

Not Straying: Mao tradition interpretations of *Shijing* love poems.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the way in which the interpretations that the Mao tradition of commentary gives of the ancient Chinese love poems in the *Shijing* can be understood in the framework of *si wuxie* 思無邪. *Si wuxie* is a phrase from a poem in the *Shijing* which Confucius said expressed the spirit of the entire corpus and it has several meanings, ranging from not straying in one's thoughts, to not swerving to having no vulgarity. This thesis argues that the different resonances of *si wuxie* are the basis of the readings of *Shijing* poems given in the most authoritative tradition of interpretation of the *Shijing*, namely the Mao tradition. Originating during the Western Han dynasty, the Mao tradition exerted interpretive authority over the *Shijing* from the second century C.E until the beginning of the twentieth century. This thesis begins by examining the way in which the Mao tradition interprets *Shijing* love poems through a reading based on taking *si wuxie* to mean 'in thought not straying.' Next it explores how the Mao tradition approached *Shijing* love poetry by taking *si wuxie* to mean 'not swerving from the correct path.' Finally, it takes up a deeper meaning of *si wuxie*, namely 'having no vulgarity.' By exploring these different meanings of *si wuxie*, the Mao tradition's interpretations of *Shijing* love poems will be seen not just as a repression and elimination of sexual desire, but as a method through which the poems themselves were transformed and refined into powerful tools of social intercourse.

Declaration:

This is to certify that this thesis comprises only my original work except where indicated; due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; the thesis is approximately 22, 100 words in length, inclusive of footnotes (14, 900 exclusive of footnotes), but exclusive of tables, appendices and bibliography.

Acknowledgments

To Anne, for putting me on the path,

And to Lewis, for letting me stray,

This work and the learning that came with it is indebted to you both.

And to the one who couldn't care less about ancient Chinese poetry,

Thank you for caring for me.

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Note the transliteration of Chinese names.

All Chinese names have been provided in pinyin, except for the names of authors and places that are traditionally referred to by names that are not written in pinyin, e.g. Taipei. Quotations from works that have used other styles of transliteration have been changed to pinyin. Names that appear in the footnotes are provided with both pinyin and Chinese characters on their first appearance with only pinyin used for all following appearances. Titles of books have, where possible, been given in English with pinyin and Chinese characters given in parentheses.

Introduction: Straying thoughts

I — A question of love

This thesis explores the traditional interpretations of some of the love poems in the *Shijing*,¹ a collection of poems composed sometime around the 10th to 7th centuries B.C.E that later became one of the Five Classics of the Confucian canon. The seeds for this project were sown four years ago when as an exchange student at Peking University I joined the Gengdu morning reading club. Each morning at seven we would gather under the small crooked pine in Jingyuan Garden and with our morning drowsiness dispelled by the autumn breeze, we would read aloud the poems of the *Shijing*. Monotonously chanting these archaic odes, there were times when I would perceive patches of meaning breaking through the blur of sound. This awakened the fire of curiosity in me: as depictions of love, desire and longing seemed to abound throughout the text. Even with only a little understanding of Confucian values, it seemed incongruous to me that an anthology of such poems could be sanctioned as one of the Five Classics and placed at the heart of Confucian learning for over two thousand years. Traditional interpretations presenting the poems as models for virtuous conduct seemed to be at odds with their openly amorous, at times almost raunchy, contents.

It appears that I am not the only reader who has been stirred by the expressions of love found in the poems of the *Shijing*. Chanting the same poems half a millennium before me, Du Liniang, the protagonist in Tang Xianzu's famous 16th century drama *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting* 牡丹亭), was also moved by a similar spring breeze

¹ The name *Shijing* has no definitive English translation and has been rendered variously as the *Classic of Odes*, *Classic of Poetry*, *The Book of Songs* and even *The Confucian Odes* (Ezra Pound). I believe as with the English renditions of the names of Chinese classics such as the *Tao-te-ching* and the *I Ching*, the *Shijing* does not need to be translated.

that in spite of her teacher's indignant exhortations, drew her out from the confines of traditional interpretation and carried her down into the garden.² Watching Du Liniang slipping through the web of traditional interpretations that should have held captive her spring dreams, her teacher could only be amazed that someone could wander so far from the moral virtues of a canonical Confucian text.

Even today, having survived rejection by the New Culture Movement and the attacks of the Cultural Revolution, poems from the *Shijing* continue to inflame contemporary hearts. Sitting on the floor of his luxurious Shanghai apartment, Weiwei, the paragon of upper-class success and high culture in the recent online series *Ode to Joy*, read these lines from the *Shijing* to impress his girlfriend Andy:³

For good or ill, in life as in death;
This is the oath I swear to you.
I take your hand
As token that I will grow old along with you.⁴

These lines today make up the repertoire of any Chinese wedding MC worth their salt. Yet while generations of eminent scholars have chosen to read this passage as the promise of fidelity in love, a number of bloggers criticised Weiwei's choice of poem as having nothing to do with the love he was trying to express.⁵ For these lines were interpreted by traditional commentators not as something akin to a modern day marriage-vow, but as the pledge of comrades in arms who in the face of battle and death swear to stand firm together.⁶ Tensions between the moral orthodoxy of

² See Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 71 – 76.

³ See Kong Sheng and Jian Chuanhe, *Huanle song*, Season 1, episode 29.

⁴ Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs*, pp. 112-113. English translations of *Shijing* poems for this thesis are all taken from Waley's *Book of Songs*.

⁵ Writing in the Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi 朱熹 interpreted this passage as a soldier's recollection of the promise he had made to his wife that he would not abandon her. Zhu Xi, *Shi ji zhuan*, 19. Qing dynasty scholar Chen Huan 陳奂 also understood this passage as expressing a soldier's nostalgia for his wife, *Shi Maoshi zhuan*, vol 1, section 1, p. 62. See Chang bozi de changjinglu and Dajia xiaoshu for examples of blogs that criticise Weiwei's choice of poem.

⁶ This reading was popularised by the Eastern Han commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, see Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 300.

camaraderie and the humanism of romantic love have thus passed from the commentaries of the past to online posts in the present,

II — Stating the problem

Much as beauty is said to lie in the eye of the beholder, when it comes to interpreting the poems of the *Shijing* it would seem as if love lies in the eye of the reader. This thesis is not an attempt to support or deny the existence of romantic love within the *Shijing*, but is rather an exposition of how its chief interpreter, the Mao tradition of commentary, addressed some of the love poems in the anthology. Established in the Han dynasty more than two thousand years ago, the Mao tradition of commentaries affected almost all subsequent generations of *Shijing* readers, so much so that it is almost impossible to separate its interpretations from all others that came after. With a focus on the philosophical and political world of the Han dynasty, this thesis aims to reveal not only how the Mao tradition interprets the love poems in the *Shijing*, but also why it interpreted them in the way that it did. With respect to a tradition that privileges transmission over making things up,⁷ my central argument for this thesis is that in its essence the Mao tradition can be encapsulated in the same short phrase that Confucius said summed up the *Shijing* – *si wuxie* 思無邪

III — Definition of the key term

Si wuxie 思無邪

Just exactly what might Confucius have meant with this one phrase encapsulation of the spirit of the *Shijing*? This phrase, which is found in passage 2.2 of the *Analects*, is translated by Raymond Dawson as:

⁷ *Analects* 7.1. See Waley's translation, "The Master said, I have 'transmitted what was taught to me without making up anything of my own.'" *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 123.

The Master said: “The *Songs*⁸ number three hundred, but I will cover their meaning with a single quotation: ‘Let there be no depravity in your thoughts.’”⁹

Other translations for this phrase include:

Stephen Owen: “In thought no straying.”¹⁰

Ezra Pound: “Have no twisty thoughts.”¹¹

D.C. Lau: “Swerving not from the right path.”¹²

In both Old and Modern Chinese, the first word in the phrase, *si* 思 primarily means ‘thinking’ and ‘thoughts.’ *Xie* 邪, the last word in the phrase, denotes ‘evil’ as well as ‘heterodoxy’ and ‘wicked,’ and in Modern Chinese is often joined with other words to take on meanings of ‘depraved.’ If we see such evils as being nullified by the negative verb *wu* 無, one possible meaning of Confucius’ phrase is that the essential nature of the *Shijing* was that it had the ability to purify the mind of its reader, ensuring that they would have, as Ezra Pound describes, “no twisty thoughts.”

True to his own philosophy of not making things up, Confucius’ famous phrase is itself taken from the line of a poem within the *Shijing* that praises the virtue of horses. Scholars have observed that in this particular *Shijing* poem the first word of the phrase, *si*, does not mean ‘thoughts,’ and instead is a meaningless word used to maintain metrical rhythm.¹³ A description of the way in which horses run, the phrase *si wuxie*

⁸ At the time of Confucius the *Shijing* had not attained classical – *jing* – status and was known simply as *Shi*. The *Shi* were made up of lyrics set to music and thus Dawson here translates *Shi* as ‘Songs.’ In an attempt to avoid lengthy explanations and provide consistency for the nonprofessional reader I have used *Shijing* throughout the corpus, even when in some situations it should technically be rendered as *Shi*. More elaboration is given in Chapter One.

⁹ Dawson, *The Analects*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 58.

¹¹ Pound, *Confucius: The Great Digest, The Unwobbling Pivot, The Analects*, p. 197.

¹² D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, p. 63.

¹³ This passage occurs in the poem *Jiong* 駒 number 297 in the traditional numbering of the poems in the anthology. Writing in the early-mid nineteenth century, Chen Huan (1786 - 1863) was possibly one of the first scholars to notice that the *si* in this passage acted as a grammatical word, see *Shi Maoshi zhuan*, vol. 2, section 7, p. 49. However Legge’s translation, completed by 1871, continues to translate *si* as ‘thoughts’ suggesting that this reading was still dominant in the later nineteenth century. See Legge *Chinese Classics*, vol.4, pp. 611 - 613. Both Karlgren and Waley maintain readings of *si* as grammatical, see, Karlgren, “Glosses on the Ta Ya and Sung Odes,” p. 174. Waley, *The Book of Songs*, pp. 274 - 275.

means ‘not swerving,’— it is a term of praise for horses which run straight. Thus for those familiar with the original context of the line in the *Shijing*, Confucius’ words are not about thoughts at all, and instead imply that the *Shijing* is fundamentally a guide for readers in maintaining proper conduct. Such a reading is evident in D.C. Lau’s translation, “Swerving not from the right path.”¹⁴

From proper thoughts to proper conduct, Confucius’ words encapsulate an entire schema through which readers can understand the *Shijing*. However, I would suggest that there is yet another possible interpretation of this phrase. In many of Confucius’ statements in the *Analects*, it is evident that the self-cultivation one practiced through the study of the *Shijing* was not intended to promote some type of individual spiritual enlightenment, but rather aimed at providing the important skills needed for social interaction. One of the most important skills that students of the *Shijing* could acquire was that of proper communication, for as Confucius told his son, “Unless you study the *Odes* you will be ill equipped to speak.”¹⁵ For those who, like Confucius, endeavored to be the advisers of rulers, cultivating the skill of elegant and correct speech was an occupational imperative, and it commenced with studying the refined language found in the poems of the *Shijing*. Thus the act of studying the *Shijing* was one of becoming refined, a sanding away of the rough edges of one’s character and speech that would lead a good student to have both elegance and the power of persuasion. It is in this context that I sense another meaning of the phrase *si wuxie*,

¹⁴ D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, p. 63. While many translators of the *Analects* are aware of this meaning, there is some debate as to which meaning Confucius was referring to. Waley, Dawson and Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 all state that Confucius is more likely to have taken *si* to mean thoughts, while Qian Mu 錢穆 and Lau see no reason not to use the original meaning found in the poem. Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 88. Dawson, *The Analects*, p. 84. Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, p. 11. Qian Mu, *Lunyu Xinjie*, p. 29.

¹⁵ *Analects* 16.13. Lau has used the term *Odes* to refer to *Shi*, the collection of poems that would later make up the *Shijing*. See Lau, *The Analects*, p. 141. Another passage that shows the uses of the *Shijing* in developing social skills can be found in *Analects* 17.9, “The Master said: ‘My young friends, why do none of you study the *Songs*? The *Songs* may help one to be stimulated, to observe, to be sociable, and to express grievances. One uses them at home to serve one’s father, and one uses them in distant places to serve one’s ruler. One also gains much knowledge concerning the names of birds and beasts and plants and trees.” Dawson, *The Analects*, p. 70.

that of ‘having no vulgarity.’¹⁶ This understanding of the *Shijing* poems endows them as both elegant and refined, qualities which in turn could be imparted to those who themselves used the poems in social discourse.

IV — Chapter outline

Having set out these three understandings of Confucius’ one short phrase *si wuxie*, this thesis acts to connect these separate meanings with three different methods that the Mao tradition employs in interpreting love poems in the *Shijing*. One chapter will be given to each of the three above mentioned understandings of *si wuxie*, allowing for a gradual progression through the multiple layers of meaning that lie within the Mao tradition’s interpretations.

Acting as an introduction to the subject matter, Chapter One first discusses the historical formation, social function and literary features of the *Shijing*, before going on to describe the ways in which *Shijing* love poetry has been understood by scholars past and present. Tracking the growth of early *Shijing* commentarial traditions that emerged in the Western Han, I present a brief summary of the Mao tradition’s historical background as well as its textual features.

¹⁶ This understanding of *si wuxie* is built on the understanding of *xie* 邪 as meaning unrefined or coarse. The character 邪 originally referred to the place Langya 琅琊 and its current meanings ‘evil’ and ‘impure’ come from appropriating these meanings from another homophonous character *xie* 袞 during the late Warring States period. See Li Xueqin, *Zi yuan*, p. 737. As Duan Yucai 段玉裁 explains, the character *xie* 袞 was eventually replaced with two characters, with *xie* 邪 coming to be used to describe the ‘swerving’ of people, i.e. ‘evil’ while *xie* 斜 was used to describe the swerving of things, i.e. ‘slanting.’ See Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 718. The *Guangya* lists many words related to *xie* 袞 that have meanings of ‘rough’ and ‘uneven,’ i.e. 差, which when used in *cenci* 參差 means uneven or jagged, *xian* 險, which can describe terrain as rugged and rough, and *zu* 阻, originally similar to *xian* 險 however Wang Niansun 王念孫 connects this character to *ju* 齟 as in *juyu* 齟齬 meaning unaligned teeth. See Wang Niansun, *Guangya Shuzheng*, pp. 70 -71. For advocates of the *youwen shuo* 右文說 (Using the phonetic element of a character to understand its meaning) it is interesting to note that the phonetic element for both *xie* 袞 and *xie* 邪 is *ya* 牙, which refers in ancient texts to ‘molar teeth’ in contrast to *chi* 齒 ‘front teeth.’ It is also used in the word crow *ya* 鴉, which Schuessler takes to be a form of sound symbolism, (using a sound similar to the caw of the crow as the noun for crow) *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, p. 517. While some may feel that connecting the coarse nature of molar teeth and crow caws to *xie* 邪 may be too ‘unscientific,’ this thesis is concerned more with the social implications of understanding the poems in the *Shijing* as refined, than with trying to prove that *xie* 邪 means coarse.

Chapter Two explores the way in which an understanding of *si wuxie* as the absence of ‘depravity’ in thoughts, connects to the Mao interpretations of two love poems in the *Shijing*. This chapter will focus on the ways in which the Mao tradition worked to oppose readings of *Shijing* love poems that might provoke amorous thoughts by promoting moral readings and by criticising sexual desire. Through the comparison of the Mao tradition with other commentarial traditions, I demonstrate that the Mao tradition’s concept of sexual desire was significantly more negative than those of its predecessors. In essence it reflected the idea of having no depravity in thought.

Chapter Three moves on to show how the meaning of *si wuxie* as ‘swerving not from the right path’ connects with Mao tradition interpretations of three love poems that were seen as emphasizing female virtue. Understanding the ‘right path’ to be that which is moral and virtuous, this chapter explores how the female virtue expressed in this aspect of the Mao tradition was directly related to the immoral behaviour of court women in the Western Han. Tracking the rise of consort power in the Western Han, I show how these Mao interpretations were closely connected to an emerging didactic discourse about female virtue that was aimed at eliminating the political threat from royal consorts by constructing the concept of a correct female path.

Chapter Four looks at the way in which the meaning of *si wuxie* ‘no vulgarity,’ connects with the Mao tradition’s interpretations of two *Shijing* love poems that were seen to be political allegories. Contrasting the Mao tradition with interpretations by modern scholars which understand many of the *Shijing* poems as rustic love songs, I argue that the Mao interpretations provided refined understandings of the poems that allowed them to be used as a tool for social communication. Focusing on the way in which these interpretations allowed male appropriation of the female voice, I suggest that this appropriation itself was part of a process of acquiring refinement in speech that allowed users of the *Shijing* greater flexibility when criticising their superiors.

V — Sources

Given that the poems in the *Shijing* and their Mao tradition interpretations were composed and performed in a time and place far from my own, I am aware that my capacity to understand them is restricted by the complex and archaic language they employ. To ensure that my own thoughts do not stray too far from the received understandings of the text, I have made use of two established English translations; one is that produced by the 19th century Scottish sinologist James Legge as part of his Herculean labours to translate the Chinese Classics, in which he translated both the poems and the Mao commentaries; the other is Arthur Waley's meticulous work completed in the mid twentieth century. Waley's translations, which broke up the orthodox sequence of poems in order to have a more rational categorisation based on theme, have also conveniently provided the criteria for what this thesis defines as a 'love poem.' The poems that I have studied in this thesis are drawn from the 'Courtship' and 'Marriage' sections of Waley's translation of the *Shijing*.¹⁷

The greatest pleasure for me and indeed the sole impetus for this work comes from reading the poems in their original form. While there are countless published copies of Chinese versions of the *Shijing*, all original versions of the poems and the Mao interpretations used in this thesis are drawn from *The Correct Meanings of the Mao edition of the Shijing* (*Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義) which was compiled in 653 and later became the authorised version of the *Shijing*.¹⁸ This text was incorporated into the edition of the 13 Classics in the Song dynasty known as the *Annotations to the Thirteen Classics* (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏) which was later reprinted by Ruan Yuan in 1815.¹⁹ I have also compared the text found in Ruan Yuan's edition of

¹⁷ Waley found the *Shijing* "impossible to study satisfactorily in its existing order" and almost broke up the traditional order of the *Analects* as well. See, *The Analects of Confucius*, Preface. More than one third of the poems in Waley's translation are classified under the categories of 'Courtship' and 'Marriage,' with the rest divided between various categories including 'Feasting,' 'Hunting,' 'Sacrifice' etc. *The Book of Songs*.

¹⁸ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 372.

¹⁹ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 372, 375

The Correct Meanings of the Mao edition of the Shijing with a modern version of the *Shijing* annotated by Zhou Zhenfu. Cases in which these two texts differ have been noted in the footnotes.

Chapter 1: The *Shijing* and the Mao tradition

This chapter describes the historical background in which both the *Shijing* and the Mao commentaries emerged, while also providing a brief summary of the way in which *Shijing* love poetry has been interpreted throughout history. This chapter also describes the structure and organisation of both the *Shijing* and the Mao commentaries, on the assumption that some readers may not be familiar with the Confucian classics.

1.1 — The *Shijing*

The *Shijing* is a collection of poems that were originally produced around the royal Zhou court from the 10th to 7th centuries B.C.E.²⁰ The products of many hands working at many different times, these poems originally took the form of songs which had, at least by the time of Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.E),²¹ come to be known throughout the various states that made up the Zhou empire.²² Promoted by the teachings of Confucius and his followers, these ancient songs, known collectively as *Shi*, gradually lost their musical accompaniments, and came to be regarded as poems.²³ Passed down in an oral form by different philosophical schools and by the nobility, these songs-turned-poems were endowed with the status of being a classic – *jing* – sometime before or during the life of Xunzi in the third century B.C.E.²⁴

²⁰ Kern notes that these dates are given without specific evidence. *Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han*, p. 18. This long period of composition is looked at more closely by Dobson, who provides linguistic evidence that suggests the corpus is composed of several strata which were composed over several centuries, see “Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of the ‘Book of the Songs.’”

²¹ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 367.

²² Evidence that the *Shi* poems were known throughout the Zhou Empire is found in the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳), a text that describes the historical events from 722 - 463 B.C.E. Many passages in the *Zuo Tradition* recount the use of the *Shi* poems in the communications between the emissaries of different states. In this way, the language of the poems became part of a lingua franca that was used in the diplomatic proceedings between states. For a more detailed account of how the poems of the *Shijing* are used in the *Zuo Tradition* see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 158 - 170, and Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 38 - 43.

²³ Van Zoeren provides a detailed description of this process in which the *Shi* progressed from lyrics attached to music into a form of text devoid of music, see *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 17 - 51.

²⁴ As Van Zoeren notes, this use of *jing* 經 in the sense of a canonical text does not occur in the Mencius and is first seen as occurring in the *Xunzi*. See *Poetry and Personality*, p. 74. For the passage in the *Xunzi* which refers to

Gradually coming to be transcribed into writing, the *Shijing* survived the burning of the books by the First Emperor of Qin, and became an increasingly important text during the Western Han dynasty (202 B.C.E - 8 C.E).²⁵ With the rise of institutionalised Confucianism during the Western Han, the *Shijing* became part of the canonical tradition that would be known to future generations as the Five Classics.²⁶ This canonical status would be maintained for over two thousand years during which time study of the *Shijing* was especially important for those wishing to sit the imperial examinations. In this way the poems of the *Shijing* became an essential part of the literary cultural fabric for each succeeding dynasty, their memorisation, close study and use, embedding them in a social memory that continues to be maintained to this day.

The 305 poems that make up the *Shijing* are divided into three sections traditionally seen as being distinct in both composition and functionality.²⁷ The oldest poems are the ones that occur at the end of the anthology in a division known as the Eulogies (*Song* 頌)²⁸ which consist mostly of sacrificial eulogies and dynastic hymns that are thought to have been performed during ancestral sacrifices made at the royal court.²⁹ The language of these poems is extremely archaic and often no obvious

the *Shijing* as a classic see Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol 1, p. 139; cf. p. 270. Both C.H. Wang and Kern have written on the oral nature of the *Shijing*. C.H. Wang, *The Bell and the Drum*. Kern, "The Odes in excavated manuscripts," 175 - 184.

²⁵ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 4. Damage to the *Shijing* during the First Emperor's famous Burning of the Books in 213 B.C.E is often overstated. As Qian Mu points out, the edict that set out to burn books connected to the *Shijing* and the *Book of Documents* (*Shi Shu* 詩書) was intended to eliminate the versions of the texts that had been popularised outside the court, *Liang Han jingxue jingguwen pingyi*, pp. 168 - 169. Copies of these texts held by the bureau of academicians were not affected. See further Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, pp. 28 - 30.

²⁶ The Five Classics are the *Shijing* (*Shi* 詩), the *Book of Documents* (*Shu* 書), the *Rites* (*Li* 禮), the *I Ching* (*Yi* 易) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋).

²⁷ There is some uncertainty regarding the total number of poems in the *Shijing*. In the received anthology the titles of 311 are recorded, however 6 of these have no words and are known as *shengshi* 笙詩. It may have been that many poems or lines of poems have been lost in transmission. *Analects* 3.8 is an example in which a line quoted from a particular poem is no longer extant.

²⁸ As with the English translation for *Shijing*, there are no definitive translations for the three sections of the corpus. The *Song* 頌 section has been variously translated as Hymns, Eulogies, Lauds and Odes of the Temple and the Altar (Legge). Given the use of the *Song* poems in ancestral sacrifices I have chosen Eulogies.

²⁹ For a detailed description of the composition and functions of the *Shijing* see Kern, "Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han," pp. 18 - 39.

rhyme or rhythm is discernible, leading most scholars to classify them as older than the other parts of the anthology.³⁰ The next oldest part of the corpus which makes up the middle division of the *Shijing* is known as the Court Hymns (*Ya* 雅).³¹ This section consists both of longer royal poems, as well as shorter poems concerned with hunting, banquets and political complaints. Traditionally conceived as the products of the Zhou royal courts, the Court Hymns are thought to have been performed for state dinners and for certain sacrifices. The language of the Court Hymns while still archaic, is consistent both in rhyme and metre, almost always maintaining the tetrasyllable, and thus these pieces are often dated as originating after the Eulogies. What scholars see as the most recent stratum of the corpus is the first section of the *Shijing*, known as the State Airs (*Guofeng* 國風).³² The poems that make up the State Airs are often short single-themed pieces that seem to take on the voice of folk songs, often speaking of love, daily life and the longing of those who through war or marriage have become separated from their families. Further divided into fifteen separate subcategories with each named after the different states that existed at an early stage of the history of the Zhou dynasty, the State Airs poems were traditionally thought to have been collected from these states by Zhou officials who would take them back to the royal court to provide rulers with small snippets of song that could act as the

³⁰ For examples of linguistic evidence upon which these claims are based see Dobson, “Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of the ‘Book of the Songs.’”

³¹ Various translated as Court Songs, Court Hymns, Elegentiae and Odes, much of the difficulty in translating *Ya* 雅 is possibly due to the fact that this section itself is split into two distinct divisions, Minor and Major. The poems in the *Minor Ya* resemble more the court songs one might associate with feasts, while those of the *Major Ya* have a tendency to be longer, solemn and more hymn like. The term Elegentiae, which seems to have originated with Pound, is chosen due to its connection with one of the literal meanings of *Ya*, ‘elegant.’

³² Translations of *Guofeng* 國風 are perhaps the most consistent due to the remarkable coincidence in which two of the meanings that *feng* represents, namely ‘wind’ and ‘song’ can be equally expressed by one English equivalent ‘Airs.’ Variations of this translation include Airs of the States or just simply Airs. The *guo* in *Guofeng* is usually seen as taking on the meaning of state, however in the recently recovered Confucius’ discussion of the Odes *Kongzi shilun* 孔子詩論 manuscript which is dated around the late fourth century B.C.E, *Guofeng* is given as *Bangfeng*, 邦風 suggesting that *guo* may have been used to avoid the taboo of the first Han emperor’s name, Liu Bang 劉邦. As opposed to *guo* which originally took on the meaning of a walled city, *bang* is closely related to *feng* 封 which has meanings of ‘boundary’ and ‘border.’ This is perhaps revealing as instead of *Ya* 雅, the *Kongzi Shilun* describes the second section of the corpus as *Xia* 夏 which is the old word used by people in the Zhou to refer to those people living in what was considered to be central China. For an elaboration on the consequences for such a reading see Cai Xianjin and Zhao Haili, “Chu zhushu *Kongzi shilun* zhong ‘Bangfeng’ ji ‘Xia’ zhi mingcheng yiyi.”

barometers of the political atmosphere of their kingdom.³³ This idea, coupled with the poems simple formulaic language, has led many modern readers to believe that the poems of the State Airs originated in the folk songs of the Zhou dynasty.³⁴ However, more recently scholars have pointed to the refined literary features of the poems, suggesting that if not actually composed by the educated literati of the Zhou court, the songs were heavily edited by them.³⁵

1.2 — Interpretations of *Shijing* love poems throughout history

Most of the expressions of love and desire within the *Shijing* are to be found in the poems of the State Airs section. Containing numerous poems of longing, courtship and marriage, the amorous nature of the State Airs has been long acknowledged, with the third century B.C.E philosopher Xunzi describing this section of the *Shijing* as erotic (*haose* 好色).³⁶ For many modern readers these love poems are something of an anomaly in the classical tradition, as on the surface these works seem to constitute expressions of love that are untouched by the moral policing of gender roles and sexual desire associated with the Confucian tradition. This ‘out of place’ quality of many of the poems in the State Airs was not lost on the traditional *Shijing* commentators, for whom these love poems posed thorny problems of interpretation. Following the rise of the *Shijing* to canonical status in the Han, generations of commentators developed numerous interpreting techniques that would enable these poems to be read in line with their own contemporary Confucian norms. However, beginning in the Song dynasty (960 - 1279 C.E), even these ameliorative interpretations were often deemed insufficient and in a climate of increasing sexual

³³ There has not yet been any definitive study on how each particular state came to be chosen, nor why, as Waley points out, important states such as Lu 魯 and Song 宋 are not represented. *The Book of Songs*, p. 347. This collection of the poems by Zhou officials is recorded in the *History of the Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書), see Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Shihuozi*, p. 1123.

³⁴ Granet, Wen Yiduo and Waley were the forerunners in understanding the *Shijing* pieces as folk songs.

³⁵ See Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, p. 82. C.H. Wang, believed that although the poems are oral in nature, they were not necessarily spontaneous folk songs but rather were pieces crafted over time. *From Ritual to Allegory*, 2.

³⁶ See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol 3, p. 230.

conservatism, some scholars went as far as suggesting that these poems be removed from the corpus itself.³⁷ Following the collapse of institutionalised Confucianism and the rise of the New Cultural Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, the authority of the classical texts, including the *Shijing*, was dramatically overturned, encouraging a new generation of modern scholars to sift through the layers of previous interpretations in an attempt to reveal the voices of the original love poems. Scholars such as Marcel Granet (1884 - 1940) and Wen Yiduo (1899 - 1946) distanced themselves from previous ‘Confucian’ readings, and in the wake of new developments in anthropology and sociology, began interpreting the love poems in the *Shijing* as representations of the sexual rites and practices prevalent in the Zhou dynasty.³⁸ Essential to their work was the concept that the love poems of the State Airs were descended from a folk tradition, which allowed their readings to move away from previous political and moral interpretations and instead, take on new forms as ‘rustic’ love songs. Later translations of the *Shijing* by Ezra Pound (1884 - 1972) and Arthur Waley (1889 - 1966) reflect such understandings with many of their renditions of *Shijing* love poems reading like idyllic pastoral poetry, set within what some have described as an apolitical “agrarian utopia.”³⁹ Although these interpretations are themselves problematic, they have come to define present day understandings of the love poetry within the *Shijing*. However, in more recent times scholars have begun to cautiously question the validity of these romantic readings, suggesting that much is lost when the text of the poem is separated from the tradition of commentary which has long accompanied it. Gradually shifting from the radical

³⁷ For a detailed description of the way Song dynasty scholars understood the *Shijing*, especially the more amorous poems, see Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 152 - 249. Citing the work of Cheng Yuanmin 程元敏 Van Zoeren describes how one of Zhu Xi’s disciples, Wang Bo 王柏 removed the poems he considered debauched from his edition of the *Shijing*. See *Poetry and Personality*, p. 172.

³⁸ See Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China* and Wen Yiduo, *Wen Yiduo quanji*, vol 3 and 4. Granet was especially critical of the traditional interpretations which during his time would have still held interpretive orthodoxy. In the effort to discover what he saw as the original meaning of the poems he begins his book with a list of rules observed when reading the *Shijing*, the first being, “No attention will be paid to the classic interpretation, or to the variants of it which survived”. *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, p. 26.

³⁹ For Waley’s translations see *The Book of Songs*. For Pound’s see *The Confucian Odes*. Rouzer critiques the romantic anthropological interpretations of early modern scholars, suggesting that the ‘agrarian utopia’ they represent is only convincing in a hypothetical social context, *Articulated Ladies*, pp. 17 -18.

rejection of the classical tradition just a century earlier, scholars such as Haun Saussy and Michael Nylan are now pointing to the importance of the interpretive tradition, not just in the meaning it held for historical readers, but for its implications in understanding the poems themselves.⁴⁰

1.3 — The early interpretative traditions

The *Shijing* commentary traditions first rose to prominence during the early stages of the Western Han dynasty. This rise may in part be explained by what historian Qian Mu terms the popularisation of particular classic texts such as the *Shijing* that occurred towards the end of the Warring States period (475 - 221 B.C.E).⁴¹ While the classics were traditionally studied only by court officials, the growth of private schools for study of the classics allowed men unaffiliated with the royal elite to obtain positions as court academicians, in which, among other tasks, they would advise rulers on the practice of government. This growth in the studies of classics inevitably lead to the formation of different interpretive traditions, and while this was suppressed through the burning of unsanctioned texts in the Qin (221 - 206 B.C.E), by the early Western Han three distinct *Shijing* traditions had received state patronage. These three *Shijing* traditions, namely the Lu, Qi and Han schools – known collectively as the Three Schools – all arose among the semi-autonomous northeastern feudal kingdoms that were the traditional centers of Confucian learning.⁴² Although representatives of these schools were accepted as court academicians, their early success in the Han capital Chang’an (Modern day Xi’an) was somewhat restricted by those in the court who favoured the Huang-Lao school, broadly affiliated with

⁴⁰ Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*. Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, pp. 91 - 119.

⁴¹ Qian Mu, *Liang Han jingxue jingguwen pingyi*, pp. 168 - 170. For the dates concerning the Warring States see, Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 3.

⁴² The Lu and Qi schools were named after the kingdoms Lu 魯 and Qi 齊 (Modern day Shandong), while the Han school took its name from a certain Han Ying 韓嬰 who was from the kingdom of Yan 燕 (Encompassing modern day Beijing). See, Ban Gu, *Hanshu – rulin zhuan*, pp. 3608 - 3613. For an English translation see Hightower, “The Han-shi wai-chuan and the San chia shih,” p. 277.

Daoism.⁴³ It was not until the time of Emperor Wu (r. 141 - 87 B.C.E),⁴⁴ who in 136 B.C.E restricted the positions of the court academicians to only those who studied the Five Confucian classics, that scholars associated with the Three Schools began to enjoy more influence.⁴⁵ With the establishment of the Imperial Academy in 124 B.C.E, court academicians focusing on the Confucian classics acquired a growing student base to which they could pass down their teachings, and by the later stages of the Western Han, the Three Schools of *Shijing* scholarship had further expanded and diversified as they branched into multiple interpretative traditions.⁴⁶ Coupled with this growing popularity of the *Shijing* was an increase in textual commentaries. Fourteen separate works relating to the *Shijing* are listed in the bibliographical section in the History of the Han, including two belonging to the Mao tradition.⁴⁷

1.4 — The rise of the Mao tradition

Unlike the Three Schools, the Mao tradition came to prominence only at the very end of the Western Han. Coinciding with a political climate that was turning away from the expansionist outlook of the early Western Han, the Mao tradition's rise to official favour at the beginning of the Common Era was brought about by the support of the imperial librarian Liu Xin (d. 23 C.E)⁴⁸ and his patron and regent for the child emperor, Wang Mang (B.C.E 45 - 23 C.E).⁴⁹ Both these men were promoters of traditionalist and reformist values and were deeply devoted to the classical texts

⁴³ This will be further explored in chapter two. For a detailed description of the difficulties faced by the founders of the Three Schools see the translations of their biographies in Hightower, "The Han-shi wai-chuan and the San chia shih," p. 268 - 278.

⁴⁴ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 107.

⁴⁵ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 154. Qian Mu, *Liang Han jingxue jingguwen pingyi*, pp. 175 - 182.

⁴⁶ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 154. Qian Mu, *Liang Han jingxue jingguwen pingyi*, p. 194.

⁴⁷ Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Yiwenzhi*, pp. 1707 - 1708.

⁴⁸ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 104-108, 110. Pages 104 -108 include Loewe's summary of the change during the Western Han from more modernist to more traditionalist ideologies. Both Wang Mang 王莽 and Liu Xin 劉歆 were representatives of the latter.

⁴⁹ Bielenstein, "Wang Mang, the Restoration of the Han Dynasty, and Later Han," p. 226, 238. Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 110. The Mao tradition was given official patronage during the time of Emperor Ping (r. B.C.E 1 - 6 C.E) See Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Rulin zhuan*, p. 3621.

associated with the Confucian tradition. Working in the imperial library, Liu Xin eagerly promoted the patronage of the Mao along with other texts such as the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳), which he perceived to belong to a more ancient lineage.⁵⁰ Coming to be known as the Old Texts, the authenticity of classics which Liu Xin had promoted was a source of constant debate for scholars during the Eastern Han (27 – 220). In the case of the Mao tradition, this debate would continue until the end of the Eastern Han, when its authority was promoted by the famous commentator Zheng Xuan (127 - 200), who, in choosing to annotate the Mao version of the *Shijing*, significantly strengthened its claim to doctrinal orthodoxy.⁵¹ Following the gradual disappearance of nearly all the commentarial traditions connected with the Three Schools, the Mao tradition's claim to interpretative orthodoxy would continue right up until the fall of imperial China.

1.5 — The Mao tradition

The redaction of the Mao tradition that has been passed down through history is itself a synthesis of at least three distinct texts that were collated by scholars in the Han dynasty. The three texts that made up the Mao tradition were the Mao versions of the *Shijing* poems (*Mao Shi* 毛詩), the Mao Commentary (*Mao zhuan* 毛傳) and the Mao Prefaces (*Mao xu* 毛序)

The Mao Poems

⁵⁰ Qian Mu, *Liang Han jingxue jingguwen pingyi*, p. 207. Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Chu Yuanwang zhuan*, p. 1967.

⁵¹ Kern, “Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han,” p. 21. Much has been written recently on whether the Mao tradition actually became the interpretative orthodoxy at the end of the Eastern Han. Mark Asselin has shown that the influence of Lu School interpretations was still strong towards the end of the Eastern Han, while Kern has shown that during the Six Dynasties (222 - 589) there are many examples of readings that depart from the Mao interpretations. See, Asselin, “The Lu-School Reading of *Guanju* as Preserved in an Eastern Han fu.” Kern, “Beyond the Mao Odes - *Shijing* Reception in Early Medieval China.”

The texts that we today know as the poems of the *Shijing* are in fact the Mao tradition's version of the poems. Passing from oral poems into written documents at a time when written characters were still evolving, written copies of the *Shijing* in the Western Han had distinct orthographical differences, resulting in textual variations among the different traditions of the *Shijing*. As Martin Kern has shown in his study of excavated *Shijing* texts, these differences were normally graphical in nature, meaning that different homophonous characters would be used for the same word.⁵² However, with the stabilisation of the written character, such differences gradually faded, and most comparisons of lines from the Mao poems with their Three Schools counterparts reveal only slight graphical variance.⁵³

The Mao Commentary

The Mao Commentary consists of dictionary-like gloss definitions for individual words within the poems. The commentary is typically associated with a certain Mr. Mao who is recorded in the *History of the Han* as an academician at the court of King Xian (r.155 - 130 B.C.E) of Hejian (Slightly to the south of modern-day Tianjin).⁵⁴ However, there is some controversy over which particular Mao this refers to, with other early texts giving two names, Mao Heng and Mao Chang.⁵⁵ The Commentary text is not an interpretation of the poems and in general acted to help its readers with the more archaic words that might have been difficult for Han dynasty readers to understand. Bernhard Karlgren has suggested that it was written around the middle of

⁵² Kern, "The Odes in Excavated Manuscripts."

⁵³ Kern suggests that the reason for such similarities between the Mao tradition and the Three Schools is likely due to the Three Schools texts undergoing later adjustment to adhere more closely to the Mao tradition, "The Odes in Excavated Manuscripts," p. 152.

⁵⁴ Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Rulin zhuan*, p. 3614. For the reign dates of King Xian 獻王 see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 173. Lewis uses the epithet Prince, however, I have followed Loewe who uses the term king for the Western Han tittle *wang* 王. For a map of Western Han China that includes Hejian see Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 146 – 147.

⁵⁵ These the earliest extant record which mentions these two names is by Lu Ji 陆璣 in his *Subcommentaries on the plants and the trees, the birds and the beasts, and the insects and the fish in the Mao version of the Shi* (*Maoshi caomu niaoshou chongyu shu* 毛詩草木鳥獸蟲魚). It is quoted in Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shijian jing zhushu*, p. 259. For an analysis of which Mao might have written the commentary see Karlgren, "The Early History of the Chou Li and Tso Chuan Texts," pp. 12 - 15.

the second-century B.C.E, an analysis that would agree with traditional accounts.⁵⁶

The Mao Commentary would have originally taken the form of a separate text to the Mao poems, and was presumably cut up and placed after the poems by later scholars.⁵⁷

The Mao Prefaces

The Mao Prefaces are the short lines of text that are placed in front of each poem, serving as the poem's interpretation. Authorship of the prefaces has long been an issue of contention with traditional accounts ascribing the prefaces variously to Confucius' disciple Zi Xia, one of the two Mr. Mao's, the early Eastern Han scholar Wei Hong, and a host of other contenders.⁵⁸ Such conflicting accounts led the Qing dynasty editors writing in the *Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Storehouses* (*Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目) to state that the question of the Mao Preface authorship was "The number one contentious issue for classicists."⁵⁹ Much of the difficulty surrounding the preface has to do with their heterogeneous nature. The preface to the first poem is especially long and scholars have long noted

⁵⁶ Karlgren, "The Early History of the Chou Li and Tso Chuan Texts."

⁵⁷ See Karlgren's reference to Duan Yucai 段玉裁, who noted that the references in the *History of the Han* bibliography (*Yiwenzhi* 藝文志) to the two works relating to the Mao tradition (*The Maoshi guxun zhuan* 毛詩故訓傳 and the *Maoshi* 毛詩) most probably related to the commentary and the text proper, which in the Western Han were not written together in the same text. "The Early History of the Chou Li and Tso Chuan Texts," p. 14.

⁵⁸ For a complete overview of the opinions of nearly every famous educated person to have written on the subject of who wrote the prefaces see Zhang Xincheng, *Weishu tongkao*, pp. 223 - 257. Possibly one of the most interesting entries is that of Kang Youwei 康有為 who states that they were forged by Liu Xin. p. 252. This is part of a greater accusation by Kang Youwei that Liu Xin forged not only the Mao Prefaces but also the Mao Commentary as well as the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) and the *Zhou Rites* (*Zhou li* 周禮). Karlgren aptly defends Liu Xin against all these accusations but unfortunately does not deal with the forging the Mao Prefaces. See "The Early History of the Chou Li and Tso Chuan Texts." Most modern scholars writing in English are hesitant to assign the Mao Prefaces to a definite author, though there is a tendency to place their creation around the time of Wei Hong (first-century C.E). See Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 173. The first record that relates Wei Hong to the Mao Prefaces is the *History of the Later Han* (*Hou-Hanshu* 後漢書), see *Fan Ye*, *Hou-Hanshu – Rulinzhuan xia*, p. 2575. For an interesting article that explores the way in which scholars writing in Chinese have gone from promoting Wei Hong as the author of the Mao Prefaces at the beginning of the 20th century to promoting Zi Xia and Mencius in recent times, see Tan Zuowen, "Shiji yilai guanyu Maoshixu de zuozhe he shidai wenti zhi lunzheng." From the information set out in the following chapters, I would place the Mao Prefaces, especially the Lower Prefaces as having been written sometime around the beginning of the Common Era.

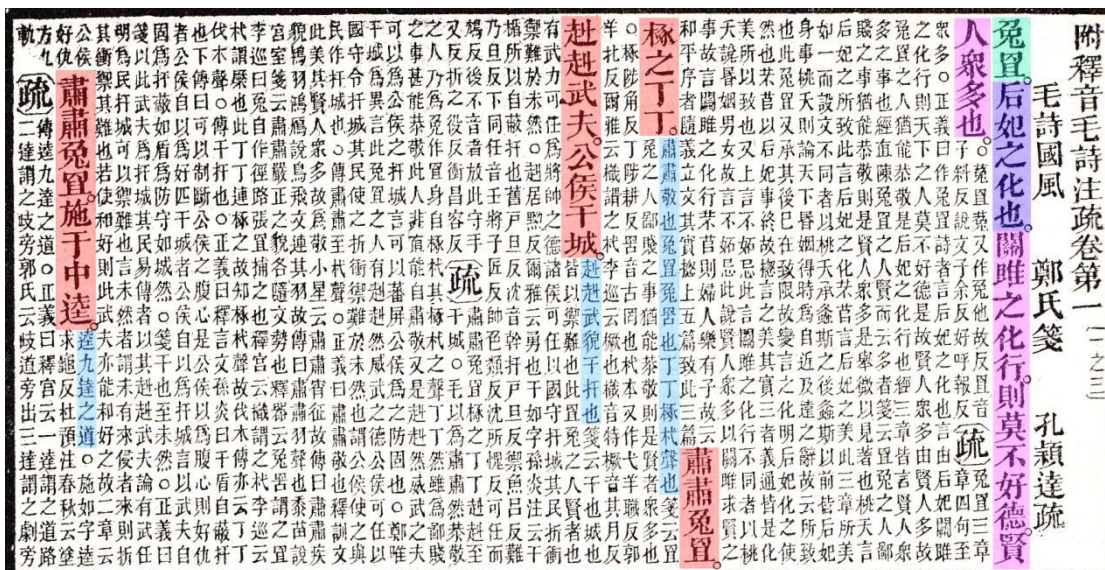
⁵⁹ Quoted in Tan Zuowen, "Shiji yilai guanyu Maoshixu de zuozhe he shidai wenti zhi lunzheng," p. 174.

that much of this preface is not an interpretation of the poem but rather an explication of the entire *Shijing* itself. This first preface has traditionally been seen as separate from the others and is known as the Great Preface (*Daxu* 大序). Renowned as a signature work on the nature of poetry and for its long lasting influence on theories of literature, the Great Preface has been the longstanding focus of many scholars' attention.⁶⁰ Following after the Great Preface at the beginning of the anthology, smaller prefaces are found at the beginning of every poem, and it is these smaller prefaces that will be explored in this thesis. These smaller prefaces act as the interpretations of the poems, often explaining when, where and why the poems were composed, and it is these interpretations that came to be the orthodox interpretations of the poems throughout history. In traditional publications of the *Shijing* anthology, each of the smaller prefaces is presented before the poem that they describe, guiding their readers' understanding even before they had actually read the poems themselves. However, the smaller prefaces are themselves composite texts, and it has long been observed that they consist of one short sentence, followed by a longer second sentence that seems to act as a commentary on the first sentence.⁶¹ Van Zoeren refers to the shorter and most likely earlier sentence as the Upper Preface, and calls the longer and presumably later sentence the Lower Preface.⁶² I will maintain this terminology when referring to the individual sections of the prefaces, however when I use the word preface in general, it refers to both the Upper and Lower Prefaces. When I use the term Mao interpretations, I am also referring to the interpretations of the poems as expounded in the prefaces, however, when using the term Mao tradition, I am referring to the compilation of the poems, commentary and prefaces as a textual whole. This thesis will maintain the original structure of traditional anthologies, presenting the Upper and Lower Prefaces first before giving the poems themselves.

⁶⁰ See, Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 37 - 49. Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 95 - 115. Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, pp. 74 - 105.

⁶¹ Van Zoeren notes that the earliest record he could find that acknowledged the distinction between the prefaces was in a work by Cheng Boyu 成伯瑜 titled *Explanation of the Points of the Shijing* (*Maoshi zhishuo* 毛詩指說) which was produced sometime in the Tang dynasty. See, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 148 - 150, 269.

⁶² See Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 90 - 95.



A picture tells a thousand words — An extract taken from *The Correct Meanings of the Mao edition of the Shijing* (*Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義) as it appears in the 1980 reprint of Ruan Yuan's compilation of the *Annotations of the Thirteen Classics*. Read from right to left, this page begins with the large characters of the title of the poem (highlighted green) followed by the Upper Preface (dark purple) and the Lower Preface (light purple). The smaller unhighlighted characters that follow consist of a short commentary by Zheng Xuan, the sound glosses from the *Annotations to the Classics* (*Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文) and a long sub-commentary by the Tang dynasty compilers of *The Correct Meanings of the Mao edition of the Shijing*. The text of the poem is also given in large characters (red) and the Mao Commentary (blue) is placed immediately after the words of the poem but in smaller characters. The use of large characters for the preface is suggestive of its authoritative position within the text.

Chapter 2: No depravity in thought

The main argument of this thesis is that the Mao tradition's interpretations of the *Shijing* love poems can be understood as connected to Confucius' statement that the *Shijing* is summed up by the phrase *si wuxie*; a phrase that can be understood in several different ways. In this chapter I describe how the first understanding of Confucius' encapsulation of the *Shijing* as being that one is to have no depraved thoughts connects with the Mao Prefaces' interpretations of *Shijing* love poems. Through an analysis of two *Shijing* poems and their prefaces, this chapter will show how the Mao Prefaces can be seen working in two ways to promote the purity of thought on the part of their readers. One method that the Mao Prefaces employ is the active promotion of interpretations of the poems that would not lead to depraved thinking. The second method is one in which improper expressions of sexual desire are pointed out but criticised, allowing the desire within the poem to be seen as both negative and immoral. By both stressing the importance of pure thoughts and highlighting the evils of desire, the Mao Prefaces present an understanding of the *Shijing* love poems that was aimed at encouraging readers to have no depraved thoughts. These interpretations differed significantly from other interpretative traditions of the *Shijing* and suggest that the Mao Preface compilers' understanding of the term *xie* 邪 'depravity' had shifted from a general evil to one focused on sexual immorality. This shift demonstrates the subtle change in Confucian understandings of sexual desire that occurred during the Han dynasty. Whereas earlier Confucian texts had previously sought to legitimise desire through moderation and ritual decorum, the Mao Prefaces instead promoted a discourse of sexual desire that was focused on the elimination of depravity. Such approaches to sexual desire were to have long-lasting implications.

2.1 — Enjoining moral thoughts

An example of the way in which the Mao Prefaces actively promote understandings of poems that would not lead to depraved thoughts can be seen in the preface to one of the more well-known poems, *Hanguang* (Mao 9).⁶³ This poem is placed at the beginning of the State Airs section and belongs to a set of poems which were thought to have come from a region called Zhounan. The poems ascribed to Zhounan were seen by the Mao tradition as morally-normative compositions that were produced in a time of harmonious government.⁶⁴ This being so, they presented opportunities for the Prefaces in this section to espouse proper virtuous behaviour. Here the Upper Preface begins by paying homage to the virtue of the state:

Expansive virtue reaches far.⁶⁵

As with many of the Upper Prefaces, this short interpretation of the poem takes some of its wording from the poem itself, with the word ‘expansive’ (*guang* 廣) used in the first line of the poem to describe the width of the Han river. As with the majority of the prefaces, the Upper Preface here serves as an indication of the general meaning of the poem, and thus it becomes the role of the Lower Preface to provide a commentary connecting the explanation found in the Upper Preface with the images expressed in the poem itself.

⁶³ As Waley notes, referring to the poems by their headings given in the *Shijing* is not very useful. *Book of Songs*, p. 19. I have given the pinyin title for each poem plus their traditional position in the Mao anthology. As nearly every printed version of the *Shijing* maintains the Mao sequence, the Mao numbers are the easiest way to identify a particular poem. However in the endeavor to prevent this thesis from looking like an exploration of algebra, I will only give the Mao number the first time the poem is mentioned.

⁶⁴ The Mao tradition has an interesting understanding of the states that make up the State Airs. The first two sections, the Zhounan 周南 and the Shaonan 召南 are seen as examples of harmonious government that are sometimes attributed by the prefaces to the time of the King Wen 文王 but more often are not ascribed to any time at all and instead come to form the ideal utopian state. The following chapters of the State Airs are traditionally known to designate the area from which the poems in the chapter originated. Thus the poems that come under the heading Qi 齊, are thought to have originally been from the state of Qi. Exceptions include the poems found under the States of Bei 邶 and Yong 鄘, which for some reason are thought to belong to the state of Wei 衛.

⁶⁵ All translations of the Mao Prefaces are my own, for comparisons with Legge’s translations, see Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, pp. 34 - 81. For the Chinese original see, Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 281.

The virtuous way of King Wen stretched out across the southern lands. His beautifying force spread through the lands of the Yangtze and the Han River. There were no thoughts of transgressing propriety. Seeking, one was not able to attain.⁶⁶

Like the Upper Prefaces, the Lower Prefaces have a tendency to make use of the language used within the poem they were describing. In this case, the last line of the Lower Preface is a play on the fourth line of the poem. Thus while the Lower Preface does not state directly what the object that is being sought, it becomes apparent from the poem that the object that is being sought in the Lower Preface is the lady walking by the Han River. This led many later commentators to praise the virtue of this lady, an idea that can be found in Legge's translation of the last sentence, "young women would be solicited in vain for their favours."⁶⁷ Having read the preceding prefaces, readers could understand the expressions of desire within the poem as being both normative and indicative of moral virtue.

In the south is an upturning tree;
 One cannot shelter under it.
 Beyond the Han a lady walks;
 One cannot seek her.
 Oh, the Han it is so broad,
 One cannot swim it,
 And the Jiang, it is so rough
 One cannot boat it!⁶⁸

Beginning with parallel images that associate the discomfort of having no shade to rest in with the discomfort of not being able to seek after a beautiful woman, the poem's introduction seems to create a context that expresses desire for the lady walking by the Han. However, this reading of the poem is subtly reformulated by the sentence in the Lower Preface stating that there "were no thoughts of transgressing

⁶⁶ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 281.

⁶⁷ See Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, p. 38.

⁶⁸ This is the first verse of Waley's translation. See, Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 82.

propriety.” This sentence has an echo in the last word of the fourth line *si* 思, which seems to be a meaningless grammatical word in the text of the poem, but is taken by the Lower Preface to have the semantic meaning of ‘thoughts.’⁶⁹ Just as interpreting *si* as thoughts in the phrase *si wuxie* allowed its meaning to pass from ‘not swerving’ to ‘not thinking depraved thoughts,’ this reinterpretation of *si* allowed the poem to take on the added meaning of not having desirous thoughts. Thus for later readers the fourth line would read more like, ‘One cannot think of seeking her,’ fully revealing that the narrator was without desire, while at the same alluding to the virtue of the lady whose chaste behaviour would not permit desirous thoughts to enter the mind. Interpreting the text in this way, the Preface actively promotes readings of the poem that would direct readers to have no depravity in their thoughts.

2.2 — Alternative interpretations

In stark contrast, other Han dynasty commentarial traditions represent this river encounter as anything but a proper example of virtuous conduct: with the Han tradition sums up the poem in one word – ‘delightful.’⁷⁰ Other traditions such as the Lu, made connections between the poem and the legend of a certain Zheng Jiaofu’s encounter with two river goddesses. Unaware that the ladies in front of him are celestial beings, Zheng Jiaofu audaciously asks for their girdle belts which they gladly give to him, only to disappear the moment he turns his back.⁷¹ Such playful

⁶⁹ This process is not as simple as just reading *si* as ‘thoughts.’ In Zhou Zhenfu’s modern edition of the text, the first four lines of the above verse are 南有喬木，不可休思，漢有游女，不可求思. In this form it is obvious that the *si* (思) occurring at the end of line four is a metrical reflection of the same character in line two. The meaningless (grammatical) quality of *si* is here further emphasised by the fact that the rhyme in this verse falls on the words before *si*, namely *xiu* 休 and *qiu* 求. However, in *The Correct Meanings of the Mao edition of the Shijing* version of the text the last character of the second line is given as *xi* 息, which in the context of *xiuxi* 休息 becomes a lexical word that means rest. With the introduction of *xi*, the *si* in the fourth line was also able to take on a lexical function, in this case as ‘thoughts.’ See, Zhou, *Shijing yizu*, 12. Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 281.

⁷⁰ See, Wang Xianqian, *Shi Sanjia yi jishu*, p. 68. It should be noted that I am following Wang Xianqian’s choice of appropriating certain variant interpretations to a particular school.

⁷¹ See, Wang Xianqian, *Shi Sanjia yi jishu*, pp. 68 - 71. For an elaboration on this story in English see Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 31 -32. For an interesting comparison between the different interpretive

understandings of the seeking and not attaining that are alluded to in the poem suggest that the compilers of the Three Schools' commentaries were not overtly concerned with the issue of depraved thoughts. In contrast to the Mao Prefaces' construction of virtue that is based on the absence of sexual desire, the Three School's interpretations present a framework in which the desire expressed in the poem can be perceived in a positive light. These less conservative attitudes towards sexual desire suggest that the Three Schools may have been influenced by the philosophical attitudes of the Huang-Lao school, ostensibly their rival, but supported by the Han royal household.

Differences between the commentarial traditions were arguably influenced by the political and philosophical changes which took place during the Western Han. Beginning with the political ascendancy of the Daoist-oriented Huang-Lao ideology that was favoured by the first emperor of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang, and his consort Dowager Lü, the Western Han saw a gradual shift towards a Confucian-centered ideology that found a key supporter in Emperor Wu.⁷² Recognised by the state several decades before the accession of Emperor Wu, the founders of the Lu, Qi and Han Ying schools were often attacked by proponents of the more popular Huang Lao ideology and were in some cases hindered from obtaining higher offices due to their more Confucian leanings. An example of the difficulties faced by scholars of the Confucian school can be found in Sima Qian's biography of Yuan Gu, the founder of the Qi School. Working as a court academician, Yuan Gu was once asked by Dowager Dou what he made of the thoughts and teachings of the Daoist master Laozi.

traditions see Hu Qiulei, "Reading the Conflicting Voices: An Examination of the Interpretive Traditions about *Hanguang*."

⁷² Huang-Lao 黄老 takes its name from two historical figures, The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黄帝) and Laozi 老子. For a description of this shift in from Huang-Lao to Confucian orientated ideologies, see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 337 - 350. Exactly what the Huang-Lao school was has long been a subject of debate. Lewis attributes the following characteristics to the Huang-Lao school - Connected with the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. Favouring minimalist government and avoiding administrative detail. Interest in longevity practices. Providing the rationale for low taxes and nonintervention. *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 340 - 341. For the political aspects of the Huang-Lao see Hans van Ess, "The Meaning of Huang-Lao in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*."

An ardent follower of the Huang-Lao school herself, Dowager Dou was shocked to hear Yuan Gu's reply "These are merely the words of a servant." Infuriated, the Dowager ordered him to kill a pig in a pigsty, a feat that he only accomplished through the generous provision of a sharp knife by the Dowager's son, Emperor Jing.⁷³ Although this story may be anecdotal, it lends support to the possibility that followers of the Confucian school may have had a difficult time promoting their teachings in a court that was in favour of the Huang-Lao School.⁷⁴ It may be that the Three School's less puritanical interpretations of the *Shijing* were in some way informed by the more Daoist aligned ideologies that existed in the early Western Han. However, with which they perhaps attempted to compromise. With a shift in political attitudes towards a more Confucian-oriented conservatism, the end of the Western Han saw the emergence of new *Shijing* interpretations in the form of the Mao tradition. These new Mao interpretations not only enjoined pure thoughts, they also attacked the very legitimacy of sexual desire.

2.3 — Criticising Sexual Desire

Another method which the Mao Prefaces employ in maintaining interpretations of *Shijing* poems that would not lead to depraved thoughts is through direct criticism of sexual desire. Prefaces presenting poems as negative examples that warned the reader of the dangers of sexual desire, are found throughout the mid-to-later sections of the State Airs, appended to poems which superficially seem to give expression to desire. Interpreted as having been composed in times of political decline when the moral state of the empire was decaying, these poems, described by the Great Preface as 'mutated poems,' were often understood as criticisms of the rulers in whose reign they

⁷³ Sima Qian, *Shiji – Rulinchuan*, p. 686. Yuan Gu's reply to the Dowager is taken from Hightower who has translated this passage into English. See, "The Han-shih wai-chuan and the San chia shih." pp. 274 - 277.

⁷⁴ The Dowager Dou 竇太后 also made life difficult for members of the Lu School, see Hightower, "The Han-shih wai-chuan and the San chia shih." pp. 269 - 271.

were supposed to have been composed.⁷⁵ Often drawing attention to a ruler's licentious behaviour, the protraction of military service as well as male-female interactions that occurred outside the bounds of proper decorum, the preface's interpretations of desire expressed in the mutated poems are almost always negative.

Yuechu (Mao 143) is one of the many examples of a State Airs poem in which the Mao Prefaces describes sexual desire in a negative light. Located among the poems in the state of Chen, the Upper Preface simply states that *Yuechu* is:

Criticising the love of sexual pleasure.⁷⁶

This 'love of sexual pleasure,' *haose* 好色 is a common term that is found in many ancient classic texts, normally having a pejorative meaning that is associated with a man's fondness for enjoying pleasure with beautiful women. Confucius himself mentions it in the *Analects*, lamenting that he has "yet to meet the man who is as fond of virtue as he is of beauty in women."⁷⁷ Following the Upper Preface the Lower Preface seems to be a play on Confucius' words:

Those ruling did not love virtue but rather took delight in beautiful women⁷⁸

This stock phrase could be applied to many poems in the *Shijing*, suggesting that the compilers of the Lower Preface were not concerned with providing each poem with a distinctive individual interpretation. Here the Preface's criticism of the actors in the poem presents an example of behaviour that is both deviant and depraved, by implication encouraging its readers to practice virtue by avoiding the evils of sexual pleasure.

⁷⁵ 'Mutated' is Owen's translation of *bian* 變. See, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, p. 47. Van Zoeren translates *bian* as 'changed,' while Saussy gives 'altered.' Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 96. Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, p. 80.

⁷⁶ For both the Upper and Lower prefaces see, Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 378.

⁷⁷ *Analects* 9.18. This translation is by D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, p. 98. "Beauty in women" is Lau's translation of *haose* 好色

⁷⁸ Delight in beautiful women is my own translation of *yue mei se* 說(悦)美色

A Moon rising white
 Is the beauty of my lovely one.
 Ah, the tenderness, the grace!
 Heart's pain consumes me.⁷⁹

It is interesting to note that in contrast to the Mao Prefaces' negative statements, there is little if anything in the Mao Commentary that complements these readings. Acting more as a gloss defining certain words than an interpretation, the Mao Commentary for *Yuechu* simply states that the word 'white' refers to the moonlight and that the descriptive words used in the second and third lines refer respectively to a beautiful and leisurely countenance.⁸⁰ This discrepancy between the Mao Prefaces and the Mao Commentary suggest that the poems themselves were not always read as criticisms of sexual desire, and that the Prefaces were the key vehicle for expressing ideas about sexual morality.

2.4 — Changes in understandings of sexual desire

Evidence that early Confucian thinkers did not view the desire in the *Shijing* as inherently negative can also be found in the writings of Xunzi, one of the greatest early Confucian exponents of the *Shijing*. In contrast to the strict restraint on and criticism of sexual desire in the Mao Prefaces, Xunzi describes the desire expressed in the *Shijing* as a natural human instinct that must be controlled to prevent excess. According to Xunzi, the many expressions of sexual desire that occur throughout the State Airs poems were examples showing that desire could be satisfied without being excessive.⁸¹

⁷⁹ First verse of Waley's translation. *The Book of Songs*, p. 41.

⁸⁰ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 378.

⁸¹ Knoblock's translation of this passage in the *Xunzi* reads, "Of the eroticism of the "Airs of the States," the *Commentary* says: "They give satisfaction to the desires men have but do not err in their stopping point.""

Passages commenting on the *Shijing* that are found in excavated manuscripts provide further evidence that expressions of desire in love poems were not always denounced as they were in the later Mao Prefaces.⁸² Unearthed in 1973, the “*Wuxingpian* manuscripts discovered at the Mawangdui tomb in Changsha contain both lines of *Shijing* poems as well as their interpretations, and as Jeffery Riegel has shown, these differ dramatically from their Mao preface counterparts.⁸³ Giving an explanation of the first poem of the *Shijing*, *Guanju* (Mao 1), the *Wuxingpian* interprets the poem as presenting the narrator’s urgent longings for sexual union. However, while accepting that such desire is indeed expressed within the poem, the commentary finishes with the importance of maintaining proper decorum, stating that no matter how urgent the desire, no man would copulate in front of his parents. In striking contrast to the Mao Preface’s interpretation of *Guanju* which will be discussed in the next chapter, the *Wuxingpian* accepts the presence of desire within the mind of the poem’s narrator, attempting to harness it within the frameworks of ritual decorum. Dated by archaeologists as having been sealed in 168 B.C.E,⁸⁴ the *Wuxingpian* interpretations suggest that during the early Western Han, expressions of sexual desire in *Shijing* love poems did not necessarily need to be given negative connotations.

The discrepancy between the Mao Prefaces’ interpretations of *Shijing* love poems and those of the Three Schools and other excavated texts suggests that a shift in the understanding of sexual desire took place sometime during the Western Han. Sexual desire, once perceived as a legitimate human feeling that could be controlled through moderation was taken by the Mao Prefaces to be immoral and depraved. Connecting the Mao tradition back to Confucius’ encapsulation of the meaning of the *Shijing* that

Knoblock suggests that for Xunzi it is the ritual principles which are the stopping point of the eroticism in the State Airs. See *Xunzi*, vol 3, p. 370. See also Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 78.

⁸² Only one excavated manuscript is described here. For details on a similar sexualised reading of the *Guanju* in another recently excavated text known as the *Kongzi shilun* 孔子詩論 see Kern, “Beyond the Mao Odes,” pp. 135 - 136.

⁸³ Riegel, “Eros, Introversion and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary.” Kern also mentions the *Wuxingpian* in “Beyond the Mao Odes,” pp. 135 - 136.

⁸⁴ Kern, “The Odes in Excavated Manuscripts,” p. 149.

there should be no depravity in one's thoughts, it would seem that the Mao Prefaces' criticisms of sexual desire served to identify what one should not think about and furthermore, to classify what was held to be depraved. Through this process, the Mao Prefaces reveal themselves as being concerned with a particular type of depravity, namely depravity of a sexual nature. Where previous understandings of depravity referred to exceeding moderation and transgressing ritual decorum, the Mao Prefaces took sexual desire itself to be depraved. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the preface to the poem *Xi you Changchu* (Mao 148) which the Lower Preface interprets as:

The people detested their ruler's licentiousness and longed for a ruler who did not have desire.⁸⁵

By explicitly acknowledging depravity within the poems, the Mao Prefaces were in fact promoting purity in thought, for once evil had been named, one could not be led to let it unknowingly enter into one's mind. Whereas the Three Schools' playful interpretations of seeking after river goddesses might inadvertently lead the straying reader to fantasize about their own journeys to the banks of the Han, readers who took the Mao Prefaces to heart would never face this problem, for even if they did find their hearts quickening at descriptions of pale skinned tender women standing in the moonlight, they would that such thoughts were intrinsically depraved.

⁸⁵ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 382.

Chapter 3. No swerving from the right path

Just as *si wuxie*, Confucius' one phrase encapsulation of the *Shijing* has various layers of meaning, the Mao Prefaces to the poems in the *Shijing* can also be seen as leading to ever deeper levels of interpretation. This chapter examines the way in which the Mao Prefaces adhere to the second meaning that can be read in the *si wuxie* phrase: 'Swerving not from the right path.' Understanding the 'right path' to be that which is morally correct, this chapter analyzes three poems and their prefaces, exploring the way the Mao Prefaces representations of female virtue created guidelines that acted to prevent women from straying from this correct path. In their interpretations of these three *Shijing* love poems the Mao Prefaces emphasize the importance that female virtue has for a harmonious imperial order. This was in direct contrast to the role that court women were perceived as having played in the Western Han, a time in which the growth of consort power threatened the very stability of the Han Empire. The Mao Prefaces' construction of an image of female virtue that emphasised public interests over those of the individual was itself part of a greater didactic discourse about female virtue that arose at the end of the Western Han in response to this threat of female power. Through this construction of female virtue, the Mao Prefaces played an instrumental role in later Confucian understandings of the correct female path.

3.1 — The construction of female virtue

The Mao Prefaces' choice to interpret a *Shijing* poem as relating either to the correct or to the immoral nature of women is slightly unusual. Standing somewhat at odds with the rest of the corpus, all the poems in the first two kingdoms of the State

Airs section, namely the Zhounan and the Shaonan poems, are almost entirely devoted to interpretations of women's behaviour. What is perhaps most remarkable, given the amorous nature of some of the poems in these two chapters, is that every poem which a Preface designates as relating to women are all without exception interpreted as expressing positive female virtue. The debauched beauties and princesses with incestuous desires who inhabit the prefaces of poems in the other states are nowhere to be found within Zhounan and Shaonan sections. Furthermore, where the Mao Prefaces for states such as Wei and Zheng deploy the names of famous women from historical texts, none of the women in the prefaces for the Zhounan and Shaonan are named, with the Mao Prefaces preferring to construct an anonymous female personage who they refer to as the 'royal consort.'⁸⁶ Although it would not be long before commentators picked names for these unblemished consorts from the ancient history texts, the Mao Prefaces construct an idealised nameless consort, the perfect representative of the correct female path.⁸⁷

The importance of this idealised royal consort is highlighted by the Mao Prefaces, which grant her the privilege of being the subject of the first Preface of the *Shijing*. Because the preface is given before the poem, the very first line that readers of the *Shijing* would read (assuming they started from the beginning) would be the Upper Preface of *Guanju* the first poem in the anthology:

The virtue of the royal consort.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ The Mao Prefaces create have different ranked anonymous consorts. The first is constructed in the Zhounan and is known as the Royal Consort or Queen (Houfei 后妃). The second and third are constructed in the Shaonan and are at least one rank lower than the royal consort, Legge translates these as 'Prince's wife' (furen 夫人) and 'Wife of a Great Officer' (dafuqi 大夫妻) See, Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Cheng Zuming says that Zheng Xuan began the process of choosing names for the subjects of the poems which have no name in the Mao Commentary. I have not found evidence as of yet of Zheng Xuan giving names to the consorts in Zhounan and Shaonan. However it is clear that Zhu Xi thought the royal consort in the Zhounan may have referred to the consort of King Wen, Taisi 太姒. See Cheng Zuming, "Sanjia shishuo yu han diguo ruxue goujian -yu maoshi shuo xiangbijiao," p. 110.

⁸⁸ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisanjing zhushu*, p. 269.

What follows is perhaps the most famous preamble of all the Five Classics, in which steering away from the poem itself, the Mao Preface compilers give an introduction to the entire corpus that explains both the psychological origins of poetry and its social uses, forming a passage that is now known as the Great Preface. However for readers searching for the Preface's understanding of *Guanju*, the Great Preface's deviation from the poem itself makes it difficult to decipher when it is commenting on the poem and when it is expounding on the nature of poetry in general. Working on this problem in the Song dynasty, Zhu Xi extracted from the beginning and end of the Great Preface what he saw as being the preface for *Guanju*, an approach which has come to be accepted by many *Shijing* scholars.⁸⁹ This preface for *Guanju* is much longer than most of the Mao Prefaces. It explains how the poem sets right the relationship between husband and wife, before defining all the poems in the Zhounan and Shaonan sections as expressions of virtue that were associated with the reigns of certain virtuous sagely kings. However, as far as interpretations of the love expressed within the poem are concerned, it is perhaps the last lines of the Preface which hold the most significance:

Therefore in *Guanju* there is delight in obtaining a beautiful girl as a match for the lord. Delighting in presenting those of worth, she is not excessive in desire. Sorrowing for the lovely lady and thinking of this lady's talents, the goodness of her heart is not injured. This is the meaning of *Guanju*.⁹⁰

While the above translation is a somewhat clumsy rendition of the passage, the original text presents some difficulties in translation, because the subject for the above lines is not given, and one has to travel back to the very start of the passage to realise that the 'she' seeking to obtain a beautiful lady is none other than the royal consort. In

⁸⁹ Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 91 - 92.

⁹⁰ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 273. It may be of some use to compare my translation with Legge's who adds more meaning than the text actually gives, based on his understanding Zheng Xuan's sub-commentary. 'Therefore in the *Guanju* we have joy in obtaining virtuous ladies to be mates to her lord; anxiety to be introducing ladies of worth; no excessive desire to have her lord to herself; sorrow about modest retiring ladies [not being found for the harem], and thought about getting ladies of worth and ability, – all without any envy of their excellence: – this is what we have in the *Guanju*.' *Chinese Classics*, vol 4, p. 37.

a seemingly bizarre twist in the interpretation of the poem, readers of the Mao Preface would now be able to read the following poem as the royal consort's expressions of desire and longing in finding a fitting concubine for her husband.⁹¹

'Fair, fair,' cry the ospreys
 On the island in the river.
 Lovely is this noble lady,
 Fit bride for our lord.

 In patches grow the water mallow;
 To left and right one must seek it.
 Shy was this noble lady;
 Day and night he sought her.

 Sought her and could not get her;
 Day and night he grieved.
 Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy thoughts,
 Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.⁹²

It would seem that here again the Mao Prefaces present an interpretation that denies strong expressions of sexual passion, in this case by attaching these expressions to the longing of a women searching for a concubine for her husband. This interpretation of the *Guanju* is remarkably different to earlier interpretations of the poem, such as the sexualised *Wuxingpian* interpretation discussed in the proceeding chapter as well as

⁹¹ This interpretation has been the source of some controversy. Writing in the Qing dynasty Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 believed that Zheng Xuan misinterpreted the phrase which describes 'anxious in presenting those of worth' (In the above passage this is given as 'delighting in presenting those of worth' as the *Shisan jing zhushu* version of the text has *ai* 愛 'delight' where modern day texts such as Zhou Zhenfu's edition have *you* 憂 'anxious') The Chinese is quite vague and Ma Ruichen sees the consort as presenting herself, not as presenting another woman. Ma's understanding is influenced strongly by the Mao Commentary which contains no suggestion of a consort finding a concubine for her king. Ma Ruichen, *Maoshi zhuanjian tongshi*, vol 1, chapter 2, p. 1. Zhou, *Shijing yizhu*, 3. For an example of a modern scholar who also believes that the original passage had no connection to the consort presenting other ladies to her husband, see Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 51 - 52. I believe that Zheng Xuan read correctly. The representation of female virtue here fits in with the Mao Prefaces for other poems in the Zhounan and Shaonan. Saussy also understands this passage as the consort's search for another lady, see *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, 82.

⁹² The first three of five verses. Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 81.

those interpretations of the other Three Schools.⁹³ In light of the way in which the Mao Prefaces negate and condemn the discourse of desire, the preface to *Guanju* shows how utterly successful its writers were in removing any traces of erotic passion from the poem, transforming the powerful expressions of longing into sentiments that would serve the lord and state.

For the Mao Preface writers, the virtue of the royal consort lies not so much in her desire to find a beautiful maiden for her king, but in the fact that this causes her no injury. In other words it is in her lack of jealousy that they find cause for celebration. While only hinted at in the lines of the *Guanju* preface, the importance of the unresentful consort who is not jealous of her husband's affections for other presumably younger and more sensuous women is highlighted throughout the Lower prefaces of the *Zhounan* and *Shaonan* chapters. Such virtue is extolled by the prefaces as leading to a whole host of positive outcomes, with the preface of one poem describing how the consort's lack of jealousy lead to her numerous progeny,⁹⁴ while the preface for another poem, *Taoyao* (Mao 6), celebrates the positive transforming influence such virtue had for the whole kingdom. The Lower Preface to *Taoyao* praises the royal consort with these words:

As she was not jealous there was rectification between men and women, marriages were performed at the correct times and no man was without a wife.⁹⁵

While this praise for the beneficial effects of not being jealous may seem to border on hyperbole, the Lower preface is here connecting the character of the royal consort to

⁹³ Many of the readings from the Three Schools saw the *Guanju* as a poem of criticism made during the decline of King Kang's reign in the Zhou dynasty. See Cheng Zuming "Sanjia shishuo yu han diguo ruxue goujian - yu maoshi shuo xiangbijiao," p. 109.

⁹⁴ This poem is *Zhongsì* (Mao 5). Legge translates the prefaces as 'The subject of the *Zhongsì* is the numerousness of the queen's progeny. It says they were like locusts; for having no jealousy, her progeny was so numerous.' *Chinese Classics*, vol 4, p. 38.

⁹⁵ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 279.

the images of marriage described in the poem itself, which was traditionally thought of as a wedding song.

Buxom is the peach-tree;
 How its flowers blaze!
 Our lady going home
 Brings good to family and house.⁹⁶

Readers who continued from the Zhounan and Shaonan sections to the other chapters in the State Airs would soon be made aware of the dangers a kingdom faced if it were led by an immoral consort. Many of the prefaces for love poems in the states of Bei, Wei and Qi describe how the debauchery of the consort led to disorder among men and women, disruption to the correct times of marriage, and ultimately to the destruction of the kingdom itself.⁹⁷ Although the connection between female virtue and the survival of the state seems an unusual choice of interpretation for poems that outwardly do not give a basis for such readings, this connection becomes much more intelligible when observing the role of women, especially royal consorts, in the Western Han dynasty.

3.2 — The immoral consorts of the Western Han

From the very beginning of his chapter on the history of the Former (Western) Han, Michael Loewe highlights how the rise in the power of consorts and their families came to be one of the main concerns for leading men and women.⁹⁸ This rise in consort power was almost certainly influenced by changes in Han royal marriage

⁹⁶ Waley translates line three as ‘Our lady going home,’ as he believed that the word *gui* 歸 here referred to *guining* 歸寧, the ceremony in which a lady first returned to her parents after being married. This is at odds with the exact same line (*zhi zi yu gui* 之子于歸) found in the poem *Hanguang* which Waley translates as ‘Here comes a girl to be married.’ *The Book of Songs*, p. 82, 106. Both Karlgren and Legge understand this line as the bride going to her new home. Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, p. 12. Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ See especially the Mao Prefaces for poems 34, 42, 47, 49, 57, 104, 105.

⁹⁸ Loewe, “The Former Han Dynasty,” p. 104.

practices, which, according to Lisa Raphals, created new tensions within the empire.⁹⁹ Firstly, Han dynasty rulers, unlike their Warring States counterparts, were only allowed to have one principal consort, who would be endowed with the title of empress. This consort would be recognised as the mother of the following emperor, regardless of whether the chosen heir was her own son or the son of another concubine. Such changes ensured that there would always be tension surrounding the issue of imperial succession as generations of consorts attempted to promote their own children while at the same time murdering the potential male heirs born to other concubines. Secondly, marriage practices in which rulers would take wives from outside their own state changed in the Han dynasty marriages within the same state, because the unification of the empire meant that there were no other states from which a Han emperor could take a consort. This change led to the rapid rise of consort families, which would often gain political and material benefits through their connections to the royal house. Time and time again, this rise would facilitate conflict within the empire, threatening and even at times toppling the rule of the royal family (in the case of Wang Mang, who established his own short-lived dynasty).

The rise and fall of emperors throughout the Western Han thus reads as a drama played out between the royal house and consort families with the royal consort taking center stage. At the very beginning of the dynasty, the Han royal house was shaken by the threat from the first royal consort, Empress Lü, who, after the death of her husband, slowly began to accumulate and wield power. According to historical sources, the first emperor of the Han dynasty Liu Bang (r. 206 - 195 B.C.E),¹⁰⁰ had apparently expressed before his death the desire to have the son of Lady Qi, his new favourite concubine, made emperor after his death.¹⁰¹ This was certainly not to

⁹⁹ See Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, pp. 85 - 86.

¹⁰⁰ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 132 - 133.

¹⁰¹ Liu Bang felt that his son to Empress Lü 吕太后 was weak and wanted to have Ruyi 如意, his son to Lady Qi 戚夫人 made heir. See, Sima Qian, *Shiji – Lü Taihou benji*, p. 84.

Empress Lü's advantage, and with the passing of the emperor she had both Lady Qi and her son killed.¹⁰² Having eliminated rival claims to the throne, the next fifteen years of the Western Han were marked by a series of young puppet emperors propped up by the power of the empress dowager, during which time the Lü family almost succeeded in overthrowing the royal Liu family.¹⁰³ While the threat of the Lü family was annihilated through force of arms after the death of Empress Lü in 180 B.C.E.,¹⁰⁴ conflicts between the royal house and consort families continued throughout the Western Han. The reign of Emperor Cheng (r. 33 - 7 B.C.E),¹⁰⁵ one of the last emperors of the Western Han is presented by early historians as one particularly dominated by the conflict between imperial consorts in which the jealous Zhao sisters successfully gained the favour of the emperor, instigating the dismissal of both his first imperial consort Empress Xu and his favourite concubine Beauty Ban.¹⁰⁶ Unable to bear viable heirs themselves, the Zhao sisters reportedly had the other male offspring of the emperor killed in order to maintain their power, leaving no direct successor after the emperor's death. This break in the line of imperial succession and the ensuing power struggle that ensued eventually led to the fall of the Western Han Empire in 8 C.E.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² According to the Sima Qian, Empress Lü had Ruyi poisoned, and then proceeded to chop of Lady Qi's hands and feet, stab out her eyes, burn out her ears and make her drink a potion that made her mute before putting her in a latrine and calling her a 'human pig.' See *Shiji – Lü Taihou benji*, p. 84.

¹⁰³ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 135 -135.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 199.

¹⁰⁶ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 213 - 215. One of the most interesting characters in this story is Beauty Ban (Ban jieyu, 班婕妤) who composed the *Rhapsody of Self-commiseration* (*Zidao fu* 自悼賦) after being dismissed from the Emperor Cheng's 成帝 harem by the Zhao 趙 sisters. In this piece, Beauty Ban both quotes phrases from the *Shijing* and even refers to the names of poems themselves, indicating she was well versed in the corpus. During Emperor Cheng's reign a lady by the name of Cao Gong 曹宮 was known to give the Empress Xu 徐太后 instruction in the *Shijing* and as Knechtges notes this may have been part of training in womanly conduct. This was only a few years before the Mao tradition was given official patronage and I think we can argue that the importance of the *Shijing* as a text for teaching the women in the harem influenced the descriptions of female virtue in the Mao Prefaces. See Knechtges, "The Poetry of the Imperial Concubine," pp. 127 - 144.

¹⁰⁷ Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," p. 215.

3.3 — Keeping court women on the right path

One particularly interesting facet in the conflict between Emperor Cheng's consorts is the emergence of Confucian-inspired didactic texts for women. The Han history narrates how, with the chaos inside the royal harem causing consternation throughout the court, one particularly eminent Confucian scholar, Liu Xiang (79 - 8 B.C.E),¹⁰⁸ sought to control the dangers of ambitious women, not through force and violence but through text.

Liu Xiang watched the rise of vulgar customs, licentious behaviour and the way in which those from the originally lower-ranked Zhao and Wei families crossed the boundaries of propriety. Believing that the education of kings was a process running from the inner domain to the outer that began with those closest to the king, Liu Xiang collected stories of virtuous concubines and chaste consorts drawn from works of literature. Including models of women who strengthened their kingdoms and brought honour to their families and also the depraved favourites that brought chaos and ruin, he ordered the stories into an 8 chapter work entitled *Categorised Biographies of Women* (*Lienü zhuan* 列女傳) to serve as a warning for the emperor.¹⁰⁹

Liu Xiang's *Categorised Biographies of Women* is, as Anne Kinney notes in the introduction to her translation of the text, 'the earliest extant book in the Chinese tradition solely devoted to the moral education of women.'¹¹⁰ It is significant to note that the female virtue expressed in *Categorised Biographies of Women* which Li Xiang is reported to have submitted to the emperor in 17 B.C.E¹¹¹ is very similar to that described in the Mao Prefaces. Indeed, given that the Mao Prefaces' acceptance by the state at the beginning of the Common Era was largely due to the support it received from Liu Xiang's son Liu Xin, this is perhaps no coincidence. Perhaps the most striking similarity is found in the story of Fan Ji, the consort of King Zhuang of

¹⁰⁸ Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, p. XV.

¹⁰⁹ See Ban Gu, *Hanshu – Chu Yuanwang zhuan*, pp. 1957 - 1958.

¹¹⁰ Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, p. XV.

¹¹¹ Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, p. XVII.

Chu whose biography is listed along with that of other virtuous women in a chapter entitled ‘The Worthy and Enlightened.’ Mocking the King of Chu for believing that his own minister is worthy, Fan Ji reminded the king of the efforts she had undertaken in order to present him with worthy concubines, noting that although she would have preferred to be the sole recipient of his love, she would not place her individual interests above those of the kingdom. Fan Ji then explained how the king’s minister has only ever nominated his own family members and relatives for important assignments, clear evidence of the minister promoting his personal interests.¹¹²

3.4 — The Mao tradition as a didactic text for teaching female virtue

Thus within the example of Fan Ji, we find a narrative story that reinforces the descriptions of female virtue found in the Mao Preface for *Guanju*. When the two texts are read together, they work to reinforce and consolidate representations of female virtue within the minds of their readers. This connection between Liu Xiang’s work and the Mao Prefaces is further highlighted in the preface for the poem *Baizhou* (Mao 45),¹¹³ which, in its privileging of chaste widowhood, reflects many of the stories found in the ‘Chaste and Compliant’ chapter in the *Categorised Biographies of Women*.¹¹⁴ As the prefaces explain, *Baizhou* was originally:

The oath of Gong Jiang.

Gong Bo the eldest son of the king of Wei died young. Although his wife maintained her chastity, her parents wanted to force her to remarry. Swearing not to be married, she made this poem to reject them.¹¹⁵

Readers of the *Categorised Biographies of Women*, would naturally fit these actions into their understanding of the virtuous widow who would not remarry, and so the

¹¹² Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, p. 31.

¹¹³ There are two poems in the Mao tradition known as *Baizhou*, (Mao 26) and (Mao 45).

¹¹⁴ Kinney, *Exemplary Women of Early China*, p. 67 -86.

¹¹⁵ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 312.

emotion expressed in the body of the poem would be completely legitimised within the bounds of this proper conduct.

Unsteady is that cypress boat
 In the middle of the river.
 His two locks looped over his brow
 He swore that truly he was my comrade,
 And till death would love no other.
 Oh, mother, ah, Heaven,
 That a man could be so false!¹¹⁶

Although Waley understood this poem as a woman's complaint about her faithless lover, the ambiguities of the text allowed for a reading consistent with the Mao Preface's interpretations: the last lines could be rendered as 'Oh, mother, ah, father, why don't you believe me!'¹¹⁷ Protesting against her parents' wishes for her to remarry, the chaste widow of *Baizhou* is a Mao Preface creation that appropriates emotions expressed within the poem in the construction of a particular type of female virtue. When situated alongside the stories found in Liu Xiang's didactic text, the Mao Prefaces which interpret love poems in the *Shijing* as representations of female virtue can be seen as a continuation of the late Western Han drive to rectify the behaviour of female actors in the inner court. Court scholars who had previously only been able to watch on as self-motivated consorts increased their power could now use the text in defense of the empire. Providing interpretations that utilised the emotional power of the poems to create a model of female virtue, the Mao Prefaces were in many cases specially designed to instruct those women who might stray from such virtue. For women who had studied the Mao tradition, its construct of female virtue would become the models on which their own behaviour could be judged, serving to both remind them of the correct path and keep them from straying off it.

¹¹⁶ See Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 53.

¹¹⁷ The Chinese here reads as 'mu ye tian zhi, buliang ren zhi 母也天只，不諒人只.' The Mao Commentary glosses *liang* 諒 as *xin* 信 meaning 'trust' or 'believe' and glosses *tian* 天 as 'father.'

Chapter 4: No vulgarity

Having passed from pure thoughts to virtuous conduct, this final chapter explores the way in which the Mao tradition's political readings of love poems are connected to an understanding of *si wuxie* as meaning 'having no vulgarity.' In this chapter, the concept of vulgarity is here first understood as denoting the sexual nature of the poems which was the focus of the early modern scholars who were eager to eliminate the political interpretations of the poems and present them as 'vulgar' folk songs about romantic love.¹¹⁸ By examining two prefaces and their poems, this chapter questions these 'vulgarity-focused' readings and suggests that the Mao tradition's political interpretations of the poems were only continuing political readings inherent within the original *Shijing* poems themselves. Highlighting the way that these political interpretations allowed for male appropriation of the female voice, this chapter ends with an exploration of the way the female voice could be used to as a tool for expressing political criticism. Here, 'no vulgarity' takes on a deeper meaning of a language refined by the female voice that is both delicate and sharp and is able to be used to criticise others without fear of incurring violent retribution.

4.1 — Vulgar rustic love songs

Perhaps the most heinous crime of which traditional commentaries of the *Shijing* have been accused is the 'allegorisation' of love poetry, in which desire between lovers is presented as a form of political discourse between a lord and his subject. Especially critical of such interpretations were the early modern translators of the *Shijing*, whose attacks on the traditional commentary increased from Legge's

¹¹⁸ C.H.Wang suggests that in an attempt to free themselves of the classical tradition modern scholars may have unwittingly vulgarised the poems. *From Ritual to Allegory*, 1.

halfhearted critiques to Granet and Waley's outright denunciations of traditional *Shijing* interpretations, as they attempted to sift out the more amorous nature of the poems by separating them from the commentaries.¹¹⁹ Granet's first rule of how to read the poems in the *Shijing* is that "No attention will be paid to the classic interpretation, or to the variants of it which have survived."¹²⁰ For Granet, the ostensibly amorous poems of the *Shijing* were exactly what they appeared to be on the surface; rustic love songs.

Qiang Zhongzi (Mao 76), one of the most famous love poems in the whole corpus, is a key example of the process by which what seems to be a rural love song is transformed into a political allegory. Locating the origins of the poem in the kingdom of Zheng, which was famed for its sexually depraved songs,¹²¹ the Upper Preface sees no such signs of wantonness within the poem and instead interprets it as follows:

Criticising Duke Zhuang.¹²²

As recorded in the *Zuo Tradition*, Duke Zhuang was born feet first. Such a birth was both inauspicious and also very painful for his mother, who after giving birth

¹¹⁹ Legge is criticised by both Waley and Granet for not completely cutting ties with the traditional interpretive tradition. Waley remarks that 'Legge mixes up the Zhu Xi interpretation with that of the Han commentators and dilutes both with suggestions of his own, so that today his translation serves no useful purpose.' *The Book of Songs*, p. 337. Granet is even more critical of Legge, 'Legge appears to work upon the Classics rather with ancient China in view, but it must be admitted that his outlook on them is extraordinarily narrow. Often he seems to have no end in view beyond making an inventory of the literary labours of Confucius and deciding whether or not he was really a great man. A rather brief review which does not appreciate the real problems; a too-industrious scholarship with, apparently, no rules to guide it; a desire to show at times the absurdity of the commentaries and at others to include in his translation injudiciously selected notes, all these factors combine to detract from the value of his work, notwithstanding the fact that it was done under the most favourable material conditions.' *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, p. 16.

¹²⁰ *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, p. 26.

¹²¹ *Analects* 15.11. Confucius, asked on the how to govern a state, concludes that one should, 'Get rid of the Sounds of Zheng and banish clever talkers. The sounds of Zheng are licentious and clever talkers are a menace.' Dawson, *The Analects*, 61. Analysing a set of bells excavated in the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙, DeWoskin has shown that the licentious nature of the sounds of Zheng 鄭 was due to the introduction of a six-tone or seven-tone scale, as opposed to the traditional five-tone scale. *A Song for One or Two*, pp. 45, 90-92.

¹²² Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 337.

professed her hate for him and attempted to have her younger son inherit the kingdom.¹²³ Although unsuccessful in this endeavor, Duke Zhuang's mother persuaded him to grant his younger brother a city to rule over, a move highly criticised by the duke's loyal minister Zhai Zhong, who rightly feared that in granting his younger brother such power Duke Zhuang was increasing the risk of rebellion. Caught between the warnings of his minister and the entreaties of his mother, Duke Zhuang's dilemma is articulated in the Lower Preface.

He could not stand up to his mother to harm his brother. His younger brother Shu had lost the way and the duke did not control him. Zhai Zhong remonstrated but the duke did not listen. A lack of forbearance in small matters led to great chaos.¹²⁴

Having read the preceding preface, readers would now be able to connect the name of the subject in the poem, Zhong, which would normally refer to a second brother or simply as sir, with Duke Zhuang's faithful minister Zhai Zhong, thus allowing the poem to represent Duke Zhuang's entreaties to his minister that the latter should not to admonish the Duke for granting his brother a city.

I beg of you, Zhong zi,
Do not climb into our homestead,
Do not break the willows we have planted.
Not that I mind about the willows,
But I am afraid of my father and mother.
Zhong zi I dearly love;
But of what my father and mother say
Indeed I am afraid.¹²⁵

While Legge raises questions about the validity of the Preface interpretations, suggesting that the more probable reading was the one articulated by Zhu Xi of a

¹²³ Wang Yunwu, ed. *Chunqiu zuozhuan jinzhu jinyi*, vol 1, p. 4.

¹²⁴ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 337.

¹²⁵ Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 35.

woman warning off her ardent lover, Granet and Waley have no qualms in quashing the Mao interpretation in favour of their more vulgar readings of rural courtship.¹²⁶ Interestingly, it would seem that interpretations of secret courtship enacted by a daring lover were not the discoveries of modern scholars or even of Zhu Xi, for images of climbing into homesteads and breaking down bushes were quite possibly seen as referring to erotic affairs, even before the Han dynasty.¹²⁷ The ability of the Mao Preface writers to produce political readings of this poem seemingly suggests that they were trying to bring refinement to crude expression through allegory.¹²⁸

However, where such allegory begins is a point of speculation. For Haun Saussy, it is not simply a question of the allegory being articulated in the Prefaces, but rather a question of whether the poems themselves are allegorical. Saussy suggests that as the poems of the *Shijing* were composed over the span of several centuries during which the poems were often used in political discourses, the earlier poems may have influenced the composition of later poems.¹²⁹ This would mean that even at their very inception, many of the later poems in the *Shijing* may have themselves been deliberate allegories used for political discourse and were not the rustic love poems of Zhou lovers. With the love poems in the State Airs dated as the latest poems in the anthology, it is very probable that they may have been influenced by the more overtly

¹²⁶ Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol 4, pp. 126 - 127. Both Granet and Waley connect this poem with the secret visits a rural lover paid to his lady at night. Waley, *The Book of Songs*, pp. 34 -35. Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, p. 83.

¹²⁷ The image of jumping over a wall to get a woman is also found in Mencius, see Dobson's translation, "Or if you could only get a bride by climbing the wall of the house next door and abducting you neighbour's virgin daughter, would you do so?" *Mencius*, p. 93.

¹²⁸ Pauline Yu argues that what occurs in these interpretations is not a process of allegory but rather one of contextualisation in which the poems themselves are represented as 'literal vignettes' drawn from a historical reality. *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 76. This argument is critiqued persuasively by Saussy in *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, 24 - 46.

¹²⁹ Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, pp. 47 - 73. As Saussy shows, ancient users of the poems saw no need to distinguish 'original' meaning from what the poems could be made to mean in a certain context. cf. p. 64. Lewis explains this further saying that users of the poems in the *Zuo Tradition* were not concerned with the original sense of the verse but rather in "breaking apart the stanza to extract the meaning" (*duanzhang quyì* 斷章取義). Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 148.

political Court Hymns and Eulogies which are seen as having been composed much earlier.

Thus it may be that while scholars have been struggling for over a century to reveal the true meaning of *Shijing* love poems through cutting away at the inauthentic layers of traditional commentaries, the uncorrupted Ur-poems that they were seeking may ultimately prove to be allegories. If this is the case, then the political interpretations given by the Mao tradition are themselves only part of a poetic tradition that was already in existence at the time when many of the later *Shijing* poems were composed.

4.2 — Refined interpretations

Mugua (Mao 64) is another of the many State Airs poems that is given a political interpretation by the Mao Prefaces while ostensibly speaking (at least to readers such as Zhu Xi, Waley and Granet) of love between a man and a woman. Placed as the last poem of the state of Wei, the Upper Preface states that *Mugua* describes:

Praising Duke Huan of Qi.¹³⁰

As the Lower Preface explains, the people of Wei were forced to leave their homeland due to foreign incursions and were given assistance by Duke Huan of Qi in setting up a new place of residence.

Having been defeated by the Di barbarians, the people of Wei resided at Cao. Duke Huan of Qi supported them and provided them with land, bestowing on them chariots, horses, vessels and clothes. Thinking of this the people of Wei desired to reward him generously, and thus they made this poem.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 327.

¹³¹ Ruan Yuan, ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 327.

Such a reading for the poem would inevitably be questioned in the Song dynasty by readers like Zhu Xi, who through their close readings of the text imagined that what they saw was not gift-giving between states, but rather between debauched lovers.¹³² And while Waley and Granet continued with such interpretations, albeit in a pastoral rather than a debauched setting, it is perhaps revealing that Legge and other Qing Dynasty scholars such as Wang Xianqian were not convinced by Zhu Xi's readings.¹³³ Seeing the poem as a metaphor for the reciprocation of gifts and the importance of friendship, Legge felt no need to provide a pronoun that specified the gender of the unstated subject in the first line. In contrast, Waley has been inclined to further his interpretations of this text as a love poem by adding 'she.'

She threw a quince to me;
 In requital I gave a bright girdle-gem.
 No, not just requital;
 But meaning I would love her for ever.¹³⁴

But does 'she' really exist within the lines of the original poem? As Rouzer notes, gender can never be ascertained within the *Shijing* with any sense of epistemological certainty,¹³⁵ and though one might argue that images of fruit such as the quince (as well as the peach and plum of the following verses)¹³⁶ are often representative of female beauty in *Shijing* poems, there is absolutely no inherent textual element that necessitates the use of 'she'; indeed, Edwards' English rendition of Granet's French translation has this lover as 'him.'¹³⁷ While Legge adeptly traverses the difficulty of the invisible ungendered giver through the use of a dummy subject, "There was presented to me a papaya,"¹³⁸ ironically it is in the more imaginative translations of

¹³² Zhuxi, *Shi ji zhuan*, 41.

¹³³ Legge rejected Zhuxi's readings of it as an amorous text, suggesting that the poem itself was metaphorical and could have general applications. *Chinese Classics*, vol 4, p. 108. Wang Xianqian, *Sanjia yi jishu*, pp. 331 - 332.

¹³⁴ Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 31.

¹³⁵ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, p. 15.

¹³⁶ The connection of the peach and the bride was seen in *Tao yao* (Mao 6).

¹³⁷ Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, pp. 58 - 59.

¹³⁸ Legge is very thorough in his translation of botanical terms, but here seems to have missed the fact that the papaya is a modern use of the term *mugua* 木瓜. Waley notes that botanists identify *mugua* with *Cydonia Sinensis*

Ezra Pound who has no qualms about subject-absent sentences that we find probably the most literal translation, ‘Gave me a quince.’¹³⁹

Possibly even more confusing than the issue of gender is whether or not ‘love’ is present within the poem at all. The meaning of the second last word of each verse, *hao* 好, which Waley has translated above as love, is the one word within the poem upon which interpretational authority lies heaviest. Legge translates it as ‘friendship,’ a rendition that concurs with the *Kangxi Dictionary* and the more recent ancient Chinese dictionary edited by Wang Li and others, both of which use this line from *Mugua* as a model example for the definition of *hao* as friendship.¹⁴⁰ However in their endeavor to cast aside the repressive nature of traditional interpretations, Granet and Waley have portrayed the desire expressed within the poem as fitting for the rustic country setting in which they saw the poem as originating; both render *hao* in a way that would maintain the romantic reading, ‘love.’ Technically speaking, the *hao* of love and the *hao* of friendship are actually two different words with distinct pronunciations that are represented by the same graph 好. This distinction is still found in modern day Mandarin which continues the tradition of using the fourth tone to distinguish love (as a transitive verb) while using the third tone to denote being friends (an intransitive verb).¹⁴¹ Interestingly it would seem that the ancient sound glosses favour Waley and Granet, for Zhu Xi and the earlier phonetic guide given in *Annotations to the Classics (Jingdian shiwen 經典釋文)* both give fourth tone

(Chinese Quince). However in the proceeding verses Waley himself mistakes the fruits, as relying on the information from the *Compendium of materia media (Bencao gangmu 本草綱目)* he identifies *mutao* 木桃 and *muli* 木李 as *Cydonia Japonica* and the common quince. As Legge notes, this information in the *Compendium of materia media* was made for the sake of this particular poem and it is most probable that the preceding fruit terms refer in fact to a peach and a plum. Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 31. Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol 4, 108.

¹³⁹ Pound, *The Confucian Odes*, pp. 32.

¹⁴⁰ Wang Li et al, *Gudai Hanyu changyong zi zidian*, p. 142. *Kangxi zidian xiudingban*, p. 232.

¹⁴¹ Technically speaking the tone used for reading the Old Chinese word for love is known as the *Qusheng* 去聲, while a reading of friendship would use the tone known as *Shangsheng* 上聲. These two tones are not always the equivalent of modern day fourth and third tones.

readings for the *hao* in *Mugua*.¹⁴² With such linguistic evidence, can we be assured of the amorous intentions within which *Mugua* originated? Rouzer would suggest that we cannot.

In *Articulated Ladies*, a work which explores male literati appropriations of the female voice from the Han dynasty, Rouzer problematises the reading of *Mugua* that would see the poem as an expression of rural courtship, questioning whether such readings and their political Mao Preface counterparts were necessarily mutually exclusive.¹⁴³ Referring to a poem about a longing wife written by Lu Ji (261-303)¹⁴⁴ which quotes from *Mugua*, Rouzer suggests that early readers of the *Shijing* who were educated in the classical commentaries may not have felt it necessary to specify either political or amorous readings. For Rouzer, much of the reason that interpretations focused on love have been mandated in modern times is perhaps more to do with what he calls the ‘de-Confucianisation’ of the poems in the *Shijing* by modern scholars than with any inherent literary features.

It is perhaps then the modern reader who, having given precedence to desire of a heterosexual nature and interpretations of a rustic love, fails to grasp the possibility that the longing in the poems may lie outside the male female domain. Indeed it would seem that some of the lines from the poem *Mugua* itself originate from one of the historically earlier Major Court Hymns, where we find references to a similar fruit tossing ceremony presented in a political context.¹⁴⁵ This only highlights the way in

¹⁴² The *Annotations to the Classics* is a compilation of sound and meaning glosses for the Classics and was compiled by Lu Deming 陆德明 during the Sui dynasty around 589 C.E. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 372. The *Annotations to the Classics* is placed after the Zheng Xuan commentary in Ruan Yuan’s edition of the *Shisan jing zhushu*. Here the *fanqie* 反切 (Combining two characters together to work out the pronunciation of an unknown character) is given as 呼報反, which is a fourth tone or *qusheng* reading of *hao*. *Shisan jing zhushu*, p. 327. Zhu Xi gives the same gloss for pronunciation in his annotated version of the *Shijing* in the Song dynasty. Zhu Xi, *Shi ji zhuan*, 41.

¹⁴³ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, pp. 15 - 26.

¹⁴⁴ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁵ See the poem *Yi* (Mao 256)

which metaphors within the poems can take on meanings that validate both social and sexual readings, and as Rouzer warns, much is lost if we attempt to separate these two domains, or as in the case of many modern scholars, suppress the social altogether.¹⁴⁶ The Mao Prefaces' political reading of *Mugua* is not necessarily a rejection of the romantic emotions expressed in the poem, but rather an appropriation of these expressions in a social context that enables the poem to become more refined.

4.3 — The refined female voice

This process of refinement can also be found in the Mao Preface interpretations where there is a male appropriation of the female voice, of which the interpretation of *Qiang Zhongzi* as given above is a fitting example. Although the female voice in *Shijing* poems is often seen as representing the true voice of the common Zhou woman, many of the *Shijing* poems which express a woman's longing are not in fact the works of an anonymous rustic female but rather of an educated male scholar. Just as Rouzer finds much male appropriation of the female voice in male-authored texts from the Han to the Song, many of the *Shijing* poems which express a woman's longing are interpreted by the Mao Prefaces as belonging to the realm of men. For David McCraw, male appropriation of the female voice within *Shijing* poems was a later phenomenon that was preceded by the true voices of the 'Chinawoman,' the catalyst of change being the social transformation from a more egalitarian Neolithic society to a male dominated agrarian society.¹⁴⁷ If this was true then it would seem that we have come full cycle, a journey of *Shijing* interpretations that begins at the sexual, strays into the political, before finally returning again to their long lost origins. If we are to accept the view of most modern scholars that the poems in the *Shijing* were the products of a highly literate class and furthermore that this high literary language belonged to the male domain,¹⁴⁸ then the composition of rustic folk songs

¹⁴⁶ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Mc Craw, *How the Chinawoman Lost Her Voice*, pp. 16 - 19.

¹⁴⁸ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, p. 8.

written in the female voice becomes problematic. While many have questioned what use the social elite might have for poems stemming from a folk tradition, perhaps the more correct question to ask here is, borrowing the words of Rouzer, “what advantage lies in the “feminine?””¹⁴⁹ I believe that we may find some semblance of an answer within the Mao tradition itself.

In the Mao tradition’s Great Preface, one of the important uses of the poems in the State Airs is stated as:

Those above used the ‘[State] Airs’ to transform those below; those below used the “[State] Airs” to satirize those above. The speaker who emphasises pattern and admonishes discreetly is guilty of no offense, and the hearer is sufficiently warned.¹⁵⁰

This claim that the poems could be used as a way of legitimately criticising those in authority underscores the formulation of many of the Mao Prefaces, which as we see in the example of *Qiang Zhongzi*, reveal the originating intention of the poem as the criticism of a particular ruler. Here the emphasis on patterning, which Van Zoeren translates as a striving for “delicacy,”¹⁵¹ refers to the way in which certain literary measures can refine a socially dangerous discourse, both allowing it to be more palatable while acquitting its interlocutor of the charge of causing offense. This desire to avoid culpability may have played an important role in male literati’s appropriation of the feminine voice.

For those elite individuals and officials navigating the perils of ancient courts, use of the feminine voice may have helped them to avoid the direct danger that remonstrating with one’s superior brings. Taking on a female voice would at once render the speaker as seductive and inferior, diminishing the threat from superiors

¹⁴⁹ Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁰ Translation by Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, p. 79.

¹⁵¹ Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 96.

while at the same time increasing the speaker's persuasive power. In a conceptual domain that did not distinguish love from politics, the plaint of a deserted wife as we find in *Baizhou* could now reveal the anguish of a rejected minister in a way that would not directly accuse the lord that had spurned him. In effect, assuming the feminine voice would allow elite males to soften their political punches, while at the same time, providing a mode of discourse that made their attacks more refined.

One might suggest that the 'refined' nature of criticism is apparent in the word for criticism itself, *ci* 刺. Used in the Mao Prefaces to articulate 'criticism,' *ci* is not evocative of some crude verbal attack, for taking its original meaning from 'thorn' or 'splinter,' and extended meanings of 'prick' and 'stab' endow this criticism with a sense of calculated precision that is designed to stimulate, not maim. Thus wielded, *ci* is not the mace of the knight, but the needle of the lady, allowing its user the right to take the offensive without necessitating violent retaliation. This connection between the stab of criticism and the prick of a needle, is perhaps evident in the semantic layers of the needle itself, for the word *zhen* 箴 can refer to both the sewing instrument as well as the admonishment that comes with its use as a social tool for criticism. Writing in the Eastern Han, Ban Zhao's poem on the nature of the needle playfully spins between these two meanings.

Truly the miracles worked by needle and thread

Extend far and wide, although they have no source!¹⁵²

And while connections between needlework and woman's work may seem fraught with essentialism, perhaps what the male adoption of the female voice really signifies is a declaration of the author's refinement in which the speaker seeks to undermine the threat of words through presenting them as inferior, while at the same time increasing their persuasive power. Such modes of discourse could be used by both ruler and subject, with either of them able to render themselves inferior or superior

¹⁵² Idema & Grant, *The Red Brush*, p. 30.

when they sought to chastise the faults of others. In this way the Mao Tradition's political interpretations of love poems that allowed male literati to appropriate the female voice can be seen as presenting more refined understandings of these poems so that they might be effectively used as tools for social criticism. Like an acupuncture doctor carefully inserting his needle into sick patients, users of these refined poems would be able to administer to the health of the state and its subjects, free from fear of the retribution that follows when one "attempts to cure headaches with an axe."¹⁵³

¹⁵³ There is an interesting connection between *xie* 邪 and acupuncture. In traditional Chinese medicine *xie* refers to the unhealthy influences that cause disease. In perhaps one of the oldest texts associated with acupuncture, the *Ling Shu* 靈樞 (one of the four books that makes up the *Huangdi neijing* 皇帝內經 that is thought to have been written before the common era) contains a few passages that describe the removal of 邪 through acupuncture. See Shibue Chūsai, *Lingshu jiangyi*, p. 46. The story of curing headaches with an axe is one of the many anecdotal folk legends surrounding the famous doctor Hua Tuo 華佗, who in suggesting to chop a hole in Caocao's 曹操 head as a remedy for the general's headache, inevitably led to his own head being chopped.

Conclusion:

This thesis has endeavored to show the way in which the Mao tradition's interpretation of love poems in the *Shijing* connects with what Confucius described as the essence of the *Shijing*, the principle of *si wuxie*, a phrase that this thesis has interpreted as having three different resonances in the Mao tradition – having no depravity in one's thoughts, not swerving from the right path and being without vulgarity. My exploration of the Mao interpretations of *Shijing* love poems began by examining the Mao Prefaces of poems that deliberately worked to prevent the thoughts of its reader from straying onto improper subjects, namely romantic love and sexual desire – this is what I refer to as having no depravity. I suggest that the Mao tradition differed from all previous traditions in its understanding of sexual desire. Although the school of thought that is now affiliated to Confucius had long placed emphasis on moderation and self-restraint, when it came to matters of sexual desire the Mao tradition was profoundly puritanical, much more so than Confucius and his immediate successors. This dramatic shift in the understanding of love and sexual desire was, I argue, a product of its times, and reflects both the increasing institutionalisation of Confucianism towards the end of the Western Han and also the politics of the time. The exact causes and the exact chronology of this change in the understanding of sexual desire is a possible topic for future research, as is the influence this understanding had on the lived experience of *Shijing* readers after the Han.

The later period of the Western Han also saw a rise in the discourse around female virtue, and it is here that we find connections to the second meaning of *si wuxie*, 'swerving not from the right path.' This meaning entails the concept of a

‘correct path,’ and we find this concept in the Mao Prefaces description of female virtue. I argue that in creating a construct of female virtue that emphasised the state over the individual, the Mao Prefaces were a reaction to the threat that court women posed to the Han Empire. One of the more interesting observations that emerged from my analysis of the Mao Prefaces was their striking similarities to *Categorised Biographies of Women*. That there is such similarity in the ideals of female virtue between the two texts is perhaps not surprising, as Liu Xiang, the author of *Categorised Biographies of Women*, was the father of Liu Xin, the force behind the Mao tradition’s attainment of state patronage. Further exploration of the relationships, between father and son, between Liu Xin and the Mao tradition, and between the Mao Tradition and the other classic texts that Liu Xin promoted (especially the *Zhou Rites* and the *Zuo Tradition*), will undoubtedly provide greater understanding of how and why this discourse of female virtue was constructed towards the end of the Western Han.

Transcending the previous two traditional interpretations of *si wuxie*, the last chapter of this thesis explored how the Mao tradition’s political interpretations of *Shijing* love poems can be understood as connected to *si wuxie* ‘having no vulgarity.’ Contrasting these political interpretations with the more ‘vulgar’ readings of modern scholars, I suggested that neither reading could be completely confirmed or refuted and that furthermore, the Mao tradition’s political interpretations were not the creation of their compilers, but were rather a continuation of a long tradition of allegory that had begun with the *Shijing* poems themselves. Perhaps one of the most interesting observations here is that early readers of the Mao tradition could move between the vulgar and refined understandings of the *Shijing* love poems while later readers, from the Song to modern times, have tended to privilege only one interpretation.¹⁵⁴ For

¹⁵⁴ In Chapter Four the example of Lu Ji showed how a third century C.E *Shijing* reader could have a courtship reading of a poem that the Mao tradition interpreted as political. Kern has also revealed numerous other cases in which early readers of the *Shijing* interpreted poems in ways that differed from the orthodox Mao tradition. See Kern, “Beyond the *Mao* Odes.” However, while Kern takes this as evidence that the other earlier interpretive

other contemporary readers and students of the *Shijing* who like myself, are caught up in the contradiction between the love of the poems and its absence in the commentaries, this understanding allows one to view the Mao commentary outside of a ‘love repression’ framework. In this way the more complex implications of the Mao tradition’s political interpretations can be explored. The fourth chapter ended with an example of one such exploration, namely the way in which refined interpretations that present male appropriation of the female voice allowed the poems to be used as tools of criticism.

The Mao tradition is not the only interpretation of the meanings of the poems in the *Shijing* that has connections with the many meanings of *si wuxie*. As understandings of the nature of the orthodox and heterodox have shifted with the passing of time, one could even argue that the modern day interpretations of Waley and Granet are themselves representatives of *si wuxie*. Unswerving in their pursuit to find the ‘true’ meaning of the *Shijing* poems, their determination not to be distracted from the evils of traditional interpretations is itself only a transformation of the Mao tradition’s drive not to be lured by the dangers of sexual desire. Indeed, while the connection between the *Shijing* and the Mao tradition has long been established, it may be that the essence of the *Shijing*, encapsulated in *si wuxie*, is the connection that binds the *Shijing* to all its commentaries.

traditions such as those seen in the *Wuxingpian* and the Three Schools were still prominent, I believe that early readers of the *Shijing* did not read the Mao tradition interpretations as ‘The’ interpretation, but only as an interpretive possibility. It would seem that for the Mao tradition, this shift from ‘interpretive possibility’ to ‘interpretive authority’ had its genesis in the Song dynasty as evident in the attacks by scholars such as Zhu Xi who felt that the traditional interpretations were ‘incorrect.’ Such an attack could only have arisen with the understanding that the Mao tradition was meant to provide a ‘correct’ reading of the poems.

Appendices:

Translations of the Mao Prefaces with their Chinese original texts.

Chapter Two:

Hanguang (Mao 9)

Upper Preface: 德廣所及也

Expansive virtue reaches far

Lower Preface: 文王之道被于南國。美化行乎江漢之域。無思犯禮。求而不可得也。

The virtuous way of King Wen stretched out across the southern lands. His beautifying force spread through the lands of the Yangtze and the Han River. There were no thoughts of transgressing propriety. Seeking, one was not able to attain.

Yuechu (Mao 143)

Upper Preface: 刺好色也

Criticising the love of sexual pleasure.

Lower Preface: 在位不好德而說美色焉。

Those ruling did not love virtue but rather took delight in beautiful women.

Xi you changchu (Mao 148)

Lower Preface: 國人疾其君之淫恣。而思無情慾者也。

The people detested their ruler's licentiousness and longed for a ruler who did not have desire.

Chapter Three

Guanju (Mao 1)

Upper Preface: 后妃之德也

The virtue of the royal consort.

Lower Preface: 是以《關雎》樂得淑女以配君子。愛在進賢。不淫其色。哀窈窕。思賢才。而無傷善之心焉。是《關雎》之義也。

Therefore in *Guanju* there is delight in obtaining a beautiful girl as a match for the lord. Delighting in presenting those of worth, she is not excessive in desire. Sorrowing for the lovely lady and thinking of this lady's talents, the goodness of her heart is not injured. This is the meaning of *Guanju*.

Taoyao (Mao 6)

Lower Preface: 不妬忌。則男女以正。婚姻以時。國無鰥民也

As she was not jealous there was rectification between men and women, marriages were performed at the correct times and no man was without a wife.

Baizhou (Mao 45)

Upper Preface: 共姜自誓也。

The oath of Gong Jiang.

Lower Preface: 衛世子共伯蚤死。其妻守義。父母欲奪而嫁之。誓而弗許。故作是詩以絕之。

Gong Bo the eldest son of the king of Wei died young. Although his wife maintained her chastity, her parents wanted to force her to remarry. Swearing not to be married, she made this poem to reject them.

Chapter Four

Qiang Zhongzi (Mao 76)

Upper Preface: 刺莊公也

Criticising Duke Zhuang.

Lower Preface: 不勝其母以害其弟。弟叔失道公弗制。祭仲諫而公弗聽。小不忍以致大亂焉。

He could not stand up to his mother to harm his brother. His younger brother Shu had lost the way and the duke did not control him. Zhai Zhong remonstrated but the duke did not listen. A lack of forbearance in small matters led to great chaos.

Mugua (Mao 64)

Upper Preface: 美齊桓公也。

Praising Duke Huan of Qi.

Lower Preface: 衛國有狄人之敗。出處于漕。齊桓公救而封之。遺之車馬器服焉。衛人思之。欲厚報之。而作是詩也。

Having been defeated by the Di barbarians, the people of Wei resided at Cao. Duke Huan of Qi supported them and provided them with land, bestowing on them chariots, horses, vessels and clothes. Thinking of this the people of Wei desired to reward him generously, and thus they made this poem.

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