Whose Voice Is It Anyway? A Rereading of Wang Changling's "Autumn in the Palace of Everlasting Faith: Five Poems"

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Abstract The Tang dynasty poet Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756), renowned for his mastery of the *jueju* 絕句 (quatrain) form, has been praised specifically for having brought a lyric sensibility to the heptasyllabic quatrain: a poetic genre most closely associated with *yuefu* themes and technical complexity. To the extent that such praise is responding to something specific in Wang's poems, they present a fine opportunity to investigate precisely how a lyric subjectivity is constructed on the basis of the limited poetic vocabulary afforded by stock themes, archetypal characters, and stylized surroundings. Noting that Wang is especially adept at using visual (and occasionally auditory) cues to convey the inner state of the personae that inhabit his quatrains, and taking into account the importance he apparently places on establishing a bodily presence within a given poem (as expressed in his attributive essay "Lun wenyi" 論文意 [On Writing]), this article performs a close reading of the perceptual cues featured in the five heptasyllabic quatrains, "Autumn in the Palace of Everlasting Faith" 長信秋詞. Borrowing the term *focalization* from recent theories of visual narrativity (most notably as applied by Mieke Bal), and applying it to these poems over the course of this close reading exercise, the essay demonstrates that the lyric power of these poems stems not from the communication of the poet's inner state on the specific occasion that inspired his writing but from his use of the senses to construct a fluid, shifting, and permeable subjectivity—one that can, at moments, encompass the reader and the poet.

Keywords Wang Changling, *jueju* poetry, palace-style poetry, subjectivity, focalization

The Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture • 3:1 • April 2016
DOI 10.1215/23290048-3461796 • © 2016 by Duke University Press

A couple of decades ago, Yu-kung Kao published an article in which he laid out in clear, workmanlike terms the technical changes undergone by ancient Chinese poetry as it evolved from relatively impersonal, archetype-based songs and rhymed-verse political memorials to make room for the "lyric" voice, the "inscape" of the individual poet.[1] With that article, which stands as a landmark in the field, Kao implicitly reaffirmed that venerable equivalency between the "lyric voice" and the "subject," between the literary expression of inner experience and the existence of a stable, bounded subjectivity undergoing that experience. And more explicitly, Kao discussed—in an observation that both echoed the words of scholars in the past and solidified the foundation for those to come—the primacy of visual perception in the reception and expression of a poet's experience.

Toward a Definition of the Chinese Lyric Subject

Kao's intervention notwithstanding, the word *subjectivity* is bound to send an army of question marks and exclamation points scurrying to the front lines of everybody's critical consciousness, accompanying an array of reasonable and well-founded questions and objections: How appropriate is it to append an eighteenth-century Cartesian or Lockean label to writings produced in sixth- to eighth-century China? Isn't one of the primary narratives of early Chinese poetic creation aimed precisely at mitigating, if not dissolving, the self/world—or subject/object—dichotomy that characterizes so much of Western thought and, apparently, unexamined quotidian human experience? Finally, today, haven't even European and US thinkers (and here I have in mind a host of contemporary writers ranging from Judith Butler to Catherine Malabou and Adrian Johnston)[2] rejected the very existence of an autonomous subjectivity, armed as they are with the findings of gender theory, psychoanalysis, and neuroscience, anxious to undo the hegemonic, positivist, and colonialist damage done by the illusion of an autonomous, sovereign subjectivity?

These are all, on the face of things, excellent reasons to reject the use of the term as a tool of literary or cultural analysis. Unless, that is, we engage in the time-honored practice of pouring new wine into an old bottle. For all their potential to evoke a range of unwanted implications, *subjectivity* and *subject* still emerge as uniquely useful terms, especially when clearly defined in the context of a specific line of inquiry. Considered from the standpoint of the earliest Chinese notions of poetic production, for example, the subject may be productively identified with the *xin* 心 (the heart), while *xin* functions as the locus for the formation of the intent or *zhi* 志.[3] And, examined from the inverse standpoint of poetic reception, it coincides with the entity that early Confucian writings identify as what a (good) reader gets to know or understand (*zhi* 知) upon reading someone's writing—nothing less than the person (*ren* 人) that produced those writings.[4] In short, the Chinese lyric subject is the unnamed entity imagined as living in and responding to the world and consequently, unavoidably, expressing itself in poetry. This subject is accessible and interpretable only inasmuch as it is bodied forth in poetic language.

This formulation of the Chinese lyric subject, narrow and simple as it is, has several theoretical advantages. First, it grows directly out of early and enduring Chinese terms of poetic creativity and reception. As such, it handily encompasses, but is never limited to, all the components that seem to make up the person (*ren*) in Chinese philosophical writings, including those most consistently associated with the act of writing: vital breath (*qi* 氣), feelings (*qing* 情), intent (*zhi*), ideas (*yi* 意), body (or self, *shen* 身), spirit (*shen* 神), senses (*gan* 感), cognition (*shi* 識), and knowledge (*zhi* 智). Second, insofar as it is not defined in terms of any binary opposition (like the subject/object dyad), it is endowed with a fluidity that, in certain strands of poetic thought (most notably Daoist and, later, Buddhist), transcends the constraints inherent in its (illusory) experience as a discrete and stable sensory being.[5]

The third, and perhaps most important theoretical advantage of this definition is that it identifies the subject as fundamentally contingent—a characteristic that allows it to accommodate the wealth of theoretical challenges to its existence. Dispensing with the complicating characteristic of perfect (or even imperfect) sovereignty, this formulation acknowledges that the lyric subject (as both an individual and a historical entity) shifts along with, and so reflects, the features of the sensual, historical, material, and social world; and, as I have recently tried to show elsewhere, is equally contingent on the recognition of other (reading) subjects, themselves shaped by similar forces.[6]

Visuality and Bodily Presence in Tang Poetic Writing

With this in mind, one may begin to read Chinese poetic writing with an eye to explicitly delineating certain consistent features of this elusive-but-real lyric subject, as they are implicitly revealed (and dissimulated) in both poetry and the critical and theoretical writings that discuss it. This essay will look specifically at one particular feature associated with much of Tang poetry (but a feature inherited most strikingly and immediately from the Liang dynasty poetic tradition)[7]—the emphasis on the senses, vision in particular—and at how the lyric subject functions therein as a "perceptual entity." Consistent with its defining characteristic of contingency, this perceptual entity not only perceives but also must be perceived in the act of perceiving. One might say that the lyric subject thus understood is submerged in the perceptual world specifically in order to be made more perceptible (just as poetic language is submitted to the concrete world in order to be made more eloquent). It communicates its being in large part through the act of seeing.

Closely tied to the shaping of the perceptual lyric subject is the evocation of place, a feature shared by a vast range of premodern Chinese poems, and one that has long attracted scholarly attention. Digging more and more deeply into the general, even amorphous, categories of landscape poetry (*shanshui shi* 山水詩) and even poetry on excursions (*youlan shi* 遊覽詩), some scholars have increasingly taken note of the finer distinctions characterizing the poetics of place and space, devoting entire studies to the enduring themes of exile, frontier, separation, and climbing high, as well as the boudoir, temples, and ruins—studying the historical and political contexts that contributed to the development of the particular, relatively finite, visual vocabularies that characterize them.[8] Other scholars, most notably Cheng Yu-yu (Zheng Yuyu 鄭毓瑜), have stepped back and attempted to theorize spatiality as a more fundamental feature of Chinese poetry. Cheng's work toward linking the depiction of space and subjectivity is especially relevant here, for she explicitly recognizes the fluid boundary between the subject and the space that the subject represents in language. As she puts it, "It is precisely because [space] dissolves the boundary between subjectivity and objectivity, or between reality and the imagination, that [it] cannot be reflected or portrayed."[9] The growing scholarly consensus seems to be that any reader of Tang poems will be sensitive to imagery; but it is really the link among the three terms *visuality, place*, and *experience* that most eloquently discloses the construction of the lyric subject of a given poem of this time.

The eighth-century essay entitled "Lun wenyi" 論文意 (On Writing) devotes several passages to establishing precisely this link. It is preserved, along with many other works on Chinese poetics and prosody that had been lost during the Tang, in the *Bunkyō hifuron* (*Wenjing mifulun* 文境密府論 [The Secret Repository of the Mirror of Literature]), edited by the Japanese monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835).[10] This short, disjointed essay, traditionally attributed to Wang Changling,[11] is unique in containing an explicit Tang-dynasty description of the preparatory process for the writing of a poem. In its emphasis on honing one's perception, choosing the best viewing conditions, and caring for one's mental and physical well-being, this section bespeaks an author who not only understood the importance of the interface between the perceived world and the feeling subject but was self-conscious about its nurturance and manifestation in language.

This essay, seamlessly intermingling technical advice and aesthetic judgment, emphasizes the importance of the lyric subject's bodily presence in the lived world.

> In all cases, one's embodied self [*shen* 身] must be present in [a poem's] intent; if there is no embodied self present in a poem, then from where can a poem come into existence?[12]
>
> When it comes to poetry, in the very first line one must be able to see where [the poet/viewer] is positioned. . . . If one speaks abstractly 空言物色 [lit., "emptily"] of the appearance of things, then even if [the words] are fine, they will be without flavor. One must establish one's own presence [in a particular place 必須安立其身].[13]

This, then, is where the reader steps in; the reader must be able to sense the bodily presence of the self—*shen*—from which the perceptions appearing in the poem emanate.[14] For the poem to be good, for it to "ring true," the sense of actual presence in a place must be discernible in the poem. This sense of a concrete presence, the root of the poem's subjectivity, is not so much a function of the subject's actual position or even its articulated and verifiable view from that position. Its presence exists where it does because the reader can reliably locate it within the finished poem.

But just how is this presence inscribed so that it can be sensed by a reader? To begin to respond, it is useful to turn to theoretical work that has been done since the mid-1980s on the specific issue of visual narrativity, that is, the capacity of images—whether themselves visual or literary—to represent a story.[15] Mieke Bal, basing her inquiry on the work of Gérard Genette in particular, but also on that of Edwin Panofsky, Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, and W. J. T. Mitchell, has borrowed the narratological term *focalizer* to develop a theory of visual narration that is of particular use to us here. Genette coined the term to describe a principle by which information is filtered and organized within a narrative. Hoping to improve upon the older notion of point of view, Genette thereby distinguishes between the subject that speaks (the narrator or narrative voice) and the subject that sees, with *focalizer* referring to the former. Whether this refinement was necessary or successful is a matter of some debate. Brian Finney has written eloquently on the ineffectiveness of this supposed distinction;[16] but, his protests notwithstanding, the term has since become a commonplace among scholars of narratology. Ironically, if understandably, the scholars who have since adopted the term tend to apply it primarily to seeing—to regimes of visual information. Bal followed suit, demonstrating its rich analytical potential in her close reading of the function of vision in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.[17] Most recently, in her own retrospective summary of the term and its provenance, she recently writes,"In the study of narrative, a renewed interest in visual aspects has grown out of the realisation that subjectivity is formed by a perpetual adjustment of images passing before the subject who, as *focalizer* [italics mine], makes them into a whole that is comprehensible because it is continuous. Having a certain continuity in one's thought depends, at a level that is more subliminal than it is conscious, on having a certain continuity in one's images."[18]

In her description of the focalizer as adjusting the procession of images "passing before the subject" in order to make them "whole," Bal provides us with a term that approximates the perceptual presence implied, not just in "On Writing" but also in many poems of the Chinese tradition that rely on visuality to convey subjective experience. In doing so, her work can therefore also help us bring some clarity to the question of just how a reader detects the lyric subject's presence (*shen*) in a poem. If we keep it in mind while reading Wang's essay "On Writing," this focalizing function emerges as the mechanism that renders the lyric subject recognizable by the reader of the poem. That is, in order for the poem to mean anything, the reader must be able to identify the patterns of adjustment through which the world of images is transformed into a continuous—if not always coherent—whole. In what follows, then, I will use the term *focalizer* to refer to the discernible functioning of the lyric subject: the entity whose experience is successfully conveyed to the reader through a selective deployment of visual images extending over the course of a poem or, in this case, a cycle of poems.

Particularities of Place: From Mountaintop to Boudoir

For readers familiar with the conventions of Tang poetry, it seems only natural that all the examples cited by the author of "Lun wenyi" situate the lyric subject in a natural setting. After all, not only are the earliest modes of poetic figuration (exemplified by *bi* [comparison] and *xing* [stimulus]) drawn from the natural world, but so much of the experience of the poetry-writing elite is framed by the awareness of being in the vast geographical expanse of the kingdom as a whole. Poets climb to high places, travel the land and the waters, visit ancient sites, go off to war, take leave of their friends, send their friends off on journeys both voluntary and forced, leave inscriptions on temples and cliffs, and generally just leave home. But they also spend time indoors—or, at the very least, in the constructed spaces of the court and the capital: partaking in banquets, watching spectacles, playing games, and—in private moments—enjoying a tryst with a lover, or combatting insomnia, illness, and old age in their rooms.

Although the collections of lyric poetry that have come down to us contain many more thematic subgenres situating the speaker outdoors than indoors, nothing specific in "Lun wenyi" or, to my knowledge, in any other essay on poetics dictates that the cues signaling bodily presence are uniquely the province of natural settings. One way of testing the extension and the limits of this spatially constructed notion of the lyric subject is to examine it in the subgenre of boudoir poetry, in which both the space occupied by the speaker appears to be more confined and the images associated with it more restricted. Because of these peculiarities, boudoir poetry offers a kind of limit case for this exercise.

As recently described by Xiaorong Li, the poetry of the boudoir—the palace woman's inner chambers or *gui* 閨—constitutes a specific, if dominant, topos within the larger, fluid genre known as "palace-style poetry" (*gongti shi* 宮體詩).[19] Its spatial and visual vocabulary is relatively limited but well adapted to the rendering of the stock character of the desirous—if not pining—woman it portrays. At the same time, the explicitly private nature of the boudoir setting has at least the potential to suggest depths of experience not readily accessible by the reader. As a result, these poems, particularly as instantiations of what Xiaofei Tian has termed "a new poetics of seeing,"[20] offer an interesting opportunity for the blending of implied subjectivity with a stock character, whether drawn from the *yuefu* tradition or from historical and legendary anecdotes. This approach to reading the boudoir poem may help us think through what it means to speak of subjectivity in the absence of assumptions about individual uniqueness, while also examining the interplay between privileged and shared perspectives within a given work.[21]

One Tang poet whose reworking of palace-style poetry, and of the boudoir topos in particular, presents a particularly interesting case study of the construction of the lyric subject is Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698–758), the attributive author of "On Writing." Wang was, by all accounts, a preeminent poet of his time, meriting the largest number of poems in Yin Fan's 殷璠 (*jinshi* 756) *Heyue yingling ji* 河嶽英靈集. What further singles him out is his predilection for and excellence in the composition of a particular type of verse that, in his time, was not considered lyrical in the usual sense: the heptasyllabic quatrain (*qiyan jueju* 七言絕句). Not only did he devote a large percentage of his compositions to this genre, but he is also widely acknowledged as its master, in some ways even surpassing Li Bai 李白 (701–762).[22] Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602), for example, specifically singles out Wang Changling's palace-style *yuefu*, most of which are quatrains, as most accomplished in their lyrical power: "Whereas it is Li [Bai]'s rendering of 'scene' that penetrates right to the spirit, it is Wang [Changling]'s expression of 'feeling' that gets to its very mainspring. Li is incapable of achieving the level of Wang's palace-style lyrics and *yuefu*; and Wang could never match Li's poetry on famous sites and excursions."[23] Somewhat later, Lu Shiyong 陸時雍 (fl. 17th c.) goes further, comparing Wang Changling's heptasyllabic quatrains to the classical *sao* tradition, lamenting that an increasingly ignorant readership has allowed this quality to go largely unremarked: "Wang Longbiao's [i.e., Wang Changling] heptasyllabic quatrains are, naturally, the *sao*-speech of the Tang people. Their intricate layers of profound feeling and bitter resentment are beyond counting, such that no amount of fathoming will exhaust their depths, nor will any amount of pondering them tarnish one's delight."[24]

In the period leading up to his day, the heptasyllabic quatrain served primarily as a forum in which to demonstrate one's technical prowess, to rehearse and perhaps refresh traditional folk-song themes, or both.[25] As described by Stephen Owen, during the High Tang things began to change, as "the quatrain song became a significant means by which occasional poems moved toward the general referents of *yueh-fu*."[26] In his adaptations of the quatrain, Wang Changling used visuality in distinctive ways to inject a lyric sensibility into a relatively impersonal poetic mode, and in the process transformed it into a window onto the construction of lyric subjectivity in its time, complicating what might have been a relatively clear distinction between the conventional persona depicted in the poem and the poet.[27]

In what follows, I offer a close reading of five of the more celebrated of his heptasyllabic quatrains, grouped since at least as early as the Song dynasty under the title "Autumn in the Palace of Everlasting Faith: Five Poems" 長信秋詞五首 (Changxin qiu ci wushou).[28] Two of these are collected in Guo Maoqian's 郭茂倩 (fl. 1264–1269) *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Collected Yuefu Poetry), where they appear at the end of a long line of *yuefu* songs about (and, indeed, the earliest of which were first attributed to) Ban Jieyu 班婕妤 (48–6 BC). Typical of the heptasyllabic *jueju*, and representative of much of the work of Wang Changling, these poems draw on—or even, we might say, appropriate—a familiar *yuefu* theme. As such, they offer a most fertile ground for a study of the construction of subjectivity. And so, in the course of reading these poems, I hope to demonstrate not just the widely accepted perception of Wang's transformation of the form into a lyric mode but, rather, *how* he bodies forth a detectible lyric subject through his careful deployment of the features of visuality, spatial organization, allusion, and even citation. Furthermore, I will show how, in a series of poetic gestures that justify the oft-mentioned comparison of Wang Changling and Li Bai (in the writing of heptasyllabic quatrain, that is),[29] this lyric subject functions not merely as a presumed locus of feeling but also as an expressive tool that itself can be refracted, split, and re-formed to powerful effect. It is, in the end, this reflexive function that draws attention to an especially broad and fluid subjectivity, which facilitates the reader's identification with the speaker within the poem, and also with the writer who put the speaker there in the first place.

In the reading that follows, I will treat these poems as a unified cycle; each poem will be considered both as an independent whole and as a contributing segment of a larger, cumulative reading experience. There is, it must be said, little evidence that Wang Changling ever intended them to be read as an integrated whole, let alone in precisely the order in which they are published today. Still, the fact that they have been frequently reproduced as a group since the Southern Song suggests that the editors who first established this order saw some justification in doing so, and that their decision was fortuitous enough to contribute to the status that these poems have enjoyed ever since.[30] Throughout this reading, I will be examining the interaction of three modes, or levels, of focalization: the generic, the internal, and the external. Although the internal and external focalizers date back to Genette, the addition of the generic focalizer is my own. I define them below, as they arise.

	“Autumn in the Palace of Everlasting Faith: Five Poems” First of Five	長信秋詞五首[31] 其一
	At the golden well, a phoenix tree, its leaves yellow with autumn;	金井梧桐秋葉黃
2	Bead curtains not yet rolled up, gone frosty overnight.	珠簾不卷夜來霜
	An incense burner, a jade pillow: her face blankly pale;	熏籠玉枕無顏色
4	Lie awake and listen: in the south palace the clock’s clear water drips on.	臥聽南宮清漏長

This quatrain boasts some of the essential trappings of palace-style *yuefu* poetry: a well, crystal-bead curtains, a censer, a jade pillow, and a water clock. For readers familiar with palace-style poetry—and what readers by this time would not have been?—such a collection of objects signifies a place (the palace boudoir), which in turn signifies a circumscribed set of experiences (erotic pleasure, female abandonment, and longing). By the time of the Tang dynasty, so conventional is this set of associations that it might be read as signaling, if anything, the dissimulation if not the erasure of subjectivity. It is a world where there can be but little difference between a reader’s preconceived expectations of what a particular poem will express and the implied subject’s “real” experiences. In such poems, the pleasure to be gained by reading is the pleasure of recognition, of a more-or-less fresh encounter with the familiar; in this specific poem, the recognition is of Ban Jieyu in particular, and of forsaken palace wives, consorts, and by extension, women more generally.

However, at the risk of stating the obvious, a poem is also an aggregate of words encountered (at least at first) over time. As such, its sequential ordering of visual cues has at least the potential to destabilize the predictable and thus apparently static presentation of familiar images. In this particular poem, Wang Changling takes advantage of that potential, sequencing the images in a way that allows for a variety of perspectives from which they might be viewed (justifying, I think, the experiment of applying this reading across the group as a whole). It is the reader’s ability to entertain multiple viewpoints, and come to grips with their intersection, that introduces the dimension of the unknown, if not of the unknowable locus of feeling, the *xin*. Given the boudoir poem’s inherent associations with privacy and the hidden, the introduction of the unknowable in this way is both apt and significant. I would therefore like to explore the idea that the poems’ stimulation of the reader’s imaginings—particularly through the insertion of impenetrable space between the reader and the lyric subject—is where the seeds of lyric subjectivity lie.

So, how might we go about the process of bringing to the surface the multiple viewpoints that this array of images brings into play? One way is to think of the poem as lying within and being composed of concentric circles of sign systems (to borrow another hoary old term). The outermost circle—the one that is most easily apprehended and widely shared—is determined by the formal genre and thematic subgenre to which the poem obviously belongs: succinctly put, it brings into play the "generic" perspective. In Tang poetry in particular, the title provides much of this information, making it possible for a reader to readily recognize intertextual moves, including pastiche, innovation, and the like. Then, moving into the particularities of the individual poem, and here I return to Bal, one becomes aware of its embedded focalizers: the points of *viewing* that compel the reader to situate the perceived images within a shared space, in relation to each other. Following Genette, a focalizer may be internal, articulating the inner life of a character (when narrative is present) or the feeling subject (when narrative is absent or suppressed); or, a focalizer may be external, providing information about the protagonist's or subject's situation. In some poems, and perhaps the most interesting ones, these perspectives will exhibit a certain fluidity with regard to one another, stimulating in the readers a questioning of their initial assumptions about who is doing the talking and the looking, and even how this information contributes to their understanding of the unifying subject as its source. All this will play into the process of figuring out what the poem is supposed to mean. In the case of *yuefu* poems, which, certainly by the Tang, were retelling well-worn tales, such incitements to doubt and wonder were effective because readers came to the poem confident that they already knew it all.[32]

Beginning with the generic perspective, the title identifies the poem as a *yuefu* (as opposed to, for example, an occasional poem) and so discourages (without preventing) a reading of the scene as belonging to Wang Changling's personal experience—except, of course, for readers who perceive allegorical import in his choice of Lady Ban as the subject. It must be noted that several critics have invoked the long tradition wherein poets "hide" their political troubles beneath the guise of a woman's amorous longings.[33] Such readings are certainly supported by the title's inescapably ironic, if historically accurate, reference to the "Palace of Everlasting Faith."

However, since an allegorical reading takes place outside the dynamics of the focalizers inscribed in the poem, readers may recognize it as an added layer of significance that will not, in effect, disturb those dynamics. And so, coming upon the title, readers will expect some version of Ban Jieyu's storied fall from Emperor Cheng's 漢成帝(r. 32–6 BC) favor, along with her replacement in his affections by the dancer Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕, "Flying Swallow." From the point of view of the generic focalizer thus brought into play, the bead curtains, incense burner, pillow, and water clock are but the requisite furnishings of Ban Jieyu's physical environment. The last line marks Ban Jieyu's presence among these objects, sketched into place by the verb phrase "*wo ting*" 臥聽 (lie awake and listen). The generic perspective posits Ban's presence as little more than the most arresting among her objects: a lovely, passive object of pity.

Notably, her historically attested loveliness is unseen here; she is identified only, and pointedly, by her ability to listen. Ban is, we are thus reminded, not merely an archetype but also the protagonist of her story. As such, at least theoretically, she is an actor who may (or may not) act and, more importantly, a subject who feels. Her presence as one who is doing the perceiving even more than she is being perceived stimulates a rereading of the poem through her eyes (if you will). She thus emerges as the internal focalizer, who suffuses the objects that surround her with the particularity of her subjective viewpoint. What she is listening to is the sound of the water clock—the sound of absence: the visual absence of the clock itself (it is traditionally located in the room where Emperor Cheng is being entertained by his new object of affection) and the affective absence of Emperor Cheng, as the clock mercilessly measures the lengthening time since his last appearance. It draws our attention anew to both a night that is autumnal, and a nocturnal moment in autumn. The water clock acts in concert with the sequential presentation of the arrayed things that surround her to remind us that those seemingly timeless objects, too, are subject to the time she hears passing; for the scene changes from richly detailed and golden in line 1, to pale and crystalline in line 2. When we reach line 3, *wu yanse* describes a face void of any expression; viewed from the outside, the image bodies forth a confluence of invisibility (of expression) and psychological absence. The modality of the particle *wu* 無, in *without* subtly conveys that the object that has been robbed of its distinguishing features is also the most personal object of all.

Even as the sketched-in consort provides the reader with a viewpoint from which to make affective sense of the space laid out in the poem, it seems essential, and even natural, that she be "read" as unaware of her status as a viewed object. In a commonsense sort of way, if the internal focalizer is to offer a truly internal perspective, she must not be read as being aware of the generic, formulaic structuring of her situation. The parallel positioning of the generic perspective (which posits the woman-as-object) and that of the internal focalizer (woman-as-subject) has a literary, even a theatrical function: the consort's innocence of her status as a viewed object—the illusion that she believes herself to be alone and unobserved—heightens the erotic interest, which is essential to the drama of the scene. To a certain extent, some degree of parallel positioning is observable in the most traditional boudoir poems, going back to the southern

Ziye tradition, and beyond. What is different in Wang Changling's quatrain is that he forges a link between the generic and the internal perspectives—in the form of the external focalizer. It is precisely this that makes it possible to infuse certain *yuefu* with the power of the lyric *shi*, to bestow upon a timeworn legend the strangeness of lyrical expressivity.

Second of Five	其二
The pounding-blocks of autumn ring through the towering hall, night nears its end;	高殿秋砧響夜闌
Frost thickens, still recall the coolness of imperial robes.	霜深猶憶御衣寒
Silver oil-lamp in a green-lattice window—cutting and stitching cease;	銀燈青瑣裁縫歇
Turn back and look toward the "shining prince" in the golden palace.	還向金城明主看

In Chinese terms, we might think of the external focalizer as the *zhi yin* 知音, or "the one who knows the tone," inscribed in the poem: the authoritative, if not omniscient, entity who perceives the overlaps and disjunctures between the generic and internal points of view, and in so doing, *realizes* (in both senses of the word) the lyric subjectivity that integrates the poetic elements into an interpretable whole. To adapt Ruth Ronen's description of the external focalizer to a poetic context, this entity is posited beyond the bounds of the constructed world of the poem "to motivate the selection" of (visual) information "that cannot be accounted for" within "the scope of perception of a particular character."[34] Reflecting (in both senses of manifesting and reproducing) the poet's act of composition, the external focalizer registers the complex spatial positioning that is projected through the display of perceivable and perceiving objects, and thereby recognizes the convergence of the internal focalizer with the archetypal "abandoned woman." While this is arguably set in motion by the first poem, it does not fully emerge until the second one.

While we cannot know, as mentioned earlier, whether Wang Changling composed these poems to be assembled in this particular order, whoever first put them together knew what they were doing: here is presented a virtual gallery of the possibilities of perspectival design. Continuing smoothly from the first poem, the second quatrain opens up where the last poem left off, with the internal focalizer inscribed in the invisible-yet-central figure of a woman, lying there with her eyes closed, unseen and unseeing. Thus inured to the sad visual stimuli of her boudoir furnishings, she is all the more vulnerable to the effects of sounds and feeling. If the first poem left her listening to the water clock's irrepressible reminder of time's passage, then this poem fills her ears with the reverberations of pounding blocks in the distance, which, from the generic perspective, unfailingly signal winter's imminence. Then, in the next line, in a move that strays slightly from the expected, yet without disturbing one's genre-based expectations, thickening frost translates autumn's sounds into touch.

With the appearance of the verb *recall* (*yi* 憶), the external focalizer then registers that the internal focalizer is pulling the seemingly inexorable passage of time back in the opposite direction. The frigidity of the encroaching frost brings not only winter and its culturally sanctioned prospect of solitary senescence but also—and all the more painfully—the persistent memory of her own youthful past: in the form of the cool, silken robes she used to wear in her days as the emperor's favored consort. This unexpected, yet sensually logical, move brings into stark contrast the generic perspective on the images of an autumnal world on the one hand, and the specific way they stimulate the mind of the internal focalizer on the other. Only the external focalizer is in a position to recognize this tension, thereby realizing the interplay of perspectives and, especially, the seemingly incontrovertible gap that separates them.

With the consort's hidden subjectivity thus brought again to the reader's awareness, the second couplet of the quatrain—the part of the poem that carries the weight of the poem's import—takes on a peculiar poignancy. One might liken this emotion to what one typically feels when observing an intimate from a distance or in a strange context, when becoming achingly aware of the stark contrast between how she seems (to others) and how one knows her to be. In the third line, the legendary consort is framed once again by the requisite ornaments of the palace boudoir; an unseen observer—whom we can identify as the external focalizer—is drawn into the picture as the only one to notice that the woman has paused in her sewing. Then, in a seamless transition to the fourth and final line, that same focalizer is there to see her turn her face in the direction of the palace, where the consort knows her "shining prince" must be. Only the external focalizer, who brings together the generic perspective and the point of view of the internal focalizer, understands the motive behind that turn of the head and can grasp that, while this may conform to a staged *yuefu*-determined gesture, it is much more than that. The external focalizer's awareness of the intimate connection between the two perspectives allows a reader to trace the poem's movement—first, forward into a dim, cold future, then (almost simultaneously) back into a cherished, dreamlike past, and finally coming to a full stop, with the turn of a head, in the agonizing present.

The shift to the external focalizer's perspective in the second couplet of this quatrain stirs yet another kind of pain. Not only does this distant view expose the confounding gap between how a subject seems and how she feels, but it also sensitizes the reader to the vulnerability that comes with such exposure. Naked as she now is to our view, she is, ironically, a subject whose gaze is directed toward—and whose response is determined by—what she cannot see. The hopelessness of that state is conveyed not by the final word of the poem, *kan* 看 (to look at), but by the absence of the object that should come after it. That is, we are granted full vision of a subject who is agonizingly visionless. The choice of the descriptor *ming* 明 (shining) to modify the object of that gaze, the invisible, unseeing, and presumably unfeeling prince, becomes even more fraught with irony than usual, as we absorb that word's multiple connotations of ethical illumination, political enlightenment, and plain old perceptual brilliance.

It is tempting at this point to go the distance with the feminist adaptation of the theory of focalization and fall into a conventional discussion of the male gaze, voyeurism, and the objectivized female. However, taking due note of the usefulness of such a reading in decoding boudoir poetry in general,[35] I propose moving on to consider the more broadly applicable question of how this specific poem (and the set of poems to which it belongs) infuses a stock character with feeling, thereby recruiting a stock figure into the poetic task of awakening fellow feeling in a reader. Considered in this light, the consort—the abandoned woman—functions as a syntactic pivot: an object who is also a subject. She is an object in that she acquires her identity by being perceived in a physical context (among other objects); but those objects, in turn, are depicted as awakening in her responses that lend her a subjective identity. Her subject/object duality—which is the essence of her plight—can only be brought into play by the external focalizer.

Third of Five	其三
She plies her broom just at dawn, the golden palace opens;	奉掃平明金殿開
Yet still in hand her moon-round fan, together they waver and sway.	且將團扇共徘徊
Her jade-white face no match for the color of a winter crow,	玉顏不及寒鴉色
who, arriving now, still bears the gleam of the Palace of Shining Favor.	猶帶昭陽日影來

This poem is by far the most famous of the set, traditionally singled out as "proof" of Wang Changling's unparalleled mastery of the heptasyllabic quatrain.[36] With equal admiration but greater specificity, commentators have appreciated the poem's subtle dramatization of the "shining prince's" lack of discernment. Zhu Tingzhen 朱庭珍 (1841–1903) responds to the much-discussed third line, for example, by remarking upon Emperor Cheng's inability to distinguish between man and animal, and sees the poem as illustrating the consequential success of darkness over light.[37] Most of all, they praise the poem's restraint, likening it to the "Airs" of the *Shijing*,[38] and remark that its literary perfection is such that it makes the strange (especially the comparison of "jade face" and "winter crow") appear to be perfectly normal.[39] We may now add to this list of accomplishments (all of which involve the play of visual perspectives) the subtle manifestation of a complex lyric subjectivity.

The opening couplet presents the recognizable Ban Jieyu, or "Favorite Beauty" Ban, iconically marked by the attributes of her broom, a reminder of her demeaned position, and her fan, featured in the one pentasyllabic lyric poem attributed to her, the "Song of Resentment" (*Yuan ge xing* 怨歌行).[40] Here, the generic perspective, by way of allusion to the poem associated with her, is at the fore, rendering her as an immediately accessible archetype (an iconic object). But that same allusion also identifies her as a less immediately accessible, real-life poet (that is, as a subject). This double vision is continued in the second couplet, when the fan is quickly parlayed into the image of her pure, pale face, seeming to return her to her archetypal whiteness—purity—that provides the vivid, troubling contrast with the blackness of the "crow"; yet, as archetypal as the image seems to us now, it also reads as the realization of the image first put forth by the poet herself. And for all that the twisted transformation of Ban's replacement, Flying Swallow, seems iconic and impersonal, it clearly recalls the more subtle comparison of the usurper to winter, put forward by Ban in the "original" poem.

This blending of the internal focalizer with the generic focalizer is complicated only by the visual composition of the poem and its implicit play of perspectives. Ban appears to be standing at the gates of the palace, perhaps waiting to go in to serve, just as Zhao Feiyan is coming out of the open gate. The arrangement of the two women is primarily one of juxtaposition, suggesting the dominance of the external focalizer. This perspective conveys the poem's meaning, not by inviting the reader's identification with the abandoned woman (whether as archetype or as feeling subject) but by inviting the reader to compare perspectives: specifically, the reader's own lucid view of the situation as against Emperor Cheng's manifest blindness. How, we must wonder, can this tragic injustice be so clear to us and not to him? The critics who noted that the focus of this poem is on discernment, lucidity itself, were spot on. Furthermore, if we reread the poem in this light, the opening allusion to Ban's fan/poem takes on yet another level of significance, and perhaps the most important one. Recalling that, in her poem, Ban predicted the situation depicted here, we realize that the fan that both signals and hides Ban's subjectivity also should remind us of her own prescient lucidity.

	Fourth of Five	其四
	Truly overlooked by fortune—I obsess in my longing;	真成博命久尋思
2	In a dream I see my prince; but waking, I have my doubts.	夢見君王覺後疑
	Fires illumine the western palace, I know well those midnight imbibings,	火照西宮知夜飲
4	When clear as day, through those double corridors, he bestows his grace.	分明復道奉恩時

If these five poems are read in this order, then the contrast between light and dark, between lucidity and blindness, we noted in poem number 3, repeats itself with poem number 4. However, instead of being situated within one quatrain, the contrast is situated between the two. That is, whereas the preceding poem takes place entirely from the clear-eyed perspective of an external focalizer, this one emanates from that of the internal focalizer—the subject, Ban Jieyu herself. One may intimate a causal relationship in the transition from number 3 to number 4. In that case, if we follow its internal trajectory, poem number 4 traces the passage from the blindness and illusion of her longing and dreams not to merely distinct reality but to the merciless glare of her imaginings of it. One commentator, Xu Ying 徐英, remarks that the poem works in reverse, and this may be why.[41] Instead of delineating how public knowledge of the emperor's conduct drives her to a state of obsessive longing, the poem—through the function of the internal focalizer—is organized so that her inner world is gradually projected outward, transforming a private moment into a public image, breaking through the abject state of encasement and blindness set forth in poem number 2 to the hyperlucid state of seeing and knowing precisely what is not actually before her eyes but what is clear as day for everyone else. (The contrast between poems number 2 and number 4 is only heightened by the fact that the setting is the same: the darkness of night, complete with walls that reflect and repel sound and light.)

There is in this moment a visual irony comparable to that noted in my discussion of poem number 3. However, in this poem the internal focalizer—this suffering subject—is identified closely with the poet who is depicting her, not so much by virtue of the more clearly implied first-person perspective, but because of her apparent control of the visual field. We see nothing but what she reveals to us, what is most present to her experience. And the immediacy of that experience is made palpable in the replacement of perceptual verbs with that one clear, painful verb in line 3: she "knows" (*zhi* 知). This is the knowledge gained not from direct observation but from her own past experience, and this specific word's use here deepens the sense that she is endowed with a subjective existence, parts of which will ever be inaccessible to the outside observer, however sympathetic.

With this, the internal focalizer (seamlessly identified with the legendary Ban Jieyu) and the poet can be seen to merge, compelling the external focalizer and the reader to do the same. Where the internal focalizer/poet calls the shots, and controls what the external focalizer/reader can and cannot perceive, lyric intensity is at its greatest, bringing home the pain in "Ban's" words along with the eavesdroppers' helplessness to do anything about it.

	Fifth of Five	其五
	In the Palace of Everlasting Faith, the brightness of an autumn moon;	長信宮中秋月明
2	Below the Palace of Shining Favor, the sound of cloth-pounding stones.	昭陽殿下擣衣聲
	In the Hall of White Dew, a track of tiny grass blades;	白露堂中細草跡
4	Behind the red curtains of silk, insurmountable emotion.	紅羅帳裡不勝情

The opening couplet of this poem wrenches us back from a state of sympathetic impotence to the safe distance of the generic perspective; here we are again, faced with the laying out of clichés, set pieces, back in the familiar territory of the *yuefu* reader's registering the signs of autumn at the palace, as dictated by the title. Its perfect parallelism, right at the beginning of the poem, seems to resist the assignment of any subjective identity whatsoever. Yet, having gone through the experience of reading the preceding four poems, having witnessed the unanticipated inner depths of an archetypal figure of ancient lore, the attentive reader can no longer dismiss this set piece as just another iteration of "the Ban Jieyu story." Indeed, nothing about this story can ever seem "cliché" again, for the reader has been instructed (by both the negative example of Emperor Cheng and the defamiliarizing process of the poem itself) in the importance of discernment, discrimination, and lucidity.

Endowed with this refreshed vision, the reader will note that the second couplet, too, is a parallel one, but it inscribes in the poem the presence of a subject. Line 3 presents a tiny, unexpected detail, probably invisible (or at least inconsequential) in the eyes of anyone but a fully rounded Ban Jieyu, and those readers who (now) understand her: tiny blades of grass leading from the palace gardens, through the halls, and—as we learn in the fourth couplet—into the bedchambers. We cannot know for sure whether Ban could have been in a position to see this tell-tale trail of tiny bits of grass in the palace, but we have already witnessed the power of her imagination, her uncanny abilities as an internal focalizer living in full view of an external one, to “see” scenes that are more real than reality itself. The invisible but exquisitely rendered final scene behind the red silk bed curtains is, indeed, almost too much to bear. The imagined springtime symbols of red and green (bed curtains and blades of grass) sharpen Ban’s now-suppressed autumnal reality. But, as the poem concludes, we must ask: For whom is the emotion “insurmountable”? For Flying Swallow, who is the envied recipient of the emperor’s attentions? Or for Ban Jieyu, in whose heart this “emotion” lives on in the impossible duality of her personal memories (*yi*) and her inescapable understanding (*zhi*)? Is this feeling of insurmountability a feeling of ecstasy or utter despair? Of course, the answer to this either/or question can only be: both.

In this final poem, Wang Changling leaves us with a modified, but not unconventional set piece, almost as if he wanted to present evidence that archetypes once had subjectivity, too. Indeed, he might say, they became archetypes for a reason. Ban Jieyu is hereby not just revived but reanimated through Wang’s transformation of her into a true lyric subject—a subject the reader can perceive perceiving, and thereafter can proceed, again, to never forget.

Conclusion

In his history of the Tang quatrain, Zhou Xiaotian elaborates on Hu Yinglin’s comparison of Li Bai and Wang Changling, cited earlier, in which Hu praises Li Bai’s superior rendering of scene (*jing* 景) as against Wang’s uncanny ability to capture feeling (*qing*). Zhou explains, “Li Bai is a subjective poet. For the most part, the lyric subject of his poems is the poet himself. . . . In contrast, Wang Changling is a relatively objective poet. The lyric subject in his poems is frequently a knight errant or a woman; only in his parting poems does he express something of himself. . . . He is interested in observing and representing the inner worlds of others and is especially adept at describing the subtle process of psychological transformation. This is what Hu Yinglin meant when he said ‘it is Wang [Changling]’s expression of “feeling” that gets to its very mainspring.’”[42]

Zhou’s comment is telling, for it derives from an unquestioned belief in a fluid boundary between a poet’s feeling and the scene he depicts/creates (as manifest in Li Bai’s poetry), while positing an absolute and stable boundary between the subject who writes a poem and the subjectivities of the personae he depicts/creates (manifest in Wang Changling’s poetry). Wang Changling, credited with having transformed the technically difficult and impersonal mode of heptasyllabic quatrains into a lyrical mode comparable to the “Airs” and the *Sao*, achieves this, we are to believe, by skillfully objectifying the feelings of others. While there is little doubt that Wang Changling was a fine observer of human feeling, a careful reading of his heptasyllabic quatrains on *yuefu*-type themes suggests something less analytical, something that might be thought of as a blended or fluid lyric subjectivity.

Of course, this blended subjectivity, on a psychological level, implies compassion, fellow feeling. But from a poetic standpoint, which is what interests us here, the above analysis seems to indicate that, through a thoughtful and innovative deployment of images (visual and auditory), Wang found a way to extend the lyric ideal of the “blending of feeling and *scene*” to something that might be called the “blending of feeling and ‘found characters.’” That is, just as a poet like Du Fu might articulate a viewed scene in such a way as to communicate a state of mind, Wang Changling marshals personae—along with their conventionalized points of view—to do something similar; but, in a further qualification of this comparison, the state of mind he communicates, disconnected as it is to any specific occasion in his own life, may or may not be his own at any given moment. This type of poetics, I would argue, is not more or less subjective than occasional poetry; it is simply less clearly anchored in a biohistorical moment. In the poetry of Wang Changling, the universality implicit in the life of a stock character, like the predictable and conventionalized features of nature itself, is harnessed as part of a larger lexicon whereby a more nuanced and fluid subjectivity can take shape.

While it might be foolhardy to conclude anything on the basis of this close reading exercise, I would like to suggest that, at the very least, our rereading of these quatrains in light of the theory of focalization has demonstrated a literary basis for the widely held impression of Wang Changling’s infusion of the heptasyllabic quatrain with a subjective lyricism. It may be possible to pursue this line of thought through his equally famous frontier quatrains; but I have concentrated this essay on the space of the abandoned woman’s boudoir because Wang himself seems to have recognized that the double vision of the abandoned woman most vividly expresses the possibility of a fluid, contingent subjectivity: simultaneously taking in where she was and where she is, contemplating her present situation alongside that of her rival, and fluctuating between her status as a subject and her status as an object. This process creates an analogous fluidity in the reader’s own subjectivity, enhancing the communication of feeling, which is at the heart of the lyric poem.

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Acknowledgment
I am happy to acknowledge here my indebtedness to *JCLC*’s two anonymous readers of this essay, whose comments encouraged me to consider the broader implications of this discussion.

Notes

1. See Kao, "Chinese Lyric Aesthetics."
2. Among Judith Butler's many works pertaining to this subject, see her *Giving an Account*; see also Malabou and Johnston, *Self and Emotional Life*.
3. The earliest and most frequently quoted instance of this identification of *xin* 心 as the seat where one's intent is formed on the way to being externalized as poetry is the "Great Preface" to *Shijing*: "The poem is that to which what is intently on the mind [*zhi*] goes. In the mind it is 'being intent' [*zhi*]; coming out in language [*yan*], it is a poem" 詩者，志之所之也。在心為志，發言為詩. In Kong, *Maoshi zhengyi*, 1.5a. As translated in Owen, *Readings*, 40. Note that later in the same passage, *xin* is, for all intents and purposes, supplanted by the term *zhong* (within, center). For my earlier discussion of the spatial nature of the process described in the "Great Preface," see Varsano, "Getting There from Here." For a relevant reminder that the subject who recites the words of the poem to express intent is not necessarily the person who composed the poem, see Rusk, *Critics and Commentators*, 25–26.
4. The ideal that one's words allow the astute listener (the Sage) to comprehend one's inner nature is articulated in *The Analects*, 2.10; and *Mengzi*, 2.a.2, 5.a.4. Like all ideals, however, it stirs up skepticism and debate. In this case, the debate focused on whether language could indeed be adequate to what was on one's mind. Confucius is famously depicted in the *Zuozhuan* (Duke Hsiang, twenty-fifth year) as citing an unknown source asserting that not only can words be concomitant with one's ideas; they must be. And the "Appended Phrases" to the *Book of Changes* records a related dialogue questioning and then reasserting the capacity of language (the language of the Sages, that is) to fully express what was on their minds. For these texts, their translations, and a detailed commentary on all these passages, see Owen, *Readings*, 19–34. For an extended discussion of the problem of word–meaning concomitancy, see Cai, "*Yi-Xiang-Yan* Paradigm."
5. Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, who has written extensively on the impact of Daoism and Buddhism upon the development of Chinese literary writing and thought, discusses how Daoist thought may be behind the poetic tradition whereby imagery expresses the suppleness of the boundaries separating man from the world of things. See his article "Xiangxiang de shijie." For a compelling examination of how spiritual traditions endow landscape with the poetic potential to convey the transcendence of self, see Jiang, "Chaoyue zhi chang."
6. Varsano, "Do You See."
7. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Tian, *Beacon Fire*, esp. "Illusion and Illumination: A New Poetics of Seeing" (chap. 5), 211–59.
8. For a recent example tying the tradition of landscape poetry to specific political activities such as imperial tours and land surveying, see Huang, "Excursion."
9. This quote comes from Cheng's extended study of the profound link between "self" and constructions of space in the Chinese literary tradition: *Wenben fengjing*, 16. An interesting phenomenological study on the depiction of space in traditional Chinese philosophical and literary culture is Chou Xiaoping's *Gudian shici shikong sheji meixue*. On the intimate link between seeing and travel (both real-world and visionary), see Tian, *Visionary Journeys*.
10. While studying in China, the Shingon monk Kūkai collected what would become the bulk of today's extant texts documenting the poetic thought of the Tang dynasty. This work has been translated in its entirety by Richard Wainwright Bodman, who also provides an important introductory essay and commentary. See his *Poetics and Prosody*.

11. There has been some debate concerning Wang Changling's authorship, not just of "On Writing" but of the entire text of the *Shige* 詩格 of which it is a part. The overwhelming consensus is that the attribution is reliable, if not for every line of the text, then for the fundamental ideas it preserves. For a line-by-line compilation of the major textual analyses that have been presented, see Lu Shengjiang, *Wenjing mifulun huijiao huikao*, 3:1282–1450. For an overview of the arguments that have been raised regarding the reliability of the attribution, see Zhang, *Quan Tang Wudai*, 145–48; see also Lu Shengjiang, *Wenjing mifulun yanjiu*, 1:210–22.

12. 皆須身在意中。若詩無身，即詩從何有？若不書身心，何以為詩？ As reprinted in Zhang, *Quan Tang Wudai*, 159–72.

13. Ibid. 夫詩, 一句即須見其地居處……若空言物色，則雖好而無味。必須安立其身.

14. For the translation of *shen* as "embodied self" or "presence," I am indebted to Richard Lynn and Wang Yugen for their comments during my presentation of this paper at the West Coast Workshop on Premodern Chinese Literature and Culture held at the University of California, Berkeley, in April 2014, as well as those by Jiang Yin, at the conference New Frontiers in the Study of Classical Chinese Poetry at Hong Kong Baptist University, December 17–18, 2014.

15. For a clear and useful distinction between narrative as discourse and story as the virtual sequence of events represented in narrative, see Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 16.

16. Finney, "Suture in Literary Analysis."

17. Bal, *Mottled Screen*.

18. Bal, "Visual Narrativity."

19. The complexity of clearly defining "palace-style poetry," and specifically distinguishing it from the boudoir theme, derives in large part from the tendency of critics to apply the derisory narrowness (and woman-centered) characteristics of the latter to the former. Yang Ming 楊明 has attempted to untangle these threads, pithily characterizing "palace style" thus: "While ancient literary works emphasize the expression of feeling [*shuqing* 抒情], the palace style foregrounds the embodiment of things [*tiwu* 體物]." See his "Gongtishi pingjia wenti." For a discussion of the significance of the boudoir as a topos within the larger context of palace-style poetry, see X. Li, *Women's Poetry*, esp. chap. 1, "The Green Window: The Boudoir in Poetic Convention," 20–51. See, too, Xiaofei Tian's in-depth critique of the circular identification of palace-style poetry with Xu Ling's 徐陵 (507–583) *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (New Songs from the Jade Terrace) and of the genre's identification as being strictly about women for and by men in Tian, *Beacon Fire*, 182–95.

20. Tian, *Beacon Fire*, 212.

21. While this approach focuses on the implications of a new poetic framing of the fundamental act of seeing, earlier scholars have explored it from the perspective of feminist criticism. Among the scholars who have adopted this perspective in their examination of the question of subjectivity and point of view in palace-style poetry, see Robertson, "Voicing the Feminine"; and Rouzer, "Watching the Voyeurs."

22. According to Zhou Xiaotian 周嘯天, out of the 180-odd extant poems by Wang Changling, 85 of them are quatrains and, of these, the majority are heptasyllabic. See his *Tang jueju shi*, 82.

23. 李寫景入神，王言情造機。王宮詞樂府，李不能為。李覽勝紀行，王不能作. In Hu, Y. *Shisou*, 6.

24. 王龍標七言絕句，自是唐人騷語。深情苦恨襞積重重，使人測之無端，玩之無盡。惜後人不善讀耳. In Lu Shiyong, *Gushi jing*, 3.13b.
25. For a concise description of the particularities and provenance of the *jueju* form, see Egan, "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry," as well as his in-depth critical discussion of the history of scholarly debate concerning the origins of *jueju* in his "Critical Study."
26. Owen, *Great Age*, 94.
27. Owen, while recognizing Wang's skillful deployment of visual cues, stops short of acknowledging any link to lyric expression; quite to the contrary, he describes Wang as a poet who "sought a poetry that in a few quick strokes could evoke a mood, a figure, an emotionally fraught situation." See his *Great Age*, 98. For examples of other approaches that scholars have adopted to explore how lyric poets adapted stock characters and conventional modes of expression to express personal responses to the world, see Zong-qi Cai's discussion of Cao Zhi's adaptation of *yuefu* and *gushi* themes and prosody in his *Matrix of Lyric Transformation*, esp. chap. 3, "Ts'ao Chih: The Development of the Lyrical Mode." See also Samei, *Gendered Persona*.
28. Although I have not discovered any in-depth study of these poems as a group, they are translated and briefly discussed by Egan in his essay, "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry," 212–14.
29. Among the critics who have placed Wang Changling on a par with Li Bai in his achievements in the heptasyllabic quatrain, we find Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540–1620), Song Luo 宋犖 (1634–1714), and Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590). Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) is perhaps unique in suggesting that no one, not even Li Bai, surpasses Wang Changling in this regard. For specific citations, see Fu, "Wang Changling shiji kaolüe," 109. Fu also discusses critics' suspicions that there was some textual confusion among the two poets' quatrains.
30. They appear together, and in this order, in Hong, *Wanshou Tangren jueju*. For a brief textual history of these poems, see Li Guosheng, *Wang Changling shi jiaozhu*, 136. It is of interest that Charles Egan has explicitly described the grouping of these poems as one of Wang Changling's innovations; I am unclear about the basis of this comment. See his "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry," 213.
31. All poems from Li Guosheng, *Wang Changling shi jiaozhu*, 136–43.
32. For specific investigations into how Li Bai played with and expanded the apparent limitations of *yuefu* poems, see Allen, *In the Voice*, 64–102; Varsano, *Tracking the Banished Immortal*, 204–57.
33. Such an interpretation would seem especially justified, given the complicated and sad story of Wang's own political career, which involved several bouts of exile and ended in his death at the hands of a local official. Hu Wentao and Luo Qin, the editors of the *Wang Changling ji biannian jiaozhu* (hereafter *BNJZ*), believe this to be the case for this group of poems, even as they acknowledge that there is no reliable way to date them. See esp. pp. 87–88.
34. See Ronen, *Possible Worlds*, 186.
35. See, for example, Fong, "Engendering the Lyric"; Hsiung, "Constructing Women"; and Wang, "Poetry of Palace Plaint."
36. I have in mind here the famous story, recorded in the ninth century by Xue Yongruo 薛用弱 in his *Jiyi ji* 集異記 (Account of Collected Anomalies), in which Wang Changling is credited for having bested the other two poets, Gao Shi 高適 and Wang Zhihuan 王之奐, in a competition in a wine shop. Cited in its entirety in *BNJZ*, 431–32, and translated in Owen, *Great Age*, 91.

37. From his *Xiaoyuan shihua* 筱園詩話, as cited in *BNJZ*, 93.
38. The earliest person to suggest this seems to be Xie Fangde 謝枋得 (1226–1289), who says, "This piece expresses resentment without anger, and so has something of the intentions of the singers of the 'Airs'" 此篇怨而不怒，有風人之義 (*BNJZ*, 90). This line seems to have become a touchstone for many of the Ming and Qing critics discussing this poem.
39. He Shang 賀裳 (fl. 1681) is thus cited in *BNJZ*, 91.
40. Collected in Xiao, *Wenxuan*, 27.17a–b. The Tang commentator, Li Shan 李善, indicates that Ban was imitating an old theme in her own composition. For a brief introduction and translation, see Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers*, 17–19.
41. "The composition of this poem is most strange, for it reorders lines 4, 3, 2, 1 into 1, 2, 3, and 4, sustaining this reverse narration until the very end. Since ancient times, few people have understood it. They knew only that it was marvelous, but knew not how it came to be thus. An extreme case, indeed. Writing poetry is not easy, but understanding poetry is also not easy" 此詩立法最奇，以四三二一為一二三四，錯敘到底，千古以來，解人不多，知其妙而不知其所以妙，甚矣。作詩不易，解詩亦不易也. Yu Xing, cited in Li G., *Wang Changling shi jiaozhu*, 142.
42. Zhou, *Tang jueju shi*, 88.

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