

**Ambivalence in Poetry:  
Zhu Shuzhen of the Song Dynasty**

**Kar Yue CHAN**

**Submitted for the Degree of**

**PhD**

**Asian Studies (Chinese)**

**School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures**

**College of Humanities and Social Science**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2005**



# Declaration

I hereby affirm that all work in this thesis, unless otherwise acknowledged, is my own work and has been composed by me solely. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature:

Name: Kar Yue CHAN

Date: 24 November 2005

## Abstract

Many people in the past praised Chinese literature partly because of the glamour revealed in splendid poetry, and in creating these poetry male poets have proved their excellence. Conversely the contributions of women poets have seemed much less significant in the history of traditional Chinese literature. Among the relatively small number of famous women poets in China, Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真 (1135?-1180?) is certainly worthy of discussion, but she has not received much critical attention, in part because of the lack of reliable biographical information. Although some of Zhu Shuzhen's poems have been seen by some scholars as disgraceful, it is nevertheless valuable to explore the inner world and poetic indications of the voice projected from the poems in an objective way. However, as the number of poems attributed to Zhu Shuzhen is large, despite living under an atmosphere that discouraged the writing of poetry by women, her name is undoubtedly significant in the development of female poetry.

Western theories of gender representation and the development of self in literature have been used as the main sources and frameworks for research in this thesis. The aesthetic values in Zhu Shuzhen's original verse have been retained through my translations by selecting the best appropriate original versions in different editions. Comparisons between Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844?-868?), a woman poet in the Tang Dynasty, reveal similarities and differences which distinguish the two in terms of their resistance to the code that cast women as inferior. This thesis will analyse Zhu Shuzhen's ambivalent mind as revealed in her poetry through her contradictory statements, ideas and images regarding the notion of being a good wife on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of a woman suspected of conducting an extramarital affair.

## Acknowledgement

In writing and processing this thesis, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Julian Ward, my principal supervisor, who has been working unswervingly with me on many unsettling problems throughout my research. Without him I could not understand the wide sense of cultural significance and the difference of research methods of the Western world, and the literary aesthetics represented in poetry. His great care and delicate assistance in my research provided me with the necessary energy to proceed, and he has facilitated me with unprecedented progress. Special thanks must also be given to Dr Tommy McClellan, my second supervisor. He provided me with valuable advice and insightful comments. He also exerted his efforts in encouraging my progress.

My thanks are due also to the University of Edinburgh and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, which provide adequate facilities for me to study and use appropriate resources. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Bonnie McDougall, the postgraduate advisor, who has encouraged me throughout the course of my study and has provided me with precious opinions on my research. I wish to thank especially Dr Paul Levine, my academic colleagues and friends in Hong Kong, who have been encouraging and assisting me through these years. Thanks also to the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Without this department I might not have made my part-time study possible. Lastly, I want to express additional gratitude to my parents and Kevin, my husband, who are always giving continuous support and courage to my study. Along with them I could concentrate on my research without worrying about not being loved.

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b>		i
<b>Abstract</b>		ii
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		iii
<b>Abbreviations</b>		vii
<b>Introduction</b>		1
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Women in Chinese Society and the Poetic Tradition of Women</b>	
1.1	Patriarchal Norms in Traditional Chinese Society	9
1.1.1	The Confucian Tradition	9
1.1.2	The Influence of the Confucian Tradition on Women's Lives – The Separation of the Sexes	11
1.2	The Rise of Neo-Confucian Thought	14
1.2.1	The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought	14
1.2.2	Restrictions Laid upon Women under Neo-Confucianism	16
1.2.2.1	Principle of Separation and Female Literacy	16
1.2.2.2	Widow Chastity and Divorce	19
1.2.2.3	The Social and Sexual Inferiority of Women	21
1.3	Chinese <i>Shi</i> -poetry	23
1.4	<i>Shi</i> -poetry in the Song Dynasty	24
1.5	The Development of <i>Ci</i> -poetry - From the Tang and Five Dynasties (907-960) to the Song Dynasty	26
1.6	<i>Ci</i> -poetry in the Song Dynasty	27
1.7	Distinctive Women Poets in the Tang and Song Dynasties	29

## **Chapter 2      About Zhu Shuzhen**

2.1	A Capture of Zhu Shuzhen's Biography	38
2.2	The Background and Content of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry	47
2.2.1	Describing Still Lives	49
2.2.2	Describing Scenery	52
2.2.3	Appreciating Historical Heroes	56
2.2.4	Peasant Hardships	58
2.2.5	Grieving for an Unhappy Marriage	60
2.2.6	The Longing for Love	64
2.3	Poetic Style of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry	67
2.4	The Contribution of Zhu Shuzhen as a Woman Poet	72

## **Chapter 3      Virtue vs Vice: Ambivalence in Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry**

3.1	Prologue	79
3.2	Zhu Shuzhen's Poems Reflecting a Youthful Voice	83
3.3	Zhu Shuzhen's Poems Reflecting a Mature Voice	90
3.4	Zhu Shuzhen's Poems about Love Affairs	102
3.5	A Poem with Doubtful Authorship	118
3.6	Conclusion	121

## **Chapter 4      Selfhood vs Selflessness: Zhu Shuzhen's Enhancement of Female Subjectivity**

4.1	Prologue	125
4.2	Zhu Shuzhen's Literary Selflessness	129
4.2.1	The Self-Unconscious Mind	132
4.2.2	The Self-Semiconscious Mind	137
4.3	Zhu Shuzhen's Literary Selfhood and Self-Paradox	141
4.3.1	Zhu Shuzhen as a Self-Conscious Being	141
4.3.2	Zhu Shuzhen and Her Self-Contradictory Attachments	150
4.4	Zhu Shuzhen's Representation of Female Subjectivity	152
4.5	Conclusion	161

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Femininity vs Masculinity: Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji's Poetic Female Voices</b>	
5.1	Prologue	163
5.2	A Brief Biographical Account of Yu Xuanji	166
5.3	A Comparison of Female Voices in Zhu Shuzhen's and Yu Xuanji's Poetry	170
5.3.1	Love Inspired by Illusions	170
5.3.2	Love Inspired by Wishful Passion	174
5.3.3	Love towards Womanly Talent	181
5.3.4	Love – Implicitly or Explicitly?	187
5.4	Imitated Masculine Voices in Zhu Shuzhen's and Yu Xuanji's Poetry	194
5.5	Imitated Feminine Voices in Tang and Song Poetry	200
5.6	Conclusion	206
<b>Conclusion</b>		208
<b>Appendices</b>		
Appendix A	"Duanchang ji xu" ["A Preface to the Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry"] by Wei Zhonggong	216
Appendix B	"Xuanjitu ji" ["The Record of Chiasmus Poetry"] by Zhu Shuzhen (Comments from <i>juan</i> fifteen of <i>Chibei Outan</i> [Occasional Talks North of the Pond] added by Wang Shizhen attached afterwards)	219
Appendix C	Lithographic Calligraphy by Zhu Shuzhen	223
<b>List of References</b>		224

## Abbreviations

- LSWS *Liang Song wenxue shi* 兩宋文學史 [A Literary History of the Two Song Periods]
- SDNW *Songdai nüxing wenxue* 宋代女性文學 [Literature by Women of the Song Dynasty]
- XYN *Xu Xiaomu ji jianzhu, Yu Xuanji shi, Nan Tang er shu ci* 徐孝穆集箋注、魚玄機詩、南唐二主詞 [Annotated Collection of Xu Xiaomu, Shi-poetry by Yu Xuanji, and Ci-poetry by the Two Rulers of the Southern Tang]
- ZSZJ *Zhu Shuzhen ji* 朱淑真集 [A Collection of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry]
- ZSZJZ *Zhu Shuzhen ji zhu* 朱淑真集注 [Annotated Edition of the Collected Poetry of Zhu Shuzhen]
- ZSZP *Zhu Shuzhen ji qi zuopin* 朱淑真及其作品 [Zhu Shuzhen and Her Works]
- ZSZSH *Li Qingzhao Zhu Shuzhen shici hezhu* 李清照、朱淑真詩詞合注 [A Combined Annotation of Shi-poetry and Ci-poetry by Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen]



# Introduction

## Poetry in Traditional China

*Shi* 詩 [hereafter “*shi-poetry*”] and *ci* 詞 [hereafter “*ci-poetry*” or “lyrics”], the two most important genres of traditional Chinese poetry, are two different literary forms within the same category of *yunwen* 韻文 [rhymed texts].<sup>1</sup> One of the main differences between the two forms is that while *ci-poetry* is closely linked to musical presentation, *shi-poetry* is not. As a result *ci-poetry* is always accompanied by a tune title (usually unrelated to the content of the lyric poem) which *shi-poetry* lacks.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this major difference, *shi-poetry* has strict rules for generally equal-length lines, rhyming and couplet patterns: such rules reached a peak with the regulated verse of the Tang 唐 Dynasty (618-907). In contrast to the regularities of *shi-poetry*, *ci-poetry* appears to be freer in style, with lines of varying length, freer patterns of rhyming and unrestricted couplet systems, although this impression is not accurate since *ci-poetry* was itself also bound by complex rules.

Poetry has long been a major concern of Chinese scholars who, traditionally, have carried out textual criticisms, biographical studies and pedagogical research. In recent decades there has been an enthusiasm for applying Western literary theories to Chinese literary contexts. To reach a more globally recognised level, poetry can be analysed in a broader and more modern context. The traditional Chinese way of analysing the hopes and aspirations of the poet through his/ her lines should not be considered unimportant, but it is even more viable to interpret the poem by reading the

---

<sup>1</sup> In Chinese the term *shi* may be considered as a generalised term for both *shi-poetry* and *ci-poetry*.

<sup>2</sup> The tunes for the lyric poems have not survived. According to Baxter, “[...] the T’ang and Sung [Song] tunes associated with the *tz’u* have all disappeared.” Glen William Baxter. “Metrical Origins of the *Tz’u*.” In John L. Bishop ed. *Studies in Chinese Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965: pp.186-224, here p.188.

lines profoundly, by understanding the poet's background, and by objectively analysing the intention, the poetic schema and the symbolisations that the poet has applied.

Researchers welcome a new way of looking at Chinese literature and, in particular, a new perspective from which to look at women poets who may previously have been ignored. This is because in traditional Chinese society women were generally regarded as inferior; indeed, people appreciated a woman with no talent, as can be seen from the saying "nūzi wucai bian shi de" 女子無才便是德 [the virtue of a woman is for her to be without talent].<sup>3</sup> *Liji* 禮記 [*Book of Rites*] "impose[d] strict discipline on women [and thus became] the authority on feminine conduct, [...] the latter part of the [Han] dynasty was devoid of women of genius or outstanding character, though not lacking in women of conventional virtue."<sup>4</sup> After *Liji* was written, this greatly influenced later ages, and the poetic atmosphere became more male-centric from that time onwards. Poetry by women, which was regarded as unnecessary, deserves more research now since the small number of women poets and their works could prove more valuable insights to the inner worlds of traditional women.

---

<sup>3</sup> Although this statement was said to have flourished in the Qing 清 Dynasty (1644-1911), it is so famous to the Chinese people that it can be served as a generalised concept relevant to different periods. The argument started when "the side of this debate [on female literacy] represented by the maxim 'only the virtuous man is talented, only the untalented (illiterate) woman is virtuous' had gained credence, and female literacy in scholarly families may thereafter have declined." Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education." In Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee, *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, pp.325-67, here p.356. This idea contradicts what has been said by Rexroth and Chung about the flourishing literary atmosphere among female gentry classes in the Qing Dynasty. See below for more on this. Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*. New York: New Directions, 1972: p.143. However, both Wendy Larson and Lin Yü-t'ang declare that the statement was 'invented' in the late Ming 明 Dynasty (1368-1644). See Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998: p.47; and Lin Yü-t'ang, "Feminist Thought in Ancient China." In Li Yu-ning ed. *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1992: pp.34-58, here p.37. According to Sun Kangyi [Kang-i Sun Chang], the statement was established at the turn of the Qing Dynasty by those who defended traditional moral principles, as a reflection of their feeling of being threatened by the flourishing atmosphere of women's writing of poetry rather than revealing the phenomenon of women being oppressed. Sun Kangyi. *Gudian yu xiandai de nüxing chanshi* 古典與現代的女性闡釋 [*Feminist Readings: Classical and Modern Perspectives*]. Taipei: Lianhe Wenxue, 1998: p.68.

<sup>4</sup> From Tseng Pao-sun. "The Chinese Woman Past and Present." In Li Yu-ning ed. *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*, pp.72-86, here p.74.

## Representation of the Female in Chinese Poetry

The question of gender has created controversy through the ages. Gender is “used to refer to the roles, behaviors, and symbols attached to anatomical sex in a particular culture; it is said to be learned and culturally variable[.]”<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, it “refers to ways of seeing and representing people and situations based on sex difference.”<sup>6</sup> Lizbeth Goodman makes a significant point that shapes my understanding of the notion of ‘gender:’

‘Gender’ is a social or cultural category, influenced by stereotypes about ‘female’ and ‘male’ behaviour that exist in our attitudes and beliefs. Such beliefs are often said to be ‘culturally produced’ or ‘constructed.’<sup>7</sup>

The analysis of women poets in the feminist sense should also be undertaken through looking at gender as “distinguished from ‘sex’ in that it refers not to biology but to a set of social meanings attached to *male* or *female*.” furthermore, we should see *masculinity* and *femininity* as “subject positions not necessarily restricted to biological males or females.”<sup>8</sup> Maureen Robertson has also suggested a similar opinion:

I use the words “feminine” and “masculine” here to refer not to the biological reality of sex, but to the binary patterns of socially constructed gender, behavioral and attitudinal differences which are culturally given at the individual’s birth and which become integral to both social personhood and existential selfhood.<sup>9</sup>

According to Susan Brownell and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, scholars have

---

<sup>5</sup> Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom eds. *Chinese Femininities/ Chinese Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002: p.24.

<sup>6</sup> Lizbeth Goodman ed. *Literature and Gender*. London: Routledge, 1996: “Introduction,” p.vii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Joan Scott quoted in Jinhua Emma Teng. “The Construction of the ‘Traditional Chinese Woman’ in the Western Academy: A Critical Review.” *Signs* 22.1 (1996): 115-51, here 119.

<sup>9</sup> Maureen Robertson, “Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China.” *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 63-110, here 67.

shown how the definition of femininity or masculinity, “anatomical details, behaviors, discussions, and ideas [that] make a woman into a woman and a man into a man,” is deemed different in every setting, and is specifically defined in China, and “how femininity and masculinity in China are constructed and performed as *lived experience*[.]”<sup>10</sup> In this way, as gender can be defined as represented in general or specific senses, according to Alice Schlegel, it would be useful in this thesis to analyse a particular gender relation “on display, in the specific sense.”<sup>11</sup> This means that a particular kind of femininity can be analysed with particular focus on a woman poet with reference to her precise work of poetry.

The notion of gender can be applied to many different aspects, and feminist literary criticism has become one of the most important approaches in analysing literature. Such criticism “is an academic approach to the study of literature which applies feminist thought to the analysis of literary texts and the contexts of their production and reception.”<sup>12</sup> Working shoulder to shoulder with the feminist literary criticism approach, the “gender-difference approach” suggested by Brownell and Wasserstrom, which “[does] not take for granted an immutable male-female divide but rather see[s] ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as socially and culturally created categories [...],” will also inform this research.<sup>13</sup>

“The body,” according to Judith Butler, “appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning

---

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom eds. *Chinese Femininities/ Chinese Masculinities*, pp.1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Alice Schlegel. “Gender Meanings: General and Specific.” In Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough eds, *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990: pp.23-41, here p.38.

<sup>12</sup> Lizbeth Goodman “Introduction,” *Literature and Gender*, p.xi.

<sup>13</sup> Brownell and Wasserstrom eds. *Chinese Femininities/ Chinese Masculinities*, p.5. For clarification, the “gender-difference approach” is a name modified from the “difference approach” suggested by the editors.

for itself.”<sup>14</sup> That is to say, the meaning of gender reveals itself mentally rather than physically. Although Li Xiaojiang argues that “it would be redundant to introduce the notion of gender (*shehui xingbie*) [社會性別 literally, social sex difference] to the Chinese language, since *nü* [women/female] and *nan* [man/ male] are already understood as social, and not natural, beings[,]”<sup>15</sup> the injection of the idea of gender as distinguished from sex into Chinese culture helps create a novel introduction of social roles given the unambiguous distinction between sex and gender discussed above. In this research, the main focus will be on literary aspects of the particular feminine gender described here and the woman poet’s self-representation.

Although feminist literary criticism has been widely applied in the field of modern and contemporary literature, it has relatively rarely been used to analyse literature written before the twentieth century, and even more rarely in the context of Chinese traditional literature.<sup>16</sup> The relatively modern approach of feminist analysis on traditional literature would be based on the clear fact that some traditional Chinese women suffered under the stipulation of Confucian teaching that they should be virtuous and untalented. Therefore they might have displayed their voices and thoughts through poetry, or even more, have resisted their inferior status – an idea which conforms with the practices of modern and contemporary women writers. Two traditional women poets who played a leading role in displaying their womanly talent were Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844?-868?) and Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真 (1135?-1180?, *hao* Youqi jushi 幽棲居士 [Hermit of Seclusion], also known as Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑貞 [with a different Chinese

---

<sup>14</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p.12.

<sup>15</sup> Qtd. Brownell and Wasserstrom eds. *Chinese Femininities/ Chinese Masculinities*, pp.25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Jinhua Emma Teng remarks that the “relative neglect of Chinese women by Western scholars in comparison with Chinese scholars” is common and is seen in other fields as well. From Jinhua Emma Teng. “The Construction of the ‘Traditional Chinese Woman’ in the Western Academy: A Critical Review,” 133.

character but the same pronunciation]).<sup>17</sup>

According to Butler, there is no ontological sense of gender ideology, and there is no intrinsic standing for male and female. It requires “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”<sup>18</sup> That means, a repetitive act of imposing gender roles on a particular sex by a particular society formulates people who assume the image of what the society thinks they are. Applying this concept to traditional Chinese society, females “bec[a]me” women<sup>19</sup> under the imposition of a feminine role allotted by Confucian thought, and their characteristics were “culturally constructed”<sup>20</sup> by the influence of the moral code according to which they were expected to behave. In spite of having been affected by the traditional patriarchal society, however, the feeling that some early women poets were resisting the stipulated moral code permeates their poetry. Women poets like Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji used their poetry as a weapon with which to challenge the patriarchal structure of society.

It is also crucial to consider the social conditions of the Southern Song 南宋 period (1127-1279) when Zhu Shuzhen is believed to have been alive, in order to analyse the self-representation and the crystallised essence of the implicit feminine voice as revealed in her poetry. In this thesis Zhu Shuzhen is analysed as an image that plays the inconsistent role of, on the one hand, activating her inherited passion; and on the other hand, submitting her selfish desires to traditional minds.

---

<sup>17</sup> There have been doubts surrounding Zhu Shuzhen’s dates since the Song 宋 Dynasty (960-1279). See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for further discussions about this issue.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp.43-44.

<sup>19</sup> Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage, 1989: p.xix. Judith Butler further points out that “[i]f there is something right in Beauvoir’s claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end.” Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p.43.

<sup>20</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p.9.

## General Outline

This thesis is divided into three main parts. The first two chapters contain background information about the concept of Chinese women under Chinese society and their poetic tradition, as well as a detailed biographical analysis of Zhu Shuzhen. The former is analysed in Chapter 1 through a general introduction to Confucian beliefs, with particular emphasis on the rise of Neo-Confucianism in the Southern Song Dynasty and its impact on women in different aspects. Chapter 2 examines past research and present investigations of Zhu Shuzhen's biographical details, which are important sources for the formation of the argument: however, it remains extremely difficult to gather reliable evidence of her life from the different extant sources.

The second part of this thesis will examine the two essential ideas of the ambivalent minds represented in Zhu Shuzhen's poems, and the 'self' mirrored throughout her verse. In Chapter 3 resistance to, and reinforcement of, the patriarchal moral norm lied in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry are examined by the application of modern Western feminist theoretical frameworks. Chapter 4 considers the dual attitudes of viewing the self, and how is the idea magnified in Zhu Shuzhen's literature.

The third part, Chapter 5, is a comparison between Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji's poetry, both of which show strong resistance. The comparison is based on the content of the poems under both poets' names, in terms of love towards wishful passions and womanly talent, the two essential elements discouraged under traditional teachings to women. Disguising the voice of another gender in the poems will be dealt with in this chapter, especially in terms of how females adopt the voice of males and vice versa, and how authentic female and imitated male voice influence Zhu Shuzhen's poetry.

Sixty-five of Zhu Shuzhen's poems have been translated into English in

the main text of this thesis. There are relatively few published translations of Zhu's poetry, and I believe that through these translations, I will bring out numerous inspirations with my understanding of the emotions in the creating of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry. The aim of translating her poetry is not only to reflect to the readers the content of a particular poem, but also to mirror her style, her diction, her form, and hence her sentimental effect shown in every line. Nevertheless, this is a research incorporating both analyses through her works and appreciations of the art of Chinese poetry through translation.



# Chapter 1 Women in Chinese Society and the Poetic Tradition of Women

## 1.1 Patriarchal Norms in Traditional Chinese Society

### 1.1.1 The Confucian Tradition

The traditional image of a woman in China is a gender object constructed under Confucianism which, generally speaking, is a set of beliefs developed initially by Confucius 孔子 (551-479 B.C.). The book which contains the basic teachings of Confucianism, *Lunyu* 論語 (hereafter *Analects*), provides three significant “core ideas” of Confucian teaching, *Dao* 道 [the Way], *xue* 學 [learning] and *zheng* 政 [politics], which form the basis of Confucian education.<sup>1</sup> Confucius’s thought was developed in later centuries by many philosophers, including Mencius 孟子 (371-289 B.C.) and Xunzi 荀子 (fl. 298-238 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> The main ideas of Confucianism were developed further in the Han 漢 Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) commentary notes on *Yijing* 易經 [the *Book of Changes*] and *Liji*.<sup>3</sup>

Under Confucianism, only through the actions of *ren* 仁 [benevolence] and the *liuyi* 六藝 [six arts, or six classics]:<sup>4</sup> *li* 禮 [ritual], *yue* 樂 [music], *she* 射 [archery], *yu* 御 [charioteering], *shu* 書 [calligraphy] and *shu* 數 [arithmetics] can the “body and mind” be “discipline[d] so that one can act fittingly in all human situations.”<sup>5</sup> In the *Analects* it says:

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Tu Wei-ming, “The Sung Confucian Idea of Education: A Background Understanding.” In Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee, eds. *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989: pp.139-50, here p.139.

<sup>2</sup> Other famous developers of Confucius’s teachings include Mozi 墨子 (476?-390? B.C.) and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179?-104? B.C.) of the Han Dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Tang Chun-i. “The Spirit and Development of Neo-Confucianism.” *Inquiry* 14 (1971): 56-83, here 57.

<sup>4</sup> Translations of *liuyi* are adapted from Tu Wei-ming, “The Sung Confucian Idea of Education: A Background Understanding,” p.143, and Carsun Chang. *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1957: p.20.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Tu Wei-ming, “The Sung Confucian Idea of Education: A Background

He [Confucius] stood for the theory of the “rectification of names” [*zheng ming* 正名], by which he meant that if each person fulfils his duties as father, son, king, minister, husband, wife, elder brother, friend, in accordance with the definition of these respective terms, the community will be well-ordered.<sup>6</sup>

Mencius’s way of transmitting Confucius’s core teachings was based on *ren*. He advocated the method of “teaching the ruling minority the art of ‘humane government’ [*renzheng* 仁政]<sup>7</sup> and the kingly way [*wangdao* 王道],” while also emphasising the importance for a genuine noble man [*junzi* 君子]. It was recognised that morality and righteousness prevail in determining the definition of a “noble man.”

In spite of the many different ideas regarding the exact nature of the Confucian ideal, on the whole philosophers of the Confucian school approached matters from a similar starting point, giving primary importance to a standardised moral connotation and the notion of virtue [*de* 德].<sup>8</sup> The Confucians created a certain ‘rope’ based on moral codes to tie people together for the accomplishment of the Confucian political and social ideal. As a result, the influence of Confucian teaching was enormous: for many centuries the shield for defending righteous and moral behaviour was given a Confucian label.

Confucian thought, which remains deep-rooted in the minds of the Chinese people, shaped the ancient community through providing a standardised, orderly and peaceful system of social moral codes which could govern people’s minds and behaviour with appropriate “rituals and righteousness.”<sup>9</sup> Only through such behaviour, could the sagely objectives of

---

Understanding,” p.143.

<sup>6</sup> Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, p.18.

<sup>7</sup> This term is sometimes translated as “benevolent government,” such as in Tu Wei-ming’s “The Sung Confucian Idea of Education: A Background Understanding,” p.142.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from *ibid.*, pp.142-43.

<sup>9</sup> Chinese people often call China *liyi zhi bang* 禮義之邦 [a state with rituals and righteousness], a saying clearly derived from ancient Confucian teachings.

*xiushen* 修身 [cultivating one's moral character], *qijia* 齊家 [maintaining a family], *zhiguo* 治國 [ruling a state] and *ping tianxia* 平天下 [making a land an orderly place] be attained.

### 1.1.2 The Influence of the Confucian Tradition on Women's Lives – The Separation of the Sexes

The Confucian emphasis on the cardinal virtues of filial piety, fidelity and chastity was deemed essential in “stabiliz[ing] a society that was ordered according to a hierarchy of age, and divided into kin-groups based on male dominance and male descent-lines.”<sup>10</sup> Confucian ethics bound together people of different relations and generations with the introduction of *wulun* 五倫 (five relations): between “ruler and subject [*junchen* 君臣]; father and son [*fuzi* 父子]; older brother and younger brother [*xiongdi* 兄弟]; husband and wife [*fufu* 夫婦]; and friend and friend [*pengyou* 朋友].”<sup>11</sup> The first four of these relationships were based on the superiority of the first person named with only the last reflecting a notion of equality between the two people involved.

Within the category of husband and wife, the wife was obliged to remind herself about the difference between male and female [*nannü zhi bie* 男女之別], and the concept of the male and female being on the ‘outer’ [*wai* 外] or ‘inner’ [*nei* 內] side respectively.<sup>12</sup> The subordination of women by

---

<sup>10</sup> Mark Elvin, “Female Virtue and the State in China.” *Past and Present* 104 (1984): 111-52, here 111-12. Elvin’s article lists the five most honoured Confucian virtues: “(i) filial behaviour towards parents and grandparents, (ii) the harmonious cohabitation of many generations within a kin-group without any division of property, (iii) the fidelity of widows towards their deceased husbands, (iv) the safeguarding of sexual purity by a woman, through self-mutilation or suicide if necessary, and lastly (v) longevity, which was conceptually assimilated to virtue in many aspects [...]” In this dissertation it is more coherent to take “fidelity” and “chastity” as referring to traditional Confucian ethical teachings.

<sup>11</sup> Qtd. Christian de Pee, “The Ritual and Sexual Bodies of the Groom and the Bride in Ritual Manuals of the Sung Dynasty (Eleventh Through Thirteenth Centuries).” In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.53-100, here p.58.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Fan Hong’s quotation: “And their [men and women’s] roles were distinct: ‘While a man does not talk about internal affairs (affairs inside the house), a woman does not talk about external affairs (affairs outside the house).’” Fan Hong. *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*. London: Frank Cass, 1997: p.21.

patriarchal society in pre-modern times is best seen through looking at the “Three Obediences” [*san cong* 三從]<sup>13</sup> and “Seven Reasons for Divorcing a Wife” [*qi chu zhi tiao* 七出之條]<sup>14</sup> created at the time of Confucius with his core doctrine of the rules of propriety (*li* 禮). “The Confucian code resulted in a major abuse of the principle of equality – the unequal treatment of women. Among other things it imposed a ruthless double standard in sexual mores.”<sup>15</sup> This suggests that women were put into a weaker gender category within both male-female and husband-wife binary systems, in order to ensure female subservience. One of the notions of patriarchy, according to Patricia Ebrey, was that “women are morally and intellectually less capable than men and therefore are to be under male control.”<sup>16</sup> The reason for this may be seen in Confucius’s saying as quoted in the *Analects*: “Women and people of low birth are very hard to deal with. If you are friendly with them, they get out of hand, and if you keep your distance, they resent it.”<sup>17</sup> Another concept that hindered women from expressing stronger characteristics was the two interacting elements of *yin* 陰 [negative principle] and *yang* 陽 [positive principle]:

<sup>13</sup> “Confucius said, ‘[...] Her [the wife’s] moral principle is that of the Three Obediences: at home she follows her father; when married, she follows her husband, when she dies she follows her son. She never ventures to act according to her own will.’” Qtd. Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.341. The most common version of the original text for the Three Obediences reads, “在家從父，出嫁從夫，老來從子。” Similar quotations appear in Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, pp.21-22, with a slightly different translation which reads, “They [women] had to ‘obey the father when at home, submit to the husband when married, and listen to the son after the husband dies.’”

<sup>14</sup> “The *Elementary Learning* [*Xiaoxue* 小學] listed the seven reasons for divorcing a wife, quoted as the words of Confucius: disobedience to a husband’s father and mother; being unable to produce children; being licentious; being jealous; having an incurable disease; talking too much; [and] stealing.” Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.342. The seven reasons for divorcing a wife appear in Chinese as “無子、淫逸、不事舅姑、口舌招尤、盜竊、妬忌、惡疾。”

<sup>15</sup> Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, p.19.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Ebrey, “Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History.” In Paul Ropp ed, *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, pp.197-223, here p.204.

<sup>17</sup> *Analects* 17:25, translated by Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*. Qtd. Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.329. The original reads, “唯女子與小人為難養也！近之則不遜，遠之則怨。” (from the seventeenth section of “Yanghuo” 陽貨) Wing-tsit Chan has provided a slightly different translation which reads, “Confucius said, ‘Women and servants are most difficult to deal with. If you are familiar with them, they cease to be humble. If you keep a distance from them, they resent it.’” Wing-tsit Chan trans, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963: p.47.

[...] in classical Chinese philosophy it [the dualism of the elements] was used to explain all of human society, simplistically and fallaciously, it heaped all kinds of positive and superior traits upon men and left women with negative and inferior characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

Repressed intrinsically (under the sayings of *yin* and *yang*), physically (by the practice of footbinding)<sup>19</sup> and psychologically, women's nature was constructed in Confucian society as inferior, ignorant and weak. *Yin* and *yang* ideas were used widely in describing the relationship between male-female differentiation and the general social roles of the two sexes.<sup>20</sup> Although literary exposure was generally restricted for women under Confucian teachings,<sup>21</sup> visibility for women underwent major changes in some dynasties, notably the Tang when the impact of Confucianism was less marked and the moral standards required of courtesans and Daoist priestesses were less strict. It was not until the Song, following a new movement binding together ancient Confucian moral values and social standards, that a further consolidation of Confucian thought appeared.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, p.21. A similar comment appears in Birge's article, "China, like many other societies, had a long tradition of subordination of women. From earliest times, the principle of *yin* and *yang* equated men with *yang*, Heaven, the sun, light, strength, and activity; women corresponded to *yin*, Earth, the moon, darkness, weakness, and passivity." Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," p.329.

<sup>19</sup> According to Fan Hong, the practice of footbinding was started during the Han Dynasty, and became fashionable during the period between the Five Dynasties and the start of the Song Dynasty. *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, pp.22-25.

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from Patricia Ebrey, "Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History," p.204.

<sup>21</sup> Dorothy Ko has provided evidence of such restrictions in later imperial China: "the number of women educated in the seventeenth century remained small. But the interest taken by the burgeoning commercial printing industry in the works of women writers certainly suggests that literate women were enjoying unprecedented visibility." "Pursuing Talent and Virtue: Education and Women's Culture in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century China." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 9-39, here 10. The phrase "unprecedented visibility" suggests that most of the women's works were invisible before the seventeenth century. This point is also supported by Sherry J. Mou, who notes that, "women are very much a part of the literati tradition; however, if we take an ahistorical, modern squint at this tradition, we see that it allotted a very specific and limited space for women. Women in the classics and the histories remain familial and passive, and the discourse of the tradition—molded not just by the Confucianists but also by the Daoists and Buddhists—often presented the feminine as a force that needed suppressive regulation." In Sherry J. Mou ed. *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*. Houndmills: MacMillan, 1999: p.xviii.

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Ebrey has noted that "[t]extbook surveys of Chinese history often note a decline in the

## 1.2 The Rise of Neo-Confucian Thought

### 1.2.1 The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought

During the Tang Dynasty, through his efforts to improve the existing government, Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) sowed “the seeds of a new movement” which was to come to full bloom during the Song Dynasty as “Neo-Confucianism.”<sup>23</sup> In Chinese there is no such word, and it is usually called *lixue* 理學 [learning of the principle]. The prefix “neo-” suggests a new view and status derived from the traditional Confucian ideals. To achieve sagehood by self-cultivation would be the core spirit of Neo-Confucianism, as this was dissimilated with Confucianism in previous periods.<sup>24</sup>

Neo-Confucianism developed from the traditional teachings of Confucius and Mencius mentioned above. The Neo-Confucianian emphasis on the learning of the *dao* [learning of the Way, *daoxue* 道學]<sup>25</sup> as their fundamental tenet was stressed by various thinkers like early Neo-Confucianists from Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) to Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077), Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), Cheng Yi 程頤 (Cheng Hao’s younger brother, 1033-1107), and finally to the “great synthesizer” Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200)<sup>26</sup> and his later challenger Lu

---

status of women that is usually dated to the T’ang-Sung [Tang-Song] transition or to the Sung [Song] period.” Patricia Ebrey, “Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History,” p.216. For one example of such a comment, see Fairbank and Reischauer’s remark on the decline of women’s status associated with footbinding during this period. John K. Fairbank and Edwin O. Reischauer, *China: Tradition and Transformation*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia, 1979: p.142.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, p.29.

<sup>24</sup> Adapted from Tang Chun-i, “The Spirit and Development of Neo-Confucianism,” 56.

<sup>25</sup> Peter K. Bol has also mentioned the learning of the *dao* which Zhu Xi considered the most important intellectual development after the death of Mencius. Zhou Dunyi passed this idea on to the Cheng brothers, and they shared the full understanding of the ‘*tao*’ [*dao*] with Zhang Zai. Zhu Xi called this *daotong* 道統, the “unified succession of the *tao*” or “line of continuity with the *tao*.” Qtd. and adapted from *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992: pp.28-29.

<sup>26</sup> Adapted from Tu Wei-ming, “The Confucian Tradition in Chinese History.” In Paul Ropp ed. *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990: pp.112-37, here p.129.

Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193).<sup>27</sup>

The Cheng brothers are considered two most important Neo-Confucianists. The fundamental principle of Cheng Hao's philosophy was *li* 理 [principle], or *tianli* 天理 [heavenly principle].<sup>28</sup> He used the idea of "*yi ti*" 一體 [one body] to represent the whole of mankind and their sentiments towards the universe.<sup>29</sup> Cheng Yi reacted against the traditional Confucian belief, held by his brother and his predecessors, of self-cultivation as the mere "illumination of the mind," suggesting instead the new idea of *gewu* 格物 [the investigation of things].<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, man should follow a true *dao* or *li*, by which man could know what he "shall be" and "actually can be."<sup>31</sup> Therefore the Cheng brothers were shaping the nature of man by defining the good and right mind and behaviour.

The most famous Neo-Confucianist was Zhu Xi, whose consolidation of the philosophy led to the Neo-Confucian school of thought being "referred to as 'the Learning of the Principle'" [*lixue*].<sup>32</sup> Following Cheng Yi's sayings, Zhu Xi was famous for his contribution to the discussion of the human mind.<sup>33</sup> Sticking closely to the *Daxue* 大學 [*Great Learning*, originally one of

---

<sup>27</sup> Neo-Confucian thought was further developed during the Ming Dynasty, when a new and highly influential school of thought was founded by Wang Shouren 王守仁 (1472-1529, courtesy name Yangming 陽明).

<sup>28</sup> This led to a famous Neo-Confucian doctrine of *cun tianli, mie renyu* 存天理，滅人欲 [to uphold and sustain heavenly principle while suppressing human desires]. Qtd. and adapted from Fangqin Du and Susan Mann, "Competing Claims on Womanly Virtue in Late Imperial China." In Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003: pp.219-47, here pp.224-25. In Wang Shouren's *Yangming xiansheng jiyao* 陽明先生集要 [*An Essential Collection by Yangming*], "The more knowledge one acquires, the more flourished are the human desires; the more talent one possesses, the more concealed are the heavenly principles." The original reads, "知識愈廣，而人欲愈滋，才力愈多，而天理愈蔽。" Qtd. Liu Yongcong. *De, cai, se, quan* 德·才·色·權 [*Virtue, Talent, Beauty and Power*]. Hong Kong: Chengbang, 1998: p.174.

<sup>29</sup> Adapted from Tang Chun-i, "The Spirit and Development of Neo-Confucianism," 66.

<sup>30</sup> Adapted from Tu Wei-ming, "The Confucian Tradition in Chinese History," p.130.

<sup>31</sup> Tang Chun-i, "The Spirit and Development of Neo-Confucianism," 69.

<sup>32</sup> Tu Wei-ming, "The Confucian Tradition in Chinese History," pp.130-31. Later on people referred to this kind of principle as "*Cheng-Zhu lixue*" 程朱理學 [The Learning of the Principle by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi].

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed discussion on the ideas of Neo-Confucianism, see also Charles O Hucker, *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975: pp.362-73.

the chapters in *Liji*], Zhu Xi propounded the idea of a good and right response, calling for the “rectification of mind” (using Tang Chun-i’s words).<sup>34</sup> In short, Zhu Xi’s efforts in setting up principles for the control of the mind were in line with traditional Confucian beliefs in law as a means of ordering society.

According to Denyse Verschuur-Basse, “[t]he alienation of women was very strong during this epoch [during and after the twelfth century]. Neo-Confucianism was at its peak influence, and Chinese ‘male chauvinism’ was at its highest.”<sup>35</sup> The revival of Confucianism saw an unprecedented tightening of moral standards and social education, especially in the Southern Song period when Zhu Xi took the lead in shaping the minds of the people: Restrictive policies were also spread in particular to women, to whom Zhu Xi assigned a pattern of education with “the harsh standard of behavior dictated by [his] prescriptive texts with accounts of women’s virtuous activity [...]”<sup>36</sup> Moral standards, which were very different from those of previous dynasties, affected the lives of women in many ways.

## 1.2.2 Restrictions Laid upon Women under Neo-Confucianism

### 1.2.2.1 Principle of Separation and Female Literacy

The revival of Confucian ethics in the Northern Song 北宋 Dynasty (960-1127) was heightened in the Southern Song period following Zhu Xi’s strengthening and application of Cheng Yi’s teachings. Fidelity, chastity and filial piety were seen as the most important virtues for a woman, and systems of awards were granted for women of virtuous behaviour. Referring to the ancient emphasis of gender differences between men and women, Cheng Yi,

---

<sup>34</sup> In other words, this can also be seen as an “ethical intentionality,” a term used by Allen Chun. Zhu Xi did not simply advocate “moral cultivation,” but also with the purpose of an attainment to *mingli* 明理 [“understand the principle”] and *lixue* [“rationalism”]. Adapted from Allen Chun, “The Practice of Tradition and the Writing of Custom, or Chinese Marriage from *Li to Su*.” *Late Imperial China* 13.2 (1992): 82-125, here 90.

<sup>35</sup> Denyse Verschuur-Basse, *Chinese Women Speak*. Trans. Elizabeth Rauch-Nolan. London: Praeger Publishers, 1996: p.5.

<sup>36</sup> Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.325.



quoted by Zhu Xi in his *Jinsi lu* 近思錄 [*Reflections on Things at Hand*], further highlighted the significance of gender difference:

Between man and woman, there is an order of superiority and inferiority, and between husband and wife, there is the principle of who leads and who follows. This is a constant principle. If people are influenced by feelings, give free rein to desires, and act because of pleasure, a man will be driven by desires and lose his character of strength, and a woman will be accustomed to pleasure and forget her duty of obedience. Consequently, there will be misfortune and neither will be benefited.<sup>37</sup>

The overwhelming influence of Neo-Confucian concepts on ethical propriety held sway for most of the Song Dynasty. In this way, the attempt by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), a historian and statesman in the Northern Song, and Zhu Xi in the Southern Song, to set up a model society formed the cornerstone of the social and political changes of that period. The essential consolidation centred on education, which was deemed to be the fundamental element for establishing personhood. Women were accorded the major duties of *zhijia* 治家 [home management], including the obligation of educating children.

As mentioned above, women stayed within the inner quarters for their inner or domestic duties, while men stayed outside. Sima Guang developed the rules for sexual segregation listed in the “Domestic Regulations” chapter of *Liji*:

In housing there should be a strict demarcation between the inner and outer parts, with a door separating them. [...] The men are in charge of all affairs on

---

<sup>37</sup> Qtd. *ibid.*, p.331. The original reads, “男女有尊卑之序，夫婦有倡隨之義，此常理也。若徇情肆欲，惟說是動，男牽欲而失其剛，婦狃說而忘其順，則凶而無所利矣。” From section twelve of *juan* twelve “Jingjie” 警戒 [“Correcting Mistakes and the Defects of the Human Mind”] of Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137-1181)’s *Jinsi lu xiangzhu jiping* 近思錄詳註集評 [*Annotated Detailed Edition of Reflections on Things at Hand*], annotated by Wing-tsit Chan. Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1992: pp.505-06.

the outside; the women manage the inside affairs. During the day, the men do not stay in their private rooms nor the women go beyond the inner door without good reason.<sup>38</sup>

The question of female literacy is of central importance in analysing social conditions in the Song. Young gentry class children were taught at home by their mothers, the values they received reflecting the women's own education: the knowledge of characters and moral values taught in gentry households provides clear evidence of the high degree of literacy among women of this class in the Song Dynasty.<sup>39</sup> Apart from literacy, a tool which was thought to be used merely for didactic purposes, the study and writing of poetry and literature became a controversial issue thanks to Sima Guang's opinion that "women should not concentrate on poetry and literature but should study historical and didactic texts."<sup>40</sup> According to Jennifer Holmgren, traditional Chinese thinking allowed only interrelated concepts of "education" and "morality" [moral virtue].<sup>41</sup> In spite of some discouragement, the environment of the Song gentry class was still filled with an aura of female literacy and poetry-writing and the number of female poets was over two hundred.<sup>42</sup> As Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy wrote, the differences between men and women ensured that women's

---

<sup>38</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period*. (hereafter *Inner Quarters*) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993: pp.23-24. The original reads, "凡爲宮室，必辨內外，深宮固門 [.....] 男治外事，女治內事。男子晝無故不處私室，婦人無故不窺中門。" From *juan* four in Sima Guang, *Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀 [*Letters and Ceremonies by Master Sima*]. Shanghai, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1936: p.43.

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," p.352.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.355. See also Esther Yao's observations: Sima Guang "strongly opposed girls' learning how to write poetry inasmuch as poetry composition was often associated with prostitutes and prostitution." Esther S. Lee Yao, *Chinese Women: Past and Present*. Mesquite: Ide House, 1983: p.87.

<sup>41</sup> Adapted from Jennifer Holmgren, "Myth, Fantasy or Scholarship: Images of the Status of Women in Traditional China." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 6 (1981): 147-70, here 154.

<sup>42</sup> See Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," pp.352-57 for some examples. The discouragement was mostly due to the writing of "flowery essays and poetry." If women were writing poetry for proper reasons, such as chanting historical figures, then the practice was acceptable. Many Song authors referred to women's works in funerary inscriptions. The number of women poets in the Song is taken from *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 [*A Complete Collection of Shi-poetry of the Song Dynasty*]. Qtd. Su Zhecong, *Songdai nüxing wenxue*. 宋代女性文學 [*Literature by Women of the Song Dynasty*] (hereafter *SDNW*). Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue, 1997: p.5.

relationship with the *Dao* could never be the same as that of men, thus their status was never considered as being equal to that of literate men, in terms of either poetic preservation or imitation.<sup>43</sup> Without the presumed distinction between virtue and talent which existed under the patriarchal environment, women might have had sufficient space to develop their poetic interests, exclusive of any incompatibility and danger posed to the patriline.<sup>44</sup>

### 1.2.2.2 Widow Chastity and Divorce

The insistence on female chastity was further stressed in the Southern Song period. A woman was expected to pursue widowhood throughout her life if her husband died, and a girl should commit suicide if she was raped.<sup>45</sup> Huang Yanli has discussed the unprecedented shackles produced by Neo-Confucian beliefs:

The maxim “just as Wang Zhu [王蠋], a loyal official, did not serve two emperors, so a chaste woman should not serve a second husband,” was particularly emphasised during the Song Dynasty. Firstly it was emphasised in Taizong’s [太宗] apportioning of blame for the death of Fan Zhi [范質]; secondly in Cheng Yichuan’s [Cheng Yi] sayings of “to starve to death is a very small matter. To lose one’s integrity, however, is a very serious matter.” As a result precautions [against being blamed] taken by officials serving the sovereign and wives waiting upon their husbands were followed more strictly.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Adapted from Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy eds, *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999: p.9.

<sup>44</sup> Danger here refers to the situation in which women interfered in men’s affairs, which was unacceptable because this might mean the elimination of the patriline. Christian de Pee mentioned that “[m]anuals for household management, similarly, warn against female interference, female property, and female pursuit of the interests of the conjugal unit.” In Christian de Pee, “The Ritual and Sexual Bodies of the Groom and the Bride in Ritual Manuals of the Sung Dynasty (Eleventh Through Thirteenth Centuries),” p.90. Lisa Raphals also focuses on the point that the idea of destructiveness in women has long been seen, as shown in *Shijing* 詩經 [sometimes called *Book of Poetry*, hereafter *Book of Songs*]: “... they [the poems] have been used to justify the exclusion of women from public life, and claims that intelligence or cleverness, when it should happen to occur, is destructive in a woman.” *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998: p.206.

<sup>45</sup> Adapted from Fan Hong. *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, p.19.

<sup>46</sup> Qtd. Huang Yanli, *Zhu Shuzhen ji qi zuopin* 朱淑真及其作品 [*Zhu Shuzhen and Her Works*]. (hereafter ZSZP), p.65. This excerpt is recorded in *Kunxue jiwén* 困學紀聞 [*Records of What I*

The prohibition of remarriage for widows, which, as Birge has noted, is already present in *Liji*, thus attained a new level of importance during the Song Dynasty under the influence of the Cheng-Zhu school.<sup>47</sup> According to Huang Yanli, divorce and re-marriage had been common in previous dynasties (such as the Han and Tang) and the bondage of female chastity less severe than in the Song. After Cheng Yi declared his beliefs regarding the chastity of widows, the picture became very different. If a woman cancelled a wedding engagement, she would be regarded as disgraceful for the rest of her life.<sup>48</sup> According to Ebrey,

---

*Heard when I was Studying Assiduously*] written by Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223-1296). The original reads, “王蠋忠臣不事二君，貞女不更二夫之言，直至宋代而明。一明於太宗責范質之死，一明於程伊川謂餓死事小，失節事大。而後爲人臣，爲人婦者之防始嚴。” Fan Zhi (911-964) was determined to help the child emperor, Gongdi 恭帝, to ascend the throne after the death of Zhou Shizong 周世宗 (ruled 945-959), the former emperor of Later Zhou during the Five Dynasties. Fan “was noted for his frugality.... In spite of the fact that he did not play a dynamic and creative role under the founder of the Sung dynasty, his personal qualities and his manner of conducting official affairs make him highly praiseworthy as a model councilor of state.” According to Herbert Franke, “Sung T’ai-tsu [Song Taizu 宋太祖 (Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤), 927-976, ruled 960-976] dismissed court when he heard of Fan’s death, presented lavish funeral gifts to Fan’s family, and made Fan posthumous Secretary-General of the Secretariat 中書令. Sung T’ai-tsung [Song Taizong 宋太宗 (Zhao Guangyi 趙光義), 939-997, ruled 976-997] also praised Fan as a worthy councilor of state, but went on to say that he lamented the fact that Fan ‘owed Chou Shih-tsung [Zhou Shizong] a death’.” From Herbert Franke ed. *Sung Biographies*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976: pp.310-21, here p.320. The translation of “餓死事小，失節事大” is adapted from section 13 of *juan 6* “Jiadao” 家道 [“The Way to Regulate the Family”] in *Reflections on Things at Hand [Jinsi lu 近思錄]* translated by Wing-tsit Chan. The whole passage reads, “Question: According to principle, it seems that one should not marry a widow. What do you think? Answer: Correct. Marriage is a match. If one takes someone who has lost her integrity to be his own match, it means he himself has lost his integrity. Further question: In some cases the widows are all alone, poor, and with no one to depend on. May they remarry? Answer: This theory has come about only because people of later generations are afraid of starving to death. But to starve to death is a very small matter. To lose one’s integrity, however, is a very serious matter.” From Wing-tsit Chan trans, *Reflections on Things at Hand: The Neo-Confucian Anthology Compiled by Chu Hsi and Lü Tsu-Ch’ien*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967: p.177. The original text containing this phrase reads, “問：孀婦於理似不可取，如何？曰：然。凡取以配身也。若取失節者以配身，是已失節也。又問：或有孤孀貧窮無託者，可再嫁否？曰：只是後世怕寒餓死，故有是說。然餓死事極小，失節事極大。” In Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian’s *Jinsi lu xiangzhu jiping*, p.346. Some hold that the above dictum was maintained by both Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, see, for example, Mark Elvin, “Female Virtue and the State in China,” 138-39.

<sup>47</sup> Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.338.

<sup>48</sup> This somewhat contradicts what Bettine Birge has said, “[In response to what Cheng Yi said,] Chu Hsi was conscious of the distinction between sagely ideals and practical living. Remarriage of widows was extremely common in the Sung Dynasty [...] Fan Chung-yen [Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹] (989-1052) even allotted money from his charitable estate to help widows remarry.” Qtd. *ibid.*, p.340.

Paternal authority was also reinforced by the laws on divorce. The husband's parents could send back a wife who displeased them or bore no children. The woman, by contrast, could not unilaterally leave her husband and his family, nor could her parents take her back against their will. Indeed, running away was a punishable offense. [...] The commentary explained that "wives follow their husbands and lack the authority to make decisions themselves."<sup>49</sup>

Looking from this angle, cases of divorce were unlikely during the Song period. The combination of the expectations of widow chastity and ideal wives contributed to the establishment for women of a proper womanhood, from the time they lived at their natal homes, through marriage, widowhood, and even until the day they died. Their behaviour was guided by an ever-present frame, that was embellished with frequent quotations from pre-Song works such as *Neize* 內則 [*Rules for the Inner Quarters*] and contemporary Neo-Confucian creations like Sima Guang's *Jiafan* 家範 [*Family Precepts*].<sup>50</sup> As most of these writings or sayings were aimed at women, patriarchal power and gender inequality were strengthened, leading to womanhood appearing to be feeble and vulnerable. Subversion of the female identity is an appropriate way of describing the situation of the Song period under the influence of the prevalent Confucian ethical models.

### 1.2.2.3 The Social and Sexual Inferiority of Women

Zhu Xi created social boundaries for women, not only for their literary talents and domestic virtues, but also for their physical appearance: "Beautiful and talented women, by contrast [to men who set up the state], are compared to wicked birds. Because of their talking too much they ultimately

---

<sup>49</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, p.48.

<sup>50</sup> One example of this can be seen in Sima Guang's "several anecdotes about [...] ideal marriages in his *Family Precepts* (*Chia-fan*) [*Jiafan*], including one [...] whose 'women's quarters were serene and strict.'" Qtd. Christian de Pee, "The Ritual and Sexual Bodies of the Groom and the Bride in Ritual Manuals of the Sung Dynasty (Eleventh Through Thirteenth Centuries)," p.89. Another example of this is seen in "[t]he text that [Zhu Xi] referred most to women was the *Elementary Learning* which drew largely from the ritual classic *Record of Rites* (*Li chi*) [*Liji*], especially the chapter on 'Rules for Domestic Life' (*Nei-tse* [*Neize*])." Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," p.326.

form steps to disaster.”<sup>51</sup> As women’s images were stereotyped, a natural association between appearance and vice inevitably emerged. Ebrey commented on this by referring to adultery: “[The Chinese] did have feelings of horror, shame, and anger about certain sorts of extramarital sexual relations. Incest and adultery could lead to criminal prosecution or simply to divorce.”<sup>52</sup> The chain effect of adultery and persecution indicates Zhu Xi’s success in bringing about the restrictions “forb[idding] all manifestations of heterosexual love outside the intimacy of the wedded couch.”<sup>53</sup> Women were expected not to know anything about sexual pleasure and love emotions.<sup>54</sup> In a discriminative mode, this doctrine was only set against a married woman having a sexual relationship with a man other than her husband, while a married man having a sexual relationship with a woman (except for the virgin daughters of good families [and other people’s wives]) other than his wife was perfectly acceptable.<sup>55</sup> This canon magnified the significant level of separation of sexes and gender inequality within the law enforcement of Song China.

In general there were several major changes in women’s roles in Song times as compared with previous dynasties, especially after the emergence of Neo-Confucianism. The important and relevant changes were: “increased literacy among women;” “revised notions of both masculinity and

---

<sup>51</sup> Zhu Xi. *Shijing jizhuan* 詩經集傳 [Annotations of the Book of Songs]. In *Sishu wujing Song Yuan ren zhu* 四書五經宋元人注 [The Four Books and the Five Classics, with Commentaries by Song and Yuan Authors]. Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 1985. 3 vols, here *juan* seven, vol.2, p.150. The original reads, “故此懿美之哲婦，而反爲梟鴟。蓋以其多言而能爲禍亂之梯也。” This is another evidence for the danger posed by talented women in line with the previous passage, and is compatible with the ancient Chinese saying of *hongyan huoshui* 紅顏禍水 [beauty brings calamity] from *Chunqiu* 春秋 [The Spring and Autumn Annals] and *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [Zuo’s Commentary]. According to Richard Guisso, “feminine beauty was a source of male ambiguity, but seldom do we find so strong a conviction that ‘where there is extreme beauty, there is sure to be extreme wickedness.’” From Richard W. L. Guisso, “Thunder Over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Reception of Women in Early China.” In Richard W. L. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen eds, *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*. Youngstown: Philo Press, 1981: pp.47-61, here p.56.

<sup>52</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, p.250.

<sup>53</sup> R. H. Van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961: p.223.

<sup>54</sup> Adapted from Denyse Verschuur-Basse, *Chinese Women Speak*, p.6.

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, p.250.

femininity" [with the male gender becoming more superior and the female gender more inferior]; "more attention to the segregation of the sexes;" "encouragement of women's literacy when used to educate their sons,<sup>56</sup> but discouragement of it for writing poetry" and "increased emphasis on patrilineality."<sup>57</sup> Such social backgrounds strengthened the patriarchal power in its oppression heading towards the inferiority of women, and while resistance seemed impossible and effort-wasting at the time, most of the women could only live according to the stipulated moral code without expressing any objections. Physical constraints of mental restrictions eventually permeated into domestic lives by the Neo-Confucianists stifled Song women. However, some womanly voices fighting for own freedom passively could still be seen in writings about resistance in poetry, one of the most outstanding being the voice reflected in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry.

### 1.3 Chinese *Shi*-poetry

*Shi*-poetry was a literary genre which was at the centre of Chinese cultural history for hundreds of years. The beauty of Chinese poetry is seen in the aesthetics of diction, style, imagination and inspiration. A poet's manifestation of imagery, whether explicit or implicit, was an important indication of the difference between verse and prose form. During the Tang Dynasty in particular, *shi*-poetry not only possessed a specific aesthetic value but also exerted a general influence in terms of life style and literary development. The centrality of poetry in traditional China lay in how closely it was tied in with the examination system that was used to select officials to serve the state. As a result of Neo-Confucian influences, expressive poetry, especially that written by women, was considered unorthodox and

---

<sup>56</sup> To add to this, "[t]he expression of a devoted mother nurturing her husband's heirs became a hallmark of the wife's ability to help sustain (or improve) the status of the family into which she married." From Harriet Zürndorfer, "Introduction: Some Salient Remarks on Chinese Women in the Imperial Past (1000-1800)." In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.1-18, here p.2.

<sup>57</sup> These important and relevant changes are taken from Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, p.265.

insignificant. However, women did succeed in producing well-known poems throughout the ages, on occasions even expressing their idea of resistance in poetry.

As mentioned at the very beginning, Chinese *shi*-poetry was marked by strict rules. Poetry in the Tang Dynasty was generally considered as the most significant and influential form of literature in China. It was largely divided into *guti shi* 古體詩 [ancient style *shi*-poetry] and *jinti shi* 近體詩 [modern style *shi*-poetry] which had notably strict tonal and rhyme patterns. During and after the heyday of Tang poetry, many poets wrote modern style *shi*-poetry in two distinct styles, namely *jueju* 絕句, four-line poems with a rhyme scheme applied in the first, second and the fourth lines, and *lüshi* 律詩, eight-line poems, divided into four couplets, *toulian* 頭聯 [the head couplet], *hanlian* 頷聯 [the chin couplet], *jinglian* 頸聯 [the neck couplet] and *weilian* 尾聯 [the tail couplet], in which rhymes were required in the first, second, fourth, sixth and eighth lines. Both styles were also bound by strict rules relating to the use of *pingze* 平仄 [syllables of “even” and “oblique” tones].

#### 1.4 *Shi*-poetry in the Song Dynasty

The Northern Song period started with an explosion of poetic creation thanks to an official policy of *zhong wen qing wu* 重文輕武 [an emphasis on civilian rather than martial arts].<sup>58</sup> The beginning of this period saw an imitation of poetry written in the Tang Dynasty, and most of the officials of the time liked to mingle with intellectual men and pose as lovers of culture, writing *chang he shi* 唱和詩 [chanting poems], a style particularly associated with Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) of the Tang Dynasty. Later poets, such as Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), also imitated Bai Juyi, as he was the master of poems concerned with social

---

<sup>58</sup> Cheng Qianfan and Wu Xinlei. *Liang Song wenxue shi* 兩宋文學史 [A Literary History of the Two Song Periods]. (hereafter *LSWS*) Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1991: p.2.



problems and patriotic sentiments.<sup>59</sup>

Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) were perhaps the most significant and influential poets of the Northern Song period. One of their most crucial achievements was that they revived the use of classical language in their poetry and prose.<sup>60</sup> Ouyang Xiu's poetry is natural and emotive, while Su Shi's is allegorical and realistic, both avoiding *Xikun* 西崑 style poetry.<sup>61</sup>

The poetic style of the Southern Song Dynasty began with a strong sense of patriotism resulting from the movement of the Song administrative authority from the North to the South following the invasion of the Jin 金 ethnic group. This new kind of poetic expression, the patriotic style, gradually replaced the status of the *Jiangxi shi pai* 江西詩派 [school of Jiangxi] led by Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105), and destroyed its limitations in both form and style.<sup>62</sup> The master of patriotic-style poetry of the Southern Song period was Lu You 陸游 (1125-1210). He was especially outstanding in writing pastoral and patriotic poetry, making him the most important poet of the Southern Song period.<sup>63</sup>

Other famous Southern Song poets include Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206), Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) and Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236-1283). Yang Wanli and Fan Chengda worked with Lu You in creating

---

<sup>59</sup> Adapted from *ibid.*, pp.2-10.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed sketch of Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi's poetry, see Charles O Hucker, *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*, pp.396-401.

<sup>61</sup> Adapted from Cheng Qianfan and Wu Xinlei. *LSWS*, pp.31-59. *Xikun ti* 西崑體 was a prevalent form of poetry in the Northern Song period. It enabled poets to revive the poetic atmosphere of the Late Tang period, especially the poems by Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858). Most of the *Xikun ti* poems are boastfully gorgeous with contents lacking substance, and the *Xikun* poets emphasised strict adherence to the rules and forms of classical poetic composition, which later triggered criticism due to the fact that this aim did not conform to the promotion of Confucian thought by the Song administrators.

<sup>62</sup> Huang Tingjian was famous for altering the clichéd expressions and structures of classical poetry, in order to make them more self-oriented; he also created a new style of manipulating difficult forms, rhythms, intonations and diction. For further reference, see Chen Youbing, "Ershi shiji dalu de Song shi zonglun yanjiu huigu" 二十世紀大陸的宋詩總論研究回顧 ["An Overview of Research on Song Dynasty Poetry in Mainland China during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century"]. *Hanxue yanjiu tongxun* 24: 2 (2005): 1-16, here 9-13.

<sup>63</sup> Adapted from Cheng and Wu, *LSWS*, pp.299-324.

patriotic and pastoral poems. Yang's poems largely employed realism while Fan's expressed a calling for fairness and an end to the exploitation of the poor peasants.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of the Southern Song period, Wen Tianxiang wrote historical poems and demonstrated his strong patriotic sentiments following the invasion of the Mongol troops. Even after he was taken prisoner by the Mongols, he wrote a very famous poem called "Zhengqi ge" 正氣歌 ["A Song for Healthy Trends"] which is considered a powerful call for patriotism to this day.<sup>65</sup>

## 1.5 The Development of Ci-poetry

### ~ From the Tang and Five Dynasties 五代 (907-960) to the Song Dynasty

The form of *ci*-poetry is said to have derived from the *Book of Songs*, *Yuefu* 樂府 folksongs, or other poetic forms throughout the development of Chinese poetry. The lyric form possessed the special characteristics of *chang duan ju* 長短句 [long and short lines] and the ability to be sung. The Late Tang period saw Wen Tingyun's 溫庭筠 (812?-866?) initiation of dense and gaudy *ci*-poetry along with the emergence of a number of other distinguished lyric composers. This kind of lyric is known as *huajian ci* 花間詞 [lyrics among the flowers] because of its rich content and extensive use of elaborate rhetoric in the description of women and love. Many scholars believe the style of *huajian ci* to have been influenced by the amorous and gorgeous poems of the Late Tang period. This early form of *ci*-poetry which began in the Tang and developed during the Five Dynasties, led eventually to the flourishing of large-scale writings in the Song. These rhetorical flourishes display the typical characteristics of the *Huajian ci pai* 花間詞派 [the lyric school of "Among the Flowers"], which was later to affect the development of *wanyue* 婉約 [delicate and graceful] style poetry.

---

<sup>64</sup> Adapted from *ibid.*, pp.324-48.

<sup>65</sup> Adapted from *ibid.*, pp.472-77.

The elaborate rhetoric of Wen Tingyun's poems changed to lively and graceful expressions, and rigid contents to more universal renderings in the Five Dynasties. Representative poets of the period include Feng Yansi 馮延巳 (903-960) and Li Yu 李煜 (937-978), the last ruler of the Southern Tang 南唐 (937-975). Feng Yansi wrote one hundred and twenty *ci*-poems in his collection named *Yangchun ji* 陽春集 [A Collection of Sun and Spring]. Feng's status was based on his portrayal of women's emotions through the description of scenery, while Li's poetry was a combination of noble leisurely and carefree moods with deep and melancholy sadness. The former arose from his early happiness in his palace and the latter reflected his later life, when he was put under house arrest in 975 by the Song army and lamented his nation. Both Feng and Li consolidated the beauty of *ci*-poetry before the formal emergence of Song lyrics, and the style of their poetry paved the way for the development of the later delicate style of *ci*-poetry of the Northern Song period.<sup>66</sup>

## 1.6 *Ci*-poetry in the Song Dynasty<sup>67</sup>

With the strong influence of the *huajian ci* of the Late Tang and the noble style of lyrics in the Five Dynasties, lyrics in the early and middle Northern Song period came in full blossom accompanying a formal *wanyue* style. The representative poet of this style [and, of this period] is Liu Yong 柳永 (987?-1053?). Although he wrote delicate lyrics that were sometimes described as *su* 俗 [vulgar] since his portrayal of lower class people, such as market traders or prostitutes, was considered common. One thing

---

<sup>66</sup> The sketch of the development of *ci*-poetry in the Tang and Five Dynasties, Wen Tingyun's, Feng Yansi's and Li Yu's biographies and their works is adapted from Mu Zhai. *Tang Song ci liubian* 唐宋詞流變 [The Evolution of *Ci*-Poetry of the Tang and Song Dynasties]. Beijing: Jinghua, 1997: pp.20-70.

<sup>67</sup> For the following sketch of the development of the Northern Song Dynasty *ci*-poetry, cf. Cheng and Wu, *LSWS*, pp.100-28 (Liu Yong), pp.167-78 (Su Shi's lyrics), pp.188-201 (Qin Guan) and pp.243-62 (Li Qingzhao). There are also references from Mu Zhai. *Tang Song ci liubian*, pp.71-91 (Liu Yong); pp.92-94 (Yan Shu and Ouyang Xiu); pp.112-36 (Su Shi); pp.166-84 (Qin Guan) and pp.214-32 (Li Qingzhao).

noteworthy to say is that Liu Yong was skilled at adopting a female voice in his poetry, a practice which later provided a chance for readers to discover the displaced self of the author.<sup>68</sup>

Su Shi was another important poet in the Northern Song Dynasty who also contributed to great change in the development of lyrics. He widened the scope of the previous contents written by other poets, and emphasised that the range of topics could be broadened.<sup>69</sup> His *wanyue* style was later inherited by Yan Shu 晏殊 (991-1055) and Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100). Some scholars even thought that the major difference between Liu and Su was the distinction between *su* and *ya* 雅 [elegance].<sup>70</sup> Some others, however, have put Su Shi into the category of *haofang* 豪放 [bold and unrestrained] style poetry, which later contributed mainly to the development of Southern Song period *haofang* lyrics led by Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207).

The development of *ci*-poetry during the Southern Song Dynasty was deeply affected by fears that the integrity of the country was under serious threat of invasion by the Jin. The atmosphere hence paved the way for the mushrooming of the *haofang* style poetry, and famous male poets like Zhang Xiaoxiang 張孝祥 (1132-1170), Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1141) and Lu You contributed most to the creation of this kind of lyrics.

Two most significant poets of the period were Xin Qiji and Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1155?-1221?). With the complement of the need of the political situation, the *haofang* style lyrics, which characterised the Southern Song, came to full bloom and supplanted the *wanyue* style of poetry. Xin Qiji used various rhetorical figures and magnificent content to create poetry imbued with deep thought and male lofty quality.

Jiang Kui's *ci*-poems are different from those written by Xin Qiji. Jiang's

---

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 5 of this dissertation on male poets' adoption of female voices in their poetry.

<sup>69</sup> Su Shi's lyric topics included love and parting sorrows, *huaigu* 懷古 [treasuring the ancient times], *yongshi* 詠史 [appreciating history], *shuoli* 說理 [rational reasoning], *tanchan* 談禪 [talking about Buddhist meditation] etc. Adapted from Cheng and Wu, *LSWS*, p.168.

<sup>70</sup> See Mu Zhai. *Tang Song ci liubian*, p.74; p.112.

style was appreciated by scholars for going back to the elegant and delicate style [*ya* 雅, or *wanyue*] of *Chu ci* 楚辭 [*Lyrics of the Chu*]. He created a *lengdiao* 冷調 [style of coolness] in his poetic creation, which hence led to his abstract elegance, very different from the style of Xin Qiji's poems. As a result of Jiang's great enthusiasm in chasing perfection in art and rhetorical beauty, sometimes the meanings of his poems are difficult to understand. Indeed, Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) commented that Jiang's poems were "like looking at flowers through a fog, with a layer lying between."<sup>71</sup> This vague beauty illustrated in the poems may have been an indicator of how, in the late Southern Song period, other forms of literary representation were superseding *ci*-poetry.<sup>72</sup>

According to some researches, the subject of this research, Zhu Shuzhen, was almost certainly alive in the Southern Song period.<sup>73</sup> Although her lyrics are fewer in number than her poems, all thirty-two are appreciated for their excellence, and she has even been compared favourably with Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1081-1141?, *hao* 號 *Yian jushi* 易安居士 [Hermit of Ease]). Women poets were very few before the Tang, but in the Song a genuine momentum for development began to flourish: the status of both Zhu and Li has increased over the succeeding centuries.

## 1.7 Distinctive Women Poets in the Tang and Song Dynasties

Maureen Robertson mentions the relatively little recognition of the names and works by women poets before the Ming and Qing Dynasties:

Until the Song dynasty, only the names and words of those protected by very high social status, such as women associated with dynastic courts as learned

---

<sup>71</sup> Qtd. Mu Zhai. *Tang Song ci liubian*, p.288. The original text reads “如霧裡看花，終隔一層。”

<sup>72</sup> The sketch of the development of the Southern Song Dynasty *ci*-poetry is based on Cheng and Wu, *LSWS*, pp.349-71 (Xin Qiji) and pp.390-417 (Jiang Kui). There are also references from Mu Zhai. *Tang Song ci liubian*, pp.237-45 (Zhang Xiaoxiang, Yue Fei and Lu You); 251-72 (Xin Qiji) and pp.273-302 (Jiang Kui).

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for discussion of Zhu Shuzhen's biography.

teachers of women or imperial consorts (and, in rare cases, a daughter or sister of a prominent official or poet), and those occupying, conversely, low social status, such as singers and courtesans with no “respectability” to lose, were very likely to have their names or writings preserved.<sup>74</sup>

There have been, however, many brilliant women writers since the very early stages of Chinese literature. According to Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy,

Chinese literature can boast of an exceptional number of women writers before the twentieth century, [... and they] are very much a part of Chinese literature. Though their place has been contested, though they have encountered the usual sorts of peremptory dismissal and trivialization, and though the benefits of a literary reputation typically eluded them, they did participate in that vast conversation.<sup>75</sup>

As early as the Zhou 周 Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.), the contents of representative literary works such as the *Book of Songs*, namely on love and courtship, showed to the readers “the presence of a woman’s voice or voices.”<sup>76</sup> A typical example is the folksong “Meng” 氓 [“A Common Person”] in the *Wei feng* 衛風 group of songs from the *Guofeng* 國風 [folk songs] section.<sup>77</sup> “Meng” uses a first person female voice in describing the story of a woman who, after few years of happy marriage, is abandoned by her husband. She sighs and warns other women of the need to exercise

---

<sup>74</sup> Maureen Robertson. “Changing the Subject: Gender and Self-Inscription in Author’s Prefaces and ‘Shi’ Poetry.” In Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang eds. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997: pp.171-217, here p.179.

<sup>75</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy. “Introduction.” In *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, p.3.

<sup>76</sup> Charlotte Furth, “Poetry and Women’s Culture in Late Imperial China: Editor’s Introduction.” *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 1-8, here 2.

<sup>77</sup> The *Book of Songs* is divided into three sections: *feng* 風 [sometimes known as *Guofeng*], *ya* 雅, divided into *Daya* 大雅 [songs used for royal and other banquets] and *Xiaoya* 小雅 [songs for private banquets], and *song* 頌. *Feng* consists of folksongs, *ya* consists of banquet songs and *song* consists of songs for ancestral worship. Adapted from Yuan Dawei and Lu Dihe, *Zhongguo wenxue jiben zhishi ji fazhan jianshi* 中國文學基本知識及發展簡史 [*Basic Knowledge of Chinese Literature and a Brief History of Its Development*]. Hong Kong: Renren, n.d., p.20.

wisdom in selecting their own husbands. Stephen Owen has remarked on this sharing of poetic voices by both male and female: “Courtship, marriage, and the longings of separated lovers figure prominently in the ‘Airs’ [Guofeng], and these remain among the most appealing poems of the collection. The lyrics are put into the mouths of both common folk and the aristocracy, women as well as men.”<sup>78</sup> In the *Book of Songs*, poems assuming a female voice, however, do not necessarily imply female authorship. Later came the first renowned woman poet, Ban Jieyu 班婕妤 [Consort Ban] (48 B.C. – 6 B.C.?), who was best known for her poem “Yuan Gexing” 怨歌行 [“A Poem of Resentment”] about a discarded fan,<sup>79</sup> and Ban Zhao 班昭 (49-120) and Cai Yan 蔡琰 (177-239), both of the Han Dynasty, who are considered the most significant women poets before the Tang Dynasty.<sup>80</sup>

Beginning in the Tang Dynasty, however, a few women had more obvious chances or freedom to display their individuality when composing poetry. Among those women poets of the Tang Dynasty whose works survive are Li Ye 李冶 (fl. mid-eighth century), Xue Tao 薛濤 (768-831) and Yu Xuanji. The two outstanding women poets of the Song Dynasty were Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen. Other talented female poets of imperial China included courtesans such as Guan Panpan 關盼盼 (fl. 805-820) of the Tang Dynasty,<sup>81</sup> Li Shishi 李師師 (fl. twelfth century) of the Song Dynasty and

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Owen. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986: p.53.

<sup>79</sup> See section 2.2.5 in chapter 2 of this dissertation for further discussion of this poem.

<sup>80</sup> Ban Zhao wrote basically didactic texts, and her main work was *Nü jie* 女誡 [Admonitions for Women]. She also assisted her brother, Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), in editing the *Qian Han shu* 前漢書 [History of the Former Han]. See footnote number 17 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for more information on *Nü jie*. Extant poems written by Cai Yan were “Beifen shi” 悲憤詩 [“A Poem of Indignation”] and “Hujia shiba pai” 胡笳十八拍 [“Eighteen Beats from the Reed Instrument”]. Adapted from Zhang Huizhi, Shen Qiwei, and Liu Dezhong eds. *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 中國歷代人名大辭典 [A Dictionary of Famous Names Past and Present]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1999. 2 vols: p.1826 and p.2444 (both vol.2) respectively.

<sup>81</sup> Xu Bo 徐渤 (n.d.) of the Ming Dynasty commented that “In the three hundred years of the Tang Dynasty, there were only around ten women who could write poetry: of the circle of courtesans the best were Xue Hongdu [Xue Tao] and Guan Panpan.” [the original reads, “唐有天下三百年，婦人女子能詩者，不過十數。娼妓詩最佳者，薛洪度、關盼盼而已。”] Qtd. Xue Tao. *Xue Tao shijian* 薛濤詩箋 [Poetry and Letters by Xue Tao]. Annotated with Commentaries by Zhang Pengzhou. Beijing:

Jing Pianpian 景翩翩 (n.d.) of the Ming Dynasty.

Once the Confucian teachings became influential in China, a woman had to avoid appearing in public, a bride had to live under the caprice of her husband, a concubine was treated as a servant, and women were deprived of education. It was not until the Tang and Song Dynasties that a significant number of women had the opportunity to create literary works, though even in the Tang Dynasty “literacy was restricted to nuns, priestesses and courtesans.”<sup>82</sup> Li Ye and Yu Xuanji were Daoist nuns and Xue Tao was a courtesan. Some courtesans were very talented poets and maintained their success by entertaining customers at banquets, while the priestesses enjoyed themselves in social gatherings through using their talent to produce poetry. The courtesans were not restricted by norms of female good conduct and did not have to be scrupulous about family reputations.

Apart from being well educated and talented in writing poetry, courtesans at that time were also skilled in playing music and chess. Various commentaries were written by scholars from the Tang to the Qing Dynasties, including Hu Zhenheng 胡震亨 (1569-1645?) who wrote:<sup>83</sup>

Xue Tao, courtesy name Hongdu, was originally from a respectable family in Chang'an [長安]. She accompanied her father on official trips, ending up in Shu [蜀], where she became a courtesan.<sup>84</sup> As she was beautiful, intelligent and talented in writing poetry, Wei Gao [韋皋], the military governor of Shu, summoned her to serve wine, and granted her the title of *nü jiaoshu* [女校書, a title for text editing and proofreading]. From then on she passed through the

---

Renmin Wenxue, 1983: p.69.

<sup>82</sup> Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung. *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, p.141.

<sup>83</sup> Famous scholars who have commented on Xue Tao include Ji Yougong 計有功 (fl. 1121-1161) of the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574-1624) and Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) of the Ming and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801) of the Qing. Qtd. Xue Tao. *Xue Tao shijian*, pp.99-118.

<sup>84</sup> The original sentence of “where she became a courtesan,” “遂入樂籍,” literally means to register as a government courtesan in the “courtesan-entertainment bureau.” The *yue* [樂 music] here means that girls could register as musicians in banquets. This is formulated from the reference taken from Song Dynasty practices of courtesan registrations. Adapted from Beverly Bossler. “Shifting Identities: Courtesans and Literati in Song China.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62.1 (2000): 5-37, here 13.



offices of eleven military governors, from [Wei] Gao to Li Deyu [李德裕], and made herself well-known with her talent for writing poetry. Intellectuals at the time admired her elegance and chanted poems with her. Xue Tao [later] made letter paper, on which she wrote poetry for circulation; as a result people called that kind of letter paper 'Xue Tao *jian*' 薛濤牋 [also written as 箋, Xue Tao paper].<sup>85</sup>

According to the scholars' comments, Xue Tao also exchanged poems with various poets including Yuan Zhen, Bai Juyi, Zhang Ji 張籍 (767?-830?), Du Mu 杜牧 (803-853) and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842).<sup>86</sup> Although Xue Tao was known to have written around five hundred poems, collected in her *Jinjiang ji* 錦江集 [A Collection of the Brocade River], this collection was lost in the Southern Song Dynasty, and only ninety-one have survived.<sup>87</sup> According to Zhong Xing, Xue Tao's poems are "delicate and vivid" [*yi er dong* 逸而動], and "subtle, gracious and charming" [*weiwán dongren* 微宛動人].<sup>88</sup>

Yu Xuanji openly wrote about love affairs and secret meetings with lovers.<sup>89</sup> Xue Tao and Yu Xuanji's moral conduct was not expected to be as exemplary as that of women from respectable families in the Tang Dynasty as they were courtesans and nuns whose behaviour was relatively unrestricted in the comparatively open-minded Tang. Restrictions became stricter and stricter as dynasties passed. During the Northern and Southern Song periods the picture was completely different.

The poetic atmosphere of the Southern Song period was quite different

---

<sup>85</sup> From the commentary *Hongdu ji fuzhuan* 洪度集附傳 [Attached Comments to the Collection of Hongdu's Poetry] written by Hu Zhenheng. Qtd. Xue Tao, *Xue Tao shijian*, p.112. The original reads, "薛濤字洪度。本長安良家女。隨父宦，流落蜀中，遂入樂籍。有姿色，辨慧工詩。韋中令皋鎮蜀，召令侍酒，稱為女校書。由是出入幕府，由皋至李德裕，凡歷事十一鎮，皆以詩受知。文士慕其風雅，多與酬和。自製小牋，寫詩饗遺，世號薛濤牋。"

<sup>86</sup> From the commentary *Xue Tao shi fuzhuan* 薛濤詩附傳 [Attached Comments to Xue Tao's Poetry] written by Zhong Xing. Qtd. *ibid.*, p.110.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>88</sup> From *juan* thirteen in Zhong Xing's *Mingyuan shigui sanshiliu juan* 名媛詩歸三十六卷 [A Collection of Poetry by Notable Women – Thirty-six Rolls] Taipei: Zhuangyan Wenhua Shiye, 1997: pp.144-47.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 5 of this dissertation for an account of Yu Xuanji's biography and some examples of her poems.

from the previous dynasties because more women poets emerged. Song Dynasty women poets, in the words of Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, were gentry women who inherited some family traditions of good education:<sup>90</sup> Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen, for example, who both wrote *ci*-poetry, expressed their feminine elegance through the use of words and delicate manners of writing. Apart from Li and Zhu, Wu Shuji 吳淑姬 (n.d., *hao Mengzi* 孟子) and Zhang Yuniang 張玉娘<sup>91</sup> (fl. thirteenth century, who named herself Yizhen jushi 一貞居士 [Hermit of Chastity]) were two other prominent women poets in this period, who wrote pieces of poetry showing their love yearnings and concerns, a very typical style of reflecting feminine voices in poetry.

The great transition both in political situation and the alteration of poetic style between the Northern and Southern periods of the Song Dynasty was characterised by the female poet Li Qingzhao. Her major shift of poetic style from *wanyue* to *haofang* was due to the *Jingkang zhi bian* 靖康之變 [the incident in the year with reign title *Jingkang*, the invasion by the Jin ethnic group from the North] in 1126. Li Qingzhao, originally a daughter from an aristocratic family, was married to Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081?-1129) at the age of eighteen. They shared common interests in collecting inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets, and their intimate relationship was reflected in Li Qingzhao's poems of her early life, which were mostly descriptions of her happy married life. The *Jingkang* 靖康 incident brought the collections of inscriptions, the life of Zhao Mingcheng and the life of the Northern Song to a complete end.<sup>92</sup> Deeply grieved, Li Qingzhao lamented her husband in lyric poems that were full of descriptions of parting sorrows.

---

<sup>90</sup> Adapted from Rexroth and Chung, *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, p.143.

<sup>91</sup> The character “niang” 娘 appears in some other articles as “niang” 孃, carrying the same pronunciation and the same meaning as “mother” or “a young woman.”

<sup>92</sup> The sketch of Li Qingzhao's life and collection of inscriptions can be seen in “Jinshi lu houxu” 金石錄後序 [“The Second Preface to the Catalogue of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions”] written by herself. In *Guwen guanzhi xinbian* 古文觀止新編 [A Collection of Ancient Prose: A New Edition]. Shanghai, Shanghai Guji, 1988. 2 vols: pp.922-38 (vol.2).

The distinction indicated a significant change from the *wanyue* to the *haofang* style, which coincidentally happened around the time of the political transition from the Northern to Southern Song Dynasty.

Li Qingzhao has been honoured as the most famous and talented woman poet in the Song Dynasty, and there was a bold saying by Zhu Xi that reads, "The only women who can write in this dynasty [Song Dynasty] are Li Yian [Li Qingzhao] and Lady Wei [魏夫人 (1035-1107)]."<sup>93</sup> The comment magnifies the fact that rare attention had been put on women poets at the time under Neo-Confucianism, but obviously Li Qingzhao was appreciated due to her excellence in poetry-writing. Her poems were studied thoroughly in later centuries, and voices of academic appreciation persist.

No official biography for We Shuji has been found. Huang Sheng 黃昇 (n.d.) of the Southern Song commented on Wu's poetry, "Shuji, as a woman, was clever and shrewd. She wrote five *juan* 卷 [rolls] of *ci*-poetry, whose fairness was not below [that of] Li Yian."<sup>94</sup> From her very limited extant works, it has been suggested that Wu Shuji lost her virginity when she was raped by a wealthy young man,<sup>95</sup> thus losing the opportunity of marrying into an aristocratic family (since aristocratic families normally only allowed a legitimate first marriage for a woman), and she was later sold as a concubine to the Zhou 周 family. She lamented her sad marriage and the social pressures that resulted from the loss of her virginity. Only three of her *ci*-poems survive, all of them dealing with her longing for her beloved one. Wu Shuji's poetic collection was believed to be *Yangchun baixue ci* 陽春白雪詞 [Ci-poems of Spring Snow], and three of her poems appear in *Qingni lianhua ji* 青泥蓮花記 [A Record of Green Mud and Lotuses] by Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚

---

<sup>93</sup> From *juan* one hundred and forty of *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [Records of Master Zhu's Assorted Sayings]: "本朝婦人能文，只有李易安與魏夫人。" Qtd. Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.55.

<sup>94</sup> Qtd. Su Zhecong, *SDNW*, p.251. The original reads, "淑姬女流中點慧者，有詞五卷，佳處不減李易安。"

<sup>95</sup> Adapted from *Yi Jian zhi* 夷堅志 [Records by Yi Jian] by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) of the Southern Song Dynasty, qtd. *ibid.*, pp.251-52.

(1553-1619).<sup>96</sup>

Zhang Yuniang's fame was assured by her collection entitled *Lan xue ji* 蘭雪集 [A Collection of Orchid and Snow Poetry]. The contents of the whole collection are about her passion and her longings, stemming from her pitiful experience of a failed relationship with her lover, her cousin Shen Quan 沈佺 (n.d.), to whom she was originally betrothed. They had an intimate passionate relationship until Yuniang's parents refused to allow the marriage to take place; the angry Shen Quan then accompanied his father on official trips before dying at the age of twenty-two as a result of his heartbreak. After Shen Quan's death, Yuniang wrote a memorial poem for him, and vowed to be chaste. In her poems Zhang Yuniang used all her literary skills to show her chaste love for Shen Quan and how she retained her moral integrity. Later Yuniang succumbed to a serious disease and died at the age of twenty-eight. Scholars generally appreciate Zhang Yuniang's "chastity and talent for writing, which has never been seen throughout history."<sup>97</sup> This appreciation is thus partly due to Zhang's adherence to aristocratic requirements of chaste womanhood.<sup>98</sup>

Wu Shuji's, Zhang Yuniang's and Zhu Shuzhen's poems expressed the concerns mostly from a feminine angle, an inner boudoir sentiment confining the female voice to a restrictive, hollow and unreachable realm of selfhood.<sup>99</sup> A point that should be noted concerns the issue of these poets' recognition. Later scholars listed Wu Shuji, Li Qingzhao, Zhang Yuniang and Lady Wei as

---

<sup>96</sup> The sketch of Wu Shuji's biography and her works is adapted from *ibid.*, pp.251-56. *Qingni lianhua ji* is a Ming Dynasty biographical sketch of courtesans and prostitutes.

<sup>97</sup> "玉娘貞而能文，爲今昔所未有。" Adapted from *Zhennü ciji* 貞女祠記 [An Ancestral Hall Record on Women with Chastity] by Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜 (fl. 1639), qtd. *ibid.*, p.292. Wilt L. Idema has also noted: "It is no coincidence that Meng Ch'eng-shun [Meng Chengshun] not only compares Chang Yü-niang [Zhang Yuniang] to the most perfect examples of chaste womanhood from ancient times such as Kung Chiang [Gongjiang 共姜] and the daughters of Yao [堯], but also contrasts her undivided strongly to those female poets who as a widow remarried..." from "Male Fantasies and Female Realities: Chu Shu-chen and Chang Yü-Niang and Their Biographies." In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.19-52, here p.37.

<sup>98</sup> Adapted from Su Zhecong, *SDNW*, pp.288-306.

<sup>99</sup> See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for an example of the expression of self in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry.

*Si da nü cijia* 四大女詞家 [The Four Great Women *Ci* Poets], which suggests that Zhu Shuzhen's name was excluded in this regard. The reason for her name being excluded is perhaps because the behaviour reflected in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry was considered morally unacceptable. Many considered the poems to have alluded to adultery and they might have been considered unsuitable for publication in formal (aristocratic) circles. Nevertheless, the beauty revealed in the poems should be appreciated in aesthetic terms in spite of the age-long suspicion of the immoral behaviour contained between the lines.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> See Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation for more detailed discussion on the moral behaviour inferred from the content of Zhu Shuzhen's poems, and about the suspected extramarital love affair seen in the poems.

## Chapter 2 About Zhu Shuzhen

### 2.1 A Capture of Zhu Shuzhen's Biography

There is no official biography of Zhu Shuzhen. Thus it is extremely difficult to form a reliable picture of Zhu Shuzhen's real life. Neither is her name recorded in the official history of the Song Dynasty, nor is any evidence given in Song, Ming and Qing sources of the possible existence of such a figure. The image of Zhu Shuzhen, however, is still worthy of analysis, since the voice reflected in the poetry bearing her name displays a resistance against the social constraints affecting women, regardless of whether Zhu Shuzhen was merely an image created by literati, or a real woman poet living under strong oppression. One thing worth noting is that the analyses and information about her life in this chapter are generally based on different materials written by literati in the past and researchers nowadays.

According to some literati, Zhu Shuzhen was a gentry woman alive during the Song Dynasty, a period when few women writers could gain public attention, thanks, in particular, to the rise of the Neo-Confucian teachings that restricted women's exposure to the outer world. In Chinese, the character *zhen* 真 [truth] is easily confused with another character *zhen* 貞 [virtuous], because they have the same pronunciation and are so alike in appearance: therefore people in pre-modern periods confused the last character of Zhu Shuzhen's first name, mixing the two mentioned characters. The idea that the names *Shuzhen* 淑真 and *Shuzhen* 淑貞 refer to the same person is now generally accepted, as scholars put those poems that were attributed to Zhu Shuzhen elsewhere under the two different characters.<sup>1</sup> Others have confused Zhu Shuzhen with Zhu Xizhen 朱希真 (courtesy name Qiuniang 秋娘) because of the similar pronunciation of the characters

---

<sup>1</sup> See Tang Guizhang, *Song ci hujian kao* 宋詞互見考 [*Mutual Criticisms of Song Ci-poetry*]. Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1971: pp.13-14, 91, 159-60, 180 and the index (p.229).

shu 淑 and xi 希, as for example in *Benshi ci* 本事詞 [Source Material Lyrics] by Ye Shenxiang 葉申薊 (1780-1842).<sup>2</sup> On this matter Chu Renhuo 褚人穫 (fl. 1675-1695) made a very clear distinction in the section “Shi ji Zhu Xizhen” 詩譏朱希真 [“A Poem Mocking Zhu Xizhen”] of his work *Jianhu ji* 堅瓠集 [Collection of the Hard Bottle Gourd],<sup>3</sup> indicating that Zhu Shuzhen was totally different from Zhu Xizhen.

Zhu Shuzhen’s fame was not established until a series of writings by anthologists of the Ming Dynasty, after Wei Zhonggong 魏仲恭 (fl. 1121-1182)<sup>4</sup> compiled a collection of her poetry in 1182 [the ninth year of the Chunxi 淳熙 reign period], which he named *Duanchang ji* 斷腸集 [A Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry] in which he had gathered together three hundred and thirty-seven *shi*-poems and thirty-two *ci*-poems.<sup>5</sup> Wei wrote a

---

<sup>2</sup> The most crucial matter about Ye’s confusion is seen in his quotation of Zhu Xizhen’s *ci*-poem “To the tune ‘Pusa man’” which reads “濕雲不渡溪橋冷 [.....]” [“Damp clouds do not pass by; the bridge over the stream is cool [....]”], but the poem was believed to have been written by Zhu Shuzhen. Qtd. Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.177.

<sup>3</sup> Chu Renhuo annotated, “Noted: [Zhu] Xizhen, named Dunru [1081-1159], a famous intellectual in the eastern capital of the Song. He wrote a *ci*-poem with the tune title ‘Xijiang yue.’ [...] Now I come across some words written by Jiang Luluo (courtesy name Xuetao), which reads, ‘Zhu Xizhen, courtesy name Qiuniang, was the wife of Xu Biyong, a merchant. Two of her *ci*-poems were listed as those boudoir poems, but the lines in the poetic commentary cannot be traced.’” *Jianhu ji* 堅瓠集 [Collection of the Hard Bottle Gourd]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin, 1986. 4 vols: pp.6-7 (*juan* three, *ji* five, vol.2). The original reads, “按：希真名敦儒，宋東都名士，有西江月詞 [.....] 而今見在江某蘿雪濤小書云：「朱希真，小字秋娘，商人徐必用妻。二詞列之閨秀，詩評中未知何據。」”

<sup>4</sup> Wei Zhonggong attained the title of *jinshi* 進士 [presented scholar] in 1121. He became a high ranking official during the reign of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 [ruled 1127-1163]. Adapted from Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, pp.729-30.

<sup>5</sup> Some discrepancies occur here as there were different opinions on the exact number of Zhu Shuzhen’s *shi*-poems and *ci*-poems. Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599-1659) obtained a copy of *Duanchang ci* 斷腸詞 [Heart-breaking *Ci*-poetry]; he included twenty-seven of Zhu’s *ci*-poems in his *Jiguge ben Duanchang ci* 汲古閣本斷腸詞 [Drawing from the Ancients Pavilion Version: Heart-breaking *Ci*-poetry]. Recently Tang Guizhang, when editing *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 [A Complete Collection of *Ci*-poetry of the Song Dynasty], collected thirty-two Zhu’s *ci*-poems, including seven of uncertain authorship. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu edited *Duanchang ji* again in the 1980s, obtaining twenty-one extra *shi*-poems and one extra *ci*-poem, making a total of three hundred and thirty-seven *shi*-poems and thirty-three *ci*-poems. Cf. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *Zhu Shuzhen ji* 朱淑真集 [A Collection of Zhu Shuzhen’s Poetry] (hereafter *ZSZJ*), p.8. Huang Yanli concludes that a couple of the thirty-three *ci* may have been written by others rather than Zhu Shuzhen herself, as some of her writings were burned [according to Wei Zhonggong’s preface], scattered and copied by different people of various dynasties. Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.136. Most importantly, the extra *ci* poem, written to the tune *Lei jiang yue* 醉江月, has recently been shown by Ren Dekui to have been written by a Daoist monk named Tan Chuduan 譚處端 between the Jin and Yuan Dynasties. Cf. Ren Dekui, “Zhu Shuzhen

preface called “Duanchang ji xu” 斷腸集序 [“A Preface to the Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry”], which is considered to contain the earliest extant, and probably the most important, information about Zhu Shuzhen’s life. Although there was a biography of Zhu Shuzhen written by Wang Tangzuo 王唐佐 (n.d.) according to Wei’s preface, it was lost and the people of the Song Dynasty never quoted any information from this biography.<sup>6</sup> According to Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, there have been different conclusions concerning Zhu Shuzhen’s life made by past scholars. One interesting point was apparently made by some scholars that “[i]t has even been argued that Wang Tangzuo, the purported author of the biography quoted by Wei Duanli [Zhonggong], was actually her [Zhu Shuzhen’s] second husband.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Wei’s preface, Zhu Shuzhen was married to a member of the lower class after her parents had neglected to find her a husband.<sup>8</sup> Although literati in the past have questioned whether Zhu Shuzhen’s husband truly was ill-educated, many suggesting that her husband was in fact probably aristocratic,<sup>9</sup> many researchers conclude that she shared no common interest with her husband in the matter of poetry and art appreciation, and they believe that this was a factor that led to Zhu Shuzhen’s later rejection of her husband, which in turn led eventually to her extramarital affair and her tragic death. Apart from this important

---

*Duanchang ci banben kaoshu yu zuopin bianwei*” 朱淑真《斷腸詞》版本考述與作品辨偽 [“Textual Criticism of Versions and Identifications of Forged Works of Zhu Shuzhen’s *Heartbreaking Ci-poetry*.”]. *Wenxue yichan* 1 (1998): 84-93, here 90-92.

<sup>6</sup> Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.2. For a translation of this preface, see Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant. *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004: p.248. See also Pan Shoukang. *Zhu Shuzhen biezhuanyuan* 朱淑真別傳探原 [An Exploration of Zhu Shuzhen’s Unofficial Biography]. Taipei: Heluo, 1980: pp.14-15.

<sup>8</sup> *Shijing min* 市井民 [translated as “a member of the lower class” in the main text] in Wei’s Preface can also be translated as “connoisseur.” The original reads, “[朱淑真] 早歲不幸，父母失審，不能擇伉儷，乃嫁爲市井民家妻。” Qtd. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, p.303.

<sup>9</sup> Huang Yanli examined evidence from the lines of Zhu Shuzhen’s poems in order to prove that she was actually married to an aristocratic rather than a vulgar fellow, showing how she wrote about the lavish architectural features of her home, and how the clothing, food and wine described in her poems matched those enjoyed by the upper classes at that time. *ZSZP*, pp.29-30.



information, however, no concrete evidence about Zhu Shuzhen's life has been ascertained, nor even any precise information about the year of her birth or death. Faced with this lack of information, researchers have devoted much effort to locating alternative sources in order to outline Zhu Shuzhen's life as a woman poet in Song history.

Various scholarly records have suggested Zhu Shuzhen's native place as being located either in Haining 海寧 (present day Huizhou 徽州, in Anhui 安徽 Province), Qiantang 錢塘 (present day Hangzhou 杭州) or Guian 歸安 (present day Wuxing 吳興, in Zhejiang 浙江 Province), with a consensus of opinion settling on Qiantang. A late but significant source for Zhu Shuzhen's biography, *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 [*Occasional Talks North of the Pond*] by Wang Shizhen 王士禛 [禛] (1634-1711), indicated clearly by means of a title "Qiantang Youqi jushi Zhu shi Shuzhen shu" 錢塘幽棲居士朱氏淑真書 ["Written by Zhu Shuzhen, Hermit of Seclusion, from Qiantang"] at the end of "Xuanjitu ji" 璿璣圖記 ["The Record of Chiasmus Poetry"],<sup>10</sup> that Zhu Shuzhen's native place was Qiantang. Doubt was expressed by Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), who suggested that there would have been many opportunities for the record to have been faked, owing to the fact that it had been passed down from a very long time ago.<sup>11</sup>

In 1796, Tao Yuanzao 陶元藻 (fl. 1796) wrote "Zhu Shuzhen's native place was Xiali 下里 in Qiantang, and her family lived in Taocun 桃村 for

---

<sup>10</sup> "Xuanjitu ji" was attributed to Zhu Shuzhen and is the only extant essay believed to have been written by her. According to what was written, she wrote it because she had obtained "Xuanjitu" 璿璣圖 ["Chiasmus Poetry"] from her father and was impressed by the talent of Su Hui 蘇蕙 [b. 357?, the author of "Xuanjitu"] of the Eastern Jin Dynasty and was enlightened by its miraculous mixing of different poems. (See Wang Shizhen's *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 [*Occasional Talks North of the Pond*]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982: p.367.) For a translation of "Xuanjitu ji," see Appendix B.

<sup>11</sup> Ji Yun 紀昀 ed. *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 [*Annotated Catalogue of a Collection of the Imperial Library*]. Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1939. 4 vols: p.3758 (vol.4). Poems by Zhu Shuzhen which had been collected in two volumes of *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* have notes which read "written by Zhu Shuzhen of the Song. Shuzhen, who was from Qiantang, named herself 'Youqi jushi' [幽棲居士, Hermit of Seclusion]," *Ibid.* The original reads, "宋朱淑真撰，淑真錢塘女子，自號幽棲居士。" Another excerpt reads, "written by Zhu Shuzhen of the Song. Shuzhen, who was from Haining, named herself 'Youqi jushi.'" *Ibid.*, p.4453 (vol. 4). The original reads, "宋朱淑真撰，淑真海寧女子，自稱幽棲居士。"

generations.”<sup>12</sup> According to Huang Yanli, Zhu Shuzhen’s native place was later generally believed to be Qiantang.<sup>13</sup> However, in 1994 Deng Hongmei concluded that there was no such place as Xiali in Qiantang, and, furthermore, that the name “Haining” was not used until Yuan times. Deng therefore suggested, on the basis of research carried out by Huang Aihua, that Zhu Shuzhen’s native place was Xiuning 休寧 rather than Haining or Qiantang.<sup>14</sup> Huang Aihua has seen the lithographic calligraphy of the “Xianyuan” 賢媛 [“Chaste Gentry Women”] section of *Shi shuo xinyu* 世說新語 [A New Account of Anecdotes of the World] hand-written by Zhu Shuzhen. At the end of the piece there is a short title which reads *Gu She Zhu Shuzhen lu* 古歎朱淑貞錄 [recorded by Zhu Shuzhen of Old She Province], followed by a small oval-shaped seal with the name “Shuzhen” [淑貞] inscribed. She Province is modern Anhui Province [known in Song times as Xiuning], so Huang Aihua concluded that Zhu Shuzhen’s native place was Xiuning.<sup>15</sup> This suggestion has been generally accepted in recent years.

The most problematic matter has been to determine whether Zhu Shuzhen was alive in the Northern or Southern Song.<sup>16</sup> Scholars have generally put forward three suggestions concerning the period of Zhu Shuzhen’s life, ranging from Northern Song, to the period of transition, and, lastly, to Southern Song. If we look briefly at what has been discussed in the past, scholars like Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤 (1859-1926) who suggested the Northern Song because the style of Zhu Shuzhen was typical of that period, and the year and date printed in “Xuanjitu ji,” *Shaoding san nian* 紹定三年

<sup>12</sup> Tao Yuanzao. *Quan Zhe shihua wushisi juan* 全浙詩話五十四卷 [Notes on the Complete Shi-poetry of Zhejiang Province: Fifty-four Rolls]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1995: p.278 (juan nineteen). The original reads, “朱淑貞，錢塘下里人，世居桃村。”

<sup>13</sup> Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> See Deng Hongmei, “Zhu Shuzhen shiji xinkao” 朱淑貞事蹟新考 [“A New Investigation of Zhu Shuzhen’s Biography.”]. *Wenxue yichan* 2 (1994): 66-74, here 68.

<sup>15</sup> Huang Aihua 黃愛華. “Zhu Shuzhen jiguan xinkao” 朱淑貞籍貫新考 [“A New Investigation of Zhu Shuzhen’s Native Place”]. *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 1 (1985): 178. For the image of the inscription, see Appendix C.

<sup>16</sup> The following discussion of whether Zhu Shuzhen was alive in the Northern or Southern Song period is adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.9-18; and Zhang and Huang, *ZSZJ*, pp.1-2.

[the third year of the Shaoding reign period 1228-1233, i.e. 1230], could have been mistakenly put in by later copywriters. Kuang further pointed out that the reign period Shaoding should in fact be Shaosheng 紹聖 [reign period 1094-1098, in the Northern Song period] instead.<sup>17</sup> Also, Zhu Shuzhen had one poem named “Hui Wei furen” 會魏夫人 [“Meeting Lady Wei”], and because the Lady Wei mentioned could have been the wife of Zeng Bu 曾布 (1036-1107), a prime minister in the Northern Song period, it was believed that Zhu Shuzhen was alive in the Northern Song period.<sup>18</sup> The idea, however, was rejected by later scholars since there was no evidence that the Lady Wei in the poem was the wife of Zeng Bu.<sup>19</sup>

The second more recent assumption that Zhu Shuzhen was alive in the period of transition from the late Northern Song to the early Southern Song was supported in later scholarly studies of Zhu Shuzhen’s life, which usually took the view that Zhu Shuzhen’s dates were revealed on the basis of a line in her poem “Ye liu yilüting” 夜留依綠亭 [“Lingering at the Green Pavilion at Night”] which reads “The wind brings to the lake the sound of the palace water-clock [gonglou 宮漏],” because the palace water-clock was something which only appeared in the Southern Song period,<sup>20</sup> approximately during

---

<sup>17</sup> Kuang added, “The year ‘Shaoding’ should in fact be ‘Shaosheng.’ During the Shaoding reign period when Emperor Lizong changed the title of the reign, it was already near the end of the Southern Song, by when the area of Zhe had long been subordinate to the Capital. In the record [“The Record of Chiasmus Poetry”] [Zhu] said ‘In the beginning, my father took official trips to Zhexi’, when Zhexi was already part of Lin’an [the Capital], how could such a name be addressed?” Kuang Zhouyi. *Huifeng cihua, Guang Huifeng cihua* 蕙風詞話、廣蕙風詞話 [*Huifeng’s Commentaries on Ci-poetry, Huifeng’s Varieties of Comments on Ci-poetry*]. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji, 2003: p.74. The original reads, “紹定當是紹聖之誤。紹定理宗改元，已近南宋末季。浙地隸輦轂久矣。記云「家君宦遊浙西」。臨安亦浙西，詎容有此稱耶？”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> See Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.17; Deng Hongmei, “Zhu Shuzhen shiji xinkao,” 66; Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, p.100.

<sup>20</sup> The original line reads, “風傳宮漏到湖邊。” The suggestion that *gonglou* appeared only in the Southern Song is supported by Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, pp.1-2. However, it cannot be justified. One evidence that it appeared before the Song is seen in He Ning’s 和凝 (898-955) *ci*-poem “To the tune: *Boming nü*” 薄命女, “Dawn is going to break,/ The lingering sounds of the palace water-clock pass through the flowers./ The sparse starlight shines by my window./ The chill dew coldly penetrates the curtain front,/ The fading moonlight sinks behind the tips of the trees./ My dream interrupted, I am empty and sad by the brocade curtain,/ Forcing myself to wake up, my knitted brows become so small.” The original reads, “天欲曉，宮漏穿花聲繚繞。窗裡星光少。冷露寒侵帳額，

the reign of Gaozong, when he had determined to move the capital to Lin'an 臨安 in the eighth year of his reign [year 1138]. Working on this information, some scholars were convinced that Zhu Shuzhen lived between the late Northern and the early Southern Song period.

Most scholars are now inclined to believe that Zhu Shuzhen was alive in the Southern Song period. Miao Yue has suggested that, had Zhu Shuzhen been alive in the turbulent period between the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties, she would have been inspired to write about war; in fact no such references can be discerned in her poetry.<sup>21</sup> This point is, however, unjustified because affairs about war were not a common theme for women in their inner quarters. One scholar Ji Gong suggested, regarding the controversy about the reign periods *Shaoding san nian* and *Shaosheng san nian*, that the real date was *Shaoxing san nian* 紹興三年 [the third year of reign period Shaoxing, 1131-1162, i.e. 1133, Southern Song period].<sup>22</sup> After comparing the poetry written by Zhu Shuzhen with that of other Northern and Southern Song poets, Huang Yanli concluded that Zhu had drawn on many lines used by previous poets, such as Su Shi, Qin Guan, Li Qingzhao,<sup>23</sup> and even the Southern Song poet Zhang Xiaoxiang. Huang suggested that Zhu Shuzhen was born around 1135, and died around 1180. Another interesting statement about Zhu Shuzhen, which suggests that she was not

---

殘月光沉樹杪。夢斷錦幃空悄悄，強起愁眉小。” From *Tang Wudai ci xuanji* 唐五代詞選集 [*An Annotated Collection of Ci-poetry in the Tang and Five Dynasties*]. Annotated by Huang Jinde. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1993: p.258. Therefore this point does not stand in determining the period when Zhu Shuzhen lived.

<sup>21</sup> Miao Yue. “Lun Zhu Shuzhen shenghuo niandai ji qi *Duanchang ci*” 論朱淑真生活年代及其《斷腸詞》 [“Zhu Shuzhen’s Life Experience and Her *Heartbreaking Ci-poetry*.”]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan eds. *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu* 古代女詩人研究 [*A Study of Ancient Women Poets*]. Wuhan: Hubei Jiaoyu, 2002: pp.419-34, here p.422.

<sup>22</sup> Ji Gong. “Guanyu nüshiren Zhu Shuzhen de shici” 關於女詩人朱淑真的詩詞 [“About the *Shi*- and *Ci*-poetry by the Women Poet Zhu Shuzhen”]. *Xueshu yuekan* 3 (1963): 57-61, here 57. See also Kong Fanli. “Zhu Shuzhen yishi jicun ji qita” 朱淑真佚詩輯存及其他 [“The Edition and Collection of Zhu Shuzhen’s Lost Poems and Beyond”]. *Wenshi* 12 (1981): 227-33, here pp.232-33.

<sup>23</sup> “Chang Yen (fl. 1526) states that Chu Shu-chen [Zhu Shuzhen] modeled herself on (*tsu*) a specific poetic line by Li Ch’ing-chao [Li Qingzhao].” Qtd. John Timothy Wixted. “The Poetry of Li Ch’ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women’s Authorship.” In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994: pp.145-68, here p.147.

alive before the Southern Song period, reads “[Zhu Shuzhen’s native place was in] Haining of Zhezong 浙中, and she was a niece of Wen Gong 文公 [i.e. Zhu Xi].”<sup>24</sup>

According to some records, Zhu Shuzhen was clever in her childhood, her writings surpassing learned male writers of the period. She was talented in painting, music and writing poetry.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned before, Zhu Shuzhen, who was said to be unhappily married to an official, had wished to be an ideal wife, with a talented man as her mate.<sup>26</sup> However, since her husband did not share her interest in poetry, she is believed to have secretly established an extramarital relationship, although the only grounds for this view lie in interpretations of her poetry. In the meantime many of the poems lamenting unhappy marriage and expressing longings for love were produced. Apart from these, scholars have put forward various suggestions

---

<sup>24</sup> *Duanchang ji: jilüe* 斷腸集·紀略 [A Shortened Record of the Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry] written by Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅 (fl. 1554). The original reads, “[朱淑真,] 浙中海寧人, 文公姪女。” Similarly Zhao Shijie 趙世杰 (n.d., Ming Dynasty) wrote in his *Gu jin nü shi* 古今女史 [Talented Women Through the Ages] (published in 1628), “[朱淑真,] 海寧人, 文公姪女。” [(Zhu Shuzhen’s native place was in) Haining, and she was a niece of Wen Gong.] Similar sayings appear in Hu Weiyuan’s 胡薇元 (n.d., Qing Dynasty) *Suihanju cihua* 歲寒居詞話 [Notes on Ci-poetry of the Cold Year Court], qtd. Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.3-4; also in Li E’s 厲鶚 (1692-1752) *Song shi jishi* 宋詩紀事 [A Record of Song Dynasty Shi-poetry]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1983. 2 vols: p.2102 (*juan* eighty-seven, vol.2). Although this piece of information appears in various works, there is no firm proof that Zhu Shuzhen was Zhu Xi’s niece, and the sources shown in these works may have only been developed from those written in previous dynasties.

<sup>25</sup> Another similar comment appears in Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (*jinsi* 1526). *Xihu youlan zhiyu* 西湖遊覽志餘 [Record of a Journey around Western Lake]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1998: p.253: “Zhu Shuzhen was a native of Qiantang. From a young age she displayed great intelligence, was an expert reader and was talented in writing poetry. Her character was delicate and refined.” The original reads, “朱淑真者, 錢塘人。幼警惠, 善讀書, 工詩, 風流蘊藉。”

<sup>26</sup> The saying was taken from Wei Zhonggong’s preface: “Looking at her poems and thinking of her charming personality, it is clear that her marriage to a vulgar fellow simply ruined her life.” [“觀其詩, 想其人, 風韻如此, 乃下配一庸夫, 固負此生矣。”] Apart from that, Tian Yiheng stated that “Zhu Shuzhen’s parents neglected to find her a husband, and married her off to a member of the lower class who was common and vulgar. [...] after then Shuzhen felt frustrated all her life and so in her poems she wrote a lot about sadness in order to express the unfairness she had encountered. She finally died with regret since she could not get married with a talented man as she had wished and could not find a true friend.” [“父母不能擇伉儷, 乃嫁爲市井民家妻, 其夫村惡籛籛, [.....] 淑真抑鬱不得志。作詩多憂怨之思, 以寫其不平之憤, 時牽情於才子, 竟無知音, 悒悒抱悲而死。”] Tian Yiheng. *Shi nü shi shisi juan, shiyi yi juan* 詩女史十四卷、拾遺一卷 [A History of Poetry by Women: Fourteen Rolls, Collection of Omissions: One Roll]. Tainan: Zhuangyan Wenhua Shiye, 1997: p.763 (*juan* ten).

concerning the last years of Zhu Shuzhen's life. Some have suggested that she probably committed suicide due to having breached virtuous moral principles.<sup>27</sup> Others have argued that she was divorced and lived alone in a monastery at the end of her life.<sup>28</sup> Wei Zhonggong's preface records the information that after Zhu Shuzhen's death, her parents cremated her together with her poems to ashes, leaving "not even one out of a hundred."<sup>29</sup> Although the lack of evidence regarding certain aspects of her life means that no definitive biography of Zhu Shuzhen can be written, and no proof of her existence can be drawn, the poems attributed to her remain worthy of

<sup>27</sup> Huang Yanli assumed this on the basis of Wei's preface which reads, "more to console her [Zhu Shuzhen's] fragrant soul on the lonely banks of the Nine Springs, than to leave her name unrecognised." ["聊以慰其 [朱淑真] 芳魂於九泉寂寞之濱，未為不遇也。"] Huang Yanli suggests that the "Nine Springs" may refer to Zhu Shuzhen's burial in water and this may have been the result of her committing suicide by jumping into a river after people accused her of immoral acts. *ZSZP*, pp.47-51. According to Verschuur-Basse and Esther Yao, during the Song and the Yuan, committing suicide was quite a common practice for women keen to prove their chastity. Denyse Verschuur-Basse, *Chinese Women Speak*, p.7. Yao further points out that it was not uncommon for a family to encourage a widowed daughter to die in order to "glorify the family name." From Esther S. Lee Yao, *Chinese Women: Past and Present*, p.79. If this was the case, perhaps Zhu Shuzhen's parents encouraged her to commit suicide in order to scotch rumours of her immoral behaviour. However, the point of Zhu's burial in water cannot be justified as in Wei's preface it was clearly stated that "she [Zhu Shuzhen], together with her poems, were cremated in a fire set by her parents." So the suggestion by Huang Yanli cannot stand as a valid point. ["并其詩為父母一火焚之。"]

<sup>28</sup> Deng Hongmei concluded, on the basis of Zhu's *ci*-poem called 酌江月 (詠竹) ["To the Tune: *Lei jiang yue* (Appreciating Bamboo)"] in which she described finding enlightenment in a monastery that Zhu Shuzhen lived in a monastery for the last years of her life. From "Zhu Shuzhen shiji xinkao," 72-73. As mentioned above, Ren Dekui has shown that this poem was written by a Daoist monk named Tan Chudian between the Jin and Yuan Dynasties. "Zhu Shuzhen *Duanchang ci* banben kaoshu yu zuopin bianwei," 90-92.

<sup>29</sup> According to Wei's preface, "When she died, her bones could not be buried in a proper place like the Green Mound [for Wang Zhaojun]; moreover, she, together with her poems, were cremated in a fire set by her parents. A double misfortune is that her extant poems today represent only one out of a hundred. What a calamity!" {"其 [朱淑真] 死也，不能葬骨于地下，如青冢之可吊，并其詩為父母一火焚之。今所存者，百不一存，是重不幸也。"} "Green Mound" 青冢 refers to the tomb of the beautiful Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (fl. 33 B.C.) of the Han Dynasty, who was appointed by the Han Emperor to marry the leader of the Xiongnu 匈奴 so that they would not invade the Han territory again. Wei used this allusion to conclude that it was unfortunate that Zhu Shuzhen could not be buried properly as Wang Zhaojun had been. On the other hand, according to Lap Lam, during the Song, people adopted a "defensive attitude" against literary writing as it was considered a *xiaocheng* 小乘 ("lesser vehicle"), or even *hai Dao* 害道 ["harmful to the *Dao*"] in the eyes of the Neo-Confucianists. In order to avoid "posthumous disgrace," it was a practice for the Song people to burn their *ci* as soon as possible before they spread. This could serve as a rational reference for Zhu Shuzhen's parents burning her poems after her death. Lap Lam, "Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Reputation of *Ci*." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 24 (2002): 1-41, here 8-9, 12, 21.

academic study.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.2 The Background and Content of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry

In pre-modern China, the Confucian ideal held that a poem was written in order to voice one's aspirations [*shi yan zhi* 詩言志]: in other words poets should enunciate their opinions through the creation of poetry.<sup>31</sup> Grace Fong also agrees with the notion that "according to this accepted genealogy [*shi yan zhi*], poetry as a discursive mode has always been predicated on expressing or embodying the 'true' feelings and 'genuine' voice of the enunciating subject."<sup>32</sup> It is easy, then, for Chinese scholars to suggest that Zhu Shuzhen always indicates her aspirations within the lines of her poetry, which is a clear illustration to the readers of her poems of how she thinks, how she feels, and how she acts in certain situations. The appreciation of *mei* 梅 [plum blossom] and *zhu* 竹 [bamboo] serves as an example, as they appear frequently in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry. Both of these images are symbols of unswerving and unyielding determination in traditional Chinese society.<sup>33</sup> Therefore the poet can sometimes be seen as a determined woman by merely reading the lines of the poems. This traditional method helps in analysing the beauty and the meaning of the poetic lines, but fails to outline the fact through the biographical details of a particular poet, because it is ultimately difficult to know whether the poetic content is a creation or an

---

<sup>30</sup> For more details concerning studies of Zhu Shuzhen, see Li Weimin. "Zhu Shuzhen yanjiu liushi nian zongshu" 朱淑真研究六十年綜述 ["A Summary of Sixty Years of Studies of Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 3 (1995): 17-22.

<sup>31</sup> "Shi yan zhi" is from the third part of *Shundian* 舜典 [*Renditions of the Shun Emperor*] of *Shangshu* 尚書 [*Book of Documents*], in which the words of Shun Di 舜帝 [the Shun Emperor] are noted: "Poetry is used to express one's aspirations." [The original reads "詩所以言志也"] From Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692). *Shangshu yinyi* 尚書引義 [*The Book of Documents with Associated Comments*]. Beijing, Zhonghua, 1976: p.15.

<sup>32</sup> Grace Fong, "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/Biographical Practices." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 2.2 (2000): 259-303, here 262.

<sup>33</sup> The appreciation of plums and bamboos was a general theme in the Southern Song period, further circumstantial evidence of Zhu being alive at that time. See Huang Yanli and Wu Xihe, *Duanchang fangcao yuan — Zhu Shuzhen zhuan* 斷腸芳草遠 — 朱淑真傳 [*The Heartbreaking Fragrant Grass is Far Away — The Biography of Zhu Shuzhen*]. Shijiazhuang: Huashan Wenyi, 2000: p.21.

autobiographical reflection, especially in the case of Zhu Shuzhen, when her details are mostly unconfirmed and without corroborating evidence.

The controversial issue of whether Zhu Shuzhen existed has provided researchers with much grounds for discussion. Wilt Idema even suggests that it would be best to:

[...] read the poems in *Tuan-ch'ang chi* [*Duanchang ji*] not so much as the products of a single, specific individual, but rather as a reflection of twelfth century male conceptions of what typical effusions from the inner quarters should be like. It is not inconceivable to me that a sizable portion of the Chu Shu-chen poems should be the work of anonymous male authors impersonating the female voice.<sup>34</sup>

This is a very extraordinary remark: however, no concrete proof of male poets assuming Zhu's identity can be provided either. In spite of this problem, the poetry attributed to Zhu Shuzhen displays sensitive and sentimental feelings deep from a woman's mind. The question of searching for evidence could better be put aside here, rather it is safer to see "Zhu Shuzhen" as an image represented in her poetry, to appreciate the beauty and the sentiment of the voice expressed in the poetry than to associate directly the poetry with the biography.

When expressing the emotions that arose from a woman's daily life, in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry a wide variety of subject matter is used, in contrast to the practice of women poets of previous ages. Adopting the role of a typical wife in the boudoir Zhu Shuzhen's poetry mainly concentrated on appreciating different kinds of flowers and plants; even tiny insects and living organisms could arouse different thoughts. It is from such a 'micro-world' of a lonely woman that the delicate nature of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry reveals its own characteristics. The reason for this being that,

---

<sup>34</sup> Wilt L. Idema, "Male Fantasies and Female Realities: Chu Shu-chen and Chang Yü-niang and Their Biographies," pp.24-25.



according to Hu Yuanling,

Women [at that time] lived a bounded life from birth, and they did not encounter the quarrels and troubles of the male world. As a result their environment was dull and quiet, which led to feelings of *xian* 閒 [idleness]. Because of this she [Zhu Shuzhen] could observe things in a more sensitive and calmer way, and she could pay more attention to slight changes in things and delicate vibrations in emotions. Zhu Shuzhen's poetic work provides us with a *chao jing* 超靜 [hyper-silent] and *chao wei* 超微 [hyper-subtle] world.<sup>35</sup>

On the one hand, Zhu Shuzhen's poetry provides readers with a broad range of topics and content, and can peep into minor matters worthy of, but hitherto lacking, attention; on the other hand, it also pays attention to society in a larger context besides domestic affairs, the major interest of pre-modern age women. Above all, sadness is the main inspiration for Zhu Shuzhen's poetry.

Zhu Shuzhen's poetry has been sorted into the categories "Describing Still Lives," "Describing Scenery," "Appreciating Historical Heroes," "Peasant Hardships," "Grieving for an Unhappy Marriage" and "The Longing for Love," which will be used here as the basis for analysis.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.1 Describing Still Lives

A substantial portion of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry is concerned with the appreciation of still lifes, including a large number that discuss the beauty of flowers and plants, written in the hope of either symbolising human characteristics or expressing her own grievances. Examples can be seen in the following poems:

---

<sup>35</sup> Hu Yuanling, "Lun Zhu Shuzhen shici de nüxing tese" 論朱淑真詩詞的女性特色 ["A Discussion of the Feminine Characteristics of Zhu Shuzhen's *Shi*-poetry and *Ci*-poetry.']. *Wenxue yichan* 2 (1998): 71-81, here 73.

<sup>36</sup> The arrangements of the categories of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry are adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.69-124, with slight changes.

### 杏花

淺注胭脂剪絳綃，獨將妖艷冠花曹。春心自得東君意，遠勝玄都觀裡桃。<sup>37</sup>

### Apricot Blossom

Rouge-tinged petals trimmed from silk,  
In charm alone cap all other flowers.  
Winning the pleasure of the god of spring,  
Far surpassing peach blossoms in the Xuandu Temple. (ZSZSH p.146)

### 梨花

朝來帶雨一枝春，薄薄香羅蹙蕊勻。冷艷未饒梅共色，靚妝長與月為鄰。  
許同夢蝶還如蝶，似替人愁卻笑人。須到年年寒食夜，情懷為你倍傷神。

### Pear Blossom

Spring mornings bring rain to the flower stems,  
Thin, fragrant satins encircling the stamen.  
As cool and beguiling as plum blossom,  
Its elegant beauty always best when next to the moon.  
Like dreaming of a butterfly and still being like a butterfly,<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> In the original poem in Zhang Xiancheng et al eds, *Li Qingzhao Zhu Shuzhen shici hezhu* 李清照、朱淑真詩詞合注 [A Combined Annotation of Shi-poetry and Ci-poetry by Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen]. Chengdu: Bashu, 1999 (hereafter ZSZSH). The original poems cited in this thesis are generally based on this source unless specifically pointed out. Comparisons and selections will be made if characters happen to differ in different versions. In ZSZSH, it reads “Yuandu guan” 元都觀 [Yuandu Temple] rather than “Xuandu guan” 玄都觀 [Xuandu Temple] here. However, it reads “Xuandu guan” in both ZSZJ, p.57; and in *Zhu Shuzhen ji zhu* 朱淑真集注 [Annotated Edition of the Collected Poetry of Zhu Shuzhen] (hereafter ZSZJZ). Annotated by Zheng Yuanzuo. Zhejiang: Zhejiang Guji, 1985: p.42. The explanation in ZSZJ reads, “At the Xuandu Temple in Chang’an during the Tang Dynasty, peach blossoms were planted.” [“唐代長安有玄都觀，種桃花。”], p.57. In Zhu’s poem “Chuang xi taohua sheng kai” 窗西桃花盛開 [“By the West of the Window the Plum Blossoms Bloom”], the annotation refers to Liu Yuxi’s poem “Yuanhe shi nian zi Langzhou hui Jing, xi zeng kanhua zhu junzi” 元和十年自朗州回京，戲贈看花諸君子 [“A Joyful Poem for my Good Friends who Appreciate the Flowers, upon my Returning from Langzhou to the Capital in the Tenth year of the Yuanhe Reign Period”], which contains the line, “Xuandu guan li tao qian shu” 玄都觀裡桃千樹 [“In Xuandu Temple there are thousands of plum blossom trees”]; Liu wrote another poem titled “Zai you Xuandu guan” 再遊玄都觀 [“Visiting Xuandu Temple Again”]. ZSZSH, pp.145-46. The change from “Xuandu” to “Yuandu” was the taboo on Xuanye 玄燁, Emperor Kangxi’s 康熙 (1654-1722, ruled 1661-1722) personal name. Texts published in the Qing from Kangxi onwards used the character  *yuan*  元 for  *xuan*  玄, but in modern editions the original character  *xuan*  appears again. The version “Xuandu guan” would prevail here.

<sup>38</sup> This line symbolises loss and frustration. A famous story about Zhuangzi 莊子 (369?-286? B.C.) recounts “Once upon a time Zhuang Zhou [Zhuangzi] dreamed of becoming a butterfly, a butterfly that flaps its wings and floats in the air. I felt that it was appropriate for my mindset, and I forgot that I was Zhuang Zhou. Later I was awoken, and abruptly realised that I was Zhuang Zhou. Did I know that

Seeming to share people's sadness but yet smiling at them.  
Must wait till the annual Cold Food Festival,<sup>39</sup>  
When the sympathy for you will be redoubled. (ZSZSH p.146)

暮春有感

倦對飄零滿徑花，靜聞春水鬧鳴蛙。故人何處草空碧，撩亂寸心天一涯。

Moved by the Decline of Spring

Wearily facing the path strewn with faded flowers,  
Calmly listening to the frogs noisily croaking in the spring water.  
The grass is green in vain when my beloved is somewhere out there,  
My feelings are confused at the edge of the world. (ZSZSH p.136)

Looking at these poems, we can see the sophisticated use of different kinds of imagery and descriptive techniques to describe what the persona sees, hears, touches, and even feels by appreciating the beauty of the blossoms. The metaphors of “Rouge-tinged petals trimmed from silk” (the first line of “Apricot Blossom”) and “Thin, fragrant satins encircling the stamen” (the second line of “Pear Blossom”) both suggest unrestrained and talented creative imagination assuming the voice of a lonely woman behind

---

it was Zhou who dreamed of becoming a butterfly, or the butterfly dreamed of becoming Zhou? It was certainly a distinction between Zhou and the butterfly. This is known as transformation of objects.” The original reads, “昔者莊周夢爲蝴蝶，栩栩然蝴蝶也，自喻適志與，不知周也。俄然覺，則遽遽然周也。不知周之夢爲蝴蝶與，蝴蝶之夢爲周與？周與蝴蝶，則必有分矣，此之爲物化。” “Qiwu lun” 齊物論 [“An Argument of Things being Equal”], in Wang Shumin. *Zhuangzi jiaoquan* 莊子校註 [Annotated Edition of Zhuangzi]. Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1988: p.95.

<sup>39</sup> The Cold Food Festival is one day before the *Qing ming jie* 清明節 [Tomb-sweeping Day, on the fourth, fifth or sixth day of April in the modern calendar] or one hundred and five days after the Winter Solstice. According to Liu Xiang's 劉向 (77?- 6?B.C.) *Xinxu* 新序 [A New Order], “When Jin Wengong 晉文公 (697-628 B.C.) returned to his state [after nineteen years of exile], Jie Zitui 介子推 [also known as Jie Zhitui 介之推] (fl. 636 B.C.) did not receive any rewards [despite his mercy in feeding Wengong with the flesh on his leg to prevent starving when in exile], so he left and went to seclusion in Mian Mountain 綿山 [present day Jiexiu 介休 County. The mountain was later called Jie Mountain 介山 in memory of Jie Zitui]. Wengong [regretted his negligence and] pleaded for Zitui but failed, so he set a fire to the mountain [to force Zitui out]. Zitui never got out and was burned to death. [...] It was passed on that fire was forbidden on this day in memory of Jie Zitui's being burned to death [and so was how the Cold Food Festival come from].” Qtd. Fan Ye's 范曄 (398-445) *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 [History of the Later Han]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965. 6 vols: here p.2025 (juan sixty-five, vol.4). The original reads, “晉文公反國，介子推無爵，遂去而之介山之上。文公求之不得，乃焚其山，推遂不出而焚死。[.....] 俗傳云子推以此日被焚而禁火。”

the curtain of her boudoir. The phrases “[w]earily facing” and “[c]almly listening to” (in the first two lines of “Moved by the Decline of Spring”) are both amplifications of her lethargic attitude towards life. A restrained point of view through a woman’s eyes is projected here, as the settings and environments are confined to the expected areas occupied by a pre-modern woman, instead of being able to experience the outside world in the same way as males could.

The description of nature constitutes a major part of Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry, revealing a woman’s subtle and sensitive care of both the environment and the psychology of the persona. Although these poems have not assumed major importance in China’s literary history, the beauty inside strengthened the *wanyue* style which had become one of the most advocated poetic styles in pre-modern China.

### 2.2.2 Describing Scenery

The four seasons are the most significant topics in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems and lyrics. *Duanchang ji* has been generally edited and arranged into categories of ‘seasons’ in different *juan*. Under such arrangements many of her poems have been placed into *chun jing* 春景 [spring scenes], *xia jing* 夏景 [summer scenes], *qiu jing* 秋景 [autumn scenes] and *dong jing* 冬景 [winter scenes] in modern editions.<sup>40</sup> Poems on the topic of ‘four seasons’ attributed to Zhu Shuzhen make up over half of the content of *Duanchang ji*. The large number of poems describing the four seasons may have indicated the poet’s detailed attachment to every slight change between different seasons, including the weather and vegetation. Many of Zhu’s poems are concerned with festivals and occasions when expressions could be conveyed by describing different types of scenery. Through description the poet often moved on to a conclusion about emotional sentiments, mostly on the major

---

<sup>40</sup> This order appears in the table of contents of both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ*. There are slight differences in the subtitles of some poems.

feelings about sadness.

With the embellishment of scenery and various objects in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry a kind of *xing* 興 schema in poetics<sup>41</sup> was used to express emotions, sometimes in a satirical, tragic or symbolised way, mostly with the aim of expressing the views of the human nature and the state of human affairs. This point can further be explained by looking at the following poems:

### 春霽

淡薄輕寒雨後天，柳絲無力妥殘煙。弄晴鶯舌于中巧，著雨花枝分外妍。  
消破舊愁憑酒盞，去除新恨賴詩篇。年年來對梨花月，瘦不勝衣怯杜鵑。<sup>42</sup>

### Clearing Up After Spring Rain

It is a day after rain, hazy, and slightly chilly,  
The willow strands trail lifelessly in the lingering mist.  
Celebrating sunshine the oriole sings skilfully,  
Dressed in raindrops flowers are more delicate than ever.  
Only by cups of wine can one remove old sorrows,  
Only by lines of poetry can one dispel new regrets.  
Year after year facing the pear-blossoms in the moon shadows,

---

<sup>41</sup> The *xing* schema was used often during the period when the *Book of Songs* was written. *Xing* means to describe something [such as the surrounding environment] before stimulating the writer's emotions, and it is just like citing a metaphor by mentioning something else first. In Chinese it reads "先言他物以引起所詠之辭." Yuan Dawei and Lu Dihe, *Zhongguo wenxue jiben zhishi ji fazhan jianshi*, p.22. One of the examples of the *xing* schema is seen in "Gui yuan" 閨怨 ["Boudoir Sadness"], a poem by the Tang poet Wang Changling 王昌齡 (690?-756?). It reads, "The young bride in her boudoir knows little about sorrow,/ In springtime she adorns herself and ascends the emerald tower./ Seeing the colour of the willows beside the road,/ She regrets having encouraged her husband to seek fame and honour." [In Chinese it reads, "閨中少婦不知愁，春日凝妝上翠樓。忽見陌頭楊柳色，悔教夫婿覓封侯。"] *Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou* 新譯唐詩三百首 [The Three-hundred Tang Shi-poetry with New Annotations]. Annotated by Qiu Kuiyou. Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1973: pp.471-72. In this poem the writer writes about the young woman and her beauty in spring first. The focus turns at the point of the willows, the subject for stimulation, thus the emotion of the woman's regret is displayed.

<sup>42</sup> "Can yan" 殘煙 [lingering mist] in the second line as it appears in *ZSZSH* reads "zhao yan" 朝煙 [morning mist] in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZZ* (both p.5). The choice of "lingering mist" in my translation indicates a rational picture following the "day after rain" in the first line. Apart from this, "nian nian lai dui lihua yue" 年年來對梨花月 [Year after year facing the pear-blossoms in the moon shadows] in the seventh line of the original poem reads "nian nian lai dao lihua yue" 年年來到梨花月 [Year after year when it comes to the pear-blossoms in the moon shadows] in *ZSZJ*, p.5. The former choice makes the line more picturesque.

Too thin for the robe, too frightened to hear the cuckoo's cry.<sup>43</sup>

(ZSZSH pp.111-12)

春詞二首 (其一)

屋裏楊柳噪春鴉，簾幙風輕燕翅斜。芳草池塘初夢斷，海棠庭院正愁加。  
幾聲嬌巧黃鶯舌，數朶柔纖小杏花。獨倚妝窗梳洗倦，只慚辜負好年華。<sup>44</sup>

Spring Poem (Two Poems) – Number 1

By the house are teasing willows and cawing spring crows,  
In the light breeze behind the curtain, swallows slant their wings.  
By fragrant grass and pond my dreams have just been disturbed,  
Flowering apples in the garden have their sorrows extreme.  
Sounds of sweet and delicate orioles' cries,  
Several clusters of frail and slender apricot blossoms.  
I lean against the dressing window, weary of making myself up,  
Only regretting that my golden youth is going to waste. (ZSZSH p.120)

The above two poems are of a similar nature: the feeling of melancholy is thoroughly expressed concerning the female persona's lonely life. The

---

<sup>43</sup> The legend of the cuckoo concerns Emperor Wang 望帝 of Shu 蜀, who abdicated his throne and lived in seclusion on Mount Xi 西山. He then turned into a *dujuan* 杜鵑 [cuckoo], who cried sad tunes day and night during the spring months. The "cuckoo's cry" is a metaphor used to describe the sad resonance of a dead soul, while 'a cuckoo's [or *zigui*'s 子規 (another name for cuckoo)] crying blood' refers to the sorrowful resonance of the cuckoo. The metaphor is often used to describe sorrowful, distressed or emotions on longing for returns. (One episode in Chinese reads, "望帝讓位後隱遁西山，化爲杜鵑鳥，至春月間則晝夜悲鳴不止。後遂用「望帝啼鵑」比喻冤魂的悲鳴……用「杜鵑啼血、子規啼血」等指杜鵑鳥的哀鳴。常用以描寫哀怨、淒涼或思歸的心情。") *Changyong diangu cidian* 常用典故詞典 [A Dictionary of Frequently Used Allusions]. Xu Chengzhi, Wang Guanghan, and Yu Shi eds. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 1985: pp.463-64. In some poems it is known that the cuckoo's cry sounds like *burugui* 不如歸 [better go home], as in the following *ci*-poem "To the Tune: *Zhegu tian*" 鷓鴣天 by Yan Jidao 晏幾道 (1040?-1112?): "Ten miles of towers resting on green peaks,/ Deep among the flowers the cuckoos cry./ I would rather talk to the travellers/ Than fly at will like the orioles./ I'm awakened suddenly from dreams,/ But as I'm enjoying the sunshine,/ Every sound seems to say, 'Better go home!'/ Though the edge of the sky must lead home./ The date for my return is too hard to predict." The original reads, "十里樓台倚翠微，百花深處杜鵑啼，殷勤自與行人語，不似流鶯取次飛。驚夢覺，弄晴時，聲聲只道不如歸，天涯豈是無歸意，爭奈歸期未可期。" Gu Yisheng, Xu Peijun, and Yuan Zhenyu eds. *Song ci jinghua* 宋詞精華 [The Essence of Song Ci-Poetry]. Chengdu: Bashu, 1995: p.112.

<sup>44</sup> In the first line "yangliu" 楊柳 [willows] in the original poem reads "liuye" 柳葉 [willow leaves] in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ* (p.18 and p.15 respectively); while "huangying" 黃鶯 [orioles] in the fifth line reads "huangli" 黃鸝 [orioles] (*ibid.*). As the changes do not cast a big difference to the meaning of the poem, the *ZSZSH* version will prevail here for my translation.

former poem is less forceful with just one descriptive line about her health condition “too thin for the robe,” and one brief reference to her emotions “too frightened to hear the cuckoo’s cry.” The voice in the latter poem is stronger in the sense that the last two lines portray more directly the image of a lonely lady in her boudoir (“weary of making myself up”), and a lament for the fact that her “golden youth is going to waste.” Readers can observe that most parts of the two poems are descriptions of scenery, and that only towards the end of each poem does the poet voice her deep feelings and sentiments. This conforms to the ancient Chinese saying of *zuzhang xian qi zhi* 卒章顯其志 [the final section reveals one’s aspirations/ sentiments],<sup>45</sup> which is also compatible with the expression *shi yan zhi* discussed above.

Another important characteristic of the Tang and Song poets was their projection of emotion upon the environment surrounding them.<sup>46</sup> This idea was described by Wang Guowei as *you wo zhi jing* 有我之境 [Rickett’s “personal state”] as contrast to the idea of *wu wo zhi jing* 無我之境 [Rickett’s “impersonal state”].<sup>47</sup> In Zhu Shuzhen’s latter poem sad feelings are imposed onto the objects: “Flowering apples in the garden had their sorrows extreme,” in which the female persona’s *chou* 愁 [sadness] has become the

<sup>45</sup> From Bai Juyi’s saying in *Xin yuefu xu* 新樂府序 [A Preface to the New Yuefu], “..... 繫於意，不繫於文。首句標其目，卒章顯其志，詩三百之義也。” [... (a poem should be) adhered to its meaning, not to its words. The first line should indicate its topic, while the final section reveals one’s aspirations/ sentiments; this is the real meaning of the three hundred songs (the *Book of Songs*).] Qtd. Chen Xiang ed., *Bai Juyi de xin yuefu*. 白居易的新樂府 [Bai Juyi’s New Yuefu Folksongs]. Taipei: Guojia, 1982: p.29.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. the Western idea of “pathetic fallacy,” a term used when human feelings are ascribed to the inanimate. Adapted from J. A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin, 1976: pp.692-93.

<sup>47</sup> Wang Kuo-wei’s *Jen-chien tz’u-hua: A Study in Chinese Literary Criticism*. 人間詞話 [A Critique on Ci-poetry in the Mortal World]. Trans. Adele Austin Rickett. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1977. An important excerpt reads, “In the personal state the poet views objects in terms of himself and so everything takes on his own colouring. In the impersonal state the poet views objects in terms of objects and so one cannot tell what is the poet himself and what is the object.” [The original reads, “有我之境，以我觀物，故物皆著我之色彩。無我之境，以物觀物，故不知何者爲我，何者爲物。”] Pp.40-41. One typical example of the “personal state” is a poem title “Chun wang” 春望 [“Spring View”] by Du Fu. It reads, “When I am touched, the flowers shed tears,/ When I feel sad for parting, the birds’ cry makes me startled.” *Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou*, pp.255-56. (The lines read “感時花濺淚，恨別鳥驚心” in Chinese.)

sadness of the flowering apples. By reflecting the self into the poem in this way Zhu Shuzhen is able to maximise the creativity and imagination in order to convey different emotions at different times, even if she is only describing the scenery that she could see, and even if a traditional woman's mobility was restricted only to her boudoir.

### 2.2.3 Appreciating Historical Heroes

There are ten poems named “Yong shi shishou” 詠史十首 [“Ten Poems Appreciating Historical Heroes”] in Zhu Shuzhen's collection, all of which about figures of the Qin and Han Dynasties. Although not great in number, and despite the fact that in most people's minds Zhu's poems were considered more of an expert on sorrowful feelings of the boudoir, in such poems readers can see the other side of the poems — her readiness to look at a larger context than was generally expected of women at that time is reflected in her poems which show a breadth of vision and sensibility similar to that of men. Li Liangrong remarks,

Zhu Shuzhen's poems about historical heroes show her concern with politics and social issues, and illustrate the lofty ideals and the aspirations of a talented woman. Her knowledge of history is rich, and she is sharp-sighted and outstanding amongst other poets. The famous historical figures that she came across include Xiang Yu [項羽], Han Xin [韓信], Zhang Liang [張良], Lu Jia [陸賈], Jia Sheng [賈生], Dong Zhongshu, Chao Cuo [晁錯] and Liu Xiang. The means of poetic expression is either subtle or explicit, the creation of ideas novel and inspiring.<sup>48</sup>

Other than focusing on a particular historical figure, the poet's feelings were also expressed when reading historical records. From this it can be seen that Zhu Shuzhen had an extraordinary ability to describe and appreciate historical figures, reflected in a different way of seeing history, and thus of

---

<sup>48</sup> Li Liangrong, “Preface.” In Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, pp.19-20.



viewing the world. Her ideas about history can be seen in the following two poems:

讀史

筆頭去取萬千端，後世遭它恣意瞞。王霸漫分心與迹，到成功處一般難。

**Reading Historical Records**

The brush tip decides a myriad beginnings,

Wilfully betraying later generations.

Distinguishing between the intentions of kings and tyrants

Is hardest for the most successful ones. (ZSZSH p.209)

項羽二首 (其一)

自古興亡本是天，豈容人力預其間。非憑天與憑驍逝，驍不前兮戰已閑。<sup>49</sup>

**Ode to Xiang Yu (Two Poems) – Number 1**

Through the ages rise and fall is no more than destiny,

How can man hope to interfere in its integrity?

By relying only on fine horses and not on the gift of fate,

If the horse does not advance, the battle will come to an end. (ZSZSH pp.270-71)

The first poem reflects the poet's general feelings on reading historical records, while the latter deals with a particular historical figure. The former poem is most appreciated by scholars for its bringing out of new dimensions for analysis. Poets in the past wrote many poems in honour of ancient historical figures, generally displaying a positive approach to the appreciation of history. Zhu Shuzhen's poems, on the contrary, made an explicit negative remark about past historical records. She openly criticised the wide-spread practice of deception whereby people wrote historical records in order to please the emperors, and sighed at the lack of a distinctive

---

<sup>49</sup> "Zi gu xingwang ben shi tian" 自古興亡本是天 [Through the ages rise and fall is no more than destiny] in the original poem reads "zi gu xingwang ben zi tian" 自古興亡本自天 [Through the ages rise and fall come from destiny] in ZSZJZ (p.175). It would have been unusual for poets to use the same character twice in the same line, so the former version will prevail in my translation.

difference between a *wang* 王 [kingly] and a *ba* 霸 [forceful] way of ruling. Such concern for politics was rarely seen in historical poems, especially those attributed to women, who were expected to be untalented: such a criticism was also dangerous in the sense that it might arouse hostility if the poem were to be read by males.

Zhu Shuzhen's poem about Xiang Yu (232-202 B.C.) reveals her views on the limitations of the human mind, which conform perfectly with the traditional Chinese idea of *jin renshi, ting tianming* 盡人事、聽天命 [do what one can, and submit to the will of fate]. Xiang Yu, the *bawang* 霸王 [hegemon] of Xi Chu 西楚 (206-202 B.C.), had originally been expected to be the winner of the battle between the Chu and Han states, thanks to his powerful army of four hundred thousand soldiers and his wisdom, yet destiny decided that he would be defeated by Liu Bang 劉邦 (256-195 B.C.), the Han king 漢王 [Han Gaozu 漢高祖] whom he had himself appointed.<sup>50</sup> In this respect Zhu Shuzhen brought out the rational principle of how people are subject to the influence of fate, and how hopeless people could be if destiny is against them. The effort in commenting on both success and failure magnifies Zhu Shuzhen as an image with the supposed male quality of reflecting on political events and state affairs, which is out of the ordinary and unprecedented.

#### 2.2.4 Peasant Hardships

Apart from political concerns, Zhu Shuzhen's poetry also paid considerable attention to peasant hardships. Around ten poems were written on farming and peasants in four categories: sympathy for peasant grievances; chanting farming matters; appreciating the government's concern for farming;

---

<sup>50</sup> "Xiang Yu benji," *juan* seven in *Shiji*: 史記 (卷七)·項羽本紀 ["Basic Annals of Xiang Yu" in *The Book of History*]. In Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?-86? B.C.). *Shiji: wen bai duizhao* 史記：文白對照 [*The Book of History, with Ancient and Modern Versions*]. Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin, 1994: pp.133-45.

describing and admiring farmers' harvests.<sup>51</sup> It was hard in pre-modern times for women to write about the environment outside their boudoirs, for they did not possess the necessary awareness of such situations, particularly when it came to matters concerning ordinary people. The first section of this chapter showed how it has been suggested by scholars that Zhu Shuzhen was the wife of an aristocratic official, implying that she was confined within the inner quarters. Some researchers suggest that, as women managed only domestic matters, the most likely opportunity for Zhu Shuzhen to have observed and written about peasant grievances was at the time when she accompanied her father or husband on official trips.<sup>52</sup> As no direct reference can be discerned for the background of this poem, we can only appreciate the poetic content without referring to the poet's biography. The following is most direct poem on this topic:

苦熱聞田夫語有感

日輪推火燒長空，正是六月三伏中。旱雲萬疊赤不雨，地裂河枯塵起風。  
 農憂田畝死禾黍，車水救田無暫處。日長飢渴喉嚨焦，汗血勤勞誰與語？  
 播插耕耘功已足，尚愁秋晚無成熟。雲霓不至空自忙，恨不抬頭向天哭。  
 寄語豪家輕薄兒，綸巾羽扇將何為！田中青稻半黃槁，安坐高堂知不知？

**Moved by Hearing Farmers' Words in Bitter Heat**

Burning the vast sky with rolling fire is the sun,  
 In the sixth month it is now the hottest season.  
 A thousand layers of arid clouds, barren and with no rain,  
 Earth cracked, rivers dried up, clouds of dust in the wind.  
 The farmers are afraid that the crops will die in farmland,  
 The water wheels rescue the land with no time for rest.  
 During the long day throats are thirsty and parched,  
 To whom can they speak of their diligent blood and sweat?

<sup>51</sup> For a list of these ten poems, see Huang Yanli, *ZSZP* p.106.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22. In Zhu Shuzhen's poem "Chunri shuhuai" 春日書懷 ["Writing my Emotions on a Spring Day"], the first two lines read "從宦東西不自由，親幃千里淚長流" ["Against my will, I accompany official trips to east and west./ With my parents' home far away, my tears run long."]. This poem suggests that she is going on an official trip with her husband.

Significant are the efforts to sow, seed and weed,  
Worried that even in late autumn there is still no harvest.  
In vain for them to work hard if no rain clouds come,  
Regret that they cannot raise heads and cry to Heaven.  
I must say to the frivolous fops of wealthy clans,  
What can you do with silk scarf and feather fans?  
Green paddies in the farms wither and turn into yellow,  
Sitting comfortably in the high hall, about these do you know?

(ZSZSH pp.153-54)

This realistic poem was written using simple characters and easily comprehensible expressions.<sup>53</sup> This is consistent with Bai Juyi's new *yuefu* songs in which he developed his own style of realistic poetry. In this poem the poet's concern is shown for the worsening social conditions of a particular period, and she boldly criticises the ignoble behaviour of "frivolous fops" for their ignorance and negligence of the lower class peasants. She directly reprimanded the profligate members of wealthy families for their reluctance to part with comfort and ease and for their failure to address the bitter suffering of the people. Zhu Shuzhen was able to demonstrate that she was not a feeble woman stuck in the inner quarters, but someone whose heart and mind paid attention to the political and social realities of the age in which she lived.

### 2.2.5 Grieving for an Unhappy Marriage

Zhu Shuzhen's love poems, which make up a large proportion of her oeuvre, can be divided into two quite different categories. One is the category of poems with sorrowful and ironic features, while another category is the

---

<sup>53</sup> Similar poetic topics and descriptions were also common in the Tang Dynasty. Typical examples are shown in Wang Wei's 王維 (701-761) poem "Ku re" 苦熱 ["Bitter Heat"] and Du Fu's "Zaoqiu ku re dui an xiangreng" 早秋苦熱堆案相仍 ["With Bitter Heat in the Early Autumn, Reports Keep Piled up on my Desk"] See *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 [A Complete Collection of Shi-poetry of the Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960. 25 vols.: p.1251 (*juan* one hundred and twenty-five, vol.4) and p.2415 (*juan* two hundred and twenty-five, vol.7) respectively.

joy of love, which some scholars consider to be poems about extramarital affairs.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, scholars believed that Zhu Shuzhen's marriage was an unhappy one. During pre-modern times women rarely expressed their feelings about marriage in writing, as Ebrey noted: in Song times, "few husbands or wives wrote about their own marriages... they [i.e. men] did not share (or perhaps even write) poems about parting from their wives."<sup>55</sup> On the basis of this practice it is difficult to link up the topic of an unsatisfactory marriage with Zhu Shuzhen's poems. Even though she did not directly show her resentment towards her husband, most of her poems are full of loneliness and heartbreak, and some hint at discontent towards a particular person: thus we can say that the poet tried to construct Zhu Shuzhen as a female image, as a "self," abandoned and lonely in her boudoir, feeling distressed in the absence of her husband. In this sense, these poems can also be considered as *guiyuan shi* 閨怨詩 [poems on resentments in the boudoir] associated with this kind of feelings. The following poems may illustrate the said dissatisfaction:

悶懷二首 (其二)

秋雨沉沉滴夜長，夢難成處轉淒涼。芭蕉葉上梧桐裏，點點聲聲有斷腸。

**A Poem for Loneliness (Two Poems) – Number Two**

The heavy heavy autumn rain drips all night long,

Dreamlessness turns my life lonely and forlorn.

On the plantain leaves and among the wutong trees,

Pittering, pattering, heart-breaking.

(ZSZSH p.173)

圓子

輕圓絕勝雞頭肉，滑膩偏宜蟹眼湯。縱可風流無處說，已輸湯餅試何郎。

---

<sup>54</sup> See discussions on this category of poetry in section 2.2.6.

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, p.152.

### A Round Dumpling

Lighter and rounder than a maid's breast,  
Smooth and rich yet it is put into overdone soup.  
Though I can be flirtatious, I have no way to express.  
You lose when a soup pastry puts He Yan to the test. (ZSZSH pp.209-10)

### 新秋

一夜涼風動扇愁，背時容易入新秋。桃花臉上汪汪淚，忍到更深枕上流。<sup>56</sup>

### When Autumn Comes New

A cool night breeze moves me to the fan's sorrow,  
Lacking a happy fate I slide easily into the new autumn.  
Brimming tears on the peach blossom face  
Held back till the depths of the night, to flow on the pillow. (ZSZSH p.245)

The first poem is directly associated with loneliness, the second one is believed by scholars to be a symbolic expression of the poet's resentment towards her husband, while the last suggests boudoir sorrow. The use of *qiliang* 淒涼 [forlorn] and *duanchang* 斷腸 [heart-breaking, literally gut-tearing] in "A Poem for Loneliness" is typical of Zhu Shuzhen's way of representing her voice in many of her boudoir poems. The reference to her dreamlessness (*meng nan cheng* 夢難成 [dreams are hard to form]) also appears in many of her poems, an essential element in explaining both a woman's poor physical condition and the mental barriers that prevented her from enjoying a happier life.

The second poem, "A Round Dumpling," is a rather difficult yet profound poem in which metaphors and allusions are used to express her resentment by the use of satirical expressions rather than reprimanding and lecturing. She uses the "round dumpling" to symbolise herself, referring to herself as "light" and "round," "smooth and rich." The irony can be drawn

---

<sup>56</sup> The character *ren* 忍 [hold back] in the last line reads as such in both ZSZJ and ZSZJZ, but reads *chou* 愁 [sadness] in ZSZSH. The former use of *ren* matches perfectly with the *lei* 淚 [tears] in the previous line, and it has a greater poetic impact concerning the tears that are shed not before the other people during daytime, but "till the depths of the night" when somebody is lonely.

when she talks about the fact that this dumpling has to be put into “overdone soup,” an unwanted situation. The last two lines point out that her flirtatiousness cannot be expressed to any other person but He Yan 何晏,<sup>57</sup> who was a talented and handsome intellectual. As shown in the poem, the Zhu Shuzhen revealed inside wishes her ideal mate to be a talented man who could share her interests in writing poetry, so He Yan is referred to in order to represent her perfect match. Her hopes could not be achieved, and so the way for her to vent her frustration was to submit to passive resentment, which is believed by some scholars to be an indirect and secret reference to her unhappy marriage.<sup>58</sup> As no proof exists of an unhappy marriage for Zhu Shuzhen, this could only be seen as a brief reference here.

The third poem, “When Autumn Comes New,” should be read in comparison with Ban Jieyu’s poem “Yuan gexing,” which contains a similar lament for female abandonment.<sup>59</sup> Apparently Zhu Shuzhen uses the metaphor of a fan, first introduced by Ban Jieyu, to hint in the poem that she has the same fate (“Lacking a happy fate” in the second line) as the discarded fan. This content shows a passive resistance against the prevailing social norms: nothing could change the situation, all of which signifies and also magnifies a woman’s inferiority, with a large number of Zhu Shuzhen’s poems containing references to tears (such as “Brimming tears on the peach

<sup>57</sup> The allusion comes from *Shi shuo xinyu*: “He Yan was handsome with delicate white skin. Emperor Wen of the Wei suspected that he had applied make-up to his face, so during the summer months he gave He Yan some dumplings in hot soup. He was dripping with sweat immediately after eating the dumpling, and he wiped his face with his red clothing. It was seen that the colour of his face was even whiter than before.” The original reads, “何晏美姿貌白，魏文帝疑其傅粉，夏月，遂賜熱湯餅。既啖，大汗出，以朱衣自拭，顏色皎然愈白。” Qtd. Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, pp.209-10.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. also Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.31; and Huang Yanli and Wu Xihe, *Duanchang fangcao yuan — Zhu Shuzhen zhuan*, pp.90-91.

<sup>59</sup> For this comparison see Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, p.188. The poem “Yuan gexing” reads “I cut a piece of cloth from Qi [the Qi State at the time of the Warring States], / As snow it is bright and white. / I tailored it into a fan of happiness, / As round as the moon bright. / It is always in your embrace, / A light breeze comes when you fan. / I am afraid of the coming of autumn, / While cool wind will replace the heat. / Then the fan will be abandoned into a case, / And our intimacy will abruptly end.” [“新裂齊紈素，皎潔如霜雪。裁爲合歡扇，團團似明月。出入君懷袖，動搖微風發。常恐秋節至，涼風奪炎熱。棄捐篋笥中，恩情中道絕。”] Ban Jieyu was clearly using the fan metaphor to refer to an abandoned woman.

blossom face" in the third line) that were supposedly prevalent among females in traditional Chinese society.

### 2.2.6 The Longing for Love

Describing the sadness about lacking love, Zhu Shuzhen's poetry shows a desperate wish for love. Her love poems show both a youthful and a mature voice; some reveal signs of love and sexual affairs. Certain scholars have been keen to insist that the love affairs mentioned could only be extramarital affairs. However, as Zhu Shuzhen's poems cannot be dated, there cannot be any absolute proof that those affairs were adulterous. The reason why Zhu Shuzhen's poems were so bold in talking about the possible love affairs is that doing so expressed a kind of strong wish to break the social restrictions of the age.

It is worthwhile to observe the changes of the person's emotions in Zhu Shuzhen's poems even though it should be stressed again that there is no exact dating for her poetry. Some of Zhu Shuzhen's poems can be categorised as written in a youthful voice, if, for example the diction, the poetic style and tone are lucid and lively.<sup>60</sup> The following poem may provide some insights:

秋日偶成

初合雙鬟學畫眉，未知心事屬他誰？待將滿抱中秋月，分付蕭郎萬首詩。

#### Occasional Verse: Autumn

When I was fifteen, to paint my brows I was learning,

With whom could I share my love yearnings?

Awaiting when so full is the Mid-Autumn moon,

Sharing with my lover countless poetic tunes.

(ZSZSH pp.177-78)

From the second line "With whom should I share my love yearnings," the most plausible interpretation of this poem is that the female persona has

---

<sup>60</sup> Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.72.



still not found a lover. Her love yearnings are to share “with [her] lover countless poetic tunes” which is also consistent with her hope of getting a talented husband.<sup>61</sup> Although this does not necessarily represent a realistic wish, in the poem an image of Zhu Shuzhen has possessed such a wish, and at least the mentioned hope can be seen from such a great number of over three hundred poems and lyrics during a period of general discouragement of any poetry-writing not concerned with subjects that were seen as proper.

Zhu Shuzhen’s poems written about love affairs may repay more analysis here. Many traces of such a relationship are present in her poems. As no dates can be provided, categorising the poems into different periods may not be sensible; rather it is better for us to consider those poems as scattered ideas about love, whether they were written before or after marriage. In general, most of Zhu Shuzhen’s love poems are romantic and without many scruples regarding moral principles, and sometimes even some metaphors on sex are present in her works. The following *ci*-poem may illustrate some of these points:

江城子 (賞春)

斜風細雨作春寒。  
對尊前，憶前歡。  
曾把梨花，寂寞淚闌干。  
芳草斷煙南浦路，  
和別淚，看青山。  
昨宵結得夢黃緣。  
水雲間，悄無言。  
爭耐醒來，愁恨又依然。  
展轉衾裯空懊惱，  
天易見，見伊難。

---

<sup>61</sup> “Lover” is translated here from “Xiao lang” 蕭郎 in the original poem. “Xiao lang” is assumed to be Xiao Shi 蕭史, who married a beautiful princess due to his talent in playing the flute, and the couple flew off on a phoenix. It is also a traditional Chinese allusion of describing a *jia'ou* 佳偶 [desired lover]. One Chinese description reads, “用‘蕭史、仙史、鳳史、鳳婿、秦鳳、蕭鳳、吹蕭伴’等借指情郎或佳偶。” *Changyong diangu cidian*, p.410. See also footnote number 71 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for more details.

Appreciating Spring (To the tune: *Jiang cheng zi*)

Slanting wind and misty rain bring spring chill.  
Wine at hand,  
Joy of my former love I remember still.  
A face once like pear blossom,  
Alone now crisscrossed with tears.  
Fragrant grass and patchy mist on the road to Nanpu,<sup>62</sup>  
Our tears shared,  
With the green mountains in our sight.  
I dreamed of the invisible bond between us last night.  
Between the waters and the clouds,  
We were sad and wordless.  
Struggling back to reality,  
What remained was still my sadness.  
Tossing about between the sheets I feel distraught,  
To see spring is easy;  
To see him, difficult. (ZSZSH pp.302-03)

This is one of Zhu Shuzhen's most famous *ci*-poems. *Qian huan* 前歡 ["Joy of my former love"] in the second line suggests an implicit and vague image of physical love, with the character *qian* 前 [ex-; former] clearly referring to a relationship in the past. The whole poem is sad in the sense that the woman described inside is unable to see her lover ["To see him, difficult" in the last line] in comparison with the ease with which she can see *tian* 天 [literally "sky," which figuratively refers to the season, spring, to reflect the title].<sup>63</sup> Comparing this poem with the previous one, a great change of

---

<sup>62</sup> The place "Nanpu" 南浦 means the south side of a river. Zhang Xiancheng et al eds, *ZSZSH*, pp.302-03. Zhang Xian 張銑 (n.d.) of the Tang Dynasty gave the annotation as "Nanpu, the place for seeing people off" ["南浦，送別之處。"] Many ancient works used the name of this place for the idea of parting, such as "Jiu ge" 九歌 ["The Nine Songs"] in *Chu ci*, "Seeing the beautiful person off at Nanpu" ["送美人兮南浦"] From *Ci hai* 辭海 [*An Ocean of Phrases*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1989, p.153. In Jiang Yan's 江淹 (444-505) *Bie fu* 別賦 [*Rhapsody of Parting*], there are lines such as "The spring grass is emerald,/ The spring wave is green,/ Seeing you off at Nanpu,/ How much sorrow do I have?" ["春草碧色，春水綠波，送君南浦，傷如之何?"]. Qtd. Zhang and Huang, *ZSZJ*, p.275.

<sup>63</sup> Zhang Xiancheng et al eds, *ZSZSH*, pp.302-03. For a reference of the expression "To see spring is

emotions can be seen, moving from a naïve daughter's myriad hopes to an experienced woman's sigh. Sorrow and tears fill most of Zhu Shuzhen's poems written in her mature voice, as well as those poems containing descriptions of secret love.<sup>64</sup> The image of sex [or making love] derived from *shui yun* 水雲 [the waters and the clouds] in the line "Between the waters and the clouds,/ We were sad and wordless" is an echoing of the traditional image of sex, coming from the expression *yun yu* 雲雨 [clouds and rain].<sup>65</sup> One of the reasons for Zhu Shuzhen's abandoning of the use of *yun yu* may have been the fact that women at that time were not expected to express sexual ideas either in writing or verbally.

### 2.3 Poetic Style of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry

Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, as attributed to a woman writer, would have normally been treated as possessing the *wanyue* style, as opposed to the *haofang* style. By looking at the contents of her poems in the previous section, however, apart from her sad boudoir poems, we can still see works in the

---

easy;/ To see him, difficult," see the line "To part is easy, but to see each other, difficult." from Li Yu's *ci*-poem "To the tune: *Lang tao sha*" 浪淘沙, "The rain patters outside the curtain,/ As spring comes to an end./ The early morning chill seeps through my silk garment./ In my dream knowing not I am a visitor,/ For a moment I am happy./ Lean not against the rail when alone/ For my land is boundless./ To part is easy, but to see each other, difficult./ Flowing water, falling flowers, spring fading away/ Between heaven and earth!" The original reads, "簾外雨潺潺，春意闌珊。羅衾不耐五更寒。夢裡不知身是客，一晌貪歡。獨自莫憑闌！無限江山。別時容易見時難。流水落花春去也，天上人間！" *Tang Wudai ci xuanji*, p.448.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for further discussion.

<sup>65</sup> From "Gaotang fu" 高唐賦 ["Rhapsody on Gaotang"] by Song Yu 宋玉 (290-223 B.C.). The excerpt reads, "Once upon a time the late king [referring to King Xiang of the Chu 楚襄王] travelled to Gaotang. He felt tired and took a nap in the afternoon. He then dreamt of a woman... and he made love with her. Before [the woman] left she said, 'I am from the southern side of the Wu Mountain and the northern side of the Gao Hill. In the daytime I am the morning clouds, and in the evening I am the falling rain. From morning to night, from dawn to dusk, I am under the *yangtai*' [yang terrace]." People use the images of "Wu Mountain" and "clouds and rain" to symbolise sex and making love. "*Yangtai*" is another famous image for a place where men and women make love. (The original reads "昔者先王嘗遊高唐，怠而晝寢，夢見一婦人..... 王因幸之。去而辭曰：妾在巫山之陽，高丘之岨，旦爲朝雲，暮爲行雨，朝朝暮暮，陽台之下。") Qtd. Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.239, the annotation for "Xiaye you zuo" 夏夜有作 ["A Poem on a Summer Night"]. Another reference can be seen in Rexroth and Chung's explicit translation of this line into "Speechless, we made love/ In mist and clouds." ["Spring Joy"] Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung. *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, p.45.

*haofang* style criticising the upper class's ignorance of peasant hardships.<sup>66</sup> In this way we can say that her poetic style is diversified and creative, displaying an exceptionally lofty quality unexpected from a woman of the pre-modern ages.

What is more important, however, is the style of her boudoir poems. As Sharon Shih-jiuan Hou has noted, "[...] an overwhelming majority of her poems concern the loneliness, lovesickness, tearful self-pity, and ill health of the abandoned-woman persona who finds relief from her sorrows in wine."<sup>67</sup> It is interesting that according to figures provided by Hu Yuanling, in Zhu Shuzhen's *Duanchang ji*, "the use of the character *chou* 愁 appears almost eighty times; *hen* 恨 [regret] about twenty times, and *duanchang* twelve times."<sup>68</sup> In some poems the phrase *duanchang* even appears two times within four lines. One such example is shown in one of her poems:

中秋聞笛

誰家橫笛弄輕清，喚起離人枕上情。自是斷腸聽不得，非干吹出斷腸聲。

Hearing the Flute at Mid-Autumn Festival

From where comes the flute music so clear and light?

Stirring the pillow-side lovelorn emotions.

I'm reluctant to listen because my heart is breaking,

Not because of the wafting heartbreaking sounds. (ZSZSH pp.174-75)

This method of doubling the idea and physical diction of 'heartbreaking' suggests a deep-seated sorrow that is hard to vent. The expression of *duanchang* in the title *Duanchang ji*, given by Wei Zhonggong, has also suggested the sadness in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry since,

---

<sup>66</sup> See the discussion of Zhu Shuzhen's poem "Moved by Hearing Farmers' Words in Bitter Heat" above.

<sup>67</sup> Sharon Shih-jiuan Hou. "Women's Literature." In William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986. 2 vols: pp.175-94, here p.189 (vol.1).

<sup>68</sup> Hu Yuanling "Lun Zhu Shuzhen shici de nüxing tese," 74.

... not only are the characters *duanchang* frequently used [in her poetic lines], as in “Drizzles spray on the pear blossoms after dusk,/ If this is not saddening, it is heart-breaking.” (from “Hen chun” 恨春 [“Regret for Spring”]);<sup>69</sup> “Is my soul flying towards the flute sounds in the wind?/ Heartbreaking when beating clothes at night on a stone.” (from “Chang xiao” 長宵 [“A Long Night”])<sup>70</sup> and “The spring sight strikes my chord with lingering regret,/ Facing the scene, there is no time I am not heartbroken.” (from “Shang bie” 傷別 [“The Sadness of Parting”]),<sup>71</sup> but also there is the fact that, although in most of her works the characters of *duanchang* do not appear, the feeling of *duanchang* is there.<sup>72</sup>

Su Zhecong further emphasises this point by illustrating Zhu Shuzhen’s sadness [*chou* mentioned before]. After examining her poetry Su points out,

She [Zhu Shuzhen] is sad in the morning: “Leaned over the twelve fences, listlessly/ When *sadness* comes heaven ignores me.” {from “Ye jinmen (‘Chun yi ban’)” 謁金門 (春已半) [“Halfway Through Spring (To the Tune: Ye jinmen)”]};<sup>73</sup> she is sad in the evening: “Drizzles spray on the pear blossoms after dusk,/ If this is not *saddening*, it is heart-breaking.” [from “Hen chun”]; she is sad at night: “Who could know my emotions right now?/ Sitting alone in the courtyard when night is deep.” {from “Xiaye chengliang” 夏夜乘涼 [“Enjoy the Coolness at a Summer Night”]};<sup>74</sup> and she is also sad in her dreams: “In a bad mood just wanting to nap,/ My dreams are still full of *sadness*.” {from “Su chou” 訴愁 [“Telling my Sadness”]}.<sup>75</sup>

The “sad” emotions in Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry have led some researchers to classify her as “*duanchang shiren*” 斷腸詩人 [the heartbroken poet].<sup>76</sup> The frequent use of *duanchang* and the subtle recall contained within the phrase “pillow-side lovelorn emotions” indicate sensitive and delicate observations

<sup>69</sup> The original reads, “梨花細雨黃昏後，不是愁人也斷腸。”

<sup>70</sup> The original reads, “魂飛何處臨風笛，腸斷誰家搗夜砧？”

<sup>71</sup> The original reads, “逢春觸處須縈恨，對景無時不斷腸。”

<sup>72</sup> Jin Yaoji, “Introduction,” in Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.XI.

<sup>73</sup> The original reads, “十二闌干閑倚遍，愁來天不管。”

<sup>74</sup> The original reads, “此時情緒誰能會，獨坐中庭夜已深。”

<sup>75</sup> The original reads, “苦沒心情只愛眠，夢魂還又到愁邊。” Su Zhecong, *SDNW*, p.160.

<sup>76</sup> See Song Zhixin. “‘Duanchang shiren’ Zhu Shuzhen” 斷腸詩人朱淑真 [“Zhu Shuzhen, the Heartbroken Poet”]. *Tianfu xinlun* 6 (2000): 67-70, here 67.

towards describing a neglected woman's psychology. In terms of linguistic aspect Zhu Shuzhen's use of words was dainty and elegant denoting refined gentry loftiness. Many of her expressions were the kind of typically feminine utterances that were expected from female poets. Marián Galik remarks:

If we consider the aesthetic function of literature written by Chinese women and that of literature written by Chinese men, we see that the former was not meant to have a wider sphere of impact than was [sic] the environment of its origin (family soror[ities], courtesans' circles and their friends), while the aesthetic function of the latter was intended to have a wide field of activity, to affect, if possible, the entire intellectual sphere of Chinese society.<sup>77</sup>

In short, Wei Zhonggong, in compiling Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, commented that her poetic styles are "*qingxin wanli, xusi hanqing*" 清新婉麗，蓄思含情 [fresh and delicate, thoughtful and exuding emotions].<sup>78</sup> Everything becomes attached to love and emotions under Zhu Shuzhen's name, even something as trivial as the *dujuan* 杜鵑 [cuckoo] (in "Chun ji" 春霽 ["Clearing Up after Spring Rain"]); *die chi* 蝶翅 [butterfly wings] (in "Xin chun" 新春 ["New Year"]); *he qian* 荷錢 [small lotus leaves] (in "Muchun" 暮春 ["Declining Spring"]); *can chan* 殘蟬 [a dying cicada] (in "Qiuri denglou" 秋日登樓 ["Mounting a Tower on an Autumn Day"]) incorporating the plants and small insects in daily lives, which are also present in many other expressions in her poetry.

Hu Yunyi considered poems written by women poets to be "the core element of *wanyue* poetry," women being regarded as the genuine creators of *wanyue* literature.<sup>79</sup> The statement may be somewhat subjective, but to a certain extent represents an appreciation of the attention-lacking situation of women poets in traditional society. In short, although the element of *rou* 柔

---

<sup>77</sup> Qtd. John Timothy Wixted. "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship," p.155.

<sup>78</sup> Wei Zhonggong's "Duanchang ji xu." Qtd. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, p.303.

<sup>79</sup> Qtd. Tan Zhengbi, *Zhongguo nüxing de wenxue shenghuo* 中國女性的文學生活 [*The Literary Lives of Chinese Women*]. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling Guji, 1998: pp.26-28.

[delicateness, gentleness] prevails in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, the characteristic of *gang* 剛 [toughness, firmness] is also present at times. This shows how those poems were not only ready to present the quality of a gentry woman of the inner quarters, but also to reveal a woman's own unique views and opinions regarding the social changes that were not exposed to females at that time. One of the most important points refers to the hint of silent resistance present elsewhere in Zhu's poems, which forms the basic argument that these poems represent the voices of traditional women who had long been male dominance. To conclude this section, the following poem will show Zhu Shuzhen's tough attitude towards women's literary efforts:

自責二首 (其一)

女子弄文誠可罪，那堪詠月更吟風。磨穿鐵硯非吾事，繡折金針卻有功。<sup>80</sup>

Self Repeating (Two Poems) – Number 1

It is truly a great guilt for women to dabble in writing,  
 Let alone chant the breezes and even hymn the moonlight.  
 To rub through the inkstone is not for us to handle,  
 How more creditable it is to embroider till breaking the needle! (ZSZSH p.211)

The voice in the poem employs a self-deprecatory attitude to abase her *own* status as a woman, yet satirises the emphasis in traditional China on women's virtue rather than their talent, and represents a breakthrough in protesting against the unfair way in which women suffered discrimination.<sup>81</sup> According to Ji Qin, the "Self Repeating" poems reflect Zhu Shuzhen's sadness at being a clever and knowledgeable woman.<sup>82</sup> The words used in the poem, such as *cheng* 誠 [truly], *geng* 更 [even] and *que* 卻 [yet,

<sup>80</sup> "Fei wu shi" 非吾事 [not for us to handle] in the third line of the original poem reads "cheng he shi" 成何事 [what has {the rubbing of the inkstone} become of?] in ZSZJZ, p.118. The former version serves as an obvious indication of the poet's determination in reflecting her talent.

<sup>81</sup> Paraphrased from Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. ZSZSH, p.211, the annotation for "Zize er shou" 自責二首 ["Self Repeating (Two Poems)"].

<sup>82</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Liu Yongcong, *De, cai, se, quan*, p.194.

transformed as “how more” in the last line], display a firm determination and express a masculine voice and quality. Although Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry is regarded by scholars as the core of *wanyue* poems in the literary tradition, they could also be considered as possessing different styles, swaying between *wanyue* and *haofang* emotions. The irony remains here through her wanting to be talented, as magnified in the poem, and her silent resistance against the role of an untalented woman.

## 2.4 The Contribution of Zhu Shuzhen as a Woman Poet

As a productive poet of the late imperial period, Zhu Shuzhen was believed to be a famous poet possessing equal status with Li Qingzhao: “Shuzhen and Yian [Li Qingzhao’s *hao*] both deserved to be called *juancai* 雋才 [talented individuals].”<sup>83</sup> Gu Qilun 顧起綸 (fl. 1573) also quoted Jingshan Jushi’s 荆山居士 [Meng Shuqing 孟淑卿 (fl. Ming Dynasty)] comments on Zhu Shuzhen’s poems:

Her (Zhu Shuzhen’s) poems, like “Ruthless is the bird over the branch,/ It still caws when I am sad.” (from “Chun gui” 春歸 [“When Spring is Off”]); and “Don’t look at the hooked moon at the sky,/ It hooks your new and old sorrows.” (from “Shu huai” 書懷 [“Expressing My Heart”]) are [simple] without [pretentious] boudoir styles, and she is good at using *xuzi* 虛字 [function words] elegantly. Her status is no less than that of Yu Xuanji.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Comments are from “Jiaobu Duanchang ci xu” 校補《斷腸詞》序 [“A Preface to the Collection of Heartbreaking *Ci*-poetry with Collation and Addenda.”] by Xu Yuzhuan 許玉瑒 (n.d.) of the Qing Dynasty. Qtd. Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.208. The original reads, “淑真易安，並稱雋才。”

<sup>84</sup> Gu Qilun ed. *Guoya ershi juan, xu guiya si juan, guoya pin yi juan* 國雅二十卷、續國雅四卷、國雅品一卷 [Songs for Banquet: Twenty Rolls; Song for Banquet (Continued): Four Rolls; Comments on Songs for Banquet: One Roll]. Ji’nan: Qilu Shushe, 2001, p.352. The original reads, “[朱淑真詩]〈春歸〉云：「無情最是枝頭鳥，不管人愁只管啼。」〈書懷〉云：「天邊莫看如鉤月，鉤起新愁與舊愁。」不但無鉛粉氣，且雅善用虛字，亦魚玄機之亞。” These two poems, unfortunately, can be found neither in Zhang Xiancheng et al eds., *ZSZSH*, nor in *ZSZJZ* annotated by Zheng Yuanzuo. This may have been due to errors in transmission. This also indicates that some lines or even a number of poems written by Zhu Shuzhen were lost when they were brought down. Although this cannot be a very strong point without the actual poetic lines, from the words of Meng Shuqing, the readers can realise how Zhu Shuzhen was regarded as a famous woman poet who could match Li Qingzhao and Yu Xuanji. The former poem is attributed to a character called Zhu Xiaoji 朱小姬 (said in the story to have been alive in the Yuan Dynasty) in an anecdote “Zhu Xiaoji liancai jiepei” 朱小姬憐才解珮



Zhu Shuzhen's poetic influence was seen in her being the object of appreciation in various verses of later dynasties which referred to her character or her poems. From all those verses quoted by Huang Yanli, readers can have a strong feeling that the scholars are sometimes sympathetic, sometimes critical, and sometimes appreciative of her beauty, her talent, and her fate.<sup>85</sup> Extant poetry collections by four of the most well-known women poets of the Song Dynasty are *Shuyu ci* 漱玉詞 [Ci-poetry of Gargling Jade] by Li Qingzhao, *Duanchang ji* by Zhu Shuzhen, *Yangchun baixue ci* by Wu Shuji and *Lan xue ci* 蘭雪詞 [Ci-poetry of Orchid and Snow] by Zhang Yuniang.<sup>86</sup> Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen are regarded as the most famous women poets of the Song Dynasty; although Zhu Shuzhen's fame was not equal to that of Li Qingzhao, and despite the fact that her existence is still an unresolved question, to a certain extent her name was well recognised in the later dynasties.<sup>87</sup>

The most notable reason for Zhu Shuzhen's fame may have been the renown of the lines "The moon was on the tip of the willow tree, / We met each other after evening light" in a *ci*-poem called "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* ('yuanxi') 生查子 (元夕) ["The Night of the Lantern Festival (To the Tune: *Sheng chazi*)"]".<sup>88</sup> In fact she was at times criticised for conducting an

---

["Zhu Xiaoji's Sympathy towards the Talented and Her Abandoning of the Jade"]. In Che Shui, *Zhongguo lidai mingnü: qingnü juan* 中國歷代名女：情女卷 [Famous Chinese Women: Women Fighting for Love]. Beijing: Zhongguo Sanxia, 1994: pp.185-91, here p.186. The latter poem was originally attributed to Meng Shuqing herself, as clearly stated in the chapter title "Exchanging Poems and Prose They have Fallen in Love" [傳詞寄翰兩情深], as noted at the start of Chapter 3 of the Qing pornographic novel *Taohua ying* 桃花影 [The Shadow of Peach Blossoms]. Zuili Yanshui Sanren 樵李煙水散人. *Taohua ying, Chundeng nao* 桃花影、春燈鬧 [The Shadow of Peach Blossoms, The Clamour of Spring Lanterns]. Taipei: Taiwan Daying Baike, 1994: p.61.

<sup>85</sup> Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.196-200.

<sup>86</sup> *Lan xue ci* is another name for *Lan xue ji* mentioned in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. The sketch of the respective collections is from *Cilin jishi* 詞林紀事 [A Record in the Ci-poetry Circles] by Zhang Zongsu 張宗櫛 (n.d.) of the Qing Dynasty, qtd. *ibid.*, p.210.

<sup>87</sup> Wei Zhonggong's preface reads, "When I went on an outing in Wuling, some idlers staying at my inn were for ever reciting Zhu Shuzhen's *ci*-poems." ["比往武陵，見旅邸中好事者，往往傳誦朱淑真詞。"] Qtd. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, p.303.

<sup>88</sup> The original reads "月上柳梢頭，人約黃昏後。"

extramarital relationship, partly on the basis of these lines that hinted at lovers' secret meeting under the moon. Many scholars in the late Song, Yuan and Ming periods commenting on the *Sang Pu zhi xing* 桑濮之行 [lovers' secret tryst]<sup>89</sup> revealed in her poetry, accusing her of being non-virtuous, using this poem as evidence of her breaching of moral principles.<sup>90</sup> The authorship of this poem has been discussed and disputed over several centuries. Although scholars in the past have proved that the poem was not written by Zhu Shuzhen herself,<sup>91</sup> scholars in the 1990s continued to cite this poem in order to explore Zhu Shuzhen's world of emotion and love.<sup>92</sup>

Zhu Shuzhen's influence was also seen in later poets' imitations of the writing skills in her poetry. The most obvious imitation was *He Zhu Shuzhen Duanchang ci* 和朱淑真斷腸詞 [Reply to Zhu Shuzhen's Heartbreaking Ci-poetry] written by Dai Guan 戴冠 (fl. 1505) in 1505.<sup>93</sup> He used the same tunes (and sometimes the same rhymes) appeared in Zhu's same poems. Examples can be seen in various poetic creations. Here the use of italics represents the similarities in Dai's use of words or phrases as imitated from Zhu's:

---

<sup>89</sup> From the expression *Sangjian Pu shang* 桑間濮上 [between the place Sangjian and on the Pu River]. There is a line in *Han shu: Dili zhi xia* 漢書·地理志下 [The Historical Book of Han: The Final Chapter of Geographical History], "In the land of Wei there was a barrier between Sangjian and the Pu River, so both men and women loved to meet in that place. As a result the place was filled with voice and countenance." ["衛地有桑間濮上之阻，男女亦亟聚會，聲色生焉。"] This anecdote was later used to allude to the place where men and women *youhui* 幽會 [meet secretly]. Qtd. *Gu hanyu da cidian* 古漢語大辭典 [A Dictionary of Ancient Chinese Language]. Wang Jianyin et al eds. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 2000: p.584.

<sup>90</sup> A postscript to *Jiguge ben Duanchang ci* by Mao Jin of the Ming Dynasty remarked that Zhu Shuzhen, as reflected by the content of this poem, was like *baibi wei xia* 白璧微瑕 [literally a slight flaw in a piece of white jade, meaning somebody who has stepped out of a certain moral code]. Qtd. *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, p.627 (vol. 1488).

<sup>91</sup> The authorship of the poem "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* ('yuanxi')" will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>92</sup> Ren Dekui, "Zhu Shuzhen *Duanchang ci* banben kaoshu yu zuopin bianwei," 84.

<sup>93</sup> These poems appear in Dai Guan's *Suigu ci* 邃谷詞 [Ci-poetry of a Deep Valley], which is quoted in *ZSZJ* annotated by Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, pp.331-38. The date noted in Dai Guan's script reads *Hongzhi yichou jiu yue* 弘治乙丑九月 [the ninth month of the Hongzhi reign period, which was the eighteenth reign year of Xiaozong 孝宗 of the Ming Dynasty, i.e. the year 1505.]

"Spring matters are half gone,/ Over ninety years of time who will restrict?/ I heard that red and green fill up the South garden,/ Feeling sad but spring ignores me." (by Dai Guan, from "Ye jinmen ('Chun ban') 謁金門 (春半) ["Spring Half Gone (To the Tune: Ye jinmen)"]<sup>94</sup>

as compared with

"Halfway through spring,/ My eyes are full of unrestricted emotions./ Leaned over the twelve fences, listlessly/ When sadness comes heaven ignores me." (by Zhu Shuzhen, from "Ye jinmen ('Chun yi ban') 謁金門 (春已半) ["Halfway Through Spring (To the Tune: Ye jinmen)"]}

Another example reads,

"The glorious youth is tight as an arrow,/ Counting on my fingers, spring is not more than ten days away./ Hoping the past would stay, but I have no time,/ I saw sad winds and weeping rain." (by Dai Guan, from "Qing ping yue ('Chun mu') 清平樂 (春暮) ["Declining Spring (To the Tune: Qing ping yue)"]<sup>95</sup>

as compared with

"Time is tight,/ Suddenly it is the third month, the thirtieth day./ Hoping spring would stay, but I have no way,/ With the green field of the mist in sorrow, and dew in tears." (by Zhu Shuzhen, from "Qing ping yue ('Fengguang jinji') 清平樂 (風光緊急) ["Time is Tight (To the Tune: Qing ping yue)"]}

These poems provide evidence that Zhu Shuzhen had a considerable impact on poets of later generations. Of equal importance is the fact that Zhu Shuzhen's large volume of poems has allowed grounds for much examination, hypothesis and criticism.

---

<sup>94</sup> The original reads, "春事半，九十光陰誰限。聞道南園紅綠遍，人愁春不管。" as compared with the original *ci*-poem by Zhu Shuzhen: "春已半，觸目此情無限。十二闌干閑倚遍，愁來天不管。"

<sup>95</sup> The original reads, "韶華箭急，屈指春無十。去路欲追追不及，但見風悲雨泣。" as compared with the original *ci*-poem by Zhu Shuzhen: "風光緊急，三月俄三十。擬欲留連計無及，綠野煙愁露泣。"

Apart from poetry, Zhu Shuzhen's influence also prevailed in *huaben* 話本 [story-telling scripts] in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. According to Pan Shoukang, Zhu Shuzhen's love story was re-formatted into the Song and Yuan story-telling script (while some of the scripts could be traced back to as late as the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign period [1522-1566] during the Ming) *Yuchuang ji: Jiezhier ji* 雨窗集·戒指兒記 [A Collection of a Rainy Window: The Record of a Ring],<sup>96</sup> which proves that people were aware of Zhu Shuzhen's name in the centuries that followed her death.<sup>97</sup> In these anecdotes, although Zhu Shuzhen's poems are quoted, no dates and names of the poems' authors quoted can be discerned, and therefore there is no firm evidence that this story was specifically associated with her. It is better to treat this story as a mere creation after people formulated Zhu's life from the lines of her poetry. There are other more interesting anecdotes, poems and riddles<sup>98</sup> believed to have been written about or attributed to Zhu Shuzhen. Some examples are cited below:

<sup>96</sup> The story is about Chen Yulan 陳玉蘭, the beautiful daughter of Prime Minister Chen, who falls in love with Ruan Hua 阮華 [Sanlang 三郎], a talented intellectual living near her. She gives her ring to Ruan through her maid Meixiang 梅香. From this time on, Ruan begins to suffer from lovesickness. Zhang Yuan 張遠, his wealthy friend, bribes a Buddhist nun to act as go-between. The nun arranges a meeting in a Buddhist convent where Yulan and Ruan make love. Unfortunately, Ruan subsequently dies as a result of the frantic sexual passion. Although this is not the end of the story, the surviving fragments end here, the remainder having been lost. From *Yuchuang ji: Jiezhier ji* 雨窗集·戒指兒記 [A Collection of a Rainy Window: The Record of a Ring]. In Hong Pian 洪楗 [n.d., Ming Dynasty] ed. *Qingpingshan tang huaben* 清平山堂話本 [Story Script of the Qingping Hill Pavilion]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1957: pp.244-71. Two of Zhu Shuzhen's poems were quoted in this story, namely "Lichun" 立春 ["The Beginning of Spring"] and "Shu Wang an daogu bi" 書王庵道姑壁 ["Writing on the Wall of Nun Wang's Buddhist Convent"]. *Ibid.*, p.248 and p.250 respectively. The former reads, "Brilliant streamers are slender over my phoenix hairpin,/ The new spring alters not our old feelings./ The hidden green grass roots are under a covering of ice,/ Willow buds conceal their beauty buried under snow." (The original reads, "嘉勝春幡裊鳳釵, 新春不換舊情懷。草根隱綠冰痕滿, 柳眼藏嬌雪裏埋。"). The latter reads, "Short walls surround the tiny pavilion,/ Half an eave of bamboos keep rustling./ Keeping out of dust one is ever quiet,/ With a wisp of incense and two rolls of sutra." (The original reads, "短短牆圍小小亭, 半檐疏玉響泠泠。塵飛不到人長靜, 一篆爐煙兩卷經。").

<sup>97</sup> Pan Shoukang, *Zhu Shuzhen biezhuàn tanyuan*, p.97.

<sup>98</sup> There are still some poems and riddles with unidentified authorship available on the Internet. Apart from poems, there is a riddle which is believed to have been written by Zhu Shuzhen. No source can be found for the riddle, but in terms of content, it is a riddle with ten lines of poems and the answer to the riddle is numbers one to ten. The lines of the poem appeared in the riddle are elegant and inspiring, but it is still difficult to recognise the authorship by looking at just a few lines. As it is too tenuous to be put as an evidence here, it is left out in the body of this dissertation. It may, however, be interesting to look at and for further explorations if necessary.

## (Anecdotes)

In the year of Xinmao [辛卯, i.e. 1651] of the rule of Shunzhi [順治, an emperor in the Qing Dynasty], a visitor from Yunjian [雲間, present day Songjiang 松江] did a planchette writing at the *Pianshi* house. A man asked about his own fate. The planchette book wrote, "It is not me who knows." Then he asked, "Where are you from, Immortal one?" The book wrote, "*Erjia* [兒家, meaning 'I,' a term used by women] lived in ancient Qiantang in my childhood, and I wrote poems called *Duanchang*." The man asked, "What is your name, Immortal?" The book wrote, "I still have a courtesy name in the *ci*-poetry circle." The man did not know about the author of *Duanchang ji*, but when he thought of the use of *erjia*, he knew that the immortal was a woman. Then he asked, "Are you Immortal Su Xiaoxiao [蘇小小, i.e. Su Hui mentioned above]?" The book wrote, "You're being too free if you take Shu lady [淑女] to be Ruolan." He asked again, "So are you Li Yian?" The book wrote, "What must be known is that Qingzhao is different from Zhenniāng [貞娘], you are welcome to look at my *zhuyan* 朱顏 [a rosy, beautiful face. Here *zhu* is a pun referring to Zhu Shuzhen's surname]." As a result the man knew that she was Zhu Shuzhen. After a few rounds, the casual questions and answers form a *ci*-poem, to the tune "*Ru meng ling* [如夢令]."99

## (A Poem attributed to Zhu Shuzhen)

### An Ode to Chopsticks

The wives of the two houses are slight of stature,  
If you pinch their waists their legs will open;  
If you are greedy for the taste,  
You have to stretch out your tongue.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> From *Huruan zaji* 湖壩雜記 [Miscellanies of the Lakebank] by Lu Ciyun 陸次雲 (n.d.) of the Qing Dynasty. Qtd. Zhang and Huang, *ZSZJ*, p.339. The original reads, "順治辛卯，有雲間客扶乩於片石居。一士以休咎問，乩書曰：「非余所知。」士問：「仙來何處？」書曰：「兒家原住古錢塘，曾有詩篇號《斷腸》。」士問：「仙為何氏？」書曰：「猶傳小字在詞場。」士不知斷腸集誰氏作也，見曰「兒家」，意其女郎也。曰：「仙得非蘇小小乎？」書曰：「漫把若蘭方淑女。」士曰：「然則李易安乎？」書曰：「須知清照異貞娘，朱顏說與任君詳。」士方悟為朱淑真。故隨問隨答，即成《如夢令》一闕。”

<sup>100</sup> Chu Renhuo, *Jianhu ji*, p.11 (*juan three, ji nine, vol.3*). The story goes, "Zhu Shuzhen was good at writing poetry. One day she was invited to an official's house, and was accompanied by his concubine. When the meal was ready the official asked Zhu to compose a poem on chopsticks. Zhu immediately said, [see the above]. The lines were witty with puns, and she was clever and graceful." The original story "詠箸" reads, "朱淑真能詩，一方伯延入衙，以妾陪之。囑飯時令題箸。朱應聲云：「兩家娘子小身材，捏著腰兒腳便開，若要嘗中滋味好，除非伸出舌頭來。」雙關妙句，聰穎可人。”

The style of the above poem does not conform to the usual style of Zhu Shuzhen's poems. According to Huang Yanli, this poem displays a certain youthful wit, but the "poetic taste" is relatively low compared with Zhu Shuzhen's other poems which are refined and delicate.<sup>101</sup> Although Zhu Shuzhen is clearly noted in *Jianhu ji* as the author of this poem, the dubious attribution may have resulted from the process of the transmission of poetry from ancient times. Chu Renhuo, the author of *Jianhu ji*, admitted in one of his prefaces that the stories were collected through the Qin 秦 (221 B.C. – 206 B.C.) and Han Dynasties to the Ming, and were selected from the anecdotes heard from the elders when visiting them.<sup>102</sup> These should then be considered as merely stories created from ages past. Regardless of the degree of truth of the poem, the above anecdote and poem suggest that Zhu Shuzhen's influence is multi-faceted, and the impact can be diversified through different forms of creation and imitation. Whether Zhu Shuzhen was considered as the target or the subject of the various transmitted writings, her status can still be regarded as significant since not many women poets' names were recognised in traditional China. The sheer volume of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry can be compared favourably with that of the more famous Li Qingzhao. As mentioned before, the most recognisable point for Zhu Shuzhen may have been the love affairs reflected in her poems. Nevertheless, by looking at aspects of the aesthetic creativity, the diversified poetic contents in her poems and her significant influences, readers and scholars may have to be circumspect and to gather together research materials before drawing objective conclusions and reasonable suggestions.

---

<sup>101</sup> Adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.216.

<sup>102</sup> Adapted from Chu Renhuo, *Jianhu ji*, p.1 (preface, vol.2). The original reads, "[.....] 搜錄秦漢以迄故明歷代軼事，并訪諸故老之舊聞，摘其佳事佳話之尤者，次爲一編，命之曰堅瓠集。"

# Chapter 3      Virtue vs Vice: Ambivalence in Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry

## 3.1 Prologue

The complicated relationship between gender and inequality, according to Rubie Watson, "is particularly well illustrated by the many *ironies* [my italics] of the female predicament in China:"

[W]omen may be property holders but have few or no legal rights to property, they may be decision makers without the authority to make decisions, they may have physical mobility but are socially and economically constrained, they may exercise the power of an emperor but have no right to the imperial title.<sup>1</sup>

Watson is commenting here on the general ironic situation that prevailed in traditional Chinese society. The once-free limbs of Chinese women were bound owing to the restrictions of patriarchal dominance, both literally and figuratively, symbolised by the practice of footbinding, as has been explained by Michelle Yeh: "[o]ne obstacle to women achieving power and autonomy is the perpetuation of gender stereotypes prescribed by a malecentric culture."<sup>2</sup> According to Li Ziyun, poetic works by traditional women were "tame in comparison to the daring intensity of the erotic poetry of male writers. History and tradition have stifled women's voices. At most these women of the past have murmured in their loneliness and expressed a vague longing for love."<sup>3</sup> Zhu Shuzhen's poetry is a good example of

---

<sup>1</sup> Rubie S. Watson. "Marriage and Gender Inequality." In Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey eds. *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991: pp.347-68, here p.348.

<sup>2</sup> Yeh's comments, although applicable to her studies on the status of women in the twentieth century, can be used as a point of reference for the development of male-dominated power from Zhu Xi's time to the twentieth century. From Michelle Yeh. "New Images of Women in Modern Chinese Poetry: The Feminist Poetic of Xia Yu." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 4 (1991): 22-26, here 24.

<sup>3</sup> Li Ziyun. "Women's Consciousness and Women's Writing." Trans. Zhu Hong. In Christina K. Gilmartin et al eds. *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. Cambridge: Harvard

embodying women's psychological and physical struggles in traditional society.

Accounts of Zhu Shuzhen's life incorporate descriptions of a woman's talented youth; a desire to obtain a gifted husband by marrying an official; a suspected extramarital affair and divorce, through to her assumed tragic death. As revealed in her poems, as an image, her sad life was accompanied by her secret passive resistance to established patriarchal power. In her poems assuming a woman's youthful voice, Zhu Shuzhen reinforced the hope of behaving like a traditional wife under the social restrictions of the age. However, an ambivalent mind is reflected when the resistance manifested in her more sophisticated poems simultaneously reveals a reinforcement of the patriarchal norm.

Assuming, though, that accounts of Zhu Shuzhen's life possess sufficient authenticity to explain her behaviour and psychology, especially regarding her extramarital affair and suicide, too many contradictory commentaries and distorted records remain.<sup>4</sup> About Zhu Shuzhen's extramarital love affair, Idema has commented, "... modern feminist scholars may be too eager to find traces of love-affairs in the poems of Chu Shu-chen, so she can be depicted as a fighter for free love and as a feminist '*avant la lettre*' ...."<sup>5</sup> If this should be considered true, then the traces of extramarital love affairs in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry may well be found or "constructed"<sup>6</sup> in many other ways. Even until now there are no conclusive clues concerning Zhu Shuzhen's so called "extramarital affair," and ultimately all of the suggestions have only been taken from her poetry. In my opinion, whether

---

University Press, 1994: pp.299-317, here p.299.

<sup>4</sup> Examples can be shown in different records determining the periods of Zhu Shuzhen's life by Kuang Zhouyi, Zhang and Huang, and some modern researchers, mentioned in section 2.1 of the previous chapter. Apart from this, the most controversial issues concern whether Zhu Shuzhen had an extramarital relationship, whether she divorced and went back to live at her natal home, and how she died.

<sup>5</sup> Wilt L. Idema, "Male Fantasies and Female Realities: Chu Shu-chen and Chang Yü-niang and Their Biographies," pp.24-25.

<sup>6</sup> A term used by Simone de Beauvoir, qtd. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p.12.



Zhu Shuzhen existed or not, and whether she had any extramarital love affairs, is not of the utmost importance in the determination of her virtuous or immoral character. Taking Idema's point, we have to look objectively at Zhu Shuzhen's poems in order to avoid suggesting anything without evidence or being too imaginative.

A brief discussion of the purpose of poetry is necessary here in order to analyse the extent to which the experiences reflected in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry reveal *truth*, and also to see how her poetry reflects any hint of love affairs, not to mention *extramarital* relationships. Paul Ropp remarks, as part of a discussion about writings by women in late imperial China,

As distinguished from drama, short stories, or novels, poetry was generally assumed to be autobiographical and non-fictional. Even where fictionality and metaphor were used, they were generally interpreted as masks for representing personal experience or for the veiled expression of political criticism.<sup>7</sup>

Ropp has such an observation, since most poets in China wrote poetry to express their feelings towards a variety of their own experiences, including family unions, war, parting sorrows, and even political criticism. Su Shi lamented his banishment to Huangzhou 黄州; Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) recorded people's grievances against wars; Li Qingzhao wrote of her final parting from her husband; so most Chinese people thought that Zhu Shuzhen was also lamenting losing something dear to her. As John Wixted remarks, "Tz'u by Li Ch'ing-chao [Li Qingzhao] and Chu Shu-chen have traditionally had a special impact on readers because the authors, being women, are presumed to have been writing directly from their own

---

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ropp, "Love, Literacy, and Laments: Themes of Women Writers in Late Imperial China." *Women's History Review* 2.1 (1993): 107-41, here 111. Stephen Owen also remarks: "The traditional Chinese reader had faith that poems were authentic representations of historical experience. Poets wrote, as readers read, under those assumptions. No one felt uncomfortable in constructing chronologies from poems or in using poems as direct sources for cultural history." From Stephen Owen's *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985: p.57.

experiences as ‘abandoned women.’”<sup>8</sup>

The very Chinese way to view poetry is to take it as a reflection of the poet’s mood or aspirations in a particular known situation, and readers interpret poems by analysing implied meanings with reference to the poet’s biography. In Zhu Shuzhen’s case, however, as nothing definite is known about her life, any conclusions drawn from her poetry necessarily stem from critical analysis. To a certain extent Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry can be divided into two main styles – one naïve and bright, the other emotional and tormented – which signify a possible split between the youthful voice and the mature voice, including some feelings about the general theme of love. Poems from *Duanchang ji* will be analysed to show both her resistance to and reinforcement of the construction of female inferiority – thus suggesting that an ambivalent attitude can be seen when reading her poetry. As no exact dates can be ascertained from any reliable source material about Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry, the interpretations must be merely drawn from her style and vocabulary.<sup>9</sup>

Another way of resolving this problem is based on the ‘blank spaces’ suggested by Hu Yuanling in both Zhu Shuzhen’s own self as a poet and her works. According to Hu,

The content of a good piece of literature [...] is from daily life [...], so in literature there are many ‘*bu queding*’ 不確定 [uncertainties] and ‘*kongbai*’ 空白 [blank spaces],” such that they provide critics with a ‘*huixuan yudi*’ 迴旋餘地 [an allowance to go to and fro] [...] in order to encourage the reader’s

---

<sup>8</sup> The term “abandoned women” is applied from Lawrence Lipking’s *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition*, in John Timothy Wixted. “The Poetry of Li Ch’ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women’s Authorship,” p.166.

<sup>9</sup> According to Kiyomi Murakoshi, “For most of Zhu Shuzhen’s love poems, there is no evidence that she was writing for any man apart from her husband. It is not necessary to think that the contents of her poems are based on her actual behaviour.” From Kiyomi Murakoshi. “Saijyo no nageki – Syu Syukushin no ‘urei’ no mochiifu” 才女の嘆き – 朱淑真の「愁い」のモチーフ [“The Sigh of a Talented Woman – The Motive of Zhu Shuzhen’s Sorrow”]. *Gakugei kokugo kokubungaku* 27 (1995): 72-84, here 74. The original reads, “朱淑真のうたった多数の愛情の詩を、夫以外の男性に捧げた詩とする根拠はないし、詩の内容がすべて実際の行爲に基づくと考える必要もない。”

imagination.<sup>10</sup>

The lack of exact dates and supporting evidence for Zhu Shuzhen's life has made research extremely difficult. Conventional practices of "*yi ren hai wen, yin ren lun wen*" 以人害文、因人論文 [to denigrate and to comment on the text on the basis of the person's behaviour or character]<sup>11</sup> should not always be applicable. Given Zhu Shuzhen's unofficial biography and the 'behaviour' revealed in her poems, it is still too difficult to locate a "factual and historical" Zhu Shuzhen; readers, in the first place, should not be affected by the 'immoral' behaviour emerging from the lines of her poems, especially when reading her poems concerning love. Rather it would be helpful to view her as a "created and moulded literary image" when criticising her works, especially as there is a serious shortage of information about her real life.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2 Zhu Shuzhen's Poems Reflecting a Youthful Voice

Following our analysis of Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought in traditional Chinese society, it is noteworthy that:

[T]he exclusive form of traditional literary history was authorized by a patriarchal proprietorship of written language. The allocation of language/writing to men guaranteed the perpetuation of systems of representation conforming to gender arrangements as defined by the dominant (primarily Confucian) ideology.... [W]omen or monks [...] could articulate their "otherness" within the accepted discourse [...] only through a "mixed process of acceptance and resistance."<sup>13</sup>

With clues derived from those of Zhu Shuzhen's poems which are

---

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Hu Yuanling. "Zhu Shuzhen yu 'kongbai' xiaoying" 朱淑真與 '空白' 效應 ["Zhu Shuzhen and the 'Blank' Effect"]. *Xueshu jiaoliu* 1 (1998): 80-82, here 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Maureen Robertson, "Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China," 66.

assumed to be a reflection of her youthful voice, the descriptions of the ingenuous and naïve character of a woman's youth emerge from between the lines. These poems were mainly focused on boudoir sentiments, dealing with ladies' carefree lives in the inner quarters. According to these poems, the female persona spends her leisure time reading {*du wenshu* 讀文書 in "Xiari you shuige" 夏日遊水閣 ["Visiting the Waterside Pavilion in Summer"]}, painting her eyebrows {*hua mei* 畫眉 in "Qiuri oucheng" 秋日偶成 ["Occasional Verse: Autumn"]}, fishing {*zhi sigou* 擲絲鉤 in "Qiuye zhouxing su qianjiang" 秋夜舟行宿前江 ["On an Autumn Night Skiff, Lodging in Front of the River"]} and appreciating blossoms {*shitan hanmei* 試探寒梅 in "Tan mei" 探梅 ["Seeking Plum Blossoms"]}, reflecting episodes of upper class boudoir enjoyments.<sup>14</sup> One such example is shown below:

夏日遊水閣

淡紅衫子透肌膚，夏日初長水閣虛。獨自憑欄無個事，水風涼處讀文書。

Visiting the Waterside Pavilion in Summer

The light red garment exposes my skin,

The waterside pavilion is empty when long summer days begin.

Leaning alone against the railing I am idle,

Reading essays and books in places with cool water and wind. (ZSZSH p.241)

The above poem enhances the image of a young gentry class maiden with various characteristics: the "light red" colour in the first line symbolises the healthiness and happiness of young girls.<sup>15</sup> The "idle[ness]" in the third line reflects traditional images of women in their boudoirs, denied access to the world outside. In the Song, however, gentry ladies were educated to be literate, as has been shown in the content of the poem about reading essays and books. The term *wenshu* 文書 [essays and books] in the original poem

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.72-73. These activities are typical of an upper class lady's youthful period and boudoir life, distinguished by the poem's style and vocabulary.

<sup>15</sup> Red is the colour representing healthiness, prosperity and happiness in traditional Chinese culture. It is usually used as a custom for happy occasions such as weddings and birthdays.

suggests that what she read was within the boundary of orthodox convention circumscribed by traditional literati circles. If the term here were to be changed to *shici* 詩詞 [poetry], the ideology would become a controversial issue, especially given Sima Guang's proposal that women should concentrate on historical and didactic texts rather than poetry and literature.<sup>16</sup> Wittingly or unwittingly, the phrase may have been written because of the limitations imposed for women within the realm of what they could express about literacy. A woman's image should be defined by the traditional construction as virtuous, patient and well-behaved, under the influence of Ban Zhao's *Nü jie*,<sup>17</sup> in which it was stipulated that a virtuous wife should be "tranquil, gentle, chaste and obedient, whose beauty is characterised by inferiority."<sup>18</sup> Avoidance of reading and writing flowery poetry made a perfect maiden.

Apart from *Nü jie*, Liu Xiang, in writing *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 [*Biographies of Exemplary Women*], also "praise[s] traditionally feminine conduct that subordinates dutiful women to their male relatives." One category of vicious and depraved women "describes women of talent and intelligence who are not, or cannot be, assimilated into the moral order."<sup>19</sup> Richard Guisso, in his analysis of *Wujing* 五經 [*Five Classics*],<sup>20</sup> "argues that the *Five Classics* depict women not as individuals but in stereotyped life cycle roles: as daughters, wives, and mothers."<sup>21</sup> All these texts constructed frameworks for requisite

---

<sup>16</sup> See section 1.2.2.1 of Chapter 1 for further reference.

<sup>17</sup> *Nü jie* was regarded as a "complete treatise on women's behavior that was used in women's education persistently until the 1930s [...], which resulted in] a gender-determined educational system. For women, education was limited to the practical and functional purpose of better serving their families, to which the Confucian classics were thought to be a sufficient guide." Sherry J. Mou, "Introduction." In Sherry J. Mou ed. *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*, p.xix.

<sup>18</sup> The original text for a virtuous wife in *Nü jie* reads, "和柔貞順、以弱爲美." Qtd. Su Zhecong, *SDNW*, p.148.

<sup>19</sup> Lisa Raphals. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, p.22.

<sup>20</sup> *Wujing* refers to the five great Confucian classics, *Shijing*, *Shujing* 書經 [i.e. *Shangshu*], *Liji*, *Yijing* and *Chunqiu*.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Lisa Raphals. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, p.24.

feminine behaviour, allowing virtually no room for violation.

Zhu Shuzhen's works demonstrate the affluence, ease and leisure typical of a member of the upper hierarchy of society, but they can also reveal a vivid young mind. Two of her poems can help to illustrate this:

探梅

溫溫天氣似春和，試探寒梅已滿坡，笑折一枝插雲鬢，問人瀟灑似誰麼？

**Seeking Plum Blossoms**

The warm warm winter weather is just like spring.

Looking for cold plum blossoms I find the slopes already full.

Merrily a branch I break and stick it into my cloud tresses.

I keep asking, whom am I like — so casual and unrestrained? (ZSZSH p.255)

秋夜舟行宿前江

扁舟夜泊月明秋，水面魚游趁閘流。更作嬌痴兒女態，笑將竿竹擲絲鉤。

**On an Autumn Night Skiff, Lodging in Front of the River**

Our skiff moors at night, by the bright autumn moon,

The fish gambol about before the floodgate closes.

We also adopt an infatuated, naïve manner,

Laughing we cast our hooked fishing rods. (ZSZSH p.247)

Zhu Shuzhen's poetry paints a picture of a beautiful youth by lucidly describing the privileged activities. More importantly her attitudes and her gestures – casual and unrestrained; infatuated and naïve – suggest her state of mind as immature and carefree. In her poems there seems to be a determination that the youthful freedom is not to be disturbed as she wilfully breaks a branch of the plum blossom or casts hooked fishing rods with innocent laughter. Such artless behaviour demonstrates a desire to be free from worries and worldly affairs, typical youthful attitudes which might, however, have been disapproved of at the time. The wish for freedom would have been seen as a beginning of secret defiance of the rules binding together

the female gender and required long-term residence within the inner quarters.

For Zhu Xi, being good at “women’s work” [*nü gong* 女工] meant the “ability to handle silk and hemp and to stitch fine threads;” in his *Elementary Learning* he “set forth a course of study for girls in the home to learn these skills and obedience from age ten.”<sup>22</sup> Even without Zhu Xi’s promotion or even in the periods before the Southern Song, women’s work would not have been considered unimportant, whether it took place before or after marriage. In Zhu Shuzhen’s first of two poems titled “Self Reproving,”<sup>23</sup> the *self* in the poem ‘admits’ that a woman’s act of dabbling in writing is truly a great guilt, and the contradictory ideas of “writing” (talent) and “embroidery” (virtue) is used to show the effect of society’s emphasis on the importance of women’s work. It is obvious from the poem that a woman’s level of virtue was much more important than her possession of talent. What is of particular interest here is that the manner of writing in Zhu Shuzhen’s poem is paradoxical in the sense that an ironical expression is applied to voice her seemingly positive belief in women’s vice in writing poetry, while later the phrase “how more” is used, thus creating an abrupt twist in the atmosphere of the poem, and magnifying the psychological struggle between virtue and vice.

The second poem under the same title adopts a similarly satirical note, swaying between talent and virtue, albeit more implicitly:

自責二首 (其二)

悶無消遣只看詩，又見詩中話別離。添得情懷轉蕭索，始知伶俐不如痴。<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from Bettine Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” p.344.

<sup>23</sup> See section 2.3 in Chapter 2 for the original poem and its translation.

<sup>24</sup> “You jian” 又見 [again I note] in the original poem reads as it is in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ* (p.155 and p.118 respectively) but reads “bu jian” 不見 [lack] in *ZSZSH*, p.211. The former choice better suits the overall sense of the sad atmosphere of the poem, while in my opinion the latter version [“bu” 不] would be a mistaken recognition of the character “you” 又.

### Self Repeating (Two Poems) – Number 2

Bored and listless I just look at some poems.

Within the poems, again I note parting sorrows.

My new-found sentiments turn to desolation.

Only now do I understand that cleverness is not as good as stupidity.

(ZSZSH p.211)

Although this poem cannot be dated, linking it with the other poem with the same title makes sense when explaining the psychological ambivalence in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry. She sighs at the contradiction between "wisdom" (talent) and "stupidity" (an inability to read the poems which make her sad), which is a sad echo of herself being the incompatible reality between the objects of womanly inferiority and talent.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the last line implies a reinforcement of her inconsistency in simultaneously protecting her poetic talent and her womanly status. A typical woman's image is shown in Zhu Shuzhen's poems in a transition from teenage years to adulthood with the acts of "painting eyebrows" and being a good wife (in Zhu Shuzhen's poems, "sharing poetic tunes" with the lover, as featured in "Occasional Verse: Autumn"), which was a widely expected practice for upper-class women under the norm stipulated by Confucian morals. In her poems assuming a young voice, Zhu Shuzhen as an image, like other young women entering adulthood, dreamt of fulfilling a wife's duties, despite the fact that her idea of the role of a good wife diverged from the norms of the tradition. The formation of Zhu Shuzhen's socially constructed female image was emerging, and in some poems with more sophisticated diction she began

---

<sup>25</sup> Cf. A Jie's comments: this act of self-repeating might have also been due to Zhu Shuzhen's genuine hope of attaining harmony and reunion [in her husband's family], [...] because their [Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen's] status as gentry women determined that what they expressed in poetry was extremely "severely circumscribed." Adapted from A Jie. "Jiating shihe zhuangtai xia nüxing xintai de zhenqie biao xian — Li Qingzhao, Zhu Shuzhen, Huang E shici yiyun xintan" 家庭失和狀態下女性心態的真切表現 — 李清照、朱淑真、黃娥詩詞意蘊新探 ["The Authentic Expression of the Female Psychology under the Situation of Family Discord — A New Exploration of the Ideology of Poetry by Li Qingzhao, Zhu Shuzhen and Huang E"]. *Qiu suo* 1 (2003): 190-92, here 191-92. Certainly when nothing about Zhu Shuzhen's life can be ascertained, the above could only be treated as a reference.



to resist, using language as a weapon.

Some researchers have suggested, on the basis of the biographical approach, that Zhu Shuzhen had a lover before her marriage. Such suggestions have been based on one poem:

賀人移學東軒

一軒瀟灑正東偏，屏棄囂塵聚簡編。美璞莫辭雕作器，涓流終見積成淵。  
謝班難繼予慚甚，顏孟堪睇子勉旃。鴻鵠羽儀當養就，飛騰早晚看沖天。

**Celebration of Moving Your Study to the Eastern Verandah**

The verandah is beautiful and faces the east,  
Far from the hubbub scholarly works are stored.  
The finest jade cannot avoid being carved into an object,  
Streams eventually gather together into deep pools.  
How I regret not being a worthy successor of Xie and Ban,<sup>26</sup>  
How much I hope you could learn from Yan and Meng.<sup>27</sup>  
When the swan's wings are mature and ready,  
With towering passion it will sooner or later soar to the sky. (ZSZSH p.273)

There is no firm reference to the “you” in the poem. The persona is believed by some scholars to be a young student who stayed at Zhu Shuzhen's home (the eastern verandah) to study.<sup>28</sup> Some other researchers in the past were inclined to interpret the poem as Zhu Shuzhen's encouragement of her husband as he prepared to take an examination.<sup>29</sup> More recently scholars have suggested that Zhu Shuzhen was in love with this young student in her teens, and hoped that he would advance in his career by studying hard and getting good results in the imperial

<sup>26</sup> “Xie” refers to Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (fl. 376) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, while “Ban” refers to Ban Zhao, two women famed for their literary talent and feminine virtue.

<sup>27</sup> “Yan” refers to Yan Yuan 顏淵 (521-481 B.C.) [also known as Yan Hui 顏回] and “Meng” refers to Mengzi (Mencius), two Confucian thinkers. Yan Yuan was famous for his studious character while Mencius promoted the ideologies of benevolence and righteousness.

<sup>28</sup> Huang Yanli, ZSZP, p.36.

<sup>29</sup> Li Liangrong, “Preface.” In Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. ZSZSH, pp.4-5. Kuang Zhouyi made similar comments in his *Huifeng cihua*, *Guang Huifeng cihua*, pp.72-73 (juan four).

examination.<sup>30</sup> Of course this poem could still be addressed to anyone who seemed to be younger than the poet's voice, such as a brother. As no dates can be provided for this poem, it seems unwise to categorise it as having been written before or after Zhu Shuzhen's marriage. And, it must be stressed again that her biography is unofficial and possessing weak evidence regarding her attitude or behaviour. Despite the fact that these interpretations are not conclusive, it is still a valuable point to note when we examine the relationship between Zhu Shuzhen as a literary image and the reflection of love affairs revealed in the lines.

### 3.3 Zhu Shuzhen's Poems Reflecting a Mature Voice

For centuries in Chinese society, the degree of inferiority for women increased following the change of their roles from a daughter to a wife and then to a mother. Western scholars are inclined to discuss traditional Chinese women in terms of their "victimisation," and most agree that the "Confucian Ideology of the Classics has been regarded as the basis for female subordination, and precepts such as 'Three Obediences and Four Virtues [*si de* 四德]' have often been cited as evidence for women's lowly status."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the separation of sexes within a marriage and the practices of footbinding in traditional Chinese society have been seen as the main sources of female subordination. Of course in most cases women would have accepted their own fates under the historically constructed images which had

---

<sup>30</sup> See Huang Yanli's explanations in *ZSZP*, pp.36-37; and Su Zhecong's interpretations in *SDNW*, pp.140-41.

<sup>31</sup> The Four Virtues are *fu yan* 婦言 [a woman's language], *fu gong* 婦功 [a woman's achievements], *fu de* 婦德 [a woman's virtues] and *fu rong* 婦容 [a woman's appearance]. The quotation is taken from Jinhua Emma Teng. "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," 121. In Zhu Shuzhen's case the influence of the ideology provided by the Neo-Confucianists was more extreme. According to Ban Zhao's *Nü jie*, "[In the aspect of] a woman's virtues, she needs not to be exquisitely talented; [in the aspect] of a woman's language, she needs not to have a debating tongue; [in the aspect] of a woman's appearance, she needs not to be beautiful; and [in the aspect] of a woman's achievements, she needs not to perform her work in a way better than the others." Qtd. Liu Yongcong, *De, cai, se, quan*, p.187. The original reads, "夫云婦德，不必才明絕異也；婦言，不必辯口利辭也；婦容，不必顏色美麗也；婦功，不必工巧過人也。"

controlled their minds – if we apply the concept introduced by Simone de Beauvoir, considering a psychological influence within traditional Confucian teaching, that one should have “become” a woman<sup>32</sup> according to the correct Confucian model. In other words their characteristics were “constructed” under the influence of the moral code which they were expected to follow; few women could break the fetters of age-old ideologies.

Signs of sadness and loneliness can always be deduced by looking closely at Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry written with a mature voice. The described sorrow may well be traced to the persona’s rejection of a hidden addressee, with clear questions within the lines that indicate her reluctance to *conghuan* 從宦 [accompany on official trips]. Who exactly was the accompanied person, however, was not mentioned. Some scholars have tried, on the basis of the following poems, to formulate a Zhu Shuzhen who wrote these poems when she was on official trips with her husband, by interpreting the content with reference to her biography.<sup>33</sup> On logical assumptions, in those days if a woman were not asked to accompany her father on official trips, then she should be accompanying her husband, as in the following poem:

春日書懷

從宦東西不自由，親幃千里淚長流。已無鴻雁傳家信，更被杜鵑追客愁。  
日暖鳥歌空美景，花光柳影漫盈眸。高樓惆悵憑欄久，心逐白雲南向浮。

**Writing my Emotions on a Spring Day**

Against my will, I accompany him on official trips east and west,  
With my parents’ home far away, my tears run long.  
No swan goose here to carry a family letter,  
But the cuckoo elicits the traveller’s sadness.  
In vain are nice scenes of warm days and birds’ song,  
Before my eyes, futile are flower glows and willow shadows.

---

<sup>32</sup> See footnote number 19 in “Introduction” of this dissertation for further reference.

<sup>33</sup> See Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.33-35.

I lean long and forlorn against the railing on a high tower,  
Following the clouds my heart floats towards the south. (ZSZSH pp.231-32)

The description of accompanying frequent official trips (“east and west”) seems to have caused the persona to feel sad at missing her parents (“With my parents’ home far away, my tears run long”). This style of poems contrasts enormously with those reflecting a youthful voice, displaying feelings of resentment towards the official trips and a kind of sadness relating to the implicit image of a husband. Apart from this, several poems attributed to Zhu Shuzhen overtly express her discontent with a lack of poetic talent:

舟行即事七首 (其一)

帆高風順疾如飛，天闊波平遠又低。山色水光隨地改，共誰裁剪入新詩？

**Poems on a Boat (Seven Poems) – Number 1**

With high sails and a favourable wind the boat flies,  
The waves are flat and low, while so far and wide is the sky.  
As I sail, the beauty of the mountains and waters changes,  
With whom should I create new poetic tunes? (ZSZSH p.278)

舟行即事七首 (其五)

對景如何可遣懷，與誰江上共詩裁？日長景好題難盡，每自臨風愧乏才。

**Poems on a Boat (Seven Poems) – Number 5**

How to dispel sorrows when facing fine scenery?  
With whom should I compose poems on the river?  
With long days and wonderful vistas poetic titles are abundant,  
Whenever I face the breeze, I regret my lack of talent. (ZSZSH p.280)

As discussed above, the wish for a talented mate is always present in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems, and in these two poems the poetic voice was apparently still contemplating the possibilities of sharing poetry with ‘him:’ “With whom should I create new poetic tunes?” and “With whom should I

compose poems on the river?" as a direct opposition to "Sharing with my lover countless poetic tunes" written in a youthful voice (in "Occasional Verse: Autumn"). These two lines suggest clearly that the official trip was not a pleasant experience, since the implicit image described in the poem was not catering to her desire to share the art of poetry. Secret resistance is subtly implied in these two lines, a reflection of the confined depression penetrating her verse. The reference of this saying can be seen by another few lines from the same series of poetry:

舟行即事七首 (其六)

歲暮天涯客異鄉，扁舟今又渡瀟湘。顰眉獨坐水窗下，淚滴羅衣暗斷腸。

**Poems on a Boat (Seven Poems) – Number 6**

At year-end, by the world's end, in an unfamiliar place,

Across the Xiao and Xiang rivers we are sailing again.

With knitted brows, I sit alone beside the boat's window case.

Tears drop on my silk clothes – my heart secretly breaks. (ZSZSH p.280)

This clearly suggests that the trip she described was one she did not relish, and that her heart was only broken "secretly," which may mean she was overpowered but was resisting silently.

In the poem, the unwillingness to accompany on official trips is reflected in her listlessness, when faced with the nice scenes before her, while her sighing at her "lack of talent" was a further ironic response to the assumption of her husband's lack of poetic talent. The various poems written about these trips reveal that she had gone on many such journeys without any open display of defiance, the suggestion of secret resistance expressed only through her poetry. Her forms, her feelings and her messages for resistance were always clandestine, which may mean that womanly feelings of opposition were too feeble to be expressed overtly. In the poems an image of a traditional woman is established, who wished to be a competent wife by

composing poems with a husband with whom she shared common interests, yet the official trips revealed the kind of husband who did not treat her in the way she had hoped; her sterile female image became conspicuous.

Sadness and regret fill the lines of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry. Most scholars suggest that her sadness resulted mainly from her despondent feelings towards her marriage, while some argue that her poems on "loneliness" indicate that she was divorced or secluded either in her natal home or in a monastery.<sup>34</sup> In general, however, no direct concrete evidence can be found in her poetry regarding any discussion of divorce, seclusion, or even her so-called 'unhappy marriage.' Therefore it is better for us to adopt an objective stance in this dissertation towards the content of her poetry and the metaphors used, rather than referring directly to her life. The following *shi*-poems and *ci*-poems can be used as further evidence of Zhu Shuzhen's regret and loneliness:

黄花

土花能白又能紅，晚節由能愛此工。寧可抱香枝上老，不隨黃葉舞秋風。

**The Yellow Flower**

Local flowers can have tips of white, or tips of red.

Ever loving is this work of nature to its withering days.

Rather embrace the fragrance and grow old on the branches

Than dance in the autumn wind with yellow leaves. (ZSZSH p.220)

---

<sup>34</sup> See footnote number 28 of Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Huang Yanli remarks that it would have been very difficult for Zhu Shuzhen to get divorced as she was believed to be alive in the Southern Song, a period when the ideology of chastity was very strictly upheld. Adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.65. Sima Guang, the famous Confucian thinker, also explained in his *Jiafan*, "Some scholar-officials who divorced their wives were criticized by society as having done wrong, hence they did not divorce lightly." Cheng Yi, in his *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 [*Collected Works of the Cheng Brothers*], also remarked that "[p]opular custom deems divorcing a wife as indecent behavior, so one dares not do it." This serves as an evidence of divorce being seen as strictly undesirable in the Song. Qtd. and adapted from Jian Zang, "Women and the Transmission of Confucian Culture in Song China." Trans. Dorothy Ko. In Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, pp.123-41, here p.131. Following this logic, the possibility of Zhu Shuzhen leaving her husband's family to live elsewhere was also extremely low. See also section 1.2.2.2 in Chapter 1 for more details.

The image of “the yellow flower” (chrysanthemum) is often used to reveal a poet’s aspirations and integrity. The last two lines have often been cited as an illustration of the persona’s wish to “grow old” rather than to be overpowered by “yellow leaves” [people with whom she did not share common interests] and the “autumn wind” [existing moral codes].<sup>35</sup> An unexpectedly high womanly aspiration is demonstrated that surpassed those of other women from a similar background. The poem “A Round Dumpling” mentioned in the previous chapter also illustrates a kind of symbolised indignation towards unsuitable match for women.<sup>36</sup> Her resentment was expressed through a description her image of an ideal husband. Opposition to the lack of talent is magnified in this poem, even though this is done through the use of a metaphor.

Some other poems on “loneliness” by Zhu Shuzhen have often been interpreted by scholars as evidence of her divorce and subsequent solitary life. Without any concrete proof, it has to be acknowledged that these poems could have been written describing a woman living alone when her husband was away. Therefore, the solitude described in the poems would best be explained in terms of a woman being abandoned in the inner quarters, unable to join the official trips later in her life, or in terms of her ambivalent mind of swaying between going on trips and being left behind. The theme of loneliness is put to an extreme in the following *ci*-poem:

---

<sup>35</sup> A comment by Shen Tao 沈濤 (n.d.) of the Qing Dynasty (in his *Sexie congfan* 瑟榭叢談 [A Collection of Talks by the Zither Pavilion]) reads, “The two lines of ‘Rather embrace the fragrance and die on the branch tip,/ When was it blown off to the north wind?’ by Zheng Suonan [鄭所南, 1241-1318] inscribed on his drawing of chrysanthemums, was actually based on the two lines of ‘Rather embrace the fragrance and grow old on the branches/ Than dance in the autumn wind with yellow leaves’ in [Zhu] Shuzhen’s poem ‘Chrysanthemum’ [‘The Yellow Flower’]. The lines show high-sounding and limpid integrity.” [The original reads, “淑真《菊花》詩：「寧可抱香枝上老，不隨黃葉舞秋風。」實鄭所南自題畫菊「寧可枝頭抱香死，何曾吹落北風中」二語所本，志氣皦然。”] Qtd. Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu, *ZSZJ*, pp.257-58.

<sup>36</sup> See section 2.2.5 in Chapter 2 for further reference.

減字木蘭花 (春怨)

獨行獨坐，獨倡獨酬還獨臥。佇立傷神，無奈春寒著摸人。此情誰見？  
淚洗殘粧無一半。愁病相仍，剔盡寒燈夢不成。

Spring Resentment (To the tune: *Mulan hua* — Reduced Words)

Moving alone, sitting alone,  
Chanting alone, drinking alone, even lying alone.  
My soul is grieving when standing still,  
Yet what keeps teasing me is the spring chill.  
Who can see these feelings?  
Tears wash away my fading powder, with little left.  
Both sadness and sickness remain,  
Even after the cold lamp is exhausted I am yet dreamless.

(ZSZSH pp.292-93)

The “sickness” mentioned in this poem might have been a reason for being left behind in her boudoir. The consecutive use of five “alone[s]” in the first two lines best demonstrates her sad feelings at being left behind. The sadness described may stem from the idea that the desire to be an ideal wife, mentioned in her other poems, had not met with success; alternatively it is more logical to think that she feels lethargic without a beloved by her side, resulting in her feelings being a mixture of “sadness and sickness.” Dreamlessness featured in many of her poems, and her “tears,” her “fading powder” and her poor health all contributed to, or heightened, a frail and vulnerable reflection of the socially constructed female. This is just what Grace Fong has commented about this poem, “[t]he self-conscious positing of the male gaze, or, more correctly, of its absence, seems to efface the feminine identity – it washes away with the make-up.”<sup>37</sup> In this poem the vivid image of a subserviently inferior female stemming from the restrictions laid upon women living in traditional Chinese society was salient and reinforced.

One very famous aspect of Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry is the frequent

---

<sup>37</sup> Grace S. Fong. “Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song.” In Pauline Yu ed, *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.107-44, here p.122.



reference to the four seasons. Many of her poems describe spring, and she was most likely using “spring” in order to transform herself into part of nature. It is, therefore, important for readers to pay attention to descriptions of spring when reading Zhu Shuzhen’s poems. An example is shown below:

問春古律

春到休論舊日情，風光還是一番新。鶯花有恨偏供我，桃李無言祇惱人。  
粉淚洗乾清瘦面，帶圍寬盡小腰身。東君負我春三月，我負東君三月春。<sup>38</sup>

**Asking Spring (Ancient-Style Verse)**

Talk not about past feelings when spring comes,  
When the outlook is entirely fresh and new.  
The oriole and the flowers are teasing me from spite,  
And one is irritated by the silent peach and plum.  
Powdered tears have run dry on the sallow face,  
Inch by inch my belt retracts around the little waist.  
With just three months of spring, the god of spring betrays me;  
I have betrayed the god of spring, for the three months of spring.

(ZSZSH p.115)

The poem is veiled by sadness and regret, especially the last two lines. *Dongjun* 東君 [the god of spring] is taken as a metaphorical representation of heaven arguing against the persona’s unfortunate fate.<sup>39</sup> The words used are uncompromising, such as “teasing,” “irritated” and “betray,” showing a kind of resistance to the arrangement of her fate, and the determination to take revenge (“I have betrayed the god of spring, for the three months of spring”), even though she may not be able to alter her predestined life. As discussed above, in her poem “When Autumn Comes New,” the traditional image of a discarded fan is used to signify women encountering such a cruel

---

<sup>38</sup> “Dongjun” 東君 [the god of spring] in the last line of the original poem reads “dongfeng” 東風 [spring wind/ east wind] in ZSZJZ, p.9. To maintain the contradiction provided in the last two lines, the former version is chosen in my translation.

<sup>39</sup> Hu Yuanling, “Lun Zhu Shuzhen shici de nüxing tese,” 75.

act of abandonment.<sup>40</sup> Of course this could merely be Zhu Shuzhen's imagination in order to add to the poetic beauty, but within the literary realm she had sorted out sufficient space within which to lament, and the feeling of abandonment is present throughout her lines.

The atmosphere of regret and bitterness recurs in several of Zhu Shuzhen's poems. According to some research, some of her poems satirise her husband's keeping of concubines.<sup>41</sup> Again, as no concrete evidence can be provided for Zhu's biography, this can only be seen as an assumption. However, if readers look at the content of the poems, regardless of the authenticity of her husband's concubinage, Zhu Shuzhen's subordinate feminine image under the patriline was further consolidated. One of the poems that may have given the clearest signal of this follows:

愁懷二首 (其一)

鷓鴣鴛鴦作一池，須知羽翼不相宜。東君不與花為主，何以休生連理枝。

Sadness (Two Poems) – Number 1

Crowding in the same pond are lovebirds, egrets and gulls,

You should know this jumble of wings may not work out.

If the god of spring does not view flowers as the host,

---

<sup>40</sup> See section 2.2.5 in Chapter 2 for further reference.

<sup>41</sup> Kuang Zhouyi suggested that this poem was a satire about her husband's obtaining of concubines because there were talented wives of his time [Qing Dynasty] writing similarly satirical poems about their own husbands, using "lovebirds" and "gulls" as in Zhu Shuzhen's poem. One of these poems reads, "Lotus leaves and lotus blossoms,/ Match each other with red and green./ Lovebirds have their groups,/ Egrets and gulls cannot interfere." [The original reads, "荷葉與荷花，紅綠兩相配。鴛鴦自有群，鷓鴣莫入隊。"] He also commented on the possibility of Zhu Shuzhen's husband's keeping of concubines. It reads, "Her [Zhu Shuzhen's] husband went on remote official trips, but Shuzhen did not necessarily accompany him each time, so it is possible that it might have been a case of Dou Tao [竇滔] and Yangtai [Zhao Yangtai 趙陽台]." [The original reads, "其夫遠宦，淑真未必皆從，容有竇滔陽台之事，未可知也。"] Dou Tao (fl. fourth century), "a prefect under the Jin," and husband of Su Hui, kept a concubine Zhao Yangtai for remote trips. Su Hui was jealous and wrote, in the form of embroidery, the famous "Xuanjitu ji" ("a love poem of 841 characters") and sent it to Dou Tao. Dou Tao was touched by her skill and talent, and returned home to Su Hui. *Huifeng cihua, Guang Huifeng cihua*, pp.73-74 (juan four) See footnote number 10 of Chapter 2 of this dissertation for "Xuanjitu ji." Huang Yanli further suggests that it was a general social practice in the Song for men to obtain concubines [*na qie* 納妾] and to have improper relationships with prostitutes [*xia ji* 狎妓]. The practice was developed by the emperor and the government, and hence the aristocratic officials all obtained concubines as a kind of custom. Adapted from *ZSZP*, p.67.

Why will he then allow more intertwining branches to grow?

(ZSZSH p.198)

This poem has been interpreted as Zhu Shuzhen's strongest attack against the practice of concubinage. In this poem Zhu Shuzhen is enacting the ambivalent process both of resistance and reinforcement. Firstly, let us look at the way in which she was resisting the overwhelming male dominance of females, the latter being suppressed even to the extent of being obtained as a concubine. She uses "lovebirds," [*yuanyang* 鴛鴦, a traditional metaphor of conjugal love]<sup>42</sup> along with "egrets" and "gulls" [other kinds of birds] to signify a gathering together of wife and concubines respectively "crowding in the same pond," and notes that this mixture "may not work out." Again she blames the god of spring<sup>43</sup> for meddling with the intertwining branches.<sup>44</sup> The metaphor of "flowers" may mean the wife, the

---

<sup>42</sup> *Yuanyang* in Chinese is normally translated as "mandarin ducks." Here I use the translation "lovebirds" to replace "mandarin ducks" because firstly, the two-syllable rendering provides similar length lines in English when compared with the seven-character lines in Chinese; secondly, the symbolisation of love in the term *yuanyang* can be explicitly shown in the translated term "lovebirds."

<sup>43</sup> Refer to Zhu Shuzhen's poem "Asking Spring (Ancient-Style Verse)" discussed above. The "god of spring" here may refer to a great authority that cannot be overpowered, such as the masculine dominance in the patriarchal society. If the context about conjugal love is accepted, the "god of spring" may also refer to a husband. A similar symbolisation can be seen in the two poems titled "Meihua" 梅花 ["Plum Blossom," sometimes the two poems are viewed as one intact poem], in which Li Yu mourns his wife, Queen Zhou 周 [Ehuang 娥皇] (936-964). The first poem reads, "We ardently moved plants to fields,/ Bordered by winding balustrades and small railings./ Promising that someday we would admire the flowers together,/ Worried yet that they might not flourish./ Though obstructive winds hindered our way,/ We irrigated the plants by moonlight with pure spring water./ Who would have thought that round about blossom-time,/ It would be your beautiful eyebrows that would become incomplete." [The original reads, "殷勤移植地，曲檻小欄邊。共約重芳日，還憂不盛妍。阻風開步障，乘月漑寒泉。誰料花前後，蛾眉卻不全。] The second one reads, "Losing the master of this wonderful scenery,/ The god of spring himself knows nothing./ Of what use is this fragrance now?/ It is just like last year's blossoming spray." [The original reads, "失卻煙花主，東君自不知。清香更何用，猶發去年枝。"] Li Yu uses the image of the "god of spring" to represent himself [the husband], and "the master of [the] wonderful scenery" to symbolise Queen Zhou. Both from *juan* eight of *Quan Tang shi*, p.73 (vol.1).

<sup>44</sup> "Intertwining branches" [連理枝] is a traditional symbol of conjugal love, figuratively meaning concubines when Zhu Shuzhen uses "allow *more* intertwining branches to grow" (emphasis added). The term was first used by Bai Juyi of the Tang Dynasty, when he wrote a poem named "Chang hen ge" [長恨歌, "Song of Everlasting Regret"] describing the love between the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762) and his prized consort Yang [Guifei] 楊貴妃 (719-756). The poem contains the following famous lines: "We would like to be lovebirds between the clouds, and to be intertwining branches on the ground." [The original reads, "在天願作比翼鳥，在地願為連理枝。"]

host[ess] of a family. So if the wife were not to be treated as the host, why would the others [described as “intertwining branches,” figuratively concubines] be able to ‘host’ the family? As “intertwining branches” is usually used to describe conjugal love, the additional use of “more intertwining branches” is used here to signify concubines.

It is unconventional how Zhu Shuzhen asserts a woman’s voice boldly with the image of “flowers,” the “host” in spring, a reinforcement of a wife’s status with the god of spring, the symbol of a husband here. In the last line, she questions why heaven allowed the husband to obtain concubines. This can be considered either as a sign of her brave resistance or, on the other hand, a declaration more or less out of jealousy.<sup>45</sup> Contradictory enough, despite the feeling of jealousy revealed in the poem, the feelings were expressed secretly and metaphorically, due to the prevailing customs of concubinage and prostitution. This conformed with the Song social ideology that a man could have sexual relations with a woman other than his wife, but women did not have the same freedom.<sup>46</sup>

Zhu Shuzhen, in expressing her distressed emotions, created poetry associated with flowers as representation of a feeble feminine self. Being inferior according to the dogma of the social structure, she could only rely on

---

<sup>45</sup> Lin Yü-t’ang remarks, “Jealousy has a definite special origin in China, because it was concomitant with the concubinage system, as anybody might easily perceive.” In Lin Yü-t’ang. “Feminist Thought in Ancient China,” p.40. See also Francesca Bray’s discussions on the subject of “the jealousy of wives” towards concubines in late imperial China in *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997: p.355.

<sup>46</sup> There is, however, another interpretation of “Sadness (Two Poems) – Number 1.” Some scholars interpret the “lovebird” as symbolising the poet herself, and the “egrets and gulls” as referring to her husband. Kong Yiping considers the “lovebirds” to be “colourful and beautiful” like the poet, and the “egrets and gulls” to be “superficial and ignorant” like her husband. Adapted from Kong Yiping. “Ci qu zhi ying tian shang you, renjian neng de ji hui ting — cong Zhu Shuzhen shici chuanguo tan qi aiqing xinli de dutexing” 此曲只應天上有人間能得幾回聽 — 從朱淑真詩詞創作探其愛情心理的獨特性 [“This Song can Only be Heard in Heaven, How Many Times can the Human World Hear That? — on Zhu Shuzhen’s Specificity of Her Psychology on Love, With Reference to Her Poetic Creations”]. *Jiangsu guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* 4 (1996): 30-35, here 33. The original reads, “她 [朱淑真] 自比文彩斑斕的鴛鴦，視其夫為淺陋無知的鷗鷺。” See also Xie Ping’s comments for a similar idea to this poem. In her “Ku sun shuangmou duan jin chang — shi lun Zhu Shuzhen shici zhong de ziwo xingxiang” 哭損雙眸斷盡腸 — 試論朱淑真詩詞中的自我形象 [“Harming my Eyes by Crying, and Breaking my Heart to the Utmost — Commenting on Zhu Shuzhen’s Self Image Reflected in Her Poetry”]. *Nanjing hangkong hangtian daxue xuebao* 4 (1999): 39-43, here 40-41.

her silent nature to voice a woman's self in a metaphorical or a less explicit way:

菩薩蠻 (詠梅)

濕雲不渡溪橋冷，蛾寒初破霜鉤影。溪下水聲長，一枝和月香。  
人憐花似舊，花不知人瘦。獨自倚闌干，夜深花正寒。<sup>47</sup>

Plum Blossom (To the Tune: *Pusa man*)

Damp clouds do not pass by; the bridge over the stream is cool,  
The freezing moon is just breaking through the icy boughs.  
Long is the sound of the stream water,  
Fragrant is the spray of plum blossom under the moon.  
I sympathise with the flowers as in the past,  
But the flowers do not know how thin I grow.  
Alone I lean against the railing,  
Night deepens and the flowers are now cold. (ZSZSH p.292)

The powerful image of “flowers” is used in Zhu Shuzhen’s poem to describe the deepest feelings of grief and remorse, “sympathis[ing] with” the “flowers in the past,” using these traditional Chinese metaphors to paint a picture of a woman growing thin, to depict the feeling of oldness and lamenting for days gone by.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to Li Qingzhao, who had earlier used the same metaphor, Zhu Shuzhen personifies the flowers, so that it is the flowers *who* do not know how thin she grows, which suggests that nature

---

<sup>47</sup> “Shuang gou ying” 霜鉤影 [shadows of icy boughs] in the original poem reads as it is in both ZSZJ and ZSZJZ (p.284 and p.204 respectively), but reads “shuang gou ying” 雙鉤影 [shadows of hook stroke in Chinese paintings] in ZSZSH, p.292. It means “when Chinese people draw their paintings of plants, they would first sketch the outlook of stems and branches before deciding on colours, and this is known as ‘hook stroke painting.’” In the annotation of this poem, *ibid.* (The original reads, “畫家寫生，先鉤出莖幹枝葉而後設色者，謂之雙鉤畫。”) In this poem the emphasis has been placed on the shadow of the plum reflected in the moon, so the former version will prevail in order to suit this purpose in my translation.

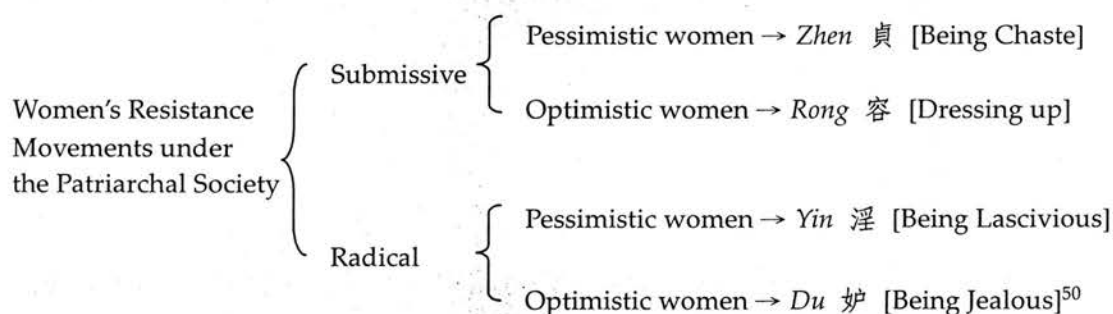
<sup>48</sup> The powerful image of a woman growing thin with the flowers was present in many poets’ (especially women poets’) works. One of the famous excerpts is Li Qingzhao’s lines in her “To the Tune: *Zui hua yin*” 醉花陰: “At the eastern hedge I drink a cup after dusk;/ Furtive fragrances fill my sleeve. Don’t say one can’t be overwhelmed;/ When the west wind furls up the curtain,/ I’m more fragile than the yellow chrysanthemum.” [The original reads, “東籬把酒黃昏後，有暗香盈袖。莫道不銷魂，簾捲西風，人比黃花瘦。”] Qtd. Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy eds. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, p.94.

rather than herself dominates her. With this kind of cross-referencing, she becomes integrated with the flowers, and allows them to represent herself. The last line about “cold” flowers implies the voice’s depressed plight in the depths of the night. Loneliness and despair are overwhelming while Zhu Shuzhen’s sorrowful feeling is at its height.

The above poems reflect a woman’s mature voice, a delicate style assisted by the use of deep-seated sorrowful feelings which reveals a fragile and vulnerable feminine image with “brimming tears on the peach blossom face” [from “When Autumn Comes New”], in contrast to those poems in her youthful voice, “adopt[ing] an infatuated, naïve manner” [from “On an Autumn Night Skiff, Lodging in Front of the River”]. This abrupt change was made more acute, or more apparent, by her poetic resistance to the inferior and subordinate image of women that existed under the separation of sexes.

### 3.4 Zhu Shuzhen’s Poems about Love Affairs

Situated within a thousand-year-long male-centred society, women naturally searched for ways to resist such a society,<sup>49</sup> whether in the form of physical resistance or mental defiance through writing. Tan Zhengbi has represented the possible expressions of resistance in the following model:



<sup>49</sup> Adapted from Tan Zhengbi, *Zhongguo nüxing de wenxue shenghuo*, p.5.

<sup>50</sup> Model from *ibid.*, p.6, with slight amendments.

The behaviour of women in traditional society is presented here in the two concepts of "submissive" and "radical" behaviour. Within the category of submissiveness, women generally accepted their fate of having to submit to arranged marriages, and if they were optimistic enough they dressed themselves up in order to seek the attention of their husbands. On the contrary, pessimistic women in this category would never think of resisting their marriage, rather choosing to remain chaste for the rest of their lives. Therefore most Chinese women submitted to chastity although it was the most favoured negative submission which would never overpower the male gender. The already inferior female gender would in this way be further weakened. On the other hand, those women within the radical category resisted their marriage status. In order to gain attention, optimistic women within this category might display jealousy towards their husbands' concubines, as has been discussed in the previous section. Pessimistic women, however, would seek pleasure outside the marriage and resort to lasciviousness, ignoring their husbands. It is worth noting that the optimistic option of submission, "dressing up," might sometimes be seen by traditional norms as associating with, or causing, the pessimistic option of radical behaviour, "being lascivious."<sup>51</sup> A dilemma arises when it is necessary to determine a dividing line between the pessimistic and optimistic behaviour of a woman suffering under the suppression of the patrilineal moral norm.

There seemed to be signs of lament for an unhappy marriage in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, but her other poems show episodes of restrained or secret love. We do not know the addressees of these poems, but the style and use of words indicate a sophisticated and mature voice, and thus it is easy to believe that the poems were written about love affairs. One such poem reads:

---

<sup>51</sup> "The unwritten rule since ancient times was that when husbands were away, it was inappropriate for chaste wives to dress up or adorn themselves. Of course, women also tended to neglect personal appearance when feeling 'abandoned.' This explains why one pervasive theme in 'abandoned wife' *tz'u* is a woman's self-evaluation of her fading beauty [...] and her reluctance to comb her hair...." Qtd. Kang-i Sun Chang. "Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?" In Pauline Yu ed, *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.169-87, here pp.180-81.

元夜三首 (其三)

火燭銀花觸目紅，揭天鼓吹鬧春風。新歡入手愁忙裏，舊事驚心憶夢中。  
但願暫成人繾綣，不妨常任月朦朧。賞燈那得工夫醉，未必明年此會同。<sup>52</sup>

**The Night of the Lantern Festival (Three Poems) – Number 3**

Fireworks and lanterns are dazzlingly red.  
Raucous music stirs the spring breezes.  
I worry in my haste for the start of a new love,  
Recalled in dreams are the pains of former affairs.  
For the moment, I want to feel the affections for the one,  
And always be with him in the misty moonlight.  
But — we'd better be intoxicated with the lantern flame,  
Or next year, things may not be the same. (ZSZSH p.139)

According to Kang-i Sun Chang, people tended to accuse gentry women of “extramarital liaisons” if they wrote candid songs of passion and love.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, the above poem has caused much debate about whether Zhu Shuzhen committed any immoral acts. The confusion regarding dates can lead to misinterpretation regarding whether this describes her lover before marriage or an extramarital lover, on the grounds that she may have described meeting her former lover one final time immediately before her marriage, and hence there is a line saying that there might be some evil force acting as an obstacle.<sup>54</sup> However, since it is always difficult to determine the date of these poems, it is safer not to be so radical about the content.

When looking at “The Night of the Lantern Festival” above, the line “And always be with him in the misty moonlight” and the line “Or next year, things may not be the same” suggest a restricted relationship which is secret

---

<sup>52</sup> “Xin huan” 新歡 [new love] in the original poem reads “xin huan” 欣歡 [joyful love] in ZSZJ, p.48. The choice of the former version in my translation is due to the clear contrast made with “jiu shi” 舊事 [old matters {“former affairs” in my translation}] in the following line.

<sup>53</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang. “Liu Shih and Hsü Ts’an: Feminine or Feminist?,” p.180. She points out that courtesans did not face such discrimination when writing poetry.

<sup>54</sup> Su Zhecong, *SDNW*, pp.141-42.



("in the misty moonlight") and may not last long. The illegitimacy of their meeting is suggested here, but this fails to indicate whether the love revealed in this poem signifies an extramarital affair or a premarital one, as both of these were restricted in traditional China. On the basis of these lines, the love that is described in this poem may have been under great pressure, with the feeling that not much time was left, and some evil force would destroy the love. From many of Zhu Shuzhen's poems, it is clear that much of the sadness came from parting sorrows: the relationship between the poetic voice and the image of a lover was the kind of forbidden love that was severely restricted.

Some poems by Zhu Shuzhen are expressed in a straightforward way, revealing an ultimate confrontation with the restrictions imposed by the traditional moral code, but expressions of the imagination in the poems can only be revealed in writing, and there is no way to know whether this is actual behaviour. Resistance in this way has been seen by Su Ping as a kind of *shen xin xiang li* 身心相離 [separation of body and mind]. To write about their discontent rather than reveal it in their behaviour is the one and only channel for Chinese women poets to resist, but is also a feeble characteristic of them.<sup>55</sup> In this sense, a regret towards being regarded as an abandoned woman contributed most to the gathering of these secret but teasing words in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry. One of the other poems shows bold attitude in articulating the lament and hence an undisclosed yearning for love follows:

清平樂 (夏日遊湖)

惱煙撩露，留我須臾住。攜手藕花湖上路，一霎黃梅細雨。  
嬌癡不怕人猜，和衣睡倒人懷。最是分攜時候，歸來懶傍粧臺。

---

<sup>55</sup> Adapted from Su Ping. "Zhu Shuzhen aiqing beiju xinli tanwei" 朱淑真愛情悲劇心理探微 ["An Exploration of Zhu Shuzhen's Psychology on Her Love Tragedy"]. *Liaoning shifan daxue xuebao* 4 (1998): 52-54, here 54.

Visiting the Lake in Summer (To the Tune: *Qing ping yue*)

Amidst the galling mist and teasing dew,  
For a while he asks me to stay.  
Hand in hand walking beside the lake of lotuses,  
Suddenly the early summer drizzles spray.  
In my passion I ignore people's suspicions,  
With my clothes on, I lie in his embrace.  
But so sad is the time when we part,  
Back at home I am too listless to approach my dressing case.  
(ZSZSH p.296)

In spite of the unhappy ending, this *ci*-poem contains one of Zhu Shuzhen's few descriptions of passion, and is a very bold description of a female persona and her lover going for a summer lakeside walk.<sup>56</sup> The most controversial issue surrounds the two lines "In my passion I ignore people's suspicions, / With my clothes on, I lie in his embrace." This was the original line, but was later changed in order not to breach the prevailing moral code.<sup>57</sup> The acts in the poem could be seen as a suppression of relationships that did not accord with expected behaviour. On the one hand, a recall of the happiness of her union with a secret lover is seen in this poem, but, on the

---

<sup>56</sup> Some scholars have suggested that this *ci*-poem is a reflection of Zhu Shuzhen's love scenes when in her youth. As no dates for the poem can be provided, it is unwise to either firmly acknowledge or rule out this possibility. See Zhang Shu and Zhang Fuhua. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen 'Duanchang ci' de sixiang yiyi" 論朱淑真《斷腸詞》的思想意義 ["On the Philosophical Meaning of Zhu Shuzhen's Works"]. *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 2 (2002): 115-19, here 117.

<sup>57</sup> The original lines (prior to the Ming Dynasty) in Chinese are "嬌癡不怕人猜，和衣睡倒人懷，" but the latter line seemed to trigger suspicion among pro-Confucian scholars. The line was changed to "嬌癡不怕人猜，隨群暫遣愁懷" ["In my passion I ignore people's suspicions, / Following the others I rid myself of sorrow."] in Mao Jin's *Jiguge ben Duanchang ci*. This point is supported by Miao Yue, "Lun Zhu Shuzhen shenghuo niandai ji qi *Duanchang ci*," p.431. The former version of the poem appears in *ZSZJZ*, p.201, while the amended version appears in *ZSZJ*, pp.278-79. My translation sticks to the original lines. Wu Hengzhao 吳衡照 (1771-?) wrote, "Zhu Shuzhen's 'In my passion I ignore people's suspicions' is good at expressing emotion, it is marvellously indulgent." ["淑真「嬌癡不怕人猜」，善于言情，放誕得妙。"] *Lianziju cihua* 蓮子居詞話 [*Notes on Ci-poetry of the Lotus Seed Court*]. Shanghai, Shanghai Guji, 1995: p. 14 (*juan* two). In his *Baimei xin yong* 百美新詠 [*New Chants of One Hundred Beauties*], Yan Xiyuan 顏希源 (n.d.) of the Qing Dynasty also commented on Zhu Shuzhen's behaviour in relation to her poetry in four lines, "For secret tryst at dusk she puts on make-up,/ As her body has been indulged to resemble wild lovebirds./ Not loving her own reputation but loving the poetic fame,/ With a collection of new poems called 'Heartbreak.'" ["密約黃昏試晚妝，已拚身付野鴛鴦。身名不愛詩名愛，集得新編號《斷腸》。"] Qtd. Zhang and Huang, *ZSZJ*, p.328.

other hand, the words and expressions she used may have represented a severe challenge to the traditional Confucian society, under which only males could enjoy more than one sexual partner.

Chen Wuying sees this poem as representing women's optimistic and subjective pursuit of love in contrast to the century-long submissive and suppressed status of women in terms of love and marriage.<sup>58</sup> The implied criticism of traditional virtues in Zhu Shuzhen's verse indicates clearly a resistance to and reinforcement of the prevalence of accepted norms: the line "with my clothes on" serves as a protection stating the idea that she behaved in a way acceptable to herself. Yet this clearly shows that she was still veiled by the invisible moral norm; although temporarily determined to break the restrictions, she dared not do so openly. Comparable to Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯, the heroine in the Tang narrative story *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 [*The Story of Yingying*] written by Yuan Zhen, Zhu Shuzhen is "confronted with a conflict between propriety and passion (i.e., society and self)[,]" a phrase used by Lorraine Dong.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, scholars still categorise the line in the poem as a counter movement to the stipulated standard of women's behaviour [*fu dao* 婦道], and accuse Zhu Shuzhen of having "a slight flaw in a piece of white jade."<sup>60</sup> This leads on to discussion of Zhu Shuzhen's resistance to the traditional moral code and her reinforcement of her female image in the binary system of the heterosexual hierarchy, of which more later.

Undisguised still, utmost feelings of loving joy towards the lover are presented in Zhu Shuzhen's poems. Even if the incidents mentioned were not true, such verse ensured the loss of the poet's purity vis-à-vis the traditional

---

<sup>58</sup> Adapted from Chen Wuying. "Zhu Shuzhen shici de lishi jiazhi" 朱淑真詩詞的歷史價值 ["The Historical Value of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry"]. *Shehui kexue jikan* 5 (2002): 168-72, here 169.

<sup>59</sup> Lorraine Dong. "The Many Faces of Cui Yingying." In Richard W. L. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, pp.75-98, here p.81. In the story, Cui Yingying "took the initiative and committed fornication with Master Zhang [張生]." P.75.

<sup>60</sup> See footnote number 90 of Chapter 2. White jade serves as an important imagery symbolising the purity and virginity of a woman in Chinese society.

teachings. Although many of Zhu Shuzhen's love poems were written in a subtle way, and even the actions described only happen in the poems, in fact some of them present the idea of a love affair very transparently, which was considered unacceptable behaviour in the eyes of the people who safeguarded the traditional moral code. The following two poems show how are the joyful feelings of sexual encounters presented:

夏夜有作

暑夕炎蒸著摸人，移床借月臥中庭。更深露下衣襟冷，夢到陽台不奈醒。

A Poem on a Summer Night

Muddling is the steaming heat of the summer night,  
So I move my bed and sleep in the courtyard under the moonlight.  
The deep night dew drips cold on my front garment,  
Dreaming of a loving joy, I awake in this plight. (ZSZSH pp.238-39)

春歸五首 (其三)

狼藉花因昨夜風，春歸了不見行蹤。孤吟惻坐清如水，憶得輕離十二峰。

Spring Departs (Five Poems) – Number 3

Last night's winds scattered the flowers,  
Spring has gone, leaving no trace.  
Chanting and sitting alone as pure as water,  
I remember rashly leaving the twelve peaks. (ZSZSH pp.133-34)

The above two poems hint subtly at sexual desires and relationships. The clues of *yangtai* [the *yang* terrace, the place for loving joy] and *shier feng* 十二峰 [literally "twelve peaks [of the Wu Mountain],"<sup>61</sup> figuratively symbolising the place where men and women make love]<sup>62</sup> can partly

---

<sup>61</sup> The twelve peaks are located on the two shores of the Wu Mountain in Sichuan 四川 Province. One of the peaks is the famous *Shennü feng* 神女峰 [The Goddess Peak] which was transformed from Yao Ji 瑤姬, the daughter of the Mother Goddess. Later people use the metaphor of the Wu Mountain and its twelve peaks to symbolise sexual relationships. From Wen Ouchu ed. *Zhongguo mingshan shidian* 中國名山事典. Beijing: Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo, 1997: pp.122-24.

<sup>62</sup> Refer to footnote number 65 of Chapter 2 for explanation.

explain why people accused Zhu Shuzhen of lasciviousness. To a Chinese mind such familiar images could not have been written by a woman: since women were not supposed to be explicitly exposed to sexual desires, lascivious behaviour could be persecuted. The line "Dreaming of a loving joy, I awake in this plight" signifies the desperate, unconscious longing for a sexual union, which might arise from sexually unsatisfactory relationship. Logically she would have been indicted of immoral behaviour even if the reference to sex was present only in her poetry. It is noteworthy that Zhu Shuzhen contradicts herself by writing firstly about her secret sexual desires before going on to describe her sudden awakening from an unconscious to a conscious state. This may also be interpreted as her sigh at the restrictions imposed upon women's freedom.

"Spring Departs" demonstrates a thorough symbolisation of a disorderly sexual experience. The images of "scattered flowers" and the "twelve peaks" provide an obvious mark for the metaphor of a sexual relationship. The "winds" in the first line describe the unruly sexual traces of the previous night. Sardonicly enough, when back at home the heroine depicts herself as "as pure as water," while the latter line betrays her by the image of the twelve peaks. These words seem to have been portrayed intentionally in order to magnify the idea of a woman daring to pursue her own free will.

Although Zhu Shuzhen's poetry reveals an enjoyment with a secret lover, in the poem she did suffer from the difficulties of being an inferior woman who could not make decisions regarding her own independence. She also suffered from the absurdity of being caught between her own audacity in resisting the contemporary moral standards and her inner desire to be an ideal wife with her expected conjugal sexual union. Immured within all these painful dilemmas, many poems were written about her sufferings:

### 惜春

連理枝頭花正開，妒花風雨便相催。願教青帝長為主，莫遣紛紛落翠苔。<sup>63</sup>

### Treasuring Spring

Once the blossoms on the intertwining branches are blooming,  
The blossom-envying storm is soon pressing.  
Hoping that the god of spring would long be master,  
Let not the flowers fall upon the green moss in disorder. (ZSZSH p.216)

### 恨春五首 (其二)

一瞬芳菲爾許時，苦無佳句紀相思。春光正好須風雨，恩愛方深奈別離。  
淚眼謝他花繖抱。愁懷惟賴酒扶持。鶯鶯燕燕休相笑，試與單棲各自知。<sup>64</sup>

### Regret for Spring (Five Poems) – Number 2

At springtime, the flowers' fragrant beauty is over in an instant,  
For cherishing our love, I sadly lack a fine verse line.  
Though springtime is fine, wind and rain come interrupting.  
We are about to part just as our love begins to deepen.  
With brimming eyes, I thank the embrace of flowers in spring,  
As spring parts my sorrow is comforted only by wine.  
Those orioles and swallows, please halt! At me you are laughing,  
For the feeling of living alone, try and you will understand.  
(ZSZSH pp.130-31)

### 恨春五首 (其四)

遲遲花日上簾鉤，盡日無人獨倚樓。蝶使蜂媒傳客恨，鶯梭柳線織春愁。  
碧雲信斷惟勞夢，紅葉成詩想到秋。幾許別離多少淚，不堪重省不堪流。

<sup>63</sup> “Bian xiang cui” 便相催 [... soon blows destroying] in the original poem reads as such in ZSZJ, but “ku xiang cui” 苦相催 [... destroys bitterly] in both ZSZSH and ZSZJZ, p.29. The procedural indicator of “bian” 便 in the former version makes the choice in my translation.

<sup>64</sup> “Chunguang zheng hao xu fengyu” 春光正好須風雨 [Though springtime is fine, wind and rain come interrupting] in the third line of the original poem reads “chunguang sui hao duo fengyu” 春光雖好多風雨 [Though springtime is fine there is plenty of wind and rain] in ZSZJZ, p.25. The former version makes more sense as the motion “interrupting” provides a matching metaphor with the following line.

#### Regret for Spring (Five Poems) – Number 4

Slowly, slowly the blurred sun ascends the curtain hooks,  
All day I lean against the tower with no companion.  
The butterfly and bee messengers report the travellers' regrets,  
The oriole goes between the willow threads to weave the sorrow of spring.  
Without a message between the clouds, on my dreams I am relying,  
And for the verses on red leaves in autumn, I am longing.  
How many times of parting, and how many tears?  
Partings, unbearable to recount; tears, unbearable to shed.

(ZSZSH pp.131-32)

Feelings of regret and grief are overwhelming in these poems. Nevertheless, it is hard to discern direct references to Zhu Shuzhen's uncongenial relationship with her husband.<sup>65</sup> Especially in the poem "Treasuring Spring," her fury is expressed towards the evil power ["the blossom-envying storm" in the second line] that has destroyed their intimate bond, thus lamenting the factors obstructing their love union. Zhu Shuzhen is eager to recount her sufferings, her self being locked up in hopelessness openly rebels against the cruel truth, whereas it is only possible to write about these sorrows by using metaphors. This kind of restrained resistance is scattered through Zhu Shuzhen's verse.

Perhaps described in Zhu Shuzhen's poems, the lover might have left the persona due to criticism or parental opposition. In "Treasuring Spring," for example, the image of "intertwining branches" appears again representing sprouting conjugal love (or, love between herself and her lover), yet the "storm" comes to destroy them. To concentrate more clearly on the love relationship, in the second poem titled "Regret for Spring," Zhu

---

<sup>65</sup> Some scholars conclude that these poems are actually Zhu Shuzhen's expression of love for her husband. The main problem with this is the lack of addressees in Zhu's poems, and these poems cannot serve as mere justifications for conjugal love as there is no reliable evidence for this. For one of these suggestions, see Liu Jie. "Duanchang shi yin enyuan qing — Zhu Shuzhen shici yiyun xintan" 斷腸詩吟恩怨情 — 朱淑真詩詞意蘊新探 ["Heartbroken Poems Chanting Feelings of Gratitude and Resentment — A New Exploration into the Implications of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry and Ci Poems"]. *Xibei shida xuebao* 1 (2003): 58-61, here 59.

Shuzhen uses images of flowers and spring to symbolise a beautiful yet short-lasting love. The 'evil power' serves as the main source for destroying their love: "Though springtime is fine, wind and rain come interrupting./ We are about to part when our love begins to deepen." This point is emphasised in order to turn the focus to her situation of *dan qi* 單棲 ["living alone"] in the last line, which is a direct reference to her loneliness without anybody by her side. The confused feeling of *dan qi* is often taken in traditional Chinese culture as representing the loss of somebody's husband, added to which was the idea that it was impossible during that age to live with her lover; it is unlikely that the phrase *dan qi* would have been written here if the poem was solely for the lover. The phrase shows that, in writing this poem the roles of the husband and the lover would be confused unconsciously, which also associated with her youthful desire to have a husband to whom she was bound by a mutual love built on poetic talent. Certainly this could also be seen as Zhu Shuzhen's deliberate display of her matching of the role of an ideal husband with her perception of a perfect lover.

In the description of cherishing the desperate hope of marrying a talented man, Zhu Shuzhen described herself shedding tears for someone she loved. The subtle proverb of *hongye cheng shi* 紅葉成詩 ["verses on red leaves"] is used to illustrate her deep longing to be her lover's wife.<sup>66</sup> By using this metaphor her feeble feminine image is strengthened. Although she could still write in resistance of the established moral code, she could only recount her own inferior form of rebellion: shedding tears. Tears serve as an important focus in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, and can lead to her style of writing

---

<sup>66</sup> The proverb of "verses on red leaves" is sometimes called *hongye ti shi* 紅葉題詩 [writing verses on red leaves]. The Tang Dynasty story was about Lu Wo 盧渥, a candidate taking the imperial examination, who received on the palace river a red leaf on which a poem had been written. Originally an imperial maiden wrote the poem, and later, without knowing Lu Wo, she was betrothed to him coincidentally after Lu got an official title. This story was later used as a symbol of a good marriage based on coincidence. (One episode in Chinese reads, "盧渥從御溝中得到宮人的紅葉題詩，後又與宮人巧爲夫婦，遂用「紅葉題詩、詩題紅葉、紅葉詩、題紅葉、題紅、紅葉留詩、葉題、宮葉字、紅葉御溝流、御溝紅葉、傳波紅葉」等描寫情思、閨怨；亦稱良緣巧合。") *Changyong diangu cidian*, pp.194-95.



being stereotyped as *wanyue*, feminine and subordinated. Yet in her poetry she always finds ways to avoid being seen as submissive; her poems were a passive response that left her perplexed and hence without any assurance of conveying her sense of resistance.

Deep feelings for a lover are revealed in some of Zhu Shuzhen's emotional accounts of how the woman described in her poetry was unable to reunite with her lover. The parting scenes in the poems were perhaps due to family or social pressure. Extreme melancholy from a feminine angle is expressed in some of Zhu Shuzhen's poems:

睡起二首 (其一)

起來不喜勻紅粉，強把菱花照病容。腰瘦故知閑事惱，淚多只為別情濃。

**Waking Up (Two Poems) – Number 1**

On waking, I am in no mood to apply rosy powder.  
I force myself to look at my sallow face in the engraved mirror.  
My thin waist shows that what annoy me are idling matters,  
The tears are so many because of the powerful parting sorrows.

(ZSZSH p.203)

恨別

調朱弄粉總無心，瘦覺寬餘纏臂金。別後大拼憔悴損，思情未抵此情深。

**Parting Regrets**

To smooth rouge and fix my powder I have no heart,  
So thin that my gold bracelet is loose on my arm.  
Sallow and pallid is my face, after our long parting,  
No love yearning has ever been as deep as this longing. (ZSZSH p.200)

Love made the woman's face sallow, her body sick and thin. Describing the lack of love and protection from a man she had wished, the above poems were written about the seeking and the loss of love. However, the content of these poems takes a very serious risk of being accused of breaching the

prevailing moral standards. Yet, in traditional China, rumours served as “powerful agents of destruction, and [were] especially potent in restricting the ‘modernity’ of women who tr[ie]d to love.”<sup>67</sup> As expressed in the poems, the lovers might have been forced to separate because of rumours. The loss of love signified would mean that she was tortured by the loss of her ideal hope, her ability to identify with her natural feminine image. Her feeble female reflection is further strengthened, in contrast to the intrinsic wish in her mind, and was manifested by her presentation of herself as an abandoned grudge-bearing woman who was in no mood to adorn herself.<sup>68</sup> She repeatedly emphasises her ruined figure to disclose the power of *bie qing* 別情 [“parting sorrows”]. It is interesting to note the relationship between the *bie qing* and *ci qing* 此情 [“this longing”] in the two poems, and how *the* love profoundly affected her. Her emphasis of this “weak and sick female beauty” element was particularly often “enshrined” in traditional literary texts, because “a weak female body indicated lofty literary sensibilities.”<sup>69</sup> These uses indicate quite clearly the poet’s premeditated divergence from the normal conjugal relationship, while it is worth noting that she reflected a late mature voice in these poems, explained by the sophisticated expressions she applies to describe her “sallow” appearance.

---

<sup>67</sup> Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China*, p.97. She quotes Wang Pinglu’s sayings from another angle: “the old moral virtue of China clearly is the hidden reef [that obstructs] love [....] The biggest culprit in obstructing women from gaining access to a liberating love was moral virtue, which forced ritualized behavior and relationships on women and disallowed spontaneous affection.” *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>68</sup> With reference to footnote number 51 in this chapter, it is worth contemplating whether the woman described in Zhu Shuzhen’s poem was in no mood to adorn herself or whether she was thinking about the inappropriateness of adorning herself while her husband was away. The concept of adornment is from a traditional Chinese saying: “A noble man will die for someone who recognizes him; a woman will adorn herself for someone who pleases her.” The original from *Shiji* reads, “士爲知己者死，女爲悅己者容。” Qtd. and trans. Lisa Raphals. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, p.12.

<sup>69</sup> Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China*, pp.115-16. The last part is a quote from Xie Siyan (fl. 1923).

鵲橋仙 (七夕)

巧雲粧晚，西風罷暑，小雨翻空月墜。  
牽牛織女幾經秋，尚多少、離腸恨淚。  
微涼入袂，幽歡生座，天上人間滿意。  
何如暮暮與朝朝，更改卻、年年歲歲。

**The Seventh Night (To the Tune: *Queqiao xian*)**

The coloured clouds decorate the night,  
The western wind puts a halt to the summer heat.  
As the moon sinks, misty rain is rolling in the sky.  
How many autumns have the Altair and the Vega passed?  
And how many more,  
Of sorrow apart and tears of regret?  
The soft breeze, into my sleeve it blows,  
Secret joys surround where I sit.  
Both celestials and mortals enjoy it.  
What is it like, a love that lasts every morning and evening?  
Forever changing,  
Year after year. (ZSZSH pp.300-01)

湖上小集

門前春水碧於天，座上詩人逸似仙。白璧一雙無玷缺，吹簫歸去又無緣。

**A Brief Gathering on the Lake**

Before my door, more limpid than the sky is the spring water.  
The poet on the seat is as free and unrestrained as a divine.  
Without any flaw, we are like a pair of pure jade so fine.  
After playing the flute we lose our fate of being together. (ZSZSH p.190)

秋夜牽情六首 (其一)

纖纖新月掛黃昏，人在幽閨欲斷魂。  
牋素拆封還又改，酒杯慵舉卻重溫。  
燈花占斷燒心事，羅袖長供挹淚痕。  
益悔風流多不足，須知恩愛是愁根。

**Autumn Night Feelings (Six Poems) – Number 1**

The slender new moon hangs in the dusk,  
In my gloomy boudoir my heart is about to break.  
I tear open the envelope and change the letter again,

I re-warm the wine cup though too weary to raise it.  
 Burning my breaking heart, the candle is melting in decay,  
 My silk sleeve has long served to wipe my tears away.  
 Regretting all the more that my romance is never enough.  
 Everyone should know, love is the root of sorrow. (ZSZSH pp.178-79)

The above poems show that the persona sometimes placed the blame for her loss of love on destiny or even on herself. Imagining that her relationship with her lover was similar to that of the Cowherd and the Weaving maid who met each other on the Milky Way for only once a year,<sup>70</sup> she reflected on her destroyed love affair, on a struggle between other people's contented or discontented endings. Most important of all, she had identified her lover as her companion, even if the relationship was just as short as the one that existed between the Cowherd and the Weaving maid, or as supernatural as the couple referred to in the allusion of "playing the flute."<sup>71</sup>

With her confused feelings after the departure of her lover, Zhu Shuzhen uses ironical expressions towards these two cases: first she rejected the ideas of Qin Guan, "If love between the two could last long,/ Why should

<sup>70</sup> "The Herd-boy [Cowherd] and the Weaving-girl are husband and wife [in mythology], who were separated by the Milky Way. They can meet only once a year [on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month over the bridge of the Milky Way which is formed by magpies]. From *Xiaoshuo* 小說 [Small Talks] by Liang Yinyun 梁殷芸 of the Southern Dynasties, qtd. *Changyong diangu cidian*, pp.86-87.

<sup>71</sup> The story is about a couple called Xiao Shi and Nongyu 弄玉. Xiao Shi was good at playing the flute, imitating the sounds of a phoenix. One evening, accompanied by Xiao's flute music, the couple flew off on a phoenix. One explanation in Chinese reads, "蕭史者，善吹簫作鳳鳴，一夕，夫婦乘鳳去。" Another explanation reads, "[Xiao Shi] was a mythical figure alive in the Spring and Autumn Period. He was good at playing the flute, imitating the sound of a phoenix. Qin Mugong 秦穆公 [Mu Emperor of Qin] betrothed his daughter, Nongyu, to him. Xiao later built a phoenix tower and taught Nongyu to play the flute. The sounds of the flute attracted phoenixes from outside. As a result the couple became immortals with Nongyu riding on a phoenix, and Xiao Shi on a dragon." In Chinese it reads, "[蕭史] 傳說中春秋時的人物。善吹簫，作鳳鳴。秦穆公以女弄玉妻之，作鳳樓，教弄玉吹簫，感鳳來集，弄玉乘鳳、蕭史乘龍，夫婦同仙去。" See *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 [A Biography of Various Celestial Beings] by Liu Xiang of the Han. Qtd. Zhang Xiancheng, et al eds., *ZSZSH*, p.190, the annotation of "Hu shang xiao ji" 湖上小集 ["A Brief Gathering on the Lake"]. The story symbolises the final reunion of two lovers. In Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.36. See also footnote number 68 of Chapter 2 of this dissertation for cross-reference.

we bother to stay mornings and evenings?" ("To the Tune: *Queqiao xian*"),<sup>72</sup> giving in contrast a suggestion of "What is it like, a love that lasts every morning and evening?/ Forever changing,/ year after year" ("The Seventh Night"). Second, instead of compromising with the happy ending of the flute-playing couple, she simply utters the hopeless statement of "After playing the flute we lose our fate of being together" ("A Brief Gathering on the Lake"). Nevertheless, in her mind they were still "like a pair of pure jade so fine," which can coincidentally serve as the strongest defence against Mao Jin's accusation of her being a "flaw in a piece of white jade." In general, she put the blame on her fate, where the "changes (of the mortal world)" (which may signify the 'evil power') were too hard to cope with, and the invisible bond seemed not to hold them together tightly, so their love was lost silently.

Poems attributed to Zhu Shuzhen also apparently illustrated the charge based on her unhappy conjugal relationship, of her being 'immoral,' of being not flirtatious enough to be a good wife, of being able to resist the unequal stipulations towards women, while being unable to enhance her rebellion, both mental and physical. As seen in the poems, Zhu Shuzhen's image seemed to be tormented by love, by high expectations, by discontented conjugal love, and by the painful loss of her love. Unable to distinguish between love and hatred, she finally sighed over her "romance," uttering, "love is the root of sorrow" ("Autumn Night Sentiment"). The literary image presented in her poems was atypical, in the sense that as a traditional woman, she could be so deeply involved in love: however, she was typical in terms of her womanly quality concerning her feminine desires to be an appreciated wife in conventional society.

---

<sup>72</sup> The original reads, "兩情若是久長時，又豈在朝朝暮暮?"

### 3.5 A Poem with Doubtful Authorship

Many scholars have debated the real author of a famous *ci*-poem titled “To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* (‘yuanxi’).” Originally attributed to Zhu Shuzhen, the poem was cited as proof of her breaching of moral principles:

生查子 (元夕)

去年元夜時，花市燈如晝。月上柳梢頭，人約黃昏後。  
今年元夜時，月與燈依舊。不見去年人，淚溼春衫袖。

**The Night of the Lantern Festival (To the Tune: *Sheng chazi*)**

At the festival last year,

Lanterns in the market were like daylight.

The moon was on the tip of the willow tree,

We met each other after evening light.

At the festival this year,

The lanterns and the moonlight still remain.

But not seeing the one I saw last year,

Tears wet my spring sleeve.

(ZSZSH pp.287-88)

The poem was criticised for its immorality for describing a pair of moonlit lovers. Although many scholars believed that Zhu Shuzhen had breached conventional moral principles, there is no proof of such a behaviour, and proof can certainly not be derived solely from one poem without first discussing the poem’s authorship. First published in *Ouyang Wenzhonggong jinti yuefu* 歐陽文忠公近體樂府 [Modern-style Yuefu of the Revered Ouyang Wenzhong] and *Yuefu yaci* 樂府雅詞 [The Elegant Lyrics of Yuefu], the poem was believed to have been written by Ouyang Xiu. From the Song and Yuan it was then believed to have been written by Qin Shaoyou 秦少游 [Qin Guan], before later in the Yuan it was rumoured that the author was Li Qingzhao: Zhu Shuzhen’s name first appeared as the author in *Ci pin* 詞品 [Commentary on Ci-poetry] by Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559). On the basis of Yang’s commentary, Mao Jin’s *Jiguge ben Duanchang ci* and notes by some

Qing scholars all made highly critical comments of Zhu Shuzhen. The misunderstanding has prevailed even to the present day, with some scholars still eager to discern Zhu Shuzhen's immoral behaviour by looking at the content of this poem.<sup>73</sup>

Wang Shizhen was the first to counter the suggestion that the poem was written by Zhu Shuzhen.<sup>74</sup> The second evidence for this poem not having been written by Zhu was seen in other poets' imitation of the poem's writing style, such as Li Shi's 李石 (fl. 1160s) "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi*":

生查子

李石

今年花發時，燕子雙雙語。誰與卷珠簾，人在花間住。  
明年花發時，燕語人何處。且與寄書來，人往江南去。

To the Tune: *Sheng Chazi* by Li Shi

At flower blooming time this year,  
Side by side the swallows whisper.  
Who rolled up the pearl screen with me?  
The one who was staying among the flowers.  
At the flower blooming time next year,  
Swallows still whisper but where has he gone?  
And when he sends me his letter,  
He will have headed off to Jiangnan.

Zhu Shuzhen's name was not known before Wei Zhonggong compiled *Duanchang ji* in 1182. Huang Yanli holds that if "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* ('yuanxi')" was written by Zhu Shuzhen, Li Shi would not have written the

<sup>73</sup> Adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.137-39. Song Zhixin notes that the criticism of this poem is a further indication of double standards, since it is deemed immoral if written by Zhu Shuzhen, but is indifferent or even appreciable if written by Ouyang Xiu. See Song Zhixin, " 'Duanchang shiren' Zhu Shuzhen," 70.

<sup>74</sup> Wang Shizhen, in *juan* fourteen of his *Chibei outan*, said that the mentioned poem could be seen in *juan* one hundred and thirty-one of the *Ouyang Wenzhong ji* 歐陽文忠集 [*A Collection of Works by Ouyang Wenzhong*], and he did not understand why it had been misinterpreted as the work of Zhu Shuzhen. She then has been accused of immorality based on this *ci*-poem. He also warned that people should beware when they read the records. (The original reads, "今世所傳女郎朱淑真「去年元夜時，花市燈如畫」《生查子》詞，見《歐陽文忠集》一百三十一卷，不知何以訛為朱氏之作？世遂因此詞疑淑真失婦德，紀載不可不慎也。") *Chibei outan*, pp.321-22.

above poem before reading Zhu's formally published poetry.<sup>75</sup> Further evidence appears below:

生查子

辛棄疾

去年燕子來，繡戶深深處。香徑得泥歸，都把琴書污。  
今年燕子來，誰聽呢喃語。不見捲簾人，一陣黃昏雨。

To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* by Xin Qiji

The swallows came last year,  
Her boudoir in a deep and secluded place.  
They returned from collecting mud from the fragrant path,  
Have made her zither and books all muddy.  
The swallows have come this year,  
But who has listened to their twittering?  
I do not see the one who rolls up the screen,  
Just a spatter of dusk rain.

The style and the use of the sequence *qunian* 去年 ["last year"] and *jinnian* 今年 ["this year"] are very similar to that of the original poem. It was a normal practice for poets to imitate poetic lines from the works of others, but rarely did they imitate a poet of little reputation such as Zhu Shuzhen.<sup>76</sup> The real author of the poem was later discovered to be Ouyang Xiu, with an obvious indication of the date and the person who quoted the poem in *Yuefu yaci: Shaoxing Bingyin shangyuan ri Wenling Zeng Zao yin* 紹興丙寅上元日溫陵曾慥引 ["Quoted by Zeng Zao of Wenling, on the Day of the Lantern Festival of the *Bingyin* year of the Shaoxing Reign Period," (i.e., the year 1146)]. As the details concerning the dates for the poem "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* ('yuanxi')" are so concrete, the suggestion that these words were written by Zhu Shuzhen cannot be upheld. To criticise Zhu Shuzhen's character solely on the basis of "To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* ('yuanxi')," as has been seen above in Mao Jin's comments and the remarks made during the Qing Dynasty, is

<sup>75</sup> Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, pp.140-41.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



thus absurd.<sup>77</sup> The *shi*-poem titled “The Night of the Lantern Festival,”<sup>78</sup> which creates a similar effect to *Sheng chazi*, can allow readers to analyse Zhu Shuzhen’s poetic content more objectively.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Referring to the words of Idema cited above, if modern feminists are “too eager” to discern traces of Zhu Shuzhen’s extramarital love affairs in her poetry, or if some argue that the traces are only interpretations of her poetry, and do not necessarily prove that Zhu Shuzhen had a lover, then these two extreme situations would logically present enormous difficulties for anyone seeking to draw conclusions on even the most trivial elements on the basis of her poetry, while in fact these elements may be worthy of discussion in order to back up her writings. However, as nothing certain is known for her life, we can only adopt a sceptical attitude towards the biographical approach. It is possible, rather, to interpret the modes of her behaviour shown in her poetry to have been her own dreams, her own hopes arising out of her imagination, reflected between the psychological struggles of her inner ego and outer conventions of behaviour. Vacillating between reality and imagination, the image of Zhu Shuzhen was inclined to move to and fro between her real self and the reflected self seen in the expressions of her poetry.

It is, therefore, easy to accuse Zhu Shuzhen of immoral behaviour (or, at least, to criticise her for the appearance of immoral ideas in her poetry) if we consider traditional ideas of conservative morality; however, it remains exceptionally difficult to determine exactly what motivated the poet to describe the behaviours. Furthermore, the imbalance between the dominant male and the subservient female was generally more acute in traditional China than in most traditional Western cultures. Unlike the Western methods

---

<sup>77</sup> The sketch of how scholars found out the real author of the poem “To the Tune: *Sheng chazi* (‘yuanxi’)” is from *ibid.*, pp.139-41.

<sup>78</sup> For cross-referencing, refer to section 3.4 in this Chapter for this poem.

of “understanding [...] the sources and varieties of the systems which oppress women and [...] the feminist struggle to overcome that oppression,”<sup>79</sup> the case of Chinese women differs thanks to the traditional Chinese quality of almost unanimous acceptance of patriarchal dominance and the inner-outer dichotomy under the heterosexual norm. Serious blame and persecution were expected outcomes for any breach of moral standards. An interesting statement by Tseng Pao-sun directly pointing to the case of Zhu Shuzhen will be quoted in this context:

Previous to his [Zhu Xi's] time widows or divorced women marrying a second time were quite common and were recorded without any criticism. But the Sung scholars never let such a case pass without due censure. Great poetesses of the time such as Li Ch'ing-chao and Chu Shu-chen were condemned simply because they held different moral views. Orthodox Neo-Confucianists would not even read their works. [...] the woman of Sung was serious and narrow.<sup>80</sup>

As Wixted has stated, “[c]riticism of women writers was generally not benign, as exemplified by the following comments of Tung Ku [Dong Gu 董穀] (fl. 1522):”

From the Han on, women capable of writing poetry and prose, like T'ang-shan fu-jen [Tangshan Furen 唐山夫人] [a favorite concubine of Emperor Kao [Gao] of the Han (r. 202-195 B.C.)] and Pan Chao [Ban Zhao], set down words to serve

---

<sup>79</sup> Judith Stacey. “A Feminist View of Research on Chinese Women.” *Signs* 2.2 (1976): 485-97, here 486.

<sup>80</sup> From Tseng Pao-sun. “The Chinese Woman Past and Present,” p.76. Li Qingzhao was said to have remarried Zhang Ruzhou 張汝舟 (fl. twelfth century) in 1132 (at the age of forty-eight) out of poverty, but was divorced on her instigation within one hundred days of their marriage, because she could not get along with Zhang. Wu Hengzhao accused Li Qingzhao of being a *shijie fu* 失節婦 [a woman who had lost her chastity]. *Lianziju cihua*, p. 14 (*juan* two). Li E also blamed her for *wanjie buzhong* 晚節不終 [not maintaining the integrity of her chastity in her later years]. *Song shi jishi*, p.2095 (*juan* eighty-seven, vol.2). Unlike Zhu Shuzhen, most scholars were not inclined to accuse Li Qingzhao of being immoral, which might have been the result of the unlikely immoral content of her poetry, or due to her good fortune that her year of re-marriage was not within the period under the strict disciplines advocated by Zhu Xi. Or, alternatively, as Wixted has put it: “Li Ch'ing-chao for the most part accepts (or at least does not question in a threatening way) the dominant societal values of her time; and this probably helped allow for the possibility that she be accepted as the superb practitioner of *tz'u* that she both was and, for the most part, was appreciated as being.” John Timothy Wixted. “The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship,” p.164.

as moral instruction; their style being ancient and their learning correct, they were not easy to follow. Ts'ai Yen [Cai Yan] and Li Ch'ing-chao can be censured for having violated chastity [by having remarried]. Prostitutes like Hsüeh T'ao [Xue Tao] are not worthy of mention. Since Chu Shu-chen suffers from excess of sadness and disaffection, she too was not a good woman.<sup>81</sup>

At this point a poet like Zhu Shuzhen was deemed to be an immoral being who opposed her socially prescribed destiny. With the "psychological suggestion of society that a virtuous woman should be obedient, quiet, self-effacing, and ignorant, devoting herself only to the service of the family," the accepting characteristic of a traditional Chinese woman owed its origin to this "hypnotic suggestion" which makes them "feel that only by striving after such an ideal can she find her true self."<sup>82</sup> Oddly enough, in her poems Zhu Shuzhen resisted the restrictions stipulated by the code while at the same time she reinforced the traditional feeble image of a woman living according to the norms of established society, albeit without her being aware of doing so.

Poetry under Zhu Shuzhen's name includes a woman's feelings,

---

<sup>81</sup> Qtd. John Timothy Wixted. "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship," p.150. The lines appear in Dong Gu's *Bili zacun* 碧里雜存 [*Assorted Extant Texts of the Green Lane*]. To have an easier understanding of this quotation, I here attach the original text which reads, "自漢以下，女子能詩文者，若唐山夫人、曹大家 [班昭]，立言垂訓，詞古學正，不可尚已；蔡文姬 [蔡琰]、李易安，失節可議；薛濤倚門之流，又無足言；朱淑真者，傷于悲怨，亦非良婦 [.....。]" Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536-1618) also criticised the talented women throughout different dynasties: "[...] when [a woman] has violated the basic moral principle, her strengths are even hard to conceal this weakness. Citing Cai Wenji [Cai Yan], Li Yian and Zhu Shuzhen, even if they possessed [Su Hui's] talent of writing chiasmus poetry, or [Xie Daoyun's] wisdom in appreciating snow, [...] I would not include these names in this edition, while others [whom I have not included] are self-explanatory." The original reads, "[.....] 大節有虧，則眾長難掩。無論蔡文姬、李易安、朱淑真輩，即回文絕技，詠雪高才，[.....] 余且不錄焉；他可知矣。" Lü Kun. *Guifan* 閨範 [*Regulations for the Boudoirs*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1994, p.330. As a reference I also attach here a criticism of Li Qingzhao's use of diction in her poetry by Wang Zhuo 王灼 (fl. 1149) in his *Biji manzhi* 碧雞漫志 [*Casual Records of the Emerald Rooster*], "She [Li Qingzhao] writes at will the licentious language of the back alleys and streets. There has never been a woman with literary talent from a good gentry family as inattentive to taboos as she." Qtd. Lap Lam, "Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Reputation of *Ci*," 26. The original reads, "閨巷荒淫之語，肆意落筆，自古搢紳之家能文婦女，未見如此無顧忌也。" It is worth contemplating here that, if in Wang Zhuo's mind Li Qingzhao is already considered to be "licentious," how could Zhu Shuzhen's poems several decades later be considered tolerable?

<sup>82</sup> Tseng Pao-sun. "The Chinese Woman Past and Present," p.78.

sometimes sorrowful (towards her unfavourable plight), sometimes regretful (towards her love longings), sometimes sarcastic (towards her resentment at women's obligation to follow the dominant binary separation), and sometimes fragile (towards women's stipulated destiny). She questioned why women should accept these arranged fates, while at the same time she, as a woman with inferior status in society, was too weak to provide strong resistance. This 'resistance born from submission' phenomenon was not common in pre-modern China, since the pressure for Chinese women to lead a conventional life was very strong. Few women acted on their desire to rebel. Adopting Verena Stolcke's statement that "the subordination of women is one of the prerequisites for the maintenance of social relations of domination [,]"<sup>83</sup> feminine inferiority has here been shown to be in a static mode within traditional concepts. In the Song, the image of Zhu Shuzhen was one of the very few women who was bold enough to speak out and to struggle for love, although it should be noted that there is no definite indication elsewhere that in the reality she did go as far as to elope with her secret lover, or seek divorce from her husband. This is also the lack of concrete evidence to show that her desire to resist was matched by action, and needless to say, such action was almost impossible in such a strictly implanted system of female chastity as was the case in the Southern Song period. Nevertheless, she achieved an important breakthrough for women poets.

---

<sup>83</sup> Qtd. Rubie S. Watson. "Marriage and Gender Inequality," p.360.

## Chapter 4 Selfhood vs Selflessness: Zhu Shuzhen's Enhancement of Female Subjectivity

### 4.1 Prologue

The Song Dynasty saw the emergence of tremendous distinctions, in comparison to previous periods of Chinese history, in terms of female status within male-and-female realms, in general, and husband-and-wife relationships in particular. In this period, "female figures were deeply enmeshed in the literary, historical, and pictorial canon of Chinese culture." Zhu Shuzhen and Li Qingzhao may be categorised as representing the focuses in "a shift between the Tang and the Song in the portrayal and imaging of women in written and visual culture."<sup>1</sup> Although the implicit change did not indicate an explicit improvement in women's status which was still inferior, the shift did provide an unprecedented opportunity for women to express themselves in a way not possible in previous dynasties. Zhang Xuecheng's illustration of this point is even more helpful with reference to women's lowered status: his idea of a "historical process" that "worked to undermine women's status [...] was the aestheticizing and sexualizing of women's writing, possibly a complex outcome of the self-conscious development of a female voice by male writers[.]"<sup>2</sup> In this way, the female voice was at times veiled by the dominant male literary circle, which deprived most women of the possibility of expressing self-oriented emotions, and hence creating self-related content in poetry.

---

<sup>1</sup> Susan Mann, "Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.4 (2000): 835-62, here 846. Although both poets actually lived in the Song Dynasty rather than between the Tang and Song periods, this comment can still be applied to them despite the different approaches in portraying and imaging women.

<sup>2</sup> Qtd. *ibid.*

Unlike the Western world, in Chinese society “it has been the common features and not the uniqueness of an individual that draws attention.”<sup>3</sup> Or, in another perspective, “[...] the premodern self simplifies the Confucian tradition by overemphasizing the individual’s passive submission to ritual and authority and denying the active role of the subjective heart-mind (*xin* 心).”<sup>4</sup> This distinction was even stronger for women, since their gender representation left them inferior to their male counterparts. In a society dominated by Neo-Confucian ideology, women were expected to have a clear understanding of their inferior status.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the compulsory assumption of the stipulated roles of firstly a boudoir daughter, then an obedient wife and later a responsible mother, she had no alternative channel to explore. As Joel Kupperman noted, “[...] traditional ‘feminine’ roles operate as a trap for some women, limiting their opportunities and also their chances for awareness of underlying desires and preferences.”<sup>6</sup>

Constraints and the predetermined nature of the didactic purpose achieved through specific kinds of literature only contributed to a more acute dilemma concerning the relationship between virtue and talent. According to Wendy Larson, the separation between women and literature reflected “moral content (*de*) [德] of women — physical, concrete, and self-sacrificing — that was not in tune with the talent (*cai*) [才] implied in literature — abstract, transcendent, and self-promoting.”<sup>7</sup> Larson’s words hit

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Hegel. “Introduction: An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self.” In Robert E. Hegel, and Richard C. Hessney eds. *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985: pp.3-30, here p.6.

<sup>4</sup> Kirk A. Denton. *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998: p.37.

<sup>5</sup> An example can be seen in the sentence “[w]omen were infrequently the subject of biographical writing in old China; even then they are most commonly referred to only by surname and by the names of their spouses.” From Robert E. Hegel. “Introduction: An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self,” p.5.

<sup>6</sup> From Joel L. Kupperman, “Feminism as Radical Confucianism: Self and Tradition.” In Chenyang Li ed. *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*. Illinois: Open Court, 2000: pp.43-56, here p.44.

<sup>7</sup> Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China*, p.74. The statement may actually serve as a generalised concept throughout Chinese literary history, and is perhaps more applicable to traditional China.

home as virtue and talent were believed to be contradictory concepts in terms of the idea of self-revelation. Dangers derived from the combination of virtue and talent might somehow be characterised as a consistent phobia in the development process of women writing their literature. Consequently, the original female self was concealed or even damaged, and self-sacrifice was even considered a necessity for tradition-bred females, especially after their marriages and their becoming mothers.

Women under the “virile” (using Julia Kristeva’s term) or authoritative power of patriarchal families were in no way capable of asserting their own identity, or even dignity. “[S]he [a woman] will only *represent* the authority of the in-laws and the husband; she herself is *not* the authority, she herself is not vested with it, she is never ‘herself.’”<sup>8</sup> Looking from another angle, some Chinese women desired to be shut in a no-return cul-de-sac of behaving selflessly with regard to their compulsory upbringing under Confucian teaching, which was especially manifested in the Southern Song by the drastic imposition of correct behaviour by the Neo-Confucianists, who thought that only a selfless wife was capable of sacrificing her selfishness and submitting to serve her in-laws, her husband and her sons in a considerate manner.

Being emotional, especially concerning the expression of reluctant submission to the patriarchal norm, was a serious flaw in a woman’s character in traditional eyes. Therefore, a good Chinese wife was expected neither to display jealousy towards her husband’s concubines, nor to place self-interest before anything else. In short, she was expected to maintain a harmonious family without personal passion, and without, needless to say, any external passion outside her own boudoir. Owing to the pressure which derived from powerful patriarchal stipulations, some women sought to express their personal feelings through literary creations: a smaller group,

---

<sup>8</sup> Julia Kristeva. *About Chinese Women*. Trans. Anita Barrows. London: Marion Boyars, 1977: p.79.

such as in Zhu Shuzhen's poems, various topics were written in order to reveal the true self of an individual.<sup>9</sup> Of course this could be traced through the clear-cut line between courtesans and gentry women, just as the writing style of Yu Xuanji was seen to be totally distinct from that of Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen. As far as their statuses were concerned, expressions of passionate love in poetry by married gentry women were taken for granted as indications of extramarital love affairs – “[e]ven unmarried women were concerned about guarding their reputations” – while courtesans were given a free hand to express passion for entertaining their guests.<sup>10</sup>

What seems contradictory is the fact that more and more female poets wrote poetry in their inner chambers even under the prevailing suppressive atmosphere and, moreover, that the poems they produced are imbued with sophisticated feminine emotions and styles.<sup>11</sup> “Self” is defined as “a construct of mind,” which is “socially formed” and appears in an “inner” or “hidden” form.<sup>12</sup> It is a “commonly experienced sense, at any given moment, of a unitary presence and identity, an ‘unconsciously structured illusion of plentitude.’”<sup>13</sup> The genuine female self is revealed in relation to a woman's in-depth feelings, which a male could hardly produce even if he imitates the female voice in order to enrich the feminine element of the poem. Over the course of the Song Dynasty, *ci*-poetry became the focus for the expression of personal emotions: women poets were in the vanguard of this development. Wendy Larson quoted the modern woman writer, Lu Yin 盧隱 (1899-1934), who said that “the essence of art is subjectivity and insisted on the validity of

---

<sup>9</sup> Scholars always feel that, “In *tz'u* poetry in particular, we find women poets like Li Ch'ing-chao writing out their lives, creating a wonderful poetic fusion of convention and originality, of the female and male traditions.” In Kang-i Sun Chang. “Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?,” p.180.

<sup>10</sup> Qtd. and adapted from *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the opinion of certain seventeenth century male scholars that the best *wanyue ci*-poetry, which cultivated “refined elegance and tender feeling,” was produced by female poets. Qtd. and adapted from *ibid.*, p.176.

<sup>12</sup> Irving Howe. “The Self in Literature.” In George Levine ed. *Constructions of the Self*. Rutgers: The State University, 1992: pp.249-67, here p.249.

<sup>13</sup> Maureen Robertson. “Changing the Subject: Gender and Self-Inscription in Author's Prefaces and ‘Shi’ Poetry,” p.176.



representing individual experience."<sup>14</sup> In this way voicing the self by the women poets is seen logical and explainable in the poetry they write. Female subjectivity also poses a significant manifestation in this regard. In fact "from early on [Tang Dynasty onwards] in the poetic tradition [... poetic titles] came to signify a self-reflective content concerning the personal circumstances and emotional and intellectual state of the poet, that is, his/her inner response vis-à-vis external conditions;"<sup>15</sup> the physical involvement of women in creating lyrics and the spiritual experience required for writing poetry contributed largely to the contradiction discussed above.

## 4.2 Zhu Shuzhen's Literary Selflessness

According to Stephen Owen, the vision of the self can be divided into "roles" and "a much more contradictory and unsteady being."<sup>16</sup> He further points out the interrelated aspects of 'self' and 'role,' with 'role' meaning the basic desire of a being and constituting a more superficial level of the 'self.'<sup>17</sup> In traditional China roles in society served as an essential element taught to individuals in order to ensure effective government. Every single self was expected to behave in a certain way in order to have his name regarded highly by historians, who wrote individual biographies identifying their "traditional behavioral models," such as the examples cited by Robert Hegel: "a person may not have been merely a minister, a father, a son, but instead an *upright* minister, an *exemplary* father, a *filial* son—or their converse."<sup>18</sup> Such stipulations represented the rigid practice of sculpting models of behavioural

---

<sup>14</sup> Qtd. Wendy Larson. *Women and Writing in Modern China*, p.124. Another approach of saying this point comes in John Wixted's opinion about Li Qingzhao, which reads "What makes Li Ch'ing-chao different is that, as a woman, her writing is taken to be autobiographical in a more direct way than *tz'u* by male authors, specifically those written in the personas of women, possibly can be." In John Timothy Wixted. "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship," p.157.

<sup>15</sup> Grace Fong, "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/Biographical Practices," 285.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Owen, "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography." In Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen eds. *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp.71-102, here p.86.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> Robert E. Hegel. "Introduction: An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self," p.6.

patterns, and served to ensure that human behaviours were “predictable and uniform” in order to prevent the possible expression of individual “temperament and values.”<sup>19</sup> To go beyond the anticipated behavioural realm was to be self-centred and thus not within the criteria of the traditional ruling system, and such that being self-centred was to be regarded as being wrong. This was applied even more stringently for women.

In analysing the portrayal of feminine images in Southern Dynasties poems, Anne Birrell gave a clear definition of ‘self’ regarding poetry creation:

For terms such as “self” presuppose the poet’s willingness to inject into the fictionalized image of a woman in love some semblance of his [or her] own personal experience. Those terms also imply a sense of uniqueness about a person, which is the opposite of a conventional type.<sup>20</sup>

This idea also conforms with Stephen Owen’s comment that “*shih* [shi 詩] was the stuff for inner life, the person’s *chih* [zhi] 志, ‘intent,’ and *ch’ing* [qing] 情, ‘emotions’ or ‘subjective disposition.’”<sup>21</sup> Apart from all these, James Liu, in analysing *Wen fu* 文賦 [*Rhapsody on Literature*] by Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303), quotes Lu’s remark that “writing is not simply a matter of matching words with things [物] [...] but involves first conceiving or perceiving things and then expressing in words one’s own conceptions or perceptions of things.”<sup>22</sup> From this the unconventional characteristic of the self is revealed when the poet becomes preoccupied in seeking his or her self, consciously or unconsciously.

As a dually explainable concept, selflessness can be analysed in two different aspects, which are, firstly, in terms of women’s behaviour (such as

---

<sup>19</sup> Adapted *ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> From Anne M. Birrell. “The Dusty Mirror: Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry.” In Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney eds, *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, pp.33-69, here p.36.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Owen, “The Self’s Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography,” p.74.

<sup>22</sup> Qtd. James J. Y. Liu. “The Paradox of Poetics and the Poetics of Paradox.” In Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen eds. *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp.49-70, here p.60.

cutting away of selfish desires; putting others' interest before herself, which I call "social selflessness") in the context of the period when she was alive; and secondly, in terms of the extent to which she described her emotions in her poems (which I call "literary selflessness") – the smaller the extent, the higher degree of selflessness she displayed in her poems. Social selflessness is easier to trace if the research is expected to serve as an evidence-seeking tool, however, such an approach is limited since knowledge of Zhu Shuzhen's life, as mentioned before, is exiguous. Although her biography is somewhat workable as a means of anticipating her possible literary behaviour, analysis here could best be accompanied with the thoughts revealed within her poetry, which can serve as the best record of how she felt and expressed the self. That means, the poet displays her separate existence in order to reveal the self via the descriptions of other matters in her poems: in actual life she might have jumped outside the rigid frame beyond "calm subsistence" (using Hegel's words).<sup>23</sup> As Hegel remarks, the individual self can be "implicitly" presented through "conventional modes of expression in verse," because literature "reveals the self as expressed by an individual self, whether consciously or inadvertently."<sup>24</sup>

Zhu Shuzhen's psychological state of self survives only in her literary representations, and she does not show her concern with the idea of social selflessness that was appreciated to a large extent in such a community. In most of her poems, her self-assurance manifests the larger sense of ego, which constituted to a majority of contextual descriptions of the persona's selfish thoughts and desires, as "[d]esire is the source of the self[...] the self is engendered by desire."<sup>25</sup> One of the most attractive characteristics of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry is that, with the background of scenery descriptions,

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Hegel. "Introduction: An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self," p.8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Michel Oughourlian, qtd. J. F. Buckley, *Desire, the Self, the Social Critic: The Rise of Queer Performance within the Demise of Transcendentalism*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1997: p.26.

selflessness still prevails through the use of appealing metaphors, such as “god of spring” (*dongjun*) and “egrets and gulls” (*ou lu*) mentioned in the previous chapter,<sup>26</sup> to represent the state of other individual body’s influences on her life, without an explicit involvement of her personal identity inside the poems.

#### 4.2.1 The Self-Unconscious Mind

Zhu Shuzhen’s selfless state, here given the name of “self-unconscious mind,” can be compared with the notion of the “impersonal state” and “personal state” initiated by Wang Guowei. The major difference between the self-unconscious mind and the (im)personal state is that the former involves projecting *oneself* into the content while the latter engages in the way of viewing the objects in poetry. The term “self-unconscious mind” can prevent misunderstanding while the word “selflessness” may produce a second meaning of self-sacrificing or nobility in terms of lifestyle, that is, “social selflessness” mentioned above. It is necessary to say that in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems her incorporation of the self-unconscious mind and (im)personal state together are sometimes shown; it is, however, easier to figure out how she organised her mind and state through looking at her poetry. Zhu Shuzhen’s poem “Clearing Up After Spring Rain” could be taken as an example showing such a state of mind.<sup>27</sup>

This poem has a distinctive style combining both the self-unconscious mind and the personal state (as contrasted to the impersonal state in terms of viewing objects in poetry) mentioned above. Although Zhu Shuzhen applies a specifically Chinese approach of concealing the ‘I’ (self-unconsciousness) in the subject, her personal feelings are vividly projected throughout the lines. The portrayals of the “lifeless” willow strands and “more delicate” flowers

---

<sup>26</sup> See section 3.3 in Chapter 3.

<sup>27</sup> See section 2.2.2 of Chapter 2 in this dissertation for cross-referencing to Wang Guowei’s notion and the details of this poem.

“dressed in raindrops” are more than sufficient to explain these additional emotions towards those expressed by the objects. Subtly written ideas are seen in “Only by cups of wine can *one* remove old sorrows,/ Only by lines of poetry can *one* dispel new regrets.” The *one* Zhu Shuzhen refers to would obviously be her poetic self, and in the Chinese original text she does not use any of the subjects, with the emphasis placed on “remove old sorrows” and “dispel new regrets.” The last line “Too thin for the robe, too frightened to hear the cuckoo’s cry” possesses no immediate reference to the poet’s own emotions, but the interesting thing here is the use of the character *shou* 瘦 [thin], which is applicable to both the persona and “the pear-blossoms in the moon shadows.” In this way the adjective is blurred in terms of whether it is describing the person or the scenery. This kind of unconscious concealing of oneself, while at the same time disclosing one’s existence, has served to become a particular style of Chinese poetry, and has also contributed to a humble resonance of Chinese-styled selflessness.

According to Martin Huang’s observation on James Olney’s idea of “self as metaphor” (“the self expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects”), it also “comes close to the concept of *jituo* [寄托] (self-allegorizing) or *zikuang* [自况] (self-comparison) in traditional Chinese writings.”<sup>28</sup> This serves as an autobiographical representation of the poet, and it functions as another way of looking at how a poet personalises his/ her sentiments in indirect ways, projecting him/ herself onto plants, animals or objects that possess certain allegorical significance in Chinese culture. The self-effacing attitude presented in Zhu Shuzhen’s poetry on the one hand prevents the readers from discovering her genuine identity, yet on the other hand the use of strong words and phrases enriches her toughness:

---

<sup>28</sup> Martin Huang. *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995: p.11. In my understanding the *zikuang* mentioned in the quotation does not necessarily mean “self-comparison,” rather a translation into ‘self-analogising’ would, to me, be more appropriate.

直竹<sup>29</sup>

勁直忠臣節，孤高烈女心。四時同一色，霜雪不能侵。

### Upright Bamboo

Upright is the loyal official's integrity,  
Just as a female martyr's heart is haughty.  
Appearing in the same colour in four seasons,  
Even frost and snow cannot overcome. (ZSZSH p.267)

Zhu Shuzhen's use of bamboo to symbolise *lienü* 烈女 [a female martyr] draws attention to women, particularly those who have been compared to "martyr[s]." On the surface the poet recounts her feelings towards bamboo, with the emphasis on the adjective "upright," which has two different symbolic meanings, one physical and the other mental. The physical-mental transformation takes place in the assimilation of her appearance and moral attitude, if it is acceptable that she writes about her own aspirations. Despite the fact that there is not even one character obviously signifying her identity, there is a slight hint that a "[haughty] female martyr's heart" is not to be overcome by "frost and snow," which can be seen as a symbol of destructive or obstructive forces. It is hard to surmise to what extent this poem reveals Zhu Shuzhen's state of *zikuang*, but much imagination can be formed when reading in between the lines of her poetry.

Another poem shows Zhu Shuzhen's poetic tactics of enforcing her feelings in the eyes of her readers in spite of not mentioning any individual identity in the poem. Her preoccupation with her poetic self is illustrated in every line, revealing how she is overwhelmed by her own thoughts:

---

<sup>29</sup> The title reads "Yong zhi zhu" 詠直竹 ["Appreciating Upright Bamboo"] in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ*. In *Mingyuan shigui* and *Gu jin nü shi*, the title appears as "Yong zhu" 詠竹 ["Appreciating Bamboo"]. According to these two sources, the poem is attributed to Huang Shu 黃淑 (n.d.), the wife of Wang Fang 王防 (n.d.), a Song Dynasty *jinshi*. Qtd. *ZSZJ*, pp.218-19. However, this poem appears elsewhere in the collections of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, i.e., *ZSZP*, *ZSZJ*, *ZSZJZ*, *ZSZSH* and *SDNW*.

清瘦

春花秋月若浮漚，怎得心如不繫舟。肌骨大都無一把，可憐禁駕許多愁。

**Thin and Pallid**

Spring flowers and autumn moon are like foam floating,

How should the heart be as a boat without mooring?

Skin and bones, perhaps, have not been left even one bit,

In hand, pathetically, there is plenty of sorrow. (ZSZSH pp.203-04)

Although no expression of personal identification or pronoun is shown in this poem, the sad mood is thoroughly displayed from the persona's inner (the heart) to her outer ("skin and bones") emotions. The personal state is also used in the very first line to show the melancholic feelings towards "spring flowers and autumn moon," traditionally seen in Chinese culture as something ephemeral, an appropriate way of depicting her laments and her short-lived hopes. In spite of no acknowledgement of personal identity, her prevailing sorrowful feelings help create the immediate contradiction of 'quality vs quantity.' Although she is thin with not "even one bit" of her "skin and bones," such a weak physique can hold "plenty of sorrow." This would be one of the most effective ways for her readers to decide who is the victim in the poem and who is it who has plenty of sorrow. Lack of individual recognition can sometimes mean a more profound memory of the persona's sufferings. This idea also conforms with Birrell's observation that:

[...] the very conventional nature of [Southern Dynasties] court poems prohibits such poetic female types from reconciling their conflicts, or adapting their behavior according to experience, or transforming themselves from victims to active participants in love and in life.<sup>30</sup>

The above quotation is inspiring in the sense that despite periodical differences, the contrasting idea applies that the *unconventional* nature of

---

<sup>30</sup> Anne M. Birrell. "The Dusty Mirror: Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry," p.36.

poetry [written by women in Song times] enables “poetic female types [to reconcile] their conflicts, or [adapt] their behavior according to experience, and [transform] themselves from victims to active participants in love and in life.” Under this theoretical assumption Zhu Shuzhen’s inclination to reveal her poetic self, to reconcile her ambivalent mind and to allow the imagination to believe that she is conducting extramarital love affairs is ultimately explainable.

Another style of the self-unconscious mind is the poet’s description of her hope of obtaining another individual being’s sympathy although there is still no explicit personal identification to be found in the poem. The lack of pronouns makes identification ambiguous, but the application of *shui* 誰 [“whom,” referring to other people] displays a distinctive difference between her self and other beings. One such example is shown below:

冬夜不寐

推枕驚帷不奈寒，起來霜月轉闌干。悶懷脈脈與誰說，淚滴羅衣不忍看。

#### **Sleepless on a Winter Night**

Pushing aside pillow and embroidered bed-curtain, the cold is intolerable,

As I rise the frosty moon is crossing the balustrade.

To whom should one recount the silent loneliness?

Seeing the tears dropping on the silk dress, how unbearable! (ZSZSH p.257)

Sadness and solitude are overwhelming in the above poem. Zhu Shuzhen is assumed here to have been recounting a lonely woman behind the boudoir, and the lack-of-subject phrases “pushing aside,” “intolerable,” “silent loneliness” and “how unbearable” are transparent enough to allow the retrieval of her inner feelings. Huang Yaqing suggests that “whether she writes love poems in her loneliness or expresses lonely feelings in her love poems, they can only be seen as an expression of her self-imagination, which



goes beyond the imagined lonely feelings arising from her loneliness.”<sup>31</sup> In many of her poems Zhu Shuzhen’s way of relating her own hidden identity to other people’s explicit individuality is effective enough to enhance her poetic expressions.<sup>32</sup>

It is hard to say whether it is fair to speak of a self-unconscious mind, since the extant undated poems of Zhu Shuzhen, together with our limited knowledge of her biographical background, are insufficient to allow the construction of concrete grounds that she was writing them with or without a conscious consideration of her self. What has been done in this regard is to analyse her poems by the use of the explicit or implicit personae of the self, where the former strengthens the sense of oneself, and the latter, in describing the behaviours and emotions of oneself even without pronouns, creates an interesting idea of enriching the individualised sense of the literary self.

#### 4.2.2 The Self-Semiconscious Mind

Self-semiconscious mind is a term given here to describe the state which is often displayed in poetry in relation to other people’s behaviour or feelings, which is to a certain extent different from the degree of personal identification in the state of self-unconscious mind. It is also determined in the way that the poet writes about him/ herself with a partial identification, such as Zhu Shuzhen’s use of words like *ren* 人 [people] to refer indirectly to the self, and some situational phrases such as *gu* 孤 [loneliness] or *du* 獨

---

<sup>31</sup> Huang Yaqing. “Zhu Shuzhen shici aiqing xintai qiantan” 朱淑真詩詞愛情心態淺探 [“The Attitude to Love in Zhu Shuzhen’s Poetry”]. *Zhejiang shuren daxue xuebao* 1 (2003): 58-61, here 60.

<sup>32</sup> Quotations from some other poems using similar methods of relating to other beings are: “Newly bereft of wine cups, bereft of the verse scrolls,/ I wonder who will relieve my melancholy feelings?” [the Chinese text reads, “詩卷酒杯新廢卻，閑愁消遣帶他誰？” From “Declining Spring (Three Poems – Number 3)” 暮春三首 (其三)]; “Who can see these feelings?/ Tears wash my fading powder, with little leaving.” [the Chinese text reads, “此情誰見？淚洗殘粧無一半。” From “Spring Resentment (To the tune: *Mulan hua* — Reduced Words)” 減字木蘭花 (春怨)]; and “Who will have a word for the spring night, On the tower, to lightly hit the hour drum?” [the Chinese text reads, “倩誰寄語春宵？城頭畫鼓輕敲。” From “Time is Tight (To the tune: *Qing ping yue*)” 清平樂 (風光緊急)].

[alone] to show her plight. Even if she uses the two concepts of indirect pronoun and situational phrases together, she still attempts to present an ambiguous image of an unnamed sorrowful woman. One such example is shown below:

霜夜

彤雲黯黯暮天寒，半捲珠簾未欲眠。獨坐小窗無伴侶，可憐霜月向人圓。

**A Freezing Night**

Dim, dim are the gloomy clouds, the dusk is cold,  
By the half unfurled pearl curtain, unable to sleep.  
Sitting alone beside the small window, without company,  
How piteous is the freezing moon which appears round to me.

(ZSZSH pp.254-55)

With a very clear description of why the persona is sad, the uses of “alone” and “piteous” are self-explanatory. In the last line the expression “freezing” has a sad connotation, while the “moon appears round to [her]” would be the ultimate regret for herself. In Chinese culture a round moon, representing reunion, only appears before stable relationships, such as a family or a couple, so this context is merely sad that she had not got even one partner. A very strong personal state appears in the last line, when to the lonely woman, a round moon becomes “piteous.” As mentioned above, by combining indirect pronoun and situational phrases Zhu Shuzhen is only semiconsciously asserting herself to be the heroine of the poem: in fact she is applying the writing style known as *yu gai mi zhang* 欲蓋彌彰 [wanting to conceal something yet that something is even more explicitly shown], a partial concealment of personal identity which might be more appealing to readers. According to Li Liangrong, through portraying objective objects, Zhu Shuzhen often uses twisted expressions to describe matters that are

inappropriate for direct utterance.<sup>33</sup> Her use of situational words is demonstrated in the following poem:

寓懷二首 (其二)

菊有黃花籬檻邊，怨鴻聲重下寒天。偏宜小閣幽窗下，獨自燒香獨自眠。

Expressing Emotions (Two Poems – Number 2)

Beside the fences the yellow chrysanthemums grow,  
The heavy sounds of a resentful goose descend from the cold sky.  
It is suitable, in my small boudoir, under the secluded window,  
To burn the incense alone and sleep alone. (ZSZSH p.176)

The above poem emphasises Zhu Shuzhen's voice of loneliness, with double use of the word "alone" in the last line. The expression of "alone" is a transformational method of a hidden disclosure of her own state without the presence of other people, which goes halfway to revealing her individual self to the readers. Without including any concrete personal pronoun the above sense becomes a self-semiconscious mind. Strong appearance of the personal state is embedded in the second line: "as she was lonely, she imagined that the lonely sounds that chanced to descend from the sky was from a 'resentful goose' that had lost its mate."<sup>34</sup> In this way, in the poem Zhu Shuzhen reflects her selfish emotions against other unrelated objects so as to aggregate her resentful feelings, and her regrets and sorrows.

The use of beautiful metaphors is in many ways an appropriate substitute for Zhu Shuzhen's self-representation. In such a way she would still clarify her own existence in the poem by giving herself another name, such as in:

---

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from Li Liangrong. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen" 論朱淑真 ["Commenting on Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Sichuan jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 2 (1998): 11-15, here 14.

<sup>34</sup> The original Chinese text reads, "因為她孤獨，便把偶從空中飛過的一隻孤雁，想像成失去配偶的「怨鴻」。” From the annotation of the same poem, Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.176.

## 看花

欲向花邊遣舊愁，對花無語只成羞。春光縱好須歸去，誰伴幽人著意留。

### Looking at Flowers

Beside the flowers, wanting to dispel old sorrows,

Wordlessly facing the flowers, one only feels ashamed.

Although springtime is good, it will have to part one day,

With the secluded one who will definitely stay? (ZSZSH p.144)

In this poem the persona's monologue is represented in her conversation with "flowers," which, although originally not for sharing emotions, are yet capable of enhancing her feeling of loneliness – she can only talk to flowers rather than to anybody dear to herself. The "springtime" mentioned in the poem is a direct reference to her golden youth which itself "will have to part one day." Despite the fact that no overt presence of the self is contained, the first three lines show her semi-consciousness in creating an intact self – whether in the form of body or mind – to exhibit her solitude. The *youren* 幽人 [secluded one] in the last line reveals a shaped image of an isolated and hopeless woman, without a direct quotation of any pronoun, but just an oblique description of herself.

Another remarkable pronoun used for the self-semiconscious mind appears in the combination of *ren* and *ni* 你 [you], although the latter is seldom used in Zhu's and other's poems as it is sometimes too direct to point to the second-person point of view. The use of pronouns indicates Zhu Shuzhen's distinctive features as can be seen in her poem "Pear Blossom."<sup>35</sup> In this poem the indicators of *ren* (in the sixth line) and *ni* (in the last line) serve as appropriate and rational substitutes for the personal pronoun and first-person point of view respectively. In the first place, the repetition of *ren* ("people") in the sixth line enhances the feeling of someone (herself?) receiving the "smile" in contrast to her sadness, while the clever use of the

---

<sup>35</sup> See section 2.2.1 in Chapter 2 of this dissertation for reference of this poem.

pronoun “you” in the last line can be viewed as a direct reference and replacement for “I” in the Chinese language. The combination of the above two methods signifies Zhu Shuzhen’s conscious or unconscious obscurity in her personal identification, when it is contradictory for her to either show her direct emotions explicitly, or to cover them completely within her heart.

In short, the concept of literary selflessness is vividly represented in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems by the use either of concealed pronouns or even of no pronouns at all. On the other hand, however, social selflessness presents itself in a different way, whereby traditional Chinese women behaved in a selfless way without thinking about their own interests, adopting self-sacrificing attitudes towards their mothers-in-law, husbands and offspring, sufficient to illustrate their constructed role in a constructed society. Readers can sometimes see this kind of behaviour described in the works of female poets. The following section discusses this, showing how were the thought and behaviour revealed in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems distinctive from others with regard to her literary selfhood.

### 4.3. Zhu Shuzhen’s Literary Selfhood and Self-Paradox

#### 4.3.1 Zhu Shuzhen as a Self-Conscious Being

Confined by the roles imposed by society, people can never be regarded as ‘himself’ or ‘herself,’ since they view duties of their particular roles in the way society confers. This is consistent with David Hume’s (1711-1776) sayings in *A Treatise on Human Nature*:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular role or other, of son or father, lover or friend, student, or teacher, brother or neighbor. I never can catch *myself*, at any time apart from a role, and never can observe anything except from the viewpoint of

a role.<sup>36</sup>

Zhu Shuzhen, in the ontological representation in her poems, can be said to be projected in her various roles of, firstly, a typical wife, latterly an abandoned woman, and also a secret lover at various parts of her poetry. The most important concept in these series of poems is her clear indication of her personal identification through her “poetic self-consciousness:”<sup>37</sup> the concrete use of the pronoun “I.” Maureen Robertson remarks: “[...] a traditional, shared belief in ‘self’-expression through texts in which the ‘I’ who speaks is in some sense autobiographical or non-fictional may generate in the reader a sense of direct communication with an absent existential subject.”<sup>38</sup> According to Grace Fong, to some of the women poets, notably Zhu Shuzhen, when they wrote poetry they “would have provided a rare emotional outlet, a channel for the expression of feelings otherwise suppressed or ignored[,]” while she often tends towards “self-obsession in her poetry; she writes about herself over and over again.”<sup>39</sup> The hint of the identification is often magnified by Zhu Shuzhen’s determined attitude to move away from the structured model of womanly behaviour through the use of robust vocabulary. One such example is shown below:

秋夜聞雨三首 (其二)

竹窗蕭索鎮如秋，雨滴檐花夜不休。獨宿廣寒多少恨，一時分付我心頭。

**Listening to Rain on an Autumn Night (Three Poems – Number 2)**

Bamboo windows are always desolate at autumn time,

Rain restlessly patters on eaves, the night never ends.

---

<sup>36</sup> Qtd. Henry Rosemont. “Classical Confucian and Contemporary Feminist Perspectives on the Self: Some Parallels, and Their Implications.” In Douglas Allen ed. *Culture and Self: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives East and West*. Boulder: Westview, 1997: pp.63-82, here p.72.

<sup>37</sup> A term used by J. F. Buckley, *Desire, the Self, the Social Critic: The Rise of Queer Performance within the Demise of Transcendentalism*, p.20. This could also be taken as a reference to Emerson’s saying that “man is only half himself, the other self is his expression.” Qtd. *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>38</sup> Maureen Robertson. “Changing the Subject: Gender and Self-Inscription in Author’s Prefaces and ‘Shi’ Poetry,” p.177.

<sup>39</sup> Grace S. Fong. “Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song,” p.123.

Sleeping alone in the Cold Palace, so many regrets

Are at this moment surging up in my heart.

(ZSZSH p.166)

With the uses of metaphorical combinations of objective environments and personal emotions, the forlorn atmosphere is stimulated in the beginning as well as emphasised in the last two lines. Sorrow at desertion is enhanced in the mood evoked by autumn and rain, a traditional metaphor used by Chinese poets to enrich the sadness or regret arising from loneliness, abandonment and parting. Here in the third line the metaphors of Chang'e 嫦娥 and *guanghan* 廣寒 [Cold Palace] are used to indicate the persona's extreme loneliness.<sup>40</sup> Zhu Shuzhen holds that although Chang'e has become an immortal being in the moon and lives in a splendid palace, she is on her own suffering the torture of solitude. This serves as a direct allusion to what Zhu Shuzhen wants to present in her poems: spending her days and nights alone in the splendid boudoir. The strong and clear indication of her personal persona ("my") diverts the readers from an ambiguous metaphor to an obvious and conscious victimisation. She is responsible to nobody's heart, but only to her self.

Zhu Shuzhen's "Asking Spring (Ancient-Style Verse)"<sup>41</sup> seems to have been written in a similar mood. Unusually rich in personal identification, the character *wo* 我 [I/ me] appears three times in the third, penultimate and last lines respectively. The combination of naming herself as "me" and "one" in the chin couplet<sup>42</sup> is a blending of self-conscious and self-substituted pronouns in order to emphasise in a diversified way the feeling of "I." The

---

<sup>40</sup> In Chinese culture, *guanghan* [sometimes also known as *guanghan gong* 廣寒宮] refers to the palace in which Chang'e lives. In an ancient Chinese myth "Chang'e stole [from her husband Hou Yi 后羿] the drug of immortality; after she ate it she flew to the moon palace and became a spirit in the moon" [The Chinese for this reads, "嫦娥偷吃了不死之藥，便飛上月宮成爲月的精靈。"]. *Changyong diangu cidian*, p.541. As seen in *Longcheng lu* 龍城錄 [A Record of the Dragon Town], there was a line which reads "the clear and void Cold Palace" [in Chinese "清虛廣寒之宮"], which, in Zhu Shuzhen's poem, means "the description of the clear and cold environment" [in Chinese it reads "此處是摹寫環境的清冷。"]. Qtd. Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, pp.166-67.

<sup>41</sup> See section 3.3 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for reference of this poem.

<sup>42</sup> See section 1.3 in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

most powerful means of using the individual persona lies in “the god of spring betrays *me*” and “*I* have betrayed the god of spring,” in which a determined indignation towards “the god of spring” [some sort of obstruction] is shown.<sup>43</sup> The remarkable use of repetition and altered syntax in the above two clauses not only illustrates the poet’s purposeful determination to make the content of the lines prominent, but emphasises her strong personality, and her own self working against the impact made by the god of spring. This kind of clear and abundant indication of the self is extremely rare in poetry written by women in pre-modern days, since self-indication might trigger the violation of traditional moral stipulations.

A small number of poems are attributed to Zhu Shuzhen that seem to be directed against the fact that women were oppressed. The small number might be partly due to a kind of reluctance to write poetry with such content during a period of patriarchal dominance, and partly because of the difficulty in retaining such poems transmitted from ages passed. These poems are often displayed with a clear stance pointing towards some forces of destruction. One such example is shown below:

秋日述懷

婦人雖軟眼，淚不等閒流。我因無好況，揮斷五湖秋。

**Expressing my Emotions on an Autumn Day**

Though women are vulnerable to tears,

Tears do not carelessly run.

As I am not in a favourable plight,

Autumn on the Five Lakes I wave away.

(ZSZSH pp.176-77)

An ambivalent viewpoint is presented in the description of tears, which are most often associated with women. This is very true of Zhu Shuzhen as “tears” often appear in her poems – she is feeble enough to be affected by her

---

<sup>43</sup> See sections 3.3 and 3.4 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for more detailed analyses on “the god of spring.”



emotions ranging from loneliness and love losses to parting sorrows. In the above poem, however, she initially tries hard to stem her tears by concluding that a woman (here used to stand for all women) is not crying carelessly. One reason for saying this would be that she would like to prove to the world that women are not as fragile as people have presumed. Inconsistency in attitude derives from Zhu Shuzhen's sudden divergence of her feebleness to a seemingly masculine voice. Grace Fong comments that "when voicing their discontents as women, when trying to break the shackles of gender in literature, women had to reject the image and poetics of the feminine constructed in the dominant tradition."<sup>44</sup>

The short and self-explanatory statement of "As I am not in a favourable plight," if referring to her own life, is the boldest declaration of how she feels under hostile conditions using the perfectly simple "I," as Wai-ye Li remarks, "[t]he illusion of self-containment can hardly mask the grim reality of loss and destruction."<sup>45</sup> This can also be seen as a kind of "self-imposed minority" suggested by Kant, when such an unfavourable condition is so obviously voiced by the poet herself.<sup>46</sup> It is believed that Zhu Shuzhen is consciously writing about the self, using the metaphor of the Five Lakes in order to allude to Fan Li's 范蠡 (fl. 473 B.C.) carefree life.<sup>47</sup> The action of "wav[ing] away" the autumn of the Five Lakes demonstrates a new way of describing movements with an extraordinary matching of verb and object, an innovative idea of self-determination seen in Zhu Shuzhen's poems

---

<sup>44</sup> Grace S. Fong. "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," p.144.

<sup>45</sup> Wai-ye Li. *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993: p.87.

<sup>46</sup> Qtd. Irving Howe. "The Self in Literature," p.251.

<sup>47</sup> "Five Lakes" refer to the lakes near the areas of Tai Hu 太湖 [Lake Tai, located in Jiangsu 江蘇 and Zhejiang Provinces]. Originally from "Yue wang Goujian shijia," *juan* forty-one in *Shiji*: 史記 (卷四十一)·越王勾踐世家 ["Historical Facts about Goujian, the Yue King" in the *Book of History*]. In Sima Qian. *Shiji: wen bai duizhao*, pp.616-21. Zhu Shuzhen wrote the last line "to show that she has to imitate Fan Li in freeing himself on the smoke and waters of the Five Lakes, and forgetting all worldly cares and associations." The Chinese original text reads, "女詩人 [.....] 表示自己要效法范蠡, 逍遙於五湖煙水之上, 忘卻世間一切煩惱與俗念。" From Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.177.

compared with the works of other women poets.

Zhu Shuzhen also uses the character *zi* 自 [myself] frequently to describe self-initiated emotions in her poetry, an effective way of raising the degree of authenticity for her readers. *Zi* serves as an apparent declaration of the, occasionally pathetic, feelings or aspirations of the poet him/ herself. One such example is shown below:

對雪一律

紛紛瑞雪壓山河，特出新奇和郢歌。樂道幽人方閉戶，高歌漁父正披蓑。  
自嗟老景光陰速，唯使佳時感愴多。更念鱗居憔悴客，映書無寐奈愁何。

Facing Snow (*Lüshi*)

Auspicious snow pours in to cover mountains and rivers,  
As fresh and wonderful as joining in the Ying songs.<sup>48</sup>  
The contented recluse has just closed the door,<sup>49</sup>  
Singing with high spirit the fisherman has soon put on his straw cape.  
I sigh how fast I have reached old age,  
Melancholic feelings redouble when looking back at good times.  
And I miss the old and sallow man, wifeless,  
How to relieve his sorrow when reading by snow, sleepless?<sup>50</sup> (ZSZSH pp.259-60)

<sup>48</sup> Ying 郢 was the capital of the state of Chu in the Spring and Autumn Period, in present day Jiangling 江陵, Hubei 湖北 Province. “Ying songs” refer to the songs of Chu, namely “Yangchun” 陽春 and “Baixue” 白雪 [“Song of Spring Snow”], “Xiali” 下里 and “Baren” 巴人 [“Song of the Rustic Poor”]. From the annotation of this poem, *ibid.*, p.260.

<sup>49</sup> The “recluse” refers to Yuan An 袁安 (d. 92) of the Eastern Han. In *Ru’nan xianxian zhuan* 汝南先賢傳 [Biography of Late Virtuous Men of Ru’nan] it reads, “At the time when the roads were deep in snow, the officer of Luoyang went out to investigate, and he saw people all swept away the snow and some of them begged. When he reached Yuan An’s home, there was no path for letting in. [Some people] suspected that Yuan An had died, so the officer ordered to remove the snow for entering, and they saw Yuan An numb with coldness in his bed. [The officer] asked him why had he not been out. Yuan An answered, ‘With the heavy snow everybody is hungry, it is not appropriate to offend others.’ The officer felt that he was virtuous and recommended him for the official title of *xiaolian* 孝廉 [similar to *xiucai* 秀才, Cultivated Talent; normally would be offered a place of *lang* 郎, Gentleman-attendant].” In Fan Ye. *Hou Han shu*, p.1517 (*juan* forty-five, vol.3). The original reads, “時大雪積地丈餘，洛陽令身出案行，見人家皆除雪出，有乞食者。至袁安門，無有行路。謂安已死，令人除雪入戶，見安僵臥。問何以不出。安曰：「大雪人皆餓，不宜干人。」令以為賢，舉為孝廉。”

<sup>50</sup> The allusion of “reading by snow” is attributed to *Shang you lu* 尚友錄 [The Record of Advocating Friends] by Liao Yongxian 廖用賢 (fl. 1617): “Sun Kang of the Jin Dynasty was from Jingzhao. He was clever and diligent. Being poor, he lacked burning oil for his lamp, so he tried to read by the brightness of the snow in the winter months.” Qtd. Zhang and Huang, *ZSZJ*, p.207. The

This poem shows an unusual indication of the persona's self-realisation and moody sighing at her old age. In the last four lines, the phrase *zi jie* 自嗟 [I sigh] heightens Zhu Shuzhen's feeling towards the youth which cannot return, feelings especially magnified when it comes to the passing of a season or a year, symbolising old age. It is extraordinary in the sense that Zhu Shuzhen's awareness of her plight provides an ironic comparison between herself and the wifeless man. Her concern for the "old," "sallow" and "wifeless" man can be viewed as matching her own lonely, pallid and husbandless (or loverless) situation. In my opinion this is a clever way of elaborating her self-image while borrowing from others' conditions, whether authentic or created. "Reading by [the light of] snow" and "sleepless" in the last line of this poem could also be a strategy used to recount her own melancholy at not receiving love. Some researchers tend to interpret this "wifeless" man as her lover,<sup>51</sup> however it is difficult to draw an exact conclusion here by reading merely one line of her poetry. One idea is that the persona has emphasised her awareness of her own feelings in the boudoir, intensifying the stress caused by enduring the cruel passage of time.

The use of the direct "I" persona in Zhu Shuzhen's poems contrasts with the dogma of selflessness expected of women at the time. Although it is not frequently used, we cannot say that the poet was frightened for fear of incurring criticism, because although sometimes the idea of "I" is concealed, elsewhere she reveals the idea within the title of her poems. The two interrelated poems of "Self Reproving" offer important messages.<sup>52</sup> Despite the fact that no obvious personal identification is shown in the above two poems, the title "Self Reproving" is directed towards the self. The most

---

original reads, "晉孫康，京兆人。性敏好學，家貧，燈無油，於冬月嘗映雪讀書。"

<sup>51</sup> Huang Yanli and Wu Xihe. *Duanchang fangcao yuan — Zhu Shuzhen zhuan*, pp.170-71.

<sup>52</sup> See section 2.3 of Chapter 2 in this dissertation for reference of "Self Reproving (Two Poems) – Number 1" and section 3.2 of Chapter 3 in this dissertation for reference of "Self Reproving (Two Poems) – Number 2."

appealing characteristic of the two poems is Zhu Shuzhen's ironical defence of women's talent for writing, and her use of the specific singular/ plural pronoun of *wu* 吾 [I/ we] in taking up the responsibility in her unconscious leadership of guiding other women to reveal their own selves. The uses of "how more" in the first poem and "only" in the second implicitly disclose her satirical application of metaphors. Her ambivalent mind appears here when Zhu Shuzhen says that "it is *truly* a great guilt for women to dabble in writing" and "cleverness is not as good as stupidity," thus contradicting her own declaration in another poem:

暮春三首 (其二)

碧沼荷錢小葉圓，眼前芍藥恣連顛。清明已過三春候，谷雨初晴四月天。  
乍著薄羅偏覺瘦，懶勻鉛粉只宜眠。情知廢事因詩句，氣習難除筆硯緣。

Declining Spring (Three Poems) – Number 2

In the green pond the young lotus leaves are round,  
Peonies are passionately displayed in profusion before my eyes.  
Tomb-Sweeping Day has passed, it is the end of spring,  
It is the fourth month now and the rainy season has ended.  
Silk garments just touch my skin, yet I am feeling too thin,  
Weary of applying make-up, I only desire rest.  
Deep in my mind, I know, writing poetry makes me listless,  
Yet my predestined attachment to brush and inkstone is hard to alter.

(ZSZSH p.129)

Combining the ironical representations of the former two poems and the last line "Yet my predestined attachment to brush and inkstone is hard to alter," it is unambiguously clear that Zhu Shuzhen's deliberate removing from the self provides her with the paradoxical predicament of her writing. We can also conclude that by all means, whether positive or negative, she never abandoned her own self in the poems, but dared to voice her

grievances and defend herself against the conventions imposed on women.<sup>53</sup>

Consequently, Zhu Shuzhen's means of revealing the self in poetry is to adopt several different personae, including first-person, second-person, third-person and even no persona. One important point to note is that while the persona-lacking expression is often taken to represent the self in traditional Chinese texts, the clear indication of personal identification means an extraordinary emphasis. In another aspect, Zhu Shuzhen's literary self-consciousness is also exposed in her mental defiance of the convention of self-sacrifice established by society, her vigorous defence against the customary stipulations regarding feminine behaviour. The effort involved in reflecting upon her self is appreciable as "many women fail to get in touch with an 'authentic self'" since, in Diana Meyers's definition, "authentic self" is "a self-chosen identity rooted in the individual's most abiding feelings and firmest convictions, yet subject to the critical perspective autonomy competency affords."<sup>54</sup> From all this, it is easy to imagine that her ideal way of projecting her self-centred aspect in poetry<sup>55</sup> was totally unacceptable within such a community that emphasised so strongly the wiping away of the effects of poetry on women. Zhu Shuzhen's personal state being not acceptable at the time might have also been due to the fact that, as Henry Rosemont has noted, "the Confucian persuasion rejects the distinction between the personal and the impersonal in moral theorizing, in favor of the

---

<sup>53</sup> Xu Lifang sees this poem as a self-contradiction when contrasted with the two poems of "Self Reproving." Xu remarks that "writing" is revealed in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry as a main concern in her life as seen from all these poems regarding writing. Xu Lifang, "Nüzi nongwen cheng ke zui — shi xi nüxing shuxie yishi zhong zhi zijue yu maodun" 女子弄文誠可罪 — 試析女性書寫意識中之自覺與矛盾 ["It is Truly a Great Guilt for Women to Write — An Analysis of Self-Awareness and Contradiction in Women's Writing Consciousness."]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan, *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu*, pp.110-26, here pp.120-21.

<sup>54</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Joel L. Kupperman. "Feminism as Radical Confucianism: Self and Tradition," p.51.

<sup>55</sup> See Grace Fong's phrase "ideal projections of the self" used in her paraphrasing of Martin Huang's *Literati and Self Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel* in her "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/Biographical Practices," 261.

interpersonal[.]”<sup>56</sup> If looked at in this way, whether Zhu Shuzhen behaves, in her poetry, personally (self-consciously) or impersonally (self-unconsciously) would still be intolerable in the eyes of the Confucians.

#### 4.3.2 Zhu Shuzhen and Her Self-Contradictory Attachments

As mentioned in the previous chapter, contradictions in thought and behaviour are constant in Zhu Shuzhen’s verse. This can be shown in her wavering thoughts towards being viewed as inferior or even immoral. At times she presents herself in the disguise of a tough female figure who does not submit to conventional ethical standards, as in “Asking Spring (Ancient-Style Verse)” and “Expressing my Emotions on an Autumn Day” discussed in the above section. At other moments she is veiled in the mask of a feeble and fragile woman with an intrinsic fear of being dominated by the patriarchal society, such as “Thin and Pallid” and “Sleepless on a Winter Night” analysed in section 4.2.1.

One obvious question to pose is whether Zhu Shuzhen is inconsistent in the subtle expression of her womanly status. The answer is not simple, since she is both inconsistent as well as consistent in the ideas revealed in her poetry. She is inconsistent in that, on the surface, she racks her brain in order to give a light touch regarding the idea of inequality for women. The thought of virtue riding over talent (writing) inspired by the two poems titled “Self Reproving” can be said, to a large extent, to be an idea directly contradicting the line “Yet my predestined attachment to brush and inkstone is hard to alter” in the second poem of “Declining Spring (Three Poems).” Part of the question may have been how she wants herself to appear in those poems, the degree of authenticity being a noteworthy aspect to investigate, since poetry may to a large extent reflect the poet’s literary self. It is quite obvious that Zhu Shuzhen always wanted to reveal the self in her poetry, otherwise those

---

<sup>56</sup> Henry Rosemont. “Classical Confucian and Contemporary Feminist Perspectives on the Self: Some Parallels, and Their Implications,” p.75.

poems attracting criticism would not have been written, for the sole purpose of maintaining her flawless image. On other occasions, however, she seems to appear passive and submissive towards the frames established for women at the stage when she has no way of escaping from social constraints and is docile in the face of the heavy burden laid upon her.

In another way, consistency appears in Zhu Shuzhen's poems in deeper levels, but we can say that it is only indicated in a very subtle way, resembling the floating foam seen in her poem "Thin and Pallid" discussed above. In reading many of her poems, cross-referencing to submissive and invulnerable characteristics can easily be found. If we refer back to the two poems titled "Self Reproving," the underlying desire of getting the approval of society for her talent is conversely revealed in the lines "To rub through the inkstone is not for us to handle,/ How more creditable it is to embroider till breaking the needle," an ironical representation of the unacceptable realms of women's writing. She also has the self-realisation that "cleverness is not as good as stupidity," however hesitant may be the use of the phrases "only now do I understand." This "self-referential poem, in which she mockingly censures herself as a female author, reads as one of the most modern statements on the ambivalent role of female writers in society."<sup>57</sup> Despite all these, a clear eye will find that the poet actually prefers cleverness to stupidity and the above analysis explains an attitude that can be both inconsistent and consistent. In voicing her ultimate passions and desires, Zhu Shuzhen's poetry does not conform to society's norms. She knows that to perform conventionally would be one way to escape public accusation, yet through her unconscious ironies she betrays herself.

---

<sup>57</sup> Anne Birrell, "Women in Literature." In Victor Mair ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, pp.194-220, here p.210.

#### 4.4 Zhu Shuzhen's Representation of Female Subjectivity

To simply add to the concept of self, “[f]emale critics have noted that many women writers use autobiographical discourse as a powerful mode for asserting identity and subjectivity.”<sup>58</sup> Referring back to section 4.3.1, if moral behaviour is to be analysed, as Rosemont has suggested, in terms of an interactive basis, Zhu Shuzhen is “non-interactive” in only two ways: either through her obsession with created loneliness, or through the imagined manners of the particular role in which she is engaged, even though this is relatively minor when compared to her overwhelming solitude. However, even in such an interrelated reflection of her self and the poetic unfulfilling of her theoretical moral responsibility, Zhu Shuzhen further shows her conscious feminine self through the construction of a female image in her poetry, working against a widespread objective evaluation, of her imagined behaviour mirrored through the lines. Her boredom and desolation allow much flexibility in the confines of her boudoir in writing sad poems:

[...] by convention a woman's boudoir is the center of her existence. This interior setting is full of the intimate objects with which a woman of the noble class [here gentry class would apply] would surround herself: her ivory bed, her silken curtains, her bronze lamps, her jade mirror stand and bronze mirror, and her exotic cosmetics and perfumes.<sup>59</sup>

Impounded in the surroundings of such an environment a woman, in describing either her own emotions or those of a projected persona, is more easily inclined to reflect her image, and even her life in poetry. “[V]oluntary seclusion, suspension of activity, nostalgic pinning, obsessive despair [...] self-neglect and physical deterioration[...],”<sup>60</sup> still appear due to the hope of obtaining public recognition in the male-dominated society. Female poets

---

<sup>58</sup> Grace Fong, “Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/Biographical Practices,” 259.

<sup>59</sup> Anne Birrell. “The Dusty Mirror: Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry,” pp.44-45.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.



could not break away from the traditionally acceptable style of writing about very feminine topics.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, a creation of her female subjectivity in relation to her uniquely unconventional attitude is seen, and in her poems such an aspect is implicitly revealed:

春陰古律二首 (其二)

陡覺湘裙剩帶圍，情懷常是被春欺。半檐落日飛花後，一陣輕寒微雨時。  
幽谷想應鶯出晚，舊巢應怪燕歸遲。間關幾許傷情處，悒悒柔情不自持。<sup>62</sup>

A Cloudy Spring Day (Ancient-Style Verse) (Two Poems) – Number 2

All of a sudden I find my belt retracts on my waist,  
Since my passions are always tricked by spring.  
After falling flowers and setting sun under the eaves,  
Slight coldness comes and drizzles spray.  
The secluded valley hopes the orioles should be slow in leaving it,  
The old nest must blame the swallows for their late return.  
On hearing birds' chirping I am heartbroken,  
Because my painful tenderness is unendurable. (ZSZSH p.114)

By the experience of being “tricked by spring” and her exasperation at the “swallows['] late return,” Zhu Shuzhen focuses mainly on feminine subjects of fragile physique and the innermost unreachable sensation under the constructed notion of a weaker gender. The concrete imagery of a belt retracting on her waist symbolises delicate consideration towards her personal concern with her identity as a woman, as a direct contrast to male habits of writing female poems – most of which focus on the outer appearance of a woman, or objective descriptions of settings. The female

---

<sup>61</sup> Adapted from Wilt Idema, “Proud Girls.” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.2 (2001): 232-48, here 235 and 244 respectively.

<sup>62</sup> “Jiu chao ying guai yan gui chi” 舊巢應怪燕歸遲 [The old nest must blame the swallows for their late return] in the original poem reads “Jiu chao que guai yan gui chi” 舊巢卻怪燕歸遲 [But the old nest blames the swallows for their late return] in *ZSZJ*, pp.9-10. “Shang qing chu” 傷情處 [heartbroken] in the original reads “shang huai chu” 傷懷處 [bitter in mind] in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ* (pp.9-10 and p.8 respectively). As there is no great advantage in terms of meaning in changing the characters suggested, I have followed the version in *ZSZSH* in my translation.

persona's deepest feelings of "painful tenderness" reveal someone who is unable to tolerate being deceived by the spring (an image of an evil power), and her feebleness in waiting for the return of the swallows (an image of a lover).<sup>63</sup> These elusive descriptions provide subtle thoughts of mysterious attachments to a particular passion, which constitute an explainable analysis of Zhu Shuzhen's poetic affections.

A weak physique, the typical image of a feeble woman, appears in many of Zhu Shuzhen's poems. In such poems subjectivity from the inner sensitive mind of a woman is often shown, paying attention for example to the slight catch of breath after a hot bath:

浴罷

浴罷雲鬟亂不梳，清癯無力氣方蘇。坐來始覺神魂定，尚怯涼風到坐隅。

After Bathing

After bathing I comb not my wild cloudy hair,  
Just catching my breath as I am weak and lifeless.

---

<sup>63</sup> "Swallow" has a specific meaning of loneliness and permanent longing for a lover. The allusion is to the story of Guan Panpan. A preface of Bai Juyi's poem "Yanzi lou" 燕子樓 [Swallow Tower] reads, "Once a minister in Xuzhou had a beloved courtesan named [Guan] Panpan, who was good at singing and dancing with refined manners. [...] Later the minister was dead and buried in the eastern part of Luoyang. In Pengcheng there was an old residence of the Zhang's [surname of her husband], in which a tower called 'Swallow' was located. Panpan decided to refrain from remarriage due to her old love, and she stayed in the tower for over ten years. [Afterwards she died by eating nothing.]" [The original reads, "徐州故尚書有愛妓曰盼盼，善歌舞，雅多風態。{.....} 尚書既沒，歸葬東洛，而彭城有張氏舊第，第中有小樓名燕子。盼盼念舊愛而不嫁，居是樓十餘年。{後不食而死。}"] Qtd. Gu Yisheng, Xu Peijun, and Yuan Zhenyu eds. *Song ci jinghua*, pp.146-47. Su Dongpo wrote a *ci*-poem, "To the tune: *Yong yu yue* (Night Stay at the Swallow Tower in Pengcheng)" [永遇樂 (彭城夜宿燕子樓，夢盼盼，因作此詞。)] Another version of this *ci*-poem reads "To the tune: *Yong yu yue* (Awaken from a Dream in Xuzhou, Written When I Mount the Swallow Tower in the North)" 永遇樂 (徐州夢覺，北登燕子樓作。)] which expresses his sympathy for Guan Panpan who, after ten years of loneliness staying in the Swallow Tower mourning her husband, committed suicide. Part of the poem reads, "A weary traveller at the world's end,/ When coming back in the mountain path,/ Looks heartbroken at the past garden in his mind's eye./ The Swallow Tower is empty,/ But where is the beautiful one?/ In vain is the swallow locked up in the tower./ The past and present time is but a dream,/ When did I become aware of my dream?/ Yet leaving behind old joy and new regrets./ At a different time I am facing/ The night scenes of the yellow tower,/ And I have a big sigh for you." From *ibid*. The original reads, "天涯倦客，山中歸路，望斷故園心眼。燕子樓空，佳人何在？空鎖樓中燕。古今如夢，何曾夢覺，但有舊歡新怨。異時對，黃樓夜景，爲余浩嘆。" This is a very subtle use of the allusion by Zhu Shuzhen when she describes facing the parting of her loved one, and staying in the inner quarters alone.

I sit down merely to soothe my spirit,  
But I am still afraid the cool breeze will reach this corner.

(ZSZSH pp.211-12)

The fragility of the female persona in this poem is manifested in her lassitude, an inability even to comb her hair or breathe normally. The Chinese belief of not sitting in a corner catching breezes is also seen here, indicating the presence of a kind of physical weakness specifically attributed to women. Thus the feeling of sickness after a routine activity like bathing, can be considered as Zhu Shuzhen paying close attention to women's health.

Although female subjectivity is seen typically expressed by women, certainly it may not be wise to suggest a distinction between masculine objectivity and feminine subjectivity since male poets can write subjective poetry and female poets can also write objective poetry. The way of distinguishing sensitive femininity lies in the descriptions of emotions directly from the eyes of the female persona. Therefore it is always easier for women poets to display distinctive introvert feminine beauty in their feminine poems, in contrast to those male formations of extrovert female portrayals inserted into the lines of their poetry.<sup>64</sup>

Women's emphasis on love or affections can be seen elsewhere in their poetry through their particular ways of expressing ideas. The bottomless sorrow caused by painful love experience is reviewed throughout the feminine sense of distorting physical and mental forms of the poet's ontological presence in her poems. The following poem displays this kind of twist of mind:

---

<sup>64</sup> Notice the difference of meanings and implications between the two words 'feminine' and 'female.' The former is produced by the constructed gender of 'female' (when we call them 'women' using the word created by society) while the latter signifies only the identification of the superficial sex 'women.' Male poets tended to portray the outer façade of the so-called 'women' rather than go into the deepest feelings of women themselves. This idea will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

秋夜牽情三首 (其三)

閒悶閒愁百病生，有情終不似無情。風流意思鑄磨盡，離別肝腸鑄寫成。

**Autumn Night Sentiment (Three Poems) – Number 3**

Listless loneliness and longing spark off much illness,  
Loving someone is, after all, unlike being loveless.  
Our romance is carved and polished to the end,  
Casting and portraying my desolation at separation.

(ZSZSH pp.179-80)

To magnify the lethargic sense of sickness, Zhu Shuzhen attributes this attitude to her damaged beliefs regarding the constructed inferiority imposed on women. Her ultimate lack of company (“loneliness”) and caressing love (seen in “longing” and “loveless”) serves as the main focal point in the expression of her gut-tearing soreness when she parts with somebody. Comparison between being *with* and *without* love touches the deepest places of most females, when their subjectivity of love seeking and love-retention blends together with the occurrence of unexpected parting (or, avoidance of love loss). The use of the words “carved,” “polished” and “casting” demonstrates how her deepest sentiments are drawn into an endless hollow of failed love.

A series of ten poems attributed to Zhu Shuzhen displays feelings of feminine solitude and a feminine way of looking at even the most trivial details of the things around her. Generally, in analysing women poets, it is perhaps right to follow Idema’s comment that “[m]any poems reiterate – *ad nauseam*, one is tempted to say – the sadness over the passing of spring and autumn (poems on the suffocating summer heat or the harshness of winter are rare).”<sup>65</sup> Zhu Shuzhen, however, in fulfilling her productivity for the “spring and autumn” content of Idema’s comment as well as compensating

---

<sup>65</sup> Wilt Idema, “Proud Girls,” 244-45. The comment is made when Idema in analysing *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* edited by Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy.

when it comes to summer and winter, expresses her womanly feelings through the use of subjective emotions, which indicates that it is through her specific thoughts from a feminine angle on top of the altering of seasons and environments, that she projects her sense of self-reflection and self-realisation. The following poems are typical of illustrating Zhu Shuzhen's projection of her loneliness by mirroring the self through personalising objects:

春日雜書十首 (其一)

春來春去幾經過，不是今年恨最多。寂寂海棠枝上月，照人清夜欲如何。<sup>66</sup>

Assorted Poems on Spring Days (Ten Poems) – Number 1

Spring comes, spring goes, many have passed,

It is not this year that I have most regrets.

The lonely, lonely moon over the crabapple branches --

Why does it shine so clearly on me in the cool night? (ZSZSH p.123)

春日雜書十首 (其五)

捲簾月掛一鉤斜，愁到黃昏轉更加。獨坐小窗無伴侶，凝情羞對海棠花。

Assorted Poems on Spring Days (Ten Poems) – Number 5

Between rolled curtains hangs a hook-like slanting moon,

Melancholy at dusk turns to deepen itself.

Sitting alone beside the small window, without company,

Preoccupied with my mood, ashamed before the crabapple blossoms.

(ZSZSH p.125)

---

<sup>66</sup> “Bu shi jinnian hen zui duo” 不是今年恨最多 [It is not this year that I have most regrets] in the original poem reads “bu shi jinnian hen zui duo” 不似今年恨最多 [It is not like this year that I have most regrets] in both ZSZJ and ZSZJZ (p.25 and p.19 respectively). Zhong Xing comments in *Mingyuan shigui* that “[The use of] ‘bu shi’ [‘it is not’] cannot be replaced by ‘bu shi’ [‘it is not like’], which is totally different.” Qtd. ZSZJ, p.25. (The original reads, “「不是」, 不可作「不似」, 此甚有別。”) “Yu ruhe” 欲如何 [how would it want to be] reads “yue ruhe” 月如何 [how is the moon] in ZSZSH, p.123. Zhong Xing comments in *Mingyuan shigui* that “[The use of] ‘yu ruhe’ [‘How would it want to be,’ in the poem it is translated as ‘why does it (...)’] is questioned in a regretful and bitter way.” Qtd. ZSZJ, p.25. The original reads, “「欲如何」, 問得怨苦。”

春日雜書十首 (其十)

自入春來日日愁，惜花翻作為花羞。呢喃飛過雙雙燕，嗔我垂簾不上鉤。

Assorted Poems on Spring Days (Ten Poems) – Number 10

Since spring's arrival day after day I worry,

So that my love of flowers has turned to shame.

Flying shoulder by shoulder a pair of twittering swallows,

Are angry with me for not hooking up my curtains. (ZSZSH p.127)

One reason for the poet to use the passing of spring to personify her emotions would be that spring symbolises new and fresh life, which is in direct contrast to her withering beauty and fading youth. The unswerving passage of time also signifies the irony of the parting of a lover, especially when she is enjoying such magnificent spring scenery. The main words in common in this series of poems are “regrets,” “melancholy” and “sorrow.” Images of the moon and the flowers reflect to a large extent a woman’s sadness, on the ground that the former signifies reunion, while the latter signifies an intimate relationship with the appreciation of feminine beauty, especially applied to cases when comparison occurs between a woman and the flower itself. One obvious example in the work of another female poet appears in “To the tune: *Zui hua yin*” by Li Qingzhao, “One is even thinner than the yellow flowers.”<sup>67</sup>

Despite all these associations, in her poetry Zhu Shuzhen still creates a melancholic atmosphere, such as the regrets that spring has intensified in her subjective mood illustrated in the first poem of “Assorted Poems on Spring Days (Ten Poems).” “It is not this year that I have most regrets” demonstrates the recursive depression she encounters once spring arouses her concerns about her fading attractiveness. This contrasts with the standard ideas of spring symbolising fresh youth is subtly brought about to indicate her

---

<sup>67</sup> The original reads “人比黃花瘦.” Cf. the translated version “I’m more fragile than the yellow chrysanthemum.” In Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy eds. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, p.94.

feelings regarding seasonal changes.

In the fifth poem Zhu Shuzhen manipulates the transformation from daylight to dusk accompanying her deepened sorrow: “Melancholy at dusk turns to deepen itself,” suggests the changing day could symbolise a person’s sad process of aging, a very traditional Chinese way of looking at life. The last line in this poem “Preoccupied with my mood, ashamed before the crabapple blossoms” goes well in terms of feminine subjectivity with the second line of the tenth poem, “So that my love of flowers has turned to shame,” flowers being an outstanding image for feminine beauty as mentioned above. The use of the word “[a]shame[d]” best describes the poet’s introverted inferiority when faced with fabulous flowers, which can signify an allusion to other beautiful women. Such a restrained comparison would seem too delicate to observe, but it is still possible that her passion is extremely elusive, pointing to her deepest inner feelings derived from experience.

Zhu Shuzhen uses the character *xiu* 羞 [ashamed] when she mentions the flowers, and she may have been using the allusion *biyue xiuhua* 閉月羞花 [the moon is covered and the flowers ashamed].<sup>68</sup> A pun emerges here when she actively manipulates her beauty to the original allusion in order to make the flowers ashamed, yet the action surprisingly becomes passive, the persona having felt herself ashamed before such marvellous flowers. Of course, the “pair of twittering swallows” obviously worsens her lonely and sorrowful emotions by the subtle illustration of a woman being shut in the inner quarters (symbolised by “not hooking up my curtains”).

Subjective reasoning is seen more often in the works of a woman poet

---

<sup>68</sup> This alludes to two of the *si da meiren* 四大美人 [Four Most Beautiful Women] in ancient China, namely Xishi 西施 (b. 506 B.C.?) (Spring and Autumn Period), Wang Zhaojun (Han Dynasty), Diaochan 貂蟬 (n.d.) (Eastern Han Dynasty) and Yang Guifei (Tang Dynasty). Anecdotes were circulated to appreciate their beauty in later ages when people stated that Xishi was as beautiful as *chenyu* 沉魚 [the fish sinking {to the bottom of the river when seeing her beauty}]; Wang Zhaojun as *luoyan* 落雁 [the geese falling down {when seeing her beauty}]; and Diaochan and Yang Guifei as *biyue* and *xiuhua* mentioned above respectively.

than that of her male counterparts. Her delicacy and the stance or angle that she undertakes, are more inclined to the society-constructed feminine way of treating things. Accordingly, it was unavoidable for Zhu Shuzhen to have injected into her poetry the scattered fragments of her emotions, which can be seen as slightly but significantly distinctive from the creations of male poets. In conclusion, Wu Aiyue's comments are useful in discussing Zhu Shuzhen's personal feminine subjectivity:

From the feminine angle, Zhu Shuzhen's early awareness of her feminine ideology and the catastrophes in her life has provided her with feminine sensitivity, delicacy and spirituality with which to observe life. In expressing her own recognition and emotions towards life, she possesses a special feminine utterance of tastes and sentiments. The vividness of the character sensations and the profoundness of the psychological levels are not to be surpassed by male poets.<sup>69</sup>

Certainly it is always hard to refer to the scattered records of Zhu Shuzhen's life as evidence of her projection of feminine subjectivity. Wu Aiyue's comment, however, has characterised Zhu Shuzhen's subjective ideology towards the objects around her as reflected in her poetry. Although her view of the world is restricted to her boudoir, her self is reflected in her preoccupied effort in recognising her own sensitive mind and poetic sentiment. Sensitivity and distance from the outer world allow women to express themselves richly and painfully without awareness of having gone beyond the established frame.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Wu Aiyue. "Chongchong fanli zhong de nüxing beige — ping Zhu Shuzhen zuopin de nüxing yishi" 重重藩籬中的女性悲歌 — 評朱淑真作品的女性意識 ["The Sad Elegy of Female within Layers of Barriers — Commenting on the Female Ideology in Zhu Shuzhen's Work"]. *Guangxi minzu xueyuan xuebao* 4 (1996): 103-06, here 104.

<sup>70</sup> Adapted from Hu Yuanling, "Nanxing shilun yu nüxing shiren de 'ge' — Zhu Shuzhen yanjiu zhong de yi ge wenti" 男性詩論與女性詩人的'隔' — 朱淑真研究中的一個問題 ["The 'Separation' between Poetic Commentaries by Male and Female Poets — A Problem in the Study of Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Qiusi xuekan* 2 (1998): 80-82, here 81-82.



## 4.5 Conclusion

When discussing the problem of the self revealed in poetry, one is always faced with a question of identity representation. To reveal one's own identity or imagined identity (i.e. the identity created or imitated in a particular poem), one is confined to either distinguishing or blending together the two personalities. Distinguishing the personalities reflects fewer elements of the self, while blending together the two gives researchers a more favourable factor for interpreting the content of the poem. The degree of compatibility of one's own and created identity determines the authenticity of the self echoed in poetry, that is, the higher the compatibility, the greater the authenticity.

As for the question of how highly Zhu Shuzhen valued the importance of revealing her self, the use of the word "I" and the implicit indications of "myself," though lacking an obvious pronoun, express the upsurge of the sense of self-realisation in poetry. In fact, Zhu Shuzhen may have been unaware of the self-conscious and self-semiconscious minds. She was deeply concerned with displaying in her poetry her feminine voice, her aspirations as a woman and her profound insights. Despite the fact that her historicity is vague, the image that Zhu Shuzhen has presented in her poetry is a mixture of her own sentiments and the mirrored likeness of her frail figure and pallid face. In the poetic mirror she saw herself variously as a talented daughter, a lonely wife in her boudoir, a thoughtful individual equipped with a masculine concern for other people's grievances, and a typical woman with hyper-feminine sensitivity. Zhu Shuzhen's self is reflected in diversified aspects, through independent affirmation of the above roles or combinations of some of them.

Zhu Shuzhen's self is constructed by culture and the established rules of society. Her self-realisation and self-portrayal explode out of the suppression-submission setting resulting from the introduction of strict

compliance by society. Thus the ideas of resistance reflected in her poems are actually derived from her cultured self which is specific in terms of her feminine concern and her individual needs and longings that emphasise personal value. The combination of feminine characteristics and cultural responsiveness can help us to look at the stance taken by a poet imbued in her literary passions.

# Chapter 5 Femininity vs Masculinity:

## Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji's

### Poetic Female Voices

#### 5.1 Prologue

Female subjectivity is revealed in poetry in a feminine persona as well as in a feminine reaction or emotion towards a particular object. Interpretation of the feminine voice thus derived from the persona is vital in order to magnify the essence of the sentiments expressed in the works of a particular woman poet. As Charlotte Furth remarks, "The genres associated with women, *shi*-poetry and *ci*-poetry, were considered the most suitable for private, intimate emotions and for the evocation of romantic themes."<sup>1</sup> For interpreters of individual poems, however, placing them in terms of their femininity or masculinity is difficult. It is perhaps misleading simply to ascribe femininity to female poets and masculinity to male poets, although in most cases the gender nature is perfectly reflected in the poetry written by the same gender.

In the case of Zhu Shuzhen's poetry, after detailed analysis it is generally assumed that the voice expressed represents a female's profound sensations. But such feminine voices expressed in her poems are sometimes seen as 'pretended feminine voices' since Zhu Shuzhen's biography is regarded as a mystery, and, given the many cases of male poets forging the feminine style in their poetry, "[...] a man or a woman, may write well enough to fool us by faking emotions and by creating the appearance of authenticity. And that means that gut feelings about authorship have little

---

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Furth, "Poetry and Women's Culture in Late Imperial China: Editor's Introduction," 4.

bibliographical value."<sup>2</sup> Of course there were also female poets imitating male voices. This kind of mutual imitation allows a freer imagination for both poet and reader, while readers can attain a sense of catharsis regarding their own sensations when they penetrate the intended emotions of the poem regardless of the writer's gender. Ultimately people may ask: can male poets write as *appropriately* as female poets when they express those matters that are especially confined to the inner boudoirs? The phrase "as *appropriately* as" here does not necessarily signify "as *well* as," but refers rather to the genuine ideas and feelings embedded within the consciousness of the poet herself. In arguing the possibility of male poets authoring feminine styles, Idema agrees that "[t]he more successful the author was in describing the emotions of *his* persona in a persuasive manner, the stronger would be the claim that such a poem could only have been written by a *woman*" [emphasis added],<sup>3</sup> thus triggering a counter-argument that a woman poet could also be successful in describing *her* persona so well that she could convince people that the poem had been written by a *man*. Elaine Showalter emphasised her modern view that "women belong to both the dominant (largely male-defined and administered) culture and to the less vocal subculture of women; women learn both cultures and hence speak a 'double-voiced' language."<sup>4</sup>

Over the past decades arguments have already been made regarding authentic women's voices and mimed ones (for both male miming female voices and female miming male voices). Marie Florine Bruneau has summarised the comments of past scholars, including Maureen Robertson who distinguished between genuine feminine voices speaking for their own selves and imitated "literati-feminine" voices. At the same time Robertson acknowledged that there has been a respectable male poetic tradition of

---

<sup>2</sup> Wilt Idema. "Proud Girls," 238.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Qtd. Judy Little, *The Experimental Self: Dialogic Subjectivity in Woolf, Pym, and Brooke-Rose*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996: p.8.

manipulating women's voices.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it sounds quite rational when scholars like Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua "identify traditional literature, and more broadly textual work, as a central discursive technique by which men manipulated and imaged women in order to give materiality to men's own subjective construction." The reason behind this would have been the strong but invisible limitation imposed on women for participating in the traditional literary establishment solely enjoyed by male poets.<sup>6</sup>

According to Dorothy Ko, when critics analysed talented women poets, they "often called into question the poets' authenticity and insisted they must be male because otherwise they could not be so talented: scholars generally assumed that women's verse was inferior to men's."<sup>7</sup> If it is argued that female poets did not possess the necessary qualities to imitate masculine poetic styles, this does not reflect the fact that there were some women poets who had received a broad education and then took the risk of facing severe criticism by writing about their own aspirations in spite of the patriarchy's unforgiving desire to wipe out the possibilities of flowery poetry written by women.

The crucial question seems to be: how are we going to compare the trivial differences between the realistic feminine voice and an imitated one? It is known that many poets usually express their aspirations through writing. Sometimes male poets imitate the female persona just as female poets imitate the male persona. But the point is whether male poets have made the poetic persona feminine enough, or female enough. According to Kang-i Sun Chang's observation regarding the important distinction made by Camille Paglia:

---

<sup>5</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Marie Florine Bruneau. "Learned and Literary Women in Late Imperial China and Early Modern Europe." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 156-72, here 166-67.

<sup>6</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Wendy Larson. *Women and Writing in Modern China*, p.74.

<sup>7</sup> Qtd. *ibid.*, p.100.

[F]emininity is not the same as femaleness. Femininity in Chinese poetry is an aesthetic quality, the cultivation of refined elegance and tender feeling—a quality akin to the “delicate restraint” (*wan-yüeh*) typical of the majority of Sung *tz'u* written by men. Women poets did not invent femininity in *tz'u*; male poets did.<sup>8</sup>

This view could be seen as a major distinction between the kind of “femaleness” naturally projected by women and the formulated “femininity” created by male poets, who usually wrote their poems under the influences of styles which prevailed at particular periods of time, such as the *wanyue* style in vogue in the Northern Song. Transference of emotions in poetry written by women signifies an extraordinarily refined sense of delicacy, which easily permeates deep into the feelings of readers. This perfectly explains the statement “[w]oman is trapped in her wavy, watery body. She must listen and learn from something beyond yet within her [...] Yet woman is depressed, pressed down, by earth’s gravitation, calling us back to her bosom.”<sup>9</sup> A woman’s efforts lie in absorbing emotions derived from outer environments; blending these together with her own sentiments and reflecting them in poetry renders an exotic difference, just as Grace Fong has commented, “[...] as women’s songs, that is, love lyrics with a female speaker [author], they [female-voiced songs] represent some of the strongest expressions of a female lyrical subject in the Chinese tradition.”<sup>10</sup>

## 5.2 A Brief Biographical Account of Yu Xuanji

In this chapter, a comparison of Zhu Shuzhen’s poetic female voice with that of Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844?-868?, original name Youwei 幼微, courtesy name Huilan 蕙蘭) of the Tang Dynasty is worthy of discussion, because her

---

<sup>8</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang. “Liu Shih and Hsü Ts’an: Feminine or Feminist?,” p.176. The distinction between “femininity” and “femaleness” appears in Camille Paglia. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. London: Yale University Press, 1990: pp.56-60.

<sup>9</sup> Camille Paglia. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, p.57.

<sup>10</sup> Grace S. Fong. “Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song,” p.111.

sadness manifested in her poetry a similar unhappiness in love loss. Although her language is more explicit and stronger than Zhu Shuzhen's, this may have been due to Yu Xuanji's greater freedom partly because she was a Daoist nun, and partly because of the less severe gender restrictions in the period in which she was alive.

Although sources of Yu Xuanji's biography do provide some different facts, most of them are consistent with each other in general terms. The anecdote in *Tang shi jishi* 唐詩紀事 [A Record of Tang Shi-poetry] reads as follows:

[Yu] Xuanji (style name Youwei) was a Daoist nun in the Xianyi Temple [咸宜觀] in the Western Capital during the reign period Xiantong [咸通 (860-874)]. She was talented in composing literary works. [...] Later on she was taken prisoner [and was executed] because she beat a girl [her maidservant] Lüqiao to death.<sup>11</sup>

According to anecdotes recorded in the Northern Song source *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 [Trivial Words of the North Dream] and the Yuan source *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng* 唐才子傳校正 [Rectified Biographies of the Talented in the Tang Dynasty], at the age of fifteen Yu Xuanji became a concubine of Li Yi 李億 [Zian 子安] whose official title was *Buque* 補闕 [Rectifier of Omissions]. Later her love with Li Zian faded because Li's wife was jealous, and under her scrutiny Li expelled Xuanji to the Xianyi Temple to become a Daoist nun.<sup>12</sup> She started to receive attention from some young men, and when spending time with them she sang poetry, and "[f]rom time to time on such

---

<sup>11</sup> Ji Yougong 計有功 (fl. 1121-1161). *Tang shi jishi jiaojian* 唐詩紀事校箋 [A Record of Tang Shi-poetry with Annotations]. Annotated by Wang Zhongyong. Chengdu: Bashu, 1989. 2 vols: pp.2022-23 (*juan* seventy-eight, vol.2). The original reads, “玄機，咸通中西京咸宜觀女道士也，字幼微，善屬文 [.....] 後以笞殺女童綠翹事下獄。”

<sup>12</sup> Sun Guangxian's 孫光憲 (d. 968) *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 [Trivial Words of the North Dream]. Commented by Kong Fanli. Beijing: Xueyuan, 2000: pp.195-97. The original reads, “[魚玄機] 咸通中，為李億補闕執箕帚，後愛衰下山，隸咸宜觀為女道士。” Also in Xin Wenfang's 辛文房 (fl. 1304-1324) *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng* 唐才子傳校正 [Rectified Biographies of the Talented in the Tang Dynasty]. Jiangsu: Jiangsu Guji, 1987: pp.240-41. The original reads, “[魚玄機] 咸通中及笄，為李億補闕侍寵。夫人妒，不能容。億遣隸咸宜觀披戴。”

occasions banter was unrestrained.”<sup>13</sup> Yu Xuanji was executed in the autumn of 868 because she had murdered and buried her maid Lüqiao 綠翹 in her backyard out of jealousy when she suspected that Lüqiao “had betrayed her [having a sexual relationship with one of her patrons].”<sup>14</sup>

There are forty-nine surviving poems written by Yu Xuanji. Although she enjoyed only twenty-four years of life,<sup>15</sup> she was an extraordinary figure in classical Chinese society:

What is striking about Yu Xuanji, then is that in her short and sad life she tried at least three of the available roles by which women could hope to experiment with accomplishments normally associated with male pursuits. She was a concubine in a family where her literary talents were admired and encouraged; she was a Daoist “nun” in a community where concentration on spiritual and intellectual issues was part of the way of life; and she was, apparently, a courtesan, which meant she could associate with well-to-do men, many of them highly educated and powerful, who might well appreciate her spirit and literary accomplishments as much as her personal attractiveness.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Huangfu Mei 皇甫枚 (fl. 874-910). *Sanshui xiaodu* 三水小牘 [*Small Texts from Sanshui*]. Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1958: pp.32-34. Translation by Jeanne Kelly, found in Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau eds. *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978: pp.305-06. According to Sang Baojing, in the Tang Dynasty there were still restrictions upon women’s activities despite the fact that the social atmosphere was relatively open. Only two alternatives were available for women who wanted to get rid of these restrictions: they could become either prostitutes or Daoist nuns. The purpose of the establishment of the Xianyi Temple was defined as not for simple meditation. From Sang Baojing. “Nüguan caiyuan Yu Xuanji — Zhongguo daojiao wenhua shi de guangcai yi ye” 女冠才媛魚玄機 — 中國道教文化史的光彩一頁 [“Yu Xuanji, the Talented Daoist Nun — A Brilliant Epoch of the Daoist Cultural History in China.”]. *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1 (2002): 48-57, here 52.

<sup>14</sup> Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau eds. *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, p.305. Suzanne Cahill adds that, “[h]is [Huangfu Mei’s] Yu Xuanji is a classical negative model, warning the reader of what happens to a woman who exercises freedom of choice concerning her own sexuality, religious vocation, and intellectual life.” Suzanne Cahill. “Smell Good and Get a Job: How Daoist Women Saints were Verified and Legitimized During the Tang Dynasty (618-907).” In Sherry J. Mou ed. *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*, pp.171-86, here p.174.

<sup>15</sup> David Young gives Yu Xuanji’s year of death as by 871, making her age of death twenty-eight, according to the traditional Chinese calculation of a person’s age, which is one year older than his/ her actual age. “Introduction.” In Yu Xuanji. *The Clouds Float North: The Complete Poems of Yu Xuanji*. Trans., David Young and Jiann I. Lin. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998: p.ix. Other sources suggest that Yu Xuanji was dead in the year 868, hence at the age of twenty-four. See Qu Wenjun. “Nü daoshi Yu Xuanji de zhunque zu nian” 女道士魚玄機的準確卒年 [“The Exact Year of Death of Yu Xuanji, the Daoist Nun”]. *Jianghai xuekan* 5 (1997): 61, here 61.

<sup>16</sup> David Young, “Introduction,” p.xi.



Despite the fact that the number of her poems is not large, her topics are diverse. Sharing her own experience of playing the three roles mentioned above, she wrote poetry on “missing her husband, flirting with other writers and with lovers, and pondering spiritual truths and accomplishments.”<sup>17</sup> Yu Xuanji is extraordinary in that she sometimes boldly “complains about the hardship of combining poetic talent and womanhood” while she is also so audacious as to “adopt a more teasing and playful stance toward other poets, her male friends, and lovers, because of her odd relation to them as both a fellow writer and an object of desire.”<sup>18</sup> Her talent, however, is also shown in her broad associations with people of different walks of life. The following poem may be her most familiar to Chinese readers:

贈鄰女

羞日遮羅袖，愁春懶起妝。易求無價寶，難得有心郎。  
枕上潛垂淚，花間暗斷腸。自能窺宋玉，何必恨王昌？

To a Female Neighbour

To avoid sunshine I cover up with silk sleeves,  
With spring's sadness I am too lazy to apply make-up.  
It's easy to strive for priceless treasures,  
But it's difficult to have a true and faithful lover.  
On the pillow we stealthily shed our tears,  
Among the flowers we are secretly heartbroken.  
If we can chant poems together with Song Yu,<sup>19</sup>  
Why should we long for Wang Chang?<sup>20</sup> (XYN p.1a)<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Song Yu was an outstanding *Chu ci* writer.

<sup>20</sup> Wang Chang 王昌 signifies a handsome lover. According to Xi Zuochi's 習鑿齒 (fl. 365) *Xiangyang qi jiu zhuan* 襄陽耆舊傳 [*Old and Past Commentaries of Xiangyang*], “Courtesy name Gongbo, [Wang Chang] was the Cavalier Attendant-in-ordinary. He had a handsome appearance, and was appreciated by people at his time. There were frequent references to him in Tang poetry, such as Cui Hao's (704?-754) ‘The Young Wife of the Wang Family:’ ‘At fifteen I married Wang Chang,/ Fairly I went out of the painted pavilion.’ And Li Yishan's [Li Shangyin] ‘Give a Reply for Someone:’ ‘Who is dispatching news to Wang Chang?/ What I know is the thirty-six lovebirds.’” The original reads, “[王昌] 字公伯，為散騎常侍，姿儀俊美，為時人所賞。唐人詩中屢及之，如崔顥〈王家少婦〉：「十五嫁王昌，盈盈出畫堂。」李義山〈代應〉：「誰與王昌報消息，盡知三十六鴛鴦。」”

This poem was apparently written by Yu Xuanji in order to console her neighbour,<sup>22</sup> a girl suffering from the loss of her lover. Yu Xuanji sighs at the girl's problems: "it's easy to strive for priceless treasures/ But it's difficult to have a true and faithful lover."<sup>23</sup> Yu Xuanji applies elegant and beautiful phrases in expressing her feelings in comforting others, while her philosophy pondering upon male and female relationship is illustrated in just two lines. Her purpose of writing a particular poem is always clearly shown in the titles (mostly addressing someone), which easily attract readers' attention to the situations or issues when she expresses her emotions.

### 5.3 A Comparison of Female Voices in Zhu Shuzhen's and Yu Xuanji's Poetry

#### 5.3.1 Love Inspired by Allusions

Attitudes reflected in poetry may be explainable and can be analysed by referring to the author's life. This process cannot be worked in reverse, however, as Idema has stressed: "some contributors have not avoided the temptation of drawing conclusions concerning the real-life personality of the author on the basis of her poetry."<sup>24</sup> Alternatively a poet's biography can, to a certain extent, play a vital role in determining the purpose of writing at times, as some titles and preface-style sub-titles of the poems show. Both Zhu

---

Xia Chunhao suggests that the name "Wang Chang" generally refers either to handsome and passionate men, or to dissolute and unfaithful men. Xia Chunhao. "Lun Yu Xuanji shi" 論魚玄機詩 ["Commenting on Yu Xuanji's Poetry"]. *Xuzhou shifan daxue xuebao* 3 (1997): 56-59, here 57.

<sup>21</sup> Yu Xuanji's poems are taken from Gao Shixian, and Wu Rulin eds. *Xu Xiaomu ji jianzhu, Yu Xuanji shi, Nan Tang er zhu ci* 徐孝穆集箋注·魚玄機詩·南唐二主詞 [Annotated Collection of Xu Xiaomu, Shi-poetry by Yu Xuanji, and Ci-poetry by the Two Rulers of the Southern Tang]. Taipei: Zhonghua, n.d. (Hereafter *XYN*). The translations of Yu's poems are done by myself.

<sup>22</sup> According to *Sanshui xiaodu*, Yu Xuanji wrote this poem when she was in prison following the murder of her maid. The original reads, "[魚玄機] 在獄中亦有詩曰：易求無價寶，難得有心郎。" In Huangfu Mei. *Sanshui xiaodu*, p.34.

<sup>23</sup> *Beimeng suoyan* and *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng* commented that this poem was written for Li Zian due to Xuanji's grudge towards him, p.195 and p.240 respectively.

<sup>24</sup> Wilt Idema. "Proud Girls," p.241.

Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji adopted this way of writing on some occasions, voicing their intention in writing a particular poem. Examples are shown below:

Title and Sub-title of a Poem (by Zhu Shuzhen)

會魏夫人席上，命小鬟妙舞，曲終，求詩於予，以「飛雪滿群山」為韻作五絕。

Meeting Lady Wei at a banquet, she ordered the young maids to perform a marvellous dance. As the music stopped, she requested poems from me, so I wrote five *jueju* using each of the characters "fei," "xue," "man," "qun" and "shan" from the line "wafting snow fills the mountain ranges" as rhymes.

(ZSZSH p.206)

Titles of Poems (by Yu Xuanji)

酬李學士寄簟                      To Thank Scholar Li for Sending Me the Gift of a  
Bamboo Mat                              (XYN p.2b)

期友人阻雨不至                      Expecting a Friend who was Held Up by Rain and  
did not Arrive                              (XYN pp.7b-8a)

The titles and sub-titles in these poems reveal personal experiences, and the purpose is apparently shown to the readers by reading just the title or sub-title as a summary of the poem. The aspect of looking into the poet's self is also taken into consideration here, without having to draw subjective conclusions concerning the relationship between the poetic content and the poet's emotions at a particular stage of her life. This kind of statement about the poem, however, has been proven to account for a very small number in Zhu Shuzhen's collection, a noticeable contrast to Yu Xuanji who made her purpose clear in over half of her poems. Nonetheless, readers can still observe the overwhelming use of the female voice imbued in the poems of both women, even without being aware of their detailed biographies.

Yu Xuanji's boldness reflected in the content of her poetry was

considered more acceptable during the Tang Dynasty than was the case for Zhu Shuzhen's poetry written several centuries later. Voices of the personae, in their similarities, often disclose boudoir loneliness and sadness, while the femaleness or female characteristic expressed in their lines accords with a womanly delicate attention to small details. A similarity between the poetry written by Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji appears in their appreciation of animals that symbolise love relationships:

羞燕

朱淑真

停針無語淚盈眸，不但傷春夏亦愁。花外飛來雙燕子，一番飛過一番羞。

Ashamed by the Swallows

by Zhu Shuzhen

Stopping the needle, silently tears fill up my eyes,

Not just sad for spring but summer is also full of sorrows.

Beyond the flowers, side by side fly a pair of swallows,

I feel a surge of shame every time they fly by. (ZSZSH p.162)

"Stopping the needle" signifies the listlessness of the female persona when it comes to fulfilling one of the duties required of a moral woman — needlework. The lethargy is caused by a sense of particular sadness as symbolised by the "pair of swallows" which makes her ashamed, and this can be well documented as referring to Zhu Shuzhen's love loss, a frequently used allusion in her poems.<sup>25</sup> The womanly characteristic is divulged in the

<sup>25</sup> "A pair of swallows" has a specific attribution to Guo Shaolan 郭紹蘭 (n.d.) of the Tang Dynasty. According to *juan* three of *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 [*Posthumous Incidents of the Reign Periods Kaiyuan and Tianbao*] by Wang Renyu 王仁裕 (880-956), "A woman named Guo Shaolan from Chang'an was married to Ren Zong [任宗], a rich merchant. [Ren Zong] went to Xiangzhong on business, and did not return for years. Shaolan thus wrote a poem, attached it to a swallow's feet [and sent them to him]. As a result Ren Zong's tears fell as he was touched by this." In *Siku quanshu*, pp.843-65, here p.859 (vol. 1035). The original reads, "長安[.....]女子[郭]紹蘭，適巨商任宗。爲賈於湘中，數年不歸，[.....] 蘭遂吟詩一首，[.....]繫於[燕]足上，[.....] 宗感而泣下。" In the section of "Ji yi" 輯佚 ["Edited for Lost Works"] of Zhu Shuzhen in Zhang Zhang and Huang Yu's *ZSZJ*, there is also another poem, "Guan yan" 觀燕 ["Watching Swallows"], about the idea of "a pair of swallows." It reads, "In my deep boudoir loneliness drags the slanting shadow of sunset,/ Dusk comes again as I am halfway closing the door./ The swallows do not know my feelings,/ In front of the eaves shoulder by shoulder they intentionally fly." The original reads, "深閨寂寞帶斜暉，又是黃昏半掩扉。燕子不知人意思，檐前故作一雙飛。" Her use of "intentionally" here indicates

environment (a boudoir with needlework, in spring or summer), the circumstance (silence) and the heart-felt emotion (“sorrows” and “shame”). It is also shown in the personal line of sight from inside the boudoir to outside the window, which suggests subtly an absence of freedom felt by women at the time.

Allusions to animals (particularly birds in Chinese culture) are often used to symbolise love, such as the common figurative image of lovebirds:<sup>26</sup>

聞李端公垂釣回寄贈

魚玄機

無限荷香染暑衣，阮郎何處弄船歸？自慚不及鴛鴦侶，猶得雙雙近釣磯。

Reply to Li Duangong on Hearing that He had Gone Fishing

by Yu Xuanji

Boundless lotus scent permeates the summer clothes,

Where did Ruan alight from his boat trip?<sup>27</sup>

I feel ashamed for not being a match for the lovebirds,

They get to approach the fishing rock in pairs. (XYN p.6b)

*Ruan lang* 阮郎 [a man surnamed Ruan 阮] in this poem represents a figurative image of a lover who has left and not returned for a long time. Yu Xuanji uses the allusion here to boldly indicate her admiration to one of the

---

the swallows’ teasing her about her love loss. See also “Assorted Poems on Spring Days (Ten Poems) – Number 10” in section 4.4 of Chapter 4 in this dissertation for a reference to the allusion of “a pair of swallows.”

<sup>26</sup> See “Sadness (Two Poems) – Number 1” in section 3.3 of Chapter 3 in this dissertation for a reference to the allusion of “lovebirds.”

<sup>27</sup> “Ruan” symbolises a lover, originated from a tune title “*Ruan lang gu*” 阮郎歸. The title came from the story of Liu Chen 劉晨 and Ruan Zhao 阮肇. According to Liu Yiqing’s 劉義慶 (403-444) *Youming lu* 幽明錄 [*The Record of Darkness and Brightness*], “In the fifth year of the Yongping reign period under Emperor Ming of Han [i.e. the year 62], Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao of the Shan Province went together to Tiantai Mountain to pick *Gupi* [a kind of herb medicine]. Unfortunately they got lost. On top of the mountain they suddenly saw a tree filled with peaches, and when they picked the peaches to feed their stomachs they encountered two extremely beautiful women. [...] At night they stayed in tents. The women went into each of them and they were made couples. Half a year later the two men left for their hometown. [When they arrived back in the human world,] they were aware that seven generations had already past.” The original reads, “漢明帝永平五年，剡縣劉晨、阮肇共入天台山取谷皮，迷不得返。望山上有一桃樹，遂採桃充飢。後遇二女子，姿質妙絕。[.....] 至暮，令各就一帳宿，女往就之 [.....]。二人停半年還鄉，子孫已歷七世。” *Changyong diangu cidian*, pp.186-87.

ideal ones, Li Duangong 李端公 [original name Li Ying 李郢 (fl. 856), who attained the status of *jinshi* in the tenth year of the reign period Dazhong 大中 (the year 856)]. This is also evident in the following confession that she is unable to be “a match for the lovebirds,” an apparent affirmation of a failure in her pursuit of love,<sup>28</sup> and an ostensible envy at their still being “in pairs” when it was believed that Li Duangong “could not accept Yu’s love due to social restraints.”<sup>29</sup>

Yu Xuanji’s feelings towards marriage, as seen from this poem, however, are totally different from Zhu Shuzhen’s attitude as revealed in “Sadness (Two Poems) – Number 1.”<sup>30</sup> The former regrets that she is, for an unknown reason, unable to get together with her husband, while the latter expressed a resentful feeling towards an undesired marriage when using the lovebirds to refer to the unwanted outside relationships. Hence it is rational to suggest that Zhu Shuzhen views the pair of swallows in the poem “Ashamed by the Swallows” to be other happily married couples teasing her in her loneliness, as has been discussed in previous chapters.

### 5.3.2 Love Inspired by Wishful Passion

Scholars have defined *qing* 情 [love, emotion, sentiment, or passion] in different ways. According to Wai-yee Li, “[s]ince love is the lowest common denominator in human feelings, it is paradigmatic of human relationships and can therefore serve as the foundation of morality.”<sup>31</sup> Dorothy Ko has identified the cult of *qing* as a noble emotion of romantic and sexual love as

---

<sup>28</sup> Adapted from Liang Chaoran. “Yu Xuanji kaolue” 魚玄機考略 [“An Exploration of Yu Xuanji”]. *Xibeidaxue xuebao* 3 (1997): 18-21, 25, here 21. Other scholars have suggested that Yu Xuanji regrets their infrequent relationship. See Liu Jiafu. “Tang dai nü shiren Yu Xuanji” 唐代女詩人魚玄機 [“Yu Xuanji, Woman Poet of the Tang Dynasty”]. *Wenshi zazhi* 5 (2000): 26-28, here 27.

<sup>29</sup> Zhao Li. “Ping Yu Xuanji zuopin de nüxing yishi” 評魚玄機作品的女性意識 [“Commenting on the Feminine Ideology in Yu Xuanji’s Works”]. *Shanxi shifan daxue xuebao* 1 (2001): 250-53, here 252.

<sup>30</sup> See the translation and analysis of this poem in section 3.3 of Chapter 3 in this dissertation.

<sup>31</sup> Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*, p.89.

“giving meaning to human life,”<sup>32</sup> while Grace Fong has defined *qing* as “the evocation of mood and the figuration of emotion,” which “cultural stereotyping” could also arouse women’s emotions.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore a basic indicator of an individual person’s expression of his/ her feelings towards an object or a matter.

*Qing* constitutes a significant element in both Zhu Shuzhen’s and Yu Xuanji’s poetry, with the distinction that there are fewer traces of Yu Xuanji’s wishful passions since the number of her extant poems is much smaller than that of Zhu Shuzhen. Unlike other poets, both Zhu and Yu describe unsanctioned love relationships distinct from the widely accepted conjugal associations. Allusions to sexual matters in their poems play a subtle but essential role of emphasising their secret passions. The symbols *yangtai* and *shier feng* used in Zhu Shuzhen’s “A Poem on a Summer Night” and “Spring Departs (Five Poems) – Number 3”<sup>34</sup> signify furtive sexual desires beneath the veil of the standardised morality practised by gentry women. Such desires are portrayed in an unpretentious way with obvious metaphors, so that people should not have the definite misunderstanding that women do not write about sexual desires. Male poets of the time could hardly imagine (and could hardly imitate) a woman’s boldness in writing such taboo subjects, and of course it is largely possible that this was written only for the poet’s private interest, without any thought of later publication.

Yu Xuanji, however, possessed more freedom in writing about sexual activities, due to the fact that her identity as a Daoist nun already excluded

---

<sup>32</sup> Dorothy Ko. *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994: p.84.

<sup>33</sup> Grace S. Fong. “Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song,” p.121. Halvor Eifring has given a detailed analysis on the etymology and the development of the various aspects of *qing* in Chinese culture. See Halvor Eifring, “Introduction: Emotions and the Conceptual History of *Qing* 情.” In Halvor Eifring ed. *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*. Leiden: Brill, 2004: pp.1-36, here pp.1-22. See also Su Ping’s analysis of the transformation from *ren qing* 人情 [human passion] to *wu qing* 物情 [passion towards objects] and the result of *jie wu shu qing* 借物抒情 [expressing emotions inspired by objects]. Su Ping. “Zhu Shuzhen aiqing beiju xinli tanwei,” 53.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to the translations and analyses of these two poems in section 3.4 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

her from the realm of expected decent moral behaviour,<sup>35</sup> and also, as mentioned above, because moral standards in the Tang Dynasty were less rigid than in the Song.<sup>36</sup> It was still considered immoral, however, for women to write openly about sexual desires, or use phrases hinting at sexual activities. Yu Xuanji's sensuality revealed in her poems is probably addressed to her passion aroused by a lost love for her husband, and some of her poems do trigger a feminine hope of obtaining pleasurable sexual experience from her patrons. An example is seen below:

感懷寄人

魚玄機

恨寄朱弦上，含情意不任。早知雲雨會，未起蕙蘭心。  
灼灼桃兼李，無妨國士尋。蒼蒼松與桂，仍羨世人欽。<sup>37</sup>  
月色苔階淨，歌聲竹院深。門前紅葉地，不掃待知音。

**Stirred by Emotions, Sent to Someone** by Yu Xuanji

With my regrets attached to the crimson string,  
Full of passion yet my mind is not at ease.  
I knew perfectly well that our clouds and rain affair<sup>38</sup>  
Has not yet stirred the orchid's emotions.<sup>39</sup>  
How splendid are the peach and plum blossoms,  
But they should not obstruct the scholar seeking success.  
How emerald green are the pines and laurels,  
But they still long for worldly people's admiration.

<sup>35</sup> In the Daoist notions, "the body is also the location of Chinese cultural constructions of gender. Women's bodies are associated with sexuality, reproduction, and motherhood, which find their proper order within the structures of marriage and the family." Suzanne E. Cahill, "Discipline and Transformation: Body and Practice in the Lives of Daoist Holy Women of Tang China." In Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, pp.251-78, here 271.

<sup>36</sup> According to Huang Shizhong, "In terms of socialisation between men and women, Daoist nuns in the Tang Dynasty had more opportunities than ordinary people [...] Once they met talented men, it was easy to understand that why they fell in love" Huang Shizhong. *Tang shi yu dao jiao 唐詩與道教 [Tang Poetry and Daoism]*. Guilin: Lijiang, 1996: p.50.

<sup>37</sup> The character *qin* 欽 [admiration] appears blank in *XYN*. In order to make the poem more complete, the character is replaced by taking reference from the same poem in Yu Xuanji. *The Clouds Float North: The Complete Poems of Yu Xuanji*, p.33.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote number 65 in Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a cross-reference to "clouds and rain."

<sup>39</sup> A pun is used here, *huilan* 蕙蘭 [orchid] in the original poem being the same characters as those of Yu Xuanji's second courtesy name. Therefore the "orchid" rendered here may be a symbol of the poet herself.



Under the moonlight the mossy steps are clean,  
Singing sounds from deep in the bamboo courtyard.  
In front of the gate, the ground is filled up with red leaves  
And will not be cleaned until an old friend comes. (XYN p.7b)

Having been behaving in a depraved way, Yu Xuanji indulges herself by writing about sexual activities after she has become a nun. The identity of the patron is unknown, but it is quite obvious that firstly, this poem is not for her husband, since Yu had several poems addressed clearly to “Zian.”<sup>40</sup> Secondly, the mentioning of “clouds and rain” to signify sexual affairs is not normally addressed to conjugal relationships, as couples at that time should keep their sexual matters in their boudoirs undisclosed. In this way, this aspect can serve as a useful comparison with the same element in Zhu Shuzhen’s “Appreciating Spring (To the tune: *Jiang cheng zi*),”<sup>41</sup> a much more restrained poem, in which Zhu refers to “the waters and clouds.” Thirdly, the environment Yu Xuanji provides in this poem allows a profound insight into her world of yearning for a *zhiyin* 知音 [“an old friend” translated in the above poem],<sup>42</sup> through the metaphors of “pines and laurels” “long[ing] for worldly people’s admiration,” and “red leaves” (while Zhu Shuzhen has also used the metaphor of “red leaves” to symbolise love),<sup>43</sup> awaiting the coming of an “old friend.”

Yu Xuanji wrote nothing about any notion of there being a moral duty for someone who was a nun. Rather, she displays a kind of femaleness in her poems through voicing a desire to fulfil the image of a free woman, by

---

<sup>40</sup> There are five extant poems by Yu Xuanji addressed to Li Zian in *XYN*, namely “Qingshu ji Li Zian” 情書寄李子安 [“A Love Letter to Li Zian”] (*XYN* pp.2b-3a), “Chunqing ji Zian” 春情寄子安 [“Spring Emotions Sent to Zian”] (*Ibid.*, p.3b), “Ge Hanjiang ji Zian” 隔漢江寄子安 [“To Zian, Separated by the Han River”] (*Ibid.*, pp.10a-10b), “Jiangling chouwang ji Zian” 江陵愁望寄子安 [“To Zian, with a Sad Gaze towards Jiangling”] (*Ibid.*, pp.10b-11a) and “Ji Zian” 寄子安 [“To Zian”] (*Ibid.*, p.11a).

<sup>41</sup> Refer to section 2.2.6 in Chapter 2 of this dissertation for the translation and the analysis of the poem.

<sup>42</sup> *Zhiyin* signifies a true friend, a soulmate, who understands one as others do not.

<sup>43</sup> See footnote number 66 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for cross reference.

indulging in drinking, bawdy singing and sexual activities as a compensation for love loss, despite the fact that such behaviour was considered depraved. Compared to Zhu Shuzhen, Yu Xuanji demonstrates a wilful self-indulgence towards female chastity, manoeuvring excuses to do so with her special identity, a brave and outward resistance to female inferiority, while Zhu Shuzhen's understated resistance in the voice of her poetry is palpably stressful.

Femaleness also illustrates itself in the women poets' sad portraits of love losses and passions. Most of these renderings are attributed to the nostalgic sorrowful feelings after joyful love experiences, as in the lines "Regretting that my talent and romance are never enough,/ Everyone should know, love is the root of sorrow" in Zhu Shuzhen's "Autumn Night Feelings (Six Poems) – Number 1,"<sup>44</sup> in which she explicitly voices her opinion towards love. This displacement of love by sorrow may be a particularly feminine way of looking at love, a delicate concern when love loss happens to women. Another poem by Zhu Shuzhen can explain her feelings towards love:

供愁

朱淑真

寂寂疏簾掛玉樓，樓頭新月曲如鉤。不須問我情深淺，鉤動長天遠水愁。

**Offering Sadness**

**by Zhu Shuzhen**

Silently the thin curtains hang in the jade tower,

On top of the tower, like a hook a new moon appears.

Don't have to ask if my passion is deep or thin,

It hooks the sadness of the vast sky and distant waters. (ZSSH pp.199-200)

Zhu Shuzhen, in this poem, vividly illustrates the relationship between love (passion) and sadness. Her subjective eyes are placed on the moon, a delicate object that observes different feelings in the world, and she applies

<sup>44</sup> See section 3.4 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation for reference of this poem.

the metaphor of the hook (the shape of the moon) to link love and sadness. This kind of attention to the linkage of sadness from passion signifies a feminine concern with small descriptive details.

Yu Xuanji displays a similar kind of sadness towards love in the following poem:

秋思

魚玄機

自歎多情是足愁，況當風月滿庭秋。洞房偏與更聲近，夜夜燈前欲白頭。

Autumn Thoughts

by Yu Xuanji

To be passionate is enough for sorrow, I sigh,  
Let alone winds and moon, and the autumn-heavy courtyard.  
Just close to the bridal chamber the watches sound,  
In front of the lamp, night after night, my hair is about to turn white.

(XYN p.6a)

In the first line Yu Xuanji sighs at the sorrowful result of being passionate, a noticeable prefigurement of Zhu Shuzhen's "love is the root of sorrow." Yu's bold description of *feng yue* 風月 [winds and moon]<sup>45</sup> contains a great amount of sexual implication: by accompanying the mentioning of "bridal chamber," the hidden meaning is rendered more explicit. The "bridal chamber" here, in my opinion, does not necessarily suggest marriage when "winds and moon" in the previous line hints at decadent sexual relationships rather than conjugal ones. Yu displays an extraordinary ending here by indicating subtly that the sounds of the *geng* 更 [watches]<sup>46</sup> hinder her sexual activities, and the regret (white hair) may have been caused by obstruction. Looking at this from another point of view, for a young woman

---

<sup>45</sup> *Feng yue* literally means 'the wind and the moon,' it also "signifies love affairs between men and women. In Chapter 15 of *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [A Dream of the Red Chamber], it reads, '[Neng'er] has grown up now, and she starts to know about the wind and the moon.'" In *Cihai*, p.1725. It reads, "風月，喻男女情愛。《紅樓夢》第十五回：「[能兒] 如今長大了，漸知風月。」"

<sup>46</sup> *Geng* was an instrument beaten by the watchman to indicate the time during the night, and there were five watches at night with two-hour intervals, from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am. After the fifth it was normally considered to be morning. Adapted from *ibid.*, p.61.

like Yu Xuanji, passionate time seems to pass all the more quickly, and every time when she makes love she thinks of her mortality. Regret for aging is common in Chinese poetry, but it would be seen as immoral to describe it by manipulating the process of making love. A woman in traditional China should not have enunciated these kind of feelings, but the unusual content of Yu Xuanji's poem used the poetic metaphors of "winds and moon" and "white hair," a feminine way of introverting the idea. At any rate, Yu demonstrated a much more convincing personal attitude in describing the feelings of a sexually-active woman than people expected at the time.

Comparing the voices of Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji in their poetry respectively, the former is subjected to a kind of repression of sexual desires when she abruptly ends the description, probably with her own moral restrictions, "Dreaming of a loving joy, I awake in this plight[;]"<sup>47</sup> and her declaration of herself being "as pure as water," but still remembering being involved in the "twelve peaks."<sup>48</sup> Yet on the other hand, Zhu Shuzhen inspires her readers to guess at hidden meanings by the metaphors of *yangtai* and *shier feng*. Yu Xuanji, however, does not present such an ambivalent mind as she possesses plenty of freedom to engage in sex. In contrast to Zhu Shuzhen, Yu Xuanji may have intentionally magnified her passionate attitude and sexual desires, as her poems indicate unambiguous addressees, and then an amplifying effect is provided in the sexual content associated with the name of the person who appears in the title of the poem. Nonetheless, what prevailed in Zhu Shuzhen's poems is a delicate female voice revealing assertive passions yet passive awareness of the established limitations, whereas Yu Xuanji demonstrates an unexpected feminine valour in speaking out her own opinion on sexual desires. However, we have to be careful about the typicality of Yu Xuanji's affirmation, as her identity as a nun exempts her

---

<sup>47</sup> From "A Poem on a Summer Night." Refer to section 3.4 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>48</sup> From "Spring Departs (Five Poems) – Number 3." Refer to section 3.4 in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

from the normal constraints placed on women.

### 5.3.3 Love towards Womanly Talent

Women's discontent at being viewed as inferior in talent was seldom represented in poems, perhaps because they were deprived of the chance to write freely. Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji demonstrated two exceptional cases in that they "did question the existing sexual arrangement"<sup>49</sup> and expressed their opinions on the strict suppression of female talent in the male-dominated society. Their poems are self-assertive as they exhibit a large measure of disapproval against women being excluded from the literary establishment. Most prominent poems on this subject by Zhu Shuzhen are the ones discussed in the previous chapters, such as "Self Reproving (Two Poems) – Number 1"<sup>50</sup> and "Declining Spring (Three Poems) – Number 2."<sup>51</sup> In the content of her poems, Zhu Shuzhen never absolutely indicated her identity, but in an introduction to one of her poems, she explained her intention in writing it, which definitely conforms with her opinion towards female talent:

幼年聞說，有一人鬻文於京師辟雍之前，多士遂令作一絕句，以〈掬水月在手〉為題，客不思而書云：「無事江頭弄碧波，分明掌上見嫦娥。」諸公遂止之，獻金以贖其行。予喜此二句，恨不見全篇。因暇，漫吟續之，然翰墨文章之能，非婦人女子之事，性之所好，情之所鍾，不覺自鳴爾，因成〈弄花香滿衣〉一絕于後。

**In my childhood I heard this story: a man sold his writings in front of a great hall<sup>52</sup> in the capital city. The literati then asked the man to write a *jueju* with**

<sup>49</sup> The phrase is from Marie Florine Bruneau. "Learned and Literary Women in Late Imperial China and Early Modern Europe," 163.

<sup>50</sup> See section 2.3 of Chapter 2 in this dissertation for reference.

<sup>51</sup> See section 4.3.1 of Chapter 4 in this dissertation for reference.

<sup>52</sup> *Piyong* 辟雍 [great hall] means a hall established by the emperor to disseminate the messages of courtesy, music and proper moral behaviour. The original reads, "辟雍，指天子行禮樂宣德化的大禮堂。" From Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.205. The *piyong* in the introduction written by Zhu Shuzhen in *ZSZSH* is mistakenly printed as *qunyong* 群雍, which has no meaning in Chinese.

the title “A Handful of Water, the Moon is in My Palm.” Without any thought, the traveller wrote, “Idly by the riverside I trifle with waters green,/ Apparently on my palm Chang’e I have seen.” The literati then stopped him, and gave him some gold to sponsor his journey. I liked these two lines, but regretted that I had not seen the whole poem. And so, whenever I had a free moment, I would unrestrainedly chant and try out different ways of finishing it. However the capability to write is [ultimately] not a matter for women and girls, it is just because of my interest and passion [towards poetry that] I have unconsciously expressed my feelings: that is how the following *jueju* “Trifling with Flowers, Fragrance Fills my Dress” was written.

掬水月在手

無事江頭弄碧波，分明掌上見嫦娥。不知李謫仙人在，曾向江頭捉得麼。

### A Handful of Water, the Moon is in My Palm

Idly by the riverside I trifle by waters green,

Apparently on my palm Chang’e I have seen.

Wondering if the Banished Immortal Li is here,<sup>53</sup>

Catching the moon by the riverside, did he ever succeed? (ZSZSH pp.204-05)

弄花香滿衣

艷紅影裏擷芳回，沾惹春風兩袖歸。夾路露桃渾欲笑，不禁蜂蝶繞人飛。<sup>54</sup>

### Trifling with Flowers, Fragrance Fills my Dress

I pick the fragrant flowers and head for home in splendid crimson shadows,

Stained with spring breeze, on the way back my sleeves follow.

Lining the road dewed peach blossoms simply smile at me,

I just can't prevent the bees and butterflies fluttering around me. (ZSZSH p.206)

<sup>53</sup> *Li zhexian ren* 李謫仙人 [the Banished Immortal] refers to Li Bai of the Tang Dynasty. There is a story about Li Bai trying to catch the reflection of the moon in a river. The story reads, “[...] Li Taibai [Li Bai’s courtesy name] was drunk and when he was drifting in a boat in the river in Caishi, Dangtu Province [in Anhui], he saw the shadow of the moon and bent his body to catch it. He died from drowning while trying to pluck the moon from the water.” The original reads, “[.....] 李太白在當塗采石，因醉泛舟于江，見月影俯而取之，遂溺死[。]” In *juan* three of Hong Mai 洪邁. *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 [*Casual Writings from the Rongzhai Study*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1978: p.33.

<sup>54</sup> “Xie fang hui” 擷芳回 [pick the fragrant flowers and return] in the original poem reads “xie fangfei” 擷芳菲 [pick the fragrant flowers] ZSZSH, p.206. To better accommodate with the following line in forming a couplet, the former version will prevail in my translation as the verb “hui” 回 [return] pairs with “gui” 歸 [go back] in the second line.

The introduction here functions as a *xu* 序 [preface], in which the poet's rationale for writing poems is revealed. It is the longest introduction out of the five in her *shi*-poetry<sup>55</sup> and the nine in her *ci*-poetry.<sup>56</sup> The traveller's story given in Zhu Shuzhen's sub-title can be seen as a reflection of her longing for peer appreciation of her womanly talent. That is the reason why she would like to "try out different ways of finishing it," but she reveals her ambivalent mind again when on the one hand, she approves the opinion that "the capability to write is [ultimately] not a matter for women and girls," while on the other hand after she finished the last two lines based on the lines provided by the traveller, she wrote another poem because of her "interest and passion" towards writing poems in which she "unconsciously expressed [her] feelings." From this it seems that interest and passion did not function as adequate reasons for writing poetry at Zhu Shuzhen's time, and the above declarations were a sign of her refusal to abide by the established principles binding women's hands on creative poetry.

The phrase *bu jue zi ming er* 不覺自鳴爾 [unconsciously expressed my

<sup>55</sup> Three of these sub-titles [introductions] in Zhu Shuzhen's extant *shi*-poetry are "Ou de mudan shu ben, yizhi chuangwai, jiang you zhao hua yi er shou" 偶得牡丹數本，移植窗外，將有著花意二首 ["I Occasionally Obtained Several Peonies, and Planted Them outside the Window. They are Hinting at Producing Flowers (Two Poems)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.148-49), "Tang xia yangui qiuwan weikai zuoshi cu zhi" 堂下岩桂秋晚未開作詩促之 ["Under the Pavilion the Laurels are Not Yet Bloomed in Late Autumn, so I Write this Poem to Urge the Blossoms on"] (*ZSZSH* pp.181-82) and "Shanjiao you mei yizhu, di cha bei yin, dongshen chu jie rui, zuo jueju ji zhi" 山腳有梅一株，地差背陰，冬深初結蕊，作絕句寄之 ["At the Bottom of the Mountain there is a Plum Tree, It is Facing North, which Implies a Bad Physical Environment. The Stamen only Comes out in Late Winter, so I Write a *Jueju* to Express my Feelings."] (*ZSZSH* p.185). Refer to section 5.3.1 in this Chapter for the fourth one.

<sup>56</sup> The nine *ci*-poems with sub-titles by Zhu Shuzhen are "Pusa man (Muxi)" 菩薩蠻 (木樨) ["Osmanthus (To the tune: *Pusa man*)"] (*ZSZSH* p.291), "Pusa man (Mei)" 菩薩蠻 (梅) ["Plum (To the tune: *Pusa man*)"] (*ZSZSH* p.292), "Busuanzi (Mei)" 卜算子 (梅) ["Plum (To the tune: *Busuanzi*)"] (*ZSZSH* p.293), "Yi qin'e (Zhengyue chuliu yeyue)" 憶秦娥 (正月初六夜月) ["The Moon at Night on the Sixth Day of the First Month (To the tune: *Yi qin'e*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.294-95), "Liushao qing (Mei)" 柳梢青 (梅) ["Plum (To the tune: *Liushao qing*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.297-98), "Queqiao xian (Qixi)" 鵲橋仙 (七夕) ["The Seventh Night (To the tune: *Queqiao xian*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.300-01), "Nian nu jiao (Cui xue)" 念奴嬌 (催雪) ["Urging Snow (To the tune: *Nian nu jiao*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.303-04), "Yuehua qing (Lihua)" 月華清 (梨花) ["Pear Blossom (To the tune: *Yuehua qing*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.305-07) and "Jiangdu chun (Mei)" 絳都春 (梅) ["Plum (To the tune: *Jiangdu chun*)"] (*ZSZSH* pp.307-08). The reason why sub-titles appear more often in *ci*-poetry than *shi*-poetry is because of the limitations imposed by the use of the titles of the tunes.

feelings] in Zhu Shuzhen's introduction shows clearly how she was partially unaware of her own talent. This lack of awareness indicates an unswerving devotion to writing poetry, behaviour which was not considered to conform with the moral standards of the time. The recognition of her intrinsic talent is revealed in the phrase *bu jue* when it is, however, through her own consciousness that her unconsciousness was written out. Her ambivalence always allows her both to express her obsession in talent and to avoid diverging too far from the male literary tradition, which is a kind of partial feminine submission under strong pressure as well as an inherent assurance of feminine literary wisdom.

The lines that she joined together with the existing lines in "A Handful of Water, the Moon is in My Palm" produce an intact whole, with no feeling of the last two lines having been written by a different person. Her unconscious interests have made the second poem "Trifling with Flowers, Fragrance Fills my Dress" possible, amplifying a world of her ideal life and her yearning for the freedom to break away from worldly concerns, and for a beautiful environment filled with flowers.<sup>57</sup> Natural feminine love towards flowers is expressed here in the naïve style of a blissful and young spirit, accompanied by feminine images of "splendid crimson shadows," "spring breeze" and "dewed peach blossoms." The persona in this poem is based largely on the timid intolerance of "bees and butterflies," indicating a delicate female voice, which provides a genuinely undisguised manifestation of her own feminine character.

Yu Xuanji, in her poems, undoubtedly indicates her talent as well as her wish to have it affirmed by other people. Her consciousness allows her to write unreservedly on her hope of getting scholarly attention, flouting the widespread restriction of scholarly activities to males only. The following

---

<sup>57</sup> Adapted from the annotation to the sub-title in Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.205. The original reads, "[這]二首七言絕句是女詩人表達生活理想的詩歌，反映了她對超脫塵世自由生活和開滿鮮花的環境的嚮往。"



poem expresses obvious discontent towards the exercise of civil service examinations:

遊崇真觀南樓睹新及第題名處

魚玄機

雲峰滿目放春晴，歷歷銀鉤指下生。自恨羅衣掩詩句，舉頭空羨榜中名。

Visiting the South Tower of Chongzhen Temple, and Seeing the Posting of  
the Newly Released Civil Service Examination Results by Yu Xuanji

Cloudy mountains fill up my sight as the spring sun shines,  
Under competent fingers appears bold and brilliant calligraphy.  
I regret that my silk dress has veiled my poetic lines,  
Raising my head, the names on the honour board I envy futilely.

(XYN pp.5b-6a)

As suggested by the title of the above poem, when Yu Xuanji wrote about visiting the Chongzhen Temple, the civil service examination results attracted her attention, because women were not allowed to sit the examinations.<sup>58</sup> Yu Xuanji's desire to be equal with the males is evident in her use of assertive description and the progressively descriptive method: from the panoramic description of the environment ("cloudy mountains"), to the close-up sight of calligraphy, before focusing on her feelings of regret that she is a woman ("silk dress" signifies the female identity).<sup>59</sup>

The first hint of Yu Xuanji's desire to obtain recognition from others is seen in "[u]nder competent fingers appears bold and brilliant calligraphy" together with the last line "[r]aising my head, the names on the honour board

<sup>58</sup> Anne Birrell describes Yu Xuanji's "female aspiration for a career in public life when she voices her opposition to gender inequality as it is manifested in female exclusion from the civil service examinations." Anne Birrell, "Women in Literature," p.209.

<sup>59</sup> In *juan* eight of his *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng*, Xin Wenfang commented that "[In reading this poem,] I can see that her [Yu Xuanji's] aspirations are desperately yearned for, if she was to be born as a man, she must have been a talented person to be put to use." Xin Wenfang, *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng*, pp.240-41. The original reads, "觀其 [魚玄機] 志意激切，使爲一男子，必有用之才[。]" Sharon Shih-juan Hou comments that the two poems [this poem and "To a Female Neighbour" discussed above] "embody the poet's aspiration to the wealth, fame, and sexual freedoms that were reserved for men. They may also be viewed as her implied protest against sexual inequality in society." Sharon Shih-juan Hou. "Women's Literature," p.187 (vol.1).

I envy futilely," which imply her own respect for beautiful handwriting as well as her admiration towards people with scholarly achievements in examinations. Aside from such admiration, the idea that she wishes to be one of them can be seen in the adverb "futilely," suggesting her longing for independence and her pursuit of her own value.<sup>60</sup> The second suggestion of her desire comes from a passive indication of regret for being a female, the identity which veils her achievements. The last two lines are a subtle but sharp attack on the restrictions on female talent and the lack of public recognition for womanly attainments. Unlike Zhu Shuzhen, Yu Xuanji demonstrates an explicit protest on behalf of unacknowledged female talent, and the phrase *zi hen* 自恨 [I regret] suggests a clear and assertive female voice speaking out about her unfair plight. Anne Birrell remarks that Yu Xuanji "inscribed [her] feminine experience into [her] verse, reflecting [her] worlds, [her] poetics, and [her] interior life [...]."<sup>61</sup> Susan Mann has also commented that "[t]hey [Li Ye, Xue Tao and Yu Xuanji] provided a voice or a medium for the expression of profound and sincere loyalty, or for sharp and devastating criticism", based on Zhang Xuecheng's observation that "the words they use are elegant and yet informed by a standard, true and yet free of lewdness [*ya er you ze, zhen er bu hui* 雅而有則，真而不穢]."<sup>62</sup>

There are other poems by Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji which describe their engagement in literary creativity. Even if the poem is not necessarily a self-portrait, the female voices are strong in the sense that they write about their poetic renderings in the environment of the boudoir, such as the two lines in Zhu Shuzhen's "Yu guo" 雨過 ["After Rain"]: "After my bath I am too lazy to put on make-up,/ Rather I create new poems with my brush and

<sup>60</sup> Adapted from Bai Junfang. "Yinqin bu de yu, honglei yishuang liu — tan Yu Xuanji he ta de shi" 殷勤不得語 紅淚一雙流 — 談魚玄機和她的詩 ["Attentive but Without Words of Care, Red Tears Shedding from My Pair of Eyes — About Yu Xuanji and Her Poetry"]. *Shanxi guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* 1 (2000): 45-48, here 47.

<sup>61</sup> Anne Birrell, "Women in Literature," p.209.

<sup>62</sup> Susan Mann, "'Fuxue' (Women's Learning) by Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801): China's First History of Women's Culture." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 40-61, here 47.

inkstone.”<sup>63</sup> In another of her poems “Yuhuai er shou (qi yi)” 寓懷二首 (其一) [“Expressing Emotions (Two Poems) – Number 1”], two of the lines read: “Listlessly behind the lonely window for a whole day,/ Editing and changing my poems I look at them.”<sup>64</sup> Yu Xuanji has also written some poems describing her writing process, such as her “Dongye ji Wen Feiqing” 冬夜寄溫飛卿 [“To Wen Feiqing on a Winter Night”]:<sup>65</sup> “Painfully seeking a poetic line I chant by the lamp,/ Sleepless for a long night I am afraid of the cold quilt.”<sup>66</sup>

Female poets like Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji wished to show to people that their literary talent should not be neglected by the community they lived in. The female voices displayed in their poems reveal a desperate need to survive within the boundaries imposed by the male literary establishment. Ultimately they express their genuine sentiments in terms of their subtle but powerful resonance as oppressed voices in a prescribed system which discouraged the free expression of deep emotions.

#### 5.3.4 Love – Implicitly or Explicitly?

The most appropriate way to describe the expression of *qing* in the poetry of Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji would be “implicitness” for the former and “explicitness” for the latter. One great disparity between Zhu and Yu is that the former almost never mentioned exactly whom her poems were for, and the identity of the figures portrayed in her poems can only be hypothesised from the meanings of the lines. The latter, however, made the addressees explicit in most of her titles. In such a way Yu Xuanji was able to put across her personal voice towards the person of her affections, and readers can easily uncover her emotions between the lines of her poetry. As

---

<sup>63</sup> The original reads, “浴罷晚妝慵不御，卻親筆硯賦新詩” (ZSZSH p.158).

<sup>64</sup> The original reads, “孤窗鎮日無聊賴，編輯詩詞改抹看” (ZSZSH p.176).

<sup>65</sup> “Feiqing” 飛卿 is the courtesy name of Wen Tingyun. See section 1.5 in Chapter 1 of this dissertation for more details about Wen Tingyun.

<sup>66</sup> The original reads, “苦思搜詩燈下吟，不眠長夜怕寒衾” (XYN pp.4a-4b).

mentioned above, the most frequently brought up figure in Yu Xuanji's poems is Li Zian, her husband. Although the following lines cited in her five poems addressed to Li Zian are just part of each poem, they are vital in the sense that they nonetheless echo a deep attachment to Li under the circumstance of their parting.

秦鏡欲分愁墜鵲，舜琴將弄怨飛鴻。

[.....]

書信茫茫何處問，持竿盡日碧江空。（情書寄李子安【節錄】）

Qin mirror wishes to break but my sorrow cracks the Milky Way,<sup>67</sup>

To tune Emperor Shun's zither I resent the messenger goose.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> *Qin jing* 秦鏡 [Qin mirror] refers to the story of Xu Deyan 徐德言 (fl. sixth century) and his wife Lechang Gongzhu 樂昌公主 [Princess Lechang] (fl. sixth century) of the Chen Dynasty (557-589). From *Benshi shi* 本事詩 [Source Material Poems] by Meng Qi 孟棻 (n.d.) of the Tang, "On the wife of Xu Deyan, houseman to the heir apparent of Chen, was bestowed the title of Princess Lechang. She was originally the younger sister of Shubao, the last ruler of Chen, and was beautiful and talented. At that time the political situation of Chen was chaotic, and Deyan knew the impossibility of keeping each other safe. He told his wife, 'If our state ever fell, you would enter a powerful wealthy family given your talent and beauty, and we would never meet again. If our predestined love is not yet ended, and we wish to see each other again, we should have a token.' Thus he broke a mirror into two and each of them kept one half. He made a promise, 'When the time comes we will sell the halves in the marketplace on the fifteenth day of the first month. I will be there and will visit you immediately that day.' As expected, when Chen fell, his wife was brought into the family of Yang Su, the lord of Yue, who kept her as his beloved concubine. Wandering about everywhere, Deyan had barely enough strength to reach the capital, but he arrived at the marketplace on the fifteenth day of the first month. There was a white-haired man selling half a mirror at an extremely high price. People there all laughed at him. Deyan brought him to his home and invited him to dine. He clearly described the incident and showed another half of the mirror to join together the one from the man, and wrote a poem which read, 'The mirror and the person are all gone./ The mirror is back but not the one./ Chang'e's shadow is no longer returned./ In vain the bright moonlight is left.' When she received the poem, Chen [Princess Lechang] cried and stopped eating. [Yang] Su felt sad on discovering this, and he immediately summoned Deyan, returned his wife to him and offered them a substantial amount of money." The original reads, "陳太子舍人徐德言之妻，後主叔寶之妹，封樂昌公主，才色冠絕。時陳政方亂，德言知不相保，謂妻曰：「以君之才容，國亡必入權豪之家，斯永絕矣。倘情緣未斷，猶冀相見，宜有以信之。」乃破一鏡，人執其半。約曰：「他日必以正月望日賣於都市，我當在，即以是日訪之。」及陳亡，其妻果入越公楊素之家，寵嬖殊厚。德言流離辛苦，僅能至京，遂以正月望日訪於都市。有蒼頭賣半鏡者，大高其價，人皆笑之。德言直引至其居，設食，具言其故，出半鏡以合之，仍題詩曰：「鏡與人俱去，鏡歸人不歸。無復嫦娥影，空留明月輝。」陳氏得詩，涕泣不食。素知之，愴然改容，即召德言，還其妻，仍厚遺之。” As Xu Deyan and Princess Lechang broke the mirror in Chang'an, the ancient capital of Qin, the allusion is addressed by Yu Xuanji as *Qin jing*. From *Changyong diangu cidian*, pp.389-90.

<sup>68</sup> *Shun qin* 舜琴 [Shun Emperor's zither] alludes to Emperor Shun's song played on his zither. This song was *Nanfeng* 南風 [south wind, denoting summer], with the lyrics: "The blowing of the south wind can relieve my people's discontent; the season of the south wind can enrich my people's fortunes." From "Yuepian" 樂篇 ["Section on Music"] in *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語 [Family Excerpts]

[....]

My letters in the vast distances, where can they be found?

All day I pole my boat, but how vacant is the green river!

（“A Love Letter to Li Zian.” Extract, XYN pp.2b-3a）

冰銷遠澗憐清韻，雪遠寒峰想玉姿。

[.....]

如松匪石盟長在，比翼連襟會肯遲。

雖恨獨行冬盡日，終期相見月圓時。

別君何物堪持贈？淚落晴光一首詩。（春情寄子安【節錄】）

With ice melting into distant streams I tenderly love your clear voice,

With snows on remote freezing peaks I remember your handsome face.

[....]

Like pines, not stones, are our long-standing lovers' vows,

Like lovebirds flying shoulder-to-shoulder, our meeting is delayed.

Although I hate to walk alone towards the end of winter,

Ultimately I hope to see you again under the moon round.

On our parting, what memento is worthy for me to offer?

Brimming with tears in the sunlight, here is my poem.

（“Spring Emotions Sent to Zian.” Extract, XYN p.3b）

江南江北愁望，相思相憶空吟。

鴛鴦暖臥沙浦，鷓鴣閑飛橘林。（隔漢江寄子安【節錄】）

Sadly, I gaze South and North of the river,

Yearning, and recalling our times I am in vain chanting.

The lovebirds lie cosily in the piles of sand,

The teals fly lazily to the mandarin groves.

（“To Zian, Separated by the Han River.”

Extract, XYN pp.10a-10b）

---

by Confucius]. The original reads, “《孔子家語·樂篇》：舜彈五弦之琴，造《南風》之詩曰：「南風之薰兮，可以解吾民之慍兮；南風之時兮，可以阜吾民之財兮。」” *Ibid.*, p.491.

憶君心似西江水，日夜東流無歇時。（江陵愁望寄子安【節錄】）

My yearning for you is just like the water in the West River,  
Day and night it flows to the east without taking a rest.

（"To Zian, with a Sad Gaze towards Jiangling."）

Extract, XYN pp.10b-11a)

蕙蘭銷歇歸春圃，楊柳東西絆客舟。  
聚散已悲雲不定，恩情須學水長流。  
有花時節知難遇，未肯厭厭醉玉樓。（寄子安【節錄】）

The orchids return to the spring garden after it fades,  
Willows crowd on both banks to slow the traveller's boat.  
Going together, being apart, I put the blame on fleeting clouds,  
Our affection should be like the running water that never stops.  
During the season of flowers I know how hard it is to meet,  
I'm reluctant to sulk and get drunk in the jade tower.

（"To Zian." Extract, XYN p.11a）

The five poems addressed to Li Zian demonstrate a progressive development of the female persona's passion towards him, from a conscious anticipation of her reunion with Zian, using the first person schema, to an unconscious description to him of her own plight. It is interesting to note here that the titles of the first four poems suggest certain kinds of emotions, whether passionate ("A Love Letter to Li Zian" and "Spring Emotions Sent to Zian") or sad ("To Zian, with a Sad Gaze towards Jiangling"), but the last one ("To Zian") is neutral. This is related to the content of certain poems, in which Yu Xuanji describes her resentment towards the "messenger goose," or sighs that the river is "vacant" without any returning communication from her husband in "A Love Letter to Li Zian." "Spring Emotions Sent to Zian" may have been a great magnification of Yu Xuanji's female voice as in almost every line she writes about missing Li Zian and alludes to conjugal love, such

as “long-standing lovers’ vows,” “[l]ike lovebirds flying shoulder-to-shoulder” and her “hope to see you again under the moon round.”

In contrast, sadness appears prominently in “To Zian, Separated by the Han River” and “To Zian, with a Sad Gaze towards Jiangling.” Recalling her times with Zian is the main reason for the persona’s sadness, and the sharp distinction between her passionate quest for Li Zian’s love and her loss of hope formulated in the two sad poems form the basis for the last poem of the five, “To Zian.” Yu Xuanji’s indifferent attitude seen in both the title and the content shows the possible “decay” of their love. Interestingly though, the application of the symbol *huilan* [orchid] appears again as a symbol of her poetic self,<sup>69</sup> which suggests that she (*huilan*) returns to the flirtations of her patrons (“spring garden”) after waiting for Zian’s message for a long time (“after it fades”), since they sometimes get together and when they are “being apart” they are just like “fleeting clouds.” She hopes, however, that their affection should not stop, as it would be “hard to meet” another lover like Zian. This message is expressed subtly, but, with close observation, an orderly arrangement can be discerned.

Vague addressees are at times present in Zhu Shuzhen’s poems, despite the fact that her poems usually appear to have been addressed to her literary self. On only a few occasions do the titles or content of her poems speak for a hinted person. This also reveals her female voice in veiling the addressee of her poems. One of the obvious examples can be seen in the following poem:

初夏二首（其一）

朱淑真

枝上渾無一點春，半隨流水半隨塵。柔桑欲椹吳蠶老，稚筍成竿彩鳳馴。

荷葉受風欹翠蓋，榴花宜日皺殷裙。待到一罨傷心淚，寄與南樓薄倖人。<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> See footnote number 39 in this Chapter for reference to this pun.

<sup>70</sup> “Heye shou feng qi cui gai” 荷葉受風欹翠蓋 [In the wind, listing emerald lids the lotus leaves resemble] in the original poem reads “Heye ai feng qi gai cui” 荷嫩愛風欹蓋翠 [The delicate lotus loves the wind to lift their emerald lids] in both *ZSZJ* and *ZSZJZ* (both p.67 and p.51 respectively). As such there is a slight swapping of a character from “liuhua yi ri zhou yin qun” 榴花宜日皺殷裙

Early Summer (Two Poems) – Number 1      by Zhu Shuzhen

On the branches there is not even one petal of spring blossom,  
Parts of them follow the stream, and parts of them have dust become.  
Tender mulberries start bearing fruit; the Wu silkworms are growing old,<sup>71</sup>  
Delicate shoots grow into bamboos the gorgeous phoenixes are docile.  
In the wind, listing emerald lids the lotus leaves resemble,  
Under the sun pomegranate flowers are like a crimson dress's wrinkle.  
When a hunting-bag full of sorrowful tears I've gathered together,  
I'll send them to the cold-hearted one in the south tower.      (ZSZSH p.151)

The descriptions in the first six lines of this poem signify the passage of spring and the approach of summer, through the portrayal of scenery and named objects in the seasons. The last two lines turn abruptly to the persona's own feelings towards a "cold-hearted" person. Unlike Yu Xuanji's poems, in Zhu Shuzhen's verse little attention is given to the relationship between the sender and the receiver. In the above poem, however, the first six lines function as a prologue to the sad emotion she wants to express in the latter part, which emphasises regret at the quick passing of spring, and the character *dai* 待 [waiting] in the second last line gives a hint of the time she has spent waiting for someone's return, probably from the "south tower."

The "hunting-bag" in the second last line is used as a dramatic metaphor to accentuate the amount of tears she has shed, also implying for how long, from spring to summer, she has shed those tears in waiting for the "cold-hearted" one. The use of the phrase *boxing* 薄倖 [cold-hearted], a

---

[Under the sun pomegranate flowers are like a crimson dress's wrinkle] into "liuhua yi ri zhou qun yin" 榴花宜日皺裙殷 [Under the sun pomegranate flowers are like a dress's wrinkle so crimson] to form a complete couplet in ZSZJZ, p.51 [in ZSZJ there is a slight difference with "zhou qun yin" being changed into "zhou qun xin" 皺裙新 {a dress's new wrinkle}, p.67]. The couplet works beautifully either before or after the change. "Dai dao" 待到 [wait until] in the second last line reads "dai feng" 待封 [wait until I seal] in both ZSZJ and ZSZJZ (p.67 and p.51 respectively). The former version already displays a kind of implicit beauty (even without a main verb) when I chose to translate it.

<sup>71</sup> Wu 吳 [present day Suzhou 蘇州] was the name of an ancient place famous for producing silk cocoons. From the annotation of the above poem by Zhu Shuzhen. From Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. ZSZSH, p.151.



conventional saying particularly addressed to males, is seen as a powerfully female resentment, and may serve as an explanation of the “hate produced from extreme love.”<sup>72</sup> As such the female voice’s anger towards a man who has ill-treated her is obvious, in the sense that her grudge permeates her view of the brilliant scenery without the company of the one she misses. The “cold-hearted” person here is vague and it is difficult to associate this with Zhu Shuzhen’s unofficial biography, and it is ultimately not important for readers to speculate about the addressee of this poem. Nonetheless, Zhu Shuzhen’s subtle regrets for love in her other poems are in slight contradiction with this one, with its last minute shift from her appreciation of scenery to an apparent bitterness towards someone, but it is still implicit, not allowing her readers to recognise who exactly is the “cold-hearted one.”

The expression of voices, in both Zhu Shuzhen’s and Yu Xuanji’s poems, is prominent but subtle to a certain extent. Yu Xuanji sounds bold and unrestrained in many of her poems, and tells about her deep love towards Li Zian and her casual sexual relationships with or desires towards others, while in most of the Zhu Shuzhen poems her bitter longings for love is expressed while retaining some consideration for gentry restraints. Subtle resistance, however, is seen in the poetry of both women, and the difference lies in whether strong or restrained intention is voiced. To sum up, it is insightful to note that Yu Xuanji is direct and simple in her voice, whereas Zhu Shuzhen’s voice shows reflective and thought-provoking passions.

---

<sup>72</sup> Adapted from Huang Yanli, *ZSZP*, p.42. The original reads, “「薄倖」兩字，古代女子屢喜採用，亦可作愛極而恨的解釋。” A poem by Guo Shaolan, one of the examples cited by Huang Yanli in her footnote on *boxing*, reads, “My husband travels to Chonghu,/ Beside the window I write a letter with tears and blood./ Hope the swallow’s frequent wings,/ Will take them to my cold-hearted husband.” [the original reads, “我婿去重湖，臨窗泣血書。殷勤憑燕翼，寄與薄情夫。”] Qtd. *ibid.*, pp.66-67. Also refer to footnote number 25 in this Chapter for more details about Guo Shaolan.

## 5.4 Imitated Masculine Voices in Zhu Shuzhen's and Yu Xuanji's Poetry

In general, both Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji display their female voices in their poetry without any concealment of identities. On some occasions, however, poems appear using the imitated voices of male poets; such poems can be examined in comparison with the duplication of feminine voices in poetry written by men.<sup>73</sup> Sun Kangyi describes a stylistic *nan nü shuangxing* 男女雙性 [“Androgyny” used by Sun] discovered in women’s writings when they emphasised the masculine qualities of *zifa* 自發 [being spontaneous], *xiaoxian* 消閒 [being leisurely] and *fenxiang* 分享 [being shared].<sup>74</sup> Grace Fong defines the masculine quality as “constructed chiefly through the choice of theme and diction within particular registers of ‘male’ emotion.”<sup>75</sup> According to Birrell, “[i]n literary representations of woman, male-authored approaches to the female body offer a significant means of understanding questions of gender.”<sup>76</sup> The style demonstrated by Zhu and Yu in their masculine poetry is atypical of female poets, amplifying the lack of concern shown by the outer world. In fact, Zhu Shuzhen wrote more masculine-voiced poems than Yu Xuanji. One example is shown below:

喜雨

朱淑真

赤日炎炎燒八荒，田中無雨苗半黃。天工不放老龍懶，赤電驅雷雲四方。  
瓊瑰萬斛寫碧落，陂湖池沼皆泱泱。高田低田盡沾澤，農喜禾無枯槁傷。  
我皇聖德布寰宇，六月青天降甘雨。四海咸蒙滂沛恩，九州盡解焦熬苦。  
傾盆勢歇塵點無，衣袂生涼罷揮羽。江上數峰天外青，眼界增明快心腑。  
炎熱一洗無留跡，頓覺好風生兩腋。紗廚湘簟爽氣新，沉李削瓜浮玉液。  
傍池佔得秋意多，尚餘珠點綴圓荷。樓頭月上雲散盡，遠水連天天接波。

<sup>73</sup> This idea is named by Sun Kangyi as “gender mask” or “gender crossing.” In Sun’s concept, the mimed female voices used to create metaphorical aesthetics in literature by male poets were seldom applied by women poets in their writing traditions. Sun Kangyi, “Xingbie de kunhuo — cong chuantong duzhe yuedu qingshi de pianjian shuo qi” 性別的困惑 — 從傳統讀者閱讀情詩的偏見說起 [“The Gender Perplexed — From the Bias Created by Traditional Readers Reading Love Poetry.”]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan, pp.100-09, here pp.104-05.

<sup>74</sup> Adapted from Sun Kangyi, *Gudian yu xiandai de nüxing chanshi*, p.74.

<sup>75</sup> Grace S. Fong, “Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song,” p.139.

<sup>76</sup> Anne Birrell, “Women in Literature,” p.216.

Glad of Rain

by Zhu Shuzhen

The burning heat of the red sun rolls over the vast lands,  
Half of the seedlings are scorched without rain in the fields.  
Heaven's work allows not for laziness in the old dragon,  
All around sharp lightning presages thunder and clouds.  
Like myriad pieces of precious jade falling from the sky,  
Ponds, lakes and swamps are all filled up with water.  
Entirely nourished by the rain are farms low and high,  
Farmers are glad that the crops are not yet withered.  
The holy virtue of our blessed Emperor spreads throughout the cosmos,  
Causing timely rain to fall from the clear sky in the sixth month.  
The mercy of rain nourishment the whole country has received,<sup>77</sup>  
From the torture of heat and drought the nine prefectures are wholly relieved.<sup>78</sup>  
The heavy rain has stopped and there is not a speck of dust anywhere,  
Coolness penetrates clothes and sleeves so the feather fans are resting.  
Heavenly green are the various peaks upon the river,  
With brighter sights my views are relaxed and broadened.  
Once the burning heat is washed away no trace is left,  
Suddenly fresh and cool breezes dry my sweat.  
Newly refreshed are the gauze curtains and bamboo mats,  
Plums and peeled melons sink and float on jade-like water.  
Next to the pond people find a multitude of autumnal feelings,  
Dewdrops are still left to decorate the round lotus leaves.  
Over the tower the moon appears with clouds dispersed,  
Distant waters link the sky and the sky links the waves.

(ZSZSH pp.159-60)

Zhu Shuzhen is here able to express herself towards the affairs of the world with no conventional feminine feebleness. One obvious example is her

---

<sup>77</sup> "The whole country" reads *si hai* 四海 [the four seas] in the original poem. It refers to the whole of China because the ancients thought that China faced the sea in the four directions. From the annotation of the above poem, in Zhang Xiancheng et al eds. *ZSZSH*, p.160. The original reads, "四海，古人認為中國四方臨海。"

<sup>78</sup> *Jiu zhou* 九州 [the nine prefectures] stands for China. It is because the ancient China governed her people by setting up nine prefectures, namely Ji 冀, Yu 豫, You 幽, Yang 揚, Yan 兗, Xu 徐, Qing 青, Liang 梁 and Jing 荆. Later on people used 'the nine prefectures' to stand for China according to the section of "Yugong" 禹貢 of *Shangshu*. *Ibid*.

“Moved by Hearing Farmers’ Words in Bitter Heat”<sup>79</sup> in which she pays attention to a class of people from whom she may have been totally out of reach: such concern for their sufferings were unusual for a woman.

The above poem is also exceptional not only because of Zhu Shuzhen’s care for the farmers and their crops (“Farmers are glad that the crops are not yet withered”), but also because of her wider concern for mankind throughout China (“From the torture of heat and drought the nine prefectures are wholly relieved”). Hard to imagine is the masculine *haoqi* 豪氣 [heroic spirit] of expressing great concern about the lives of the common people, presented in the physical masculine writing in the first part of the poem. Upon observation we can say that this poem is an illustration of a masculine voice of a lofty concern for the drought followed by a shift to a feminine voice to describe the refreshed environment after rain. This poem later received much praise, as in Zhong Xing’s comments in *Mingyuan shigui*,

Normally when poems like “Glad of Rain” are written by women, they do not go beyond clauses and phrases such as “coolness penetrates clothes and sleeves” or “gauze curtains and bamboo mats.” This poem, however, describes the farmers’ happiness for the rain which is attributed to the holy virtue of the emperor. As such the setting and logic in this poem are skilful and superb, which is not to be surpassed by the others.<sup>80</sup>

In this way masculinity in Zhu Shuzhen’s writings emerges when she decides which part of her concern requires a masculine approach, and which part a feminine sensitivity. Her great concern at seasonal changes can be seen in the following poem:

---

<sup>79</sup> Refer to section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2 in this dissertation for the poem.

<sup>80</sup> In *juan* nineteen of Zhong Xing’s *Mingyuan shigui*, p.220. The original reads, “《喜雨》詩若出女子口中，不過「衣袂生涼」、「紗廚湘簾」等語盡之矣。卻寫出農夫喜雨一段實情，歸頌聖德上，局理高渾，非他可及也。”

夏日作

朱淑真

東風迤邐轉南風，萬物全歸長養功。舜豈無心阜民俗，薰薰歌入五弦中。

Written on a Summer Day

by Zhu Shuzhen

East wind gradually changes to south wind,

All of creation depends on the power of nourishing.

It was surely not by chance that Shun enriched our folk customs,

Harmoniously creating the song for the five strings.<sup>81</sup> (ZSSH p.237)

In the beginning Zhu Shuzhen pays attention to the change of wind direction, which is a symbol of the seasonal change from spring to summer. The description turns in the second line to her great concern for “[a]ll of creation” that are in the gigantic *tianxia* 天下 [cosmos] of the Chinese emperors, from whom the “power of nourishing” is formed. The reference to Emperor Shun triggers thoughts about the contributions to the universe made by this exemplary emperor of ancient times. To think or write about *tianxia* is deemed to be always the matter of males, and Zhu Shuzhen’s attempt at commenting on Emperor Shun’s intention to nourish and enrich his people can be seen as a female intrusion into the male world of larger concerns. Her care for the development of the people’s “folk customs” is also constructed as a masculine concern. This “gender fluidity (the interchangeability between the feminine and masculine)”<sup>82</sup> is consistent with Kang-i Sun Chang’s remark, “women poets like Li Ch’ing-chao writing out their lives, creating a wonderful poetic fusion of convention and originality, of the female and male traditions.”<sup>83</sup>

In their poems appreciating historical heroes, both Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji demonstrate their admiration towards great figures of the past.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> “Five strings” is a metonym for a zither. Refer to footnote number 68 in this chapter for Emperor Shun’s song played on the zither.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*, p.42.

<sup>83</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang. “Liu Shih and Hsü Ts’an: Feminine or Feminist?,” p.180.

<sup>84</sup> Refer to section 2.2.3 of Chapter 2 in this dissertation for reference to Zhu Shuzhen’s poetic styles in her writings regarding the appreciation of historical heroes.

Imitated masculinity is logically combined into their styles as nobleness and towering insight are required for the historical knowledge which is unexpected from women's education. Although ten such poems are attributed to Zhu Shuzhen, shrewd historical insights are still to be found in Yu Xuanji's much smaller amount of extant poetry. An example is shown below:

浣紗廟

魚玄機

吳越相謀計策多，浣紗神女已相和。一雙笑靨纔回面，十萬精兵盡倒戈。  
范蠡功成身隱遯，伍胥諫死國消磨。只今諸暨長江畔，空有青山號芋蘿。

The Yarn Washing Temple

by Yu Xuanji

Skilful strategies for conspiracies between Wu and Yue states,<sup>85</sup>  
Are soon pacified by the Yarn Washing goddess in this temple.<sup>86</sup>  
With a pair of dimples when she turns her face around,  
Hundreds and thousands of crack troops all put back their weapons.  
Having won merits Fan Li frees himself to a place secluded,<sup>87</sup>  
Admonished to death by Wu Xu the state is exhausted.<sup>88</sup>  
But now this place Zhuji, next to the Long River,<sup>89</sup>  
Has only a green mountain named after Zhuluo.<sup>90</sup> (XYN p.2a)

<sup>85</sup> Wu 吳 and Yue 越 were two rival states in the Zhou Dynasty.

<sup>86</sup> *Huansha shennü* 浣紗神女 [the Yarn Washing goddess] refers to Xishi, one of the four most beautiful women in ancient China. Xishi gained this name because before she was sent to Wu, she always washed yarn beside a stream in her birthplace. See footnote number 68 in Chapter 4 of this dissertation for further reference.

<sup>87</sup> Fan Li is Xishi's lover. See footnote number 47 in Chapter 4 of this dissertation for further reference to Fan Li.

<sup>88</sup> Wu Xu 伍胥 [also known as Wu Zixu 伍子胥] was "from the state of Chu. King Ping killed She, his father, and Xu escaped to the state of Wu. King Fuchai of the Wu defeated Yue at Fujiao [present day Taihu 太湖 in the Wu 吳 Province], and King Goujian of the Yue begged for allegiance to Wu. When Fuchai wished to accept it, Xu remonstrated with him, but he did not listen to Xu. Afterwards Wu planned to conquer Qi, but Xu warned that he should first destroy Yue rather than Qi. Pi, Taizai 太宰 [Grand Steward] of Wu, framed Xu by slander, so Xu was offered a sword for committing suicide." From *juan* three in *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 [Strategic Writings of the Warring States]. The original reads, "[伍子胥，] 楚人，平王殺其父奢，胥奔吳。吳王夫差敗越於夫椒，越王勾踐求委國為臣妾，夫差將許之，胥諫不聽。後吳伐齊，胥諫請釋齊先越，太宰嚭讒之，賜劍以死。" *Zhanguo ce*. Compiled by Liu Xiang. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1978: p.128.

<sup>89</sup> Zhuji 諸暨 [present day Zhuji Province in Zhejiang] was the ancient capital of Yue, built by King Yunchang 允常 [King Goujian's father]. It was the place where the Temple of Washing Yarn was located. From Peng Zhixian and Zhang Yi. *Yu Xuanji shi biannian yizhu* 魚玄機詩編年譯注 [The Annalistic Annotations of Yu Xuanji's Poetry]. Ürümqi: Xinjiang daxue, 1994: p.97.

Taking an objective stance, Yu Xuanji is able to comment on the historical facts of the rivalry between Wu and Yue, and to relate them to her description of her visit to the Yarn Washing Temple. This is a strategy going beyond personal emotions and including a broader sense of obligation towards historical rights and wrongs, a masculine quest for logical analytical power. Personalised sentiments are more expected from women and universal commitment from men, but Yu Xuanji, in writing about her opinions, transcends this dichotomy. Her feminine subjectivity is fully expressed here with her justifications that emphasis had been put on male heroes such as Fan Li and Wu Xu, but not on Xishi who had seduced the Wu King for ignoring politics.<sup>91</sup> A sensible comparison between the success contributed by Fan Li and the tragic and vain reproach of Wu Xu is also made to be a typical approach and style of *wen* 文 [prose] written by male writers.

Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji both call for freedom to write on the topics they favour, and to express the emotions that touch them. "Women did not, in general, merely mime the predominant masculine code in the literary tradition, but raised issues central to their own gender, each in her own age."<sup>92</sup> Their poems written with masculine voices signify that they sometimes do possess the kind of spirit or vision equivalent to the opposite gender, and they can produce poems with confused identities doubted by the readers, just as male poets do when they imitate the feminine voice in their poems.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Zhuluo 苧蘿 refers to Zhuluo Shan 苧蘿山 [Mountain Zhuluo, present day south of Zhuji Province], the birthplace of Xishi. *Ibid.*, pp.97-98.

<sup>91</sup> Xia Chunhao. "Lun Yu Xuanji shi," 59.

<sup>92</sup> Anne Birrell, "Women in Literature," pp.218-19. Also, "[m]ost female authors perceived the problem of women in literature and society to be one of gender conflict and gender inequality." *Ibid.*, p.219.

<sup>93</sup> Sun Kangyi criticises the traditional Chinese approach of reading and interpreting poems by women as their autobiographies, while it should be noted that there was freedom for women to mime and adopt personae in imitated poetry. Sun also warns that this approach would create argument and furthermore, immoral judgements towards many women poets. Zhu Shuzhen was one of these victims.

## 5.5 Imitated Feminine Voices in Tang and Song Poetry

Imitating feminine voices in poetry has long been a tradition of Chinese literary realms. This phenomenon appears in both *shi*- and *ci*-poetry, but mostly in later forms as regard to the nature of *ci*. According to Kang-i Sun Chang, "*ci* are from the beginning associated with women as performers and poetic personae, but the actual authors of *ci* were (insofar as we can be sure) as likely to be male as female[.]" and due to the fact that *ci* was performed by "female entertainers," it was logically associated particularly with feminine voices.<sup>94</sup> An apparent example appears in Kang-i Sun Chang's analysis of "abandoned wives:" "[...] since the times of Ch'ü Yüan [Qu Yuan 屈原] (d. 315 B.C.?) and Ts'ao Chih [Cao Zhi 曹植] (192-232), the Chinese poet, when demoted or exiled, had been accustomed to speak through the female voice of the 'abandoned wife' (*ch'i-fu* [qifu 棄婦]), intending the words to be read as political allegory."<sup>95</sup> Feminising "the subject of a poem" conforms with the remarks of Arthur Waley,

Love-poetry addressed by a man to a woman ceases after the Han Dynasty; but a conventional type of love-poem, in which the poet speaks in the person of a deserted wife or concubine, continues to be popular. The theme appears to be almost an obsession with the T'ang and Sung poets. In a vague way, such poems were felt to be allegorical.<sup>96</sup>

As such, the possibility of male poets writing poetry based on catastrophes in their life is generally assumed, and the male "feminization of desire and pleasure was a well-documented trope in traditional Chinese literature and was politicized through an allegory that turned the subservient

---

Adapted from Sun Kangyi, "Xingbie de kunhuo — cong chuantong duzhe yuedu qingshi de pianjian shuo qi," pp.102-03.

<sup>94</sup> Qtd. and adapted from Kang-i Sun Chang. "Introduction: Genealogy and Titles of the Female Poet." In Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy eds. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, pp.1-14, here pp.4-5 and p.13 respectively.

<sup>95</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang. "Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?," pp.179-80.

<sup>96</sup> Arthur Waley trans. *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*. London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1918: pp.6-7.



position of the court poet into that of the vulnerable woman."<sup>97</sup> This is totally consistent with Kang-i Sun Chang's argument that "by participating in a set of stylistic and rhetorical conventions, writers made themselves into women writers."<sup>98</sup> Looking from another angle, however, we can also consider a noteworthy remark by John Wixted:

Many *tz'u* by male authors have been praised for the understanding they are said to reveal of female psychology. Most such *tz'u*, as feminist critics would probably point out, tell us not of how women think or feel, but of how such male authors perceive women: how they think, or fancy, or would have it, that women think and feel.<sup>99</sup>

This sounds very true in the sense that although male poets are capable of applying the tropes of 'becoming a woman,' the traditionally constructed restraints for the female gender are not easily adopted as their own. This idea is perfectly exposed in poems written by Du Mu, Wen Tingyun and Liu Yong, representing styles from the Tang to the Song. The mushrooming of *nanzi zuo guiyin* 男子作閨音 [male poets' imitation of boudoir voices]<sup>100</sup> was seen as the result of the *huajian ci*. As mentioned before, imitations of female voices by male poets were normally accompanied by descriptions of women's appearances and the boudoir settings, with no attempt to portray the feelings buried inside women's hearts. This point is further noted by Grace Fong who remarks:

[M]ale poets also wrote in a first-person female voice, but the tendency was to write a description of woman, to reproduce a female persona *external* to feminine subjectivity. Since to describe the physical appearance of a female

---

<sup>97</sup> Wendy Larson. *Women and Writing in Modern China*, pp.98-99.

<sup>98</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang. "Introduction: Genealogy and Titles of the Female Poet," p.6.

<sup>99</sup> John Timothy Wixted. "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship," p.157.

<sup>100</sup> Zhao Zehong. "Wanyue cipai nüxing xingxiang de shenmei shanbian" 婉約詞派女性形象的審美嬗變 ["The Transformation of Aesthetic Judgement on Female Image in the School of Delicate Ci-poetry"]. *Chongqing shiyuan xuebao* 1 (1994): 30-36, here 30.

persona calls for discriminating taste rather than emotional empathy or identification, it would seem to be more easily and naturally accomplished by male poets. [My italics]<sup>101</sup>

For instance, Du Mu's relatively plain portrayal of a boudoir and a woman's activities in his poem "Qiu xi" 秋夕 ["Autumn Night"] signifies the persona's pure and love-longing desire:

秋夕

杜牧

銀燭秋光冷畫屏，輕羅小扇撲流螢。天階夜色涼如水，坐看牽牛織女星。<sup>102</sup>

**Autumn Night**

**by Du Mu**

Silver candlelight and autumnal mood cast a chill on the painted screen,

By a small silk fan I catch fluttering glow-worms.

At night the heavenly steps are cool like water,

Sitting and watching the Cowherd and Weaving Maid Stars.

The voice is presumably first-person female, while the imitation is delicately produced, but only in a physical sense. The metaphor of the Cowherd and Weaving Maid reflects a kind of female wish of obtaining love, but it is less profound than the feelings expressed by women poets in the sense that it goes into female movement but not deeply into feminine emotion.

The simple and pure description of female movement in Du Mu's poems, appeared before the emergence of *nüxing hua* 女性化 [feminisation] in the poetry of Wen Tingyun whose elaborate depiction of women's voices was centred on the notions of *meiyan* 美艷 [charming beauty] and *qiyuan* 綺怨 [miserable regrets].<sup>103</sup> His delicate and profound analysis of women's appearances, motions and lives reveals his deep concern for appreciating female beauty. One such example is displayed below:

---

<sup>101</sup> Grace S. Fong. "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," p.112.

<sup>102</sup> *Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou*, pp.503-04.

<sup>103</sup> Zhao Zehong. "Wanyue cipai nüxing xingxiang de shenmei shanbian," 30.

菩薩蠻

溫庭筠

小山重疊金明滅，鬢雲欲度香腮雪。懶起畫蛾眉，弄妝梳洗遲。  
照花前後鏡，花面交相映。新帖繡羅襦，雙雙金鷓鴣。<sup>104</sup>

To the tune: *Pusa man*

by Wen Tingyun

The pencilled eyebrows overlap when golden screen paintings glisten,  
The cloudy temple hair is just to cross over the fragrant snow-like face.  
I lazily awake and paint my delicate eyebrows,  
While making up delays the washing and dressing.  
My beauty is reflected front and back in the mirror,  
Flowers in my hair set my face off beautifully.  
Newly embroidered on my silk coat  
Is a pair of golden Chinese francolins.

“Elaborate and detailed descriptions of the background and women’s outward performance without psychological descriptions [...] and charming bearing [...] in a particular moment” are special characteristics of Wen Tingyun’s poetry.<sup>105</sup> One important feature of male poets imitating female voices is that they do not seem to identify the women’s self in the poems, rather they portray or mime the feminine persona through their own angle of looking at females. The persona identification has been translated as “I” rather than “she” because of the degree of delicacy produced by the poet, the content determining the nature of a feminine poem. However, the “I” inside the poem can also be altered into “she,” because it is difficult to trace whether the poems are written about a woman autobiographically or written from the eyes of other people when no obvious personalisation can be affirmed. Apart from sophisticated vocabulary, those female images under Wen’s brush are only produced “to please the males, to be submissive to males’ aesthetic judgement, to serve their aesthetic interests, and to become

<sup>104</sup> *Tang Wudai ci xuanji*, p.113.

<sup>105</sup> Ding Enquan. “Wen Tingyun yu Li Qingzhao ci zhong nüxing xingxiang bijiao yanjiu” 溫庭筠與李清照詞中女性形象比較研究 [“A Comparative Study of Female Imagery in Wen Tingyun and Li Qingzhao’s *Ci-poetry*”]. *Sheke zongheng* 4 (2002): 60, 68, here 60.

wu hua 物化 [reified] women.”<sup>106</sup>

Liu Yong developed this kind of elaborate description of women into a monologue of sorrow for prostitutes and lower class women. Zhao Zehong comments that Liu’s description of these women is “a kind of spiritual sustenance of his own failed passion [in career], and the indulgence of those women is also a reflection of his cynical attitude towards life.”<sup>107</sup> The sorrow inscribed in Liu Yong’s verse can be seen in the following *ci*-poem:

蝶戀花  
柳永  
佇倚危樓風細細，望極春愁，黯黯生天際。  
草色煙光殘照裡，無言誰會憑闌意。  
擬把疏狂圖一醉，對酒當歌，強樂還無味。  
衣帶漸寬終不悔，為伊消得人憔悴。<sup>108</sup>

To the tune: *Die lian hua* by Liu Yong  
Standing and leaning on a high tower, soft is the wind,  
Looking into distant, the spring sorrow  
Faintly generates from the edge of the sky.  
The hue of the grass and the misty light in the fading glow,  
Wordless, who would know why I lean against the railing?  
I have wished to be intoxicated by indulging in drinking,  
Raising a glass and singing loudly,  
Trying hard to be happy only engenders dullness.  
Though my belt gets looser and looser, I never regret,  
Only because of him I become thin and sallow.

The last two lines indicate a typical female voice regarding her pallid appearance as a result of the parting of a lover or husband (“him” in the poem). Liu Yong’s poem gives a clearer illustration of the catching of feminine thoughts (“I never regret [for my thinness]”), than Wen Tingyun’s

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Zhao Zehong. “Wanyue cipai nüxing xingxiang de shenmei shanbian,” 34.

<sup>108</sup> This lyric poem has an alternative tune called “*Feng qi wu*” 鳳棲梧. See Gu Yisheng, Xu Peijun and Yuan Zhenyu eds. *Song ci jinghua*, p.22.

mere description of appearance. Bai Junfang suggests that,

[Liu Yong] starts to care for the female needs of passion and their working of the minds. He illustrates his respect and admiration for women, without considering them as reified individuals for aesthetic judgement, [... and he considers women as] having resonance in both of their minds.<sup>109</sup>

When imitating the female voice in indicating her “regrets,” Liu Yong’s portrayal of women differs from that of Wen Tingyun by constructing an individual self of a woman who could speak for herself. The delicate and tender feminine touch in his poetry is revealed by phrases often used by both male poets adopting a female voice, and women poets, like “spring sorrow,” who “lean against the railing” and are “thin and sallow.” Feminine voices are consolidated in this sense when the persona is individualised into a particular aspect of female psychology. Liu Yong can be seen as a pioneer in digging into the female mind.

“Sorrow” is frequently applied by male poets to be the main topic in their imitation of feminine voices, since the sorrow derived from parting or abandonment seems to be the focal point of feminine poetry. Ding Enquan criticises the false and superficial construction of the sorrowful passion in male imitations, without personal experience and broadness of the particular “sorrow;” such that this kind of *dai yan* 代言 [representative voice] for women has become static, a *jiti wu yishi* 集體無意識 [unified unconsciousness] as compared to women poets’ ultimate effort in revealing their own selves in poetry.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Bai Junfang. “Ji wo yi sheng xin, fu ni qian hang lei — Liu Yong ci zhong de nüxing xingxiang ji qi nüxing guan” 繫我一生心 負你千行淚 — 柳永詞中的女性形象及其女性觀 [“My Heart Beats E’er for Thee; You’re Wet with Tears for Me — On the Female Figures in Liu Yong’s *Ci*-poems and His Outlook on Women”]. *He’nan daxue xuebao* 1 (2000): 100-04, here 100.

<sup>110</sup> Adapted from Ding Enquan. “Wen Tingyun yu Li Qingzhao ci zhong nüxing xingxiang bijiao yanjiu,” 60, 68.

## 5.6 Conclusion

According to Grace Fong, the male persona was seldom reproduced by female poets because of the great distance between male superiority and female inferiority.<sup>111</sup> In revealing their feminine voices in poetry, both Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji work painstakingly against the typically constructed womanly *nu xing* 奴性 [submissiveness] and *yifu xing* 依附性 [dependency].<sup>112</sup> Most of the gentry women writers in ancient China followed conventional ways of promoting womanly virtue and the Way, so works revealing authentic passion and emotions rarely appeared.<sup>113</sup> The display of feminine voices appears intact in Zhu and Yu's poetry. While it is valuable to address their feminine subjectivity together with their female voices represented in poetry, it is also sensible to distinguish the difference between the degree of authenticity of feminine voices revealed in poetry by female and male poets.

What is crucial here is the basic question of how the female voice is achieved through the poet's self-realisation. Gender distinction appears to be the most problematic barrier for equal viewing of willingness to display genuine self between male and female poets. In such a way authentic female voices might have been distorted into other forms, such as those created by male poets in describing female appearances, to fulfil the gap of gender separation implemented by society. The lack of deep understanding of female psychology in such forms happens to dominate the literary circle without, or with no need for, caring for the authenticity derived from feminine poems written by females.

For a larger part of the feminisation process in classical Chinese poetry, the practice of displaying a female voice has been transformed from male consciousness in terms of female image to a kind of feminine self ideology;

---

<sup>111</sup> Adapted from Grace S. Fong. "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," p.141.

<sup>112</sup> The phrases are suggested by Zhao Li. "Ping Yu Xuanji zuopin de nüxing yishi," 251.

<sup>113</sup> Adapted from Sang Baojing. "Nüguan caiyuan Yu Xuanji — Zhongguo daojiao wenhua shi de guangcai yi ye," 50.

from the feminised sentiments by male poets to the self emotions by female poets; and from the female group image to the female individual image.<sup>114</sup> This can be understood in the sense that male influence in writing poetry, in their disguises of pretending to be female personae, has failed to reflect feminine authenticity without genuine female sensations, gender backgrounds and socially constructed resonance under restrictive social norms.

In conclusion, what seems to be of ultimate significance concerning the portrayal of feminine voices in poetry is to convey the concept of female poets writing about their own selves in poetry, regardless of the degree of whether they have made use of their life experiences in accomplishing the purpose of the poems. Indications of the female poets' thoughts and philosophy towards objects, scenery or sentiments towards human beings should be emphasised when criticising poems. This means that if male poets can penetrate females' thoughts and psychology profoundly, they can also insert their minds into the females' minds and write fine feminine poetry, without dominating the females by their own angle or view towards particular objects, scenery and human beings. It is important here to note that "femininity" is nonetheless a noun derived from "female."

---

<sup>114</sup> Adapted from Zhao Zehong, "Wanyue cipai nüxing xingxiang de shenmei shanbian," 36.

## Conclusion

### A Passive Forerunner: Reviving Zhu Shuzhen

When approaching the question of the problematic arrangement of resisting and reinforcing gender division, a careful search of how Zhu Shuzhen's ambivalent mind is formed in different poems should be conducted. In this dissertation, the particular ambivalence has been brought out logically by examining the relationship revealed in Zhu Shuzhen's poetry: between her intrinsic wish to be a good wife and her growing desire to move beyond the boundaries set for women living in a traditional society. The existence of her desire is attested to by the prevalence of expressive aura that overwhelms the lines of her poetry. Women poets in China frequently reveal sad moods resulting from being neglected, and display unswerving, though passive, emotions towards resistance against traditional moral norms. The term *shendu* 慎獨 ["self-watchfulness when alone"] described by Tu Wei-ming as "an integral part of Confucian self-cultivation"<sup>1</sup> is useful here to describe how Zhu Shuzhen deliberately embellishes her lonely self with literary flourishes.

Seen from the content of her poetry, Zhu Shuzhen can ultimately be regarded as a constructed image of separated personality. This concept is in a sense revealed in the lack of conscious recognition of her struggle in spite of its reflection in her poetry. At the same time her yearning to align to the expectations of a gentry daughter remained strong. The controversial matter of Zhu Shuzhen's extramarital affair underlines the suggestion that the above-mentioned ambivalence is intensified by the immoral characteristics seen in her poetry. What seems to be most important here is the presence of a

---

<sup>1</sup> Qtd. Kirk A. Denton, *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling*, p.38.



particular defiant mood since we note Zhu Shuzhen's construction of a wishful yet lonely figure that allows for much speculation on her marriage and love affairs. This can be seen in the emphasis on, firstly, desires accompanied by certain wordings, and, secondly, on the loneliness resulting from abandonment that would magnify the notion of viewing her as being deprived.

The ambivalence that Zhu Shuzhen reveals in her poems illustrates a phenomenon that I shall call "imperfect gender construction" in the eyes of the Neo-Confucianists. The success of the Neo-Confucianists lay in manufacturing the concept of a flawless woman required to adhere to their moral standards: however, this paradigmatic shaping of a female was incomplete. Traditional ideas did shape a partial image of Zhu Shuzhen as can be seen, for example, when she describes feeling like a young girl from a gentry family who imagines a faultless marriage with an ideal husband. However, this partial construction paves the way to the destruction of her dreams and, eventually, the silent resistance and tragedy revealed in her poetry. In the process of her resistance, the vigorous aggravation of the image of an ideal wife highlights the feebleness of being physically a woman and mentally a female.

In relation to her resistance, Zhu Shuzhen acts as a passive forerunner by, firstly, initiating resistance, before later going on to display her rebellious passion through her poetry. However, the constraints of traditional society bind her to silent and secret struggles resulting from her unconvinced obedience to established norms of womanly inferiority. This kind of mental and physical inconsistency leads to self-confrontation and an insentient mind-wrestling between morality and immorality. Women's education in traditional society caused the desire not to be viewed as deprived to collide with the hope to go beyond stipulated forms of behaviour.

## Merging the “Self” and the “Other Self”

The assumption in traditional China that poets wrote about their own selves strengthened the belief in the reliance on poetic expression as a means of voicing heartfelt moods. In some ways individual poets presented their aspirations and sentiments through self-magnification and self-judgement. This kind of self-revelation, however, can hardly be seen as a unitary whole. Rather it should be viewed as a merging of two ideas: one’s self and his/ her “other self,” an interesting concept of mirroring a person’s psychology through the contemplation of one’s relationship with another identity of self in one’s psyche, or, as Irving Howe wrote, the “self speaks of a person’s relation to both others and oneself.”<sup>2</sup> For instance, when Zhu Shuzhen consciously plays the role of a woman poet, she is also drawn to a manifestation of a male expression of emotion in her poetry. The particular self being retrieved in this aspect, thus, is a way of joining together the two sides of the persona that poets could play in writing poetry and the mental transformations that are thus represented. Such psychological relationships, needless to say, could trigger conflict and frustration.

In analysing the concepts of the self, one important element to be considered is how poets view their actual and mimed voices presented in poetry in order to show particular kinds of emotions. Although actual voices do not always imply autobiographical representations in poetry (especially in the case of works written by male poets),<sup>3</sup> mimed voices would still in most cases be regarded as less satisfactory when it came to providing readers with grounds to address the question of their expression of authentic sentiments. Therefore, the degree of self-fulfilment represented in poetry is determined by the extent to which a poet writes in a voice that signifies his

---

<sup>2</sup> Irving Howe. “The Self in Literature,” p.249.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Sun Kangyi, “Xingbie de kunhuo — cong chuantong duzhe yuedu qingshi de pianjian shuo qi,” p.101.

own reliable feelings, and the extent to which he writes in an imitated voice to indicate the emotions of another self. If a poem is autobiographical, the author's intentions can mostly be expressed through direct descriptions, while the other self would normally be symbolised by rhetorical representation, such as metaphors.

During the conversion from one's own self to the other self, poets' perceptions towards particular objects and views in their poetry inspire subjective judgements. Usually, greater emphasis is placed on one's own self, expressed in a more subjective point of view and focus, when compared with the specific features of the other self revealed in literature. And, the statement that "the more one penetrates into one's inner self, the more one will be capable of realizing the true nature of one's human-relatedness" magnifies itself.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it is insightful to note that poets like Zhu Shuzhen and Yu Xuanji describe their search for minds and psyches as a way of reflecting a kind of self-awareness in their poetry. Seeking a true self may thus be a way of avoiding displacement, not only of a poet's own mind, but also of the poet's readers. The displacement of Zhu's poetic self represents a pseudo contradiction of her masculine and feminine points of view, while the degree of variation between preoccupation in one's self and transformation to the other self is magnified with the poet's own ideal and initiative to determine how her self travels.

It is important to point out that the concept of self discussed in this particular section strengthens the idea of the independent female voice. In principle traditional Chinese women were expected to be selfless, or to avoid speaking out about their plight, but in this regard the hidden self of the women poets explodes as a way of revealing their own voice. They are, in a way, consciously or subconsciously, enriching the ideal of self-realisation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Tu Wei-ming, qtd. Kirk A. Denton, *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling*, p.38.

## Femaleness and Femininity

In this dissertation the ideas of “femaleness” and “femininity” have been crucial to the expression of Zhu Shuzhen’s female voice in her poetry.<sup>5</sup> The naturalness of her femaleness and the invention of femininity by male poets pose a contradiction in her poetry. However, what is noteworthy is the difficulty for readers in distinguishing between femaleness and femininity. It is perhaps easier to say that female poets sometimes display femininity in their poetry. The opposing idea of “female femininity,” further developed from the “male (imitated) femininity” in poetry, can better be traced through the reader’s understanding of how a female poet imitates feminine movement and emotions in her poetry. All depends on the interpretation of the readers regarding how female poets show their responses between the lines and throughout the created or authentic images contained within their poetry. Some voice their lives, while others invent a figurative female form of expression without penetrating into the genuine and profound feeling of delicate female sensibility.

The difference between femaleness and female femininity, in this sphere of interpretation, can be divided into an intrinsic expression of female psychology against any unauthentic renderings in poetry written by female poets. As it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which a poet is writing autobiographically, femaleness may sometimes be confused with feminine representations of women’s dainty figures, speeches and encounters, or a general atmosphere of womanly solitude, restrictions and psychological conflicts. The first person point of view used by women poets can be one of the best ways of discerning the degree of profound female voice, along with the traditional Chinese way of argument that first-person expressions normally generate emotions from the self. If femaleness is considered to be the natural way of illustrating psychological process in poetry, it is easier to

---

<sup>5</sup> See footnote number 8 in Chapter 5 of this dissertation for the definitions of “femaleness” and “femininity.”

address women poets' sentiments and yearnings through a specified significance and emphasis on effects of the female body and mind, rather than paying attention to the imitated style of poetry as represented by male poets.

Assuming that the female voice is best embodied by the female body and mind, the poets' personal adherence to displaying either masculine or feminine voices depends on their own intentions and desires, if clearly presented by the author at the beginning of the poem. For instance, psychological struggle is quite frequently seen in Yu Xuanji's lines, while it is relatively difficult to trace Zhu Shuzhen's inner world when merely looking at her lines without cautious analysis of her exiguous biographical details. The poet's introvert and extrovert expressions of her mind penetrate through her chains of thought and lines of communication to her readers. It is therefore convincing for some Chinese readers to figure out the high degree of femaleness, and thus profoundness, of the poetic content by referring to the background of the particular poet.

### **Authenticity and Aesthetics**

The Western way of ascertaining the authenticity of a particular poem is not as straightforward as the traditional Chinese method of textual interpretation. Given the lack of an official biography, it is essential to emphasise that the ultimate goal is to analyse Zhu Shuzhen's poetry by the relatively modern and widely acceptable means of viewing her as a literary image, rather than attempting to dig out the secrets of her so-called extramarital affair, as many scholars are doing nowadays. When examining her poetry, Chinese methods of appreciating poems can be added to an understanding of the poetic beauty that she represents, but the degree of autobiographical representation in poetry should be assumed as constant in order to have a fair and objective judgement of Zhu Shuzhen and the

messages that she wants to convey in her poetry.

When authenticity is uncertain, the interpretation of poetry can concentrate on the expression of aesthetics as a way of appreciating poetic beauty. It is sometimes believed that authenticity triggers poetic beauty: criticism could then look at the representations of a particular poet, with his/her background being taken as a reference to why, when (if indicated) and how he/she came to write a piece reflecting his/her views and psychology on a particular matter. While we can strike a balance between authenticity and aesthetics because they mutually influence and enrich each other's existence, sometimes they project an opposing stance. Hypothesis tells us that authenticity implies a genuine self, a true aesthetic representation in poetry: poetic aesthetics, however, do not necessarily entail the authenticity of the poet's background revealed in the lines. Hence the spirit of research, again, tells us that aimlessly pursuing authenticity only yields undesirable results; alternatively, textual criticism can be more successful in revealing poetic beauty than biographical approaches.

The beauty of aesthetics, in another way, is sometimes deepened by the authenticity of the passion expressed by the poet. Many Chinese scholars believe that the more aesthetically rich the poem, the more indisputably true the poetic emotion projected from the depth of the poet's heart. Certainly this is only one of the ways of appreciating poetry as it is not always applicable. Finding different ways of looking at the same text, such as from gender representation, self analysis and even comparison between poets with similar intention and style, would best fit my research methodology of mirroring the poet's emotions and psychological contradictions with the echoes from her beautiful and sentimental lines. Accompanying by differentiated interpretations of poetry, it is believed that many inspiring thoughts could flourish through this kind of analysis, insight and comment, from both traditional Chinese and modified Western methods of research.

## Postscript

This thesis has examined the way in which women were regarded as inferior objects in traditional China in terms of their writing poetry, especially under the suppression resulting from the influence of Neo-Confucian ideology. In the Qing Dynasty the literary inferiority of women was mitigated, because a talent to write poetry became a merit in a woman's dowry.<sup>6</sup> It is out of this development that Qing readers were able to encounter new kinds of exotic and profound emotions in poetry written by women, such as Zhu Shuzhen's expression of love in her poetry, which might have previously been seen as disgraceful by those who sought to defend traditional moral principles, in a very different way than those written by men. In general, the evolutionary process of feminine emotions revealed in poetry throughout different periods has been a crucial factor in reflecting women's resistance of the established code of suppression on womanly talents. Zhu Shuzhen's ambivalent mind, in this case, is one of the most significant manifestations of such an evolution.

---

<sup>6</sup> Rexroth and Chung, *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, pp.141-42.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### 魏仲恭〈斷腸集序〉

嘗聞摘辭麗句，固非女子之事；間有天姿秀發，性靈鍾慧，出言吐句，有奇男子之所不如；雖欲掩其名，不可得耳。如蜀之花蕊夫人，近時之李易安，尤顯顯著名者，各有宮詞、樂府行乎世，然所謂膾炙者，可一二數，豈能皆佳也。

比往武陵，見旅邸中好事者，往往傳誦朱淑真詞。每竊聽之，清新婉麗，蓄思含情，能道人意中事，豈泛泛者所能及，未嘗不一唱而三歎也。早歲不幸，父母失審，不能擇伉儷，乃嫁為市井民家妻。一生抑鬱不得志，故詩中多有憂愁怨恨之語。每臨風對月，觸目傷懷，皆寓於詩，以寫其胸中不平之氣，竟無知音，悵悵抱恨而終。自古佳人多命薄，豈止顏色如花命如葉耶！觀其詩，想其人，風韻如此，乃下配一庸夫，固負此生矣。其死也，不能葬骨于地下，如青冢之可弔；并其詩為父母一火焚之。今所傳者，百不一存，是重不幸也。嗚呼冤哉！

予是以歎息之不足，援筆而書之，聊以慰其芳魂於九泉寂寞之濱，未為不遇也。如其敘述始末，自有臨安王唐佐為之傳，姑書其大概為別引云，乃名其詩為《斷腸集》。後有好事君子，當知予言之不妄也。

淳熙壬寅二月望日醉□居士宛陵魏仲恭端禮書



**“Duanchang ji xu” [“A Preface to the Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry”]  
by Wei Zhonggong**

I have heard that elaborate phrases and flowery lines are absolutely not a matter for women; but thanks to their intrinsic talents and shrewd spirits, the works produced by some women surpass those by males even with an extraordinary talent, so that their fame cannot be concealed even if they wished to do so. Both Huarui furen [Lady Stamen] (886-926) of [Former] Shu (907-925) and, more recently, Li Yian [Li Qingzhao] have been put into the limelight because of their palace lyrics and *yuefu*. Only one or two have enjoyed great popularity, how could the works of all women be good?

When I went on an outing to Wuling, some idlers staying at my inn were for ever reciting Zhu Shuzhen's *ci*-poems. Every time I listened secretly to these poems, they seemed fresh and delicate, thoughtful and exuding emotions, capable of recounting people's feelings. How could the works of ordinary people match up to hers? It is hard not to chant and echo her poems over and over. [Zhu Shuzhen] was unfortunate in her early years when her parents had neglected to find her a husband, so she was married off to a commoner. Because she was depressed and failed to achieve her life ambitions, much of her poetry used the language of sadness and regret. Whenever she faced the wind and the moon, she was grief-stricken by what she saw, and buried her feelings into her poetry in order to express her anger at the injustice she had suffered. She could not find a friend with whom she could share her common interests, and, smouldering with regret, she died. Throughout the ages most beautiful women have been ill-fated, how can we merely say that their faces are like flowers but their fates are like fallen leaves? Looking at her poems and thinking of her charming personality, it is clear that her marriage to a vulgar fellow simply ruined her life. When she died, her bones could not be buried in a proper place like the Green Mound [for

Wang Zhaojun]; moreover, she, together with her poems, were cremated in a fire set by her parents. A double misfortune is that her extant poems today represent only one out of a hundred. What a calamity!

As merely sighing is inadequate, I have taken up a brush to write this preface, more to console her fragrant soul on the lonely banks of the Nine Springs, than to leave her name unrecognised. To describe the whole story, Wang Tangzuo of Lin'an has written a biography for her, so the information in this preface is generally quoted from other sources. I name [Zhu Shuzhen's] poems *Duanchang ji* [*A Collection of Heartbreaking Poetry*]. Later on idlers will not find my words absurd.

~ Written by Wei Zhonggong (Duanli), Hermit of Drunken □, from Yuanling, on the fifteenth day of the second month, in Renyin, the ninth year of the Chunxi reign period [1182].

## Appendix B

朱淑真《璿璣圖記》(後附王士禛《池北偶談》卷十五評)

若蘭名蕙，姓蘇氏，陳留令道質季女也。年十六，歸扶風竇滔。滔字連波，仕苻秦為安南將軍，以若蘭才色之美，甚敬愛之。滔有寵姬趙陽臺，善歌舞，若蘭苦加捶楚，由是陽臺積恨，讒毀交至，滔大恚憤。時詔滔留鎮襄陽，若蘭不願偕行，竟挈陽臺之任。若蘭悔恨自傷，因織錦字為回文，五彩相宣，瑩心眩目，名曰《璿璣圖》，亙古以來所未有也。乃命使齋至襄陽，感其妙絕，遂送陽臺之關中，具輿從迎若蘭于漢南，恩好踰初。其著文字五千餘首，世久湮沒，獨是圖猶存。唐則天常序圖首，今已魯魚莫辨矣。初，家君宦遊浙西，好拾清玩，凡可人意者，雖重購不惜也。一日家君宴郡倅衙，偶於壁間見是圖，償其值，得歸遺予。於是坐臥觀究，因悟璿璣之理，試以經緯求之，文果流暢。蓋璿璣者，天盤也；經緯者，星辰所行之道也；中留一眼者，天心也。極星不動，蓋運轉不離一度之中，所謂居其所而斡旋之。處中一方，太微垣也，乃疊字四言詩。其二方，紫微垣也，乃四言回文。二方之外四正，乃五言回文。四維乃四言回文。三方之外四正，乃交首四言詩，其文則不回也。四維乃三言回文。三方之經以至外四經，皆七言回文詩，可周流而讀者也。

紹定三年春二月望後三日，錢塘幽棲居士朱氏淑真書

王士禛《池北偶談》卷十五

辛亥冬，於京師見宋朱女郎淑真手書《璿璣圖》一卷，字法妍嫵，有記云 [朱淑真《璿璣圖記》上文]..... 首有「璿璣變幻」四小篆，後有小朱印。予向見《斷腸集》，不載此文。諸家撰閨秀詩筆者，皆未之載。宋桑世昌澤卿、明雲間張玄超之象撰《回文類聚》，亦未收此。家考功兄輯《然脂集》三百餘卷，多徵奧僻，因錄一通歸之。後有仇英實父補圖四幅，亦極妙。按張萱、周昉、李伯時輩，皆有織錦回文圖，英此圖，殆有所本也。

**“Xuanjitu ji” [“The Record of Chiasmus Poetry”] by Zhu Shuzhen (Comments from *juan* fifteen of *Chibei Outan* [Occasional Talks North of the Pond] added by Wang Shizhen attached afterwards)**

Su Ruolan whose first name was Hui, was the youngest daughter of [Su] Daozhi, the officer of Chenliu prefecture. [When Ruolan was] sixteen, she was married to Dou Tao of Fufeng. Dou Tao, courtesy name Lianbo, worked for the state of the Former Qin founded by the Fu family [350-395, also known as Qian Qin 前秦] and became a general in Annan. He respected and loved Ruolan very much because of her extraordinary talent and beauty. Tao kept a favoured concubine Zhao Yangtai, who was good at singing and dancing. Ruolan painstakingly dissuaded him [from obsessing with Yangtai], causing Yangtai to burn with resentment towards Ruolan, leading to the exchange of slanders and calumnies; Tao felt angry and resentful. When Tao was ordered to take up the guard at Xiangyang, Ruolan was unwilling to go with him, so Tao brought Yangtai along to assume duty. Feeling regretful and sad, Ruolan wove a piece of brocade into a tapestry of palindromic poems. The tapestry was splendidly five-coloured and dazzling with lustrous hints, was called “Xuanjitu” [“The Chiasmus Poetry”], and had never been seen in previous ages. Ruolan then ordered a messenger to take it to Xiangyang. Stirred by the marvellous brocade, Tao sent Yangtai back to the frontier pass and prepared carriages to receive Ruolan at Hannan; both then loved each other even more than before. Although she wrote over five thousand pieces, almost all are lost, with only this palindromic poetry having survived. Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang wrote a preface for this chiasmus poetry, but its authenticity is hard to verify today.

In the beginning, my father took official trips to Zhexi [West of Zhejiang]. He was fond of picking up refined things, and would not hesitate to spend a large sum of money on those that were to his liking. One day my

father attended a banquet in a vice-prefecture officer's house, where he happened to see this chiasmus poetry on the wall. He met its value, took it home and gave it to me. I examined and studied it excitedly, and was enlightened by the chiasmus logic. On attempting to figure it out by vertical and horizontal lines, I found that the flow was really smooth. This is because 'chiasmus' refers to the twine of heaven; the vertical and horizontal lines refer to the tracks along which stars revolve; and the eye in the centre is the heart of heaven. The core star does not move, because the revolving cannot be done if removed from the central point, which is known as 'locating in the centre and rotating around it.' The one side in the centre, the *taiwei* spot, contains reiterative four-character verses. The second side, the *ziwei* spot, contains four-character chiasmus poems. The four corners out of the second side contain five-character chiasmus poems. The four dimensions contain four-character chiasmus poems. The four corners out of the third side contain four-character verses with a shared first character, without palindrome effects. The four dimensions contain three-character chiasmus poems. From the vertical line of the third side to the outer four vertical lines, are seven-character chiasmus poems, which can be read from every direction.

~ Written by Zhu Shuzhen, Hermit of Seclusion, from Qiantang, on the third day after the fifteenth day of the second month in spring, in the third year of the Shaoding reign period [1230].

*Juan fifteen in Chibei Outan [Occasional Talks North of the Pond] by Wang Shizhen*

In the winter of the year Xinhai [1671], I saw in the capital a *juan* of "Chiasmus Poetry" hand-written by a woman named Zhu Shuzhen of the Song Dynasty. The handwriting was enchanting, and there was a record which read ["The Record of Chiasmus Poetry" by Zhu Shuzhen quoted above].... At the beginning of the *juan* there were seal characters that read "Chiasmus Caprice," with a small seal in red at the end. The *Duanchang ji* I have seen does not contain this record, and it is seen neither in scholars' passages quoting women's poetry, nor in Sang Shichang (courtesy name Zeqing) of the Song's brilliant work, *Huiwen Leiju* [Assorted Collections of Chiasmus Prose], produced in the Ming by Zhang Xuanchao from Yunjian. When my examiner brother edited *Ranzhi ji* [Burning Rouge Collection], a work of more than three hundred *juan* that is full of profound and recondite allusions, he included all of this work. Afterwards Qiu Ying (courtesy name Shifu) added four fabulous portraits. As there had been brocade chiasmus poetry portraits in the periods of Zhang Xuan, Zhou Fang and Li Boshi respectively, Qiu Ying's portraits had something to work on.

Appendix C



Lithographic Calligraphy by Zhu Shuzhen

(Source: Huang Aihua, "Zhu Shuzhen jiguan xinkao," 178.)

## List of References

### Primary Sources

- Che Shui 車水. *Zhongguo lidai mingnü: qingnü juan* 中國歷代名女：情女卷 [Famous Chinese Women: Women Fighting for Love]. Beijing: Zhongguo Sanxia, 1994.
- Chu Renhuo 褚人穫. *Jianhu ji* 堅瓠集 [Collection of the Hard Bottle Gourd]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin, 1986. 4 vols.
- Fan Ye 范曄. *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 [History of the Later Han]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965. 6 vols.
- Gao Shixian 高時顯, and Wu Rulin 吳汝霖 eds. *Xu Xiaomu ji jianzhu, Yu Xuanji shi, Nan Tang er zhu ci* 徐孝穆集箋注、魚玄機詩、南唐二主詞 [Annotated Collection of Xu Xiaomu, Shi-poetry by Yu Xuanji, and Ci-poetry by the Two Rulers of the Southern Tang]. Taipei: Zhonghua, n.d.
- Gu Qilun 顧起綸 ed. *Guoya ershi juan, xu guiya si juan, guoya pin yi juan* 國雅二十卷、續國雅四卷、國雅品一卷 [Songs for Banquet: Twenty Rolls; Song for Banquet (Continued): Four Rolls; Comments on Songs for Banquet: One Roll]. Ji'nan: Qilu Shushe, 2001.
- Hong Mai 洪邁. *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 [Casual Writings from the Rongzhai Study]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1978.
- Hong Pian 洪楩 ed. *Qingpingshan tang huaben* 清平山堂話本 [Story Script of the Qingping Hill Pavilion]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1957.
- Huangfu Mei 皇甫枚. *Sanshui xiaodu* 三水小牘 [Small Texts from Sanshui]. Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1958.
- Ji Yun 紀昀 ed. *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 [Annotated Catalogue of a Collection of the Imperial Library]. Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1939. 4 vols.



- Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤. *Huifeng cihua, Guang Huifeng cihua* 蕙風詞話、廣蕙風詞話 [*Huifeng's Commentaries on Ci-poetry, Huifeng's Varieties of Comments on Ci-poetry*]. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji, 2003.
- Li E 厲鶚. *Song shi jishi* 宋詩紀事 [*A Record of Song Dynasty Shi-poetry*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1983. 2 vols.
- Li Qingzhao 李清照. "Jinshi lu houxu" 金石錄後序 ["The Second Preface to the Catalogue of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions"]. In Qian Bocheng ed. *Guwen guanzhi xinbian*, pp.922-38 (vol.2).
- Lü Kun 呂坤. *Guifan* 閨範 [*Regulations for the Boudoirs*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1994.
- Peng Zhixian 彭志憲 and Zhang Yi 張燚. *Yu Xuanji shi biannian yizhu* 魚玄機詩編年譯注 [*The Annalistic Annotations of Yu Xuanji's Poetry*]. Ürümqi: Xinjiang daxue, 1994.
- Qian Bocheng 錢伯城 ed. *Guwen guanzhi xinbian* 古文觀止新編 [*A Collection of Ancient Prose: A New Edition*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1988. 2 vols.
- Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 [*A Complete Collection of Shi-poetry of the Tang Dynasty*]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960. 25 vols.
- Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [*A Collection of the Imperial Library*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1987. 1500 vols.
- Sun Guangxian 孫光憲. *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 [*Trivial Words of the North Dream*]. Commented by Kong Fanli 孔凡禮. Beijing: Xueyuan, 2000.
- Sima Guang 司馬光. *Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀 [*Letters and Ceremonies by Master Sima*]. Shanghai, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1936.
- Sima Qian 司馬遷. *Shiji: wen bai duizhao* 史記：文白對照 [*The Book of History, with Ancient and Modern Versions*]. Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin, 1994.
- Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋 ed. *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 [*A Complete Collection of Ci-poetry of the Song Dynasty*]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965. 5 vols.
- . *Song ci hujian kao* 宋詞互見考 [*Mutual Criticisms of Song Ci-poetry*]. Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1971.

- Tao Yuanzao 陶元藻. *Quan Zhe shihua wushisi juan* 全浙詩話五十四卷 [Notes on the Complete Shi-poetry of Zhejiang Province: Fifty-four Rolls]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1995.
- Tian Rucheng 田汝成. *Xihu youlan zhiyu* 西湖遊覽志餘 [Record of a Journey around Western Lake]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1998.
- Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅. *Shi nü shi shisi juan, shiyi yi juan* 詩女史十四卷·拾遺一卷 [A History of Poetry by Women: Fourteen Rolls, Collection of Omissions: One Roll]. Tainan: Zhuangyan Wenhua Shiye, 1997.
- Wang Fuzhi 王夫之. *Shangshu yinyi* 尚書引義 [The Book of Documents with Associated Comments]. Beijing, Zhonghua, 1976.
- Wang Renyu 王仁裕. *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事 [Posthumous Incidents of the Reign Periods Kaiyuan and Tianbao]. In *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1035, pp.843-65.
- Wang Shizhen 王士禛 [禛]. *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 [Occasional Talks North of the Pond]. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982.
- Wang Shumin 王叔岷. *Zhuangzi jiaoquan* 莊子校註 [Annotated Edition of Zhuangzi]. Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1988.
- Wu Hengzhao 吳衡照. *Lianziju cihua* 蓮子居詞話 [Notes on Ci-poetry of the Lotus Seed Court]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1995.
- Xin Wenfang 辛文房. *Tang caizi zhuan jiaozheng* 唐才子傳校正 [Rectified Biographies of the Talented in the Tang Dynasty]. Jiangsu: Jiangsu Guji, 1987.
- Xue Tao 薛濤. *Xue Tao shijian* 薛濤詩箋 [Poetry and Letters by Xue Tao]. Annotated with Commentaries by Zhang Pengzhou 張篷舟. Beijing: Renmin Wenxue, 1983.
- Yuchuang ji: Jiezhier ji* 雨窗集·戒指兒記 [A Collection of a Rainy Window: The Record of a Ring]. In Hong Pian ed. *Qingpingshan tang huaben*, pp.244-71.
- Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 [Strategic Writings of the Warring States]. Compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1978.

- Zhang Xiancheng 張顯成 et al eds. *Li Qingzhao Zhu Shuzhen shici hezhu* 李清照、朱淑真詩詞合注 [A Combined Annotation of Shi-poetry and Ci-poetry by Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen]. Chengdu: Bashu, 1999.
- Zhong Xing 鍾惺 ed. *Mingyuan shigui sanshiliu juan* 名媛詩歸三十六卷 [A Collection of Poetry by Notable Women — Thirty-six Rolls]. Taipei: Zhuangyan Wenhua Shiye, 1997.
- Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真. *Zhu Shuzhen ji* 朱淑真集 [A Collection of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry]. Annotated by Zhang Zhang 張璋 and Huang Yu 黃畬. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1986.
- . *Zhu Shuzhen ji zhu* 朱淑真集注 [Annotated Edition of the Collected Poetry of Zhu Shuzhen]. Annotated by Zheng Yuanzuo 鄭元佐. Zhejiang: Zhejiang Guji, 1985.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Shijing jizhuan* 詩經集傳 [Annotations of the Book of Songs]. In *Sishu wujing Song Yuan ren zhu* 四書五經宋元人注 [The Four Books and the Five Classics, with Commentaries by Song and Yuan Authors]. Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 1985. 3 vols.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹 and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙. *Jinsi lu xiangzhu jiping* 近思錄詳註集評 [Annotated Detailed Edition of Reflections on Things at Hand]. Annotated by Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷. Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1992.
- Zuili Yanshui Sanren 橋李煙水散人. *Taohua ying, Chundeng nao* 桃花影、春燈鬧 [The Shadow of Peach Blossoms, The Clamour of Spring Lanterns]. Taipei: Taiwan Daying Baiken, 1994.

## Secondary Sources

- A Jie 阿潔. "Jiating shihe zhuangtai xia nüxing xintai de zhenqie biaoqian — Li Qingzhao, Zhu Shuzhen, Huang E shici yiyun xintan" 家庭失和狀態下女性心態的真切表現 — 李清照、朱淑真、黃娥詩詞意蘊新探 ["The Authentic Expression of the Female Psychology under the Situation of Family Discord — A New Exploration of the Ideology of Poetry by Li Qingzhao, Zhu Shuzhen and Huang E"]. *Qiu suo* 1 (2003): 190-92.
- Allen, Douglas ed. *Culture and Self: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives East and West*. Boulder: Westview, 1997.
- Bai Junfang 白軍芳. "Ji wo yi sheng xin, fu ni qian hang lei — Liu Yong ci zhong de nüxing xingxiang ji qi nüxing guan" 繫我一生心 負你千行淚 — 柳永詞中的女性形象及其女性觀 ["My Heart Beats E'er for Thee; You're Wet with Tears for Me — On the Female Figures in Liu Yong's Ci-poems and His Outlook on Women"]. *He'nan daxue xuebao* 1 (2000): 100-04.
- . "Yinqin bu de yu, honglei yishuang liu — tan Yu Xuanji he ta de shi" 殷勤不得語 紅淚一雙流 — 談魚玄機和她的詩 ["Attentive but Without Words of Care, Red Tears Shedding from My Pair of Eyes — About Yu Xuanji and Her Poetry"]. *Shanxi guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* 1 (2000): 45-48.
- Baxter, Glen William. "Metrical Origins of the Tz'u." In John L. Bishop ed. *Studies in Chinese Literature*, pp.186-224.
- Birge, Bettine. "Chu Hsi and Women's Education." In Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee, *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, pp.325-67.
- Birrell, Anne M. "The Dusty Mirror: Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry." In Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney eds., *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, pp.33-69.

- . "Women in Literature." In Victor Mair ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, pp.194-220.
- Bishop, John L. ed. *Studies in Chinese Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Bol, Peter K. *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Bossler, Beverly. "Shifting Identities: Courtesans and Literati in Song China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62.1 (2000): 5-37.
- Bray, Francesca. *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Brownell, Susan, and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom eds. *Chinese Femininities/ Chinese Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Bruneau, Marie Florine. "Learned and Literary Women in Late Imperial China and Early Modern Europe." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 156-72.
- Buckley, J. F. *Desire, the Self, the Social Critic: The Rise of Queer Performance within the Demise of Transcendentalism*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1997.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Cahill, Suzanne E. "Discipline and Transformation: Body and Practice in the Lives of Daoist Holy Women of Tang China." In Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, pp.251-78.
- . "Smell Good and Get a Job: How Daoist Women Saints were Verified and Legitimized During the Tang Dynasty (618-907)." In Sherry J. Mou ed. *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*, pp.171-86.

- Chan, Wing-tsit trans. *Reflections on Things at Hand: The Neo-Confucian Anthology Compiled by Chu Hsi and Lü Tsu-Ch'ien*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- . *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Chang, Carsun. *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1957.
- Chang, Kang-i Sun. "Introduction: Genealogy and Titles of the Female Poet." In Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy eds. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, pp.1-14.
- . "Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?" In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.169-87.
- Chang, Kang-i Sun, and Haun Saussy eds. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Changyong diangu cidian* 常用典故辭典 [A Dictionary of Frequently Used Allusions]. Xu Chengzhi 徐成志, Wang Guanghan 王光漢, and Yu Shi 于石 eds. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 1985.
- Chen Wuying 陳武英. "Zhu Shuzhen shici de lishi jiazhi" 朱淑真詩詞的歷史價值 ["The Historical Value of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry"]. *Shehui kexue jikan* 5 (2002): 168-72.
- Chen Xiang 陳香 ed. *Bai Juyi de xin yuefu* 白居易的新樂府 [Bai Juyi's New Yuefu Folksongs]. Taipei: Guojia, 1982.
- Chen Youbing 陳友冰. "Ershi shiji dalu de Song shi zonglun yanjiu huigu" 二十世紀大陸的宋詩總論研究回顧 ["An Overview of Research on Song Dynasty Poetry in Mainland China during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century"]. *Hanxue yanjiu tongxun* 24: 2 (2005): 1-16.

- Cheng Qianfan 程千帆 and Wu Xinlei 吳新雷. *Liang Song wenxue shi* 兩宋文學史 [A Literary History of the Two Song Periods]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1991.
- Chun, Allen. "The Practice of Tradition and the Writing of Custom, or Chinese Marriage from Li to Su." *Late Imperial China* 13.2 (1992): 82-125.
- Ci hai* 辭海 [An Ocean of Phrases]. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1989.
- Cuddon, J. A. *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin, 1976.
- de Bary, Wm. Theodore, and John W. Chaffee eds. *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- de Pee, Christian. "The Ritual and Sexual Bodies of the Groom and the Bride in Ritual Manuals of the Sung Dynasty (Eleventh Through Thirteenth Centuries)." In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.53-100.
- Deng Hongmei 鄧紅梅. "Zhu Shuzhen shiji xinkao" 朱淑真事蹟新考 ["A New Investigation of Zhu Shuzhen's Biography"]. *Wenxue yichan* 2 (1994): 66-74.
- Denton, Kirk A. *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Ding Enquan 丁恩全. "Wen Tingyun yu Li Qingzhao ci zhong nüxing xingxiang bijiao yanjiu" 溫庭筠與李清照詞中女性形象比較研究 ["A Comparative Study of Female Imagery in Wen Tingyun and Li Qingzhao's Ci-poetry"]. *Sheke zongheng* 4 (2002): 60, 68.
- Dong, Lorraine. "The Many Faces of Cui Yingying." In Guisso and Johannesen, *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, pp.75-98.

- Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- . "Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History." In Paul Ropp, *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, pp.197-223.
- Eifring, Halvor. "Introduction: Emotions and the Conceptual History of Qing 情." In Halvor Eifring ed. *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp.1-36.
- . ed. *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Elvin, Mark. "Female Virtue and the State in China." *Past and Present* 104 (1984): 111-52.
- Fairbank, John K., and Edwin O. Reischauer. *China: Tradition and Transformation*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia, 1979.
- Fan Hong. *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*. London: Frank Cass, 1997.
- Fong, Grace S. "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song." In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.107-44.
- . "Persona and Mask in the Song Lyric (Ci)." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50 (1990): 459-84.
- . "Writing Self and Writing Lives: Shen Shanbao's (1808-1862) Gendered Auto/Biographical Practices." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 2.2 (2000): 259-303.
- Franke, Herbert ed. *Sung Biographies*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976. 3 vols.
- Furth, Charlotte. "Poetry and Women's Culture in Late Imperial China: Editor's Introduction." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 1-8.
- Gao Yuan 高原. *Tang Song ci jianshang cidian 唐宋詞鑒賞辭典 [A Dictionary of Appreciating Tang and Song Ci-Poetry]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 1988.
- Gilmartin, Christina K. et al eds. *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Goodman, Lizbeth ed. *Literature and Gender*. London: Routledge, 1996.



- Gu hanyu da cidian 古漢語大辭典 [A Dictionary of Ancient Chinese Language]. Wang Jianyin 王劍引 et al eds. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 2000.
- Gu Yisheng 顧易生, Xu Peijun 徐培均, and Yuan Zhenyu 袁震宇 eds. *Song ci jinghua* 宋詞精華 [The Essence of Song Ci-Poetry]. Chengdu: Bashu, 1995.
- Guisso, Richard W. L. "Thunder Over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Reception of Women in Early China." In Richard W. L. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen eds, *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, pp.47-61.
- Guisso, Richard W. L., and Stanley Johannesen eds. *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*. Youngstown: Philo Press, 1981.
- Hegel, Robert E. "Introduction: An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self." In Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney eds. *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, pp.3-30.
- Hegel, Robert E., and Richard C. Hessney eds. *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Holmgren, Jennifer. "Myth, Fantasy or Scholarship: Images of the Status of Women in Traditional China." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 6 (1981): 147-70.
- Hou, Sharon Shih-jiuan. "Women's Literature." In William H. Nienhauser Jr. ed. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp.175-94 (vol.1).
- Howe, Irving. "The Self in Literature." In George Levine ed. *Constructions of the Self*, pp.249-67.
- Hu Yuanling 胡元翎. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen shici de nüxing tese" 論朱淑真詩詞的女性特色 ["A Discussion of the Feminine Characteristics of Zhu Shuzhen's Shi-poetry and Ci-poetry."]. *Wenxue yichan* 2 (1998): 71-81.

- . "Nanxing shilun yu nüxing shiren de 'ge' — Zhu Shuzhen yanjiu zhong de yi ge wenti" 男性詩論與女性詩人的‘隔’ — 朱淑真研究中的一個問題 ["The 'Separation' between Poetic Commentaries by Male and Female Poets — A Problem in the Study of Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Qiushi xuekan* 2 (1998): 80-82.
- . "Zhu Shuzhen yu 'kongbai' xiaoying" 朱淑真與‘空白’效應 ["Zhu Shuzhen and the 'Blank' Effect"]. *Xueshu jiaoliu* 1 (1998): 80-82.
- Huang Aihua 黃愛華. "Zhu Shuzhen jiguan xinkao" 朱淑貞籍貫新考 ["A New Investigation of Zhu Shuzhen's Native Place"]. *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 1 (1985): 178.
- Huang Hongquan ed. and trans. *Anthology of Song-Dynasty Ci-Poetry*. Beijing: People's Liberation Army Publishing House, 1988.
- Huang, Martin W. *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Huang Shizhong 黃世中. *Tang shi yu daojiao* 唐詩與道教 [*Tang Poetry and Daoism*]. Guilin: Lijiang, 1996.
- Huang Yaqing 黃亞清. "Zhu Shuzhen shici aiqing xintai qiantan" 朱淑真詩詞愛情心態淺探 ["The Attitude to Love in Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry"]. *Zhejiang shuren daxue xuebao* 1 (2003): 58-61.
- Huang Yanli 黃嫣梨. *Zhu Shuzhen ji qi zuopin* 朱淑真及其作品 [*Zhu Shuzhen and Her Works*, also known as *Zhu Shuzhen yanjiu* 朱淑真研究 {*A Study of Zhu Shuzhen*}]. Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1991.
- Huang Yanli, and Wu Xihe 吳錫河. *Duanchang fangcao yuan — Zhu Shuzhen zhuan* 斷腸芳草遠 — 朱淑真傳 [*The Heartbreaking Fragrant Grass is Far Away — The Biography of Zhu Shuzhen*]. Shijiazhuang: Huashan Wenyi, 2000.
- Hucker, Charles O. *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.

- Idema, Wilt L. "Male Fantasies and Female Realities: Chu Shu-chen and Chang Yü-niang and Their Biographies." In Harriet Zürndorfer, *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspective*, pp.19-52.
- . "Proud Girls." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.2 (2001): 232-48.
- Idema, Wilt L. and Beata Grant. *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004.
- Ji Gong 季工. "Guanyu nüshiren Zhu Shuzhen de shici" 關於女詩人朱淑真的詩詞 ["About the Shi- and Ci-poetry by the Women Poet Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Xueshu yuekan* 3 (1963): 57-61.
- Ji Yougong 計有功. *Tang shi jishi jiaojian* 唐詩紀事校箋 [A Record of Tang Shi-poetry with Annotations]. Annotated by Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞. Chengdu: Bashu, 1989. 2 vols.
- Jin Yaoji 金耀基. "Introduction." In Huang Yanli, *Zhu Shuzhen ji qi zuopin*, pp.IX-XIV.
- Ko, Dorothy. "Pursuing Talent and Virtue: Education and Women's Culture in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century China." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 9-39.
- . *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Ko, Dorothy, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Kong Fanli 孔凡禮. "Zhu Shuzhen yishi jicun ji qita" 朱淑真佚詩輯存及其他 ["The Edition and Collection of Zhu Shuzhen's Lost Poems and Beyond"]. *Wenshi* 12 (1981): 227-33.

- Kong Yiping 孔逸萍. "Ci qu zhi ying tian shang you, renjian neng de ji hui ting — cong Zhu Shuzhen shici chuanguo tan qi aiqing xinli de dutexing" 此曲只應天上有 人間能得幾回聽 — 從朱淑真詩詞創作探其愛情心理的獨特性 ["This Song can Only be Heard in Heaven, How Many Times can the Human World Hear That? — on Zhu Shuzhen's Specificity of Her Psychology on Love, With Reference to Her Poetic Creations"]. *Jiangsu guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* 4 (1996): 30-35.
- Kristeva, Julia. *About Chinese Women*. Trans. Anita Barrows. London: Marion Boyars, 1977.
- Kupperman, Joel J. "Feminism as Radical Confucianism: Self and Tradition." In Chenyang Li ed. *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*, pp.43-56.
- Lam, Lap. "Elevation and Expurgation: Elite Strategies in Enhancing the Reputation of Ci." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 24 (2002): 1-41.
- Larson, Wendy. *Women and Writing in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Levine, George ed. *Constructions of the Self*. Rutgers: The State University, 1992.
- Li, Chenyang ed. *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*. Illinois: Open Court, 2000.
- Li Liangrong 李良鎔. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen" 論朱淑真 ["Commenting on Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Sichuan jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 2 (1998): 11-15.
- . "Preface." In Zhang Xiancheng 張顯成 et al eds. *Li Qingzhao Zhu Shuzhen shici hezhu*, pp.1-27.
- Li, Wai-yee. *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- Li Weimin 李偉民. "Zhu Shuzhen yanjiu liushi nian zongshu" 朱淑真研究六十年綜述 ["A Summary of Sixty Years of Studies of Zhu Shuzhen"]. *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 3 (1995): 17-22.
- Li Yu-ning ed. *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1992.
- Li Ziyun. "Women's Consciousness and Women's Writing." Trans. Zhu Hong. In Christina K. Gilmartin, et al eds. *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*, pp.299-317.
- Liang Chaoran 梁超然. "Yu Xuanji kaolue" 魚玄機考略 ["An Exploration of Yu Xuanji"]. *Xibei daxue xuebao* 3 (1997): 18-21, 25.
- Lin, Shuen-fu. "The Formation of a Distinct Generic Identity for Tz'u." In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.3-29.
- Lin, Shuen-fu, and Stephen Owen eds. *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Lin Yü-t'ang. "Feminist Thought in Ancient China." In Li Yu-ning ed. *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*, pp.34-58.
- Little, Judy. *The Experimental Self: Dialogic Subjectivity in Woolf, Pym, and Brooke-Rose*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.
- Liu, James J. Y. "The Paradox of Poetics and the Poetics of Paradox." In Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen eds. *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp.49-70.
- Liu Jiafu 劉加夫. "Tang dai nü shiren Yu Xuanji" 唐代女詩人魚玄機 ["Yu Xuanji, Woman Poet of the Tang Dynasty"]. *Wenshi zazhi* 5 (2000): 26-28.
- Liu Jie 劉潔. "Duanchang shi yin enyuan qing — Zhu Shuzhen shici yiyun xintan" 斷腸詩吟恩怨情 — 朱淑真詩詞意蘊新探 ["Heartbroken Poems Chanting Feelings of Gratitude and Resentment — A New Exploration into the Implications of Zhu Shuzhen's Poetry and Ci Poems"]. *Xibei shida xuebao* 1 (2003): 58-61.

- Liu Yongcong 劉詠聰. *De, cai, se, quan* 德·才·色·權 [Virtue, Talent, Beauty and Power]. Hong Kong: Chengbang, 1998.
- Ma, Y. W. and Joseph S. M. Lau eds. *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Mair, Victor ed. *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Mann, Susan. "'Fuxue' (Women's Learning) by Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801): China's First History of Women's Culture." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 40-61.
- . "Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.4 (2000): 835-62.
- Miao Yue 繆鉞. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen shenghuo niandai ji qi *Duanchang ci*" 論朱淑真生活年代及其《斷腸詞》 ["Zhu Shuzhen's Life Experience and Her Heartbreaking Ci-poetry."]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan eds, *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu*, pp.419-34.
- Mou, Sherry J. ed. *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*. Houndmills: MacMillan, 1999.
- Mu Zhai 木齋. *Tang Song ci liubian* 唐宋詞流變 [The Evolution of Ci-Poetry of the Tang and Song Dynasties]. Beijing: Jinghua, 1997.
- Murakoshi, Kiyomi 村越貴代美. "Saijyo no nageki – Syu Syukushin no 'urei' no mochiifu" 才女の嘆き – 朱淑真の「愁い」のモチーフ ["The Sigh of a Talented Woman – The Motive of Zhu Shuzhen's Sorrow"]. *Gakugei kokugo kokubungaku* 27 (1995): 72-84.
- Nienhauser, William H., Jr. ed. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986. 2 vols.
- Owen, Stephen. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986.
- . "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography." In Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen eds. *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, pp.71-102.

- . *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World*. London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. London: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Pan Shoukang 潘壽康. *Zhu Shuzhen biezhuuan tanyuan 朱淑真別傳探原 [An Exploration of Zhu Shuzhen's Unofficial Biography]*. Taipei: Heluo, 1980.
- Qu Wenjun 曲文軍. "Nü daoshi Yu Xuanji de zhunque zu nian" 女道士魚玄機的準確卒年 ["The Exact Year of Death of Yu Xuanji, the Daoist Nun"]. *Jianghai xuekan* 5 (1997): 61.
- Raphals, Lisa. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Ren Dekui 任德魁. "Zhu Shuzhen Duanchang ci banben kaoshu yu zuopin bianwei" 朱淑真《斷腸詞》版本考述與作品辨偽 ["Textual Criticism of Versions and Identifications of Forged Works of Zhu Shuzhen's Heartbreaking Ci-poetry."]. *Wenxue yichan* 1 (1998): 84-93.
- Rexroth, Kenneth and Ling Chung. *Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*. New York: New Directions, 1972.
- Robertson, Maureen. "Changing the Subject: Gender and Self-Inscription in Author's Prefaces and 'Shi' Poetry." In Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang eds. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, pp.171-217.
- . "Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 63-110.
- Ropp, Paul S. ed. *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- . "Love, Literacy, and Laments: Themes of Women Writers in Late Imperial China." *Women's History Review* 2.1 (1993): 107-41.

- Rosemont, Henry Jr. "Classical Confucian and Contemporary Feminist Perspectives on the Self: Some Parallels, and Their Implications." In Douglas Allen ed. *Culture and Self: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives East and West*, pp.63-82.
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough eds. *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.
- Sang Baojing 桑寶靖. "Nüguan caiyuan Yu Xuanji — Zhongguo daojiao wenhua shi de guangcai yi ye" 女冠才媛魚玄機 — 中國道教文化史的光彩一頁 ["Yu Xuanji, the Talented Daoist Nun — A Brilliant Epoch of the Daoist Cultural History in China."]. *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1 (2002): 48-57.
- Schlegel, Alice. "Gender Meanings: General and Specific." In Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough eds, *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, pp.23-41.
- Song Zhixin 宋致新. "'Duanchang shiren' Zhu Shuzhen" 斷腸詩人朱淑真 ["Zhu Shuzhen, the Heartbroken Poet"]. *Tianfu xinlun* 6 (2000): 67-70.
- Soong, Stephen C. ed. *A Brotherhood in Song: Chinese Poetry and Poetics*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1985.
- Stacey, Judith. "A Feminist View of Research on Chinese Women." *Signs* 2.2 (1976): 485-97.
- Su Ping 蘇萍. "Zhu Shuzhen aiqing beiju xinli tanwei" 朱淑真愛情悲劇心理探微 ["An Exploration of Zhu Shuzhen's Psychology on Her Love Tragedy"]. *Liaoning shifan daxue xuebao* 4 (1998): 52-54.
- Su Zhecong 蘇者聰. *Songdai nüxing wenxue* 宋代女性文學 [Literature by Women of the Song Dynasty]. Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue, 1997.
- Sun Kangyi 孫康宜 [Chang, Kang-i Sun]. *Gudian yu xiandai de nüxing chanshi* 古典與現代的女性闡釋 [Feminist Readings: Classical and Modern Perspectives]. Taipei: Lianhe Wenxue, 1998.



- . "Xingbie de kunhuo — cong chuantong duzhe yuedu qingshi de pianjian shuo qi" 性別的困惑 — 從傳統讀者閱讀情詩的偏見說起 ["The Gender Perplexed — From the Bias Created by Traditional Readers Reading Love Poetry."]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan eds, *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu*, pp.100-09.
- Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧. *Zhongguo nüxing de wenxue shenghuo* 中國女性的文學生活 [*The Literary Lives of Chinese Women*, also known as *Zhongguo nüxing wenxue shi* 中國女性文學史 {*The Literary History of Chinese Women*}]. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling Guji, 1998.
- Tang Chun-i. "The Spirit and Development of Neo-Confucianism." *Inquiry* 14 (1971): 56-83.
- Tang Wudai ci xuanji 唐五代詞選集 [*An Annotated Collection of Ci-poetry in the Tang and Five Dynasties*]. Annotated by Huang Jinde 黃進德. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1993.
- Teng, Jinhua Emma. "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review." *Signs* 22.1 (1996): 115-51.
- Tseng Pao-sun. "The Chinese Woman Past and Present." In Li Yu-ning ed. *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*, pp.72-86.
- Tu Wei-ming. "The Confucian Tradition in Chinese History." In Paul Ropp ed. *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, pp.112-37.
- . "The Sung Confucian Idea of Education: A Background Understanding." In de Bary and Chaffee eds, *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, pp.139-50.
- Van Gulik, R. H. *Sexual Life in Ancient China*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961.
- Verschuur-Basse, Denyse. *Chinese Women Speak*. Trans. Elizabeth Rauch-Nolan. London: Praeger Publishers, 1996.
- Waley, Arthur trans. *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*. London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1918.

- Wang Guowei 王國維. *Wang Kuo-wei's Jen-chien tz'u-hua: A Study in Chinese Literary Criticism* 人間詞話 [A Critique on Ci-poetry in the Mortal World]. Trans. Adele Austin Rickett. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1977.
- Wang Xuezhì 王雪枝 and Liu Dongling 劉冬玲. *Youlan yi lu hong — Yu Xuanji zhuan* 幽蘭浥露紅 — 魚玄機傳 [The Fragrant Orchid is Red by the Wet Dew — Yu Xuanji's Biography]. Shijiazhuang: Huashan Wenyi, 2000.
- Watson, Rubie S. "Marriage and Gender Inequality." In Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey eds. *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, pp.347-68.
- Watson, Rubie S. and Patricia Buckley Ebrey eds. *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Wen Ouchu 文偶初 ed. *Zhongguo mingshan shidian* 中國名山事典. Beijing: Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo, 1997.
- Widmer, Ellen and Kang-i Sun Chang eds. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Wixted, John Timothy. "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women's Authorship." In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.145-68.
- . "Sung-Dynasty and Western Poems on Poetry." In Stephen Soong ed. *A Brotherhood in Song: Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, pp.351-59.
- Wu Aiyue 吳愛月. "Chongchong fanli zhong de nüxing beige — ping Zhu Shuzhen zuopin de nüxing yishi" 重重藩籬中的女性悲歌 — 評朱淑真作品的女性意識 ["The Sad Elegy of Female within Layers of Barriers — Commenting on the Female Ideology in Zhu Shuzhen's Work"]. *Guangxi minzu xueyuan xuebao* 4 (1996): 103-06.
- Xia Chunhao 夏春豪. "Lun Yu Xuanji shi" 論魚玄機詩 ["Commenting on Yu Xuanji's Poetry"]. *Xuzhou shifan daxue xuebao* 3 (1997): 56-59.

- Xie Ping 謝萍. "Ku sun shuangmou duan jin chang — shi lun Zhu Shuzhen shici zhong de ziwo xingxiang" 哭損雙眸斷盡腸 — 試論朱淑真詩詞中的自我形象 ["Harming my Eyes by Crying, and Breaking my Heart to the Utmost — Commenting on Zhu Shuzhen's Self Image Reflected in Her Poetry"]. *Nanjing hangkong hangtian daxue xuebao* 4 (1999): 39-43.
- Xinbian gujin hanyu da cidian* 新編古今漢語大辭典 [A Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Chinese Language: A New Edition]. Hu Yushu 胡裕樹 et al eds. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu, 1995.
- Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou* 新譯唐詩三百首 [The Three-hundred Tang Shi-poetry with New Annotations]. Annotated by Qiu Kuiyou 邱燮友. Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1973.
- Xu Lifang 許麗芳. "Nüzi nongwen cheng ke zui — shi xi nüxing shuxie yishi zhong zhi zijue yu maodun" 女子弄文誠可罪 — 試析女性書寫意識中之自覺與矛盾 ["It is Truly a Great Guilt for Women to Write — An Analysis of Self-Awareness and Contradiction in Women's Writing Consciousness."]. In Zhang Hongsheng and Zhang Yan, *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu*, pp.110-26.
- Xu Yuanzhong 許淵沖. *Zhong shi Ying yun tansheng* 中詩英韻探勝 (On Chinese Verse in English Rhyme: From the Book of Poetry to the Romance of the Western Bower). Beijing: Peking University Press, 1992.
- Xu Yuanzhong 許淵沖, Loh Beiyei 陸佩弦, and Wu Juntao 吳鈞陶 eds. and trans. *300 Tang Poems: A New Translation*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1987.
- Xu Yuanzhong 許淵沖 and Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 eds. *Gems of Classical Chinese Poetry in Various English Translations*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1988.
- Yao, Esther S. Lee. *Chinese Women: Past and Present*. Mesquite: Ide House, 1983.

- Yeh, Michelle. "New Images of Women in Modern Chinese Poetry: The Feminist Poetic of Xia Yu." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 4 (1991): 22-26.
- Young, David. "Introduction." In Yu Xuanji 魚玄機. *The Clouds Float North: The Complete Poems of Yu Xuanji*, pp.ix-xviii.
- Yu, Pauline. "Song Lyrics and the Canon: A Look at Anthologies of Tz'u." In Pauline Yu ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, pp.70-103.
- ed. *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Yu Xuanji 魚玄機. *The Clouds Float North: The Complete Poems of Yu Xuanji*. Trans., David Young and Jiann I. Lin. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Yuan Dawei 袁大衛, and Lu Dihe 陸迪河. *Zhongguo wenxue jiben zhishi ji fazhan jianshi* 中國文學基本知識及發展簡史 [*Basic Knowledge of Chinese Literature and a Brief History of Its Development*]. Hong Kong: Renren, n.d..
- Zang, Jian. "Women and the Transmission of Confucian Culture in Song China." Trans. Dorothy Ko. In Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott eds. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, pp.123-41.
- Zhan, Heying Jenny. "Chinese Femininity and Social Control: Gender-role Socialization and the State." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9.3 (1996): 269-89.
- Zhan, Heying Jenny and Roger Bradshaw trans. "Book of Analects for Women: Consort Song (Tang)." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9.3 (1996): 261-68.
- Zhang Hongsheng 張宏生 and Zhang Yan 張雁 eds. *Gudai nü shiren yanjiu* 古代女詩人研究 [*A Study of Ancient Women Poets*]. Wuhan: Hubei Jiaoyu, 2002.

- Zhang Huizhi 張撫之, Shen Qiwei 沈起煒, and Liu Dezhong 劉德重 eds. *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 中國歷代人名大辭典 [A Dictionary of Famous Names Past and Present]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1999. 2 vols.
- Zhang, Jingyuan. "Vision of the Other's Vision: Western Feminist Criticism Reconsidered in a Chinese Literary Context." *The Force of Vision: Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*. Vol. 2. Eds. Earl Miner et al. Tokyo: International Comparative Literature Association, 1995. pp.584-92.
- Zhang Shu 張姝 and Zhang Fuhua 張富華. "Lun Zhu Shuzhen 'Duanchang ci' de sixiang yiyi" 論朱淑真《斷腸詞》的思想意義 ["On the Philosophical Meaning of Zhu Shuzhen's Works"]. *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 2 (2002): 115-19.
- Zhao Li 趙莉. "Ping Yu Xuanji zuopin de nüxing yishi" 評魚玄機作品的女性意識 ["Commenting on the Feminine Ideology in Yu Xuanji's Works"]. *Shanxi shifan daxue xuebao* 1 (2001): 250-53.
- Zhao Zehong 趙澤洪. "Wanyue cipai nüxing xingxiang de shenmei shanbian" 婉約詞派女性形象的審美嬗變 ["The Transformation of Aesthetic Judgement on Female Image in the School of Delicate Ci-poetry"]. *Chongqing shiyuan xuebao* 1 (1994): 30-36.
- Zürndorfer, Harriet ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- . "Introduction: Some Salient Remarks on Chinese Women in the Imperial Past (1000-1800)." In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.1-18.
- . "Women in the Epistemological Strategy of Chinese Encyclopedia: Preliminary Observations from Some Sung, Ming, and Ch'ing Works." In Harriet Zürndorfer ed. *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, pp.354-95.