

suffer from the faults Li finds in the works of Chang Hsien, Liu Yung, Yen Shu, Ho Chu, Ch'in Kuan, and Huang T'ing-chien. He further developed the technique of *p'u-hsü* innovated by Liu Yung in a refined and elegant language with "classic weightiness" and "allusive substance," although his main subjects remained "lovesickness" and "separation." Above all, his song lyrics illustrate a perfect harmony between intrinsic and extrinsic music; as a poet, he paid closer attention to all four tones than had any previous songwriter. [93]

But however sophisticated and refined, Chou Pang-yen's works represent a synthesis of the orthodox aesthetics of the genre of the song lyric as it had developed during the Northern Sung. Although Li Ch'ing-chao's omission of him from "A Critique of the Song Lyric" is a curious one, her articulation of the characteristics of the genre marks a crucial moment in its critical history, a comprehensive awareness of its identity as a distinct literary form. Only as a result of the cumulative contributions of a number of poets could she assert, therefore, that the *tz'u* now claimed a domain of its own.

[93] Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao, "T'ang Sung *tz'u* tzu-sheng chih yen-pien."

Meaning the Words: The Genuine as a Value in the Tradition of the Song Lyric

Stephen Owen

The word "genuine" constitutes the skeleton beneath the song lyric. When the emotions are genuine and the scene is a genuine one whatever has been written is always excellent and it's easy to consider it complete

K'uang Chou-I, Hui-Feng Tz'u-Hua (1936)[1

][*Note: "consider it complete," t'o-kao, "to get out of draft stage," a cliché for finishing a literary work, implying a reflective process of revision. Does this mean the lyricist revises until the words "sound" genuine, or until they "are" genuine?*]

Only a Song

With conscious purpose the layered curtains hide our most intimate words .

重簾有意藏私語

YEN CHI-TAO, TO "CHE-KU T'IEN"[2]

The phoenix cover and the lovebird curtain are nearby
Where I would go if I could get there.
Shrimp-whisker brushes the floor and the double doors are still.
I recognize the shuffle of embroidered slippers
Invisible in the bedroom,
Her forced laugh, her voice
Light and lovely, like a woodwind.

Her makeup done,
She idly holds a lute.
Her favorite love songs—
Into every note she seems to put her fragrant heart.
Listening outside the curtain
Gets me so much heartbreak!

[1] K'uang Chou-i, *Hui-feng tz'u-hua* , ed. Wang Yao-an (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1982), p. 6.

[2] *Ch'üan Sung tz'u* , ed. T'ang Kuei-chang (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965), p. 227. Hereafter CST .

Misery such as this
Only she could share.

咫尺鳳衾鴛帳
欲去無因到
蝦鬚窄地重門悄
認繡履頻移
洞房杳杳
強笑語
逞如簧,再三輕巧
梳妝早
琵琶閒抱
愛品相思調
聲聲似把芳心告
隔簾聽
贏得斷腸多少
恁煩惱
除非共伊知道

Liu Yung, To "Listening Outside the Curtain" ("Ko lien t'ing") [3]

Moments of accidental "overhearing" were a common motif in the song lyric: sometimes overhearing words, but often overhearing song. Words overheard were clearly not directed to the accidental listener; however, the song overheard is a more interesting case, raising many questions of whom the song words are for, if anyone, and what kind of claim they make on the heart of the singer. Overhearing song, the listener may be stirred to think on his own case, or he may feel a sudden rush of sympathy for the singer, finding himself in the ancient role of *chih-yin*, "the one who knows the tone," the person who knows how the music and the song word reveal what is in the singer's heart. In poetry we can trace this motif back to "In the Northwest There Was a Building High" ("Hsi-pei yu kao-lou") from the "Nineteen Old Poems," in which a passerby overhears a woman singing a song of sorrow for a lost or absent man and feels immediate sympathy for her. In his conclusion, however, the passerby wishes that they might become a pair of birds and fly away together—hearing a song in which a woman is longing for another man, the overhearer is both touched and attracted, and inserts himself in the place of the beloved.

Liu Yung's song is a very special mode of overhearing: it is eavesdropping. And this eavesdropper is so personally implicated in what he hears that a group of questions, usually repressed, comes to the surface

[3] Translation by James R. Hightower, "The Songwriter Liu Yung," pt. 1, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41 (1981): 375. CST, p. 30.

of the lyric: how true the singer's words are, what kind of truth those words claim to have, whom the words are meant for. To the singing girl's guest on the other side of the curtain, the man who is the direct recipient of the conversation and song, these words all seem as if directed to him and true—or at least he is willing to suspend disbelief and take them as true for the

moment. In this case, however, the eavesdropper knows—or thinks he knows, or wants very much to believe—that there is a difference between true words of love and a merely conventional performance of love's words. There is someone else sitting in the place that he wishes to be his own. His unease at being replaced, in discovering how individuals can apparently be interchanged in what is supposed to be a very particular relationship, is somehow connected to the way in which the same song can be reperformed—for different guests, by different singers, in different circumstances. From the outside the eavesdropper discovers how fine and almost invisible is the boundary between "meaning it" and a skillful performance of "meaning it."

The lyric begins with the site where the unseen performance will be concluded: the invisible bed, itself named by conventional synecdoche as layers of coverings—quilt and bed-curtains—both further hidden behind the curtains of the room outside which he listens. Such coverings are peculiar barriers, creating a maddening closeness (*chih-ch'ih*) that cannot be crossed yet permits the clear passage of sounds, sounds whose intent and truth are uncertain, open to interpretation.

He reads the event in its sounds. First, against the stillness of the room there are the sounds of things brushing the ground: the swish of the "shrimp-whisker" fringe of an inner curtain as she enters the room, then the scraping of her slippers as she comes forward to entertain the invisible guest. That intensely audible proximity paradoxically intensifies his sense of his distance from her: *yao-yao*, less "invisible" than "remote and indistinct." The next phase of her performance is pleasant banter, laughing chitchat. Here we might observe that any sounds or words from the invisible guest are silenced in the words of *this* song, for the eavesdropper makes himself the singular audience of this intimate performance, even though he is an audience displaced, receiving sounds apparently directed toward someone else. Her voice is "forced"—or so it seems to him. Is this some quality he thinks he detects in the sounds or only an assumption he wants to make? If the guest were to become aware of such "forcedness," the performance would fail by becoming patently false. Whether compulsory performance or willing performance, her words have already become a kind of music, the "woodwind" that will complement the strings of the *p'i-p'a* in the next stanza. It is

verbal music that is *ch'ing-ch'iao*, "light and artful": a positive quality in terms of an artisan's skill, but questionable in a human who cares.

As we move into the second stanza, she becomes as if visible—probably an inference he makes, hearing the music and knowing the set phases of the performance. He has, no doubt, been there before himself, sat in the very place the guest now sits, taken all the words as genuine, which compels him

to question the genuineness of what he overhears now. The phases of the "entertainment" are a set sequence: the entrance, the conversation, the song, bed—with a coda often consisting of lover's vows that this place in the heart will be occupied by no other. Liu Yung has heard such vows and believed them.

Although the phases of the love encounter differ from one culture to another, traditions of love poetry often place special emphasis on the stage just before consummation. The penultimate phase is often the displaced double of union, sexual or spiritual, and at the same time the deferment of consummation and ending. As a medieval treatise has it, *Gradus amoris sunt hii: visus et alloquium, contactus, basia, factum* ("The phases of love are these: seeing and then talking together, touching, kisses, the act"). And there is a long tradition of classical and European poems on the penultimate phase of kissing, at once the imitation, the prelude to, and explicitly the deferment of the sexual act. In the Chinese "phases of love" the penultimate stage is usually singing; and although the lyrics often remind us that the lovers go to bed after the song is done, we should remember that this bedding is part of the lyrics of a song, at once promise and deferment. [4] Through song the woman, who is supposed to be reticent and shy, is given a voice and authorized to speak what is supposed to be heart's truth (and since these women were paid singers, to hear such songs as if they were true would be reassuring). The Chinese poetic tradition was as fascinated by the expression of female desire as the Western poetic tradition has been fascinated with male desire. Once the song has permitted the woman ritually to speak the desire that is elsewhere silenced, the couple can go to bed.

On her p'i-p'a she plays "melodies of love-longing," *hsiang-ssu tiao* (love songs), which Liu Yung claims are her "favorite type," *ai-p'in*. And at this point the conventional bedroom scene of the Chinese love song begins to go astray, revealing the motives of this man standing outside the curtain, one who believes himself to be the true lover. He knows that she likes this kind of song and by such knowledge shows his own intimacy with her. Moreover, by commenting that the song she plays

[4] Cf. Chou Pang-yen, "Ying-ch'un yüeh" (*CST*, p. 616).

belongs to her "favorite type," the eavesdropper calls into question the truth of the words she is singing to the invisible guest, their genuineness as address—perhaps she chooses a love song at this moment because she "likes" such songs in general. But he does not know *why* she likes this kind of song—whether only because it is a song, or because she enjoys the love game, or because she cares about him.

The observation that she seems to lodge her heart in every note is even

more troubling and ambiguous. He seems to hear her confiding real feeling into the song she is singing, but feeling for whom—the guest who sits before her, or for him, the absent beloved who is secretly standing outside the curtain? On another level, we are not certain how to understand the "seeming": is this a function of his perception—that it seems to him that there is true feeling in the words, though of course he cannot be sure—or is the "seeming" the quality of the performance itself, an appearance of feeling when feeling is, in fact, lacking? Song, which was supposed to be the voice for the heart's truth that must otherwise be kept veiled, here becomes the source of uncertainty and pain, heard from the other side of the curtain.

At this point the speaker explicitly positions himself on the other side of the curtain, introducing himself into the scene with the situation that is also the title of the melody for which he composes the lyrics. Like so many song lyrics, this song is reflexive, concerning song and the truth of song. Both the lyricist and the invisible guest receive the "declaration," *kao*, of her song; the guest believes he understands the message and is surely filled with joy and desire; the eavesdropper and we, the audience of *his* song, receive the message but don't know what it means—we can't be certain. If there is genuine love in the words of her song, is it for him or for the guest; or is it perhaps only a song, the pleasure in the craft and the skilled performance of a feeling that is not there?

The next phase of the "performance" should be the bed; at this point song lyrics often speak of the lovers' going together inside the bed-curtains, her shyness at undressing, the bedcovers' rolling like waves. But the poet has displaced the waiting bed, unoccupied, to the beginning of his song; and in place of describing the final movement to consummation, which must cause him pain, the eavesdropper simply writes his pain: *ying-te*, this is "all he gets out of it," the experience of eavesdropping. In this phase he can no longer pretend to presence; the difference is too clear: another "gets out of it" joy and pleasure, "all he gets" is hurt.

These last lines in Liu Yung's song have their own mark of authentication, slipping into a more colloquial voice, as song lyrics often do at

the end. As previously there had been a question of the woman communicating her true feelings through her song, the problem now is communicating what *he* feels. Although there was uncertainty about her song, his own song closes with the bold claim of her "knowing," *chih-tao*. Most important, he explicitly rejects the general promiscuity of song: the truth of his feeling could only be known when together with her—or expressed here negatively as a rhetorical question: "Unless together with her could it be known?"

He offers a song for a song, an attempt to sing back through the curtain and replace doubt with sure understanding and intimacy, doubt about the communication of her feelings with certainty about the communication of his own. Yet when he is "together with her," this peculiar circumstance, the occasion of doubt and pain that produces in turn the ostensibly true song, will be past.

Or perhaps there is nothing deep here, nothing that finds footing in the heart. Perhaps Liu Yung is writing only a clever variation on a common boudoir scene, something "light and clever," *ch'ing-ch'iao*, for any skilled singer to sing. Now we may recall, with some unease, that this song, whose tune is listed among the melodies of the T'ang Music Academy, the *chiao-fang*, belongs to that class of lyrics that elaborate the situation implied in the title, just as lyrics to the tune "Tsui kung-tzu" often describe a wife's reaction when her husband returns home drunk from carousing. We wanted to believe his words, we thought he "meant it"; now we doubt.

Even if this is so—and in our modern distrust, we guess it may well be—we cannot help hearing the question of the song's genuineness, even within the conventions of song. Is he merely performing or does he "mean it," and if so, how?

The Reliable and the Unreliable

When I meet her, can I interpret whether she cares or not?

相逢還解有情無

YEN CHI-TAO, TO "HUAN HSI SHA"[5]

The true word, the word meant, has great power: it brings lovers together and keeps them together across spans of time and physical distances. Other things may fade: the memory of a face. Dreams may try to span distances but cannot. In "Ts'ai-yün kuei," after describing the scene of his travels, Liu Yung moves in the second stanza to recollection

[5] *CST*, p. 239.

of the beloved, as he so often does.[6] There are two powerful remainders:

the lingering smell of her body and a "line" or "sentence." The one is dissipating, but the other stays clearly in mind.

Since we parted, most painful of all,
barely detectable in my sleeves and gown's fold,
there is still her lingering scent.
And I'm sure that she, on phoenix pillow, under lovebird quilts,
cannot help brooding on it through the long nights.
But the only thing that really pulls at my heart
is that one line, when we were about to go our ways,
that I cannot forget.

別來最苦
襟袖依約
尚有餘香
算得伊、鴛衾鳳枕
夜永爭不思量
牽情處
惟有臨歧
一句難忘

We do not know the content of the line, only a claim of its power. And perhaps the content of the line cannot be adequately reproduced in these lyrics he now writes, where they would become mere words of song, deprived of their connection to a person and a moment, open to repetition by anyone.

But the words of lovers may sometimes prove to be untrustworthy, as in the problematic conclusion to Liu Yung's "Ch'iu-yeh yüeh."**[7]** The opening stanza is a conventional situation in which the poet reencounters the beloved, but instead of their steamy and joyous reunion, something goes wrong.

Back then we met only to part
And I told myself there was no way ever to see her again.
But the other day I met her unexpectedly at a party.
While we were drinking she found a chance
To draw her brows together and sigh,
Rousing any number of old sorrows.

Her eyes brimming with tears,
In my ear she whispered

[6] *CST* , p. 36.

[7] Translation by James R. Hightower, "The Songwriter Liu Yung," pt. 2, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42 (1982): 18. *CST* , p. 23.

A thousand secret reproaches:
"Too bad you had things in your heart
There was no way to see."
I would like to believe she is telling the truth
And has no other ties.
Maybe I'd better just curb my fancy
And go on with her forever.

當初聚散
便喚作、無由再逢伊面
近日來、不期而會重歡宴
向尊前、閒暇裏
斂著眉兒長歎
惹起舊愁無限
盈盈淚眼
漫向我耳邊
作萬般幽怨
奈你自家心下
有事難見
待信真箇
恁別無縈絆
不免收心
共伊長遠

If the speaker is uncertain what is in the other's heart, the song's readers or audience are equally uncertain who is speaking and what is being said. Hightower's decision in handling the conclusion here is only one among several possibilities. For example, we might easily extend the woman's speech two more lines, so that instead of having the man doubt her sincerity in turn, we finally have only her distrust of him, at which he is so ashamed that he decides to stay true to her.

"I'm certain that in your heart
things were concealed.
I would like to believe what you say is true,
and that you were not involved with anyone else."
At this I can't help reining in my fancies
and going on with her forever.

Another, no less plausible interpretation would have the entire end in the voice of the male speaker, distrusting her, yet deciding he can't help returning to her in the end.

I'm certain that in your heart
there are certain things concealed.

I'd like to believe she is telling the truth
and that she's not involved with anyone else.
Yet I can't help stopping these fancies
and going on with her forever.

Someone distrusts the words of someone else; each reader or member of the audience may tell the story according to his or her own anticipations. Although the decision is less urgent for us, we stand in the position of Liu Yung outside the curtain, hearing the repeatable words of the song and not knowing to whom they are directed.

We might want to believe the lyricist when he tells of his pain at hearing his beloved entertain another man; but he may be only inventing a situation to elaborate the title of an old melody. In his lyrics he wonders if the beloved "means the words" in the song *she* sings. But the singer may be no more than a bird that repeats the same syllables with meaningless and mindless skill. In the famous Tun-huang version of "Ch'üeh t'a chih" ("Tieh lien hua") the exasperated woman locks away the magpie that keeps bringing the good news of her husband's return, words without any truth to back up their repeated syllables: "You bring good news, but when has it ever had any basis?" *sung-hsi ho-ts'eng yu p'ing-chü*. As the magpie later complains, the words were only to cheer her up, pure rhetoric—perhaps like the singer's profession of love in the song. And at last the magpie wishes for the husband's return so that the message of its words will be substantiated and it will be set free.

The love song is both the stylized imitation of love and at the same time the words in which a truth of love can be spoken. The singer is both a professional, paid to enact passion, and a human being, to whom love, longing, and loss can actually happen. We would be overly credulous to believe every statement of love-longing is indeed love; we would be foolishly cynical to believe that every statement of love-longing is purely professional or part of a hollow game. And we can't tell the difference. We may, as readers eight centuries later, say it doesn't matter; but it did seem to matter to the lyricists whose songs we now can only read, who were ever looking for evidence that the singer really meant it. We can say, with more acumen, that the fantasy and role-playing of these love games easily blurred into genuine feeling; but the participants themselves were concerned with an unambiguous experience of genuineness. Because overt statements and gestures were always potentially unreliable, they looked closely for the accidental slip, or some gesture or expression coming from the woman when she thought she was unobserved, free of the pressure of performance. If voyeurism is an impor-

tant motif in the song lyric, it comes from an intense concern with the

genuine; and that concern in turn follows from a suspicion of mere artfulness, of being manipulated. **[8]** The lyricists knew that the singer's skill could instigate unskillful passion in the listener:

Before the song comes to its most tender moment,
her brows take on a seductive expression;
as the drinking companions grow tipsy,
their eyes become still wilder.

歌逢媚處眉先嫵
酒伴酣時眼更狂

Ho Chu, to "Che-ku t'ien" **[9]**

She is not speaking what is in her heart: she is performing a text; she knows the words that are coming and strikes a pose for their appearance.

Yet there might be a moment, barely noticed or dimly seen, when role and true feeling come apart, as in the following lyrics to "Ts'ai sang-tzu" by Yen Chi-tao: **[10]**

I saw her then, under the moon,
in the western mansion,
trying to smooth over her tear-streaked powder unobserved;
and when the song was over, she knit her brows again;
I regret I could not see her perfectly,
across the smoke rising from the censer.

Since we parted, the strands of willows
dangling beyond the mansion
have how many times changed their spring green?
Yet I, weary traveler in the red dust,
will always recall that woman in the mansion,
her powder streaked with tears.

西樓月下當時見
淚粉偷勻
歌罷還皺
恨隔爐煙看未真
別來樓外垂楊纓
幾換青春
倦客紅塵
長記樓中粉淚人

[8] For a discussion of voyeurism in poetry, see Paul Rouzer, "Watching the Voyeurs: Palace Poetry and *Yuefu*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 11 (1989): 13–34.

[9] *CST* , p. 516.

[10] *CST* , p. 251.

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The curtains that hid the singing beloved from Liu Yung here in Yen Chi-tao's lyrics become a partially transparent veil of smoke. He thinks that he has seen her trying to wipe away the tracks of tears unobserved and frowning once she relaxes the professional pose assumed in song (those brows having been trained to assume a seductive frown when she reaches the most tender moment in the song). But *k'an wei chen* , he can't see clearly enough, can't tell for sure (the *chen* here being the term of the "genuine"). These gestures and expressions on her face are marks of hidden distress, a code of loss and love-longing, but for him or for someone else?—we cannot be sure, and perhaps even he could not be. It almost doesn't matter: the particular object of love here seems less important than the moment when genuine response appeared, an uncertain vision that is fixed in memory and celebrated in this song. Such a moment, like the reliable words of Liu Yung's beloved in the earlier lyric, is something that survives time's passage, that stands in contrast to the world of public life in the red dust.

Tears or the inexplicable frown were among the oldest tropes of genuine feeling rising to a concealing surface, as in Ho Ning's famous "Ts'ai sang-tzu," where after a lovely young girl has been described, **[11]**

For no reason she knits her brows,
making her mother suspicious that she has springtime longings.

無事顰眉
春思翻教阿母疑

Or in Ho Chu's "Su chung-ch'ing": **[12]**

Facing the wind again, she sings of the circular fan,
her true feeling fixed on which man?
Lightly she jokes,
then barely frowns:
you can tell it's love.

臨風再歌團扇
深意屬何人
輕調笑
淺凝顰
認情親

Song lyric teaches a close attention to the most subtle expressions—"barely frowns"—for it is in such ripples in the surface of public

[11] Lin Ta-ch'un, ed., *T'ang Wu-tai tz'u* (1933; rev. ed., Shanghai: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing-she, 1956), p. 102. Hereafter *TWTT* .

[12] *CST* , pp. 530–31.

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appearance that reliable marks of true feeling are to be found. And yet once these become motifs in song, these too can be feigned.

One of the most striking examples of the inexplicable frown is in Chou Pang-yen's "Wang Chiang-nan":**[13]**

At the party with singers
the most wonderful things are those glances of love.
Jeweled coiffures glitter, from which jade swallows hang aslant;
embroidered shawls, soft and glossy, gauzes steeped in perfume.
There should always be plenty of what people like.

For no reason at all
how come she furrows her brows?
Lightly made-up, as if seen in a painting.
Yet her brilliant conversation is better than hearing her sing,
not to mention the swaying dance.

歌席上
無賴是橫波
寶髻玲瓏玳玉燕
繡巾柔膩掩香羅
人好自宜多
無箇事
因甚斂雙蛾
淺淡梳妝疑見畫
惺鬆言語勝聞歌
何況會婆娑

The opening stanza of the lyric is the opulent naming of paraphernalia that is typical of one type of party song, concluding with a wonderfully crass statement of indulgence—the more of what people (sc., men) like, the better. Into such unreflective pleasures intrudes the frown "for no reason at all." Other lyricists may be quick to interpret the frown's meaning, a certain index of love; but Chou Pang-yen offers it to us as a question: "How come?" And in leaving the frown as a question, he raises a larger question of

interiority. The frown is the mark of interiority—silent expression, as words are voiced expression. But there are two kinds of words: those produced from oneself and the formalized words of a song. Chou first gives us the "pretty as a picture" cliché to objectify the frowning singer, but then he qualifies this "speaking picture" with one of the more unexpected statements in the tradition of party song: her conversation is superior to her song, even though song is the phase that will lead to bed (or the bushes). The frown undercuts the

[13] *CST*, p. 615.

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momentum of the party song; the appearance of the genuine complicates the love game.

Repetition

Attention to the presence of genuine feeling and the marks by which it could supposedly be recognized sustained many conventional motifs in the thematic repertoire of song lyric. The inherent contradiction here should be obvious. Insofar as figures of genuineness became categorical terms in a stylized language of feeling, they could be used—as the terms in any language can be used—to lie. Through such thematization of the genuine, we can see the pervasiveness and depth of the concern; but the genuine itself can never adequately appear in its thematization, which is open to repetition and "use."

The genuineness of repeatable words is inherently suspect. And yet the song lyric was a form in which repetition in performance was essential. Here we must distinguish two versions of repetition: there is one in which the repeated words belong to the singer's present; and there is another in which repetition recalls words said at a given moment in the past, in which the singer is enacting words recognized as belonging to another person and another time.

This appears figured in one of the strangest passages in all of Liu Yung's song lyrics, in which two voices are superimposed, each repeating the same words. One of those voices is repeating words that matter, that are recognized as belonging to another person and to time past; the other voice is a mockery of performance, the merely skillful repetition of sounds that have no footing in the heart:

She leans on the railing beside the pool, sad, no companion.
What's to do about these living alone feelings?

Together with the parrot in the golden cage
She says over the things her lover said.[14]

池上凭闌愁無侶
奈些箇、單樓情緒
却傍金籠共鸚鵡
念粉郎言語

[14] "Kan ts'ao tzu" (CST , pp. 14–15). Translation by James R. Hightower, "The Songwriter Liu Yung," pt. 2, p. 10. The rare use of *nien* , "to recite," is interesting here in that it has another usage in *tz'u* , in the prose *nien-yü* or "recited preface," that may precede the performance of a *lien-chang* (*tz'u* sequence). Here the performer speaks the words of the author, words explicitly the author's own. In contrast to the lyrics themselves, where the speaker is often indeterminate, in the *nien-yü* the singer "performs" someone else's words, as the woman does above when she "recites" what the beloved said.

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The human version of the parrot's repetition, speaking in an eternal present, is, of course, more complicated. The repeatable party song often takes precisely this aspect of its performance as a theme, speaking for complete absorption in the present moment, forgetting past and future; such songs appeal to the human yearning to become animal and to take the animal's anonymous pleasures, to be free of memory. Yet their absorption in the moment is something desired, articulated against the human truth of memory and anticipation.

As an example, we may quote the famous version of "Huan hsi sha" by Yen Shu.[15] This represents a normative language in song, to be sung by any singer to any guest at any party; its version of "the moment" is any moment and every moment. The singer may "mean the words" or she may be only skillfully repeating the words; but the words belong to no fixed moment in human history when they were or were not genuine:

Only a moment, this season's splendor,
this body, a bounded thing;
to part now as if it didn't matter
easily breaks the heart;
so don't be hasty, refusing
the party's wine, the banquet's song.

Mountains and rivers fill our eyes, but care
is wasted on things too far;
besides which, this grief at spring passing,
at wind and the rain bringing down flowers;

it is better by far to take as your love
the person before your eyes.

一向年光有限身
等閒離別易銷魂
酒筵歌席莫辭頻
滿目山河空念遠
落花風雨更傷春
不如憐取眼前人

As the performer who sings such a song can be endlessly replaced, so too can the body, the anonymous "person before the eyes."

Most of Ou-yang Hsiu's song lyrics are similar to Yen Shu's in this respect, including a party song to "Yü-lou ch'un" beginning "North and south of West Lake, a vast sweep of misty waves."**[16]** However, when Su Shih hears Ou-yang Hsiu's ("the Drunken Old Man's") lyrics being performed a generation later, we note that a significant change has

[15] *CST* , p.90.

[16] *CST* , p. 133.

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taken place. When the lovely woman stands before Su Shih and sings the pleasures of the party, instead of taking delight in "the person before his eyes," Su Shih responds quite differently:**[17]**

In lingering frost I've lost sight
of the sweep of the long River Huai;
I hear only the trickling current
of the clear Ying.
The lovely woman still sings
the songs of the Drunken Old Man;
but forty-three years have gone by
like a sudden sheet of lightning.

霜餘已失長淮闊
空聽潺潺清潁咽
佳人猶唱醉翁詞
四十三年如電抹

Ou-yang Hsiu's song lyric no longer inhabits an eternal present; hearing it recalls its maker and a particular time in the past.

We might consider the analogy between the two modes of understanding song above and the versions of song in Liu Yung's "Listening Outside the Curtain." As Liu Yung listened to the beloved, he wondered if and how the beloved "meant the words"; he recognized those lyrics she sang only as a category, "her favorite type" (*ai-p'in*), "love songs" (*hsiang-ssu tiao*). In the second version, the question is whether Liu Yung "means the words" of his own song lyric, a question that can be answered only by understanding the words of the song in terms of the circumstances of its composition (this question of meaning the words in regard to the circumstances of composition *can* be posed here, as it cannot be posed in Yen Shu's "Huan hsi sha"). This is a reading of the song lyric on the model of *shih*. Whether the singer ("the person before your eyes") does or does not invest genuine feeling in the repeated words must remain forever suspect; the most immediate and familiar model for genuine words was one of words bound to a particular moment in the past, words that always recalled the circumstances of their origin.**[18]**

Between Li Yü at the very beginning of the Northern Sung, and the

[17] *CST*, p. 283. The first stanza of a "Mu-lan hua ling," the same tune pattern as Ou-yang Hsiu's "Yü-lou ch'un," and matching his rhymes.

[18] We might note how important this act of displacement into the past became in the thematics of later love songs. Later, and often even in Liu Yung, genuine romance was rarely the problematic, perhaps dubious "person before your eyes," but more often a love recollected and its sites revisited.

time of Su Shih, the song lyric underwent a transformation from a normative and typological song form to a highly circumstantial form, sometimes truly occasional and sometimes not.**[19]** I would suggest that the problem of genuineness was an important factor in this transformation.**[20]**

To remark on the interest in genuineness and its consequences for both reading and composition, is in no way to suggest that such lyrics actually *are* genuine, either in the sense that the author "means the words," or in the sense that they are necessarily occasional or grow out of real life experience. In "Listening Outside the Curtain" Liu Yung may simply have been elaborating an incident suggested in an old tune title; however, as he persuasively dramatizes his own "genuine" concern for the genuineness of the beloved's song words, he drives the reading of song lyric toward being more like that of *shih*. Later, when the singer performs this lyric by Liu Yung, the words will be understood as representing Liu Yung's sentiments, and no longer those of the singer. This has two important consequences. First, it contributes to the formation of the legend of the great lover Liu San-pien (Liu Yung) as a biographical frame for reading the lyrics. Second, the

reperformance of such lyrics contributes to a dramatized Liu San-pien, who eventually became a popular figure in Chinese theater.

The Categorical and the Particular

Insofar as meaning the words (or the appearance thereof) became a value in song lyric, those texts that somehow managed to embody "genuineness" within the words themselves would be particularly valued. Here we should stress the lyric's difference from *shih*. *Shih* could

[19] This transformation has been amply documented by many historians of *tz'u*, such as Kang-i Sun Chang in *The Evolution of Chinese Tz'u Poetry: From Late T'ang to Northern Sung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). The normative and typological tends to be associated with *hsiao-ling*, while the circumstantial tends to be found in *man-tz'u*; however, this formal division is not at all a strict one: Li Yü writes circumstantial *hsiao-ling*, while Liu Yung writes typological *man-tz'u*. I use the term "circumstantial" as referring to a category broader than the "occasional," which it includes. Thus, we might consider many of Chou Pang-yen's lyrics as circumstantial, but not truly occasional; that is, although we may doubt that such lyrics were composed for a particular experiential occasion, they create a strong sense of a particular, non-repeatable moment.

[20] It is significant that Yen Chi-tao, the last master of the Northern Sung typological party song, was also the lyricist for whom the question of genuineness posed the largest problem. In his song lyrics he raises the possibility of the beloved's lack of true feeling and potential falseness with remarkable frequency.

make the *assumption* of genuineness (which is not to say that all *shih* are genuine or aim for that value). In contrast, genuineness was a *problem* in the song lyric.

In addition to a circumstantiality that increasingly bound (or seemed to bind) the words of the song lyric to some moment in the past, the song lyric sought other ways to embody the particularity of feeling and experience. The desire to write genuine feeling into language, in the text rather than in the performance, inevitably encountered a basic limitation of language. Words like "love," "longing," and "sadness" are general categories and only crude ways of articulating particular and constantly changing states of feeling. Using categorical language, the song lyric sought ways to speak of states of feeling more particular, more immediate, and more variable than language readily permitted.

As we might expect, both the particularity of feeling and the inadequacy of categorical language came themselves to appear as themes within the song lyric. Older statements of the inadequacy of language, such as the anecdote of Wheelwright P'ien in the *Chuang-tzu* or T'ao Ch'ien's famous fifth poem of "Drinking Wine," tended to declare the absolute ineffability of "what" was known. In contrast, the lyricists usually accepted the essential validity of categorical language and faulted only language's capacity to convey adequately the precise quality of feeling. Comments on the particularity of feeling occur frequently in the song lyric tradition, as in the famous passage from Li Yü's (attrib.) "Wu yeh t'i" (or "Hsiang-chien huan"); first he gives the category ("the sorrow of being apart"), then declares its singularity:**[21]**

Cut but not severed,
put in order, but then a tangle again—
that's the sorrow of being apart.
It is a flavor all of its own kind in the heart.

剪不斷
理還亂
是離愁
別是一般滋味在心頭

Or when Liu Yung speaks of a sensation of being ill at ease after sex, he says: "It's a disturbing quality of feeling all of its own kind."**[22]** And Li Ch'ing-chao, perhaps echoing Li Yü, describes an elusive apathy in spring's bad weather: "It's a flavor of tedium all of its own kind."**[23]**

[21] *TWTT* , p. 231.

[22] "Yü-ch'ih pei" (*CST* , p. 21).

[23] "Nien-nu chiao" (*CST* , p. 931).

In the passages from Liu Yung's song lyrics quoted earlier, the lover does not give the precise words the beloved said; he or she can only declare that there are words remembered and repeated. In the same way, the lyricist cannot "name" the distinction of the feeling; he can only gesture toward it, often using the phrase *pieh-shih* , "all of its own kind."**[24]** It is significant that Li Ch'ing-chao picks up that phrase pattern, indexing singularity, when making the first statement of *tz'u* 's own singularity as a genre in the "Tz'u lun." "Tz'u ," she says, "is something all of its own kind." She is not able to define the particular quality of the genre with precision; rather, she can only point to its distinctness.

problem of categorical language and the particularity of emotion is to be found in Li Ch'ing-chao's "Sheng-sheng man": **[25]**

Searching and searching, seeking and seeking,
so chill, so clear,
dreary, and dismal, and forlorn.
That time of year when it's suddenly warm, then cold again,
now it's hardest of all to relax.
Two or three cups of weak wine—
how can they resist the sharpness of the wind that comes with evening?
The wild geese pass—
that's what hurts most—
and yet they're old acquaintances.

Chrysanthemum petals fill the ground in piles,
looking wasted, damaged—
as they are now, who could bring herself to pluck them?
Keeping by the window,
how can I wait alone until the blackness comes?
The wu-t'ung tree, and on top of that the fine rain,
until dusk,
drop after drop.
In a situation like this
how can that one word "sorrow" grasp it?

尋尋覓覓
冷冷清清
悽悽慘慘戚戚
乍暖還寒時候
最難將息
三盃兩盞淡酒
怎敵他、晚來風急
雁過也
正傷心
却是舊時相識
滿地黃花堆積
憔悴損
如今有誰堪摘
守著窗兒
獨自怎生得黑
梧桐更兼細雨
到黃昏
點點滴滴
這次第
怎一箇愁字了得

To see how song lyric claims for itself the capacity to immediately convey genuine feeling, we should begin with the vernacular question at the end, which appears at first glance to be a simple critique of language's capacity to represent feeling. The precise phrasing, however, redeems the closing lines from being merely a restatement of the commonplace critiques of language. The first and most obvious element is the specific reference to the single categorical word: *i-ko ch'ou tzu* . Not only is the problem explicitly located in the single word, the term used is *tzu* , "the written word."**[26]** Yet this reference to *tzu* , the written word, is made within a sentence whose syntax and diction mark it strongly as colloquial; and even though the text as we have it is written, not performed, it presents itself to us not so much as "the written language," but as using the written language to represent speech.

The second important element in this passage is the term used to indicate what the written word cannot do: *liao-te* , "fully get it," with a strong sense of finishing or completion.**[27]** The single word (*i-ko [ch'ou] tzu*) is not essentially wrong, only radically incomplete; and thus her rhetorical question is filiated to a long tradition of statements on lan-

[26] This is not to suggest that Li Ch'ing-chao is thinking of "writing" per se here. Rather, when she wants to isolate a single term from the more or less natural phrasings of speech (*yü-tz'u*), this is the only term she has recourse to.

[27] For parallel usages see Lung Ch'ien-an, *Sung Yüan yü-yen tz'u-tien* (Shanghai: Shang-hai tz'u-shu ch'u-pan-she, 1985), p. 39.

Liao-te is the militantly vernacular phrase (*yü-tz'u*) replacing the more classical word (*tz'u*) *chin*, "to exhaust," conventionally used negatively in statements of poetic value: that a poem should "contain inexhaustible meaning in reserve," *han pu-chin chih i*.

"Meaning" (*i*), of course, is not the issue here, not what she hopes to convey, but rather "this situation," *che tz'u-ti*. *Che tz'u-ti* is gestural, ostensive, referring to something present and particular, unlike the more abstract "meaning" (you might even say: *tsen i-ko "i" tzu liao-te*). "Situation," *tz'u-ti*, encompasses both the inner state and its external determinations, without raising the issue of the conventional dichotomy in poetics between "scene" (*ching*) and "feeling" (*ch'ing*).

We now come to that venerable question in the philosophy of language, which is how it is possible to speak the "what" of "what language cannot convey." With the colloquially ostensive "this," *che*, she gestures toward it; but by this point in the song lyric the object of her gesture is no mere blank space. We cannot tell whether the "situation" to which she gestures is the full sequence of experiences given earlier in the lyric or the precise moment that is their outcome. But a tacit claim is made through the gesture that we should recognize "this situation"—that the lyric has already adequately given us the object of the ostensive "this." "*Tz'u* is something all of its own kind," says Li Ch'ing-chao, implicitly articulating the genre against *shih*, which, though still recited, had already become very much "written poetry." Song lyric should enable the reader or listener to "fully get it" through language, if not in any particular word. *Shih* may *chin i*, "exhaust the meaning"; song lyric turns the phrase into the vernacular with significant substitutions: [*chiang*] *tz'u-ti liao-te*, "fully get the situation."

From the time of Chang Tuan-i's *Kuei-erh chi* of the 1240s, traditional critics recognized that Li Ch'ing-chao's "Sheng-sheng man" was an exceptional song lyric, and I do not believe it is rash to assume that Li Ch'ing-chao recognized in writing it that it was a great lyric. Rather than despairing of language's power to convey the immediacy of feeling, the closing passage may be taken as an oblique expression of her pride of accomplishment (the reader shakes his or her head and says: "Yes, how can a word express *this?*"). Here, then, is a rare case in which the theme of the problem of expressing genuine feeling in words is conjoined to what tacitly claims to be a successful example of genuine feeling embodied in words. At this point our discussion moves from the relatively simple task of describing the question and showing that it was an explicit concern in song lyric to the far more elusive problem of how

song lyric "does it," how it actually gives the sense of genuine feeling in words—not only in categorical words, but in some of the most hackneyed

images and motifs of the *tz'u* tradition. [28]

The remarkable series of doublets (*tieh-tzu*) that opens the lyric has always caught the attention of critics. Since such accumulation of doublets was generally avoided, we may wonder what made them so effective in this case. [29] In addition to describing qualities (often implicitly unifying external and interior conditions), such doublets may also suggest intensification and continuous action.

We may note that although every pair in the first three lines is formally a doublet, each line represents a rather different kind of doublet; by placing them together, Li Ch'ing-chao uses their formal identity to make them work in similar ways. *Hsün-hsün* and *mi-mi* are doubled verbs, each not surprising in itself, but neither commonly doubled and unusual in being put together. When we find paired doublets, it is usually with bound mood terms, such as we have in the third line (where, again violating convention, we have a series of three, rather than a pair of doublets). [30] Verbal doublets, such as *hsün-hsün* and *mi-mi*, tend to suggest continuous and intensified action; however, by pairing these verbal doublets in the manner of mood doublets and by placing them in a matrix of mood doublets, the "action," intense and continuing, tends to take on the quality of a mood or a state of mind.

The next pair of doublets, *leng-leng* and *ch'ing-ch'ing*, are physical sensations of qualities in the external world, but also carrying strong

[28] Although the close stylistic analysis that follows tries to show how *tz'u* "does it," the present author is painfully aware of the incongruity between his topic (conveying immediate and genuine emotion) and the inevitable heavy-handedness of stylistic analysis, more appropriate in the classroom than in writing. Therefore, any reader who wishes at this point to skip ahead to the next section is forgiven beforehand.

[29] Rather than being categorical names for conditions (such as "sorrow"), such doublets give a more differentiated sense of a condition's quality: "how" it is. About such doublets as they were used in the *Shih-ching*, Liu Hsieh said in the "Wu-se" chapter of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung: i-yen ch'iung li . . . liang-tzu ch'iung hsing*, "One phrase gave the fullness of the principle [of the thing] . . . two characters gave the fullness of its form." (Note how the question of adequate presentation returns here, though using *ch'iung*, rather than the roughly synonymous and more commonplace *chin*.) The Southern Dynasties poet Chiang Yen could write a poetic exposition on "Grief" ("Hen fu"), giving many examples; likewise, one could look up the categorical emotions in an encyclopedia, which would provide a storehouse of precedent cases. However, the doublets, such as *ch'i-ch'i* or *ts'an-ts'an*, are not such categories: one cannot write a poetic exposition on one of them as a "topic," nor can they constitute headings in an encyclopedia.

[30] By "bound term" I mean two-syllable words whose individual syllables are normally, though by no means always, compounded.

mood associations. Like the verbal doublets in the first line, each of these is normally a single syllable (or compounded with another word). Making these syllables into doublets suggests intensification of the sensation (hence the translation "so"). Each doublet in the third line, *ch'i-ch'i ts'an-ts'an ch'i-ch'i* (in the Sung the first and third were phonologically distinct), primarily describes a quality of feeling, though often with ties to external circumstance. These are bound terms, and as mentioned above, it is common to find them in pairs, but not in groups of three.

Each line of doublets is, in some way, twisted away from habitual usage; and by placing them in a common matrix, they are made to be "of the same kind." What would normally be distinguished as action, physical sensation, and mood here blur together. Thus, the initial "action" is joined to sensation and mood and becomes itself an interior state; on the other hand, the terms of mood are linked to physical sensation and the (mental) restlessness of the opening line. The matrix works to break down conventional distinctions between the exterior (*wai*) and interior (*nei*).

Most important is the initial *hsün-hsün mi-mi*, "searching and searching, seeking and seeking." Of all actions, these verbs of seeking require an object in order to be complete. Seeking, to be itself, must seek *something*. Without an object, it becomes more of a condition than an act. Moreover, made into doublets, the verbs connote intensified and continuous seeking, lacking an "end" in several senses. Moving to the second and third lines, the seeking is left incomplete, without an object; and the strong associations of isolation and the absence of another in the second and third lines echo that sense of incompleteness. Thus, emotion here is given the form of intensely purposive movement, but only the pure form, lacking objectified purpose.

That time of year when it's suddenly warm, then cold again,
now it's hardest of all to relax.

Weather and human emotion are often associated (in Western literature as in traditional China, where both are qualities of *ch'i*). From the intense steadiness of the opening, where the chill was an ongoing condition, there is all at once a volatility. **[31]** The mode of the opening was con-

tinuation of the same; all at once we enter "suddenness" and alternation of opposites (warmth and chill). From a language of vague poetic mood, we

suddenly enter a discursive language: placing, explaining, commenting. In contrast to the opening, where interior and exterior conditions were undifferentiated, here external changes are observed, changes of the weather that also anticipate changes of sensation and feeling: as in the conjunction of the second and third lines, physical sensation blurs into state of mind. Emotion (the Greek *pathos*, "what is endured," *kan*) is involuntary, being the object of forces over which one has no control. The voice, restless but unable to attach her restlessness to any object, tells us explicitly that she cannot settle down, cannot "get hold of herself," cannot relax.

The opening was pure condition; these lines introduce a self-consciousness in which she is aware of the weather as something external, its variability due to the changes in the season. She can conceive of the possibility of relaxing, even though it is beyond her powers. In contrast to the opening lines, here she attempts to "define" her position, to explain her restlessness in terms of this particular moment of the year; now relaxing is "hardest of all," a comparative difficulty. Insofar as song lyric can embody feeling in language, it does so through *movements*—not in statements per se, but in the way one statement "sounds" in relation to other statements. The movement here from the immediacy of the first three lines to the "explanation" offered in these two lines is the dominant "move" of this lyric: using words to try "fully" to grasp a condition that is both changing and beyond one's control.

"Suddenly warm, then cold again": she stresses the unexpected suddenness of the changes (even while restricting them to this particular time of the year). This is neither a steady "in-between" condition nor a set of predictable alternations, but sudden and unexpected change, all the more forceful because she anticipates the possibility of sudden

change without knowing when it will occur. **[32]** No wonder it is hard to "relax," *chiang-hsi*, combining rest, relief from pressure, and taking care of oneself.

As she futilely tries to get the situation under control in words ("It's that time of year, you know"), she also tries to control it by action—not the sudden spells of welcome warmth recalling departing summer, but the chill that always returns with the evening wind in autumn. She takes wine against it, wine that might promise both warmth and relaxation; but it is inadequate in quantity and strength. We should take careful note of how she phrases the failed intention of the act: *tsen ti*. She wants to "oppose" or "counterbalance" those external forces that can work upon her, that affect her mood through physical sensation. But this gesture of opposition also fails, either in fact or in anticipation (if we read the lyric as the course of a

day, with evening falling later).

The wild geese pass—
that's what hurts most—
and yet they're old acquaintances.

"The wild geese pass," *yen kuo yeh* : the beauty of the line depends on the *yeh* . It isolates the fact, separates the statement from the flow of discourse. It is given to us a neutral observation (another consequence of the quality of *yeh* , as opposed to more emotional particles), something safely external. But immediately this mere fact impinges on her mood. Suppose we combined the first two lines into a *shih* line: *yen kuo cheng shang hsin* , "The passing of the wild geese hurts most" (or "is what hurts right now"). That would be a simple statement of feeling. But *yen kuo yeh / cheng shang hsin* first delivers something ostensibly as a neutral fact, then seems to "discover" a consequence of the fact, a relation to it. The *cheng* ("most of all" or "at this moment") attempts to localize response, to give the real source of the mood by focusing response on the preceding scene. But that too fails adequately to explain why she feels as she does. *Ch'üeh-shih chiu-shih hsiang-shih* , "and yet they're old acquaintances." She generalizes, compares past and present, contrasts how she ought to feel (welcoming old acquaintances) with how she does feel (*cheng shang hsin*). She takes an old cliché of song (the wild geese appearing as old acquaintances) and uses it against the feeling, but it rings hollow. We don't believe it is a valid consolation; she doesn't believe it is a consolation. The poetic cliché is as thin and weak as the wine. Its

[32] "Anxiety," as Freud defines it against "fear" and "fright" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* , depends on knowing that you may well encounter something without knowing exactly when.

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value in the song is not "what" it says but its function as gesture, as a futile attempt to interpret the emotional force of the fact.

Chrysanthemum petals fill the ground in piles,
looking wasted, damaged—
as they are now, who could bring herself to pluck them?

The first stanza was too full of motions and countermotions to bear a strong stanzaic shift (*huan-t'ou*). The fallen flowers are, of course, the counterpart of the aging woman. And the realization that no one will pluck them brings in the absent figure of the man or friend, someone who might pluck blossoms—even these last blossoms of the year—but only at their proper time. [33] Inevitably in the background of such a scene we find T'ao Ch'ien, who did

pick the chrysanthemums in their season, who watched the birds fly off to South Mountain (their passage did not "hurt"), and from such a scene attained an aloof pleasure, rising above the shifting "flavors" of depression that beset Li Ch'ing-chao. And we may recall also that in the same poem, the fifth "Drinking Wine," T'ao concluded with the difficulty of finding the right words for what was in his mind.

"As they are now, who could bring herself to pluck them?" She sees herself in her figurative double, and in being herself unwilling to pluck the tattered blossoms, she recognizes her helplessness, being the object of outer forces—the weather, the passage of time that wastes persons and flowers, and even in the most hopeful situation, dependency on someone to pick and appreciate. Li Ch'ing-chao is not passive, but she is impotent: she is the object of outer forces, scenes, actions. She opposes them by constructs of words and deeds, but she is always defeated, always overcome. Although tempting, the question of the author's gender is not, I think, of paramount importance here; such helplessness, the condition of emotion (*ch'ing*), is equally a convention in the lyrics of many male poets—though one might argue it is an essentially feminized stance.

Keeping by the window,
how can I wait alone until the blackness comes?

[33] One may note the relation between this passage and the earlier attempt to unify the exterior and interior qualities. Here as she looks out into the exterior scene, she finds the figure of the bedraggled flowers as the self's double; and as she has no inclination to lay claim to the blossoms, so she herself is unclaimed (the refusal to pluck balancing the seeking of the opening). There is an interesting relation between poetic modes of isolation and the solipsistic project of unifying interior experience (*ch'ing*) and the external world encountered (*ching*).

The wu-t'ung tree, and on top of that the fine rain,
until dusk,
drop after drop.

Although her mood may be restless and uneasy, her body is fixed to one spot, gazing out the window that gives her one scene after another that reminds her of autumn. The *shou-che*, "keeping to," is as if willful, drawn to this frame of disturbing visions. Then, instead of another depressing item in the visual iconography of autumnal melancholy, the next thing that is to appear is night's blackness, an absence of vision. In such darkness, for all its ominousness, she might have been able to escape from those visual impressions that impinge on her mood and cause pain. But even though the visual world might be muted, there is an equally oppressive aural world,

sounds traditionally associated with melancholy and loss.

The song lyric aims for a "way of speaking" that sounds genuine, and often it depends for its effects on particles. The eventual darkening of the scene is the external fact. The vernacular *tsen sheng te*, "how can I wait," places her in an intense relation to the fact. More subtle, but no less important, is the *keng-chien*, "on top of that." She might simply have said *wu-t'ung yü*, "rain on the wu-t'ung tree"; but *keng-chien* "adds" the elements, as if they were not a unified scene but some itemization of the causes of her painful impressions, like the "drip-drip drop-drop," *tien-tien ti-ti*, each single one drawing attention to itself and adding to the store of pain. [34]

Li Ch'ing-chao, intensely aware of the tradition of the song lyric, is here troping on the second stanza of the sixth of Wen T'ing-yün's "Keng-lou-tzu" lyrics: [35]

On the wu-t'ung tree
rain of the third watch
has no concern how feelings at being apart are at their most painful.
on every single leaf
sound after sound
drips on the empty stairs until daylight.

[35] *TWTT*, p. 62. The admiration for this passage in the twelfth century is suggested by the fact that it was singled out for praise in the *T'iao-hsi yü-yin ts'ung-hua—hou chi*, *chüan* 17 (dated 1167), one of the few comments on Wen's song lyrics in the Sung.

梧桐樹
三更雨
不道離情正苦
一葉葉
一聲聲
空階滴到明

From the indeterminate "seeking" of the opening, to "keeping to" her window, to the rains lasting until dusk, the lyric reinforces the idea of "continuing," bound in uncertain anticipation of some hidden end. Outside is a drama of autumn, which she somehow feels compelled to watch and listen to until the true darkness of night, with the dripping rain serving, like the water clock, as the monotonous marker of time. At last she brings in her act of interpretation, the failure of naming, gesturing to "this situation," which can be crudely classified as "sorrow" or "melancholy," but whose particularity belies the "single word." The name should "complete," should fully account for the phenomenon; yet here the name is held up for

comparison with the "situation," which throughout embodies incompleteness, continuing, uncertainty, seeking in vain some end that will make it a whole and thus to be understood and named.

In the song lyric the conventional name always sits uneasily and imperfectly on experience that can only be lived through, or it has more detail and nuance than the appropriate categorical word. At last the categorical word may come to be used ironically, implying its own failure to account for the complexity of "this situation."

Every phase of the heart, every yearning:
there is no adequate way to tell them all—
it's just "love-longing."

心心念念
說盡無憑
只是相思

Yen Shu, to "Su chung-ch'ing"[36]

Taxis and Quotation

The song lyric sought the means to embody and convey apparently genuine and particular phases of feeling in categorical words.[37] It was

[36] *CST*, p. 97.

[37] Literary genres are inevitably the recipients of historically diverse interests, and it is wrongheaded to try to characterize them by any single question. Often genres take shape around sets of antithetical values; and it is through such contradictory pairings, rather than by any single quality, that the genre takes on a distinct in relation to other genres. In song lyric the concern with embodying genuine feeling was bound to an antithetical interest in obvious artificiality, figuration, and overt marks of conscious craftsmanship. Careful craftsman and helpless victim of passion are frequently conjoined; it is less a contradiction to be reconciled than an antithesis whose poles lend energy to the genre.

early discovered that this could be accomplished, not by the words themselves, but by the relations implied between phrases, lines, and stanzas.[38] The words themselves belong to a common normative language, but the quality of movement from one normative verbal segment