

A narrative of the author's research interest in *ci* 詞 song-poetry, as found on pp. 89-91 of John Timothy Wixted, "One Westerner's Research on Chinese and Japanese Languages and Literatures," *Asian Research Trends* (The Toyo Bunko), New Series 4 (2009), pp. 77-113.

The latter is also available online:

<http://www.toyo-bunko.or.jp/newresearch/upload/2010011510213931.pdf>

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I would like to turn now to research I have done on *ci* 詞 poetry. As an M.A. candidate at Stanford University more than forty years ago, I only

knew that I wanted to concentrate on traditional Chinese poetry; I did not know what area I would focus on. Since there had been comparatively little work done on early-*ci* poetry in the West, and since the Stanford M.A. program then required an annotated translation for an M.A. thesis, I decided to work on the poet Wei Zhuang 韋莊, whose poetry was included in the *Huajianji* 花間集. I read the scholarship on the *Huajianji* then available in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages; translated Wei Zhuang's forty-eight poems in the *Huajianji*; and provided an introduction, notes, and a bibliography. In the process, reading all 505 poems in the *Huajianji*, I came to realize that I did *not* want to do a doctoral thesis on early-*ci* poetry. I got tired of *Huajianji* verse with its narrow range of themes. As I later wrote about the "boudoir" poetry of Wei Zhuang:

Beautiful women, heartbroken in elegant chambers, keep cold, lonely beds, their lovers having gone or soon to depart. Beside a single lamp or solitary screen, like a parrot in a fancy cage, they are presented in the context of the passage of time. Spring is well advanced or on the wane; candles are dimming or spent; the waterclock drips on; warblers announcing the dawn mark the passing of night. Surrounded by tokens of wealth, they are impoverished in love. The world of nature—with spring just past its peak, playful bees amid the flowers, the grasses lush—forms a setting painfully alive when contrasted with their dreary forlornness.

Now let us skip ahead twelve years. It was then that I decided to revise the M.A. thesis on Wei Zhuang to try to get it published. With more Chinese-language experience behind me, and with a "fresh" start editing the English text, I extensively revised the earlier manuscript. It resulted in a published volume that came out a year later, *The Song-Poetry of Wei Chuang (836-910 A.D.)* [Wixted 1979]. It has a simple, clear introduction; translation of the forty-eight poems into English, with facing Chinese text in the calligraphy of my colleague at Arizona State University, Eugenia Y. Tu (Du Yangzhen 杜颺珍); notes on the poem-translations; a finding list to other translations of the poems, both into European languages and Japanese; and a bibliography.

Let us skip ahead another ten years. Because of the volume that had appeared on Wei Zhuang, I was asked to take part in a special conference on *ci* poetry. I thought that by writing on the combined topic of Li Qingzhao 李清照 and Western feminist literary theory, I would read and learn more about both. I was particularly interested to see how useful feminist theory would be when applied to Li Qingzhao and her work. The

published result was “The Poetry of Li Ch’ing-chao: A Woman Author and Women’s Authorship” [Wixted 1994].

In the course of researching the topic, several items became clear, which are discussed in the article. The view of Li Qingzhao as being a poet of quintessentially feminine sensitivity is really quite recent; and the image of her first marriage as being an ideal one only gains currency four centuries or more after her death. The fact that she was a woman was focused on by many later literary critics, some negatively; but perhaps more surprisingly, she was generally admired as a poet, by men as well as women. Indeed, ironically enough, she was literally called a “patriarch” (*zong* 宗) of *ci* poetry; but that was a double-edged compliment, when one considers that *ci* poetry to a large extent was considered the “distaff side,” the alternative (or female) side, to *shi* poetry. It is more from Li Qingzhao’s *shi* poetry and other known circumstances of her life, than from her *ci* poetry, that one can glimpse what a formidable woman she probably was. In researching the project, I read all of the poems by women in the *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 and *Quan Jin-Yuan ci* 全金元詞 and found no identifiable “women’s voice,” in terms of written style, in the women writers of the period or in the genre. Indeed, few women until modern times seem to have taken Li Qingzhao as a poetic model, still less as a “role model.”

When preparing the article on Li Qingzhao, I read the *ci* of Su Shi 蘇軾, Liu Yong 柳永, Xin Qiqi 辛棄疾, and Wu Wenying 吳文英 and came to appreciate the range of the genre during the Song, especially as compared with the *Huajianji*.

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