

Between Self-Indulgence and Self-Restraint—Tao Qian’s “Quieting the Passions”

Lawrence C. H. YIM

Assistant Research Fellow

Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica

Keywords: Tao Qian “Xian qing fu” image of the lady love ideal
intertextuality eroticism

NOT only an all-time great poet but also a paragon of morality and principle, Tao Qian 陶潛 (Yuanming 淵明; 365-427) confounded many readers with his sexually charged rhapsodic poem, “Quieting the Passions” (“Xian qing fu” 閑情賦). Tao composed it as a *fu* 賦, a “rhapsody” in highly ornate and stylized language, that does not usually characterize him. Critics have ceaselessly argued over the value and purpose of “Quieting the Passions” since its composition.

In his preface to the *fu*, Tao names his precursors and lays out the tradition he claims to follow:

In the beginning, Zhang Heng [78-139] composed a *fu* entitled “Stabilizing the Passions,” and Cai Yong [132-192] one “Calming the Passions.” Both shunned fancy language and aspired to naturalness: they first gave themselves over to imaginations, but in the end returned to tranquility and propriety. Their works serve to curb the caprices of the wayward mind, and must be considered worthy of moral criticism and remonstrance. Men of letters in the ensuing ages have continued this tradition. They have been stirred by similar feelings and have enriched the lexicon and nuances. I have much leisure residing in my farm; I, too, wet my brush and treated the theme.

I am indebted to Professor Kang-i Sun Chang, Professor C. H. Wang, Elizabeth Jackson and Robert Green for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. My gratitude also goes to the two anonymous readers of my manuscript, whose constructive criticisms and suggestions have been taken into serious consideration in preparing this version.

Although my literary skills surely leave much to be desired, I have perhaps not deviated from the intent of my precedents.¹

初張衡作〈定情賦〉，蔡邕作〈靜情賦〉。檢逸辭而宗澹泊，始則蕩以思慮，而終歸閑正。將以抑流宕之邪心，諒有助於諷諫。綴文之士，奕代繼作，並因觸類，廣其辭義。余園闕多暇，復染翰爲之，雖文妙不足，庶不謬作者之意乎？

Tao particularly emphasizes the tradition's moral purpose, that self-criticism and persuasion lead to a renunciation of wayward pleasures. Simplicity of style and the progressive refining of content calm and redirect the minds of author and reader alike. Yet this is not at all the sense of Tao's own *fu*. Although he avoids characteristic mention of wine,² Tao indulges liberally in the powerful intoxicants of love and carnal desire. In the preface, Tao suggests that by writing this *fu*, reconstructing desire through literature, he can overcome it. The remark at the end of the passage would have us believe that this piece is a mere imitation of its precedents, what some critics have called a "writing exercise." Tao's success in overcoming his own desire is uncertain. His purportedly transcendental conclusion simply nods to avert circumstance, and by the same token, calls into question his devotion to the tradition.

I. The Convention of "Quieting the Passions"

This essay probes the nuance of the lady in "Quieting the Passions," focusing on the beginning of the *fu* (lines 1-28). Tao Qian breathes new life into this image. Three elements—love, music, and seduction—play a particularly important role in molding the lady's character. This essay brings to light the significance of this figure in the particular tradition of *fu* in which woman and music are employed as aesthetic and cultural symbols.

¹ All translations in this essay are mine, but I have benefited immensely from A.R. Davis' *T'ao Yuan-ming (AD 365-427): His Works and Their Meaning* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983). I have also drawn on James Hightower's "The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17 (1954): 169-230. My debt of gratitude to them, and other translators of early Chinese poetry, is reflected in the footnotes. Davis renders "Xian *qing fu*" as "Quieting the Affections," but I prefer to translate it "Quieting the Passions." Hightower uses "passions" to render *qing* 情 as well. For Tao Qian's works, I follow Lu Qinli 遼欽立, ed., *Tao Yuanming ji* 陶淵明集 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1987). For the entire text of "Xian *qing fu*," see pp. 152-159.

² Drinking was a favorite subject of Tao, so much so that the saying "there is drinking in every piece of his works" has been in currency since shortly after his death. See Xiao Tong's 蕭統 preface to Tao's writings, in Beijing Daxue Zhongwenxi 北京大學中文系 et al., eds., *Tao Yuanming yanjiu ziliao huibian* 陶淵明研究資料彙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), pp. 8-9. For a study of Tao's drinking poems, see James Hightower, "T'ao Ch'ien's 'Drinking Wine' Poems," in James Hightower & Florence Chia-ying Yeh, *Studies in Chinese Poetry* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), pp. 3-36.

The Latter Han (25-220) and the WeiJin (220-420) periods witnessed a proliferation of the theme of "Quieting the Passions." Tao Qian's and the following seven works, Tao's precedents, are consanguineous:

Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78-139) "Stabilizing the Passions" ("Ding qing fu" 定情賦)

Cai Yong's 蔡邕 (132-192) "Curbing Excess" ("Jian yi fu" 檢逸賦)³

Ruan Yu's 阮瑀 (ca. 165-212) "Putting a Stop to Desires" ("Zhi yu fu" 止欲賦)

Wang Can's 王粲 (177-217) "Stilling Evil Passions" ("Xian xie fu" 閑邪賦)

Ying Yang's 應瑒 (?-217) "Rectifying the Passions" ("Zheng qing fu" 正情賦)

Chen Lin's 陳琳 (?-217) "Putting a Stop to Desires" ("Zhi yu fu" 止欲賦)

Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192-232) "Stilling Thoughts of Longing" ("Jing si fu" 靜思賦)

James Hightower, in his meticulous study of Tao Qian's *fu*, adds to this genealogy two more, namely, Yang Xiu's (175-219) 楊修 "The Goddess" ("Shennu fu" 神女賦) and Zhang Hua's 張華 (232-300) "Eternal Love" ("Yonghuai fu" 永懷賦). Hightower provides English translations for all the above, except for those of Yang Xiu and Zhang Hua.⁴

All these *fu* follow the conventional narrative structure and take up the conventional theme. This leads Hightower to conclude that Tao's "Quieting the Passions" is "an apprentice exercise in versification," that Tao "was not striving for originality in his own version."⁵ A.R. Davis, an able translator and commentator of Tao Qian's works, shares Hightower's opinion: "We are here faced with an apparently very close and very skillful following of existing models, in which we cannot detect the individuality of the author, as we do in his other work, and this must leave us inevitably dissatisfied."⁶

"Textual imitation," as Joseph Allen reasons in his study of *Yuefu* poetry, is "deliberate modeling of one literary work or type on another."⁷ He expounds:

In its simplest form, imitation is the author's intent and is in the author's control; it is fully present in the reader's understanding of the work, or so the author hopes. The author turns directly to a text, or a text type . . . and reproduces a variation of it. The model is either specifically or implicitly announced, and the success of the imitation is judged against the model.⁸

³ "Jian yi fu" should be the "Jing qing fu" mentioned in Tao's preface.

⁴ See James Hightower, "The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien": 169-188.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 181 & 196.

⁶ Davis, I, p. 191.

⁷ Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992), p. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

The Latter Han and Wei-Jin *fu* traditions provide what Allen would call “a titular set”⁹ of “Quieting the Passions.” Shared or derived titles, common narrative structure, and a common symbolism link these *fu*. If Hightower and Davis were correct in their arguments, a further study of the titular set and Tao’s piece would expose the repetitive borrowings of a stylized archaism. Instead, comparative study shows that Tao Qian develops some themes, downplays others, and gives the genus an entirely new tone. It is edifying to compare Tao Qian’s *fu* with its “models.” For this purpose, I have constructed a “prototext” of “Quieting the Passions” as follows. Of the seven *fu* that we listed above, from Zhang Heng’s to Cao Zhi’s, none remains in a complete form, yet Ying Yang’s “Rectifying the Passions” features most of the elements that we find in Tao Qian’s work. We use Ying’s as the mainstay and add on it as many exemplary fragments from the others as possible, sacrificing chronology, to recreate the theme’s high points before Tao. (The source of each fragment is given in the parentheses; section headings are my own addition.)¹⁰

A

夫何媛女之殊麗兮	O what rare beauty of this fine lady!
咨濫惠而明哲	She is so very gently kind and wise.
應靈和以挺質	Endowed with spiritual harmony, her virtues were formed,
體蘭茂而瓊潔	Embodying the orchid’s luxuriance and the jasper’s purity.
方往載其鮮雙	Look in years past, there was rarely her match,
曜來今而無列	She shines, in the present she knows no equal.
發朝陽之鴻暉	She emits the immense light of the morning sun,
流精睇而傾世	She flashes sparkling glances, profuse!
既榮麗而冠時	Not only is she lushly beautiful, peerless in her time,
援申女而比節	She also aspires to be as virtuous as the lady Shen.

(Ying Yang, “Rectifying the Passions”)

B

余心嘉夫淑美	My heart delights in her refined beauty,
願結歡而靡因	Yearning to be joined in pleasure with her, but there is no medium.
承窈窕之芳美	Overwhelmed by her profound charm with fragrant grace,
情踊躍乎若人	My feelings hop around this person.
魂翩翩而夕遊	In the evening my soul wanders, fluttering
甘同夢而交神	Longing to share a dream in which our spirits intercourse.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Compare Hightower’s translations in “The *Fu* of T’ao Ch’ien”: 179-180. The Chinese texts are based on Yan Kejun 嚴可均, ed., *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958). See *Quan Hou-Han wen* 全後漢文, 42.1b-2a, for Ying Yang’s “Zheng qing fu”; 92.1a-b for Chen Lin’s “Zhi yu fu”; 53.9b for Zhang Heng’s “Ding qing fu”; 69.4a for Cai Yong’s “Jian yi fu”; and 93.1a-b for Ruan Yu’s “Zhi yu fu.”

晝彷徨于路側
宵耿耿而達晨

In the daytime I loiter by the roadside, bewildered
At nighttime I remain disquieted until daybreak.

(Ying Yang, "Rectifying the Passions")

C

欲語言于玄鳥
玄鳥逝以差池
道攸長而路阻
河廣濶而無梁
雖企予而欲往
非一葦之可航

I wish to speak to the swallow,
But it flies away, feathers ruffled.
The journey is distant and long, and the road blocked,
The River is broad and swirling, there is no bridge.
I stand on tiptoe, longing to forge ahead,
But it cannot be crossed on a reed.

(Chen Lin, "Putting a Stop to Desires")

D

思在前爲明鏡
哀既往于替¹¹

I fancy myself to be facing her, the bright mirror,
But how sad it must be when it is replaced . . .

(Ying Yang, "Rectifying the Passions")

思在面爲鉛華兮
患離塵而無光

I fancy myself to be on her face, the powder,
But I fear it will be soiled and loses its luster.

(Zhang Heng, "Stabilizing the Pleasures")

思在口而爲簧鳴
哀聲獨不敢聆

I fancy myself to be in her mouth, the reed pipe resonating,
But the tune is too sad to listen to alone.

(Cai Yong, "Curbing Excess")

E

清風厲于玄序
涼飈逝于中唐
聽雲鴈之翰鳴
察列宿之華輝
南星晃而電隕
偏雄肅而特飛
冀騰言以俯首
嗟激迅而難追
傷往禽之無侶
悼流光之不歸
愍伏辰之方逝
哀吾願之多違
步便旋以永思
情慄慄而傷悲

Cool winds turn sharp in the ninth month,
A chill gale crosses the courtyard.
I listen to the high cry of the wild goose in the clouds,
And I watch the gleaming rays of the stellar constellations.
The Southern Star flickers, lighting descends,
The lone male bird flies swiftly by himself.
I hope the bird will lower its head and deliver to me words,
But, alas, it speeds away, impossible to pursue.
I sympathize with the passing bird who has no mate,
I lament that bygone time cannot be regained.
I agonize over the likely union that has just slipped away,
I am saddened, that my wishes are all unfulfilled.
My pace purposeless, I am lost in deep thinking,
My feelings sad and forlorn, I am in grief.

(Ying Yang, "Rectifying the Passions")

F

還伏枕以求寐
庶通夢而交神

I return to lie on my bed, hoping to get some sleep,
May that through a dream our souls will meet.

¹¹ The original character is corrupted, and the translation of this line gratuitous.

神惚恍而難遇
思交錯以續紛
遂終夜而靡見
東方旭以既晨

My soul feels lost and hers is nowhere near,
My thoughts are confused, disconcerted.
The night is through and she cannot be seen,
The east lightens, ushering in dawn.

(Ruan Yu, "Putting a Stop to Desires")

G

知所思之不得
乃抑情以自信

I know whom I long cannot be reached,
So I suppress my feelings and fortify myself.

(Ruan Yu, "Putting a Stop to Desires")

This reconstructed proto-"Quieting the Passions" embodies seven sections, as represented above. The first (Section A) presents the pleasing sensuous and spiritual beauty of the woman who caught the speaker's fancy. In the second (Section B), the speaker is tortured by his passion for the idealized being. In the third (Section C), the speaker searches for a suitable intermediary to relay his love. In the fourth (Section D), he indulges in a fantasy about a union that he knows is impossible. The fourth section is followed by a relatively longer passage (Sections E & F) in which two elements reflect the strife in the speaker's mind: the speaker recognizes the impossibility of any contact between himself and the lady, but still invents fantastic rendezvous. In the final section (Section G), the speaker composes himself and resolutely puts aside his desire.¹²

Tao Qian's "Quieting the Passions" follows the same schema. However, "Quieting the Passions" makes three significant contributions to the earlier tradition. First, in the first section Tao Qian describes not only the lady's beauty and virtue, but also her inner feelings. He follows this with a description of the lady playing music. Second, Tao Qian develops the fantasies about the impossible union into "ten wishes" (*shi yuan* 十願), ten metaphysical conceits that occupy almost one third of the poem. Third, the final self-purification process is much more sophisticated and elaborate. Tao Qian draws on nature as an arbiter of passion, and calls on nature's changes to dispel his own desires. These three contributions show Tao Qian's genius. Tao's "Quieting the Passions" shares a tradition, but it is by no means a grim imitation that lacks "originality" and "individuality." To write in a recognizable convention is not tantamount to imitation in the narrow sense. Wai-yee Li, in her study of love and illusion in Chinese lyrical traditions, explores the subtleties of the "ten wishes" in "Quieting the Passions":

The real pathos lies not in the impossibility of the wishes, but in the fact that, even if the wishes were granted, the result still would be only transient bliss. The logic of

¹² Compare Hightower's description of the structure of Tao Qian's *fu*, in "The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien": 195-196.

inevitable frustration and melancholy is relentlessly spun out In each of these ten wishes, the first two lines describe the poet's fantasy of being transformed into an object close to the lady, and the last two reveal how temporality renders all hopes of permanent union futile. It is the heightened consciousness of the passage of time and the eternal flux of all things that paves the way for the final message of Taoist detachment¹³

And Kang-i Sun Chang, in her *Six Dynasties Poetry*, identifies the observation of nature as a vehicle for overcoming personal desires in "Quieting the Passions" with a prominent tendency in Tao Qian's verse. Chang suggests:

T'ao Ch'ien's "Fu on Calming [Quieting] the Passions" is dramatically opposed to such earlier *fu* as Song Yü's (3rd century B.C.) "Kao-t'ang fu" and Ts'ao Chih's "Lo-shen fu" in one significant aspect: whereas nature provides convenient settings for erotic love in these earlier *fu*, it serves a completely different function in T'ao Ch'ien's *fu*. Certainly T'ao Ch'ien's piece, as is expressed clearly in his "Preface," is written in perfect awareness of the convention in *fu* to write about quieting the passions. But his remarkable description of nature's power to transcend excessive feeling is an original contribution to the *fu* tradition. The belief that nature, in the sense of *tzu-jan*, is the key to self-realization is uniquely at the heart of T'ao Ch'ien's poetics, one which I would call "lyrical sublimation."¹⁴

Although whether the sway of nature had gotten the speaker of "Quieting the Passions" over his fancies is, in my opinion, uncertain, the lyrical representation of such an intense, genuine struggle is indeed new to the *fu* tradition. Much critical attention has been given to the "ten wishes" and the "lyrical sublimation" of "Quieting the Passions," but the representation of the female in the *fu* is never fully explored. We devote the following discussions to the lady in "Quieting the Passions."

II. Melancholy, Music, and the Love Ideal

First an assemblage of portraits from the "Quieting the Passions" genus:¹⁵

¹³ Waiyee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 38-39.

¹⁴ Kang-i Sun Chang, *Six Dynasties Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 45-46.

¹⁵ See note #10 for citations for Zhang Heng, Cai Yong, Ruan Yu, Chen Lin, and Ying Yang. See *Quan Hou-Han wen*, 90.2b, for Wang Can and *Quan Sanguo wen* 全三國文, 13.4a, for Cao Zhi, both in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*.

Zhang Heng 張衡, "Ding qing fu" 定情賦	Cai Yong 蔡邕, "Jian yi fu" 檢逸賦	Ruan Yu 阮瑀, "Zhi yu fu" 止欲賦	Wang Can 王粲, "Xian xie fu" 閑邪賦	Chen Lin 陳琳, "Zhi yu fu" 止欲賦	Ying Yang 應瑒, "Zheng qing fu" 正情賦	Cao Zhi 曹植, "Jing si fu" 靜思賦	Tao Qian 陶潛, "Xian qing fu" 閑情賦
夫何妖女之淑麗	夫何族族之媛女	夫何淑女之佳麗	夫何英媛之麗女	媛哉逸女	夫何麗女之殊麗兮	夫何美女之嫵妖	夫何逸逸之令姿
光華艷而秀容 斷當時而呈美 冠服固而無雙	顏煥燁而含榮 普天壤其無備 曠千載而特生	顏灼灼以流光 歷千代其無匹 超古今而特章 軌妙年之方盛 性聰惠以和良 秉純潔之明節 後申禮以自防 重行義以輕身 志高尚乎貞妻	貌向美而動逸 橫四海而無仇 超羣世而秀出 發唐棣之春華 當盛年而處室	在余東漢 色曜春華 艷逾碩人 乃述古其嘉傳 固當世之無鄰 允宜國而宣家 實君子之攸儀	亦溫惠而明行 應麗和以美質 體麗茂而瓊潔 力往載其鮮雙 耀來今而無列 流精歸而超淫 既榮麗而冠時 援申女而比節	紅顏暉而流光 卓特出而無匹 呈才好其莫當 性溫暢以聰惠 行縝密而妍詳	獨曠世以秀群 表傾城之艷色 期有德於傳聞 佩鳴玉以比潔 齊幽蘭以爭芬 淡柔情於俗內

Like other earlier fu on the same theme, "Quieting the Passions" begins by praising the lady's unmatched beauty and virtues:

夫何瓌逸之令姿	O what spectacularly beautiful demeanor—
獨曠世以秀群	Unique, peerless and outstanding!
表傾城之艷色	She shows devastating charms,
期有德於傳聞	And aims to be virtuous in people's mouth.
佩鳴玉以比潔	She wears jingling jades to match her purity,
齊幽蘭以爭芬	Arranges hidden orchids around, to compete with their fragrance.
淡柔情於俗內	She hides her tender feelings from the vulgar crowd,

負雅志於高雲 Carries refined aspirations lofty as clouds.¹⁶

(lines 1-8)

Tao Qian draws on stock attributes from the common repertoire of the earlier *fu* in describing this lady’s sensuous and moral qualities. In lines 5-8, we have, among others, “orchid” (*lan* 蘭) and “jade” (*yu* 玉), symbolic of purity. Before Tao’s use of them, these two symbols appear together in Ying Yang’s “Rectifying the Passions”:

應靈和以挺質 Endowed with spiritual harmony, her virtues were formed,
體蘭茂而瓊潔 Embodying the orchid’s luxuriance and the jasper’s purity.¹⁷

Although Tao Qian uses the same symbols to suggest the same qualities, there is an essential difference between his *fu* and Ying Yang’s. Ying Yang attributes the character of the orchid and the jade to his lady. The lady in “Quieting the Passions” herself strives to match their character (lines 3-4). A series of strong, transitive verbs—namely, *pei* 佩, *bi* 比, *qi* 齊, *zheng* 爭, *dan* 淡, *fu* 負—manifest her efforts (lines 5-6). This is the grammar of “Encountering Sorrow” (“Li sao” 離騷), for example:

紛吾既有此內美兮 Blessed I with such innate virtues,
又重之以脩能 I enriched them with cultivated abilities.
扈江離與辟芷兮 I put on selinea and shady angelica,
紉秋蘭以爲佩 And I wear autumn orchids as ornaments.¹⁸

(lines 9-12)

Such grammar confers upon the lady in “Quieting the Passions” a subjectivity that her counterparts never had.

Lines 7-8 locate the lady in a human dwelling. Even though surrounded by “vulgar” mortals, she remains lofty in spirit. As my discussion below will show, in this *fu* Tao Qian creates an abstractly conceived love-ideal. Yet Tao Qian does not place this ideal love outside the bounds of human experience—rather, she thinks and acts in the real world; she is no longer a superhuman ideal. Tao Qian’s *fu* continues with the following four lines, which are entirely new in the “Quieting the Passions” tradition:

¹⁶ Compare Davis’ translation of the “Xian qing fu” in Davis, I, pp. 186-189, and Hightower’s in “The *Fu* of T’ao Ch’ien”: 170 & 181-189.

¹⁷ For a complete translation of Ying Yang’s *fu*, see Hightower, “The *Fu* of T’ao Ch’ien”: 175-177.

¹⁸ Cf. David Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), p. 68.

悲晨曦之易夕 She regrets that early dawn changes to sunset just too soon,
感人生之長勤 And she laments that human lives see no end of distress.
同一盡於百年 With no exception all perish in a hundred years,
何歡寡而愁殷 Alas, joys are so rare, sorrows so ready!

(lines 9-12)

A mood of melancholy has taken her. The earlier poems in the titular set attribute no inner feelings to their ladies. Tao fleshes his lady out with her own experience and sentiments, overstepping the convention. Significantly, those sentiments strongly resemble Tao Qian's own and echo his profound understanding of the pathos of mortal life. For instance, Tao writes in "The Blossoming Tree" ("Rong mu" 榮木):

采采榮木 Exuberant! The blossoming tree—
結根于茲 It has taken root here.
晨耀其華 In the morning it boasts of its flowers,
夕已喪之 By sunset it has already lost them.
人生若寄 "Human life is but a sojourn,"
顛顛有時 It withers in its allotted time.
靜言孔念 Quietly I ponder over this deeply,
中心悵而 My heart beset with sorrows.¹⁹

Anxiety about old age drives Tao to write "The Blossoming Tree."²⁰ The lady in "Quieting the Passions" displays similar sensitivity. Tao Qian seems to have a particular emotional sympathy for this lady.

Another great creative move on Tao's part rests in a sequence in which the lady plays a *se* 瑟, cithern, developing her melancholy:

褰朱幃而正坐 She raises the red curtain and sits properly,
泛清瑟以自欣 She fondles the clear se, to amuse herself—
送纖指之餘好 Delicate fingers dance, full of grace;
攘皓袖之繽紛 White sleeves wave, in profusion;
瞬美目以流眄 Her lovely winking eyes cast furtive glances;
含言笑而不分 She seems speaking or smiling, it is hard to tell.
曲調將半 The melody is almost half through,
景落西軒 When twilight sinks by the western chamber.
悲商叩林 A sad autumn wind shakes the woods,
白雲依山 White clouds repose on the hills.
仰睇天路 She glances up at the heavenly road,

¹⁹ Chinese text in Lu, pp. 15-16; cf. Davis, I, p. 16.

²⁰ See *ibid.*

俯促鳴弦	She looks down, quickens her resonant strings—
神儀嫵媚	Her demeanor engaging and charming,
舉止詳妍	Her deportment calm and alluring. ²¹
激清音以感余	She stirs clear notes to move me,
願接膝以交言	I desire to sit knee to knee to talk with her.

(lines 13-28)

The lady’s music intensifies as the day wanes, the sun sinks, the wind mourns, clouds settle. Nature echoes the pathos of men’s life meditated shortly before, that joys are few, and sorrows many; and that the “early dawn” “changes to sunset” only too fast. Nature is the lever of philosophy for Tao Qian.²² Images of the declining sun, gloomy wind, and returning clouds recur in Tao’s poems. All three appear in a single couplet from “At the End of the Year Matching a Poem by Attendant Zhang” (“Suimu he Zhang Changshi” 歲暮和張常侍):

向夕長風起	Towards sunset a breeze from afar stirs,
寒雲沒西山	Cold clouds descend on the western hills. ²³

Later I will discuss the poem’s obsession with the lady’s allure, an interest which only grows more explicit and more erotic. At this point, I wish to investigate further the nature of the emotional bond between the author and the subject of his poem. Tao Qian puts into the lady’s mouth sentiments that he expresses in other works. It seems that he has constructed a spiritually consanguineous being; that he desires, besides physical intimacy, a union of souls.

The lady expresses the poignancy of mutability through music (line 27), and the speaker relates to it. This kind of wordless, spiritual communication characterizes the relationship between “tone-wise companions” (*zhiyin* 知音) or “understanding friends” (*zhiji* 知己), such as Bo Ya and Zhong Ziqi.²⁴ Tao

²¹ The word *xiang* 詳 is left untranslated in Davis’ text, while *yan* 妍 should more properly be understood as “alluring” in the context, rather than “beautiful” as it stands in Davis’ rendition. See below. “Chao youren” 嘲友人 by Li Chong 李充 in *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠, *juan* 3, has this couplet: 目想妍麗姿, 耳存清媚音. See Mu Kehong 穆克宏, ed., *Yutai xinyong jianzhu* 玉臺新詠箋注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 115.

²² See discussion in Chang, *Six Dynasties Poetry*, pp. 37-46.

²³ Chinese text in Lu, p. 67; cf. Davis, I, p. 75.

²⁴ “When Bo Ya played the *qin* and Zhong Ziqi listened, Ziqi’s thoughts were transported to towering mountains. He exclaimed to Bo Ya, ‘How marvelous, with majesty akin to Mount Tai!’ But in a moment his thoughts were carried to flowing waterways. ‘How marvelous,’ he said, ‘bubbling and flowing like our mightiest rivers.’ Ziqi died, and thereupon Bo Ya smashed his *qin* and broke its strings. Never again did he play the *qin*, for he felt no one in the world was adequate to appreciate its voice.” The translation is taken from Kenneth DeWoskin, “Early Chinese Music and the Origins of Aesthetic Terminology,” in Susan Bush & Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 196. For the Chinese text, see *Fengsu tong* 風俗通 (*HanWei congshu* 漢魏叢書 edition), *juan* 6, 6-7.

Qian alludes to Bo Ya in “After an Old Poem” (“Nigu jiu shou” 擬古九首), Poem 8:

不見相知人	I see no one to be my likeminded friend,
惟見古時丘	I only see the graveyard of times old.
路邊兩高墳	By the roadside there are two tall tombs,
伯牙與莊周	Those of Bo Ya and Zhuangzhou.
此士難再得	Such gentlemen are difficult to find again—
吾行欲何求	What is the use of my traveling around? ²⁵

When Zhong Ziqi died, Bo Ya broke his lute, believing that his music would no longer be understood. The Daoist master Zhuangzi is said to have given up philosophic discussions after his Logician friend Hui Shi passed away.²⁶ As Kang-i Sun Chang suggests: “The allusions to Po [Bo] Ya and Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi] reveal the lonely self of the poet [Tao] that lies hidden behind his contented outlook.”²⁷ Indeed, solitude and the search for understanding friends is a major topic in Tao Qian’s writings.²⁸ Note Poem 5 of “After an Old Poem”:

東方有一士	In the east lives a gentleman,
被服常不完	Whose clothes are always shabby.
三旬九遇食	“In a cycle of thirty days, he manages to have nine meals,”
十年著一冠	“For the whole span of ten years, he has worn the same hat.”
辛苦無此比	In term of toils no one can beat him,
常有好容顏	Yet he always wears a contented look.
我欲觀其人	I longed to see him in person,
晨去越河關	So I set out at dawn, traversing rivers and passes.
青松夾路生	Green pines grew along the roadsides,
白雲宿簷端	White clouds slept atop the eaves.
知我故來意	You knew the intention of my visit,
取琴爲我彈	And fetched the qin to play for me.
上絃驚別鶴	First your strings awed me by the “Parted Crane,”
下絃操孤鸞	Then your strings played the “Solitary Phoenix.”
願留就君住	I would like to stay and live close to you,
從今至歲寒	Now and till the year’s cold days. ²⁹

²⁵ Chinese text in Lu, pp. 113-114; cf. Davis, I, p. 124.

²⁶ See discussion in Davis, I, p. 124n18.

²⁷ Chang, *Six Dynasties Poetry*, p. 29.

²⁸ See discussion in *ibid.*, pp. 27-32. In “In Reply to Aide Peng” (“Da Pang Canjun” 答龐參軍), Tao Qian cries out for friendship. See Lu, pp. 22-23.

²⁹ Chinese text in Lu, pp. 112-113; cf. Davis, I, pp. 122-123.

The two barely exchange a word, yet the gentleman divines the speaker’s interiority, which he renders into music. The gentleman’s instrument is the *qin* 琴, a lute, a potent cultural icon during the Six Dynasties. The *qin* has become an emblem for a sage or a “superior man” by the early Six Dynasties.³⁰ Xi Kang 嵇康 (223-262) celebrates it at the end of his “*Fu* on the Lute” (“*Qin fu*” 琴賦):

識音者希	He who understands its music is hard to come by—
誰能珍兮	Who, really, can treasure it?
能盡琴雅	He who can fully appreciate the elegance of the <i>qin</i>
唯至人兮	Can be none but the Perfect Man! ³¹

The *qin* is embraced as the only friend of a lofty soul.³² Intriguingly, *Qin* lore abounds with partial figures of the instrument. Completeness comes from something eternally missing. We are given haunting images like the *qin* with broken strings or with no strings at all; and the aesthete playing alone, to nature, to his own kind, or simply wandering about with his *qin* not playing at all.³³ Tao Qian himself owns a non-sounding *qin* (*su qin* 素琴)—he “keeps a plain lute without strings,” and at drinking parties “he fingers it to express his thoughts.”³⁴

In this section of “Quieting the Passions,” the lady plays a *se*, not a *qin*. The *qin* is touched on later, in one of the “ten wishes” (lines 71-74), in which the speaker fancies himself to be a *qin* resting on the lady’s lap, to touch her body. That is from the male’s perspective and does not relate to the sensibility of the lady. The *se* occurs but once in Tao Qian’s entire oeuvre, here in this *fu*. The *se* is considerably bigger than the *qin*, but simpler in construction. While early Chinese culture favored both the *se* and the *qin*, by the Eastern Jin period (317-420), when Tao Qian lived, the tradition of the *se* as a solo instrument had

³⁰ See discussion in DeWoskin, “Early Chinese Music”: 192.

³¹ *Liuchen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), p. 339, c-d. Cf. David. R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen Xuan, Or, Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), Vol. 3, p. 303; and R.H. van Gulik, *Hsi K’ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), pp. 120-121.

³² By the time of Xi Kang, the *qin* and music had gone through a period of humanization. Emphasis shifted from communication with superior forces such as the ancestors and powers of heaven to communication with humankind. Concepts and terminology of music played an important role in the development of theories of aesthetics from this period. See discussions in Kenneth DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1982), p. 145; and DeWoskin, “Early Chinese Music”: 189.

³³ See discussion in DeWoskin, “Early Chinese Music”: 193.

³⁴ See Tao Qian’s biographies in *Jin shu* 晉書 and *Nan shi* 南史, collected in *Tao Yuanming yanjiu ziliao huibian*, pp. 11-14.

been entirely abandoned.³⁵ In all of the *fu* in the “music” section (*yinyue* 音樂) of the *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), there is none that takes on the *se*. Yet there are no less than half a dozen references to the *qin* in Tao Qian’s works. It seems rather old-fashioned of the lady in “Quieting the Passions” to play the *se*.

The *Shi jing* 詩經 (Book of Odes) provides a vivid description of the instrument from before the Six Dynasties. I feel that drawing on the *Book of Odes* is quite warranted—Tao Qian himself refers to the poems of that collection at the end of this *fu*:

尤蔓草之爲會 I loathe those rendezvous as in “Mancao,”
誦邵南之餘歌 And intone the extant songs from the “Shaonan.”

(lines 119-122)

Poems from the *Book of Odes* present a context for *se* and *qin* performance. In fact, this context can shed some light on the complex role of the lady in Tao Qian’s *fu*. “Lu ming” 鹿鳴 (Mao #61) tells of entertaining an “honorable” friend:

我有嘉賓 I have an honorable guest:
鼓瑟鼓琴 I play the *se*, I play the *qin*,
鼓瑟鼓琴 I play the *se*, I play the *qin*,
和樂且湛 Let us partake of the music, and be blissful!
我有旨酒 I have good wine,
以燕樂嘉賓之心 I serve it, to warm the heart of my honorable guest.³⁶

“Guan ju” 關雎 (Mao #1) describes the music being played, welcoming a bride:

窈窕淑女 Such a composed fine lady!
琴瑟友之 With *qin* and *se* we welcome her.³⁷

“Chang di” 常棣 (Mao #164) compares conjugal affections with the harmonies of the *qin* and *se*:

妻子好合 Wives and children in harmony

³⁵ During late Zhou (770-256 B.C.), both the *qin* and *se* were played as solo instruments, but the *qin* already seems to have been preferred to the *se* for serious music. Beginning with the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) the *se* as solo instrument was hardly mentioned. See discussion in R.H. van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay in Ch'in Ideology* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1940), pp. 7-9.

³⁶ Cf. Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960), p. 192.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81.

如鼓瑟琴 Like qin and se played in unison³⁸

These verses celebrate friendship (in “Lu ming”), marriage (in “Guan ju”), and conjugal love (in “Chang di”), while the *se* plays in the background. From them emerges a picture of idealized love, which seeks affections and friendship in union. This love, anchored in the family, becomes graceful and conciliatory. The traditional associations between the *se* and pleasant companionship speak to the emotional bond between Tao Qian and the lady in his poem. She seems desirable, not only as a lover, but also as an understanding friend.

III. Intertextuality and the Sources of Seduction

These associations of well-disposed companionship notwithstanding, Tao Qian’s *fu* takes a strong erotic interest in the lady. The two interests, companionship and sexual desire, are closely intertwined. For example, the music which communicates such a deep emotional understanding also provides a venue for admiring the physical charms of the lady—her hands (line 15), her eyes (line 17), and her gestures (lines 25-26). One tradition of the *fu* arms its seductresses with music, an association which finds an echo, but with a significant twist, in Tao Qian’s *fu*. Song Yu’s 宋玉 (c.290-223 B.C.) “*Fu* on Persuasion” (“Feng fu” 諷賦) and Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179-117 B.C.) “*Fu* on the Beauty” (“Meiren fu” 美人賦) come readily to mind.

The “*Fu* on Persuasion” chronicles an encounter between the poet and a musical seductress. He explains how he refuses her temptation to defend himself against an accusation that he is lustful (*haose* 好色). The seductress attires herself with sensuous luxury and erotic ornamentation:

Clad in a kingfisher feathers coat with a cloud pattern, and what’s more, a single
petticoat of white gauze underneath; her pearl earrings dangling while she walked . . .
披翠雲之裘, 更被白縠之單衫, 垂珠步搖 . . .³⁹

The poet plays the *qin* to announce his morality, and twice the woman sings invitingly to weaken his will:

歲將暮兮日已寒 The year almost spent, the days have already turned cold;
中心亂兮勿多言 My heart flutters, O please, let’s talk no more!⁴⁰

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 204.

³⁹ For the Chinese text see *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen* 全上古三代文, 10.3a, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*. Cf. Arthur Waley, trans., *The Temple and Other Poems* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923), p. 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

And:

內怵傷兮徂玉牀	Inside I'm trembling while I approach my dear one's bed;
橫自陳兮君之傍	I am stretched, lying next to you.
君不御兮妾誰怨	If you don't possess me, who can I blame?
日將至兮下黃泉	It'll be the day I go to the nether world. ⁴¹

We are given to believe that the poet rejected her resolutely. In the “*Fu on the Beauty*”⁴² the poet relates his travels through such places as Zheng 鄭, Wei 衛, Sangzhong 桑中, Zhenwei 溱洧, and Shanggong 上宮, vistas the *Book of Odes* made infamous for illicit love and decadent music. The poet chances upon a house of leisure. Assailed by an overwhelming fragrance, he enters the house to find a beautiful woman reclining on a sumptuous bed. As in “*Fu on Persuasion*,” the poet plays the *qin* to mark his incorruptibility. Undaunted, the woman expresses her cravings for him in an amatory song:

獨處室兮廓無依	Alone in my chamber, no one to lean on,
思佳人兮情傷悲	Thinking of my dear one, my feelings so sad,
有美人兮來何遲	There is a handsome man—how late he comes!
日既暮兮華色衰	Dusk has descended, the glamour of my beauty will wither;
敢託身兮長自私	I entrust my body to you, for our long, private pleasure. ⁴³

The temptress then makes bold sexual advances on the poet. The *fu* ends virtuously with the poet extricating himself from her enticements. The women in “*Fu on Persuasion*” and “*Fu on the Beauty*” play the role of the seductress, professing their passions in amorous songs and offering their bodies to the speakers. They are tokens used to distinguish the moral stature of the men. The lady in Tao Qian’s “*Quieting the Passions*” does not conform to the stereotype of the seductress. Before she plays the *se*, she “sits properly” (line 13), obedient to etiquette. She plays the *se* “to amuse herself” (line 14), not to entertain others. The tones of her music are “clear” (*qing* 清; lines 14 and 27), unlike the “decadent music” (*mimi zhi yin* 靡靡之音) of Zheng and Wei. Halfway through the tune, she is moved by the sights of the waning day, at which she quickens her singing strings (lines 20-22). She is as susceptible to nature as the empirical

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Quan Han wen* 全漢文, 22.1b, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*. “*Fu on the Beauty*” might be an imitation of “*Fu on Persuasion*” and Song Yu’s another *fu*, “*Fu on Master Dengtu the Lecher*” (“*Dengtuzi haose fu*” 登徒子好色賦, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.6a-7a.) The chronology of “*Fu on the Beauty*” and “*Fu on Master Dengtu the Lecher*” is still a matter of dispute. See Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, p. 31n52. Li examines a series of *fu*, including the two under discussion, under the section “*The Topos of the Ambiguous Divine Woman*” in *ibid.*, pp. 23-33.

⁴³ *Quan Han wen*, 22.1b.

writer of the poem, Tao Qian, as we have come to know of him.

It has often been observed that Chinese lyricism is haunted by a fatalistic mood of melancholy originating from natural determinism. Mortal life is compared to the cycle of nature and cannot escape nature’s law.⁴⁴ The lady in “Quieting the Passions” (lines 9-12) and the two seductresses whom we met above lament the close of the year and the setting sun, symbols of the ephemeral blossom of life and beauty. The natural images in the enticing songs of the seductresses serve to strengthen the inflamed desires of the singers. In contrast, the images in “Quieting the Passions” are much more profound and lyrical—they speak to the universal human subjugation to life and death, emanating a certain philosophic gravity and touching on Tao Qian’s own sentiments.

Nevertheless, the question remains, does Tao Qian intend the lady in “Quieting the Passions” to be a seductress? After all, the speaker of the poem is thrown in a fit of physical and imaginative excitement by listening to her music and visualizing the person. There is no easy answer to this question. The semiotics of the passage about the lady generates two conflicting dynamics, those of seductiveness and impassiveness. Tao Qian draws on a genus in the *fu* traditions in which a beautiful lady or goddess alternates between seduction and detachment. A close examination of the textual details from the following *fu* is in order: Song Yu’s “*Fu* on Master Dengtu the Lecher” (“Dengtuzi haose fu” 登徒子好色賦) and “*Fu* on the Goddess” (“Shennü fu” 神女賦); and Cao Zhi’s 曹植 “*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess” (“Luoshen fu” 洛神賦).

In Song Yu’s “*Fu* on Master Dengtu the Lecher,” the speaker chances upon an “attractive” (*li* 麗) young maid (*chuzi* 處子) whose appearance and bearing entice him:

恍若有望而不來	She seemed to be watching but would not come close,
忽若有來而不見	Suddenly she seemed to be approaching but could not be seen.
意密體疏	Her interest was keen, but her body remained distanced,
俯仰異觀	Viewed from above or from below, she struck a different impression,
含喜微笑	And she looked lighthearted, smiling faintly,
竊視流眄	She stole furtive glances at me, rolling her eyes. ⁴⁵

The young girl is at once unworldly seductive and elusive, torturing the admirer. In Song Yu’s “*Fu* on the Goddess,” the female figure appears as an “attractive” (*li*)⁴⁶ goddess and the tryst moves inside to the speaker’s bedroom. The

⁴⁴ See discussion in Anne Birrell, trans., *New Songs from a Jade Terrace: An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986), pp. 14-15.

⁴⁵ *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.7a; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 353.

⁴⁶ Knechtges translates *li* 麗 as “elegant.”

expression in the goddess' eyes grows more provocative, and her intent unfathomable. The speaker invites the goddess to go to bed with him:

望余帷而延視兮	She watched my curtain and made eyes at me,
若流波之將瀾	It was like rolling waves soon to surge.
奮長袖以正衿兮	She flung her long sleeves and straightened her lapels,
立躑躅而不安	Standing, restive and ill at ease.
澹清靜其愔愔兮	So peaceful and quiet, pleasant and mild,
性沈詳而不煩	By nature she is composed and undisturbed. ⁴⁷
.....	
褰余幃而請御兮	I raised the bed curtains and asked for her favors,
願盡心之惓惓	I desired to find the fullest expression of my yearning heart.
懷貞亮之潔清兮	But she harbored chastity so clean and pure
卒與我兮相難	That in the end abstained from getting close to me. ⁴⁸
.....	
神獨亨而未結兮	Our spirits met, but did not unite,
魂煢煢以無端	My soul felt desolate, disoriented.
含然諾其不分兮	She seemed to be willing but did not make herself clear,
唱揚音而哀歎	I couldn't help but let out a cry of sorrowful lament. ⁴⁹

Another goddess, who manifests herself in Cao Zhi's "*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess," bears a kindred countenance:

轉眄流精	Her turning glances flash sparks,
光潤玉顏	Her face shining and supple.
含辭未吐	She makes as if to speak, but would not utter the words;
氣若幽蘭	Her breath smells like hidden orchids. ⁵⁰

It is difficult not to notice the similitude in Song Yu, Cao Zhi, and Tao Qian's descriptions of the ladies' eyes:

Song Yu:	竊視流眄	She stole furtive glances at me, turning her eyes
Song Yu:	望余帷而延視兮	She watched my curtain and made eyes at me,
	若流波之將瀾	It was like rolling waves soon to surge.
Cao Zhi:	轉眄流精	Her turning glances flash sparks
Tao Qian:	瞬美目以流眄	Her lovely winking eyes cast furtive glances

And their visages:

⁴⁷ *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.6a; cf. Knechtges, 3, pp. 345 & 347.

⁴⁸ *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.6a; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 347.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.3a-b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 363.

Song Yu:	含喜微笑	She looked lighthearted, smiling faintly
Song Yu:	含然諾其不分兮	She seemed to be willing but did not make herself clear
Cao Zhi:	含辭未吐	She makes as if to speak, but would not utter the words
Tao Qian:	含言笑而不分	She seems speaking or smiling, it is hard to tell

Stock attributes are not limited to the physiognomy of the lady/goddess. The ladies’ carriage is generic, too. In “*Fu* on Master Dengtu the Lecher,” “Her interest was keen, but her body remained distanced.” (*Yi mi ti shu* 意密體疏.) In “*Fu* on the Goddess,” “Her complexion is fair, and her figure full and firm; / Her air is tranquil, and her body relaxed.” (素質幹之醲實兮, 志解泰而體閒.)⁵¹ And: “So peaceful and quiet, pleasant and mild, / By nature she is composed and undisturbed.” (澹清靜其愔嫺兮, 性沈詳而不煩.) The Luo River Goddess is seen as “Her demeanor is quiet, and her body relaxed.” (*Yi jing ti xian* 儀靜體閑.)⁵² The lady in Tao Qian’s *fu* generates a similar aura, though her allure is deliberately more subdued, closer to Song Yu’s goddess: “Her demeanor engaging and charming, / Her deportment calm and alluring.” (神儀嫵媚, 舉止詳妍.) (We will return to this couplet below.) All in all, the charms of the ladies are for your eyes only, so to speak.

More importantly, we must recognize that Song Yu’s *fu* has created a prototype of the goddess for most of the works of the theme of “Quieting the Passions” and a series of *fu* bearing the title “Goddess” (*shennu* 神女) and its variants. Song Yu intones:

茂矣美矣	Exuberant! Beautiful!
諸好備矣	Complete with every sterling merit!
盛矣麗矣	Magnificent! Gorgeous!
難測究矣	Words fail to do her justice!
上古既無	The remote past did not have one alike;
世所未見	In our time she knows no equal.
姿瑋態	Her appearance is splendid, and her manner exquisite;
不可勝贊	I simply can’t praise her enough! ⁵³

夫何神女之姣麗兮	O what spectacular beauty of the goddess,
含陰陽之渥飾	Endowed with profuse attributes of <i>yin</i> and <i>yang</i> .
被華藻之可好兮	She adorns herself in resplendent apparel, so becoming:
若翡翠之奮翼	Like a kingfisher flapping its wings!
其象無雙	Her image is without a match,
其美無極	Her beauty is limitless.

⁵¹ *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.5b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 345.

⁵² *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.2b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 359.

⁵³ *Quan Shanggu Sandai wen*, 10.5a-b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 341.

毛嫱鄞袂	Mao Qiang would screen herself with her sleeves:
不足程式	She couldn't present herself as the standard of beauty any longer.
西施掩面	Xi Shi would hide her face:
比之無色	In comparison she would appear jejune.
近之既妖	When you are close to her, she is captivating,
遠之有望	If viewed from a distance, she is a phenomenon.
骨法多奇	The pattern of her bones is of a rare quality,
應君之相	A wonderful match for my lord's physiognomy. ⁵⁴
.....	
素質幹之醜實兮	Her complexion is fair, and her figure full and firm;
志解泰而體閒	Her air is tranquil, and her body relaxed.
既婉孌於幽靜兮	She remains calm and lovely in seclusion,
又婆娑乎人間	But she also enjoys dancing in the human world.
宜高殿以廣意兮	A tall hall befits her: it will inspire her
翼放縱而綽寬	To free herself like a bird flapping its wings, unbridled!
動霧縠以徐步兮	She paces leisurely, rustling her misty gossamer,
拂躡聲之珊珊	Leaving behind a jingling sound against the stairs. ⁵⁵

Observe a few passages from the “Goddess” line, whose authors, except Yang Xiu, also treated the “Quieting the passions” theme:⁵⁶

Yang Xiu 楊修, “Shennü fu” 神女賦	Wang Can 王粲, “Shennü fu” 神女賦	Chen Lin 陳琳, “Shennü fu” 神女賦	Cao Zhi 曹植, “Luoshen fu” 洛神賦
惟玄媛之逸女	惟天地之普化	望隔俟而瀟灑	瓌姿艷逸
育明曜乎皇庭	何產氣之淑真	視玄羅之軼靈	儀靜體閑
吸朝霞之芬液	歆陰陽之休液	文綵糾之奕奕	柔情綽態
澹浮遊乎太清	育天麗之神人	鳴玉鸞之嚶嚶	媚于語言
.....	棄自然以絕俗	答玉質于苕華	奇服曠世
盛容飾之本艷	超希世而無群	擬艷姿于薜榮	骨像應圖
奩龍采而鳳榮	感仲春之和節	披羅衣之瓊粲兮
翠馳翠裳	戴金羽之首飾	歎鳴雁之嗶嗶	珥瑤碧之華瑤
織數文袿	珥照夜之珠璫		戴金翠之首飾
順風揄揚	襲羅綺之縠衣		綴明珠以耀耀
乍合乍離	曳綉縠之華裳		踐遠遊之文履
飄若興動	錯繡紛以雜佩		曳霧縠之輕裾
玉趾未移	袿燈燭而熒煌		微幽蘭之芳蕙兮
詳觀玄妙			步踟躕于山隅
與世無雙			

⁵⁴ *Quan Shangu Sandai wen*, 10.5b; cf. Knechtges, 3, pp. 343 & 345.

⁵⁵ *Quan Shangu Sandai wen*, 10.5b-6a; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 345.

⁵⁶ See Yang Xiu in *Quan Hou-Han wen*, 51.10a; Wang Can in *ibid.*, 90.5a; Chen Lin in *ibid.*, 92.3a; and Cao Zhi in *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.2b-3a.

Divinity or semi-divinity, magnificence, and a sense of intangibility mark these goddesses. The language is lavish, and the imagery resplendent. In terms of syntax, imagery, or even overall structure, the influence of Song Yu’s “*Fu on the Goddess*” on all later works in the “Quieting the Passions” and “Goddess” traditions is obviously discernible. Before Tao Qian, Cao Zhi’s “*Fu on the Luo River Goddess*” certainly represents a high point in its elaborate portrayal of the female figure and the palpable anguish of her admirer. Cao Zhi and Tao Qian’s *fu* bear some strikingly similar textual details. For examples, Song Yu writes: “Her appearance is splendid, and her beauty unworldly.” (*Guizi yanyi* 瓊姿艷逸.)⁵⁷ Tao Qian begins his *fu* by saying: “O what spectacularly beautiful demeanor.” (*Fu he guiyi zhi lingzi* 夫何瓊逸之令姿.) Song Yu says the goddess is of “tender feelings and elegant deportment.” (*Rouqing chuotai* 柔情綽態.)⁵⁸ And Tao Qian praises his lady, saying: “She hides her tender feelings from the vulgar crowd.” (*Dan rouqing yu sunai* 淡柔情於俗內.) On the goddess’ physiognomy, Cao Zhi remarks:

轉眄流精	Her turning glances flash sparks,
光潤玉顏	Her face shining and supple.
含辭未吐	She makes as if to speak, but would not utter the words;
氣若幽蘭	Her breath smells like hidden orchids. ⁵⁹

Tao Qian does not comment on his lady’s breath—he nevertheless uses “hidden orchids” in the line “Arranges hidden orchids around, to compete with their fragrance” (齊幽蘭以爭芬)—but almost all the rest are captured in these two lines:

瞬美目以流眄	Her lovely winking eyes cast furtive glances;
含言笑而不分	She seems speaking or smiling, it is hard to tell.

(lines 17-18)

After the Luo River Goddess departed, the speaker in Cao Zhi’s *fu* is in pains and remorse:

夜耿耿而不寐	Throughout the night I remain disquieted, unable to sleep,
霑繁霜而至曙	I am soaked in heavy frost until dawn. ⁶⁰

Missing the lady intensely, Tao Qian’s suffering speaker is also deprived of sleep:

⁵⁷ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.2b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 359.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.3a-b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 363.

⁶⁰ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.3b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 365.

惘惘不寐 Disquieted, I am unable to sleep,
衆念徘徊 Confusing thoughts haunt me.
起攝帶以伺晨 I rise to put on my belt and await daybreak,
繁霜粲於素階 Heavy frost glistens on the white steps.

(lines 103-106)

What the above transpires is the literary phenomenon that during the Latter Han and the Wei-Jin eras, the female figure in the *fu* traditions of the “Quieting the Passions” and the “Goddess” is arguably an archetypal image that generations of *fu* writers literalize and enrich.⁶¹ By and large, the lady/goddess is gorgeous, refined, otherworldly, and tenderhearted, and she takes an enormous liking for her admirer, but to whom she alternates between being passionate and dispassionate. Although flirtatiously seductive, she refrains from having intimate relations with him. Tormented by the burning desire for the lady/goddess, the sorrowful man laments and moans to unburden himself. The intensity of feelings of these *fu* stems from, among others, the deeply felt but unconsummated love/passions. The exuberance and richness of the language,

⁶¹ Hong Shunlong’s 洪順隆 recent article, “Lun ‘Luoshen fu’ dui Liuchao futan de touying” 論《洛神賦》對六朝賦壇的投映, *Xin Ya xueshu jikan* 新亞學術集刊 (*New Asia Academic Bulletin*) 13 (1994): 91-114, is extremely helpful for us to understand the reception and influence of Cao Zhi’s *fu* on the “Goddess” tradition during the Six Dynasties era. However, Hong does not discuss the impact that Cao’s work has on the “Quieting the Passions” genus. Deng Shiliang’s 鄧仕樑 (S.L. Dang) article, “Lun Jian’an yi ‘xianxie’ he ‘shennü’ wei zhuti de liangzu fu” 論建安以「閨邪」和「神女」為主題的兩組賦, in the same issue of the journal cited above, pp. 349-362, is also important in that it helps ascertain the conventions and traditions of the “Quieting the Passions” and the “Goddess” themes. Deng illuminates that in certain aspects the symbolic meanings of the two themes intersect. Regrettably, Deng does not explore the mutual influence in terms of textuality and imagery of the two traditions. Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香 (Cheung Suk-hong), in her recent study of the symbolism of *shennü* in *Lao Can youji* 老殘遊記, also touches on some of the *fu* that we are discussing here. She suggests that the theme of “encountering the goddess” has formed a “literary archetype” (*wenxue yuanxing* 文學原型) in the *fu* tradition by the time when Cao Zhi produced his “Luoshen fu.” This view is similar to mine, but she does not expound on the differences between the character of the female in Cao’s *fu* and those in Tao and others’. See Zhang, “Xiehou shennü—jie *Lao Can youji erbian Yiyun shuofa*” 邂逅神女—解《老殘遊記二編》逸雲說法, in Guoli Taiwan Daxue Zhongguo Wenxuexi 國立臺灣大學中國文學系, ed., *Yuwen, qingxing, yili: Zhongguo wenxue de duocengmian tantao guoji xueshu huiyi lunwenji* 語文、情性、義理：中國文學的多層面探討國際學術會議論文集 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan Daxue, 1996), pp. 437-445. Another important issue surrounding these *fu* and the representation of the female is the power relationships between male and female and that between emperor and courtier in the times concerned, but this is beyond the scope of this essay. Readers are referred to Paul Rouzer’s treatment of the theme in the chapter “The Traffic in Goddesses” of his book, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 39-72; and Zheng Yuyu 鄭毓瑜 (Cheng Yuyu), *Xingbie yu jiaguo: Han Jin cifu de Chusao lunshu* 性別與家國：漢晉辭賦的楚騷論述 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2000).

the rare beauty and the seductively shaped body of the lady/goddess, and the mental processes of love and Eros define the literary interests of these *fu*.

Thus situated, we return to the lady in Tao Qian’s “Quieting the Passions.” On the one hand, this lady comports herself with propriety (line 13); she is self-absorbed (line 14) and self-controlled (line 26). On the other hand, as Tao Qian writes:

瞬美目以流眄 Her lovely winking eyes cast furtive glances;
含言笑而不分 She seems speaking or smiling, it is hard to tell.

(lines 17-18)

Tao Qian plays about her lips, in a whimsically ambiguous gesture of intoning or showing pleasure. Earlier in the *fu*, we are told that she plays the *se* “to amuse herself” (line 14), but later the poem claims:

激清音以感余 She stirs clear notes to move me,
願接膝以交言 I desire to sit knee to knee to talk with her.

(lines 27-28)

Contradictions and fantasies show the speaker’s excitement. The interplay of contradictory semantic meanings is borne out in an even more minute portrayal of the lady. This couplet precedes the two lines above:

神儀嫵媚 Her demeanor engaging and charming,
舉止詳妍 Her deportment calm and alluring.

(lines 25-26)

It immediately follows the atmospheric descriptions of the declining day and the lady’s empathic response (quickening her musical notes; lines 19-24). The expressions “engaging and charming” (*wumei* 嫵媚) in the first line and “alluring” (*yan* 妍) in the second refer to the lady’s enchanting gesturing. Both are ornate, sensuous attributes. Between these two adjectivals, however, is interwoven a tranquillizing element, the adjective “calm” (*xiang* 詳), commanding composure. *Xiangyan* is an oxymoron: there is simply too much enticement in *yan* to allow the placid *xiang* in the same breath. At any rate, it is a rare expression. Both the classic *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府 and the latest *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 have only one lone entry to offer, citing the couplet here. *Xiangyan* is akin to an expression in Cao Zhi’s another *fu*, “Stilling Thoughts of Longing” (“Jing si fu” 靜思賦), which is also in the “Quieting the Passions” lineage. In “Stilling Thoughts of Longing,” Cao Zhi writes:

夫何美女之嫵妖 O what graceful charms of this beautiful woman!

紅顏曄而流光 Her rosy cheeks shine with a subtle glow.
.....
性通暢以聰惠 By nature she is understanding and sensitive,
行嬾密而妍詳 In conduct at once charming and composed, alluring and calm.⁶²

Hightower renders *mimi* 嬾密 as “gracious,” and *yanxiang* 妍詳 “charming.” His translation, though elegant, fails to reflect the tension between 嬾 and 密. 嬾 associates with *miman* 嬾嫵, beautiful but more on the charming side.⁶³ This meaning is at odds with 密, which indicates quiet and peace. The same applies to *yanxiang*, which mutates into *xiangyan* in Tao Qian’s *fu* and we have understood the latter as “calm and alluring.” 嬾密 and 妍詳 or 詳妍 divulge the ambivalent character, in the speaker’s wishful thinking perhaps, of the lady: enchanting and demure at the same time. An apt illustration of this disposition is a passage from Cao Zhi’s own “*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess” that we have mentioned in passing:

瓌姿艷逸 Her appearance is splendid, and her beauty unworldly;
儀靜體閑 Her demeanor is quiet, and her body relaxed.
柔情綽態 With tender feelings and elegant deportment,
媚于語言 She is entralling in her words.⁶⁴

Save for the entralling words, Tao Qian’s two lines transport almost all in Cao Zhi’s. An argument can even be made—in view of the curiously similar imagery, wording, and syntax—that Tao Qian is imitative of Cao Zhi.

After the music and the sensuous description of the lady, the speaker in “Quieting the Passions” impulsively declares that the lady directs her notes at him, soliciting physical intimacy. This assertion is, strictly speaking, not warranted by the narrative development of the *fu*, since the speaker and the lady do not interact in the preceding sections. These conflicting and disjointed meanings betray a struggle between self-indulgence and self-restraint in the speaker’s mind. A dialectic of impassiveness and seductiveness pervades the whole of the lady’s behavior, perhaps even the whole *fu*. Tao Qian creates ambiguity and ambivalence. It is played out in the lady’s whimsical, ambiguous attitudes, rooted in apparently contradictory and inconsistent wording and passages. Consider one of the “ten wishes” later in the *fu*:

願在莞而爲席 I fancy myself to be the cattail in her mat,

⁶² *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.4a; cf. Hightower, “The Fu of T’ao Ch’ien”: 179-180.

⁶³ Consider the sense of 嬾 in these two lines of Ruan Ji’s “Yue lun” 樂論: 延年造傾城之歌, 而孝武思嬾嫵之色. See Guo Guang 郭光, ed., *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* 阮籍集校注 (Henan: Zhongzhou guji, 1991), p. 58.

⁶⁴ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.2b; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 359.

安弱體於三秋 To assuage her frail body in the three autumn months.
悲文茵之代御 But I grieve that a tiger skin will replace me,
方經年而見求 And it will take another full year before I am sought again.

(lines 51-54)

Concurrently, the speaker fantasizes about being skin-close to the lady and chills himself by thinking that that pleasure would not last.

The search for solace in nature, in the finale of the poem, has these results:

于時畢昴盈軒 At this moment the Bi and Mao stars ease in the window,
北風淒淒 The north wind becomes chilly.
惘惘不寐 Disquieted, I am unable to sleep,
衆念徘徊 Confusing thoughts haunt me.
起攝帶以伺晨 I rise to put on my belt and await daybreak,
繁霜粲於素階 Heavy frost glistens on the white steps.
雞斂翅而未鳴 The cock folds its wings and does not crow;
笛流遠以清哀 In drifts from afar the sound of a flute, clear and sad:
始妙密以閑和 At the beginning it feels subtle and calm,
終寥亮而藏摧 At the end it turns sharp and grief-stricken.
意夫人之在茲 I will that the lady is there,
託行雲以送懷 Entrusting the floating clouds to convey her bosom.
行雲逝而無語 But the floating clouds pass by without saying a word,
時奄冉而就過 The time is gradually slipping away.
徒勤思以自悲 In vain, I am charged with such intense emotion and self-lament,
終阻山而滯河 Fate decrees that hills and rivers keep me at bay!

(lines 101-116)

The intensity of feeling results from the juxtaposition of opposites. In place of the cock's close, domestic crow comes the shrill sound of a flute heard from a great distance. The music starts out soothing but ends saddening. Once again the music's sensibilities touch the speaker. He cherishes that it is the lady communicating her feelings to him through the notes, accompanied by the moving clouds. The clouds nevertheless pass by, uninterested. Nature's comforts are both brief and illusory.

In the preface to the *fu*, Tao Qian promises to transcend desires. However, "Quieting the Passions" remains amorously vital until the final freezing over, in which Tao Qian resorts insipidly to the moral import of two poems from the *Book of Odes* to elevate himself (lines 119-120). The seeds of disenchantment, more interestingly, are sown at the moment when enchantment unfolds, pre-set in the basic lexical and syntactic constructions that describe the lady, long before the speaker begins his intentional process of spiritual cleansing.

We have observed that the lady in “Quieting the Passions” is a not a generic seductress like those in Song Yu and others’ *fu*—She does not dress to kill (like those in most of the works that we mentioned above); she does not sing or dance to arouse the man (like the two in “*Fu* on Persuasion” and “*Fu* on the Beauty”); she does not reveal her body (like the goddess in “*Fu* on the Goddess”); she does not sleep with the man (like the spirit in Zhang Min’s 張敏 “*Fu* on the Goddess” [“Shennu fu” 神女賦]);⁶⁵ and she does not give the man a “jasper gem” or “shining pearl earring” in token of love (like Fufei 宓妃 in “*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess”). Yet, as demonstrated above, we can address the seductiveness of the lady in “Quieting the Passions” from still another perspective, from the implications and intertextuality of this aesthetic text. Tao Qian’s “Quieting the Passions” draws to mind quite a few pretexts or intertexts that employ the topoi of seductress and music, and its textual details point to a genealogy of texts in which an enchanting goddess frolics with the man. Our prior reading experiences lure us to read the lady of Tao Qian’s *fu* as seductress. After all, the sensuous images in “Quieting the Passions” do invoke their counterparts in the earlier traditions. Even seemingly innocent descriptions of the lady might carry amorous overtones. One last example:

送纖指之餘好 Delicate fingers dance, full of grace
攘皓袖之繽紛 White sleeves wave, in profusion

(lines 15-16)

The sleeves, hanging on her figure, act as an extension of the body. The fervid praise of her sleeves and fingers invites imagination of more intimate body parts. In the absence of overt sexuality in Chinese erotic poetics (in the early poetic traditions at least), this couplet might serve as a euphemistic signal.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the informed reader will associate this couplet with a similar structure in, again, “*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess”:

攘皓腕于神澗兮 Exposing her white wrists in the divine river’s brim,
采湍瀨之玄芝 She plucks from the rapids the fabulous black mushrooms.⁶⁷

This is preceded by the bewitching playfulness of the Luo River goddess:

于是忽焉縱體 Then all of a sudden she lets herself go,
以邀以嬉 Rambling, playing about:
左倚采旄 Now she leans on the colored pennants on the left,

⁶⁵ *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文, 80.1a-b, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*.

⁶⁶ See discussions in Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, pp. 9-21.

⁶⁷ *Quan Sanguo wen*, 13.3a; cf. Knechtges, 3, p. 361.

右蔭桂旗 Now she hides by the cassia flags on the right.⁶⁸

Watching her, the speaker confesses that he is in love with the goddess’ “refined beauty” (*shumei* 淑美), and he finds his heart “pounding nervously” (*zhendang* 振蕩).⁶⁹ In “Quieting the Passions,” the amatory overtone surrounding the portrayal of the lady develops into the “ten wishes,” fantasies about being skin-close to the lady in ten different manners.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Tao Qian gives the lady in “Quieting the Passions” a lyrical and contemplative voice that is never heard from her precedents, the topos of the musical seductress has transcended its former purpose as mere sexual entrée in the *fu* tradition. And Tao Qian shapes the man’s yearning for the lady in a quest for a soul mate and pleasure. The man’s ten amorous wishes in the middle of the *fu* are bare and bold in Chinese lyrical traditions, but at first the lady’s seduction strikes us as minimal to invite them. Yet the seductiveness of Tao Qian’s *fu* grows stronger and stronger as the intertextual relations of the text unfold.

To many scholars and readers, Tao Qian is not only a great poet but also an icon of incorruptibility, save for wine. That Tao should fancy women in his poetry has troubled many critics, traditional and modern, as Kang-i Sun Chang points out in her recent study of the reception of Tao Qian and his works in the critical traditions.⁷⁰ Representative of the contending traditional views are those of Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531; the first to anthologize Tao’s works) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101; Tao’s ardent admirer from the Song dynasty). Xiao disapproved of “Quieting the Passions,” finding it morally corrupt, “a minor flaw in the white jade [Tao’s writings; 白璧微瑕].” Su demurred, declaring that the value of this *fu* was as great as those in the *Book of Odes* and the works of Qu Yuan.⁷¹ Attempts have been made to read “Quieting the Passions” allegorically as a work to reminisce his former, fallen imperial house; or to lament for a lack of understanding friends; or to deplore the turbulent times; or to mourn for his deceased wife; or to express frustration in public service.⁷² A critic writing

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Kang-i Sun Chang, “The Unmasking of Tao Qian and the Indeterminacy of Interpretation,” unpublished manuscript. Permission to quote from the manuscript is granted by Prof. Chang and I thank her for sharing the manuscript with me.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² For a discussion of these views, see Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, “Tao Yuanming de ‘Xianqing fu’ yu cifu zhong de aiqing xianqing zhuti” 陶淵明的《閑情賦》與辭賦中的愛情閑情主題, *Beijing Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 北京大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 1992.5: 1-6. Yuan himself interprets “Quieting the Passions” as expressing romantic love

recently even maintains that the lady/goddess in Tao Qian and others' *fu* is a metaphor for the Grand Dao 大道, the ultimate truth and beauty.⁷³ All this is good thinking, but in the final analysis falls short of textual support from the *fu* itself.

Such prominent modern scholars as Liang Qichao 梁啟超, Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛, and Lu Xun 魯迅 all celebrate the literary values and sincerity in "Quieting the Passions." Indeed, as Chang observes it, these opinions "represent a progression away from the allegorical interpretation—which includes Su Shi's invoking the moral authority of *Shi jing* in his interpretation of 'Xianqing fu'—toward a richer, more down to earth reading that is less predictable and more penetrating into the human condition. As a result, a more human and more believable image of the poet Tao Qian emerges from our encounter with the text itself."⁷⁴ From a different perspective, Zheng Yuyu 鄭毓瑜, in her recent study of the early *fu* traditions, also suggests that Tao Qian's "Quieting the Passions" completes a process of equating the "signified" with the "signifier," advising the divorce of romance from allegoresis.⁷⁵

The widely respected modern critic Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, nevertheless, passes a harsh judgment on Tao. Seizing upon the discrepancy between what he calls the poem's "avowed purpose" (*zongzhi* 宗旨) and its "actual effects" (*chengxiao* 成效), Qian ridicules Tao for "hanging up a sheep's head and selling horsemeat" (*xuan yangtou er mai mafu* 懸羊頭而賣馬脯).⁷⁶ One feels that Qian would be ultimately disappointed in seeking an "organic whole" in Tao's *fu*. The underlying structure of this *fu* lodges in the human psychology of desire: unfathomable, with indulgent, unpremeditated, disjointed, painful and pleasurable moments. There is no erasure of eroticism in "Quieting the Passions." Qian is drily insightful in this, after all. Tao Qian engages it and struggles to flesh it out, catching many, perhaps including Tao himself, unprepared. It is as if the preface to the *fu* was added after the poem was written out—a postscript in actuality—when Tao finally calmed down and wondered what his readers would think of him.

and an effort to tame it. Also useful is Wang Guoying 王國瓔 (Wang Kuo-ying), "'Xianqing fu' zhi fengjian yu jituo" 〈閑情賦〉之諷諫與寄託, in her *Gujin yinyi shiren zhi zong: Tao Yuanming lunxi* 古今隱逸詩人之宗: 陶淵明論析 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1999), pp. 222-244.

⁷³ Guo Jianxun 郭建勳, "Xiangzheng: qingyu yu 'da dao'—Han Wei Liuchao 'shennü-meinü' xilie cifu de tantao" 象徵: 情慾與“大道”—漢魏六朝“神女-美女”系列辭賦的探討, in Nanjing Daxue Zhongwenxi 南京大學中文系, ed., *Cifu wenxue lunji* 辭賦文學論集 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu, 1999), pp. 343-354.

⁷⁴ Chang, "The Unmasking of Tao Qian."

⁷⁵ See Zheng Yuyu, "Meili de zhouxuan—shennü lunshu yu xingbie yanyi" 美麗的周旋—神女論述與性別演義, in her *Xingbie yu jiaguo*, pp. 43-52.

⁷⁶ Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian* 管錘編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), Vol. 4, pp. 1220-1221.

Between Self-Indulgence and Self-Restraint—Tao Qian’s “Quieting the Passions”

Lawrence C. H. YIM

This essay probes the nuance of the image of the lady in Tao Qian’s “Xian qing fu” (“Quieting the Passions”), focusing on the beginning of the *fu* (lines 1-28). Tao Qian breathes new life into this image. Three elements—love, music, and seduction—play a particularly important role in molding the lady’s character. Through a close reading of “Xian qing fu” and an exploration of its intertextual relations, this essay brings to light the significance of this lady in the particular tradition of *fu* in which woman and music are employed as aesthetic and cultural symbols.

This essay observes that Tao Qian has constructed a spiritually consanguineous being; that Tao desires, besides physical intimacy, a union of souls. These associations of well-disposed companionship notwithstanding, Tao Qian’s *fu* takes a strong erotic interest in the lady. The two interests, companionship and sexual desire, are closely intertwined: Tao Qian gives the lady a lyrical and contemplative voice that is never heard from her precedents; the topos of the musical seductress has transcended its former purpose as mere sexual entree in the *fu* tradition. Still, Tao Qian shapes the speaker’s yearning for the lady in a quest for a soul mate and pleasure.

The ten amorous wishes in the middle of the *fu* are bare and bold in Chinese lyrical traditions, but at first the lady’s seduction strikes the reader as minimal. Yet the seductiveness of Tao Qian’s *fu* grows stronger and stronger as the intertextual relations of the text unfold. This essay suggests that the underlying structure of “Xian qing fu” lodges in the human psychology of desire: unfathomable, with indulgent, unpremeditated, disjointed, painful and pleasurable moments. There is no erasure of eroticism in the *fu*. Tao Qian engages it and struggles to flesh it out, catching many, perhaps including Tao himself, unprepared.

Between Self-Indulgence and Self-Restraint—Tao Qian’s “Quieting the Passions”

嚴志雄

陶潛〈閑情賦〉塑造了一個空谷幽蘭般的佳人形象，她迥異於漢代以降「閑情」與「神女」系列辭賦中的女性典型，本文主旨即在於探索此佳人之文學與美學意蘊。陶潛透過對男女愛慕、音樂相感及色身誘惑的書寫與想像，牽引出這一女性角色與男性說話者若即若離的互動，並體現了後者對靈與慾的渴求——賦中佳人既是他希冀的知己，亦為色授魂與的麗人；這兩個象徵系統交織纏結，構成了〈閑情賦〉豐富而複雜的文本。賦中佳人所體現的孤絕之美與她所抒發的生命無常之感，與陶潛慣有的抒情聲音極為類似，而她的神儀舉止雅麗、所演奏之樂音意境淒美哀婉，絕非其他作家筆下的佳人神女之綺豔放蕩可比擬，她特殊的主體性因而呼之欲出。陶潛在此所締造的「情」，是一種理想化的情，源於性情投契與相互傾慕。即便如此，讀者仍不能無視於賦文中強烈的綺思（此亦為「情」之底蘊），著名的「十願」便是男性說話者設想自己親狎佳人身體，相當大膽露骨。其實情色之思在賦文前半已露端倪，但須仔細分析文本的語構、句構、意象，以及比對相關賦作的同類象徵表現，始能識破。〈閑情賦〉的文本互涉性越彰顯，文中的「誘惑」與「色欲」便越見真切，故本文排比並分析〈閑情賦〉及其相關賦作的象徵手法與句式，闡明其文本互涉特徵，藉此點出本賦在辭賦傳統中的重要地位。本文同時認為，〈閑情賦〉的深層結構須於男女色欲的本質中索求，它是自發而難以測度的，交錯於耽溺、壓抑、痛苦與歡快之間；它也是不連貫的，所以批評家沒有必要將此文本視為有機的整體而過分苛求。

關鍵詞：陶潛 〈閑情賦〉 女性形象 理想愛情 文本互涉性 色欲