Iron Clappers and Red Castanets:

Gender and Representation in Wu Zao's (1796-1862) Writings

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life and writings of woman poet Wu Zao (1796-1862) within the circumstances of women's literary culture in late imperial China. It aims to explore the different images of Wu Zao in her *shi* poems and song lyrics as well as the representations in the paratexts to her works. The thesis is organized into three chapters that examine: 1) the different representations of Wu Zao by her contemporary male literati and gentry women, 2) the poems representing Wu Zao's pleasant experiences in the inner quarters, and 3) the song lyrics in which she fashioned herself masculine. This thesis challenges the simplistic representation of Wu Zao's image as melancholic and sheds a new light on literary women's quotidian life and social activities.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la vie et l'œuvre de la poétesse Wu Zao (1796-1862) dans le contexte de la culture littéraire féminine de la fin de la Chine impériale. Elle a pour but d'explorer les diverses images de Wu Zao présentes autant dans ses poèmes shi et ci que les représentations provenant des paratextes de ses œuvres. La thèse comporte trois chapitres qui examinent: 1) les différentes représentations de Wu Zao par les hommes de lettres et femmes de la noblesse vivants à la même époque, 2) les poèmes décrivant les expériences agréables de Wu Zao dans les boudoirs et 3) les poèmes ci dans lesquels Wu Zao se représente de façon masculine. Cette thèse conteste la vision simpliste de Wu Zao comme étant une femme mélancolique et apporte un nouvel éclairage sur la vie quotidienne des femmes littéraire et leurs activités sociales.

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Introduction

The subject of my study is Wu Zao 吳藻 (1796-1862), one of the most prominent women poets in Hangzhou active in the Daoguang (1821-1850) and the Xianfeng (1851-1861) periods. She is also known by her courtesy name Pingxiang 蘋香.[1] Unlike most literary women of the time, Wu Zao was born into a merchant family and married to a man surnamed Huang from the same social class. She had three elder siblings (who are only known by their courtesy names): eldest sister Hengxiang 蘅香, second sister Zhixiang 芷香, and third brother Mengjiao 夢蕉. They were also Wu Zao's friends, travelling companions, and supporters of her literary pursuit.[2] Wu Zao obtained a well-rounded education like other women writers from the gentry class and distinguished herself by her gifts in poetry, music, painting and calligraphy.[3]

As a result of her devotion to poetry, Wu Zao left behind a rich literary legacy, including

[1] For Wu Zao's birth year, please refer to the Appendix I. Wu Zao also has two other style names: Yucengzi 玉岑子 and Xiuyuezi 修月子. The former is more commonly known. The latter is only noted by Wu Zao's intimate friend Shen Shanbao 沈善寶 (1808-1862) in a note in her poem "Liqiuri die qianyun ji Pingxiang 立秋日疊前韻寄蘋香" in *Hongxuelong shixuan chuji* 鴻雪樓詩選初集, 15·10b-11a.

[2] For the names of her brother and sisters, please see the short preface to *Dong xian ge* 洞仙歌, in *Xiangnan xuebei ci* 香南雪北詞, in *Linxia yayin ji* 林下雅音集, 10a.

[3] One of the accounts, which describes the versatile talents of Wu Zao, is the preface attached to Chen Wenshu's 陳文述 (1771-1843) poem "Hualian shuwu huai Wu Pingxiang 花簾書屋懷吳蘋香." See Chen Wenshu, *Xiling guiyong* 西泠閨詠 (1892 edition), 16·2a-2b.

one *zaju* drama, eighty-five *shi* poems, three hundred and nine song lyrics, five suites (*taoqu* 套曲) and one aria (*xiaoling* 小令).[4] Wu Zao's drama *Qiao ying* 喬影 (The Fake Image) was composed in or perhaps before 1824 and performed at family banquets in the same year.[5] In 1825, this drama went to the public stage in Hushang 滬上 (present-day Shanghai) with great success. It was printed later in the same year and re-printed the following year (1826). At almost the same year Chen Wenshu compiled the poetry anthology *Bicheng xianguan nüdizi shi* 碧城仙館女弟子詩 (Poetry of Female Disciples of the Jade City Immortal Pavilion) , in which he collected poems of his ten female disciples. Nine poems written by Wu Zao are included under the title *Hualian shuwu shi* 花簾書屋詩 (Poems from the Floral Curtain Study).[6] In 1826, during Wu Zao's visit to Wumen (present-day Suzhou) for the literary gathering of Chen Wenshu's

[4] Wu Zao, *Qiao ying* (1826), copy in the National Library, Beijing; *Hualian ci* 花簾詞 and *Xiangnan xuebei ci* 香南雪北詞, in *Linxia yayin ji* 林下雅音集, ed. Mao Jun 冒俊 (1828-1884), Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 1, 2016); *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* 香南雪北廬集, copy in Nanjing Library; *Hualian shuwu shi* 花簾書屋詩, in *Bicheng xianguan nüdizi shi* 碧城仙館女弟子詩, ed. Chen Wenshu, copy in Princeton University Library. Futhermore, Wu Zao's *ci*, "Qi tian le 齊天樂," appears in *Cihui guan shici cao* 慈暉館詩詞草, Ruan Enluan 阮恩灤, Ming Qing Women's Writings; and "*tici* 題辭," in *Wenjian yici* 聞見異辭, Xu Qiucha 許秋垞, CADAL Digital Library: http://www.cadal.zju.edu.cn/ (accessed Aug. 1, 2016).

[5] The second poem in Wu Zao's *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* is: "My drama *Fake Image* or *Drinking Wine while Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'* has circulated quite widely. Troupes in Jiangzhe perform it. At the end of spring, Mr. Jin Meixi held a banquet and had it performed, and I was invited to watch. I was moved to compose two poems 余所制喬影劇即飲酒讀離騷意，頗傳于外，江浙梨園有演之者。時值餞春，金丈梅溪開筵演此，承招往觀，感賦二首." This poem is dated to 1824 or before. See Jiang Minfan 江民繁, *Wu Zao ci zhuan: dusao yinjiu jiu shengya* 吳藻詞傳：讀騷飲酒舊生涯 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2014), 53-54.

[6] A printed version of *Bicheng xianguan nüdizi shi* was published by the Xiling Publishing House 西泠印社 in 1915.

female disciples, she showed the draft of her first song lyric collection *Hualian ci* 花簾詞 (Collection of Song Lyrics from the Floral Curtain) to a small group of literati.[7] In 1827, a manuscript of this collection appears to have circulated in Hangzhou.[8] This collection went to print in 1830 and contains one hundred and twenty-seven song lyrics.[9] Wu Zao's second song lyric collection *Xiangnan xuebei ci* 香南雪北詞 (Collection of Song Lyrics from Fragrant South and Snowy North) was printed twice, in 1844 and 1850. The 1844 edition includes one hundred and twenty-three song lyrics; the 1850 edition adds five suites and one aria.[10] In 1856, Wu Zao's third collection *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* 香南雪北廬集 (Collection from Fragrant South and Snowy North Studio), which has two independent chapters (or *juan*): *Xiangnan xuebei lu shiji* 香南雪北廬詩集 (Collection of Poetry from Fragrant South and Snowy North Studio) and *Xiangnan xuebei lu ciji* 香南雪北廬詞集 (Collection of Song Lyrics from Fragrant South and Snowy North Studio), was printed by Jin Shengwu's 金繩武 (fl. 1835-1861) publishing house—Immortal Studio of Evaluating Flowers 評花仙館. This collection includes seventy-five poems and seventeen song lyrics. In addition, Wu Zao also wrote two song lyrics as verse inscriptions, which are not included in her collections (See footnote 4). In this thesis, I have used the following editions of Wu Zao's works because they provide the most complete coverage and are

[7] See Wei Qiansheng, preface to *Hualian ci*, *Wei xu*·4a-5a.

[8] The circulation of the manuscript in Hangzhou is evinced by Shen Shanbao's poem entitled "Reading Manuscript of Madame Wu Pingxiang's Song Lyrics from the Floral Curtain 讀吳蘋香夫人花簾詞稿," which is dated *dinghai* 丁亥 (1827). See Shen Shanbao, *Hongxuelou shixuan chuji*, 1·18a.

[9] It seems that *Hualian ci* has taken two years from 1829 to 1830 to print. See the three prefaces to *Hualian ci*, *Chen xu*·2a-*Zhao xu*·6a.

[10] For the publication year for the two editions of *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, see the two authorial prefaces by Wu Zao, *ziji* 1a, *zizhi* 1a.

the most accessible. These are the second edition of *Qiao ying* (1826), *Hualian ci* and *Xiangnan xuebei ci* in *Linxia yayin ji* 林下雅音集 edited by Mao Jun 冒俊 (1828-1884) and published in 1884, and *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* (1856).[11] Another significant source is *Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話 (Remarks on Poetry by Notable Women) and *Mingyuan shihua xuji* 名媛詩話續集 (Remarks on Poetry by Notable Women, Sequel) written by Shen Shanbao, in which Shen has included precious records of her personal contacts with many cotemporary women writers, including her friendship with Wu Zao and a large social circle that overlaps with Wu Zao's.[12]

As an important and, in a sense, exceptional woman poet and dramatist, Wu Zao's literary production has received a certain amount of scholarly attention in both Chinese and English publications. In order to locate my own research within the current scholarship, I will summarize below some of the most important studies in this field and, in particular, those about Wu Zao's life and works. In the last two decades, with the rediscovery of textual productions by educated women—courtesans and gentry women—from the late Ming to the end of the Qing, women's cultural legacies have attracted the attention of scholars in history, literary studies, art history, and many other fields. Cultural historians, such as Dorothy Ko and Susan Mann, have opened up new vistas in women's history in late imperial China. Their investigations demonstrate the development and features of women's culture, women's gender roles in family and society, and the rich details of women's life. Their research has largely relied on women's poetry and other types of writing as primary sources. Their studies illuminate the flourishing literary culture and

[11] *Hualian ci* and *Xiangnan xuebei lu ci* are also included in the song lyric anthology *Xiaotanluan shi huike guixiu ci* 小檀欒室彙刻閨秀詞, compiled by Xu Naichang 徐乃昌 (1868-1936).

[12] Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua* and *Mingyuan shihua xuji,* Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 1, 2016).

communities of gentry women from the Yangzi delta region. Moreover, they testify to the importance of women's participation in literary culture. It is worth-noting that two ambitious projects of English translation of women's writings into English have also been carried out: *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (1999) and *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (2004); they indicate the wider appeal of late imperial Chinese women's literary production to the English readership. Recent studies in China and Taiwan have also constructed revisionist literary histories that take women's poetry into consideration. In literary research, scholars such as Grace Fong, Wai-yee Li, Maureen Robertson, and Ellen Widmer, have offered important insights into women's subjectivity and voice in poetry. My thesis aims to make a contribution to the field of Ming-Qing women's studies with an in-depth study on Wu Zao's life and writings.

Critical comments on and evaluations of Wu Zao's literary production begin with traditional Chinese critical works, which evaluate Wu Zao's poetic style and her skills as a lyricist and dramatist as well as remarks on biographical details that have already appeared in traditional genres such as *shihua* 詩話 (remarks on poetry) and *cihua* 詞話 (remarks on song lyric). Some of the earliest critical remarks appeared even during Wu Zao's own life time, for example, in her friend Shen Shanbao's *Mingyuan shihua* and *Mingyuan shihua xuji* and in the works of male literati.[13] The prefaces written for Wu Zao's three collections by her contemporaries Chen Wenshu, Wei Qiansheng 魏謙升 (1800-1861), Zhao Qingxi 趙慶熹 (1792-1847), Jin Shengwu,

[13] These literary works include: Chen Wenshu, *Xiling guiyong*; Liang Shaoren 梁绍壬 (1792-?), *Liangban qiuyu'an suibi* 兩般秋雨盦隨筆; Huang Xieqing 黃燮清 (1805-1864), *Guochao cizong xubian* 國朝詞綜續編; Qi Xueqiu 齊學裘 (1803-?), *Jixin'an shi hua* 寄心盦詩話; Qian Yong 錢詠 (1799-1844), *Lüyuan conghua* 履園叢話; Yan Heng 嚴蘅 (1826?-1854?), *Nüshishuo* 女世說; Ding Bing 丁丙 (1832-1899) and Ding Shen 丁申 (?-1880), *Guochao Hangjun shiji* 國朝杭郡詩輯.

and Zhang Jingqi 張景祁 (1827-1891), and the paratexts of her drama *Qiao ying* also contain critical contents.[14] After Wu Zao's death, her reputation as a famous woman lyricist continued to spread in critical works in the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.[15] Among all these works, two works are representative. First is the influential work *Baiyuzhai cihua* 白雨齋詞話 (Remarks on Song Lyrics from the White Rain Studio) by the authoritative late Qing critic Chen Tingzhuo 陳廷焯 (1853-1892), in which he does not consider Wu Zao as a first-class lyricist and criticizes some of Wu Zao's song lyrics for being superficial or resentful and angry in tone.[16] The second work, *Qingdai guixiu shihua* 清代閨秀詩話 (Remarks on Poetry by Gentry Women of the Qing) by Yu Biyun's 俞陛雲 (1868-1950), on the contrary, celebrates Wu Zao, together with Xu Can 徐燦 (1610-1678) and Gu Taiqing 顧太清 (1799-1877), as the three greatest women lyricists of the Qing dynasty.[17] In Gu Xianrong's 顧憲融 (1901-1955) book *Tianci menjing* 填詞門徑 (The Door to Song Lyric Composition), which aims to teach beginners to write song lyrics, Wu Zao is also considered one of the greatest song lyricists in Chinese history; indeed the only women included in this book are Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-1151) and

[14] For discussion of the paratexts to *Qiao ying*, see Chapter One.

[15] Traditional critical works on Wu Zao written by the later generations include: Lei Jin 雷瑨 (1871-1941) and Lei Jian 雷瑊 (fl. 1875), *Guixiu cihua* 閨秀詞話; Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869-1928), *Jinci conghua* 近詞叢話; Zhang Deying 張德瀛 (fl. 1891-1914), *Cizheng* 詞徵; Wang Yunzhang 王蘊章 (1885-1942), *Ranzhi yuyun* 燃脂餘韻; Chen Yun 陳芸 (?-1911), *Xiaodaixuan lunshishi* 小黛軒論詩詩; *Xuxiu siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 續修四庫全書總目提要.

[16] "The meaning of [her song lyric *Lang tao sha*] is shallow 韻味淺薄"; "[The song lyrics] by Wu Pingxiang are resentful and angry 吳蘋香則怨而怒矣." See Chen Tingzhuo, *Baiyuzhai cihua*, 5·30b, 7·8a, Chinese Text Project: http://ctext.org/ (accessed August 10, 2016).

[17] Yu Biyun, *Qingdai guixiu shihua*, *juan* 4, quoted in Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao ci zhuan,* 14.

Wu Zao.[18] In scholarship on Chinese poetry from the republican period, the trend of which was to construct literary histories, Wu Zao regularly appears in histories of the *ci* genre or histories of women's literature.[19] These works witness an elevation of Wu Zao's status as a woman poet.

Other studies by modern Chinese scholars focus on Wu Zao's life and the literary qualities in her works. An important scholarly work is the drama specialist Lu Eting's 陸萼庭 *Qiaoying zuozhe Wu Zao shiji* 喬影作者吳藻事輯 (Chronology of Events in the Life of Wu Zao, The Author of the *Fake Image*), which offers valuable information on Wu Zao's life and major works.[20] More recently, Hong Kong scholar Huang Yanli 黃嫣梨 explores Wu Zao's large social network through Wu Zao's social occasional song lyrics in the chapter "Qing nüciren Wu Zao jiaoyou kao 清女詞人吳藻交遊考 (A Study on the Qing Female Lyricist Wu Zao's Social Network)," in which she indicates that seventy-three men and women are mentioned in Wu Zao's works.[21] A groundbreaking work is Taiwan scholar Chung Hui-ling's 鍾慧玲 *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu* 清代女作家專題──吳藻及其相關文

[18] Gu Xianrong, *Tianci menjing* (Shanghai: Zhongyang shudian, 1935), 115-116.

[19] For histories of the *ci* genre, see Hu Yunyi 胡雲翼 (1906-1965), *Zhongguo cishi lue* 中國詞史略, and Xie Qiuping 謝秋萍 (fl. 1930), *Wu Zao nüshi de baihuaci* 吳藻女士的白話詞; for women's literary histories, see Liang Yizhen 梁乙真(1899-1950), *Qingdai funü wenxueshi* 清代婦女文學史, and Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧 (1901-1991), *Zhongguo nüxing de wenxue shenghuo* 中國女性的文學生活.

[20] Lu Eting 陸萼庭, "Qiaoying zuozhe Wu Zao shiji 喬影作者吳藻事輯" in *Qingdai xiqujia congkao* 清代戲曲家叢考 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1995), 196-210.

[21] Huang Yanli, "Qing nüciren Wu Zao jiaoyou kao 清女詞人吳藻交遊考," in *Wenshi shiwu lun* 文史十五論 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001), 111-134.

學活動研究 (Qing Women Writers—Studies on Wu Zao and her Literary Activities).[22] This book includes a textual analysis of selected song lyrics by Wu Zao, in which she argues for a change in Wu Zao's self-image projected in her works written from different life phases. Chung indicates that in Wu Zao's earlier song lyrics and her drama *Qiao ying*, the image projected is melancholic and frustrated, but that the tone in her later song lyrics project serenity. Also, Chung's book provides robust information about Wu Zao's social connections with gentry women and male literati. In his book *Wu Zao ci zhuan: dusao yinjiu jiu shengya* 吳藻詞傳：讀騷飲酒舊生涯 (Wu Zao's Song Lyrics and Biography: Reading 'Encountering Sorrow' and Driking Wine in her Old Life), Jiang Minfan 江民繁 attempts to construct a bio-chronology for Wu Zao.[23] Jiang has, significantly, re-discovered Wu Zao's third collection, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji,* and he is able to describe an expanded social network between Wu Zao and poets from the predominantly male poetry society Chanting Club of the East Study 東軒吟社.

In her pioneering work on the history of the song lyric written by women, *Nüxing cishi* 女性詞史 (A History of Women's Song Lyrics), *ci* scholar Deng Hongmei 鄧紅梅 provides critical analysis of Wu Zao's song lyrics. Deng historicizes Wu Zao's poetic style by contextualizing her song lyrics in the literary trends of the Qing dynasty and holds Wu Zao in a very prominent position as a song lyric writer.[24] Lastly, drama specialist Hua Wei 華瑋 has written the most

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[22] Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu* 清代女作家專題──吳藻及其相關文學活動研究 (Taipei: Lexis Book Co., 2001).

[23] Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao ci zhuan: yinjiu dusao jiu shengya* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2014).

[24] Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cishi* (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000). Deng also edits and comments on Wu Zao's song lyrics, selected from Wu's first two *ci* collections, in her book *Meijua Ruxue wu xiangchan: Wu Zao ci zhuping* 梅花如雪悟香禪：吳藻詞註評 (2004).

important and comprehensive study on *Qiao ying* in the chapter "'Ninan' de yishu chuantong: Ming Qing funü xiqu zhong zhi ziwo chengxian yu xingbie fansi 「擬男」的藝術傳統：明清婦女戲曲中之自我呈現與性別反思 (The Artistic Tradition of "Immitation of Men": Self-Representation and Reflection on Gender in the Dramas by Ming-Qing Women)," in which argues that Wu Zao's ideal selfhood is achieved by means of cross-dressing. [25]

In the West, Wu Zao's fame probably began with the translations by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung in the anthology *Women Poets of China.*[26] They hailed her as a great lesbian poet.[27] With the emergence of studies on Chinese women's writings, interests in Wu Zao in the West primarily turned to translating her song lyrics. The two anthologies, *Women Writers of Traditional China* and *The Red Brush*, include a good selection of song lyrics from Wu Zao's first two collections *Hualian ci* and *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, accompanied by a biographical sketch. *The Red Brush* also provides a complete translation of the drama *Qiao ying* with the postscript by Wu Zaigong 吳載功 (discussed in Chapter 1) and an analysis of her drama and song lyrics. Sophie Volpp also provides a complete translation of the drama with a textual analysis.[28]

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[25] Hua Wei, "Ninan de yishu chuan tong: Mingqing funü xiqu zhong zhi ziwo chengxian yu xingbie fansi" in *Ming Qing funü zhi xiqu chuangzuo yu piping* 明清婦女之戲曲創作與批評 (Taiwan: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo, 2003), 119-127.

[26] Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, *Women Poets of China* (New York: A New Direction Book, 1972).

[27] I do not gree with this point of view. As Tze-lan Sang points out, female same-sex relations are rarely represented in writings by either men or women in late imperial China. See Tze-lan Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 60-63. Among Wu Zao's oeuvre, I have found little evidence to prove that Wu Zao was a lesbian. Needless to say, the term "lesbian" here used to describe Wu Zao's identity is anachronistic.

[28] Sophie Volpp, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow': A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao," in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, eds. Susan Mann and Yu-yin Cheng. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 239-250.

There are several critical studies that include some discussion on Wu Zao's work but there has not been a sustained in-depth study of Wu Zao.[29] In this thesis, I intend to explore Wu Zao's poetic works, both *ci* and *shi*, along with the paratexts that frame her literary collections. I focus on two interconnected issues: (self-)representation and genre. The song lyric is Wu Zao's primary literary genre. As mentioned above, Wu Zao's talent as a song lyricist was clearly recognized and praised by poets and critics already in her own time. She wrote a far greater number of song lyrics than *shi* poems and uses the song lyric for both self-expressive and social functions. Through the song lyric, she was able to communicate with an extended community that included both men and women. It is in this social context that her self-representation or self-image projected in the song lyric can be thought of, almost counter-intuitively, as "public." In contrast, as I will show in Chapter Two, Wu Zao circulated her poems in the *shi* genre only among intimate and almost exclusively female friends in a small circle. In this female homosocial space, I describe the self–image projected as "private." Wu Zao is very conscious of her choice of genres, which can be seen in her distinction of themes and lexicons used in different genres. A quintessential example is that the expression of "sorrow" does not exist in her *shi* poems. This may be explained by the fact that some of her *shi* poems appear to have been composed at a later stage of her life, during which she enjoyed more support from her extended social circle. But it could also be possible that she has chosen to reserve the *shi* genre for particular, less-performative expressions. In contrast, Wu Zao forcefully vents her frustration and

[29] These studies include: Grace Fong, "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song"; Tze-lan Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian*; Xiaorong Li, "Engendering Heroism: Ming-Qing Women's Song Lyrics to the Tune *Man Jiang Hong*"; Yanning Wang, "Fashioning Voices of Their Own: Three Ming-Qing Women Writers' Uses of Qu Yuan's Persona and Poetry"; Siu-leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*.

sorrow in her drama and many early song lyrics. She has also chosen to write in a masculinized-style language, through which she self-fashioned as masculine. I also note the flirtatious and sensual language, expected of the generic conventions, she adopts in her arias.[30] Finally, in the following discussion, I want to show the differences in the representations of Wu Zao. I will emphasize how the representations of Wu Zao in the paratexts written for her works reveal *how her contemporaries saw her or constructed her image*, whereas Wu Zao's self-representations in her poetry reveal *how she saw herself or wished herself to be seen*. The latter are effects of her negotiation and manipulation of particular genres, which may differ from and even contradict the perceptions of her contemporaries.

In this thesis, I will bring into discussion the seventy-five *shi* poems in *Xiangnan xuebei lu shij*, a work long thought lost or was simply unknown. This lacuna resulted in a skewed reception of Wu Zao based solely on her drama and song lyrics. More importantly, because of their general buoyant spirit, these *shi* poems unveil an image strikingly different from the melancholic image projected in some of Wu Zao's better known song lyrics. I will also examine closely the paratexts written for Wu Zao's works, especially for *Qiao ying*. These writings, which have not been discussed previously, show how the image of Wu Zao was constructed and manipulated differently by her contemporaries of both genders.

The thesis will examine Wu Zao's life experiences through her works and situate her life in her social network. I begin by examining her writings in different literary genres and intend to demonstrate how Wu Zao constructed contradictory self-images in the same stage of her life. I turn to discuss how the received melancholic image of Wu Zao was constructed by analyzing and deconstructing the paratexts, especially those written for *Qiao ying*. *Qiao ying* has been

[30] See for example, the aria (*sanqu*) "*Nan yue diao*: Ti hangui bingqu tu 南越調: 題寒閨病趣圖," in *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, 5b-7a.

extensively studied by Chinese and Western scholars, but no one has yet examined the prefaces, inscriptions, and postscripts, which are critical in constructing and circulating a particular image of Wu Zao. I then turn to examine Wu Zao's poetry: the cultural values and gendered dimensions of her *shi* poetry about everyday life and the social-occasional dimension of her song lyrics as well as the masculine mode in which she wrote these song lyrics. I argue that these song lyrics are part of her means to gain a place in the predominantly male literary domain.

The thesis is organized into three chapters. Chapter One investigates how the image of Wu Zao was represented differently by contemporary male literati and gentry women in their writings. The majority of these writings are the paratexts around the second edition of *Qiao ying* published in 1826. In order to demonstrate the pivotal role that gender plays in the representation of Wu Zao's image, this chapter first examines how male paratext writers of *Qiao ying* appropriate the theme of "Encountering Sorrow" for self-expression and give priority to the image of a melancholic woman. Secondly, this chapter shows how paratext writers successfully build up Wu Zao's image as a talent in the boudoir, especially by arguing the superiority of female talent over that of men. Also, I attempt to analyze how writers of paratexts understand the cross-dressed female scholar in *Qiao ying* as an image of Wu Zao. Lastly, I aim to discuss the complexity of Wu Zao's image, which was also influenced by Wu Zao's age, her changing attitude towards the art of the song lyric, the accessibility of her works, and different evaluative standards used by both genders.

Chapter Two aims to explore how Wu Zao inscribes her pleasant boudoir experiences in her *shi* poems, and how these cheerful poems forcibly challenge the accepted, melancholic image of Wu Zao, which is projected in her earlier works, such as *Qiao ying* and song lyrics in the *Hualian ci.* In doing so, I will provide an analysis of two poem series—*Qiqiao ci* (praying for

skills) and *Xiaoxia ci* (leisure of the summer)—from the newly rediscovered *shi* collection *Xiangnan xuebei lu shiji.* My investigation on *Qiqiao ci* will provide a new point of view of women's experience about the female-exclusive rituals, which are an important aspect of women's culture, and also the literary world created and celebrated by Wu Zao and her female friends. Furthermore, my discussion of *Xiaoxia ci* will present substantial evidence for Wu Zao's experience in the inner quarters, especially through her descriptions of boudoir amusements and objects of everyday use in a light-hearted tone, which strikingly opposes the sorrowful image of Wu Zao.

Chapter Three demonstrates how Wu Zao appropriates masculine poetics in her song lyrics, which transcend the limitations of feminine poetics, and thereby creates and presents a masculinized self-image. My analysis focuses on a selection of five song lyrics under the subgenres or themes of song lyrics inscribed on paintings, thoughts on the past, friendship with like-minded scholars, witnessing to social turmoil, and gender frustration, which are written in an explicit or subdued masculine mode. Through the five topoi, I intend to show the woman writer Wu Zao's appropriation of the masculine lyric tradition, and how a masculinized image is constructed by her conscious choices of textual strategies.

Chapter I Paratexts: Wu Zao's Images in Others' Eyes

In this chapter, I aim to explore how the image of Wu Zao was represented in different ways by contemporary male literati and gentry women. Also, I intend to demonstrate how Wu Zao's self-representation either differs from or conforms to her representation by writers of both genders. The paratexts of Wu Zao's works have received little scholarly attention. I argue that these writings play a significant role in constructing the widely accepted melancholic image of Wu Zao while also mitigating the less conventional image of her as a cheerful woman.

Here I want to draw on the concept of paratexts coined by the French critic Gérard Genette in his book *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. As framing devices, paratexts direct the reader's access to the meaning of the main text.[31] That is to say that paratexts influence the reader's reception and understanding of the main text, which I argue also affect the image of the author. In the present case, Wu Zao's drama and poetry are surrounded or framed by many paratexts. A good part of this chapter will focus on reading the paratexts around the second edition of *Qiao ying* 喬影 (The Fake Image) published in 1826.[32] *Qiao ying* is the single most important piece among Wu Zao's oeuvre, and the second edition contains lavish paratexts by scholar-officials, local celebrities of both genders, and dramatists. These paratexts include a portrait of Wu Zao in male robes, a preface, inscriptions by twenty-nine literati and five gentry women, and two postscripts. Other texts of contemporary writers and Wu Zao's own writings

[31] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-15. See Grace Fong's discussion in "The Life and Afterlife of Ling Zhiyuan (1831–1852) and Her Poetry Collection," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 1.2 (2014): 127; also in "Auto/biographical Subjects: Ming-Qing Women's Poetry Collections as Sources for Women's Life Histories," *Overt and Covert Treasures*, ed. Clara Wing-chung Ho (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012): 372-373.

[32] Wu Zao, *Qiao ying* (second edition, 1826), copy in National Library.

will also be discussed in this paper. The interaction of these texts co-creates the varied aspects of the image of Wu Zao.

In the following section, I will first situate this play in the tradition of interpreting "Encountering Sorrow" in order to demonstrate how paratexts writers manipulate the *topos* for self-expression and thereby emphasize the image of a frustrated talent in the boudoir. Then, I will examine how paratexts writers construct Wu Zao's image as a talented woman, especially through arguing the superiority of female talent over men's. Third, I will discuss the cross-dressing in *Qiao ying*, and how paratexts writers understand the cross-dressed female scholar as an image of Wu Zao. Finally, I will discuss the complexity of Wu Zao's image, which I suggest was also influenced by her age, her attitude towards song lyrics, accessibility of her works, and different evaluative standards of both genders.

The Tradition of "Encountering Sorrow"

The image of Wu Zao was primarily shaped by the title and theme of this drama. "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'" (*yinjiu du Sao yi* 飲酒讀騷意) is an alternative title for *Qiao ying*.[33] In this play, the female protagonist, Xie Xucai 謝絮才, is role-typed as a male lead (*xiaosheng* 小生) and cross-dressed in male attire throughout the play. *Qiao ying* was understood as an autobiography of Wu Zao by her contemporaries and modern scholars, and the female character Xie Xucai is thus deemed an alter ego of Wu Zao.[34] By temporally breaking through the gender boundary in her drama, Wu Zao forcibly expresses her gender frustration and desire

[33] For the play's title, see Wu Zao's poem title in *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji,* 1a.

[34] Hua Wei, *Ming Qing funü zhi xiqu chuangzuo yu piping*, 119-127. And see Sophie Volpp, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow': A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao," 239-250.

for immortality through words. This act of "drinking wine and reading 'encountering sorrow'" was considered a symbol of becoming a *mingshi* 名士 (famous gentleman). In the anecdote of Wang Gong 王恭 (?-398) in *A New Account of the Tales of the World,* he claims: "A famous gentleman (*mingshi*) does not necessarily have to possess remarkable talent. Merely let a man be perpetually idle and a heavy drinker, and whoever has read the poem 'Encountering Sorrow', can then be called a 'famous gentleman.'"[35] The portrait of Wu Zao displayed with the title "Drinking Wine and Reading' Encountering Sorrow'" on the stage is a crucial element of the drama's plot. In this drama, Wu Zao identifies her alter ego Xie Xucai 謝絮才 with Qu Yuan 屈原 (fl. 340-278 BC). In Qu Yuan's signature poem "Encountering Sorrow," the poet laments his political frustration and describes his spiritual journeys to ideal realms.[36] The noble man's futile pursuit established the tradition of not being in accord with the times (*shi bu yu* 士不遇).[37] During the Ming Qing transition, the lore of Qu Yuan reached another zenith owing to the political disorder and personal frustration of scholar literati. In particular, a wave of works adapting Qu Yuan's tale and poetry were composed in the *zaju* genre. A case in point is You Tong's 尤侗 (1618-1704) *zaju* drama *Reading "Encountering Sorrow"* (*Du lisao* 讀離騷).[38] These male playwrights in general are sympathetic to or identify with Qu Yaun's political pursuit

[35] For the original text, see Liu Yiqing (403-44) 劉義慶, "Rendan 任誕," in Yang Yong 楊勇, annot., *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* 世說新語校箋 (Hong Kong: Dazhong shuju, 1969), 575-76. For the translation, see Richard Mather, *A New Account of the Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 391.

[36] Laurence A. Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 17-47.

[37] Sophie Volpp, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow': A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao," 241.

[38] You Tong's *Du Lisao* is alluded to twice in *Qiao ying's* inscriptions. Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 8b, 10b.

and ill fate. In his study of transformations of Qu Yuan's lore, Laurence Schneider emphasizes that Qu Yuan, together with his suffering and poetry, were used by Ming-Qing male scholars as "a means of emotional release."[39] For them, the frustration and hurt are caused more by the social ladder than the ruler.[40] Through chanting "Encountering Sorrow," the scholar resonates with Qu Yuan's plight and those of other previous worthies. It is no surprise that Wu Zao's drama deeply touched her male contemporaries, and Wu Zao became a reincarnation of Qu Yuan and a *zhiyin* (one who knows the tone, i.e. an understanding friend) for these frustrated male readers. The postscript of Ge Qingceng 葛慶曾 (1786-1828) provides an illuminating example. Ge was a friend of Wu Zao's brother Wu Mengjiao and an unsuccessful scholar in the examination system. He never obtained the provincial *juren* degree. To make a living, he was a private secretary or tutor for years, and he died in extreme poverty.[41] His postscript incorporates Wu Zao's drama into the lore of Qu Yuan and also vents his own anxiety over the difficulties in climbing the ladder of success:

> … [Li Bai] was banished to Yelang, and [Jia Yi] was exiled to Changsha. The talented ones all come down in the world; it is the same for ancient times and the present. I also sojourn in Shanghai, and my life is like a tumbleweed. The frustrated gentleman can express sorrow and have deep feelings at middle age. Therefore, for this heartbroken drama, I write verses at the end.[42]

[39] Laurence A. Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u*, 79–86.

[40] It is noteworthy that Wu Zao's frustration is different from that of literati, considering that her talent was limited by her gender. But here it seems that these male scholars did not emphasize this "gender difference" but instead they identified with Wu Zao as expressing a "self" similar to that of a male literatus in a grand historical continuity.

[41] Liang Shaoren, *Liangban qiuyu an suibi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 111.

[42] Ge Qingceng, "Postscript," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *ba* 1b-2a.

夜郎遷謫，長沙被放，才人淪落，古今同慨。余也羈棲海上，迹類蓬飄，秋士能悲，中年多感。爰誌傷心之曲，聊書綴尾之詞。

Ge's postscript makes several references to Qu Yuan's original piece and uses two allusions to Li Bai 李白 (701－762) and Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.E) who were both frustrated, talented men, and the latter mourned Qu Yuan in his rhapsody. Then, Ge moves on to his own misfortune, which he shares with talents of the past and present. In the poem that Ge inscribes, he emphasizes again the shared frustration of men and women: "We men also have the feeling of failing, / Not only the ones in the red boudoir are depressed and brokenhearted 吾儕亦有沉淪感，/ 何止紅閨黯斷腸."[43] This interpretation of *Qing ying* was echoed by other frustrated male scholars in their inscriptions. Wei Qiansheng, for example, emphasizes: "I am also a scholar who has come down in the world 我亦青衫淪落者."[44] Chen Sen 陳森 (1796-1870) writes: "I am also discontented and beset with a hundred worries 我亦牢騷百慮并."[45] Both of these men were not successful in entering officialdom through the examination system. That is to say, Wu Zao's identification with Qu Yuan evokes the resonance of the local literati who are unsuccessful in the examination system, and these male scholars tend to prioritize their own self-expression in their paratexts for Wu Zao's drama. These paratexts provide a safe *location* from which these men can explicitly express their dissent and frustration. Ultimately, these inscribed verses reinforce Wu Zao's image as a frustrated woman, considering that these paratexts writers focus on this motif in

[43] Ge Qingceng, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 5a.

[44] Wei Qiansheng, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 11b. Wei Qiansheng is a local literatus of Hangzhou. He later became one of the three preface writers of Wu Zao's *Hualian ci* and a lifelong friend.

[45] Chen Sen, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 21a. Chen Sen has an unsuccessful career but was the writer of *Meihuameng chuanqi* 梅花夢傳奇 and *Pinhua baojian* 品花寶鑒.

the play. This image of Wu Zao as a frustrated talent was also recognized by other male literati who have watched or read this play. Qi Xueqiu (1803-?) notes in his *Jixin an shihua* (Poetry Talks from Entrusting the Mind Studio):

> Once in Wuzhong (present-day Suzhou), I saw female-scholar Wu Pingxiang's *zaju* "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'." [The protagonist] dons man's attire and expresses discontentment and a strength of spirit. The talent of the boudoir also complains of unfairness.[46]
>
> 向在吳中見女士吳蘋香有飲酒讀騷雜劇，作男子裝，牢騷骯髒，閨閣才人亦自鳴其不平者。

"Expressing discontentment and a strength of spirit" (*laosao kangzang*) became a popular theme in the genre of *zaju* drama since the late Ming. In his preface for *Sheng Ming zaju* 盛明雜劇 (The Drama of the High Ming), Xu Hui 徐翬 (fl. 1629) points out: "Nowadays what is called the "Northern Songs" (*zaju*) are composed by those who are discontented yet strong in spirit in their own time 今之所謂'北'者, 皆牢騷骯髒不得於時者之所為也.[47] These *zaju* dramas, in which the playwrights "complain about that their strength and spirit were frustrated," include the re-creations of the Qu Yuan story, such as You Tong's *Du Lisao* and Ji Yongren's 嵇永仁 (1637-1676) *Xu Lisao* 續離騷 (Sequel to Encountering Sorrow).[48] Qi Xueqiu's comment evinces that Wu Zao's drama *Qiao ying* is understood as a continuation of the *Li Sao* tradition, which

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[46] Qi Xueqiu, "Notes," in Wu Zao, *Hualian ci*, 7a, in *Linxia yayin ji*, ed. Mao Jun.

[47] Xu Hui, "Preface," in Shen Tai 沈泰(fl. 1629), *Shengming zaju*, Chinese Text Project: http://ctext.org/ens (accessed May. 7, 2016).

[48] Laurence A. Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 79–86.

functions as a means of expressing frustration. In summary, Wu Zao's personal frustration voiced in her drama was paid particular attention by her male audience; therefore, Wu Zao's image as a frustrated woman became dominant while other facets of her image, such as the heroic and the cheerful, came to be overshadowed.

The Female Talent

Qiao ying successfully brought recognition to Wu Zao's talent, evidenced by the robust paratexts, although she forcefully complains about her unappreciated talent in this play. In her discussion of Wu Zao's *Qiao ying*, Sophie Volpp remarks that "[t]hrough the course of the play, Xie Xucai laments that her gifts are not being used and describes the pain of not having her talents recognized."[49] Collaborating this observation, I suggest that Wu Zao voices her frustration over the fact that as a woman, her talent cannot be put to use in an officially sanctioned avenue. In her study of the role of women's writing in the eighteen century, Susan Mann demonstrates that "whatever her historical position, the woman as a writing subject challenged fundamental conventions of Chinese high culture."[50] The talent of women does not lead to public service, and thus women's talent—"superfluous" in a way— was often suspected and criticized. Furthermore, since the late Ming, there has been a long-lasting debate surrounding female talent and virtue.[51] Nevertheless, valorization and celebration of women's talent by both genders are also seen in the same historical period. While courtesans of the late Ming were celebrated by male communities,

[49] Sophie Volpp, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow': A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao," 239

[50] Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17.

[51] Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, The West, and The Woman Question in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 87-106.

Wangyan Yunzhu 完顏惲珠 (1771-1833) valued the talent of gentry women who were also exemplars of morality. It is noteworthy that well-known scholar-literati, such as Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) and Chen Wenshu 陳文述 (1775-1845), vigorously promoted the poetry writing of women. Chen Wenshu also wrote an inscription for *Qiao ying* and a preface for Wu Zao's first-published song lyric collection *Hualian ci* 花簾詞 (Collection of Song Lyrics from the Floral Curtain, 1830). Wu Zao became Chen's disciple after *Qiao ying* was performed publicly.[52] The success of *Qiao ying* won Wu Zao recognition of her talent. All the thirty-six paratexts writers of *Qiao ying* express their admiration for Wu Zao's unique talent and ambition. Furthermore, several male scholars and also a gentry woman even suggest that Wu Zao's talent is superior to men's in their inscription verse:

1	I am just afraid that men lack this kind of talent.[53] (Qi Yanhuai)	正恐鬚眉少此才。
2	Let me ask the worthies of the Six Dynasties,	試問六朝名士,
	Can they have such elegant demeanour as this?[54] (Guo Lin)	可能似此風神?
3	Even if a man were to change to your bone,	縱使鬚眉換君骨,
	Could his portrait be hung in the Lingyan pavilion?[55] (Li Yunjia)	可能圖畫上凌烟?
4	Such talent and such eccentric character.	如此才華如此癖。
	Even in the human world, which man can compare with her?[56] (Yu	便人間、若箇男兒

[52] Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao ji qi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, 3.

[53] Qi Yanhuai 齊彥槐 (1774-1841), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 3a.

[54] Guo Lin 郭麐 (1767-1831), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 7a.

[55] Li Yunjia 李筠嘉 (1766-1828) "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 8a.

[56] Yu Xinchuan 余新傳 (fl. 1826), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 10b.

	Xinchuan)	比？
5	The heroic spirit she holds is a thousand feet high, I ask which man can compare with her? [57] (Yu Hongjian)	胸中豪氣高千尺, 爲問鬚眉若箇如?
6	Such talent is rare in the boudoir, She is better than scholars who spend ten years reading by lamp. [58] (Zhang Xiang)	如此才華閨中少。 勝書生、十載親燈火。

The view of the superiority of female talent was not uncommon in Ming-Qing society. Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574–1624), the editor of the late Ming anthology *Mingyuan shigui* 名媛詩歸 (Poetic Retrospective of Famous Ladies) as well as a leading poet of the Jingling School, considered women's poetry superior to that of men. In his preface, he argued that true poetry is the voice of nature, and women are deemed better poets because they personify serenity, which is the essence of poetry.[59] Moreover, Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1798) also acknowledged that women's poetry is superior to men's in that their poetry is more spontaneous and arises from human nature and inspiration (*xingling*).[60] In addition, as Louise Edwards points out, in the great novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong lou meng)*, the narrator describes Baoyu's female cousins as superior to their male counterparts in both talent and morality. One quintessential example is the cleverness and sophisticated poetic skills that that these young women show at their literary

[57] Yu Hongjian 俞鴻漸 (1781-1846), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 12b.

[58] Zhang Xiang 張襄 (fl. 1826), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 26b.

[59] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 61-62.

[60] Jerry Schmidt, "The Reception of Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry by Two Male Authors: Yuan Mei (1716–98) and Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801)," *China Report*, 44.1 (2008): 9.

gatherings.[61]

In the case of *Qiao ying's* paratexts, inscription writers often appear to praise Wu Zao's talent by negating that of men. These poetic lines compare Wu Zao to her male contemporaries or historical, legendary figures. In particular, Qi Yanhuai expresses his belief that men do not have such extraordinary talent. Yu Xinchuan and Yu Hongjian boldly state that Wu Zao's talent far surpasses men's in this world. Guo Lin's couplet refers back to the subject of Wu Zao's drama, namely, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'," which was deemed an attribute of a *mingshi*. Moreover, Guo Lin suggests that Wu Zao is even more outstanding than those worthy men of the Six Dynasties, who are recognized cultural paragons. Li Yunjia refers to the painting presented on the stage, in which Wu Zao is cross-dressed as a young scholar. He compares Wu's portrait to those of famous ministers of the Tang, which were chosen by Emperor Taizong (598-649) and displayed in the Lingyan Pavilion.[62] In his poem, it seems that Wu Zao is equal, if not superior to, the prominent ministers. As stated above, the only woman, Zhang Xiang, compares Wu Zao's talent to men's. While she admits that Wu's talent is unusual for a woman, she claims that Wu's talent is better than that of those scholars who have studied literature and history for years. As a daughter of the military official (*canjiang* 參將) Zhang Dianhua 張殿華 (fl. 1844), Zhang Xiang is known not only for her talent in poetry and painting but also in horseback riding and archery.[63] However, the song lyric by Zhang Xiang also suggests her modesty by saying that she is ashamed because Wu Zao's piece is too great to match (*he*) 愧

[61] Louise Edwards, *Men and Women in Qing China: Gender in the Red Chamber Dream* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 50-51.

[62] *Lingyange gongchen tu* 凌煙閣功臣圖 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), n. p.

[63] Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua*, *juan* 10, 12b-13a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed August 10, 2016).

難和. This modesty is also seen in Xu Yu's 徐鈺 (fl. 1826) inscribed poem, she writes: "I am ashamed that I am full of passion but lack heroic spirit 愧我多情豪氣少."[64] Interestingly, the male inscription writers assert that Wu Zao's talent surpasses mediocre men or even great men in history, but they never suggest that her talent is better than that of their own. In spite of this gender difference in the promotion of Wu Zao's talent, these paratexts successfully construct the image of Wu Zao as an unusual talent in the boudoir.[65]

The Cross-Dressing

The crossing-dressing is a remarkable element of the drama *Qiao ying*. The image of the cross-dressed female scholar has a long-lasting influence on how Wu Zao's image was understood. In his preface "Xiangxue lu ci xu 香雪盧詞敘" written after Wu Zao's death, when Zhang Jingqi introduces Wu Zao's life, he highlights: "She loves outlandish clothes when she was young 幼好奇服." Although theatre historian Lu Eting 陸萼庭 (1924-2003) argues that Zhang's preface may not have compelling evidence to prove that Wu Zao loves to wear outlandish clothes, this statement may come from her portrait of "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'," in which she dressed in male attire.[66] In addition, in a poem addressed to Wu Zao, a fellow

[64] Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, copy in National Library.

[65] One limit of this study is that the rhetoric of paratexts written for someone's literary work should be praise and not criticism. However, I think that Wu Zao's image as a female talent is solid because I have not seen any of her contemporaries questioned her moral character or literary talent. In his *Baiyuzhai cihua*, Chen Tingzhuo considers some of Wu Zao's song lyrics "superficial or resentful and angry," while he praises other pieces, owing to his aesthetic standard. His work is published in 1891 and thirty years after Wu Zao's death, so strictly speaking, he is not Wu's contemporary. Chen Tingzhuo, *Baiyuzhai cihua*, *juan* 5, 30b, *juan* 7, 8a, Chinese Text Project: http://ctext.org/ (accessed August 10, 2016).

[66] Lu Eting, *Qingdai xiqujia congkao*, 197.

Hangzhou scholar Jiang Tan 蔣坦 (1818-1863) wrote: "In a cinnabar pavilion with emerald curtains, she enters the first absorption, / Wearing rouge powder and a black gauze cap, her smile brings the spring 朱樓翠幕初禪界，/ 紅粉烏紗一笑春," which is followed by a note: "The female scholar loves to dress in men's clothes 女士喜作男子裝."[67] Furthermore, according to Chen Wenshu's preface to *Hualian ci*, the pictorial imagery of Wu Zao cross-dressed in male clothes was first painted by herself: "She used to paint a portrait of Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering the Sorrow' and inscribe songs of the Jin and Yuan on it 嘗自寫飲酒讀騷小像，以金元樂府題之."[68] The cross-dressed image was later printed as an illustration entitled "Drinking Wine and Reading Encountering Sorrow 飲酒讀騷圖" placed at the beginning of her drama (second edition, 1826). It was painted by Wu Zao's female friend Gu Shao 顧韶 (fl. 1826-1856). After Wu Zao's death, a portrait entitled "Wu Pingxiang Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering the Sorrow' 吳蘋香飲酒讀騷圖" (dated 1871) was executed by a male painter Shi Ruinian 施瑞年 (date-unknown), in which Wu Zao is also painted as cross-dressed in a scholar's robe. Even though I have not seen that any record from Wu Zao's close female friends indicating that she is fond of donning male garments in her everyday life, the cross-dressed image on the stage is recognized as a symbolic self of Wu Zao.[69]

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[67] Jiang Tan, *Huatian yuedi yin* 花天月地吟, *juan* 6, quoted in Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao cizhuan*, 204.

[68] Chen Wenshu, "Preface," in Wu Zao, *Hualian ci*, *Chen xu*·2b.

[69] Although scholars recently cast some doubts on the autobiographical reading of women's writings, the distinction between the author and fictional persona was strange to Wu Zao's contemporaries. Moreover, as Hua Wei suggest, in the Ming-Qing period, playwrights of both genders like to use his or her plays as autobiographies. See Hua Wei, *Ming Qing funü zhi xiqu chuangzuo yu piping,* Last, the picture of "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow" is Wu Zao's self-portrait, so the connection between the dramatic image and real person is strong.

The cross-dressing in *Qiao ying* is not strange for Wu Zao's contemporary audience. In fact, female cross-dressing is a popular theme in dramas by male writers in the late Ming and early Qing period.[70] Women writers of the Ming-Qing period also produced several works featuring heroines in male disguise.[71] As a subgenre, the female cross-dressing plays are always associated with the issue of (self-)representation, in which women authors express a longing for becoming men through their imagined cross-dressed heroines. During this historical period, the male, as Siu Leung Li points out, is the only ideal sex, into which the secondary sex desires to transform.[72] A case in point is Wu Zao's *Qiao ying*. In this play, there are multiple layers of gender crossing. Foremost there is a three-layer gender twisting in the performance: "player-role type-character."[73] The heroine Xie Xucai is cast as a *sheng* (the male role). In other words, a player trained to act male characters is playing a woman, and her woman identity and voice can be clearly recognized in *Qiao ying*. Furthermore, the portrait displayed on the stage, in which Xie Xucai was cross-dressed in a scholar's robe, is a crucial prop of this drama. Finally, the image of the cross-dresser is constructed through the lyrics and recitation, in which Wu Zao casts her alter ego Xie Xucai as several famous male poets,, such as Li Bai, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842), and in which she also explicitly describes her gesture of cross-dressing and the portrait of the cross-dressed scholar.[74]

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[70] Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 220.

[71] Hua Wei, "Ninan de yishu chuan tong: Mingqing funü xiqu zhong zhi ziwo chengxian yu xingbie fansi", in *Ming Qing funü zhi xiqu chuangzuo yu piping*, 119-127.

[72] Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 4-5.

[73] Ibid, 185.

[74] Wu Zao's gesture of cross-dressing as a scholar, according to Sophie Volpp, also reverses Qu Yuan's persona as an abandoned woman. See Sophie Volpp, "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow': A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao," 241.

The cross-dressing in *Qiao ying* also attracts full attention of the paratexts writers. As Sophie Volpp points out, "Wu Zao's admiration of her cross-dressed self-portrait was one of the most salient features of the play."[75] It is no surprise that in the paratexts, the writers also talk about the image of the cross-dressed female scholar; even more, they repeatedly use the characters *tu* 圖, *hua* 畫, and *ying* 影 directly referring to the portrait.[76] These writers focus on this portrait probably also because the scene—Xie Xucai inscribes the portrait of herself in a scholar's robe and talks to the portrait as a living person—may recall the two famous scenes in *The Peony Pavilion*—"Shi hua 拾畫" (Recovering the Portrait) and "Jiao hua 叫畫" (Calling to the Portrait).[77] The connection between the two plays is clearly made in Qi Yanhuai's inscribed poem: "After all Xiaoqing does not have the heroic spirit, / Trimming the wick, she is leisurely reading *The Peony Pavilion* 畢竟小青無俠氣，/ 挑擔燈閒看牡丹亭."[78]

The most noticeable characteristic of the paratexts about the cross-dressing is that these writers draw on Buddhist (or Taoist) ideas to interpret it. At the beginning of Zhong Jichen's 鍾績辰 (fl. 1826) preface to *Qiao ying*, he writes: "Is it true or false? Turn it upside down. The physical form is a sojourn, in which the shadow again lodges 是耶非耶，顛之倒之。形本僑耳，影又寄斯."[79] Also, the references to Buddhism are used repeatedly in the inscribed poems:

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[75] Ibid.

[76] In the inscribed poems, *tu* occurs four times, *hua* occurs thirteen times, and *ying* occurs fourteen times.

[77] The two scenes are consolidated into a *zhezixi* by both Zang Maoxun 臧懋循 (1550-1620) and Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1645), and later it was printed in the *Zhui baiqui xinji* 綴白球新集 (1767). See Catherine Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 116-117.

[78] Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 3b.

[79] Zhong Jichen, "Preface," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying,* n. p.

1	Her form, by accident, changes tonight.[80] (Ge Qingceng)	色相偶然今夕換。
2	Rouge and power are used to draw the portrait of wondrous illumination,	鉛華寫盡妙明圖，
	When the form is empty, both gratitude and resentment are abandoned.	色相空時恩怨捐。
	I am sure someday she will transcend the Realm of Desire,	他日定知超欲界，
	No need to pray to the gods and spirits with a cupped-hand salute. (Guo Lin)	不勞執手問諸天。
	[Author's Note:] In the Realm of Form, there is no male or female form.[81]	注：色界天上無男女相。
3	The Goddess in the manifest body is extraordinary,	現身天女本非凡，
	Why would she use the Golden Immortal's elixir for transforming bones?[82] (Liang Shaoren)	底用金仙換骨丹？
4	To empty the forms of self and other,	一空我相人相，
	Travelling between the Heaven of Love and Heaven of Form.[83] (Wang Chen)	來往情天色天。
5	What harm is there in transforming into the body of a man?[84] (Zhu Weibi)	何妨幻作丈夫身。

[80] Ge Qingceng, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 6b.

[81] Guo Lin, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 7a-7b.

[82] Liang Shaoren (1792-?), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 13b.

[83] Wang Chen 王辰 (fl. 1826), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 14a

[84] Zhu Weibi 朱爲弼 (1771-1840), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 18b.

6	She comprehends the form and transformation of the body,	參同色相化形骸，
	The *kalavinka* bird warbles the immortal music.	鳥嚩迦陵仙樂來。
	Why not recognize the talented woman as a noble man?	才女何妨例名士，
	[She is] the wondrous truth of scattering flowers, talent of floral splendor.[85] (Zhu Weibi)	散花妙諦粲花才。
7	Because the Moon Maiden repented the karma of the previous life,	早憑月上懺前生，
	[Author's Note:] According to the *Sutra of the Maid in the Moon*, female believers who chant this sutra can transform from female to male.	注：佛藏有《月上女經》諷者女轉男身。
	She escapes from illusion, the present body in a red boudoir.[86] (Zhang Shen)	幻脫紅閨現在身。

It is noticeable that all the lines quoted above are written by male literati.[87] The reason why men do not reject female cross-dressing is that the existing power relations which place men in the dominant position is not challenged. In *Qiao ying*, the masculinization of the female protagonist Xie Xucai's body affirms her masculine pursuits rather than questions male privileges. As Dorothy Ko points out, the exceptional women, in this case Wu Zao, are regarded as honorable men in real life.[88]

More importantly, these men draw heavily on Buddhist terminology possibly because

[85] Ibid, *tici* 19a-19b

[86] Zhang Shen 張深 (1781-1846), "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 23a.

[87] Although women writers, such as Gui Maoyi 歸懋儀 (1762-1832) and Xu Yu, also refer to the crossing-dressing, their focus is the stage figure and portrait rather than the Buddhist rendering. See, "Inscription," in Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, *tici* 27b-28b.

[88] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 140.

Buddhist ideas of emptiness are quite suitable to the notion of changing form, in this case the cross-dressing on stage. Taiwan scholar Liao Zhao-heng shows that in the Ming-Qing period, Chan masters often used dramas to illustrate that human life is transient and insubstantial.[89] A quintessential example is Juelang Daosheng 覺浪道盛 (1592-1659), who considers every person in this world an actor, but the actors do not realize they are playing. The drama players are actually practicing emptiness:

> On stage actors take being as emptiness, so they can be enlightened like Buddhas and sages; off stage actors take emptiness as being, so they hold onto illusion like all living beings. All people are acting, and the earth is the stage.[90]
> 臺上戲子，以有為無，故能如佛聖之解悟；臺下戲子，以無為有，故同眾生之執迷。世人全身是戲，大地是臺。

These lines of the inscribed poems emphasize that the physical form (or *sexiang* 色相) is illusionary. Ge Qingceng's line points to the transformed body on stage. Guo Lin's poem explicitly explains that there is neither male nor female form in the Realm of Form, into which she will enter after transcending the Realm of Desire. Wang Chen's couplet refers to the instability of gender. He considers this ambiguity as the emptiness of the forms, and thereby heroine can travel between the Heavens of Love and Form. Zhu Weibi concentrates on the gender transformation from female to male. The image of the *kalavinka* bird—a legendry bird that lives in the Pure Land where only men can be reborn—refers back to the original text of *Qiao ying*: "Forever I'll follow the one in the scroll, / And from now on be a *kalavinka* bird. /

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[89] Liao Zhao-heng 廖肇亨, "Chanmen shuoxi—yige fojiao wenhuashi de changshi 禪門說戲──一個佛教文化史觀點的嘗試," *Hanxue yanjiu*, 17.2 (1999): 289-295.

[90] Juelang Daosheng, "Qianjie shu 前揭書," in *Cantong shuo* 參同說, 25·25. Quoted in Liao's article.

Indistinguishable: image and body have fused into one 長依卷裏人，永作迦陵鳥，分不出影和形化了!”[91] At the end of this play, the heroine calls for a combination of her portrait as a male scholar and her female form. Then Zhu Weibi suggests that Wu Zao could be acknowledged as an honorable man because she is like the Goddess Scattering Flowers in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* who truly understands emptiness and is exceptionally talented. Zhang Shen’s couplet repeats the belief that a female body is a consequence of past karma, but he suggests that the heroine can escape from her female body because she already repented to Buddha like *Vimalakirti’s* daughter The Moon Maiden. The famous example of gender transformation in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* is alluded to several times.[92] The most interesting example is Liang Shaoren’s couplet, in which he honours Wu Zao as the extraordinary Goddess Scattering Flowers who has no need to transform her physical body. In the famous conversation between the Goddess and Buddha’s disciple Shariputra, the Goddess refuses to transform into a man as Shariputra asks, and then she transforms Shariputra to her form and herself to Shariputra’s form in order to show him emptiness. “[T]he Buddha teaches that all phenomena are neither male nor female.”[93]

The paratexts writers examined in this section share an autobiographical reading of *Qiao ying* and even understand the image of the cross-dressed female scholar as Wu Zao herself. The cross-dressing on stage is granted as Wu Zao’s behavior in real life.[94] They enthusiastically

[91] Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 693.

[92] Burton Watson trans., *The Vimalakirti Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 90-91.

[93] Burton Watson trans., *The Vimalakirti Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 91.

[94] My point here is to show that in that historical period, the cross-dressing image on stage had been read by male scholars as the author herself. I agree with Ronald Egan’s argument that the autographical reading of women’s works is problematic, see Ronald Egan, T*he Burden of Female Talent: The Poet Li Qingzhao and Her History in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia

interpret the cross-dressing as the transformation of form based on Buddhist teaching. The instability of gender is not considered problematic because the cross-dressing does not challenge the power hierarchy. Furthermore, the cross-dressing was shown in a theatre, which is seen as an epitome of the illusory world, and according to Buddhist ideas, all forms are transient and insubstantial, one should be able to transform from one to another.

The Complexity of Wu Zao's Image

The image of Wu Zao is complex, and I suggest that many factors influence its reception. For *Qiao ying,* the inscription writers repeatedly allude to thirteen extraordinary female figures, historical or fictive, and these allusions, I suggest, parallel the different aspects of the image of Wu Zao projected in this drama. Wu Zao is primarily compared to exceptional women who are remembered for their literary talent, including Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (fl. 361), Li Qingzhao, and Ban Zhao 班昭 (fl. 45-117). Also, Wu Zao is compared to Huang Chonggu 黃崇嘏 and Hua Mulan 花木蘭 for her cross-dressing and masculine qualities. Some male writers even make a connection between Wu Zao and ill-fated women, such as Xiaoqing 小青, Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, and Yuji 虞姬, who are often used as metaphors for the frustrated men themselves. The fact that some comparisons are not very strong points to the awkward situation of the limited presence of female role models in Chinese history. This is in striking contrast to the numerous male models, including Li Bai, Su Shi, and Liu Yuxi, with whom Wu Zao identifies herself, when she describes her ambitions in a heroic mode.[95]

Center, 2013), 105-114.

[95] For the discussion of Wu Zao's self-masculinization, please see Chapter Three.

Above all, Xie Daoyun is the female talent most frequently alluded to in the inscriptions, not surprising since Wu Zao chose Xie Xucai for the name of the protagonist, who shares the same family name with Xie Daoyun, and her given name Xucai, "catkin talent," is derived from the famous anecdote about Xie Daoyun. Xie An asked the children of the Xie family to compose a poetic line describing the snow. Compared with her male cousin's mediocre answer "Could it be salt shaking down through the air," the ingenuity of Xiao Daoyun's line "Even more the willow catkins on the wind uplifted" impressed her uncle.[96] As Susan Mann insightfully points out, Xie Daoyun's talent surpassed her male counterparts, but she was not considered a threat to men because she was only a child.[97] In the paratexts of *Qiao ying*, the celebration of Wu Zao's talent fulfills the expectation for a female prodigy in nineteenth century China. Furthermore, in the entry on *Hualian ci*, her first song lyric collection, iLiang Shaoren even elevates Wu Zao to an "immortal" in her family:

> Pingxiang's (Wu Zao) father and husband are both merchants, and there's not one scholar in the two families. She is the only one who shows extraordinary talent and must have been an immortal of the book in a previous incarnation. She also composed a long *qu* suite "Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'." Based on this suite, a portrait was painted, in which she was dressed in a scholar's robe. This probably implies her intention to quickly transform into a man. My poem inscribed for this portrait has these lines: 'The official Huang Chonggu from the Southern Dynasties, / The song lyric master Li Yi'an from the Northern

[96] Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, 67.

[97] Susan Mann, *Precious Records,* 83.

Song'."[98]

蘋香父夫俱業賈，兩家無一讀書者，而獨呈翹秀，真夙世書仙也。又嘗作飲酒讀騷長曲一套，因繪為圖，已作文士裝束，蓋寓速變男兒之意。余為題圖有句云: '南朝幕府黃崇嘏，北宋詞宗李易安。

In Liang Shaoren's eulogistic passage, Wu Zao was seen as the reincarnation of a literary immortal and comparable to women like Huang Chonggu and Li Qingzhao. In order to successfully craft this image as a literary immortal, Liang erases Wu Zao's siblings' achievements. Sources suggest that Wu Zao was not the only educated person in her natal family. Wu Zao's brother Mengjiao was a promoter of the public performance of her drama and a devoted reader of her poetry. Wu Zao's two sisters Hengxiang and Zhixiang showed talent in music and poetry and also participated in the activities of poetry clubs.[99]

Wu Zao's age also appears to influence how much attention her work would attract, and how she was represented. *Qiao ying* and *Hualian ci* were composed at a comparatively young age, and these works received more attention from the literati community.[100] Her maiden work *Qiao ying* contains a large quantity of paratexts, and *Hualian ci* also has three long prefaces by male literati: her mentor Chen Wenshu and her friends, two local elites, Wei Qiansheng and Zhao Qingxi. In particular, Zhao Qingxi in his preface uses the character *chou* (sorrow) 愁 fifteen times and emphasizes the melancholic tone found in several song lyrics in *Hualian ci*:

[98] Liang Shaoren, *Liangban qiuyu an suibi,* 46.

[99] See one example in the following section. Also see the records about other parties in Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua*, *juan* 6, 19a-20a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed August 10, 2016).

[100] I am not saying that there were no positive comments on Wu Zao's poetic talent when she became an aged woman, but the amount largely decreases.

There is no year that lacks falling blossoms, there is no place that lacks fragrant grasses, and there is no day that lacks a setting sun and a radiant moon. But how many people in past and present have been able to speak of falling blossoms and fragrant grasses? And how many in past and present have been able to speak of setting sun and radiant moon? This shows how extremely difficult it is to describe objects and to describe *sorrow*. But the Master of the Floral Curtain is skilled in *sorrow*, and her lyrics excel in describing *sorrow*. If people are not in a *sorrowful* situation, they are unable to speak of *sorrow*. If they are in a *sorrowful* situation, how can they have leisure time to speak of *sorrow*? Delicate, desolate, dim and quiet, her *sorrow* comes without cause. Her lyrics are about the falling blossoms, the fragrant grasses, the setting sun, and the radiant moon. These objects do not necessarily evoke *sorrow*. But if one feels *sorrow* when there is no necessity for *sorrow*, then one will perceive the entire world as being filled with objects that are conducive to *sorrow*, and filled with scenes that are conducive to *sorrow*. This is the reason why the Master of the Floral Curtain excels in *sorrow*, and this is also the reason why she excels in writing lyrics. Therefore, we print her lyrics to show people who love to speak of *sorrow*. As for the form and pattern and rhyme scheme of her song lyrics, they have been admired by people. There is no need to say more. [101]

無歲而無落花也，無處而無芳草也，無日而無夕陽明月也。然而古今之能言落花芳草者幾人，古今之能言夕陽明月者幾人？則甚矣，寫物之難，寫愁之

[101] The majority of Zhao Qingxi's preface is translated in *The Red Brush*, and I translate the omitted part. For the original text, see Zhao Qingxi, "Preface," in Wu Zao, *Hualian ci*, *Zhao xu*·6a. For an English translation, see *The Red Brush*, 695.

難也。花簾主人工愁者也，詞善寫愁者也。不處愁境，不能言愁。必處愁境，何暇言愁。嫋嫋然，荒荒然，幽然，悄然，無端而愁，卽無端而詞。其詞落花也，芳草也，夕陽明月也，皆不必愁者也。不必愁而愁，斯視天下無非可愁之物，無非可愁之境矣。此花簾主人之所以能愁，而花簾主人之所以能詞也。爰刊其詞，以示世之愛言愁者。若夫詞之體律，詞之音韻，向者賞評之矣，夫又何言。

In his preface, Zhao begins with the premise that the nature is eternally present, but only a few people are able to write about it. Wu Zao is not only capable of writing about nature but also of personifying it as sorrow. This preface caputures the "sorrowful"—the prominent characteristics of Wu Zao's song lyrics in *Hualian ci* but totally negates other qualities, such as the herotic and cheerful. The preface in literary collections, as Grace Fong shows in her study of the dynamic interaction between the paratexts and the author's texts in Ling Zhiyuan's collection, functions as a privileged site where the preface writer has the authority to present or manipulate the meaning of the collection and to give comments on the work and the author.[102] In this instance, Zhao's preface reinforces the image of Wu Zao as a young, talented, and sorrow-filled woman.

A more cheerful image of Wu Zao that surfaces mainly in her later works seems to have been overlooked by many of her male contemporaries. Several reasons account for this. First, Wu Zao's attitude about her own song lyric has changed over time. Her second song lyric collection *Xiangnan xuebei ci* 香南雪北詞 was printed twice in 1844 and 1850, but there are no prefaces by others. Instead, Wu Zao wrote two authorial prefaces in which she claimed to have stopped writing song lyrics and was devoting herself to religious practice. In other words, it

[102] Grace Fong, "The Life and Afterlife of Ling Zhiyuan (1831–1852) and Her Poetry Collection," 130.

seems that Wu Zao did not actively promote her song lyrics as she did for the *Hualian ci*; instead, she announced that she was abandoning this art.

Another reason lies in the inaccessibility of her later works. Wu Zao's third collection *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* 香南雪北廬集, which includes both *shi* and *ci,* was published in 1856, only six years before her death. Until recently, this collection was thought to be lost or was mixed up with her second collection due to the similarity of their titles. The manuscript of this collection was originally circulated among her intimate friends, so the cheerful image of Wu Zao, suggested by her poems in this collection, was not widely known by the public.

Moreover, the gender of the reader seems to also play a role in the different reception. The male and female readers tend to have different aesthetic values. Several of Wu Zao's earlier song lyrics, which contain a sorrowful voice, are closer to the aesthetic convention expected of this genre; the melancholic image is also closer to the literati-feminine image of a lonely woman in her boudoir and more familiar to the male audience. By contrast, in her later song lyrics, it seems that Wu Zao was searching for her own subjective voice to verbalize the pleasures of everyday life by frequently using the word *xiao* 笑, which is in striking contrast with the word *chou* 愁 overwhelmingly employed in Zhao Qingxi's preface to Wu Zao's own work. In addition, in these later song lyrics, the range of subject matter expands greatly to include excursions, her pet, and other amusements. In Wu Zao's *shi* poems, sadness and melancholy almost vanish completely. In *shi* poetry, she often inscribes pleasant experiences in the inner quarters. In short, these poetic works may not fit in the evaluative discourse of Wu Zao's contemporary male critics. Nevertheless, her female friend Shen Shanbao gives high praise to Wu Zao's later song lyrics and poems in *Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話 (Remarks on Poetry by Notable Women), in which she also records several homosocial activities, including excursions and literary

gatherings, representing Wu Zao in congenial company with her female friends. *Mingyuan shihua* is not only a female-gendered critical project that aims to preserve women's voices and their poetry but also is Shen Shaobao's autobiographical project that records her personal life experiences and that of her female relatives and friends.[103] It is the only source that reveals the different aspects of Wu Zao's image and life outside Wu's own works. Below is an example of an excursion and related poetic activity recorded in the *Mingyuan shihua*:

> In the early summer of the *bingshen* year (1836), the sisters, Pingxiang [Wu Zao] and Zhixiang, together with Xi Yishan (Huiwen) [1795?—?] of Mianchi, [Xu] Yunlin [1800?—1857?] and I, went boating to view the green leaves of the peach and plum trees. The fresh kingfisher-green leaves were like tides, and water and sky were all emerald. Three small boats drifted with the waves in the middle of the river. Compared with the time when spring flowers are in full bloom, and the red and purple flowers are abundant, [this scene] has a special pure charm. As we approached Mount Gaoting, we anchored our boats at the bridge and walked together to the woods. The fragrance of the fruits assailed our clothes. Women in the village all came to see us. They presumed that during spring, some people might come to see the flowers, but now people living in the city rarely came. Probably they never saw people who came to admire green leaves. I chanted Qu Wanxian's [1767-1810] lines: "To cherish flowers, one has to cherish leaves, /

[103] Grace Fong, "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/biographical Practices," *Nannü* 2.2 (2000): 259-303. It is noteworthy that according to Gerard Genette's classification, literary criticism belongs to the metatext. Because the majority of my examples used in this chapter are paratexts, I did not include the metatext in my title. See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, XIX.

When leaves are good, flowers will flourish. / How often are flowers red, / But leaves are green the whole year around." We looked at each other and smiled. Villagers led us to their cottages. Mulberry trees and hemp were everywhere; chickens and dogs greeted us. This was the season of reeling silk and boiling cocoons. Zhixiang said: "This place is not inferior to Peach Blossom Spring, but I am afraid I will lose the way when I come back." The host presented us yellow plums with solicitude. After lingering on for quite a while, we embarked on the small boats again. We pushed open the roofing of the boat and recited linked verses across the boats. When we returned, lamps on the main streets were already lit up… On that day, we composed a linked verse poem:

Reeling silk, boiling cocoons, the season of ripe plums (Xiangpei),[104]
the cool shade of ten thousand trees cover the shores.
Remote green mountains merge with the poets' dark eyebrows (Yunlin),
the red setting sun enters drinkers' boats (Pingxiang).
The watery town's scenery is just like a picture (Yishan),
people with the Bamboo Grove air look like immortals.
We leaned on the boat's window and carried on fine lines,
the talent of painted eyebrows [i.e. women] is so very refined (Xiangpei).[105]

丙申初夏，蘋香茝香姊妹偕澠池席怡珊（慧文）、雲林并余，泛舟皋亭看桃李綠陰。新翠如潮，水天一碧。小舟三葉容與中流，較之春花爛漫，紅紫芳

[104] Xiangpei is Shen Shanbao's courtesy name.

[105] Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua*, *juan* 6, 19a-20a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed May 7, 2016).

菲時，別饒有清趣。將近皋亭，泊舟橋畔，聯步芳林，果香襲袂。村中婦女咸來觀看，以為春間或有看花者，至今則城中人罕有過此。蓋從未見有賞綠葉者。余誦屈宛仙："惜花須惜葉，葉好花始茁。花有幾時紅，葉自經年碧"之句，相與一笑。導至村舍，桑麻徧地，雞犬迎人，正繅絲煮繭之時，茝香曰："此地不減桃源，只恐重來又迷向路。"主人以黃梅贈客，情意殷殷。流連半晌，重上小舠，推篷笑語，隔舫聯吟，歸來已六街燈火上矣…… 是日聯句一章云：繅絲煮繭熟梅天（湘佩），萬樹清陰覆水邊。遠岫綠侵詞客黛（雲林），夕陽紅入酒人船（蘋香）。水鄉風景渾如畫（怡珊），林下襟懷望若仙（茝香）。同倚蓬窗賡好句，掃眉才調盡翩翩（湘佩）。

This passage is from *juan* 6 of *Mingyuan shihua*; from this *juan* on, Shen Shanbao begins to discuss the works of contemporary women poets and often incorporates her own life experience into the records. Here Shen Shanbao records an excursion to Mount Gaoting in 1837. Later this year, Shen Shanbao would leave Hangzhou to live in Beijing at the invitation of her foster mother Madam Shi.[106] This passage describes a beautiful summer scene. Summer was not the time for viewing peach blossoms; therefore, their unexpected visit to admire the green leaves points to their special, elegant taste. The village where they sojourned is depicted as a "Peach Blossom Spring." Shen's narrative alludes to the utopia created by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427) in his famous "Record of Peach Blossom Spring," in which villagers lived with animals and nature in harmony and self-sufficiency.[107] Shen and her friends enjoyed their trip and finished by linking verses on their returning boats. This episode is written in a light-hearted manner, which

[106] Grace Fong, "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1802-1862) Gendered Autobiographical Practices," 259-303.

[107] Lu Qinli 逯欽立, *Tao Yuanming Ji* 陶淵明集 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 1979), 165-169.

reveals another model of presenting these gentry women's life experience, in which they enjoy themselves with an intimate circle of friends and have mobility to travel to natural sites. The literature inspired by such excursions outside the inner chambers exceeds the topical territories that reflect gentry women writers' ordinary mode of existence. This discourse, as one of several accounts in the *Mingyuan shihua* about these women's social gatherings in which Wu Zao engaged, reveals a cheerful image of Wu Zao. This image furthers our understanding of the varied lifestyle of educated women of the nineteenth century.[108]

In conclusion, the tradition of "Encountering Sorrow" expresses frustration and dissent, and *Qiao ying* embodies this tradition and thus resonates with the male paratexts writers of this drama. Because of their emphasis on sad emotion, Wu Zao's image as a frustrated talent is further reinforced, although her talent is highlighted when she is represented as superior to men. Her image as a cross-dresser is constructed through the autobiographical reading of *Qiao ying* and is not considered problematic because of Buddhist ideas on the insubstantiality of form and because it does not challenge the gender hierarchy. Other elements, such as the age of Wu Zao, her changing attitude towards her own compositions, the (in)accessibility of her later published works, and different gender-based evaluative standards, also influence the construction of her image. This construction of Wu Zao's image may reflect some aspects of the real circumstances of Wu Zao's life, but it magnifies certain facets of her image that satisfy male fantasies about a talented young woman. Ultimately, these paratexts by writers of both genders around Wu Zao's works give the reader insight into the complexities of the cultural construction or manipulation of

[108] Other scholars such as Dorothy Ko and Yanning Wang already showed this dimension of gentry women's life from the 17th to the 19th century.

the representation of women in late imperial China. In the next chapter, I will turn to examine heretofore unexplored dimensions of Wu Zao's work.

Chapter II Pleasures of the Inner Quarters: The *Shi* Poetry of Wu Zao

In this chapter, I will explore how Wu Zao inscribes her pleasant experiences in the inner quarters in her *shi* poems, and how these poems challenge the accepted image of Wu Zao as a woman lyricist and playwright. The melancholic image of Wu Zao projected in her earlier works, such as her drama *Qiao ying* and song lyrics in *Hualian ci,* largely influences how Wu Zao has been perceived by her contemporaries and modern scholars. My research in this chapter aims to bring Wu Zao's *shi* poems in the collection *Xiangnan xuebei lu shiji* into English-language scholarship.[109] Until recently, this collection was thought to be lost; the manuscript was originally circulated among her intimate friends and was published in 1856, only six years before her death. Thus, Wu Zao's *shi* poems have received little scholarly attention. I argue that these poems are important for understanding Wu Zao's life as a woman writer because they provide new insights into the literary world that was created and celebrated by Wu Zao and her female friends, which was separated from men's life experience and the male homosocial world. I will focus on two groups of poetry as illustrations: the poem series *Qiqiao ci* 乞巧詞 (Praying for Skills), which represents female-exclusive domestic rituals in Wu Zao's life; and the poem series *Xiaoxia ci* 消夏詞 (Passing the Summer at Leisure), which depicts quotidian objects and activities that Wu Zao and her friends enjoyed in summer.

Praying for Skills

Wu Zao's pleasant experiences are recorded in her poetry about female-exclusive rituals, such as her poem series *Qiqiao c*. These rituals are an important component of a distinctive women's

[109] Wu Zao's third *shi* and *ci* joint collection *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji* (1856) has two independent chapters (or *juan*): *Xiangnan xuebei lu shiji* and *Xiangnan xuebei lu ciji*. See, Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji*, copy in Nanjing Library.

culture that Ming-Qing women cultivated, and her poems about them crafted a meaningful space for the voice of a woman. A case in point is *Qiqiao* 乞巧, or Praying for Skills, which is an alternate name of the Double Seventh Festival (*qixi* 七夕) and a crucial part of women's rituals in the festival. According to the legend, once a year, on the evening of the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, the two stars—the Weaver Girl (Vega) and the Cowherd (Altair) can re-unite on the bridge of magpies over the Sky River (Milky Way), which separates them during the rest of the year. Because of the romantic love and destined separation of the two stars, this festival became an occasion to write about the sorrow of separation and so constituted a subgenre in *shi* poetry and song lyric. In her discussion of diversified women's self-representations in poetry, Maureen Robertson points out that a certain group of "poems conventionally represent the familiar literati-feminine woman alone watching the heavens and longing for the absent lover."[110] This topos is dominant in the writings on the Double Seventh Festival. Furthermore, this festival is important in that it honors and romanticizes women's work. As Susan Mann indicates, a woman's value is "measured in productive labor and in her skill with shuttle and needle."[111] This festival implies the ideal distribution of labor based on gender difference in Chinese agricultural society: men plough, and women weave. The rituals of the Double Seventh are about women's work. On the seventh night, women would petition the Weaver Girl for better needlework skills. Finally, the Double Seventh Festival is also an occasion of family gathering; in the Qing dynasty, women might also invite female friends to celebrate together.

[110] 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): 95.

[111] Susan Mann, *Precious Records*, 144.

The Double Seventh Festival is a women's festival, but it is noteworthy that men also celebrated and wrote about it. As observers, men intended to describe at a distance how women in their families, such as their wives and daughters, were involved in those activities. However, I want to emphasize that women exclusively participated in the rituals of Praying for Skills. The following poem series shows that Wu Zao, as a participant, represented the scenario of the rituals of the Double Seventh:

No. 1	銀漢迢迢鵲鵲飛，	Far away at the Silver River, magpies are flying,
	一年轉盼又秋期。	One year in a flash, autumn comes again.
	閨中只解傳佳話，	In the boudoir, we only know to pass on beautiful legends,
	不管仙家怨別離。	We don't care about the immortal's bitterness of separation.
No. 2	蘭清菊秀海榴妍，	Pure orchids, flourishing chrysanthemums, and beautiful pomegranate blossoms,
	料理宵來乞巧筵。	I'm taking care of the banquet where we will pray for skills tonight.
	添購折枝三兩種，	To buy two or three more flowering branches,
	侍兒忙數買花錢。	The maid hurriedly counts the money for the flowers.
No. 3	斜陽簾影卷蝦鬚，	At sunset, the shadow of curtains with rolled-up tassels,
	水榭風廊暑退無。	In a waterside pavilion, on a breezy corridor, hot weather has retreated.
	笑把定瓷圓盒子，	Laughing, I hold a round box of *Ding* porcelain,

	晚涼花下捉蜘蛛。	In this cool evening, under flowers, to catch spiders.
No. 4	坐傍疎窗一幙紗，	Sitting by a window with a gauze curtain,
	金刀細鏤綠沉瓜。	With a gilded knife, I finely carve the dark green melon.
	分明奪得天孫巧，	Clearly getting the skill of the granddaughter of the celestial emperor,
	素手能開頃刻花。	With bare hands, I can make the flower bloom in a moment.
No. 5	素馨花發颭釵梁，	The jasmine flower quivers on a hairpin,
	拂面風來笑語香。	With the breeze blowing on our faces, our cheerful chatting is fragrant.
	一樣輕羅團扇小，	The same round fan made of fine silk is small,
	今年不似去年涼。	This year is not as cool as last year.
No. 6	玉管紅牙響未停，	Sound of jade flute and red ivory castanets does not cease,
	繞梁歌欲遏雲軿。	Songs lingering around the beams want to hold the cloud carriage back.
	何當一奏陽關曲，	How can one play the melody of Yang Pass?
	愁絕雙星不要聽。	Filled with utter sorrow the two stars don't want to listen.
No. 7	畫屏無睡酌流霞，	Sleepless by a painted screen, I drink flowing rosy clouds,

	銀燭秋光豔晚花。	Silver candles and autumn light make twilight flowers gorgeous.
	七孔金鍼穿未得，	The gold needle with seven holes, I did not succeed to thread,
	怪他弦月早西斜。	I blame the crescent moon for setting so early.
No. 8	試將秋信驗梧桐，	Trying to use the message of autumn to test the *wutong* tree,
	閏到良期不厭重。	When the intercalation is of a good day, I don't mind its repetition.
	寄語星妃好珍重，	Sending words to the star consort to take care,
	圓蟾一度又相逢。	When the round moon toad has passed, we will meet again.
	注：今歲值閏七月	[Author's Note:] This year has an intercalary seventh month.[112]

This series, "Praying for Skills," depicts several activities of the Double Seventh Festival in detail and thus re-constructs the poet's experience of this festival. These poems depart from the convention of longing and sorrow of separation, which is the most frequent theme that poets choose to employ when they write about this festival. These poems are also different from the point of view of male literati, who often see "Praying for Skills" as a single activity of the Double Seventh Festival. Wu Zao's series, however, indicates that it is constituted by a succession of activities. This series appears to be written in a temporal sequence, suggested by images that indicate time, such as approaching evening, sunset, and setting moon. To demonstrate the temporal sequence, the eight poems in this series are discussed according to

[112] Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji*, 1b-2b.

their order in the series.

The first poem begins with the reference to the bridge built by magpies in the legend and points to the specific date when the festival is held. The second couplet "In the boudoir, we only know to pass on beautiful legends, / We don't care about the immortal's bitterness of separation" turns conventional expressions of the sorrowful separation of two immortals into something light; it also mocks the iconic images of the two immortals. The relationship between the immortals and human beings is subverted through this mockery. The happiness enjoyed by the mortal women in the inner chambers is superior to the bitter separation of the immortals. I suggest that this poem functions as an introduction to the entire series, in which the poet narrates certain moments that women enjoy in the boudoir, and these moments are depicted in a humorous language.

The second poem describes the flowers that are used for the rituals of the Double Seventh: orchids, chrysanthemums, and pomegranate blossoms. Moreover, given that "I" (the speaker) am preparing the banquet where "we" (the speaker and her companions) will pray for skills for the upcoming evening, this activity takes place in the daytime and is the earliest one in the temporal sequence. Although there are already three sorts of flowers, the poet still wants to buy two or three more flowers. This shows that the Double Seventh Festival is celebrated in a lavish manner and reflects its importance for women. The last line, "The maid hurriedly counts the money for flowers," represents a moment of everyday life in the poem.

The opening line of Poem 3, "At sunset, the shadow of the curtain like rolled up shrimp whiskers," recalls the Tang poet Lu Chang's 陸暢 (fl. 820) poem "Curtain": "Her white hands roll up shrimp whiskers, / the jasper room is brilliant and embellished with pearls 勞將素手卷蝦

鬚，瓊室流光更綴珠."[113] Here the image of shrimp whiskers is used to describe the curtain. The third poem creates a sense of irony because it is a mixture of the poetic (stock image from the Tang poetry) and the prosaic (a lively scene of women catching spiders). Within the second couplet, a comic effect is created between the difference of values. The box, which is made of fine porcelain from the famous *Ding* ware, is used for the comparatively low purpose of catching spiders. The historical texts demonstrate that the act of "catching spiders" is a significant element in the rituals of the Double Seventh. According to the Six Dynasties work *Jing Chu suishi ji* 荊楚歲時記 (Record of the Year and Seasons of Jing-Chu), which has one of the earliest records of the rituals of the Double Seventh Festival, it is noted: "[Women] put wine, dried meat, melons and fruits on a small table in the courtyard to pray for skills. If a long-legged spider weaves a web on the melons, it is thought that her wish will come true 陳几筵酒脯瓜菓於庭中以乞巧，有蟢子網於瓜上則以爲符應."[114] Moreover, in the Tang work *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 (Anecdotes from the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Periods), the activity of "catching spiders" is also mentioned: "[Palace ladies] catch spiders in small boxes, open them the next morning, and see spider webs that are sparse or dense. They think that this is an indication of skill. The dense one is said to have more skill, and the sparse one is said to have less skill 捉蜘蛛於小合中，至曉開視。蛛網稀密，以為得巧之候。密者言巧多，稀者言巧少."[115] In addition, the Song work *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 (The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor) indicates "catching spiders" as a part of the rituals: "[Women] put small spiders in boxes and view them

[113] Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645-1719) et al ed., *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 5442.

[114] Zong Lin 宗懍 (fl. 500-563), *Jing Chu suishi ji*, in *Wenyuan ge siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (accessed Oct. 1, 2015), 20.

[115] Wang Renyu 王仁裕 (880–956), *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 38.

the next day. If the web is a perfect circle, it is called 'skill obtained' 以小蜘蛛安合子內，次日看之，若網圓正，謂之「得巧」."[116] Other works of the late imperial period are similar to these cited above. Therefore, Wu Zao's poem reveals that the actual practice of the rituals of the Double Seventh in Hangzhou during Wu Zao's time was to put a spider in a round box, which conforms to the custom recorded in the earlier literary texts.

In Poem 4, the second line, "With a gilded knife, I finely carve the dark green melon," is a dramatized representation of carving a watermelon into a lantern for the rituals of the Double Seventh. A melon lantern seems to be an object that would appear in the rituals of this festival. In her song lyric, "To the Tune: *Huan xi sha,* Song Lyrics of Four Seasons in the Boudoir 浣溪沙：四時閨詞," Gu Taiqing 顧太清 (1799-1877), a contemporary woman poet, also wrote about this custom: "In leisure, I invite my female friends to try the melon lantern… By using the spider web, we pray for skill and worship the two stars 閒邀女伴試瓜燈… 蛛絲乞巧祀雙星."[117] The following lines "Clearly getting the skill of the granddaughter of the celestial emperor, / With bare hands, I can make the flower bloom in a moment" echo the theme of this series; however, instead of following the tradition of Praying for Skills from the Weaver Girl (the granddaughter of the celestial emperor), Wu Zao boldly claims that she has already "taken" the immortal's skill because she can make the beautiful flowery patterns on a melon. In other words, in her hands, this common fruit in everyday life is transformed into a piece of art.

The jasmine flower, in the fifth poem, seems to be another object used for the rituals of the

[116] Meng Yuanlao 孟元老 (fl. 1103-1147) and Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, *Dongjing menghua lu zhu* 東京夢華錄註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 209.

[117] Zhang Zhang 張璋 ed., *Gu Taiqing Yihui shici heji* 顧太清奕繪詩詞合集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 291.

Double Seventh Festival. In the woman poet Tao Shu's 陶淑 (1778-1839) song lyric, "To the Tune: *Pu sa man*, Double Seventh," she writes: "Jasmine flowers are woven into a lantern white like snow 素馨織得燈如雪."[118] The word *xiao* (laughing) appears twice in this series, and the second line of this poem, "With the breeze blowing on our faces, our cheerful chatting (*xiaoyu*) is fragrant," containing this word highlights the fact that women enjoy their lives in the inner quarters, and at this moment, they are having an enjoyable conversation with laughter. This enjoyment of women stands in striking contrast to the *yuan* (resentment) and *chou* (sorrow) experienced by the star lovers. Since this festival is held at the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, and the hot weather has not entirely gone, the "round fan" (line 3) is a common image that circulates in poems in the subgenre of the Double Seventh. The last line of the poem, "This year is not as cool as last year," is a quintessential example of Wu Zao's effort by which she inscribes her quotidian experience into a poetic form.

The sixth poem starts with portraying a scene in which music is played by flutes and castanets for the rituals in the Double Seventh. Music is another element for this festival. According to the *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi*, in the imperial palace on that night, "[servants] play tunes in the *qing* and *shang* mode and hold a banquet that lasts until the next morning 動清商之曲，宴樂達旦."[119] "Cloud carriage" is a stock image used in poems about the Double Seventh. The Weaver Girl rides in this carriage of clouds to meet her beloved husband. The second couplet again points to the poet's mockery of this immortal couple. The poet asks rhetorically how one can play the Yang Pass tune, the well-known song of parting adapted from Wang Wei's

[118] Tao Shu, *Juli ci* 鞠籬詞, 6a, in *Xiao tanluan shi huike guixiu ci* 小檀欒室彙刻閨秀詞, ed. Xu Naichang 徐乃昌 (1869-1943), Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Oct. 1, 2015)

[119] Wang Renyu, *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi*, 38.

王維 (699-761) poem, “Morning rain wets the light dust in Wei city, / Willows spring green, so green beside the guest house. / Let us drain another wine cup— / west of the Yang Pass no old friend awaits you 渭城朝雨浥輕塵，客舍青青柳色新。勸君更盡一杯酒，西出陽關無故人.”[120] This song, Wu Zao suggests, would intensify the two star lovers’ pain of separation.

The penultimate poem of this series includes the most important activity of the Double Seventh Festival—threading a seven-hole needle. This custom can be traced back to the Han dynasty. In the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Miscellany of the Western Capital), it is noted: “Han palace ladies always thread seven-hole needles at the Kaijin Pavilion 漢綵女常以七月七日穿七孔鍼於開襟樓.”[121] Later in the *Jing Chu suishi ji*, it is also recorded: “Women of commoner households use colorful yarns to thread seven-hole needles 人家婦女結綵縷，穿七孔鍼.”[122] In later periods, it is said that colourful yarns were also used to thread nine-hole needles. If this act is successful, it signifies that the woman will obtain skill. Susan Mann also mentions a related record in the local gazetteer of Zhejiang, which is close to Wu Zao’s period: “In the light of the moon they try to thread a needle, and if the thread goes through, they will be skillful (*deqiao*).”[123] The second couplet of this poem, however, portrays a comic scene: the poet fails to thread the seven-hole needle, which means that she does not obtain skill, but she blames the moon for setting too quickly and preventing her success.

At the end of this poem series, a sense of time passing is emphasized. The Double Seventh

[120] Geoffrey R Waters, Michael Farman, David Lunde, and Jerome P. Seaton, *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (Buffalo, N.Y: White Pine Press, 2011), 210.

[121] Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343), *Xijing zaji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 3.

[122] Zong Lin, *Jing Chu suishi ji*, 20.

[123] Susan Mann, *Precious Record*, 170-171.

"marked the beginning of autumn."[124] Because this festival occurs at the transition between seasons, the poet "tests" the *wutong* tree to see if it shows that autumn has arrived, and the *wutong* tree is also a commonly used image in the subgenre of the Double Seventh. The second line projects the author's attitude that this festival is a good moment (*liangqi*) and not one of sorrow or resentment. The poet asks the Weaver Girl to take care of herself because this year has an intercalary seventh month, which means that the Waver Girl will reencounter the Cowherd in one month's time. A secondary meaning of this line is that the poet and the Waver Girl will meet again as well. Because of the intercalary seventh month mentioned in Wu Zao's note, this poem series can be dated to the year 1824 when Wu Zao was a young woman.[125]

To sum up, this poem series presents the specific rituals of the Double Seventh Festival in Hangzhou during the late Qing period in a sequential order: preparing flowers for the banquet, catching a spider, making a melon lantern, wearing jasmine flowers as hair ornaments, playing music, and threading a needle. Thus, this series provides a perspective on women's experience about the exclusively female-practiced rituals, which are a crucial facet of women's culture. Furthermore, this series as a whole can be understood as an attempt by Wu Zao to inscribe a woman's experience of witnessing and engaging in the rituals of the Double Seventh Festival. This literary practice by a woman demonstrates gender difference in her manipulation of conventional poetic images focusing on women's quotidian life. Ultimately, Wu Zao's endeavor can be seen as part of the efforts of women of the Ming-Qing period who attempted to carve a

[124] Susan Mann, *Precious Record*, 170.

[125] During Wu Zao's life time, there are four years that have intercalary seventh months—1805, 1824, 1843, and 1854, but it is most likely that this poem series was written in 1824. Wu Zao's collection suggests a chronological arrangement. This poem series in question was placed at the very beginning of this collection, and some later poems exchanged with Shen Shanbao could be dated to later years but before 1843.

space of their own in the domain of Chinese literature.

Passing the Summer at Leisure

The pleasant experiences of Wu Zao are also portrayed in her poetry that contains female-exclusive themes, such as "Passing the Summer at Leisure." In her article "Voicing the Feminine," Maureen Robertson shows multifarious ways in which women writers express their own feminine voices exceeding the literati-feminine. One way is to open up new thematic territories that "reflect those experiences women regarded as important in their own lives, experiences not necessarily shared with men."[126] In this sense, *xiaoxia* 消/銷夏 or "Passing the Summer at Leisure" is a new topic in the feminine poetic tradition, which was exclusively used by women.[127] Women tend to write on this topos as poem series and often in the form of heptasyllabic quatrain.[128] However, women writers explore this topos in diverse ways.

First and foremost, women poets tend to write on the topic of "Passing the Summer at

[126] Maureen Robertson, "Voicing the Feminine," 85.

[127] On the one hand, according to my survey on the *Wenyuange siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書, there are only forty-four records found, and most of these poems by male poets refer to Xiaoxia Wan 消夏灣—a place in present-day Suzhou. In other words, *xiaoxia* is a theme about which men usually would not write in their poems. One reason might be that scholars were supposed to spend their whole summer on preparing the prefecture exam in autumn. On the other hand, I found ninety-nine entries in the Ming-Qing Women's Writings database. The ninety-nine records could be either individual poems or poem series including multiple poems. All of these poems are dated in the late Qing and early Republican periods, and the earliest pieces were dated to the Jiaqing reign period (1796-1820). Thus, I consider *xiaoxia* a "new" theme.

[128] According to the Ming Qing Women's Writings website, there are two hundred and eleven poems or song lyrics (under the ninety-nine entries) that contain *xiaoxia* in the title; one hundred and fourteen poems are *qiyan jueju* (heptasyllabic quatrain), the majority of which constitute fifteen poem series. Noteworthy is that every poem series includes at least two and as many as thirty poems.

Leisure" as a literary exercise. In Lao Rongjun's 勞蓉君 (1816-1847) poem series, entitled "Thirty Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure Using the Level-tone Rhymes in Turn 消夏詞三十首依次用上下平韻," we can clearly see that the poet attempts to refine her poetic skills through the practice of writing on this topos. The content of her series encompasses seasonal setting and daily activities, but the thirty poems are written to match the thirty level-tone rhymes from *pingshuiyun* 平水韻.[129] Moreover, the poem series "Passing the Summer at Leisure Imitating the Ziye Songs 消夏擬子夜歌" of Zeng Yi 曾懿 (1852-1927) imitates the Six Dynasties *yuefu* songs— "Ziye Songs."[130] The poet addresses the male lover (or *lang* 郎) while playfully adopting a female-lover persona (or *qie* 妾). Zeng Yi's poems also show her subjective experience in everyday life, such as reading "Encountering the Sorrow," fishing, composing poems and so forth. As another illustration, the thirty poems in Ji Lanyun's 季蘭韻 (1793-1848) series "Miscellaneous Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure in the Study of Embroidered Purse 繡囊齋銷夏雜咏" are composed in the form of linked verse (or *lianju* 聯句) by Ji Lanyun and her cousin Jing Chengxian 景成銑 (fl. 1819-1834).[131] As expected of this genre, these poems are more performative and competitive than reflective. The thirty poems are on the thirty objects in or around Ji Lanyun's study, including paintings and calligraphy works as well as

[129] *Pingshuiyun* is a rhyme system, which has been commonly adopted for poetic compositions since the Southern Song dynasty. For the poem series, see Lao Rongjun, *Lüyun shanfang shicao* 綠雲山房詩草, *juanxia* 10a-13a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

[130] Zeng Yi, *Guhuanshi ji* 古歡室集, 2.2b-2.3a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

[131] Ji Lanyun, *Chuwange ji* 楚畹閣集, 10.12b-10.20a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

other objects of daily use, which would be either displayed in a scholar's study or a gentry woman's boudoir. Yet the connection to the theme "Passing the Summer at Leisure" is not strong in that only a few poems refer to summer, indicated by seasonal flowers and items, such as a bamboo bed, silk fan, or melon lantern. The last example of the poem series entitled "Passing the Summer at Leisure" as a literary exercise is the poem series of *yongwu* (celebrating objects) poems. In accordance with the poetic convention, these *yongwu* poems also contain the dimension of a literary exercise. In her series "Miscellaneous Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure 消夏雜詠," Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911) deals with eight mundane objects used for hot weather, including *liangpeng* 涼蓬 (awning), *lengbu* 冷布 (cold cloth), *lulian* 蘆簾 (reed curtain), *zhudian* 竹簟 (bamboo mat), *tengchuang* 藤床 (rattan bed), *pushan* 蒲扇 (palm-leaf fan), *bingwan* 氷盌 (ice bowl), and *fengdeng* 風燈 (lantern).[132] Additionally, Bao Zhilan 鮑之蘭 (1751-1812) also writes about two day-to-day objects—*yingfu* 蠅拂 (fly swatter) and *wenchou* 蚊幬 (mosquito net) in her "Passing the Summer at Leisure, Two Poems on Objects 消夏詠物二首."[133] These poems by Xue and Bao, I suggest, are not merely literary exercise but also poetic transformations of the daily-used, seasonal objects, which allow us to have a glimpse into the material culture of women, which are, as Dorothy Ko indicates, "realms that were influenced by the world of the literati but were by no means contained by it."[134]

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[132] Xue Shaohui, *Daiyunlou shiwen ji* 黛韻樓詩文集, 3.21a-3.22a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

[133] Bao Zhilan, *Qiyunge shichao* 起雲閣詩鈔, 4.2a-4.2b, in *Jingjiang Bao shi sannüshi shichao heke* 京江鮑氏三女史詩鈔合刻, ed. Dai Xieyuan 戴燮元 (fl. 1882), Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

[134] Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005),

Furthermore, poems on this topos of "Passing the Summer at Leisure" reflect to some extent these women's summer customs. The informative title of Zong Wan's 宗婉 (1810-?) poem series is a quintessential example:

> Zhou Zundao's [fl. 1276] *Conversations of the Hidden Leopard* records "Passing the Winter at Leisure in eighty-one days," and a lot of people recite it. But, Li E [1692-1751], quoting Lu Yong's [dates unknown] *A Record of Wuxia's Agriculture*, marks the summer solstice as the beginning of the summer. The nine phases are: In the first and second nine days, fans are never away from hands; Three times nine equals twenty-seven, iced water is as sweet as honey; Four times nine equals thirty-six, wiping away sweat is like coming out of the bath; Five times nine equals forty-five, wearing dancing autumn leaves on the head; Six times nine equals fifty-four, enjoying the cool in a Buddhist temple; Seven times nine equals sixty-three, looking for sheets in bed; Eight times nine equals seventy-two, thinking of being covered by double quilts; Nine times nine equals eighty-one, every family is making coal bricks. Other books' records may be different. This summer, Madam Xuefen (Wang Yunmei 汪韻梅, dates unknown) wrote about this topic and requested poems in reply, so I composed nine poems in order to pass the three hottest periods of the year.[135]
>
> 周遵道《豹隱紀談》九九消寒之說，詠之者多矣。而厲鶚引陸泳《吳下田家志》則復於夏至後為起，九說曰：一九二九扇子不離手，三九二十七冰水甜如蜜，四

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[135] Zong Wan, *Mengxianglou shigao* 夢湘樓詩稿, *xia* 20a-22a, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

九三十六拭汗如出浴，五九四十五頭戴秋葉舞，六九五十四乘涼入佛寺，七九六十三床頭尋被單，八九七十二思量蓋夾被，九九八十一家家打炭墼。而他書所載亦間有不同者。今夏雪芬夫人以此為題賦詩索和，爰成九章以遣三伏。

The folk rhymes for summer customs above is cited as notes in several poems series, such as Zong Can's 宗粲 (fl. 1880) "In Eighty-one Days, Poems of Passing the Summer at Leisure 九九消夏詩" and Ji Lanyun's "In Eighty-one Days, Songs of Passing the Summer at Leisure 九九消暑詞."[136] The three women mentioned above—Zong Wan, Zong Can and Ji Lanyun—each wrote nine heptasyllabic quatrains, which parallel the nine stages of the summer. Their poems could be considered a poetic adaptation and re-interpretation of the folk rhymes; thus, the nine poems parallel the objects mentioned in the folk song, namely fans, cool spring water, fragrant sweat, falling leaves, Buddhist temple, sheet, double-layer quilt, and coal. However, as Zong Wan pointed out, the records are different to some degree. According to Yan Zhongzhen's 言忠貞 (dates unknown) poem series "In Eighty-one Days, Songs of Passing the Summer at Leisure 九九消夏詞" in the fourth set of nine days, "hungry mosquitoes sting skin and fresh 飢蚊刺肌肉," in the fifth set of nine days, "sitting outside, sorrow enters the house 露坐愁入戶," and in the ninth set of nine days, "listening to crickets' sound on the doorstep 階前聽蟋蟀."[137] Zong Can and Ji Lanyun's ninth poems are also about "listening to crickets." Compared with these women's poetic adaptions of the folk song, Gui Maoyi's 歸懋儀 (fl. 1756) poem series "From

[136] Ji Lanyun, *Chuwange ji,* 1.1b-1.2b.

[137] Yan Zhongzhen, *Huayulou shicao* 話雨樓詩草, 1·5b-6b, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

Mountain Lodge of Level Distance, Eight Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure 平遠山房消夏八咏" provides a wealth of interesting details of real-life events via the depiction of eight types of agricultural or leisure activities in the summer, such as *chayang* 插秧 (transplanting rice seedlings), *saosi* 繅絲 (reeling silk), *shaiyao* 曬藥 (drying medical herbs in the sun), *zaojiang* 造醬 (making soy paste), *maibing* 買冰 (buying ice), *zhehe* 折荷 (plucking lotus leaves), *fugua* 浮瓜 (floating a watermelon), and *xizhu* 洗竹 (washing bamboos).[138] Although these women poets represented the summer customs to varying degrees, their literary production sheds new light on our understanding of the seasonal activities in which women were involved or witnessed.

Poems about "Passing the Summer at Leisure" also function as windows through which we could have insights into the lives of women and their subjective experience of everyday life. A case in point is Xi Peilan's 席佩蘭 (1766-1829) "Miscellaneous Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure in the Year Bingchen (1796) 丙辰消夏雜詩."[139] In this poem series, Xi Peilan incorporates her maternal experience into the theme. She mentions her parental relationship with her son and daughter: "My lovely son is asking for milk and can't be sent away 索乳嬌兒遣不開 (Poem 3)"; "I'm happy about my beloved daughter's company 恰喜同心嬌女伴 (Poem 4)"; " My smart little daughter can distinguish the character *feng* from *ding* 慧心小女辨風丁 (Poem 5)." Xi Peilan's maternal experience distinguishes her poems relating her quotidian life from the male poetic tradition and men's writings. Xi's poems, written under the title "leisure of

[138] Gui Maoyi, *Xiuyu xucao* 繡餘續草, 1.9a-1.10b, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

[139] Xi Peilan, *Changzhenge ji* 長真閣集, 3.14a-3.14b, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

summer," also demonstrate feminine qualities of this theme.

In Wu Zao's *Xiangnan xuebei lu shi*, there are eight poems under the title "Passing the Summer at Leisure" (or *xiaoxia ci*). These poems were composed in the summer of 1837 before her friend Shen Shaobao traveled to Beijing.[140] According to the *Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話 (Remarks on Poetry of Notable Women), Shen Shaoban notes: "Pingxiang (Wu Zao) wrote ten poems on 'Passing the Summer at Leisure,' which are quite capable of delineating the real scenes. Yushi (Bao Liang) and I harmonized with her poems 蘋香消夏詞十章，頗能描摹真景，余與玉士和之."[141] Apart from some indications about summer, there is no clear temporal frame in Wu Zao's poem series. Despite this, Wu Zao's poem series, together with Shen Shanbao and Bao Liang's 鮑靚 (fl. 1835) matching poems, could have been the result of a literary gathering. First of all, Shen Shanbao records a dialogue between Bao Liang and herself in *Mingyuan shihua*: "Yushi appreciates most my lines 'Its exquisite emerald shadow is as cool as the moon, / with a smile, the maid tries the melon lantern' 玉士最賞余之碧影玲瓏涼似月侍兒含笑試瓜燈之句."[142] Secondly, poems by both Wu Zao and Shen Shanbao mention the same communal activities, such as gambling and games, which suggest activities in a party.

Wu Zao's poem series is a marvelous representation of "real scenes" in summer—an epitome of women's pleasures of the inner quarters in nineteenth-century China. This poem

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[140] Shen Shanbao wrote ten poems under the title *Xiaoxia zayong* 消夏雜詠 matching Wu Zao's series. See, Shen Shanbao, *Hongxuelou chuji* 鴻雪樓初集, *juan* 5, 6b-8a. Also see, Chung Hui-ling, "Qingdai nüzuojia Shen Shanbao nianpu qianbian 清代女作家沈善寶年譜前篇," *Donghai zhongwen xuebao*, no. 19 (2007): 231-232.

[141] Shen Shanbao, *Mingyuan shihua*, Ming Qing Women's Writings: http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016): *juan* 6, 10a.

[142] Ibid.

series shares several features and resonates with the works of other women writers; therefore, in the following discussion, I will connect Wu Zao's poems to the broader contexts.

No. 1	一層黃篾拓虛空，	A curtain of yellow bamboo opens up to the empty sky,
	蓬障驕陽色不紅。	The awning blocks the blazing sun whose color cannot turn red.
	東閣閉窗西啟戶，	In the east pavilion, the window is closed; in the west, the door is open,
	曲房引入過堂風。	The secluded quarter ushers in the draught from the hall.
No. 2	桃符前度綴瑤釵，	When peach-wood charms adorned a jasper hairpin,
	共說鍼神有好懷。	We talked about the goddess of needlework being in a good mood.
	梅朵冰紋金縷線，	Plum blossoms and ice patterns sewn with gold threads,
	為郎親手製涼鞋。	For you my lover, I am making slippers with my own hands.
No. 3	喜得朝來女伴添，	I am happy that my female companions came this morning,
	曲房深下水晶簾。	Deep in the inner chamber, the crystal curtain is pulled down.
	呼盧喧雜圍棋靜，	The *hulu* game is noisy, and the go game quiet,
	愛把南唐葉子拈。	We love to play with the *leaves* cards of the Southern Tang.
No. 4	三絃彈唱近風詩，	Playing the three strings to sing *Airs*-like poetry,

	半似楊枝半竹枝。	Half of the songs are like “The Willow Branch,” the other half “The Bamboo Branch.”
	體貼家常兒女話，	It’s like intimate small talk between girls,
	畫屏側坐聽南詞。	By the painted screen, we sit and listen to the Southern Lyrics.
No. 5	小語啞啞出學堂，	Softly babbling, [the child] comes out from school,
	阿侯泥母擘蓮房。	Ahou, the mother of mud, splits the lotus pod.[143]
	間情作箇龍鍾叟，	In a leisurely mood, I sculpt a decrepit old man,
	配與泥孩綠間黃。	To match the mud child in green and yellow.
No. 6	碧筩盃泛酒頻呼，	Raising the lotus-leaf cup and asking for wine again and again,
	郎愛松醪妾不符。	You, my dear, love the pine wine but I do not.
	翠柄製同湘竹管，	The kingfisher handle is made with a mottled bamboo pipe,
	朱櫻小吸淡巴菇。	Red-cherry lips delicately smoke tobacco.
No. 7	病餘怕噉綠沈瓜，	While the illness remains, I’m afraid of eating the dark green melon,
	熱惱難消悶轉加。	Irritation with the heat is hard to eliminate, as a feeling of ennui rises.

[143] The meaning of this couplet is unclear.

六一散涼香薷苦， The Six-and-One pill cools while the fragrant herbs are bitter,

試煎菉豆作甌茶。 I try to roast mung beans and make a bowl of tea.

No. 8 露坐中庭笑語涼， Sitting in the open, our cheerful chatting is pleasantly cool.

平頭髻子晚來妝。 Putting on hair into flat tops for the night.

鏤空藤枕蘇州式， The latticed rattan pillow is Suzhou style,

茉莉花開夢亦香。 With jasmine flowers blooming, our dreams are also sweet.[144]

The opening poem acts as an introduction to this series, in which a summer scene is set up: a bamboo awning is built for shading the burning sun, and the draught is let into the boudoir to cool it down. The reference to the hot weather at the very beginning of a poem series dealing with this topic can also be seen in other women's works. For example, in the first poem of Lao Rongjun's poem series "Thirty Poems on Passing the Summer at Leisure Using Level-tone Rhymes in Turn," she wrote: "The blazing hot weather slows down the needle work, / The red sun is burning, the same for ten thousand *li* 炎歊天氣減鍼工, 赤日如焚萬里同."[145] Wu Zao's series allude to the summer by using seasonal objects several times, but it is only in the first and the seventh poems that the hot weather itself is mentioned, which explicitly situates the boudoir activities in the summer setting.

The persona of a female lover is introduced into this series (in the second and sixth poems), which indicates how this theme is influenced by literary exercise. Similar to Zeng Yi's "Passing the Summer at Leisure Imitating the Ziye Song," the female lover persona in Wu Zao's poems is

[144] Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji*, 5b-6b.

[145] Lao Rongjun, *Lüyun shanfang shicao*, *juanxia* 10a-13a

also adapted from the Six Dynasties *yuefu* songs but in a manner different from that of the the literati feminine. It does not involve a voyeuristic gaze from outside. The male lover, addressed as *lang*, shows up in the boudoir scene, although this lover appears to be fictional.[146] Furthermore, there is no melancholic emotion in the two poems or in the rest of this series. The intimacy depicted in the second poem (the girl is making shoes for her lover) and the playful communication between the two lovers in the sixth poem (they repeatedly ask for wine, and *he* prefers the pine ale but *she* dislikes it) seem to not reflect the real relationship between Wu Zao and her husband. However, more importantly, these poems put into question the sorrowful image of Wu Zao, highlighted by her male contemporaries who suppose it to be caused by her marriage.[147]

By writing about mundane objects, Wu Zao's poem series presents vivid details of her daily life and invites us to observe the quotidian experiences of nineteenth century women. In Poem 2, the couplet "Plum blossoms and ice patterns sewn with gold threads, / For you my lover, I am making slippers all by myself" provides a description of a woman producing embroidered shoes for a man. Embroidery, as Grace Fong points out, plays an important role in "women's daily experience that was manipulated as a topos in their poetic self–representation."[148] Similar to other women's poems, Wu Zao textualizes embroidery as a quotidian activity and experience. However, the embroidery in Wu Zao poem is not merely a motif that evokes memories about her

[146] Wu Zao and her husband, who was a merchant, had an estranged relationship, and her deep loneliness and sorrow were forcefully expressed in her early song lyrics in *Hualian ci,* and the unhappy marriage is also implied in her authorial preface (1844) of *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, and in Zhang Jingqi's 張景祁 (1827-1895) preface "Xiangxue luci xu 香雪廬詞敘."

[147] This sorrowful image of Wu Zao has been discussed in the previous chapter.

[148] Grace Fong, "Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women's Everyday Life in Late Imperial and Early Republican China," *Late Imperial China* 25.1 (2004): 9.

female kin with whom she shared this experience; instead, the poet names the material used for these specific men's embroidered shoes.[149] In the second couplet of the second poem, the poet writes that the ice pattern stitch, a skill from Suzhou Embroidery, is used to sew plum flowers while the luxurious gold threads are used for the pattern. Also, "making slippers with my own hands" emphasizes the action of embroidery. Another example of writing on the object is the tobacco pipe in the sixth poem: Wu Zao depicts the material and color of the tobacco pipe, which seems to have a jade handle and a body made of mottled bamboo. The final illustration is the "flattop hair coils" in the last poem, which is a popular hair style for women during Qing dynasty. In the novel *Hua yue hen* 花月痕 (Traces of Flower and Moon), Wei Xiuren 魏秀仁 (1818-1873)—a contemporary of Wu Zao—cites the *Gujin zhu* 古今注 (Notes on Antiquity and Present) by Cui Bao 崔豹 (fl. 278) to discuss varied sorts of women's hairstyles: "King Wen of Zhou created the flattop hair coils 周文王制平頭髻."[150] This is probably a fictive origin of this hairstyle, but it may reflect its popularity during Wu Zao's life time.

The most significant feature of this poem series is that it reflects Wu Zao's pleasant everyday life experiences. The quotidian activities described in this poem series may exemplify how women of the late imperial period enjoy their lives, or even more, challenge our existing knowledge of gentry women's boudoir life. It is striking that these leisure activities described by Wu Zao do not conform to the four types of literati arts—*qin* (zither), *qi* (chess), *shu* (calligraphy), and *hua* (painting), which are expected to be mastered as well as written about in

[149] It is possible that Wu Zao's poem is only a poetic imitation or interpretation of the object and very different from the real one.

[150] Cui Bao, *Gujin zhu*, *Chinese Text Project*: http://ctext.org/ (accessed Aug. 27, 2016). The title of *Hua yue hen* is translated by Patrick Hanan. See Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 1.

poetry by men and women of the gentry class. According to the Qing woman poet Liu Xiaomei 劉小眉 (dates unknown), there are "Ten Pleasures of the Orchid Boudoir 蘭閨十趣," which include all four literati arts and other more gender-specific arts, such as "making up in front of the morning mirror 曉鏡理粧."[151] Instead, Wu Zao's poem series not only includes activities such as needle work, drinking, and illness in the boudoir, which are mentioned in other women's poetry, but also other activities rarely seen in the works of previous or contemporary women or even considered "gentle", such as gambling, listening to *tanci*, making clay dolls, and smoking tobacco. These poems shed further light on our knowledge of lives of nineteenth-century literary women.

In the third poem, Wu Zao depicts a hilarious gambling scene: after her female friends arrived, they pulled down the curtain and started gambling. The "high art" *weiqi* (go game) is mixed with two other gambling games (*hulu* and *yezi*), and thus the boundaries between the high and low, or the elegant and vulgar, are blurred. *Hulu* (also named *chupu* 樗蒲 or *wumu* 五木) is a gambling game with five two-sided dices. Each side of a dice is painted either black or white, and two of the five dices have the character *du* 犢 (calf) on the black side and the character *zhi* 雉 (pheasant) on the white side. *Lu*, five blacks, has the highest score.[152] That is the reason why people are calling the *lu* during the game and making the game "noisy" as the poem notes. In the Ming-Qing period, *yezi* (leaves) is a card gambling game, and a Ming version has *Water Margin*

[151] Huang Qiaole, "Writing from within a Women's Community: Gu Taiqing (1799–1877) and Her Poetry" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2004), 60-61.

[152] Otani Michiyori 大谷通順, "Zhongguo gudai you xi 'chupu' zai shijie youxi shang de dingwei 中國古代遊戲'樗蒲'在世界遊戲上的定位," in *Xinshiji wenhua jiaoliu yu hanyu jiaoxue guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 新世紀文化交流與漢語教學國際學術研討會論文集 (Beijing: Beijing ligong daxue, 2000), 21-27.

figures on the cards.[153] According to Gao Shiqi's 高士奇 (1644-1703) *Tianlu shiyu* 天祿識餘 (Remnant Knowledge from the Gift of Heaven), "the Imperial Concubine Zhou of the Southern Tang Emperor Li Yu 李煜 (937-978) created the Golden Leaves Game 南唐李後主妃周氏編金葉子格."[154] In the last line of the third poem, Wu Zao suggests that they played the *yezi* cards after finishing the gambling game and *weiqi*, and the allusion to the elegant Southern Tang court culture finds a high origin for the *yezi* cards. This poem finely demonstrates how Wu Zao transforms the mundane to the poetic through writing about the daily, vulgar activities into poetry as well as poetizing the gambling games by using allusions.

In Poem 4, Wu Zao writes about her experience towards *tanci* performance. *Tanci* 彈詞 (or plucking rhymes) is a narrative form of song written in verse or prose and sung to a *pipa* or *sanxian*. Current scholarship pays attention to the relationship between women and the genre *tanci* mainly in the following two aspects. Women's long-narrative *tanci* fictions, which are composed for female readership, constitute an écriture feminine, which resist the patriarchal values.[155] Also, in the early twentieth century, progressive men and women appropriated *tanci* to encourage Chinese women to adapt to the changing social and cultural environment and to establish new identities.[156] Wu Zao's poem, however, points to the oral performance of *tanci*

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[153] Liu Jung-Chun 劉榕峻, "Chen Hongshou 'Shuihu yezi' yanjiu 陳洪綬《水滸葉子》研究" (MA thesis, National Taiwan University, 2009), 1-4.

[154] Gao Shiqi, *Tianlu shiyu*, in *Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 vol. 483 (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2001), 7.19a.

[155] Hu Siao-chen 胡曉真, *Cainü cheye weimian—jindai zhongguo nüxing xushi wenxue de xingqi* 才女徹夜未眠——近代中國女性敘事文學的興起 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 3.

[156] Li Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press: 2015), 10-11, 25-26.

prevailing in the Jiangnan region, which is not very common to see in women's writing, even though these gentry women, as Hu Siao-chen suggests, enjoy this form of art as much as commoners and their male counterparts.[157] The first couplet of the fourth poem refers to the musical form and literary style of *tanci*. The *tanci* that Wu Zao listens to is sung to a *sanxian*, and its style is more colloquial than literary. The "*Airs"* in the *Classic of Poetry* are acknowledged as folk songs. Moreover, "*yangzhi"*, or *yangliuzhi* (the willow branch), is a popular lyric tune often written in seven-character quatrains; "*zhuzhi*," or *zhuzhici* (the bamboo branch), is said to have originated from folk songs and often written as colloquial, seven-character quatrains. These two poetic genres, both of which are seven-character quatrains, are compared to *tanci* that is usually written in seven-character verse. The content of *tanci* is referred as "small talk between girls," revealing its oral and feminine characteristics. The "screen" in the last line reminds the reader of this poem's boudoir setting. Interestingly, Wu Zao calls *tanci* by its alternate name "*nanci*" (southern lyrics). This is possibly due to *tanci's* Suzhou origin. As Victor Mair and Mark Bender note, the *tanci* orally performed in Suzhou "has been especially influenced by the *kunqu* traditions in terms of character roles, voice registers, and handmovements."[158] This poem by Wu Zao is a rare record about women's direct experience of *tanci* performance, so it may also function as textual evidence that bespeaks the popularity of *tanci* and supports scholars' argument—*tanci* is beloved by gentry women.

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[157] Hu Siao-chen, *Cainü cheye weimian,* 4. Another individual case of a woman writing about *tanci* is that Ling Zhiyuan 凌祉媛 (1831-1852), also a native of Hangzhou, addressed a poem to a *tanci* singer to praise her performance. See, Grace Fong, "The Life and Afterlife of Ling Zhiyuan (1831-1852) and Her Poetry Collection," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* (2015): 136.

[158] Victor Mair and Mark Bender, "Professional Storytelling Traditions of the North and South," in *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature*, ed. Victor Mair and Mark Bender. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 311.

In the penultimate poem of this series, Wu Zao also writes about her illness in summer. As Grace Fong observes, the topic of writing about, during, or after illness is common in women's poetry, and these women have built a connection between illness and poetry writing.[159] At the very beginning, Wu Zao indicates the temporal frame: "the illness remains." This illness is also seasonal, as this poem is written in this series and signaled by the seasonal fruit—the "dark green melon." The state of her condition in the first line is followed by her emotional and physical states ("irritation" and "ennui") in the second line. In the third and fourth lines, Wu Zao writes about her real-life experience of making medicine for herself. The so-called "*liuyi* pill" 六一泥 (or Mud of Six-and-One) is borrowed from the terminology of Taoist alchemy: "[u]sually obtained from seven ingredients, the mud is used to hermetically seal the crucible and avoid dispersion of pneuma during the heating of the elixir."[160] Here the *liuyi* pill is used as one of three sorts of medicine (*liuyi*, the fragrant herbs, and mung beans) for mitigating heat, as the bitter herbs and mung beans are said to be cooling in nature. This poem is slightly at odds with the delightful tone of the whole poem series, but it also reflects the personal summer experiences of Wu Zao in her boudoir.

In summary, this poem series "Passing the Summer at Leisure" as a whole demonstrates Wu Zao's enjoyable moments in the boudoir. Sharing common features with other women's works dealing with this theme, Wu Zao's poem series also contains some fictional elements, such as the female lover persona, but it reflects more her real-life experience through her descriptions of objects used in daily life and fun boudoir activities. These cheerful poems open up a new

[159] Grace Fong, "Writing and Illness: A Feminine Condition in Women's Poetry of Ming and Qing," in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming Through Qing,* ed. Grace Fong and Ellen Widmer (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 19-48.

[160] Fabrizio Pregadio, *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* (London: Routledge, 2008), 697-698.

thematic territory of the pleasant experiences of women in the boudoir and thereby forcibly challenge the accepted, sorrowful image of Wu Zao.

In this chapter, I have explored Wu Zao's poems about the exclusively female practiced rituals of the Double Seventh Festival and her lived experience in summer. I argue that the delightful experiences inscribed in these poems are an inseparable part of Wu Zao's life. Over the past twenty years, scholars working on Chinese women's studies have deconstructed the victimized image of women in traditional China. However, women's poems about their enjoyable moments in the boudoir, which provide strong evidence for women as agents, have not received sufficient scholarly attention. Thus, I hope this work can help to fill this gap.

Furthermore, these poems written in a delightful spirit present the image of Wu Zao as a woman who enjoys her life; therefore, it strongly opposes the image of an ill-fated and lamentable talented woman. Indeed, Wu Zao expresses her acute loneliness, sorrow, and frustration in her early works. She may also have experienced difficulties in her marriage and never had children. Her life ended because of the Taiping Rebellion. However, her life is no more unfortunate than that of many contemporary men and women of the literary class, not to speak of the common people. It is also a fact that Wu Zao became a celebrity at a comparatively young age; she had and was emotionally supported by a large social circle, which included both women and men; and she did not suffer from poverty during most of her life. This may explain why Wu Zao's image as an ill-fated woman is so problematic. This image was mainly constructed by her male contemporaries and later became a crucial part of her biography and even the only known image for present-day scholars. It promotes the stereotype of a gentry woman in traditional China on the one hand. On the other hand, the concentration on Wu Zao's

misfortune signals the gender discrimination in evaluating the literary production of a woman. Wu Zao is constructed as "unfortunate" possibly because she does not fulfil the expectation for a woman in the traditional society, whose "fortune" and happiness cannot be separated from being a good wife and mother. For a woman writer, her success in the private sphere should also be an integral part in the judgment of her life and works. Therefore, I hope that this chapter will provide a different perspective on Wu Zao's life and poetry, through which we can see that Wu Zao had enjoyment and pleasure even though she had an unsuccessful marriage. Her achievements in literature and building of friendship do not depend on fulfilling the conventional gender roles.

Chapter III Wu Zao's Masculine Self-Image in Song Lyrics

This chapter aims to explore how Wu Zao appropriates masculine poetics in her song lyrics, how she creates and presents a masculinized self-image in her writing, and why she seeks to write in a masculine style. In the genre of the song lyric, a feminine aesthetics, variously associated with "voice, representation, stylistics, and critical debate," has been regarded as the orthodox tradition.[161] Feminine style is often related to the themes of emotion and the private sphere, especially romantic love and the boudoir; by contrast, the masculine style creates a symbolic space usually associated with men's ambitions and their achievements in the social and political sphere.[162] From this perspective, a substantial thematic range of Wu Zao's song lyrics remarkably transcends the limitation of feminine aesthetics and contains masculine qualities in diction and sentiment. I have chosen five representative song lyrics under the subgenres or themes of song lyrics inscribed on paintings, thoughts on the past, friendship with like-minded scholars, witnessing to social turmoil, and gender frustration, written in an explicit or subdued masculine mode.[163] Through an examination of these song lyrics, I want to show how a masculinized image of Wu Zao is constructed by her conscious choices of textual strategies, which include usages of certain tune patterns, images, and personae that are intimately connected

[161] Grace Fong, "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," in *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, ed. Pauline Yu. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 107.

[162] For the definition of the masculine style, see Xiaorong Li's discussion in "Engendering Heroism: Ming-Qing Women's Song Lyrics to the Tune *Man Jiang Hong*," *Nan Nü*: 7.1 (2005): 1-3.

[163] I want to clarify that it is not the case that I merely found five song lyrics in Wu Zao's oeuvre under five broad topics. There is a good amount of song lyrics (or poems) in each of those five categories. The reason why I decide to discuss the five dispersed topics rather than focus on one theme or subgenre is that I intend to show the complexities of a woman writer's appropriation of the masculine lyric tradition and her own creation. As a profound writer, Wu Zao's works have far more than one dimension.

with masculinities.[164] I argue that these works are significant because they evince that in the genre of song lyric, Wu Zao purposely promotes her masculine image, which, as we have seen in the first chapter, has been projected in her drama *Qiao ying*. Furthermore, I suggest that her masculine-style song lyrics also point to a cross-dressing in language, in other words, a literary performance.[165] The recognition of this performance in these subgenres and themes can help us understand how Wu Zao sought entry to the literati domain by means of writing and how she successfully obtained acceptance.[166]

Song Lyrics Inscribed on Paintings

A good part of Wu Zao's masculine-style song lyrics are written on paintings. In these, the masculine mode is mediated through the description of the paintings, such as the landscape or male figures. It is noteworthy that the gender of the painter appears to largely influence Wu Zao's diction in her inscription on the painting. Granted that Wu Zao also composed a sizable quantity

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[164] As Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasstrom point out, Chinese masculinity is a complex issue. It does not have a universal definition and should be situated in specific contexts. See Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasstrom, "Introduction," in *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1-41. More specifically, in terms of the genre of song lyric, Xiaorong Li lists several masculine qualities in her discussion of the masculine song lyrics written by men, such as "valor, ambition, determination, loyalty and so on." See Xiaorong Li, "Engendering Heroism," 10. In this chapter, I will discuss the various factors and traits that contribute to the masculine style in the following sections.

[165] See Grace Fong's discussion of Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1879-1907) as a woman who uses the masculine-style song lyrics as literary cross-dressing, in "Engendering the Lyric," 138-145.

[166] It is important to note that the author as a historical person should not be simply equated with his or her poetic persona or voice in the poetry. In the case of Wu Zao, her image projected in her *shi* poems may be comparatively closer to the historical person, as these poems record more her lived experiences than her song lyrics in general. (See discussion in the second chapter.) However, Wu Zao's song lyrics that contain masculine images, exemplify a strong performative dimension.

of *tihua ci* for women in a more feminine style; however, all painters of the artworks, for which Wu wrote song lyrics in a masculine diction, and in which she self-fashioned in a male persona, were male scholar-officials.[167] The sharp difference in diction demonstrates Wu Zao's awareness of these paintings' gender-inflected contents and her primary audience—the male painters and communities where the paintings were circulated and appreciated. An example that shows Wu Zao targeting male scholars as her potential audience and self-constructing a masculinized image is the following song lyric:

	大江東去: 金亞伯太常大江泛月圖	To the Tune *Da jiang dong qu*: Chief Minister Jin Yabo's Painting 'On the Great River, Boating under Moonlight'
1	乘風萬里，	Riding the wind for a myriad *li*,
2	看片帆、翦破大江秋色。	See the small sail breaks into the Great River's autumn scene.
3	天水蒼茫明月涌，	Between the boundless sky and water, the bright moon emerges,
4	約略槎浮今夕。	It seems like the floating raft has come tonight.[168]
5	瓜步潮平，	The tides of Guabu high,
6	海門露冷，	And the dew of Haimen cold,
7	雨點金焦白。	Raindrops tint Mounts Jin and Jiao white.[169]

[167] See the list of song lyrics inscribed on paintings in a masculine mode in Appendix II.

[168] The "floating raft" is an allusion to the immortal boat travelling between the sea and the Milky Way. See Zhang Hua 張華, *Bowuzhi* 博物志, Chinese Text Project: http://ctext.org/ (accessed Dec. 14, 2016).

[169] Guabu, Haimen, and Mounts Jin and Jiao are three places in Jiangsu, which may suggest the geographical setting in the painting or the painter's trip in reality.

8	玻璃世界，	In this crystal world,
9	晚山難辨遙碧。	Evening mountains are hard to distinguish from the distant sky.
10	我欲閑卻紅牙，	I wish to let rest red ivory castanets,
11	換來鐵板，	And exchange them for iron clappers,
12	試與坡翁説。	And try to talk to Old Man Po.
13	星使閩南持節去，	The star messenger goes to take office in Southern Min.
14	驚起魚龍能識。	Startling fish and dragon to rise that he can recognize.[170]
15	諫草焚餘，	After the official drafts are burned,
16	詩囊貯滿，	The satchel of poems fills up,
17	賦有凌雲筆。	With compositions that soar up to the clouds.
18	畫中何處，	Where in the painting
19	蓬瀛飛下仙客。	Has the immortal guest from Penglai descended?[171]

The tune title *Da jiang dong qu* denotes the masculine content of the song lyric. As the variant title of *Nian nu jiao*, it is derived from the first line of Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037-1101) famous song lyric, "To the Tune *Nian nu jiao*: Recalling the Past at Red Cliff": "The Great River flows

[170] Jin Yinglin 金應麟 (1793-1852), (courtesy name Yabo), was appointed to Fujian as the Vice Examining Official. See Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao ci zhuan*, 189. I suggest that, on the one hand, this line may refer to the boat trip on the river possibly in the painting and also in reality. In this case, Jin's boat startles the fish. On the other hand, this line may point to Jin's official position as an examiner who can distinguish the qualified candidates (dragons) from the mediocre (fish).

[171] Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, 31a-31b. For the translation of *Taichang*, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 476.

east."[172] This song lyric by Su Shi has been generally considered as the starting point of the masculine mode.[173] Later it became a convention that song lyrics under this tune title *Nian nu jiao* would be written in the masculine mode. Beginning with the tune title, Wu Zao's song lyric recalls Su Shi's lyric and the motif of Su Shi boating at Red Cliff that became the popular subject of many paintings, suggesting the ideal of a lofty-minded scholar. In the first stanza of Wu Zao's song lyric, the lyricist describes the content of the painting: a scholar on his boat in the moonlight. In the breeze, the lone boat makes ripples on the river. The bright moon rises amidst the vast sky and river. In the first stanza, these elements—the title of the song lyric, the landscape described, the visual and textual allusion to Su Shi and the Red Cliff—connect this song lyric to the masculine conversion, constructed and practiced by male scholars.

At the beginning of the second stanza, the first person pronoun "*wo*" highlights the speaking persona's presence and a subjective voice: "I wish to let rest red ivory castanets, / And exchange them for iron clappers." This pair of images, red ivory castanets and iron clappers, allude to an anecdote about Su Shi.

> When East Slope was in Jade Hall [the Hanlin Academy], there was a tapestry weaver who was good at singing. East Slope asked him, "How do my song lyrics compare with those by Liu the Seventh?" "Liu's songs are suitable only for a girl of seventeen or eighteen who, holding crimson ivory castanets, sings, 'A bank of willows, in dawn winds under a fading moon.' Your songs, sir, require a strapping fellow from the northwest who, holding an iron clapper, sings of 'The great river surges east'."[174]

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[172] Ronald Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 226.

[173] Xiaorong Li, "Engendering Heroism," 6.

[174] Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge, MA:

The song writer Liu Yong's 柳永 (987-1053) feminine style is represented by the red ivory castanets, while Su's masculine style is represented by the iron clappers. In my view, these two images respectively stand for different stylistic aesthetics and, more importantly, two types of self-image: the feminine and the masculine. The red ivory castanets recall the feminized imagery of young women singing softly; by contrast, the iron clappers immediately direct the reader to the masculine image of a strong man loudly singing the heroic lyric. These two images, red ivory castanets and iron clappers (or bronze lute), repeatedly recur in Wu Zao's corpus, whether in her drama, song lyric, or *shi* poetry. For example:

1	我待撥銅琶向江上歌。	I want to pluck a bronze lute and on the Yangzi sing a song.[175] (Bei yanerluo dai deshengling 北雁兒落帶得勝令)
2	把烏闌細抄,	Carefully tracing out the black lines,
	更紅牙漫敲,	Slowly beating the red-ivory clappers—
	纔顯得美人名士最魂銷。	Only that will display the most soul-searing beauty and scholar![176] (Bei shou Jiangnan 北收江南)
3	待把柔情輕放下,	I want to lightly put away these gentle emotions,
	不唱柳邊風月。	Avoid the breeze and moonlight near the willows.
	且整頓、銅琶鐵撥。	So let me make ready, a bronze lute and an iron plectrum.
	讀罷離騷還酌酒,	After reciting "Encountering Sorrow" I'll pour out my wine

Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 298.

[175] Wu Zao, "Bei yanerluo dai deshengling," *Qiao ying*, 6b. For English translation, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush,* 690.

[176] Wu Zao, "Bei shoujiangnan," *Qiao ying*, 8b. For English translation, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush,* 691.

	向大江東去、歌殘闋。	Into the great river that streams eastward and sing a few stanzas.[177] (Jin lü qu 金縷曲)
4	試拍紅牙歌水調。	Let me try to tap the red-ivory clappers and sing the Water Tune.[178] (Bin yun song ling 鬢雲鬆令)
5	酒醒又今宵,	Awake from a drunken sleep again tonight,
	拍遍紅牙,	I tap through the red-ivory clappers,
	儘高唱、大江東去。	Loudly singing "The Great River flows east."[179] (Dong xian ge 洞僊歌)
6	冷了紅牙,	Red-ivory clappers cold,
	住了銅琶。	The bronze lute stopped,
	一年年、減盡才華。	Year by year, my talents all diminished.[180] (Xing xiang zi 行香子)
7	問幾度、紅牙拍碎。	I ask how many times I have tapped the red-ivory clappers to pieces.[181] (Jin lü qu)
8	何時自撥銅琶唱,	When will I pluck a bronze lute by myself and sing,
	笑看江波日夜流？	And with a laugh, watch the river flow day and night?[182] (My drama *Fake Image* or *Drinking Wine and Reading*

[177] Wu Zao, "Jin lü qu," *Hualian ci*, 4b-5a. For English translation, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush,* 697-698.

[178] Wu Zao, "Bin yun song ling," *Hualian ci*, 36b-37a.

[179] Wu Zao, "Dong xian ge," *Hualian ci*, 41b.

[180] Wu Zao, "Xing xiang zi," *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, 19a-19b.

[181] Wu Zao, "Jin lü qu," *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, 20b-21a.

[182] Wu Zao, "My drama *Fake Image* or *Drinking Wine and Reading 'Encountering Sorrow'* has circulated quite widely. Troupes

> *'Encountering Sorrow'* has circulated quite widely. Troupes in Jiangzhe perform it. At the end of spring, Mr. Jin Meixi held a banquet and had it performed, and I was invited to watch. I was moved to compose two verses 余所制喬影劇即飲酒讀離騷意，頗傳于外，江浙梨園有演之者。時值餞春，金丈梅溪開筵演此，承招往觀，感賦二首)

I argue that in the song lyric "To the Tune *Da jiang dong qu*: Chief Minister Jin Yabo's Painting 'On the Great River, Boating under Moonlight'," which serves as an inscription for the scholar-official Jin's painting, the persona's gesture of giving up the red ivory castanets pinpoints the poet's intention to downplay her feminine gender; meanwhile, the act of picking up the iron clappers and talking to Old Man Po (Su Shi) reinforces the masculine and heroic image. From my perspective, it demonstrates Wu Zao's desire to be identified with a male model, such as Su Shi, and also to become part of the male dominant literary tradition, as women had been mostly excluded from it.[183]

This desire is more explicitly expressed in her drama *Qiao ying* when she describes the great ambitions of her life and identifies herself with a group of male poets, including Su Shi.[184] She clearly states: "I want to pluck a bronze lute and on the Yangzi sing a song." (Line 1) Here the bronze lute not only functions as a reference to Su Shi but also as a metaphor that epitomizes her masculine ambition. In her poem about watching the performance of her own drama *Qiao*

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in Jiangzhe perform it. At the end of spring, Mr. Jin Meixi held a banquet and had it performed, and I was invited to watch. I was moved to compose two verses," *Xiangnan xuebei lu shi*, 1a-1b.

[183] Unfortunately, it is a historical fact that before the Ming-Qing period, there are only a few women writers.

[184] For a discussion of Wu Zao's self-fashioning with a group of famous men, please see Chapter One.

ying, Wu Zao again chooses the image "bronze lute" to voice her heroic spirit: "When will I pluck a bronze lute by myself and sing, / And with a laugh, watch the river flow day and night?" (Line 8) In another song lyric "To the Tune: *Jin lü qu*, (Line 3)" Wu Zao also seems to reflect on her drama, which is indicated by using the same image "drinking wine and reading 'Encountering Sorrow'." The feminine imagery of "breeze and moonlight near the willows," alluding to Liu Yong, was again negated, while the persona again takes up the "bronze lute and iron plectrum" and sings the Great River flows east with abandon. As a practitioner of the "iron clappers" and follower of Su Shi, this act enhances Wu Zao's masculinized self-image.

Returning to the song lyric composed for Jin's painting, the content of this painting, associated with the image of the lofty-minded scholar Su Shi boating under moonlight, seems to be suitable for a masculine diction. More importantly, as in all social poems, which aims to circulate in the literary community, the potential audience of this song lyric inscription, strongly influences its rhetoric, and Wu Zao's awareness of her audience may explain why she decided to self-fashioned as a male persona. Through performing the masculine voice and imitating masculine diction, this song lyric demonstrates Wu Zao's literary competence and capability on the one hand and invites a readership from the male community on the other. This song lyric and the activity of composing a song lyric for a prominent official's painting invoke her entry and membership in the literati's domain.

Thoughts on the Past

In Wu Zao's oeuvre, there are thirteen *Man jiang hong* that express the poet's thoughts on the past, all of which I suggest carry distinctive masculine qualities in diction and sentiment. There are two groups of historical writings in Chinese poetry: *yongshi* 詠史 (reflections on history) and

huaigu 懷古 (meditations on the past). The subgenre of *yongshi* usually includes the poet's commentaries or judgments on certain historical events or figures, and it is not necessarily related to a specific place or self-reflective.[185] The subgenre of *huaigu*, however, includes a presentation of the historical situation and the poet's "response to an encounter with ruins."[186] Even though it is still debatable whether *yongshi* and *huaigu* are two distinguishable subgenres, or *huaigu* is a part of *yongshi* in a broader sense, both are connected to the writing on the past. This kind of poetic writing is conventionally masculine because, as Robertson argues, it is often associate with the "dynastic fortunes" and "concerns for the loss of a more ideal social and political order," which are issues in the public social sphere, namely the male-exclusive domain.[187]

In her study on women lyricists' appropriations of the traditional masculine tune pattern *Man jiang hong*, this tune pattern, as Xiaorong Li indicates, is suitable for embodying masculine qualities because of its vigorous sound. According to Li's research, from the late Ming to late Qing, the masculine-style song lyrics under this tune title *Man jiang hong* by women can be classified into four groups. First, many women wrote their song lyrics in a heroic or desolate tone during the Ming-Qing transition, Taiping rebellion, and Opium War. They witnessed the chaos from "their boudoirs or fugitive journeys," and their sorrow, anger, and despair can only be forcefully expressed in the masculine style. Second, even if the traditional attitude towards talented women progressively changed in Ming-Qing era, Confucian ideology about womanhood

[185] Liu Huairong 劉懷榮 and Pan Wenzhu 潘文竹, "Tang Song yongshi huaigu ci yanjiu 唐宋詠史懷古詞研究," *Ershi shiji yilai Tang Song ci yanjiu* 二十世紀以來唐宋詞研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014), 52-66.

[186] Stephen Owen, "Place: Meditation on the Past at Chin-ling," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50.2 (1990): 436.

[187] Maureen Robertson, "Changing the Subject," 193.

was still solid. Some women poets, who agreed with the ideology, highly praised the "virtuous" women who committed suicide after the deaths of their husbands or cut their own flesh as medicine to remedy their ailing parents or parents-in-law. Those virtuous women were admired by their chastity, filial piety, and courage and became women's own heroes like the icons in the *Lienü zhuan*. Their deeds were considered as important as accomplishments of men. Third, not all Ming-Qing women were satisfied with their gendered positions. Some female poets articulated their frustration, anger, and even sarcasm in their masculine song lyrics. They blamed Heaven for being born as a women and useless, or they wrote in the song lyric to complain of the gender inequality. However, most women, who expressed their intense sentiments in the masculine style, did not reject the traditional womanhood. In the late Qing, Qiu Jin, as a pioneering feminist and female revolutionist, opened up a new direction in masculine style. She claimed that women were also capable to enter the public sphere and become heroines by saving the country.[188] In short, the tune pattern *Man jiang hong* in women's hands, while incorporating masculine diction, vary in subject matter and approach.

The thirteen *Man jiang hong* written by Wu Zao contains her thoughts on history, which are inspired by objects or sites related to certain historical figures or events. Expect for the two song lyrics, entitled "To the Tune *Man jiang hong*: Two Lyrics on a Lute Formerly in the Possession of Mr. Xie Dieshan. The Lute, Named Bell, was Kept by the Family of Classicist Wu Sujiang of Xin'an," one of which will be discussed in the following section, Wu Zao also wrote "To the Tune *Man jiang hong*: At the Shrine of Mr. Hong Zhongxuan, I respond to Mr. Yu Shaoqing 滿江紅：洪忠宣公祠和俞少卿世兄作," in which Wu Zao expresses her admiration for the

[188] Li Xiaorong, "Engendering Heroism: Ming-Qing Women's Song Lyrics to the Tune Man Jiang Hong." *Nan Nü*: 7.1 (2005): 1-39.

Southern Song loyalist Hong Hao 洪皓 (1088-1155) (who served as an envoy to the Jurchen Jin and later was detained for fifteen years) and also her lament over the transience of history.[189] Moreover, Wu Zao wrote a series of ten song lyrics entitled "To the Tune *Man jiang hong*: Ten Song Lyrics of Thoughts on the Past at West Lake 滿江紅：西湖詠古十首."[190] Each song lyric of this series focuses on one historical figure, and these figures include two monarchs, two military generals, three scholar-officials, two divine figures, and a courtesan. In the *Mingyuan shihua*, Shen Shanbao remarks: "[Wu Zao's] ten song lyrics 'To the Tune *Man jiang hong*: Thoughts on the Past at West Lake' are like tapping gold and jade. The spirit and tone are profound and intoxicating. I admire them from my heart 西湖詠古滿江紅十闋，敲金戛玉，氣韻沉酣，為之心折."[191] In order to show how Wu Zao appropriated the tune pattern *Man jiang hong*, I provide a reading of the following song lyric:

	滿江紅:謝疊山遺琴二首，琴名號鐘，為新安吳素江明經家藏	To the Tune *Man jiang hong*: Two Lyrics on a Lute Formerly in the Possession of Mr. Xie Dieshan. The lute, named Bell, was kept by the family of Classicist Wu Sujiang of Xin'an." (Poem #1)
1	半壁江山，	A half-partitioned empire,
2	渾不是、鶯花故業。	Not at all the old trade of beauty and song!
3	歎回首、蕭條野寺，	I sigh to think of a rustic monastery ruined,
4	凄凉落月。	Desolate, in the setting moon.

[189] Wu Zao, *Hualian ci*, 37a-37b.

[190] Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei ci*, 26a-28b.

[191] Shen Shanbao, "Xuji zhong 續集中," *Mingyuan shihua*, 16b-18b.

5	鄉國烽烟何處認，	Where could you see your homeland's beacon smoke?
6	橋亭卜卦誰人識。	Who would know you divining by the bridge-side pavilion?
7	記孤城、	I recall how in a lone city,
8	隻手挽銀河，	You held back with one hand the Silver River,
9	心如鐵。	And showed a heart like steel.
10	纔賦罷，	You just finished composing
11	無家別。	"With No Home to Depart from."
12	早殉此，	Better an early death—
13	餘生節。	True integrity in the leftover life.
14	盡年年茶坂，	On tea-planted slopes year after year
15	杜鵑啼血。	The cuckoo weeps blood.
16	三尺焦桐遺古調，	Three feet of scorched *tong* wood bequeaths ancient tunes
17	一杯黃土埋忠穴。	While one cup of yellow earth tops a loyal grave.
18	想哀絃、	I imagine these grieving strings
19	泉底瘦蛟蟠，	Must make gaunt dragons writhe on Lethe's floor
20	苔花熱。	And moss blossoms hot.[192]

This song lyric is composed for Wu Sujiang's zither. According to Liang Shaoren's *Liangban qiuyu an suibi*, "Mr. Wu widely requested inscriptions [for the zither]. Those who responded

[192] Wu Zao, *Hualian ci,* 1b-2a. This song lyric is translated in Kang-i Sun Chang, Haun Saussy, and Charles Y. Kwong, *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, 614-615. It has been slightly revised.

were more than one hundred people 吳君遍征題詠，題者不下數百人."[193] Liang Shaoren also wrote a poem entitled "The Zither Song of Mr. Xie Wenjie of the Song Dynasty 宋謝文節公琴歌."[194] Zhao Qingxi wrote an aria for this event, entitled "To to Tune N*an nan diao*: The Zither left behind by Mr. Xie Wenjie's 謝文節公遺琴."[195]

The song lyric by Wu Zao begins with the lament of the fall of the Southern Song (lines 1-2). In the following, each strophe alludes to one of Xie Fangde's 謝枋得 (1226-1289) life stories in flashback.[196] Xie Fangde was the Prefect of Xinzhou who defended against the Mongol invasion.[197] In lines 7-9, Wu Zao depicts the war scene showing Xie alone in the besieged city with heroic spirit and steel will (7-9). Unfortunately, in 1276, Xinzhou still fell to the Mongols. After that, Xie became a diviner "by the bridge-side pavilion" (lines 5-6). In 1288, Xie Fangde was forcibly sent to the capital of Yuan and lived in the Minzhong Temple after the Mongols conquered the Southern Song (lines 3-4).

In the second stanza, lines 10-15 emphasize Xie's life tragedy. He was talented but later became homeless after the Mongol invasion and starved himself to death out of loyalty to the Song. Lines 16-20 eventually turn to Xie's zither, which sounds sad because of its master's fate. Because this song lyric is about the zither, it could be considered a *yongwu ci*; however, the

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[193] Liang Shaoren, "Xie Dieshan qin 謝疊山琴," *Liangban qiuyu an suibi*, 38.

[194] Liang Shaoren, "Song Xie Wenjie gong qinge," *Kechu ji* 刻楮集, quoted in Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao cizhuan*, 33-34.

[195] Zhao Qingxi, "Nan nan diao: Xie Wenjie gong yiqin," *Xiangxiao jiuxing ci* 香銷酒醒詞, quoted in Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao cizhuan*, 34.

[196] Dieshan is Xie Fangde's courtesy name.

[197] Tuotuo 脫脫, *Song Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 12687-12690. Translation of Xie's official title is consulted from, Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China,* 157.

reflections on the past are inscribed throughout the song lyric, in which Wu Zao focuses on the historical circumstances of the zither's owner rather than the zither. Images used in this song lyric, such as a ruined temple, a sad moon, and a cuckoo weeping blood, intensify the tone and emotion.

This song lyric is written in a stylistically masculine language in the convention of *Man jiang hong.* The theme of the song lyric, which reflects on history and the past, a Song loyalist's deeds and virtue, contributes to the construction of masculinity in the text, which is also reinforced by the strong lament over the fall of the Southern Song and Xie's misfortune. Furthermore, this song lyric is not self-reflective. Wu Zao's female gender is completely absent from the text. Instead, she fashions her voice as masculine. I suggest that this kind of rhetorical tactics establishes a distinguishable heroic style of Wu Zao, through which her masculinized image is also effectively built. As noted by her mentor Chen Wenshu, "Looking at her lyrics of heroic abandon, it is close to Su Shi and Xin Qiji. With iron clappers and bronze strings, singing loudly between the sky and the sea 顧其豪宕，尤近蘇辛。鐵板銅弦，發海天之高唱."[198]

Friendship with Like-Minded Scholars

A remarkable group of song lyrics and poems by Wu Zao, addressed to male scholars, demonstrate Wu Zao's friendships with like-minded male scholars.[199] In these works, I suggest that her gender is downplayed, she fashions herself as an "insider" of the literati community rather than the "other." From my perspective, these heterosocial connections give Wu Zao a

[198] Chen Wenshu, "Preface," *Hualian ci*, *Chen xu*·2a-3b.

[199] Huang Yanli lists forty-three male literati with whom Wu Zao had poetic exchanges. For the name list, see Huang Yanli, "Qing nüciren Wu Zao jiaoyou kao," in *Wenshi shiwu lun,*117.

position within the literati community and also promote a masculinized image of Wu Zao. In late imperial China, friendship, as Martin Huang demonstrates, was considered a male privilege and an achievement. Because male friendship demonstrated a man's capability to travel (*you* 遊) and to connect with other men beyond his family, it became a symbol of masculinity.[200] This is not to say that women did not have friendship.[201] However, unlike their male counterparts, as Huang suggests, women's friendship was usually developed within family circles or through long-distance epistolary correspondences. In other words, male and female friendships follow different patterns. Therefore, I suggest Wu Zao's connections or friendships with male scholars derived from the model of male friendship in that it has the two characteristics of male friendship, as defined by Huang: it was built beyond the family circle and involved with actual meetings with other men.[202]

Wu Zao had a large social network with male literati. For example, thirty-one men inscribed poems, preface, or postscript in the second edition of her drama *Qiao ying* (dated 1826).[203] Several of these paratexts writers later also had poetic exchanges with Wu Zao. Furthermore, Wu Zao participated in or even physically attended several literary-social activities held by the male poetry society Chanting Club of the East Pavilion 東軒吟社. This poetry society had approximately 120 gatherings from 1824 to 1833. It also had seventy-six bona fide

[200] Martin Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," in *Male Friendship in Ming China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5-6.

[201] As Dorothy Ko points out, friendship could be very important to women. See Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 203-293. Furthermore, Wu Zao's friendship with other literary women, such as Shen Shanbao, was an inseparable part of her life. For the discussion of Wu Zao's homosocial activities, see Chapters One and Two.

[202] Martin Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," 5-6.

[203] For the discussion of paratexts to *Qiao ying*, see Chapter One.

male members, who were mainly local scholar-literati based in Hangzhou or nearby counties and did not have official titles.[204] Wu Zao's suite (*taoqu*) "Inscribed on the Painting 'A Moment of Delight While Ill in a Cold Boudoir' 題寒閨病趣圖" and song lyric "To the Tune *Qi tian le*: Inscribed on the Painting 'Huayin Tower by South Lake' 齊天樂：題南湖華隱樓圖" are also included in the anthology *Qingzun ji* 清尊集 (Collection of Pure Goblet), which contains the poetry written and exchanged by the members of Chanting Club of the East Pavilion.[205] Several of her song lyrics, which are not included in the *Qingzun ji* but have the same titles as those by members of this poetry club, also suggest events (often writing inscribed verses for paintings) in which they jointly participated. Among the male members, in particular, Wu Zao had important connections or friendships with Chen Wenshu, Wei Qiansheng, Zhao Qingxi, Zhang Yingchang 張應昌 (1790–1874), and Huang Xieqing 黃燮清 (1805-1864).[206]

In this section, I want to discuss Wu Zao's friendship with male literati through the case of Zhao Qingxi. Zhao Qingxi was a frustrated local literatus of Hangzhou. He passed the *jinshi* degree but never successfully attained an official position because of illness. He stayed at home

[204] For discussion of Wu Zao's participation in the activities with the Chanting Club of the East Pavilion, see Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao cizhuan*, 21, 111-115, 143-146. For a study of the poetry society, see Zhu Zejie 朱則傑 and Zhou Yufei 周于飛, "Qingzun ji yu dongxuan yinshe《清尊集》與'東軒吟社'," *Journal of Zhejiang University (Humanities and Social Sciences),* 40·5 (2010): 172-178.

[205] Wang Yuansun 汪遠孫 (1789-1835), ed., *Qingzun ji*, 7·3b-8b, 8·2b-5b, CADAL Digital Library: http://www.cadal.zju.edu.cn/ (accessed Dec. 1, 2016).

[206] For study of Wu Zao's connections or friendships with Chen Wenshu, Wei Qiansheng, and Zhao Qingxi, see Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*,111-160. For her friendships with Zhang Yingchang and Huang Xieqing, see Jiang Minfan, *Wu Zao cizhuan*, 150-154, 200, 211, 222-224, 231-232.

for twenty years tutoring students to make a living.[207] The friendship between Wu and Zhao appeared to have started with their family connections and later turned to mutual admiration for each other's literary achievements.[208] Zhao Qingxi was one of the three preface writers of Wu Zao's *Hualian ci*.[209] In his touching preface, Zhao repeatedly used the word sorrow (*chou*) to describe Wu Zao's song lyrics, as the one who understood her.[210] Wu Zao also wrote a song lyric as an inscription for Zhao Qingxi's *Xiangxiao jiuxing ci* (Collection of Song Lyrics from Vanishing Fragrance and Awaking from Drunkenness), in which Wu Zao praised highly Zhao's song lyrics: "The finest of the Northern Song and Southern Tang 北宋南唐最佳處."[211] They also had several poetic exchanges. According to drama historian Lu Eting's study, in their collections, Wu and Zhao wrote eight song lyrics under the same or similar subtitles, which suggests that they joined in the same literary-social events. Furthermore, Wu Zao and Zhao Qingxi both excelled in writing song lyrics and arias (*sanqu* 散曲), and they frequently discussed with each other the art of lyrics. In fact, their song lyrics and arias are similar in style.[212] Their friendship continued even after Zhao Qingxi's death: the manuscript of his song lyric collection

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[207] Wei Qiansheng, "Preface," in *Xiangxiao jiuxing ci*, Zhao Qingxi, 1a-2b, http://ctext.org/ (accessed Dec.1, 2016).

[208] In Wu Zao's *Hualian ci*, she wrote a song lyric to Zhao Mingxiang 趙茗香, who seems have been an aunt of Zhao Qingxi. Also, in Zhao Qingxi's collection, he recorded several activities in which Wu Zao's brother Wu Mengjiao participated. Lu Eting, "Qiao ying zuozhe Wu Zao shiji," 201. Also see Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, 103, 132-139.

[209] The other two preface writers are Chen Wenshu and Wei Qiansheng.

[210] The full text of Zhao's preface is cited in Chapter One.

[211] Wu Zao, "Dong xian ge: Ti Zhao Qiuling Xiangxiao jiuxing ciji 洞僊歌：題趙秋舲香銷酒醒詞集," *Hualian ci*, 41b.

[212] Liang Shaoren used similar terms to comment on Zhao Qingxi and Wu Zao's song lyrics; Wu Mei 吳梅 (1884-1939) also claimed that the artistic conception of Wu Zao's arias is close to that of Zhao Qingxi. Lu Eting, "'Qiao ying' zuozhe Wu Zao shiji," 206. Also see Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, 133.

Xiangxiao jiuxing ci was compiled by Wu Zao and eventually sent to be printed.[213] The song lyric that Wu Zao composed for their parting is a good illustration of their friendship:

	金縷曲:送秋舲入都謁選	To the Tune *Jin lü qu:* Seeing off Qiuling who is Going to the Capital for an Official Appointment
1	羌笛誰家奏？	Which house is playing the *Qiang* flute?
2	問天涯、勞勞亭子，	I ask, at the end of the world, by the Laolao Pavilion,
3	幾行秋柳？	How many lines of autumn willows are there?
4	儂是江潭搖落樹，	I am the riverside tree whose leaves are falling,
5	獵獵西風吹瘦。	Gusts of the west wind blow and leave me thin.
6	算往事、不堪回首。	Reckoning past events, I dare not look back.
7	閱盡滄桑多少恨，	I have seen all changes and much resentment,
8	古今人、有我傷心否？	People of the past and present—is there anyone who is as grieved as I am?
9	歌未發，	Before the song starts,
10	淚沾袖。	Tears soak my sleeves.
11	浮漚幻泡都參透。	Illusionary bubbles I have seen through them all.
12	萬緣空、堅持半偈，	The ten thousand karmas are empty, I still hold firmly onto half a gatha,
13	懸崖撒手。	And relinquish my grip on the precipice.

[213] Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, 138.

14	小謫知君香案吏，	Banished from heaven, I know you were an immortal official,
15	又向軟紅塵走。	Then again walking into the soft red dust.
16	衹合綰、銅章墨綬。	You deserve to wear the copper seal and black belt.
17	指日雲泥分兩地，	Soon, cloud and mud will be separated,
18	看河陽、滿縣花如繡。	Looking at Heyang, all over the city, flowers are like embroideries.
19	且快飲，	Do quickly drink,
20	一杯酒。	A cup of wine.

This song lyric encompasses two fundamental elements of a male friendship: *you* 遊 (travel) and *you* 友 (friend). It captures a moment of parting, which is unavoidable in the career of an official. The topic of traveling in the context of office (or *huanyou* 宦遊) can be seen in the poetry of many men which at the same time inscribe friendship. A classic example is from Wang Bo's famous poem 王勃 (649-676): "These thoughts as I part from you, / both of us off again as our duty takes us; / in the whole world there is just you, my friend; / no matter how far you go, we will be like neighbors 與君離別意，同是宦遊人。 海內存知己，天涯若比鄰."[214]

In the first stanza, Wu Zao describes a parting scene when she bids farewell to her friend Zhao Qingxi who is travelling to the capital to receive an official appointment. The poet draws on a repertory of resonant images to construct a sad parting scene: the *Qiang* flute, Laolao Pavilion, autumn willows, river bank, the tree whose leaves are falling, and the west wind. The song lyric begins with the interrogative sentence: who is playing a *Qiang* flute with the sorrowful

[214] Geoffrey R Waters, Michael Farman, David Lunde, and Jerome P. Seaton, *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (Buffalo, N.Y: White Pine Press, 2011), 121.

melody for separation? The Laolao Pavilion (line 2) is a place of note in Nanjing where people bid each other farewell. It recalls Li Bai's poem "The Laolao Pavilion": This painful place under heaven, / —the disconsolate pavilion for seeing off guests. / The spring breeze understands the sorrow of separation, / so it doesn't allow the willow twigs to turn green 天下傷心處，勞勞送客亭。春風知別苦，不遣柳條青.[215] However, it seems that the wind of autumn no longer understands the persona's pain of parting. Willow is a classic image for parting poetry in the Chinese tradition. This is because the image of willow visualizes the lingering sentiment of parting. This tradition could be traced back to *The Book of Songs*, "Long ago, when we started, / The willows spread their shade" 昔我往矣, 楊柳依依.[216] In addition, the sound of the character "willow" (*liu* 柳) is similar to the sound of the character "to stay" (*liu* 留). To give the departing one a willow branch expresses the hope of staying together. In the Tang dynasty, it was the custom to present a willow branch to a friend who was leaving. The poet asks: "How many lines of autumn willows are there?" Sadly, no matter how many willows there were, it was impossible for her friend Zhao to stay. In lines 4-5, the speaking persona is identified with the tree whose leaves are falling by the river; and the heartless, chilly wind only knows to blow and to let the tree (her) grow thin. Lines 6-8 temporarily withdraw from the imaginary parting scene to articulate the intense pain: "People of the past and the present—is there anyone who is as grieved as I am?" This intense anguish in this song lyric appears to exceed the regular sadness at a parting but evince the importance of Zhao Qingxi's friendship for Wu Zao. The departure of

[215] Bai Li and Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Xin Yi Li Bai Shi Quan Ji* 新譯李白詩全集 (Taibei Shi: San min shu ju fa xing, 2011), 1415.

[216] Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 141

Zhao Qingxi probably was an emotional blow for Wu Zao, who might have experienced many difficulties in this stage of her life.

The second stanza begins with Buddhist allusions. It seems that the poet sought religious transcendence when the pain of separation could not be abated in reality. With the stanzaic transition, Wu Zao shifts her perspectives and views this world and suffering as bubbles on the water's surface, ephemeral and "empty." The "half gatha" refers to the second half of the gatha in a story indicating that true happiness lies in nirvana.[217] In line 13, the expression "relinquish my grip on the precipice" points out that the path to transcendence is to give up holding onto things.[218] Here it may signify Wu Zao's realization of the illusion of the attachment to emotion and friendship. In the last few lines, Wu Zao turns to express her well wishes for Zhao Qingxi's future. As a banished immortal servant of the Wenchang God 文昌香案吏.[219] Zhao Qingxi is assuming the position of a high official who will wear his insignia "the copper seal and the black

[217] In this story, the Buddha went to a snow mountain for self-training and heard the first half of a gatha from a rakshasa: All things change. / This is the law of birth and death 諸行無常，是生滅法. He was so happy when he heard it and eagerly wanted to know the second half. After hearing the second half: When birth and death are done away with, / Quietude is bliss 生滅滅已，寂滅為樂," the Buddha sacrificed his body to feed the hungry rakshasa. See Kosho Yamamoto trans., *The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra: A Complete Translation from the Classical Chinese Language in 3 Volumes* (Ube, Japan: Karinbunko, 1973), 197-199.

[218] This expression is borrowed from Wudeng huiyuan 五燈會元 (Compendium of Five Lamps). See Deng Hongmei 鄧紅梅, *Meijua Ruxue wu xiangchan: Wu Zao ci zhuping* 梅花如雪悟香禪：吳藻詞註評 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 176.

[219] Zhao Qingxi considers himself as the banished immortal servant of the Wenchang God, and here Wu Zao draws on his self-fashion. See Chung Hui-ling, *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, 138.

belt", and the place where he will govern would be as elegant as Heyang under Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247-300) rule.[220] The song lyric ends by urging Zhao to finish his wine.

The bitterness of separation inscribed in this song lyric finely demonstrates the bonding between Wu Zao and Zhao Qingxi. She addresses Zhao Qingxi as a friend, seemingly on an equal footing; together with the fact that Wu Zao participated in social-literary events with members of the male poetry society Chanting Club of the East Pavilion, it bespeaks Wu Zao's acceptance into the literati's domain, and her gender is downplayed.

Witnessing Social Turmoil

In the last few years of her life, Wu Zao composed a few poems and a song lyric, in which she wrote about her witnessing the Taiping Rebellion.[221] Even though during Wu Zao's lifetime, China witnessed a period of traumatic internal rebellion and foreign aggression, these social and political problems are not mentioned in her writings, unless the social disorder directly influenced her life or that of her family and friends.[222] The cataclysmic Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), which devastated the Jiangnan area affected Wu Zao's life and resulted in her death after

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[220] Pan Yue used to be the county magistrate of Heyang, where he planted myriad peach and plum blossoms. See Deng Hongmei, *Meijua Ruxue wu xiangchan: Wu Zao ci zhuping*, 177.

[221] Another example is her poem addressed to Wei Qiansheng: "For a long while, Zibo had not been written poems. In the autumn of year *jiayin* (1854), he suddenly showed me one, called 'Raising Arms to Sing.' It was composed after Jinling fell into the Yue rebels. [This poem] ponders on the past in a desolate tone. The grieved song is like to beat the earth. So I composed these two quatrains to vent my feelings 滋伯久不作詩，甲寅秋，忽以一編見示，名攘臂吟，皆粵匪陷金陵後作也，憑弔蒼涼，悲歌斫地，爰題二絕，以志感慨." See Wu Zao, "Xiangnan xuebei lu shi," in *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji,* 12a-12b.

[222] In Huang Qiaole's monograph on Gu Taiqing, she points out that Gu Taiqing only notes the social disorder on when it affected her family and friends, as Gu is a poet of the inner chambers. The situation of Wu Zao, in this sense, is similar to that of Gu. Huang Qiaole, "Writing from within a Women's Community: Gu Taiqing (1799–1877) and Her Poetry," 2-3.

the second fall of Hangzhou in 1862.[223] The following piece is the only song lyric by Wu Zao that reflects on contemporary warfare caused by the Taiping Rebellion:

	玲瓏四犯	To the Tune *Ling long si fan*
1	碧柳繫船，	Emerald willows tether boats,
2	紅英飛琖，	Red petals flying into cups—
3	西湖芳事如許。	West Lake's flowering season is like this.
4	雨絲風片緊，	Drizzling rain and gusts of wind follow one another,
5	寶馬香車阻。	Precious steeds and scented carriages are blocked.
6	殘春尚留未去。	Remnants of spring linger still, not yet departed
7	算三分、	I guess of three parts of spring,
8	二分塵土。	Two lie in the dust.
9	烽火江關，	Beacon fires at the River Pass,[224]
10	電光身世，	This life like a flash of lightning,
11	長恨石難補。	Yet I forever regret that the stones could not repair Heaven.[225]
12	羅窗曉、	By the gauze window at dawn,
13	鶯啼樹。	Orioles cry on trees.

[223] Luo Ergang 羅爾綱, *Taiping tianguo shi* 太平天國史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 140-150.

[224] River Pass is an ancient pass along the Yangtze River in Sichuan Province. In this song lyric, it is used to refer to the Jiangnan region or more specifically designates Yangzhou. Yangzhou is on the Grand Canal and mentioned in the later part of this song lyric.

[225] Stones allude to the mythology of Nüwa repairing Heaven with five-colored stones.

14	記水樓喚酒，	I remember we asked for wine in a lakeside pavilion,
15	花院聯句。	And linked verses in a flowered yard.
16	好懷渾滅盡，	Now all good feelings are extinguished,
17	舊曲無歌處。	There's nowhere to sing old songs.
18	兵戈慣擾揚州夢，	Weapons so often disturb the dream of Yangzhou,
19	漫回首、	In vain I look back,
20	玉人金縷。	Beauties of jade and robes of golden threads.
21	君見否？	Have you not seen?
22	斜陽外、	Beyond the sunset,
23	荒荒戍鼓。	The sound of desolate war drums.[226]

The opening strophe (lines 1-3) sketches a beautiful and peaceful spring scene, which does not radically depart from Wu Zao's other song lyrics about boating and excursions to West Lake. The

[226] Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ciji*, 4a-4b, in *Xiangnan xuebei lu ji*. Although this song lyric has no subtitle, it can be dated to 1856, the year Yangzhou fell to the Taiping rebels. To the Tune *Ling long si fan* 玲瓏四犯 is the thirteenth song lyric in the *Xiangnan xuebeilu ji*. In the subtitle of the eleventh song lyric written to the tune *Tan fang xin* 探芳信, Wu Zao provides the date "the eighth day of the second month of *bingchen* year (1856) 丙辰二月八日. In the sixteenth song lyric written to the tune *Cui lou yin* 翠樓吟, Wu Zao also provides the date of composition "the twenty-first day of the fifth month 五月二十一日." See Wu Zao, *Xiangnan xuebei lu ciji*, 6a. Furthermore, according to Jin Shengwu's postscript (*ba*), this collection was sent to be printed in the eleventh month of *bingchen* (1856). Judging from the order of these two dated poems, this collection seems to be arranged chronologically. *Ling long si fan* was placed between the two dated poems, it was conceivably written between the second and the fifth month. In addition, due to the fact that Yangzhou fell to the Taiping troops on the first day of the third month 三月初一 in 1856, this song lyric should have been written after this date. See Luo Ergang, *Taiping tianguo shi*, 131.The seasonal indicator within the song lyric also corroborates the time of year. For example, the first stanza begins with spring scenes, and line 6 mentions the "remnants of spring."

second strophe (lines 4-5) indicates a transition. “Drizzling rain and gusts of wind” and “precious horses and scented carriages” are conventional poetic images that present a cheerful scene with visitors at West Lake. However, these pleasant images are described as *jin* 緊—urgent, tense, repeated—and *zu* 阻—blocked or obstructed. These two words bring a certain tension to the scene. In line 6, “Remnants of spring” suggests that spring has already past, its blossoms scattered by the wind and rain. It introduces a sense of mourning, which is further developed in the following lines. Lines 7-8 adapt Su Shi’s famous lines on willow catkins: “Of the three parts of the signs of spring, / Two lie in the dirt, / One flows away with the river 春色三分，二分塵土，一分流水.”[227] Lines 9-11 shift from the transience of spring to vicissitudes in the human world; specifically, it points to the ongoing warfare. “Beacon fires at the river pass” should refer to the Taiping Rebellion taking place in the Jiangnan area. Wu Zao also laments her ephemeral and powerless life as a mortal woman, which prevents her from saving this world like the mythological goddess Nüwa.

The second stanza shifts from the present to the past, and from reality to recollection and imagination. “Gauze window” in line 12 is a synecdoche for boudoir, one in which the persona can hear “crying oriole” outside, perhaps awakening her from a dream. With the lead word “recall” (*ji* 記), the persona turns to memories of the past (“I remember we asked for wine in a lakeside pavilion and linked verses in a flowered yard”), a paradise in contrast to the approaching war in the present. But the recollection of the past is disrupted by the present reality (lines 16-17). Because of the ongoing war, there is no joy, and old songs are no longer sung. Yangzhou is

[227] Ronald Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994): 348-349.

first mentioned only in the fourth strophe (lines 18-19), as a dream that is broken by warfare. The line of course recalls Du Mu's poem on his vanished "dream of Yangzhou," his past romantic dalliance with beautiful courtesans there: "Ten years later, I awoke from my Yangzhou dream, / known only for breaking hearts in green towers 十年一覺揚州夢, 贏得青樓薄倖名."[228] Wu Zao begins the last strophe by asserting the authorial voice with the rhetorical question—"Have you not see?"—to call the reader's attention to the startling sound of the war drums heard in the sunset, a symbol of decline.

In this song lyric, Wu Zao combines conventional images of the pleasures of wine and song associated with outings on scenic West Lake in the past to heighten the contrast with the Taiping attack on Yangzhou in the present. The "masculine" is vague in the diction of this song lyric, but, as Wai-yee Li points out, a style "engaging with the contemporary crisis would have been regarded as more 'masculine.' This style was in turn associated with bearing witness."[229] The heroic song lyrics, which bear witness to the tremendous turmoil, were composed by those women lyricists during the Ming-Qing transition or the falling of the Qing dynasty, such as works by Xu Can 徐燦 (1610–1678), Li Yin 李因 (1616–1685), and Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907).[230]

Furthermore, as Wai-yee Li demonstrates, "[p]olitical disorder might also have created new

[228] Geoffrey R Waters, Michael Farman, David Lunde, and Jerome P. Seaton, *Three Hundred Tang Poems*, 203.

[229] Wai-yee Li, "Women Writers and Gender Boundaries during the Ming-Qing Transition," in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming through Qing*, ed. Grace Fong and Ellen Widmer. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 180.

[230] For discussion on Xu Can's song lyrics, see Xiaorong Li, "Engendering Heroism," 15-23; Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2014): 101-157. For discussion on Li Yin's poetry, see Ibid., 101-151. For discussion on Qiu Jin's heroic song lyrics, see Grace Fong, "Engendering the Lyric," 142-144; and Xiaorong Li, "Engendering Heroism," 34-38.

possibilities of action or defined an imaginative space for aspirations not admissible in periods with more stable social roles."[231] Fantasies of heroic action recurred in writings by women when they were confronting national crisis.[232] In this song lyric, Wu Zao imagined the heroic action of saving the world, as the goddess Nüwa did, but also conveys a sense of the powerlessness of a woman to take action to change the course of history. A masculinized image of Wu Zao could be constituted through her ambition of recovering the order of this world.

Gender Frustration

Gender frustration is an issue that is frequently mentioned and discussed in scholarship about Wu Zao's life and works. Although, except for Wu Zao's signature work *Qiao ying*, there are merely two song lyrics, written to the tune *Jin lü qu,* which obviously reflect on her gender frustration. I suggest that the two *Jin lü qu* are still important and merit discussion, as the frustrated female talent is a crucial aspect of Wu Zao's image.[233]

First and foremost, gender discontent is often voiced in women's writing during a time of crisis. As Wai-yee Li demonstrates, it is a recurrent theme in the writings of women living through the Ming-Qing transition. The political disorder gives women opportunity to challenge gender boundaries. Hence gender discontent is both a prerequisite and a result of political involvement.[234] A case in point is the song lyric by Gu Zhenli 顧貞立 (1623–1699). Wai-yee Li points to Gu Zhenli's unconventional usage of masculine diction and a masculine self-image in

[231] Wai-yee Li, "Women Writers and Gender Boundaries during the Ming-Qing Transition," 179.

[232] Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, 130-146.

[233] See discussions in Chapter One.

[234] Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, 5-6; 171-184.

her song lyrics, and also shows how Gu Zhenli clearly articulated her discontent with gender roles.[235] In her study of Gu Zhenli's song lyrics, Xiaorong Li also discusses how Gu Zhenli claimed in her song lyrics a nonconformist gendered identity and challenged the traditional female ideal by employing masculine rhetoric in her poetry. In addition, the lyrical voice of Gu Zhenli, as Xiaorong Li shows, challenged social manners based on gender as well as traditional feminine aesthetics.[236] Secondly, in her pioneering study of literary history of women's song lyrics, Deng Hongmei also indicates that with the awakening of women's consciousness and awareness of women's ill fate, a group of women lyricists of the High Qing period, such as Xiong Lian 熊璉 (fl.1758), Zhuang Panzhu 莊盤珠 (1772-1796), Wu Zao, Shen Shanbao, and Tan Yinmei 談印梅 (fl.1791-1820), articulated their resentment towards gender roles through their song lyrics.[237] Here I want to explore Wu Zao's gender frustration by looking at the following song lyric:

	金縷曲	To the Tune *Jin lü qu*
1	生本青蓮界，	Since I came from the Blue Lotus Realm.
2	自翻來、幾重愁案，	How many grievous verdicts I have overturned,
3	替誰交代？	And to whom must I answer?
4	願掬銀河三千丈，	I'd scoop thirty thousand feet of the Milky Way
5	一洗女兒故態。	To wash off at once a girl's familiar form.

[235] Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* , 100-200.

[236] Xiaorong Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China: Transforming the Inner Chambers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012): 86-114.

[237] Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cishi* (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000): 417.

6	收拾起、斷脂零黛。	Packing up eyeshadows and leftover rouge,
7	莫學蘭臺悲秋語，	I would not mimic Orchid Terrace's autumnal plaint
8	但大言打破乾坤隘。	But only boast of smashing through the Cosmic Pass.
9	拔長劒，	Drawing out a long sword,
10	倚天外。	To lean beyond the sky
11	人間不少鶯花海，	Many are the seas of pleasure in the realm of man!
12	儘饒他、旗亭畫壁，	Let them all have their bannered arbors and painted walls
13	雙鬟低拜。	Where ladies with double chignons would bow low.[238]
14	酒散歌闌仍撒手，	When the wine and singing stop, they still must leave
15	萬事總歸無奈。	In the end there is no choice.
16	問昔日、劫灰安在？	I ask: where are the ruined ashes of yesterday.
17	識得無無眞道理，	Learn of non-negation, the truth of truths,[239]
18	便神仙也被虛空礙。	For even gods are stumped by emptiness.

[238] The first three lines of the second stanza refers to the anecdote of the poetic competition between the three great Tang poets Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698-765), Gao Shi 高適 (706-765), and Wang Zhihuan 王之渙 (688-742). At a bannered arbor (*qiting*), they secretly listened to perfromers singing their quatrains and made a deal that the person whose poems were sung most won. When a girl sang one poem, they put a mark on the wall (*huabi*). At the beginning, nobody sang Wang Zhihuan's poem, so he bet that the finest courtesan would sing his piece because his poems were too elegant for those vulgar singers. As he expected, eventually the most beautiful girl sang his poem. See Xue Yongruo 薛用弱 (fl. 821), *Jiyi ji* 集異記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 11-12.

[239] *Wuwu* 無無 is a Taoist concept which means the negation of non-being or emptiness; in other words, even emptiness is empty.

19	塵世事，	This dusty world's affairs,
20	復何怪。	Why should they surprise?[240]

This song lyric opens with a resounding statement: as a banished immortal, "I" was from the Blue Lotus Realm (the Buddhist pure land) where only men are allowed to enter. The poet seems to suggest that incarnation in a female body is a wrong destiny. Also, Blue Lotus is the style name of the "poet-immortal" Li Bai. This textual connection to Li Bai immediately evokes a heroic, bold, and masculinized image of Wu Zao. The lines 2-3 "How many grievous verdicts I have overturned, / And to whom must I answer?" point to Wu Zao's resentment of this unjust fate being a woman, which is determined by heaven and has no solution. These lines (2-3) echo the opening lines in another song lyric to the tune *Jin lü qu*, in which Wu Zao explicitly articulates her frustration about the fate of women: "Depressed I demand a statement from Heaven, / And pose this question to the sky above: / You brought us forth into this world, / How can you bear to ruin and destroy us 悶欲呼天説。問蒼蒼、生人在世，忍偏磨滅？"[241] In the following lines (4-5), the poet highlights her discontent with her body. She would like to wash off her female body by using the ethereal water from the Silver River (the Milky Way). In line 6, the poet acts to cast away her feminine adornments (eye shadows and rouge). These gestures, to wash off her female form and to throw away make-up, point to the poet's rejection of her gender, as her femininity, manifested in her female body and feminine adornment, is considered as unbearable constraints. In her drama *Qiao ying*, Wu Zao also attempts to transcend her female form through

[240] Wu Zao, *Hualian ci,* 11a-11b. This song lyric is translated by Anthony Yu in *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism,* 605. Mirror changes are made.

[241] Wu Zao, *Hualian ci,* 4b-5a. For English translation, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 697-698.

cross-dressing. Also, to abandon her femininity is articulated at the very beginning of her drama *Qiao ying*: "Wiping away my shame of being a woman in this world 一洗人間粉黛羞."[242] The last four lines (7-10) of the first stanza contain several borrowings from the literary texts attributed to Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. 298-222 b. c. e.). "Orchid Terrace" (line 7) is derived from Song Yu's "Rhapsody on the Wind 風賦." The same line refers to the literary tradition of autumn lament, which is derived from Song Yu's "Nine Disquisitions 九辯": "Woe indeed-the spirit of autumn 悲哉秋之為氣也."[243] The next three lines are derived from the "Rhapsody on Talks about Greatness 大言賦": "Take square Earth as a chariot. Take round Heaven as its canopy. The shining long sword thus leans far beyond Heaven 方地為車，圓天為蓋，長劍耿耿倚天外."[244] Through the group of "heroic, abandon" imagery, such as "smashing through the Cosmic Pass" and "drawing out a long sword to lean beyond the sky," Wu Zao transcends her frustration as a woman and claims a heroic, masculinized self-image.[245]

This song lyric unfolds with a masculine self-dramatization through the following acts: the poet's self-claim as a male, banished immortal, her abandonment of the female body and feminine adornment, and assumption of a heroic, bold image of a swordsman. It concludes with the poet's meditation on the impossibility of transcending the impermanence. We can perhaps

[242] Wu Zao, *Qiao ying*, 1b.

[243] Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, 88.

[244] Lillian Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 45.

[245] With the stanzaic transition, the second stanza moves to lament the impermanence of the human world. As Deng Hongmei points out, Wu Zao's song lyrics often feature a shift of tone between stanzas, especially this song lyric. See Deng Hongmei, *Nüxing cishi*, 431. As the second stanza is about transcendence in the Buddhist sense, Wu Zao is not concerned with inserting herself into the male world of competition alluded to in the anecdote.

read Wu Zao's frustration towards her gender as the result of "the mismatch within patriarchal society between female embodiment and full human subjectivity. How could the poet's writing come from a woman's body?"[246] Therefore, in order to achieve her full subjectivity and to enjoy male privilege in the literary domain, Wu Zao renounced her body and feminine adornment, which are physical ensembles of her womanhood. Furthermore, Wu Zao also attempted to appropriate a masculine tone as an alternative means of self-representation. This masculine rhetoric is beyond the convention of feminine poetics in the genre of song lyric, assumed to be adequate to her gender.[247]

In this chapter, I have discussed five song lyrics under the topoi of song lyrics inscribed on paintings, thoughts on the past, friendship with like-minded scholars, witnessing to social turmoil, and gender frustration. These song lyrics, written in part or whole in the masculine mode, help construct a masculinized image of Wu Zao. Although these song lyrics might not have a woman's discrete voice and poetics, Wu Zao's subjectivity is established through the empirical, aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual facets of her experience that are embedded in the text. Instead of projecting herself as the "other" or outsider to male scholars, Wu Zao chose to present a masculine self-image that would feel familiar to the literati. Through strategically emphasizing her masculine image, Wu Zao sought to make her way in a field of literature that had been previously reserved to men. Wu Zao's case demonstrates an unconventional image of

[246] Jane Spencer, "Imagining the Woman Poet: Creative Female Bodies," in *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750,* ed. Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 100.

[247] My statement about Wu Zao's gender frustration is inspired by Xiaorong Li's argument on Gu Zhenli's gender frustration. See Xiaorong Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China*, 113.

woman in writing, as the genre of song lyric was not as much practiced by gentry women, compared with their compositions in *shi* form, and the masculine-style song lyrics are only a small portion of all song lyrics written by women. In a sense, Wu Zao's masculine song lyrics stand for the diversification of women's literary experience in the late imperial era. Fortunately, this gender-crossing literary unconventionality was not only celebrated by women themselves but also embraced by many of their male counterparts.

Conclusion

In sum, in this thesis, I first discussed the varied or even conflicting representations of Wu Zao in her *shi* poems and song lyrics, together with the paratexts framing her works. As a prominent woman lyricist and playwright, Wu Zao's image, as a frustrated female talent, was first constructed by her signature drama *Qiao ying.* This drama follows the tradition of "Encountering Sorrow," which is intimately associated with the expression of personal frustration. The paratexts of the thirty-one male scholars reinforce the melancholic image. While these men praised Wu Zao's talent highly, they also appreciated the theatricality of her cross-dressing in the play. The complexity of Wu Zao's image was the result of a number of different issues, such as her age, her changing attitudes towards writing, the accessibility of her works, and the different evaluative standards of both genders. However, I suggest that the dominant melancholic image of Wu Zao that circulated both in her lifetime and after points to the powerful male manipulation of a woman's image, which prioritizes their desires and values.

Second, I discussed Wu Zao's self-representation as a cheerful woman in her *shi* poems, which opposes the well-accepted melancholic image. I recovered Wu Zao's pleasant experiences in the boudoir from her poetry. In this female homosocial space, Wu Zao and her female friends celebrated the Double Seventh Festival, and their lived experiences in summer were full of enjoyable moments.

Noteworthy is that Wu Zao also fashioned herself as masculine through her conscious choice of textual strategies. I have investigated Wu Zao's song lyrics under the topoi of song lyrics inscribed on paintings, thoughts on the past, friendship with like-minded scholars, witnessing to social turmoil, and gender frustration. I demonstrated the different ways in which Wu Zao appropriated the masculine lyric tradition, and, at the same time, constructed her

masculinized image.

All in all, I hope that this study can further our knowledge of not only this important woman writer Wu Zao's life and works but also the social context that produces the different representations. In a future study, I look forward to exploring the sophisticated social world of Wu Zao inhabited by both men and women, in which her talents thrived.

Appendix

I

There are two points of view concerning which year Wu Zao was born: 1796 and 1799. 1799 as Wu Zao's birth year is accepted in most Chinese and English scholarship. This birth year (1796) was first suggested by Zhong Huiling in her *Qingdai nüzuojia zhuanti—Wu Zao jiqi xiangguan wenxue huodong yanjiu*, but she did not provide the source. The more popular opinion is that Wu Zao was born in the year 1799, which has been circulating in recent Chinese biographies as well as in Western scholarship, such as *The Red Brush* and *Women Writers of Traditional China.* However, I found a more reliable source about Wu Zao's year of birth. The song lyric anthology *Shijia cihui* 十家詞彙 (Song Lyrics by Ten Masters), complied by Jin Shengwu, has selected one hundred and three song lyrics by Wu Zao from her three collections. According to Jin Shengwu's authorial preface to this anthology, it was published in "the sixth year of the Xianfeng reign 咸豐六年" (1856).[248] In his postscript (or *ba)* for Wu Zao's chapter, entitled "Wu Pingxiang Xiangnan Xuebei ci 吳蘋香香南雪北詞," he notes: "the female scholar (Wu Zao) is over sixty 時女士年逾六十."[249] If we account back from this date, Wu Zao's birth year should not be later than 1796.

II

A list of song lyrics inscribed on paintings in a masculine mode:

1 金縷曲：題李海帆太守海上釣鼇圖

[248] Jin Shengwu, "Preface," in *Shijia cihui* (Hangzhou: Pinghua xianguan, 1856), *xu* 3b.

[249] Ibid., "The Ninth Postscript," *ba* 1a.

2　滿江紅：江秬香學博，新得晉任城太守孫夫人碑拓本，徵題，為填此解

3　摸魚兒：吳門潘榕皋先生官農部，時夢華亭董太史於水光雲影間，因乞太史書。太史為書尺幅而去。解組後追憶前夢，為寫水雲圖，徵題及余，爰拈是解。

4　沁園春：新安齊梅麓先生性愛梅，得林處士像一幀，忽悟為前身小影，因顏之曰梅花居士圖，屬題此解。

5　金縷曲：題蔡丈木龕小像

6　水調歌頭：題高飲江茂才讀未完書齋圖

7　摸魚兒：題魏雨人明經滌山吟館圖册

8　金縷曲：題魏春松侍御曉窗讀書圖

9　水調歌頭：又題琴隱圖

10　邁陂塘：徐星溪都督春波洗硯圖

11　金縷曲：和吳仲雲太守自題閑雲圖之作

12　邁陂塘：陸次山蜀遊圖

13　水調歌頭：孫子勤看劍引杯圖，雲林姊屬題

14　大江東去：金亞伯太常大江泛月圖

15　金縷曲：清吟閣主勘碑圖

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