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ZHUMING YAO

The Early Chinese Lyric "I": Between Poetics and Hermeneutics

ABSTRACT:
Many *Shijing* 詩經 poems feature a lyric "I" – a first-person voice speaking about intense emotions. Yet, to whom those voices belong has never been clear. Two millennia of commentarial writings leave the modern reader with a variety of readings, each plausible on its own but none more reasoned than the others. This hermeneutic impasse, I argue, results from an interpretive practice that inscribes meaning to, rather than recovers the meaning of, the lyric "I." And the inscription is made not through indisputable philological inquiries but free, sometimes idiosyncratic, imaginations of what constitutes a *Shi* poetics. Such poetic claims disguised as hermeneutic solutions have roots in the "I" as deictic-subject-position. Such positioning helps to generate a group of "type-voices" that were inhabited by readers and writers alike. In the broader history of Chinese lyric poetry, type-voices were what gave birth to lyric poets. But no lyric poet in this early phase, I also show, managed to escape the enthrallment of the common types.

KEYWORDS:
Shijing, Chuci, *lyric poetry, first-person voice, type-voice, Qu Yuan, Liu Xiang, "Jiu tan"*

When reading early Chinese poetry, one quickly encounters a speaking "I" in the midst of deep emotions. *Shiji*'s 史記 and *Hanshu*'s 漢書 heroic characters, for example, would burst into singing when driven to the precipice of despair. Their "sung poetry 歌詩" verbalizes in moving lyrics the singer-characters' innermost laments, by which self-expression also takes its sincerest form.[1] In the poetic anthology *Chuci* 楚辭, Qu Yuan 屈原 has long been celebrated as the martyred minister who turns to poetry for the recount of his grievances. Since

➢ Zhuming Yao, Dept. World Languages and Literatures, Boston U.

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[1] See, e.g., David Schaberg, "Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China," *HJAS* 59.2 (1999), pp. 305–61; Martin Kern, "The Poetry of Han Historiography," *EMC* 10–11.1 (2004), pp. 23–65.

Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 85 BC), Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BC), and Wang Yi 王逸 (89–158), readers have not failed to notice the strong first-person voice, heard particularly in "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow") and "Jiu zhang" 九章 ("Nine Manifestations"), in which one also hears intense expressions of *tristia*.[2] Indeed, as Sima Qian has remarked, "reading 讀" Qu Yuan and "contemplating 觀" his tragic end "has always made me shed tears and see right before my eyes the person [of Qu Yuan] 未嘗不垂涕. 想見其爲人."[3] The lyric "I" is not only a voice but also an image.

In the *Shijing* 詩經, the lyric "I" is even more prominent, especially in "Guofeng" 國風 ("Airs of the States") and "Xiaoya" 小雅 ("Minor Elegantiae"). Familiar are the voices that long for the elusive lover,[4] that pine for unrequited affection,[5] that lament the lack of understanding,[6] that remonstrate against injustice,[7] and that, perhaps most daring of all, accuse Heaven of condoning human sacrifice.[8] When Confucius says that studying the "*Shi* affords one the means by which to be stimulated, to observe, to form groups, and to express complaints 詩可以興. 可以觀. 可以羣. 可以怨,"[9] what one might "observe" is not necessarily "the prospering and declining of customs 風俗之盛衰" or "the gains

[2] The Latin term *tristia* is first applied to *Chuci* by David Hawkes; "The Quest of the Goddess," in Cyril Birch, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1974), pp. 42–68.

[3] *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) 84, p. 2503.

[4] E.g., Mao 129: "Thick grow the reeds and rushes,/ white dew now turned into frost./ That person I think of,/ must be somewhere along this stream 蒹葭蒼蒼. 白露爲霜. 所謂伊人. 在水一方"; *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000; hereafter cited as *MSZY*) 6, p. 494. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Here and below, the number following "*MSZY*" refers to *juan*.

[5] E.g., Mao 91: "Blue oh blue, that collar of yours;/ on and on, my yearnings for you./ Granted I cannot go to you,/ why do you not send me news 青青子衿. 悠悠我心. 縱我不往. 子寧不嗣音"; *MSZY* 4, p. 367.

[6] E.g., Mao 65: "Those who know me say that my heart is sad;/ those who do not know me ask what I am looking for 知我者. 謂我心憂. 不知我者. 謂我何求"; *MSZY* 4, p. 298.

[7] E.g., Mao 197: "Wings flapping, those happy crows;/ back to roost, flock upon flock./ To all people there is good fortune,/ I alone am caught in misery./ What is my offense against Heaven?/ What crime did I commit?/ My heart is in sorrow,/ what is there to be said or done? 弁彼鸒斯. 歸飛提提. 民莫不穀. 我獨于罹. 何辜于天. 我罪伊何. 心之憂矣. 云如之何"; *MSZY* 12, p. 874.

[8] Mao 131: "That azure Heaven,/ it kills our finest men./ Could we but ransom them,/ people in the hundreds would give their lives. 彼蒼者天. 殲我良人. 如可贖兮. 人百其身"; *MSZY* 6, p. 501. The poem has been read since the Mao commentaries as a song in commemoration of the men Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 BC) ordered to be buried with him. In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 account (Wen 6.3), only three men are named, as in the poem. The *Shiji* chapter "Qin benji" 秦本記 ("Basic Annals of Qin") states, however, that 174 other men were also murdered for the sacrifice.

[9] Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), *j.* 20, p. 689.

and losses examinable [in history] 考見得失,"[10] for that requires an exegetical perspective taking the poems as signs and indices of something else.[11] Rather, one observes first of all a range of human emotions set forth in what came to be prized as paradigmatic expressions.[12] Much as early, especially pre-Song, readings of the *Shi* prefer to see beyond the literal surface of the poems, surface reading is not the same as superficial reading.[13]

Impressed by the prevalence of the lyric "I," traditional scholarship has over time transformed Sima Qian's instinctual "seeing" of the person behind the "I" into a persistent search for either "I" the historical poet or "I" the subjective experience, thought, or value giving voice to the "I." The two differ in important ways but often converge into the same "I" when a name can be attached to a certain type of subjectivity. As Martin Kern has shown, for example, Qu Yuan as a "poet" is not so much a Chu-era (?-223 BC) fact as it is a Han-time "*imaginaire*." The poems, the wronged and yet loyal advisor, and the author of lament poetry came together only centuries later, in a concerted effort to commemorate Han intellectuals' cultural identity.[14] Compared to all other "I" in early Chinese lyric poetry,[15] Qu Yuan's long-cherished authorship of what we may call "his" poems is all but exceptional. The many "I" in *Shijing* have provoked endless disputes ever since the "Minor Prefaces" 小序 made the first attempts to circumscribe the pos-

[10] The first gloss on *guan* 觀 is Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) and the second is Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200). See, respectively, Liu, *Lunyu zhengyi*, *j.* 20, p. 689, and Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), *j.* 9, p. 178.

[11] Prince Ji Zha's 季札 (576–485 BC) response to the concert he requested in the state of Lu 魯 in 544 BC is the most elaborate account we have of such a *guan*. See an analysis in David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 86–95.

[12] In this regard, Li Zehou 李澤厚 puts it well: "What Confucius emphasizes is the 'observation' of the moral emotions and the mental status of the people of a certain society and kingdom, as reflected in the poems 孔子是強調去 "觀" 詩中所表現出來一定社會國家的人們的道德感情和心理狀態." Li Zehou and Liu Gangji 劉綱紀, eds., *Zhongguo meixue shi* 中國美學史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987) 1, p. 126.

[13] For a history of *Shijing* hermeneutics up to the Song, see Steven van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1991). For a reflection on the premises, ideals, and practices of reading Chinese lyric poetry, see Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: U. Wisconsin P., 1985).

[14] See his most extensive discussion yet in Martin Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," in Martin Kern and Stephen Owen, eds., *Qu Yuan and the Chuci: New Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 16–97.

[15] Since "I" does not have a plural form, I write both the singular and plural of the pronoun as "I."

sibilities of authorship.[16] With layers upon layers of ensuing commentaries, readers now are left to choose on their own just which *reading* of the poems to follow. Depending on the choice, the same "I" may differ not only in the identity of its authorial referent but also in the referent's gender, number ("I" versus "we"), specificity (a definite "I" versus an indefinite "I"), and the possibility that the "I" denotes not a person but a persona.

While this relentless search for the "I" has a basis in traditional poetics,[17] the result presents a conundrum to all modern readers of the *Shijing*. On the one hand, a different reading of "I" entails more than just a difference in referent. The most influential readers – for example, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Yao Jiheng 姚際恆 (1647–1715), Fang Yurun 方玉潤 (1811–1883) – all have *some* theory about how the *Shi* ought to be read, characteristically in response to the much earlier Mao–Zheng reading (namely, that of Mao Heng 毛亨 [active 3d c. BC] and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 [127–200]), as well as those of their predecessors. When choosing which reading to follow, one is practically adjudicating on a lineage of hermeneutic disputations.[18] On the other, the *Shi* cannot be read outside of the commentaries. There is no such thing as the original *Shi* or the original meaning of the *Shi*.[19] The Mao–Zheng reading itself is one among several other readings prevalent during the Warring

16 For how the Minor Prefaces prefer to read the *Shi* by a method of "historical contextualization," see Pauline Yu, "Allegory, Allegoresis, and the *Classic of Poetry*," *HJAS* 43.2 (1983), pp. 377–412; O Man-jong 吳萬鐘, *Cong shi dao jing: lun Maoshi jieshi de yuanyuan jiqi tese* 從詩到經, 論毛詩解釋的淵源及其特色 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001). For how the method was received historically, see Li Jiashu 李家樹, *Shijing de lishi gong'an* 詩經的歷史公案 (Taipei: Da'an chubanshe, 1990), pp. 15–82.

17 That is, the canonical statement that "poetry articulates intent 詩言志." Together with the "Great Preface to the *Shi*" 詩大序, the stipulation that meaning has to be sought in the poet himself, because poetry is the involuntary, spontaneous, authentic manifestation of the poet's mind, compels most readers to practice an autobiographical reading.

18 This is also the case for all these traditional readers. Zhu Xi and Fang Yurun, for example, have both written polemical essays targeted at such disputations. See Zhu's "Shizhuan gangling" 詩傳綱領 and "Shixu bianshuo" 詩序辨說, in idem, *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017; hereafter cited as *SJZ*), pp. 5–62; and Fang's "*Shi* zhi" 詩旨, in Fang Yurun, *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986; hereafter cited as *SJYS*), pp. 43–70.

19 The claim for the "original" is made in both traditional and modern scholarship. One can think of Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 *Shi benyi* 詩本義 (*The Original Meaning of Shi*), Fang Yurun's *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始 (*The Investigation of the Origin of the Shijing*), Marcel Granet's folkloric, anthropological reading (Granet, *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* [Paris: E. Leroux, 1919]), and his later successors, esp. in Japanese scholarship: Matsumoto Masaaki 松本雅明, *Shikyō shohen no seiritsu ni kansuru kenkyū* 詩経諸篇の成立に関する研究 (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1958); Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜, *Shikyō: Chūgoku no kodai kayō* 詩経, 中国の古代歌謡 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1970); Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠, *Shikyō kenkyū* 詩経研究 (Tokyo: Kenbunsha, 1986); and Inoi Makoto 家井眞, *Shikyō no gengiteki kenkyū* 詩經の原義的研究 (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 2004).

States and Han times; its hermeneutic position is not always shared.[20] More crucially, the Mao *Shi*, the sole redaction of the *Shi* in full, is a text that already builds the Mao reading into the wordings of the poems.[21] It represents *a* written constitution of a poetry that thrived on circumscribed variation, from how a sound is transcribed to how the stanzas are arranged.[22] Just as "we cannot reject the 'minor prefaces' while at the same time still accepting the individual word glosses of the Mao *Odes*,"[23] all later commentators' readings are accompanied by their own glosses. A different reading often amounts to a different poem altogether.

What, then, can a reader do other than admit the "hermeneutic openness" supposedly inherent to the *Shi*?[24] Is it even a problem if one feels more attracted to Zhu Xi's reading than, say, to Mao's? None of the commentators appears to have had any qualms in asserting what a poem must mean, aware that disagreement will follow anyway. In this essay, I wish to show that for the early Chinese lyric "I," all the disputes regarding to whom, or what, the "I" refers can be treated as evidence of something else. It is beyond banal at this point in *Shijing* scholarship to simply posit the elusiveness of the "I"; the commentarial dissent is

20 In addition to the so-called Three Schools of the *Shi* 三家詩, newly available materials also show the same pattern. See, e.g., Jeffrey Riegel, "Eros, Introversion, and the Beginning of *Shijing* Commentary," *HJAS* 57.1 (1997), pp. 143–77; Mark Laurent Asselin, "The Lu-School Reading of 'Guanju' as Preserved in an Eastern Han *Fu*," *JAOS* 117.3 (1997), pp. 427–43; Martin Kern, "Speaking of Poetry: Pattern and Argument in the 'Kongzi shilun'," in Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer, eds, *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 175–200; Yixin Gu, "Speaking with the Learning of Odes: Cao Zhi's Representation of the *Shijing* and Its Hermeneutic Traditions in the Contexts of Han-Wei China," *JAOS* 141.2 (2021), pp. 299–328.

21 Martin Kern illustrates this phenomenon through a close examination of the poem "Guanju" 關雎. See Kern, "Excavated Manuscripts and Their Socratic Pleasures: Newly Discovered Challenges in Reading the 'Airs of the States'," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 61.3 (2007), pp. 775–93. The same observation is raised in David Knechtges's reading of "Sheng min" 生民; Knechtges, "Questions about the Language of *Sheng min*," in Pauline Yu et al., *Ways with Words: Writing about Reading Texts from Early China* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2000), pp. 14–24.

22 See, e.g., Martin Kern, "'Xi Shuai' 蟋蟀 ('Cricket') and Its Consequences: Issues in Early Chinese Poetry and Textual Studies," *EC* 42 (2019), pp. 39–74; Cao Jian'guo 曹建國, "Misplacement, Re-Edition or Funerary Object: On the Textual Features of the Anhui *Shijing* Manuscript and Its Values," *Bamboo and Silk* 4 (2021), pp. 94–127; Yuasa Kunihiro, "On Stanzaic Inversion in the *Qin feng* 秦風 Ode 'Sitie' 駟驖 (Iron-Black Horses) in the Anhui University Bamboo Manuscript of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (*Classic of Odes*)," *Bamboo and Silk* 4 (2021), pp. 149–71; Meihui Liu, "Stanza Permutation in the 'Guo feng' 國風 and An Examination of the Hermeneutical Tradition of 'Orderly Progression'," *BSOAS* 88.1 (2025), pp. 123–47.

23 Kern, "Excavated Manuscripts and Their Socratic Pleasures," p. 775.

24 The term is used by Ming Dong Gu to describe the capacity of the *Shi* to generate different interpretations; Ming Dong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutics and Open Poetics* (Albany: SUNY P., 2005), esp. pp. 153–206.

indication of precisely that.[25] Practically speaking, the average reader has no better choice than to pick personal favorites. But the freedom the reader has – both now and in the *Shi*'s hermeneutic history – and the diverse readings of the many "I" that have resulted reveal something remarkably noteworthy: in concrete readings of the *Shi*, claims of a nature of poetics arise without pretense as interpretation of a poem's meaning. The *Shi* is "open to interpretation" not only because it is full of "undecidable elements" both "within and without the text,"[26] but because interpretation freely prescribes how and for what purpose a poem is made to begin with. More than mere readers tasked with the recovery of the "real" or "original" meaning of the *Shi* poems, commentators worked like authors, so to speak, of both the textual meaning of the poems and their compositional provenance.[27]

This commentarial disguising of poetic claims as hermeneutic solutions has roots in how the first-person voice is used and understood in early lyric poetry. On the one hand, there appears to be an unsaid justification on the part of many commentators in freely ascribing, often in contention with others, a meaning to the lyric "I" – who is speaking, in what rhetorical mode, under what circumstances. On the other, many lyric voices lend themselves rather fittingly to divergent reading and contextualization. The former creates the impression that "I" as a pronoun in lyric poetry was presumed to be a deictic, a shifter whose exact meaning depends on the context and whose position as the grammatical subject can be variously inhabited—by, for example, a performer.[28] The latter dovetails with the commonplaceness of the lyric "I" as what can be called a "type-voice," a voice that speaks not of distinctly individual but of shared, generic categories of human emotions. The voice can be put in a specific speaker's mouth, but the utterance itself expresses type-emotions.

[25] As Kern has noted some time ago, "It is simplistic to believe that we have direct access to the 'original meaning' of any of the 'Airs' when our earliest sources… indicate that the true meaning of a song rested in its proper application and hence was generated in ever new ways through the flexible adaptation to various contexts"; Kern, "Lost in Tradition: The *Classic of Poetry* We Did Not Know," in Grace S. Fong, ed., *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* 5 (Montreal: Center for East Asian Research, McGill U., 2010), p. 39.

[26] Gu, *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing*, pp. 166, 168.

[27] Here, I disagree with Ming Dong Gu, who attributes "the ultimate source of all the controversies" to the commentators' "search for origins" (Gu, *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing*, p. 184). The "origins" are not sought but actively created.

[28] For the "I" as deictic, see Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns," in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, Fl.: U. Miami P., 1971), pp. 217–22. For performance poetry in the *Shi*, see C. H. Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory: Seven Essays in Early Chines Poetry* (Hong Kong: Chinese U.P., 1988); Martin Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of 'Chu ci' (Thorny Caltrop)," *EC* 25 (2000), pp. 49–111.

Such close intertwinement between the lyric "I" as a deictic and the lyric voice as a type-voice has been explored, though in different terms, by Hans Frankel in an early essay on the omission of the "I" in Tang poetry. To Frankel, the purpose of such omissions is "to render the poet's self less conspicuous, and thus to enable [a] reader to put himself in the poet's place."[29] Frankel says little about what a reader would gain by being thus enabled. In light of the commentarial readings of the *Shi*, one can add that, first, the "I" need not be omitted in order for it to be inhabited; omission is a grammatical prerogative of classical and literary Chinese, whereas inhabitation is a readerly move independent of the articulation of the pronoun. Second, readerly inhabitation does not simply put the reader "in the poet's place," whatever that means, but enables a complete (re)imagination of the poet's identity and intention as well as the poem's meaning and composition. In practice, the lyric "I" was so freely inhabited that when the first lyric poets started to write, they wrote in and through the type-voices they had undoubtedly read.

To illustrate these intricate dynamics behind the lyric "I," the rest of the essay proceeds in two separate but complementary directions. In the first, I show how commentators of the *Shi* since Mao to the present day have vied to fill the "I" with competing meanings. In the process, their own ideas of lyric poetics are projected back onto the poems, giving us not different interpretations of the same poem but a range of *new* poems of the same title and words. In the second, I demonstrate how lyric poetry by poets we can name, especially those in *Chuci*, grew out of type-voices. What Qu Yuan and his poetry represent is a type-voice furnished with a more definite speaker whose biography was itself a site of cultural production. The same type-voice has more generic manifestations in the *Shijing* and is the basis of Liu Xiang's "Jiu tan" 九歎 ("Nine Laments"). It is not until the latter, I submit, that a historical poet, so far as we can tell, began to express his distinct self in the form of lyric poetry – although, even in that case, the more personal voice still sounds in part like a common type. Altogether, the two parts of the essay combine to highlight a mutually constructive relation between the poetics of early Chinese lyric poetry and the long and continuing hermeneutic tradition of it. Its significance is discussed in the concluding remarks.

29 Hans H. Frankel, "The 'I' in Chinese Lyric Poetry," *Oriens* 10.1 (1957), p. 128.

"I" AS LYRIC SELF

Mao 3, "Juan'er" 卷耳 (Cocklebur), is by far the most dividing poem in terms of the lyric "I" and a capacious example illustrating many of the intricacies in interpretation. For analytical purposes, below is the poem with a disjointed, word-by-word translation based on the Mao glosses:

采采卷耳	Pick and pluck / the cocklebur,
不盈頃筐	Does not fill / slanted basket.
嗟我懷人	Sighing for my / the person [I] hold dear,
寘彼周行	Place them / the ranks of Zhou.
陟彼崔嵬	Ascend that / tall and towering,
我馬虺隤	My horse / haggard and staggered.
我姑酌彼金罍	I, for the moment, / pour into / that bronze wine cup,
維以不永懷	Verily by means of that / not prolong the yearning.
陟彼高岡	Ascend that / high ridge,
我馬玄黃	My horse / dark yellow.
我姑酌彼兕觥	I, for the moment, / pour into / that rhinoceros pitcher,
維以不永傷	Verily by means of that / not prolong the sorrow.
陟彼砠矣	Ascend that / earth-filled hill,
我馬瘏矣	My horse / already exhausted.
我僕痡矣	My groom / already worn out,
云何吁矣	Oh, how miserable / it has been.[30]

According to the Minor Preface, "Juan'er is the intent of the Queen-Consort 卷耳. 后妃之志也." She "assists the nobleman in his search for the worthy and his inspection of the officers, and she understands the toil and struggle of his subjects. Deep inside, she harbors the intent to advance the worthy, without a mind either treacherously biased or selfishly motivated. Day and night she fills her thought [with the nobleman], to the point that anxiety afflicts her 輔佐君子. 求賢審官. 知臣下之勤勞. 內有進賢之志. 而無險詖私謁之心. 朝夕思念. 至於憂勤也."[31] As with most poems in the "Zhou nan" 周南 section of "Guofeng," the Mao reading connects "Juan'er" to the Queen-Consort of King Wen of Zhou 周文王. In this particular case, it also equates the poetic utterance with the Queen-Consort's *zhi* 志, a faithful rehearsal of the canonical dictum that "poetry articulates intent 詩言志." Although the Mao glosses do

[30] *MSZY* 1, pp. 44–49.
[31] *MSZY* 1, p. 44.

not explicitly say so, this would mean that the speaking voice in the poem is the Queen-Consort's.

Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) both follow the Mao preface but already differ in their reading of the first couplet (采采卷耳 / 不盈頃筐). For Zheng Xuan, this couplet, as Mao posits, is "an evocation of sorrow 憂者之興也": "that an easily fillable vessel (i.e., the *qingkuang* 頃筐) is not filled is because the intent lies in assisting the gentleman, which results in deep sorrow 器之易盈而不盈者. 志在輔佐君子. 憂思深也."[32] Although left unsaid, Zheng Xuan seems to have in mind the Queen-Consort as the one failing to fill the basket. Kong Yingda, by contrast, makes it clear that another figure is at play. Reading *qingkuang* in the same way, he says that the basket's not filling "is because *this person* has something in mind, as [the one she is] sorrowfully longing for is not here 由此人志有所念. 憂思不在於此故也"; and "*this plant-gatherer*'s sorrowful longings being so deep 此采菜之人憂念之深矣," Kong continues, "is meant to evoke the Queen-Consort's intent to assist the gentleman…The Queen-Consort's sorrowful longings are deep and profound, just like the plant-gatherer's 以興后妃志在輔佐君子…其憂思深遠. 亦如采菜之人也."[33] In other words, while Zheng Xuan sees the Queen-Consort's own half-hearted plant-gathering as an evocation of her sorrow, Kong Yingda locates the source of the evocation in another woman. Both follow Mao in positing a *xing* 興 here,[34] but each imagines a different poetic process.

For the following couplet (嗟我懷人/寘彼周行), Kong Yingda agrees with the Mao–Zheng reading that the first line "speaks of the Queen-Consort's mournful sighing 言后妃嗟吁而歎," that "the 'I' [in this line] refers to the Queen-Consort herself 我者. 后妃自我也," and that, in the next line, the Queen-Consort "wishes for the nobleman to place these [*sic*] worthy subjects in those/his ranks of Zhou 欲令君子置此賢人於彼周之列位."[35] Combined, the first stanza translates into two readings the difference between which its literal surface can hardly reveal:

[32] *MSZY* 1, p. 44.

[33] *MSZY* 1, pp. 44–45.

[34] The meaning of *xing* 興 has never been clear and changes from commentator to commentator. Here, I adopt Stephen Owen's understanding of it as "an image whose primary function is not signification but, rather, the stirring of a particular affection or mood"; Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard U., 1992), p. 46. For still the best discussions of *xing* and its changing meanings, see Pauline Yu, "Allegory, Allegoresis, and the *Classic of Poetry*"; and Zhao Peilin 趙沛霖, *Shijing yanjiu fansi* 詩經研究反思 (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989), pp. 280–314.

[35] *MSZY* 1, p. 45.

	MAO–ZHENG	KONG YINGDA
采采卷耳	*I* pick and pluck the cocklebur,	*She* picks and plucks the cocklebur,[36]
不盈頃筐	But could not fill *my* slanted basket.	But could not fill *her* slanted basket.
嗟我懷人	*I* sigh for the man of *my* heart –	*I* sigh for the man of *my* heart –
寘彼周行	*He* shall place them in the rank of Zhou.	*He* shall place them in the rank of Zhou.

Neither of these readings is widely adopted by later editions of the *Shi*, the major translations included. Bernhard Karlgren, James Legge, and Arthur Waley all follow a later reading (more on that later) where all the unmanifest pronouns in the stanza are taken to be the same "I" and where the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading of *bi* 彼 and *zhou hang* 周行 are rejected. In addition, the use of *xing* in Kong Yingda's understanding is forsaken as well:

KARLGREN	LEGGE	WALEY
I gather the küan-er plant,	I was gathering and gathering The mouse-ear,	Thick grows the cocklebur,
But it does not fill My slanting basket.	But could not fill My shallow basket.	But even a shallow basket I did not fill.
I am sighing For my beloved one,	With a sigh for the man of my heart,	Sighing for the man I love,
I place it here On the road of Chou.[37]	I placed it there on the highway. [38]	I laid it there on the road.[39]

The second stanza features two explicit "I" (*wo* 我) that Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda took great care to explain because Mao left them unglossed. The first "I," the one with the horse, refers to "our journeying officer 我. 我使臣也," and the second, the one pouring wine, to "our lord 我. 我君也."[40] These two glosses first offered by Zheng Xuan are conjoined by Kong Yingda into the following clarification on the meaning of the entire stanza:

36 I use "she" to mark the plant-gatherer in Kong Yingda's reading.

37 Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes: Chinese Text, Transcription, and Translation* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), p. 3.

38 James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. IV: The She King or the Book of Poetry* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc, 1991), Part I, p. 8.

39 Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, ed. Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996), p. 7.

40 *MSZY* 1, pp. 45, 46.

> He who the Queen-Consort says ascends towering heights is "our journeying officer." "Our journeying officer" on account of military duties went out and away from his position. His body already strained from trekking through the dangers of the mountains, his horse is now haggard and ill. "Our lord" ought to know about all that. If the officer manages to return, "our lord" should pour him the wine of the bronze cup and requite him with the feasting ceremonies of *xiang* and *yan*. "I," then, will, thanks to that, no longer be drowned in endless sorrow. The reason "I" have all these sorrowful yearnings is that "I" fear that our lord is unaware of [his subject's travails].
>
> 后妃言升彼崔嵬山巔之上者. 我使臣也. 我使臣以兵役之事行出. 離其列位. 在於山險. 身已勤苦矣. 其馬又虺隤而病. 我之君子當宜知其然. 若其還也. 我君子且酌彼金罍之酒. 饗燕以勞之. 我則維以此之故. 不復長憂思矣. 我所以憂思. 恐君子之不知之耳.[41]

Not unreasonable on its own and certainly in line with the Minor Preface, this reading can be hardly supported by the stanza itself. Neither Zheng Xuan nor Kong Yingda shows an interest in reading their glosses back into the poem. But because both follow the Mao in considering the Queen-Consort the speaking voice in the poem, their glosses would produce a new stanza (represented in translation below) not in keeping with how the pronoun *wo* usually works:

陟彼崔嵬	Ascending those towering heights,
我馬虺隤	*Our officer's* horse is haggard and staggered.
我姑酌彼金罍	*Our lord*, fill for now those bronze wine cups,
維以不永懷	So *I* shall not forever yearn.

The friction here is not with the plural rendition of the two *wo*, as *wo* is both singular and plural in classical Chinese, and rendering both into plural fits the context. The friction, by contrast, lies with the referential capacity of the *wo*. As a first-person pronoun, the two *wo* cannot convincingly refer to, much less stand in for, two different identities in such quick succession as two neighboring lines. Unless, that is, each is voiced by the original owner of the respective *wo*. Yet, for that to work, the stanza would have to behave as if it was polyvocal, in the manner of a dramatic performance, and thus contradict the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading of the poem as the Queen-Consort's own voicing of her *zhi*:

[41] *MSZY* 1, p. 46.

Journeying officer:	Ascending those towering heights,
	My horse is haggard and staggered.
The nobleman:	*I* shall, for now, fill those bronze wine cups,
Queen-Consort:	And *I* will no longer yearn.

Except for Legge, who calls the glosses of the two *wo* the most "licentious" of all,[42] few commentators have considered this polyvocal reading in terms of its poetic implications other than to reject it for a monovocal one.[43] In that reading, the two *wo* would conform to the conventions of grammar and style and refer to one and the same speaker, even though who the speaker is—now riding a horse, pouring a drink, and ceasing to yearn all by him/herself—is still contested. Against this more common reading of the *wo*, only Kong Yingda goes on to further defend his glosses: "the upper couplet [speaks of the Queen-Consort's] wish for the gentleman to know about the toils of his journeying officers; the lower couplet [her] wish for the gentleman to confer on them rewards 上句欲君子知其勞. 下句欲君子加其賞."[44] It is not unlikely that Kong Yingda may have had a better sense of what was possible with *wo* in *Shi* poetics, but that sense is not shared by other commentators. As Zhu Xi notes in response, "the *wo* in the first stanza is the Queen-Consort alone. If the *wo* in later stanzas all refer to the journeying officer, it will cause the beginning and end of the poem to splinter and disconnect. Surely is this not in accordance with the style of [poetic] writings 首章之我獨爲后妃. 而後章之我皆爲使臣. 首尾衡決不相承應. 亦非文字之體也."[45]

Despite all that, the dual-*wo* reading continues into the rest of the poem. Because stanza three basically repeats stanza two, both Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda simply note that the "repetition of the stanza

[42] Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Part I, p. 9.

[43] One interesting exception is the modern linguist Huang Zhuo 黄焯. In his *Mao Zheng zhuanjian pingyi* 毛鄭傳箋平議 ([Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985], pp. 7–8), Huang argues that Zheng Xuan's glosses are not really incorrect when it comes to the identification of the journeying officers and the lord as the respective *speakers* of the two "I" (箋以上句屬使臣言. 下句屬君言. 義自不誤). Yet, he continues, "it is incorrect for Zheng to think that the poet acted on behalf of the journeying officers and the lord 惟其意以詩人代使臣與君自我. 則非." The reason, he says, is that the two *wo* function both as "empty particles 語助詞" that can be read in fact as *yan* 言. Huang goes on to say that Mao understood all that but Zheng Xuan did not, hence Zheng's glossing of the two *wo* but Mao's not even bothering. Huang might be right, but it still does not explain who is speaking here. If anything, Huang is positing the very polyvocal version of the stanza I have noted above, which contradicts the poem as an expression of the Queen-Consort's *zhi* in her own voice.

[44] *MSZY* 1, p. 46.

[45] *SJZ*, p. 17. For some reason, Zhu Xi does not mention the reading of *wo* as "the gentleman," but it does not detract from the point he is making here.

aims to extend [the poetic speaker's] ardent eagerness 重章以申殷勤."[46] When the repetition starts to break down, in stanza four, Zheng Xuan once again fills in all the referents of the final two *wo*, so both are likewise disambiguated: "This stanza speaks of the mutual indisposition of the groom and the horse [of the journeying officer], now that the officer is toiling on an expedition. That the stanza then says, 'how much his sorrow must have been'—those are words of deep sympathy 此章言臣既勤勞於外. 僕馬皆病. 而今云何乎其亦憂矣. 深閔之辭."[47] Accordingly, the last stanza would read like the following if the Queen-Consort is still the speaker:

陟彼砠矣	Ascending those earth-filled hills,
我馬瘏矣	*Our* [officer's] horse is exhausted,
我僕痡矣	And *our* [officer's] groom ill.
云何吁矣	Oh, woe, oh, the misery!

For some reason, Kong Yingda stopped commenting here; one can only assume that he agreed. What they gave us, then, is a poem that begins with the Queen-Consort's lament and hope, followed by her recount of the journeying officer's affliction and her hope for the king to requite him on his return, and ends with her prolonged sympathy for the officer's ongoing toil. A perfect reading *of* the Minor Preface *into* the poem, despite the difficulties with the "I." No *wo* in a coherent poetic speech believed to have been uttered by the same voice can comfortably denote "I," "our journeying officer," "our lord," and each of the three's possessive forms at the same time.[48] In upholding the Minor Preface, the Zheng–Kong reading produces an *aporia* between interpretive fidelity to Mao and poetic conventions. Their reading is not unreasonable, but it translates poorly back to the poem given the way the poem is constructed.

Few other commentators feel nearly as beholden to the Minor Preface. For them, poetic convention is to be respected in that the various "I" have to remain consistent at least at the stanza level. Whether across stanzas those "I" continue to be the same, whose voices they represent, and what historical subjects they refer to, if any, remain

46 *MSZY* 1, p. 47.

47 *MSZY* 1, p. 49.

48 It might be the case that the poem is not coherently composed but put together in some other ways. But there is no evidence either in the poem or in the history of its reception. The recent discovery of the Anda 安大 *Shijing* contains a version of "Juan'er," but that version differs primarily in reversing the order of the middle stanzas. See Dirk Meyer and Adam Craig Schwartz, *Songs of the Royal Zhòu and the Royal Shào: Shī* 詩 *of the Ānhuī University Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 77–82.

problems of wildly imaginative debate. The Lu 魯 school of the *Shijing*, for example, reads "Juan'er" as the "longing for the ancient nobleman's employment of worthy subjects and their placement in ranked positions 思古君子官賢人. 置之列位也."[49] Itself unclear, especially in regard to the grammatical subject of "*si* 思," the Lu reading nonetheless differs from the Mao reading in not explicitly naming the Queen-Consort as relevant to the poem and in inserting the past (*gu* 古, a loaded term) into its significance. To Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917), to whom we owe these fragmentary comments, the Lu reading is evidence that the poem has a different speaker if not author as well. Summing up his various glosses, Wang says,

> Presumably, King Wen at the time took the employment of [worthy] subjects as his most urgent concern. Those cliff-nestling and valley-hiding worthies would not come out of reclusion, so he, not quailing at the assiduous toils of treacherous treks, brought himself to pursue them. That is how there are the matters of the "towering heights," "high ridges," "horse in illness," and "groom falling to exhaustion." [The king's] "hunt" for Lü Shang by Pan Stream and "lifting" of [Tai] Dian and [Hong] Yao out of the mountains are all clear proof of it.[50]
>
> 蓋文王當日以官人爲急慮. 巖棲谷隱之賢伏而不出. 不憚跋涉勞瘁. 躬親訪求. 故有崔嵬. 高岡. 馬病. 僕痡之事. 獵呂尚於磻溪. 舉顛夭於山林. 皆其明證.[51]

In other words, this poem is no longer a first-person narration in the voice of the Queen-Consort but King Wen's, which tells of his lament over the physical and psychological pain of trying to locate, and reinstall, the talents of the previous regime in his own.

To support his reading, Wang Xianqian contests several glosses in the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading. First, he cites a comment made in *Huainanzi* 淮南子 on its quotation of the first stanza to corroborate Lu's connection of the poem to the past: "[this stanza] is talking about the admiration of the distant age 以言慕遠世也."[52] Second, he refers to Du

[49] Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Shi sanjia yi jishu* 詩三家義集疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987; hereafter cited as *SSJYJS*) 1, p. 23. Here and below, the number following "*SSJYJS*" refers to *juan*.

[50] There are different versions of the legends regarding Lü Shang 呂尚, Tai Dian 泰顛, and Hong Yao 閎夭, but they all came to King Wen's service as a result of the king's active promotion of them.

[51] *SSJYJS* 1, p. 27.

[52] The quotation and comment appear at the end of the chapter "Chuzhen xun" 俶真訓. See He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), *j.* 3, p. 163.

Yu's 杜預 (222–285) comment on the quotation of 嗟我懷人/寘彼周行 in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 to establish Du's gloss of *zhou* 周 as *bian* 徧 (everywhere, widely) as the correct reading of the word, thus rendering *zhou hang* as "everywhere in the official ranks."[53] Third, this time without evidence, he glosses the *wo* in 嗟我懷人 as "King Wen himself 文王自我" and the *ren* 人 as "the noble person of the past 謂古君子."[54] With that, Wang takes the first couplet to be "sighing for my [i.e., King Wen's] longing for the noble persons of the past, and for the placing of *those* worthy subjects everywhere in [*my*] ranks 嗟我思古君子. 欲得寘彼賢人徧於行列."[55] Just as Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda have carefully curated the "I" following Mao's guide, Wang Xianqian brought out what he thought were the hidden referents in the Lu reading. The rest of the poem, he says, "speaks about the [king's] distant journey in pursuit of worthy subjects 言遠行求賢之事."[56]

Like the Zheng–Kong valorization of the Mao reading, Wang's elevation of the Lu reading also puts strain on the poem. He does not say much about the first couplet besides providing the glosses, but as Yao Jiheng noted before him, "the picking of cockleburs and the carrying of baskets are, after all, more of a womanly business 采耳執筐終近婦人事."[57] How, the connotation being, would those images fit into a poem voiced by and about a man? Wang Xianqian makes no mention of such a potential problem, but he does add, perhaps in anticipation of disagreement, that the couplet could function either as *xing*, evocation, or *fu* 賦, exposition.[58] By contrast, Yao, who also attributed the poem to King Wen, excludes *fu* as a possibility, for *fu*, at least in the common understanding which Yao appears to adopt, implies in *Shi* poetics unfigured description.[59] Instead, to complement his idea of gen-

[53] Du Yu's reading is influenced by *Zuozhuan*'s own understanding of the couplet quoted in Xiang, 15. In the translation of Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, "It says in the *Odes*, 'Sighing, I long for the men / And would place them in all the ranks.' This is about being capable of putting the right men in offices. The king and the dukes, the princes, the lieges, the chiefs, the heads, and the high officers of the second, the fourth, and the fifth outer rims, all occupy their proper places. This is what is meant by 'all the ranks' 詩云. 嗟我懷人. 寘彼周行. 能官人也. 王及公侯伯子男甸采衛大夫. 各居其列. 所謂周行也"; Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumns Annals"* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2016) 2, p. 1033.

[54] *SSJYJS* 1, p. 25.

[55] *SSJYJS* 1, p. 25.

[56] *SSJYJS* 1, p. 25.

[57] Yao Jiheng 姚際恆, *Shijing tonglun* 詩經通論 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958; hereafter cited as *SJTL*), *j.* 1, p. 20. Here and below, the number following "*SJTL*" refers to *juan*.

[58] *SSJYJS* 1, p. 25.

[59] As Owen notes, "*Fu*…is any unfigured sequence. If in the *fu* mode a speaker describes

der roles, Yao reads the couplet as an instance of *bi* 比, comparison: "Alternatively, the first stanza functions in the mode of *bi*. To speak about the picking of cockleburs, one still fears not filling [the basket], how much more so is the pursuing of the worthy to be placed in the ranks of Zhou! One truly fears that the court would not be filled 或者首章爲比體. 言采卷耳恐其不盈. 以況求賢置周行. 亦惟恐朝之不盈也."[60] Of the three poetic devices that the *Shi* is known for, none is not a commentator's tool for interpretation. As it happens rather frequently, how a poem employs the rhetorical modes of *fu-bi-xing* depends on how the commentators want the poem to register meaning.

Furthermore, Wang's reading is challenged by his own erudition as a philologist, and his solutions culminate in nothing but expedient proclamations on both the nature of the poem and the materials he consults for glossing. On the phrase *jin lei* 金罍, "bronze wine cup," for example, he notes a contradiction between the Mao reading and the Han 韓 reading of it. To Mao, it is the "ruler [who uses] bronze wine cups 人君黃金罍"; to Han, "the bronze wine cup is a vessel of great value. The Son of Heaven uses jade, and the vassal lords and high officers both use bronze 金罍. 大器也. 天子以玉. 諸侯大夫皆以金." Because the Han gloss, Wang shows, can be corroborated by more sources, and because King Wen is believed to be the traveler and the one who is drinking, Wang goes on to date the poem to *before* King Wen became a king 文王未稱王時作, arguing that "[we] need not mind that the bronze wine cup is [indeed] the standard for the vassal lords 無嫌於金罍爲諸侯之制."[61] In other words, Wang accepts the accuracy and relevance of the Han gloss over Mao's, to the point that he feels compelled to fine tune this poem's provenance.

By contrast, with regard to the parallel phrase *si gong* 兕觥, "rhinoceros pitcher," in the following stanza, Wang accepts the accuracy of, again, the Han gloss but rejects its relevance, so his claim on King Wen's authorship can be maintained. Briefly, the Han gloss identifies 觥 as a kind of "punishing cup 罰爵," used when someone is "punished [to drink] for being disrespectful 以罰不敬" at a banquet; it is not a vessel used by a ruler for his own drinking or for "offering [a drink] to a guest 不以進客."[62] But because King Wen is presumed to be recounting

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a swiftly flowing stream, that stream is taken to be present in the scene, perhaps one that the speaker of the poem must cross"; Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, p. 46.

60 *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

61 *SSJYJS* 1, pp. 26–27.

62 *SSJYJS* 1, p. 30.

his own journey, during which alcohol provided him with "temporary 姑" solace,[63] Wang says that the Han gloss, though correct, captures only "the original purpose of the making of the *gong*-pitcher 制觥之初義"; for King Wen, "it does not have to be a cup used for punishment; it is mentioned only because the ruler would have had it 不必定是罰爵. 特就國君所有爲言耳."[64] In addition to his rather arbitrary use and disuse of philological evidence, Wang is thus implying that "Juan'er" takes no artistic license and must not be a retrospective thought either. In that sense, he reads the poem precisely as King Wen's *zhi* – a spontaneous outburst of one's feelings at the very moment of stimulation.

Interestingly, Yao Jiheng reads the poem differently, even though he shares Wang Xianqian's belief that the poem is in King Wen's voice. First, he forcefully rejects any reading that in any way associates the poem with the Queen-Consort, attributing all "deficiencies 失" in those readings to their "having to make interpretation by fixating on her 必泥是爲解."[65] Second, in regard to stanzas two through four, he calls all those readings that consider the journey therein King Wen's own a "subjective conjecture 臆測," all those that posit an envoy on King Wen's behalf "circuitous 迂折," and all those that either "cast aside King Wen [completely] 撇去文王" or attribute the poem instead to a journeying officer 大夫行役之作 "equally baseless 並無稽."[66] Instead, Yao avers, "difficult as the poem indeed is to interpret, we should follow the *Zuozhuan* and read it as King Wen's search for worthy subjects to be employed in [his] government. Thinking that their journey is long and their arrival yet in sight, [King Wen] composed the poem out of sympathy for their travails on the road. That seems to me the most straightforward [reading] 此詩固難詳. 然且當依左傳. 謂文王求賢官人. 以其道遠未至. 閔其在途勞苦而作. 似爲直捷."[67]

The *Zuozhuan* reference Yao Jiheng mentions is the same *Zuozhuan* quotation of the second couplet (嗟我懷人/寘彼周行) that Wang Xianqian also cites. While Wang's purpose is to borrow Du Yu's gloss of *zhou hang*, Yao's is to support his expulsion of the Queen-Consort from the poem, since the *Zuozhuan* text does not mention her. Regardless, what

[63] I should note that Wang adopts the three-school variant *gu* 沽 (to buy) for *gu* 姑 (for the moment), stating that "King Wen was traveling afar to pursue the worthies. His alcohol might not have sufficed, so he gained more from wine sellers. That would have been proper 文王遠行求賢. 酒或不給. 取之於沕. 情事宜然"; *SSJYJS* 1, p. 26.

[64] *SSJYJS* 1, pp. 30–31.

[65] *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

[66] *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

[67] *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

Yao eventually arrives at through his polemical review of other readings – subjective in its own ways – is a far more inventive take on the poetics of the "Juan'er." For King Wen to have "composed the poem out of sympathy for the [journeying officers']," whose "road is far and arrival yet in sight," the last three stanzas that Wang Xianqian reads as the king's account of his own journey would have to be understood in Yao's reading as the king's imagination of the officers' journey *to him*, the king. In poetic terms, what follows the first stanza is the speaker's impersonation of an imagined voice, or, prosopopoeia:

YAO JIHENG'S READING		WANG XIANQIAN'S READING	
Use of *bi*	*She* picks and plucks the cocklebur, But it does not fill *her* slanted basket.	Use of *xing* or *fu*	*She/I* pick and pluck the cocklebur, But it does not fill *her/my* slanted basket.
King Wen in own voice	*I* sigh for the men *I* long for, Hoping to place them everywhere in *my* ranks.	King Wen in own voice	*I* sigh for the men *I* long for, Hoping to place them everywhere in *my* ranks.
King Wen impersonates journeying officer	"*I* ascend those towering heights, *My* horse is haggard and staggered. *I* now fill that bronze wine cup, To still my prolonged yearning."	King Wen in own voice	*I* ascend those towering heights, *My* horse is haggard and staggered. *I* now fill that bronze wine cup, To still my prolonged yearning.

(Stanzas 3–4 omitted; in both readings they remain in the same voice as stanza 2, respectively.)

"I" AS IMPERSONATION

Traditional literary criticism has not addressed prosopopoeia in lyric poetry nearly enough. The rhetorical device is recognized mainly in such performative genres as *yuefu* 樂府 and song lyrics 詞.[68] None-

[68] See, for example, Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, U. Michigan P., 1992); Xiaofei Tian, "Woman in the Tower: 'Nineteen Old Poems' and the Poetics of Un/concealment," *EMC* 15 (2009), pp. 3–21; Qiulei Hu, "Mapping Gender and Poetic Role in Early Medieval Poetry," *EMC* 21 (2015), pp. 38–62; Grace S. Fong, "Persona and Mask in the Song Lyric (*Ci*)," *HJAS* 50.2 (1990), pp. 459–84; Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), pp. 237–347.

theless, the occurrence of prosopopoeia is sometimes discussed under the much broader term of *tuoyan* 托言, "entrusted speech," which was familiar by Yao Jiheng's time especially among philologists, whose recourse to it, however, serves the primary purpose of textual authentication by differentiating authors from in-text speakers.[69]

As a poetic figure of speech, prosopopoeia is first presumed in the *Shi*'s composition in general and in "Juan'er" in particular by Zhu Xi. Typically, he would use *tuo* 託 or *tuoyan* 託言 to refer in general to metaphorical use of language, the kind of figuration the traditional triad of *fu-bi-xing* does not fully capture.[70] For instance, regarding the couplet "Wet the dew on the road, / is it not there early in the night?/ I say there is too much dew on the road 厭浥行露. 豈不夙夜. 謂行多露" (Mao 17), Zhu Xi's reading goes: "Presumably, the woman [-poet] was walking alone early in the night. Fearing that there might occur [to her] savage violation, she entrusted [the line] 'there is too much dew on the road' to express her fear of soaking [in it] 蓋以女子早夜獨行. 或有強暴侵陵之患. 故託以行多露而畏其沾濡也."[71] In other words, the road covered in dew is taken to be a physically traveled one (Zhu reads the couplet as *fu* whereas Mao reads it as *xing*[72]) while the dew itself a metaphor for stain. In the case of "Juan'er," however, which Zhu Xi reads in its entirety as a case of *tuoyan*, the term gains more interpretive nuance because of the first-person voice in the poem. Presented to be an uncontroversial term of interpretation just as *fu*, *bi*, and *xing* are, *tuoyan* in Zhu Xi's use translates to highly imaginative claims on "Juan'er" poetics, some of which at odds with *Shi* poetics as we know it. Compared to the other commentators mentioned so far, Zhu Xi's hermeneutic innovation is no less facilitated by a license to make poetic impositions.[73]

[69] For the use and problem of *tuoyan* 託言 as an interpretive category, see Zhuming Yao, "Beyond Authenticity: Genre, Rhetoric, and the Iterability of *Shangshu* Speeches," *TP* 110 (2024), esp. pp. 260–69.

[70] In Zhu Xi's own definition, "To straightforwardly refer to names and narrate events is *fu*. To originally want to speak of the poetic matter but first spuriously use two lines to 'fish it out' before continuing is *xing*. To draw something as comparison is *bi* 直指其名. 直敘其事者. 賦也. 本要言其事. 而虛用兩句釣起. 因而接續去者. 興也. 引物爲況者. 比也"; Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), *j*. 80, p. 2067.

[71] *SJZ* 1, p. 16.

[72] In Zheng Xuan's words, "This is talking about how 'I' would not know to consummate the marriage rites early that night. It is because there was too much dew on the road that 'I' did not take leave 言我豈不知當早夜成昏禮與. 謂道中之露大多. 故不行耳"; *MSZY* 1, p. 94.

[73] It is somewhat ironic when Zhu Xi says that eschewing the "minor prefaces" "only offends he who wrote the prefaces 不過只是得罪於作序之人," but "if one were to interpret [the poems] following only the prefaces without examining the original poems' meaning from beginning to end, one would be offending the sages 只依序解. 而不考本詩上下文意. 則得罪於聖

To begin with, the poem to Zhu Xi has nothing to do with the employment of the worthy, whether as an earnest wish the Queen-Consort holds for King Wen (Mao's reading), an aspiration the king himself labors to fulfill (Wang Xianqian's reading), or a shared goal pursued now by the people drawn to the king's aspiration (Yao Jiheng's reading). Rather, and rather simply, "the poem was narrated [*fu*] because the Queen-Consort was longing for the nobleman [i.e., King Wen], who was away from her 后妃以君子不在而思念之. 故賦此詩."[74] From the poem, Zhu Xi continues, we "can see how utterly chaste, subdued, loyal, and devoted the Queen-Consort was" 可以見其貞靜專一之至矣.[75]

The use of the verb *fu* here is apropos because Zhu Xi marks the entire poem as *fu* – in this case, a *fu* "made by the Queen-Consort herself 后妃所自作."[76] Especially with regard to the first stanza, it is not *xing* (as in Mao's reading), or *bi* (as in Yao Jiheng's), but *fu*. Following his overall claim that the Queen-Consort narrated the poem to express her longings for King Wen, Zhu says of the first stanza thus: "This is entrusted speech [in which the Queen-Consort] was picking the cocklebur. Before the slanted basket was filled, her heart turned to long for her nobleman and thus cannot pick anymore, so she set the basket down by the side of the broad road 託言方采卷耳. 未滿頃筐. 而心適念其君子. 故不能復采. 而寘之大道之旁也."[77] Two things merit our attention. First, the stanza is not taken to be an ordinary *fu*, but a *fu* of an "entrusted speech": the Queen-Consort misses the king, so she entrusts a stanza about the picking of cocklebur to express her longings. Put in another way, the *fu* here is not an unfigured sequence of narration but an analogy, which collides with Zhu Xi's own definition of the rhetorical device: "To straightforwardly refer to names and straightforwardly narrate *shi* is *fu* 直指其名. 直敘其事者. 賦也."[78] Unless the *shi* 事 in Zhu Xi's use is meant more broadly than "events" or "affairs," that is, actual happenings, one could only surmise that another consideration is at play in this interpretation. To Zhu Xi, who views direct expression

賢也" (Zhu, *Zhuzi yulei*, *j*. 80, p. 2092). By not "offending the sages," the poems are in fact interpreted freely according to Zhu Xi's own extrapolation of the sages' "original meaning 本意," a phrase he keeps referring to.

74 *SJZ* 1, p. 5. Zhu remains undecided as to the exact occasion of the composition. He says it could be when the king was "receiving an audience 朝會" or when he was "out on an expedition 征伐" or when he was "held in darkness at Youli 羑里拘幽"; Zhu, *Zhuzi yulei*, *j*. 1, p. 4.

75 *SJZ* 1, p. 6.

76 *SJZ* 1, p. .6.

77 *SJZ* 1, p. 5.

78 See note 70, above.

of love and longing as a strong sign of "licentiousness 淫,"[79] a proper woman such as the Queen-Consort would have to speak of such matters in codes. An aesthetic judgment appears to be driving a reading that is in essence a poetic claim about the compositional structure of the stanza.

Along with this iconoclastic reading, the controversial phrase *zhou hang* in the stanza is also glossed anew as "broad road 大道," no justification provided. It is simply given in a matter-of-factly fashion, "*zhou hang* means broad road 周行. 大道也,"[80] via a syntactical structure of categorical equation (A, B 也). As noted earlier, philological investigation can be a highly subjective process; commentators bring their own judgments to the "evidence" they gather. The diverging glosses of *zhou hang* by the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading ("the ranks of Zhou 周之列位") versus the Wang Xianqian–Yao Jiheng reading ("everywhere in the ranks 徧於行列") are no exception. Both cite the *Zuozhuan* comment on the couplet for inspiration ("each occupying his rank, that is called *zhou hang* 各居其列. 所謂周行也"), but while Wang Xianqian accepts Du Yu's gloss of *zhou* as *bian*, Kong Yingda rejects both the *Zuozhuan* comment and the Du Yu gloss because, to him, *Zuozhuan* "in quoting the *Shi* breaks apart stanzas, and thus is a difference case 引詩斷章. 故不與此同."[81] Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 (1782–1853), by contrast, defends *Zuozhuan*'s authority in reading the *Shi* and accuses Kong Yingda of misunderstanding both Mao and Zheng, claiming that in Mao's reading, *zhou* is already meant as *bian*.[82] Although Zhu Xi engages with no one and none of the materials others all reference, his dictionary-like gloss is a no less prejudiced reading, a proud result of his "savoring 玩味" of the poem "in its own right."[83]

Having reinterpreted the first stanza, Zhu Xi reads the rest of the poem also in the Queen-Consort's voice, but "again as entrusted speech [in which the Queen-Consort] wishes to mount the towering heights so

[79] For the idea of *yinshi* 淫詩 in Zhu Xi's hermeneutics and its enormous influence, see e.g. Wong Siu-kit and Lee Kar-shui, "Poems of Depravity: A Twelfth Century Dispute on the Moral Character of the *Book of Songs*," *TP* 75 (1989), pp. 209–25; and Zhang Wanmin 張萬民, "Kunjing yu jingjin: Ming Qing yuedushi zhong de Zhuzi 'yinshi' shuo" 困境與精進, 明清閱讀史中的朱子"淫詩"說, *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 39.3 (2021), pp. 61–102.

[80] *SJZ* 1, p. 5.

[81] *MSZY* 1, p. 45.

[82] See Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰, *Maoshi zhuanjian tongshi* 毛詩傳箋通釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), *j.* 2, pp. 42–43.

[83] It is often pointed out that Zhu Xi reads the *Shi* based on the *Shi* 以詩言詩, which, in his own words, means "to put aside the 'minor prefaces' and all the old readings in exchange for a humble and thorough reading of the original poems, slowly savoring them 且置小序及舊說. 只將元詩虛心熟讀. 徐徐玩味"; Zhu, *Zhuzi yulei, j.* 80, p. 2085.

as to gaze afar at the man of her heart, after whom she will follow. But her horse is too haggard to advance, so she pours herself the wine of the bronze cup, hoping to, with it, not fall further into her unceasing longings 此又託言欲登此崔嵬之山. 以望所懷之人而往從之. 則馬罷病而不能進. 於是且酌金罍之酒. 而欲其不至於長以爲念也."[84] Thus understood, the treacherous journey is no longer that of King Wen's (cf. Wang Xianqian), nor that of the worthy subject's in the Queen-Consort's recount (cf. Mao–Zheng–Kong), or even that of the subject's in King Wen's imagination (cf. Yao Jiheng), but that of the Queen-Consort's in her own imagination. The poetic speaker is giving voice to an imagined self, encoding at the same time her unfilled longing for her husband into a metaphorical trek into the mountains. No other *Shi* poem in any of the readings I have encountered is double-figured like Zhu Xi's reading of these stanzas. No other *Shi* poem in Zhu Xi's reading is in my knowledge this kinetic on the literal surface but static in its interpretation if we recall that the first couplet is also "entrusted speech."[85] There is no actual picking of cockleburs, no real ascending of the mountains, no midway drinking, no horses, no servants; everything narrated takes place in the Queen-Consort's imagination as she longs for King Wen.

Such an unusual reading, poetically *and* rhetorically, did not go unnoticed. The Ming literati-official Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), for instance, rebuts Zhu's imagining of the Queen-Consort: "A woman longs for her husband, so she ascends a high ridge and drinks wine, taking her servants to gaze from afar – even though this was [simply] 'spoken of,' it still goes against the proprieties 婦人思夫. 而陟岡飲酒. 攜僕徂望. 雖曰言之. 亦傷于大義矣."[86] The Qing *Shi* commentator Cui Shu 崔述 (1740–1816), goes further: "Master Zhu's reading [of the poem] as a woman's longing for her husband is correct. But to take the 'I' as the wife herself, who ascends high to drink wine, is decidedly not the way of a virtuous wife who ought to be cloistered and chaste. Even to regard it as the words of 'entrusted speech' is still improper 朱子以爲婦人念其君子者得之. 但以我爲自我其身. 則登高飲酒. 殊非婦德幽貞之道. 即以爲託言而語亦不雅."[87] Although both disapprovals are based on gendered moral standards rather than on anything poetic, they nevertheless highlight the unusualness of Zhu Xi's reading since both go on to argue that the traveler should be the man the female speaker is longing

[84] *SJZ* 1, p. 5.

[85] A close exception is Mao 14, "Caochong" 草蟲. For a short discussion and the text of Waley's translation, see the appendix here.

[86] Quoted in *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

[87] Cui Shu 崔述, *Du Feng oushi* 讀風偶識 (SKQS edn.), *j.* 1, p. 32.

for, be he King Wen or not. But again, to Zhu Xi and all the other commentators mentioned so far, how a poem comes into being is a function of their interpretation of the poem's meaning and purpose. So long as their own interpretation coheres, both the poet and the poem's making can be freely imagined.

In the history of *Shi* hermeneutics, Zhu Xi is the last major commentator to have preserved the legacy of the Minor Preface, even though he rejects all its stipulations but the Queen-Consort's authorship in the case of "Juan'er." Since then, Zhu's reading became the new orthodox for later commentators, and his reading of the "I" as prosopopoeia grew in tandem to be the insignia of that new orthodox. A great number of later readings all take the last three stanzas of "Juan'er" to be an impersonated speech, differing only in the voice impersonated and the source of impersonation. Prosopopoeia also entered the view of *Shi* hermeneutics, assumed in many other poems. Yao Jiheng's reading of "Juan'er" as King Wen's lament, followed by his impersonation of a traveling officer recounting the journey, should be understood precisely as an outgrowth of this new trend of reading the lyric "I". But the man responsible for the lasting impact of Zhu Xi's innovation, and for the modern reading of "Juan'er," is the last Qing-era *Shi* critic – Fang Yurun. Unsurprisingly, Fang introduces a new twist to "I" as prosopopoeia.

In Fang Yurun's time, impersonation was already a mature trope in lyric poetry. In particular, male authors would adopt a female voice and speak about political desires among men through the metaphor of heterosexual love relationships. For readers and writers alike, poetic voice is gendered, and gender correlates to certain emotions and expressions – all, admittedly, in stereotypical ways.[88] These stereotypes are projected back onto the *Shi* by Fang Yurun, who holds highly rigid views about female figures in the poems. Whenever he senses something improper or unlikely for the female to have said or done, he seeks to read a male into the poem in one way or another. Concerning "Juan'er," for example, Fang accepts Yang Shen's criticism of Zhu Xi and reads the final three stanzas not as the imagination of the female speaker's own journey, which to him "violates the principal proprieties

88 See discussions of the historical development of the phenomenon in Qiulei Hu, *Abandoned Women and Boudoir Resentment: The Construction of the Feminine Voice in Early Medieval Chinese Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2023); Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); and Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), esp. pp. 12–200.

傷于大義," but as that of her male lover's: "I say that this poem must have been composed by a woman out of her longing for her husband on an official journey and of her sympathy for his travails…the first stanza speaks of the thought of her man prompted by the picking of the cocklebur…the following three stanzas all describe *from the opposite side* in detailed imagination of the travails he must have experienced. [The woman] strives to console herself, but the more she tries the more she fails 愚謂此詩定是婦人念夫行役而憫其勞苦之作… 一章因采卷耳而動懷人念…下三章皆從對面著筆. 歷想其勞苦之狀. 強自寬而愈不能寬."[89] And the "woman 婦人" here is no longer the Queen-Consort but just *a* wife, since to Fang, "how is holding a basket and following a route the business of the Queen-Consort 執筐遵路亦豈后妃事耶?"[90]

As such, we have a fifth reading of the journey, this time completely divorced from either the Queen-Consort or King Wen. The historically contextualized readings first proposed by Mao and later modified by the likes of Zhu Xi, Yao Jiheng, and Wang Xianqian give way now to a widely applicable reading that is folkish in nature. Any wife could have uttered the poem, so long as we understand a she to be impersonating a he. But Fang Yurun does not stop here. Acknowledging that the poem can indeed work as entrusted speech, he brings his gendered hermeneutics to full circle by positing, now, a male author in the background: "If one has to read the poem as entrusted speech, then it is possible 乃可 that the poet is using the relation between a husband and wife to metaphorically speak of the relation between a ruler and a subject, or between friends. Once we stop obsessing with the Queen-Consort, then the intention to [speak of] the pursuit of the worthy and the inspection of the officers will also not be untenable 如必以爲託詞. 則詩人借夫婦情以寓君臣朋友義也乃可. 不必執定后妃以爲言. 則求賢審官人之意. 亦無不可通也."[91] In other words, typical of a gendered and far later reading of the *Shi*,[92] the poem is alternatively taken to be a male poet's work speaking figuratively through the voice and persona of a female.[93]

89 *SJYS* 1, p. 78.

90 *SJYS* 1, p. 78.

91 *SJYS* 1, p. 78.

92 The earliest gendered reading of early Chinese poetry goes back to Wang Yi's reading of the *Chuci*. See, for example, Monica E. M. Zikpi, "Wanton Goddesses to Unspoken Worthies: Gendered Hermeneutics in the *Chuci zhangju*," *EC* 41 (2018), pp. 333–74.

93 Wai-yee Li calls this the "poetics of indirectness" (Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, p. 14) to highlight both the male impersonation of a female voice and the expression of political desires through romantic desires.

Although not the first to have read a later poetic convention into the *Shi* (Zhu Xi did the same), Fang Yurun is the most consistent in doing so. On many occasions, he would read a poem as male impersonation of a female when other commentators all agree on female authorship or remain undecided.[94] The only difference lies in whether the impersonated voice is taken to be speaking figuratively or non-figuratively, judged by Fang's view of gender roles alone.[95] Nevertheless, Fang's initial, folkish, a-female-poet-impersonating-a-male-lover reading became the preferred reading of most modern commentators. In addition to Guo Moruo 郭沫若,[96] Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元,[97] and most recently Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, Xu Jianwei 徐建委, and Cheng Sudong 程蘇東,[98] this reading is also the base reading behind Waley's translation, in Joseph Allen's rearrangement as well. Legge, by contrast, adopts Fang's second, figurative, a-male-poet-impersonating-a-female reading as a friend lamenting the absence of another friend.[99] Only Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 offers something truly remarkable and yet still derivative of the prosopopoeia-based reading first raised by Zhu Xi. Instead of a poet first speaking of his/her own mind and then impersonating the target of his/her longings, whoever

94 Examples include Mao 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26, 33, 35, 72, 88, 129.

95 For example, while all commentators read Mao 35, "Gu feng" 谷風, as a "poem by an abandoned wife 棄婦詩," Fang reads it as "a self-lament by an ousted minister 逐臣自傷." For him, "although the language of the poem is that of a woman, the intent [behind it] is that of a man. That is how I know that this poem is an entrusted speech. Invariably, when a devoted minister or a righteous subject is not forgiven by his ruler, or suffers slander and exile to a remote place, he will definitely have grievances that, however, cannot be decried unequivocally. Instead, he has to entrust his words to those between a husband and wife, so as to state his case of guiltless persecution 是語雖巾幗. 而志則丈夫. 故知其爲託詞耳. 大凡忠臣義士不見諒於其君. 或遭讒間遠逐殊方. 必有一番冤抑難於顯訴. 不得不託爲夫婦詞. 以寫其無罪見逐之狀" (*SJYS* 3, p. 136). By contrast, for the very similar Mao 58, "Meng" 氓, Fang somehow agrees with others in reading the poem as the lament of an abandoned woman, claiming this time that "although similar to 'Gu feng,' this poem is really different from it. 'Gu feng' is allegorical; it uses the abandoned woman as an analogy to the exiled minister. This poem, however, is a factual narration. It is composed on account of actual happenings 此與谷風相似而實不同. 谷風寓言. 借棄婦以喻逐臣. 此則實賦. 必有所爲而作" (*SJYS* 4, p. 179).

96 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, *Juan'er ji* 卷耳集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), pp. 5–7. For some reason, Guo Moruo adopts a third-person voice throughout his modern rewriting of the poem.

97 Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元, *Shijing zhuxi* 詩經注析 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 9.

98 Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, Xu Jianwei 徐建委, and Cheng Sudong 程蘇東, *Shijing guofeng xinzhu* 詩經國風新注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), pp. 21–24.

99 Legge says in the notes to his otherwise unclear translation, "Ode 3. Lamenting the absence of a cherished friend. Referring this song to T'ae-sz, Choo thinks it was made by herself. However that was, we must read it as if it were from the pencil of its subject"; Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Part I, p. 8.

he or she might be, Qian thinks that "the person who composed the poem need not be the person chanted in the poem. The wife and the husband are both characters in the poem, and the poet spoke about their affairs on their behalf. That is why [the wife and the husband] each says 'I,' respectively 作詩之人不必即詩中所詠之人. 婦與夫皆詩中人. 詩人代言其情事. 故各曰我."[100]

Simply put, the poet to Qian is not impersonating one but *two* voices, in a dramatic manner that completely erases the identity of the poet behind the "I" in the poem. Revealingly, none of these commentators defends his reading in the framework of *Shi* poetics as promulgated, for example, in the "Great Preface" 大序. To the extent they do, they resemble Fang Yurun in pointing to later poetic forms from especially the Tang and Song onward and even to storytelling techniques in late-imperial fiction.[101] The anachronism of their hermeneutic paradigms is matched only by the impositions they bring onto the poetics of "Juan'er" – by now a title and four stanzas, the exact same title and four stanzas, for what have become eight different poems.[102]

"I" AS PERSONA

"Juan'er" is one among many poems in the *Shijing* that have inspired diverging readings of the "I," albeit an exceptionally complex one with multiple "I" right in the poem.[103] Other lyric members of the *Shi* collection may not explicitly say "I" but are nonetheless voiced in the first-person and still illustrate a narrower range of contentions over the "I." Whether the poet or speaker is a historically identifiable per-

100 Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編 (Beijing: Sanlian chubanshe, 2019), vol. 1, p. 116.

101 Qian Zhongshu, for instance, compares his understanding of "Juan'er" to the technique of "story-telling from two threads 話分兩頭" used in late-imperial "chapter-and-episode style novels 章回小說" and to poems by Wang Wei 王維, Bai Juyi 白居易, Bao Zhao 鮑照, among others even from the West like Miguel de Cervantes. Cheng Junying and Jiang Jianyuan are more conservative but still cite poets and lyricists like Li Bo 李白, Du Fu 杜甫, Liu Yong 柳永, and Zhou Bangyan 周邦彥 for support.

102 In a way, the *Shi* is not so much "interpreted" as it is used to advance their hermeneutic paradigms. But that is a topic for a different study.

103 A close comparison in terms of the number of "I" and the unconventionality of its interpretations is Mao 48, "Sangzhong" 桑中. Both Fang Yurun and Qian Zhongshu read the poem as entirely an unknown poet's impersonation of the lyric speakers in the poem. For Fang, the poet impersonates three voices speaking in succession of one another 以一人而賦三時三地之人之事; *SJYS* 4, p. 160. For Qian, the poet speaks on behalf of one man addressing three separate affairs (一男有三外遇; Qian, *Guanzhui bian*, p.152). In the "Guo feng" section of *Shi*, only Mao 110, "Zhi hu" 陟岵, appears to feature as many voices. But in that case, the poem explicitly marks the voices by "the father says 父曰," "the mother says 母曰," and "the brother says 兄曰," something also uncommon in the "Guo feng."

son or a more generic type of personality, for example, is one major area of such contentions.[104] The former looks for a specific name, the latter is content with *a* forlorn wife, *an* indignant official, *a* concerned countryman, because the identity either cannot or need not be ascertained.[105]

Gender, on the other hand, is also a major concern that feeds into further questions about impersonation and figuration.[106] That the poetic speaker is ostensibly a she does not mean the poet is a she to every reader.[107] The one group of poems that *can* be subject to similar scrutiny of the "I" but are not in the commentaries are those for which the Minor Preface does not identify an author or speaker to begin with. Typically, those poems are marked as either "criticizing 刺" or "praising 美," concerning a figure, a behavior, or a historical time (as in *cishi* 刺時). In those cases, the Mao comment is made about the purpose and effect of the poem rather than its provenance. Instead of reviving issues about the lyric "I," later commentators also use those poems for the rehearsal of their signature hermeneutic positions. If a "criticizing poem 刺詩" in the Mao reading is one about romantic love, for example, Zhu Xi would read it as a "licentious poem 淫詩," while most modern commentators a folk love song.[108]

The third area of contention – impersonation – concerns relatively fewer poems. This has to do with the hermeneutic bias against female but not male voices, a bias especially prominent among commentators in the late-imperial era. To them, both the male author and the male voice have more leeway in terms of poetic expression, while the female counterparts are subject to additional moral judgement. Of all the musings about the journey in "Juan'er," for example, the traveler is overwhelmingly taken to be a male, real or imagined. To Ouyang

104 An inexhaustive list of examples would include Mao 2, 10, 17, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 42, 44, 45, 59, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 91.

105 This line of contention almost always stems from the Mao historicization of the poems. When later commentators disagree, they seek to either show that the identified provenance and the poem do not "match 合" or argue that it is unnecessary to "concretize 實" the originating context of the poem. In the latter case, the reason is often that the poem speaks to a generic category of human emotion or experience, which is attributable to a certain group of people rather than to any individuals.

106 For some of the poems in this group, see Mao 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26, 33, 35, 64, 66, 72, 73, 74, 82, 86, 88, 90, 91, 129, 132, 145.

107 I have not encountered a single case in which a woman is argued to be impersonating a man. If the poetic speaker sounds like a man, as in the case of the poems on hunting, court politics, or military affairs, then the commentators would take the poet to be a man.

108 See, for example, Mao 42, 48, 58, 76, 86, and 91. It is worth noting that Zhu Xi does not read every love poem as a licentious poem, and his standard is unclear.

Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), who is the first to have voiced the following objection, the Queen-Consort's intent, according to Mao, to assist King Wen in employing the worthy is also inappropriate both for the Queen-Consort to have and for the commentators to assume, for, says Ouyang, "a woman does not concern herself with external [i.e., court] affairs 婦人無外事." Rather, all that the Queen-Consort can be said to have done is "[getting to] understand the difficulty of acquiring the worthy through her failure in filling [the basket] while picking cockleburs 以采卷耳之不盈而知求賢之難得." As a result of this gendered hermeneutics, the poem, argues Ouyang Xiu, is best read as the Queen-Consort's effort to "admonish, indirectly, her husband to cherish the worthy and the talented given how difficult they are to acquire 諷其君子以謂賢才難得宜愛惜之."[109] Yet, in Yao Jiheng's eyes, such admonishment "still belongs in the same category as a woman interfering in court affairs 仍類婦人預外事矣."[110]

None of these hermeneutic differences means that some readings are "correct" or "more correct" and others are not. Each reading of "Juan'er," for example, is reasonable in its own ways, however speculative or idiosyncratic it may seem from a different perspective. It shows, rather, that the poem lends itself to diverging readings and contextualizations, as the lyric voice can be imagined to suit different speakers speaking under different circumstances. The generic nature of the emotions expressed undergird that flexibility. Similar to some *yuefu* poetry, "Lack of specificity in the text had a value in inviting reuse in a wide variety of situations."[111] And *Shi* commentators worked precisely to situate the lyric "I" in the "use" and "reuse" of it by the speaking voices they found most appropriate. This interest in establishing the identity of the poetic speaker, which often is equated with the author, stemmed from the long-standing hermeneutic fixation with autobiographical reading. The Great Preface mandates that *shi* 詩 be understood as "the stuff of inner life, the person's *chih* 志, 'intent,' and *ch'ing* 情, 'emotions,' or 'subject disposition'."[112] Especially for poems that lack specificity, ascribing an author/speaker to them makes them more "readable." Mao is among the first to have read the *Shi* from the

109 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Shi benyi* 詩本義 (SKQS edn.), *j.* 1, pp. 4a-5b.

110 *SJTL* 1, p. 20.

111 Stephen Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), p. 220.

112 Stephen Owen, "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography," in Shun-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1986), p. 74.

vantage point of a contextualizing historical context, of an author/speaker, and most other commentators react to Mao without breaking the framework.

From the perspective of the poems, then, "Juan'er" is one among many that can be described as a type-voice, a voice that speaks not of distinctly individual but of generic categories of human emotions. Some type-voices, like "Juan'er," are more generic, and thus inhabitable by more speakers. Others, again, like certain *yuefu* poetry, would seem more appropriate for a certain author/speaker to have uttered. "Once such an association is made and the poem is read as being by a particular speaker, a mutually confirming circularity can be created: one has a sense of the person through the poem, and one understands the poem through the person."[113] What is most interesting about type-voices in the early phase before *yuefu* is that some of them last, transform, become the voice of culturally produced personalities, and eventually help to generate truly individual voices. A process can be traced, that is to say, behind the birth of the first lyric poets from out of these type-voices.

Consider the figure of the "frustrated scholar." Coined by Hellmut Wilhelm (originally "the scholar's frustration") to refer to a type of Han-era *fu* 賦 whose origin is further traced to the *Chuci*, the term tries to capture a poetic theme in which the poet is seen to be "voicing criticism – either of the ruler, the ruler's behavior, or certain political acts or plans of the ruler; or of the court officials or the ruler's favorites; or generally, of the lack of discrimination in the employment of officials."[114] The emotion expressed is what David Hawkes has alternatively referred to as *tristia*, "the poet's sorrows, his resentments, his complaints against a deluded prince, a cruel fate, a corrupt, malicious and uncomprehending society."[115] In essence, the poet does not have to be a "scholar," but the sentiments expressed are invariably part lamentation and part indictment vis-à-vis a more formidable power of some kind. Both designations accord closely with the *one* conception of authorship in early China, the image of the "suffering author" portrayed by Sima Qian.[116] In attributing the drive to write to personal suffer-

113 Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, p. 221.

114 Wilhelm, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of *Fu*," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1957), p. 311.

115 Hawkes, "Quest of the Goddess," p. 82.

116 See *Shiji* 130, p. 3300. For Sima Qian and his conception of authorship, see, for example, Wai-yee Li, "The Letter to Ren An and Authorship in the Chinese Tradition," in Stephen Durrant et al., *The Letter to Ren An and Sima Qian's Legacy* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2016), pp. 96–123; Martin Kern, "'Masters' in the *Shiji*," *TP* 101.4–5 (2015), pp. 335–62.

ings from unfair and unsparing treatment by society at large, this idea of the author valorizes the "venting of frustration 發憤" as the highest ideal of literary creation. The frustrated scholar has all the right to lament, especially if he is a lyric poet.

As often as Qu Yuan is identified as the earliest embodiment of the venting poet, Sima Qian points to the *Shi* as containing even earlier – and archetypical – iterations of the persona. A good number of "worthy and wise men 賢聖" in the capacities of soldiers, officials, and even princes are seen in the *Shi* to be lamenting their ill fate. As Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤 has noted, "Among the three hundred and five poems in the *Shi*, those that are sorrowful and bitter far outnumber those that are joyous and delightful 詩三百五篇之中. 優怨之詩特多於歡愉之詩"; "the attraction of joy and delight easily wears out, but the feeling of sorrow and lament knows no bounds 歡愉之趣易窮而憂傷之情無極."[117] In poems especially about warfare and military expeditions,[118] lament is expressed in such memorable lines as "the king's business never ends,/ my heart is sick and sad 王事靡盬/我心傷悲."[119] But by far the most intense lamentations are found in a set of poems that directly addresses credulous rulers and vilifying slanderers – sentiments for which Qu Yuan is known. In these poems, the persona is also given a variety of identities, each speaking in a different context. Commentators disagree over who the authors/speakers really are, but that is, once again, evidence of the voice's capacity to be variously inhabited – before it is tied to and made "personal" by Qu Yuan.

Mao 197, "Xiao pan" 小弁 ("Wings Flapping"), is a good example. Consisting of eight stanzas, the poem dives into lament right in the first stanza:

弁彼鸒斯	Wings flapping, those little crows,
歸飛提提	They return to roost, flock on flock.
民莫不穀	None among the people are not well,
我獨于罹	I alone am in misery.
何辜于天	What guilt do I have against Heaven?
我罪伊何	My crimes, what exactly are they?
心之憂矣	Grieved though my heart,
云如之何	What is there to be done?[120]

[117] Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤, *Shi sanbai pian tangu* 詩三百篇探故 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), pp. 124, 127–128.

[118] See, among others, Mao 65, 110, 121, 156, 162, 167, 168, 169, 205, 207, 234.

[119] Zhu Dongrun surveys all these expressions in Zhu, *Shi sanbai pian tangu*, pp. 124–28.

[120] *MSZY* 12, p. 874.

In these opening lines, much of the rhetoric of venting frustration shared by later iterations is already present. Couplet one is a *xing* type of imagery that sets the affective stage. Couplet two contrasts the poetic speaker to everyone else, highlighting the singularity 獨 of his suffering. Couplet three questions Heaven for either not adjudicating or not interfering on the speaker's behalf, and couplet four pointedly expresses sorrow. The poem could just as well end here, but in a true venting-of-frustration fashion seen likewise in later iterations of the voice, it goes on to *fu*, narrate, the heart's sorrow in the next five stanzas. In each of those stanzas, two couplets of imageries (of plants, insects, animals) are followed by two couplets of lamentation, a structure amply found in "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang." The lamentations, then, all end with a final line beginning with "my heart is grieved 心之憂矣" and finishing with the debilitating effect of it. The speaker falls ill, cannot sleep, and sheds tears. Only stanza three breaks the pattern by inserting an impassioned indictment into the middle of all the emotional outpouring:

維桑與梓	To mulberry trees and catalpa,
必恭敬止	One must show reverence.
靡瞻匪父	Whom do we look up to if not our fathers?
靡依匪母	Whom do we depend on if not our mothers?
不屬于毛	Am I not attached to the hairs [of my father]?
不離于裏	Did I not come from the inside [of my mother]?
天之生我	Heaven gave me birth,
我辰安在	But where is my time?[121]

This stanza is in much dispute. To the commentators who follow the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading and connect the poem to King You of Zhou's 周幽王 exile of his elder son, Prince Yijiu 宜咎, in favor of Bofu 伯服, his younger son with his concubine and new queen, Bao Si 褒姒,[122] the middle couplets speak right to the prince's desertion by his parents even though the mother was also a victim of Bao Si's usurpation.[123] In that sense, they read the third couplet in the declarative, as the prince's auto-comment on the fact of the matter, as in: "I am not attached to the hairs [of my father]; I did not come from the inside [of my mother]". But, if one were not to contextualize the poem as such, the overall tone of the stanza suggests two rhetorical questions as I (and Legge) have

121 *MSZY* 12, pp. 876–77.

122 See *MSZY* 12, pp. 873–74.

123 Kong Yingda says that the mother is mentioned because "people all receive the care of their parents 人皆得父母之恩"; "the intent here is not to blame Queen Shen 其意不怨申后也"; *MSZY* 12, p. 877.

read it. The first couplet, with the imagery of the mulberry tree and catalpa, symbols of home, indicates some relation to the parents. But exactly what they have to do with the speaker's lament is not yet clear. By contrast, the strong indignation throughout the following three couplets is hard to miss.

This indignation turns back to lamentation in stanzas four through six until the speaker, now in stanza seven, lays bare the cause of his sorrow in the clearest of terms:

君子信讒	The lord believes the slanderers,
如或醻之	As readily as he would toast a guest.
君子不惠	The lord shows no grace,
不舒究之	Taking no leisure to examine things.
伐木掎矣	In hewing a tree, one follows the lean of it.
析薪杝矣	In splitting firewood, one observes the grain.
舍彼有罪	But you, my lord, let go of the guilty,
予之佗矣	And high on me pile the blame.[124]

Here, finally, is the "slander 讒" that the Mao–Zheng–Kong reading says Bao Si made against Yijiu. But again, the poem itself gives no such indication. After that, the poem concludes in the final stanza with a warning to the lord against his credulity, followed by a sigh of despair: "My body having been disregarded,/ how will I have the leisure to care for what might come after? 我躬不閱. 遑恤我後."[125] To Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda, this means that Yijiu is to surrender to filicide.

As can be expected, the poem's provenance is an open question. The Minor Preface says that the poem "criticizes King You. It was composed by the tutor of the prince 刺幽王也. 大子之傅作焉." Kong Yingda further notes that the event was indeed Prince Yijiu's exile by King You, but the "prince cannot compose a poem to criticize his father 太子不可作詩以刺父," so his tutor did it on his behalf "out of sympathy for his exile 閔其見逐."[126] Aside from the moral decency granted to the prince, Kong is thus making a case for authorial impersonation. The Lu reading attributes the poem to Boqi 伯奇, son of a different abusive father, Yin Jifu 尹吉甫, who likewise exiled the heir in favor of his other son by a concubine. This view is shared by the Qi 齊 reading, which compares "Xiao pan" directly to "Li sao."[127] Zhu Xi, by contrast, re-

124 *MSZY* 12, pp. 879–80.
125 *MSZY* 12, p. 881.
126 *MSZY* 12, p. 873.
127 *SSJYJS* 17, p. 697.

turns the poem to King You's time but reestablishes Prince Yijiu as the author. To him, the attribution to the prince's tutor has no basis, as the prince is clearly "venting his own frustration 自怨."[128] Zhu's view has been adopted by most commentators since, until Yao Jiheng, whose commentative judgment in this case remains undetermined. He dislikes the Mao reading because "although one can compose a poem on someone else's behalf, grief and grievance come from the innermost of feelings. How can those be assumed [by another poet]? 詩可以代作. 哀怨出于中情. 豈可代乎." But, he also acknowledges, "if Yijiu did compose the poem himself, he indeed was not virtuous 若謂宜臼自作. 宜臼實不德."[129] Yao's worry was soon dismissed by Fang Yurun. Finding the poem particularly moving, Fang says, "even if Yijiu was not virtuous, he had not reached the extent of egregious malice 宜臼縱不德. 未至大惡"; "there is no doubt that this poem was composed by Yijiu 此詩爲宜臼作無疑."[130]

The culmination of the commentators' dispute about Yijiu's authorship in moral terms is indication that nothing more can be extracted from the poem itself as adjudicating evidence. It contains no definitive clues to its provenance, no clear mention of an actual exile, only a voice that can be inhabited by a son lamenting his ill fate as a victim of slander. Such reading of a generic speaker into the poem is shared by several modern commentaries.[131] In other poems commentators all agree to read as someone's lament over slander (Mao 192, 194, 195, 198, 200, 219), essentially the same voice has been placed in the mouths of a range of speakers.[132] Some are identified simply as *an* "official 大夫," *a* "eunuch 寺人," *a* "charioteer 贄御"; others are given a specific name. Likewise, while King You's reign is a popular time for all such laments, King Li's 厲王 is a favorite alternative. Further, for Mao 200, "Xiangbo" 巷伯 ("Lane Chief"), commentators cannot agree whether the poem was uttered by a poet who was a eunuch to begin with, a eunuch as a result of the slander he laments about, or a eunuch who wrote the poem out of sympathy for another slandered eunuch. Most remarkably, while some read Mao 192, "Zheng yue" 正月 ("The First

128 *SJZ* 12, p. 219.

129 *SJTL* 10, pp. 215–16.

130 *SJYS* 11, p. 407.

131 See, e.g., Cheng and Jiang, *Shijing zhuxi*, p. 599; Wang Yunwu 王雲五, *Shijing jinzhu jinyi* 詩經今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1971), p. 313.

132 The main difference lies in whether the voice focuses more heavily on lamentation (as in Mao 192 and Mao 197), indictment (as in Mao 194, 195, 200), or somewhere in between (as in Mao 198 and Mao 219).

Month"), as a prophecy of the imminent demise of King You uttered by a slandered and grieving high official, others see it as the official's painful remembrance after the fact.[133] In all these cases, no reading is the correct reading. No reading can be established as the correct reading. They all postulate *a* concrete embodiment of the type-voice of the frustrated scholar, and their postulations are all reasonable thanks to the voice's general applicability to a specific type of personal, and emotional, experience.

This *type* of experience, as is well known, is what Qu Yuan represents. The figure has been so central to both Chinese literary and cultural history that for a long time the two seemed synonymous with each other, almost exclusively so: the experience "belongs to" this one concrete figure, and this concrete figure laments about "his" experience in, importantly, poetry. But, as Kern has shown in a series of studies following earlier skepticism about Qu Yuan as an author of lyric poetry, "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang" in particular, the name translates to more of a "poetic hero" than a "heroic poet," a persona, in other words, that was constructed by a collective of others *and* the poems attributed to him.[134] Qu Yuan as we know him from the poems, further notes Stephen Owen, "is a character whose traits are shaped by ritual and mythic necessities, rather than by accidents of personality and historical contingency. If his 'nature' is the cause of events in the poem, it is… a nature without specific content. Even if there were a Qu Yuan whose experiences were close to those described in Sima Qian's biography and who did 'compose' the 'Li sao' in some form, in representing himself within the poem he would have already transformed himself into a figure of myth: he would have been acting out a role."[135] And that role, I must emphasize, is none other than the persona of the frustrated scholar, one furnished now with a biography – a "paratextual" narrative itself constructed as a "set of identity-generating paradigms"[136] – that those in the *Shi* do not have. The *voice* of Qu Yuan is not new; it just acquired a more concrete *embodiment*.

133 See Fang Yurun's impassioned adjudication of the two views in *SJYS* 10, pp. 391–93.

134 See Martin Kern, "Du Fu's Long Gaze Back: Fate, History, Heroism, Authorship," in Iwo Amelung and Joachim Kurtz, eds., *Reading the Signs: Philology, History, Prognostication: Festschrift for Michael Lackner* (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 2018), pp. 153–73; Kern, "Cultural Memory and the Epic in Early Chinese Literature: The Case of Qu Yuan 屈原 and the *Lisao* 離騷," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2022), pp. 131–69; and Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan."

135 Owen, "Reading the 'Lisao'," in Kern and Owen, eds., *Qu Yuan and the Chuci*, p. 235.

136 Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," p. 26.

From that perspective, we stand to gain from distinguishing between three varieties of the frustrated scholar as a type-voice: the voice in its archetypical, unindividuated shape, the voice as embodied by the figure of Qu Yuan and as mediated by the more personal expressions of this particular figure, and the voice in other manifestations associable with other names and other registers of expression. The first I have illustrated above using examples from the *Shi*; the third can be heard in Liu Xiang's "Jiu tan." It has been recognized that "Jiu tan" is far from a simple imitation of Qu Yuan. It refers to him, defines him,[137] approaches shared topoi in contrasting ways,[138] and utilizes "figural shifts" with more intention.[139] One can also observe that Liu Xiang's voice intertwines with Qu Yuan's. What is worth remarking further is the unprecedented elasticity of Liu Xiang's voice vis-à-vis those of the archetypical frustrated scholar and the voice as embodied by Qu Yuan. As Liu Xiang works through both, his own, distinct self also emerges, slowly but steadily. If we no longer see Qu Yuan as the "earliest lyric poet in the Chinese tradition,"[140] that vaunted position, I submit, would go to Liu Xiang.

Liu Xiang's impersonation of Qu Yuan has been demonstrated in earlier studies. In both his "Feng fen" 逢紛 ("Encountering Chaos") and "Li shi" 離世 ("Leaving the World"), Liu Xiang adopts the voice of Qu Yuan either with or without prefacing and speaks in the language and rhetoric of the "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang." The consistent use of "I" and assumption of Qu Yuan's biographical attributes leaves us in no doubt that these two poems are faithful imitations. From imitation, the embryo of a more separated voice has also been noticed. As Lucas Bender points out, the opening of "Xi xian" 惜賢 ("Pitying the Worthy") can be read either in the first- or third-person voice because of the sentiment expressed and the imageries invoked. In Bender's translation:[141]

137 For these aspects, see most importantly Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," pp. 54–58, 76–86. For a different view, see Heng Du, "The Author's Two Bodies: The Death of Qu Yuan and the Birth of *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句," in Kern and Owen, eds., *Qu Yuan and the Chuci*, pp. 98–155.

138 See Nicholas Morrow Williams, "The Topos of the World Upside-Down Turned Right-side-Up: Liu Xiang and Political Rhetoric in Early China," *AM* 3d ser. 35.2 (2022), pp. 145–81; Williams, "'Roaming the Infinite': Liu Xiang as *Chuci* Scholar and Would-be Transcendent," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Literature* 20 (2018), pp. 49–112.

139 Lucas Rambo Bender, "Figure and Flight in the *Songs of Chu*," in Kern and Owen, eds., *Qu Yuan and the Chuci*, pp. 175–83.

140 Owen, "Reading the 'Lisao'," p. 235.

141 Bender, "Figure and Flight in the *Songs of Chu*," p. 176.

覽屈氏之離騷兮	I read the "Li sao" of Mister Qu:
心哀哀而怫鬱	my/his heart is/was sorrowful and depressed.
聲嗷嗷以寂寥兮	My/his voice complains/ed in the lonely silence,
顧僕夫之憔悴	as I/he consider/ed the carriage driver's desolation.[142]

To read on a bit more, this ambiguity leaves it unclear whether the following quatrain signals the beginning of Liu Xiang's own poetic speech, his yet another impersonation of Qu Yuan (marked as "I" below), or his recount of Qu Yuan's experience:

撥諂諛而匡邪兮	I/"I"/He swept away slander and righted perverseness,
切淟涊之流俗	and cut through the vulgar custom of the muddy and the mired.
盪渨涹之姦咎兮	I/"I"/He washed off the stain of the wicked crimes,
夷蠢蠢之溷濁	and wiped out the filth and impurity that wriggled like a worm.[143]

Not only is the mode of speech unclear, the mood of these lines is also uncertain. If the verbs here are stating facts, they are obviously stating contradictory facts. Neither Qu Yuan nor Liu Xiang as we know them overcame slander and disdain so utterly cleanly as the verbs *bo* 撥, *qie* 切, *dang* 盪, and *yi* 夷 would suggest. By contrast, if these lines are meant to be aspirational, as Wang Yi reads them,[144] the aspirations are not what Qu Yuan holds in "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang" either. All he wants in those poems is to speak to the lord and present his own case (e.g., *chenci* 陳辭), but even that is never achieved.[145] After this quatrain, the poem returns to the kind of lament similar to that in "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang" and expresses the lament in the diction and rhetoric of the two, thus opening up again the possibilities of both first-person impersonation and third-person description. No clue in the poem would help us unravel the entanglement.[146]

142 Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015; hereafter cited as *CCBZ*), *j*. 16, pp. 316–17. Here and below, the number following "*CCBZ*" refers to *juan*.

143 *CCBZ* 16, p. 317.

144 *CCBZ* 16, p. 317.

145 See also Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," pp. 81–83.

146 It is revealing that while Nicholas Williams translates the entire poem in the first-person, David Hawkes switches between the first- and third-person voice. See Nicholas Morrow Williams, *Elegies of Chu: An Anthology of Early Chinese Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2022), pp.

This conflation of voices is not a problem but a feature of the "Jiu tan." In "You ku" 憂苦 ("Grieving Bitterness"), for instance, the speaking "I" starts very much in Qu Yuan's familiar voice, mentioning right away his nine-year exile to the South we know otherwise only from "Ai Ying" 哀郢 ("Lamenting Ying"): "Sad, the sorrows of my heart, / I lament the misfortunes of my old state./ Gone for nine years I never return,/ alone, my solitary exile to the south 悲余心之悁悁兮. 哀故邦之逢殃. 辭九年而不復兮.獨煢煢而南行."[147] As the poem goes on, however, the speaker mentions "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang" by name, something Qu Yuan as a poetic speaker never does: "I chant 'Encountering Sorrow' to manifest my intent,/ I have not yet exhausted the 'Nine Manifestations' 歎離騷以揚意兮. 猶未殫於九章."[148] Such transition from a Qu Yuan-like voice to a non-Qu Yuan-like voice occurs again in "Si gu" 思古 ("Longing for the Past"), where "Li sao" is similarly referred to after the speaker mentions the city of Ying 郢 and the rivers Xiang 湘 and Yuan 沅, all defining markers of Qu Yuan's biography: "I left my old quarters in the city of Ying,/ turned away from Xiang and Yuan to move afar 違郢都之舊閭兮. 回湘沅而遠遷."[149] In this particular case, the speaker even goes directly from naming "Li sao" to what looks like another impersonation of Qu Yuan, all in the space of one quatrain:

興離騷之微文兮	I raised the subtle words of "Encountering Sorrow,"
冀靈修之壹悟	hoping for the Numinously Refined to come to immediate sense.
還余車於南郢兮	So he would summon my chariot back to Southern Ying,
復往軌於初古	To retrace our tracks back to former times.[150]

The peculiarity of these four lines cannot be overstated. As the author of the only set of poems that mentions "Li sao" (and "Jiu zhang") by name, Liu Xiang is perfectly aware that Qu Yuan as a poetic speaker never does so.[151] And yet, he has Qu Yuan refer to "Li sao" himself, as the next three lines are again rehearsing the story of Qu Yuan's biography, uttered in the same "I." If there is any consistency to the voices of

132–33; David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 291–93.

147 *CCBZ* 16, p. 320.

148 *CCBZ* 16, pp. 321–22.

149 *CCBZ* 16, p. 329.

150 *CCBZ* 16, p. 329.

151 See Kern, "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," pp. 84–86, for detailed demonstration.

Qu Yuan and Liu Xiang with regard to the "Li sao," Liu Xiang here is impersonating a Qu Yuan but a Qu Yuan speaking both like Qu Yuan *and* Liu Xiang – unless, that is, Qu Yuan's biographical makers have themselves become a contentless trope. In that case, we might accept the voice as Liu Xiang's own, but speaking figuratively. As neither scenario seems more likely than the other, or even plausible on its own, barring textual problems, we would have to reconcile with the good possibility that Liu Xiang's voice has merged with Qu Yuan's.[152]

From such conflations there emerges finally Liu Xiang's own take on the persona of the "frustrated scholar," refracted through Qu Yuan but expressed in his own way. In "Min ming" 愍命 ("Lamenting Fate"), not only does it share the least amount of parallel expressions with both the "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang,"[153] the poem also adopts a rhetorical structure unseen elsewhere in *Chuci.* Of the fourteen stanzas that make up the main body of the poem before the concluding envoi, the first eleven are spent on a comparison between the glorious past and the decadent present, a trope common in the philosophical writings of the time. Among those eleven stanzas, five are devoted to the depiction and extol of the speaker's "August (deceased) Father 皇考," who is noble, forceful, and the overseer of an uncorrupted world. "His dispositions were pure, untainted by filth,/ his demeanor lofty, without blame 情純潔而罔薉兮. 姿盛質而無愆." He "approached the loyal and the upright 親忠正" and "summoned the worthy and the fine 招賢良"; he "exiled the flatterers and the sycophants,/ and censured the slanderers and the favorites 放佞人與諂諛兮. 斥讒夫與便嬖." Under his watch, "There were no resentful men in the woods,/ nor recluses by the river banks 叢林之下無怨士兮. 江河之畔無隱夫."[154] Such extensive remembrance of the

[152] Here again the difference between Hawkes's and Williams's translations are revealing. In the former, the quatrain is translated apparently into Qu Yuan's voice, following Wang Yi's reading: "By composing the subtle words of the *Li sao*,/I hope to recall the Fair One to his senses,/So that he summons my chariot back to Nan-ying/ To drive once more in the tracks we used to follow" (Hawkes, *The Songs of Chu*, p. 298). In the latter, however, it is unclear: "The subtle words of the 'Li sao' my stimulus–/I hope that Spirit Paragon will once become aware;/ Returning my carriage back to Southern Ying–/ I'll redirect my carriage-gauge to its original state" (Williams, *Elegies of Chu*, p. 139). That said, in Williams' "Topos of the World Upside-Down," p. 169, he says that "This passage opens with Liu's explicit reference to 'Li sao' as his model, further emphasizing his desire to restore ancient models." If I understand him correctly, Williams sees Liu Xiang as the speaker in his own voice, which raises the problem of the references to *lingxiu* 靈修 and *nanying* 南郢. Heng Du notes that "rather than Qu Yuan's King Huai of Chu, [*lingxiu*] now seems to denote Liu Xiang's emperor of Han" (Du, "The Author's Two Bodies," p. 144). But again she does not say anything about the city of Ying. To me, none of these readings is satisfactory, as they all elide the complexity of the voice in this little quatrain.

[153] See Kern's data in "Reconstructing Qu Yuan," pp. 91–92.

[154] *CCBZ* 16, pp. 323–24.

father is never exercised either in "Li sao" or "Jiu zhang"; to the extent the father is mentioned, he is mentioned as the endower of those qualities on Qu Yuan through the names he gave him, not as himself the possessor of them.

The next six stanzas turn to the present by enumerating the maladies of an "upside-down world," to borrow a metaphor used by Nicholas Williams.[155] Among the many names enumerated as the victims of the present time, we also find Han Xin 韓信, a founding general of the Western Han who postdates Qu Yuan. Although enumerative catalogs also undergird the poetics of "Li sao," Liu Xiang's emphasis is put on the worthy men who have been wronged, whereas those in "Li sao" are unrighteous rulers versus their virtuous counterparts. While the structural components are the same, that is to say, Liu Xiang gave the catalogs a rhetorical remake. Although past-present comparisons are likewise seen in "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang," none is nearly this expansive, occurring instead within neighboring couplets. Only then, in the final three stanzas, does Liu Xiang begin to comment on the contrast before turning to lament:

惜今世其何殊兮	How pitiful this era's difference from the past,
遠近思而不同	Then and now, the thinkings do not unite.
或沈淪其無所達兮	Some sink in the current and reach nowhere,
或清激其無所通	Some have a clear mind but achieve nothing.
哀余生之不當兮	I lament the untimeliness of my birth,
獨蒙毒而逢尤	Alone, I'm covered in poison and met by blame.
雖謇謇以申志兮	Though forthrightly I have stated my mind,
君乖差而屏之	My lord is deviant, and he renounces me.
誠惜芳之菲菲兮	Truly I love the sweet smell of the blossoms,
反以茲爲腐也	They are taken instead to be foul and putrid.
懷椒聊之蔎蔎兮	I embrace the fragrance of the scented pepper,
乃逢紛以罹詬也	Only to encounter chaos and suffer humiliation.[156]

As much as the language is reminiscent of Qu Yuan, Qu Yuan does not wait until the end to voice his lament. What Liu Xiang achieves in "Min ming" is yet another iteration of the frustrated scholar, but neither in the impersonated voice of Qu Yuan nor something intertwined with it. Rather, it is the persona in Liu Xiang's own arrangement of familiar but freshly reconfigured expressions. Qu Yuan is not the original frustrated scholar, as the archetype of it is amply seen in the *Shijing*. Nor

155 Williams, "Topos of the World Upside-Down."

156 *CCBZ* 16, p. 327.

is the way Qu Yuan articulates the voice the only way, since displacement and lament are shared topoi realizable in different ways. What we have here is a type-voice vis-a-vis its various manifestations empirically attested. The type-voice has expression only in an empirical manifestation, but a new empirical manifestation can choose to define its own relation to the archetypical type-voice, as well as its existing manifestations. It is in this sense that Liu Xiang's "I" is truly remarkable: in nine poems he gave us, like a conscientious commentator, a history of the frustrated scholar all the way up to his own poetic innovation of it.[157] "Jiu tan" on the whole is still an expression of a type-voice, but one at its most reflective and individuated yet.

CONCLUSION

In a recent essay rethinking the relation between *shi* and *zhi*, David Schaberg argues that "the 'Canon of Yao' and the 'Great Preface' appear to have taken on notions of the relation between *zhi* and expression that had been articulated in connection with oratory – that is, with the use of *shi* and other tools in persuasion – and narrowed and recast them as having to do with the original composition of *Shi jing* poems."[158] In the *Zuozhuan*, Schaberg shows, *zhi* is meant more broadly in the sense of "a willful reuse of existing language in debate and persuasive speech."[159] And that "existing language" is most notably the *Shi* in quotation. One voices one's *zhi*, all the same sincerely, not by uttering anything original but by appropriating the *Shi*. In a broader reflection, Jonathan Culler returns Western lyric poetry to likewise the realm of oratory. Finding insufficient the models of lyric poetry both as expression of the poet's subjectivity and as mimesis of a fictional character, Culler highlights the "materiality" of lyric poetry such as rhyme, meter, and refrain that would turn the lyric into something of an *epideixis* – a rhetorical event that makes claims about the world and exerts influence over an audience.[160] While oratory has little to do with my purpose here, what

[157] Reference to *Shijing* is present in "Jiu tan," though not as intensely and/or explicitly as that to the "Li sao" and "Jiu zhang." In "Yuan si," "You ku," and "Min ming," Liu Xiang mentions several times the image of the *zhengfu* 征夫, an official on an expedition; in "Yuan si," he also invokes the metaphor of *qing ying* 青蠅, the black fly. The former is a typical speaker in the *Shi* of frustration, the latter is a metaphor for slanderers and a *Shi* poem title (Mao 219).

[158] David Schaberg, "Search and Intent: Early Chinese Literature for Now," in Sarah M. Allen, Jack W. Chen, and Xiaofei Tian, eds., *Literary History in and beyond China: Reading Text and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2023), p. 37.

[159] Schaberg, "Search and Intent," p. 22.

[160] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2015).

both Schaberg and Culler have attempted is a recontextualization of an old problem the kind of which I have tried to do in this essay as well. The early Chinese lyric "I," as I have described it, reveals its use and understanding as an inhabitable type-voice when examined neither in the context of poetics nor hermeneutics but the close intertwinement, and in fact mutual production, of the two.

On the one hand, "I" as both the lyric self and prosopopoeia is a result of reading. However much of a compositional intention there was behind the "I," that intention is lost to us in the case of most early poems. Instead, it is the commentators who freely imagine for us how a poem comes into being, in what mode of speech, and using what rhetorical devices – all in the disguise of an interpretation. What they think a poem means is inseparable from how they presume the poem is composed. On the other, when compositional intention can be more or less discerned, such as in the cases of Liu Xiang's "Jiu tan" and those who gave us the "Li sao," the lyric "I" that they create derive intimately from the type-voices they have read, heard, or helped reshape. The kind of poetic work they engaged in is an interpretation of its own kind, a commentary in poetic forms on that very tradition of poetic writing. As they produce more iterations of the type-voice, a certain poetics of that voice also takes shape, becomes a model, and attracts reconfiguration.

This amenability of the lyric "I," so to speak, compels us to rethink the place of the Great Preface in both the writing and reading of early lyric poetry. It is undeniable that *shi* is privileged as the expression of *zhi*; this canonical formulation is the basis of the hermeneutic belief in and fixation with autobiographical reading. But just as Schaberg has noted, that the expression of *zhi* calls for the use of original language is already a narrower reformulation. "Jiu tan" and "Li sao" both attest to that observation by their ample reuse of common poetic expressions, which go back to the *Shi*. The Great Preface model, it would seem, does not apply to all poetic expressions of *zhi*. On what basis, then, is the model drawn? Is it intended to describe or prescribe, and to what audience is it addressed? They are questions still to be asked.[161] It is perhaps owing to those very unanswered questions that the commentators felt justified not only to ascribe meaning to the lyric "I" but to imagine how the poems are composed to begin with. And they do so by passing off poetic claims as hermeneutic solutions. This is neither

161 Some of these questions have been discussed in relation to Tang poetry. See Lucas Rambo Bender, "Against the Monist Model of Tang Poetics," *TP* 107 (2021), pp. 633–87.

delusion nor deception; on the contrary, it speaks to the extent to which hermeneutics is always inseparable from a sense of what literature is and how literature produces meaning. As modern critics of the same materials, this nature of our work remains unchanged.

Appendix

Mao 14, "Caochong" 草蟲

喓喓草蟲	Anxiously chirps the cicada,
趯趯阜螽	Restlessly skips the grasshopper.
未見君子	Before I saw my lord,
憂心忡忡	My heart was ill at east.
亦既見止	But now that I have seen him,
亦既覯止	Now that I have met him,
我心則降	My heart is at rest.
陟彼南山	I climbed that southern hill,
言采其蕨	To pluck the fern-shoots.
未見君子	Before I saw my lord,
憂心惙惙	My heart was sad.
亦既見止	But now that I have seen him,
亦既覯止	Now that I have met him,
我心則說	My heart is still.
陟彼南山	I climbed that southern hill,
言采其薇	To pluck the bracken-shoots.
未見君子	Before I saw my lord,
我心傷悲	My heart was sore distressed,
亦既見止	But now that I have seen him,
亦既覯止	Now that I have met him,
我心則夷	My heart is at peace.

For Zhu Xi, this poem is composed likewise by a woman (this time an unknown wife of a high officer) longing for her absent husband. In the same way as he reads the journey in "Juan'er," Zhu takes the mountain climbing here to be the wife's imagined trip in pursuit of her husband (登山蓋託以望君子; *SJZ* 1, p. 14). Regarding the first couplet, by contrast, he reads it as an instance of *fu* in the conventional sense, so nothing is figured like the first couplet of "Juan'er."

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCBZ	Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注
MSZY	*Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義
SJTL	Yao Jiheng 姚際恆, *Shijing tonglun* 詩經通論
SJYS	Fang Yurun 方玉潤, *Shijing yuanshi* 詩經原始
SJZ	Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳
SSJYJS	Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Shi sanjia yi jishu* 詩三家義集疏