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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

鷓鴣天

彩袖殷勤捧玉鍾，
當年拚卻醉顏紅。
舞低楊柳樓心月，
歌盡桃花扇底風。

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

永遇樂

彭城夜宿燕子樓，夢盼盼，因作此詞

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

天涯倦客，
山中歸路，

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

夜游宮

竹窗聽雨，坐久隱几就睡，既覺，見水仙娟娟于鐙影中。

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

八聲甘州

陪庾幕諸公遊靈巖

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Endnotes

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

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

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

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