

POEMS ON THINGS:
A CONTRIBUTION TO YONGMING COMPOSITION

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This thesis is based

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ABSTRACT

The study has at its centre the examination of a group of socially composed, largely extempore poems known as *yongwu shi* 詠物詩, poems on things. This generic type comes to the fore in the Yongming 永明 (483-493) period of the Southern Qi. Its emergence at this stage in the evolution of the lyric verse form, the *shi* 詩, is significant in compositional terms. The type carried a descriptive pedigree and a format, derived from the *yongwu fu*, that was accessible to patterned and symmetrical structuring. This feature made it attractive to poets preoccupied with the reflection of newly articulated formal ideals of balance and symmetry in their poems. In addition, when transformed into topics for composition, the screens, armrests and perfumed braziers of courtly existence entailed ideas of smallness and a single focus that pushed the verse form in the direction of compression. This momentum was increased by the pressures of impromptu circumstances. The game milieu in which the type arose also exerted an influence on the developing structure of the text. A vein of identity play intermittently present in the poetic tradition took on a new dimension in the salons of the Southern Qi.

Locating the *yongwu shi* in the account of the transformation of the lyric verse form brings into play the idea of restoration. This becomes the theme around which the study is structured. It is explored in a number of ways; from the tracing of a generic pedigree that has not been the subject of inquiry, to the locating and replacing of meaning at a local level. In the embedded significances of the earliest text to have put forward a theory of poetic regulation, are discovered models powerful enough to influence a practice that must fairly be defined in terms broader than tonal regulation.

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INTRODUCTION

"A distinctively literary history ought to be founded in the description of literary form.."

David Lodge, "Historicism and Literary History"¹

During the writing of this thesis a remark was made to me in after-banquet circumstances not unlike those in which the leading lights of the Southern Qi tossed off their verses. It was to the effect that my topic, as summed up in its title, was the kind of thing that would interest a foreigner. The implications were clear. My quickly characterised interests stood well outside traditional Chinese preoccupations. The title suggested a perspective on formal issues that has little place in traditional thinking. And the topic foregrounded a poetic type, the *yongwu shi* 詠物詩 or "poem on a thing," that had been largely dismissed by the mainstream tradition.

Received opinion would still back a judgement in those terms. Nevertheless, there has recently been both a groundswell of interest in the general period from which my poetic subject is drawn, the later Six Dynasties, and some attention given to a wider definition of the formal imperatives that characterise it.² No one writing about this literary epoch, as far as I am aware, would challenge traditional assessments of it as a combination of topical change and technical innovation - nor dispute that the change is in the direction of refinement. But the value placed on that combination is generally negative. It reflects what might, for convenience sake, be called a mindset.

One aspect of that mindset is reflected in the traditional predisposition to sum up literary periods in a descriptive phrase. This means that subject, approach and evaluation are merged in an

impressionistic compound, and tend to stay that way. One such capsule description, which appears to have had a seminal influence on the way in which the tradition regards an era, occurs in Yu Jianwu's 庾肩吾 (ca.487-551) biography in the History of the Liang (*Liang shu* 梁書).³ Notably, it contains the descriptive compound *limi* 麗靡. Originally applied to the poetry of the Yongming 永明 (483-93) era, this expression and near variations have come to characterise a whole period style. The line from which the phrase is taken reads: "The exquisitely ornamental (*limi*) was valued to an extent unknown in earlier times."⁴ The implications of the compound may be worked out along more than one axis but its importance for the present lies in the conventional connection between a literature that is overly concerned with decoration and a notion of excess that may be carried as far as abandonment and licentiousness.

This takes us to the threshold of a pervasive equation in Chinese interpretation: between an art form that can be characterised in the terms suggested above and a decadent political entity.⁵ The equation is Confucian in its didactic and utilitarian bias and brings that weight to bear. Couched in terms of the metaphor "the strains of a dying state" *wang guo zhi yin* 亡國之音, it holds a certain attraction.⁶ The dominance of this equation in literary commentary and discussions of literary value over the centuries is responsible, at least in part, for dismissive attitudes towards an entire literary period and, in the immediate context, for the suppression of interest in a verse type that appears to epitomise those characteristics.⁷

Related reasons can be found for the neglect of the poems that form the focus of this study, the subgenre known as *yongwu shi*. In this strand of technically innovative and frequently charming little works, the personal voice appears to be pushed to one side in favour of the description which was traditionally the province of another genre, the *fu* 賦. It is difficult to view such works as expressing the direction of the heart (*yan zhi* 言志), the goal laid down as

the proper path of the lyric in the Mao Preface to *the Classic of Songs*.⁸ To this should be added their existence in a game context devoted to the making of a witty or, not infrequently, a morally ambiguous point. All this is enough to have aroused the ire of traditionalists, and to supply the basis for a modern interpretation in terms of an active deflection of interest.

This thesis does not move directly against orthodox opinion in the terms indicated above. Though the idea has its attractions, the study does not purposely set out to rescue a poetic type for its own sake. It is led to engage with the *yongwu shi* by the observation that among subgenres of the *shi*, during the period of its greatest formal change, one category, the *yongwu*, is noticeably and consistently shorter.⁹ It is triggered by that observation to explore the notion of a more broadly constituted model of regulation in lyric verse in the last decades of the fifth century.

Form was isolated and accounted for in a different way in another strand of contemporary writings, beginning with a high profile discourse from one of the leading practitioners of the new developments. The theoretical description of the new form, as outlined by the poet Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513), starts with the line and is confined to the couplet.¹⁰ Within those parameters, the model articulated is that of a euphonious tonal alternation. It is, however, the interrelationship of three features, length, parallelism and tonal antithesis, that defines the formal structure of the mature regulated form, an interrelationship that is taken for granted in the composition - and the reading - of any regulated poem from the period of its maturity on. In formal terms, that point is usually located as some way into the Early Tang period.¹¹ The idea of an active and deliberate combination of these features by poets at a much earlier stage, during the Yongming era, is suggested by the factor of concurrence. At precisely the stage when tonal prosody was introduced into lyric verse, we encounter another phenomenon: the advent of a

group of much shorter verses, the majority of which conform to an eight-line format.

The thesis will propose that in a period in which the poetic form is evolving on a number of fronts, the *yongwu shi* is in the vanguard. The subgenre is not, of course, alone in showing an interest in and commitment to tonal prosody. (The feature is observable across the poetic spectrum, appearing even in poems that return to more artless literary forms, such as the *yuefu* 樂府). But it represents a conjunction of experimental features, including both regulated lines, sustained experimentation with parallel patterning, and a consistently shorter form. At the same time, it also epitomises the topical directions with which the Qi Liang period is associated. There would seem to be good grounds, therefore, for approaching the period with an eye to the particular contribution of the *yongwu* type.

However, if the *yongwu shi* is the exemplary instance of a period style, it also manifests all the traits associated with decadence in mainstream criticism of the later Six Dynasties period. The claim for it to be regarded as in the forefront of formal developments is based on the significance of length in the tripartite system that, in practice, constitutes formal regulation. But length is nowhere referred to in the earliest and most authoritative compositional model. Themes of marginalisation and suppression surface on more than one front, obscuring the significance of this verse group in any given account of the restructuring of the *shi*.

The situation described above offers itself up for exploration in a number of ways. The study opens with the idea of a gap between what was actually happening in practice and the earliest and, to this day, most influential account of it. Placed in context, the orientation of Shen Yue's text, the text set up - by itself, and with the later concurrence of the critical tradition - as the primary document of a new regulated form, is understandable and necessary. Though external evidence exists, the postface goes most of the way

towards supplying its own context. It proves to be a rich source, vindicating the status perennially accorded it. When the central lines of Shen Yue's text come under scrutiny and are endowed with some of the weight they were surely intended to bear, their capacity to accommodate, and generate, further interpretation has also to be acknowledged.

The pun implanted in the title of the first chapter, "A Basis in Theory," is intended to signal the presence of more than one interpretive possibility. The reading of Shen's text moves from "a basis in theory," which emphasises his attempt to define a model from the new poetic practices which he observed, and to which he contributed, to "a basis in theory," in which his formulation is read in relation to other analyses of the same poetic material. Both these readings of Shen's text are displaced in a later chapter by a third, which is the product of matching theory with a more broadly based analysis of poetic practice and its contexts.¹²

Before reaching that point, however, the second and third chapters move back to reconstruct a generic identity seldom engaged with in the commentary tradition. The *yongwu* identity originates in the *fu* genre. In terms of countering later content-based exposition, it should be emphasised that the model that emerges from these explorations embraces not only a kind of topic, but a format attendant on topic. A mixture of textual and extra-textual signals also points to the fact that a directly engendering social context is generally entailed. The result of these investigations is a paradigm that is accessible to re-location, and to "further articulation and specification under new or more stringent conditions."¹³ Although demonstrably subject to qualification on a number of fronts, the dominant mode of investigation in this chapter is linear and sequential.

A paucity of examples prevents any such approach when the type first crosses generic frontiers. The third chapter relies on the

detailed analysis of a very small number of works. These inconspicuous pieces are to be found amongst the collected poems of the late Han through to the Liu Song period. While these poems are unable to be viewed as a subgeneric strand, they are significant in relation to the history of the subgenre. In particular, they allow us to explore some of the strategies - and strategic alternatives - that were required to ease the *yongwu* model into a lyric mode. Only one of the poems considered here has been the subject of sustained critical attention. Bringing an established subgeneric consciousness to bear contributes to a fuller reading of individual poems. Meanings that can be interpreted as the product of structural and other forms of generic convergence sharpen and become more evident. Ironic possibilities come to light.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, this background is re-located in a specific literary and cultural milieu: the Yongming reign period.¹⁴ The Yongming represents a brilliant decade, in which a group of talented, mostly young poets composed a considerable and formidably innovative body of poems. Many of these pieces are the product of extempore execution, a phenomenon that was not new in itself, but which is turned to account with a self consciousness that is not found in poetry before. The physical environment of the Southern Qi court is reflected with a greater literalness than in earlier poetry. Poets attendant on princes who were themselves intellectually able and of a literary bent, reveal a new kind of wit. A lightness and daring - iconoclasm even - reflects the close identification between performer and audience, and the ease with which they moved between roles.

"Yongming" is used here not only to indicate a brief historical reign period. (Not every Southern Qi poem referred to can be dated to the Yongming period.) It also signifies the characteristics mentioned above: experimentation, group composition, a predilection for a certain kind of topic that went with a courtly context - and the sense of a brief and brilliant flowering that derives in part from the

foreshortened lives of most of the talented players on this scene. Some of the judgements expressed here are even more accurately applied to poetry of the following dynasty, the Liang. But the Yongming represents the beginning, and on those grounds may be singled out.

Even more, the Yongming period represents a point at which disparate factors and influences came to converge, to initiate the process of the formal transformation of lyric verse. The contention here is that the modern concept of the matrix might appropriately be substituted for the one-to-one connections - of whatever persuasion - that have tended to dominate interpretation of the period. The idea of a creative matrix is not only capable of accommodating a number of angles; it also accommodates them in a more neutral way. When traditional moulds are broken open, factors like the influence of the salon and one of its products, the poem on a thing, may be more accurately assessed.

Finally, a word on procedure. This study emphasises detailed readings of the texts. That approach was followed for a mixture of reasons: personal commitment, theoretical inclination and with models as diverse as Michael Riffaterre and Stephen Owen in mind. But the primary commitment is to two things. One is the belief that the attempt to restore links at a local level will almost always provide the needed and necessary keys to meaning in a variety of other areas. The other is to do with the fact that clues should be grasped regardless of where they lie - even in a poem on a curtain.

CHAPTER ONE

A Basis in Theory

"To read a text ... as literature is to remain attentive even to its apparently trivial features. A literary analysis is one that does not foreclose possibilities of structure and meaning in the name of the rules of some limited discursive practice."

Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*¹

The earliest model

The emergence of "regulated" arrangement in China's earliest lyric verse form, the *shi* 詩, may be pinpointed with unusual precision to the last two decades of the fifth century. A glance at the *shi* immediately prior to these years reveals the basic structure on which later poets built: a generally pentasyllabic line, broken by a major caesura after the second character, the virtual constant of rhyme at the end of each even line and parallelism in the middle couplet or couplets.² The whole is premised on the idea of the couplet as the primary building block. To these core features, poets of the Yongming period began on a regular basis to add schemes of tonal antithesis and alliteration, together with a growing predilection for the eight-line form. It is these changes that made possible the development of an exquisitely arranged and compressed lyric utterance, some two centuries later, in the High Tang period.³

The new formal directions in poetry were not long without a theoretical basis. Scholar, historian and poet, Shen Yue took the opportunity offered by his compilation of the official history of the previous dynasty, the Liu Song 劉宋 (420-479) to pen an apologia for current developments. This he appended, in the form of a closural summary, to the biography of the century's most influential poet, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) - a placing that leaves no doubt as to the seriousness with which he intended his remarks to be taken.⁴ The heart

of Shen's treatise has many times been extracted and discussed. But its importance as the earliest statement of poetic "regulation," supplied by a leading contemporary practitioner, ensures that it will continue to generate interest and interpretations. As a theoretical statement, its nub lies in the following lines:

"...We know that the five colours tone with each other and that the eight kinds of musical sound blend in concert.(5) In the same way the contrasting shades of "dark" and "yellow," and the serried pitch pipes accord with their objects in the natural world.(6) It is desirable to have the notes *gong* 宮 and *yu* 羽 alternate and the lowered and raised pitches held in contrastive balance.(7) [Likewise in poetry,] where there is first an open "floating" sound it should be followed by a clipped one.(8) Within one line the sounds should be differentiated.(9) The two halves of a couplet should show a balance of light and heavy sounds. Only those works that reveal a subtle understanding of these things deserve to be called 'refined writing.'"(10)

This statement has always been recognised as the manifesto of a new poetics. Predictably it excited controversy, first in the context of that perennial of literary theory, the ancients versus moderns debate. While according due recognition and respect to the tradition's well-springs, and meting out praise to its most outstanding figures, Shen Yue at the same time asserted that former poets arrived at musical effects in their poetry spontaneously (*tian cheng* 天成) and were but dimly aware of the principles to which they intermittently conformed:

"In the many historical cycles that have passed since the time of Qu Yuan, although literary style has been greatly refined, this secret has nevertheless remained hidden. When poets hit on an inspired phrase or a marvellous line, its musical consonance was spontaneously arrived at. Where their works accorded with these principles it was unintentional and not the product of careful thought."(11)

The accuracy of that account was soon contested. An exchange of letters with the younger poet Lu Jue 陸厥 (472-499) followed. The histories describe Lu in the following terms: "From his youth Lu was a man of fine bearing and character (*feng gai* 風概). He was fond of literary composition, and his pentasyllabic verse reflected a strong interest in the new developments."¹² Lu makes it clear that it is to the historical accuracy of Shen's interpretation rather than to his

aesthetics that he objects. After citing the theoretical centre of the postface, he remarks, "There is both beauty of wording and excellent logic here."¹³ The argumentation employed in this debate is of greatest relevance in the context of the construction of a literary tradition. That attempt, which preoccupied contemporary theorists, now appears less important than the earliest description of a formal ideal. Nevertheless it continues to offer insights and provides the backdrop to the analysis of Shen's text that follows later in this chapter.

More immediately important for a compositional study are the extra insights yielded by the riposte that Shen returned to Lu Jue. His introductory paragraph in particular casts further light on the aural patterns that poets, trying their hand at the new effects, were aiming for. A new compositional model is articulated:

"In a couplet comprised of ten characters, which employs a system of inverse matching, the characters may not exceed ten but already a skilled calculator could not exhaust their possible combinations."⁽¹⁴⁾

十字之文，顛倒相配，字不過十，巧歷已不能盡。

"This marvellous system of tonal alternation was not well adapted to conveying moral lessons."

此蓋曲折聲韻之巧，無當於訓義。

"Although they (former poets) understood the difference between the five notes, they nevertheless remained in the dark about their gradations and alternation."⁽¹⁵⁾

雖知五音之異，而其中參差變動，所味實多。

Shen's insights are directed at the couplet. Within its compass, the model is that of euphonious tonal alternation.

The period immediately following contains two of the largest works of Chinese literary theory, the *Shi pin* 詩品 (The Poets, Graded) and the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Dragon Carvings and the Heart of Literature).¹⁶ This last text is the tradition's most rigorously organised and, arguably, its most complex critical work. While both texts take account of Shen Yue's seminal statements, and the *Wenxin diaolong* works outward from it to a considerable extent, their insights do little to extend that primary model. Zhong Hong 鍾嶸,

author of the *Shi pin*, does not move beyond rebuttal. In *Wenxin diaolong*, in the chapter entitled *Shenglü*, Liu Xie explores the musical nature of literary composition, "Rules of Euphony." He substitutes other metaphors to express the concept of tonal harmony and makes it clear that the search for euphony includes alliterative and rhyme patterns.¹⁷ While his account fleshes out Shen Yue's original model, it does not submit it to any radical reorientation or refinement. The chapter is organised to achieve Liu's usual goal of a comprehensive and moderate synthesis of each topic, with a distinctive note of his own added.¹⁸

Alongside works that were monumental in design and ambitious in their aim, there is evidence of another strand of more practically directed criticism. References to titles, to would-be treatises and to the first detailed instructions to poets suggest widespread interest in technically-based theory. In Zhou Yong's 周顥 (?-485) biography in the *Nan shi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties) there is a reference to a work of his entitled *Sisheng qieyun* 四聲切韻 (Rhymes Distinguished on the Basis of the Four Tones).¹⁹ The gifted young poet Wang Rong 王融 (468-494) appears to have planned a discourse "On 'Understanding Music,'" which is to be understood from its context to refer to the musical patterns of language.²⁰ Shen Yue himself is credited with a more precisely worked out tonal and alliterative theory variously known as "The Four Tones and the Eight Faults" (*si sheng ba bing* 四聲八病) or, more simply, as "The Eight Faults" (*ba bing* 八病). These insights may have been incorporated in another work, the *Sisheng pu* 四聲譜 (Register of the Four Tones), also attributed to him.²¹ These texts have not survived. However, since the rediscovery of a part of Liu Shanqing's 劉善經 (fl. ca. 610) "A Guide to the Four Tones" (*Sisheng zhigui* 四聲指歸), in a compendium of texts of critical theory compiled by the Japanese monk Kūkai (774-835), the *Bunkyō hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 (The Secret Repository of the Literary Mirror), there has been consistent speculation that a portion

of this Sui Dynasty work that deals with tonal and alliterative schemes represents Shen's original.²²

A section entitled "Twenty-eight Kinds of Poetic Fault" 文二十八種病 in Kukai's "West" chapter incorporates part of "A Guide to the Four Tones," which, in its turn, relies heavily on the pronouncements of a certain "Mr Shen" 沈氏.²³ Understandably, this figure is usually equated with the progenitor of tonal theory, Shen Yue. That judgement has been queried on textual grounds and on grounds of the failure of Shen's poems to reflect the theories with which he is credited.²⁴ It may also be queried on the grounds of anomalies in its wording. It does not seem likely, for example, that the following opinion would have issued from the pen of Shen Yue: "Some take 'wasp's waist' for 'crane's knee' and 'crane's knee' for 'wasp's waist.' I doubt whether they have been clearly distinguished."²⁵ A sense of distance, at odds with newly discovered rules, is implied and the authorial comment seems improbably detached in tone.²⁶ Nevertheless, part of "A Guide to the Four Tones" appears to represent and translate into specific compositional guidelines the fundamental ideas discussed in Shen's two surviving texts.

The following examples, introduced with the tag, "Mr Shen has said," show the narrower focus of the later text:

(Of the first "fault," ping tou 平頭 "level head") "The first and the second characters should not be in the same tone as the sixth and the seventh. But if you are able to employ them criss-cross fashion, that's allowable" 第一、第二字不宜與第六、第七字同聲。若能參差用之，則可矣。

Liu Shanqing's text comments, "This means having the first and the second characters in the same tone and the second and the sixth, as in "qiu yue" 秋月, bai yun 白雲, etc."²⁷

(Of the second "fault," shang wei 上尾 "raised tail") "Shen Yue, too, has said, 'raised tail' is a particular defect in composition. It is regrettable that, from the beginning of time until now, the most careful of poets have not avoided it."⁽²⁸⁾

上尾者，文章之尤疾，自開闢迄今，多懼不免，悲夫。

(Of the third "fault," feng yao 蜂腰 wasp's waist) "A five-character line divides into two sections (ju 句), the first two characters and the last three. When you reach the end of the

line, [the two characters comprising] the "waist" must cancel out (i.e. balance) each other." (29)

五言之中，分為兩句，上二下三。凡至句末，并須要殺。

The likelihood of theory's having acquired so much more specific and technical a dimension between the composition of the postface and the reply to Lu Jue, and Shen Yue's death in 513 is difficult to assess. There are many angles to that question, but a major argument in its favour is the widespread evidence in Qi and early Liang poetry of the deliberate avoidance of some of the particular tonal and alliterative defects referred to.³⁰

There is also the often-cited confirmation of the histories that a vigorous explorative context existed for the practice and discussion of new developments in poetry:

"The end of the Yongming era was a period in which literature flourished. Shen Yue of Wu Xing, Xie Tiao of Chen Jun and Wang Rong of Lang Ye, alike in their interests and temperament (*qi lei* 氣類), promoted each other's work. Zhou Yong of Ru Nan had an expert understanding of tones and rhyme. Shen Yue and the other poets employed musical patterning (lit. *gong* and *shang* 商, standing for the notes of the musical scale) in their compositions. They introduced the four tones, "level," "rising," "departing" and "entering," by means of which they established euphony in their works. There could be no extending or cutting back. People called this the 'Yongming' style." (31)

Xiao Zixian's 蕭子顯 (489-537) description in the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (History of the Southern Qi) recognises the sense of discovery and uniqueness that characterised the Yongming period. For literary precedent, it has the bold claims of Shen Yue's postface. It is the kind of background depicted in this passage that makes the swift crystallisation of general theory into specific rules appear credible.

Li Yanshou 李延壽 (fl. 629), writing his History of the Southern Dynasties (*Nan shi* 南史), employs the same wording but inserts more detail:

"You had [rules against such faults as] 'level head,' 'raised tail,' 'wasp's waist' and 'crane's knee.' Within a line, the individual sound units had to be different. Within the two lines of the couplet, the tones (lit. the notes *jue* 角 and *zhi* 徵) could not be the same in the same place." (32)

This tidying up of earlier history, guided by the historian's requirement to be as inclusive as possible, might be read as evidence

that the "faults" had not yet crystallised when Xiao Zixian was compiling his account approximately a century before. On the other hand, what it actually says is that the Yongming poets consciously avoided using certain clearly named, unpleasing sound patterns in their works. The implication is that the "faults" had been identified by that time. Two of these infelicitous repetitions - "wasp's waist" and "crane's knee" - had been mentioned by name in Zhong Hong's Preface to the *Shi pin*.³³ The latest date for this well-attested document is 517.³⁴

The precise nature of the prosodic faults, together with the question of when they were defined, labelled and avoided on a regular basis is bound up with the search for the earliest regulated models and has obvious implications for the interpretation of literary history. But the speculation that has surrounded these questions has tended to obscure the fact that, from the beginning, the concept of a "regulated" form was envisaged in terms broader than that of the introduction of tonal patterns. When the practical context is considered in its entirety, and not limited to its more frequently evoked and favourite lyric pieces, it is clear that the Yongming period harbours another widespread trend: the compression of the form. If a weighting is allowed extempore salon composition - poems that openly consider and experiment with form - that judgement is even more valid.

The notion of a gap between literary theory and practice goes some way towards explaining why the factor of length has received so little attention.³⁵ It would seem to be traceable initially to the lack of any direct reference to length in Shen Yue's seminal pronouncements. It is easy to see how such a gap may have arisen, less easy to plot a course of divergence. Another, quite different, set of considerations is involved when we come to the attempt to match theory to the earliest specimens of "regulated" verse. Before examining each of these angles, it is worth considering why the idea

of a lacuna in critical theory - something that has not so far troubled literary historians of this period - should merit attention now.

Failure to recognise directly the new aesthetic preference for shorter forms has had two main results. It has discouraged literary commentators down to the present from making connections between the radical new involvement with textual surface and the compression of that surface. This has narrowed the description of regulated verse and can be shown to have impeded a fuller recognition of its achievements. The point will be argued here in the context of prototype regulated verse but it also extends to the appreciation of examples of the mature form. One of the aims of this study is to demonstrate how additional meanings arise when fuller account is taken of the interplay between a form that is prescribed in length and a new engagement with textual surface. This process can be shown to be present long before regulated verse reached formal maturity. Secondly, absence of comment on the broader structural contour has served to limit interest in the earliest group of poems to reflect that preference: the group of socially composed new-style compositions which centre on the subgenre known as *yongwu shi*, poems on things.

Towards a closer reading

Shen Yue's critical writings are of primary importance in setting the terms for the interpretation of regulated verse. Confined to the two texts that can confidently be assigned to him, they appear to stop short, not only at tonal euphony but at the couplet. Expanded to include part of the Tang "recoveries," that bias is even more marked. As a description of the new developments (*xin bian* 新變) that were occurring in practice, they seem to be far from comprehensive.³⁶ There is, of course, no obvious reason why someone whose explicit aim

is to justify the introduction of one radical new element into poetry should concern himself with any other feature. There is, on the other hand, a very good reason, had he been interested in the defence of a new poetry, more broadly defined, or conceived of an ideal model on some larger scale, why he should bury that conception in established terminology - and limit it to the aspect that could be most cogently argued.

The feature that first distinguished the new-style *shi* from the whole of the preceding tradition was its "regulation" by tonal and alliterative patterns. Placed in the Yongming context, the case for tonal euphony becomes the case for the new verse, at least in so far as its formal structure is concerned. This was a case that needed to be fought with weapons from an approved armoury. Musical theory provided a parallel, ready-made and sanctioned vocabulary. This drew, through a numerology that provided the basis for correlation with a whole range of natural and human systems, on the mutually reinforcing authority of an entire tradition.³⁷ What it did not do was supply the terms for an exact description.

The situation is not clear cut. This is partly due to the fact that certain key words do double duty. The same character *sheng* 聲, "sound," for example, which, amongst other usages, was used to denote a musical note, was extended to the concept of tone in speech.³⁸ The character *yin* 音 has a similar repertoire, but it encompasses the concept of a larger pattern, and usually indicates music.³⁹ It is not so much a question of interpretative flexibility in theoretical texts of this period, as of interpretation being dependent on context. Problems sometimes occur in relation to the referent, but more often they reflect some confusion on the theoretical level. Zhong Hong acknowledges a difficulty that goes well beyond terminology in his remark, "what people today call *gong* and *shang* is quite a different matter." 與世之言宮商異矣。⁴⁰ Another area of reference for the synecdoche is implied, and it describes a practice quite different

from that of fitting poetry to music (through rhyme and other consonant features which come under the general term *yun* 韻), after the manner of the old poets.

Widening the terms of reference of an expression like *gongshang* to include the concept of musicality or sound patterns in speech, and particularly its exploitation in poetry, also entailed adding a further metaphorical dimension. That coexistence sometimes serves to disguise the level on which an author is working. In the following lines from the *Shi pin* it is not easy to decide whether Zhong Hong is using musical and linguistic terms contrastively or interchangeably: "For hundreds and thousands of years we have heard no arguing over *gong* and *shang* and no discussion of the four tones" 千百年中，而不聞宮商之辨，回聲之論。⁴¹ The context suggests that these parallel expressions are intended as a loose amplification of each other and are to be taken to refer to tonal patterns in poetry exclusively.

Some of these blurred areas impinge only marginally on the overall sense. But they reflect deeper disagreement as to the nature of the relationship between music and poetry. At one end of the scale is the conception of a literal substitution: of the tones, as exploited in poetic language, for the musical notes that no longer accompanied lyric verse.⁴² This point of view envisages a direct relationship between the pentatonic musical scale and the gamut of the four tones in speech. It tends to founder, among other things, on ingenious solutions to the urgent numerical inconsistency.⁴³ From the interstices of an ill-fitting equation creep new interpretations, reaching as far as a fully metaphorical relation.⁴⁴ Shen Yue's postface would seem to sit at this end of the scale and to work from the conception of a looser, more open-ended relation. The point is important for it offers the possibility of extending the earliest and most influential model and of making it not only more broadly referential, but referential in another area.

A re-reading of the theoretical hub of the postface offers some

interesting signals. The parameters of the discursive message are set at a particular but complex prototype. The model envisaged is that of a balanced alternation within a more broadly conceived, multiply disclosed, duality. Other elements work to confirm this central reading. The insistent repetition of dual terms establishes a ubiquitous and accepted principle, the only proper pattern for the newly identified tones in speech to follow. Most of the contrastive pairs enlisted as support for this principle summon up a second area of operation. In addition to the primary contrast that each embodies, a larger spectrum is entailed, which the particular pair (*xuan-huang*; *lulu* 律呂, etc.) stands in for as synecdoche. Those notional spectra hark back to the examples of harmonious relation with which Shen initiated his comparison, the spheres of colour and music - and they let in the idea of other numerical paradigms.⁴⁵

Some confirmation that Shen's thesis draws support from numerical models, and is intended to be read at the level of numerical paradigm, is offered earlier in the postface. The introductory lines function as a careful preparation: "Man, receiving at birth the spiritual essence of Heaven and Earth, is in possession of the Five Constant Elements."⁴⁶ His nature is, by turn, hard and yielding. His emotions divide between joy and anger..."⁴⁷ The well-established lines along which this introduction proceeds should not obscure the fact that it is designed to introduce the idea both of number as an ideal and of specific number. It is present in the ancient notion of a complementary duality governing the cosmos and aspects of human behaviour alike. And it is more precisely summoned in the mention of the Five Constant Elements. The number five, which holds a reference to the pentatonic musical scale, establishes the critical connection with music and musical theory. The correlative relationship between the five constant elements and the five musical tones, *wu yin* 五音, places music (and, by extension, a poetry that employs a similar pentatonic system) within an established system of cosmic process for

which no further validation is required.

But these lines do more than lend authority. They set up the precise numerical models on which Shen Yue bases his own theory, and to which he returns at the crucial stage of his discourse. Shen's theory is not confined to the working out of a primary dual principle. It can be seen to coexist in a complex relationship with other numerical paradigms. These, in turn, have a multiple function. They evoke a general model of harmony, one that is not limited to the sphere of music. And they throw up two specific ideals, those of five and eight - both of which have a more than fortuitous relationship with the emerging poetic form. The conception of a scale or spectrum also contributes the notion of completeness. It is not much of a jump to transfer this idea to the particular context under discussion, the new poetic form. Five has an unambiguous meaning within that context in the concept of the pentasyllabic line, fixed as the ideal line length in poetry.⁴⁸ Eight was fast establishing itself as the preferred number of lines. Given that situation, it does not seem fanciful to read a particular significance into the two numbers.

While the interpretation suggested above reinforces the combinational model set up by a discursive reading, it also brings out the notion of a process taking place within certain contours. That idea, lightly present in a first reading, emerges more strongly in subsequent readings. Though some numbers carry a weight of significance according to context, there is a further sense in which no number is intrinsically more equal than any other. Coexistent with an awareness of the special significance of certain numbers, therefore, is another knowledge: that the language of number imposes an equality of its own. That awareness works in favour of the idea of a balance between the number two on the one side, and that of five and eight on the other, between the foregrounded process under discussion and the outline which comprises its outer perimeter.

An analysis along these lines does not entail breaking with a

linear reading. But it does entail some awareness of other patterns that infiltrate the textual surface, working progressively and recursively to refine and extend that original model. In the postface, the dominance of a language that operates through number at the level of argumentation generates a reading that works in terms of numerical paradigm - a reading that, in its turn, offers the possibility of further application. It is an approach that is consistent also with the noting of allusion in other areas.

Shen Yue's case is not, of course, made through number alone. A constant in discourses of this kind is the introduction of authority models. It has been noted that the early lines of the postface are thickly studded with references to the classics and approved texts. At several centuries remove, these interact with each other, becoming one vast intertext, one solid incontestable authority. Some, however, like the echo of lines from the *Yue ji*, stand out as particularly significant in the given context. The heart of Shen's treatise contains another such echo. It holds a deliberate and strategically placed reference to an earlier authority writing literary criticism, a point that would not have been lost on his readers.

Shen Yue's use of the five colours and the eight kinds of musical sound as examples of harmonious relation did not constitute the first time that the spectra of sound and colour had been linked in the search for a literary theory.⁴⁹ The phrasing is close to that of Lu Ji's 陸機 (261-303) "Fu on Literature" (*Wen fu* 文賦), and has the usual advantage of establishing an authority while asserting for the author himself and his theories a place in the same branch of the tradition. The line reads, "The alternation of sound and tone should resemble the way in which the five colours blend" 暨音聲之迭代, 若五色之相宣.⁵⁰ The "Wen fu" as intertext has more to offer. The section in which the reference to sound and colour occurs is one that builds on the dual theme of the multiple nature of literature and the need to order that multiplicity. Lu Ji does not elaborate beyond a repeated

call for proper sequence, defined as the natural sequence of head and tail, or the established order of dark and yellow.⁵¹ Shen Yue can be seen to move the relationship on, to accommodate a more precise formulation. He both situates his challenging and controversial remarks within the most appropriate context and moves gracefully forward from the springboard that context provides.

It is a truism that readers of this period, as throughout the whole classical era, were used to reading - indeed expected - to read with other areas in mind. That agility encompassed more than an ability to reconstruct allusions along a number of axes. It extends to any "signal" emitted by a text. It has been noted that appending the postface to the biography of the century's most famous poet, a biography that was located in the official history of the last dynasty, comprised a strong statement of intent. The placing of Shen Yue's central thesis at precisely the point at which his account of the tradition breaks off constitutes another such indication. Despite his assertion that, in one area, the whole of the poetic tradition had operated with a woeful naivety, Shen at the same time demands that his new form be situated in the mainstream of that otherwise acceptable body of works. More specifically, he pin-points the precise literary stage that the tradition, as delineated by him, had reached. That stage is epitomised by the works of Xie Lingyun.

There are several ways in which the poetry of Xie Lingyun may be considered preparatory to the new poetry that emerged in the Yongming period.⁵² In the formal area, the area in which Shen Yue's own call is sounded, his greatest contribution is to have established the tactical dominance of parallelism.⁵³ It is not requiring a great deal of a reader, then as now, to make that connection. Shen Yue, concerned, at this stage of his discourse, to delineate the new discoveries and to assert their uniqueness, does not dwell further on pedigrees. The exact point from which his new ideals take off is, however, clearly signalled.

While Shen Yue's position is every bit as radical as the rebuttals of Lu Jue and Zhong Hong would have us imagine, its presentation can be seen to draw fully on traditional strategies. The theory is carefully backed; the uncompromising nature of its placing and the way in which it courts controversy, balanced against a conservative format and the use of conventional methods of argument. Placed within the context of his greater account, and with some reconstruction of the intertextual context which that account entails, its central statement emerges as deliberately shaped to persuade and convince. Not only is it laced by correlative argument into an accepted system; it is presented as a logical, if hitherto unnoted, extension of that system.

Structuring and language, which buttress the argumentation, also contribute their own dimension. Reiteration, multiple cross-references and the rich ambiguity of a language that is poised between metaphorical areas make for a powerful statement. They lend to Shen Yue's words a significance that reverberates beyond the sphere of tonal euphony. The central lines of the postface, restated and elaborated in the reply to Lu Jue, do not do anything specifically to suggest that the concept of the tonally regulated couplet might enfold that of the quatrain, or that of the quatrain the notion of the perfected eight-line form. They do, however, stand as a compelling directive towards balance and symmetry in poetry and as a compositional model that exists to be applied elsewhere.

Practical Applications: Tang directions and the "faults"

As a document of poetic theory and as a description of the new developments, Shen Yue's postface had to survive alongside attempts to refine and build upon it. The earliest of these applications is the notion of the "faults," the original version of which, it will be remembered, was ascribed to Shen himself. What we know of the context

in which poetry was practised gives no reason to doubt that the broad animating principles of the postface could have swiftly translated into poetic instructions at another level. As we have seen, there is evidence to suggest their existence, in embryonic form at least, by the beginning of the second decade of the sixth century.⁵⁴ The relationship of Shen's two surviving texts of poetic theory to these disputed guidelines and to a strand of criticism that followed in their wake, has particular relevance in the context of the present study.

Through their attribution to Shen Yue, the "faults" are associated with the earliest theoretical description of the new poetic form: that contained in the postface. They have tended to be taken as shorthand for Shen Yue's poetic theory in particular and as a descriptive catch-all for regulated verse in general. They are frequently identified as the central feature of the Yongming style. Looking briefly once more at the Shen-attributed fragments of text, as filtered through Liu Shanqing, it is however their difference that is immediately striking. The few lines cited earlier show a revealing contrast with Shen's two other texts of poetic theory.

Stylistic disparity alerts the reader to other differences. Lacking any broad statement of principle, the "faults" translate into a kind of counting exercise - along the line and within the couplet - and exist at a level of literalness that is at odds with the rich correlative framework summoned up by the postface. Encapsulated in neat metaphors that sometimes occasion more controversy than illumination, the "faults" are accessible to speculation rather than to any wider interpretation.⁵⁵ Even so small a sample as the specimen provided above is enough to confirm a restricted frame of reference that is reflected in an entirely different level of expression.

The features that distinguish the "faults" from Shen Yue's major surviving statements are precisely those which relate them to later critical discussions of the new verse. In the form in which they have

been handed down, these fragments are indistinguishable from most of the Tang-assembled texts preserved in the *Bunkyō hifuron*. They cannot be separated by quality of observation, or language, from the bedrock of like observations in which they are set by later compilers. It is reasonable to allow that surviving fragments may have been shaped by the aims and arrangement of the later texts into which they were incorporated, and to attribute their relative thinness of expression to the handbook's requirement for clarity. But in a more radical way than the noting of similarities might suggest, the notion of "faults" is responsible for the direction in which critical theory was to proceed in the next few centuries.⁵⁶

Leaving aside textual questions and problems of authorship and dating, two points can still be made. We should recognise in the conception of "faults," which had circulated at least in rudimentary form from the beginning of the sixth century and perhaps before, a feature that is inherent in the notion of regulation itself. If the postface represents the broadly prescriptive, the "faults" stand for the narrowly proscriptive impulse implicit in the theory of regulation. As poets began to think in terms of the avoidance of certain uneuphonious tonal combinations in their work, it was the proscriptive angle that came to dominate the description of the new verse form. The proscriptive focus of several centuries worth of critical guidelines, and the itemising format in which most of it was cast, stem directly from the conception of the "faults."

A further difference, apparent in terms of the relationship with practice, distinguishes the primary text of poetic theory from the "faults" and works which follow in that vein. This can be stated initially as the difference between texts that had a practical rather than a polemical or a philosophical purpose. It is not a clear-cut distinction. The postface, set up by its own placement and its level of argumentation to function as a theoretical statement in the grand manner, has, for motivation, the authorisation of a practice. Its

complex focus and the fact that it operates in a number of areas at once does not obscure the specific nature of its call for tonal alternation. All the same, a distinction exists between a general injunction, and texts that develop it locally in terms of the direction of a particular practice.

The *raison d'être* of this next batch of works was to enunciate in fine detail, for an audience of aficionados or students of poetic practice, the host of rules and guidelines spawned by the new verse form. In the main, the texts put together in the Tang represent compositional directives - directives that became increasingly necessary when regulated verse was included in the examination curriculum, when candidature was widened, and as poetry was practised and discussed in circles that bore an increasingly looser relationship to the court.⁵⁷ These texts appear to represent a kind of low tradition, a movement that gathered momentum in the Tang period under the conditions referred to above.

A brief collective glance at the manuals composed or compiled in the Tang provides a basis for generalisation. As preserved in the *Bunkyō hifuron* and in a few rare singleton texts, such as the *Shige* 詩格 (Poetry models), attributed to Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca.698-ca.756), this criticism exhibits an almost exclusively technical bias.⁵⁸ An idea of its area of interest is provided by a glance at the *Bunkyō hifuron's* table of contents. The Heaven (*Tian* 天) Chapter, for example, contains the following sections: "A Chart on the Harmonious Use of the Four Tones," 調四聲譜, "Harmonising the Tones," 調聲, "Patterns for Using Tones Within Poems," 詩章中用聲法式, "Eight Kinds of Rhyme," 八種韻, and "A Discourse on the Four Tones" 四聲調.⁵⁹

Such texts embrace a variety of stylistic and structural aspects. As assembled by Kūkai at the beginning of the ninth century, they offer an umbrella-type prescription for composition, and for regulated verse in particular. The fact that they were intended for a foreign market is significant but should probably not be regarded as

influencing the selection of material unduly. It would seem that Kūkai's purpose was to assemble a succinct and non-repetitious account of the sources available to him.⁶⁰ His aim in this appears to have been similar to that which directed the compilation of the religious texts he brought back to Japan: the dissemination of the knowledge he had gained during his thirty-month sojourn in China.

On the whole, it is probably unwise to attribute any significant influence on contemporary thinking to compositional handbooks. With few exceptions, practice would seem to be prior here, leaving theory to function as the dissection of established compositional strategies. Linked to a relationship with practice that can be guessed at but not confirmed, their role as part of an evolving theoretical tradition is even more ambiguous. There are good grounds for concluding that their practical orientation, which differentiates them from texts that take a more elegantly theoretical line, disqualifies them from a serious role.⁶¹ Occasional references to them occur in the *shi hua* 詩話 (Notes on Poetry). Otherwise these writings remain unacknowledged by the commentary tradition.

Despite uncertainty as to their theoretical function, and their apparently negligible impression on subsequent theory, these texts have some importance for the modern interpretation of a literary period. In the first instance, they comprise the only theoretical record of regulated verse during its most dynamic years. Given their iteration of the same concerns, we are probably justified in taking them as an accurate reflection of formal preoccupations. In addition, viewed retrospectively, they stand in a particular relationship to the primary document of poetic theory, the postface, in which individually and collectively they appear to elaborate its fundamental tenets.

On both counts, as the record of an evolving poetic structure and as the collective elaboration of earlier theory, these writings present a partial picture. Despite their quantity and their detail, the bulk of these materials sidestep any reference to the larger

poetic contour. Only the Wang Changling texts, referred to above, contain excerpts that invite wider application.⁶² No particular work is, of course, intended as a complete prescription. Nevertheless, the failure of these texts generally to grapple with the idea of a total structure is noticeable as a gap in the account of a developing poetic practice.

There are some good reasons, both practical and philosophical, for that omission. Tonal euphony would for many decades have remained the area of greatest anxiety. The identification and exploration of these patterns is likely to have comprised the most formidable challenge to poets working within the new form. It entailed an approach that arises from, and is very largely confined to, the couplet. Only later, in the broader concept of the quatrain and the quatrain reduplicated, is the larger structure implicated.⁶³

It would be reasonable, nonetheless, to expect that the formula worked out for the couplet would have evolved into a prescription for the whole, reflecting developments in practice. It is useful at this point to return to the idea of some discrepancy between the earliest model and later theoretical developments. On the one hand, later manuals can be seen to define their parameters after Shen Yue's "Within one line" and "The two halves of a couplet." The lack of any direct reference to length in Shen Yue's seminal pronouncements would thus appear to have a direct bearing on the exclusion of that subject from technically based criticism for some centuries. On the other hand, Shen Yue's theory, as confined to the postface and the letter to Lu Jue, is persuasively situated within the tradition's own terms of reference and is given such strong and comprehensive statement that it appears more broadly referential. The contrast with the scope, argumentation and language of later critical writings is marked.

One last reason for the failure to develop a comprehensive description of the new form lies in the tradition's own preoccupations and priorities. Absorption in the couplet clearly has much to do with

its philosophical biases. An abiding fascination with duality and the complementary processes of the dual relationship, ensured that theorists would continue to focus on the principle of opposition, as reflected along the line, in contrastive tonal and alliterative patterns, and between the lines, in the opportunities for morphological and semantic matching offered by the regulated couplet. Later commentators in technical vein, inheritors now of a fully worked out formal model, continued to respect that interest. The result has been an almost exclusive concentration on the primary poetic unit, the couplet.

Other descriptions

"Lift up the stone of language ..."
Derek Attridge, *Peculiar Language*⁶⁴

Discussion to this point has engaged only with those texts concerned with compositional models and technical description. But other works, predicated on a different relationship with practice, and in which the focus is elsewhere, also contribute to the account of the new verse form. On the most general level, the model of balance and compromise that emerges from the *Rong cai* 鑄裁, (Casting and Cutting) *Zhang ju* 章句 (Paragraph and Sentence) and *Fu hui* 附會 (Organisation) chapters of the *Wenxin diaolong* has undoubted implications for structure.⁶⁵ All the same, its models of excellence are so spaciouly conceived, and its remarks so broadly targeted, that it is difficult to relate them to a local context. More is to be gained for present purposes by looking carefully at terminology. The following section is concerned with a layer of generalised description that crops up in critical discussions and in the biographical sections of the Qi and Liang poets in the histories.

References to the new style poetry vary considerably according to context but can be seen to centre around two main ideas. The most commonly used shorthand points up the dimension of newness: *xin bian*,

"new developments," zao xin 藻新, "writing in the new style," xin qi 新奇, "new and arresting."⁶⁶ The Liang shu furnishes this example, taken from the biography of Xu Chi 徐摛 (474-551), "His literary compositions were not bound by the old forms but reflected his fondness for the new developments" 屬文好為新變，不拘舊體。⁶⁷ This example makes explicit the contrast between old and new that is always present in comment in this vein. Such phrases offer a distinction rather than a description. They can be read as indicators of an argument touched off by the new verse form.

This debate surfaced at a lofty theoretical level in discussions on the nature of change. The issue was given its most comprehensive airing in Liu Xie's famous chapter entitled *Tong bian* 通變 (Continuities and Change).⁶⁸ Liu addressed the issue of derivation in a compelling colour analogy, that is remarkable for the balanced spread of perspectives that it implies.⁶⁹ Alongside direct attempts to accommodate or discredit the new developments, the references of the histories appear deceptively neutral. We should be aware, however, of the presence of controversy, and of the existence in other, apparently less committed, descriptive contexts of expressions that reflect and echo it. Even when they harden into cliché, phrases like zao xin, which function as apparently straightforward distinction, harbour specific, persistent, polemical undertones.

Such terms also foreground the idea rather than the characteristics of change. Other expressions exist that hint at the nature of that transformation. This is at first a shifting vocabulary, but it can be anchored to the conception of "restraining" or "disciplining" the form. Within that conceptual area the language offered a choice. Liu Xie, exploring musical patterning in literary composition alongside harmony in music, naturally takes over the expression employed for centuries in musical contexts, lu 律.⁷⁰ With it he imports the ideas of balance and restraint on which musical ideals were based. Although his account adjusts and extends accepted notions,

he clearly sees no need to adapt or fine-tune that original term. As employed by Liu in this context, its coverage remains limited to the domain of sound.

A second character *ju* 拘 also encapsulates the idea of restraint. In its case, a different division of the conceptual spectrum nudges it towards the notion of "restriction," generating a distinctive usage when it comes to be applied to the new verse form. This character has the primary meaning of "to stop."⁷¹ As its sense area widened, a close connection was retained between the ideas of restraint and restriction - to which the additional dimension of "forbidden" was sometimes added.⁷² There is thus an easy logic about its employment in contexts that imply disapproval. Zhong Hong, ill-at-ease with and scornful of both the idea and the specific manifestations of poetic change, required just such a term. *Ju* is prominent in the Preface to the *Shi pin* as an expression of disapprobation. It is used twice, in combination with other even more strongly weighted characters, to indicate an unnatural restriction of the poetic form. In each case, context is clear as to the way in which the term is to be taken. It is associated with the decline of contemporary writing, and the poet Wang Rong is twice singled out in that connection:⁷³

"Nowadays Ren Fang 任昉 (460-508), Wang Rong and others do not aim at fresh effects (*qi* 奇) in their poetry. Rather they scramble over each other in the pursuit of undiscovered allusions (*xin shi* 新事). More and more is this the case among today's writers. As a consequence lines have become packed full of meaningful references and language is crammed with "significant" words. These writings are compressed and contorted (*juluan* 拘攣), cobbled into a patchwork of associations. The rot is ineradicable." (74)

Other usages adjust the emphasis. This excerpt is taken from the biography of the Liang Dynasty poet, Yu Jianwu:

"During the Yongming period of the Qi Dynasty, the literary scholars, Wang Rong, Xie Tiao and Shen Yue, began to employ the four tones in their literary compositions. By this means they instituted new developments (*xin bian*). From that point they changed the direction of poetry by regulating tone and rhyme" (*zhuanju shengyun* 轉拘聲韻). The exquisitely ornamental was valued to an extent unknown in earlier times. (75)

The account is tinged with disapproval, which emerges in the wording of the last line. While that sense is not absent from the character *ju*, its main function is to describe the transformation process, viewed as the imposition of pattern on the elements of rhyme and tone.⁷⁶ Another example of its use allows the possibility at least of a neutral interpretation here.

In his "Letter to the King of Xiangdong," 與湘東王書 Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (Emperor Jianwen 簡文 of the Liang [503-551]) (describes Xie Lingyun's poetry as "containing unregulated pieces" (*shi you bu ju* 時有不拘), which represent the dross and dregs of his works."⁷⁷ *Ju* clearly stands as an affirmative term here, its absence linked to an undesirable lack of discipline in composition. The strength and particularity of its basic meaning and the context in which it was selected, do not allow interpretation to rest there. Xiao Gang, one of the prime exponents of the new developments, writing during a period when those changes were in full swing, is likely to have selected the term *ju* with care. When the characteristics of Xie's poetry are brought to bear, together with the fact that he had been censured for constructional faults, it is a good guess that the criticism was aimed at the formal structure of his poetry.

We can go further. Xie Lingyun could hardly be castigated before the idea had taken hold for his failure to employ tonal prosody. His use of parallelism - an important element in the new style verse - represented a huge step forward in the formal area. But a prominent characteristic of his poetry, one that went against the tide of Qi Liang lyric verse in general, is its length. The first Qi Emperor, Xiao Daocheng 蕭道成 (427-482) is on record as condemning Xie's verse for failing to indicate the difference between initial and final sections: "Kangle was undisciplined (*fang dang* 放蕩); his style didn't discriminate between the beginnings and the endings of poems."⁷⁸ The expression *fang dang* implies lack of control. Although it should be read in connection with the next phrase, there is more

than a suggestion here of prolixity and laxness over the length of his compositions. The same characteristics would seem to be indicated by the combination *rong chang* 冗長, which appears a few phrases later on in Xiao Gang's letter, when he dismisses those attempting to write in Xie's style: "They copy Xie without attaining the essence of his poetry or his beauty. All they achieve is his prolixity and his "length."⁷⁹ The character *ju* represents the opposite of these qualities. It is probable that Xiao Gang's choice of it is intended to reflect the dual ideas of restraint and compression and their regrettable absence from areas of Xie Lingyun's corpus.

The examples discussed above suggest that, in certain contexts, *ju* served as an early alternative to the term that eventually ousted it, *lu*.⁸⁰ Relieved of its ideological implications, it is informative about the nature of the changes that were taking place, and it supplies a concrete dimension that is largely lost to the later definition. While unravelling strands in the search for contemporary perspectives, it is interesting to side-step for a moment and consider a term that might also have been a contender, the character *yue* 約.

The biography of Song Zhiwen, in the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang), contains a summary of the previous few centuries of poetic history:

"After the Wei Dynasty's Jian'an 建安 (196-220) period, and the move south, the model of the *shi* form (*shi lu* 律詩) went through a number of changes, until it reached Shen Yue and Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581). In the works of these poets, tone and rhyme schemes were attractively combined and they showed a refined and closely integrated use of antithesis (*zhu dui jingmi* 屬對精密). When we get to Song Zhiwen and Shen Quanqi, poetry became even more extravagantly beautiful. They avoided the prosodic taboos, placed restrictions on the lines and standardised the whole (*yue ju zhun pian* 約句準篇). The poem formed a pattern like embroidered brocade."⁽⁸¹⁾

Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 (1007-1072) well-known account would seem to be the first to acknowledge the role of length directly in the construction of a regulated poem. The character used to indicate compression is *yue*. A glance at its history is instructive. The original meaning of *yue* is "to bind together (with silk)."⁸²

Transferred to the abstract plane, the sense area splinters, but early texts reveal a nexus that centres on the dual ideas of restraint and compression.⁸³ Later literary writings develop the idea of a reduction of form, but seldom shake off the notion of restraint in the ethical arena. The *Wenxin diaolong* yields several examples: "...the compositions of the ancient poets show a beauty that is tempered by balance and a language that is properly restrained (*yue*). The *ci* 辭 writers (Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 [B.C.179-117] and those who wrote in his style), on the other hand, reveal an indulgent type of beauty and prolix diction."⁸⁴

In the Preface to the *Shi pin*, Zhong Hong moves further away from the ethical dimension: "In four-character line verse the form (*wen* 文) is compressed (*yue*), the meaning wide-ranging."⁸⁵ The remark occurs in the context of a discussion of the relative advantages of the five-character line form. It is poised between allowing the formidable nature of the combination when employed by the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Classic of Songs) poets, and pointing up the lack of flexibility imposed by the extreme concision of the form, in contrast to the five-character line. The connection with the hallowed verse form of the *Shi jing* tinges the character with moral approbation.

In sixth century critical texts, therefore, *yue* represents an ideal of control jointly manifested in the conceptual and formal areas.⁸⁶ Invested with its complement of original associations, and stripped of its ethical implications, the term might well have served as a description of the action of change on the old verse form. One good reason why it appears not to have been considered in this early period must be its frequent application to the classics of the canon. A term associated with a venerable ideal, and the models that exemplified that ideal, is unlikely to have been thought of in connection with the earliest batch of short, new style compositions - salon verse on miniature topics, game poems and extempore ripostes. And we come back once more to the conclusion that, irrespective of

developments in practice, theory was not ready to consider change in formal terms alone - outside of an area for which it had established theoretical precedents on which it could build.

Conclusion

From a later perspective, the strands discussed in this chapter combine. Their effect is to diminish and obscure the significance of changes that did not come under the critical spotlight. Lack of direct reference to the element of length, and to its role in the achievement of an ideal overall structure, has implications for the description of the regulated form in general. It also has a particular application in terms of the location of the prototypes of regulated verse. At issue here is not only the adequacy of the description of the new poetic form but the accepted account of its development.

When the balance of interpretation is altered to take account of length, priorities jostle and shift, allowing salon composition a more prominent place.⁸⁷ The link between the competitive extempore conditions of the salon (particularly the imposition of time limits) and shorter forms is easily made. But it represents only one in a melting-pot of elements. The emergence of single, small-scale, topics associated with the salon milieu and developed in a particular way, is especially significant at this stage in the development of the *shi*. The acknowledgement of a connection between these pieces, known as *yongwu shi*, "poems on things," and the extension of formal ideals, devised for the couplet, to the larger structure of the *shi*, forms a springboard for the rest of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

The Yongwu Identity

"Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated... "

Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.¹

Introduction

"...most of the extant poems produced in the poetry meetings during this period [the Southern Qi] are in eight lines. In addition the poems are more often than not *yongwu* poems."

Kang-i Sun Chang, *Six Dynasties Poetry*²

Kang-i Sun Chang's observation makes explicit the connection between the new eight-line form, the salon milieu in which it arose and the subgenre known as *yongwu shi*, "poems on things." Of the chapters that follow, two will examine this nexus synchronically, centering on the link between an outbreak of subjects new to the *shi* and formal alterations; between the pressures and influences exerted by an extempore environment, and a different way of structuring poems and looking at meaning. But the idea of adjustment on which these discussions are based depends on a historical dimension and is fully explicable only in relation to it. It is with that dimension that the present chapter, and the next, are occupied.

The historical dimension encompassed here splits easily into two main antecedent elements. These are foreshadowed in the label *yongwu shi*, a hybrid that readily yields the two strands, "*shi*" and "*yongwu*." Their separation is underlined by the initial association of the *yongwu* mode with another genre, the *fu*. The *shi* side of the equation is addressed directly in following chapters. It is the *yongwu* background, less often the independent object of scrutiny, that beckons first.³

Object topics in poetry are not an invention of the second half of the fifth century. Works that were in some way designed around the idea of the "thing" had existed for centuries before. It is important to recognise that the kind of topic thrown under the spotlight in the Yongming period brought with it a considerable pedigree. That pedigree cannot be identified solely as a storehouse of themes; it also entails an approach, several centuries old, towards the object topic in poetry. There is no intrinsic association between the idea of the object and any stipulated approach. What we have first to go on, therefore, is its appearance as a topic in earlier literature.

The extreme paucity of poems on things in *shi* form before the Yongming period, and the thematic and formal dissimilarity of those that do crop up, make it difficult to talk in terms of a subgeneric development within the boundaries of the *shi*. Until the last two decades of the fifth century, the *yongwu shi* appears to be the most embryonic and underexploited of all the categories of the *shi*.⁴ The only exception to this statement is a group of poems by the Liu Song poet, Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414-466). There is, though, a sense in which Bao Zhao's innovative but disparate collection represents lines not taken by the poets of the Southern Qi. That angle will be explored in later chapters. The *yongwu* lineage has to be sought first within the broad parameters of the *fu* genre.

A note on methodology is probably needed here. The following attempt to recover something of the *yongwu* past is circumscribed by the larger themes of this study. Bounded by an angle of interest that is situated several centuries ahead, it focuses not so much on the discovery of prior versions for their own sake as on the attempt to recapture, in something of its plenitude, the *yongwu* model presented to later poets. Any resultant "history" tends to be incidental to that aim. It is resisted, too, for the linearity attendant on the notion of literary history, and associated with traditional versions in general. That linearity is qualified for a number of reasons in

this account. First among them is the state of the sources.

Surviving texts resist any but the broadest linear arrangement. Mechanical deterrents, particularly difficulties with dating, are important here. Other factors, such as the phenomenon of the example cluster, also work against the assemblage of direct lineages. These are groups of *fu* in which the same subject recurs. They may be composed close in time, even, perhaps, on the same occasion, but many span a broad time stretch. Following a particular structural contour and connected by multiple filaments, recognisable as codes, these poem groups have the appearance of a spatial rather than a temporal presentation.⁵

While the determining effect of topic on approach is the single most significant factor here, it becomes obvious on closer inspection that many codes have wandering feet. Although they have usually arisen in connection with individual topics, or classes of topic, codes are capable of redistribution across local boundaries. It is this constant crossing of frontiers, allied to formal change, that keeps the type alive. The maverick nature of many codes also counters any retrospective perception of serial patterns. The pattern is cross-historical, one of strands looping backwards and forwards in a continual re-weaving.

Reinstated here, as an antidote to the uniforming, generalising perspective which the search for a model imposes, is the theoretical independence of each of the individual texts encountered along the way. The definition of independence in practice narrows down to something like recognising the freedom of every work to rearrange its own relations with the past. Analysis becomes a process that allows each text to reveal those relations.

For all these reasons, the loosely chronological framework employed in the pages that follow should be viewed as an initial tactic only. It is intended to be re-examined and undermined by other perspectives. In particular it is checked by the notion of a more

elusive literary influence - an influence that splinters and is retrievable only on other terms, that leap-frogs stages and makes a mockery of filiation. Some of this will become the material of other chapters, deferred by the initial search for a structural model associated with the object topic.

The term *yongwu*, as it occurs in critical discussions of the pre-modern period, usually refers to a compositional approach which centers on a preference for depicting the outward form.⁶ There is the rare remark, such as the following from Hu Yinglin's 胡應麟 (1551-1602) *Shi sou* 詩藪 (Collection of Poetry Discussions), which includes a generic dimension - that does not, however, extend to the origins of the type: "The *yongwu* arose in the Six Dynasties; Tang poets carried it on 詠物起自六朝唐人沿襲"⁷ But for anything like an account we have to wait until the Qing 清 (1644-1911). The following excerpt from the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (The Four Branches of Books of the Imperial Library), though pared to a minimum and focused on the *shi* type, identifies traditional precedents. It occurs in the context of an introduction to a collection of Yuan dynasty 元 (1206-1368) *yongwu shi*, those of the poet, Xie Zongke 謝宗可 (dates unknown).

"In ancient times Qu Yuan 屈原 wrote a piece "In praise of the Orange Tree" and Xun Kuang 荀況 [Xunzi 荀子] composed "Fu on the Silkworm." poems on things grew from these beginnings. It was a mode [liu 流 lit. "current"] particularly associated with the *fu* masters.⁽⁸⁾ Emperor Wu of the Han's piece on "The Heavenly Horses" and Ban Gu's 班固 (32-92) "White Pheasant" and "Precious Tripod" took an event as the reason for poetic expression (*yin shi zhu wen* 因事抒情). In each case their major concern was not with the depiction of a particular object. The object was the vehicle for conveying thoughts and feelings (*qi tuo wu ji huai* 其托物寄懷). As regards the *shi*, or lyric poem, its beginnings can be seen in Cai Yong's 蔡邕 "The Pomegranate in the Courtyard Front." Coming to the Six Dynasties, this literary trend gradually became widespread. Wang Rong and Xie Tiao were supreme in striving to better each other in matched compositions. For the most part they were preoccupied with allusive references ..."⁽⁹⁾

The *Siku quanshu* outline distinguishes stages but largely avoids pinning down connections. It is loosely based on the premise of sub-generic progress, the last point reflected in the evolutionary

emphases of its linguistic choices (mention of "sprouts" *meng ya* 萌芽, and "beginnings" *shi shi* 始). But it is cautious about the notion of direct linkages. Instead it allows a generalised vocabulary of "currents" (*liu; feng* 風) and "comings to" (*yan* 沿及) to do the work. There are good reasons for this, ranging from a background of disputed generic definitions to the uneven development of the type. The account begins by identifying two fledgling versions of poems on objects, "In Praise of the Orange Tree," (*ju song* 橘頌), from the *Jiu zhang* 九章 (Nine Declarations) section of the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of the South); and one of a group of five poems on a variety of object topics, attributed to the pre-Qin philosopher, Xun Qing 荀卿 (ca. 312-ca. 235 B.C.).¹⁰ The *yongwu* idea is first associated, therefore, with the notion of poets addressing a single concrete topic.

The relationship between these prototype works and the *fu* genre is complicated, caught up on the one hand in considerations of poetic approach and, on the other, in a larger debate on *fu* ancestry. In the case of the pieces from the *Xunzi*, the connection with the *fu* is initially asserted through naming.¹¹ But the claims of an uncertain nomenclature and the link with topic have to be balanced against the observation that the poetic subject is, in each case, so hedged about with prior motivation that description becomes a by-product. This is in contrast to the Han *fu* which has descriptive amplification as its centre. The *Siku* authors appear to subscribe to the idea that these pieces are either ancestor to the *fu*, or represent early versions of the genre itself.

In "The Orange Tree," description is subject to the ruling allegoric mode; whoever was author of this piece compares the unblemished beauty and constancy of a young man to the lovely orange tree, which is able to grow only in the South and retains its greenery even in winter.¹² The features singled out by the poet and the descriptive procedure itself are determined by that analogical aim. Similarly, in the group from the *Xunzi*, it is the needs of the

philosophic riddle that predominate. These pieces harness description to a didactic wit, a wit that is employed in the service of "discursive exposition" (*shuo li* 說理).¹³ The result is the selection only of those attributes and properties that reveal an abstract dimension. These are consequently susceptible to an ambiguous reading that is constantly pushed as far as paradox. That bias is at odds with the descriptive impetus of the Han *fu*.

It seems reasonable to conclude that, though they stand as distant literary precedent, these predecessor types of the *yongwu* are to be interpreted as examples of that elusive literary influence referred to above. Each is most interestingly considered in the context of a discussion of poetic method, a discussion that is taken up in later chapters.¹⁴ For the moment it is enough to note both the connection with topic and the implication that the *yongwu* type cannot be reductively defined in terms of topic alone.

The *Siku* version does not dwell on the passage of the *yongwu* type through the *fu*. Angled towards *shi* precedents, it foregrounds other models, few enough to be listed almost in their entirety. Some of these pieces will be returned to in the following chapter when this strand is considered. However, the statement that *yongwu* "was a mode particularly associated with writers of *fu*" has priority. A compositionally based study, seeking the arrangement contingent on a certain kind of subject, must clearly begin with the *fu*.¹⁵

Some prototypes and a paradigm

What we might provisionally refer to as "the *yongwu* theme" meanders through some diverse examples of the pre-Han and early Han *fu*, speculation as to its existence bedevilled by problems of authorship and dating. It raises its head in two works, "Fu on the Wind" 風賦 and "Fu on a Flute" 笛賦, attributed to Song Yu 宋玉 (ca. 290-223 B.C.)¹⁶ But modern scholarship disputes the existence of this personality and inclines to a Han, or perhaps later, date for the

works.¹⁷ It is plainly present in a group of short *fu* which are, however, preserved in a text of doubtful authenticity, the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Miscellanies from the Western Capital).¹⁸ The first work that can be unambiguously assigned to an early Han date, Jia Yi's 賈誼 (200-168) "Owl *Fu*" 鵂鳥賦 turns out to be a false start, in which the ostensible topic operates as a device to introduce other interests.¹⁹

In the "Owl *Fu*," the owl functions rather like a *xing* 興, the traditional term for a compositional technique in which an object from the natural world summons up another, generally abstract, area through metaphorical association.²⁰ The term, coined in connection with the *shi* and usually reserved for that genre, has a certain aptness here.²¹ For the owl, bird of foreboding, serves to generate a strand of reflections that centre on the brief, unstable nature of life and the need, accordingly, to cultivate an attitude of detachment. As it is identified in lyric verse, *xing* is usually enclosed by its line, suspended in a manner of presentation that emphasises its self-containment. In this context the idea of an encounter must be factored in and room allowed for the concept of a personal voice.²²

The broad differences of topic and varying approaches accommodated by the *fu* genre are summarised in a number of largely antithetical descriptive terms.²³ These pairs tend to line up together, and lack of alignment, in the form of an unusual mix, may indicate a transitional piece. The "Owl *Fu*" is a case in point. Its sentiments and method of procedure characterise it as a *yan qing* 言情 or *shu qing fu* 抒情賦, a *fu* expressing emotions, and provide grounds for the interpretation that certain *fu* at least lie in line of descent from the *Sao* mode.²⁴ Going by its title and introductory section, however, it might be called an early example of the *yongwu fu*, a type not usually associated with the "expressive" mode. These are, of course, later terms, employed with the benefit of hindsight and a wide field of examples to aid discrimination. Such classification is not

always helpful, but it does point up choices, especially those present at the beginning of a period of generic scission. Early choices become of interest again when *yongwu* topics and approaches begin to filter through the *shi* form.

However one classifies it, the "Owl *Fu*" discloses a poetic mode that swings between the dramatic and the discursive, eclipsing its avian topic. Probably a little under a century later there occurs an example of a work that places its declared object topic unambiguously at the centre of interest and maintains an uninterrupted focus on its features and attributes. "*Fu* on Panpipes," (*Dongxiao fu* 洞簫賦), composed by the Former Han (206B.C.-25A.D.) poet, Wang Bao 王褒 (fl. 58 B.C.) appears nowadays to be accepted as the earliest example of the *yongwu* type proper.²⁵ The judgement acknowledges the object's occupation of the centre of the poetic stage. And it recognises a certain kind of descriptive approach that links the object-centered topic to the mature *fu* form. That combination was to become the basis of the *yongwu* mode.²⁶

The *fu* carried all before it during the Han period. It offered the obvious channel for poetic experimentation and it is not surprising that its repertoire should have proliferated and eventually come to include smaller subjects. It is difficult at this distance to discover other, possibly circumstantial, reasons for Wang Bao's change of direction. Although the poet's biography in the *Han shu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han) is uninformative as to the particular circumstances of composition, Ban Gu does his best to place this and one other of Wang Bao's works in a tradition associated with *fu* composition: the attempt to restore an ailing prince to health.²⁷

"The Crown Prince was not well. His mind wandered; he was forgetful and miserable. Wang Bao and others were commanded to go to his palace and attend him. They read and recited unusual compositions from morning to night, including those they themselves had composed.⁽²⁸⁾ Only when his illness stabilised and he recovered did they return home. The Prince was particularly fond of Bao's compositions "Sweet Springs" and "The Panpipes" and he had the Ladies of his Rear Palace and members of his entourage recite them."⁽²⁹⁾

One of the factors that is likely to have influenced a court poet's choice of a musical topic is the association of music with ritual, and of both with the concept of measured rule.³⁰ It also seems probable that what appears to be an innovative decision - the choice of a topic that was considerably narrower in scope than those that dominated the contemporary scene - was shored up by the knowledge that the subject lent itself to the making of a moral point.³¹ That dimension had long been present in the edifying, or corruptive, effect of various kinds of music, and Wang Bao dwells long and lovingly on it in his penultimate section. This comprises a description of the different responses evoked by the pipes, played in a variety of modes by that culturally ubiquitous figure, the blind musician.³²

"Wang Bao's composition on the panpipes exhausts all the variations of sound and appearance."

Liu Xie, "Elucidating the *Fu*."³³

While the length of this *fu* militates against full-scale illustration, a fair-sized extract is needed to indicate "*Fu* on Panpipes" orientation and descriptive mode. The following excerpt comprises the piece's introductory section and describes the bamboo from which the panpipes are made. After summoning up its setting, precariously placed on a precipitous hillside, the poet proceeds to sketch in a conventionally envisaged cycle of existence:

As to its origins:

The bamboo for the pipes grows
On barrens in land south of the River.
Hollow limbs stretch out, their nodes far-spaced,
Tips spread in massed display.
Just to glimpse it clinging to the mountainside,
Precipitous and jagged, jutting perilously,
Perched at a precarious incline,
Truly its instability is lamentable.
Gazing from a distance at its huge sweep,
It stretches vast and unbroken,
And its breadth and tranquillity gladden.
It entrusts itself to the earth,
Unmoved for ten thousand years.
It absorbs the nourishing goodness of the finest essence,
Receives its glossy strength from the azure hues.
It responds to the changes of the yin and the yang;
Dependent on heaven for its existence.
A circling wind passes, souging, through its tips;
Winding rivers and rushing streams water its mountainside.

White waves surge and break into pearls of spray;
With a crashing sound they pour into the abyss.
The morning dew falls cool and clear upon it. ³⁴
A clear spring moistens and sustains its roots.
The lone bird and solitary crane delight and sorrow below it.
In spring a joyous flock soars to its topmost twigs.
In autumn the fasting cicada, clinging to its sheath, sings
its unceasing chant.
The black ape gives its mournful screech, searching among
its leaves.
It dwells, in deep concealment, in a remote secluded spot; ³⁵
It stretches, dense and unbroken, in an endless expanse...

These lines represent about a fifth of the work. Any inclination to read them as a circumnavigation of the actual subject, the panpipes, or as a leisurely lead-in to topic, should be rejected. Landscape, particularly the cardinal elements of mountain and water, comprises an integral part of topical repertoire. ³⁶ Whether that repertoire had been fixed in an earlier literary model is another question. ³⁷ What does seem clear is that "Fu on Panpipes" represents a vigorous encounter between a topic, complete with its own spread of themes (located in the cultural matrix and filtered, at least in part, through earlier texts), and the fu method. ³⁸

The grandiose conceptions out of which the early Han fu had evolved - an imperial capital or a princely hunt - entailed a system of structuring that divided up the facets and attributes of its central subject, then submitted them to an ordered elaboration. It is here that fu as poetic genre and fu as compositional principle converge. The principle has been variously interpreted, but most versions do not stray far from the basic idea of a descriptive setting forth, or exposition. ³⁹ The rider "direct" seems to be projected into the definition by the contrast with its companion tropes, *bi* and *xing*. Whatever the actual historical relationship between genre and principle, their connection becomes mutually supportive of a reading that identifies the fu with an exhaustive and orderly exposure of topic. "Fu on Panpipes" is clearly to be understood first of all in terms of that compositional impetus.

The selected lines encapsulate the poet's attempt to structure

the smaller topic after the same principles that determine the arrangement of the much longer *fu*, such as the seminal versions of Sima Xiangru of the previous century. "*Fu* on Panpipes" is transparent in its adaptation of its own repertoire - themes associated with musical instruments - to that general method. In this scheme of things, the landscape associated with the playing of a certain kind of music translates into "place of origin" - and is to be recognised as one of the carefully demarcated facets of a central subject, akin to the topically ordered divisions of the capital *fu*. Like those, the sections of the smaller work are fortified by a graphic identity. Among the most prominent communities of significs here are *shan* 山 (mountain), (in the introductory section), *kou* 口 (mouth), *chong* 虫 (insect) and *shui* 水, the water radical, signifying in addition the limpid notes of the pipes.

Such markers merely signpost a sectional identity that is already explicit. A *fu* is constructed to give the impression of exploring all the imaginable byways of its topic. It encompasses both statically conceived categories - geographic, architectural, botanical etc; and those involving a sense of temporal movement - historical overviews, pleasure-seeking, descriptions of ceremonies, hunts. This is not a random progress. Nor can it be viewed as a narrative one, although certain sections and types of *fu*, particularly those conceived as journey-cum-explorations, rely on the injection of a temporal perspective.⁴⁰ The primary compositional impulses are to be located elsewhere. Its multi-faceted design is part of a rhetorical procedure directed at a comprehensive coverage of the subject and entailing, amongst other accomplishments, a strong measure of discursive conclusiveness.⁴¹ That angle is implanted not only in the inclusive assemblage of material but is also apparent in the sequence of the sections.⁴² Within those sections, the descriptive procedure begins with, and seldom moves far from, enumeration. The listing is ordered, and components amplified in such a way as to point up their

generic and representative aspects. The poem's frame of reference is continually stretched in different directions by the widespread use of opposites.

All this applies to "Fu on Panpipes" and is illustrated in the extract under consideration. Elements of landscape, birds and creatures function archetypally, modifying the particular description and summoning up an additional presence that is notional and ideal. This is achieved in a variety of ways. There is the attachment of conventional qualifiers to substantives: xiao xiao 蕭蕭, "soughing," to wind; qing 清, "clear," to dew; gu 孤, "lone," to bird; qiu 秋, "autumn," to cicada. While an item is particularised by the qualifier, its stereotypical or generic aspect is also reinforced. Expected conjunctions are often repeated, (gu ci gua he 孤雌寡鶴, "The lone female bird and solitary crane"). Frequently the pattern will straddle two lines, and the relationship encompass opposition (chun qin 春禽, "spring birds," and qiu tiao 秋蛸, "autumn cicada"). In the section just cited, matched syntax requires that the lines beginning "The lone female bird..." and "In spring a joyous flock..." belong together. Likewise the next pair of lines. But relationships like "spring birds" and "autumn cicada" overflow syntactic boundaries. This kind of parallel play may extend for several lines, contributing to a denser texture and strengthening the generic identity of sections.

"The fu of Yang (Xiong) and Ma (Sima Xiangru) were commonly composed in single lines. Those of Ban (Gu) and Zhang (Heng) 張衡. (78-139) contained parallel constructions."

Li Tiaoyuan 李調元, (Yucun's Jottings on the Fu) ⁴³

"Of course, it was not the case that works of the fu masters before Wang Bao had not contained parallel lines ...but the appearance of these lines is occasional, unlike Wang Bao's compositions, where there is sustained use of parallel lines. Particularly different is Wang Bao's employment of exquisite ordering and a finely-matched and concentrated use of parallel constructions.

"...His paired words and parallel expressions are of exceptional refinement and beauty, and his method of stitching together parallel couplets into sections is, quite simply, not something we

can imagine in other Western Han writers..."

Cai Xiongxian, "Wang Bao and his Works"⁴⁴

Wang Bao is singled out in the second reference for his sustained use of parallelism. That judgement is situated within another perspective: that of parallelism as a necessary historical development, which is also the viewpoint implied by the Qing critic, Li Tiaoyuan. Hinted at, too, is the connection between parallelism and a movement towards descriptive refinement. This process, of which parallel structuring is usually regarded as the keystone, culminated in the Six Dynasties. "Fu on Panpipes," which "exhausted all the variations of sound and appearance," is both exemplar and precursor here. These perspectives emphasise the historical and the developmental. They say nothing of the delicate network of synchronic connections that links subject to approach.

Although parallelism receives wider exposure in Wang Bao's works generally, it is particularly conspicuous as an ordering strategy in "Fu on Panpipes." Parallel construction is not merely an attractive ordering device; it summons up within its poles whole conceptual areas (in the example referred to above, classes of bird and insect; the spectrum of the seasons), that are linked by category but defined by difference. It therefore represents a method, effective and to hand, of extending the narrower repertoire contingent on the object topic. It may be argued that its prominence in "Fu on Panpipes" arises, at least in part, as compensation for the loss of a broad canvas; that it constitutes a new and particular application in the context of the smaller topic.

Other connections suggest themselves. There is a clear mimetic relation between the small, constructed artifact and Wang Bao's delicately paired and polished sentences. In any *fu*, unity derives from the relationship of the sections to a central subject. The object topic has a material presence which reinforces that awareness and contributes an additional dimension: that of a single image holding

the piece in focus. Coexistent with the notion of singleness here is that of a presence constantly transforming itself. The living bamboo, rooted in and integrated with its mountain environment, becomes the master craftsman's product, perfectly modelled, exquisitely ornamented pipes. The pipes are briefly one with their blind player before merging with the varied manifestations of their melody. Ultimately the melody translates into the effect it will have, that effect another transformation, this time of the behaviour of those who listen to it.

That continually deferred and shifting significance represents a new dynamic, one that contrasts with the measured lateral pace of sectional amplification. Its ongoing play echoes another aspect of the *fu*, in which the cumulative weight of its language entails a sense of forward movement. At the same time, a recursive as well as a progressive thematic contour can be detected, present in the notion of refinement (or reform) - of bamboo to pipes, pipes to melody, melody to the ameliorative effect of music. The central subject is constantly affirmed, and as constantly renewed, a process that further binds up the piece.

The genesis of the *yongwu* mode lies here, in the appropriation of an established generic model by a fresh category of subject, with its own cargo of themes. But just as definition cannot be confined to the idea of the object as topic, so it is not adequately accounted for by the concept of a simple graft of object topics onto the *fu* form. It is located also in a range of impulses towards accommodation. These can be summed up as the changes wrought by new themes on established models - or as the influence of a mature genre on less developed topical categories. But they centre specifically on the role of language: on its attempt to accommodate a dominant generic impetus, the exhaustive descriptive ideal of the *fu*; and on the sometimes conflicting urge to reflect the nature of a small, decorative, topic in a number of ways besides direct description. In terms of the broad

structural contour, it presents as a movement towards a subtle but persistent modification of inherited structure. These features translate into a package with enough interest and flexibility to ensure the continued existence of the new type.

From a methodological point of view it is convenient to have the earliest accepted example of the type, "Fu on Panpipes," double as both prototype and paradigm. The intention has been to present this piece with some regard for the complexity of its textual and inter-textual existence, in order to discourage a reductive interpretation that rests with categories of topic. Without elevating it into some sort of transcendent example now, it should also be seen as capable of accounting, theoretically if not literally, for multiple versions of the *yongwu* type. At the same time, specific connections between Wang Bao's *fu* and later works on musical instruments establish a generative relationship in which "Fu on Panpipes" operates directly as a prototype. It also serves as the earliest authentic specimen of a *fu* on a man-made object, an angle that connects it to the group of *yongwu shi* considered in subsequent chapters.

Transformations

As for

Narrating a single event,
celebrating a single object -
Poems inspired by wind, clouds, plants and trees,
One could extend and broaden the list
And never record them all.

Wen xuan, Preface⁴⁵

"...the problem is no longer one ... of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but of transformations that serve as foundations..."

Michel Foucault, Introduction, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*⁴⁶

The combinational model described above offered poets the possibility of exploring an almost endless range of object topics from both the natural and the man-made world. We can characterise the progress of *fu* on objects in the following general terms. They

proliferated, rising to the topical challenge that had been opened up.⁴⁷ Although lengths varied considerably, these works remained a great deal shorter than the "major" categories: the capital, hunt and journey *fu*. And, rather more arguably, *fu* on objects became imbued with elements of lyricism that diluted the didactic thrust and considerably changed the rhetorical contour inherited from older *fu*.

It is difficult to go much beyond this. It might be tempting to submit to the idea of progression more generally, linking it, for example, to the "lyricising" of the *yongwu* type, or relating it to a movement that is apparent across the *fu* spectrum: towards the normalisation of line length and increasing prosodic "regulation."⁴⁸ But there are good reasons for treating the notion as a whole with restraint. The concept of continuous progress, of the ongoing refinement of a particular genre, will always overlay and disguise the idea of multiple interpretations of a flexible, constantly transforming model. And, in the case of the *yongwu fu*, it obscures the presence of local connections, connections that establish both the particularity and variety of generic practice and the determining influence exerted by topic on form.

The notion of a progressively "lyricised" model, for example, must be approached with care. It should be balanced by an awareness that, in poems which take certain plants and meteorological phenomena as their subject, supposed "lyric" elements present as an adjunct of topic. Age-old associations between, for example, the moon and women, between snow and love trysts, or spring blossom and sexual awakening entail a standpoint and inject an ambience we might, in other circumstances, identify as "lyric." It is an angle that is most convincingly explored in connection with the analysis of individual poems and will be returned to later.

Substituting for the progressive linear model of development a perspective of multiple transformations is especially pertinent in the *yongwu fu* context. It reflects a practice characterised by different

approaches and accommodates a strain of much shorter pieces that differ considerably from the model put forward above. Problems of dating, authenticity, incompleteness, lack of context and disputed attribution arise in connection with these works. We should also be cautious about thinking of them as a separate stratum, distinguished by a more compact format. Length alone is not enough to go on, especially when so many of them are scraps and sherds. Nevertheless, viewed from a later standpoint, this assemblage of works has a collective impact. It sets up a wide variety of topical precedents, supplementing the descriptive repertoire provided by the showpieces of the type, for example, the dozen or so works contained in the four relevant *Wen xuan* chapters.⁴⁹ In addition, because many of them display a different compositional impetus, this strand of smaller pieces and part-pieces works to erode, refine and adjust the mainstream model described above. And, if in no other way, their demonstrated versatility generates other possibilities and provides a springboard for the idea of bridging genres.

The *Xijing zaji*

"For the point is this: not that myth refers us back to some original event which has been fancifully transcribed as it passed through the collective memory; but that it refers us forward to something that will happen, that must happen. Myth will become reality, however sceptical we might be."

Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*⁵⁰

This section addresses the existence of a batch of short *fu* on "things" which supposedly dates to near the beginning of the Former Han period - a chronology that, if accepted, would provide evidence of a practice that pre-dates "*Fu* on Panpipes," and the model that derives from the greater *fu*. These pieces are recorded in the *Xijing zaji* and are subject, therefore, to the same suspicions that from early on have clouded the reception of that work. Nevertheless, a section from that text follows. It describes a gathering in which scholar-literati

assembled around a princely patron and composed short works, all on topics that come into the category of "thing," in a competitive, extempore situation:

"Xiao, Prince of Liang 梁孝王 (r. 168-144 B.C.), strolled in the Lodge for Forgetting Cares. He gathered together his scholars and had them compose fu. Mei Cheng composed "Fu on a Willow" 柳賦. Lu Qiaoru 路喬如 (n.d.) wrote "Fu on Cranes" 鶴賦. Gongsun Gui 公孫詭 (?-B.C. 150), "Fu on a Striped Fawn" 文鹿賦. Zou Yang (ca. 206-129B.C.) composed "Fu on Wine" 酒賦. Gongsun Cheng 公孫乘 (n.d.), "Fu on the Moon" 月賦. Yang Sheng 羊勝 (?-B.C.150) wrote "Fu on a Screen" 屏風賦; Han Anguo 韓安國 (ob.127 B.C.) wasn't able to compose his fu (on a stool), so Zou Yang wrote it for him...Zou Yang and Anguo suffered the losers' penalty of three pints of wine, while Mei Cheng and Lu Qiaoru were each rewarded with five bolts of silk."(51)

And here is the composition that was responsible for Zou Yang and Han Anguo's defeat, chosen, with an eye on the future, for its link with Xie Tiao's "The Armrest:"

The Stool

A tall tree soars through the clouds;
Curving and twisting it spirals up.
Branches grow from its sides.(52)
The likes of Wang Er and Gong Shuban(53)
Shoulder their axes,
Clinging to vines and creepers,
They clamber to its highest branches,
Scale the unguessed heights of its topmost limb.
They fell it and take it back.
A one-eyed man planes it straight;
A deaf man polishes it smooth.
Qi contributes a bronze axe;
Chu sends craftsmen of note.
And so this stool was completed.
Its strange appearance was scarcely of this world.
It was like a dragon coiling, a horse wheeling,
A phoenix flying off, a simurgh coming back.
When the Prince leaned against it
His imperial virtue increased each day.(54)

Yves Hervouet interprets this work as political allegory, identifying its author, Zou Yang, with the lofty tree. He translates fu zhi 附枝 as "petits arbres" - which endows the branches with a certain independence - and identifies them as two advisers of Liu Wu, referred to here by his posthumous name of Xiao, "the filial."⁵⁵ These two, Gongsun Gui and Yang Sheng, were involved in a plot to put the Prince on the throne against the advice of Zou Yang. The story is told in the Han shu.⁵⁶ But the topoi and language of this small piece

tend in another direction. Its atmosphere of descriptive celebration requires each attribute to be taken positively; the branches suggest regeneration and hint at a mutually supportive relation. This reading reinforces the main theme, that of a great tree being felled and polished up to become a support for the Prince. That meaning would be undermined by the introduction of subversive elements. It would be useful here to summon up some subgeneric support but uncertainty as to when the piece was written makes it difficult to talk in these terms.

The problems surrounding the *Xijing zaji* may be summed up as follows. It purportedly represents Jin scholar, Ge Hong's 葛洪 (ca.281-ca.341) reworked version of an alternative Han history, originally put together by Han scholar Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 B.C.-A.D.23). Its miscellany of largely anecdotal material functions as a supplement to Ban Gu's *Han shu*. Problems centering on textual discrepancies between this work and more orthodox sources, and historical inconsistencies call into question both Liu Xin's authorship and the part played by Ge Hong.⁵⁷ Yu Jiayi's 余嘉錫 (1883-1955) discussion of this text remains one of the most sensible and convincing.⁵⁸ He sifts through the evidence and concludes, with the backing of various earlier scholars, that the *Xijing zaji* does not represent the transmission of uncontaminated Han material; that it is compiled from a number of sources, which may include fabricated elements; that the presence of unlikely, unverifiable or demonstrably incorrect items need not, however, discredit its entire contents.⁵⁹ For the purposes of this study it is, of course, the possibility of the Prince of Liang's poetry competition representing such a transmission that is of interest.

One Qing scholar, commenting on this text, saw fit to single out that gathering as an example of an event that could not have come from nowhere. "Works that are invented can include fictional material but actual events cannot be summoned out of thin air. For example, how could the Prince of Liang's assembling itinerant scholars to compose

fu...be entirely fabricated?"⁶⁰ There is enough evidence in the *Han shu* to vouch for the likelihood of such an occasion. First there is the fact that Liu Wu, Prince of Liang, attracted itinerant scholars, among them the foremost literary men of the time - Mei Cheng, Zou Yang, and the slightly younger Sima Xiangru, to his court. "Of the itinerant persuaders from East of Mount Tai there was not one who did not go [to Liang]. Those who went from Qi included Yang Sheng, Gong Sungui and Zou Yang ..."⁶¹

Aside from the evidence of their numerous compositions, there are direct statements like the following, "Those who had come to the state of Liang were all accomplished at composing fu" 梁客皆善屬辭賦.⁶² (Here the expression *cifu* 辭賦 probably refers to the *fu*, as representing the major literary type. Han writings frequently do not distinguish the two genres *ci* and *fu*, regarding the Han *fu* as descended from the *Chuci*.⁶³) For some confirmation by contrast there are the following few lines from Sima Xiangru's biography, "Emperor Jing was not fond of the *fu* (again, *cifu*). At that time Prince Xiao of Liang came to court, bringing with him his itinerant persuaders. These included Zou Yang of Qi, Mei Cheng of Huaiyin..."⁶⁴ As a result of this encounter, Sima Xiangru, pleading illness, left his post at Emperor Jing's court and proceeded to the more stimulating and artistically-orientated atmosphere of Liang. After a few years "Sir Vacuous's *Fu*" appeared.⁶⁵

While these snippets from orthodox sources are not enough to rescue a legendary occasion and its literary yield, they establish its theoretical probability. But whether it represents an actual occasion or a conflation of several, whether it was conjured up one century, or several, after it was supposed to have taken place, the competition recorded in the *Xijing zaji* was to become the stuff of myth, its historicity subsumed under a larger rubric. Its combination of circumstances (a prince who delighted in the arts, leading literary lights clustered round him, occasioning a spontaneous display of

talent) is liable to re-creation, freed to re-emerge in different conditions and in other forms. In "Fu on the Snow" 雪賦, the early fifth century poet, Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (397 or 407-433), uses the idea of a poetic gathering, comprising the three main Former Han poets and their princely patron, as the device around which his work is structured.⁶⁶ "...The Prince of Liang was not in good spirits. He strolled through Rabbit Garden, had a fine wine set out and summoned his old friends, Zou Yang and Mei Cheng to join him. Sima Xiangru, last to arrive, was seated to the right of the others...."⁶⁷ This is the lead in to a poetry-spinning which, with its interweaving of carefully differentiated structures and multiple perspectives, takes the whole idea to new formal and imaginative heights.

The notion of re-enactment is also relevant to the real-life milieu of the Qi and Liang salons. In this connection, it should be noted that the literary crop yielded by Liu Wu's court is entirely composed of fu on "things." The event therefore provides a nearer precedent for the contests that enliven the pages of the Qi, Liang and Chen 陳 (557-589) histories than other famous poetry contests, such as the Bo Liang 柏梁臺 banquet or Orchid Pavilion 蘭亭 outing. These gatherings favoured a different category of topic.⁶⁸

This brings us back to the pieces themselves. While the occasion alleged to have given rise to them acquires a validity independent of its historical status, the authenticity of its seven short products remains tied to that of the text in which they are embedded. The doubts cast upon the *Xijing zaji* need not extend, blanket fashion, to its entire contents. The argument that some of its entries represent a genuine transmission of earlier material is persuasive. But, lacking any external evidence, the case as to whether these fu can stand as examples of early Han composition has to be based on stylistic analysis - and is vulnerable to all the usual charges and more. Just over half a century ago Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962) provided a description of the problems:

"...[1] it is not easy for us to determine just when a certain literary style or a certain stock saying came into use; [2] a certain literary style oftentimes has behind it a long history, of which we are likely to know only a part; [3] personal judgements of literary style are often based upon subjective points of view, so that it is easy to go astray." (69)

Nonetheless, the following observations may still be made of the Zou Yang piece cited above. In terms of vocabulary it closely matches other compositions both of its author and Mei Cheng. We might note in particular the phrases *pan yu* 潘岳, *shang bu ce zhi jue ding* 上不測之絕頂, *molong* 磨礮 and *li qi* 離奇, all of which have an early flavour. These expressions are reproduced, or occur with minor variations, in the letters of Mei Cheng and Zou Yang collected in *Wen xuan*, Chapter 39.⁷⁰ Its irregular metre, its tendency to think in three line groupings (lines 1-3 and 5-7) and overall failure to sustain matched couplets are all characteristic of the Western Han approach. Its incorporation of narrative elements and the directness and flavour of its punchline might also be taken to reflect early Han tastes. Any case based on stylistic arguments is compromised, however, when the probability that it represents a later author's convincing pastiche of Han sentiments and stylistic features is factored in.

"Vulgar folk (literally, 'the lanes and alleys') would not be capable of producing the various *fu* of Mei Cheng and Zou Yang"

Shen Qinhan 沈欽韓 Exegetical Evidence for the *Han shu*⁷¹

A great deal of scholarly energy has been expended on trying to establish the identity of the compiler of the *Xijing zaji* and in so doing "secure" the *Miscellanies* by finding them an author - and a period.⁷² If prodigious learning and an attested interest in curiosities and texts outside the canon are the yardstick, the prime contender is still Ge Hong. Ge is best known for his philosophical work the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (The Master Who Embraces Simplicity), but his wide-ranging interests are confirmed by the size and diversity of the bibliographical entries under his name in the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui), and the following excerpt from the *Jin shu*, "His learning was broad and profound. He had no equal in the South"⁷³ 洪

博文深洽江左絕倫。

Shen Qinhan's observation, cited above, may be taken as an acknowledgement of Ge Hong's ability in these directions rather than as an affirmation of the legitimacy of the Mei-Zou compositions recorded in the *Xijing zaji*.

The major stumbling block to the acceptance of Ge's authorship is the fact that no surviving record before the Tang attributes the work to him. There is also the important point that the earliest citations from the *Xijing zaji* do not occur before the third decade of the sixth century, casting doubt on compilation much before that date.⁷⁴ Nienhauser's conclusion that "it is unlikely that the *Miscellanies* in its present form was compiled before the *Hou-Han shu*" provides him with a basis for backing the Liang contender, Xiao Ben 蕭賁.⁷⁵ The interest in Han imitation from the fifth century on, and the likelihood of a later author's possessing a surer sense of Han stylistic features, weigh as strongly here as conventional claims to literary ability put forward on Xiao Ben's behalf.⁷⁶

The injection of more than one suspect attribution into this melting-pot undercuts the conclusions to be drawn from textual analysis. For that reason it would seem wise to leave well alone. On the other hand, the historical dimension may be faced in a different way. From the standpoint of this study, that of the Yongming period, there is no particular urgency about placing these works in any but a prior time. As Hong Shunlun remarks, laconically, but with justice, "In the past people thought they (i.e. the four *Xijing zaji* pieces he has just cited) were factitious (wei 偽) but they couldn't be later than the Six Dynasties."⁷⁷ A clear textual link with Xie Tiao's "The Armrest" indicates that Zou Yang's *fu* was circulating in something like its present form in the last decade or so of the fifth century.⁷⁸ This provides grounds for thinking that some at least of these pieces may be regarded as a legitimate part of the *yongwu* archive presented to the Yongming poets.

The state of the sources may be linked to the general point that

it is fruitless to try and filter this material through genealogical perspectives. The identification of exact temporal relationships is not, in any case, as important as establishing a field of antecedents. From the point of view of later practice it is the nature and range of the precedent presented to the Yongming poet that matters most. We may take it for granted that later poets writing in the *yongwu* mode would range freely back over the tradition, picking and choosing among earlier models on the basis of occasional need. In the case of the Qi and Liang poets, an *impromptu* context which injected the element of speed would have served further to concertina the existing repertoire, accentuating its potential as a series of topics and approaches. From that vantage point, chasing precise genealogies becomes of secondary importance.

Jian'an versions

A crop of short *fu* on objects is apparent from around the end of the Han period. Although many of them are incomplete and some are of disputed attribution, they present a rather less troubled face than the pieces referred to above and hence are better candidates for analysis. Among the best of these are a collection by the major poet, Wang Can 王粲 (177-217).⁷⁹ Wang Can's *yongwu fu* span a broad spectrum: birds, plants, seasons, the sea, man-made objects, wine. Fragmentary prefaces attest to the existence of a further three on games.⁸⁰ These pieces encompass a variety of approaches, reflecting a clear sense of the codes that attach to particular topics. Wang Can's corpus both establishes and extends parameters.

In the first of the two pieces that follow, an authorial presence close to that of the lyric stance sets it apart from both the longer model, and many of the poet's other poems on "things." The second piece is laid at Wang Can's door by the Sung encyclopedia, the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (completed in 983), which adds "Can" 粲 to

the two characters "Wei Wang" 魏王 that comprise the incomplete Yiwen leiju entry. Yan Kejun accepts the amendment.⁸¹ It is included here because it represents an interesting conjunction of a particular kind of subject and an injection of local circumstance into the body of the piece. Although several of Wang Can's fu, too, are incomplete, both of these pieces are structurally and argumentatively coherent. Only a small question mark, in the form of the assignment of four of its lines to another work, hangs over the first of them.⁸²

The Oriole⁸³

My eye lights on a caged bird in a corner of the hall;
 High up, alone he hangs, his back to the times.⁽⁸⁴⁾
 It is a small thing, its fate of no consequence,
 But my heart goes out to it, pitying its plight.
 The sun, blotted out by evening haze, sinks in the west;
 Poised for an instant, then darkness.
 He retreats to his nook and folds his wings;
 Weary of nights alone, he tucks in his neck.
 He endures the long hours until day dawns;
 He hears a flock of mango birds calling.
 Spring turtle doves fly up to the southern rafters;
 Crested hoopoes gather over the eastern eaves.
 Sharing the one season, he is set apart by sorrow;
 Stirred by the sounds of his own kind, he is stricken with grief.
 (85)

This work raises questions that bear on the broader issues of generic and subgeneric identity. In this sense it comes across as a "transitional" piece. At the same time, within the compass of a small-scale work conceived around a miniature topic, it discloses the particular combination of features for which its period, the Jian'an, is known. In literary terms the Jian'an era has come to stand for a batch of especially fine early pentasyllabic shi. These combine formal achievement with a distinctive blend of sentiments centering on a far-sighted view of existence (the period is perceived as especially prone to tragic outcomes) and a robust sense of individual presence.⁸⁶ In "The Oriole," in his chosen form the fu, Wang Can shows a similar confidence - both in his approach to formal experimentation, and in introducing elements that, while they do not lie outside the flexible parameters of the fu, may be regarded as hybrid to the yongwu type before this time.

"The Oriole" begins not with the topic pure and simple, but with the poet, present in the hidden pronoun of the first character, *lan* 覽 "I saw," "gazed at," "caught sight of." This is followed by the author's response to the little creature that has attracted his attention, "... my heart goes out to it, pitying its plight." In its early lines therefore, the *yongwu* stance of objective description is very nearly routed by the lyric "I." It is hard to see much difference between the authorial reaction here and the springs of the lyric situation, which may be identified as *gan wu* 感物, "being moved in response to 'things.'"⁸⁷ These would seem to be good grounds for regarding "The Oriole" as moving closer to the lyric type. But for this piece, and other *yongwu fu* that employ similar tactics, a second explanation offers itself.

Placed in their generic context more widely, those "lyric" elements could just as well be interpreted as the remnant of another *fu* convention, the preface. The rhyme scheme, which changes after the fourth line, underlining the shift from authorial presence to a more objective mode, gives support to the idea that these lines comprise a vestigial preface transferred to the body of the work.⁸⁸ Many *yongwu fu* of this period are preceded by prefaces, continuing a practice that derives from the large-scale *fu*. The most substantial example is Xi Kang's preface to "Fu on a Qin." Xi Kang sharpens the basic prefatory motive, which is to supply a context, with the observation that those before him who wrote on the instrument failed to capture its full meaning (*wei jin qi li* 未盡其理).⁸⁹ We can detect in this remark a little of the contentious atmosphere of the older debate *fu*.

Most prefaces attached to *yongwu fu* simply give the circumstances in which the work was composed. A representative example, which also returns us to bird domain, is Cao Bi's 曹毗 (mid-fourth century), "While I was on duty I saw Jiao Zhou 交州 (a title or a person's name is omitted here) present a parrot."⁹⁰ I composed this *fu* in praise of its wisdom, moved to sighs at its caged state."⁹¹ While

enough prefaces exist to confirm that they were part of standard procedure, the integration of prefatory-type statements into the introductory lines is more common in works of this period. In Wang Can's oeuvre, "The Willow" (*Liu fu* 柳賦) is an example of a piece in which the first lines might be read as a preface in rhyme. Again, the end of the introductory section is signalled not only by a switch to a more objective descriptive mode, but by a change in the rhyme scheme (although in this case the rhyme that is introduced at the eighth line is not maintained for the rest of the piece).⁹² But, judging by survivals, the most common approach was to plunge straight into the description of topic.

There is yet another way in which the introductory lines of "The Oriole" may be taken: as a code, the *locus classicus* of which is to be found in a *yongwu fu* prototype, Jia Yi's "Owl Fu." Commentators are united in the judgement that the "Owl Fu" is no poem on an object.⁹³ But, through the topical link, it stands on the subgeneric fringe. Jia Yi was startled by his owl into lengthy rumination. Wang Can is stirred by the predicament of the small caged creature he sees hanging in the corner of a hall. That combination of subject and an encounter which dictates the ensuing presentation of the topic connects "The Oriole" to the earlier work. The resemblance reflects more than an aliveness to precedent on the part of the later poet. It is a pointer to the way in which codes assemble.

In this case, however, the "code" is neither representative of, nor limited to, the category of topic under consideration. Placed alongside other near contemporary pieces on the "captive creature" theme, and beside what is almost a companion work, "The Parrot," the encounter code is odd man out.⁹⁴ In the *yongwu* context overall, though, the idea of an encounter gathers currency. It becomes another kind of code, associated with an injection of presence that owes much to the contemporary *shi*. The introductory character of "The Oriole," translated, at its baldest, "I saw," introduces a reading premised on

the assumption of a "historical moment."⁹⁵ And it returns us by another route to the idea of cross-generic links, this time between the "Owl Fu," *yanqing fu* more generally, and the stance on which the *shi* is based.

After the first four lines, "The Oriole" reverts to a more objective descriptive stance - "objective" in the sense that the introductory "I" moves outside the boundaries of the text and description focuses upon the attributes and actions of the subject, the oriole. But a pervasive allegorical dimension sustains a mood with strong affinities to the lyric.⁹⁶ The point is not that allegory, with its systematic human implication, is a mode primarily confined to the lyric form but that, in this work, the allegory is concretely realised in a way that connects it to the lyric approach. The distinction can be seen to turn on the creation of an immediate and particular situation. The metaphorical dimension expressed through allegory centers here on the implications of captivity. The equation of the caged bird with any creature that is removed from its home and confined to an unnatural, even hostile environment is plain. But it is, of course, the human creature that is of greatest interest.

Ever since the *Li Sao*, or, it might be more accurate to say, the interpretation fixed on it by Wang Yi's 王逸 (ob.158) second century A.D commentary, the possibility of a biographical-political meaning is present in any work that employs the allegoric mode.⁹⁷ The main interpretative point would seem to be the degree to which a biographical reading is allowed to take over. A *yongwu* example on an avian subject exists in Mi Heng's "Fu on a Parrot." The combination in this piece of a language that is pointed and urgent enough to bear a biographical reading, of commentators armed with a knowledge of its author's character and circumstances, and of a reading tradition that inclines towards such interpretation, has resulted in the unanimous injection of a biographical dimension.⁹⁸ "The Oriole," too, could be connected with some of the circumstances in its author's life.⁹⁹ We

should note that it is also close in terms of mood and theme to many of the *Chuci* poems.¹⁰⁰ The extent to which the association with the earlier work introduces a reading along the lines referred to above is ultimately a matter of judgement. It also entails weighing up a new sense of particular context against the conventions of the *yongwu* type. The combined effect of those conventions to this point, would, however, suggest a reading at a more generalised level of allegory.¹⁰¹

In "The Oriole" the point and pathos of the whole, are summed up in two phrases, *bei shi*, translated "his back to the times," and *gan lei*, literally "to be stirred in response to one's own kind." Between them these expressions span the thematic area of this piece. The first phrase is to be understood in the abstract sense of "indifferent to." But it entails a combination of related ideas, including the homophonous *bei* 北, "north," with its crop of attendant nuances, that underline the unhappy nature (in the shade/out of the sun and therefore cold and neglected) of the bird's fate.¹⁰² It also evokes, through the character *bei* 北, "back," the notion of rejection.¹⁰³ Given the concrete nature of the context, we might be justified in adding another to the chain of more directly summoned images: that of the oriole with his back turned, in a pose that merges the elements of dejection and indifference, even to that strongest of stimuli, the lure of the seasons.¹⁰⁴

Whether or not we go as far as to imagine an actual pose, we should note that the bird's disapproval of its environs, and of its "times" (*shi* 時) is also implied.¹⁰⁵ The note of moral superiority is sounded early. The oriole hangs high up (*gao* 高) in his cage, "high" retaining its unambiguous ring of morally "above" in both languages. Other nuances accompany the idea. There is the notion of a precarious (*xuan* 懸, "suspended") position, a position that, by implication, is unable to be sustained for long. Two lines on, as the sun is poised on the horizon in a last moment of brilliance, it, too, becomes a metaphor for the brevity of existence. More than that, it

stands for the illumination briefly cast by an exceptional life. The emphasis here, however, is on the return to darkness.

The cage that marks off the oriole from those who placed him in this predicament also sets him apart from the natural order. The play on likeness and difference (tong 同 ; yi 異) builds in poignancy in the second half of the work. Images of the oriole enduring its unhappy isolation are contrasted with glimpses of the natural state of things: flocks of birds, birds soaring and calling in spring. The associations of finding a mate inherent in the references to spring hark back in pitiful contrast to the solitary oriole huddled in its cage at night. In the last few lines the abstraction is brought into the open:

Sharing (tong) the one season, he is set apart (yi) by sorrow;
Stirred by the sounds of his own kind, he is stricken with grief.

The re-introduction of the noun *shi*, which has stood for the times, in the sense of the prevailing circumstances, as well as for the passage of the seasons, endorses the merger of the two strands that together comprise the semantic continuum. The final line, which articulates the bird's feelings, is a response in lyric vein.

Formal features suggest a growing convergence between *fu* and *shi*. "The Oriole" is composed in an unbroken hexasyllabic metre. It has a rhyme scheme in which the last character of every even line participates. It has been noted that the change of rhyme after the fourth line gives substance to the idea that these lines function like an incipient preface.¹⁰⁶ This piece has only one fully antithetical doublet ("Spring turtle doves...east wing"), but the lines that precede it contain two parallel groupings ("he folds his wings;"... "he tucks in his neck") and, in the next pair there are several characters related by syntactical equivalence. The impression of a block of matched lines in the middle section is similar to that of the *shi*. The major prosodic difference remains the six-character line, descended from the *Sao* metre.¹⁰⁷ Compared to the contemporary five-character *shi*, the longer line and the grammatical relaxation

contribute an easier pace.

The metrical difference aside, both *shi* and this sort of short *fu* are characterised by relatively straightforward syntax and an undemanding vocabulary. Meaning is therefore generally accessible. Its forward momentum is held up briefly in this work by the employment of two techniques, both pointers to the future. The device of parallelism directs the attention back along the line, seeking the additional nuances that accrue from a recursive reading. Here the author has stopped at matching characters, and the equivalence merely reinforces meaning. The two expressions discussed above, *bei shi* and *gan lei*, represent areas of textual density in an otherwise transparent piece. Decoded, they function as signposts to a fuller reading.

If "The Oriole" closes the gap between *fu* and *shi*, the next work, "The Jade Wine-Bowl," seems to represent a return to an earlier ethos. It is part of a convention in which a beautiful or arresting object is invested with virtuous properties and converted into a courtly tribute. Three pieces, "The Ostrich" ("Daque fu" 大雀賦), "The Cicada" ("Chan fu" 蟬賦) and "Needle and Thread" ("Zhen lu fu" 鍼縷賦) by the female scholar and poet, Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca.49-ca.120) exemplify the mode at its most celebratory and, probably, at its earliest.¹⁰⁸ Sadly, too, for women poets are rarities, at its dullest. "The Stool" is from the same stable, but its point is led up to, and the poet's hand fully disclosed only in the final lines: "When the Prince leaned against it/ His imperial virtue mounted day by day." This kind of piece usually culminates in a statement of the object's value as an adjunct to, or an emblem of virtuous behaviour. It almost invariably functions as a compliment, the terms of which are drawn from the immediate context. "The Jade Wine-Bowl" is most interestingly considered in terms of its representation of that context:

The Jade Wine-Bowl¹⁰⁹

Attending you at the feast,
I saw a precious marvel made of jade.
This noble material stands out on lofty mountains;
It embodies the purity and truth of the yin and yang.
White drifts float through its pale green mass,
As if scudding clouds were stirred along by the wind.
A translucent glow illumines it from within;
Its surface is steeped in a lustrous gloss.
It has the true hardness that will not wear down;
Its texture is permeated by a refined pattern.
[Its substance mingles the dark of heaven with the colour of
the earth;¹¹⁰
It is as if the two principles were undivided.¹¹¹
It has the supreme beauty of the five virtues;¹¹²
It reigns, without peer, among precious stones.

The celebratory mode of this piece entails a return to the generic premise of exhaustiveness, as discussed in "Fu on Panpipes." There, as in the majority of Han fu, the controlling impulse is an exhaustive celebration of the topic, the exhaustiveness implanted in the notion of celebration. In shorter yongwu fu conceived as presentations in the manner of the older fu, the fiction of exhaustiveness has to be maintained by means other than length. As far as the structural contour is concerned, the reductive process is accompanied by further rationalisation and clarification. What were the sections and paragraphs of older fu are compressed into two lines, each doublet a clearly identifiable aspect of topic. A growing commitment to parallelism, apparent in this work in all but the introductory couplet, is part of the process of systematising the formal structure.

"The Jade Wine-Bowl" begins with an indication of the circumstances in which the piece came to be written. It then passes from mention of origins through reference to the processes (in this case "natural") by which the object is brought to perfection, on to a selection of characteristics that aims at inclusiveness, culminating in the final hyperbole, "It has the supreme beauty of the five virtues;/ It reigns, without peer, among precious stones." Here it is not function - the bowl qua receptacle - that is singled out. Wang Can chooses to concentrate on the precious nature of the material from

which the utensil was made, a material which was envisaged as a metaphor for the virtue of a gentleman. That conventional equation provides the opportunity to focus on a range of qualities which reveal an abstract dimension. The work moves smoothly between the two spheres.

Judged in aesthetic terms, the structural paradigm that results from the compression of the older model is not, by itself, an immediate recipe for success. This seems to be due to a mixture of factors. "The Jade Wine-Bowl" lacks the liveliness engendered by some of Wang Can's *yongwu fu* that follow an older formal model. Placed alongside the poet's only other extant piece on a (semi-) precious object, "The Cornelian Bridle" (*Manao le fu* 瑪瑙勒), it appears static, tied to its formal structure. At least part of the problem has to do with metrical regularity. A brief comparison with "The Cornelian Bridle" is instructive.¹¹³

This work, also fourteen lines in length, is propelled along by a combination of metrical and thematic factors. Metrical variation is provided by a form of bracketing, in which the normal hexasyllabic metre flanks a middle section comprising six four-character lines. The carrier *xi* 兮 adds variety, cropping up at the beginning, but fading out after the introductory section. Parallelism, which can slow a work almost to a halt, is largely restricted to an easy and intermittent syntactic resemblance. The use of the "famous craftsman" topos, which was encountered, fully-fledged, in "The Stool," makes a diminished appearance as "artisans were ordered/ to cut it into ornamental bridles," at lines 7-8. The topos, which entails a sense of temporal progression, also helps to move the work along.

Commitment to a more regular form, in the case of "The Jade Wine-Bowl," and the inclusion of dissimilar topoi, are not entirely responsible for the different effect produced by these two pieces. There is no extra-textual evidence as to the circumstances that occasioned the composition of either work. (A dangling line that

appears to be part of a postface - or preface - to "The Jade Wine-Bowl" is not much help here. It merely states, "I took up my brush and composed this fu."¹¹⁴) Similar themes need not necessarily suggest execution in similar situations. The evidence that arises from the text confirms a rather different approach by the poet to topics that appear to offer similar thematic potential. Whereas "The Cornelian Bridle" comprises a relatively straightforward celebration of its subject, relying on a loose discursive format to hold it together, the descriptive strategy of "The Jade Wine-Bowl" is subordinated to a local situation which it imports into the body of the fu.

Somewhere between the provision of an initial context, the transparency of the allegory and the closural hyperbole arises an awareness that "The Jade Wine-Bowl" is intended as a compliment. Its focus is the unidentified "you" of the first line, in whose presence the lovely bowl is seen and admired, and who is by implication linked with its noble qualities. The piece operates as a form of exchange, engendered by and dependent on a local context. Whether or not the occasion was originally indicated in a few lines attached as a preface or postface, it seems unlikely that the compliment would have needed to be further spelled out.¹¹⁵

In the broader *yongwu* context, "The Jade Wine-Bowl" reflects a penchant for small decorative subjects, which was to take firm hold as time went on. The potential they offered for a graceful gesture in certain social circumstances was taken up with an increasing subtlety and indirection. Wang Can remains committed to the compliment that is the point of earlier pieces in like vein, or pieces - like those contained in the *Xijing zaji* - devised in early Han style. But his method of getting it across has obviously become much less direct. At the same time, preface or no, he finds it necessary to transfer the representation of context to the body of the piece. Without it, the work could not be rescued from the realm of broadly referential allegory.

The introduction of context is a common enough feature of Wei-Jin poetry generally for its use to be viewed as conventional. The crossing of a straightforward presentation of topic with a sense of situation that is new to the *yongwu fu* becomes increasingly common in many shorter *fu* on objects from this time on. While the distant roots of the approach may be traced to the encounter theme in the "Owl *Fu*," and its injection of presence clearly owes something also to the influence of *shi* poetry contemporary with it, the feature is more immediately a response to the requirements of a particular social situation. To deprive a piece like "The Jade Wine-Bowl" of an immediate context is substantially to deprive it of point. Recognising that the context of a piece is a constituent and formative element of composition is of critical importance for understanding the development of the poem on a thing.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

Neither "The Oriole" nor "The Jade Wine-Bowl" are singleton topics. Like most *fu* on "things," they can be slotted into those subject-related groups, connected by codes, that were earlier referred to as "example-clusters." By the mid-Six Dynasties period, galaxies of *yongwu fu* exist. These represent an extensive thematic repertoire that also stands as a broad descriptive model in which the basis of a literary approach to "things" is very largely summed up and worked out. A substantial collective presence is accumulated long before it is transferred to the pages of early encyclopedias.

Encountered *en masse* in Tang compendia like the *Yiwen leiju*, or its younger sibling, the *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (Notes for a Primer), it is the collective existence and the relationship of *yongwu fu* across the centuries that attract attention. The categories of the encyclopedias also make explicit a respect for topical parameter that is present from the first in descriptions of objects. It is this feature, together with the stability of the structural contour, that gives the

yongwu so unchanging a face. Met with in those conditions, variety seems confined to a simple shuffling of codes.

The re-ordering of codes is, however, always undertaken with local circumstance in mind. In the shorter *yongwu fu* in particular, the accommodation of the circumstances of composition into the text exert pressure on the *yongwu* model inherited from the Han *fu*. Its impulse to exhaustiveness, for example, is liable to be undermined by allegory's single angle of vision, especially when that allegory is tied to a local context. And those circumstances set up other expectations - of play and exchange - that contravene the notion of *fu* as direct expression. Whether that pressure can be regarded as cumulative in its effect is another matter. The overwhelming impression is that of a repertoire that remains ordered and governed by subject; in which features are most legitimately and appropriately interpreted as the codes attendant on topic.

For the purposes of the present study we have gone about as far forward as it is necessary to go. To say that is not to imply that the *yongwu* as a type remained static from the end of the Wei until it re-emerged in *shi* form in the last half of the fifth century. But it is to assert the endurance of the paradigm extrapolated from its earliest example, while acknowledging the variety and the reach of the definition. And it is to recognise in works as early as those of Wang Can the basis of the combination that was to prove so attractive to the poets of the Yongming.

CHAPTER THREE

Moving to a Lyric Mode

"...but which it is able to reorganise and redistribute according to new relations."

Michel Foucault.

The previous chapter's discussion focused on the identification of a *yongwu* model. It took the account only far enough forward to establish the stability and persistence of the definition, and to give some idea of its compass in the *fu* genre. This chapter aims to widen that definition by acknowledging the existence, prior to the Yongming period, of a small number of *shi* composed on object topics. As mentioned earlier, the presence of *shi* on objects before the Liu Song is so fitful, so rudimentary and so unconnected that it cannot be thought of as a separate strand. And, although the existence of these pieces throws up the idea of a degree of generic convergence, we are unable, for the same reasons, to take the notion as far as that of a common springboard for future development. The conjunction of object topics with the *shi* form has, therefore, simply to be accepted when and where it crops up.

An Old Poem

The following piece, winkled out from a shell that is part ballad, part literati poem, comes from the group of eight anonymous "Old Poems" which appear in the *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (New Songs from a Jade Terrace).¹ These works, like the larger collection in the *Wen xuan*, in which some of them also appear, are subject to problems of dating as well as authorship. They are thought to represent a much larger body of "old-style" pentasyllabic verse, usually assigned to the Later Han period.²

Old Poem

Assembled guests fall quiet now,
Ready to hear my song
Let me describe a censer cast in bronze,(3)
High-peaked, like Mount Zhong Nan.(4)
Above, its branches look like cypress and pine;
Beneath, its roots hold fast to its brazen pan.
Its carved designs are of many different kinds;
Around it delicate engravings intertwine.(5)
Who has the skills to fashion such a thing?
Master Shu, also known as Ban from Lu.(6)
Vermilion flames kindle within;
Blue-green smoke flows inside its walls.(7)
Borne on the wind, it lodges in your breast;
Not a one who doesn't sigh at it.(8)
This scented current cannot last for long;
Sweet orchids die in vain in such a cause.(9)

A word is needed on the topic of this poem, a particular kind of incense burner. A Ming text, the *Ming yi kao* 名義考 (A Study of the Names of Things and their Significance), compiled by a late Ming scholar Zhou Qi 周祈 (n.d.), assembles material to be found in earlier sources into a succinct account.

"When people in Zhou times wanted to honour their ancestors with fragrance in the ancestral temples, they would burn artemisia. The Han were the first to make hill censers (*boshan lu* 博山爐). They made them in the form of a many-peaked hill rising from the sea. Beneath this was a pan that held hot water, causing the vapour to moisten and steam the aromatic plants. This kind of censer was not like our ones. Only species of orchid (*lan* 蘭 and *hui* 蕙) were burned in them... "(10)

The compiler of the *Ming yi kao* goes on to cite some lines from a Han Dynasty inscription and then from this poem, which he refers to as "an old yuefu."¹¹ He remarks:

"These were not our modern aromatics. From the time that Emperor Wu 武帝 (140-87 B.C.) sent his envoys to Amman, China began receiving spices like Baroos camphor and cloves (*ji she* 雞舌, lit. "chicken's tongue").(12) Then his envoys went westwards, China started to use such aromatics as Parthian incense and attar of roses.(13) Artemisia and orchids stopped being used."(14)

The stylistic features of this poem (discussed below) suggest an Eastern, rather than a Western Han date. But despite the fact that it is likely to have been composed after Emperor Wu initiated his commerce with spice-supplying countries, "orchid" remains the only feasible translation for *hui* here. If the poet is backing away from perception, and it is by no means certain that he is, the strongest reason in its favour is literary, and the association of fragrant

flowers with love.¹⁵ Camphor and cloves, even if they bore any resemblance to the term *hui*, would not do half as well.

This poem is of interest for the assurance with which it places its object topic centre-stage. It is an assurance that would seem to suggest the existence of literary antecedents. Censers are not the subject of any extant *fu* or *shi* prior to this. As noted in the passage cited above, *boshan lu* are a Han invention, their existence confirmed by mortuary objects discovered in Han tombs. While the words "boshan" are not mentioned in this, or in either of the other two works discussed here, the mountain shape is in each case singled out first, and appears to be the outstanding physical feature. This provides the grounds for identifying the subject as a many-peaked censuring brazier. The earliest (and in the case of the former text, the only) *fu* on this topic supplied by the *Yiwen lei ju* and the *Chuxue ji* is Xiao Tong's "The Hill Burner." The first *shi* is this one.¹⁶ Even allowing for a poor survival rate, a batch of poems on censers seems unlikely. Incense burners (known as *xun lu* 薰鑪) had, however, made their way into one area of the literary canon, the inscription (*ming* 銘). The first of the two works that follow is from the pen of Han bibliographer, Liu Xiang 劉向 (57-6 B.C.). The second is from that of Later Han scholar, Li You 李尤 (ca. 55-135), whose surviving corpus of eighty-six works establishes him as the Han inscription-maker *par excellence*.¹⁷

The Incense Burner - an inscription (Liu Xiang)

This is a fine and upright vessel, (18)
Thrusting steeply up like a mountain.
Its highest part links up with Mount Hua;
It is supported by means of a bronze pan.
In its midst are sweet fragrances,
Vermilion flames and bluish smoke.
From its many vents they pervade the air,
Ascending to the blue sky.
[The myriad beasts are engraved upon it,
To this is coupled openwork carving.] (19)

The Incense Burner - an inscription (Li You)

Above it resembles Penglai; (20)
It puffs out curls of vapour.
Its fragrant smoke disperses,
Turning the air sweet-smelling. (21)

There would seem to be a limit to what a poet, writing with Han conventions in mind, can say about an incense burner, and a certain amount of common ground should probably be assumed. Nonetheless, organisational as well as thematic similarities connect these three pieces, and the relationship is consolidated by verbal links.²² Its direction cannot be verified, given the anonymous undated nature of the Old Poem. All the same, it is probable that this piece, with its more thoroughgoing parallel arrangement, represents a re-working, in five character metre, of the descriptive basis provided by the inscriptions. An example is the way in which the semantically explicit but syntactically incipient parallelism of Liu Xiang's, "Its highest part links up with Mount Hua;/ It is supported by means of a bronze pan" 上貫太華承巨銅盤 is regularised in the Old Poem's: "Above, its branches look like cypress and pine;/ Beneath, its roots hold fast to its brazen pan" 上枝似松柏，下根據銅盤。

The descriptive approach employed in all three works has clear affinities with the shorter *yongwu fu*, particularly in its central section. (For an example in four character line, modelled on early Han practice, and employing some of the same topoi, we might refer back to "The Stool.") But the descriptive impulse attendant on a certain sort of topic is subordinated here to other needs and conventions. The Old Poem is not an inscription or a *yongwu fu*. Its descriptive nucleus is accommodated in a frame that blends ballad and literati poem elements; the whole is arranged as a pentasyllabic *shi* and the work announces itself to be a song (*yuan ting ge yi yan* 願聽歌一言, "please listen to my song"). To think in terms of its anonymous author's embarking on some cross-generic experimentation for its own sake is to start at the wrong end. Formal arrangement would seem to stem from other decisions. The circumstances of composition are likely to have played the decisive part, both in the decision to sing of a censer and in the conjunction of elements hitherto unconnected in the surviving

repertoire. Both features suggest an extempore scenario.

It looks very much as if an incense burner - a *boshan*, or "hill-shaped" burner - was present on this occasion, and that its physical appearance suggested both a subject for a song and a way of handling that subject. The multiple peaks and hilly configuration of this type of brazier are recognised and celebrated in mountain imagery in Liu Xiang's inscription: "Thrusting steeply up like a mountain" 巖若山; consolidated in the following line, "Its highest part links up with Mount Hua." But this librettist takes the convention further, cleaving a straight path from the shape of his object topic to a ballad theme that begins with a mountain.

That theme is to be discovered in the *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Collection of Yuefu Poetry), in the *Xianghe ge* 相和歌 (Songs with Alternating Accompaniment) category.²³ Its broad roots seem to lie in the anonymous ballad that heads the *Yuzhang xing* sub-section of the category.²⁴ It also appears under another heading there, that of *Yan ge xing*.²⁵ Both of these ballads take as their topic a great tree, growing on a mountain, which is severed from its roots and transformed into the building material (specifically, in the second work, the main beam) of the palace at Luoyang 洛陽, capital of the Eastern Han. The two pieces accord different weightings to the ideas of separation and transformation but in each case the themes are realised in narrative terms, providing a major point of departure from the Old Poem. These two works could be said to fit a modern Western definition of the ballad as "a folk song that tells a story with stress on the crucial situation, tells it by letting the action unfold itself in event and speech, and tells it objectively with little comment or intervention of personal bias."²⁶

Before exploring that relationship, there is a small amount of information about the ballads that can be added. But it might be noted first that these works are survivors of a predominantly oral tradition, and subject therefore to the usual hazards, in particular,

a casual attitude to recording. It is likely that they represent variant or composite forms, the product of that coexistence of versions that is one of the hallmarks of an oral tradition. The *Yuzhang xing*, with some large gaps in its frame, has not come through the recording process unscathed. We have two background facts to go on that go some way towards reducing the dating problem associated with almost any such piece: the placing of both works in the *Xianghe ge* section of the *Yuefu shiji* and the description *guci* 古詞, "old lyric," which accompanies each entry. The earliest recorded group of "Songs with Alternating Accompaniment" are fifteen pieces apparently of Han origin, collected in Shen Yue's "Monograph on Music" (*Yue zhi* 樂志), in his *Song shu*.²⁷ Although no version of the "Yuzhang" theme is among them, the "Monograph on Music" fills in the background to the *Xianghe ge* generally. It remarks that these are "old songs of the Han period 漢舊歌也." The songs are then defined in terms of their performance: "The person who beat time on the barrel drum (*jie* 節) was the singer; he was accompanied alternately by string and wind instruments" 絲竹更相和，執節者歌。²⁸

But a proviso has to be added. In his review of Jean Pierre Diény's "Aux origines de la poésie classique en Chine, Étude sur la poésie lyrique à l'époque des Han," David Hawkes argues the case that "...even though the *Sung shu* version may be the earliest text we have of these fifteen Han lyrics, it would be quite mistaken to conclude that we have in them a true representation of the Han 'originals.'"²⁹ Hawkes argues from the background evidence of the histories that Shen Yue's selection represents a recension by court musicians of the Wei period. The point might also be applied to other anonymous songs and ballads similarly designated *guci* in the *Yuefu shiji* but not included in Shen's list, such as the pieces referred to above. In "South Mountain," the work translated here, certain textual features would seem to indicate recension. Its five-character metre, carefully demarcated sections and two-line dominated structure, give it the

appearance of a smooth re-working of an earlier version. Whether or not that polishing process can be linked to the Wei musicians is, ultimately, anybody's guess.

Bearing in mind these uncertainties, it seems highly unlikely that the historical relationship of the two ballads to each other, or of either to the Old Poem, can ever be established. All that can be done in a situation of this kind is to allow the similarities to speak for themselves. Here, then, is "South Mountain," the closest match:

South Mountain has rocks piled high,
How close-ranked its cypress and pine.
Topmost branches touch the high clouds;(30)
Its girth, more than ten times a span.(31)
In Luoyang they will put up a main beam;
The pine tree grieves within.
Axe and saw hacked down this pine;
The pine tree was split in two.
It was taken off by four-wheel cart,
And brought to the palace at Luoyang.
The onlookers all gasp at it.
They ask from what mountain it came.
Who could carve a wood such as this?
Only Gongshu, known as Lu Ban.
They gave it a coat of red lacquer;
Made it fragrant with resin from the West.(32)
To begin with, a South Mountain pine,
Now turned into a palace beam.(33)

The use of audience-directed tags and formulae water down the notion of singular connections between this piece and the Old Poem. Other striking resemblances between the two pieces (the description of the mountain in the opening lines; lines 13-14) also function as poetic commonplaces.³⁴ On the other hand, the combination of similar thematic material and the nature and number of explicit verbal correspondences indicate that the author of the Old Poem was acquainted with the theme and its topoi in ballad form. It would be safest in the circumstances to take the Old Poem and "South Mountain" as analogues, grounded somewhere in a common origin. But we can probably go one step further and conclude that a version of this ballad provided the author of the poem with a prototype that cannot have differed in essentials from the work translated above. Analysis suggests that it is hardly possible for the process to have worked the

other way.

The Old Poem gains much of its point when it is read as a lyric re-working of the ballad theme. Whereas its author appears to build directly on the material and the descriptive formulae supplied by the two inscriptions, what he borrows from the ballad is incorporated with an eye to differences: of topic, of situation and of genre. An awareness of the contrast between the mountain and its small replica, the incense burner, animates the piece. The poet works from the idea of the disparity in size, which he underlines by employing a similar descriptive formula: "above...below" in the Old Poem (also in the *Yuzhang xing*); "above..in the middle," in "South Mountain". To this is added another obvious comparison: the contrast between natural and man-made. Again the use of the identical "legendary craftsman" topos in each work points up the difference in scale and situation.

Situation is the second major difference. "South Mountain" summons up the archetypal physical setting characteristic of folksong and ballad.³⁵ Its prototypal quality is enhanced on a literary plane by the presence of two *Shi jing*-derived reduplicatives, *wei wei* 巍巍, translated "piled high," and *li li* 離離, "close-ranked."³⁶ The author of the Old Poem picks up the formulaic tag, which would usually occur as an expression of wonderment some way into the piece, and turns it into an introductory tactic, along the lines of "Please be quiet." The immediate involvement of the audience and the tone of mild admonition place the lyrics that follow in an intimate after-dinner milieu. Given the various disparities involved, irony attaches to the descriptive binome retained in the Old Poem, an analogous compound, *cui wei* 崔嵬, "high-peaked."

The "differences" played on by this author are subsumed in a larger one: that of generic distinction. The point is linked to an interesting critical fact. Later generations have termed this piece both *gushi* and *yuefu*, and one critic at least has called it both, in the same paragraph.³⁷ There is more than one way to take this. To

begin with, it reflects the fact that many of the "Old Poems" were thought to have been set to music. But it also points up a certain elasticity connected with the employment of the term *yuefu*. Used as a concept credited with generic significance, *yuefu* means popular song or ballad, with a loose chronological reference to pieces which, like the two referred to above, appear to be of Han-Wei origin. But the term possesses a more pragmatic area of reference, in which it is extended to take account of numerous imitations and linked, in particular, to the works assembled in Guo Maoqian's monumental twelfth century anthology.³⁸ As noted earlier, that usage expands the definition to include lyrics written by identified poets to match existing tunes, and also poems composed by men of letters under *yuefu* titles and in ballad style but not intended to be set to music. Wherein, it would seem, lie the seeds of confusion. For literati imitations frequently reflect the literary interests of their authors and, when titles are put to one side, it is not always easy to decide the genus of a piece.

The term *yuefu* itself is not only ambiguous in its application; it has also been shown to be an anachronism.³⁹ Nevertheless, it encompasses an independent and continuous, if fluid, generic sense validated by many centuries of use, and some distinct areas of agreement as to what constitute the stylistic features of the type. It is in this general sense, and especially as a locus for certain stylistic features, that *yuefu* will be used here.

The terminological differences of later critics and anthologists constitute an indirect recognition of the convergence of two generic strands, or stances, in many of the "Old Poems." In the case of the work under discussion, the split classification also reflects a reading difference. Calling the piece a *yuefu* emphasises its origins and draws attention to ballad-type features: formulaic description, the employment of the two tags and marked shifts of perspective. But it also operates as a retrospective simplification. Other elements in

the work suggest that what we have here is not so much a literary re-working of a ballad, but ballad - and other - elements set in a determining *gushi* frame.

The interpretation of the tags provides a minor but interesting illustration. The stock-in-trade of popular song, these normally signal a direct address to the audience.⁴⁰ If, however, they are regarded as part of a new *gushi* landscape, they are invested with a degree of ambiguity. The second of them (*sizuo mo bu tan* 四坐莫不歎) could be construed as a direct aside, "None of you who doesn't sigh at that;" or it might reflect a more oblique involvement along the lines of the translation: "Not a one who doesn't sigh at it." The first reading highlights the *yuefu* presence; the second stays with the idea of an integrating lyric hand, which minimises the shift of stance. An awareness of that hand at work is also responsible for the translation of the opening lines, a translation that intended to reflect a similar coexistence of possibilities. The first stage in the reading, therefore, is to recognise the conjunction and, with it, the presence of a degree of ambivalence. This functions here as an interesting structural tension, a tension that reinforces some of the other differences and disparities played on in the piece.

But the Old Poem should not be read simply as an amalgam of existing precedents. It is a compound in which the elements are subordinated to a new and distinctive vision. The achievement of this unknown librettist is that he manages to endow his topic with what seems like an inherent and predictable lyricism. While that treatment may well be inherent in the subject, it is not - judging from surviving works - predictable in terms of any earlier tradition. To gather up some of the threads discussed earlier, when lovely, curious or evocative objects of one kind or another occupy the forefront of a work, they tend to be treated as adjuncts or symbols of virtue, usually virtuous rule. Inscriptions, the only other genre besides the *fu* to tackle this kind of topic on any scale, invariably set a

celebration of the object's properties within the framework of orthodox Confucian sentiments. In the first of the two examples on incense burners cited above, the direct link with that larger context is provided by the character *zheng* 正, which may be interpreted as "correct, upright, not deviating from what is proper."

That celebratory element is even more prominent in the earliest versions of *shi* on object topics, those cited in the *Siku quanshu* account, Han Wudi's "Heavenly Horses" and Ban Gu's "White Pheasant" and "Precious Tripod."⁴¹ These pieces do not match later criteria for the *yongwu* type for the reasons supplied by the *Siku* authors: "Each of them takes an event (*shi* 事) as the basis of literary expression. Their main consideration is not the depiction of the object." Not surprisingly, the authors of these pieces have selected topics already invested with an auspicious symbolic meaning, and it is that aspect which is responsible for the approach.

The Old Poem's departure from the world of antecedents such as these might, at first glance, appear startling. But the claims exerted by its immediate context have priority, overlaying both literary convention and factors like the association of incense with ritual.⁴² If the tag that introduces the piece is invested with its full immediacy, it is a context that is relaxed, convivial and extempore. Most probably required to produce his lyrics on the spur of the moment, the poet appears to have taken what he could from wherever he could. Whether his decisions extended to the choice of topic as well is not clear. As noted earlier, it is likely that the subject was suggested, after the manner of extempore *yongwu fu*, by the physical presence of a hill burner. Perhaps the lyrics were turned as a compliment to its owner, presumably the host of the occasion.

But this is no paean to princely, or anyone else's, rectitude. Its sentiments would seem to derive from a combination of local circumstance and the observation that, as an object that engages the senses, an incense burner entails a mildly erotic ambience. In a

secular context, its fragrance would invite romantic sentiments.⁴³ Its shape carries a hint of the female form.⁴⁴ It is interesting, however, that in the most unambiguously lyric area of the poem, its two final lines, there is a transition from the censer to the flowers that fuel it. The process is comparable to the transformation of the material object that takes place on a larger scale in "Fu on Panpipes." But we might also note that flowers form a more conventional and accessible lyric symbol with which to close the piece.

The final element in the reading returns us to the two anonymous ballads and the theme of transformation. In each, a great tree which once commanded its natural environment is eventually converted into a supporting beam of the palace at Luoyang. In the *Yuzhang xing* the poet focuses on the theme of separation:

"Its trunk (lit. "body," or "self," shen 身) is in the palace at Luoyang;
Its roots remain in Yuzhang mountain."

The author of "South Mountain" gives attention not only to the structural conversion, but to the processes of beautification:

"They gave it a coat of red lacquer;
Made it fragrant with resin from the West.
To begin with, a South Mountain pine,
Now turned into a palace beam."

These lines contain echoes of the decking out and polishing up of a country girl destined for the Rear Palace. Qing commentator Zhu Qian remarks, "I suspect that at that time the court collected village girls to fill the Rear Palace. A girl, grieving for the parting [from her home], compared herself to a pine or cypress from South Mountain and composed this piece. It may also be called a 'yange.'"⁴⁵ Modern commentator Hong Shunlong (citing this passage, though without attribution) rejects this as a misreading tied to an incorrect interpretation of the term *yange*.⁴⁶ The traditional association of towering mountains and lofty trees with men of integrity is uppermost here. But the nuances referred to by Zhu, summoned by a mixture of conventional association, generic expectation and language, are not

easily dismissed.⁴⁷ In the Old Poem the situation is reversed. Echoes of a pristine world, both physical and literary, are evoked in the second and third couplet. But, as noted earlier, they are subject to a certain amount of revaluation when employed to describe a decorative object in the context of an after-dinner song. The implications emerge in the last four lines.

Like the ballads, this poem concludes with the downside of transformation. That theme merges in the closing lines of the piece with another, the theme of transience. The censer's evanescent fragrance links up with the flowers which are swiftly consumed in its midst. Both stand as a metaphor for the brevity of passion:⁴⁸

This scented current cannot last for long;
Sweet orchids die in vain in such a cause.

The fragility of love modulates here into that of another perishable quality: life. The hill burner cannot be separated from the associations suggested by its physical appearance. These require no explicit statement. It will be remembered that Li You pronounced his burner to be fashioned after the magical island of Penglai: "Above it resembles Penglai." Twice in relatively recent history this mythical island had become the focus of a cult of immortality.⁴⁹ Clearly a connection existed between the hill-shaped representation of *boshan lu* and Mount Penglai, abode of immortals. But any such nuances lingering in the celebratory middle section of the Old Poem, together with the cult they summon up, are quickly put to rest in its closing lines. Instead there is the suggestion that, quite *unlike* any earlier *yongwu* model, the converted topic here is employed to comment ironically on the original subject. For, whether or not they are being used to stoke an incense burner, flowers are a commonplace symbol of the transience that has become the poem's final theme. It cannot be unintentional that the notion is at complete odds with a vessel that stands as a symbol of immortality.

If the closural theme of the transience of life is the clearest

connection between this "old poem" and the better known group in the *Wen xuan*, its broad formal preferences and approach also situate it firmly in the same milieu. Like many of these, it shares techniques derived from the popular song and ballad but its informing influences are literary. The point is exemplified by its re-working of ballad material. As noted, this poem derives much of its interest from the conjunction of heterogeneous qualities, of *yuefu* and *gushi* tactics, and of a broad lyric imperative with a model taken from another, non-lyrical genre. In the combination of formulae and approaches the stitching is apparent; it is also deliberate and played upon. None of this would have been in the least hard to follow for its audience, and it does not rule out the author's injunction that the piece is a song - and presumably subject to the convention of relative accessibility.

From the perspectives of this study, the situation of an object topic in a lyrical landscape is of considerable interest, signalling a range of new possibilities for the *yongwu* as a type. Of immediate interest is the fact that the object topic, made to serve lyric sentiments, serves at the same time as a bridge to the lyric form. The choice of the ballad theme as a way to approach the subject may be immediately responsible for the choice of metre. (Both of the *Xianghe* songs, as they appear in the *Yuefu shiji*, are in five-character form.) But the use of the principal lyric metre, the pentasyllabic line, would seem to be more broadly related to and dependent on the conception of a lyricised topic.

That the Old Poem appears to be something of a singleton in its period may underline the particular fitness of the combination here, a clever match of occasion with all the available precedents. But its near unique status also confirms that, where object topics were singled out, they were almost always envisaged in terms of the descriptive mode, the mode of the *fu* or the inscription. Though it may well touch upon them along the way, lyric poetry does not often, before the Liu Song period, single out the trappings of its

environment for sustained exploration.⁵⁰

Topical divisions

In the attempt to identify the nature and range of the precedent presented to the Yongming poets there is a further angle to explore. This relates to broad internal divisions within the *yongwu* mode. One of the refrains of the last chapter was the determining effect exerted by topic on approach. Moving out from the idea of repertoires and codes attached to individual topics and classes of topic, such as musical instruments, three general categories of *yongwu* can be distinguished. (These hold good for both the *fu* and *shi* type up until the end of the period under discussion.⁵¹) There are subjects from the natural world, such as plants and birds; meteorological phenomena, snow, rain etc; and man-made objects, either musical instruments or articles selected for their beauty or curiosity value. Each of these categories entails its own broad approach.

We can generalise that curious or beautiful articles, many of which function as a catalyst to an impromptu compliment, naturally tend towards a celebratory approach. Atmospheric elements were early on associated with an element of mystery. This translates into a poetic stance that not only emphasises a sense of wonder but comes to entail a kind of guessing game structure.⁵² Animate subjects from the natural world bring with them another sort of pedigree. Their thematic repertoire revolves around notions of physical change and seasonal flux. An active dimension is therefore built into the approach, centering on ideas of contrast that are capable of being worked out on a formal as well as a semantic plane. The full implications lie a long way ahead. On the immediate horizon is the perception of a link between the approach that attaches to this kind of topic and the world of the lyric. The seeds are there in "The Oriole." With the crossing of generic frontiers, that connection becomes more explicit.

In the Old Poem, the poet passes from a description of the

censer's exterior to the flames kindling within, to the sweet-smelling current of smoke into which the flames are transmuted, to the flowers that are sacrificed to it. In the process, the original object topic is converted into the flowers, a subject which seems to possess an inherent affinity with the lyric sentiments that conclude the piece. The existence of a rare *yongwu shi* by Wang Can's contemporary, Po Qin 繁欽 (ob.218) singles out a flower as topic, and allows us the chance to take the point forward.

Sweet Clover

Sweet clover grows on the north side of the hill;
Entrusting itself to a place without support.
Its roots are set in the cliff's shady side;
Day and night it fears danger and collapse.
A cold spring saturates [its] roots;(53)
A chill wind blows constantly back and forth.
The Three Luminaries light up the Eight Poles;(54)
It alone is reached by no ray of light.
Its flowers and leaves always fade and wither;
Dew collects there and has no time to dry.
The hundred plants put forth their blooms;
Only this plant lacks a season of beauty.
By the time [its] blossoms open
The cuckoo will have sounded his sad notes.(55)

With this piece we jump from the orchids burned for their scent to a fragrant plant *in situ*. Once more there is the problem of identifying the character *hui*. The *Yiwen leiju* cites the *Guang zhi* 廣志 (Gazeteer of Guangzhou?), compiled in the mid-fifth century by Guo Yigong 郭義恭: "The *hui cao* has green leaves and purple flowers."⁵⁶ In passages of early literature in which the *hui* appears as one of a crop of aromatic plants, Western translators have tended to identify the plant as the *Melilotus arvensis* (sweet clover), and the translations favoured are "melilotus" or "sweet clover."⁵⁷ A possible objection to that translation here is that the term summons up a "collective" picture - of clumps of small flowers and leaves - whereas the allegory in this poem turns on the idea of an isolated specimen, out of tune with its own environment and the rest of the plant world alike. The same point applies to most of the other botanical possibilities.⁵⁸ There is therefore nothing much to be gained from

capitalising on the opinion expressed by sixth century pharmaceutical naturalist Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), and switching to another species. Tao's verdict, which is preserved in the *Bencao gangmu*, is as follows: "Most men of letters who use the term 'hui' have actually no idea what plant they are talking about. They might relish the name but are muddled as to what it really is. They are all like this" 詩書家多用蕙，而竟不知是何草，尚其名而迷其實，皆此類也。⁵⁹

The locus classicus for hui is clearly the *Li sao*, with its evocative linking of fragrant smelling plants (including six mentions of hui) to a virtuous official who has been disregarded by his ruler. The poem never strays from that equation. If it is the *Li sao* that provides the thematic springboard, "Sweet Clover's" combination of a single focus with a systematic allegorical meaning harks back to another very early work from the *Chuci* anthology, "The Orange Tree." This work, it will be recalled, belongs on the fringes of the *yongwu* pantheon. Its mix of eulogy and high allegory unseats the idea of description in any present dimension.⁶⁰ In that sense it represents a sort of boundary against which other poems in *yongwu* mode may be measured. The comparison with the poem under consideration discloses the extent to which the later piece maintains a continuous physical presence. Despite the obvious exemplary dimension, it stands several steps away from the world of "The Orange Tree."

While "Sweet Clover" relies on an allegorical meaning inherited from the *Chuci* anthology, and especially the *Li sao*, it lacks the full backing of that earlier world - its certainty and some of its rich philosophical associations. The interest in this poem lies in deploying the allegory in a lyric context. Lyric context is initially interpreted as lyric format. From a constructional point of view, the poem stays close to the *fu* approach, marshalling an array of attributes around the categories familiar from the *yongwu fu*: place of origin, some reference to physical features, and action and reaction in seasonal and other conventional circumstances. The distinguishing

lyric marks emerge in the impetus towards two-line organisation and in the incipient parallelism within the determining pentasyllabic line. Even where parallelism is, morphologically speaking, rather hit and miss, or not sustained ("A cold spring saturates [its] roots; A chill wind blows constantly back and forth"), the linguistic effect is one of carefully paired attributes balanced across corresponding lines. Given the movement of the shorter *fu* in the same formal directions, however, the imprint of lyric perceptions is possibly of more interest here.

There are three first person references in this poem, at lines 5, 12 and 13. The lines in question translate literally as: "A cold spring saturates my roots;" "Only I lack a season of beauty;" "By the time my blossoms open." But the use of the first person in these three places does not entail a commitment to personification across the board. (Nor, given the placing of the lines, can it be related to the prefatory remarks that introduce some *yongwu fu*, the purpose of which are to provide a context.) It would seem to bear an ingenuous relation to the decision to work in the *shi* form, serving as a reminder of the piece's lyric status. These indicators are scooped up in the last two lines. The image of a belated, futile flowering concludes the piece on a poignant note. The fluency of the line and the immediacy of the image thrust aside the generality and the heavy allegory of previous lines to achieve something of the resonant effect aimed at in lyric closure:

By the time [my] its blossoms open
The cuckoo will have sounded his sad notes.⁶¹

In these circumstances, the use of the possessive adjective is most convincingly viewed as the stirrings of a lyric voice - one that slips outside the descriptive centre, providing another frame of reference.

For all that, this poem achieves only a tenuous sense of the lyric present. Clearly, figurative overtones still have priority here. Some tension between the confident objectivity with which the topic is

introduced, "Sweet clover grows on the north side of the hill," and the intermittent inclusion of a first person voice suggests a certain ambiguity associated with the lyric stance. "Sweet Clover" harbours a choice that poets working with object topics had to confront, once the decision to cross generic frontiers was made. The choice is between the full-scale grafting of lyric sentiments onto topics which, to that point, had been expressed in objective descriptive mode, and the retention of a would-be objective approach that might be more subtly shot through with lyric observation. This unassuming poem represents something of a crossroads, though the degree of generic consciousness it brings to bear is difficult to gauge. There is a clear acknowledgement in Po Qin's piece of generic difference, which translates into the way in which he adapts his topic, and a method normally associated with the *fu*, to *shi* conditions. But to speak in terms of a lyric format entailing full-blown lyric attitudes may be to assume too high a degree of self-consciousness.

Yongwu parameters: Bao Zhao

Only occasional conjunctions between the *yongwu* mode and the *shi* form are encountered in the next two and a half centuries. What passes for the first "collection" comes from the pen of the Liu Song poet, Bao Zhao. Bao Zhao has always been recognised as an innovator. He yokes together popular and high styles, couches sustained lyric expression in a *fu* frame, and generally blurs and extends traditional stylistic and generic boundaries.⁶² An awareness of that background in other areas of his work contributes to an understanding of his poems on things. Not only is he the first poet to experiment on any scale with single object topics in the *shi* form; his works in *yongwu* vein are marked by an eclecticism that threatens the stability of the type as it was inherited through the *yongwu fu*. If Bao Zhao's corpus takes us closer to defining a *yongwu* identity in the lyric mode, then this is achieved to quite a large extent through negative definition.

While the scope of this study is not broad enough to accommodate a full exploration of Bao's ten or so object-oriented poems - many of which only border on the *yongwu* type - it is important to note their existence.⁶³ First to be peeled away are a handful of poems on the seasons which, with their more diffuse focus, are not traditionally regarded as "*yongwu*."⁶⁴ Next come lyric meanderings sparked off by an object. "Looking at a Solitary Stone" 望孤石 is a good example of a piece that strays too far from consideration of its object topic.⁶⁵ We are left with a small core of poems that appear to conform more closely to *yongwu* criteria, as exhibited by the *yongwu fu*. Two are extracted for discussion here.

The first of these works entails a relationship with the evolving landscape (*shanshui* 山水) subgenre. The second has elements of what was later to be termed the "palace style" (*gong ti* 宮體).⁶⁶ It is worth noting here that Bao Zhao favours subjects from the natural world.⁶⁷ This is to revert to the idea of an affinity between certain object topics and the *shi* mode. And it would seem to explain why the poets who first adapted *yongwu* themes to a lyric format were attracted to subjects that were perceived to have lyric potential. But it also entails a natural connection with landscape poetry, and brings up the question of the object topic's being viewed as an extension, or a microcosm, of a dominant landscape tradition.

There is some advantage at this stage in referring to the wider poetic context, especially *shanshui* poetry. But we should be careful at the outset of interpretations which place the *yongwu* type within that subgenre. An approach through landscape poetry tends to encourage overtones of hierarchy and precedence, with landscape regarded as the major mode and the mid-Six Dynasties poet, Xie Lingyun, its High Priest, carrying all before. While the influence of both, especially in the formal area, is indisputable, to regard the *yongwu* type as a subset of changes occurring on the landscape front is to disregard a long and varied tradition enacted almost exclusively within *fu*

confines. That point acknowledged, it must be admitted that the timing and the nature of Bao Zhao's handful of poems does little to discourage the idea that poems on things are an offshoot of the *shi*, especially the landscape tradition.

The following poem proclaims its relationship with that tradition. The topical link is obvious - between the tree (*qua* scenic element) and the total scene, envisaged as the world of nature. From there it is but a step to the way in which that world functions as a topic in lyric poetry, and the question of a methodological influence.

"On My Journey Through the Mountains I Saw a Paulownia,
Standing on its Own"(68)

A Paulownia has sprung up amidst a pile of rocks;
Alone, its roots reach down into the chill dark earth.
Above it holds to the crumbling bank's incline;
Below it clings to the cave's deep reaches.
Rushing springs gush out in winter;
Misty rain does not let up in summer.
Leaves, not yet touched by frost, have begun to wither;
Branches, not stirred by wind, sigh by themselves.
Daylight or dusk, sad thoughts accumulate;
Night and day the sad birds cry.
The cast-off wife sees it and, weeping, hides her face;
The exiled official, before it, presses his breast in grief.
Though it may comfort those lonely and in danger,
Its grief and desolation cannot be borne.
It hopes for the fortune of being felled and carved,
Turned into a zither for your hall.(69)

The influence of the landscape subgenre is reflected in the poem's structuring. If the title is factored in, the structural contour adheres closely to the three-part format associated with the *shi* from the time of Xie Lingyun on.⁷⁰ (Conversely, the title could be interpreted as a contraction of the prefaces frequently attached to longer *fu* on objects, or as a removal from the body of the piece of the prefatory remarks included in certain shorter works.⁷¹) From its opening line to its last two lines, "The Paulownia" comprises a description of the tree's physical location, the seasonal vicissitudes that beset it, and, more unusually, but by no means outside *yongwu* boundaries, the reaction to the tree of two stereotypical characters (an abandoned wife; an exiled official).⁷² The question of what representational principles this kind of

description is grounded in is held over for the moment. We should, however, note that these fourteen lines constitute a broadly "objective" approach, an objectivity that is modified only by the singleness of the vision expressed.⁷³ The parallel ordering in the body of the piece follows the model of *shi* in *shanshui* mode, although that feature is, as noted earlier, increasingly characteristic of the *fu* as well.

The final two lines hold a shift of perspective. In general terms, they may be interpreted as the comment section that concludes any *shi* from the Jian'an period on. The weight of the *shi* tradition encourages a reading in first person voice. The *yongwu fu* mode recognises the need for a final reflection with closural force. While this may take a number of forms, it only rarely allows the inclusion of a first person commentator. This is another case where the translator cannot straddle the options. In the following excerpt the choice is to opt for personification, in this way foregrounding both the *shi* mode and a biographical connection which the translator considers to be attendant on it:

"I wish to have the honour of being carved and hewn
Fashioned into a zither in your hall."(74)

In contrast, in the translation provided earlier, that last angle is rendered less explicit, in line with the conventions of the *yongwu* type. The original lines merge these biases, offering a multiple reading that is partly the result of generic convergence.

In "The Paulownia" the *yongwu* type, as derived through the *yongwu fu*, is modified by its connection with the developing *shanshui* mode. To the extent that there is change, it can be said to be a movement in the general direction of lyric practice. That process is enacted to a greater or lesser extent in almost all this poet's poems on objects. Although it is doubtful whether Bao Zhao, with his cheerfully syncretic attitude to boundaries of various kinds, would have seen things in quite this way, the variety with which he

interprets the *yongwu* idea in his handful of poems on objects recognises areas of choice. One way of approaching his object-oriented poems is to regard them as a medley of responses to the question of the balance to be achieved between expressive and descriptive modes. The problem of the reflection of an authorial voice is part of that larger issue. The matter is differently resolved - within the context of a new theme entailing other conventions - in the second of the works selected here. But the comparison throws up another difference which requires some attention first.

From the Jian'an period on, certain *yongwu fu* reflect a physical presence that is more than the idea of a central object topic holding together a list of attributes, of which physical appearance is one. In Wang Can's "Oriole," for example, there is a sense of an object that is both concrete and temporally present. Rare excursions into *shi* territory consolidate that impression. But a work like "Sweet Clover" retains the generality of a type that leans towards abstract meanings. Compared with the earlier poem, "The Paulownia" shows a gain in textural density, which contributes to the impression of a specific visual object. Nevertheless, visual description is still held at bay. There is a difference here between the concentrated focus and accumulation of detail referred to, for example, by Kang-i Sun Chang, and a descriptive technique that encourages visualisation by audience or reader.⁷⁵ That difference is well summed up in the divergent approach revealed by this poem and the next.

A Pair of Swallows

Two swallows sport by cloud-capped cliffs,
Till scissor-shaped wings come into sight;(76)
They dip in and out of the southern apartments,
Swoop through the precincts of the northern hall.

They hope to nest by your curtain;
But can spy no niche among the pillars.
Their calls are low as the fragrant season passes;
Still they stay, as spring moves on.
With sad songs they take leave of an old love;
Holding in tears, they seek a new one.(77)

In "The Paulownia," a vigorous, verb-laden vocabulary (see, in

particular, lines 3-6) that reaches after the specific is held in check by a combination of conspicuous structuring and the dominance afforded the object's exemplary dimension. Visualisation is diminished by the impression of a catalogue of attributes that is only marginally tempered to produce a physical image. That effect is abetted by the play of abstract associations which weight every line of the piece. (Even in translation these are apparent enough to stand on their own.) Bao Zhao's predilection for wild and striking landscape with, here and there, a touch of the extraordinary ("Leaves, not yet touched by frost, have begun to wither/ Branches, not stirred by wind, sough by themselves"), is rooted in a powerful vision of isolation and neglect.

The situation is quite different in "A Pair of Swallows." The illusion of presence is fostered, especially at the beginning of the poem, by a concentration of simple verbs of movement. These mirror the physical character as well as the passage of the swallows. The little birds tack into sight, flit through the available options, relinquish them and fly on their way. The poem incorporates a progressive movement forward, from distant cliffs, through the middle ground of courtyards, to the pillar, which represents both destination and foreground. In the process the more serious issues of search and abandonment, and mutability, are traversed. However, these do not disrupt the creation of a specific physical presence.

There is, rather, a new complicity between the creation of a temporal presence in "The Swallows" and the play on associated abstractions - ideas of presence and absence, attachment and separation. That sense of presence is, as noted, in large measure accomplished through a concentration of verbs. A delight in movement itself attaches to these verbs at the start of the poem. But movement in the larger scheme of things entails, and must exist in balance with, its opposite, repose. Here it is defeated for lack of that opposite. At the sixth line of the piece the birds are denied their destination, a place to nest. From then on movement metamorphoses

into a fruitless delaying (*pai huai* 徘徊, "still they stay") and, from there, to the eventual separation.

The priority which Bao Zhao affords the depiction of a visual image determines his approach in other areas of this poem. Its two-line units theoretically divide into the string of features and aspects familiar from the *yongwu fu*, but this piece throws off the impress of inherited structure. The verbs play a major part in modifying the idea of a collection of attributes. As noted, these are simple for the most part. The reader's attention is drawn less to the verbs themselves than to their combination in a play across the poem's surface, mimicking the movement of the swallows. Because the parallelism is a little looser in this piece (the only fully parallel couplet occurring at lines 3-4), words no longer appear to be fixed to the respective sides of an equation (compare the previous poem). The static effect of such structuring is minimised. Both these features contribute a freer movement which in its turn releases another impression, that of an action taking place.

As far as the *yongwu* to this point is concerned, it is worked out in the main in a continuum that is spatial, centering on the relationship of parts to a whole. Some earlier works, of which "The Oriole" is one, harbour temporal elements that might be construed as narrative. But usually a narrative presence or possibility is subsumed in larger themes that entail a temporal dimension of their own. (In "The Oriole" the theme of identity-difference is crossed with that of change.) In "The Swallows," a more immediate sense of presence coupled to the contours of an action gives rise to the idea of narrative, as well as thematic, development.

The ease with which Bao Zhao introduces a narrative line into a subgenre that is historically largely independent of that dimension disguises the existence of a literary influence derived from another quarter. The vocabulary - pair, play, spring, farewell, tears, an old love and a new - yields a general theme that has its origins in the

yuefu. Swallows also appear in yuefu songs but they are not foregrounded as a topic, as here.⁷⁸ A combination of topical and linguistic echoes serve rather to bring earlier songs to mind and, with them, the concept of a narrative action which is embedded in a great deal of yuefu poetry.⁷⁹

Yuefu elements are clearly interpreted with a literati brush in this piece. In addition, the presence of words that provide a more specific angle - women's apartments, curtain, synonyms for spring (fang sui 芳歲 "fragrant season", shao jing 韶景 "time of beauty") - confirm a new physical and stylistic orientation. This concentration of words signals the transference of yuefu themes to a more cloistered setting. If nature remains the backdrop, it is nature as reflected in and confined to the courtyard. (The "cliffs," background and frame to this picture, are probably garden rocks.) The focus has become the inner apartments. The shift inwards is mirrored in a more consciously literary style, summed up here by the use of the synonyms. It may well be too early to talk in terms of the "palace style" or of its central topos, the "palace lady" but some of these are its ingredients, and these terms may be recognised as its idiom.⁸⁰

If the strand of language just extracted encourages audience or reader to expect a courtly version of a yuefu love song, other linguistic echoes summon an older text, the *Shi jing's* "Swallow, Swallow." The most significant aspect for the interpretation of Bao Zhao's poem is the influence of the early text's interwoven themes of separation and faithfulness. The hallowed status of the *Shi jing* lyric and the sense of a real story in the background, add weight to a lightly unspecific song.⁸¹ This is especially evident in the penultimate couplet where the birds' low urgent calls and their reluctance to abandon their lady/lord gain in poignancy from their association with the earlier text. When it comes to equivalence and the generation of allegorical meanings, though, the connection introduces some contradictory pressures. What reads so limpidly as a

visual presentation is a little harder to disentangle when approached for its significance. There is a less than perfect equivalence between the pair of swallows and the notion of a human referent in this poem. At the beginning of the poem, the linguistic strand cited above conditions us to expect the substitution of a pair of lovers for the birds and the kind of simple narrative continuum that has its roots in the love themes of popular song. But there remains the existence of that other focus, which functions as destination and love object: the conventionally indeterminate "you," standing here for "my lord," or "my lady." The existence of that focus, backed by the themes associated with the *Shi jing* piece, skews that initial equation.

The ambiguity in this poem is experienced merely as a tug in the reading, but that tension is interesting in itself. It may also be interpreted as a disparity between generic impulses: between the story line connected with many *yuefu* and the way in which allegory associated with the *yongwu* method operates. "The Swallows," with its sustained narrative dimension, offers a linear reading, but to the extent that allegorical meanings arise, these are situated in a different thematic dimension and are not similarly open to a linear interpretation. The *yongwu* as a poetic method makes use of allegory involving abstract qualities and a human referent in a systematic but essentially non-linear way. There is an awareness in this poem of a double process: the injection of a narrative contour into a type that is historically largely independent of that dimension; and the tempering and subverting of a more recently inherited narrative line by subgeneric impulses.

Significance in "The Swallows" is not confined to the allegoric area, hinging on the substitution of one creature for another. It is also located in a network of connections between form and topic. These connections are dependent for their existence on the emergence of new descriptive models, which centre on a more visually attentive

description, envisaged in terms of a denser poetic surface. The poem raises the question of the extent to which that poetry, and the terminology that evolved to reflect it, harbours a mimetic logic. But for the moment discussion will be limited to noting the conformity between the structuring of the work and its thematic dimension.

Length is implicated here. In terms of the present comparison between "The Paulownia" and "A Pair of Swallows," there is the way in which a ten-line, as opposed to a sixteen-line, length lightens the "catalogue of attributes" effect referred to above. This should not be brushed off as haphazard, for it involves an idea as integral to composition as the relation between topic and form. As far as the immediate comparison goes, it works both ways. If the physical size and the precarious existence of the swallows, as well as the transitory nature of their springtime attachment, are reflected in the brevity of five couplets, so the unrelieved situation and the weighty abstract implications of the lonely Paulownia are spelled out in its six extra lines.

Conclusion

"The Swallows" has been termed the earliest example of a *yongwu shi*.⁸² It is not difficult to see that the acknowledgement stems from a perception of the resemblance between Bao Zhao's piece and the later model that emerged in the years immediately preceding the turn of the fifth century. In terms of subject matter, almost any one of Bao Zhao's "core" poems on objects would have done as well. But a combination of distinguishing formal features single out this work. The poem bears the title "yong" which, as it stands, reflects a generic consciousness.⁸³ More telling, it shows considerable awareness of tonal alternation, lines five and six comprising a fully antithetical doublet. Finally, "The Swallows" is short - only ten lines long. It is this mix that brings to mind the outbreak of eight-

to ten-line poems, most of them *yongwu*, that occurred in the *Yongming* period.

Direct connections of the kind noted above propel us through the gap between dynasties. But we should not leave this chapter without a backward glance at its themes. If these began with ideas of rarity, discontinuity, and occasional conjunction, they accommodate another dimension which plays down generic aspect and emphasises merger. This acknowledges a broad convergence of *fu* and *shi*, and makes room for a *yuefu* presence. Such links go beyond the often noted formal affinities between *fu* and *shi* that strengthen throughout the Six Dynasties period, to take in similarities in the descriptive process generally. They play a part in easing the *yongwu* type into another genre and provide strategies for its survival there. Especially worth noticing in this connection is the incorporation of *yuefu* themes. In both the *Old Poem* and "A Pair of Swallows," these themes introduce ways of dealing with the expressive dimension on which the *shi* as a poetic type is predicated.

CHAPTER FOUR

Limitations and Length

"That this eight-line verse should arise from the salon environment is something that needs further attention..."

Kang-i Sun Chang¹

Introduction

In considering the poems of the previous chapter, the intention was not to try and account for every *yongwu* version prior to the Yongming period. It was, rather, to explore the logic of occasional mergers between object topics and the *shi* form. And, without postulating a fixed or coherent development, it aimed to expose certain early strategies that crop up in the process of transferring topics and an approach associated with the *fu* across generic borders. The repeated intersections that characterise a literature predicated on the model of a return to sources, encourage the idea of local connections between any of the early pieces so far discussed and the group of poems about to be considered. But, as the only collection of *yongwu shi* prior to the Yongming period, it is Bao Zhao's works that establish an identity in the lyric genre. And, as the poems closest in time, they might reasonably be regarded as the bridge to the pieces that form the nucleus of this study.

A clutch of subgeneric markers (the use of "*yong*," the creation of a visual presence and correlations between topic and structuring) connect Bao Zhao's poems on objects to the mature Yongming model. The link is especially obvious when these features combine in one work, as happens in "The Swallows." Nevertheless, it is the latitude with which the Liu Song poet interprets the *yongwu* idea overall that remains most striking. Possibly the most surprising feature in turning from Bao Zhao's miscellany of object-oriented poems to this next group of

works, is to discover the remarkable consistency of their format. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the contrast. On the one hand, the energy of the poet whose poems on objects decisively connect the type to the poetic mainstream should be recognised. The same vigour and eclecticism have him come up with different responses to the central challenge posed by this poetic type: the balance to be achieved between expressive and descriptive modes. On the other, the rapid closure of possibilities in favour of one model a few decades later suggests some deeper congruity between that model and other developments taking place in contemporary verse.

That observation brings us to the nub of this study: the place of the *yongwu* type in the nexus of developments occurring on the poetic front at the end of the fifth century. The type can now be returned, its generic identity sketched in, to the point where the first chapter left off. The earlier chapter, it will be remembered, was based on an examination of a new formal model in poetry, as reflected in contemporary and near-contemporary theory. Employing the idea of a theory of absence, it argued for the restoration of the element of length in the description of the developing form. And, concomitant on that recognition, for some acknowledgment of the *yongwu* type in the account of the restructuring of the *shi*. The present chapter is concerned with practical manifestations: the reflection of the phenomenon of the compression of the form in the earliest group of poems consistently to display that feature.

But if the immediate justification for singling out the subgenre is length, it is an aspect that can be only temporarily separated from the various contexts from which it derives its significance. The primary context has been identified as the network of formal elements that combine in the achievement of a particular ideal format. Here, length sits alongside the features of an already highly developed parallelism and the more spectacular development of a tonally based prosody. The *yongwu* type can be identified as a site of intersecting

formal directions. But its introduction also offers possibilities for extending the idea of concurrence beyond that of a coincidence of formal elements. The hypothesis here is of a mutual and formative interaction of a larger number of elements than is generally envisaged. These include a kind of topic, a format attendant on topic, and an engendering social context. When re-located within the boundaries of the *shi* during a period of formal change, that combination can be seen to push the compositional process further in the direction of compression.

Length is also of interest when it is situated in a broad conceptual spectrum, defined as the notion of constraint. The abstraction reaches out to touch on a variety of aspects, linking restrictions imposed by the milieu in which much poetry-making took place to the slowly crystallising schemes of composition. The continuum can be extended to encompass topical compression. These comprise the themes and the conceptual areas into which the analysis divides. With them go a gamut of reasons for placing the *yongwu* type in the middle, rather than on the fringes, of poetic activity.

It is a claim that contemporary opinion on this occasion would seem, indirectly, to endorse. Archaist critic Pei Ziye must rank as one of the tradition's most disapproving voices but his essay "On Insect Carving" (*Diao chong lun* 雕蟲論), has the merit of providing an account - in more than a descriptive compound - of the poetry of his time. Pei sums up the subject of Qi Liang composition as "plants and trees...the wind and the clouds."² The passage reads in full:

"They [writers from the end of the Song period] are preoccupied with [the subject of] plants and trees. At their most profound they concern themselves with the wind and the clouds. They are inspired by frivolousness; their intention in writing is shallow. Their works may be prettily crafted but they lack a serious core. They hold allusive meanings but these are trivial."⁽³⁾

"On Insect Carving" exists at one end of the ideological spectrum. It conceives of the history of lyric poetry as a decline envisaged in linear terms. The aberrant poetic line of Pei's own times can thus be

attributed to the wrong turnings of the Song ("Its ancestry is to be found in the Song style" 討其宗途亦有宋之風也).⁴ Nevertheless, as each period has its own characteristic style, so the topics and methods deplored by Pei are singled out because they represent a new development.

Pei's primary intention in this passage is to characterise a period preference for subjects that are exterior, reduced in scale and developed in a particular way. The thrust of the language is in one direction only. Caught in its web are a number of concepts - small, external, frivolous, shallow, pretty. These are structured by parallel arrangement into a pattern of disapprobation. The relationships may be worked out in a variety of ways, but it is important to note the link between topic and approach. Extracting the references to poetic motivation and intent, we are left with a connection between small, exterior topics and a work that is prettily crafted.

While Pei's criticisms are intended as a sweeping condemnation of contemporary literature generally, a crop of poems that shelter under the description "plants and trees" gives his words literal application in the late fifth and early sixth century context.⁵ Staying with that narrower interpretation, it might be noted in passing that Pei's words have a fleeting application to the method of the *yongwu shi*. It is interesting that the sequence of his first four lines has a loose correspondence with the progress of a *yongwu shi*. This kind of poem singles out the subject (usually through description of its physical attributes) in its early lines, equating here perhaps with Pei's naming of topic. The action of natural elements (the wind and the clouds) upon the subject will usually follow next.⁶ What inclined the poet to select his subject (indicated in the expressions *xing* 興 and *zhi* 志) will invariably be revealed in the second half of the work. In addition, the two expressions *qiao* 巧, and *yin* 隱 (translated "prettily crafted" and "hold[ing] allusive meanings") sum up the *yongwu* approach.

If the equivalences noted above operate as pointers to the *yongwu* method, and if Pei seems to write with one subgenre in the forefront of his mind, it is because the *yongwu* type encapsulates popular currents. Other phrases, employed in less highly charged contexts, are amenable to similar interpretation. The expression *liqi*, cited in the introduction, is an example. This descriptive compound, which occurs in both the Liang and Southern Dynasties Histories, appears immediately after a reference to tonal developments in the Yongming period.⁷ Its placing, in apposition to remarks about formal structure, might allow it to be interpreted as a contrasting reference to content. On the other hand, it could be taken as a comment on formal over-refinement and excess. Given the actual nature of Yongming poetry, both angles are probably intended. Ideas of rarefied subjects and exquisite technique combine in the phrase. Its spread of nuances is accentuated by the preciousness of the repeated vowel. Of immediate interest is the fact that the sense area encompasses ideas of smallness and delicacy. These lead directly to a poetry that is both ornamental and diminutive in its focus. The link with poems on things is apparent and, with it, some acknowledgement of the representative character of this poetic type.⁸

What interpretative writings hint at, numbers actively support. In quantitative terms, the appearance of *yongwu* poems on the scene in the last two decades of the fifth century is interesting in two respects. Given the paucity of poems on objects prior to the Qi period, the sudden emergence of this verse type is an unexpected development; and its appearance in relatively large numbers, amounting almost to an outbreak, is something that requires examination. The facts themselves emerge from a glance at the surviving corpus of Southern Qi poetry, especially when it is placed alongside that of the preceding period, the Liu Song. In this case, as good an impression may be gained simply by turning the pages of the *Qi shi* as attempting more precise tabulation.⁹ Figures have an approximate status only

here, qualified by at least three factors.

Poets whose lives spanned more than one dynastic cycle, like Shen Yue, are listed under the later dynasty. Some *yongwu* poems known to have been composed during the Yongming period are excluded from consideration on those grounds. The impromptu pieces executed by Shen Yue in company with Xie Tiao and three other poets are an example.¹⁰ In a handful of cases it is not easy to decide whether or not a poem can be termed a *yongwu shi*.¹¹ Substantial losses among poems composed in impromptu circumstances should probably also be assumed. The ephemeral nature of the situation and its product, as well as the vagaries of recording in such circumstances, are all factors that have some bearing here.

Difficulties of the sort mentioned above may combine to distort percentages but they do not detract from the overall impression of an unprecedented interest in the *yongwu* as a poetic type. The question of why those topics and the formal preferences that they embody held such appeal for poets at the turn of the fifth century has now to be addressed. As noted, anything by way of an answer from the commentary tradition is disclosed only within the larger context of a judgement on contemporary verse generally. This obscures what is otherwise signalled: the presence of distinct and particular reasons for the emergence of a new verse type at this stage.

The tradition's tendency to work from moralist and functionalist positions does little to illuminate literary imperatives. The hard and fast link that it forges between poetic topic and style and political decline has effectively excluded other interpretations. The analysis that follows attempts to restore some of these connections. Its own progress might be described as mosaic. The idea applies both to the method, which assembles fragments, piece by piece, at a local level. And it points as well to the outcome of this process, which is a re-arrangement of the pieces, or new mosaic. The elements which will compose the "picture" are defined in the sections that follow.

The chapter is intended to be read against the background of the fifteen translated and annotated poems provided in the final section. These comprise the *yongwu* corpus of Xie Tiao, the subgenre's most versatile and innovative exponent. Another kind of sample is offered by three poem groups, comprising nine texts by five different authors. These appear in the collected works of Xie Tiao, prefixed by three short prefaces, which tie the poems to a Yongming date.¹² The prefaces provide an idea not only of the circumstances but also of the topical categories for impromptu composition. They read as follows:

(i) "Poems composed in company on musical instruments."

同詠樂器

(ii) "Poems composed in company on amusing objects"

同詠坐上器玩

and, the most informative of them,

(iii) "Poems composed in company on an object in front of the eyes."

同詠坐上所見一物

The following nine poems cluster under their headings:

(i) The Qin: seven-stringed zither - Xie Tiao
The Pipa: four-stringed guitar - Wang Rong
The Flute - Shen Yue(13)

(ii) The Black Leather Armrest - Xie Tiao
The Bamboo Betel-nut Basket - Shen Yue

(iii) The Mat - Xie Tiao
The Curtain - Wang Rong
The Screen - Yu Yan 虞炎 (fl.ca.488)
The Mat - Liu Yun 柳惲 (465-511)

This collection represents an interesting coincidence of factors. We possess, in the prefixes, as reliable a proof of their extempore nature as we are likely to have for any poems of this period. Each one of them is in octave form. And they show a dramatic shift of topic in the *shi*, not merely towards the single object, but towards a particular kind of object. It is a combination that deserves close attention.

As nine translations are rather too much to read at a sitting, the compromise opted for here is to select a poem representative of each of the three occasions.

(i)

The Flute

South of the River is the land of pipe and flute;
Exquisite notes spill from bamboo stems.
Solicitously conveyed by jade fingers;
Full of feeling it is lifted and lowered.
It circles many times the carved rafters;
A light dust swirls again and again.
Within the tune is a deeper meaning
Of a cinnabar heart you would scarce understand.(14)

(ii)

The Black Leather Armrest

A twisted trunk, from which limbs grow;
How could it not be carved and shaped?
Modelled on the dragon-patterned tripod,
Three-legged, it reveals a splendid form.
Do not speak of the purity of white skins;
White sand is subject to mutation still.
I offer a bent form of little use
May it support you, weary, to the feast's end.(15)

(iii)

The Curtain

Fortunately threaded with pearls,
It veils my lord's pillars.
In the glimmer of moonlight, no need to roll it up;
When the breeze stirs, with a lightness of its own.
Always accumulating gold brazier fragrance;
Each time holding jade zither notes.
Its one desire: to see the wine flasks set out
And orchid oil lamps light up the night.

Inherited formats

These three poems were chosen - among other reasons - to demonstrate different aspects of the developing aesthetics of the type. But even then, and even in translation, it is clear that they work to a formula. It will also be clear from the investigations of the preceding chapters that the formula is directly derived from the *yongwu fu*. Like shorter and longer *fu* alike, these pieces divide into a collection of carefully distinguished attributes. These are easily generalised into such categories as place of origin, physical

description, action and reaction in certain conventional circumstances, function, and so on. In terms of a general scheme to work to, therefore, the *shi* follows closely the structural conception of the *yongwu fu*.

The question of exhaustiveness comes in here. Exhaustiveness is the premise on which the *yongwu fu*, and the *fu* genre generally, is based. While this feature is most apparent in the length of the greater *fu*, all *fu* are structured in accordance with the idea of a comprehensive and orderly exposition of the attributes of topic. While that principle might in theory accommodate an unlimited number of features and aspects of topic, it is usually modified by a fairly strict adherence to another requirement: that those features have a categorical significance. The impulse towards comprehensiveness is implanted in the compositional format, present in the notion of a spread of attributes, which range over the broad categories outlined above. The point made earlier in connection with "The Jade Wine Bowl," about the rationalisation and clarification of structure as works became shorter, has direct application here.

In the case of the *yongwu fu*, the categories into which topical aspects divide represent a fairly limited spread. To recapitulate, as a general rule the conceptual format would include some mention of where the object originated, its physical appearance, its reaction in certain predictable circumstances, and its function and/or effect. The schema offers scope for subdivision and, within it, as detailed an elaboration of particulars as poets may choose, after the manner of the longer *yongwu fu*. But in practice most shorter *yongwu fu* from the early Six Dynasties period on reveal a format that increasingly adheres to these categories. Although length remains a variable factor, the categories also tend increasingly to be realised in sections of two lines, many of them parallel couplets.

Turning to the *shi* deductive model, it seems that *yongwu shi* of the Southern Qi period follow a similar rule of thumb. Topic is

envisaged as the sum of the categorised features noted above, usually amounting to four or five separate sections. And each aspect of topic is released in, and controlled by, its couplet form. For poetic purposes, then, objects came to be envisaged as four or five carefully distinguished attributes, expressed in the same number of couplets. By the end of the fifth century that formula is encountered everywhere. Clearly compositional contexts had a more than passing hand in speeding up the process into the model demonstrated above. But before tackling that background directly we should consider whether the legacy of the *yongwu fu* brought with it any other principle that might have had an influence on length.

A hypothesis worth considering is that the choice of a single object topic would of itself predispose a poet towards a shorter form. The compositional formula of the type can be envisaged more abstractly as a balance between singleness and combination. While its mainspring is elaboration, all its strands are drawn in around a seldom referred to but central presence. Returning to the *fu* example, although the major explorations of the three *Wen xuan* chapters refute the idea of a relationship between small single topics and length, the notion gains credence from other quarters. Despite the fact that a large number of surviving *yongwu fu* appear to be fragments, there are enough apparently textually intact pieces to establish a definite connection between small-scale topics and a much more compact format.¹⁶

In many shorter compositions, where a piece appears to be whole and length can therefore be seen as a conscious decision, an easy connection can be made between that compact format and a less expansive approach. The singleness of vision associated with a small, self-contained subject, the mimetic relation between topic and form referred to earlier and, occasionally, a sparse thematic repertoire when a topic had rarely or never been celebrated in literature before, are all factors that have a bearing on length. All of these angles are carried over into the *shi* version of the type. And each takes on

new meaning in the context of the Southern Qi salons.

Contexts and constraints

The quotation that captions this chapter foregrounds the connection between the circumstances of composition and the structuring of a literary work. The circumstances in this case refer to the Southern Qi "salon environment." The description itself needs some breaking down. It is closely linked in Kang-i Sun Chang's account to the idea of the "poetry meeting," in which poems were composed and performed extempore. It is, of course, this last feature that introduces the factor of length. But it should be recognised that there is no inherent logic about the jump from the idea of "shorter," which is fairly readily associated with on-the-spot composition, to the mention of a specifically octave form. To explain the emergence of a particular, and fairly soon invariable, number of lines would seem to require the presence of a more specific determinant than the need for speed. On the face of things, therefore, externally imposed constraints associated with the salon context appear likely to provide only part of the story. All the same, they are a good place to begin.

Candles, bronze bowls, four rhymes...

"The Prince of Jingling, [Xiao] Ziliang 子良 (460-494) used to hold evening gatherings of literati. A candle would be notched to determine the length of a poem; for a poem of four rhymes (i.e. an eight-line poem), the cut was made an inch down the candle and this was used as a marker.(17) [Xiao] Wenyan said, 'I can't see what's so difficult about composing an eight-line poem during the time it takes a candle to burn down an inch.' And he and [Qiu] Lingkai, Jiang Hong and a group of them set the number of rhymes (li yun 立韻) by striking a bronze bowl; by the time the notes had died away the poems had to be completed and fit to be inspected."

from the biography of Wang Sengru 王僧孺
"The History of the Southern Dynasties"(18)

The biographies sections in the official histories of the Southern Dynasties are punctuated with similar anecdotes. They range from the nonchalant, "Whenever there was a feast at court a candle

would be marked and verses composed" 每預朝宴刻燭賦詩, to the evocation of relationships in which the exchange of poems or the ability to create extempore verses plays a special part.¹⁹ The excerpt translated above is immediately interesting for the confirmation it offers of the competitive, experimental and impromptu nature of much Yongming verse. It, and others like it, flesh out the information offered by the prefaces. If these one-line prefixes provide an idea of the kind of topics which poets writing in a group situation (tong 同) favoured, this passage summons up a context for composition. And central to that context is the conception of the hurdle.

The notion of obstacles courted for their own sake informs this small narrative, highlighting a condition of the period generally. Poetry gatherings themselves are not a new phenomenon, and the practice of writing impromptu poems on objects goes back, by repute at least, to the days of Prince Xiao of Liang in the second century B.C. Nevertheless, group composition in extempore circumstances appears to have taken place on an unprecedentedly frequent basis from around the beginning of the Yongming period. And it is distinguished by a more thoroughgoing application of the idea of the hurdle. This is apparent not only in the variety of situational constraints noted above but in the imposition of topics and a rhyme scheme to work to.

Judging by surviving evidence, the distribution of rhymes along with topics came into its own in the Liang period and continued to gain momentum into the Chen. Of the many examples that might be used to illustrate a taxing and complex set of pre-conditions for composition, one from the collection of Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (553-604), the last Chen ruler, stands out. This preface mentions the assignment of a rhyme to each participant, and the accommodation in a given sequence of five objects. If a sense of achievement at deadlines deliberately sought and triumphantly met filters through the earlier passage, there is a jauntiness about the future Emperor's remark, "My

rhyme provided enough for [five poems comprising] ten rhymes, 自足為
+ so I also composed a poem on the Herd Boy and the Weaver Girl..."²⁰
part of the point, presumably, is that he continued with the same
rhyme. The poem does not survive.

The situation is therefore one of challenges increasing in
complexity as the degree of technical skill inched forward. Poets,
grown accustomed both to the idea of time constraints and, apparently,
to certain time constraints in particular, continued to up the level
of difficulty, and to set new hurdles.²¹ The biography of Xie Zheng
謝徵 (500-536) yields this account which, when compared to the
previous passage from the *Nan shi*, shows a rapid escalation of the
challenge that poets were expected to meet:

"When the [Northern] Wei Prince of Zhong shan, Yuan Lue 元略
was to return to the North, the Emperor Gaozu (Xiao Yan 蕭衍 [464-
549]) held a farewell banquet in the Palace of Martial Virtue.
Poems of thirty rhymes were composed within the time it took a
candle to burn to the third notch. Zheng completed his before the
second notch. His language was particularly beautiful and Gaozu
read it a second time."(22)

The histories not only provide solid extra-textual evidence of
the range of handicaps which Qi Liang poets imposed on themselves;
they also establish the notion of constraint as a feature of late
fifth and early sixth century social verse.²³ From there it is but a
step to another kind of imposed restriction, tonal patterning in
poetry. The deliberate and widespread introduction of tonal schemes
into lyric verse is, of course, the feature for which the period is
singled out.²⁴ Although it may not have been presented in these terms
by its earliest champion, Shen Yue, in practice sound patterning
probably represents the most considerable challenge placed on the
poet.²⁵ Its existence in a common environment with other imposed tests
of poetic skill is significant.

Like the majority of anecdotes from the histories, the passages
cited above make no mention of poetic subject, consolidating the
overall impression that meeting the challenge was the most important
thing. Time, variously defined, is the adversary here, and the

achievement of form, and of a particular form, the object. In these circumstances - and, from the evidence of the histories, they were widespread - priority is given to meeting certain formal demands. As far as topic is concerned, two things may be taken from this. Both the kind of subject selected and the way in which it was developed can be presumed to be subordinated to those needs. As noted, other extra-textual sources, in the form of prefixes attached to poems, provide information on poetic subjects. These accord poems on things a central place on the impromptu scene. Clearly they were there for the very good reason that their physical subjects, the screens and candles, shrubs and flowers that comprise their topics, operated as catalysts to composition. But literary reasons make them ideal contenders also.

The *yongwu* type possessed a pedigree in the shape of a large number of surviving *yongwu fu*. Collectively, those pieces provide not only a thematic repertoire that might be tapped at will but a structural model, including the example of a spectrum of relatively short works. Only with such a background to call on had the poet a chance of accommodating the demands made by an extempore context. The *yongwu* type might therefore be seen to supply a creditable answer to the question: what sort of topic can be despatched in eight impromptu lines.

Formal pressures; octave forms

There is more to be taken from the little anecdote from the *Nan shi* than the idyllic picture of a group of scholars of literary bent, gathered around a similarly inclined prince, amusing themselves writing nocturnal verses in extempore circumstances. The excerpt is also informative as to the criteria that determined the length of an impromptu poem. In the first instance it appears to say that length was fixed at a certain number of lines in relation to what was

considered feasible under particular conditions. It is made clear that those conditions varied, not only with the social circumstances, but as challenges were stepped up and the changes rung. It might be taken from this that length was dependent on circumstance - a circumstance as arbitrarily decided, and as unstable, as the duration of a musical echo.

This interpretation has to be modified by other considerations, both inside and outside the text. The idea of length being so casually determined is undermined in the description itself by the inclusion of actual number. The measurement that is mentioned in the passage, a *cun*, has a convincing roundness. It would seem to authenticate a common practice, perhaps the most common. This, in turn, argues for a similar currency for the four-rhyme poem with which it is linked. In addition, "four rhymes" itself has an assurance that suggests an independence of immediate context. It is hard to say how much that independence relates to external factors. Foremost among these is the fact that eight lines represents the form at which the regulated structure set. The author of the *Nan shi*, writing a century and a half later, would have been likely to bring his retrospective knowledge to bear and to reach for the most obvious example. At any rate, here, by good luck, a standard measurement (the *cun*) seems to have accorded with a standard length. We have to consider the possibility, however, that, even at the early stage described, the conjunction was less casual than causal.

Statistics back the interpretation that the "four rhymes" mentioned in this anecdote is not a haphazard choice. The extant corpus of Southern Qi works confirms a deliberate and sudden preference for the octave form. According to a recent survey, the figure for the Southern Qi period may be placed at twenty-nine percent of the total of surviving works.²⁶ While, for some of the reasons given earlier, numbers have to be treated with caution, such a figure still lies well outside statistical probability, and argues for the

widespread acceptance by Southern Qi poets of a particular octave format.²⁷

If numbers provide practical evidence of poetic preference, theoretical factors also point in the same direction. The proposition foreshadowed in the first chapter, and returned to at this point, is that pressure was exerted on the formal contour of the poem by its existence in a common environment with other formal developments. The two most taxing and interesting technical features for the contemporary poet would surely be identified as the attempt to accommodate systematic tonal contrast into his work, and the continuing refinement of parallel pattern. Both features depend on concepts of antithesis and alternation. It is logical to allow for the possibility that these models should have transferred to another front. At precisely this stage we are confronted with the emergence on a relatively large scale of the eight-line form.

The question of how to account for its appearance is complicated by later interpretations. In subsequent analysis of a technical nature the feature of length has been interpreted as a tonal development - an extension of the pattern inherent in the couplet to the quatrain, and then to the quatrain reduplicated.²⁸ The terms *dui* 對, antithesis between the two lines of the couplet, and *nian* 黏, the mirror-image patterning that exists between two couplets, refer exclusively to tone.²⁹ The last step in the process is, of course, the repetition, with pattern reversal, of the initial block of four lines. Interpretation in these terms awaits the advent of large numbers of poems characterised by perfected tonal patterns.³⁰

Eight lines has another significance in terms of the mature regulated structure. In the ideal of two parallel couplets flanked by two non-parallel couplets, it represents the transfer of antithetical pattern to the larger formal structure of the *shi*. In the Southern Qi period there is a movement towards that antithetical ideal but it is only erratically achieved.³¹ The early occurrence of the octave form

can be viewed as bound up with, but not entirely dependent on, the evolution of parallel structuring. In these circumstances, it would seem that diagrammatic satisfactions of one kind or another have to be put to one side.

The explanation suggested here is that the models circulating in the Yongming salon milieu, articulated in Shen Yue's influential preface and continually drawn upon in practice, should be recognised as having a broadly influential presence. The powerful archetypes they embody appear to have generated their own momentum which poets, in varying degrees and under certain conditions, reacted to and worked towards. In this scheme of things, length is not envisaged merely as the backdrop against which the elements of tonal antithesis and parallelism could develop. It is itself seen as a vehicle, a means of perfecting inherent pattern.

At the end of the fifth century, and for many decades to follow, that ideal is incompletely and intermittently realised. But there is evidence to suggest that poets did more than, from time to time, hit upon a form charged with potential significance. The numbers and the speed with which the eight-line form established itself argue in favour of this interpretation. Without recognising a flow-on effect in the larger structural contour of the poem, it is difficult to account for the striking statistical phenomenon. Nor, without that recognition, would there seem to be a way of making the jump from shorter formats to a particular ideal format.

A vogue for object topics

The assumption to this point has been that topic was largely contingent on, or subordinate to, urgent impromptu needs or formal preoccupations in the Yongming salon milieu. In this section topic comes to the fore. In line with the approach of previous sections, and of this study generally, the focus of interest remains the emergence

of new compositional models at the turn of the fifth century. It is now suggested that topic has a part to play in this process. In the first place, the fact that the poet's eye should fall so frequently on small single topics, topics that brought with them a particular kind of descriptive pedigree, indicates their conformity with formal interests and requirements. But also contending for a place in the interpretation is the idea that the presence of certain topics in this environment itself acts as an agent of formal change, taking the process on.

The notion of congruence between a kind of topic, the format associated with it, and contemporary formal and technical preoccupations is most effectively demonstrated through the analysis of individual poems. But some brief reference to the wider literary context is useful first. In the salon milieu what apparently gives the object topic its selective edge is its physical presence. A combination of that concrete presence and the opportunity it offers for making a sharp or witty point operates as the spur to composition. But the idea of selecting a subject in front of the eyes combines, in this period, with broader literary interests.

It was noted earlier, in the discussion of Bao Zhao's *yongwu* poems, that the emergence of the subgenre in lyric verse is connected with the development of landscape and linked, along with it, to the aesthetic movement with which the larger Six Dynasties period is associated. This process, which is summed up by the term *xingshi* 形似 (literally, "form-likeness"), is regarded as a movement towards greater descriptive realism.³² Its literary origins are traditionally located in the landscape canvases of Xie Lingyun, which convey a more direct relation with surrounding nature than is apparent in the work of earlier poets. Nature continues to be envisaged in Xie's poetry as a concept charged with philosophical meaning, but that aspect is largely transferred to the structuring. Not surprisingly, as the formal device that most nearly conveys the all-encompassing ideal of

nature, parallelism attains a new primacy in the works of this poet.³³

The emergence of the *yongwu shi* on a relatively large scale in the Yongming period is part of the process of representational change described above. The poem on a thing reflects, through the choice of a subject in front of the poet's eyes, the new and more literal engagement of the lyric poet with his physical surroundings. It is also of interest in terms of the transference of approaches associated with landscape to a smaller canvas. Commentators from Pei Ziye onwards have noted the striking tendency in the Qi Liang period to choose smaller subjects: the courtyard in exchange for the grand landscape; one item instead of a scene; a line plucked from a *yuefu* and amplified as a topic. In its drastically reduced perspectives the *yongwu shi* epitomises that change of focus. Obi Koichi sums up:

"Among objects from the natural world (*ziranwu* 自然物) the majority are plants that exist within courtyard precincts and are creatures that can be perceived on the banks of a pond. If they happen to be meteorological phenomena, then they will be those that can be seen from the house or the courtyard. This is not a nature that is glimpsed deep in the mountains or hidden in the valleys." (34)

But the process is most dramatically exhibited in the choice of small, decorative, man-made accoutrements and utensils as topics for poetry.

The nine poems referred to earlier stand as a collective sample of that sudden and widespread preference. The two pieces on *qi wan* 玩, "amusing objects," represent the trend at its most self-conscious. Of these, Xie Tiao's "The Armrest," translated above, is selected as a guide to subgeneric method and to the compositional approach of its most innovative poet.³⁵ This piece unites most of the directions referred to so far.

"The Armrest" represents in the first instance the conceptual formula derived from the *yongwu fu*, comprising an accumulation of attributes united in the conception of a single material presence. It might be noted at the outset, that eight lines, divided into couplets representing four broad categories of attribute, takes the type about as far as it can go while still retaining the idea of amplification.

Each of "The Armrest's" first three couplets draws on an earlier literary text. In the case of the first and third, the reference also summons up a broader philosophical stance associated with a particular author. "The Armrest" as topic has a predecessor in Zou Yang's "The stool," cited earlier. This work is easily recognised as the immediate source for the first couplet, the association clinched by the repetition, in the first line, of *sheng fu zhi* 生附枝, "limbs sprouting from the side." The connection with Zou Yang leads on to another of his works, which yields an interesting insight into the reading.

The Former Han author's "A Letter Submitted from Prison to Clear My Name" 獄中上書自明 contains the lines: "How is it that a twisted tree with great roots, which grows in strange convoluted whorls, can be made into an object for the Emperor? It is first carved and decorated by Attendants of the Left and the Right. And so, something that is encountered unexpectedly, whether it is the Marquis of Sui's pearl or the jade that glows in the night, will only occasion resentment and its virtue will not be perceived."³⁶ The tree, the gnarled appearance of which obscures its potential value, stands for the official, Zou Yang, whose immediate predicament seems to have stemmed, to some extent at least, from lack of effective presentation. The intertext introduces the possibility of an allegorical reading. Read with it in mind, the second line becomes clearer: even an unlikely and intransigent raw material may, with due embellishment, be transformed into a useful object of service.

Mitigating the idea of that initial unlikeliness are associations of strangeness and wonder, which derive from both of the texts associated with Zou Yang. These connotations are drawn on in the second couplet. Xie Tiao focuses on the armrest's shape and invests its three-legged form with the symbolism of the tripod and the auspicious three-footed crow. The crow is not mentioned directly but its image stands behind the fourth line, which follows closely the

wording of lines from Ban Gu's "Fu on the Eastern Capital." The passage precedes by a few lines the 'Song of the Precious Tripods' (see the annotation). Xie Tiao, in search of a splendid ancestry for his armrest, has next to grapple with the object's black colour, which stands in opposition to white and the purity it symbolises.

The poet makes use of two tactics. He first introduces the idea of black in connection with the crow, a favourable context. His explicit defence, drawing on a line from the *Xunzi*, is to reject the idea of white as a constant. Perhaps, through a proleptic association with the next line, white hides are to be thought of as losing their whiteness through dyeing. Perhaps the poet is referring here to the slower processes of natural attrition. In any case, ethical implications that congregate around the ideas of whiteness and purity are uppermost. In the *Xunzi*, Xie Tiao has a fine literary precedent for the contamination of whiteness by proximate substances.

This repertoire of attributes compiled around the humble armrest is, in the final couplet, placed at the service of the poem's addressee. In a deft and much used strategy the preceding attributes of topic - which may be categorised as origin, transformation, appearance and symbolic property - are brought together and subordinated to the concept of function, which is also the object's final attribute. A neat conjunction is observable here, in which the attribute of function, envisaged in terms of a service, coincides with the subordination of the foregoing structure to the closural twist:

I offer a bent form of little use;
May it support you, weary, to the feast's end.

The conceit is passed through the character *gong* 躬, which comprises a (bent) bow set beside the radical for body or self. In the first place, therefore, the graph mirrors the object's curved physical appearance. The character *qu* 曲, "bent," which precedes *gong*, reinforces the idea. Also introduced with *gong* is the first person voice. With it the shift from one referent, the armrest, to another,

the poet, is accomplished. And this dual presence of armrest and poet is united in the graphically realised concept of a body curved in obeisance.

The final lines return the audience both to the immediate social context and the literary context with which the piece began. "The Armrest's" predecessor, "The Stool," terminates with the pious wish that when the Prince for whom it was made leaned against it his imperial virtue would be augmented day by day. The association with the Prince of Liang indicates that the addressee here might also have been a member of the royal family. The likeliest contender would be the Xiao prince whom the poet served in the early stages of his career, Prince Jingling, Xiao Ziliang.

"The Armrest" brings together attributes chosen to accentuate values in a particular social-political continuum: rare qualities which, when subjected to attractive presentation, would be recognised by a prince; auspicious objects that represent and reinforce beneficent rule; the idea, thrown up by negative implication, of lasting integrity present in an unlikely exterior. And so to the final graceful gesture, in which these valuable and re-validated attributes combine in a presence that is placed at the service of a princely recipient, for the duration of a banquet - or a lifetime.

While the poem was suggested by an object in front of the eyes, the animating spark is clearly the opportunity it affords for interplay: between the physically present object, the preconceptions it arouses, both as a material article and as a topic for poetry, and the significance with which it can be invested through the intervention of certain values. The process of stripping away the preconceptions associated with the object topic - twisted, three-legged and black, to say nothing of the more general attributes of small and minor - is accomplished by the introduction of three carefully chosen texts, interposed between it and the immediate implications of its physical features. The result is the

reinstatement of the armrest: as an article of social value, as a metaphor, and as a topic.

"The Armrest" can be placed in an older allegorical tradition, represented by the two Jian'an pieces discussed earlier. The physical characteristics of its object topic, also, function as stepping stones to their abstract implications. The ultimate end is celebration. But the route by which this piece gets there is quite different from earlier examples. A piece like "The Jade Bowl" works from the idea of similarity. The poem is arranged around a series of equations between physical attribute and moral value, the values existing in a continuum that encompasses ideas of beauty, rarity and virtue. The Yongming poet starts from the opposite end, by engaging with his topic's undesirable, or ambiguous, properties. Given that his aim remains celebration, the poet requires a new tactical approach. The gap is bridged by the strategy of reinstatement, and the particular instrument of reinstatement is a literary pedigree as ingenious as it is venerable.

The issue of a referent is differently handled in the two pieces, exemplifying period differences and revealing the greater complexity of the later poet's approach. In Wang Can's work the interest lies in the substitution of one referent (the jade bowl) for another (the addressee). The *fu* operates like an extended simile, cumulative in its impression and capped by the hyperbole of the last lines. The Yongming poem, on the other hand, brings a larger number of rhetorical approaches to bear. It engages in defence in the body of the piece, offers the rehabilitated object to the addressee only in the final lines, and extols a relation rather than a single quality. For the ultimate object of celebration is not the rehabilitated armrest, nor even the prince whom it supports, but the concept of support. Behind the concept lies the age-old ideal of mutual relation between a subject and his prince. The theme, prefigured in the first line in the idea of a relationship between a central trunk and its

subordinate branches, comes full circle in the final lines.

Among *shi* prototypes, "The Armrest" can be related to the Old Poem on a censer, where, it may be remembered, literary precedents also stood behind a lighter, lesser, immediate situation, encouraging the possibility of ironic interplay. But a major difference is observable in the fact that form is now implicated in the exchange. Xie Tiao's starting point is the structural format inherited from the *yongwu fu*, with its built-in expectation of a measured and exhaustive amplification of topic. That expectation is, in the first instance, countered by external situational constraint, summed up in the imposition of a fixed length. But it is equally curtailed by pressures emanating from the text.

The piece unfolds as a system of checks and balances. On one side are ranged the physical smallness and the slightly eccentric nature of the subject, which had only rarely been the object of literary interest in the past. That combination generates the expectation of a self-limiting format. Against it is assembled the unusual and lofty pedigree that the poet discovers for each of the armrest's features. That the armrest doesn't topple under a greater weight of allusion than a small utilitarian object can be expected to bear is because it is held in check by a rigorous structuring. The process has a circularity that continues to generate ironic ripples.

The transference of "small" to the formal area can be seen to open a range of new possibilities for meaning. And it distances this poem, and its companions, from earlier versions. This particular poem was chosen because, as the analysis shows, it plays boldly with the ramifications of "small," disclosing in yet another way the Yongming poet's awareness of the concept both as thematic interest and as compositional directive. The poem's *raison d'être* can be seen to lie in the notion of smallness, worked out along a semantic axis of little, insignificant and non-valued, and entailing, in the formal area, the concepts of compression and limitation. The relationship is

generative and reactive, forming the basis of the conceit on which the work is based.

"The Armrest" supplies other pointers which may be specifically linked to the evolution of a new structural model. At this point the discussion engages with the constructional principle known as the topic-comment construction. In this construction, the final section is envisaged as a comment or response, which places the foregoing material, identified as the topic, in a new perspective. The concept of subordination is introduced. The construction is ubiquitous in Chinese literature. It is observable in the *fu* genre, but the requirement for a concluding comment on which the whole can be seen to hinge is much stronger in lyric verse. When the *yongwu* type crossed generic frontiers, that need accordingly sharpened. The final couplet was required not merely to exhibit a degree of closural conviction, but to supply the meaning on which the poem turned.³⁷ One strategy was to capitalise on the natural tendency to place the function section at the end of the poem, and transform it into a closural comment. Another was to incorporate direct emotion into the last lines, more often than not with the aid of a female persona.

From a constructional point of view, two things are entailed. The first is differentiating and strengthening the final two lines. The second requires establishing a degree of unity among the preceding lines. In this scheme of things the foregoing block of description, which is destined to submit to the final comment, is envisaged as an aggregate. A certain parity of attribute contingent on the old *yongwu fu* approach contributes an equalising influence. The Yongming poet follows up by imposing stylistic correspondences. The widespread tendency towards the construction of three parallel couplets, followed by a non-parallel fourth, would seem to be a product of that structural perspective.³⁸ These related considerations contribute towards the creation of a crisper compositional format.

Extempore circumstances also have an input here. Clearly they

accentuate the requirement for a pithy ending, preferably one that can be linked to the immediate situation. The union of semantic and graphic meaning achieved in the final couplet of "The Armrest" may not be repeatable. But the process of which it is part, the process of elevating the last two lines, is observable in virtually every *yongwu* poem of this period. The impromptu circumstances of composition introduce an additional factor: the desirability of the audience's being able to hold the material in its head. The need intensifies when the element of wit is involved. A cycle of dependence is set up, moving the formal structure further in the related directions of compression and of a stable length.

"The Armrest" takes the function section about as far as it can go as a response to immediate context. Pressures for change, centering on the lyricising of the type, begin to generate new responses. Xie Tiao's "The Mat" may be seen as an intermediate step in this process. In this piece, desire is envisaged as the fulfilment of function:

Its one wish is to be swept by silken robes,
And not cause the pale dust to collect.(39)

Poets move from there to an increasingly common closural solution, in which desire substitutes for function. Wang Rong's "The Curtain," cited above, provides an example:

Its one desire is to see the wine flasks set out,
And have the orchid oil-lamps light up the night.(40)

Placed against "The Curtain," with its sensuous surface and lightly unspecific erotic overtones, "The Armrest" can be seen to conform to an older celebratory mode. The observation leads to a more general distinction among kinds of *yongwu* in this period.

The poet whose works exhibit the strongest grasp of a fixed structural contour, combined with an awareness of the semantic and formal possibilities attendant upon that structure, is Xie Tiao. It is to another of his poems, "The Rushes," that the study turns this time. This piece displays the conjunction of visual description and

allusive significance which characterises most Yongming examples. And it constitutes a good example of the interactive relationship between structure and the descriptive codes referred to above.

The Rushes

Rushes lying thick along the water;
Pools on their surface scatter into pearls.
In autumn, lotus flowers in their midst;
In spring the baby ducks weave in and out.
Early buds fill the carved stands;
Late blooms are mixed to plaster the Pepper Rooms.
Sad the song "On the Embankment:"
"In the end they will wear away gold."(41)

"The Rushes" works to the same prescription disclosed in the three impromptu pieces selected above. As there, descriptive comprehensiveness is implanted in the idea of categorical significance. Reduced to categories, the first two lines comprise appearance, the next two represent reaction to seasonal differences, the third couplet, use or function, and the last, effect. The poem's frame is extended by the familiar device of antithetical structuring: autumn versus spring, new buds in contrast to end-of-season blooms. In this piece parallelism is confined to the middle four lines of the octave structure. The outer couplets of the poem are non-parallel, distinguished by a more fluid syntactic movement.

The combination of four inner parallel and four outer non-parallel lines is of crucial importance in the development of a regulated structure. Overall, that symmetrical arrangement is erratically achieved in *yongwu shi* of this period.⁴² In Xie Tiao's works, it is less likely to occur when the poem begins, as here, with a binome or compound proper noun.⁴³ The impulse to follow up with a complimentary binome in the next line usually wins out. But the decision to restrict parallel structuring to the middle couplets is a conscious choice in this poem. A combination of stylistic difference and allusive reference marks off the outer from the inner couplets. In addition to the freer movement of the lines, each of the outer couplets contains a direct reference to the story of the Empress Zhen,

neglected and eventually forced to commit suicide by her husband, the second Wei Emperor, Cao Pi; the annotations refer. The opening reduplicative *lili* 離離, which is descriptive of the plants' serried abundance, is taken from the second line of the song attributed to the Empress, "On the Embankment." The penultimate line names the song and the last line restates the original: "Ill-report will wear away gold." The symmetry of the outer couplets is reinforced by the fact that both the first and last lines of this poem incorporate the words of the Empress's song.

The structural contour described above is balanced against other impulses which divide up the totality of the work in different ways. A division between the external physical attributes of the object topic and attributes with a human implication is observable here. In this and many poems on things, it equates with a structural division. In the majority of pieces the break occurs at the halfway point in the poem. The feature is a good example of the interaction of influences in the Yongming creative matrix. It is likely that the advantages of a balanced distribution of properties would have suggested itself to poets who demonstrate a high degree of interest in symmetrical arrangement in other areas. But the feature also possesses its own generic pedigree.

From the beginning, poets writing on "things" appear to have been aware of a natural order in the structuring of their pieces. This led them to concentrate first on attributes that centre on the physical, and second on properties that refer to the human situation, and which usually imply an emotional dimension. That ordering is apparent from as far back as "Fu on Panpipes." It would seem that a distinction already prefigured in the *yongwu fu* acquired structural definition in the later literary environment, both contributing to and acted upon by the octave structure.

The realisation of an emotional dimension in the poem on a thing is bound up with the emergence of the female persona who winds her way

into the subgenre when it crosses generic boundaries. In the majority of Yongming poems which introduce a female presence, the figure does not possess a specific historical pedigree and as precise a frame of reference as the Lady Zhen. Her presence is suggested instead through the semi-erotic nuance associated with one expression, or a word cluster, or by means of a literary reference. That presence is interestingly related to the subgeneric precedents discussed in the previous chapter. It might be remembered that the lady was prefigured, as a mixture of linguistic nuance and historical allusion, in Bao Zhao's "The Swallows." Earlier still, in a prototype poem on a thing, the Old Poem on a censuring brazier, a female presence was associated with a decorative object. It is worth recalling that the earlier poet introduces the sexual connotations of his object topic, in a vocabulary of vermilion flames and scented currents of smoke, only in the second half of the piece. Those connotations become fully explicit in the metaphor of the flowers dying in the brazier in the last line. The substitution, and the sequence, are strictly maintained in mature versions of the type.

In "The Rushes," the human presence is also introduced midway through the poem, at the third couplet. It is summoned indirectly in connection with the attribute of function:

Early buds fill the carved stands;
Last blooms are mixed to plaster the Pepper Rooms.

The lines have a high degree of allusiveness and thematic sophistication. The second line, with its reference to the Pepper Rooms, a name by which the Empress's apartments were known, refers to the Empress Zhen. The parallel construction places the carved stands in an antithetical relationship with the Pepper Rooms. In this connection the stands summon up ritual sacrifices, and evoke the figure around whom such ceremonies centered, the Emperor. The interpretation can be carried further when full account is taken of the opposing characters *chu* 初, "early" and *mu* 暮, "late," "end of

season." Forcefully situated at the initial position in the line, this opposition has a non-syntagmatic life of its own.

The way in which it functions can be demonstrated by a comparison with the previous couplet, which exemplifies an earlier usage:

In autumn, lotus flowers in their midst;
In spring the baby ducks weave in and out.

The parallel construction here has two functions. It orders the descriptive scene, and it extends the poem's frame of reference by summoning up the spectra between its poles. In these lines it is the gamut of the seasons that is referred to. The concept of contrasting angles, implicit in the compound *jiance* 間廁, "mixed with," and explicit in *chu ru* 出入, "to pass in and out of," provides a secondary contrast. The lines also place a spatial arrangement against a temporal dimension, an effect that is maintained in the following couplet. While the cumulative result of the parallelism works against the idea of a descriptive present, an easy visual image is produced in all four individual lines. In the third couplet, the initial opposition has an additional function. It qualifies the old celebratory descriptive technique, envisaged here as the plant's year-round usefulness.

From the angle of a developing formal structure, the important thing to notice is the freeing of the early-late opposition to link up with other signals in the text, in the pursuit of a more complex reading. The opposition relates to a sustained, non-linear, metaphorical dimension, introduced with the opening binome. While that descriptive phrase effectively summons up a visual image - a mass of rushes bending along the water - it also incorporates the literary allusion which directs the reading. And ensures that the pearls of spray in the following line receive their full thematic weight as tears; that the attractive images of lotus and baby ducks, symbols of love and happy union, operate as a contrast to the Empress's unhappy

story. So that when the deceptively innocent parallelism which structures the "function" section is encountered, it too can be seen to possess a darker human significance. The rushes introduced with the imperial presence are buds, symbolic of the early stages of Cao Pi's attachment to his second wife. The old blooms of the following line signify fragrance and, by extension female beauty and virtue. But that aspect is overtaken in this context by the early-late contrast. These aged flowers stand as a metaphor for the last and finally tragic phase of the relationship between Cao Pi and the Empress Zhen.

The obliquely introduced implications of the third couplet are followed by the explicitness of the last, with a corresponding gain in emotional intensity. In this poem, the closural lines function in precisely the way suggested earlier, by providing the historical allusion on which the poem hinges. The song is named, and the poet's framing comment, "Sad the song..." directs the audience's reaction. The last line contains the more specific information that slander was responsible for the Empress Zhen's predicament. There is not only symmetry but pathos in the fact that the information is conveyed in the words of her own song.

The inclusion of snatches and lines from prototype songs is a *yuefu* convention. It can be identified in "The Rushes" in the first instance as a *literati* echoing of that convention, contingent on the poet's choice of a topic bound up with a well known song. But of primary interest here is the fact that the *yuefu* convention is used by Xie Tiao, in the manner described above, to filter and direct meaning. That manner of looking at structure reflects an internalised model of balance and symmetry which is related to the new theoretical formulations. It is also linked to the descriptive codes that impel the subgenre. Although it may be reflected in different ways in the corpus of Southern *Qi yongwu shi*, that formal vision is present in almost all these pieces. The structure that results generates a semantic complexity seldom aimed at before this period. It is a

structure that, in its finely balanced equilibrium, anticipates the mature regulated version.

Conclusion

Similarities become apparent when the *yongwu shi* is read in the context of other types of poems composed in the salon milieu. The period is characterised by a considerable degree of generic convergence. A striking example of borrowing among genres is the regular incorporation into the *yongwu* subgenre of an expressive dimension associated with the female persona - either historical in origin, or anonymous - of earlier popular song. But the strongest impression to be drawn from an overview of the period is a sense of certain formal imperatives directing the Yongming poet's approach to composition. These interests override both established and less well-developed generic impulses.

A particularly interesting case, relevant to the present discussion, is that of the song genre, or *yuefu*. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the *yuefu*, by definition, draws on the themes and forms of old popular songs which are conveyed in an appropriately accessible idiom. It is characterised, before this era, by the presence of lines of unequal length and, like all earlier lyric forms, has no set length. Anything like the stringent formal structure evolved in connection with the new formal ideals might be expected to conflict with the impulses of the *yuefu*, when the genre is defined as anonymous popular song. Nevertheless, many Southern Qi literati versions of Han or Wei songs disclose thematic and formal directions similar to those discussed in this chapter.

Poets continuing the practice of writing to a *yuefu* title, or to a line from one of these songs, frequently amplify their topics in a manner that bears little relation to the "original" song, or at least to earliest extant versions. Song elements and titles are often envisaged as single topics, in the manner of *yongwu* poems. This makes them more amenable to the exercise of patterned and symmetrical

structuring. Not surprisingly, regulated lines and parallel constructions are common in this genre also, confirming the pervasiveness of the poet's interest in formal experimentation. Where the title points to a concrete subject, the resulting poem is likely to read like a *yongwu shi*.⁴⁴ It should be noted, however, that the feature may also be connected with developments on its own generic front. Eight-lines was becoming the regular length of a stanza in the area known as *ya yue* 雅樂, "refined music," comprising long songs composed for certain ceremonial occasions. Although these songs are mainly four-character in form, their existence in a common environment is significant.⁴⁵

Yuefu and *yongwu* meet in the salon milieu, connected by the idea of writing to an assigned topic and, it must generally be assumed, by impromptu circumstances. Constraints associated with the demands of that milieu also determine the way in which topics are selected and handled, and help to account for the similarities between different generic types. These assigned compositions provide evidence that, when placed in a situation calling for consensus as to the form to be followed, poets were disposed to opt for an eight-line length.

Generic distinctions are less formalised here than in literary periods before and to come. We may, however, generalise that the *yongwu* type exemplifies new thematic and formal directions in a more consistent manner and on a wider front; and that it does so without the ambivalence that accrues to a type which is grounded in very different generic impulses. The existence of octave compositions in other Yongming poetic types does little to disturb the argument put forward in this chapter of a deep and creative accord between the object topics of the *yongwu shi*, the inherited format attendant on those topics and the formal preoccupations that dominate the Yongming period. Although it is most consistently demonstrated in the compositions of Xie Tiao, that accord is born out in close readings of almost any *yongwu* poem of this period. It is this that makes it

possible to single out the subgenre, rather than the field of assigned compositions more generally, as the locus of contemporary currents. In addition, the nature of certain topics (defined as a combination of the single object topic and the descriptive pedigree it carried) made them uniquely accessible to the formal concerns that preoccupy the major poets of this period, and facilitated the transfer of those formal concerns to another area of the poem: its structural format or contour.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Game Element

"..the art lies in mentioning its attributes with
no mention of its name"

Hui Hong 惠洪, *Evening Notes from a Cold Studio*¹

Construing the text

The discussion of certain exemplary poems in the previous chapter points up the extent to which significance in the *yongwu* subgenre is contingent on allusion. Those discussions could be elaborated in relation to any of the pieces contained in the final section, and to the majority of *yongwu shi* of the Yongming period. Most of these poems, in one way or another, justify the *Siku* authors' judgement of the period, cited earlier: "For the most part, they were preoccupied with allusive references."² It goes without saying that poems which depend on allusive reference require an audience competent to decompress, to decipher, and to enjoy, the allusion. This chapter works from the idea of the effect of that actively construing context on the structuring of the text.

"Poems composed in company on an object in front of the eyes"³

The brief explanatory prefaces attached to the three groups of *yongwu shi* discussed in the last chapter confirm that a number of these poems were composed in company in an extempore situation. This makes of them a kind of game. The line between literature and literary games is often a slender one. One reasonable yardstick has to do with transience of effect. Riddles and guessing games tend to dissipate on decoding. The interest of acrostics and palindromes lies almost exclusively in their construction. In an age of linguistic exuberance and inventiveness, one which led to the crossing of generic boundaries and the creation of new ones, the line is even more

blurred. When the social practice of poetry extends to poetry competitions - of varying degrees of formality, but all dependent on the exercise of wit - it becomes less easy to decide when a poem is merely a word game. In the context of a compositional study, there is not a great deal of point in trying to set up a theoretical boundary for its own sake. It is, however, important to place the *yongwu shi*, a poetic type which would sit right on that hypothetical boundary, in the continuum of game poetry.⁴

The subject is clearly linked to the concept of occasion. It can be extricated from the much broader topic of occasional poetry in general if the word "extempore" is inserted here. The majority of Chinese lyric poems are "occasional," in the sense that they are created in response to a particular situation. But that does not make them - in the absence of evidence to the contrary - either "social" or impromptu. Although it cannot be substantiated in every case, it seems likely that *yongwu shi*, created in the context of and in direct response to a social situation, were, in the main, performed extempore. To the evidence of existing prefaces can be added the cache of anecdotal material yielded by the histories. Numerous small nuggets, like those cited earlier, combine to project a context in which the practice of poetry took place.

The following passage from the biography of Wang Yun 王筠 (481-549) in the *Nan Shi* is particularly interesting as it almost certainly describes the circumstances in which one set of *yongwu* poems was created. The topic of this poem series, *shi yong* 十詠 is specified as *caomu* 草木, "plants and trees." The character *yong* 詠 does not necessarily indicate generic type. But, a few lines on, the comment, "These poems describe natural things and give expression to their form," 此詩指物程形 makes it almost certain that Wang Yun's piece was a set of *yongwu shi*. The surrounding text is worth quoting as well for its corroboration of the minute attention that was given to each facet of poetic construction. Here, it is sensitivity to the other's

literary choices which cements the friendship between Shen Yue and the younger poet. That friendship is the subject of this excerpt. The passage is relevant, too, for the light it throws backwards on the artistic milieu of the Southern Qi. It evokes something of the buoyancy and the intellectual play which characterise the Yongming mood in particular.

"With the death of Xie Tiao and the others of that talented group, what has meant most to me in life has all but gone. Now that I've met up with you, I can no longer speak of a miserable old age.' Yue lived in a studio on the outskirts of the city. He asked Yun to compose ten poems on the subject of plants and trees and write them on the wall. He wrote them all straight off, without providing a title. Yue would say to people, 'These poems describe (lit. "point to") their natural subjects and give expression to their form. They don't need to rely on a title.'

Shen Yue himself composed the "Fu on Living Outside the City." (5) He spent many hours thinking about it and when it was still not completely finished he showed the draft to Yun. Yun read to "[I ride] the mirror rainbow's unbroken curve." (6) Yue clapped his hands delightedly saying, "I'm always worried that people will read 'ngiek' as 'ngiei.'" Then Yun got to the lines "Tumbled rocks, piled up to the stars" and, later on, to, "Ice is suspended in caverns and girdles the jutting isles," all the time admiringly tapping out the rhythm. Shen said, "There are very few people who understand the musical pattern of words." (7) Those who truly appreciate it are rarities. My intention in asking you here was precisely to get your response to these few lines of mine." (8)

It is suggested that the relationship described in this passage is valued because it resembles those of earlier times, times when Xie Tiao and other talented Qi scholars were still alive and *en poste* at the courts of the Xiao princes. The nostalgia attributed to Shen Yue may be that of an aging literatus, harking back to the days of his prime. But the literary relationships and the shifting coterie of the Liang, as they figure in the histories, seem to differ somewhat from those of the Qi.⁹ Something of the camaraderie of earlier circles appears to have gone, and, with them, the artistic daring they promoted. We might generalise that Liang poetry, with its more assured forms and smoother surfaces, increasingly exhibits refinement and consolidation rather than literary expansionism.

Anecdotes like the one just cited sketch in the background, underlining the intimacy of the link between poet and audience as well as the impromptu conditions in which composition took place. Very

little notice has been taken of the way in which these circumstances impacted upon the construction of the text. It is obvious in the case of riddles and certain verse games that they are shaped towards an answer. But other genres, less close to the poetic fringe, bear the imprint of their social genesis also. Leaving aside distinctions for the moment, the major expectation of extempore poetry in general is the exhibition of wit. Wit requires to be exercised in precisely the circumstances that characterised the Qi and Liang salons, whose members were by turn audience and competitor, participant and judge. Uniformity of taste and background provided ideal conditions for the witty exploitation of language. That homogeneity is conveyed by the fact that even so trenchant an opponent of new directions as Pei Ziye did not avoid dabbling in modernism.¹⁰

Qi Liang wit was further shaped and circumscribed by the premise of a set-up situation in which, as discussed earlier, a slew of conditions had to be met and manipulated. In extempore verse types across the board topical and prosodic hurdles were pitted against time constraints. In the case of the *yongwu shi*, the compositional situation encouraged the emergence of a single dominant model and the swift transformation of disparate prototypes into a uniform type. At this point the question arises of whether that extempore context had a more broadly shaping hand.

It is reasonable to suppose that the developing model of the *yongwu shi* was accessible in a variety of ways to the influence of the game milieu in which it flourished. The need to demonstrate wit, which any game poem is duty bound to display, is not necessarily confined to a play on local meanings. Structure, too, might be expected to be vulnerable, both to the expectations of a game context and to the influence of models revealed by other game poems. A few poems on things exist that seem to provide direct confirmation. Shen Yue's "Rain in the Courtyard" 庭雨, for example, reveals a structure like that of the riddle. The two introductory lines, taken together with

the title, suggest that the piece was composed on the spot, with the poet and a group of friends, of whom the royal requester was one, watching the rain drizzling in the courtyard outside.

Rain in the Courtyard;
written in response to imperial command.

Emerging from the sky, how can it be pictured?
Falling in the courtyard, doubly hard to catch it in a *fu*.(11)
It is not vapour, nor is it cloud;
Similar to silk but, again, resembling mist.
Too fine a drizzle to tailor as it falls;
A vapoury mist too light to form a flow.
Though it lacks the substance of a thousand gold coins,
Let it serve to entertain us for a while.(12)

This little poem hinges on an irony: how to describe so insubstantial a substance in a material medium. The conceit is neatly demarcated into four couplets. The problem is posed in the initial couplet and developed in the search for definition of the following four lines. The piece concludes with an observation, light enough in itself but providing yet another variation on the idea of corporeality, "Though it lacks the substance (*zhi* 質)..." The final couplet brings to the fore what has to this point merely hovered in the background. Rain is not only elusive to describe. In this scheme of things - a princely court - it is an insignificant phenomenon. It will, though, serve to divert for an hour or two. Whenever the concept of function is introduced in this kind of context it usually operates as a code, entailing the idea of service to one's prince. The reading that is summoned here is that of the poet, acknowledging his inferior worth, and at the same time suggesting that he might have some entertainment value in serving to while away the time on a rainy morning.

The guessing game format of this piece can be attributed to the combination of a standard approach to topic and a local situation. As a topic, rain, like various other natural phenomena - wind, the moon, snow etc. - readily admits to being treated as an enigmatic phenomenon.¹³ But the poem's structural format, both the broad contour and the inner arrangement of its material, also corresponds well to

what can be guessed of the conditions in which it was composed. By the Yongming period many other, possibly all, *yongwu shi* appear to have been composed in similar contexts. The majority reveal, as their most characteristic feature, a thoroughgoing indirection. A hypothesis, to which this small poem gives the lead, is that the *yongwu shi* was structured as an indirect answer to the question, "What am I?"¹⁴

If we accept the above hypothesis, indirection becomes more than a characteristic mode. It can be recognised as deeply consequent on the overall conceptual arrangement. Evidence is revealed by the model thrown up by a broad sample of Yongming *yongwu shi*. The format, not always obvious in an encounter with a single *yongwu*, is clearer when it is stamped across a group of poems. By this time, direct mention of the topic is largely avoided. Oblique description and a general avoidance of the name of the poem's topic makes of the title a kind of answer. It functions as a "solution" to the identity question posed by the body of the poem.

A comment from the *Bian lei* 編類, a work included in the Ming compilation the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Great Documents of the Yongle Era), is illuminating as to the origins of separate titles: "There were no titles in poetry of the ancient period. The first two words of the first line of the poem functioned as the title. Titles began with the *yuefu*. Providing a separate title started with Xie Tiao and Shen Yue composing "poems on things" during banquets."¹⁵ Hong Shunlong elaborates: "When several people composed poems, and the various subjects were of a similar nature, this was the beginning of separate titles."¹⁶ The account would seem to indicate a compositional situation in which title was regarded as a pointer to, or confirmation of, poetic subject.

The *Nan shi* passage cited earlier provides a slice of circumstantial evidence. Shen Yue's quick pre-empting of any objection to Wang Yun's failure to supply a title, or titles, for his poem sequence may be taken in two ways. It indicates that the provision of

a title was normal practice in these circumstances. But it also seems to assert the special merit of Wang Yun's work - in providing a description which was so clear it didn't require the confirmation of a caption. It is possible that local circumstance - perhaps the presence of the plants and trees on which Wang Yun wrote - may have had some bearing on his decision to dispense with a title.

A relevant question is how actively the practice of providing a title is to be interpreted. It is not clear, for example, whether or not topics were distributed secretly and the audience had to guess the object from the oblique description presented in the poem. Certainly this cannot always have been the case. The *yongwu* collections of the two major poets of the period, Shen Yue and Xie Tiao, contain several instances of poems in which the object topic is referred to by name.¹⁷ Nor is there any attempt to avoid or disguise the associations cemented through the centuries between the natural world and abstract qualities.¹⁸ Some doubts remain as to precisely how the combination of indirection as a method and an interrogative structure is to be taken. Before pursuing that question in the context of the analysis of individual poems, a return to the *yongwu fu* is instructive.

The place of the *yongwu fu* as a descriptive model has already been established. What has not so far been emphasised is the fact that its method in many cases accommodates an element of play on the identity of the particular object topic. This ranges from a conventional expression of the difficulties of defining the subject to the relative complexity of the following example.

Envoi to "Fu on the Snow:"

White feathers may be white;
but their substance is light.
White jade may be white
but holds vainly to virtue.
Nothing to match this snow
that rides the season's ebb and flow...(19)

The superiority of the current topic, snow, is asserted by extending and playing on an allusion from the *Mencius*. Within the larger design

these lines counterpoint the lyric lament that precedes. Its subject, regret at the passing of winter and the sensuous love scene that went with it, inverts the usual longing for spring and the "spring emotions" proper to that season.²⁰ The play, from which the classics are not exempt, and the substitution of one angle for another, link "Fu on the Snow" with later *yongwu shi*. Prior to both, however, and listed among the motley antecedents of the *fu* genre, is an earlier poetic type: the riddle.

Riddles and riddle patterns

The earliest surviving riddles are those attributed to Xunzi.²¹ These five rhymed pieces on single topics are collected in the "Fu Chapter" of the *Xunzi*, together with two other pieces, with which they have no very clear connection.²² The five - "Ritual," "Wisdom," "Cloud," "Silkworm" and "Needle" - have been taken to be predecessors of the Han *fu*, primarily perhaps because of the title *fu* which captions the chapter in which they appear.²³ Interesting prosodic connections also suggest a relationship between these riddles and the *fu* genre. Whatever that link in the eye of later writers, their structuring and some verbal echoes posit a connection with the *yongwu* type which should not be overlooked.

The last point is most clearly made by examining one of these pieces. The five riddles are governed by a similar structure but they do not appear to be sections of a single poem.²⁴ One of their number ("A Small Song") appears on its own in other early texts, suggesting the possibility of its original independence from the others.²⁵ In addition, the interconnections they betray are consonant with the employment of a prior model, rather than with the attempt to consolidate or build on each other. With its introduction of dialogue to straddle the first and second sections, its shift from a tetrasyllabic to a nonasyllabic line, its use of tags like *ci fu* 此夫, "as to/for this," to bridge and structure the piece, it is a model

that is well adapted to recitation.²⁶ It is impossible to guess whether these longish riddles were performed extempore. However, it might be noted that both the existence of a long tradition of oral presentation at court and the use of what appear to be well-established conventions to draw on would have facilitated extempore composition.

To consider these pieces as separate poems is not to deny them the coherence of an overall strategy. A hint as to the nature of that strategy is provided by the appearance of the last piece, "A Small Song," in that manifesto of persuasion, the *Zhanguo ce*. These poems, too, are engaged in the time-honoured pursuit of conveying points by indirection. But it is their puzzle structure that determines the reading. The effect of structuring them as guessing games lightens considerably the rather too prominent suasive code generated by the constant equation of physical and metaphorical properties. It places the interest back on the poet's skill. Attention is focused on the control with which the identity problem is handled and resolved. Once the guessing game is decoded and the retrospective element is introduced, audience interest is directed elsewhere. It is claimed by the dexterity with which the now self-evident topic is rendered paradoxical, while retaining its full complement of associations.

The target of each of these five riddles is - seemingly without distinction - an object or a virtuous property. Perhaps the cleverest is the fifth poem, "The Needle." Abstract and concrete meanings converge as soon as the object topic is guessed, for the character *zhen* 針, "needle," also has the sense of "admonition."²⁷ Most of this small implement's qualities - its sharpness, the unobtrusiveness of its appearance and function, its ability to conjoin, its power of penetration - entail a metaphorical reading. The association is with a worthy minister's far-sighted advice and conciliatory skills. We are better, however, not to level the play of physical and figurative to a single reading. To do so is to disregard the input of the riddle form

and to detract from the complex texture of each piece. The full significance should be located in the interplay between concrete and abstract qualities, within the puzzle concept that determines the approach.

The Needle

Here is an object:

That was born in an earthen mound
and lives in inner rooms and hall.(28)

That, lacking wisdom and lacking skill,
excels at making clothes.

Does not break in, does not rob,
yet works by penetrating and getting through.

Day and night joins what is apart
so as to make a completed piece.

Can not only execute lengthwise links,
but is expert too at crosswise joins.(29)

Covers the common people below;
adorns those above - emperor and prince.

Its accomplishments are everywhere,
yet its virtue and worth are not on display.

When needed it is there;
not required, it conceals itself.

I myself am slow-witted and don't know what it is.
May I venture to ask the King's help?

The King said:

Is it not something that:

Began as something large and, completed, became a tiny thing?

Has a tail that trails long and a sharp tip?(30)

With a piercing point and an extended length behind?

Plies to and fro, finished with a knot before it can start work?

Lacking feathers and lacking wings, flies busily back and forth?

From the tail springs what is needed to start the business;

When it turns back on itself the matter is complete.

The iron pin from which it comes is its father;(31)

The tube in which it lies is its mother.

By means of it outer garments are made;

And through it the inner layers are joined.

This is what is called the principle of the needle.(32)

Clearly factors other than topic link poems on objects with the earlier genre. An initial point of contact with *yongwu shi* is the structural conception. Both genres are premised - fictively, or otherwise - on the assumption of audience ignorance. Both proceed by

indirection. Within the dictates of that general method each mobilises a descriptive approach and an order that is strikingly alike. To dwell first on origins and then on properties and functions is no doubt a rational descriptive procedure. Nevertheless, we should note that the sequence that is writ large across a variety of later *yongwu shi* is clearly set down here. In the riddles the answer is produced with something of a flourish in the last line. With *yongwu shi* it is moved one step away to the title.

The origins of the descriptive approach can be located in a rhetorical technique that goes back beyond the *Xunzi*. The famous opening lines of the *Daodejing* 道德經 serve as an example:

"The way that may be told is not the enduring way.
The name that may be told is not the name that endures.
The beginning of heaven and earth arose from what had no name.
What had a name was mother to the myriad things."(33)

This strategy admits of many variations. It is put to admirable use in the riddle. At its most straightforward it goes something like this:

It is not/lacks X and it is not/lacks X.
[However] it is/can do such and such.'

The twist lies in the revelation that "it" is, or can accomplish, something that you would not expect a thing lacking those qualities to be or achieve. This technique, so clumsy in the description, works well in a situation where the poem's topic is the target of guesswork:

It is not silk, processed or plain;
[but] it is patterned and makes a piece.(34)

It is not sun, nor is it moon;
[but] it brightens what is under heaven.

"Ritual," lines 2-5.

It is precisely this technique that is employed by Shen Yue in "Rain in the Courtyard."

It is at best problematic to set about tracing a direct line of descent from certain early philosophical texts through riddle and *fu* to the *yongwu shi*. Some one-to-one connections may be singled out, but what is of more use here is to acknowledge a method of procedure that is part of a mainstream current. However amorphous and hard to

Regarded for a moment as a self-contained section, this coda holds a pattern for future poems. In its circling of topic, which reflects a reaching towards definition and identity, in the ambiguity born of the coincidence of concrete and abstract properties, lies a key to the reading of later poems on things.

Transitional Poems and early directions

Such sophisticated play was not easily or immediately transferred to the *yongwu shi*. The earliest *shi* on objects in riddling mode are undistinguished creatures. The accomplished author of "Fu on the Snow," was also responsible for the following piece:

Conches and Mussels³⁷

Frail wings do not soar high;
They are natural prey to nets and snares.
Delicate fins are bewitched by sweet-smelling bait;
So they are caught by angling.
The conch and the mussel lack any such heart;(38)
Their tracks go deep into mud and sand.
Their patterns have no place in carving and decorating.
Their flavour does not grace the ritual vessels.(39)

This slight poem reveals an interesting transitional structure. It falls naturally into two quatrains. The first of these, guided perhaps by some lingering echo of the old riddle approach, introduces the topic obliquely by way of negative definition. But it is submerged in a more openly propositional format here. The natural relationship of bird and fish is underlined by descriptive and positional equivalence. Wing and fin are linked by their fragility - a fragility that predisposes them to destruction. The poem, if not the theorem, is dependent for its life on an indirectly stated link. The idea of beauty is present from the first in the delicacy of natural creatures. It achieves more precise definition in the third line with the introduction of the character *huo* 惑, "to delude" (which, in Chinese as in English, may signify leading someone's judgement astray by dazzling them with physical allure). The idea of seduction is emphasised by the associations of the character *fang* 芳, "fragrant,"

or "beautiful," which is part of the descriptive repertoire of such contexts. On this occasion the situation is reversed, for it is the lovely vulnerable creatures who are themselves lured into a trap. A paradigm in which beauty is equated with defencelessness is set up.

Conch and mussel, the two lowly varieties of mollusc that comprise the piece's dual object topic, are named at the half-way point of the poem in a statement that dissociates them, physically and in terms of temperament or inclination, from the preceding creatures: "The conch and the mussel lack any such heart." The fact that these animals owe their ability to escape destruction mainly to the toughness of their shell is referred to indirectly - in the mention of their tracks, leading deep into mud or sand. There is good reason to bury the one attractive feature of the mollusc, its shell, deep in the poem. For the whole is designed to show that physical allure is a trap. This idea, hinted at in the early lines in the connection between attractiveness and fragility, is now allowed to surface fully and the converse proposition is stated, again in negative terms: "Their patterns have no place in carving and decorating. Their flavour does not grace the ritual vessels." The message of this miniature fable is clear. Undistinguished forms of life, whose external characteristics hold little immediate appeal, are less vulnerable to danger.

If all this suggests a complexity worthy of contemporary *fu* (and somehow missing from the translation), we need only look again at the descriptive method. The use of negative identification in the first four lines is the sole remaining trace of the indirection that characterises its author's masterpiece. But, as noted, the guessing game interest is subordinated here to different demands. Direct reference to the topic in the centre of the poem gives the lie to the notion of a puzzle structure. The piece turns on an apparent paradox: the invulnerability of a lower and less attractive form of existence, but the capacity for verbal play inherent in opposing notions is not

fully exploited. The exception is the pun at the centre of the work, "The conch and the mussel lack any such heart." This draws together the two strands of physical catalogue and moral comment that make up this poem.

"Conches and Mussels" belongs to the very small bunch of poems referred to in the previous chapter, some of which are clearly fragments. Almost no context remains into which to slot these little pieces, but aiming at a quick effect by exploiting a conventional association would be consistent with an extempore scenario. The main concern of such works is to extract a moral from their topics. It is a goal that in most cases seems to swamp all but necessary and obvious opportunities for wit. In this piece there is an almost palpable tension to be felt between the descriptive method, which is straightforward, sometimes to the point of bathos, and a potential for verbal play that is underexploited. A contrast that is central to this poem is the notion of interior and exterior. The theme is present in the contrasting habits of the dual "protagonists," who bury underground and the birds and fish, who inhabit a freer atmosphere. While some of the abstract connotations that attach to the central idea - of circumspection and safety, display and danger, for example - are clear, there is no attempt at verbal patterning to create a richer and more complex texture.

Xie Huilian's poem may be somewhat short on subtlety but it shows evidence of considerable structural reassessment. Even the most primitive and fragmented of these pieces reveal some sort of formal adaptation, introduced to accommodate a re-defined subject area. In this poem it takes the form of a neatly balanced proposition that reflects the scale and the compressed focus of the topic. The compactness of the statement contrasts with the lengthy, many-faceted approach of the longer *fu*. The structure arrived at is, in its own way, as assured as the framework of "Fu on the Snow." But any comparison ends there. The blunt didacticism of the piece is a

transitional marker. The laboured connective *gu* 故, "for that reason" (translated "so"), and heavy wielding of negatives turns poem into precept. The unambiguous syntax does nothing to mitigate the rather heavy tread of a pentasyllabic line, unworked apart from the use of parallelism. If the emerging subgenre was to be more than a vehicle for the occasional maxim, it had to arrive at a more interesting and flexible formula - one that would continue to engender specimens of a new poetic type.

A decade or two later, Bao Zhao's corpus provides a handful of poems on things written in *shi* style and entitled *yong*. As noted earlier, these poems not only represent a qualitative advance on earlier pieces; they also comprise the only collection that can serve as a comparison with those of the Yongming period. As discussed in the previous chapter, the most interesting feature of Bao's *yongwu* poems remains his experimentation with lyric elements. But a few of his pieces depend exclusively on an older allegorical mode. These poems throw light on a preoccupation that was central to the *yongwu* type: its interest in exploring the abstract associations of "things." Like Xie Huilian's poem, they occupy a half-way niche in the development of the *yongwu shi*. And they illuminate a centre of creative interest that is not always easily recognised in mature examples of the subgenre.

"White Snow" 詠白雪 draws on the same thematic background as Xie Huilian's "Fu on the Snow," providing an opportunity to contrast approaches that is hard to pass up. Qualitative judgements between genres so early in the history of the *yongwu shi* are probably premature. Nevertheless this poem, by foregrounding the earlier *fu* as an intertext, insists on a connection.

White Snow

A white jade tablet has a whiteness of its own.
It cannot match the sparkling beauty of the snow.
It is skilled at following a thing in movement or at rest;(40)
Able to trace a contour, square or round.(41)
It poses no threat to a pale complexion's loveliness;
Does not contend with the whiteness of dazzling silks.
Resolutely it shuts itself off from vexing forbearance"? (42)

Withdraws without trace from the fullness of the year.
When the orchid is burnt and stone is split,(43)
What good is it to cling to fragrance and firmness?(44)

The most noticeable thing about this work is that it seems merely to restate a substantial portion of "Fu on the Snow" in a *shi* arrangement, beginning with its envoi's opening proposition. A white jade tablet, symbol of rule, has its own undoubted whiteness; but the snow possesses a more brilliant beauty. Indirection is drawn on here as an introductory convention associated with the *yongwu* mode (out of the philosophic riddle). There is no indication that the poet is aware of its possibilities as a thoroughgoing descriptive method. It is broken in the second line by a direct reference to the topic. The description continues in terms drawn directly from the earlier work. Material re-served in so obtrusive a way calls attention to itself. It is seldom the case that the significance of a poem is confined to acknowledging a transfer of ideas across generic boundaries. And it is unlikely here that, formal innovator or no, Bao Zhao is merely signalling a change of format.

The interpretation hinges on the last four lines. Hexagram sixty from the *Yi jing*, noted as a possible background presence to "Fu on the Snow," surfaces at this stage in the poem in the phrase "bitter limitation." This comes from the first commentary on the hexagram: "Do not persist in an integrity that is against the odds."⁴⁵ The expression *tou xin* 投心, "to devote oneself," with which the line begins, is linked by morphological and, to a reader with precise recall, syntactic equivalence to the envoi's *zong xin* 縱心 "to let go one's heart."⁴⁶ The primary intertext is drawn into the older context summoned up by the *Yi jing* phrase and a new reading, product of both, emerges. The bright purity that conforms to any circumstance, that surpasses yet poses no threat, is to be devotedly preserved, not through an untimely rigidity but by the only means possible - withdrawal.

The final couplet further sharpens the political dimension of

the reading. The attributes of sweetness and durability, allegorised by orchid and rock, traditionally stand for integrity and strength of purpose. These qualities are fleetingly summoned up in the person of Yang Gonghou, subject of an epitaph by Pan Ni, which is echoed here. The provision of that specific context confirms the poem's direction. But it, too, is transformed by the rhetorical question with which the piece concludes. Even virtue and steadfastness may prove unreliable because they cannot resist destructive forces. In these circumstances, what by implication is left is an integrity that can only be safeguarded by withdrawal.

In "Fu on the Snow," the complex patterning afforded by a longer line and the metrical shifts allowed by the *fu* form make for a richly textured, mobile fabric that eludes the *shi* at this stage of its development. Bao Zhao compensates to some extent by developing parallelism. "White Snow" is governed by the urge to rearrange the pieces of a pattern, in particular the pattern that has been filtered through a specific literary pedigree. This it at first simply compresses, calling attention to the fact that its own themes are not self-generated. Although it can count on the interest that accrues to the rearrangement, "White Snow" takes a risk by drawing on the same intertext across four of its five couplets.

Once the organising principle of equivalence is established, the poet is able to make sophisticated use of it in the penultimate couplet. *Tou xin*, replete with its echo *zong xin*, is now drawn into an equation with *yinji* 隱迹, literally "to hide one's tracks." Syntactic parallelism enforces a semantic connection that subtly changes the nature of the relationship with the earlier poem. A more politically directed reading emerges. The restructuring of inherited material can be seen to exert pressure on the source text or texts and to lead to the creation of new readings.

Both *fu* and *shi* work outward from the metaphorical relation of snow with integrity, to explore contradictory areas within a

prevailing idea. The ground where adaptability and constancy meet is realised in "Fu on the Snow" in a sustained, if sustainedly paradoxical, physical imagery. The poem is unified at the level of its stated topic, snow. Beside it, "White Snow" appears to leave physical description behind. A "seasonal" dimension threads its way through the pivotal fourth couplet, for example, but it owes its existence mostly to the reader's knowledge that snow is a seasonal phenomenon. The ethical and political implications generated by the language at this point overwhelm all other significances.

The didacticism that characterises "Conches and Mussels" and the overt allegorising mode of poems like this are largely absent from later *yongwu shi*. A glance at the first crop of these poems as they enter the phase of their maturity shows these qualities to be, to all intents and purposes, excised. Neither feature could be seen to last in a setting that depended on the exercise of a subtler wit. But their existence serves as a reminder in poems that make their point more lightly, or seem to make no point beyond the creation of a decorative surface, that the genre was born of such metaphorical connections. And in the model of small poems expressly conceived to demonstrate an interplay between literal and figurative areas of meaning, lies the possibility of engendering other systems again.

The game context and the formation of a working model

"The games played in the Prince of Jingling's salon had more to them than tone manipulation."

Richard Mather, *The Poet Shen Yue*⁴⁷

Prototype *yongwu shi*, before the Yongming period, tend to play to the requirements of each individual situation. What generic consciousness they display is usually subject to the more urgent needs of the developing *shi*. Bao Zhao's collection can be used to sum up where the subgenre was at in the years just prior to its flowering. His corpus provides little sense of a corporate movement towards a

formal model. Taken together, his *yongwu shi* represent a hybrid type, betraying no fixed form. It is unlikely that such diversity could have generated the consistent operational model displayed, a few decades later, by *yongwu shi* of the Yongming period.⁴⁸ At this point we return to the determining influence of the context in which poetry was practised.

The sudden preponderance of game poetry in the salons of the Southern Qi makes its own claim to attention. As a phenomenon, it reflects interests that are linguistic as much as social. A key to the involvement of many of the scholars of the day in the composition of verse games is surely the prevailing desire to explore the potential of the language in every possible direction. It is linguistic tools that are needed first for the deciphering of Yongming poetry. A look at poems that sit at the game end of the spectrum offers an important clue to the literary preoccupations of a time. These pieces actively foreground certain elements of construction in turn. Wang Rong's corpus yields an example of two of the most spectacular types of the verse game, the palindrome (*hui wen* 迴文), and the *li he* 離合, "parting and rejoining" poem.

A Palindrome written in the Rear Garden

I)

Slanting peaks wound about with crooked paths;
Thrusting rocks girdle mountain chains.
Late flowers brushed by birds' play;
Dense woods where hidden cicadas sing.

II)

Crooked paths wind around slanting peaks;
Mountain chains are girdled by thrusting rocks.
Birds playing brush the last blooms;
Cicadas sing, hidden in dense woods.(49)

This piece has an attractively fluid line. It is perhaps this feature, rather than the mechanics of its construction which allows it to be read forwards and backwards, that saved it from oblivion. The next poem holds enough interest to secure its inclusion in the *Yutai Xinyong*.

"On a Flame" is an example of the *li he*.⁵⁰ This game type depends on the subtraction from the first character of the first line of the element which is signalled by its reappearance as the first character of the second line.⁵¹ The process is repeated in the next couplet and the remaining components fuse to form a new character. In this poem > and < combine to give 火 "flame." The answer provides the title of the poem. The conditions are met less obtrusively, and with more grace, than the explanation suggests.

The Flame: a "parting and rejoining" poem
written to describe a natural phenomenon.

An ice-pale face is shamed by the distant mirror;
A watery substance gives way to its bright glow.
This time it lights up the evening's longings;
Looks forward to the traveller's early return.(52)

Admiration for the ingenuity with which the technical demands of the genre are met comes first in a response to this sort of work. This four-line piece offers more. The first line is ambiguous on the narrative plane. Is this face pale-as-ice beautiful or ice-cold with grief? (They are not, of course, mutually exclusive.) What are the implications of "distant?" Why should the face be shamed by its reflection? There seems to be an imprecise metonymic connection between the word mirror and the flame that is the answer-title. It is suggested by a double connection: the idea of reflection that hangs poised between them, underlined by an equivalence, established retrospectively through the syntactic link, between glow and mirror.

The accompanying second line picks up and foregrounds conceptual meanings. A network of related ideas emerges: ice/water, water/fire (with attendant female/male associations), face/reflection/mirror. Their expected relation is the precise balance of opposition. But the text demands a closer investigation. The centrally positioned verbs can 慚 "shamed" and xie 謝 "gives way to" hold the key to this poem as surely as they do in the palindrome, although not in as mechanistic a manner. The relation that surfaces is revealed to be that of dominance and submission. A web of nuances consolidates the basic

proposition: that the female water element is consumed in the bright glow of the male fire. Ice is solidified water, and usually regarded as a refined form of the basic element; a face repeated in a glass is a face at one remove from reality. The perception of a particular hierarchical relation dominates the reading.

The second half brings the disparate and potentially antagonistic energies of the first couplet into a specific lyric focus. It supplies the explanation that integrates the word distant into the poem. It assigns priority to the cold, grief-stricken associations of ice. *Xiang si* 相思 is literally "mutual longing" and, for the space of the third line, the flame not only illuminates a present absence but symbolises a past presence. The fleetingly adjusted balance is swiftly overturned by the last line. The overwhelming odds, reflected in the literary biases of the tradition, is that this traveller, like countless travellers before, is unlikely to be back.⁵³

A remaining retroactive interest lies in recognising the way in which the nuances of alienation in the first couplet, directly generated by the verbs and implicit in the words ice, distant and, in its substitute aspect, mirror, are netted into a preciser perspective. That perspective itself remains wholly conventional. Any idea that it is far-fetched to read so much into so small a poem, especially given the likelihood of its extempore composition, should be balanced against the knowledge that the rich store of associations drawn on is entirely pre-set. Once more, the newness lies in the patterning.

Game poems clearly contributed more than an awareness of individual linguistic components. The model of new combinations that they provided in its turn generated an aliveness to other possible readings. Even so brief a glimpse into the workings of game poetry makes clear its potential also for injecting a sharpness and definition into the inherited *shi* form. *Yongwu shi*, emerging into a new prominence in a game situation, were accessible to that influence. The expectations of the compositional context combined with the

examples thrown up by other game poems, to give specific direction and point to a fairly rudimentary poetic type. The need to demonstrate some form of wit, actively or implicitly, seems to have entailed a fuller recognition of the identity play component always present in the type. A new compositional formula, based around the concept of the identity puzzle, emerges.

The question remains of how exactly that guessing game format was expected to be taken. The strong possibility, noted earlier, that the audience knew the "answer" in advance casts doubt on the idea of an active solution in terms of topic. To this should be added the fact that, while the concept of exploring the identity of an object functions as a basic structural model, the puzzle element is not thrust to the fore in quite the same way as happens in a riddle. The problem presented by the poem was probably explored in a different way. If in fact the audience was forewarned, the puzzle framework becomes a device. Interest arises in the first place from the way in which the poet is perceived to have met the various technical challenges. But hurdling local prosodic obstacles, no matter with what precision and skill, is usually of short-term interest only. A second hypothesis imposes itself upon the first: that the interrogative structure itself served as a device to generate more questions.

Quantitative analysis helps to disclose a standard arrangement, based around the oblique answering of a question, in Yongming poems on things. Its subtler partner is needed to explore some of the uses to which that pattern was put. Wang Rong, whose small corpus contains a greater variety of game-type verse than any other Yongming poet, left several compositions in the *yongwu* mode. The following poem, selected for the *Yutai Xinyong*, merges game and lyric elements.

The *Pipa*: four-stringed guitar⁵⁴

Cradling a moon which, like it, glimmers;
Enfolding an air distinct and clear.
From its silk strings are drawn strands of feeling;
Spring emotions are imparted amid flowers.(55)

Depressed, its strain has a rare low beauty
A melancholy mode, full of harmony.
Fortunately it is often brushed by perfumed sleeves;
Dragon Gate might else have produced its wood in vain.(56)

The fluid relationships of the first line establish the reading. The *pipa*, which has a rounded, moon-shaped base, can be thought of as containing a moon. The gleaming polished wood of its body, across which the strings reach, extends the analogy. Not only does it seem to glimmer like moonlight, but *ke*, 可, "capable of," holds the more fanciful suggestion that it can actively illuminate as well passively reflect. There is a hint of more abstract meanings. This sense is held in check, though, by the character *ru* 如, "as if." From the beginning, any straightforward substitution of one referent for another is disrupted by multiple interpretive possibilities. These are signalled by the language: for example, the apparent contrariness of the juxtaposition of *ru* and *ke*, the one serving to put a break on the other. The relationship of the two first characters of each line is left open. And the conceit may just as well refer to the whole instrument, cradled in front of someone's body. That reading introduces a persona, later identified as the girl of the fragrant sleeves. But for the moment the interpretation is unrestricted. We should note, however, that the second reading is undercut by the *yongwu* convention that the description in the larger first part of the poem should be from the perspective of the object.

A similar ambiguity inhabits the second line. "Wind" is both the *pipa*'s melody and the natural element on which that air is borne. Once again, the interpretation hovers between assigning a full verbal weight or a more dependent adjectival function to the first character. The strong natural connection between *bao* 抱, "cradle" and *yue* 月, "moon," and *huai* 懷, "embrace" or "enfold" and *feng* 風, "wind," and the parallelism that links the first two characters of these lines exerts the strongest influence. A "cradled moon" entails an "enfolded air." But the caesura cannot be located with certainty. It is possible

to divide the line differently, breaking after the first character to give the sort of reading offered by Anne Birrell in her translation: "Caressed its breeze is still purer."⁵⁷ Many *yongwu shi* employ the character *fu* 復 in a conjunctive manner but a second reading, which takes *shu* 殊 as an adverb qualifying another adverb, *qing* 清 is possible, giving a translation along the lines of "Enfolding an air uniquely clear." In this case, two syntactically exclusive readings are semantically close.

The central portion of the poem follows a less ambiguous path. Silk is an accessible metonymy for strings. The instrument's flowery decoration holds a secondary echo of those other flowers, the *pipa* girls.⁵⁸ The association is conventional, facilitated by the syntax. The complex connections of the first couplet give way to a progressively more limpid style. Like the Tang poems of which they are the forerunner, these poems demonstrate the need for some variation in texture. In the final couplet the *pipa* player is brought to the fore. "Fragrant sleeves" can be interpreted literally, in which case they are envisaged as brushing the instrument's surface in the course of play. A metonymic interpretation, in which the sleeves stand for the girl who plays the guitar, allows the player, and one of the important strands of significance, a more central position. This reading endows *fu* 拂 with the fully intentional meaning of "lightly stroke," "play," rather than the attendant sense of brushing against in the course of another action.

The readings that analysis tends to present as semantic alternatives more often than not coexist in a fluctuating, multiple perspective, on which the poem depends for its interest. That perspective is maintained with the help of a fiction: that the audience is unaware of the identity of the object. There are good grounds for regarding the guessing game framework as a stratagem. In the case of "The *Pipa*," the work was performed as part of a series on musical instruments. After the presentation of the first piece at

least, the audience would have had an idea of the category of object. But other, less extrinsic, considerations give a truer idea of the relationship between poem and audience. They are present in the idea of a structural model arranged around the oblique, enigmatic answering of a question - a question that, in all probability, was never directly asked.

Conclusion: towards other codes

It is, on balance, unlikely that *yongwu shi* were expected to function openly as riddles. Their latent puzzle structure is intended to operate in a subtler way. Game context, identity play, concealed riddle element - all these combine to exert an influence on meaning. Specifically, they engender an awareness that other interpretive possibilities exist, and abound. This view also helps to account for certain apparently puzzling features. It has been noted that many of these texts generate a dual focus. This is most noticeable in poems which employ the palace lady topos. Frequently the ostensible topic - a plant, a musical instrument or a decorative utensil - and the female persona with which it is linked, converge. Coexistent subjects, metaphorically associated, provide a richly equivocal response to the identity question posed by the subgenre.

There can be little doubt that the game situation acted as a catalyst on the generically immature model of the *yongwu shi* thrown up before the Yongming period. The idea that the relationship of a social context to its poetry could be broadly generative, as well as determinative, is important here. The game setting in which much poetry-making took place seems itself to have functioned as a paradigm, engendering a formal structure that was part identity puzzle. Such an approach foregrounds the identity play that was from early times part of the descriptive system of *fu* on things. It accommodates in a consistent but flexible theory both the riddle origins and the dominant conventions of the *yongwu* type. It is useful

in freeing up aspects of interpretation, enabling the reader to recognise a game element while it does not tie the significance of a poem to the "solution" of the particular problem it presents. Finally, it provides a starting point for the interpretation of puzzling areas of individual poems.

THE WIND

Swiftly interlarded, it draws the red bud from its nest,
 its thick mass spread, green cocklebur is stirred,
 drooping willows bend and then rise up;
 young duckweed cones together, to disperse.
 In the corridor long sleeves are blown about,
 facing the door, with thoughts of throwing wide panels,
 the clear high notes of flute and song float out,
 longing thoughts of which you do not know.
 Often I find the single shrouded mirror,
 hair at my temples shows flecked with stars.

詠風

輕 紅 輕 紅 輕
 綠 綠 綠 綠 綠
 低 低 低 低 低
 合 合 合 合 合
 袖 袖 袖 袖 袖
 思 思 思 思 思
 歌 歌 歌 歌 歌
 未 未 未 未 未
 鏡 鏡 鏡 鏡 鏡
 髮 髮 髮 髮 髮

The title of 詠風, "to open the flap of the gown." The phrase 輕紅 (light red) appears in Su Shi's 蘇軾 "Fu on the Wind" 風賦. King of Chu, journeyed to the Palace of the Magnolia Terrace attended by Song Yu and Jing Dun 景差. The wind blew with a rattle, and the king opened the flap of his gown to it, saying, "How pleasant this

The text followed here is the *Sibu beiyao* version; for details of this together with the other editions consulted, see the bibliography. Only those textual variants that influence meaning are noted.

(1) THE WIND

Gently intermittent, it draws the red bud from its case;
 Its thick mass spread, green cocklebur is stirred.
 Drooping willows bend and then rise up;
 Young duckweed comes together, to disperse.
 In the corridor long sleeves are blown about;
 Facing the door, with thoughts of throwing wide lapels.¹
 The clear high notes of flute and song float out;
 Longing thoughts of which you do not know.
 Often I dust the single simurgh mirror.²
 Hair at my temples shows flecked with stars.

詠風

徘徊	發紅	葶藶
葶藶	動綠	舉離
揚蕓	低復	且靡
蕓	合行	袖披
當高	思飄	歌吹
相時	子孤	未知
星	視	鸞鏡
		差

1. *Jin pi* 襟披 "to open the flap of the gown." The phrase *pi jin* 披襟 appears in Song Yu's 宋玉 "Fu on the Wind" 風賦: "Xiang, King of Chu, journeyed to the Palace of the Magnolia Terrace, attended by Song Yu and Jing Cuo 景差. The wind blew with a rustling sound and the King opened the flap of his gown to it, saying, 'How pleasant this

wind is!" (Wen xuan 13.1b).

2. Luan ^鸞 "simurgh." The *Baishi liutie shilei ji* 白氏六帖
事類集 (Mr Bo's Comprehensive Compendium of Events in Categories) has
the following note: "When the single simurgh looks in the mirror and,
gazing at his reflection, takes it for that of the female, he will
utter a sad cry and dance about" (*Baishi liutie* 29.45b). The luan is
a mythical bird of the phoenix family. Western translators have
recently tended to translate luan as "simurgh," the mythical Persian
eagle; see, for example, Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, "Note on the
Translation," p. xiii. This serves to distinguish the luan from the
fenghuan 鳳凰, "phoenix." It also reflects the erudite style and
distinction-making of the fu writers.

(2) THE BAMBOO

Before the window a single thicket of bamboo;¹
Standing alone, its fresh young green is striking.
Upper branches cross with lower leaves;
New shoots dot its aged limbs.
In the moonlight leaves sparse-etched then dense;
In the breeze it stretches up, then bends again.²
Green finches freely dart about;
Fledgelings can catch glimpses of each other.
One regret: its sheath, stripped by the wind,
From root and trunk is forever apart.³

詠竹

前	窗	一	叢	竹
青	翠	獨	言	奇
南	條	交	北	葉
新	筍	雜	故	枝
月	光	疎	已	密
風	來	起	復	垂
青	扈	飛	不	礙
黃	口	得	相	窺
但	恨	從	風	籟
根	殊	長	別	離

1. The YWLJ 89.1552 and Han Wei Liuchao baisanjia reverse the order of the first two characters.

2. Feng lai 風來, lit. "the wind comes; Hong Shunlong cites Ming commentator Liu Yixiang's 劉一相 variant sheng 聲, "sound," for lai (in Shi su 詩宿 [A Resting-place for Poems]); see Hong op.cit., p. 437.

3. The Xie Xuancheng shiji and the source cited above (in Hong, ibid.) give zhi 枝, "branches," for other editions' zhu 株, "trunk."

(3) THE ROSE BUSH

Low branches - how can they bear their leaves?

A light scent propitiously spreads itself.

Emerging buds, at first a tight-furled purple;

Late-season's petals still rain red.

New buds face the bright sun;

Old blooms follow the movements of the wind.

Uneven limbs receive the sun by turns;¹

Who would remark this humble little bush?²

詠 薔 薇
低 枝 詎 勝 葉
輕 香 幸 自 通
發 萼 初 攢 紫
餘 采 尚 霏 紅
新 花 對 白 日
故 蕊 逐 風 行
參 差 不 俱 曜
誰 肯 盼 微 叢

1. There would seem to be two possible, related, readings for this line. It might be taken to refer to the uneven blooming of the flowers, or to the action of the sun on the rose-bush. The second interpretation fits the theme of an official intermittently recognised by his prince (or a lady by her lord).

2. Three Ming editions of Xie Xuancheng ji give wei ^微 for wei ^微 "humble;" cited Lee Chik-fong 李直方 (Xie Xuancheng shi zhu 謝宣城詩注 (Poems of Xie Xuancheng, Annotated); and Hong, op.cit., p. 438. That reading would have the poet referring openly to the rose-bush in his last line, rather than making the more subtle point of his own insignificance while punning on the homophone.

(4) THE RUSHES¹

Rushes lying thick along the water;
 Pools on their surface scatter into pearls.
 In autumn, lotus flowers in their midst;
 In spring the baby ducks weave in and out.
 Early buds fill the carved stands;
 Last blooms are mixed to plaster the Pepper Rooms.²
 Sad the song "On the Embankment:"³
 "In the end they will wear away gold."

詠蒲

離	離	水	上	蒲
結	水	散	為	珠
閒	廁	秋	菡	萏
出	入	春	鳧	雛
初	萌	實	雕	俎
暮	蕊	雜	椒	塗
所	悲	塘	上	曲
遂	鑠	黃	金	軀

1. Pu ^蒲 is a sweet-smelling rush, probably the xiang pu ^{香蒲} *Typha latifolia* (common cattail). See Smith-Stuart, p. 447; Bernard Read, *Chinese Medicinal Plants from the Pen Ts'ao Kang Mu A.D. 1596*, p. 262. #782a; and Lu Wenyu 陸文郁, *Shi caomu jinshi 詩草木今釋* (Modern Explanations of the Plants and Trees in the Songs), pp. 45-6; Mao #53.

2. This line refers to the practice of mixing the flowers of the

pepper plant with mud to make a fragrant plaster to spread on the walls of the empress's apartments. The procedure appears to have been followed with the scented rush as well. Syntactically, the line has a degree of ambiguity. *Za* 雜, "mix with," has a natural connection with *jiao* 椒, the pepper plant, which would leave *tu* 塗 to be read either as a verb, "daub," or noun "mud" (see Chou Chao-ming's translation, "Their evening flowers mingle with pepper mud," op.cit., p. 230). But if the parallelism is to be maintained there must be complementarity with the previous line, with *za* matching *shi* 室, "fill," and *jiaotu* matching *diao zu* 雕俎, "carved stands." *Jiaotu* exists as a well-attested synonym for the empress's quarters (see *Wen xuan* 58.4b). It allows the parallel construction its almost invariable place in a third couplet and for that reason comprises the preferred reading.

3. The reading follows the *Baijing lou* version, *tang* 塘, "embankment," for the *Xie Xuancheng shi ji's tang* 堂, "hall." The introduction of the title into the last couplet provides a more specific, self-conscious and interesting reading, in line with the careful construction of this piece.

The song "On the Embankment" 塘上行 appears in a number of early texts, which differ slightly from one another; see *Wen xuan* 28.15a; *YTXY* 2.56; *YWLJ* 41.748; *YFSJ* 35.6a-b. Guo Maoqian's introduction states, "The *Yuefu jieti* says, 'Previous records say that Emperor Wu of Wei's piece "The Rushes Grow" was performed as part of the Jin musical repertoire. But all the various collected records state that this song was composed by Emperor Wen's consort, the Empress Zhen, lamenting that she had been cast off on account of slander and false report'" (*YFSJ* 35.6A). The Empress Zhen 甄 (183-221) was the second wife of Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226), who became Emperor Wen of Wei 魏文帝. (r.220-226). She was first married to the second son of Yuan Shao 袁紹, Yuan Xi 袁熙. Cao Pi encountered her after the defeat of Yuan Shao by Cao Cao 曹操 and the fall of Ye 鄴. He was much taken with her beauty and subsequently married her, though her former husband was still alive. After the birth of her two children, one of whom was to become Emperor Ming 明, Cao Pi's affections wandered. She enraged him with her complaints and was eventually ordered to commit suicide. Her biography is recorded in the *Sanguo zhi* 5.159-61. The variant versions of "On the Embankment" all contain the lines around which "The Rushes" is built:

"The rushes grow in my pond;
How lushly thick their leaves...
Ill-report will wear away gold,
Cause you to live a life parted from me..." (*Yuefu shiji*

35.6a-b).

Another angle to the Empress's story, which involved Cao Zhi, is dismissed by later commentators on the grounds that he cannot have been more than thirteen years old when he met the Empress Zhen. For a critical assessment, including older scholarly judgements, see K.P.K. Whitaker, "Tsaur Jyr's 'Luoshern Fuh,'" *Asia Major* 4 (1954): 44-48.

(5) THE DODDER¹

A light silk that will form no pattern;
Fine threads that will never weave.
Dispersing into a thousand shimmering strands;
Forming a stretch of silk, again one hue.
You cannot know where it will set its roots,
Nor guess at where it will entwine its heart.
Prized for its rolling up and stretching out,
Why should it heed the tumbleweed and grow up straight?²

詠兔絲

輕	絲	既	難	理
細	縷	竟	無	織
爛	漫	已	萬	條
連	綿	復	一	色
安	根	不	可	知
縈	心	終	不	測
所	貴	能	卷	舒
伊	用	蓬	生	直

1. Tu si 兔絲 is *cuscuta chinensis*; its common name is dodder; see Smith-Stuart, p. 40; Read, p. 39 #156. The BCGM cites *Lushi chungiu* 呂氏春秋 (Mr Lu's Annals): "It is said that the dodder has no roots. It is not rooted in the earth;" and Su Song's 蘇頌 (1020-1101) commentary: "The young plants grow in summer. At first these resemble fine silk. They spread over the ground and cannot grow upward of their own accord. They manage to attach themselves to the stems of other plants, twining upwards around them. Their roots gradually detach themselves from the earth and lodge in mid-air. You can believe those who say that they have no roots and depend on the air to grow" (BCGM 18.1235-6).

2. Three references from classical texts cast light on the last two lines and suggest the following interpretation: that the ability to transform oneself, like the sages, is more to be valued than learning a different way through example.

a) Juan shu 卷舒, "rolling up and stretching out," occurs four times in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Sbby 1.2b, 2.5a, 8.7b and 18.19a); in each case in a context in which opposing qualities are invoked to summon up

the amorphous and encompassing nature of the Dao. The last entry reads: "For this reason, when there are definite moral principles within, then the exterior is able to bend and stretch, to expand and contract, be compressed and released; it can move and change with the [myriad] things. In such a situation the ten thousand actions will not founder; so that what is to be valued in the sages is their ability to transform themselves like the dragon."

b) An anecdote from the Zhuangzi 莊子 concludes: "If you worry about your gourds keeling over and not being able to hold anything, isn't it the case that you still have the perspective [lit. 'the heart'] of the tumbleweed?" Guo Xiang 郭象 (?-312) comments, "The tumbleweed is one that lacks proper understanding (Zhuangzi jishi 莊子集釋, ed. Quo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844-1896) 1.37 and 39).

c) "When the tumbleweed grows amongst hemp it will grow up straight without support" (Xunzi 1.2a).

(6) FALLING PLUM BLOSSOM

Young leaves reach delicately down;
 New buds shed a first sweet scent.¹
 Meeting you at a Rear Park banquet;
 Following sweet smiles, returned.²
 Engaging your own jade-white fingers;
 Plucked, to present to Nan Wei.³
 Held to place in a cloudy hair-coil;⁴
 The jade hairpins compete with their gloss.⁵
 At day's end, falling, fading for ever;
 Your favour cannot be regained.

詠落梅

新	葉	初	冉	冉
初	蕊	新	霏	霏
逢	君	後	園	讌
相	隨	巧	笑	歸
親	勞	君	玉	指
摘	以	贈	南	威
用	時	插	雲	髻
翡	翠	比	光	輝
日	暮	常	零	落
君	恩	不	可	追

1. The deliberate criss-cross pattern in the text of xin 新, "new," and chu 初, "first," should be noted.

2. The phrase qiao xiao 巧笑, "sweet" or "charming smiles," appears in the Wei 衛 section of the "Airs of the States" 國風 in the *Shijing*, Mao #57, as part of a catalogue of a beautiful woman's features. The line in which it occurs may be translated, "Cheeks dimple in a charming smile" (*Shijing zhushu* 3/2.129); c.f. Karlgren, "Glosses on the Kuo-Feng Odes," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 14 (1942), p. 152.

The *Gujin zhu* 古今注 (Notes on Past and Present), compiled Cui Bao 崔豹 (fl.290-306), has the following entry: "Among the palace ladies it was...and Duan Qiaoxiao whom Emperor Wen of the Wei was particularly fond of...Qiaoxiao was the first to...make a purple-coloured powder to brush on the face" (*Sbby* 3.4b).

It is tempting to associate qiao xiao with Nan Wei of the subsequent couplet and translate it as a proper name. Its status as a proper noun is also suggested by the fact that it matches hou yuan 後園, "Rear Park," in the line which precedes. But, in the context of a fluctuating subject and some intended ambiguity, there is more to be said for an open reading, such as "sweet smiles."

3. Nan Wei 南威 : the *Zhanguo ce* has the following story: "When Duke Wen of Jin took Nan Zhiwei [also known as Nan Wei] he did not have audience for three days. Then he distanced her from him and said, 'In later times there will be men who lose their kingdoms on account of love'" (*Sbby* 23.8b).

Cao Zhi's "Seven Communications" 七啓 has these lines:

"Nan Wei for him broke into smiles;
Xi Shi offered him her charming face" (*Wen xuan* 34.17b).

4. Following the Xie Xuancheng *shiji* reading chi 持 "hold," for the *Baijing lou's shi* 時.

Yun ji 雲髻 is translated "cloudy hair-coil," to retain the recurrent Chinese image of hair like a cloud. The metaphor refers to hair that is abundant and beautiful. Ji indicates hair coiled high on the head.

5. Feicui 翡翠 is a hair ornament here. It is probably of green jade (*Zhongwen da cidian* 中文大辭典 29366.4).

(7) VISITING THE EASTERN HALL; COMPOSED ON THE PAULOWNIA THERE¹

Outside the north window is a lone Paulownia;

High branches reach over a hundred feet.²

Its leaves grow in a thick profusion;

When they fall [branches] splay and spread.³

It has neither fruit nor flowers -

What to send to my parted love?⁴

Fashioned into tablets of jade⁵

It once served to command all of Shen.⁶

遊東堂詠桐

孤桐北窗外
高枝百尺餘
葉生既婀娜
葉落更扶疎
無華復無實
何以為圭與
裁足可命參墟

1. The tong 桐 tree is the *Paulownia imperialis*, noted for its very large leaves; see BCGM 35.1996-7; Smith-Stuart, p. 312.

2. Lines from Mei Cheng's "The Seven Stimuli" provide the basis for the first two couplets: "The paulownias of Long men reach to a height of a hundred feet, bare of branches [to that point]. Their twisted trunks soar upward; their roots splay out in separate directions" (Wen xuan 34.3b); the idea of trunks devoid of branches lead to the next feature, a lack of flowers and fruit - and on to the convention of sending, or wishing to send, flowers to a friend or lover from whom one is parted.

3. YWLJ 89.1528 has zhi 枝, "branch" for other editions ye 葉, "leaves." The double use of the character ye is unusual but would seem to be intended. The idea of profusion is more appropriately applied to leaves; fu shu 扶疏, in the next line, describes the spread of branches.

4. The idea is common and the wording similar to several of the Jiu ge 九歌 (Nine songs) from the Chuci (see Chuci buzhu 2.8b; 2.12a; 2.13b and 2.21a). Poems Six and Nine of the Nineteen Old Poems are

concerned with the obstacles to presenting a love offering when its object is beyond reach (*Wen xuan* 29.4a and 5a). All the earlier poems describe sweet-scented plants and blossom, which set up a contrasting echo in this poem.

5. *Gui* 圭 and *rui* 瑞 were tapering, elongated, jade tablets which were conferred by the emperor on princes as symbols of the trust and authority vested in them.

The biography of Shuyu of Tang in the Jin 晉 section of the Zhou annals of the *Shiji* contains the passage: "King Cheng played a game with [his younger brother] Shuyu. He cut a Paulownia leaf into the shape of a *gui* and gave it to Shuyu, saying, 'With this I thee enfeoff'... After this he enfeoffed Shuyu with the Tang region" (*Shiji* 39.1635).

6. The locus classicus for *shen xu* 參墟 is the *Zuozhuan* (Zhao 15): "Shu of Tang received [the royal gifts] on the authority of which he occupied the region corresponding to [the star realm] Shen" (*Zuo zhuan zhushu* 47.824A). Kong Yingda's commentary states that "Shi Shen's star lodging (*ci* 次) comprises the astral field (*fenyu* 分野) for the state of Jin;" also *Guo yu* 國語 (Conversations of the States) (Sbby ed.) 10.11b. Shi Shen 實沈 was the deity who controlled Shen; the legendary background is provided by the *Zuozhuan* (42.705B). For ancient astrological theory, see the *Zhou li* (Sbby) 26.9a-b; trans. Needham, vol. 3, p. 190. Schafer identifies "Shen" as the three great stars which, in the Western tradition, comprise the belt of Orion, and translates it as "Triaster" (*Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars*, p. 82; see also his section on "Disastrous Geography," p.75ff).

(8) THE GARDENIA ON THE NORTH WALL

A lovely tree faces the courtyard steps;
Frost and dew are powerless to injure it.
On massed gold fruit vermilion hues break through;
Reflecting the sun, to seem denser still.
Fortunately it can rely on the sun's declining rays;
The last light reaches its western-most limbs.
It longs to be reflected in the limpid waters - 1
No curved pool before your courtyard steps.
Its lingering brilliance is not yet over -
Late season's fruit appears wonderful.
Retaining its virtue when gathered in the basket;²
Your favour's extent truly cannot be known.

詠牆北梔子

有	美	當	階	樹
霜	露	未	能	移
金	黃	發	朱	采
映	日	以	離	離
幸	賴	夕	陽	下
餘	景	及	西	枝
還	思	照	淥	水
君	階	無	曲	池
餘	榮	未	能	已
晚	實	猶	見	奇
復	留	傾	筐	德
君	恩	信	未	質

1. Following the Baijing lou's lu 淥, "transparent," for the Xie Xuancheng shi ji's lu 綠, green.

2. Qing kuang 傾筐: a line from *Shijing* Mao #3 constitutes the earliest reference, "I did not fill my shallow basket." The qing kuang is a type of easily filled shallow basket" (*Shijing zhushu* 1/2.33).

Comment: This is Xie Tiao's longest yongwu poem (12 lines), and in many ways his most puzzling. Most difficult to interpret is the last couplet. This appears to lack a specific background reference which would give point to the piece in the manner of "The Dodder." One possibility is that 柘 refers to the mulberry instead of the gardenia. Needham labels this plant *Morus alba*, "Chinese or silkworm mulberry." He notes, "this word came to be commonly used for *Gardenia florida* but that should probably be 苞" (vol. 6, pt. 1, p. 153). (C.f. Smith-Stuart, p. 183, and Read, p. 21 #82). Donald Harper, in a discussion of various types of kuang, 匡 "canister," notes its connection with sericulture, and those primarily engaged in that occupation, women. References, from *Lushi chunqiu* and the *Shijing*, allow him to establish the kuang as "a natural feminine receptacle" filled with offerings; see "The Sexual Arts of Ancient China as Described in a Manuscript of the Second Century B.C." *HJAS* 47.2 (1987), pp. 570-75. The connection with mulberry leaves would support a reading along the lines of the translation, i.e. when picked, it continues to be/is of even more (fu 復) benefit. Sexual nuances surrounding basket metaphors in the *Shi jing* and associated with kuang in this and other early texts may be productive for interpretation here. As noted, the milieu of salon poetry is receptive to a variety of allusive and embedded references.

(9) THE QIN: SEVEN-STRINGED ZITHER¹

By Dong Ting lake a trunk worn by wind and rain;

At Long Men hill boughs neither alive nor dead.²

Cut and close-carved across its surface

Its strings sound a clear high plaint.

A spring breeze ripples through sweet clover;

An autumn moon fills Flowery Pool.³

This time they play "The Departing Crane"⁴

And the listeners' tears flow streaming down.

琴

洞庭風雨榦
龍門生死枝
雕刻紛布獲
沖響鬱清危
春風搖蕙草
秋月滿華池
是時操別鶴
淫淫客淚垂

1. Qin 琴 : refers to the seven-stringed zither, which is "a member of the widespread family of East Asian long zithers" (Frederic Lieberman, *The Chinese Long Zither Ch'in: A Study Based on the Mei-an Ch'in-p'u*, p. 13). Translators have recently tended to favour "zither," as closer in form to its western counterparts, over the preferred older version, "lute." See, however, van Gulik's defence of lute as a better cultural approximation (*The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, Preface, p. 2). For an extended study, see *ibid*; a concise description appears in the same author's *Hsi K'ang*, pp. 47-8; also Lieberman, quoted above.

2. The details of Xie Tiao's poem are assembled from a number of earlier literary sources. Among them, there is mention of paulownias at Lake Dong Ting in Cui Yin's 崔驎 (?-92) "Seven Inclinations" (CXJ 28.690); and the description cited earlier in Mei Cheng's "Seven Stimuli."

3. Hua chi 華池 probably refers to the legendary pool in the Kunlun mountain range, cited in Sun Zhuo's 孫綽 (314-371) "Fu on Roaming the Celestial Terrace" 遊天臺山賦 (Wen xuan 11.9a).

4. Li Shan has a note on the composition of the song Bie he 別鶴, "The Departing Crane," appended to Xi Kang's "The Qin:" "The Pointers to Understanding Cranes Book says, 'A crane may cover a thousand li in

a single flight.' Cai Yong's 'Tunes for the Qin' relates, 'Muzi of Shangling had been married for five years without issue. His father and elder brother wanted him to take a different wife. Muzi took up his zither and plucked it. He sang about parting cranes to express his sad resentment. This is why it is called 'The Departing Crane' tune (Wen xuan 18.19a-20b). Li Shan also provides the *Gujin zhu* longer and slightly different version of the story, which includes the following lyrics:

"About to be wrongfully parted, we who fly wing to wing -
parted to the sides of the sky.
Mountains and rivers far off, roads that are without end.
I gather up my skirts and do not sleep, forgetful of food."

Li Shan's text contains only the character *shi* 食 in the last line. I have added the two characters that appear in other versions of the *Gujin zhu* text, cited here in *Sbby* 2.1a; see also *Yuefu shiji* 58.844-45.

(10) THE BLACK LEATHER ARMREST¹

A twisted trunk, from which limbs spring;
How could it not be carved and shaped?
Modelled on the dragon-patterned tripod,²
Three-legged, it reveals a splendid form.³
Do not speak of the purity of white skins;
White sand is subject to mutation still.⁴
I offer a bent form of little use
May it support you, weary, to the feast's end.

烏皮隱几

蟠	木	生	附	枝
刻	削	豈	無	施
取	則	龍	文	鼎
三	趾	獻	光	儀
勿	言	素	韋	潔
白	沙	尚	推	移
曲	躬	奉	微	用
聊	承	終	宴	疲

1. Yinji 隱几 is an object for leaning against for support while seated; see references in the *Mengzi* 4/2.83, and the *Zhuangzi* (*Sbby*)

1.10a. Archaeological evidence shows that while the shape of the base may vary, an armrest was always curved to accommodate the body's contours; see the carved lacquer armrest, dated to the Warring States period, featured on the cover of *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 1957/9. A grey earthenware armrest found among funerary objects excavated at Sibancun 四板村, near modern Nanjing, is semi-circular and supported by three animal-like, bent legs. It is assigned to the Southern Dynasties period "after the Eastern Jin" (317-428) (Kaogu 1959/3, p. 157).

2. The armrest's three feet provide the basis for a comparison with the *ding* 鼎, a two-eared tripod which was frequently cast in bronze and engraved. (It is for this reason that I have taken the first of the following lines to refer to an exuberantly patterned exterior. But the description may refer to the tripods' glowing surface, reflecting colours from outside; see Knechtges' translation, *Wen xuan*, p. 179). The *ding* is associated with sacrificial rituals and with benevolent rule. Xie Tiao has in mind lines from Ban Gu's 'The Precious Tripods Poem,' 寶鼎詩 in "Fu on the Eastern capital:"

"The precious tripods come; profuse their patterning.
Their appearance glows, spread with dragon scroll."

(*Wen xuan* 1.31a)

The song refers to an event described in the Han records, when a tripod appeared on Mount Wangluo 王雒 and was presented to the Great Temple (*Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記 [Han records from the Eastern Tower], *Sbby* 2.2b; *Han shu* 2.109.).

3. Behind this line stands the image of a three-footed crow. Zuo Si's "Fu on the Wei Capital" 魏都賦 casts light on this poem:

"Nothing as black as the crow;
The three-footed one reveals its presence."

(*Wen xuan* 6.21a).

The first line is a direct quotation of Mao #41 (*Shijing zhushu* 2/3. 104). The second is clearly the predecessor of Xie Tiao's fourth line. The context emphasises the propitious nature of the creatures described in this section of the fu; see also Zhang Zai's 張載 (ob.ca.304) commentary (*Wen xuan* 6.21b).

4. Bai sha 白沙, "white sand," holds a reference to the Xunzi, "When white sand is mixed with alum it will cause it to turn quite black" 白沙在涅與之俱黑 (A Concordance to Hsun Tzu, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 22, p. 1, note 12). This sentence is reconstructed from sayings attributed to Xunzi which appear in other texts. Nie 涅, translated "alum," is shi nie 石涅. The name of this compound occurs three times in the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas), each time indicating a black substance; see *Shanhaijing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Classic of Mountains and Seas Collated and Annotated) 2.35, 5.156 and 159. Yang Shen's "additional notes" 補注 state that "alum may be used to dye substances black." Alum, or alunite, was used as a mordant to fix dye on another substance (Needham, vol. 3, p. 653, refers). Shi nie is also a synonym for graphite and an ancient term for coal (Read and C. Pak, *Chinese Materia Medica: A Compendium of Minerals and Stones* #57.c, p. 42 and #70 p. 49).

(11) THE MAT

It grows up by the ebbing, flowing sea;¹
 Last rays pick out its broken, serried lines.
 Where pollia carpets the sandbars,
 And lovage takes over secluded isles.²
 Encountering you, plucking and gathering;
 On the jade couch where the golden goblet is offered.
 One wish: to be swept by silken robes,
 And not cause the pale dust to collect.

席

木	生	朝	夕	池
落	景	照	參	差
汀	洲	蔽	杜	若
幽	渚	奪	江	蘿
遇	君	時	採	擷
玉	座	奉	金	危
但	願	羅	衣	拂
無	使	素	塵	彌

1. Following the YTXY, CXJ and Baijing lou reading of the initial character as *ben* 本, for the Xie Xuancheng shiji and Sbby version *mu* 木.

Chaoxi chi 朝夕池 refers to the sea. The Yiwén 佚文 (lost texts) section of the *Fengsu tongyi* has the explanation, "Some call the sea the pool of morning and evening" 海，一云朝夕池 (*Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu* 風俗通義校注 (Comprehensive Meaning of Customs), p. 580. See also CXJ 6.115).

2. *Jiangli* 江蘿 has been variously identified as a sweet-smelling plant similar to, and sometimes identified with, *miwu* 靡蕪, selinum, and as a green plant which grows in salt water - perhaps a type of seaweed known to modern botanists as gracilary. For a summary of early opinions, see the *Chuci buzhu* 1.4a-b. Knechtges has a comprehensive note in *Wen xuan*, vol. 11, p. 58 L. 70. In most of the earlier contexts in which it appears *jiangli* occurs in listings of fragrant plants (e.g. Sima Xiangru's "Fu on Sir Vacuous" and "Fu on the Imperial Park" 上林賦 [Wen xuan 7.19a and 8.4b]). Lu Ji's version of "On the Embankment" has "The *jiangli* grows on secluded isles; a scent too faint to proclaim itself" (*ibid.* 28.15a). In the present context, *jiangli* is paired with the sweet-scented pollia. I follow Knechtges' translation "lovage," after Hervouet's "liveche."

(12) THE BAMBOO BRAZIER¹

Snow in the courtyard swirls like blossom;
Ice in the well turns to gleaming jade.²
For its warmth the sable sleeve is placed upon it;
Embracing heat, it receives the fragrant quilt.
Though its form is dense, its function is to pass through;
Though its pattern slants, its nature will not warp.
It came from a village South of the River;
Slenderly swaying, tall and green.³
Receiving for a time your jade-white fingers,
May it give way to the first beams of the spring sun.

詠竹火籠

庭雪亂如花
井水粲成玉
因炎入貂袖
懷溫奉芳褥
體密用宜通
文邪性非曲
本自江南墟
嫵娟修且綠
暫承君玉指
請謝陽春樹

1. The zhu huolong 竹火籠, also the subject of a companion piece by Shen Yue, appears to be a kind of brazier complete with bamboo framework, over which garments and articles like quilts were draped, to air and absorb the fragrant fumes; see the *Shuowen jiezi*, under the entry gou 篝 5A.1943a-b.

2. YWLJ 70.1221 and YTXY 4.175 (Wu Zhaoyi's ed.) give bing 冰, "ice," for other versions shui 水, "water." It is not uncommon for the two characters to be confused in transcription.

3. The assonant compound pianjuan 嫵娟 is descriptive of bamboo. The first of "The Seven Remonstrances" 七諫 in the *Chuci* has:

"Graceful the tall bamboo which grows by the river deeps"

嫵娟之脩竹兮寄生乎江潭
Wang Yi's commentary states, "pianjuan refers to an attractive

appearance" (Chuci buzhu 13.3a); 嬈 and 便 are interchangeable (Ci tong 7.66).

(13) THE MIRROR STAND

Lines clear-carved like vermilion railings;¹
 Length looming like the Dark Watchtower.²
 The clear ice hangs from a phoenix pair;³
 The bright moon drops from flanking dragons.
 It gives back a powdered face; she dusts it with rouge;
 Places flowers in her hair, adjusts a cloud-like coiffeur.
 A lovely face stares - to what end - at itself.
 Always she fears the ending of his love.

詠鏡臺

玲瓏類丹檻
 苔亭似玄闕
 對鳳懸清冰
 垂龍掛明月
 照粉拂紅粧
 插花理雲髮
 玉顏徒自見
 常畏君情歇

1. Linglong 玲瓏. The compound may span a sense range from "clearly perceived" to "exquisitely wrought." Both senses would seem to be present here. The Jiyun 集韻 (Collected Rhymes) has "linglong means carved and engraved" 又瑠璃貌 Wang Yanshou's 王延壽 (fl.163) "Fu on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance at Lu" 魯靈光殿賦 contains the line, "And dragon rafters are carved and incised" (Wen xuan 11.18a; trans. Knechtges, 11, p. 271; 瑠 is interchangeable with 雕 [Ci tong 20.86-7]).

2. Xuan que 玄闕, "Dark Watchtower." Li Shan's commentary to Wu Zhi's 吳質 (177-230) "In Response to a Letter from the King of Dong A" 答東阿王書 cites the Sanfu jiushi 三輔舊事 (Ancient Events in the Three Capital Districts), which states, "On the north side of the Weiyang 未央宮 (Everlasting) Palace was the Dark Warrior Watchtower" (Wen xuan 42).

3. Following the YTXY, CXJ and Baijing lou's qing 清, "clear," for the Xie Xuancheng shiji's xian 倩, "lovely."

(14) THE LAMP

Emerald glints glance off the River of Stars;¹
Treasure stored on the crest of Mount Dang.²
Stretching up its stem like an immortal's palm,³
Its fire contained like the candledragon's.⁴
A flying moth making three or four circles;
Light petals, four or five deep.
I face it, alone with the evening's longings;
Vainly stitch by its light a dancing dress.

詠燈

發 翠 斜 溪 裏
蓄 寶 宕 山 鋒
抽 莖 類 仙 掌
銜 光 似 燭 龍
飛 蛾 再 三 繞
輕 花 四 五 重
孤 對 相 思 夕
空 照 舞 衣 縫

1. Xi 溪, standing for the River of Stars, signifies the Milky Way; YTXY has han 漢, which is a more common reading. For a comparable usage, see Xie Zhuang's 謝莊 (421-66) "Fu on the Moon" (Wen xuan 13.13a).

2. The Liexian zhuan 列仙傳 (Biographies of Various Immortals) has the following story: "Zhu Zhu and the Daoist priest climbed Mount Dang together. 'It is said that there is cinnabar in this place and many thousands of catties are there for the taking.' An official of the Mount knew about this and climbed up to take possession of it (an alternative reading of feng 封 might be "to block it off"). The cinnabar dispersed and flew about like sparks of fire" (Congshu jicheng xinbian 叢書集成新編 vol. 3347, 3.40).

3. Xian zhang 仙掌, "immortal's palm." The phrase appears in Zhang Heng's "Fu on the Western Metropolis" 西京賦:

"He erected immortals' palms on tall stalks
To receive pure dew from beyond the clouds"
(Wen xuan 2.12a; trans. Knechtges, p. 201).

The conceit envisages the candle or wick of the lamp as standing in a palm-shaped pan at the end of a supporting stem, like the huge statues of immortals holding pans for collecting the dew that was supposed to

confer immortality; these statues were commissioned for Emperor Wu of the Han (see Han shu 25A.1220).

4. The Shanhai jing 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) describes zhulong 燭龍, the candle dragon: "...to the north of the Red River are the Zhang wei mountains. In them live a mysterious creature which has the face of a man and the body of a serpent, and which is red all over...When it closes its eyes there is darkness and when its eyes open there is brightness...In this way it illuminates the Nine Dark Places. That is why it is called the candle dragon." (Sbby ed. 17.7a-b).

(15) THE CANDLE

Under gingko beams guests not yet scattered;

In Cassia Palace the light grows dim.

A faint glow from within the thin curtain;

Falling rays light a jewel-studded zither.

Wavering her hair mass's shadow;

Dazzling brilliant on filigree gold.

How, on an autumn-moon evening,

Could you leave me to my bedchamber's gloom?

詠燭

杏梁賓未散
桂宮明欲沈
暖色輕帷裏
低光照寶琴
徘徊雲髻影
灼爍綺疏金
恨君秋月夜
遺我洞房陰

1. Gui gong 桂宮: "Cassia Palace was built by Emperor Wu of the Han...The Record of the Three Qin Kingdoms 三秦記 [states that] Cassia Palace is situated to the west of the Tower of Soaking Waters (漸臺) in the Everlasting Palace. Within its precincts is the Hall of Radiant Brilliance (光明殿). Window and door screens are all made of gold, jade and the round and long varieties of pearl. Everywhere there are bright-moon pearls, gold stairways and jade steps. Day and night there is radiant brightness" (Sanfu huangtu 三輔黃圖 [Description of the Three Capital Districts] 2.5a-b); San Qin ji, in Zhi fu zhai congshu 9.12a).

ABBREVIATIONS

- BHIP *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* (Guoli zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan 國立中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊)
- BCGM *Bencao gangmu*
- BCJJZ *Bao Canjun ji zhu*
- CXJ *Chuxue ji*
- HJAS *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
- LS *Liang shu*
- NQS *Nan Qi shu*
- NS *Nan shi*
- Sbby *Sibu beiyao*
- Sbck *Sibu congkan*
- SSJZS *Shisanjing zhushu*
- YFSJ *Yuefu shiji*
- YTXY *Yutai xinyong*
- YWLJ *Yiwen lei ju*

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. *Working With Structuralism: Essays and Reviews on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature*, p. 74.

2. The scholarly background emerges in references in the course of this study, but it seems appropriate at this point to locate the thesis in relation to some currents of recent scholarship.

Kang-i Sun Chang's *Six Dynasties Poetry* reflects a renewal of interest in the period as a whole. Her chapter on Xie Tiao, subtitled "The Inward Turn of Landscape," includes some stimulating but unelaborated observations which made a significant contribution to this thesis. Some of these are identified in captions to sections of the present study.

An interest in the evolution of formal regulation in lyric verse, which goes beyond the emergence of tonal patterning, is observable in the work of Wu Xiaoping 吳小平. Wu provides valuable statistics and analysis in a series of articles that concentrate on formal aspects; see, in particular, his "Lun wuyan baju shi shi de xingcheng 論五言八句式詩的形成" (The Formation of Eight-line Pentasyllabic Verse), *Wenxue yichan* 2 (1985): 27-38; and "Lun wuyan lushi de xingcheng" 論五言律詩的形成 (The Formation of Pentasyllabic Regulated Verse), *Wenxue yichan* 6 (1987): 46-57.

A third element that bears directly on the concerns of this study surfaces in a dissertation that discusses the contribution of Yongming poet Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464-499) to the development of a new verse form. It was not until I had completed annotated translations of Xie Tiao's *yongwu shi* that I encountered Chou Chao-ming's Ph.D. dissertation, "Hsieh T'iao and the Transformation of Five-Character Poetry" (Princeton, 1986), which contains a chapter entitled "Circumscription and Versification in Poetry on Objects." The space afforded by Chou to translations of Xie's poems on things and the discussion of this chapter provide a context of support for my own views.

3. LS 49.690; also NS 50.1247. Chapter Four contains some dissection of the phrase in its context.

4. *Ibid.* For a translation of the whole passage, see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, Introduction, p. 12.

5. The *locus classicus* is the story of Ji Zha 季札, sent to the state of Lu 魯 to listen to the music of Zhou 周, and to gauge the political health of the various states from their music (*Zuozhuan* 左傳 [Zuo Commentary] Xiang 29; *Shi ji* 史記 [Records of the Historian] 31. 1452-3).

6. The phrase is elaborated in its context in the *Yue ji* 樂記 (Record of Music): "The music of disordered times is angry and resentful. [It signifies] deviant government. The strains of a dying state are sad, provoking troubled reflection (*Li ji* 禮記 [Record of Rites] 37.663B).

7. We will not find a reference in near contemporary writings which directly implicates the *yongwu* type but there is a relationship between accusations levelled by archaist critic Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469-530) against the literary directions of his own time and the characteristics of this subgenre. The point is discussed in Chapter Four.

8. Wen xuan 文選 45.21a. The Mao Preface 毛詩序 is usually invoked in discussions relating to literature although the earliest statement of the phrase shi yan zhi 詩言志 is located in the Shun dian 舜典 Chapter of the Shang shu 尚書 (Classic of Documents). This text poses problems of dating and interpretation in relation to the originating context. For the text, see *Shang shu zhengyi* (Shisanjing zhushu ed.) 3.19B; for a summary of dating problems, see Donald Holzman, "Confucius and Ancient Chinese Literary Criticism," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature*, ed. Adele Austin Rickett, p. 23, note 1. The question of how far to regard either text as expressing a theory of poetry is addressed by Aat Vervoorn in "Music and the Rise of Literary Theory in Ancient China," Occasional Paper, Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1987, p. 6-8.

9. The norm for the *yongwu shi* in the Southern Qi period is eight to ten lines, with the majority of poems on things conforming to the shorter standard.

10. Shen Yue's treatise is dissected in the first chapter.

11. It is specifically identified with the names of Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (?-712) and Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (?-ca.714); see Song's biography in the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New Tang History) 202.5751.

12. For displacement as a literary term, derived from Freudian psychology, see the chapter "Similarity and Contiguity," in Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics*, pp. 87-125.

13. After the manner of paradigms in the sciences; see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Vol.2, no. 2, p. 23.

14. The reign period of Xiao Ze 蕭蹟 (440-493), Emperor Wu 武 of the Qi. The name signifies "Eternal Brightness."

1. On *Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, p. 182.

2. This study considers only wuyan shi 五言詩, the five-character line form, as the mainstream predecessor of "regulated" verse.

3. Wang Li's 王力 *Hanyu shilu xue* 漢語詩律學 (A Study of Regulation in Chinese Lyric Verse), which concentrates on the individual features of regulation, followed by examples, remains the classic account of that process. Takagi Masakazu's 高木正一 (trans. Zheng Qingmao 鄭清茂) "Liuchao lushi zhi xingcheng" (The Formation of Regulated Verse in the Six Dynasties Period) in *Dalu zazhi* 13.9 and 10 (1956): 17-18 and 24-32, provides a detailed account from the Six Dynasties angle, including some useful statistics. Yu-kung Kao's article "The Aesthetics of Regulated Verse," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, is a stimulating recent study that considers formal characteristics in the context of a developing lyrical aesthetics, for the time span indicated by the title of the volume.

The High Tang (sheng tang 盛唐) is usually taken to coincide with the reign period of the Emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗, 712-756.

4. *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Song) 67.1778-9; also *Wen xuan*, 50.12a-15a. Shen's manuscript was submitted to Emperor Wu in 488. The discourse is referred to as "the postface" from this point on.

5. The bayin 八音 are the eight kinds of musical instrument, classified according to the eight orthodox sound-producing materials. These are referred to in *Shang shu* 3.42B, and listed in the *Zhou li* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou) as "metal, stone, earth, skin, silk, wood, gourd and bamboo" 金石土革絲木匏竹 (*Zhou li zhushu* [SSJZS ed.] 23.354B).

6. Xuan huang 玄黃, dark and yellow, stand for the colours of heaven and earth; see *Shang shu zhushu* 1.21A. The relationship envisaged in this context is discussed later in the chapter.

7. Gong and yu are, respectively, the highest and the lowest notes of the Chinese pentatonic scale. They are used as synecdoche to imply the full scale.

For the *Song shu's* hu jie 五節, "tempering" or "regulating each other," the *Wen xuan* text has chuan jie 銓節, which, while it retains the basic meaning, possesses a stronger sense of opposition.

8. In Chapter 33 ("Sheng lu" 聲律) of his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Dragon Carvings and the Heart of Literature), a chapter that examines the musical nature of literary composition, Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca.465-ca.522) uses different terms for what appears to be the same distinction and elaborates a little on Shen Yue's description: "The sound of the "sinking" chen 沈 tone (Shen's qie 切, "clipped") is cut off; with the "flying" fei 飛 tone (Shen's fu 浮 "floating"), the sound floats out on the air and there is no return effect." 沈則響發而幽, 飛則聲騰而不還 (*Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍注 (Commentary to Dragon Carvings and the Literary Mind), ed. and comm. Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, 7.552. There is still no consensus as to whether a distinction in terms of pitch, tonal contour or length is indicated. For a summary of modern scholarship, see Bodman, op. cit., pp. 123-5. In a recent

article, "A Note on Tone Development," S-Y. Wang, working from the connection between tones and "features which are controlled primarily at the larynx, e.g., voicing, aspiration, glottalization, length, breathiness, etc.," proposes a correlation between the two dimensions of pitch and voicing. Noting the partial correspondence between the traditional terms *qing* 清 and *zhuo* 濁 and modern concepts of "voiced" and "unvoiced," Wang goes on to propose a poetry distinguished by distinct pitch shapes related to voiced and unvoiced consonants. He bases his conclusions on the phonological analysis of two poems by Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), suggesting that "it is...more likely that [the poet's] perception was influenced by pitch shapes" [than consonantal features]. Wang points out that attention to voicing, and the occurrence of subsequent sound changes from voiced to unvoiced, have obscured the place of pitch in phonemic interpretation. See his article, in *Wang Li Memorial Volumes, English Volume*, pp. 435-443.

9. Lu Xiang's 呂向 (fl.723) *Wen xuan* commentary states, "A *jian* signifies a line" 一簡謂一行 (*Liuchen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 (Wen xuan with Six Commentaries) 50.18a).

10. There are several recent English translations of this postface. See Richard Bodman's dissertation, "Poetics and Prosody in Early Medieval China: A Study and Translation of Kūkai's *Bunkyo hifuron*," pp. 483-488, Wong Siu-kit's *Early Chinese Literary Criticism*, pp. 75-87 and Richard Mather's recent biography and critical analysis of Shen Yue, *The Poet Shen Yueh (441-513): The Reticent Marquis*, pp. 40-44.

11. *Song shu* 67.1779.

12. *NQS* 52.897.

13. *Ibid.* 52.898. For a full translation of the two letters, see Bodman, *op.cit.* p. 489-499 and Mather, who also provides a reconstruction of the debate (see the first chapter of his *Shen Yueh*, *op. cit.*, in particular pp. 46-54).

14. *Qiao li* 巧歷: the phrase holds a reference to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Sbby ed., 1.18b)

15. *NQS* 52.899-90; *NS* 48.1196-7.

16. For the *Shi pin*, see *Shipin zhu* 詩品注, ed. Chen Yanjie 陳延傑 (Annotated Version of *The Poets Graded*). The *Shi pin* is translated by John Timothy Wixted, "The Literary Criticism of Yuan Hao-wen (1190-1257)," Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1976. Scholarly consensus has it that the text was written no later than 517 (see E. Bruce Brooks, "A Geometry of the *Shr pin*," in *Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese Humanities*, ed. Chow Tse-tsung, p. 122, note 4). The dating of the *Wenxin diaolong* is also uncertain, but a combination of internal and extra-textual evidence indicates that the latest date for completion must have been 507 (Brookes, *ibid*).

17. *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 7.552-3.

18. Liu is innovative in the distinctions he perceives between externally produced notes (those produced by an instrument) and the sounds which issue from the heart. This observation provides the basis for adjusting the relationship between music and speech. To the originating primacy of the voice (see note 30, below), a voice that possesses its own sound scale, he adds the idea of the comparative difficulty of verbal expression. This passage precedes Liu's discussion of the tones. See *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 7.552.

19. NS 34.895. Zhou Yong is referred to in a passage (cited later in the chapter) from NQS and NS as "possessing an expert understanding of tones and rhyme" 善識聲韻. I follow Bodman (p. 116) in regarding the title of this lost work as conveying a determining relationship between tone and rhyme. See also the translation of Lance Eccles, "The Four Tones in All Rhymes," in his article "Tonal Prosody in Six Dynasties Poetry," *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 18 and 19 (1986-7), p. 41.

20. *Shi pin zhu*, p. 9. Mather, op.cit., p. 38-9, translates the passage and comments.

21. Shen's biography contains the phrase, "He also compiled the Register of the Four Tones" (LS 13.243; NS 57.1414).

22. I follow the common sinological practice of referring to the text by its Japanese name. References are to Wang Liqi's variorum edition, *Wenjing mifu lun jiaozhu* 王利器, 文鏡秘府論校注 (The Secret Repository of the Literary Mirror Collated and Annotated). "A Guide to the Four Tones" is spread across several texts and subsumed under new headings in the *Bunkyō hifuron*. The bulk of it, in the form of one long coherent section, appears as "An Essay on the Four Tones" (*Sisheng lun* 四聲論), Wang Liqi, pp. 73-111; trans. Bodman, pp. 229-60. Sections are also included, interleaved with those of other authors, in "Twenty-eight Kinds of Poetic Fault," Wang Liqi, pp. 400-48; trans. Bodman, pp. 267-361. Some background to Liu Shanqing is provided by Wang Liqi, pp. 74-5, note 1, and Bodman, p. 231.

23. Wang Liqi, op.cit., pp. 404, 407, 412 and 419.

24. Li Yanshou, writing in his *History of the Southern Dynasties* (see below), may have been the first to record the discrepancy between practice and theory. After Shen Yue's riposte to Lu Jue he places a comment to the effect that although Shen Yue's argumentation could not be faulted, his own compositions constantly deviated from his ideals (NS 48.1197).

25. Wang Liqi, op.cit., p. 419.

26. This example is also cited by Wu Xiaoping to make a similar point; see his article, "Yongming Tonal Theory," p. 208.

27. Wang Liqi, p. 404.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 407.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 412. The last line is a guess. The translation depends on the interpretation of yao 要. Liu Shanqing states the rule in the immediately preceding section: "The second and the fifth characters of a five-character line should not be in the same tone; this is 'wasp's waist.'" Commentators have observed that, unlike the first two faults, the third fault does not function as a precise organic metaphor (Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 comments that it has nothing to do with the name "wasp's waist;" cited Wu Xiaoping, see below). What it brings out, however, is the idea of a line sounding squeezed - like the impossibly slender waist of a wasp - between two identical tones. Whether or not it is possible to read yao in the Shen Yue quotation as encompassing the two characters that produce the "yao," the second and fifth, the meaning would appear to insist on a balanced contrast of sound within the line. Bodman, working from other instances of the character yao, provides three possible readings (op.cit., p. 286-7; see also his discussion of "wasp's waist," pp. 134-8). C.f. Wu

Xiaoping, who follows Liu Dabai 劉大白 in taking the fault to refer to the relationship between the third characters in the two lines of a couplet ("Yongming Tonal Theory," pp. 209-211).

30. Although many analysts have attempted to fit theory to examples of poetic practice, little quantitative analysis has appeared. Takagi's article, cited above, still provides the most comprehensive survey based on statistics for poetry of the Six Dynasties period; see also Bodman's consideration of the statistical evidence, with some conclusions of his own, p. 142-150. I am aware of only one study that examines a poetic sample for its observance of all the faults, Susan Bradford's M.A. thesis, "Shen Yueh (A.D.441-513): An Introductory Survey." (University of Auckland, 1983). From a sample of fifty-five works drawn from a broad range of Shen Yue's poems, Bradford finds evidence of a considerable degree of avoidance of all the prohibitions as identified in the *Bunkyō hifuron*. The individual results for each fault are not easily summarised without distorting what is already a selective survey. But it is worth noting that her findings coincide with other scholarly evidence in discovering a near total avoidance of the second fault, "raised tail." She concludes that the incidence of avoidance of tonal faults is considerably higher if Shen is recognised as employing alternation among all four tones in his poetry, rather than the level and deflected distinction of later theory. (The passage that first implies a distinction between the level tone and the other three occurs in "An Essay on the Four Tones" [Liu Shanqing citing Liu Tao 劉滔 {fl.547}]; see Wang Liqi, op.cit., p. 80; translated Bodman, p. 126).

31. NQS 52.898.

32. NS 48.1195.

33. *Shi pin zhu*, p. 9. They would appear to operate there as synecdoche for the gamut of faults,

34. Note 14 refers.

35. As far as I am aware, the only studies that isolate and discuss length in any depth are the two articles by Wu Xiaoping, "The Formation of Eight-line Pentasyllabic Verse," and "The Formation of Pentasyllabic Regulated Verse," cited in the Introduction, note 2.

36. An instance of the use of this term occurs in the excerpt from Lu Jue's biography, cited earlier; see also the discussion of the section "Other descriptions."

37. For a discussion of the place of music in that correlative repertoire, see Kenneth DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, No. 42, Chapters Four and Five.

38. *Sheng* also, of course, includes the sound of the human voice. See, for example, the first sentence of Liu Xie's "Sheng lu," "The origin of music (yin lu 音律, lit. patterned or regulated sound) can be traced to the human voice." 夫音律所始本於人聲者也 (Wenxin diaolong zhu 7.552). Shih, op.cit., p. 353.

39. The Yueji has, "when sound forms a pattern it is called yin" 聲成文謂之音 (Liji zhushu 37.663B). DeWoskin defines yin as "sound that is patterned or marked by virtue of being placed in an ordered context...Yin are sounds whose tonal features are recognised as significantly contrastive to each other...." (op.cit., p. 53; see also the comment that follows, on the Yueji passage).

40. *Shi pin zhu*, p. 9.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

42. Zhong Hong appears to be the first to mention the split between music and poetry, placing it after the time of the Three Ancestors (the three famous Caos 曹 of the Wei 魏 Dynasty), and therefore after the early years of the third century, and before his own times; see *Shi pin zhu*, p. 8-9. For a recent discussion of the process of separation which, amongst other developments, emphasises the role of the *fu*, see Aat Vervoorn, "Music and the Rise of Literary Theory," pp. 11-14.

43. What must have been among the earliest attempts to rationalise the discrepancy is that of Li Gai 李概 (ca. 554), who drew on the *Zhou li* for evidence that the note *shang* did not accord with the scale and was to be regarded along with the note *gong*, with which it shared the same pitch. Li concludes, "Would this not seem to prefigure [lit. "dimly" (an 闇) to accord with] this principle?" (cited Li Shanqing, in Wang Liqi, op.cit., p. 104; for Li Gai, see *ibid.*, p. 107-8, notes 19-20.

44. Ample precedent exists in classical texts to confirm the practice of what might be termed "non-literal substitution." Andrew Plaks' discussion in *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* is illuminating; see, in particular, Chapters Two and Three.

45. The spectrum of colour, as of sound, was also envisaged as a pentad, and tied to an array of correlatives within the cosmos and in the sphere of human behaviour. Mention of the pitch pipes, apprehended first as a series of twelve, might appear to throw up a number extraneous to the present context. But the pitch pipes embody an essential division between the six yin and the six yang pipes. ("According to their method of generation, the pitches were divided into six yin and six yang, respectively known as *lu* 律 and *lu* 呂" [DeWoskin, op.cit., p. 47.]). This example, therefore, also reinforces the idea of a play between the number two and larger numerical models. Twelve stands, with five and eight, as one of the primary numbers on which the musical system was based. The phrase represents music and musical number and then fades into the background, having no other significance in a poetic context.

46. *Wu chang* 五常 refers to the Five Constant Elements, alternatively translated "phases," namely water, fire, wood, metal and earth; these are also known as the *wu xing* 五行 (*Shang shu* 12.169A); In Chinese scientific thinking these five represent invariable principles of action and reaction that may be, and were, applied to all the important spheres of human existence. Here they translate into the properties that were thought to comprise the human personality. Although the whole gamut is present in each person, one element will "rule" or predominate. For a discussion, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 2, p. 262ff.

47. *Song shu* 67.1778.

48. Zhong Hong provides the confirmation of a near contemporary in his Preface to the *Shi pin*, "Five-character line verse is the form central to literary composition.." (*Shi pin zhu*, p. 4). See Wong Siu-kit (op.cit., p. 92) for a translation of this passage.

49. Shen's combination of a five-fold spectrum of colour with an eight-fold gamut of sound has for precedent a passage from the *Yue Ji*,

"When combined in a pattern, the five colours do not clash. When directed through the pitch pipes, the eight winds are not dissonant" 五色成文而不亂，八風從律而不戾 (Li ji zhushu 38.681B).

50. *Wen xuan* 17.5a. See also Achilles Fang bilingual text, "Rhyme prose on Literature: The *Wen-fu* of Lu Chi (A.D. 261-303)," *HJAS* 14 (1951), p. 537. The early date of the *Wen fu* makes it unlikely that the line refers to any specific tonal theory. Bodman, who uses Fang's translation, places a question mark after "sounds and tones." He notes, "This statement has often been interpreted as an early mention of tonal prosody, but I am more inclined to read it as a plea for the skillful alternation of alliterative or rhyming pairs of syllables, examples of which occur in the very lines quoted above: *d'iet d'ai* 迭代 and *siang siwan* 相宣" (op.cit., p. 114). Mather, p. 43, has "musical notes and sounds."

51. *Wen xuan*, *ibid.*

52. For a recent account of Xie Lingyun's place in the lyric tradition, see Kang-i Sun Chang's chapter, "Hsieh Ling-yun: the Making of a New Descriptive Mode," in her *Six Dynasties Poetry*, pp. 47-78.

53. See *ibid.*, pp. 64-9. In her article, "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry," the same critic interprets the compound *qiao gou* 巧構 in the writings of the early sixth century critics as a reference to parallel structuring, which lets in the possibility of a precise recorded recognition of Xie's contribution in that sphere; see *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp. 105-129. For the different kinds of parallelism employed by Xie, see the examples cited by Takagi Masakazu in his study of the beginnings of regulation in the Six Dynasties period, op.cit. The relationship between the exploitation of parallelism and the transformation of the old style *shi* is discussed in Chapter Four.

54. Note 16 refers.

55. See, for example, the controversy over the interpretation of "wasp's waist;" note 26 refers.

56. The dating of the *Bunokyō hifuron* texts, along with their attributions, is in many cases uncertain. What would appear to be the earliest among them are characterised by a relentless dissection of tonal and alliterative patterns. Later manuals continue to exhibit the same general priorities. But the impulse to refine theories that were established in principle had, by the High Tang period, or perhaps later, expanded into a more broadly exploratory activity. In two works attributed to the High Tang poet and critic Wang Changling, "Of Literary Form and Meaning" (*Lun wen yi* 論文意) and "The Seventeen Directing Forces" (*Shiqi shi* 十七勢), some interesting snippets, showing a greater awareness of overall structure, are to be found.

57. A recent comprehensive study of the examination system in the Tang period is Fu Xuancong's 傅璇琮 *Tangdai keju yu wenxue* 唐代科舉與文學 (Literature and the Tang Imperial Examinations). An examination *shi* is recorded which dates to the twelfth year of the Kai yuan 開元 reign period (724). By the Tian bao 天寶 period (742-755), *shi* as well as *fu* form a regular part of the examination prescription (Fu, pp. 169-71).

58. For the text of the two separately named sections that are thought to comprise the *Shige*, see Xu Tang shihua 續唐詩話 (Continuation of Talks from the Tang Dynasty), compiled Shen Bingxun, 沈炳巽 (1679-1737), 6.49-68. There are some major differences

between these two texts and those preserved in the *Bunkyō hifuron*. They would seem to represent a less well-authenticated, and probably later version of Kūkai's compilation. See Luo Genze 羅根澤 "Wang Changling shige kaozheng" 王昌齡詩格考證 (Textual Evidence for Wang Changling's Poetry Models), *Zhongguo gudian wenxue lunji* (1955): 69-75.

59. See the table of contents, Wang Liqi, op.cit., p. 1-2.

60. Kūkai's Introduction states of his encounter with the materials from which the *Bunkyō hifuron* was drawn, "Although there were numerous scrolls, the number of important points was not great. The same meanings went by different names and there was a lot of proliferating detail. I enjoy resolving difficulties and so I got out my pen to expunge all this repetition, in each case leaving a single term [under which each section was organised]" (Wang Liqi, op.cit., p. 15; also trans. Bodman, p. 167).

61. It is important to remember that in neither case are we talking about a continuous and connected critical development. In the introduction to his annotated translation of Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 *Jiang zhai shihua* 薑齋詩話 (Notes on Poetry from the Ginger Studio), Wong Siu-kit reminds us, "The practice of literary criticism was a continuous process in China, and theories were proposed from time to time. But the Chinese critics did not always write in order to be read; nor were they always aware of what had been said by their predecessors" (p.vii); my italics.

62. The insights contained in the two texts the *Lun wen yi* and the *Shiqi shi* can be further analysed to cast additional light on Tang compositional strategies. They offer the opportunity to build on the work begun by Bodman, and an interesting area of further research.

63. Chapter Four, "Formal pressures; octave forms," refers.

64. *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce*, p. 123. The rest of the sentence reads, "and hidden networks of meaning, suggestive of age-old practices of exclusion and exploitation, become visible."

65. See *Wenxin diaolong zhu*, 7.543-551, 7.570-586 and 9.650-655; Shih trans. p. 346-351, 360-367 and 436-443. More remains to be gleaned from an analysis of these chapters. The direction is broadly indicated in Wu Xiaoping's article "A Discussion of the Formation of Eight-line Pentasyllabic Verse," p. 29.

66. The histories are spattered with such phraseology. For example, see Lu Jue's biography, cited earlier; or the appearance of the same compound in Xiao Zixian's essay, placed at the conclusion of his chapter on literature (NQS 52.908).

67. LS 30.446.

68. *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 6.519-529; Shih trans. p. 318-325. Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, pp. 499-90, has a note on the translation of *tong bian*.

69. *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 6.520; see also Knechtges, translation and commentary, *Wen xuan*, Introduction, pp. 14-15.

70. The term applies, as noted, to the pitch pipes but possesses the basic meaning of regularity. For an idea of its spread of meanings in early classical texts, see the *Shuowen jiezi gulin* 說文解字詁林

(Collected Glosses to Script Explained and Graphs Explicated), compiled Ding Fubao 丁福保, 2B.829a-b. Needham (op.cit., vol. 2, p. 551) explores the etymology of the character for a connection between "the laws of sound and the laws of human lawgivers" and speculates that it may be discovered in the directions for music and ritual dance, conceived as a form of organisation to achieve a certain effect."

71. *Shuowen jiezi gulin*, 3A.944a-b.

72. *Ibid.*, 944b.

73. Wang Rong's surviving poems show experimentation on a number of fronts. For his corpus, see *Qi shi 齊詩* (in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩* [Poems of the Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties], compiled Lu Qinli 逯欽立, pp. 1385-1406. Wang's poems are discussed in Chapters Four and Five. That he was an aware and articulate innovator is allowed by Zhong Rong himself (see *Shi pin zhu*, p. 9). His precocity and literary ability emerges from anecdotes recounted in his biography. See NQS 47.817-825, especially p. 821-2.

74. *Shi pin zhu*, p. 7. The second occurrence of the term is located a few lines later, "And so literary composition has become so unnaturally restricted (*ju ji 拘忌*) that its real beauty is damaged" (p. 9).

75. LS 49.690; NS 50.1247. The character *yun 韻* frequently indicates not only end rhyme but the feature of consonance more generally.

76. For a different emphasis, see John Marney's translation of this passage, in "Emperor Chien-wen of Liang, 503-551: His Life and Literature," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 109.

77. LS 49.691; NS 50.1247; Yan Kejun 嚴可均, *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文*. (Complete Prose of Antiquity, the Three Dynasties, Qi, Han, the Three States and Six Dynasties), p. 3011.

78. NQS 35.625.

79. *Quan Liang wen*, p. 3011A. Zhong Hong also offers evidence of a swing of taste away from the broad canvases and leisured pace of the earlier master when he characterises Xie as *yidang 逸蕩* "revelling in drawn out expression" (*Shi pin zhu*, p. 19).

80. Wang Liqi, op.cit., gathers together a number of the earliest instances of the use of the term *lushi 律詩*; see his Introduction, p. 13.

81. *Xin Tang shu* 202.5751.

82. *Shuowen jiezi gulin* 13A.5817a-b.

83. *Ibid.*, 5817a. A passage from the *Zhou li* gives a meaning that applies to language; Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary defines *yue* as *yueshu 約束*. The context suggests control over content and length and a translation might read, "His words were careful and concise."

84. *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 10.694; trans. Shih, p. 481. The excerpt

has to be read in the framework of an earlier judgement by Yang Xiong 楊雄 (B.C.53-A.D.18), which it repeats with a minor change of phrasing (see *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏 2/82.88, ed. Wang Rongbao 王榮寶). A full translation would be prefaced by a phrase along the lines of, "Which illustrates the statement that..."

85. *Shi pin zhu*, p. 4.

86. Other examples, from Xiao Yi's 蕭繹 (508-554) "Preface to the Collection of Stone Inscriptions from the Inner Classics" 內典碑銘集序 and Liu Xiaozhuo's 劉孝綽 (481-539) "Preface to the Crown Prince Zhaoming's Collected Works" 昭明太子集序 are cited in Wu Xiaoping, "The Formation of Eight-line Pentasyllabic Verse," p. 29.

Ouyang Xiu's use of the term *yue*, some five centuries later, appears to be limited to the sense of a reduction of lines. Placed in the context of its own line, that reduced length is clearly implicated in the achievement of a standardised form.

87. John Marney has a good discussion of the salon milieu in the subsequent dynasty, the Liang; see the third chapter, "The Salon," of "Emperor Chien-wen of Liang," op.cit., pp. 78-104; also Kang-i Sun Chang, *Poetry of the Six Dynasties*, pp. 122-4.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. P. 124. The other half of the quotation captions the chapter that follows.

2. P. 122.

3. The energy of commentators for generic discussion seems to have been taken up with examining the relationship between the *Shi jing* songs and the *fu*, between the *sao* 騷 and the *fu*, and with the construction of literary lineages. The evolution of the genre, from the Han *fu* on, is either accommodated under that last idea (as in the pedigree-making of a Liu Xie) or acknowledged as a diversifying topical repertoire in the categories of anthologies (such as *Wen xuan*). On this, see He Peixiong's 何沛雄 summary of traditional methods of *fu* categorisation, "Cifu fenlei lueshuo" 辭賦分類略說 (A Brief Discussion of Ways of Categorising *Ci* and *Fu*), *The Youngsun* 32.9-10 (1968): 22-25. A section "Jin ren de fenlei" 今人的分類 (Modern Ways of Categorising the *Fu*) outlines some early to mid-twentieth century interpretations of traditional classification, but these simply return us to the point that attempts to supplement and update those perspectives in the Chinese tradition are rare.

In addition, there is the occasional direct mention of proliferating topics in literary discussions; see the Preface to the *Wen xuan*, cited later in the chapter, and Liu Xie's "Elucidating the *Fu*" (*Quan fu* 詮賦; *Wenxin diaolong zhu*, 2.135). Pre-modern commentators tend to follow along these lines; see, for example, the Preface to the *Yuding lidai fuhui* 御定歷代賦彙 (Fu of Successive Dynasties, Compiled under Imperial Command), ed. Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652-1736); preface, 1706.

Among more general modern studies, Obi Kōichi's 小尾郊一 *Zhongguo wenxue zhong suo biao xian de ziran yu ziranguan* 中國文學所表現的自然與自然觀 (Nature and Views of Nature Revealed in Chinese Literature), trans. Shao Yiping 邵毅平, refers to the *yongwu fu*. Background is also to be found in studies that deal primarily with the *shi* or *ci* 詞, such as Hong Shunlong's 洪順隆 "Liuchao yongwu shi yanjiu" 六朝詞詠物詩研究 (A Study of Six Dynasties 'Poems on Things'), in *Dalu zazhi* 56 (1978): 31-50; Stephen Owen's *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, pp. 281-93, and Grace S. Fong's *Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry*, pp. 78-9.

Examples of substantial studies that consider individual pieces are R.H. van Gulik's *Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute*, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Monograph 4, and William T. Graham's "Mi Heng's 'Rhapsody on a Parrot,'" *HJAS* 39.1 (June 1979): 39-54. Graham includes a short discussion that focuses on the features of the type (op.cit., pp. 51-2).

4. An intermittent presence can be traced in complete collections of Six Dynasties poetry. Most of these are mentioned in the article by Hong Shunlong referred to above, p. 10. Some are discussed in Chapters Three and Five.

5. The impossibility of tracing development within a related group of pieces on musical instruments, collected in *Wen xuan*, *juan* 17-18, led one commentator, van Gulik, to resort to the idea of "some earlier model that has not been preserved" (op.cit., p. 44). But a combination of fixed associations within the cultural tradition, a particular precedent in one earlier work, "The Seven Stimuli" (*Qi fa* 七發) of Mei Cheng 枚乘 (?-140 B.C.), and the existence of a well

established *fu* method would seem to account equally well for the phenomenon of pieces that follow a similar structural and thematic model, yet manifest the degree of independence from each other recognised by van Gulik. See the discussion of "Fu on the Panpipes," later in this chapter. Another explanation for pieces composed on identical or similar topics with pronounced likenesses to one another offers itself in terms of the social circumstances in which they were composed (see Suzuki Shūji 鈴木修次, *Kan Gi shi no kenkyū* 漢魏詩の研究 [Study of Han Wei Poetry] pp. 509-14; cited Gao Deyao 高德耀, "Cao Zhi de dongwu fu 曹植的動物賦 [Cao Zhi's Fu on Living Creatures], *Wen shi zhe* 5 (1990): 44-48).

6. With this judgement goes a weight of traditional discrimination, stemming from the disposition of the critical tradition to privilege the expression of interior preoccupations over what it perceives as primarily exterior. The introduction refers. Traces of this sort of discussion are scattered through the pages of *shi hua*. See, for example, the opening lines of Zhang Jie's 張戒 (ca. 1135) "Poetry Talks from the Hall of a Man in a Cold Season" 歲寒堂詩話, "Poetry before the Jian'an era, and Tao [Qian] 陶潛 (365-427) and Ruan [Ji] 阮籍 (210-263), was solely concerned with expressing what was on one's mind (*yan zhi*). After Pan [Yue] 潘岳 (247-300) and Lu [Ji], poetry became exclusively interested in depicting things (*yong wu*)...Expressing one's intent is a poet's fundamental task; depiction is secondary" (*Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編 (A Continuation of Poetry Talks From Successive Ages), compiled Ding Fubao 丁福保, p.450.

7. *Shi sou*, *Nei bian* 內編 4.72.

8. The character *liu* is sometimes used to indicate "genre." But, in the context of an introduction that emphasises a line of descent across generic boundaries, a more flexible rendering seems preferable.

9. *Siku quanshu*, vol.1216.619.

10. "The Silkworm" (can 蠶) is singled out but is probably intended to stand in as well, through synecdoche, for Xunzi's other four works in similar vein. For "The Orange Tree," see *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Supplementary Commentary to the *Chuci*), ed. Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1070-1135), p. 153-5; for the pieces from the Xunzi, see *Sbby* 18.6b-11a.

11. The section of the Xunzi in which this group appears is called the "*Fu pian*" 賦篇 (Fu Chapter). It has not been established whether the rubric was added as a description of the chapter contents by the Han editor of the Xunzi, Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 B.C.), or whether it was there from the start. If the title was present in the original text it would represent the earliest occurrence of the word *fu* used to describe a poetic genre. For a summary of attempts to translate the term, see Ronald Miao, *Early Medieval Chinese Poetry: The Life and Verse of Wang Ts'an* (A.D. 177-217), chapter 4, note 3, pp. 283-4.

12. Wang Yi 王逸 (ca.89-158 A.D.) comments, "Qu Yuan compares his own abilities and moral worth to the orange tree. He too differs from the ordinary" 屈原自喻才德如橘樹，亦異於衆也。Qu Yuan's authorship of the *Jiu zhang* is now generally discounted. David Hawkes provides a sensible summary of the question (*Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South*, p. 59-60). Hawkes remarks of the present poem, "The rather charming little poem about the orange-tree [is] presumably written in praise of a virtuous young man..." (*ibid*).

13. See the recurrent thumb-nail characterisation, cited in Qu Shuiyuan 瞿蛻園 ed. *Han Wei Liuchao fu xuan* 漢魏六朝賦選

(Selections of *Fu* from the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Period), "Generally speaking...the emphasis in Xunzi's *fu* is on discursive exposition" (Introduction, p. 1).

14. "The Orange Tree" is referred to in Chapter Three. One of Xunzi's riddles, "The Needle," is considered in detail in Chapter Five.

15. Most modern accounts that touch on the *yongwu shi* seem to stop short at defining its relationship with the *yongwu fu*. Among other factors, it appears that some critics are put off by the prosodic differences that separate the two genres; see, for example, Yang Hsien-ching's judgement, "Suffice it to say that, generically, it [the *yongwu fu*] probably has closer affinity with the prose form than with a regular lyric poem" ("Aesthetic Consciousness in Sung *Yung-wu-tz'u* [Songs on Objects]," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1988, p. 43, note 49). Usually examples of *yongwu fu* are simply listed as general antecedents of the *shi* type. Hong Shunlong, in a section headed "The Influence of *fu* on objects on *shi* on objects (the development of literary types)," goes further: "Not only were subject matter and language carried over into the Six Dynasties *shi*, but the artistry demonstrated in these works and their structure were also of a piece" (op.cit., p. 11). Obi Kōichi also acknowledges a derivative relationship: "My own opinion is that the topics that had been popularised in the *yongwu fu* naturally entered the repertoire of the *yongwu shi* when the *shi* began to flourish" (op.cit., p. 304).

16. "Fu on the Wind" appears in *Wen xuan* 13.1a-4a; trans. Burton Watson, *Chinese Rhyme-Prose; Poems in the Fu Form from the Han and Six Dynasties Periods*, pp. 21-4. For "Fu on a Flute," see the *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 (Garden of Ancient Literature) in *Dainan ge congshu* 岱南閣叢書 1.5a-6b.

17. Liu Dabo, "Song Yu *fu* bianwei" 宋玉賦辨偽 (Considering the Authenticity of Song Yu's *Fu*), *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, Supplement to 17 (1927): 101-7 and Lu Kanru 陸侃如在 "Song Yu ping zhuan" 宋玉評傳 (An Assessment of Song Yu's Biography) are the strongest critics of traditional dating and attribution. Yan Kejun is representative of another scholarly strand which queries the authenticity of certain works in a corpus it seems otherwise to accept. Yan remarks of "The Flute:" "This is not written by Song Yu. Nonetheless it has been included in his works since before the Sui and Tang periods. Its history of mis-attribution is longstanding and I see no need to omit it" (*Quan shanggu Sandai wen* 10.75). Lois Fusek, in "The 'Kao-T'ang *fu*,'" *Monumenta Serica* 30 (1972-1973): 392-425, provides a "chronology of the Song Yu tradition" and considers the central figure in terms of a topos or theme, pointing up its connection with the rhetorical tradition as exemplified in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Intrigues of the Warring States). (Similar ideas are floated, though in a more preliminary way, in the concluding section of Liu Dabo's article [p. 107].) For additional material, see the bibliography appended to Fusek's article.

18. The *Xijing zaji* has been subjected to a great deal of scholarly scrutiny and well-founded doubts have been cast on its supposed author, compiler and date. For the text, see the *Sibu congkan* 4.3a-5a. A discussion of this work is deferred until the following section, awaiting the establishment of a mainstream model.

19. For the "Owl *Fu*," see *Wen xuan* 13.16a-20a; trans. James Robert Hightower, "Chia Yi's 'Owl *Fu*,'" *Asia Major*, n.s. 7.1-2 (1959): 125-30, and Watson, op.cit., pp. 25-8.

20. Xing is one of the Six Principles (liu yi 六義) listed in the "Mao Preface," or "Great Preface," to the Shi jing (Wen xuan 45.21a). For a summary of Six Principles scholarship, see Knechtges, Wen xuan, p. 74, note to lines 29-36. Zhu Ziqing's 朱自清 (1898-1948) Shi yan zhi bian 詩言志辨 (Analysing the expression "Shi yan zhi") contains a classic modern discussion of the terms fu, bi 比 and xing. Among the most recent and stimulating of modern accounts is Pauline Yu's "Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Classic of Poetry," HJAS 43.2 (1983): 377-412, rpt. with some alterations in her "The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition," pp.44-83.

21. There seems no good reason why the terms bi and xing, mentioned with fu in the Great Preface, should not also be flexibly identified and applied beyond generic boundaries. In this connection, see Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, "The Han fu also contains examples of both bi and xing," 而漢賦則體兼比興 in "A Brief Discussion of Western Han Literature" 西漢文學論略, especially pp. 353-57 (Zhongguo wenxue lunji 中國文學論集 [Collected Essays on Chinese Literature]); and Dore J. Levy's, "a critical principle need not be defined by a literary genre, and may indeed transcend the notion altogether" ("Constructing Sequences: Another Look at the Principle of Fu 賦" "Enumeration," HJAS, 46.2 (1986), p. 493.

Support for the immediate interpretation comes from the collation notes to the Wen xuan of He Zhuo 何焯 (1661-1722): "I would say that fu on "things" (fu wu 賦物) belongs in type with the three principles, fu, xing and bi. The owl is an example of xing, the parrot of bi and the dappled horse of fu. In a word, we need not go beyond the Six Principles to define these types" (He Yimen pingdian Zhaoming Wen xuan Li Shan zhu 何義門平點昭明文選李善注 (Wen xuan with Commentary by Li Shan, including He Yimen's Critical Comments), Ye Shufan 葉樹藩 (n.d.). Preface dated 1772. He's notes, printed in red, appear at the head, and in the margin, of Ye's text. This comment is made apropos of Mi Heng's 彌衡 (ca.173-98) "Fu on a Parrot" (Yingwu Fu 鸚鵡賦), referred to later in the chapter. The dappled horse comes from a piece of the same name by Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384-456); see Wen xuan 14.1a-8a). The reference is cited in Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄, trans. Yin Shiqu 殷石月, Fu shi dayao 賦史大要 (Outline History of the Fu), p. 42.

22. Whether or not a work was regarded as personal expression provided grounds for both generic and subgeneric distinction. On the derivation of the "personal" fu see Chen Tingzuo 程廷祚, "Sao fu lun" 騷賦論, in Jinling congshu ed. (vol 62, 20.12-14); and Levy, pp. 485-491. Some modern analysts revise the terms a little, to imply a criticism of the early Han type for its failure to inject a personal voice; see, for example, Cao Daoheng's 曹道衡 essay, "On the Expressive 'Smaller Fu' of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties," (Zhonggu wenxue shi lunwen ji 中古文學史論文集 [Collected Essays on the History of Medieval Literature], pp. 1-26. The expressive-descriptive distinction is a theme that slips in and out of this study.

23. Probably the most common distinction is that between da 大 "longer" and xiao 小 "shorter" fu." The first term applies to the much longer "capital," "hunt" or "journey" type of fu. Xiao is generally associated with the lyric fu and with yongwu versions of the type. The pair also carry the evaluative judgement of "major" and "minor." Levy, *ibid.*, p. 486 and note 42, is useful on fu classification. In Western interpretation, Knechtges has dubbed the longer type that employs descriptive amplification for rhetorical purposes "epideictic;" Mei Cheng's "Seven Stimuli" remains the most striking example here (See *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung* [53 B.C.- A.D. 18] p.32). The term has been more generally adopted in

Western critical writings.

24. On the general question of the fu's descent from the *Chuci*, see Cheng Tingzuo, op. cit. The primary source is Ban Gu's *Yi wen zhi* 藝文志 (Treatise on Bibliography), in the *Han shu* 漢書 30.1747-8.

25. See, for example, Cai Xiongxiang's 蔡雄祥 remark that Wang Bao "brought the *yongwu fu* to completion" 是詠物賦的完成者 (Wang Bao *ji qi zuopin* 王褒及其作品 (Wang Bao and his Works), Xue Cui, 19.6 (1977), p. 16); or Obi Kōichi, "Wang Bao's 'Fu on Panpipes,' which is recognised as a '*yongwu fu*,' is much more obviously [than earlier fu] a descriptive composition written in the *yongwu* manner (op.cit., p. 20).

The instrument that is the topic of Wang Bao's work is described in Li Shan's *Wen xuan* commentary. Citing the *Han shu*, it states that *dong* means hollow, that *xiao* indicates that the instrument has "no bottom" (*wu di* 無底), indicating that it was un-stopped or unsealed at the end, hence its name. The *Shiming* 釋名 (compiled in the Later Han by Liu Xi 劉熙) characterises the sound of the instrument as dignified or solemn (*su* 肅). Li Shan goes on to state that the larger variety of the instrument comprised twenty-three tubes...and the smaller, sixteen tubes... (Wen xuan 17.10a-b). But his mid-seventh century commentary cannot be used as definitive identification of the instrument described by Wang Bao. Walter Kaufmann assembles information on members of the *xiao* family in a section entitled "Hsiao and P'ai-Hsiao" (the latter refers to the Chinese pan-flutes) in *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*, p. 118-122. Of the *dong xiao* he concludes, "During and after the Han period the name *tung-hsiao* was applied to both, single tube and pan-pipes, but the concept of the single flute predominated." Kaufmann does not say what his last statement is based on. Knechtges, on the other hand, replaces his earlier translation "flute" (in *The Han Rhapsody*, p. 42) with "panpipes" in his later *Wen xuan* (p. 366, note to line 362, and 367). I cannot find any indicators in the text that cast light on the problem of whether the instrument was a single pipe or a raft of tubes. My translation opts for the second version.

26. The pieces from Xunzi's *Fu pian* also place their object topics centre-stage but, despite nomenclature and the pedigrees traced by early theorists, their connection with the Han fu generally is tenuous. Some modern scholars have dismissed it. See, for example, Hightower's judgement, "The riddles in rhyme of the "Fu p'ien" of Hsun tzu have nothing in common with the fu genre of Han times" ("The Wen Hsuan and Genre Theory, *HJAS* 20.3-4 [1957], p. 519, note 28), or Cao Daoheng: "The *Fu* Chapter's...literary worth is not high and it had little effect on subsequent literary creation" (*Wenxue pinglun conkgan* 3 (1979), p. 4, rpt. *Collected Essays*, p. 4). Others acknowledge a loose connection. Knechtges, for example, refers to the riddles as "the antecedent for the lengthy descriptive fu of Han times" (*The Han Rhapsody*, p. 21). The remark cited earlier about the emphasis in Xunzi's fu being on discursive exposition provides a basis for distinction in terms of aim and approach. Some formal similarities between the pieces from the Xunzi and the fu generally are noted in Chapter Five. That chapter also discusses their impact on the structuring of *yongwu shi*.

27. The immediate link is with Mei Cheng's "Seven Stimuli;" the text is in *Wen xuan* 34; for a consideration of this work, see Knechtges and Swanson, "Seven Stimuli for the Prince: The Ch'i-Fa of Mei Ch'eng," *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970-71): 99-116, and Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady*, pp. 186-211. Knechtges, in this article and in *The Han Rhapsody* (p. 30), emphasises the rhetorical antecedents. Frankel brings out the incantatory aspect. The case for

the specific influence of Han incantatory literature on one fu is convincingly detailed in Donald Harper's "Wang Yen-shou's Nightmare Poem," *HJAS* 47.1 (1987): 239-83. Harper suggests that such literature was part of the background of this poetic type, and has links through naming - the use of the same character, *ci* 辭 "word," to introduce incantations and as part of the term by which the fu was also known, *cifu* 辭賦 (pp. 277-82). Links with the *Chuci* are apparent in the idea of language as enchantment and language as exorcism. Waley seems to have been the first Western commentator to note this; see *The Temple and Other Poems*, p. 17. Hawkes has a substantial discussion in "The Quest of the Goddess," in Birch, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, pp. 42-68.

28. The meaning here would seem to be that unusual or arresting compositions (*qi wen* 奇文) were required to stimulate the Prince out of his lethargy.

29. *Han shu* 64B.2829. For another translation, see Frankel, *The Flowering Plum, and the Palace Lady*, p. 203.

Gui ren 貴人: Charles Hucker's *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, entry 3371, has: "Worthy Lady. In the later Han, a collective designation of one group of imperial wives ranking just below the empress." The later Han is, of course, the period immediately following Wang Bao's time.

The *Han shu* has *Ganquan ji Dongxiao song* 甘泉及洞蕭頌 (lit. "Sweet Springs" and "Panpipes Eulogy"). Elsewhere "The Panpipes" is classified as a fu (YWLJ 44.791; *Quan Han wen* 42.354). For "Sweet Springs" Yan Kejun has *Ganquan gong song* 甘泉宮頌, "A Eulogy on the Sweet Springs Palace" c.f. the *Wen xuan* reference; for the text and Yan's note, see *Quan Han wen* pp. 358b-359a.

30. The connection is constantly affirmed in the *Yueji*; a concentration of references occurs in Chapter 37 (*Liji zhushu* 66-67). The *Yiwen leiju*, which includes Wang Bao's fu in a section entitled "Xiao" 蕭, collects a group of early texts that provides a smattering of information on the xiao, an instrument that probably stands in an antecedent relationship to Wang Bao's *dong xiao*, though until doubts as to the nature of this instrument also are resolved, we can only speculate (Kaufmann, op.cit., refers). YWLJ assembles a pedigree of an instrument associated with ancient ritual, the sages, and auspicious creatures (the phoenix), an instrument that continued to be enjoyed in a court context. The following excerpt from a *Shang shu* text evokes something of the quality of the sound of pipes and flutes (*xiao guan* 蕭管): "Now they prepare to play. Pipes and flutes are raised in readiness. Sonorously sounding, solemn and harmonious, according with birdsong" (YWLJ 44.790; it should be noted that this passage does not appear in standard indexes). Wang Bao clearly capitalised on the venerable associations recorded here.

31. In the Six Commentaries text of the *Wen xuan*, Tang commentator, Lu Yanji 呂延濟 (n.d.) inserts the sentence, "Bao found the sound of the panpipes clear and awe-inspiring (*qing* 清 and *su* 肅) and so composed this fu" 褒以肅音響清肅為此賦 (Liuchen zhu *Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 17.10a). The adjectives *qing* and *su* crop up in early descriptions of the panpipes (see *Yiwen leiju*, preceding note), as part of the descriptive repertoire of a refined and orthodox music. Their use in this context, though predictable enough, may reflect a defensive element: the desire to signal seriousness of purpose in a work that, from a later vantage point, might seem to promise extensive physical description and little else. Lu's addition can be read as a reminder of the presence of an ethical dimension in musical topics generally and in this work in particular.

32. Mention of blind musicians occurs three times in Chinese

classical texts (see the section entitled "Blind Musicians" in Kaufmann, op.cit., p. 71). In a note to one reference, Legge remarks, "By 'the blind' we must understand the musicians who were employed in antiquity because of their blindness, their loss of the sense of sight being supposed to sharpen that of hearing (*The Shoo King*, p. 166, note 167). The *Guo yu* 國語 (Conversations from the States) refers to kinds of blindness in the following passage: "And so the Emperor when attending to affairs of state had his Dukes and his Ministers, down through the hierarchy, offer their advice in lyric form; he had blind musicians perform their songs, Administrators present their documents, advisers their admonitions, the sightless *fu*, other unsighted music-makers chant their criticisms..." Wei Zhao's 韋昭 (204-273) (Three States, *Wu* 吳) commentary indicates that the nature of the affliction determined the particular musical duty: "Those without vision are called *gu* 瞽; these are the music masters...Those who lack the pupils of their eyes are known as *sou* 瞶; these declaim the lyrics offered by the Dukes, Ministers and the various officials...Meng 蒙 refers to those who possess pupils but cannot see; in the *Zhou li* (or in *Zhou ritual*) these are responsible for putting indirect criticisms to music and into song; these last refer to admonitions and advice" (*Zhou yu* 周語 [Conversations from the State of Zhou] 1.5a). Also trans. Burton Watson, *Chinese Rhyme-Prose*, Appendix 1, p. 118.

33. *Wen xin diaolong zhu* 2.135.

34. *Yu ye* 玉液, literally "precious liquid," is further defined by Lu Yanji as *qing quan* 清泉, "clear spring" (*Liu chen zhu Wen xuan* 17.16a).

35. *Wen xuan* 17.10b-11b. Knechtges offers a partial translation of the introductory section to "...er zhu yuan" 而對淵 in "The Han Rhapsody" (p. 42-3) and mentions an unpublished translation (p. 127, note 116). He comments, "The language of the poem is extremely difficult and abounds with *impressifs* and other expressions that elude the linguistic acumen of Li Shan and other commentators of *The Literary Selections*" (p. 42). His Introduction to *Wen xuan*, Volume Two (pp. 1-13), enlarges on the difficulties of translating descriptive binomial compounds. Several examples illustrate the dangers of departing from the *Wen xuan* commentaries. No matter how imprecise, these remain the most reliable toe-holds, and provide the basis of the present attempt.

36. Van Gulik, in the introduction to his translation of Xi Kang's 嵇康 (223-262) *Qin fu* 琴賦 (Fu on a Zither) identifies the origins of this topos. It is "inspired by the ancient cosmic interpretation of music: music itself is part of living nature, and the very materials of the instrument that produce it are saturated with its mysterious fluidum. More than in other things this mysterious force manifests itself in mountains and water..." (*Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute*, p. 44). The story of zither master, Bo Ya 伯牙, his mind on mountains and rivers, or playing among remote mountain scenery for the friend who alone could understand his meaning, encapsulates some of these elements. (op. cit., p. 44; note 3, above, refers). The story is told in the *Liezi* 列子 5.16a-b. It is translated by Angus Graham in *The Book of Lieh-tzu: A New Translation*, cited in Frankel, op.cit., p. 40.

37. Van Gulik speculates: "...it seems improbable that Wang Pao's essay was an entirely original composition, which was imitated by Ma Yung, whose work in turn was copied by Hsi K'ang. It is far more likely that all three, to a certain extent independently, followed some earlier model that has not been preserved" (*Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay On The Lute*, p. 44; note 5 refers). In this connection,

the striking similarities between a section of Mei Cheng's "The Seven Stimuli" and the later compositions should be noted. See *Wen xuan* 34.3b-4b. Lines 96-132, which comprise the 'First Stimulus,' hold an outline and divisions of topic which "Fu on Panpipes" appears to build upon and amplify.

38. See, for example, the evidence of the texts collected in *Yiwen lei ju* (note 30 above).

39. The most influential primary sources are the *Zhou li*, which mentions *fu* as one of the six aspects or techniques of song taught to court musicians by the Grand Music Master (*Da shi* 大師) (*Zhou li zhushu* 23.35); the Mao Preface to the *Shi jing*, in which *fu* is referred to as one of the Six Principles (note 20 refers); Ban Gu's "Monograph on Literature," in his *Han shu* 30.1755-6, which supplies the first real background to the term. *Fu* is glossed as *pu* 鋪, "to spread out," "set forth," "display," in Zheng Xuan's commentary to the *Zhou li*. This is also the term employed by Liu Xie to describe the poetic principle, in the "Elucidating the *Fu*" chapter of the *Wenxin diaolong* (*Wenxin diaolong zhu* 2.134).

Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, p. 12, provides some etymological background. In *Wen xuan*, p. 92, note 1, he notes that, "Strictly speaking, the Rites of Zhou and "Mao Preface" notion of *fu* is not generic. It is rather a term for a rhetorical mode or a recitation technique that involves direct narration." The historical relationship between trope and genre is unclear, the situation aggravated by problems to do with the dating of some of the theoretical texts referred to above. The connection between the *Songs* (a poetic context that is certainly far older than the genre) and the statements of the Great Preface gives rise to the notion that the enunciation of the principle precedes the emergence of the poetic type. In a roundabout way, that picture is reinforced by the historian's impulse to place the *fu* in line of descent from the ancient *Songs*. Ban Gu provides the earliest statement of lineage: "Someone has said, 'The *Fu* is descended from (*liu* 流) the ancient *Songs*" (Preface to "Fu on Two Capitals" 兩都賦 *Wen xuan* 1.1a). (On the interpretation of the character *liu*, see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, p. 92, note 1; c.f. Levy, op. cit., p. 474). There is good reason to think that the process worked the other way; that the appearance of the genre preceded the formulation of the principle and that to think of the genre as an illustration of the principle enshrined in the Mao Preface is probably mistaken (Nakashima Chiaki 中島千秋, *Fu no seiritsu to tenkai*, pp. 38-41, and *The Han Rhapsody*, p. 123, note 11 refer). 賦の成立と展開.

Dore J. Levy, op. cit., focuses on the difference between the poetic principle and the genre. Working from the idea that much of the confusion, in Western exegesis at any rate, arises from the tendency to translate the principle *fu* as "narrative," she argues in favour of another interpretation, "enumeration." While Levy's major interest lies in freeing the principle so that it can be seen to be reinstated across generic boundaries, her argument is of considerable interest both in reconciling trope and genre in a versatile definition and in accommodating subdivisions of the genre also. See, in particular, her remark that "The principle is thus able to encompass such apparently diverse structures as a list of animals or plants, an expository statement as to the elements of a given situation, a parade of historical figures and their actions or attributes, and a chronology of events leading to an individual crisis" (*ibid.*, p. 478). This kind of definition would supply a reason why commentators discussing the history of the type seem to have seen no need for specification beyond a mention of proliferating topics. Note 3 refers.

40. The sequencing contingent on the description of an event,

particularly apparent in "journey" *fu*, has affinities with the narrative mode but the *fu* cannot be regarded as narrative in its primary impulses. See Levy, who cautions against equating the sequencing techniques of the Chinese tradition with the driving forces of Western narrative poetry (op.cit., pp. 472 and 485).

41. Hawkes warns against attempting to account for the development of the *fu* in terms of any one approach. He points out a complete lack of connection between notions of *fu* as a development of rhetorical traditions on the one hand, and shamanistic traditions on the other. Hawkes contends that the "orderly enumeration of parts of a cosmos" evident in shamanistic literature, including parts of the *Chu ci*, had a considerable influence on the Han *fu* as a precedent for structuring the work ("The Quest of the Goddess," pp. 62-68). His point is relevant to the interpretation of the *yongwu* as well as the panoramic type of *fu*.

42. For example, in "Fu on Panpipes" the sequence in which the sections are ordered is designed to allow the idea of transformation to emerge; see the discussion that follows.

43. In He Peixiong ed. *Yucun fuhua* 雨村賦話, p. 1. Yucun is Qing scholar Li Tiaoyuan's (1734-1803) hao 號, "style" name.

44. Op.cit., pp. 16 and 17.

45. Knechtges trans. *Wen xuan*, Preface, p. 77.

46. P. 5.

47. The sections of the *Wen xuan*, referred to above, offer some corroboration. The increasing popularity of the type is attested to by the scope and number of the *yongwu fu* assembled in that would-be exhaustive collection, the *Lidai fuhua*.

48. I refer to the process in which line length was normalised in the direction of a four/six format and prosody overall was subjected to an increasing regulation. In traditional accounts, that development is subsumed under the two expressions *pai fu* 排賦 and *pian fu* 駢賦, terms which may be taken to refer to a more highly worked surface generally, but which envisage the nub of that development as a more thoroughgoing use of parallelism. Yuan anthologist Zhu Yao 祝堯 (jin shi 1318) seems to have been the first to employ the concept of *pai* as a criterion in the arrangement of categories of *fu*. Other anthologists followed suit. Zhu identifies Lu Ji and his third century contemporaries as the first to employ the style consistently, "If you look at 'Fu on Literature' and similar compositions by Shiheng [Lu Ji] and others of his generation, they make full use of parallelism" 觀士衡輩文賦等作全用排體 (Gu fu bianti 古賦辨體 [Analysing the Style of the Ancient Fu] 5.3b). Ming scholar Xu Shiceng 徐師曾 puts the beginnings of the *pai fu*

type a little earlier, "During the period of the Three States, the two Jin Dynasties and down through the Six Dynasties [the fu] changed again and became the pai fu" (Wenti ming pian 文體明辨 [Clarifying the Analysis of Types of Literature]). Suzuki Torao has a chapter illustrating this development, op.cit., pp. 91-162.

49. Located in Wen xuan chapters 13, 14, 17 and 18.

50. P. 181.

51. Sbck 4.3a-5a. The texts of the seven fu mentioned in the passage are also included. Some appear to be incomplete.

52. For another interpretation, see the following paragraph.

53. Wang Er 王爾 and Gongshu Ban 公輸盤 are craftsmen of legendary skill who are mentioned together in Huainanzi 淮南子 (Sbby ed.) 8.2a; for Gongshu Ban, see also Mengzi 孟子 7.1a, and Mozi 墨子 13.8bff. Chapter Three, note 6, refers to Gongshu Ban.

54. Sibü congkan 5a and Quan Han wen 19.233.

55. Un Poète de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siang-jou, p. 166. Also William H. Nienhauser, "An Interpretation of the Literary and Historical Aspects of the Hsi-ching tsa-chi (Miscellanies of the Western Capital)," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1972, pp. 101-3.

56. Han shu 47.2210.

57. The Weishu tongkao 偽書通考 (A Thorough Investigation of Works of Doubtful Authenticity), pp. 649-59, and Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao 四庫全書總目提要 (Annotated Full List of the General Catalogue of the Imperial Library), 140 (zi bu 子部 50), set out the evidence. For a bibliography that includes both traditional interpretations and more recent discussions of the Xijing zaji, see William H. Nienhauser op. cit., updated in his article, "Once Again the Authorship of the Hsi-ching tsa-chi (Miscellanies of the Western Capital)," Journal of the American Oriental Society 98 (1978): 219-36.

58. See Yu Jiayi, Siku tiyao bianzheng 四庫提要辨證 (Critical Comments on the Catalogue of the Imperial Library Collection), p. 1003-1013.

59. Ibid., especially the following conclusions: "We know from this that his book could not possibly have been made up out of nothing by authors of the Six Dynasties period" (p.1012); "This book is certainly not the unaided work of Ge Hong. It is put together from a variety of texts, selected from different quarters. It does not emanate from one hand" (p. 1013). These points are also well illustrated by Yu's concurrence with the remarks cited in the next paragraph.

60. Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717-1796), "Tracing the Origins of the Xijing zaji: A Newly Published Work," in Baojing tang wen ji 抱經堂叢書 (Collected Writings from the Hall of Embracing the Classics), (Sibu congkan ed.) 7.8b. Cited Yu Jiayi, op.cit., p. 1013. The collated text of the Xijing zaji appears in the Baojing tang congshu; for this section, see 2.4b-7b.

61. Han shu 47.2208.

62. Ibid., 51.2365.

63. The expression *cifu* continued to be used to designate one literary type or genre. See Yao Nai's 姚鼐 (1732-1815) repeated use of the term in the introduction to his influential anthology, *Gu wen ci lei cuan* 古文辭類纂 (A Classified Compendium of Ancient-Style Prose and Verse), (Sbby, Preface, 14a-b); trans. Timothy S. Phelan, in "Two Studies in Chinese Literary Criticism," *Parerga* 3 (1976): 37-65; also the concise explanation in Wong Siu-kit ed. *Early Chinese Literary Criticism*, p. 35, note 20.

64. *Han shu* 57.2529.

65. *Ibid.*

66. The slightly later poet Xie Zhuang 謝莊 (421-466) uses the same device in his "Moon Fu" (*Yue fu* 月賦); see *Wen xuan* 13.12b-16a. For other examples, and a discussion of the device in relation to dating, see Liu Dabai, *op.cit.*, pp. 106-7.

67. *Wen xuan* 13.8b. This scenario appears to conflate the poetry gathering referred to above, at which seven poets (not including Sima Xiangru) were present, and which was supposed to have taken place in the House for Forgetting Cares (*Wang you zhi guan* 忘憂之館), with some of the details of another work attributed to Mei Cheng: "Fu on the Prince of Liang's Rabbit Garden" (*Liang Wang tu yuan fu* 梁王菟園賦); see *Yiwen leiju* 65.1162, *Guwen yuan* 1.4a-15b and *Quan Han wen* 20.236. Hervouet (*op.cit.*, p. 161-2) discusses the authenticity of this work; Knechtges (*The Han Rhapsody* p. 126, note 75, also refers.

68. For the text of the poems that were the product of the first occasion, see Lu Qinli, *Han shi*, p. 97; Pollack, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-13 translates and discusses them. For an account of the gathering and Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303-379) "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection," see the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of the Jin) 80.2099; Kang-i Sun Chang, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-8 refers.

69. "A Criticism of Recent Methods Used in Dating Lao Tsu," *HJAS* 2 (1937), p. 380.

70. See *Wen xuan* 39.12b, 39.15b and 39.17a.

71. Exegetical Evidence for the *Han shu* 漢書疏證 in *Hanshu buzhu* 漢書補注 ed. and comm. Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842-1917), 81.1428. Shen Qinhan (1775-1831) takes issue here with Tang commentator Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581-645) judgement that "The works that comprise the *Xijing zaji* are shallow and commonplace. They emanate from the backstreets and are full of errors" (in the Biography of Kuang Heng 匡衡, *ibid.*).

72. In his recent article, Nienhauser carries on the discussion begun in the pages of the *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* between Professors Lao Gan 勞幹 and Hong Ye 洪業 (see *BIHP* 33 (1962): 19-34 and 34 (1964): 389-404).

73. Entries located in *Sui shu*, juan 32-34; *Jin shu* 72.1913.

74. Hong, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

75. See his dissertation and article *op.cit.*

76. Lao Gan supports Xiao Ben, or an author of the Qi Liang era,

on stylistic grounds; see the conclusion to his article, p. 34.

77. Hong Shunlong, *op.cit.*, p. 10. For a useful note on the term "Six Dynasties," see the Preface to Kang-i Sun Chang's *Six Dynasties Poetry*, p. xi.

78. See the discussion of "The Armrest" in Chapter Four.

79. For Wang Can's surviving collection of *fu*, see Yin Menglun 殷孟倫, ed. *Han Wei Liuchao baisanjia ji tici zhu* 漢魏六朝百三家集題辭注 (Commentary on Zhang Pu 張浦 (1602-1641), comp. Collected Works of One Hundred and Three Poets of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Period), p. 935-40, and *Quan Hou Han wen* 90.958a-61a. Modern editions used include Wu Yun 吳云 and Tang Shaozhong 唐紹忠 eds. and comm *Wang Can jizhu* 王粲集注 (The Collected Works of Wang Can with Commentary) and Yu Shaochu 俞紹初, ed. *Wang Can ji* 王粲集 (Collected Works of Wang Can). Most of Wang Can's *fu* are translated and discussed by Ronald Miao in his recent full-scale study of Wang Can, *Early Medieval Chinese Poetry*, pp. 233-52; pp. 225-6 refer to the condition of the texts.

80. Translated Miao in his Notes to Chapter 4, no. 2, p. 284.

81. *Yiwen lei ju* 84.1442, *Taiping yulan* 808.15a and Yan Kejun, *op.cit.*, 90.960b.

82. The lines "The sun, blotted out by evening haze ... he tucks in his neck" (see below), are tacked onto the end of another work by Wang Can, "The Parrot," (*Yingwu fu* 鸚鵡賦), in the *Yiwen lei ju* version of the piece (91.1576). Miao, *op.cit.*, p. 235, suggests "possible textual corruption."

83. The oriole, *ying* 鶯, alternatively written 鸞, is a small yellow song bird, "found everywhere;" see Bernard Read *Chinese Materia Medica: Avian Drugs*, p. 299. *Cang geng* 倉庚 (line 10) is another name for the oriole and I have used what seems to be a popular alternative name, "mango bird" (Matthews' Dictionary, 7472), to reflect the distinction.

84. For *bei shi* 背時, "his back to the times," see the discussion below.

85. For the text of "The Oriole," see *Yiwen lei ju* 92.1603, *Baisan jia*, and *Quan Hou Han wen* 90.961A. For another translation and short commentary, see Miao, p. 233-4.

The phrase *gan lei* 感類, "to be stirred in response to one's own kind," also occurs in Mi Heng's "Fu on a Parrot;" see *Wen xuan* 13.22b. Qu Shuiyuan 瞿蛻園 (1892-1973) interprets the line, "other birds, are stirred in response, their calls echoing one another" 同類的動物互相感動共鳴 (*Han Wei Liuchao fu xuan* 漢魏六朝賦選 [Selected Fu of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Period], p. 56). William Graham observes that "Mi seems rather to have in mind a human feeling of kinship with the unhappy bird.." (*op.cit.*, p. 49; my italics). The philosophy of sympathetic correspondence is given its clearest early statement in the *Chunqiu fan lu* 春秋繁露 (Abundant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals) of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179-93 B.C.); for the text, see Sbyy ed. 13/57.3a, trans. Needham, vol. 2, p. 281. For other early sources and an interesting application to art historical interpretation, see Kiyohiko Munakata, "Concepts of Lei and Kan-lei," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck, pp. 105-131.

86. See Burton Watson's chapter, "Chien-an and the New Realism,"

from *Chinese Lyricism: Shih Poetry from the Second to the Twelfth Century*, with translations, pp. 33-51. Some lines from the slightly later poet Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210-263) biography in the *Jin shu* sum up the fate that awaited many of the era's most talented during the early Six Dynasties: "...Owing to the troubled times the lives of few men of stature were to reach completion" 天下多故, 名士少有全者. (*Jin shu* 49.1360).

87. For a classic definition, see *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 6.65 and 16.693.

88. The rhyme scheme changes from *iəg to *iěng/*iwěng (reconstruction according to Karlgren's *Grammata Serica Recensa*).

89. *Wen xuan* 18.12a-21b.

90. For this sense of zhi 直, see the biography of Wang Ji 王濟 in the *Jin shu* 42.1206: "[Wang] Ji waited for him to go on duty" 濟候其上甚直.

91. *Yiwen lei ju* 91.1576. Because of its ability to talk, the parrot is credited with wisdom and foresight. Eastern Jin poet Fu Xian's 傅咸 (239-294) description captures this aspect, "He seems to probe the secret and fathom the obscure" 似探幽而測冥 ("The Parrot," *Lidai fuhui* 130.15a). But the parrot's special attributes are also responsible for its being caught and placed in captivity: "Because it is wise it is placed in a cage" 从慧而入籠 (ibid 14.b). See also Edward H. Schafer "Parrots in Medieval China," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata*, edited by Soren Egerod and Else Glahn, pp. 280.

92. *Quan Hou Han wen* 90.960B.

93. See, for example, He Zhuo's remark: "This [fu] employs the owl in a particular way to begin the piece. It doesn't continue as a fu on the bird. Why then did the Brilliant Prince (lit. [Crown Prince of] Resplendent Brilliance 昭明; Zhaoming was the posthumous name of Xiao Tong, compiler of the *Wen xuan*) place it in his 'bird' section? It would more appropriately go with pieces such as [Ban Gu's] "You tong" 幽通 (Communicating with the Hidden) and [Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78-139)] "Si xuan" 思玄 (Contemplating the Cosmos)" (Ye Shufan, op.cit., 13.10a).

94. In "The Parrot," despite a very similar topic and approach, the authorial presence is omitted. A selection of *yongwu fu* on birds in the role of captive creature, are to be found in *juan* 90-92 of the *Yiwen lei ju*. Yan Kejun provides the most complete range of extant pieces, listed under author.

95. The phrase is Stephen Owen's, taken from "A Monologue of the Senses," in *Towards a Theory of Description*, ed. Jeffrey Kittay, Yale French Studies No 61 (1981), p. 246. For an elaboration of the view that the *shi* is intended to be read as "the authentic presentation of a historical moment," see the whole of that article. The theme, which is taken up in a specific way by poets writing in *yongwu* vein, is touched on in the following section and returned to in the next chapter.

96. The term allegory is currently something of a minefield in sinological studies. Critics who have written recently on the application of the subject to Chinese poetry include Chia-ying Yeh Chao ("On Wang I-Sun and His *Yung-wu Tz'u*," trans., James R. Hightower, *HJAS* 40.1 [1980]: 55-91), Pauline Yu ("Allegory,

Allegoresis, and the *Classic of Poetry*") and Kang-i Sun Chang ("Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the Yueh-fu pu-t'i Poem Series," *HJAS* 46.2 (1986): 353-385. While all are properly concerned to have the poetic approach slip its Western moorings, they end up by acquiescing in an attenuated or restricted use. The term is too useful to jettison, but it can be trimmed to suggest differences. In the *yongwu* context I use the expression "allegorising mode," partly to free it from specific Western interpretations; and partly to suggest, through its greater generality, an approach that is neither static nor confined to one generic category.

97. For the *Li Sao*, complete with commentary, see Hong Xingzu, *op.cit.*

98. Graham's article, *op.cit.*, refers to earlier interpretation and includes his own discussion.

99. For Wang Can's biography see the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Memoirs of the Three States) 21.597-99; and Miao, *op.cit.*, Chapter Two.

100. Particularly some of the poems on the theme of lamenting the times from the Nine Longings (*Jiu si* 九思). See, for example, the poem "Distressed by the Times" (*Shang shi* 傷時), *Chuci buzhu* 323-5, lines 7-10; trans. Hawkes, p. 178.

101 I would disagree here with Miao's reading that "No moral of any kind is to be drawn from these short exercises: the impression is of a connoisseur or artist contemplating a prized pet" (*op.cit.*, p. 234).

102. For these, see the entry in the *Shuowen jiezi gulin*, 4.1754-5. For the nuances associated with "north," see *ibid.*, 7.3653-4.

103. See the example given in the *Shuowen* from the *Xunzi*, in which *bei* is glossed as *qi qu* 棄去, "to reject." (*ibid.* 4.1755).

104. The same character *bei* occurs in another of Wang Can's *fu*, "Sailing on the Huai" (*Fu huai fu* 浮淮賦). There, the physical sense of "back to" is explicit, the meaning reinforced by the contrast with its matching character in the next line, *wang* 望 (lit. facing): "At my back, the swirling currents of the Kuo estuary/ Ahead the high banks of Horse Promontory" 背渦浦之曲流兮, 望馬丘之高滌 (Quan Hou Han wen 90.956b; Miao offers a partial translation and comment on the piece, pp. 88-9).

105. See note 100.

106. It should be noted that the character 輕 *qing* [k'iěng], which ends the third line, belongs to the same rhyme section as that which occurs in the body of the piece. If *k'iěng* is regarded as entering fully into the rhyme scheme, the piece divides into a six/eight instead of a four/ten line formula, eliminating the idea of an introductory section. In prosodic terms the feature represents a return - conscious or unconscious - to the tendency to think in triplets which characterises the early *fu*. (A near precedent exists in the introductory lines of the "Owl *Fu*;" see also Hightower's comment, *op.cit.*, p. 125-6) However, that interpretation works against the sense, which is firmly organised around the couplet. From a semantic as well as a structural point of view, the appearance of the major rhyme at this stage more likely functions as an example of prolepsis.

107. That metre is discussed by Graham in his study "The Prosody of the Sao 騷 Poems in the Ch'u Tz'u 楚辭," *Asia Major*, n.s., 10.2 (1963): 119-59.

108. For the texts of these, respectively, see *Yiwen lei ju* 92.1596, 97.1679 and 65.1169; trans., Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*, pp. 101-12.

109. The translation "jade" follows early descriptions of *chequ* 車渠 as *shi ci yu* 石次玉, "a stone; a form of jade" (YWLJ, citing the *Guangya* 廣雅 [Erya Expanded], 84.1442.) Certain properties singled out by the poet - a mountain origin, hardness and a greenish-white colour - are consistent with the description of jade. It should, however, be noted that later evidence suggests that *chequ* refers to a clam, known as "Neptune's cradle" (see Wheatley, "Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 32.2 (1961), pp. 91-2, cited Edward Schafer, "The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics," p. 337, n. 254). The thick, white, pearly shell of this creature is distinguished by a pattern of grooves that resemble the furrows left by a plough. Hence its name, literally, "cart furrows." The *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Outline of Basic Pharmacopoeia) 46. 2539 gives a detailed description. The *Bencao* also provides the link between the two materials: "[Li Xun 李珣 (855-930)] 'It is said that *chequ* is a form of jade. It comes from the Western Regions, resembles a conch or a clam in form and is patterned. It is one of the Seven Precious Substances from the Western Regions. [Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593)] '...inside the shell is white like jade ...It is not very expensive and the barbarians use it for making ornamental vessels and objects. It is mistakenly regarded as a type of jade. Some say that among the kinds of jade there is one, *chequ*; they say this for the reason that it looks like this clam."

wan 碗, "bowl," is a small wine-bowl or, possibly, wine cup. Another one of the Seven Masters of the Jian'an (Jian'an qizi 建安七子), Xu Gan 徐幹 (170-217), who also wrote on this topic, concludes with the lines, "It delights in being joined to your lips" 因歡接口 (Yiwen lei ju 73.1262). Yang Shen's 楊慎 (1488-1559) *Dan qian lu* 丹鉛錄 (Cinnabar and Lead Record) says, "*Chequ* can be made into cups. If you pour wine into it and fill it a fen over the rim it will not overflow; this has been proved to be true" (BCGM 46.2538). Schafer notes, "It [Neptune's Cradle] was especially popular in early medieval times for making wine cups and other drinking vessels" (op.cit., p. 245).

110. The lines in brackets are omitted from the *Yiwen lei ju* version of the text but, together with the final doublet, appear in the *Taiping yulan*, 808.15a. Yan Kejun includes them. It should be noted that the end rhyme fits the **iwam* rhyme scheme, and that the lines expand the governing theme. For "the dark of heaven...the colour of the earth," see Chapter One, note 6.

111. The two principles are *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤, the "Creative" and "Receptive," trigrams, standing, respectively, for Heaven and Earth. Knechtges translates "Donator" and "Receptor" (*Wen xuan*, p. 318).

112. The *locus classicus* for the association of the five virtues with jade is Zheng Xuan's commentary to a line from the *Shijing*'s "Xiao rong" 小戎, "The small war-chariot," (Mao #128). Zheng comments, "jade possesses the five virtues" (*Shijing zhushu* 6/3.236B). The five virtues are differently identified in various classical contexts; Kong Yingda defines them here as benevolence, wisdom, righteousness, propriety and truth (*ibid.*, p. 237A).

113. The text is in *Hou Han wen*, 90.5a-6b. See the translation by Miao, pp. 249-50.

114. The line does not appear in the *Yiwen lei ju* version of the text. It is taken from part of a comment appended by Li Shan to Zuo Si's 左思 (ca.250-ca.305) Recitations on History (*Yong shi* 詠史), in *Wen xuan* 21. Yan Kejun places it in a separate column after the text *Ruan han* 柔翰 lit. "soft brush" is a conventional reference to a writing brush.

115. C.f. Wu Yun and Tang Shaozhong, who consider the existence of the *Wen xuan* line as proof of a much longer original (op.cit., p. 60).

116. Extra-textual evidence is not easy to come by in this period, but the following passage constitutes a charming description of poetry-making in the company of friends (in this case, the Seven Masters of the Jian'an). It occurs in a letter from Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) (Emperor Wen of Wei) to Wu Zhi 吳質 (177-230):

"...In those days, when we went anywhere we went together [lit. *lian yu* 連輿, with our carriages joined]; when we stopped, our mats would touch. Was there ever a moment when we were apart from each other? Each time the goblets would be passed and music would play. We would drink till our ears burned. Then, looking up, we would make poems" (*Wen xuan* 42.8a).

In Cao Pi's remembering it was *shi*, the lyric form, which were the product of such occasions. But shorter *fu* along the lines of those described here would also fit well into such a framework.

Mi Heng's substantial composition "Fu on a Parrot" was supposed to have been composed impromptu in banquet circumstances (see its Preface, *Wen xuan* 13.20b). Graham (op.cit., p. 54) suggests that this might have been possible had the poet been prepared: "Even without the foreknowledge attributed to parrots, Mi could reasonably anticipate a call for this rhapsody and give the work some thought beforehand."

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Discussion of the ballad/literati poem distinction is taken up later in this chapter. I must thank Stephen Owen for drawing my attention to this poem early on in this study and for pointing out that it uses the formulae of Yuzhang xing 豫章行 (see below).

2. The term "old poem" is applied to a group of anonymous gu shi 古詩, broadly assigned to the Han period, but the finer dating of which is still the subject of some dispute. The differences are well summed up, on the one hand, by Yu Guanying 余冠英 (Han Wei Liuchao shi xuan 漢魏六朝詩選 (Selected Poems of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties), pp. 7-8, and Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 Gushi shijiu shou tansuo 古詩十九首探索 (Investigation of the Nineteen Old Poems), pp. 4-8, who support a late Han date; and, on the other, by Sui Shusen 隋樹森 Gushi shijiu shou ji shi 古詩十九首集釋 (Collected Explanations of the Nineteen Old Poems) and Zhang Qingzhong 張清鍾 Gushi shijiu shou huishuo shangshi yu yanjiu 古詩十九首彙說賞析與研究 (Collected Opinions, Appreciation and Examination of the Nineteen Old Poems), pp. 131-157. Sui and Zhang favour a Western Han date for several of these pieces. Zhang's study includes a comprehensive survey of earlier opinions. See also Jean Pierre Diény's *Les Dix-neuf poèmes anciens. Bulletin de la Maison franco-japonais*, n.s. 7 Paris, for an attractive commentary to the group selected in Wen xuan.

3. For the type of censer referred to here, a many-peaked hill burner cast in bronze, see the description of the following paragraph. Archaeological evidence from both the Western and Eastern Han periods is plentiful, and well-documented in art history publications. One of the most recent of these, an exhibition catalogue of the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1990, provides an example of the type described here, in which the censer stands on a shallow tray (see *Ancient Chinese and Ordos Bronzes*, ed. Jessica Rawson and Emma Bunker, p. 140-1, plate 45). A different variety, in which the pan is dispensed with and the censer supported by its foot, is exemplified by the well-known piece from the tomb of Western Han Prince Liu Sheng 劉勝 (ob. 113 B.C.), also illustrated in the same publication, fig. 48. Rawson notes of the latter piece, "The intricate, even showy workmanship of these examples suggests that hill censers were among the most highly prized of all Han bronzes" (p. 140).

4. Yu Guanying comments that "While many mountains are called Nan shan, the name usually refers to Mount Zhongnan" (Han Wei Liuchao shi xuan 漢魏六朝詩選 (Selected Poems of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties) p. 81. The *Sibu shidi* 四部釋地 (Elucidation of Geographical References in the Four Books) notes that, "When Nan shan occurs in a poem it does not necessarily refer to an actual place, although it may do so. In the latter case, there are two possibilities... one is Chao Nan Mountain... one is Mount Zhong Nan." It cites four references from the *Shi jing*, all of which refer to Mount Zhong Nan (*Huang Qing jing jie* 皇清經解 [Qing Explanations of the Classics], vol. 6, p. 12409).

5. Li Lou 離婁 was the name of a man, said to have lived in the time of the Yellow Emperor (Huang di 黃帝), who was noted for his keen eyesight. He features in both the Mencius (Sbby 7.1a) and the Zhuangzi, under the alternative name of Li Zhu 離朱 (Sbby 4.2a and 5a). Mencius commentator Zhao Qi 趙岐 (A.D. 108-201) remarks that Li Lou was able to discern the tip of an autumn hair at more than a hundred paces (*ibid.*, 1.a). From there the name seems to have mutated

into a term to describe fine carving. See Li Shan's commentary to He Yan's 何晏 (ob.249) "Fu on the Hall of Great Blessings" (Jingfu dian fu 景福殿賦), "li lou describes a carved and engraved appearance" 離婁刻鏤之貌 (Wen xuan 11.27a). Li lou may also describe a design that is inlaid or allows the light to penetrate (see Ci tong 辭通

11.1051). Many hill censers (though not all mortuary objects) have holes in the bowl that contains the incense, through which the fragrant smoke could emerge. It is possible that the term, as used in this context, indicates an openwork appearance. For an example in which an additional band of openwork, in the form of rectangular perforations below the mountain pattern, is a feature of the design, see "The C.C. Wang Family Collection of Important Early Chinese Works of Art," Sotheby's, New York, November 27, 1990.

6. Gongshu yu Lu Ban 公輸與魯班: Wu Zhaoyi's 吳兆宜 commentary to the YTXY (Preface dated 1675) cites the Shiji, "Gong Shuban constructed a cloud-surmounting ladder in order to invade the city of the Song," and the Huainanzi, "Lu Ban made a kite out of wood and flew it" (op.cit., 1.4). See also Chapter Two, note 53.

If the character yu 與 is read with its normal conjunctive meaning of "and," this line would appear to refer to two men. But it would seem from usage and the opinion of commentators that the names were interchangeable; that Gong Shu Ban from the state of Lu was also known as Lu Ban - in much the same way that Li Lou in the Mencius is Li Zhu in the Zhuangzi. Zhao Qi's commentary, 公輸子魯班魯之巧人也 is ambiguous here and cannot be used as evidence. Yan Shigu seems to subscribe to the idea of one figure (Han shu, 70A.4233) and Zhu Qian 朱乾 (?1777), commenting on the identical occurrence of this line in an anonymous ballad (see below) is explicit: "It certainly does not say that there are two men" (Yuefu zhengyi 樂府正義 [Rectified Interpretation of Yuefu] 8.4b). Modern scholar Xu Renfu 徐仁甫 finds a lexical basis for the interpretation in Wang Yinzhi's 王引之 (1766-1834) Jingzhuang shi ci 經傳釋詞 (Explanation of the Language of the Classics and their Commentaries), which supplies a verbal meaning, wei 謂 "is called," for yu; see Wang Yinzhi 1.3, and Xu's Gushi biejie 古詩別解 (Distinguishing Ancient Verse), pp. 101-3. The reference is, of course, to a consummate craftsman.

7. In her translation of the YTXY, Anne Birrell translates qing 青 as black (New Songs from a Jade Terrace: An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry, p. 32). Smoke from burners is more commonly described as red and/or some shade of green. See, for example, the unambiguous description in Jin poet Mu Hua's 木華 (fl. ca. 290) "Fu on the Sea" (Hai fu 海賦), "Vermilion flames and green smoke" 朱燄綠煙 (Wen xuan 12.6b). It is possible that a red-black contrast is introduced in the Old Poem for its male-female symbolism, in the manner of later poems. (For this kind of sexually oriented play, see Xie Tiao's "The Mirror Stand," translated in the final section). However, despite the mild erotic atmosphere generated by these lyrics (see below), I believe that an interpretation in those terms strains the text and that the conventional contrast of vermilion flames and blue-green smoke is more in keeping with this poem's atmosphere.

8. The YWLJ 70.1222 has huan 歡, "to be delighted by" for the YTXY tan 歎, "sigh." Lu Qinli follows the YWLJ (Han shi, p. 334). Either makes sense. The translation opts for the earlier, YTXY, version.

9. YTXY 1.4 and Han shi, p. 334-5. It is translated in Anne Birrell, op.cit.

10. Chapter 10 of the Sung text the Kao gu tu 考古圖 (An Illustrated Study of Ancient Things), compiled by Lu Dalin 呂大臨.

(ca.1042-ca.1090), seems to be the source for the description of the censer; see the *Siku quanshu* 840.262-3. The earlier text is translated by Berthold Laufer in a section entitled "Hill-Censers," in *Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty*, p. 176; the whole of this section provides useful background.

鏡原 11. The inscription is discussed below. The *Gezhi jingyuan* 格致 (Mirror of Scientific and Technical Origins), compiled by Chen Yuanlong, cites this passage, with some minor differences in wording. It too describes this poem as a *yuefu* but, a few lines on, refers to the piece as the "Old Poem" (57.2547 and 2548, respectively). The casual switch from one term to another is characteristic of much pre-modern criticism in this literary area. See the discussion later in this chapter.

12. Schafer has a note that "The older name for cloves was 'chicken tongue aromatic,' referring to the shape of the dried immature flower buds" (*The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotica*, p. 171).

13. *Qiangwei shui* 薔薇水, translated "attar of roses," is possibly used anachronistically; see Schafer, p. 174.

14. *Siku quanshu* 856.438; this section is entitled *Luping* 罽罽 (censers)

15. The Ming commentator does not seem to think so from his comment on the poem, "These were not our modern aromatics."

16. YWLJ 70.1222-3 and CXJ 25.606.

17. For Li You's corpus, see *Quan Hou Han wen* 50.4a-13a.

18. The grammar of this line appears to indicate a verbal reading but two considerations militate against a translation along the lines of "I praise." Inscriptions are far more commonly begun with a laudatory adjective than they are with a first person presence. And the insertion of a subject in an inscription does not sit well in English. The present attempt tries to get round this by reinstating the adjective in combination with a syntax that throws the spotlight on the object, so that the strong beginning is retained (c.f. Needham, vol. 5, pt. 2, p. 133).

19. YWLJ 70.1222 and *Quan Han wen* 37.335. Li Shan's commentary to He Yan's "Fu on the Hall of Great Blessings" cites the lines in brackets (*Wen xuan* 11.27a.); Yan Kejun appends them to the inscription. For the translation "openwork carving," see note 5, above.

20. *Penglai* 蓬萊: one of three mythical islands, reportedly located in the Eastern Sea. These were believed to harbour both life-prolonging herbs and immortals - who had presumably benefited from their properties. The islands were the object of pilgrimages made by, and on behalf of, the immortality-minded Emperors Shihuang 始皇 and Wudi during the Qin 秦 (B.C.221-207) and Han periods respectively. See, amongst other passages, the *Shi ji* 6.247 and 28.1385; trans. Edouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, vol.2, p. 151ff. and vol.3, p. 436ff; *Han shu* 25A.1204-5 and 1216-7.

堂書鈔 21. Li You's inscription is culled from the *Beitang shuchao* 北 (Extracts from the Northern Hall), an encyclopedia compiled by the Sui official, Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558-638). It appears in *Quan Hou Han wen* 50.751.

22. Wu Zhaoyi's commentary to the YTXY notes verbal correspondences with Li You at line 4, and with Liu Xiang at line 12. Also striking is the employment of the descriptive compound *li lou* (coupled with the use, in the same line, of *xiang* 相, "in conjunction with") in both Liu Xiang and the Old Poem. There is word for word resemblance between the Old Poem and this piece at lines 13-14, "Who could carve.. Lu Ban;" this topos also appears in "The Stool."

23. The *Yuefu shiji*, compiled by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (ob. ca. 1126) represents the earliest extant and most comprehensive collection of *yuefu* songs and poems. "Yuefu" is expansively defined to include song material employed in connection with ancestral and ceremonial rituals and with performances at court, through a large repertoire of popular songs and anonymous old ballads like these, to literati reworkings and new versions apparently not intended to be set to music. The twelve categories into which Guo divides his material represent a musically based taxonomy. The loss of the musical scores to which the lyrics relate has rendered the task of reconstruction something of an impossibility and later analysts have redirected their energies into different channels. (See, for example, Luo Genzi's complementary schema, in which the texts, initially divided into musical and non-musical categories, are sub-divided according to origin (folksong, literati version etc.) and then further differentiated by such criteria as their degree of musical adaptation or, in the case of texts not intended to be set to music, the extent of their difference from, the early anonymous popular type (*Yuefu wenxue shi* 樂府文學史 [History of the Yuefu], p. 11). See also Hans Frankel's "Yueh fu Poetry," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch, pp. 71-2. The *Xianghe ge*, translated "Songs with Alternating Accompaniment" (see below, note 27) represent the fifth of Guo Maoqian's categories, comprising his chapters 26-43.

For some background to *yuefu* types and origins, see Luo Genze, op.cit., Xiao Difei 蕭梯非 *Han Wei Liuchao yuefu wenxue* 漢魏六朝樂府文學 (Yuefu of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Period), Wang Yunxi 王運熙 *Yuefu shi luncong* 樂府詩論叢 (Collection of Essays on Yuefu) and Jean-Pierre Diény "Aux origines de la poésie classique en Chine, Étude sur la poésie lyrique à l'époque des Han," *Monographies du T'oung Pao*, volume VI, 1968 167 pp. 81-100; Hans H. Frankel's article, op.cit., pp. 69-107, is the seminal work in English. Among recent studies, Chan Man Sing's "The Western Songs (*Xiqu*) of the Southern Dynasties (420-589): A Critical Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1984) contains an excellent bibliography and places both this regional strand and the *yuefu* type more generally within a distinct oral and musical tradition. Anne Birrell's article, referred to below, contains a rigorous examination of terminological problems and some historical misconceptions associated with the study of the genre.

24. YFSJ 34.501. Yuzhang was the name of a Han commandery district.

25. See YFSJ 34.579; In his introduction to the *Xianghe ge*, Guo Maoqian has a note that "...long songs also have a *yan* 豔 the *yan* comes before the piece proper 大曲又有豔, 豔在曲之前" (op.cit., 26.377). *Yange* might therefore be translated as "opening song" or "opening section." Yang Yinliu's 楊蔭瀏 view that *yan* are not confined to the beginning but may also crop up in the middle of songs (*Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao* 中國古代音樂史稿 [Outline of the History of Chinese Traditional Music], p. 114) differs from that of other modern scholars. See Chan Man Sing, op.cit., p. 289, note 59, who notes lack of evidence for Yang's interpretation.

26. Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* p. 11. The translation "ballad" is accurate enough here, and it defers the need to confront the traditional designation yuefu until it enters the vocabulary of later sections. But it should be pointed out that ballad is still a controversial term in Western critical theory, and that it does not equate with the Chinese expression yuefu, particularly in its failure to accommodate the numerous lyric works which come under that rubric. A connected point is its inadequacy as a description of the contents of the Yuefu shiji. The introductory chapter of Gary Shelton Williams' Ph.D. dissertation, "A Study of the Oral Nature of Han yuefu" (University of Washington, 1973), recapitulates the history of the term ballad in the Western tradition and examines its adequacy as a translation of yuefu more generally (pp. 8-15).

27. *Song shu* 21.603-24.

28. *Ibid.* See also the comment, "Where songs and old lyrics have survived until the present, these are the ballads and folk songs that were current (lit. "of the streets and lanes") in Han times" (*Song shu* 19.549). The interpretation of Xianghe ge follows the explanation offered by Cheung Sai-Bung 張世彬 in his *Zhongguo yinyue shi lunshu gao* 中國音樂史論述稿 (Historical Studies of Chinese Music), Volume One, pp. 72-3.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether jie represents an instrument akin to the modern pai ban 拍板, "clappers," (as, for example, Hawkes, cited below, p. 155), or a small drum, after the picture and explanation offered by the Yue shu 樂書 (Book of Music), 138.9-10. Jie is listed under the category of "skin" (ge 革) instruments in *Song shu* 19.555, although it could be argued that the listing is not conclusive: clappers might also qualify here by reason of the leather thong that attaches the two wooden sections to each other (see the description in Xue Zongming's 薛宗明 *Zhongguo yinyue shi* 中國音樂史 [A History of Chinese Music], p. 259). The explanation offered by Cheung Sai-Bung probably comes closest, though, and the translation is based on it: "...jie is a beating instrument. It is used for controlling speed and rhythm. From this it would seem that its function was the same as today's clappers. But in those days jie referred to jiegu 節鼓, a drum. Also the *Song shu* included it under "skin instruments" for the reason that it probably comprised skin stretched over a wooden frame. It would have been like the single skin drum of later times" (op.cit., p. 73).

29. *T'oung Pao* 55 (1969), p. 156.

30. Qing yun 青雲: only an extreme form of poetic licence would allow clouds to be described as "blue" (qing 青), as Hawkes' translation of the phrase (in *Songs of the South*, p.85). The expression merges blue sky and clouds to give the impression of altitude.

31. Wei 圍, literally a man's two arms stretched to form a circle. The locus classicus is the *Zhuangzi* (Sbby ed.) 2.12a and 13b-14a.

32. Su he xiang 蘇合香, "storax," refers at this early period to a dry fragrant resin obtained from the tree *Styrax officinalis*, a native of the Levant. Commentators cited in the BCGM state that it came from the "Western Regions" (Xi yu 西域). From Tang times on, the compound refers to a different substance derived from the bark of the *Liquidamber orientale*, an Asia Minor native. This variety of storax was also obtained, and later imported to China, from a related species grown in parts of South-east Asia. See the BCGM 34.1962-3, Frederick Porter Smith, *Chinese Materia Medica: Vegetable Kingdom*,

rev. G.A. Stuart, p. 243; Needham, vol. 6, pt. 1, p. 277, and Schafer, op.cit., p. 168-9.

33. YFSJ 39.501.

34. The repetition of the grammatically strange phrase *Gongshu yu Lu Ban* may well have something to do with the five-word metre common to both. See also note 6, above.

35. Note 4, on *Nan shan*, is relevant here.

36. See *Shijing zhushu* 5/2.195 and 10/1.351.

37. As noted, the poem under discussion first appears in the YTXY as an "Old Poem." But the tendency to classify poems of this type and general period as *yuefu* is discernible as early as the Sui and well attested from the Tang. Cao Daoheng, *Yuefu he gushi* 樂府和古詩 (Yuefu and Gushi), in *Collected Essays*, op.cit., pp. 436-7, and Ma Maoyuan, op.cit., p. 3, refer. Cao also mentions some earlier critical attempts to derive *gushi* from *yuefu* and vice versa. For an example relating to the present poem of an essayist swinging between the two terms, see note 11.

38. The application of the term *yuefu* to a diverse collection of pieces is reflected in a much earlier work, the *Gujin yuelu* 古今樂錄 (tentatively translated "A Record of Yuefu, Ancient and Modern"), compiled in 568 by the monk Zhijiang 智匠. (The *Gujin yuelu* is no longer extant but was re-assembled by Qing scholars from a variety of sources, the one appearing in *Han Wei yishu chao* 漢魏逸書鈔 (A Transcription of Fragmentary Texts of the Han and Wei), compiled Wang Mo 王謨 (fl.1778), being the most comprehensive. In all but a very few cases, the lyrics are omitted but there seems little doubt that the original functioned as an anthology; see the example cited by Chan Man Sing, op.cit., p. 8, note 27). The *Yuefu shiji* cites this work extensively.

39. Another major area of difficulty connected with the employment of the term centers on questions concerning its historical status. The most urgent of these have recently been brought together and aired in an article by Anne Birrell. One of the aims of Birrell's study is to detach the term and the song texts it covers from their traditional location in the Han Bureau of Music, a location which has been questioned by earlier scholars, and which she convincingly demonstrates has no basis in historical fact. She also establishes that, used as a term to indicate a particular literary genre, *yuefu* is no earlier than Shen Yue's *Song shu* (100.2452). The generic sense is confirmed thereafter by Liu Xie (*Wenxin diaolong zhu* 2.101-33) and fully implemented by its appearance as an independent sub-category in *Wen xuan* (chapters 27-8); also in the slightly later YTXY (1.6-16). See her "Mythmaking and Yueh-fu: Popular songs and Ballads of Early Imperial China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109.2 (1989): 223-235. Birrell's article effectively discredits the historical use of the term *yuefu* as a designation for popular songs prior to the sixth century. But ambiguous and unhistorical as the term might be, it still possesses the useful umbrella function discussed below. Without it, we are left with an acknowledged generic identity and nothing to call it.

40. Frankel, op. cit., p. 82, describes some of the techniques by which the listener was involved.

41. For "Heavenly Horses," see *Han shi*, p. 95. The last two pieces, specifically designated *shi* 詩, are part of a group of five poems in four line metre that conclude Ban Gu's "Fu on the Eastern

Capital" (*Dong du fu* 東都賦); see *Wen xuan* 1.31a-b; translated Knechtges, *Wen xuan* pp. 175-79.

42. Schafer puts this a different way: "...in the medieval world of the Far East there was little clear-cut distinction ...among substances which...attract a lover and those which attract a divinity" (op.cit., p. 155). Schafer's chapter "Aromatics" (p. 155-75) gives a full and interesting account of the place of incense in ceremonial and secular contexts during the Tang dynasty. The greater availability and variety of spices in the later period would obviously have generated a much more widespread and elaborate usage. But archaeological remains and the odd literary survival (such as the two Han inscriptions discussed above) suggest that Han custom did not differ in essence from the picture described by Schafer, i.e. that incense served a complement of ritual, liturgical and aesthetic purposes.

43. A related nuance is the association of hill burners with marriage. The evidence here is no earlier than a Jin dynasty work, variously entitled *Donggong jiu shi* 東宮舊事 (Old Events at the Eastern Palace), *Jin Donggong jiu shi* 晉東宮舊事 (Old Events of Jin Times at the Eastern Palace), and *Jin Donggong gu shi* 晉東宮古事 (Old Stories of Jin Times from the Eastern Palace). Similar entries, under "Censing braziers" (*xiang lu* 香鑪), in *YWLJ* (17.1222) and *Taiping yulan* (703.7), and the *Shuo fu* 說郛 (The Environs of Fiction) text (in *Shuofu san zhong* ed., 120.2731-2733), state that there were hill burners (the descriptions of which vary) on the occasion of the Crown Prince's marriage. The Song work, the *Kaogu tu* adds the information, "According to an old Han procedure, when a King marries he presents hill burners. The *Jin Donggong jiu shi* says, 'When the heir to the throne is in mourning hill burners are present'" (840.263; my italics). See also Laufer, op.cit., p. 177.

44. The second in Bao Zhao's series "In Imitation of 'Along the Hard Way'" (*Ni Xing lu nan* 擬行路難) builds on the idea. Bao takes as his topic "a golden hill censer cast by a famous craftsman of Luoyang;" for the text, see Lu Qinli, *Song shi* 7.1274. A recent translation and commentary by Liu Hsiang-fei ("The Hsing-ssu Mode in Six Dynasties Poetry: Changing Approaches to Imagistic Language," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1988, p. 187-8) brings out the connection with "the qualities of the implied female figure," including "The function of providing pleasure at night." In Liu's analysis those qualities are interpreted in a fairly abstract way. My own interpretation is that the comparison was based on a compelling mix of physical similarity and function - that the combination included not only the idea of a vessel generating fragrance and pleasure, but was firmly based also on the shape of the object, which suggests a stylised female form. Similar nuances are present in the play on the character *xu* 墟, "village," in a later piece, Xie Tiao's "The Bamboo Brazier" (see the final section). Admittedly the conceit in that poem passes through the verbal medium, but one half of it, the idea of a rounded vessel serving as a reminder of the female form, is present. It is likely that such nuances contributed a background presence in the Old Poem. For another translation of Bao's poem, see John Frodsham's, "The Nature Poetry of Pao Chao," *Orient/West* 8.6 (1963), p. 91.

45. *Yuefu zhengyi* 8.4b.

46. *Yuefu shixuan* 樂府詩選 (Collected *Yuefu*), p. 165). See also Yu Guanying, op. cit., p. 81.

47. As is, perhaps, acknowledged in Hong's rather uneasy

addendum about not sticking to a rigid interpretation.

48. I have called it passion, and believe that context and language (backed up at an extra-textual level by its YTXY placing) combine to give that reading priority. But the interpretation need not screen out echoes suggestive of that other relation, subject and lord.

49. See note 20.

50. One of the most common approaches to the object in lyric poetry is to have it function as a stimulus to reflection. The description of the object then assumes a contingent or subordinate status in relation to the response which it generates. Critics from at least as early as the Mao Preface engaged with this compositional method, and distinguished amongst its manifestations, by employing the traditional descriptions *xing* and *bi*; the previous chapter refers.

51. Some critics would add another, along the lines of Obi Kōichi's *ren shi* 人事, "human concerns," in which various "lovely lady" (*mei ren* 美人) topics and the activities associated with them are collected under one heading (op.cit., p. 302). This sort of topic gained currency during Liang times. It cannot always be identified as *yongwu*. See, for example, the difference between Shen Yue's *yongwu* poems on women's garments and his "Six Recollections" 六憶 (four of which survive); a spread of these poems appears in the YTXY 5.182-195). Chapter Four, note 8, refers to the piece, "Embroidery on a Collar's Edge."

52. That angle is explored in Chapter 5.

53. Literally, "my" roots. See the discussion that follows.

54. The Three Luminaries (*san guang* 三光) are the sun, moon and stars.

55. Lu Qinli, *Wei shi* 3.385. The cuckoo's cry not only sounds sad - the BCGM 49.2665 describes its cry as *aiqie* 哀切 "exceedingly sad" - it is associated with all sorts of sad stories of different provenance and uncertain date. One of the most ancient appears to be the legend of late Zhou hero Du Yu's 杜宇 transformation into a cuckoo (see the reference in Zuo Si's *Fu* on the Shu Capital (*Shu du fu* 蜀都賦), and Li Shan's commentary, citing the *Shu ji* 蜀記 [Records of Shu] 4.26a). The story is referred to in an extended image in one of Bao Zhao's "In Imitation of 'Along the Hard Way'" series; this includes the line, "Its call is bitter sad, a never-ending cry" 聲音 哀苦鳴不息 (Song shi, p. 1275). Other tales range from the notion of its call signifying separation for those who first hear it, to the belief that it cries until the blood flows, giving rise, no doubt, to the further belief that those who imitate its call will spit blood. The BCGM 49.2665-6 is a convenient repository of references.

56. YWLJ 81.1393.

57. For example, David Hawkes, in *Ch'u Tz'u: Songs of the South*, has "melilotus" (e.g. p. 23), and Knechtges (references: the *Guangya shuzheng* 廣雅疏證 [Exegetical Evidence for the *Erya* Expanded], 10A.11b, and Smith-Stuart, p. 262) gives "sweet clover" (*Wen xuan*, p. 322 L.131n). Knechtges summarises the problems that confront the translator: "This plant name is sometimes confused with *Ocimum basilicum* (sweet basil) and can also refer to *Pogostemon cablin* and *Agastache rugosa*. See Li Hui-lin (Li Huilin 李惠林), trans., *Nan-fang ts'ao-mu chuang: A Fourth Century Flora of Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1979), pp. 75-77." The entry

in the *Bencao gangmu* (under *xuncao* 薰草 and *lingling xiang* 零陵香), 14.901-2, confirms the difficulty of precise identification in a climate characterised by the use of synonyms. To cite one entry, selected fairly much at random, "Zheng Qiao's 鄭樵 (1104-1160) *Revised Pharmacopoeia* equates *lan* with *hui* and *hui* with *lingling xiang*. This too is supposition, failing to distinguish [among individual plants]. 'Lan' and 'hui' belong to one genus but are two different species."

Li Hui-lin, cited above, p. 151, translates *Guang zhi* as "General Records (on Nature)."

58. I should like at this point to acknowledge help from Alan Griffiths, Professor of Botany at Hong Kong University, who helped me sort out no less than four botanical possibilities, and introduced me to some European sources.

59. *BCGM* 14.901. For some background in English on Tao Hongjing, which focuses on the naturalist rather than the Daoist alchemist, see Needham, vol. 6, pt. 1, pp. 244-53. On the alchemical explorations that were fuelled by Tao's pharmaceutical interests, see Michael Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," in Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel eds. *Facets of Taoism*, pp. 123-92.

60. The reader was earlier referred to David Hawkes translation, which emphasises abstract meanings and captures the true pitch of the piece.

61. One cannot step in and out of the first person as easily in English. There is no way of suggesting that intermittent voice without a full surrender to personification.

62. What was identified in the earliest critical appraisal of Bao Zhao, Zhong Hong's *Shi pin*, as a rather contradictory mix of attributes is later perceived as an interesting and atypical inclination towards experimentation with literary types (see *Shi pin zhu*, p. 33, and Kang-yi Sun Chang's interpretation of that response, *Six Dynasties Poetry*, pp. 81-2; Sun's chapter on Bao Zhao brings out Bao's versatility. See also Lin Wenyue 林文月, "Bao Zhao yu Xie Lingyun de shanshui shi" 鮑照與謝靈運的山水詩 (The Landscape Poetry of Bao Zhao and Xie Lingyun), *Wenxue pinglun* 6 (1980): 1-21, and Lu Zhenghui 呂正惠, "Bao Zhao shi xiaolun" 鮑照詩小論 (On Bao Zhao's Lyric Verse), pp. 119-134.

63. Bao Zhao's corpus of object-oriented poems is assembled in *Bao Canjun jizhu* 鮑參軍集注 (The Collected Works of Bao Zhao with Commentaries), ed. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, pp. 392-412; one or two works which are clearly not poems on things are interspersed amongst these pieces.

64. Chapter Two, note 47, refers.

65. *BCJJZ*, p. 409-10.

66. For "palace-style" poetry, see Lin Wenyue, "Nanchao gongti shi yanjiu" 南朝宮體詩研究 *Wen shi zhe xuebao* 15 (1966): 407-58. Also see note 80.

67. Although none of Bao's poems in *yongwu* mode includes the kind of decorative or functional object discussed so far, among his *yuefu* (in "Imitating the *Xing lu nan*" series) there is the poem on a censor, referred to in note 44.

68. For a note on the Paulownia tree, see the *BCGM* 35.1997-9

and Stuart-Smith, op.cit., pp. 312-3.

69. *Song shi*, p. 1310 and *BCJJZ*, p. 410-1; also trans. Kang-yi Sun Chang, p. 92 and Chou Chao-ming, p. 184.

70. This is defined by many critics in terms of the sequencing of poetic content; see, for example, Lin Wenyue: "In Xie's poems the beginning relates the [author's] circumstances (*xushi* 敘事). The poem continues with a description of the physical setting (*jingwu* 景物), and concludes with its affective rationale (*qingli* 情理)...This method of ordering a poem became the model" (The Landscape Poetry of Bao Zhao and Xie Lingyun), p. 14.

71. The discussion of "The Oriole" in Chapter Two refers.

72. See, for example, Mi Heng's "The Parrot," in which the same pair of stock figures are evoked (*Wen xuan* 13.21b).

73. Like that very much earlier piece, "Sweet Clover."

74. Chou Chao-ming, op.cit., pp. 184-7. Kang-yi Sun Chang's translation is very similar; see her p. 92.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 93 and 95.

76. The locus classicus for *ci chi* 差池 is "Swallow, swallow" (*Yan yan* 燕燕) from the *Airs* of *Bei* 邶 section of the *Shi jing* (Mao #28). The compound has the general meaning of "uneven," "irregular." The Zheng-Kong commentaries to the *Shijing* state that the expression refers to the tail feathers extended in flight (*SJZS* 2/1.77). The statement misses out part of the explanation: that the swallow's tail wings acquire their familiar irregular shape when they are spread during flight. The *Shuo wen* is more explicit on the subject of the swallow, "When the wings are spread, the tail has a forked appearance (lit. "the tail forks") 布翅枝尾; cited in *Shi Maoshi zhuan shu* 詩毛氏傳疏 (Commentary on the Mao Commentary to the Classic of Songs) p. 81. Legge translates, "With their wings unevenly displayed" (*The Shoo King: The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, p. 42); Karlgren, who has "uneven-looking are their wings," explains, "As they caper about, the foreshortening makes now one now the other of the wings seem longer" (*The Book of Odes*, p. 16-17); Waley's "Wing high, wing low" (op.cit., p. 107) appears to transfer the meaning to the swallows' pattern of flight but retains an interesting ambiguity. In Bao Zhao's poem the expression is obviously meant to recall the *Shijing* piece, but it is also intended to characterise the appearance of the swallow pair, as they move to the forefront of his own poem. Movement is a major theme in this piece (it is, of course, present in a more abstract sense in the earlier lyric) and the compound manages to suggest both an image coming into focus, and the strangely irregular wing shape. The translation is based on the idea of that combination of images. C.f. Birrell's translation, "Till wings bob up and down" (op.cit., pp. 118).

77. *YTXY* 4.145. *Song shi*, p. 1310 and *BCJJZ*, p. 411; trans. Birrell, pp. 118-9. The *YTXY* has *ni* 泥, "mud," for *YWLJ*'s *lei* 淚, "tears." The translation follows Lu Qinli in adopting the second reading.

78. The most well-known *yuefu* example is probably the song "In front of the hall swallows swoop and soar" 翩翩堂前燕 (*YFSJ* 39.549; it is classified as a *yange xing*). The swallows open the piece, setting the scene for the return of the husband and the restoration of the conjugal pattern disrupted by war.

79. See the earlier discussion of the ballads. The *Yuzhang xing* and "South Mountain" are first of all explicable in terms of a narrative action. The action they embody is, in each case, consistent with a linear allegorical reading.

80. In an influential modern article Ronald C. Miao discusses "one major subdivision of *kung-t'i shih*: those poems which describe, directly or indirectly, the frustrations of the palace lady in disfavour" ("Palace-Style Poetry: The Courtly Treatment of Glamour and Love," in *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, edited Miao, vol. 1, pp. 1-42). Miao, pp. 1-2, also provides some useful bibliographical references.

81. The details of the historical episode attached by traditional critics to this poem vary. The commentaries cited above refer to the predicament of Dai Wei 戴媯, virtuous second wife of Duke Zhuang 莊公, on his death, and her return to her home. Most of the critics say that she is accompanied on her way by the Duke's first wife, Zhuang Jiang 莊姜 who is often envisaged as the speaker. The swallows (there is disagreement as to their number), stand as symbols of faithfulness, but their precise relation to the protagonists of this piece is not clear. The *Mao zhuan* does not identify the bird/s as a *xing*.

82. Aoki Masaru 青木正兒, *Shina bungaku geijutsu ko* 支那文學藝術考 (Studies in Chinese Literature), p. 432.

83. See, however, the discussion of titles in Chapter Five.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. *Six Dynasties Poetry*, p. 122.

2. For some background to Pei Ziye and his treatise, see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, Introduction, pp. 13-14, and Marney, "P'ei Tzu-yeh: A Minor Literary Critic of the Liang Dynasty," in *Selected Papers in Asian Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 161-71. Pei's biography is in *Liang shu* 30.441-44.

3. *Quan Liang wen* 53.3262b.

4. *Ibid.* The translation "style" for *feng* 風 falls somewhat short of the original, which suggests the approach characteristic of a period generally. *Feng* covers thematic preoccupations as well as stylistic traits, and encompasses the idea of what was transmitted to subsequent periods.

5. Corroboration is also to be found in Shen Yue's request to a younger poet to compose ten poems on plants and trees; the excerpt is discussed in the following chapter.

6. C.f. Marney, who translates, "They...go beyond themselves to become one with the winds and clouds," and who reads "winds and clouds" as "traditional symbols of licentious impropriety" (op.cit., p. 168).

7. See the Introduction, p. 2.

8. Knechtges recognises the relationship between this compound and the *yongwu shi*. He follows up a translation of the passage from the histories with an example of a poem on a thing, Shen Yue's "Embroidery on the Border of a Collar" 領邊繡 (Wen xuan, Introduction, p. 12; for the poem, see YTXY 5.191-2). In its combination of diminutive subject, delicate treatment and ironic application of the theme of support to a collar catching tresses, the poem would seem to represent an advanced stage of that decadence pinned on the period as a whole by Confucian critics. But it also discloses the blend of freshness and delicate observation that characterises most of Shen Yue's compositions in this vein.

9. *Qi shi*, p. 1375-1511.

10. For these, see the end of this section.

11. For example, Xie Tiao's *yuefu* "The Fragrant Tree" (Fang shu 芳樹) and "Autumn Bamboo: a song" (Qiu zhu qu 秋竹曲) fit *yongwu* criteria and are included in Chou Chao-ming's list of this poet's *yongwu* poems (op.cit., p. 179). See also Knechtges' comments on the two poems by Shen Yue included in the *Wen xuan*, op. cit., Introduction, p. 41, and note 257. The issue is referred to in the conclusion to this chapter.

12. More precisely, given the names, dates and combinations involved, the three occasions referred to could only have taken place within the Yongming reign period. For the prefaces, and their poems, see *Sbby* 5b-7b.

13. The instrument referred to is a *chi* 簫, a small transverse flute.

14. The cinnabar heart (*dan cheng* 丹誠) stands for faithfulness.

15. For "The Armrest's" annotations, see the final section.

16. The earliest location for most of these is under their subject categories in the early Tang *leishu*, the *Yiwen leiju* and the *Chuxue ji*.

17. A *cun* 寸, translated "inch," represented between 2.5 to 3 centimetres; the information is taken from David Pollack, citing Kaizuka Shigeki et al., "Chūgoku no doryōkō no tan'i to sono henshen," *Kanwa Chū Jiten*, p. 1311 ff; see Pollack's "Linked-verse poetry in China: A Study of Associative Linking in 'lien-chu' Poetry With Emphasis on the Poems of Han Yu and his Circle," Ph.D. dissertation, 1976, p. 347).

18. NS 59.1463. Wang Sengru's dates are 465-522.

19. NS 22.607. An example of the second kind of atmosphere is the occasion described in note 5, above.

20. Lu Qinli, *Chen shi*, pp. 2516-7, for the preface and the five surviving poems; Pollack, *op.cit.*, p. 42, refers.

21. The next section elaborates on the idea of particular time constraints.

22. LS 50.718. Pollack, who also translates this extract, comments, "If this in fact indicates three *sun*, then these poets were under severe pressure indeed compared to those who participated in the more relaxed gathering at the Prince of Ching-ling's salon" (*op.cit.*, p. 51).

23. A convenient collection, containing almost all the references relevant to this discussion, can be found in *Wei Jin Nanbei shihua* 魏晉南北朝詩話 (Remarks on Poetry from the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties), ed. Xiao Huarong 蕭華榮. Pollack (*op. cit.*, Chapter One) translates and discusses many of the most interesting anecdotes.

24. See the discussion of the first chapter.

25. Shen bases his defence on the fact that the new tonal patterns represent another manifestation of familiar archetypes. He is unlikely to have drawn attention to any unnatural difficulties associated with their introduction.

26. See Wu Xiaoping, "The Formation of Eight-line Pentasyllabic Verse," p. 1. The proportion of eight-line pentasyllabic poems for the much larger Liang corpus of verse is, perhaps surprisingly, the same. It jumps to 55% of the total for the Chen period.

27. Given that losses might be expected to be greatest in the area of impromptu composition, and that a substantial number of eight-line works are conclusively linked to such a context, the figure of around one third of the total would seem to err on the conservative side.

28. Looked at in these terms, the eight-line format is accepted as normative to the point that it requires no independent discussion. See, for example, Wang Li's approach in his influential record of the features of regulation in lyric verse, *Hanyu shilu xue* (cited, Chapter

One, note 3).

29. Wang Li, op.cit., p. 72 and pp. 112-19.

30. Wang Li remarks, "We should first of all recognise that the rules of *dui* and *nian* were not minutely adhered to before the High Tang" (op.cit., p. 112). Chou Chao-ming (op.cit., p. 215-6) provides the statistics for the feature of tonal regulation in seventeen poems of *yongwu* type by Xie Tiao, including all those translated in the final section. He summarises: "Hsieh T'iao and Shen Yue observed the rules for regulated lines (*luju* 律句). In their poems, regulated couplets also become more common."

31. In this period, first couplets are frequently constructed according to parallel principles. In the sample of Xie Tiao's poems on things, seven of the fifteen poems have a fully parallel first couplet and one other exhibits a degree of parallelism. See also the discussion of the poem "The Armrest."

32. The phrase is sometimes translated "verisimilitude." For an influential use of the term, see *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 10.694, and Shih, p. 481.

33. Kang-i Sun Chang's article "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp. 105-129, has a useful discussion that relates parallelism to descriptive realism; see, in particular, p. 109.

34. *Nature and Views of Nature*, p. 303.

35. The poem is repeated, with its annotations, as part of Xie Tiao's collection. See the last section.

36. *Han shu* 51.2350. The link is cemented by another linguistic echo, *pan mu* 蟠木, "twisted trunk." I am grateful to Eva Chong for giving me access to her annotated translation of this letter.

37. For a discussion related to lyric verse, see Stephen Owen's *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, pp. 425-8.

38. The feature may also be associated with a certain ambiguity as to the participation of the first line in rhyme and tonal schemes.

39. *Xie Xuancheng shi ji* (Sbby ed) 5.6a-b; Lu Qinli, *Qi shi*, p. 1454.

40. *Xie Xuancheng shi ji* 5.5b-6a; *Qi shu*, p. 1402;

41. *Xie Xuancheng shi ji* 5.4a; *Qi shu*, p. 1451;

42. Note 31 refers.

43. See "The Wind," "The Mirror Stand" and "The Candle;" the last poem begins with a compound proper noun. It should be noted that a minority of otherwise fully regulated poems of Tang date retain a parallel structure in the first couplet. The feature is relatively common in pre-Tang composition.

44. A good example is Xie Tiao's "The Fragrant Tree," referred to in note 11. Other poets also wrote to this title in the context of assigned poem series composed to *yuefu* titles; for Wang Rong's version, see *Qi shi*, p. 1389 and, for Shen Yue's, *ibid.* 1620. Shen's piece is translated and discussed by Mather, op.cit., pp. 64-6.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. In Shiren Yuxie 詩人玉屑 (Immortal Fragments from the Poets), comp. Wei Qingzhi 魏慶之 (Southern Song), 10.215. Yuxie are, literally, "jade splinters," which, in Daoist alchemical practice, are thought to confer immortality.

2. Cited in Chapter Two. The comment refers specifically to Wang Rong and Xie Tiao, but has application to the period more generally. As a generalisation, allusion becomes progressively more attenuated in the following dynasties, the Liang and the Chen.

3. Xie Xuancheng shi ji 5b; prefixed to Wang Rong's "The Curtain" and three other poems. Chapter Four refers.

4. The earliest attempt to come to grips with a Southern Dynasties' game context was Morino Shigeo's 森野繁夫 "Ryō no bungaku no yūgishō" 梁の文學の遊戯性 (The "Game" Character of Liang Literature), *Chūgoku chūsei bungaku kenkyū* 6 (1967): 27-40. See also the first chapter of Pollack's dissertation (op.cit., pp. 23-82), which includes a substantial section on literary games of the Six Dynasties. With the general context already outlined and explored, I have been able to limit the discussion in this chapter to compositional implications and, in line with the general directions of this thesis, to concentrate on what textual analysis reveals.

5. Shen Yue's "Fu on Living Outside the City" 郊居賦 was composed in 507; see LS 13.236-42, for dating and the text. A full translation, together with biographical background, is provided in Richard Mather's *The Poet Shen Yue*, pp. 175-223.

6. *Ngiek 霓 (modern Mandarin, ni) refers to the secondary rainbow, defined as "a fainter one formed inside or outside the primary by double reflection and double refraction, and exhibiting the spectrum colours in the opposite order to that of the primary" (O.E.D.). The secondary bow was regarded as female. The "weft" text, the *Chunqiu wei yuanming bao* 春秋緯元命苞 (Apocryphon to the Spring and Autumn Annals: Buds of Primal Life) has the statement, "When yin and yang conjoin they create male and female rainbows...The male is known as *ghung and the female as *ngiek" (Yuhan shanfang ji yi shu 玉函山房輯佚書 [Restored Texts from the Yuhan Mountain Studio], comp. Ma Guohan 馬國翰 [1794-1857], 57.4a). See also Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, pp. 85-6.

7. The earliest sense of zhi yin 知音, someone who understands another's music, is reinstated here. The *locus classicus* for this idea is the story of Bo Ya, who broke his qin after the death of Zhong Ziqi 鍾子其 his close friend and the only person with whom true communication through his strings was possible. See *Liezi* 5.16a-b; Chapter Two, note 39, also refers. The focus here would seem to be on issues of tonal euphony, although the piece under discussion is a fu.

8. NS 22.609. LS 50.715.

9. This may have to do with the fact that Xiao Yan, formerly one of "The Eight Friends of Jingling" 竟陵八友, was now Emperor (r. 502-49). (The seven other "Friends" were Shen Yue, Xie Tiao, Wang Rong, Xiao Chen 蕭琛 (478-524), Fan Yun 范雲 ((451-503), Ren Fang and Lu Chui 陸倕 (470-526); see LS 1.2). Although he was still an

active promoter of literary talent and the centre of various poetic groups, less of a contest among equals is to be expected in literary gatherings presided over by the Emperor. His disclaimer of any knowledge of tonal prosody in the well-known anecdote, cited below, may be interpreted as an attempt to distance himself from earlier preoccupations and, perhaps, people:

The Emperor asked Zhou She 周捨 (469-524), "What are these four tones?" She replied, "They are summed up in 'The Son of Heaven is sage and wise' (天子聖哲)." But the Emperor never displayed any interest in them or practised them (LS 13.243).

The characters exemplify the four tones in order. Zhou She was the son of that other Zhou, Zhou Yong, credited with writing a work on the four tones; Chapter One refers.

10. A *yongwu shi*, "The Snow," composed by Pei Ziye, survives. For the text, see Lu Qinli, *Liang shi*, p. 1790; translated Marney, "P'ei Tzu-yeh," p. 164. Cao Daoheng emphasises the deliberate attempt to avoid tonal pattern in this poem, in "Guanyu Pei Ziye shiwen de jige wenti" 關於裴子野詩文的幾個問題 (Some Questions Concerning Pei Ziye's Lyric Verse and Prose Writing), (Collected Essays, pp. 278-286). That aspect aside, Pei's poem is indistinguishable in terms of its overall style, octave length and the exact parallelism of the two middle couplets, from other salon pieces.

11. *Fu* 賦 (*piwo*) is used verbally here, paralleling the verbal function, as well as the sound, of *tu* 圖 (*d'o*) in the previous line.

12. *Liang shi*, p. 1649. Cynthia Chennault, "The Poetry of Hsieh T'iao (A.D.464-499)," Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1979, p. 140, provides another translation and commentary on this poem. Her analysis does not, perhaps, take sufficiently into account the place of subgeneric convention and Qi Liang wit.

13. The section "Yongwu parameters," in Chapter Three, refers; also the discussion, later in this chapter, on "Fu of the Snow."

14. The point has also been made by Pollack: "I would suggest here that in its contexts and treatment *yung-wu* might be understood to be as much of a game as a technique like *li-ho* 離合, the correct interpretation of which also yielded the subject of the poem" (op.cit. Chapter 1, note 81, p. 345).

15. 823.267A.

16. Xie Xuancheng *ji jiaozhu*, p. 29-30.

17. Chou Chao-ming (op.cit., pp. 230-31) refers to a conventional distinction between open and hidden approaches to topic (*ming ti* 明體 and *an ti* 暗體), citing Liu Tieleng's 劉鐵冷 *Zuo shi bai fa* 作詩百法, pp. 102-3, and later examples. It seems unlikely that, in this period, poets made a distinction along these lines, but worked rather from the requirements of individual situation and topic. Personal preference comes into it also. Shen Yue tends to mention his topic in the early lines more frequently than other poets (see, for example, the three poems in *Liang shi*, p. 1645). However, numbers are heavily weighted in favour of an indirect approach. Only three of the fifteen poems cited in the final section refer directly to their topic ("The Bamboo," "The Rushes," and "The Paulownia"). Of these, the two poems on plants follow an older *yongwu fu* convention; "The Rushes" adapts the words of a song. Chou Chao-ming suggests that the use of *si* 絲 in the first line of "The Dodder," as part of the plant's name, *tusi* 兔絲, places this poem also in the category of "straightforward

style." It is perhaps more convincingly interpreted as another allusive device.

18. An example of such a linkage is the association of snow with purity.

19. *Wen xuan* 13.12a. This poem is graced with two attractive English translations. See Burton Watson's *Chinese Rhyme-Prose*, pp. 86-91 and, for a full annotation and structural analysis also, Stephen Owen's article "Hsieh Hui-lien's 'Snow Fu'," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94.1 (1974): 14-23. The allusion is to the Mencius: "[Mencius] said, 'Would you say that the whiteness of white feathers is like the whiteness of snow and that the whiteness of snow is like the whiteness of white jade? Gaozi said, 'I would.' 'Then in that case, does a dog's nature resemble a cow's and a cow's that of a human being?'" Commentary (by the Han commentator Zhao Qi 趙岐 [108-201]): "Mencius knew that it is the nature of feathers to be light. The nature of snow is to dissolve and that of jade is a constant hardness. These things are all white but their natures are different. He asked Gaozi, whether the nature of these three white things was the same" (SSJZS 11A.193A). Li Shan's commentary in *Wen xuan* cites a similarly worded explanation by the Eastern Han (25-220) scholar Liu Xi 劉熙. Liu Xi's "Commentary to the Mencius" 孟子注 did not survive beyond the Tang. Fragments were resurrected and included in the *Han Wei yishu chao*, op.cit., 6.1-2.

20. See Owen, op.cit. p. 20.

21. Referred to in Chapter Two; see the section "Some prototypes."

22. See Xunzi, *Sbby* 18.6b-11a. The other two poems are entitled "Poem of Anomalies" 侷詩 and "A Small Song" 小歌.

23. Chapter Two, note 11, refers. Knechtges suggests that "The riddle ... might have been considered a special type of fu that never achieved much popularity, and the only surviving specimens of the genre are those in the *Hsun tzu*" (*The Han Rhapsody*, p. 19). See the whole of this section (pp. 18-21) for a summary of the connections between these riddles and the fu genre. Knechtges' Introduction to *Wen xuan* describes the riddles more specifically as "the prototypes for the *yongwu* rhapsody" (p. 32).

24. C.f. Hellmut Wilhelm, who considers them to be variations on the theme of Xunzi's fitness for office; see "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of 'Fu,'" *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. J.K. Fairbank, pp. 316-7 and note 40, p. 401.

25. "A Small Song" occurs in variant forms in the *Zhanguo ce* (*Sbby* 17.4b-5a) and *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (4/25), trans. J.R. Hightower, *Han Shih Wai Chuan*; Han Ying's *Illustrations of the Didactic Applications of the Classic of Songs*, pp. 151-2. See also Knechtges, op.cit., pp. 18-19. The argument for its existence in an earlier, or another, version is likely to remain unsolved without further evidence as to the relative dating of the three texts, and the question of how much of an editorial hand Liu Xiang had in the recension of the Xunzi. The direct switch from playful indirection to outright lament and condemnation in the last two pieces may stem from the urge to recapitulate in a different vein. (The term used to introduce "A Small Song" is *fanci* 反辭, which the earliest Xunzi commentator, mid-Tang scholar, Yang Liang 楊儵, explains as "recapitulating after the manner of a *Chuci* envoi" (反覆叙說之辭 猶楚辭亂曰) and "summarising the previous ideas" (總論前意).)

Stylistic counterpoint may be responsible for the inclusion of a double envoi. But another reason for placing the last two pieces under the "fu" rubric could well be the retrospective perception that they have something in common with the characteristics of the "fu of frustration" (Wilhelm, op.cit., p. 401 note 40).

26. These are also, of course, some of the stylistic characteristics that distinguish the fu.

27. Under the entry zhen, the Shuowen has "zhen refers to a needle used for stitching clothes 綴衣箴也(5B.1972a-b). The Yu pian 玉篇 (Jade Thesaurus) has "admonish, warn, criticise" 規也戒也刺也.

28. Yang Liang's commentary notes that this line refers to the needle's being made of iron, which is extracted from the ground. An early reference to the use of iron for making needles occurs in the Guanzi 管子 in the context of a recommended tax on iron, for "Every woman must have...a needle..." (Sbby 24.2b).

29. The phrases he cong 合從 and lian hong 連衡 indicate vertical and horizontal linkage. Originally they refer to the respective achievements of the two great Warring States persuaders, Su Qin 蘇秦 and Zhang Yi 張儀, in enabling the Six States to unite for a period against Qin (he cong), and allowing Qin to mount the individual campaigns which resulted in collective defeat (lian heng). The terms reflect geographical realities, with the States envisaged as forming a roughly North-South alliance and Qin picking off its rival states in its advance from West to East. The expressions would be expected to retain something of their original flavour in this context.

30. What a modern reader would probably refer to as the "head" of the needle - the part that contains the eye - is called the "tail" (wei 尾) here. The tail is envisaged as long (長; 趙繚) because of its trail of thread. The phrase jie wei 結尾 refers to the fact that a knot in the end of the tail is required before the needle can go into action. Two lines down, the needle must be threaded before a start can be made.

31. This line and the next play on the fact that the needle is encased, or hidden, in something else. Thus the iron needle derives from a larger pin that is filed down. It is implied that an attractive exterior (zan 簪 means "hairpin" and brings the idea of ornament to bear) conceals the needle's sharpness.

32. Sbby 18.9b-10a.

33. Sbby ed., 1.1a.

34. The line reads, 非絲非帛. The characters si 絲 and bo 帛 both refer to silk. It is difficult to identify a difference that is relevant to this context. As the basic meaning of si is the strands of silk from the silk worm, and bo is always a fine processed silk, particularly associated with the use of silk for books, the translation reflects that distinction.

35. A meteorological basis for this description can be found in the Huainanzi, "When the dominant yin essence chills (lit. 'congeals') frost and snow are produced" 陰氣勝則凝而為霜雪 (Sbby.3.1b).

36. Wen xuan, 13.12a-b. Li Shan's commentary cites, as the springboard for the final reflection, Zhang Heng's "Fu on Returning to the Fields" 歸田賦. This concludes with the lines, "Let me let go my mind beyond the physical world. How do I know where honour and

disgrace lie?" 苟縱心於物外，安知榮辱之所如 (Wen xuan 15.9b).
 Another twist to the theme is introduced in the phrase haoran 浩然.
 Li Shan cites a line from the Mencius in which the phrase occurs: "I
 am skilled at nourishing my boundless flow of qi (vital essence)" 我善
 養吾浩然之氣. The explanation that follows characterises that qi
 as "immense and steadfast" or "able to retain its own nature" 至大至剛.
 (See D.C.Lau's *Mencius* for a translation of the passage; there is a
 discussion of this section in his Introduction, p. 25.) To this the
 Wen xuan reading of the character, 皓 [for 浩], adds the idea of
 brightness and purity.

The coda may hold an echo of hexagram 60 jie 節 "integrity," or
 "limitation," and its commentary 苦節不可貞. This yields an
 admonishment along the lines of, "Do not persist in an integrity that
 is against the odds" (Zhou yi 6.132A). The background presence of the
 hexagram is suggested by the repetition of the characters jie and zhen
 貞.

37. In the context of this poem the characters luo 螺 and bang 蚌
 would seem to stand collectively for a class of gastropod mollusc,
 and, within it, to represent two kinds. These would now be classified
 as the spiral-shelled univalve and the double-shelled bivalve.
 Although luo occurs, by itself and in combination, with the meaning of
 "snail," snails are not primarily thought of as marine animals in
 English; nor do they team up naturally with mussels. Conches and
 mussels do go together (see the OED entry, "conch"), and the
 translation opts to retain the connection.

38. Fei you xin 非有心, lit. "do not have a heart," or
 "centre." This refers to the belief that the hard-shelled, soft bodied
 mollusc has no heart, as, for example, the Da Dai Liji 大戴禮記
 (Record of Rites of the Elder Dai), which states: "creatures that live
 in (lit. 'eat') the earth do not have hearts and do not breathe" (Han
 Wei congshu 13.8). (C.f. the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which describes
 this species as possessing a "well-developed heart" [see under
 "circulation," p. 672].) Xie Huilian reflects a common perception,
 then as now. On the metaphorical level the phrase declares that the
 conch and the mussel will have nothing to do with the gaudy
 treacherous lifestyle of birds and fish. The line is central to the
 interpretation and, to try and capture something of its significance
 in translation, I have called on older meanings implying "inclination"
 or "temperament" that attached to the word "heart." These are now
 classified as obsolete (see the O.E.D. entry under "heart," 7 and 8),
 although something of their meaning persists in the expression, used
 in the negative, "not to have the heart for."

39. Song shi, p. 1197. For ding 鼎, tripod, see the final
 section, Poem 10, note 2. A zu 俎 is a rectangular stand or tray.
 Besides being employed as cooking utensils - and associated in this
 connection with the richer families - these receptacles also had a
 function in the sacrificial rituals. The translation might read, more
 domestically, "Their flavour does not grace the trays and cauldrons."
 But the existence of another saying, apparently current in the Later
 Han, tips the balance. I am indebted to Aat Vervoorn for pointing out
 the following lines: "If you go for the bait and swallow the hook,
 you'll fall to the ceremonial blade" 愛餌銜鉤，悔在鸞刀 (from Cui
 Shi's 崔寔 [c.110 c.170] "Reply to Mockery," [Da ji 答譏], YWLJ
 25.460). This line connects being seduced by the baits of office with
 the "simurgh knife" (luan dao 鸞刀) - in this context, a knife (to
 which bells were often attached) which was used in connection with
 a court ceremonial. For the background to the Cui Shi piece and a
 translation of the passage in which the expression occurs, see
 Vervoorn's *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese
 Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han*, p. 219-220.

40. The text has qi 氣, which the modern scholar, Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, citing parallelism with the following line, amends to shi 詩; the Erya explains this as jing 靜, "still, quiet" (see Erya yishu 爾雅義疏 [Exegesis to the Erya], Sbbv 1.4b, and Bao Canjun jizhu, p. 397).

41. This line and the three following contain the most overt references to "Fu on the Snow" (see Wen xuan 13.10b), but the text is saturated in its echoes. The discussion refers.

42. For ku jie 苦節, "bitter purity," see the discussion.

43. Pan Ni's 潘尼 (ca. 250-310) "Epitaph for Yang Gonghou, Governor of Yizhou" 益州刺史楊恭侯碑 contains the lines, "He held unswerving to his inherent principles/ Embodied the orchid's and the rock's qualities of fragrance [standing for moral wholesomeness] and firmness" (see Yiwen leiju 50.896).

44. Song shi, p. 1306.

45. The commentaries that accompany the hexagrams, as opposed to those that discuss their component elements, yao 爻, are attributed to King Wen of the Zhou (see Gao Heng's 高亨 Zhou yi gujing jinzhu 周易古經今注 [The Classic of Changes: A Modern Commentary to the Ancient Classic], p. 6).

46. Both phrases occupy the strong position at the beginning of the line. Both occur in lines that herald a change of direction. It is likely that any reader familiar with the fu would recall the way in which the piece concludes.

47. Op.cit., p. 64. I have altered the romanisation to pinyin for consistency. See this section of Mather's chapter "The Flowering of the Yung-ming Style," for a sensitive discussion of Shen's salon compositions; also his fine translations of the only yongwu shi which were selected for inclusion in the Wen xuan, Shen's two pieces, "Wild Geese Over the Lake" 詠湖中鴈 and "A Response to Assistant Imperial Secretary Wang Siyuan's 'The Moon'" 應王中丞思遠詠月 Liang shi, pp. 1645 and 1646; translated Mather, op.cit., p. 71 and Sunflower Splendour: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry, ed. Wu-chi Liu and Irving Lo, p. 71.

48. Bao Zhao died, at 52, in 466. The question of the dating of some of his literary works is addressed by Cao Daoheng in "Bao Zhao jipian shi wen de xiezuo shijian" 鮑照幾篇詩文的寫作時間 (The Dating of Certain of Bao Zhao's Writings and Poems) Wen shi 16 (1982): 189-202, rpt. Collected Essays, pp. 378-400. The diversity of the approach revealed by his pieces in yongwu vein might suggest that they were composed over a period of time.

49. Qi shi, p. 1405. Lu Qinli cites the Shi ji 詩紀 (Record of Poems): "Some attribute this poem to Emperor Yuan (元) of the Liang."

50. A discussion of the li he form is found in Wang Yunxi's "Lihe shikao" 離合詩考, Guowen yuekan, no. 79, pp. 26-30.

51. The character shi 是 provides the second half < of the graph huo 火. It signals that fact by its positioning at the beginning of the third line. Mechanical factors therefore determine its inclusion and its place. Its semantic function is emphatic here and I have decided not to translate it literally by "it" or "this," which are non-emphatic in English. The poem centres on a hub of related contrasts and the translation "this time" underlines the comparison

between past and present.

52. *Qi shi*, p. 1405.

53. An influential poetic forerunner of the abandoned woman, despairing of seeing her man again, appears in Old Poem 2 (*Wen xuan* 29.1a-b).

54. The poem was referred to in Chapter Four as part of the group collected under the title "Poems, composed in company, on musical instruments;" for the prefix, see *Qi shi*, p. 1453 and the text, p. 1402.

The *Chuxue ji* (16.391) contains a summary of information about this instrument taken from earlier sources: "The *Fengsu tong* says, 'Today's musical craftsmen make the *pipa* but we do not know where it came from. It is three *chi* and five *cun* in length, and thus modelled on [the idea of] Heaven, Earth and Man, and the five elements. [*Chi* and *cun* are the Chinese "foot" and "inch," respectively one third of a metre and 23.10mm in length.] Its four strings symbolise the four seasons.' The *Shiming* says that the *pipa* was originally played by Northern peoples (*hu* 胡) on horseback. When the hand pushes the strings forward the movement is known as *pi*; when it draws them back in a plucking movement it is known as *pa*. It got its name from this. Fu Xuan's "Fu on the *Pipa*" says, 'Hollow within, it is solid without, symbolising heaven and earth. It has a rounded base and a straight neck, thereby demonstrating the principles of yin and yang.'"

55. The surface of the guitar was often decorated with a painted or engraved pattern, the "flowers" referred to in the poem. A flower pattern can be made out on the *pipa* in one of the earliest surviving paintings depicting the instrument, Gu Hongzhong's 顧闳中 (10th century) "An Evening's Entertainment at Han Xidai's House" (*Zhongguo lidai huihua* 中國歷代繪畫 [Paintings of Successive Chinese Dynasties] p. 84 (a) and p. 86. *Chun qing* 春情, "spring feelings," are the emotions associated with spring, especially sexual love.

56. *Long men* 龍門, "Dragon Gate," was the preferred location for the wood of the *qin*. See *Wen xuan* 34.3b; note 2 to Poem 7 in the final section refers.

57. *New Songs From A Jade Terrace*, p. 126.

58. In this tradition, as in so many others, women are conventionally envisaged as flowers.

Bibliographical Note

Many translations of titles are taken from, or based on, the versions given by Knechtges in his bibliographies to *Wen xuan*, Volumes One and Two. Needham's *Science and Civilisation* and the *Indiana Companion* have also been consulted on occasion.

Some further bibliographical acknowledgement is in order here. I have not wanted to set up a formal link between selected critical texts from the Western tradition and the subject matter of this study by placing them in the bibliography. It is in any case hard to say when I began specifically reading for this thesis. But some of the currents of recent years should clearly be acknowledged as having opened up critical perspectives, and for operating as an undoubted stimulus. Mention should be made of the following books, some of which provided the bits of encapsulated wisdom that appear at the beginning of chapters and sections:

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