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How the Chinawoman Lost Her Voice

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This "just-so story" aims to help uncover an obverse side to an oft-told tale. Maybe i should invoke Foucault's ghost here (esp. the "archaeologist of knowledge" -- see the early essays in Foucault 1984; cf. relevant essays in Hoy 1986 and Diamond 1988). Reviser of history who helps us see what it overlooked, detective of deviancy who helps disclose suppressed ways of thought, accomplice to insurrections of subjugated voices -- come to my aid! Monsieur, i confess having succumbed to the common notion that traditional Chinese poetry suppressed women's voices. Conventional Sinological wisdom confines women to "boudoir laments" and "palace-style poetry"; it reduces women to a persona that projects male fantasies, that gets consumed by hopeless longing for One Man (who always seems to peep, brush in hand, through her boudoir curtains).

M. Foucault, i offer up an alternative account. This genealogy tries to demonstrate that women in Chinese verse can play more interesting roles than simply stroking jealous male egos or providing erotic decor. To trace our genealogy back as far as possible, we must delve uncertainly past strata of Confucian allegoresis, peel away layers of patriarchal exegesis, and hope to uncover more than a reflection of the digger's face. Assuming we have perceived correctly, our dig reveals some remarkably "unconventional" females who dominate the very ancestress of (extant) Chinese verse, its Book of Songs or Canon of Poetry. The folksongs ("Airs") and a few lesser "Capital Odes" of this pre-600 B.C. anthology resound with female voices that inhabit a world apart from languishing boudoir belles. According to Arthur Waley's thematic arrangement, courtship and marriage account for two-thirds of the "Airs." Of these, about half air the grievances of women in or out of love. And what do these women say? Well, let us listen carefully and hear as much as long-range transmission and translation allow....

#226

All morn a pickin' greens:
Don't even fill a handful.

My hair's grown all snarly:
Must get home and wash it.

All morn pickin' indigo:
Doesn't fill an apron.
The 5th day was our date:
On 6th day, yet no sight....

When he went a huntin'
I would sheath his bow.
When he went a fishin'
I would reel his line.

And what does he fish?
Why, bream and tench.
Those bream and tench,
How I long to see 'em!

Like many folksongs, this Song begins with an opening image that traditional scholars called an "arousal" (xing). Most "arousals" involve natural images that imply or evoke comparison with the song's human drama. #226's lone plantpicker establishes a topos that aroused many Songs. The plantpicker usually suffers depression, sometimes rankles at ostracism or rejection, and often broods about her ill-treatment. She forms a counterpart to England's 19th c. Crazy Jane, but this Chinese Jane speaks her mind lucidly. Like her descendants in boudoir laments, this persona neglects her appearance and counts the days till her man's return. But her humble setting and frank response set her apart from boudoir airs and artifices. Here metaphors of hunting and (especially) fishing convey longing for sexual love in a more direct, "natural" way than the "erotic decor" in later verse. Fish in the Songs (as Wen Yiduo demonstrated long ago) make potent erotic symbols (see esp. Songs #24,104,171,190 and infra); fishes' fertility, smells, appearance, touch, taste, the close Chinese pun between fish ngio and desire/wish ngiuk, and anglers' arts all reinforce her final wish. No question that her conclusion deserves an exclamation point!

#10

Along the Ru's levee,
Cuttin' boughs in the brake.
Before I saw milord,
Pangs like dawn-hunger ache.

Along the Ru's levee,
Cuttin branch & twigspray.
Now that I've seen milord,
You won't cast me away.

That bream with ruddy tail,
King's Room like house afire.
Though it seems all afire,
Dad and Mom are so near.

This verse, too, appears well-stocked with formulae for courtship and matrimony. I/II.3 echo both halves of the common epithet for women's unfulfilled and fulfilled desire. Again we meet a plantpicker, but the river she follows marks a common trysting spot, and the twigs she bundles emblemize joined families (cf. P. Lee 50-51 and #9,68,72,92,101,118,158,238). After she has seen her man, the fish she watches swim redly in rut. We no longer hold the key to "King's Room," but given its context we may forgivably understand this chamber as a metaphor of blazing desire. The most remarkable thing about this ode to teen lust is the incredible contortion scholars performed to transform it into "political threnody" (cf. infra and Sun:311-12, who interprets #10's matiere as spring lustration rites).

#132 Dawn Wind (a kind of falcon)

Swooping flies a Dawn Wind;
Gloomy looms up Northwood.
Before I've seen milord,
My worried heart cuts keen.
What's to do? What's to do?
You forget me too much ....

On the hill grow clump-oak,
In the mire grows ash-tree.
Before I've seen milord,
In worried heart's no glee.
What's to do? What's to do?
You forget me too much ....

On the hill grow clump-plum,
In the mire grows pear-tree.
Before I've seen milord,
Worried heart's as if drunk.
What's to do? What's to do?
You forget me too much ....

At first glance this poem more closely resembles later boudoir laments;

they often borrowed its "arousal." The falcon's suggestive swoop arouses questions: has her "lord" gone hunting in Northwood? Do her spirits plunge like the falcon, or does she feel like "prey"? Does it augur danger (and for whom?) or do the north's customarily somber associations color I,1-2 grim? Stock "arousals" in II/III 1-2 sound similarly adversative; in the natural (vs. the human realm) high and low remain in proper place (see Waley #81; cf.#84,115,172,204, 88,126). But her husband has strayed from his proper place, so her heart leaps in her throat or sinks to the pit of her stomach. Her strong sense of drama, her repeated protests, and the lack of any indoor scene all strongly contrast with later boudoir laments.

#124 Kudzu Grows

Kudzu grows, covering the briar;
Bindweeds spread over the fields.
My fair one has gone away --
With whom to dwell-- dwell alone.

Kudzu grows, covering the thorn;
Bindweeds spread over the graves.
My fair one has gone away --
With whom to sleep -- rest alone.

The horned pillow glimmers,
The brocade blanket shimmers.
My fair one has gone away--
With whom meet dawn-- meet alone.

Summer days,
Winter nights.
After my 100 years, (conventional maximum lifespan)

I'll return to our dwelling.

Winter nights,
Summer days.
After my 100 years,
I'll return to our **chamber.** or **crypt**

Kudzu adorns many "arousals" and involves complex associations. In different songs, Zhou Chinese apparently associated this indefatigable rambling vine with: spatio-temporal extent (cf.#37); family ties (cf.#2,#71); dependency (cf.#4); wedding footwear (cf.#107); and coffin bindings (cf.Mozi 38/25/59; Chow Tse-tsung in Roy:48-51). It testifies to this song's richness

that all five associations seem relevant. The singer is almost surely a widow buried in prolonged grief; her arousal's desolate weediness bespeaks absence of husbandry. Stanza III stands somewhat apart; its gaudy appurtenances highlight by contrast her emotional distress. This "foil image" **fanchen** would become a boudoir lament staple. If the pillow and quilt form part of her trousseau (cf. Mi:I,258 who thinks they are burial goods), they would further heighten her distress. IV/V extend her grief's scope beyond one sleepless night; they use "return" -- which in Chinese signifies both a woman's marriage and death -- to convey undying devotion. Indeed, eveything else about this widow suggests death. Her progression from "dwell" to "sleep/rest" to "greet" to "dwelling" to "chamber/crypt" suggests she already lies lifelessly immured within their "chamber." Lack of any reference to consoling children helps intensify one of the most poignantly inconsolable poems in ancient Chinese.

#17

Drip drop, dew on the road;
Ain't it dere morn & night?
Too much dew on that road!

Who say sparrow got no horn?
How kin he pierce my roof?
Who say you got no fam'ly?
How kin you **court so rough**? lit. **plead this case**
No matter how you rough ...
Yo' family ain't enough!

Who say a rat got no fang?
How kin he pierce my wall?
Who say you got no fam'ly?
How kin you act so small? lit. **plead this suit**
No matter how you small ...
I'll never follow y'all.

The women in this and the next song speak more forensically. Apparently, all Chinese commentators have taken the speaker's defiance seriously: she's in dead earnest when she refuses to take the road to her fiance's home and when she defies his influential family. However, I agree with Marcel Granet (246-48) that her putdowns and her references to a legal "suit" sound playful. They resemble the courtship invective popular in cultures from Africa to

Tibet; she tweaks her beau just like those "dissin'" southern blacks who used to spar in their "dozens" (one ancestor of rap music). Her strong rhetorical tropes seem quite funny and perhaps even parody legal debate. Hairsplitters will explain II/III,1-2 as paradox; sparrows are hornless and rats fangless, but a sparrow's beak can wreck a thatch roof; a rat's incisors can tunnel through a wall. Poets will argue that a sparrow's beak <u>is</u> its horn, that a rat's tooth <u>is</u> a fang. Somehow i think their endless exegetical debate about such aporias prolongs a "suit" this speaker mocks and resists. But whether in jest or in earnest, she speaks out formidably. She claims "her" own house; she claims a say in deciding her marriage lot. We don't know whether she relies on or rails against prevailing social customs, but we do know that later prospective brides had no such say in verse, not even in jest.

#54

How I gallop and spur
Home for Wei to condole.
Spur my horse on and on
In my haste to reach Cao.
Officers trudge and ford,
And now my heart is sore.

Now you aren't good to me;
I can't turn and go back.
Seeing you're misguided,
I can't distance my cares.

Now you aren't good to me;
I can't turn & ford 'cross.
Seeing your misconduct,
I can't stifle my cares.

Climbing up a steep slope,
Plucking the **fritillary.**
Full well my woman's heart,
My own paths of conduct.
Men of Xu fault my course:
All are childish, all mad!

"embittered wife" topos
tonic for depression
fully well & good;
full (of feeling)

Travelling on the moor --
Thick & lush grows barley.
I'd **plea** to a great state,
But go where? Where rely?
Officers . . . Gentlemen:
Do not find fault with me!
All hundred of your schemes
Cannot match my thoughts' course.

flee/rein in/appeal

[home]

This speaker is apparently an unhappy noblewoman. Zuo's Tales identify her as a native of Wei who sang #54 in 659 B.C. when aliens overran Wei and her inlaws in Xu refused to allow her a homecoming visit. This account sounds plausible, though we could ask: how did Mr. Zuo learn of this woman's distress 300 years later; did he make #54 up to embellish his tale with the cachet of ancient verse; was this a traditional "return" lament into which a singer could insert a few place names; when the "Baroness of Xu" sang this did she compose a new song or just **chant** an old one? Scholars who need to find a historical pretext for every folksong make me suspicious; still, they tempt me to accept a legend that would identify an earliest Chinese poet as poetess.

Her song's "narrative sequence" is ambiguous; we may place her opening flight in past tense, present progressive, or desiderative mode. Afterward, her movements grow less purposive, more hopeless, more emblematic of a discarded wife's lament. But her tone gets even harsher, from plucky to feisty to downright contemptuous. Stanza IV's rhetoric mirrors her concluding intensity; it runs a gamut from opening "arousal" to votive mode to repetition (chiasmus in translation) to apostrophe to a final pun (final suozhi, usually understood to mean "my own [thoughts]," very likely means "where I go" as well; cf. her earlier play on xing - "path/conduct"). Such spirited resistance practically disappears in later verse. Archaeophilic commentators just had to pin a "historical" name on this persona, who stands among the first vivid characters in Chinese poetry. She reminds me of Arnaldo Momigliano's insight that Greek literature's first vivid, self-conscious self-portrayals occur in forensic contexts, as characters defend themselves against a legal challenge (Carrithers:90).

#39 Spring Waters

Bubbling -- spring waters,
Flowing on to the Qi.
I long for folk in Wei,
No day when I don't yearn.

Beautiful -- my cousins,
I will ask your advice.

Lodge for a night in Zi,
Send-off banquet in Ni.
When a girl goes to wed,
She must leave her family.
I must ask all my aunts,
And elder sisters, too.

Lodge for a night in Gan,
Send-off banquet in Yan.
Oil & tighten wheelcaps,
Let homing carts move on.
Could dashing off to Wei
Out-distance my troubles?

I yearn for Bubble Spring,
Endless I sigh for thee.
I yearn for Xu and Cao,
My heart longs far & slow.
I'll yoke & go a'roving
To dissipate my woe.

Old placenames make this song a problem to interpret. If we accept traditional glosses that place all the names in Wei and the names in III on Wei's northern border, we will follow the traditional identification; our speaker, another unhappily exogamized bride, yearns for home. Her song's narrative sequence, too, is ambiguous; most likely she has already wed. II/III could represent flashbacks to her nuptial trip or recollections of stock marriage advice (cf. Waley's [#81] sensible suggestion that II/III,1-4 quote what her relatives tell her). The Qi River in Wei is the River of Love and Marriage (cf. #48,#55,#56,#59,#63, and infra); perhaps the spring in I and IV symbolizes hopes for love (a boy next door?) thwarted by family interference. III,6 (a difficult line in Chinese) nicely captures her mixed emotions. Commentators cannot agree whether she views flight to Wei pessimistically or hopefully; my rendition tries to reproduce this crux by equivocating between rhetorical question and wishful suggestion. The bride's concluding gesture involves a formula expressing discontent (see Karlgren:26) that recalls our previous song. Her final outing makes poor consolation for a trip home, but at least it offers an anodyne denied to later depressed boudoir denizens.

#26 (modifying Burton Watson's translation [22-23])

That cypress boat, drifting on,
Drifting along with the flow....
In fiery fret, I can't sleep,
As if hiding painful woe.
Not because I have no wine
To amuse me on my cruise.

My heart is not a mirror,
It won't swallow your will. **you can't just peer into it!**
Indeed, I too have brothers, - Watson
Tho' you can't rely on them.
When I ran to them to plead --
Merely suffered their anger.

My heart is not a stone --
You can't roll it around.
My heart is not a mat --
You can't just roll it up!
My conduct's pure & proper;
You can't cast fault at me.

My heavy heart is consumed,
I'm vexed by petty people.
I've seen trouble a'plenty,
Swallo'd insults: not a few.
Silently, I brood on these;
Awaking, I beat my breast.

Ah, you sun; Oh, you moon,
Why d'you take turns fading?
Sorrows wrap around my heart
Heaped like unwashed robes.
Silently I brood on these;
I can't rise and fly away.

An opening "arousal" sets this song's mood; as C.H. Wang (110-12) has demonstrated, the drifting cypress boat evokes a bride "under pressure," who cannot control her marriage fate. A rich series of images parallels her growing desperation; a mirror that passively reflects others' heads; a heavy stone and downtrodden (sleeping) mat; lack of "light" from Sun and Moon (which may symbolize parental neglect; cf. #29,#33); and dirty clothes that beautifully evoke how sullied and dispirited she feels. Our speaker feels alone and persecuted; by turns she defends outward and lacerates inward. Rhetorical features reinforce her "negativity"; every stanza abounds with negative constructions and even litotes. Ironically, everything she vehemently denies comes to pass: we <u>do</u> see into her heart/mind, and she <u>is</u> forced to

swallow other's decisions; her heart grows **heavier** than a stone, and she <u>does</u> become another's sleeping-mat. These contradictions enhance the emotional turmoil in ancient China's most boldly introspective psychological poem. It vividly, powerfully enacts an upwelling of suppressed resentment and pain.

#35 Gully Wind

Gusting blustery gully winds,
Bringing gloom, bringing rain.
As I strive to share your mind,
You should not get so enraged.
Picking turnips and daikon,
Do you leave the lower parts!
Your good name I won't betray:
I'm yours till the bitter end.

I trudge the road, so slowly,
Within my heart is betrayed.
Not far, that tiny distance
You hurry me out to the gate!
Who calls sow-thistle bitter?
Tis sweet as shepherd's purse.
You feast your new bridefolk,
As if they were your brothers.

'Tis Wei that roils clear Jing,
Yet limpidly flow its shoals.
You feast your new bridefolk
& won't deign to stay with me.
Do not tread upon my dam:
Don't open my fish-traps!
You don't care for my body,
Never mind my progeny!
[posterity]

Where the waters ran deep,
How I rafted and boated.
Where the waters shallowed
How I waded and floated.
What you wanted or lacked,
How I strove to find them.
When your folk had trouble
On my knees I helped them.

You will not cherish me,
But rather see me as your enemy.
You have spoilt my virtue
No trader can re-sell me.
Back then, rearing in fear & toil
With you I stumble-tumbled.
But now the kids are grown,
You treat me like poison.

I stored up a fine hoard,

To ward off the winter.
You feast your new bridefolk,
Use me to ward off want.
You are swollen with rage,
Tho you gave me broomtwigs.
Not thinking of our past,
You have swept me away.

Some women's laments (#26,#54,#124) appear longer and more complex than the usual 3-4 stanza folksong. Indeed, poems in female voice like #35 compose the Songs' most ambitious and sophisticated verse. #35 interweaves many familiar tropes: plantpicking, river-crossing as marriage journey (here wading the Qi stresses the wife's arduous labors; cf. the proverbially muddied Jing that can refer to his discernment or her position -- the new mate has cast her status and his judgment into the murk), fish, bundled twigs as marriage-token (taking si as equivalent to si in #10/2; i take the unusual concluding ji "sweep" as equivalent to ji in #20/3), etc. She cleverly manipulates water images, from the blustery storm to roiled waters to her aquatic resources and resourceful river-crossings to the concluding "swollen with rage." Her arousal sounds ominous; since "gully" holds strong female associations in early Chinese verse (see #201 and Lao Zi VI,...), it tempts me to read these winds as symbols of her anguish and resentment. Her vegetable metaphors in I/II evoke her bitterness; her husband has cast off a fertile mate and good provider for a sweeter dish. She ends bereft of hope and poignantly transforms her nuptial emblem into the vehicle for a brusque brush-off (Cf. #201.2).

If men could cast off a low-status "husk-bran wife" so easily, it speaks ill for women's social position. Our precariously working-class speaker has grown economically savvy; her image play of sustenance and commerce contrasts her substantial love with his exploitation. By discarding a good provider, he made a bad bargain; unfortunately, so had she. Her exclamation at III,8 rings with particular poignancy. Taboos usually keep Songs from mentioning young children. Here our speaker's grim wordplay implies that her children will be discarded (or else lost to her) and intensifies beyond poetic decorum her

sense of domestic tragedy. This woman pulls every rhetorical trick and fights tooth and nail to bring her husband to his senses; her song represents a last-ditch reconciliatory gesture that cannot overcome its own bitterness.

#58: A Simple Bumpkin

A simple bumpkin you seemed,
Toting cloth to trade for silk.
But you came not to buy silk,
You came with designs on me.
I saw you across the Qi,
I went as far as Dun Hill.
Not that I delayed our date;
You had no good go-between.
I begged you: don't be angry,
Let's fix autumn as our date.

I would climb that ruined wall
& look for **your cart's return**. or **tollgate**
My tears fell streaming down.
When I'd seen your cart return,
How we laughed & how we talked.
You consulted shell and stalks;
The forms said: nothing amiss.
Then you came with a carriage,
Carried off dowry and me.

Before the mulberry sheds,
How glossy-green its leaves.
Ah, alas! you turtledoves:
Do not eat the mulberries!
Ah, alas! you young women:
Do not take pleasure with men!
When a man takes his pleasure,
He may explain it away.
When a woman takes pleasure,
She will have no **getaway**. **explanation**

When the mulberry has shed,
How sere-yellow its leaves.
Since coming to you I have
Tasted three years' poverty.
Deep-flowing, waters of Qi
That wet my carriage-curtains.
The woman has stayed constant;
The man has altered his ways.
Your conduct knows no limit:
Your virtue all twos & threes.

3 years I served as your wife,
Never dwelling on my toils.
Early to rise, late to bed;
Never a morning's leisure.
But once I was established,
You treated me brutally.
My brothers, knowin nothin,

Just jeered & laffed at me.
Silently, I brood on this
& lament my own sad plight.

We swore to be Lifelong Mates;
Lifelong-- it makes me rankle.
At least the Qi has its bank;
Even this swamp has its shore.
How happy -- our pigtail days!
We laughed and chatted gaily.
You swore oaths so sincerely,
I never thought you'd turn back.
You'd turn back? I never thought...
Then let this be the end of it!

#58 is the Songs' most famous, most militant, and structurally most sophisticated female lament. It adapts #35's six-stanza form and reworks most of the formulae from previous songs. Our speaker sings almost completely in "narrative" mode, except for a cautionary moral in stanza III that obliquely introduces the indispensable "plantpicking" motif. She wields the river-motif ingeniously, first as site of engagement, then as token of her marriage-journey, and finally in contrast to the "boundless swamp" of wedlock. Since her husband has "turned back" on his vows, she claims a right to recross the Qi. Thus, the Qi's 3 occurrences trace a circular pattern of engagement, consummation (crossing her personal Rubicon), and demand for annulment. Perhaps a few later Chinese women had the temerity to make such demands; I know of none that dared do so in verse. At any rate, nothing quite like #58 has survived. The "Qi" motif marks just one among many 3-fold repetitions that highlight thematic elements: men's bad-faith "designs"; their carriages (whose "returns" foreshadow "altering his ways" and his ultimate "turning back"); the mulberries (whose three occurrences evoke the wife as good provider, the pleasures of courtship, and the "barrenness" of a bad match that also implies glum leafpicking [but this woman is **not** picking; she finds a more active line of resistance]); the number "three" itself, enunciating her poverty, her constant toils, and his fickleness; and the "lifelong" oaths (in II/VI) each swore. She concludes with a devastating rhetorical barrage that ranges from oaths to epizeuxis to (riparian) metaphor to flashback to antimetabole to her

climactic divorce resolution.

#58 demonstrates that women sang the richest, most intricate, and most powerful Songs (for a discussion of Songs rhetoric, see McNaughton:107ff). Even if a man had composed #26,#54,#124,#35, and #58 these songs would demonstrate that only the best of "his" art would serve to convey women's voices. Indeed, they speak with a vehemence and beauty unmatched by subsequent women in Chinese verse (and rarely matched by **any** Chinese). All subsequent Chinese poets venerated these women's laments as their richest rhetorical trove, as their mother tongue.

The skeptic will question how "liberated" these voices are. After all, these women's moods and self-consciousness seem determined by their marital status and love life; their menfolk define them as wife, lover, and mother. The skeptic will object that their obsession with love and marriage marks them as slaves to patriarchal politics. A cynic might hazard that men wrote these poems to portray women as dependent and man-obsessed. I would rejoin: the Songs females are not "liberated" in a Western sense, but neither were the men. Ancient Chinese hardly valued independence, equality, and autonomy as we do. For traditional Chinese "standing alone" smacked of nightmarish orphanhood, not liberation. Men were no less role-bound, were no less cogs in a corporate self, were no less a lineage's way to produce more scions. Rather than judge solely by Western standards of "liberation," I would prefer to observe how these women speak more strongly than any of their (extant) poetic descendants (cf. Ames on Chinese sexism). Even if men had "written" these songs, it would show that female impersonators needed to create magnificent art and strongminded heroines in order to portray women convincingly. I would rather stress that verses like #26,35, and 58 compose the Songs' most sophisticated and skillful poems. They demonstrate women's central, even paramount, place in China's earliest literature.

So what happened? Obviously, patriarchy took over and women became

marginalized, somewhat differently than in the Western tradition. Chinese rationalized sexism with a different argument. Rather than simply deny women and shut them out of the temple (see Lerner, Ch. 10), Chinese men granted women a trivialized and devalued place within. Unlike Westerners, Chinese didn't usually try to vanquish women philosophically. But we should not leap to a false conclusion; Chinese did subjugate women socially. Consider yin and yang, for example. In theory the two relate in codependent, ontologically peer, and mutually complementary ways (see Alison Black in Bynum:185ff; Black cautions not to equate yin as philosophical notion with woman as gender construct). But socially and politically yang ranks superior to yin; in fact, it subsumes yin. Hence only a (male) magistrate gets honored as a "father-mother official"; only a (male) Daoist sage can "know the male and preserve the female" (Songs #172.3,251.1; Laozi 28; cf. Ames:18). Steve Sangren (133) observes that yang establishes hegemony not by exclusion but by "encompassing of the contrary," like a winner at encirclement chess. Chinese considered that yin, however, could not encompass yang (Sangren is aware his findings point well beyond the modern popular Daoist scope of his study). A cynice might contrast Chinese and Western gender-constructions by invoking Adam's rib. Western genesis excised woman to damn her separate identity as culpable temptress. Chinese philosophers never even gave woman an identifying rib to spare.

How would we expect a sexist but not "masculinist" patriarchy to treat women's Songs? Well, if women still held a position of considerable importance and prestige, and if women sang most skillfully and possessed the finest word-hoards, and if traditional ways got valued highest, then patriarchs would have great difficulty in suppressing the songs. Instead, they would have to find ways to recast, allegorize, and appropriate them. These three tropes precisely describe what happened in Chinese literary history. In the Songs itself, we can already glimpse here and there a male poet borrowing lines from

women's laments to express his own woes. For example, the speaker in Song 197.8 concludes his lament by quoting the four lines ending #35.3. In #199.1 the speaker (who traditional scholars identified as an officer but who might be a lamenting wife) begins by alluding to #35.3:

> What kind of man is this?
> His heart's awfully hard.
> Why does he tread my dam,
> But not enter my gate?

In #167 men on campaign open their lament with "Pick bracken, pick bracken," quoting #14. In #168 other campaigners climax their homecoming song by quoting #14.1:

> You You cries grasshopper;
> Jump leap goes katy-did.
> Before I'd seen milord,
> My sad heart went boom-doom.
> Now that I've seen milord,
> My heart has come to rest.

Then they refer to "picking asters," as in #13. And in #205 a worried official begins his lament:

> Climbing that north mountain,
> To pluck those willow leaves.

Maybe he's after headache relief from salicylic acid, but he may find reciting a woman's sad plantplucker motif more analgesic. Note that in all these examples, i follow custom in assuming the men have borrowed from the ladies. It would greatly discomfort my argument (and present surmise about the relative dates of written "Airs" and "Odes") to discover the contrary, but that possibility seems remote.

Men utilized the second trope to trivialize women's concerns by valorizing politically allegorical Song-readings; they reduced women to something less than Adam's rib in the body politic. Scholars grew wont to explain every woman's lament as a symptom of disorder in the realm; thus, they stigmatized women's voices as symptoms of deviancy. An egregious example is #10, which since the sixth century B.C. has been misread as a lament for the fall of the Western Zhou. Never mind that "King's Room like house afire" does not say the

king's palace is burning; never mind that the Ru River (site of the Song) lies hundreds of miles from the Western Zhou capital. Even modern scholars like Arthur Waley continue to spout the Confucian line and insist this lovesong is a threnody.

The third trope allowed any male poet simply to take over writing women's laments and put words into their mouths to express male dominance, or an official's resentment about his subordinate relation to his own lord, or other resentful and/or deviant feelings too delicate for direct assertion. All these rancors emerged as the anguished woman's yearning for her One Man. How it gratified male egos to have "tamed the beast," to have bound and imprisoned woman inside the boudoir (Eve's suffering heart locked in Adam's ribcage), to have enjoyed her desire exclusively with a firm hand on the "leash." Of course, we must look closely to distinguish when "mentriloquists" merely coopt women's voices, and when men genuinely empathize with women's problems.

Further, we need to clarify two points about this process of male appropriation. First, its three tropes need not have appeared singly, or in strict chronological order. Given our scant knowledge of Songs transmission, we would not want to insist when, how, with what alterations, and by whom Songs got transcribed at court. We can see evidence of recasting and allegorization very early. Women's words served as a staple of diplomatic discourse at least by the eighth century B.C., when officials quoted them in discourse (the earliest reference dates from 719 B.C.; Zuo Zhuan Yin 3, p.8). Second, male appropriations are a function not only of time, but of class. Upperclass women suffer stronger constraints earlier, while more plebeian women continue to speak more freely (cf. popular ballads from the early Common Era). This holds true in the Songs themselves; the courtly "Odes" already express open misogyny (see esp. #189.9 and #264.3).

Given that traditional China was so sexist, why did women's voices resound so strongly in the Songs? Although evidence is scarce, I wish to rush in with

a hypothesis. We know that China, like the Middle Eastern civilizations described by Gerda Lerner, rested upon a Neolithic base. Lerner demonstrates that many Neolithic societies appeared to give prominent place to women. China's archaeological record remains spotty, but it appears that in early Neolithic women may have accounted for roughly 60% of economic production and, in one subculture, had roughly 60% of the grave goods (see Lerner:22; Wenwu 1975.12:75). These Neolithic societies seem fairly egalitarian; at least, no strong evidence demonstrates women stood inferior to men (cf. Kaogu Xuebao 90.4:511ff. finding that more Neolithic men than women lie buried in tombs; David Keightley in Ropp:28 points out that human sacrifice can be traced back to 4000 B.C., while Zhongyuan Wenwu 1988.1:6,27 also finds relatively early suggestions of stratification). Some would even claim "higher civilization" is a masculinist reaction to the "overwhelming feminity of earlier stages of human existence" (Ong:188); they will argue that women are inherently superior, that (as Walter Ong:112 endorses) "nature's primary impulse is to make a female." Ong may be right, but I balk at making so universalist a claim.

Only later in Lungshan times (3000-1800 B.C.) do graves reveal more weapons, stratified burials, and even human sacrifice. Women who might have been buried independently or parallel with other women (or a spouse) in early Neolithic would now be flexed servilely next to the "master of the tomb" (for a graphic illustration of the contrast, see Chang:147 [Yangshao], 285 [Lungshan]). From Lungshan men needed to take only one step to found an agrarian "civilization" standing upon the subordination of women (thus, I would apply the Lerner thesis -- mutatis mutandis -- to China). By then, nouveaux patriarches had consolidated their authoritarian rule; their women had regressed to slaves, chattels, or purchased wives at the mercies of husbands and in-laws.

But, not all Chinese got "civilized" at the same rate. Even during the

Western Zhou, while leaders dwelt in raised-earth palaces, wielded bronze weapons, and enjoyed hereditary offices, most Chinese subsisted in pits, scraped out a living with digging-sticks and stone-bladed hoes, and supplemented meager harvests with a mixed hunter-gatherer economy. Peasants remained mostly mired in Neolithic, which leads us to a neglected implication; what might "retarded development" have meant for a plebeian woman? I speculate that her status relative to her menfolk was higher than her "elite " sisters' relative status to **their** menfolk. Moreover, vestiges of matrifocal and even matrilineal traditions survived. As many have pointed out, the Chinese graphs for "surname," "gestation/origin," "ancestress," and most North Chinese royal surnames all include the semantic component for **woman**. Traces of non-patriarchal society, such as fosterage and polyandry, survive (as oddities) even into the Common Era (see Soushen Ji:5.37; cf. Gernet:52).

I speculate that the Songs reflect a traditional view of woman's place. After all, oral folk traditions often best convey alternative, gynofocal worldviews (Lerner:226). Given a prevailing scholarly consensus that the Songs are "demonstrably formulaic, and conceivably oral" (C.H Wang:x), it would surprise if the Songs did **not** express China's conservative substratum. And upwardly mobile patriarchs would naturally find that outmoded tradition both precious and, increasingly, embarrassing. They would have to purloin, to allegorize, and ultimately to supplant these foksongs with written versions that deny, disguise, and destroy feisty, unruly women. Thus, I suggest the Songs' strong female voices reflect China's imperfect emergence from Neolithic civilization during the first third of the last millenium B.C. A few hundred years later, masculine innovations -- iron for swords and plowshares, improvements on stylus and tablet, developments in political organization and statecraft technique -- would no longer allow women so free a voice (cf. Schafer:27,29,46; who notes this process with entirely different evidence).

To see in these folksongs a measure of archaic gender-quasiegalitarianism

is truly poetic justice. How ironic that the crown of patriarchal China's literature -- its "Canon of Poetry" written down by men at court -- should sing a swansong for women's strength. How appropriate that the granddaughters of potteresses who once scratched the first extant "mother of Chinese character" symbols in clay should sing the last strains of unbowed womanhood in China's first canonical text!

If my speculation is correct, we would expect to see a few more shreds of gender-quasiegalitarianism in the handful of Zhou texts closest to an oral (or at least a folk) tradition. Such evidence survives in history, in philosophy, and in poetry. Scholars generally concede that China's first historical text, Zuo's Tales (Zuo Zhuan, thought to be compiled ca. 370 B.C.), contains many oral traditions (see Maspero:491-94; Watson:xv). Its very first entry tells of a lord whose breechbirth made him an enemy to his mother. The lord defeats her favorite son and vows: "Not until we reach the Yellow Springs [Hades] shall we meet again." He later regrets his oath, and his clever, filial advisor devises a way out (or down): "Dig into the earth until you reach the springs, and fashion a tunnel where the two of you can meet." And so, intoning celebratory verses, mother and son ritually reenact (and reform) the faulty birth and live happily ever after. Watson (1-4; i have borrowed his translation) observes that we commonly find this theme in folklore and that we rarely find such original verses in Zuo Zhuan. I would additionally stress that Zuo Zhuan's first story relates a tale of birth that reconciles masculine rule with matrifocal veneration. The ruler's filiality almost seems an uneasy propitiation to woman's power. Zuo Zhuan expresses great concern about women's power/potency (**nu de**), as in this warning from Duke Xi's 24th year (p.124):

> A woman's potency has no limit; a wife's rancor has no end.

Zuo Zhuan usually treats powerful women with a cautionary and negative attitude (see Watson xxii-iii), but women do play a prominent role in this fountainhead of Chinese history. In the next great work of history, Sima

Qian's Records of the Historian, women become almost invisible.

Women become almost invisible in most of Zhou philosophy, too. But one text stands out both for its suspected oral origins and its gynofocus -- the Laozi or Canon on Way and Potency. Its gnomic style and Protean text make speculation both hazardous and irresistible. I agree with modern scholars' view that Laozi represents a heterogeneous compilation of proverbs, or a catechism, and/or a set of obiter dictae for discussion (see Lau:163-74; belatedly i find Victor Mair [xii-xiii, 120-124] has thoroughly anticipated me). Its view of women has long excited speculation; scholars have adduced Laozi as evidence for matriarchy (Erkes:166-76; Needham:II,33), for mother-worship (Chen:399-404), and for worship of "a primitive, female, all-enveloping ocean of fertility" (Schafer:33). H.G. Creel (44ff), however, argues that Laozian "feminism" merely serves as a means for the masculine end of political control. Recently, Roger Ames has deftly reconciled disparate views by positing an "Androgynous Ideal" that redeems feminine "passivity," enables "some positive ideals of the consummate human being," and allows a "coherent interpretation of the Lao Tzu's philosophical system" (Guisso:23). I think Laozi -- a hodgepodge of different folk sayings -- has accreted from several strata. Thus, we can find a layer to justify matriolatrists, a layer to support Machiavellians, and even a layer to confirm Ames' vision that Laozi "pursues both a personal and a political ideal that reconciles the tension of opposites in sustained equilibrium and harmony (33)." These accumulated strata, however, do not comprise a "coherent philosophical system." But matrifocal worship does constitute an important stratum. The famous first chapter sounds a main Laozi trope: we may conceive of Dao (however ineffable and indeterminate) as genetrix of all things. Chapter 1's soundplay reaches two climaxes that highlight its sense. Lines 3-4:

Naught names	Heaven & Earth's gestation
miwo mieng	t'ien d'ia tiəg siəg
Aught names	Myriad creatures' mother.

giəg mieng miwan miwət tiəg məg

If we can trust our archaic phonological reconstruction, the couplet celebrates motherhood; it plays on "mother's" near-homophone "naught (and we should recall **naught/absence/lack** is another main Laozian metaphor for Dao)," on its labial initial, and on its final (particularly in the rhymes with "gestation" and "aught/being." Chapter 1's end celebrates Dao/mother's "dark/mystery":

Darker and still darker--
  giwen tiəg giug giwen
Manifold marvel's portal.
  tiong miog tiəg miwən

Those final labials seem to express our Dao-voyeur's wish to return to the womb. No matter what other strata intrude on Laozi, surely here we confront a rockbottom devotional psalm. The singer worships his/her goddess with a joyous tongue, surely one that (Chapter 20) "values feeding on the Mother." But for every passage that worships Dao/mother/absence/gully/water,etc., we can find more "purposive," instrumentalist **uses** of the devotional stratum. By my count, more than two-thirds of Laozi's 81 stanzas feature and/or (particularly) end with a rational moral, a political calculation, or a pedantic summary. For a typical example, observe Chapter XIV:

Look but don't see, call it "wee."
Listen but don't hear, call it "rare."
Grope but don't grasp, call it "wisp."
  These 3 can't be brought to question
  So we mix them up as "one."
  Its topside is not bright,
  Its bottom is not dim.
  Faded-faint, it can't be named
  And goes back to no-thing.
This we call "shape without shape,"
             "image without thing."
This we call "confused--commingle."
  Approach: we don't see its head;
  Follow: we don't see its rear.
    Grasp the ancients' Way
    To rein in what's today.
Able to know the ancients' birth,
This we call the Dao's Main Cord.

Lines 1-3 (rime one), 4-9 (rime two), 10-12 (rime three), and 13-14 (rime

four) share a mystic tone. They provide a paean to -- what? Dao? -- entirely in negative terms. Then, it seems, our pedant enters and tries to **use** his ancients' sacred hymn to enlighten his ruler. Unless our pedant is simply a Machiavel, he has fallen into the word-trap of using purposive, instrumentalist language to convey religious awe. This paradox born of disparate strata and incommensurable visions lies at the heart of Laozi. I think the pedantic compiler ("author" is too strong a word) sincerely believes the ancient creed underlying his text. But he lives in a time when "female" has become synonymous with "passive, quietistic, negative, naturalistic, escapist, pessimistic, and so on" (Ames:23 on "female" qualities) -- not by half the matriolatrous vision! So our well-meaning pedant tries to **revive** and **revalorize** the feminine in an intelligible way (cf. Needham), but he does it "as a compensatory measure to ...redress a predominance of masculine attitudes" (Ames 32) and cannot avoid falling into "purposive" pitfalls (cf. Creel). Still, we should stress two salient points about Laozi:

1) it is, like the Songs, a repository of ancient folk wisdom, a rhymed and formulaic collection of proverbs, and the **only** Zhou philosophical text I know that makes **no** textual allusions (pace Lau, Chapter XLI mentions only an "established saying" **jian yan**);

2) it venerates the mother and atavistically revalues "woman."

Partly for these reasons, Laozi has become a national treasure as precious as the Songs to China's heritage -- the fountainhead of Daoism.

We have little other poetry from Zhou China. An early second-century anthology of traditional (and imitative) songs from Chu -- The Songs of the South (Hawkes' subtitle) forms the chief exception. Its earliest material is a set of Nine Songs scholars characterize as a literary version of traditional, formulaic shaman's chants (Hawkes:35; Schafer:39). Gender relations in the "Nine Songs" continue to fascinate readers; tone and diction hardly differ whether we hear a female "shamanka" trying to seduce a Sky-god (see Hawkes:37) or a male shaman seeking erotic union with a River-goddess (see Hawkes:37-9). Indeed, Chinese often read these songs "the other way"; for example, many read

"Xiang Princess" as a shamanka's plea to her god (Schafer:38-9 demonstrates this is unlikely). Male or female, the shaman's suit, the shaman's magic formulae and ritual actions, and the shaman's concluding regrets remain the same. In fact, because the "Nine Songs" probably record truncated portions of dramatic performances (and because a shaman will **assume** a divine character to express union), we often have trouble distinguishing who speaks: shaman or deity?

My version of "Mountain Spirit" assumes a shamanic speaker (although some think the goddess herself speaks in lines 9-12) but does not interject pronouns when our "script" leaves its actor ambiguous. We may associate this Mountain Spirit with the Goddess of Witch/Shamanka Mount (Guo Moruo's thesis, quoted by Frances Mochida in Hegel:81). Still, we should reflect that nothing in this text requires "goddess" rather than "god"; indeed, nothing in this poem even requires a heterosexual shaman-deity bond. Part of Mountain Spirit's enduring charm lies in its multifarious possibilities. It presents a sacred alp we can traverse by different paths. Travellers along one path will insist the mountain looks one way, but any path involves difficulties, and many reach aporias. My English rendition follows what seems a path of least resistance:

ll.1-8 a (male?) shaman invokes a deity (goddess?) and envisions her equipage;
l.9ff. (which maintains the rhyme from ll.5-8 but marks a break with extra syllables) our shaman expresses anxiety that he(?) and deity stand apart, then envisions clouds and rain apparently from her(?) perspective. A series of binomes in ll. 12-14 (rongrong, mingming, piaopiao) accentuates what appears to be "Mountain Spirit's" stormy, ecstatic climax.
ll.15-16 express formulaic satisfaction and a sort of post-coital wonderment.
ll.17-20 move (in hallowed Nine Songs manner) from tryst to tristesse.
ll.21-24 recapitulate l.1-4 in less hopeful tones.
ll.25-28 recall and amplify (tiantian, mingming, jiujiu, sasa, xiaoxiao) the binome climax from ll.12-14; now wind, rain, and darkness divorce man from spirit.

Mountain Spirit

Seems to be a person in the mountain's fold
Robed with figleaves girt with rabbit-floss.
Eyes flutteringly coy with a comely smile
You're yearning for me so winsome and fine.

Driving ruddy leopards leading striped civets

Magnolia-decked chariot cassia-woven pennants.
Robed with stone-orchid girt with sweet-asarum
Plucking fragrant scent to offer the loved one.

Hidden in bamboo covert, I never see the sky
The road's steep & hard one lone latecomer.
Without, standing alone on the mountain-top
Obscured, dimly gloomy, dark, even at noon.

Clouds' massy surface resting down below
Winds' wafting flow Spirits send rain.
Await a Spirit beauty placidly forget home
The year's grown late Who's beflowered me?

Plucking a trifloria on mountain's waist
Stones steeply piled kudzus run rampant.
Rankled at My Master longing forget home
Milord yearns for me You can't find time.

Person of the mountain fragrance of pollia
Drink from Rock-spring shelter under pines.
. . . .
Milord yearning for me holds back, bashful.

Thunders rumble roll rains darken down
Gibbons chatter chill apes cry in night.
Winds huffing harshly trees rustling rue
I yearn for My Master just suffering woe.

Before we plunge into 2000 more years of longing ladies, it refreshes to hear the **man** yearning. Our explication should mention several features that have influenced my choice of "paths" yet that translation has distorted:

*form- each Chinese line (except 1.9) contains seven syllables, the fourth being a "carrier-syllable" that I have replaced with a visual caesura. Endrhymes divide the poem's 28 lines into 6 divisions; 1-2 and 3-4 form rhymed couplets (from a neighboring rhyme group that reinforces their close relationship); 5-12 rhyme (9 contains two extra syllables; 12-13 have been scrambled in the original text, and I follow part of a rearrangement and a textual variant suggested by Hawkes:187); after that, each quatrain shares a rhyme (until 11.25-28, which end with rhymed couplets). I have manipulated lefthand margins to suggest stanzaic divisions.

*formulae- many of our shaman's words, adornments, and actions recur elsewhere in the Nine Songs and resonate with ritual potency. Each of the many herbs apparently had its own magic property (and I largely follow Hawkes' fanciful English equivalents); as Songs readers will suspect, picking plants can convey yearning here, too. The bashful goddess and tarrying shaman, too, conform to Nine Songs conventions. "Placidly forget home" and "longing, forget home" also repeat common shamanic formulae; here, however, transition from "placid" to "longing" reflects our shaman's lowering spirits. Threefold repetitions augment "Mountain Spirit's" liturgical air; 3 times our shaman claims his goddess "yearns" for him, while he "awaits," "rankles at," and finally "yearns for" her. 3 lines mention stones of the mountain; each line's second half balances rock with growing plants. Incidentally, the goddess'(?) herbaceous garments and plantpicking get mentioned only twice, but line 23 (in

a stanza envisioning the goddess) has disappeared. Maybe our missing line involved something like: Picking X for robes and Y for a girdle.

*terms of address- these, too, confuse gender. "My Master" (**Gongzi**) usually addresses young men, while the word "Milord" (**jun**) usually refers to a male (some plausibly interpret these terms as proof that the Mountain Spirit herself sings). My own trail, skirting a difficulty, marks these terms as androgynous.

We do not have to resurrect the old argument that shamans are usually bisexual deviants, but certainly gender-confusions form part of this poem's appeal. Anyone can identify with our shaman's yearnings, irrespective of gender and sexual preference. Similar gender-transformations help enliven the "Lamentation," a long soliloquy usually attributed to Qu Yuan (whose legendary dates are 343-278). Qu Yuan first drapes himself in flowers and casts himself as a shamanka seeking union with her Lord (who has become a **secular** ruler); afterward, he seeks to influence the spirits by seducing a goddess. Later Songs of the South seem so tedious in large part because they have lost the shaman-deity drama and erotic excitement that energize earlier songs. Their speakers, too, suffer from a "masculinization" that would eventually deny even southern goddesses their proper identity (see Schafer:27,29,46). But the first Songs of Chu -- fountainhead of Southern literature -- demonstrate again that traditional folk-influenced media retaining strong female traits and non-patriarchal androgyny mark many Zhou literary classics. If our paltry Eastern Zhou examples do not quite resound like the Songs selections, it only confirms our correlation of Neolithic traces with women's (literary) potency. Subsequent poetic history all too often seems like a post-lapsarian chronicle. Many a Chinese Eve, fallen from the Songs' Eden, increasingly finds her Lords and Masters have prohibited forthright female poetic expressions as forbidden fruit.

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