreams. The idea of the path-crossing of souls is related to the ancient belief that in sleep a person's soul (*hun* 魂) or spirit (*shen* 神) can go wandering away from its abode, the body, and encounter spirits of all sorts.[9] Dream divination is thus greatly emphasized in early Chinese dream culture. The idea of *menghun* 夢 魂 or "dream soul" has a far-reaching influence on later dream theories and literature.

This idea obviously underpins the beautiful fable that ends the "Discourse on Evening Things Out" chapter in which Zhuangzi dreams that he is a butterfly. What follows is a rendering of the passage adapted from the translations by Burton Watson and by A. C. Graham:

> Once Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, saying to himself, "Doesn't this just suit my fancy?" He didn't know about Zhou at all. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhou. He didn't know whether he was Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly there must be some distinction. This is what is meant by the transformation of things.[10]

There is no denying that when Zhuangzi asks whether it was a butterfly dreaming he was Zhou, he implies that a butterfly also has a soul which enables it to cross paths with a human soul. The purpose of this fable, however, is not to clarify the nature of dreaming per se; rather, it is to illustrate the philosopher's skepticism regarding the ultimate validity of a rigid distinction between the two states of being.[11] By indicating his

inability to determine whether the dreamer dreams he is the butterfly or the other way around, Zhuangzi sets forth an argument for the reversibility of subject and object and blurs the distinction between reality and dream.

Zhuangzi also moves away from the ancient popular belief in the prophetic value of dreams in another section in the same chapter:

> He who dreams of drinking wine cries and weeps at dawn; he who dreams of crying and weeping at dawn goes off to hunt. While he dreams he does not know that he is dreaming, and in his dream he even interprets a dream. Not until he wakes does he know that it was a dream. And only after a great awakening does he know that it was all a great dream. Yet fools believe they are awake, so sure that they know what they are, princes or herdsmen—how dense! Confucius and you are both dreams, and when I call you a dream, I am also a dream![12]

This passage begins by pointing out the lack of a necessary connection between what we see in a dream and what we may do the next morning. It moves on to comment on the fact that while in a dream we tend to accept what is experienced as true, and even engage ourselves in interpreting a dream within a dream. It then concludes with a disquieting assertion that life is but a dream to be awakened. Implied here is the idea that the realization that life is but a dream constitutes a kind of spiritual liberation. Although Zhuangzi has no intention to set forth a theory of dreams, both the idea of "life is but a dream to be awakened" and the distinction he draws between the dream state and the waking state have considerable influence on later Chinese thinking about dreams.

Both passages above from the "Discourse on Evening Things Out" also illustrate Zhuangzi's penchant for viewing things from a perspective that is diametrically opposed to one normally adopted by people. Both begin with a dream, and both assert that our ordinary wakeful existence is virtually no different from a dream. As a part of his persistent attempt to deconstruct such binary oppositions as large and small, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong, usefulness and uselessness, dream and wakefulness, and life and death that have structured our culture, Zhuangzi here advocates a new way of looking at life and the world through what may be called "a window of dreams." This epistemological method also has a profound influence on later Chinese literature.

Yue Guang of the third century was the first person in Chinese history to attempt a theoretical explanation for the psychophysiological phenomenon of dreaming. In the 5th-century text *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World), there is this story:

> When Wei Jie 衛玠 was a boy with his hair still in tufts, he once asked Yue Guang about dreams.
>
> Yue replied, "They are thoughts (*xiang* 想)."
>
> Wei said, "Dreams occur when body and spirit aren't connected. How can they be thoughts?"
>
> Yue replied, "They are contingencies (*yin* 因). Nobody's ever dreamt of entering a rat hole riding in a carriage, or pulverizing leeks and chewing an iron pestle, because there have never been any such thoughts or contingencies in both cases."
>
> Wei pondered over "contingencies" for a month without getting any understanding, and consequently became ill. Yue heard about this and ordered his carriage and went to make a detailed explanation for him. Wei immediately recovered a little from his illness. Sighing, Yue said, "There will never be any incurable illness in this boy's chest!"[13]

What Yue Guang has precisely intended to mean by *yin* 因 (here rendered "contingencies") is difficult to discern. Since his detailed explanation is regrettably not recorded, we will have to try to work out some interpretation from the general usage of the two terms and from the context of the two examples Yue Guang has provided. In classical Chinese, *xiang* 想 can mean "to wish, hope, covet, desire, or long for" in its verbal sense; and "thought, pondering, imagining, reflecting, cherishing the memory of, and visualizing" in its nominal sense.[14] In Buddhist texts, *xiang* 想 is used to refer to the activity of "bringing forth to the mind the images of things."[15] It is possible that Yue Guang includes in *xiang* 想 at least a few of these senses.

In classical Chinese, *yin* 因 can mean both "reason" or "cause" in its nominal sense and "to follow, to rely upon" in its usual verbal sense.[16] To my knowledge, the *yin* 因 Yue Guang uses in the above quoted passage has always been taken by scholars in the past to mean "following or relying upon." Therefore, I prefer to render it "contingencies" rather than "causes." What can *yin* 因 or "contingencies" possibly be referring to in the context of a discussion about the sources of dreams? Yue Guang says that we never dream of "entering a rat hole riding a carriage" or "pulverizing leeks and chewing an iron pestle" because we never have such thoughts or contingencies. It is not difficult to see that we do not have a desire for or do not "think of" doing these two things. But it requires some effort to realize that perhaps "contingencies" refer to the sensory stimulation or sense data on which our imagining or dreaming depends. We never dream of doing these two activities because we never wish to do or think of doing them. And we never have such thoughts because we never have, or have never

had, these two kinds of sensory stimulation or sense data to begin with. Thus *xiang* and *yin*—the psychological and physiological factors or bases—are not sharply separate but interrelated.[17]

Prior to Yue Guang, explanations of dreams along two separate lines, namely the psychological and the physiological lines, could be found already. In the ancient text *Zhouli* 周 禮 (The Rites of Zhou), six types of dreams are distinguished on the basis of content and the psychological factors involved.[18] Of the six types, *simeng* 思 夢 or "thought dream" explicitly refers to the type of dreams that have resulted from daytime reflections or mental preoccupations.[19] We can say that "I think therefore I dream," to borrow a phrase from the American scholar Bert States that describes well an enduring belief in traditional Chinese dream theory.[20] Explanations along the physiological line could be found in early medical literature, dating back to the earliest classic of medicine, the *Huangdi neijing* 黃 帝 內 經 (The Classic of the Yellow Emperor's Internal Medicine).[21] Yue Guang has derived his two concepts of "thoughts" and "contingencies" from these two previous traditions of dream interpretation. Cryptic and terse as they are, Yue Guang's two concepts remain very influential on later developments in Chinese dream interpretation.

Su Shi of the Northern Song offers another explication of the relationship between thoughts and contingencies. In an essay called "Mengzhai ming" 夢 齋 銘 or "An Inscription for the Dream Studio," he says:

> The human mind depends upon sensation data for its existence. It has never been an independent entity in itself. In the emerging and vanishing of sensation data, there is no thought (*nian* 念) that remains fixed. Between dreaming and waking, sensations interact with each other, and after several transferences, they lose their original identities. Is it not all due to *yin* 因 (contingencies) that we think of body and spirit as being unconnected? There was once a shepherd who fell asleep. From (*yin* 因, literally, "relying upon") his sheep, he thought of (*nian*) horses; from the horses, he thought of a carriage; from the carriage, he thought of a carriage canopy; and then he dreamt of a curved canopy, fanfare, and himself becoming a lord. A shepherd and a lord are far apart from each other indeed. Can we regard the dream as strange when we understand what the thought (*xiang* 想) [of becoming a lord] is contingent upon (*yin* 因)?[22]

In Buddhist thought, there are six kinds of sensation data, which are called *gunas* (*chen* 塵 in Chinese). They are sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought. In the above quoted passage, Su Shi offers a definition

of the human mind as a storehouse of these six kinds of sensation data. In his actual discussion, however, he seems to have somehow separated thought from the other five senses. It is clear from the example that Su Shi uses "thought" to refer to both what Sigmund Freud calls "the dream content" or "dream thoughts"[23] and the process of imagination and association observable in dreams. To borrow Freud's terminology, as the "manifest content" indicates, the example Su Shi uses here is a rather simple dream of "wish-fulfillment."[24] I should like to note in passing here that "wish-fulfillment" is an important theme in Chinese literary dreams. The shepherd's desire for wealth and status is fulfilled in the dream through a chain of associations beginning with the sense impression of the sheep and culminating in his becoming a lord. The sense impression of the sheep may come from the memory of the shepherd who has had a long-standing experience with the animal. It may also come from the stimulation of the environment where the shepherd is sleeping. The concept *yin* or "contingency" is here used to refer to the necessary dependence of imagination and association on sense data. Dream thoughts, and in fact all thoughts, rely on prior sensorial experience for expression. Though not explicitly stated, *yin* carries the meaning of an "associative process" as well. The relationship between psychological and physiological aspects of the dream experience are thus clearly spelled out in Su Shi's brief essay.

Before turning to examine song lyrics in which dreams are depicted, let me recapitulate the key points in the above discussion of traditional dream theory. First, we have talked about one ancient belief that dreams have resulted from the crossing of the paths of souls. Poets have resorted to using this popular belief in their poems even though they do not necessarily subscribe to it. Second, we have briefly talked about some previous explorations in the psychological and physiological bases of dreaming. Third, we have also briefly talked about Zhuangzi's influential notion that "life is a dream." It goes without saying that these three important points do not account for the diversity of the literary dream in the song lyrics. But to achieve some focus and coherence in my subsequent discussion, I shall restrict myself mainly to these key points.

The first song lyric I would like to examine is a short one set to the tune of "Zhegutian" 鷓鴣天 or "The Partridge's Sky" by the Northern Song poet Yan Jidao 晏幾道 who was a senior contemporary of Su Shi, active during the second half of the eleventh century. Unlike Su Shi, Yan Jidao has not written any theoretical discourse on the dream. Nonetheless, he is a skillful writer of the dream experience, and his treatment of the subject is in compliance with traditional views of the sources and nature of dreams. In a preface to his collected works written late in his life, Yan Jidao says:

> Whenever I try to investigate what these song lyrics have recorded, I find that the events of joys, sorrows, partings, and reunions have vanished like phantasms and lightning, like dreams and sensation data of bygone days. I can do nothing but to close the volume and stroke it, feeling touched by the swift passing of time, sighing that encounters in my life are so unreal![25]

Expressed here late in the poet's life, after having re-read his own song lyrics, is a poignant sense that life is like a dream. Let us now examine the text of "The Partridge's Sky":

> Colorful sleeves attentively carried a jade goblet;
> That time, I didn't mind letting my face be flushed with wine.
> She danced the moon down below the willows in the mansion,
> And sang her peach-blossom fan out of air.
>
> Since we parted,
> Remembering our meeting,
> How many times have our souls met in the same dreams?
> Tonight I hold up a silver lamp to shine on you,
> Fearing still that this meeting is in a dream.

鷓鴣天

彩袖殷勤捧玉鍾，
當年拚卻醉顏紅。
舞低楊柳樓心月，
歌盡桃花扇底風。

從別後，
憶相逢，
幾回魂夢與君同。
今霄剩把銀釭照，
猶恐相逢是夢中。[26]

In a short song of 55 characters, Yan Jidao has provided a rather complete account of his relationship with a singing girl from their first encounter, to their yearning for each other after parting, and finally to their reunion. The opening two lines describe their first meeting: the girl was holding a luxurious goblet attentively urging her guests to drink, and the poet—the speaker in the poem—most willingly allowed himself to get drunk. The next two lines describe the sight of the girl dancing and singing for him

almost the whole night through at that meeting. This first stanza consists of images, which are the sense impressions in the poet's memory of the singing girl, impressions that he could easily recall to life when he wrote the song lyric. These images are the *yin* or contingencies—the physiological elements—discussed earlier.

In the beginning two lines of the second stanza, the poet tells us that after he parted from the girl, he has remembered their meeting. This "remembering" refers, of course, to the psychological element of *xiang* or "thought" I have discussed above. We can imagine that the actual content of his remembering must be a replay of the sense impressions stored in the poet's memory as depicted in the first stanza. His remembering efforts have several times resulted in dreams which obviously represent the fulfillment of his wish for reunion with his girl friend. Here he describes on purpose the reunion of their dream souls to indicate that their love for each other is genuine and not one-sided. Up till this point, the elements of the crossing of the souls' paths, mental preoccupation, and contingencies are clearly reflected in the song lyric. The concluding two lines offer a twist. The poet says that they meet again after a long separation, but this time he holds a lamp to shine upon her, for fear that they have met in a dream. Here Yan Jidao makes an allusion to the sequence of three poems entitled "Qiangcun" 羌村 or "Qiang Village" by Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Du Fu concludes the first poem in the sequence with these two lines: "Toward night's end I take another candle, / and face you, as if still in a dream."[27] The endings in both Du Fu's and Yan Jidao's poems describe their experience of the fear that the reality they are facing may be simply an illusion.

Su Shi, Yan Jidao's junior but more famous contemporary, is an important writer not only of dream theory but also of the literary dream in poetry. He has written a large number of poems about dreams or in which the word dream is alluded to. While Yan Jidao usually sticks to direct depiction of the dream experience, Su Shi enjoys philosophizing about it. The idea that life is like a dream is found countless times in his song lyrics and *shi* 詩 poetry.[28] The following song lyric set to the tune "Yongyule" 永遇樂 or "Forever Meeting with Happiness" is a good example:

> Written after Dreaming of Panpan while Staying Overnight at the Swallow Tower in Pengcheng

Bright moon like frost,
Fine breeze like water—
Clear view extending endlessly.
Fish are leaping in the winding creek,

Round lotus leaves shake off dew,
But no one sees them in this solitude.
Boom goes the third-watch drum,
Ding falls a single leaf,
Dejected: my dream of clouds is broken.
In the vastness of the night,
I can find it nowhere again:
Waking up, I've walked to every spot in this little garden.

A weary traveller at the world's end,
I've gazed at the mountainous road back
Till my homesick heart and eyes break.
The Swallow Tower stands empty:
Where is the beauty now?
In vain the swallows are locked inside.
Past and present are like dreams;
Who has ever wakened from them?
All we have is old joy, new grief.
In the future, when people see
The night view at the Yellow Tower,
They'll heave a long sigh for me! [29]

永遇樂

彭城夜宿燕子樓，夢盼盼，因作此詞

明月如霜，
好風如水，
清景無限。
曲港跳魚，
圓荷瀉露，
寂寞無人見。
紈如三鼓，
錚然一葉，
黯黯夢雲驚斷。
夜茫茫，
重尋無處，
覺來小園行遍。

天涯倦客，
山中歸路，

望斷故園心眼。
燕子樓空，
佳人何在，
空鎖樓中燕。
古今如夢，
何曾夢覺？
但有舊歡新怨。
異時對，
黃樓夜景，
爲余浩歎。[30]

Unlike "The Partridge's Sky" which depicts Yan Jidao's dreaming of a girl he has met before, "Forever Meeting with Happiness" describes Su Shi's dreaming of a woman who lived two centuries earlier. [Guan] Panpan [關] 盼 盼 is the name of a concubine of Zhang Yin 張 愔, the son of Zhang Jianfeng 張 建 封 who was Prefect of Pengcheng in the ninth century.[31] According to legend, after Zhang Yin died, Panpan never remarried and lived in the Swallow Tower at the Zhang Residence for ten years. When Su Shi wrote this poem, he was himself Prefect of Pengcheng.

Su Shi's song lyric is divided into two stanzas, each consisting of four strophes with three lines in each of them. The six lines of the opening two strophes depict a quiet and beautiful scene of the dream. The third strophe describes that his dream of Panpan is awakened by the sounds of the third-watch drum and of a falling leaf. The last strophe describes the poet's search for the dream in the little garden after he wakes up. The sense of loss "in the vastness of the night" here contrasts sharply with the "clear view extending endlessly" in the dream world. In the last line of the first stanza, Su Shi seems to say that as soon as his dream is disturbed, he goes out to look for the woman in his dream in the garden in a sort of half-awake, half-asleep state: "Waking up, I've walked to every spot in this little garden."

The second stanza focuses on the sentiment of "past and present are like dreams" that has derived from his failed attempt to find the dream again. In the first three lines of the second stanza, Su Shi presents himself as someone who is weary of official service and hopes to, but cannot, return to his hometown. The second strophe goes back to the theme of Panpan. It is worth noting that Su Shi does not provide any direct description of this beautiful woman of two hundred years ago. At this point, the poet has walked through the whole garden and is probably standing right in front of the Swallow Tower. He says that the tower is empty, Panpan is nowhere to be seen, and the swallows are locked in there, bearing witness to the absence of the lovers. Dreaming of a person in history depends entirely

upon historical imagination. The impressions of an ancient person whom one has never met can only be the imaginings one develops from his or her study of documents. Although Su Shi's impressions of Panpan are not the same in origin and nature as Yan Jidao's impressions of his girl friend, they are the same in being "images" existing in the minds of the poets. As time passes, a person's first-hand experiences in life will inevitably become sense impressions or images stored in his or her memory. These images from the past can resurface in the mind from time to time, in a manner resembling dreaming. I believe Su Shi's line "Past and present are like dreams" in the third strophe can be understood in this sense.

In the concluding three lines, Su Shi takes us from the present moment into the future. From his experience with the Swallow Tower, he predicts what will happen in the future to the Yellow Tower he built in Pengcheng. According to Su Shi's own account, he built the Yellow Tower after he had successfully led the residents of Pengcheng to control floods in the prefecture.[32] The construction of the tower commemorated an important achievement in his career as a scholar-official. Nonetheless, Su Shi predicts that the Yellow Tower will only become an object to provoke deep sighs from some sentimental people who know about his life and career. In the end, even a life of accomplishment and significance such as Su Shi's amounts to no more than a source of dream-like experiences for later cultivated and sensitive people. If we can understand this fundamentally illusory nature of our experiences as Su Shi points out here, we will have to agree with him that human life is but a great dream from which nobody has yet awakened. To conclude this section on Su Shi, we can say that the dream experience in the Swallow Tower provides Su Shi a special kind of window through which he views life and reality.

We now come to the works of the thirteenth-century song-writer Wu Wenying 吳文英 for whom the dream holds a special significance. Wu Wenying styled himself "Mengchuang" 夢窗 or "A Window of Dreams," and toward the end of his life changed it to "Jueweng" 覺翁 or "The Old Man Who Has Awakened."[33] The word *meng* or "dream" appears more than 170 times in the collection of his 340 some extant song lyrics.[34] And there are song lyrics in the collection which depict dreams without directly mentioning the word "dream." Recently some Chinese scholars have started to approach Wu Wenying's distinctively complex, allusive, and obscure style of poetry from the perspective of the aesthetics of the dream. It has been observed that Wu Wenying looks at life and the world usually through a window of dreams and illusion.[35] The following, for instance, is a very peculiar and original song lyric that depicts a dream. The poem is set to the tune "Yeyougong" 夜游宮 or "A Tour through the Palace at Night":

I Listened to the Rain by a Window beside Bamboos. After Having Sat There for a Long Time, I Leaned on a Small Table and Fell Asleep. Upon Waking Up, I Saw Narcissi Swaying Gracefully in the Shadow of the Lamplight.

Outside the window, the sound of rain sweeps across the brook,
Reflecting, inside the window, a cold lamp chewing a blossom.
I feel as if mooring a lone boat on the Xiaoxiang;
I see a solitary goddess,
Walking on the waves:
A shadow by the moon's side.

Fragrant flowers are harried by the bullying chill,
Tugging at my dream soul to go round a thousand acres of blue waves.
Waking from my dream—a new grief, the old scenery:
Dark clouds are drooping,
The jade hairpin is aslant,
Someone just sobering up from wine.

夜游宮

竹窗聽雨，坐久隱几就睡，既覺，見水仙娟娟于鐙影中。

窗外捎溪雨響。
映窗裡嚼花鐙冷。
渾似瀟湘繫孤艇。
見幽仙，
步凌波，
月邊影。

香苦欺寒勁。
牽夢繞滄濤千頃。
夢覺新愁舊風景。
紺雲欹，
玉搔斜，
酒初醒。[36]

Although the prose preface is brief, it provides such contextual information for an understanding of the poem as the experience to be depicted, the environment in which the poet has a dream, and the real

objects to which the images in the dream are supposed to refer to. The preface is a brief but rational account of the entire process from before the poet's entering a dream to his waking up from it. It does not describe the dream experience itself, but only hints in the last line that upon waking, the poet still sees in the lamplight images of narcissi which are clearly carried over from his dream. The dream itself is the subject of the song lyric.

The poem opens with a line that describes the experience of "listening to the rain by a window beside bamboos." But the word "bamboos" is not mentioned at all. What Wu Wenying is trying to do is to present the sense impression of the rain falling on the bamboos outside the window as perceived by the mind of someone about to fall asleep. In such a drowsy state, the poet has lost his awareness of the bamboos outside his window, and consequently interprets the sense impression as that of the rain sweeping across a brook. The second line describes the sight inside the window as perceived by the soon-to-be dreamer. *Ying* 映, meaning "reflecting," is a word that normally refers to the sense of sight, but Wu Wenying uses it here to write about the contrast between the sound outside the window and the sight of the lamplight inside it. "A cold lamp chewing a blossom" is an astonishingly original image depicting a lamp's flame burning its wick. These two lines are rich with appeal to the senses of hearing, sight, and touch. They constitute the physiological element of *yin* or contingencies, referring to the stimulation or sensation a sleeper receives from the environment. As we shall see, the poet's dream described later evolves from the two sense impressions of the "brook" and the "blossom" in a process of free association. With the third line, the poet enters the dream world proper. He feels as if he has moored a lone boat on the Xiaoxiang River 瀟湘江, and subsequently sees a solitary goddess, walking on the waves, beside the reflection of the moon in the water. The "solitary goddess" refers to one of the two "Goddesses of the Xiang" (Xiangfuren 湘夫人) as depicted in one of the ancient "Nine Songs" 九歌.[37] The image of the goddess must have derived from the previous sense impression of the "brook" and what the poet remembers of the "Goddesses of the Xiang" from his reading of the "Nine Songs." Although Wu Wenying has not explained, the element of *xiang* or "thought" is probably at work as well in the dramatization process from the sensation of the "brook" and the "blossom" to the "dream event" of encountering one of the Goddesses of the Xiang River.

The second stanza continues to describe the dream. "Fragrant flowers" must refer to the narcissi mentioned in the preface, which appear in the dream. The feeling of chill here must have evolved from the sense of coldness described at the beginning of the first stanza. The beautiful narcissi entice the poet's dream soul to go about acres and acres of blue

waves, perhaps in search of the Goddess of the Xiang who appears in the previous stanza. Although the poet directly mentions "waking" from his dream in the third line, he is obviously still in a state between dreaming and waking. He feels a "new" sadness, presumably because the narcissi remind him of the goddess who has already vanished. And then he is immediately taken over again by the "old scenery," the scenery in his dream that he has just left behind. The old scenery is presented as the image of a beautiful woman who is just sobering up from wine, with drooping dark hair, and a jade hairpin hung aslant. This is no doubt an image of the charming goddess. At the same time, it can also be interpreted as a metaphor of the narcissi mentioned in the preface.

Not to be ignored is the fact that the word *chuang* 窗 or "window" appears twice in the first stanza, and the word *meng* 夢 or "dream" also appears twice in the second stanza. It is as if Wu Wenying has self-consciously embedded his literary style Mengchuang 夢窗, "Dream Window," in this short song lyric. Perhaps even more important than the apparent wordplay, Wu Wenying seems to be telling us in this poem that reality and dream-illusion are two closely interpenetrating states to be found on the two sides of an open window.

Wu Wenying's treatment of dreams as seen in "A Tour through the Palace at Night" differs radically from that by Yan Jidao and Su Shi discussed previously. Although Yan Jidao often regards reality as dream or vice versa and Su Shi often expresses the view that human life amounts to a series of dreams, they express in their song lyrics a very strong sense of time and a clear distinction between reality and illusion. In Yan Jidao's and Su Shi's song lyrics about dreams, terms such as "that year" (*dangnian* 當 年), "that time" (*dangshi* 當 時), "before" (*congqian* 從 前), "right now" (*rujin* 如 今), "tonight" (*jinxiao* 今 宵), and "since I woke up" (*juelai* 覺 來) which indicate a clear concept of time are commonly used. These temporal words help us differentiate the scenery in front of the poet's eyes from the images that appear in his dreams. In Wu Wenying's "A Tour through the Palace at Night," however, the scenery in front of him and the images from his dream, the inner and the outer, the present and the past, and reality and illusion are indistinctly juxtaposed side by side. Although "dream" and "awakening," "new" and "old" are used, they do not seem to enhance any sense of time. The song lyric itself lacks the sense of a linear temporal order discernible in the prose preface. Instead, what "A Tour through the Palace at Night" manifests is a kind of spatial order that is derived from the paralleling, juxtaposition, and correspondence of elements within the song lyric. Professor Kao Yu-kung has used the term "spatial design" to refer to this kind of poetic structure.[38] I should like to point out that a dream itself reveals a "spatial design" or a montage. In a dream, the

images that randomly make up the dream events usually come from the sense impressions stored in our memory that belong to different temporal and spatial frameworks. The merging of diverse temporal and spatial boundaries and the appearance of randomness in "A Tour through the Palace at Night" is the result of Wu Wenying's attempt to write his song lyric as a direct manifestation of a dream. This sort of structural characteristic cannot be found in any of the song lyrics about dreams written by Yan Jidao or Su Shi.

"A Tour through the Palace at Night" is a poem recording an actual dream experience. Some people might say that since it is a poem about a dream, it is natural for Wu Wenying to adopt a dream-like structural feature. However, the same kind of spatial design as we see here can also be found in many of Wu Wenying's song lyrics which are not depictions of dreams at all. The following poem set to the tune "Basheng Ganzhou" 八聲甘州 or "Eight-Rhymed Ganzhou Song" is a good example:

> An Outing on Mt. Lingyan with Colleagues from the Grain Transport

An endless void, mist to the four distances.
What year was it
The meteor fell from the clear sky?
Illusory green crags and cloud trees,
Celebrated beauty's Golden Chamber,
Failed Leader's palace walls.
On Arrow Creek a sour wind impales the eyes.
Creamy water stains the flower's stench.
At times tripping paired-lovebirds echo:
An autumn sound in corridor leaves.

In the palace the King of Wu is dead drunk,
Leaving the weary traveler of Five Lakes
To angle alone, cold sober.
Ask the blue waves: they don't talk.
How can grey hairs cope with the mountain's green?
The water envelops the void;
From the balcony's height
I follow random crows and slanting sun dropping behind
Fisherman's Isle.
Again and again I call for wine
And go to climb Lute Tower:
Autumn level with the clouds.[39]

八聲甘州

陪庾幕諸公遊靈巖

渺空煙四遠，
是何年青犬墜長星。
幻蒼崖雲樹，
名娃金屋，
殘霸宮城。
箭徑酸風射眼，
膩水染花腥。
時靸雙鴛響，
廊葉秋聲。

宮裡吳王沉醉，
倩五湖倦客，
獨釣醒醒。
問蒼波無語，
華髮奈山青。
水涵空，
闌干高處，
送亂鴉斜日落漁汀。
連呼酒，
上琴臺去，
秋與雲平。[40]

In recent years, not a few scholars have devoted energy to interpreting this masterpiece. Among them, Professor Florence Chia-ying Yeh 葉嘉瑩, has offered one of the most original, penetrating, and exhaustive interpretations.[41] A condensed version of Professor Yeh's reading of the song lyric can be found in the article titled "Wu Wen-ying's *Tz'u*: A Modern View," done in collaboration with Professor James Hightower and published in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* in 1969.[42] I shall generally follow Professor Yeh's exegesis as presented in that article in my discussion below of Wu Wenying's penchant for looking at things through a window of dreams or illusion.

Wu Wenying was in Suzhou 蘇州, the base of the ancient Wu State 吳國, around the year 1232, and he was in his thirties at the time. He had been a resident in the Suzhou region for a long time and so was familiar with the historical sites and monuments there.[43] According to the historical gazetteers of the region, Mt. Lingyan is 360 fathoms high, and lies three

leagues from human habitation. Situated on top of the mountain were the palaces of the ancient Wu State. From the top of Mt. Lingyan one can look down on both Mt. Juju and Mt. Dongting. Over vast billows of mist the view stretches a thousand leagues.[44] This was the setting in which Wu Wenying had that unusual experience recorded in "Eight-Rhymed Ganzhou Song." As noted in the subtitle, the song was written on the occasion of him accompanying his colleagues from the Grain Transport Office on an outing to Mt. Lingyan.

The two lines of the beginning strophe juxtapose the poet's view of the endless stretches of space and a fantastic thought that emerges in his mind. The unusual appearance of Mt. Lingyan inspires in him a bizarre thought, and he asks, "What year was it a meteor fell from the sky?" In two brief lines, he fuses infinite space with an enormous span of time. The next three lines of the second strophe continues the poet's wondering: the meteor that has fallen out of the blue sky transformed itself into illusory green crags, misty trees, the Beauty's Golden Chamber, and the Failed Hegemonic Leader Fuchai's 夫差 palaces. By adding the word *huan* 幻 or "illusory" to the "green crags and mist-enshrouded trees," Wu Wenying equates these substantial, natural objects with the ephemeral works of Fuchai, the King of Wu. Thus, reality and illusion are also fused together. From here to the first strophe of the second stanza, the poem focuses on illusory images of the past that emerge in the poet's mind. These illusory images constitute a kind of dream, or to be precise, "daydream," that Wu Wenying had that day when he climbed Mt. Lingyan. Since these images that appear in his mind's eye can be compared to a dream, the formation of this daydream must be based on similar psychological and physiological elements. The physical aspect of Mt. Lingyan and the endless space must have given the sensitive and imaginative Wu Wenying a powerful sensorial stimulation. In the language of traditional Chinese dream theory, this is the element of *yin* or contingency. The fantasy about a meteor falling from the sky to transform into the mountain and other natural as well as man-made things, provoked by this sensorial stimulation, represents then a synthesis of the poet's thoughts and sense impressions of the environment. It seems clear that here Wu Wenying uses the technique for depicting dreams to write about his innermost feelings and thoughts.

The remaining two strophes of the first stanza describe King Fuchai's life of debauchery. Arrow Creek is a nickname for Plucking Fragrances Creek 采香徑 whose stream flows straight as an arrow. The *Wujunzhi* 吳郡志 (Wu Prefecture Gazetteer) says, "Plucking Fragrances Creek is a small brook on the side of Fragrant Hill. King Wu planted fragrant plants on Fragrant Hill and had his harem beauties pick them as they drifted down the brook in boats."[45] This gazetteer mentions that Plucking Fragrances

Creek is where King Wu's favorite lady Xishi 西 施 bathed, and where his palace ladies washed off their makeup. Further, it mentions that in the Palace Where the Beauty Was Lodged, a "Corridor of Echoing Steps" 響 屐 廊 was built over a sound-chamber of catalpa wood, so that when Xishi walked along it wearing lovebird-shaped slippers, her steps resounded. As Wu Wenying views the ruins of King Wu's palace, he mingles illusion with reality, and past with present. This part of the song lyric carries tremendous sensory impact. The autumn wind tastes sour and impales his eyes, the water is creamy, and the flowers carry a stench. In one moment he seems to hear Xishi's footsteps, but in the next, it is the rustle of dry autumn leaves in the wind that he hears. Wu Wenying's inexpressible sadness over the relics of a vanished past is conveyed through the dazzling but fragmented imagistic language.

The first strophe of the second stanza wraps up the poet's depiction of King Wu's dissolute life with his favorite Xishi.[46] Because of his debauchery, Fuchai was eventually defeated by Goujian 勾 踐, the King of the neighboring State of Yue 越 國, who had the capable assistance of a minister named Fan Li 范 蠡. Knowing that Goujian was someone with whom one can share hardships but not peace and happiness, Fan Li retired to lead a carefree life as a recluse on Five Lakes (i.e., Lake Tai 太 湖) after helping his king to accomplish the goal of conquering Wu. Indeed, Fan Li is the only sober person during the period of competition between Wu and Yue, a sharp contrast to the King of Wu, Fuchai. With the second strophe, the poem returns to the present.[47] Wu Wenying lived during the last decades of the Southern Song Dynasty, when there were powerful enemies on the borders and treacherous officials at court. And Emperor Lizong 理 宗 who ruled the Song at the time was as inane as the King of Wu depicted in the song lyric. There is an implied analogy here between the China of Wu Wenying's day and the ancient State of Wu. This is why Wu Wenying compares himself to Fan Li, a grey-haired, sober, but weary traveller, who finds no answer from the blue waves to the question concerning the rise and fall of empires that so preoccupies his mind.

In the last six lines of the poem, Wu Wenying appears first to try to free himself from his preoccupation with the sorrows of history and the implied worries of the present he lives in.[48] He takes us back to the scene that he was facing that day: the lake water stretching out to merge with the sky, forming an infinite expanse. Embedded in the line "The water envelops the void" is the name of a lookout tower, "Hankong" 涵 空 or "Enveloping the Void," which is believed to have been first built on Mt. Lingyan during the ancient Wu times. It seems clear that Wu Wenying uses these two words to allude again to the vanished past. His purpose in doing this is obviously to roll past and present, as well as reality and illusion into

one. As he gazes from the high railings toward the distance and sees a few crows disappearing with the setting sun beyond the fisherman's isle, he must feel an immense burden of grief, despondency, and loneliness. He cannot do anything but to repeatedly call for wine with the hope of easing his pain and sadness. But after calling for wine, he climbs onto Lute Tower which was also built in Wu times. From that high point, he sees that "Autumn is level with the clouds." There is nothing but this autumn air, which is associated with sorrow in Chinese literature, filling the vast space between heaven and earth. In the end, the green crags, the misty trees, Golden Chamber, Lady Xishi, the Failed Leader, King Wu's palaces, the weary traveler Fan Li, even Wu Wenying himself are all enveloped and dissolved in the mists of the four distances. Wu Wenying is indeed skillful in creating in a song lyric a dream-like and heavily tragic atmosphere.

In "Eight-Rhymed Ganzhou Song," from beginning to end, Wu Wenying has intermingled time and space, past and present, the personal and the historical, the substantial and the insubstantial, as well as reality and illusion. Although we can tell when he enters and comes out of his daydream, the scenery that exists in front of his eyes before and after his reverie state, as depicted in the song lyric, involves elements of illusion also. Consequently, we can consider this song lyric, along with the previously discussed "A Tour through the Palace at Night, as a direct manifestation of a dream experience. As noted earlier, this direct manifestation of a dream experience is something not found in the song lyrics prior to the late Song. Therefore, these two masterpieces and other similar works by Wu Wenying represent an important development in the literary dream in classical Chinese poetry.

Endnotes

1. Eric Bentley, ed. *Life Is a Dream and Other Spanish Classics*, translated into English by Roy Campbell (New York: Applause, 1991). The remark that *Life Is a Dream* is "still perhaps the most celebrated of all Spanish plays" can be found on p. 296 of this book.
2. Bentley., p. 268.
3. Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*, translated into English by Paulette Moller (New York: Berkeley Books, 1997), pp. 227-229.
4. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene 1, Line 156. See George Lyman Kittredge, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1936), p. 26.

5. For a slightly fuller treatment of traditional Chinese dream theory, see my article entitled "Chia Pao-yü's First visit to the Land of Illusion: An Analysis of a Literary Dream in Interdisciplinary Perspective" published in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 14 (1992): 77-106, especially 77-94.
6. Fu Zhenggu 傅正谷 who has published several books on the dream in Chinese literature and culture refers to Zhuangzi as "the person who has laid the foundation of ancient Chinese dream theory." See Fu Zhenggu, *Zhongguo mengwenhua shi* 中國夢文化史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1993), p. 14.
7. Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962), Vol. 1, p. 51.
8. Here I follow the interpretation as set forth in Liu Wenying 劉文英, *Meng de mixin yu meng de tansuo: Zhongguo gudai zongjiao he kexue de yige cemian* 夢的迷信與夢的探索：中國古代宗教和哲學的一個側面 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), p. 167.
9. Liu Wenying, pp. 14-15.
10. See A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 50 and Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 49.
11. This important point has been observed by Andrew H. Plaks in his brief essay " . . . But a dream" in *Asian Art*, Vol. III, No. 4 (Fall 1991), 6.
12. Adapted from the translations by A. C. Graham, pp. 59-60; and Burton Watson, pp. 47-48.
13. This is largely based on Richard Mather's magnificent translation. The most important change I have made is in rendering *yin* as "contingencies" instead of "causes." For Mather's translation, see his book *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 98.
14. Liu Wenying, p. 225.
15. Liu Wenying, p. 225.
16. Liu Wenying, p. 225.
17. Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 is probably the first modern Chinese scholar to discuss the two important concepts of *xiang* and *yin* in traditional Chinese dream theory. See his book *Guanzhuibian* 管錐編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), Vol. 2, pp. 488-500.
18. Liu Wenying, pp. 211-214, 247-248.
19. Liu Wenying, p. 212. Liu also argues that *simeng* probably carries the sense of "dream thoughts" or "dream content" as well.

20. Bert O. States, *The Rhetoric of Dreams* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 15.
21. Liu Wenying, pp. 186-205.
22. Su Shi 蘇軾 *Dongpoji* 東坡集 in *Sansuji* 三蘇集 (No publisher, with colophon by Gong Yiqing 弓翊清, dated 1833), 19. 24a-b.
23. Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, translated and edited by James Strachey (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), pp. 14-16, 18-19, 33-34, 75-76, etc.
24. Freud, p. 21.
25. Jin Qihua 金啓華 et al, eds., *Tang Song ciji xuba huibian* 唐宋詞集序跋匯編 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1990), p. 25.
26. Tang Guizhang, ed., *Quan Song ci* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 1.225.
27. Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 423.
28. Curtis Dean Smith has written a doctoral dissertation in Chinese on the dream in the *shi* and *ci* poetry of Su Shi. See Shi Guoxing 史國興 (Chinese name of Curtis Dean Smith), *Su Shi shicizhong meng de yanxi* 蘇軾詩詞中夢的研析 (Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University, 1996).
29. This is a slightly modified version of the translation by James J.Y. Liu, *Major Lyricists of the Northern Sung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 133.
30. Tang Guizhang, 1.302; see also Shi Shenghuai 石聲淮 and Tang Lingling 唐玲伶, *Dongpo yuefu biannian jianzhu* 東坡樂府編年箋注 (Wuhan: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1990), pp. 129-130.
31. There is a brief account regarding Guan Panpan in Bai Juyi's 白居易 preface to his poem sequence entitled "Yanzilou shi: sanshou" 燕子樓詩三首, see Shi Shenghuai and Tang Lingling, p. 130. It should be noted that Guan Panpan was the concubine of Zhang Yin, not his father Zhang Jianfeng who was once prefect of Pengcheng. Here Su Shi evidently follows an older, erroneous story that Guan Panpan was Zhang Jianfeng's concubine.
32. Su Shi wrote a rhymeprose (*fu* 賦) entitled "Huanglou fu" 黃樓賦 or "Rhymeprose on the Yellow Tower" with a preface explaining the occasion for the construction of the tower. See Shi Shenghuai and Tang Lingling, p. 130.
33. Tao Erfu 陶爾夫 and Liu Jingqi 劉敬圻 *Nansong cishi* 南宋詞史 (Haerbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 336 and 370.

34. Tao and Liu, p. 364.
35. Tao and Liu, pp. 363-364, 370.
36. Tang Guizhang, 4.2896; see also Yang Tiefu 楊鐵夫, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi* 吳夢窗詞箋釋, with collation and punctuation by Chen Bangyan 陳邦炎 and Zhang Qihui 張奇慧 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 128-129.
37. For the "Nine Songs," see David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 95-122.
38. Kao Yu-kung 高友工, "Xiaoling zai shichuantong zhong de diwei" 小令在詩傳統中的地位 in *Cixue* 詞學, 9 (1992): 20. I have also discussed this feature in an article entitled "Space-Logic in the Longer Song Lyrics of the Southern Sung: A Reading of Wu Wen-ying's 'Ying-t'i-hsu'" in *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, No. 25 (1995), 169-191.
39. Translated by James Hightower in Florence Chia-ying Yeh, "'Wu Wen-ying's *Tz'u*: A Modern View," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969), 80-81.
40. Tang Guizhang, 4.2926.
41. Yeh Chia-ying 葉嘉瑩, "Chaisui qibaoloutai: tan Mengchuang ci zhi xiandaiguan" 拆碎七寶樓臺：談夢窗詞之現代觀 in *Jialing lunci conggao* 迦陵論詞叢稿 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980), pp. 139-207.
42. This article is now collected in the book by James R. Hightower and Florence Chia-ying Yeh, *Studies in Chinese Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 355-383.
43. Hightower and Yeh, p. 374.
44. These several brief details depicting the setting can be found in such historical gazetteers as the *Wujunzhi* 吳郡志 and *Da Qing yitongzhi—Suzhou fuzhi* 大清一統志—蘇州府志. See the recapitulation in Hightower and Yeh, p. 375.
45. For this quotation and the subsequent brief remarks, see Hightower and Yeh, pp. 377-379.
46. Hightower and Yeh, pp. 379-380.
47. Hightower and Yeh, pp. 380-381.
48. Hightower and Yeh, pp. 381-383.

Writing from a Side Room of Her Own: The Literary Vocation of Concubines in Ming-Qing China

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I begin with some general comments on concubinage in China as background to my paper, which examines the literary practice of specific women who occupied the socially marginal position of concubines. I want to explore what implications we can draw from the intersection between social subjugation and subject positioning or self-construction in textual practice. I will discuss in particular the poetry of one concubine in which a strong sense of identity and self-representation is inscribed. Through this example, I hope to illustrate the difference made visible by literacy to female agency and identity by exploring how such women might compensate for, write against, resist, or overturn the marginality associated with concubinage through their literary vocation. Given that their personhood was denied on the social level, their literary pursuits suggest a sense of self conceptualized on premises other than the social, which point to ideas of authority, subjectivity, and self-fulfillment produced in the act of writing.

The Room off to the Side

Concubinage was a deeply entrenched social institution in the history of China. It was one among several prevailing practices of unequal gender relations and female servitude institutionalized and naturalized by the Chinese patriarchal family and social system. Although in legal and ritual contexts, a man could only marry one wife—his legal and official wife, in practice, he could have one or more concubines in addition.[1] The ingrained acceptance of concubinage is demonstrated by its practice well into the twentieth century. In China, it took the marriage laws instituted by the People's Republic in 1950 to eradicate the lingering practice. In colonial Hong Kong, concubinage was not prohibited legally until as recently as 1971.[2]

The common term for a concubine is *qie* 妾. The earliest meaning of this word is female slave. That it was later employed as the word for "concubine" indicates the low social status of such women within normative social structures in which women were located, such as family and lineage. The term *qie* also came to be used by women as the humble form for the gendered first-personal pronoun "I" that women used to refer to themselves in elocutionary acts. This elocutionary form signifies the general subordinate social positioning of women in relation to men. Another term for a concubine is *ceshi* 側 室, which literally means "side chamber"—the room off to the side. This peculiar designation derives from and is implicated in the spatial construct of the Chinese house compound and its corresponding social, religious, and cultural configuration, and the gendering and hierarchizing of its space. Within this physical configuration, the concubine was housed in separate quarters at the side or the back of the compound. The term *ceshi* positions the woman who occupies its space primarily in relation to another woman, who occupies *the* room (*shi*), or more precisely, the principal or central main room (*zhengshi* 正 室) within the master's house.[3] This woman is the principal wife, and *zhengshi* is the term that refers to her—the mistress or lady of the house. The spatial location of the *ceshi* (side room) is precisely off-center or on the margins in the layout of the house compound, just as the role of the concubine is socially and ritually marginal within the family. A concubine is not presented to the ancestors nor does she participate in the ancestral cult upon coming into the family. Thus, gendered social hierarchy is integrated into conceptualization of space, forming an interlocking grid on symbolic, social, and material levels.

The wife, whose legal and ritual status was conferred through the performance of the proper marriage rites between two families, also brought in property in the form of dowry, and thus had economic resources. In contrast, concubines were often bought from poor families and brokers, ostensibly for reproductive purposes for the patriline, but often they were obtained for purposes ranging from providing domestic services to catering to male pleasure and enhancing class status. Concubines could be given or received as gifts between men. The husband could rename her at will, and she could be disposed of at will, even if she had produced children for the husband. In describing the general status and condition of concubines, the American anthropologist Rubie Watson emphasizes that a concubine "was cut off from the outside world and became enmeshed in the private domain of her consort and his household."[4] Her ties to her natal family were usually severed. Her isolation stands in contrast to the wife, who often maintained contact with her parents, siblings, and other kin.

From vernacular fiction and popular lore, two common stereotypical images of the concubine emerge. She is an unscrupulous, ruthless, and scheming character, who would use whatever means available to defeat the other women of the house, whom she sees as rivals contending for the attention and favor of the master. Or she is the mirror opposite, that of the victim, persecuted by the principal wife or other concubines. Both the late Ming vernacular novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (Golden Lotus) and the 1993 film *Raise the Red Lantern* (dir. Zhang Yimou 張藝謀) manipulate the dark side of the gender and power dynamics of this system of female hierarchy dominated by patriarchy in the representation of concubines. But Rubie Watson believes that the concubine as victim is perhaps closer to the experience of many women who were in that position.[5]

Without denying the subjugation and commodification of women in the practice of concubinage, I argue that an approach to the experience of some concubines from the perspective of women's literary agency can show us more subtle areas of negotiation and more complex, localized configurations of gender and power relations than are evident in historical and fictional representations. More significantly, with the rediscovery of the rich corpus of women's own texts from the Ming and Qing periods, we can pay attention to the voices of the concubines themselves and their self-perceptions. The standard catalogue of women's writings by Hu Wenkai includes literary works by more than seventy concubines.[6] Thus, we are in a position to listen to those who wrote from a side room, those who endeavored to articulate their identities and subjectivities from a position designated as marginal.

So, for some women who became concubines, actually their own side room could become an important space in spite of or even because of their marginality. These women could exploit the contradiction inherent in this social and physical space, that of being separate while in bondage and confinement, which produced a zone in which some concubines were able to create and maintain a degree of autonomy and productivity. It is within the double grid of what is intended to be mutually reinforcing center-periphery spatialization and the top-bottom social hierarchization that some concubines open up a space of agency through literacy.

In the best and worst of circumstances, the "side room" can take on quite different meanings and forms, both physically and metaphorically. Besides just a room off to the side or the rear, in wealthy households it could be a side courtyard or wing within the main complex (as exemplified in *Jin Ping Mei* and *Raise the Red Lantern*), a detached lodging in the residential family compound, or even a remote country lodge away from the main residence. Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618?-64), the celebrated late Ming courtesan, was installed by her husband the famous scholar Qian Qianyi

錢謙益 (1582-1664) in the Jiangyun Lou 絳雲樓, a new lodge he built for her where they could engage in literary projects together, undisturbed by mundane domestic interference or the jealousy of the wife.[7] The legendary ill-fated young concubine Feng Xiaoqing 馮小青, also from the late Ming, and one of her latter day incarnations Li Shuyi 李淑儀 (1817-?), were banished by jealous wives to physical and emotional isolation in family villas in the countryside.[8] The wife prevented the husband from visiting Xiaoqing. In their unhappiness these women poured their energies into writing. Most of Feng Xiaoqing's poems were supposedly burnt by the vindictive wife after she died, young and unfulfilled in love. But Li Shuyi accomplished two collections of poetry—*Shuyinglou mingshu baiyong* 疏影樓名姝百詠 and *Shuyinglou minghua baiyong* 疏影樓名花百詠—during her year of exile and had them published at the precocious age of sixteen.[9]

In another metamorphosis, for the concubines of scholar-officials, this side room could be mobile and temporary, such as a house-boat, an inn, or government residence. The concubine was often the one who accompanied the husband to serve him on official journeys and postings, while the wife remained "centered" at home to manage the family. Li Yin 李因 (1616-85), the concubine of Ge Zhengqi 葛徵奇 (d. 1645), was a famous painter and poet of the late Ming.[10] Li accompanied her husband on official assignments all over China for fifteen years until his death. She painted and wrote many poems during these journeys. The poem, titled "Writing a Poem with my Husband Luxun as our Boat Departs from Guo County," shows a life in movement, as the couple began another journey by boat:

Brushing our robes, how hurriedly we depart,
Hair almost half white from worry.
Passing guests are few on the edge of the world,
Our travelling kitchen is empty of firewood.
At Meditation Pass, the mountain moon is dim,
By Fish Gate, night lamps are flaming red.
Knowing that the pine and chrysanthemums are fine,
With our hoes and books, we can bear our poverty.

舟發郭縣同家祿勳賦

撫衣去去急，
白髮半愁中。
過客天涯少，
行廚橘柚空。

禪關山月黑，
魚柵夜鐙紅。
松菊聞無恙，
鋤書可耐窮。[11]

Li Yin alludes to the austerities of travel. Being on the move, they had little contact with friends (the "passing guests"), and the portable kitchen was not stocked up. Ultimately she identifies with the simple life of a cultivated recluse by alluding to the pine and chrysanthemum, the hoe and books, associated with the fifth-century poet recluse Tao Qian. Li Yin turns the boat into the site of a productive side room.

In the polygynous household, some concubines were interested in and found opportunities for learning and employing the technologies of (self-) inscription. Not surprisingly, some of the most accomplished concubine poets and painters were courtesans who already possessed the literary and artistic skills necessary for their profession. They were trained in these arts as children so they could entertain literati clients. Liu Rushi, Gu Mei 顧媚 (1619-64), and Dong Bai 董白 (1625-51) were some of the most celebrated examples of courtesans who sought the status of concubine, or, to use the spatial metaphor, the "side room" as a privileged space and refuge from the floating world. They were successful in escaping from the courtesan life and marrying into scholar-gentry families as concubines and continued or increased their artistic and poetic production. They often took on the role of co-editors and compilers alongside their husbands, working on critical editions and anthologies.[12]

However, the more remarkable examples are young girls who were sold into concubinage, such as Li Shuyi, mentioned earlier, who writes that she was first sold by her parents out of desperate poverty to be a maid servant, the lowest on the female hierarchy within the household.[13] Most families of social standing would not want to sell or marry their daughters as concubines. Young women sold or given away as concubines were generally from economically or socially degraded families or from lower social classes.

Shen Cai (b. 1732): A Concubine of Talent

As mentioned above, historians and anthropologists have often viewed the concubine as victim and Chinese novelists often represented them as predatory. In order to provide a sense of what concubines thought of themselves and to give them their own voice, I would like to present in some detail the writings of Shen Cai 沈彩 (b. 1732), who became a concubine at the age of twelve to the scholar and bibliophile Lu Xuan 陸烜. Lu Xuan (style name Meigu 梅谷) mentions in the preface he

wrote to her collected works, entitled *Chunyulou ji* 春雨樓集 (Collection of Spring Rain Pavilion),[14] that she came from a good family in Wuxing 吳興, Zhejiang, which had declined.[15] We know little of her girlhood life before the age of twelve, when she was married to Lu Xuan as his concubine. She made one self-reference to her childhood in a colophon she wrote to a handscroll of cloudy mountains by the Song painter and calligrapher Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107), which was in her husband's collection. After evaluating the marvelous qualities of Mi's brushwork, Shen Cai was inspired by the expanse of mists and clouds in the small painting to recall briefly a relatively free and seemingly mobile childhood traveling by boat in the scenic surroundings of her native region:

> I remember when I was a child I often went back and forth between Lake Fuyu (Floating Jade) and Lake Bilang (Emerald Wave). I saw the lush green of the trees in the mist, houses along the water, and temples on Mount Bian. The shapes and lines along Mount Long were like the curves of chignons and brows. They seem to disappear into the vast expanse of white mist. All of these have gone into the painting. Opening this scroll my former haunts seem like a dream. (*Chunyulou ji*, 13.4a-b)

From the age of twelve on, the space of her side chamber, the off-center boudoir of the concubine, within the Lu family residence in Pinghu, Zhejiang, constituted the basic boundary of her physical existence.[16]

The only extensive excursion Shen Cai recorded was to a nearby river Dongxi (East Stream), where her husband took her for an evening cruise in the new family pleasure boat when she was twenty-one. In this little travel essay, she recorded her husband's invitation with his little discourse on travel: "Would you like to travel? Let me tell you about traveling. One does not need to travel amidst famous mountains and great rivers. It is simply a matter of following one's inspiration. We can just take the boat along East Stream where we can recite poetry and view the scenery. Should we make the excursion?" The essay continued to record the sensations, sights, and sounds during the cruise, and ends with her own reflection on the meaning of travel:

> We made our return late into the night. I reflect on the fact that my feet walk over six square foot of ground; I have never traveled. Now my traveling stops here, but it has more than satisfied my simple inspiration. I think that if one could not get simple inspiration, though one might travel all over the world, one would

> not have begun to travel really. Thus I record this. ("Record of a Boat Excursion on Dongxi," *Chunyulou ji*, 10.7a-b)

This short essay, which records a unique experience outside the inner quarters of the home, also indicates inversely Shen Cai's physically confined mode of existence. It also inscribes her acceptance, even affirmation, of the spatial boundary of her life by agreeing with her husband's view of the significance of the spirit and not the physical extent of travel. In contrast, Lu Xuan's brief biography in the local gazetteer *Pinghu xianzhi* highlights his interest in traveling to natural sites, and records that he visited famous mountains such as Siming and Tiantai in Zhejiang and the Yangzi and Huai River area further north.[17] Thus the lesson he gave Shen Cai involves a familiar double standard when viewed against his own practices. If we read the gender difference underlying his words, we can see that though his statement is made from an apparently universal perspective, it is aimed at convincing his concubine that there is no need for her to travel outside the home to see the world or nature. Located within a gender regime that prescribes the inner sphere of the home as the ideal space for women, neither he nor Shen Cai saw the inherent contradiction between his words and his actions.

Let us consider further Shen Cai's social status, education and environment after she entered the Lu household, and how these play into her identity formation. Lu Xuan's preface notes that when Shen Cai married into his home that "she was pretty but proper and serious, and well endowed with intelligence," and that his wife began to teach her Tang poetry and Ban Zhao's (ca.49-ca.120) classic *Nüjie* 女誡 (Precepts for Women) (*Chunyulou ji*, preface 3a).[18] Lu's wife is Peng Zhenyin 彭貞隱, granddaughter of the early Qing scholar-bureaucrat, poet, and song lyric critic Peng Sunyu 彭孫遹 (1631-1700), and herself a poet.[19] Lu further comments on Shen Cai's good memory and the efforts she has put into book learning and practicing calligraphy. This description of Shen Cai's education under the tutelage of the principal wife is reminiscent of a mother educating a daughter. In this case, the wife and concubine developed an unusually nurturing and intimate relationship.

Lu Xuan's biography in the *Pinghu xianzhi* describes him as not only a keen traveler, which means he was away from home quite often, but also a bibliophile and a medical practitioner. In a note to a poem sent to him, Shen Cai mentions that he was invited to read books at the prestigious library Tianyige 天一閣 in Ningbo (*Chunyulou ji*, 4.3b). The gazetteer noted that after he failed in the district examination, he gave up pursuing an official career. Instead he sold part of his family property to acquire books and devoted himself to scholarship and

writing.[20] Thus, the material resources for studying and writing, the literati inclinations of Lu Xuan, the poetic ability and maternal attitude of Peng Zhenyin, and the shared literary and artistic interests in the household together constituted a supportive environment for Shen Cai's poetic and artistic development.

Shen Cai's own self-representation also gives emphasis to her education and her dedication to learning. In the poem sequence entitled "Narrating in Jest" written later in life, Shen Cai summarizes the stages of her education: from its beginning under the tutelage of the principal wife, to her subsequent success at learning, and finally to her role as teacher to their children. Shen would have received some training prior to her entering her new home, but in the first poems she downplays her achievements to emphasize her indebtedness to Peng Zhenyin.

I.
Charming and small at twelve, not knowing names,
Learning to make dividing lines, I couldn't quite write.
But then I paid respects to a good teacher—the principal wife,
Opening the classics I became a young female scholar.

II.
Ten *li* of spring breeze brightens the Brocade River,
A female *zhuangyuan*, the top candidate on the examination list.
Among examples of pupils in the paternal hall of instruction,
The Lord of the East should agree to my being a student.

III.
Dare you hope to go from dullness to high ranks?
In learning characters you must at least remember your names.
The rod is imposingly placed next to knife and ruler,
In giving the children lessons I've now become the female master.

戲述二首

十三嬌小不知名，
學弄烏絲寫未成。
卻拜良師是大婦。
橫經曾作女書生。

春風十里錦江明，
女狀元標第一名。

若論鯉庭桃李例，
東君應許作門生。

敢希愚魯到公卿，
識字須粗記姓名。
夏楚儼陳刀尺畔，
課兒今作女先生。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 7.6b)

The third poem is a rare example of reference to children in Shen Cai's writings. In contrast to the practice common among women poets whose collections often include poems addressed to or about their children, it is significant that there are so few references to children in Shen Cai's writings. There is only one other reference at the end of a colophon she inscribed on a piece of calligraphy by her husband, in which she notes that he wrote and kept the calligraphy in order to show it to the children (*Chunyulou ji*, 14.8a-b). The family certainly had children. In his preface, Lu makes a passing reference to having well behaved sons and daughters (*Chunyulou ji*, preface 3a).[21] It is not possible to tell whether Shen Cai had any children of her own. But as a concubine, any children borne to her would have been considered legally and socially the children of the principal wife.[22] The ambivalent social and emotional status of the concubine-mother might explain the absence of children in her writing. In any case, Shen Cai decidedly does not take a maternal angle in constructing her identity and subjectivity in writing. Her interest is in reproducing the sensuous woman and the assiduous calligrapher as self-representations.

Inscribing and Arranging: Modes of Self-Production

When we turn to the form and content of Shen Cai's collection, we find that it is substantial and richly varied. This is not surprising once we recognize and encounter *materially* her intense focus on and dedication to writing and calligraphy. The *Chunyulou ji* contains a total of 14 *juan* (or chapters) in the following order and categories: *juan* 1 rhyme prose (6 pieces), *juan* 2-7 *shi* poetry (253 pieces), *juan* 8-9 song lyrics (66 pieces), *juan* 10-11 prose (10 pieces), and *juan* 12-14 inscriptions and colophons (61 pieces). The collection was printed in 1782 when she was thirty-one and contains the fruits of fifteen or more years of active pursuit of writing poetry and prose and practicing calligraphy. The collection was obviously conceived as the culmination of her artistic and literary achievements, and the arrangement of its contents by genre, which highlights her varied accomplishments, corroborates this interpretation.

For the purpose of publication, Shen Cai meticulously copied the entire manuscript in her own hand over a period of several months in 1781, indicating the precise date at several points of completion within the collection. At the end of *juan* 1, she records: "On the twenty-first day of the fifth month, in the *xinchou* year of Qianlong (1781), written at the Arbor of Lotus Fragrance and Bamboo Color. The end of *juan* 1." (*Chunyulou ji*, 1.8b). Then at the end of *juan* 4 she writes: "After an ailment I got up on the Double Seventh. The water caltrops have already climbed up and the autumn begonias are filling the fish basket, their fragrances absolutely pure. Wearing a smooth damask unlined robe, I write in the East Pavilion of Qijin Studio." The precise moment of completion and Shen's sensual awareness of the sight and scents of her surroundings and her body (what she was wearing) are inscribed in the text. And finally, at the end of *juan* 7: "On the twenty-third, I finished compiling all the *shi* poems. In total there are six *juan* of poetry with two hundred and fifty-three poems, and fifteen appended."[23] Hu Wenkai noted in his entry on Shen Cai that the wood blocks for the edition were carved with the calligraphy of her hand-copied manuscript, which is a much more expensive process, but it also adds further aesthetic value to the literary collection.[24]

The Feminine/Female Subject in the Text

Focusing on her poetic texts, the site of subject construction, what did Shen Cai inscribe on these pages with her brush and ink? Did she imitate, construct, or re/invent models and styles? If we examine the poetry, both *shi* and *ci*, in the collection, the focus is on an unabashedly feminine self, based on the model of representation which Maureen Robertson in her study on women poets' textual positions calls the "literati-feminine."[25] This is a female persona constructed by the male gaze and desire, as represented in the sixth century anthology of love poems *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (New Songs from a Jade Terrace) in which the female image is eroticized and objectified in a voyeuristic presentation.[26] Indeed, Shen Cai begins the *shi* poetry section with a poem explicitly entitled "Imitating the Jade Terrace Style":

Delicate and pretty, a maiden at fifteen,
Bright, bright, inside the deep chamber.
The moon reflects on her lightly penciled brows,
The wind blows on her moist fragrant mouth.
Red beans are from the tree of longing,
Its blossoms open in the long autumn days.
Concerned how she's thinned under the sash,
She dares not embroider mandarin ducks.

效玉臺體

盈盈十五女，
皎皎在洞房。
月映眉黛淺，
風吹口澤香。

紅豆相思樹，
花開秋日長。
自憐羅帶減，
不敢繡鴛鴦。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 2.1a)

The vocabulary, the mildly erotic imagery, the metaphor of love longing (red beans, emaciated waist under the sash, mandarin ducks) all derive from the "Jade Terrace" style, or what I refer to as the boudoir-erotic style. But is this imitation, self-objectification, or self-representation? As the first piece in the *shi* section in the roughly chronological arrangement, this piece is most probably juvenilia. Fifteen *sui*, or fourteen years old, is formally the beginning of maturity for girls, the age of the girl in the poem, when girls have their hair pinned up (*ji* 笄) in a ceremony marking the rite of passage; this ritual is often also performed just before the wedding or engagement.[27] In a colophon Shen Cai wrote on a piece of calligraphy entitled "Spring Rain" by the monk Zhiyong (fifth century), she records the occasion of her own rite of passage into womanhood as her coming of age ceremony enacted with the principal wife: "This was in the *bingshu* year of Qianlong (1766) when I first had my hair pinned up and paid my respects to madam. Madam gave me this calligraphy as a token of her friendship in return. I accordingly changed the name of my pavilion to 'Spring Rain.'" (*Chunyulou ji*, 14.7a) This record is a textual and gender displacement of the consummation of the marriage with Lu Xuan. She enacts the coming of age with the wife rather than the husband, but the poem marks a self-consciousness of being an erotic object.

The anthology *Yutai xinyong* was in the family possession. One of her song lyrics is subtitled "On a spring day, written on the back of *Yutai xinyong*" (*Chunyulou ji*, 8.7a-b). Perhaps on a certain level, her own life experiences find resonance with the literary representation of the enclosed, eroticized boudoir/garden space where temporality is embodied in the cyclical repetition of nature, an orderliness different from the vicissitudes of an individual's life connected to "outside" realities or historical changes. She uses the character *gui* 閨 "boudoir" often in poem titles and poem texts

in various combinations: *yougui* 幽閨 "secluded boudoir," *honggui* 紅閨 "red boudoir," *jingui* 金閨 "golden boudoir," *langui* 蘭閨 "orchid boudoir" etc., quite in keeping with the conventions of this style of poetry. Many titles in the *Chunyulou ji* also use simple seasonal markers, lending them a generic feel. But the texts of her poems manipulate a conventionalized language to express the specific, and in the process display great sensitivity to the subtle and minute changes and variations in the microscopic, intimate nature of her experience and perception. Take for example the following couplets:

The Onset of Winter Chill

...
Butterflies, startled by the sudden cold, find it hard to settle on the grass,
Flies, loving the light warmth, easily fall into the tea.
...

初寒

...
蝶驚乍冷難依草，
繩戀微溫易入茶。
...
(*Chunyulou ji*, 6.5a)

Autumn Evening in the Small Garden

...
As I sat a long time, the green moss got moistened by white dew,
When I walk the yellow leaves set off in relief my red shoes.
...
By mistake I brushed off the firefly on my hair—
It's just the moonlight through the woods glittering on the gold hairpin.

小園秋夕

...
坐久青苔滋白露，
行來黃葉襯紅鞋。
...
錯認拂鬢螢火落，
疏林明月耀金釵。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 5.7a-b)

The following poems also capture the minutiae of her daily life presented in a feminine mode:

Written at the Spur of the Moment

I've thrown away needle and thread to relax all day.
The trellis of red wisteria has hidden the floral latch.
Tired of listening to the babbling of village ditties,
I taught the little maid the lyrics to my new songs.

遣興

針線長拋盡日閒，
朱藤一桁掩花關。
村歌厭聽斑斑曲，
自把新詞教小鬟。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 2.2b)

Early Autumn Sitting at Night Reading

In the delicate cool I love to read the *Zhuangzi*,
At the low desk in my bed, reflections on the green gauze—
The moon has set past the pavilion—I realize I've sat long,
Even the jasmine flower on my hair has already bloomed!

新秋夜坐讀書

嫩涼初喜讀南華，
柴几框床映碧紗。
月過降樓知坐久，
鬢邊茉莉已開花。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 6.3b)

Writing Characters

On the cold paired-fish inkstone it soaks up the clear wave,
I lick on the fine brush, lightly moistened with ink.

But I was watched by the maid, giggling on the side—
Cherry lips suddenly dotted with purple grapes.

作字

雙魚洗冷汲清濤，
淡墨輕濡吮采毫。
卻被鴉鬟窺竊笑，
朱櫻忽點紫蒲萄。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 2.6b)

Each small object, each minute detail, each seemingly insignificant incident, each subjective observation or musing is encapsulated in a poem. It is easy to see the influence of the boudoir-erotic language and convention in the above poems, but Shen Cai subverts that very model in using it by constituting an active feminine subject at the center of these poems, turning them into the expressive feminine mode associated with folk song traditions such as the *Book of Songs*, the popular songs of Wu, and the song cycles of Ziye of the Six Dynasties. In the poem "Writing Characters," she turns herself into the object of the gaze (third line) only to create a comical vignette: the maid is the innocent voyeur of lips messed up from the practice of calligraphy.

Shen Cai is daring in trying out the erotic potential in her poetry. Her collection contains some of the most erotic verses written by a Chinese woman poet. There are two poems entitled "Recording Events on a Winter's Night," which are thinly veiled descriptions of a memorable night spent with her husband:

Outside the thin curtain lingering snow, we discussed poetry together,
Never believing there's separation in the human world.
In dream suddenly I chanted verses of heartbreak,
Under the plum blossom canopy this was known by spring.

On pillows designed with mandarin ducks, calls of "little darling,"
The song writer of love really does have passion.
We sing again the melody of Fish Playing in Spring Water,
Keeping the candle trimmed and lit by the perfumer till dawn.

冬夜紀事二絕

疏簾殘雪共論詩，
不信人間有別離。
夢裏忽吟斷腸句，
梅花帳底被春知。

鴛鴦枕上喚卿卿，
紅豆詞人信有情。
重唱魚遊春水曲，
薰籠剪燭到天明。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 3.8a)

Other poems focus more explicitly on the body, often titled with the word *xi* 戲 "playfully" to divert the referentiality of the erotic content and emphasize the literary play, such as the song lyric to the tune *Nanxiangzi* 南鄉子 subtitled "Playfully on Taking a Bath" 戲詠浴 (*Chunyulou ji*, 9.3a). In "Playful Poem on Springtime Hills," she may well be describing her own body through the eroticized representation of nature:

Beyond the tips of apricot trees two jade peaks,
Thin clouds bind across and the green mist is layered.
If you want to see the whole body of the delicate hills,
You should ask Third Master to untie the breast covers.

戲詠春山

杏子梢頭玉兩峰，
微雲橫束翠煙重。
玲瓏欲見山全體，
擬倩三郎解抹胸。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 4.6b)

But Shen Cai can also make fun of the erotic, such as in this song lyric on bound feet, to the tune "Wang Jiangnan:"

How ridiculous!
To bend the long jade bows.
Binding them so tight they grow an underside just like a crab.

Spread out those delicate toes in a row—
They're not as good as a piece of ginger.
What flavor are they? I ask you, young lover.

望江南

戲詠纏足

無謂甚、
竟屈玉弓長。
牢縛生臍渾似蟹，
朗排纖指不如薑。
何味問檀郎。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 9.2b)

This is one of the very few poems that women wrote about the bound foot, which is the most concealed part of the feminine body. Their erotic appeal lies in their mystification, a covered fetish to be fondled and smelled but never unmasked. Shen Cai not only wrote about them but did so in a critical and satirical tone, completely demystifying their erotic appeal by exposing their "naked truth" to the male lover who could only smell but not actually see them. As women knew about the shape and looks of their own, and thus other women's bound feet, Shen Cai's "poetic" disclosure challenges the male reader in general to visualize the not-so-pretty lumpy and gnarled appearance of bound feet.

Shen Cai is conscious of the fact that she is working within the conventions of the boudoir-erotic style.[28] But her self-representation is more effectively individual because she writes in the language and convention only to subvert the cliché image of passively waiting, tear-stained, love-lorn ladies immobilized in their lonely chambers. There is a total absence of tears or melancholy in her poetry; neither is there any sense of boredom or ennui. She textualizes the boudoir environment into an energized, productive space. She transforms into poetic subjects her daily duties and activities such as serving tea to her husband, sewing and embroidering, teaching the maid, playing a musical instrument, sitting or walking in her little garden. In her self-representation, she is always occupied with meaningful activity—busy reading, studying, practicing calligraphy, and writing poetry, often deep into the night and also early in the morning. Her working at calligraphy is a recurring subject of her poems. Some of these poems describe humorous accidents and contain a light touch

of self-irony, even while she is copying the revered styles of past masters such as Yang Xin (370-442) 羊 欣 and Ouyang Xiu (1007-72) 歐 陽 修:

Learning Calligraphy

The ivory tube lightly dabbed in the ink cloud.
On a cold day I tried to copy Yang Xin's style.
Not succeeding, my hand slipped, the pointed brush fell.
It soiled my skirt of butterflies in gold appliqué.

學 書

象 管 輕 輕 蘸 墨 雲 ，
日 寒 書 格 彷 羊 欣 。
不 成 失 手 尖 毫 落 ，
竟 涴 泥 金 蛺 蝶 裙 。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 3.3a-b)

I was Copying Ouyang Xiu's Calligraphy at Night when Suddenly Embers from the Lamp Dropped and Made Burn Marks. I was Really Mad. Madam Wrote a Poem and so I Harmonized with a Quatrain.

A scroll of thin Ou style—beautiful without a blemish.
Suddenly burn marks like fallen scabs spread all over.
I won't deny that the silver stand had brought happiness,
At the autumn window I lost control and cursed the flame.

夜 臨 歐 書 ， 忽 燈 燼 落 成 燒 痕 ， 余 恚 甚 。
夫 人 有 詩 ， 因 和 作 一 絕 。

瘦 歐 一 幅 美 無 瑕 ，
忽 漫 燒 痕 似 落 痂 。
不 道 銀 釭 曾 送 喜 ，
秋 窗 失 口 嗎 燈 花 。

(*Chunyulou ji*, 4.4b)

More often, her poems on practicing calligraphy show her concentration and deep absorption. They also show her determination and persistence, at different times of the day and in different seasons. The title of another poem

describes how her husband playfully tried to snatch the brush away from behind her while she was practicing unawares, but she was holding it so tight in concentration that surprisingly he could not get it out of her hand. She thus ends the quatrain with the couplet: "Don't say that slender leeks of spring have no energy or strength/There are three claw marks on the bamboo brush" 莫道春纖無氣力，爪痕入竹有三分 (*Chunyulou ji*, 6.5a-b). Once again, slender leeks/slender fingers—a commonly fetishized part of the female body in boudoir-erotic poetry—are here given strength and meaning with the new task they are performing.

While Shen Cai takes the boudoir-erotic style as her point of departure, in many of her poems she actually turns the eroticized female object into an actively desiring subject. She takes delight in her body, in her senses, in her talents, and most of all in being a woman. Her desires include the avid pursuit of reading, learning, and writing. Shen Cai does not experience either her gender or her efforts at learning as a burden or as mutually incompatible: she celebrates both. Her poems are literally and entirely written within the boudoir. In so doing, she has turned the boudoir space into a site of production and performance.

Sequestered in her side room, she achieved a degree of artistic and literary reputation in her own lifetime. Her talents crossed beyond the boundaries of her boudoir as her calligraphy was sought by a Japanese and her poetry circulated to the capital Beijing (*Chunyulou ji*, Preface 3a, 7.7a). A few years after the publication of her collected works, seven of her poems were selected for inclusion in the anthology of women's poetry the *Jifang ji* 擷芳集 (preface 1785), a vast compilation of more than 2000 women poets compiled by Wang Qishu 汪啓淑 (fl. late eighteenth century). Her poems are included in the last *juan* of the section of poetry by concubines (*jishi* 姬侍, 70.12a-13b). In 1779, as he penned the preface in preparation for the publication of her poetry and prose writings, Lu Xuan gave more than a hint that Shen Cai's literary and artistic work properly carried out within her side room was both an economic resource and cultural capital for the family: "Now her poems have circulated to the capital, and her calligraphy has reached across the ocean. Relying on her brush like Wu Cailuan 吳彩鸞,[29] she can help out our slight resources; assisting with the management of a Li Luoxiu 李絡秀,[30] she will enhance our reputation." (*Chunyulou ji*, Preface 3a)

Shen Cai may well have brought money into the household with her publication. My research indicates that a large number of copies of her poetry collection must have been printed, which suggests that her work was popular and reached a larger audience. In contrast to other women's texts, most of which have one or two copies extant in rare book collections, Shen

Cai's *Chunyulou ji* can be found in all the major rare book collections in libraries in China, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hangzhou.

For Shen Cai, her subordinate status and her upbringing within a polygamous household from the young age of twelve had successfully inculcated in her an acceptance of her specific gender role as a concubine and of her confined mode of existence. Her primary duty was to serve her master without upsetting the harmony of the household. However, from her literary works, a reader would neither categorize her as a passive object and subservient woman, nor as a conniving concubine manipulating the attention of her husband in relations of power to the other women in the household, especially the principal wife, whom she treats more like a teacher and mother than a competitor for her husband's affection. Her self-representation resists stereotypes. Her poetry, while approximating certain male paradigms of the representation of women, also subverts them in the process. She has constructed a different gendered significance and space for herself through the medium and technology of writing in the space of the side chamber.

Conclusion

From examples of concubines such as Liu Rushi, Li Yin, and Shen Cai, we see that the gender regime could provide opportunities for and accommodate the literary aspirations of some women who were otherwise at the bottom of the social sphere to gain literacy and literary fame despite the many odds that such a system held against them. It provided them with a "side room," a space with possibilities. This may be read as another instance of a resilience in the Confucian gender system that enabled it to co-opt women's complicity.[31] In a poem addressed to a neighbor girl, probably an imaginary interlocuter, Shen Cai defends both the pursuit of learning and being a woman:

In Reply to a Neighbour Girl

I intone when the moon is facing the window,
Recite softly when the sun is at high noon.
The girl next door said to me:
"Reading books is to make oneself suffer in vain."
I thank my neighbor for her words,
But my heart will always look to antiquity.
It's like the bees making honey,
My life chiefly depends on it.
A thousand cases of books will surpass a hundred city walls,

The myriad affairs will seem lighter than a feather.
I just wish that it will always be like this,
Even in my next life I want to be an old woman.

答 鄰 妹

長 嘯 月 當 窗 ，
微 吟 日 卓 午 。
鄰 妹 謂 余 曰 ，
讀 書 徒 自 苦 。
多 謝 鄰 妹 言 ，
余 心 慕 終 古 。
譬 如 蜂 釀 蜜 ，
性 命 藉 爲 主 。
千 函 敵 百 城 ，
萬 事 輕 一 羽 。
但 願 長 如 此 ，
來 生 仍 老 姥 。

(*Chunyulouji*, 6.5b)

Shen Cai's writings offer a startlingly positive view of herself and her environment, as do writings by other concubines. In a sense they are the fortunate ones who have the indispensible support of their husbands. But we can still ask what meanings textual production was able to offer those in positions of subordination. With Shen Cai, what remains to be examined are the inscriptions and colophons on paintings, and essays of connoisseurship, in which she assumes the subject position and full authority of an art critic. This is true also with the many unexplored writings of other women. How should we read self-representations that, rather than offering a critique of the patriarchal family system and the tensions in the subordinated female hierarchy by registering complaint and suffering, instead seem to locate a space for agency and the fulfillment of desire within the boundaries of the polygynous system? Do our modern perspectives and cultural differences obscure and erase certain possibilities for relational experience which, if we listen to the voices of the subordinated, we may recover?

Note

I would like to thank Robin Yates and Tom Looser for their helpful comments on this paper.

Endnotes

1. There were historical, class, and regional patterns and variations in the practice of concubinage. But the practice had become widespread in the Ming and Qing and not only men from elite or wealthy families took concubines. Patricia Ebrey discusses the conditions of concubines in the Song, the pivotal period of social and economic transition to the late imperial period. See *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Chapter 12, "Concubines."
2. Rubie S. Watson, "Wives, Concubines, and Maids: Servitude and Kinship in the Hong Kong Region, 1900-1940," in Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, eds., *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 237.
3. The central space or hall in a wealthy household is usually where the ancestral tablets are set up for ritual observances. See Francesca Bray's discussion of the variations in *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 96-105. The principal wife's room may be located in greatest proximity to this important social and ritual space.
4. Watson, "Wives, Concubines, and Maids," 244.
5. Watson, "Wives, Concubines, and Maids," 247.
6. Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao* 歷代婦女著作考 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985).
7. On Liu Rushi's life and poetry, see the seminal study by Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung: Crisis of Love and Loyalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
8. For a detailed study of Feng Xiaoqing's life and lore, see Ellen Widmer, "Xiaoqing's Literary Legacy and the Place of the Woman Writer in Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 111-55. On Li Shuyi's life and poetry collections, see Li Xiaorong, "Woman Writing about Women: Li Shuyi (1817-?) and Her Gendered Project" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2000).
9. Or seventeen *sui* in the Chinese way of counting. All references to age have been converted to actual age. For the astonishing detail concerning Li Shuyi's age when her work was published, I am indebted to Li Xiaorong.
10. See the entry on Li Yin and examples of her paintings in Marsha Weidner et al, *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists 1300-1912* (Indianapolis and New York: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Rizzoli, 1988), 102-5.

11. Xu Shichang 徐世昌, comp., *Wanqingyi shihui* 晚晴簃詩匯 (1929; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 9/183.8090.
12. Liu Rushi, for instance, was responsible for the section on women in the *Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集 (Anthology of Poetry from Various Dynasties). See Kang-i Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies," in Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 153-56. Dong Bai participated fully in the aesthetic and refugee life of her husband Mao Xiang 冒襄 during her nine years as his concubine. She compiled the *Lianyan* 奩艷, a collection of miscellaneous notes on women and the feminine, which is not extant. See Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü*, 688; see also Mao Xiang's memoir on her, *Yingmeian yiyu* 影梅庵憶語, in *Xianshu sizhong* 閒書四種 (Wuhan: Hubei cishu chubanshe, 1996), 1-70.
13. Li Xiaorong, "Woman Writing about Women," 10-13.
14. Published in 1782. Copy in Shanghai Library.
15. *Chunyulou ji*, Preface, 3a. The term he used is *gujia* 故家, literally "a former family," which implies a good family that has declined in wealth and status.
16. There is no indication that Shen Cai returned home to visit, but she seems to have kept in touch with a younger sister or cousin Piaoxiang, who came to stay with her. There are several poems written to or thinking of Piaoxiang. (*Chunyulou ji*, 4.7b, 8a, 7.5b, 8.8b).
17. *Pinghu xianzhi* 平湖縣志 (1886; reprinted in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu*, No. 189; Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1975), 1705.
18. For a translation of this classical didactic text for women, see Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*, New York: Century, 1932.
19. In a lyric to the tune "Manjianghong 滿江紅" Shen Cai quotes two apparently famous lines by Peng Sunyu and notes that Peng Zhenyin is his granddaughter. (*Chunyulou ji*, 8.5b-6a) For Peng Zhenyin's poetic works, see Hu Wenkai, 627-28.
20. *Pinghu xianzhi*, 1705.
21. In Lu Xuan's biography, one son by the name of Lu Fang 陸坊 is mentioned. He passed the provincial examination in 1808. See *Pinghu xianzhi*, 1705.
22. See Francesca Bray's seminal discussion of how, in a polygynous household, elite women appropriated the offspring of those lower down socially in the female hierarchy, *Technology and Gender*, 351-68.

23. Though not indicated, I am assuming the remaining *juan* were copied in the same year, as the collection was printed in the following year.
24. Hu, 365.
25. Maureen Robertson, "Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China" *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 69.
26. For a complete translation, see Anne Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986). See also my discussion of the female image generated by the male gaze in "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," in Pauline Yu, ed., *Voices of the Song Lyric in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 107-144.
27. See Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 45-47.
28. In a title within a series of bantering poems with her husband, she mentions in a note that the previous poem by her in the series "was graciously improved by madam" (i.e., the principal wife), so it does not contain a trace of feminine language (literally "the feeling of rouge" 脂 粉 氣) (*Chunyulou ji*, 4.6a). On this term see also the discussion in Kang-i Sun Chang's paper in this volume.
29. A woman calligrapher of the Tang (618-905) who supported her family with her work.
30. Li Luoxiu came from a commoner family. During a hunting trip, Zhou Jun, General of Andong of the Jin (265-316), chanced upon her ability to manage the production of a large banquet. As a result, he asked to have her as his concubine. She brought up her three sons to become successful statesmen. She obviously provides an apt and favorable comparison for Shen Cai. Li's biography is included in the *Lienü* section of the *Jin shu* 晉 書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 96.2514-15.
31. Dorothy Ko emphasizes this aspect of the Confucian gender regime in her study of women's culture in the seventeenth century, see *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).