Gong Dingzi and the Courtesan Gu Mei: Their Romance and the Revival of the Song Lyric in the Ming-Qing Transition

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Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳 (1615-1673) was a famous writer of the late Ming and early Qing. He, along with Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) and Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1671), are collectively known as the Three Masters of Jiangdong 江左三大家. One of Gong Dingzi's *ci* 詞 (song lyric) collections, *White Gate Willow* (*Baimen liu* 白門柳), has not received the attention it deserves from researchers. Even the well-known modern scholar Meng Sen 孟森, who specializes in research on Gong Dingzi, has ignored this collection which records the relationship between the poet and the famous courtesan Gu Mei 顧媚 (?-1663). As a consequence, the relationship between Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei is still unclear. In my opinion, *White Gate Willow* is both a record of the love story between Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei, and an example of Gong's explorations in a literary style which contributed to the development of *ci* poetry in the Ming-Qing transition. In this paper, I will explore some aspects of both Gong and Gu's relationship and the changes in style of the song lyric that this collection reveals.

White Gate Willow, the title of Gong's work, is significant. The White Gate was the west gate of the capital Jiankang 建康 (present-day Nanjing 南京) during the Six Dynasties. After the Six Dynasties era, it became synonymous with Nanjing. The willow tree has many symbolic associations in Chinese literature and culture. It is characterized by a slim, fragile and beautiful posture and consequently is sometimes associated with the courtesan. The so-called Streets of Flowers and Willows 花街柳巷 were where courtesans lived and served patrons in elegant storied buildings. Because Nanjing has historically been famous for its courtesan

culture, the title of Gong's song lyric collection *White Gate Willow* implies a connection with courtesans.

During the late Ming and early Qing period, the district along the Qinhuai River 秦淮河 in the southern part of Nanjing city was well known throughout China as a center of courtesan culture. The eight most famous of these courtesans were called "The Eight Beauties of Qinhuai" 秦淮八豔. Yu Huai 餘懷's (1616-1696) work, *Diverse Records of Banqiao* (*Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記), which describes the gay quarters of the Qinhuai district, contains a record of one of these "Eight Beauties." "Gu Mei," he wrote, "was dignified and refined, and her whole demeanor was remarkable. The hair on her temples was clouds, and her face resembled a peach blossom. Her feet were particularly small, and her slender body moved gracefully as she walked. She was proficient in literature and history, and good at painting orchids. Her level of artistic talent was equal to that of Ma Shouzhen 馬守眞 (1548-1606).[1] However, Gu surpassed Ma in beauty. At that time, people considered Gu Mei to be the top performer in Southern Drama 南曲."[2] Gu Mei's residence, named after her, was called Mei's Building (Meilou 眉樓). It was located at the east end of Old Compound (Jiuyuan 舊院). Established at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the Old Compound, not far from the Peach Leaf Ferry 桃葉渡, was where courtesans owned by the state in the Ming Dynasty were located.

After Gu Mei married Gong Dingzi, he was absolutely devoted to her. The fifty-nine song lyrics in the *White Gate Willow* make a special record of their romance.[3] Three song lyrics, in particular, record crucial periods in their courtship and express respectively Gong's emotional rapport with Gu Mei at the beginning of their relationship, during their separation, and at their reunion after much hardship.

The first *ci* was written in 1641, following Gong Dingzi's successful participation in the Imperial Civil Service Examinations for the Jiangnan Region. As the top candidate he was selected to work in Beijing, China's capital at the time. Passing through Nanjing en route to Beijing, he was introduced to Gu Mei at her residence, Meilou, on the bank of the Qinhuai River. He and Gu Mei fell in love at first sight. Written to the tune *Queqiaoxian* 鵲橋仙, this song lyric depicts Gong's appreciation of Gu Mei's beauty, her skill in calligraphy and painting, and their happiness at a banquet together.

Writing notes on beautiful red stationery,
With fragrant musk and lovely make-up,
Dark eyebrows newly painted, all on my behalf.
Multi-talented, you play the lute and strum the *pipa*.
Painting your own portrait in the breeze that protects flowers.

The moon descends while the golden flute is played.
Your silk sash sways at the magnificent banquet.
It is impossible to stop the deep affection between us.
In such a lovely hour I'm unwilling to hear the crow's caw,
Wishing that our whole life will be like tonight.

紅箋記注，
香麋勻染，
生受綠蛾初畫。
挑琴壁阮太多能，
自寫影、養花風下。

月低金管，
帶飄珠席，
兩好心情難罷。
芳時不慣是烏啼，
願一世、小年爲夜。[4]

The second song lyric was composed after Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei had become a couple, and Gong Dingzi had to leave for Beijing in 1642, obliging the couple to part. Written to the tune *Langtaosha* 浪淘沙, it is subtitled "On the Double Seventh in Chang'an":

Dew makes me suddenly feel autumn,
Moonlight fills the West Tower.
The sound of a bamboo flute drifts from South of the River.
It tells of the reunion in the sky tonight.
Coloured threads stitch sorrow together.

Heartless the Cowherd star,
With few meetings, we are separated often.
One evening and the bridge of magpies is folded up with the rosy clouds,
I am the cowherd boy, she the Weaving Maid
Every night at the bridge's end.

璧露乍驚秋，
月滿西樓。
江南簫管正悠悠。
報到天邊今夜會，
彩線穿愁。

薄倖是牽牛，
會少離稠。
鵲楂一夕錦雲收。
我做牛郎他織女，
夜夜橋頭。[5]

Chang'an 長安, the capital of the Han and Tang Dynasties, stands for Beijing, where Gong Dingzi had gone to take up his official post. Being apart, Gong and Gu longed intensely for each other. Here the author uses a beautiful legend as a metaphor for their relationship. The legend of the Cowherd 牛郎 and the Weaving Maid 織女 describes the extraordinary love between husband and wife. Because they offended the Queen Mother of the West 西王母 she flings the Milky Way 天河 between them. Only on the seventh night of the seventh lunar month, when magpies flock together to make a bridge for them, can they meet. In the end, Gong Dingzi expresses the hope that every night magpies can set up a bridge for them so they can meet. Gu Mei had attempted to travel to Beijing in the autumn of 1642, but her travels were obstructed by rebels on the way. She did not reach Beijing until the autumn of the following year.

The third song lyric was written during Gong Dingzi's appointment in Beijing. During his tenure, he often impeached powerful officials and ministers, and criticized the imperial government's policies. At this time, the military situation was deteriorating with the Manchus attacking the northeast and peasant rebellions rising in other parts of the country. Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎, however, was obstinate. Not only did he not accept Gong Dingzi's views, but furthermore was extremely angry. About a month after Gu Mei had come to join Gong Dingzi in Beijing, the emperor threw Gong into the special jail reserved for the emperor's criminals and prisoners. The conditions in this prison were especially horrible. Gong Dingzi was locked up together with Jiang Cai 姜埰, whose account describes the situation in the prison:

> In prison we suffer all kinds of cruel torture. There is not one part of our bodies that is untouched. After we rise from bed they put shackles on us. At night we sleep in a low, sunken, netherworld, a humid place. In daytime, darkness stretches in every direction, and we can see many phosphorescent lights (emanating from corpses hung) on the wall. As convicts our hair hangs loose and our faces are filthy. We are subjected to the insults of the guards, vulgar prisoners ride roughshod over us, mice and rats gnaw on us.[6]

Undoubtedly, the situation described by Jiang Cai was also the situation in which Gong Dingzi found himself during his imprisonment. However, with Gu Mei's spiritual and emotional support, he was able to bear prison life. The third song lyric to the tune *Yuzhuxin* 玉燭新 is subtitled "Written in Prison on the Lantern Festival, to the One I am Thinking of":

(second stanza)
Below the candlelight, in front of the screen,
I seem to catch sight of your pretty dimples, silken gown,
Enveloped by moonlight, is everything fine with you?
Your lovely eyebrows crescent-shaped.
Although you are so near,
I cannot see your thin shadow next to the lamp:
Fragrant softness and powdered beauty.
Courageously you accompany a hero in his predicament.
A hundred, a thousand years from now,
Who will take white silk thread,
And embroider Pingyuan's real portrait?

依稀燭下屏前，
有翠靨綃衣，
月明安否？
小眉應鬥。
恨咫尺、不見背燈人瘦。
香柔粉秀。
猛伴得、英雄搔首。
千古意，
誰許冰絲，
平原對繡？[7]

The Lord of Pingyuan 平原君 in the last line refers to Zhao Sheng 趙勝 (?BCE-251BCE), the son of King Wuling of Zhao 趙武靈王 during the Warring States period. As a ruler, the Lord of Pingyuan treated the wise courteously and cultivated the scholars. He was known to have had 3,000 hangers-on, that is, people who lived off his generosity. In return they helped him accomplish his goals. Through this allusion, Gong Dingzi shows himself to be a leader who can recognize talent, and Gu Mei to be an intimate friend who knows his true self.

Therefore, when Gong Dingzi was set free in the early spring of 1644, and was once again able to be with Gu Mei, he composed the song lyric written to the tune *Wannianhuan* 萬年歡, with the subtitle "Freed in Early

Spring, using Shi Dazu's rhyme in his song lyric on 'Spring Longing.'" In it, he expresses his dedication to her in these lines:

Iron and stone can't wear it away,
Only the deepest romantic love can be so absolute.
. . .
Even till the end of time,
We will fly as a pair of wings and never part.

鐵石銷磨未盡,
算只有、風情癡絕,
.....
料天荒地老,
比翼難別。[8]

Through the imagery of endurance, he expresses their love and commitment to each other in the midst of adversity. After the writing of this song lyric, violent transformations occurred in the socio-political situation of China. Shortly after Gong was released from prison, in the fifth month of 1644, Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645), at the head of a peasant army, fought his way into Beijing and the imperial palace, the Ming Chongzhen emperor committed suicide, and Li Zicheng established the Dashun 大順 regime. Gong Dingzi capitulated to this rebel regime. Shortly after, the Manchus entered the pass at Shanhaiguan 山海關 and fought their way into Beijing where they expelled Li Zicheng. Gong Dingzi surrendered in turn to the Qing Dynasty government.

Such experiences made Gong into a complicated and deeply pained individual. Yet, no matter what the circumstances, Gu Mei remained close beside him and together they passed the difficult years following the overthrow of the Ming Dynasty in 1644.

In Yu Huai's *Diverse Records of Banqiao*, mentioned above, he speaks about Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei's romance by calling the *White Gate Willow* a *chuanqi* 傳奇.[9] Why did Yu Huai use this term to refer to this account of their romance written in song lyrics? *Chuanqi* is the term originally applied to the genre of classical Chinese short stories written in the Tang Dynasty. In later usage, a large number of performance genres such as southern style drama and Ming and Qing poetic dramas were also referred to as *chuanqi*. The term *chuanqi* refers to particular characteristics in both content and form. The content must be in some ways *qi* 奇 (strange, unusual, marvelous), and the form must have a developed narrative that can be "transmitted" (*chuan* 傳). The contact between a celebrated scholar from the Jiangnan region and a renowned courtesan from the Qinhuai pleasure quarters, lead-

ing up to their marriage, is certainly good source material for *chuanqi*. Furthermore, the unusual twists and turns in their encounter form a story that needs an extended narration. In the *White Gate Willow*, Gong Dingzi records the process by which he and Gu Mei became intimate friends and lovers who experienced separation and reunion, and shared joy and sorrow through numerous vicissitudes. Significantly, Gong chose the song lyric genre for both the expressive and narrative purpose. He joins together a certain number of *ci* and arranges them into a larger framework that enables them to give expression to a certain narrative process endowed with the nature of a long literary work.

In literary history, *ci* is generally considered to be a type of emotionally expressive art that has exceptional aesthetic potential for describing subtle emotions. The modern specialist of the song lyric Wu Shichang 吳世昌 has in fact pointed out the narrative function of the song lyric. As early as 1936, in his article "New Poetry and Classical Poetry" 新詩與舊詩, Wu had remarked that "*Xiaoling* 小令, that is, the short song lyric, in its initial stage had the structure of stories. In the (tenth-century song lyric anthology) *Among the Flowers* (*Huajianji* 花間集), many short song lyrics, such as *Huanxisha* 浣溪沙, contain the structure of a complete story. Short tunes (*duandiao* 短調) of the Northern Song period, such as *Shaonianyou* 少年遊 and *Changxiangsi* 長相思 by Zhou Bangyan 周邦彥 (1056-1121); and *Qingpingyue* 清平樂 and *Suzhongqing* 訴衷情 by Yan Jidao 晏幾道 (1030?-1106?) also have the structure of a story." In discussing the long tune *Ruilongyin* 瑞龍吟 by Zhou Bangyan, Wu further notes:

> Generally speaking, the writing technique of modern short stories, is: first, narrate the present situation; second, narrate past events and strive to link them up with the present; then carry on with the present situation and continue narrating the subsequent development. Nearly all European and American literary masterworks abide by this principle. Nine hundred years ago Zhou Bangyan already put it to use in a most natural way. His first stanza relates the present situation. The second stanza recounts the past. The third stanza again returns to the subject under discussion. Though he mixes narration of scenes and stories, the whole poem achieves integration, without any trace of piling up fancy words.[10]

According to Wu Shichang, a single *ci* poem can be used to write a story, and several song lyrics linked together (*lianzhang* 聯章) are even more capable of fulfilling this function. Furthermore, linking together several song lyrics, wherein the parts of the story described in the poems are con-

nected, is most appropriate for constructing a narrative. As such, in structural terms, the linked lyrics can possess the narrative function of a *chuanqi*.

In the period of transition between the Ming and Qing dynasties, the view regarding the song lyric genre as *chuanqi* seemed quite prominent. For example, Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634-1711) commented on the song lyrics of Wu Weiye 吳偉業, one of the Three Masters of Jiangdong, that they possess the qualities of *gexing* 歌行, the heptasyllabic long poem form which Wu Weiye employed to write about current events.[11] With regards to the song lyric genre, the critic Zhang Deying 張德瀛 of the Qing period once called Wu Weiye the leader among *ci* writers of the dynasty.[12] Perhaps this praise is excessive, but Wu's song lyrics are in many ways creative. The interlinking of the approach to writing poems and song lyrics is one expression of his creativity. For example, Wu wrote thirteen lyrics to the tune *Manjianghong* 滿江紅 narrating historical events and current affairs. Many place names in these lyrics can be verified in the *Ming Shi* 明史, the dynastic history of the Ming. That Wu Weiye writes song lyrics using his narrative heptasyllabic song form style can be said to be a technique of writing *chuanqi*.

During the Tang Dynasty, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) were known for their long narrative poetry. Wu Weiye's narrative style is chiefly influenced by Bai Juyi's style. The emergence of Bai Juyi's narrative poetic style was more or less simultaneous with the maturation of the *chuanqi* tales in the same period. We can thus recognize a mutual influence between the two genres, or at least an interest in narration in both prose and poetic genres. If we argue that the influence of Wu Weiye's poetic style on the song lyric came from its indebtedness to Bai Juyi's style, it is understandable that the song lyric, at a certain level, might have certain narrative features of the *chuanqi*. It is worth mentioning that Gong Dingzi was quite familiar with his contemporary Wu Weiye's poetic style, and had actually written a number of imitations. One of his most famous imitations is the "Song of Jinchang" 金閶行. This poem, composed for Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611-1693), is about the difficult unsettled life of literati scholars and cultivated women in troubled times. It resembles Wu Weiye's songs such as the famous "Song of Yuanyuan" 圓圓曲. That Wu Weiye is able to use the method of the long narrative song form (*gexing*) to write *ci* testifies to his being in the creative vanguard of literary history. Gong Dingzi also takes hold of the *gexing* method of writing *ci* and develops it further. Therefore, Yu Huai's reference to the *White Gate Willow* as *chuanqi* is not entirely without foundation.

In addition, the content of the *White Gate Willow* bears an even closer relation to the genre *chuanqi*. In the Ming-Qing transition, the story of a male literary celebrity and a beautiful woman meeting and becoming great

friends was often combined with their concern for their country. Many writers treated this theme from different perspectives and in different genres, including not only poems and songs, but also prose accounts. For example, Mao Xiang (1611-1693) records his romance with the courtesan Dong Xiaowan 董小宛 (1624-1651). Hou Fangyu 侯方域 (1618-1654) gives an account of his relationship with the courtesan Li Xiangjun 李香君 in *Liji zhuan* 李姬傳. They can both be called *chuanqi*. It was in this literary context that Gong Dingzi compiled a collection of his own *ci* which also attempted to record this kind of love. An important distinguishing quality of Ming Dynasty *chuanqi* is its valorization of love. For instance, in the famous foreword to the *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudanting Tici* 牡丹亭題詞), the late Ming playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1617) declares: "It is not known from what place love arises. As soon as it is born, it is very profound. For love, the living can die, and the dead can again come to life. The living who cannot die for love, and the dead who cannot again be born for love - these do not express the highest love."[13]

Here I would like to compare briefly Gong Dingzi's *White Gate Willow* with Mao Xiang's memoir *Yingmei'an yiyu* 影梅庵憶語. Mao Xiang and Gong Dingzi were both male literary celebrities from the Jiangnan region. Mao Xiang's *Yingmei'an yiyu*, a representative work of late Ming prose, describes his relationship with the famous Qinhuai courtesan, Dong Xiaowan. While Mao Xiang and Dong Xiaowan at last became husband and concubine, they also went through a period of vicissitude and frustration during which Mao Xiang repeatedly refused Dong Xiaowan's insistence to follow him.

Mao's own account often shows that Dong Xiaowan was the active member in the relationship, and Mao himself was passive. She was passionate about their relationship; he was restrained. Yet, perhaps this is only the author's narrative strategy. Even though Mao Xiang was a member of the Late Ming activist literary society Fu She 复社, and his words and actions were sometimes unconventional and unrestrained, when it came to gender relations, he seemed to have abided by Confucian moral standards. As a result, his account very clearly exhibits a desire for readers to recognize that, as a man, his actions might "emerge from the affections . . . but they go no further than rites and moral principles."[14] It is worth mentioning that Gong Dingzi, in his preface to the *White Gate Willows*, quoted these very words from the Great Preface to the Confucian classic, the *Book of Odes*. The similarity to Mao Xiang's moral restraint in gender relations is not accidental. Gong Dingzi was quite familiar with *Yingmei'an yiyu*. His other song lyric collection *Xiangyan ci* 香嚴詞 contains the song lyric *Hexinlang* 賀新郎, in which is inscribed the following preface:

> The *Yingmei'an yiyu* had long been placed on my desktop. It was taken away by someone. Pijiang (Mao Xiang) sent me another copy. Opening it my tears fell. Thoughts of the past well up. My empathy for his experiences can be seen in this lyric.[15]

In the song lyric he wrote, there seems to be a shared sensibility. So it is possible that the *White Gate Willow* and *Yingmei'an yiyu* are akin to each other in motivation and emotional embodiment. They both can be considered variations of *chuanqi* on the love between a scholar and a beauty.

In the late Ming and early Qing, the influential Yunjian School of *ci* 雲間詞派, represented by Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647) and others, privileged the style of *ci* written in the late Tang and Five Dynasties period, especially that of the anthology *Among the Flowers*. They began by discarding the shallow, vulgar *ci* style that had existed during the Ming Dynasty, and established a valuable foundation for the development of Qing Dynasty *ci*. But the followers of the Yunjian School preferred and restricted themselves to writing *xiaoling*. Because the textual space of *xiaoling* is limited, it is difficult to write extended narratives that delineate complex themes in social life. As well, the stylistic range of *xiaoling* is rather restricted. During the Ming-Qing transition, writers with breadth of vision recognized this problem and attempted to effect change.

Gong Dingzi is one of the writers who early on recognized and attempted to address this problem. In the early Qing, Wang Shizhen pointed this out in his comment: "Song lyric writers of the Yunjian School are unwilling to bear even a trace of the Southern Song style. This is both their strong point and shortcoming. Gong Dingzi alone has brilliant literary talent, possesses a multi-faceted style, and is full of transformations."[16] Gong Dingzi went beyond the confines of the Yunjian School and developed his skills in writing *changdiao* 長調 (lyrics written to long tunes).

Among the fifty-nine *ci* poems in the *White Gate Willow*, there are a total of twenty song lyrics written to "long tunes." They display many different styles. Six song lyrics, in particular, are modeled on the style of the Southern Song *ci* poet Shi Dazu 史達祖 (1163?—1220?), matching Shi's rhymes. One example is *Hexinlang* 賀新郎, subtitled "On Receiving her Letter from North of Jingkou, using Shi Dazu's rhymes":

> Quietly I make arrangements at Oriole Inn,
> And await the pearly wheels on the road carrying the letter—
> Willowy pennants with the flower's command.
> I send magpies ahead to seek out the fragrance,
> Dew sprinkled on star bridge, making the jade cold.
> But have you seen the Lu family's official boat?

It has a tiger's head with gold characters and a blue bird seal,
Affixed with red ink paste, blocking the reflection of spring
sorrow.
Riding on the phoenix moon,
Breaking through the misty darkness.

In a jasper case, tears folded in remnants of vermilion silk.
Plumbing the lotus, by two rows of palace candles,
She spread out the fragrant letter.
A rain of roses lightly rubbing her brush,
Her soft heart and gentle nature so warm and familiar.
With this brocade carp, our love will be confirmed.
With misty curtain and fair weather gowns deeply folded
I fear the autumn begonia cannot endure the fierce west wind.
So I enjoin you to listen to
The wild goose ahead.

鶯館安排靜。
待珠輪、逐程屯劄，
柳旗花令。
預遣探香烏鵲去，
露灑星橋玉冷。
可曾見、盧家官艇。
金字虎頭青鳥印，
押紅泥、遮抹春愁影。
騎鳳月，
破煙暝。

瑤箱淚疊朱絲勝，
試芙蓉、兩行宮燭，
對攤芳信。
薇雨細揉彈事筆，
溫熟低心軟性。
料錦鯉、今番情定。
霧幔晴衫深打疊，
怕秋棠、不耐商飆勁。
因早雁，
囑君聽。[17]

This song lyric expresses Gong's joy when he received news that Gu Mei would be coming to Beijing to join him. It conveys emotion through the use of mundane actions such as planning the residence, sending a person to wel-

come her, unfolding the letter lost in thought, and arranging the clothing. Thus, it employs many decorative images: oriole inn, pearly wheels, willowy pennants, star bridge, gold characters, tiger's head, blue bird (signifying a messenger), red ink paste, jasper box, vermilion silk, lotus flower, palace candles, fragrant letter, rain of roses, brocade carp (which alludes to a carp that delivered a letter put in its belly by a wife to her husband), misty curtain, fair weather gowns, autumn begonia, fierce west wind, and wild goose (again a messenger). The song lyric seems highly prolix, but the narrative structure creates a continuous flow. It is an exemplary piece modeled on the poetic style of Shi Dazu.

Gong Dingzi was acknowledged for his leadership in literary circles. Many early Qing writers in *ci* poetry circles received his mentorship on their way to fame. Gong Dingzi particularly admired and publicized the song lyrics of his younger contemporary Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709), who subsequently became a renowned poet and scholar. Zhu Yizun is regarded as the founder of the Zhexi School of *ci* poetry 浙西詞派. Zhu advocated as models the Southern Song *ci* poets Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1155-1221) and Zhang Yan 張炎 (1248-1320?). The *ci* poetry of Jiang Kui and Zhang Yan bears stylistic similarity in certain respects to Shi Dazu, Gong Dingzi's poetic model. Could Gong have influenced Zhu Yizun's preference for Southern Song *ci* models? In the past, when speaking about the Zhexi School of *ci*, literary historians only considered the influence of Cao Rong 曹溶 (1613-1685) on Zhu Yizun. Now we may have a slightly widened field of vision that may alter our consideration of Gong Dingzi's role.

Gong Dingzi's *White Gate Willow* records and narrates the history of his and Gu Mei's love. Significantly, Zhu Yizun's collection of song lyrics entitled *Jingzhiju qinqu* 靜志居琴趣 also records a love story. However, it is a record of the illicit love between Zhu Yizun and his younger sister-in-law. In terms of structure, Zhu Yizun's collection also describes the whole course of the love affair, forming a narrative pattern similar to linked poems (*lianzhang* 聯章). Without question, Gong's love for Gu Mei is expressed more explicitly and openly, while Zhu's is rather veiled. Also, Gong's expression is lighter in tone, while Zhu's is more reserved. This difference in writing styles is perhaps attributable to the fact that Gu Mei was a courtesan, while Zhu Yizun's sister-in-law, Shouchang 壽常, was a woman from a gentry family, and object of Zhu's illicit desire. The lyrics of this collection by Zhu Yizun were considered to be a new expression or development of *yanci* 豔詞 (erotic lyrics).[18] I believe that Gong Dingzi's *White Gate Willow* had an early and significant effect on Zhu Yizun's *Jingzhiju qinqu*.

Another reason for the significance of the *White Gate Willow* in literary history is that it gives expression to the effect of courtesan literature on the revival of *ci* poetry. *Ci* poetry originated and flourished in the Tang Dynasty

(618-907) and subsequent Five Dynasties (907-960), achieved a period of great prosperity in the Song Dynasty (960-1229), declined in the Yuan (1271-1368) and subsequent Ming Dynasties (1368-1644), and resurged in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). What is the reason for the revival of *ci* poetry in the Qing Dynasty? In Professor Kang-I Sun Chang's seminal study *The Late-Ming Poet Chen Tzu-Lung: Crises of Love and Loyalism*, she examines courtesan culture in the Jiangnan region in the late Ming period and suggests that Chen Zilong and Liu Rushi's intimate exchange of song lyrics initiated a new orientation in writing love lyrics. It is also an important cause behind the revolution in *ci* writing during the Ming-Qing transition. Chang's point is well taken.[19]

The song lyric developed and matured chiefly in the environment of banquets and feasts with performance by singing girls, dancers, and courtesans. Many late Tang and Five Dynasties writers were deeply engaged in writing song lyrics. They successively initiated two flourishing phases in the Western Shu Dynasty 西蜀 and Southern Tang Dynasty 南唐. The poets in the Western Shu's anthology *Among the Flowers* are especially representative. This anthology also became a significant model for later generations. Almost all the song lyrics in it, however, are the mouthpiece of male writers. Women's voices are only transmitted obliquely. In contrast, while the courtesans, singers and dancers of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties used only their bodies and artistry to participate in the construction of *ci* poetry, the celebrated courtesans of the Ming-Qing transition developed relationships of literary influence with the famous scholars.

These highly cultivated women produced their own aesthetic creations. Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647) and Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618-1664) wrote many song lyrics with identical tunes and identical titles. At that time their lyrics made a major impact in poetry circles and were regarded as their joint achievements. It is worth noting that Chen Zilong's discussion of the song lyric consciously traced its origins to the Late Tang and Five Dynasties *ci*. In the preface he wrote to Liu Rushi's *ci* collection *Youlancao* 幽蘭草, he explains, "From the two emperors of the Southern Tang down to the Jingkang period of the Northern Song (1126), many *ci* writers emerged: some wrote beautiful lyrics expressing sorrow, others wrote in a smooth and graceful style to capture beauty. However, the state attained was engendered by emotion, and words were inspired by thought. . . . . These lyrics reached the highest point."[20] From this we can see that Chen Zilong held close to the *ci* of the Tang and Five Dynasties as ideal models in his efforts to bring about a revival of the song lyric. However, in his later years Chen Zilong developed a serious approach to the *ci* of the Northern Song.

Although immense social and political changes occurred in the Ming-Qing transition, many writers of *ci* appeared to be still devoted to love lyr-

ics. For example, in the last years of the reign of the first emperor of the Qing dynasty, Shunzhi 順治 (1644-1661), Zou Zhimo 鄒祇謨 (1627?-1670) and Wang Shizhen in Yangzhou compiled and selected a large anthology of mainly late Ming and early Qing love lyrics. Titled *Yisheng chuji* 倚聲初集, the anthology's selections total over 460 writers and 1,914 song lyrics. According to the two compilers, with this large selection, they intended to restore the tradition of *Among the Flowers*. But in that period of dynastic change, they could not have been that simple-minded. After the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) was conquered, Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190-1257) also compiled the *Zhongzhou Collection* (*Zhongzhou ji* 中州集). Yuan intended to preserve the literature of his former country. Zou Zhimo and Wang Shizhen appeared to be similarly motivated.

Changes in literary style often evolve unnoticed. When literary reform is carried out, though it might be on a small or local scale, it can nonetheless bring about unanticipated ramifications. The Song poet Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100), by writing his life experiences into the love lyric,[21] brought about the development of other types of styles and features in the song lyric. The development of the love lyric in the Ming-Qing transition is unprecedented in quantity and quality, and inseparable from the vitality of the courtesan culture. It is not just a return to the *Huajian* tradition. Even more, it is the deepening of this tradition. From this literary perspective, we can affirm the contribution to the love lyric by Chen Zilong and Liu Rushi, and Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei in the period of the Ming-Qing transition.

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Endnotes

1. Ma Shouzhen was also one of the Eight Beauties of Qinhuai. She was famous for her paintings of orchids.
2. Yu Huai, *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記, in *Xiangyan congshu* 香豔叢書, 5 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1994), 4.3649.

3. The edition used in this paper is that included in the *Quan Qingci: Shun Kang juan* 全清詞 順康卷, 2 vols., ed. Nanjing Daxue Zhongguo Yuyan Wenxuexi Quan Qingci Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 南京大學中國語言文學系全清詞編纂委員會 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1994), 2.1110-1122.
4. *Quan Qingci* 全清詞, 2.1110-1111.
5. *Quan Qingci*, 2.1113.
6. Jiang Cai 姜埰, "Yinshi chenyanshu 因事陳言疏," in *Jingtingji* 敬亭集 (Rpt., n.p.: Shandong shuju, 1889,), *j.* 7.10a.
7. *Quan Qingci,* 2.1116-1117.
8. *Quan Qingci*, 2.1117.
9. Yu Huai, *Banqiao zaji,* 4.3651.
10. Wu Shichang 吳世昌, *Cixue luncong* 詞學論叢, in *Luoyinshi xueshu lunzhu* 羅音室學術論著 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1991), 2. 800, 890-891.
11. Wang Shizhen 王士禎, *Huacao mengshi* 花草蒙拾, in Tang Guizhang, ed., *Cihua congbian* 詞話叢編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 1.685.
12. Zhang Deying, *Cizheng* 詞征 (Kedulou congshu 刻閣樓叢書 edition, 1941), *j.* 7.6a.
13. Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, *Mudanting* 牡丹亭 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1963), p. 1.
14. Stephen Owen, trans., *Great Preface* 大序, in *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992.), p. 47.
15. *Quan Qingci,* 2.1148.
16. Wang Shizhen, *Huacao mengshi*, in *Cihua congbian*, 1.685.
17. *Quan Qingci,* 2.1115.
18. Chen Tingzhuo 陳廷焯(1853-1892), *Xianqingji* 閑情集, in *Cize* 詞則 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 6a.
19. Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Chen Tzu-lung: Crises of Love and Loyalism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991).
20. Chen Zilong 陳子龍, *Anyatang gao* 安雅堂稿 (Taibei: Weiwen tushu chuban youxian gongsi, 1977), pp. 279-280.
21. Zhou Ji 周濟, *Songsijiacixuan* 宋四家詞選 in *Qingren xuanping ciji sanzhong* 清人選評詞集三種, Yin Zhiteng, ed., (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1988), p. 236.