Chang’an on My Mind: A Reading of Lu Zhaolin’s “Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity”

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ABSTRACT

Lu Zhaolin’s (634-ca. 684) “Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity” is among the best-known early Tang poems, part of a group of works by contemporary poets on this theme. Lu’s poem reveals five different Chang’ans: (1) Chang’an itself during the late seventh century depicted through parallels to the Han capital city; (2) the demimonde of the Tang again told as if it were the Han pleasure districts; (3) the corrupt politics of the early Tang; (4) Lu Zhaolin’s assessment of how he failed to fit in any of these three previous worlds; and (5) the Chang’an of Lu’s literary experience as revealed in the allusions and resonances of the poem. This paper reveals many of these allusive layers, arguing that “Chang’an gu yi” is best understood in this context.

Keywords: allegorical context, layers of meaning, Lu Zhaolin, Chang’an, contextualization, complementarity

Introduction

Among the best known poems of the early Tang are several written about the then capital city of Chang’an. Luo Binwang’s (627?-684?) “Di jing pian” (On the Imperial Capital) and Lu Zhaolin’s “Chang’an gu yi” (Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity) top this list. They depict portions of the megapolis that evolved from the foundations of the Sui capital (Daxing cheng), its walls originally about 10,000 meters from east to west and over 8,000 from north to south. The suburbs may have been spread out so that it would have taken someone several days to walk across the entire metropolitan area, much as it would have for Jonah to pace Nineveh (Jonah, 3:3). Upon entering the city through one of the gates in the southern walls there would initially be some homes and shops, but also expanses of open territory, fewer residents, less traffic. As one moved north, towards the markets, palaces and government offices, the number and height of the buildings must have increased, the streets large and small filled with horses, ox-drawn carriages, and pedestrians. On the western side of the Eastern Market was the notorious Pingkang Ward where since the first years
of the Tang courtesans were housed. Here the streets were winding and narrow. Then came the districts where the officials lived and the palaces themselves.

This imaginative approach does not differ greatly from that Lu Zhaolin uses to introduce his readers to his city in his “Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity.” However, as the poem unfolds, it quickly loses its cinematic approach and presents a very personal and topical view of the great capital city. This paper hopes to explore that view in light of Lu Zhaolin’s biography. In translating and contextualizing the poem the work of three scholars has provided particularly useful: the textual apparatus of both Li Yunyi 李雲逸 and Ren Guoxu 任國緒, as well as Stephen Owen’s translation and commentaries.5

Let us begin by our re-examination of “Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity” in a translation and line-by-line commentary before attempting to place it within the context of Lu’s life.

I. First Reading

1-2 在安大道連狹斜，青牛白馬七香車。
3-4 玉簟縱橫通主第，金鞭絡繹向侯家。

In Chang’an the big streets connect to the narrow lanes—
Black oxen, white horses, and seven-fragrance carriages.
Jade pushcarts crisscross, stopping at princess’s residences,
Golden whips in an unbroken string, heading for marquises’ homes.

These opening two couplets set the scene. The reader’s gaze is opened directly onto the city streets (no gates here). After sketching a rough map of avenues intersecting with alleyways, Lu Zhaolin populates his sketch with the heavy traffic of the elite. Guyi 古意 in the title is ambiguous, suggesting that Lu Zhaolin is intending to imitate earlier works or to meditate on the past.6 Indeed, the second line seems to echo the opening line of the third of a series of “Wu qi qu” 烏棲曲 (Crow-nesting Tunes) written by Xiao Gang 蕭綰 (503-551; i.e., Emperor Jianwen of the Liang, r. 550-551): “Black oxen, crimson wheelhubs, a seven-fragrance carriage / How lovely, tonight I stay over in a singing-girl’s house. / In the tall tree of the singing-girl’s house a crow’s about to nest; / The gauze curtains and azure covers I’ll trouble...”
Whether this is enough of a resonance to add a layer of eroticism to the lines which follow depends on whether the reader knows the earlier poem. But as will become clear below, Lu Zhaolin was widely read and demanded equal knowledge of his readers.\(^8\)

Jade pushcarts provided transportation for both royalty and especially for women, royal or otherwise. The juxtaposed “golden whips” refer of course to the young gallants who plied both the larger and smaller streets of Chang’an, as can be seen in the first lines of Lu Zhaolin’s “Jieke shaonian chang xing” (Scenes of the Rowdy Youth and Their Associates): “Chang’an values the knights-errant, Luoyang rich in goods and valor; / With jade swords riders fast as floating clouds, Golden whips and bows shaped like the bright moon”\(^9\) Lāngchāng zhòngyóu, Lòngyáng fùchái xié; Yújiù míngyú yǔn, “These “narrow lanes” were the locations of the courtesans and the rowdy youth (shào nián 少年), as seen in many earlier poems, and especially those written to the yuefu title “Chang’an you xiàxié” (Chang’an Has Narrow Lanes). Shen Yue’s “Liren fù” (Rhapsody on Beauties) makes clear the connection in its opening lines: “The talented girls of the narrow lanes, the beauties of Copper Street—a wondrous clarity of like the moon”\(^10\)

5-6 競逐奢僑夜宴。

From dragon mouths, posts of precious baldachins hold the morning sun. 
Spit from phoenix beaks,\(^11\) tassels carry the sunset clouds.

These lines depict the elegant dragon and phoenixes carved on the chassis of the vehicles, suggesting the high status of their passengers providing the reader with a close-up view of highbrow hustle and bustle that goes on throughout the day. The references to the sun in both lines may also intimate the proximity of these elite travelers to the emperor himself. As will become clear below, the vehicles could perhaps be heading for a feast or party, one that would last the entire day.

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\(^7\) Yuefu shiji 楽府詩集, 48.693. The origin of Jianwen Di’s line may be found in the letter Cao Cao 曹操 wrote to Yang Biao 杨彪 (142-225) in which Cao Cao gave him both two black, female oxen and a seven-fragrance carriage, after having had Yang’s son put to death (see the line quote by Taiping yulan, 775.3566 [2b]): “今貸足下西狩逢難七香車韋犢牛二頭”\(^8\) Paul W. Kroll notes that when Lu was working in the archives of Li Yuanyu 李元裕 (Prince of Deng 彭), he “exhausted the resources of the prince’s extensive library; this erudition is evident in the many uncommon allusions employed in his poems... Lu [was] an exceptionally gifted writer, with a total command of the classical literary heritage and tradition” (Kroll, 1986: 600-1).\(^9\)

\(^8\) Li Yunyi, 1998: 44. Fuyun 浮雲, Floating Cloud, also refers to a famous horse of Emperor Wen of the Han (cf. Xijing zaji 西京雜記, 2.2b).\(^10\)

\(^9\) Yiwen leiju, 18.334.\(^11\)

\(^10\) Chen Yixin 陳贻焮 (1924-2000), 2000: 29.249, glosses the lines as 車上掛的流蘇刻成犀頭的鉤子, depicting a kind of hook from which the tassels are hung.
7-8 百丈游絲爭繞樹，一群嬋鳥共啼花。

A thousand feet of gossamer struggle to wrap the trees,
A single flight of graceful birds join their sing midst the flowers.

This fourth couplet completes the exposition by adding the time to the place and players: the strands of gossamer flying tell it is clearly spring. The trees which hold the birds may border the palace walls, since that seems to be where the poet takes us next.

9-10 嘉花戲蝶千門側，碧樹銀臺萬種色。

Songs midst the flowers, playful butterflies beside the thousand gates,
Jade-green trees, silvery towers—ten thousand different hues.

The anadiplosis (lianzhu 连珠) that joins lines 8 and 9 brings the reader suddenly before the thousand gates of the palace and perhaps floats the persona — with the birds and butterflies — to a height from which the preternatural beauty of the palace can be seen. The “thousand gates” referred originally to the Jianzhang Palace of the Han (see the discussion on lines 13-14 below), but here seem also to indicate the Tang Daming Gong Palace of Great Enlightenment) begun by Emperor Taizong (597-649; r. 626-649) and completed under Emperor Kaozong (628-683; r. 649-683) in the early 660s. The yintai (silvery towers) would then refer to the left and right Yintai Men, Silvery Tower Gates, entrances that respectively led from through the Dongnei Yuan and Xinei Yuan (Eastern and Western Inner Gardens) to the Daming Gong itself. Through the right Yintai Men (to the west) one came immediately to the Hanlin Yuan (Academy of the Forest of Pens), where the emperor often received literati and other talented men. Although the Hanlin Academy was not established until the Kaiyuan era (712-742) under Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756), it is possible that this gate was even in the late seventh-century a place where literati entered the palace confines and thus recognizable to Lu Zhaolin’s readers as a reference to the Daming Gong.

12 The first line seems possibly reconstructed based on Yu Xin’s poem “Yan ge xing” (513-581) poem, “In Luoyang a thousand feet of gossamer join together” 洛陽游絲百丈連

13 Wu Zhaoyi’s note to Yu Xin’s poem “Xian shan” 仙山(#1) notes that a silvery tower was the residence of immortals, especially Xi Wang Mu 西王母 (Wu Zhaoyi’s note to Yu Xin’s poem “Xian shan” 仙山(#1) notes that a silvery tower was the residence of immortals, especially Xi Wang Mu 西王母 (Yu Xin, 1983a: 5.46b).

14 See Xiong, 2000: 79.

15 The Beimen Xueshi 北門學士 or Scholars of the Northern Gate, for example, were active from about 666 to at least 688 (cf. Twitchett, 1992: 25, n. 82. There seem to have been Northern Gate scholars as early at Taizong's reign (Wenyuan yinghua, 741.15b cited by McMullen, 1998: 366, n. 115.)
Covered passageways and interlaced windows—
make for joined pleasure;
In paired gate-towers, linked rafters droop like phoenix wings.

This couplet suggests the erotic miasma to which Lu Zhaolin will repeatedly return in the lines below. These lines may also refer both to the Jianzhu and Daming palaces as well as by extension to imperial activities there. Although “covered passageways” (fudao) appear in poems that depict scenes outside the palaces (such as the fourth poem in Du Fu’s series of ten “Kuizhou ge”),

Moreover, it is unlikely that covered passageways would be allowed in private residences in Chang’an. If one assumes that these passageways are similar to those in the Han and Qin palaces, then they would have allowed the emperor (or later Empress Wu) to travel to a palace rendezvous behind the same windows into which “joined-pleasured” flowers (i.e., silk-tree flowers) were carved. Although “twin towers” is a common enough term in earlier verse (beginning with Cao Zhi), it occurs in the opening line of “Di jing pian” (The Emperor’s Capital City), a series of ten poems (with a long preface) attributed to Tang Taizong, a series which shares some similarities with the present poem. The phoenixes may also be an indirect reference to the two pavilions that flank the main hall of the Daming Gong, the Hanyuan Dian—they were known as Qifeng Ge and the Xiangluan Ge.

In the Liang residence the painted pavilion rose into the heavens;
The Han Emperor’s golden stalks stood tall into the clouds.

Here the poet indulges in reverie. When confronted with the Tang palace, even as he directs the reader’s gaze to the tops of columns and pavilions, the echoes of earlier texts must have rung in his ears. Lu Zhaolin’s imagination takes him (and his reader) back to the splendors of Han palatial architecture suggested already in

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16 Hung, 1966: 3.516 (juan 32, #44).
17 Xiong, 2000: 81. Xiong points out that the first fudao connected to the Daming Palace were built in 726, but since Lu Zhaolin is drawing his palace imagery in part from Han times, these passageways could equally refer to Han palaces.
18 He huan 合歡, “joined pleasure,” is pregnant with meaning in this line, referring literally to the “joined pleasure” afforded those who moved through the covered passageways and also to the silk-tree flowers carved into the wooden windows of those passages.
19 Chen Yixin, 2000: 1:1-3.
the references to *qianmen* and *fudao* above. The painted pavilions in line 13 were part of the elaborate estates that Liang Ji 梁冀 (d. 159) built for himself. The reference in line 14 is to Han Wudi’s “bronze pillars” (*tong zhu* 銅柱), which the emperor had erected along with the Bo-liang Tai 柏梁臺 (Cypress-beamed Terrace).20 There were two of these pillars, each either 140 or 210 feet in height.21 Atop each pillar were “immortal palms” (*xian zhang* 仙掌), basins in which “sweet dew” (*gan lu* 甘露) was collected, then mixed with a jade powder and drunk—supposedly extending life.22 These two lines, of course, also refer to the men behind the buildings, Liang Ji of the Later Han and Emperor Wu of the Former. Liang originally gained power through his younger sister who became empress (of Emperor Shun 順) in 132 CE. When the emperor died in 144, with his sister as the dowager empress, Liang Ji was instrumental in selecting his replacement, the eight-year-old Liu Zuan 劉鑑 (138-146; posthumously Emperor Zhi 賁). For the next twenty years the Liang Clan, with Liang Ji at its head, virtually ruled the empire. Liang and his wife Sun Shou 孫壽 held huge, extravagant mansions and terraces and pavilions carved and painted with images of dragons and other beasts, and carriages decorated with gold and silver covered by a canopy of feathers (perhaps reminiscent of the preceding lines of our poem?).23 This extravagance was funded by the large marquisates that Liang Ji and other members of his family held. Liang and his wife were also noted for their lascivious behavior.24 Emperor Wu’s fondness for extravagant plans both within the palace and without are well known. Thus the overall effect of these lines is to portray a Tang palace so imposing it evokes two huge classical edifices of ancient Chang’an, and at the same time to suggest that the palace is founded in part on extravagances similar to those of Liang Ji and Emperor Wu.

This couplet also helps to set the style here. Lu Zhaolin is not only indebted for some of his content to earlier *fu*—Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) in his “Xidu fu” 西都賦 (Rhapsody on the Western Capital, lines 299-300) notes how “they hoisted immortals’ palms to receive the dew, / Jutting forth from golden stems standing in pairs” 抚仙掌以承露，擢卓雙立之金茎—but is clearly adopting many of the

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20 According to the “Wudi benji” account in the *Shiji* (12.459) these pillars were built in 119 B.C. This dating may be problematic, since the pillars were said to have been in the Jianzhang Gong 建章宮 (Establishing A Display Palace [Watson, 1993: 2.49, translates this as Palace for Establishing the Statutes; Knechtges, 1982: 1.130, note to lines 256-7, says “it is not clear exactly what Jianzhang means,” but the palace seems to have been named after the local village near which it was built (i.e., Jianzhang Xiang 建章鄉 [Jianzhang Village; cf. He Qinggu 何青谷, 2005: 122, and Shiji, 28.1402]), and completed only 104 B.C., after the Boliang Tai had been destroyed by a fire. The Han shu (25A.1244) says the Boliang Tai, located in the Weiyang Gong 頭央宮 (Everlasting Palace), was erected in 115 B.C. (see also He Qinggu, 2005: 5.281-4).

21 The “Soyin” commentary to the *Shiji* (12.459) cites the *Sanfu gushi* 三輔故事 claiming that the pillars were thirty zhang 丈 tall; Yan Shigu 袁略古 (581-645) cites the same text in the *Han shu* (25A.1220) as reading “twenty zhang.”

22 *Han shu*, 25A.1220 (again citing the *Sanfu gushi*).

23 See Crespiigny, 2007: 450-3, 775-6, and *Hou Han shu*, 34.1178-89.

24 See also the citation from Hua Jiao’s 華嬌 Han shu 漢書 cited in *Ywen leiju*, 18.325.

25 *Wen xuan* 文選, 1997: 1.18; translation revised slightly from that of Knechtges, 1982: 1.135.
Chang'an on My Mind: A Reading of Lu Zhaolin's “Chang'an, Thoughts on Antiquity”

stylistic techniques of the *fu*. The resonance with the “Xidu fu” becomes stronger when one recalls the similarities between the opening lines of Lu Zhaolin’s poem and the passage in the rhapsody which reads precedes the mention of the “immortals’ palms” (lines 252-69):

The carriage passageways, winding round and about,
Long vestibules, flying galleries,
From the Everlasting Palace connected the Cinnamon Palace,
Northward stretched to Shining Brightness, extended to Enduring Joy,
Traversed the inclined passageway, crossed the western wall,
Merged with Jianzhang, and continued outside the city.
Here they placed the phoenix watchtower of the Jade Gate,
On whose upper ridges a bronze bird perched.
Inside: The Watchtower for Distinguishing the Winds, rugged and tall,
Intricately beautiful, well-crafted, thrust itself upward.
They installed a thousand gates, built ten thousand doors,
Which, according to daylight and darkness opened and closed.

And then there is:
The main hall, towering precipitously, story upon story . . .
Their upturned eaves provide a covering mantle,
Intercept the sun’s rays and capture its light . . .
They hoisted immortals’ palms to receive the dew,
Jutting forth from golden stems standing in pairs.

 lagi 經 席，修除飛閣。自未央而連桂宮，北彌明光而互長樂。凌紇道而超西墉，擬建章而達外戚。設壁門之鳯闕，上觚棱而棲金爵。內則別風之燎燿，眇麗巧而欝播。張千門而立萬戶，順陰陽以開闔。舉乃正殿崔嵬，上反宇以蔽戴，激日景而納光，抗仙掌以承露，擢雙立之金塜。

The similarities between Ban Gu’s description of the Jianzhang Palace in his rhapsody and “Chang’an gu yi” may be seen to imply several things. First, that when Lu wrote this poem, he had this narrative sequence from Ban Gu’s rhapsody in mind, with its depiction of the “thousand gates” (i.e., qian men 千門 as in line 9 of this poem), the flying galleries (fu dao 覆道 “covered passageways” in line 11), the “phoenix watchtower” (huang yi 鳳翼 “phoenix wings” of line 12), the golden stems holding the immortal palms (line 13), and possibly even the play of sunlight upon the carriages (lines 5-6) reflecting Ban’s line on how the eaves caught the

26 Cf. Owen, 1977: 103-4.
27 See Knechtges, 1982: 1.128 note to line 253: “The flying gallery (fei ge 飛閣) is just another name for the raised gallery that connected the Everlasting Palace with the large Jianzhang Place located outside the west wall of the city.”
28 Yan Shigu (Han shu, 25B.1245) points out that the Sanfu gushi says that atop the gatetower was a bronze phoenix.
light (激日景而納光). Second, that lines 9-14 are intended, on one level of meaning at least, to depict the Jianzhang Palace of Han times. Lu’s reliance on the “Xidu fu” is not surprising, since as Fu Gang 傅剛 points out, the fu 赋 on the capitals in the Wen xuan 文選 20 had an immense influence on later writers, comparable to that of the Five Classics.30

The relationship with Ban Gu’s rhapsody allows the “phoenix wings” in line 12 above to be identified with the 170-feet-tall Feng Que 凤閣 (Phoenix Gatetower) which was located about half a mile east of the Han palace walls as the left tower of the main gate of the Palace, the Changgai 門闕 (Gateway to Heaven).31

15-16 樓前相望不相知，陌上相逢讵相識？

Those one gazes on before the lofted buildings are those one does not know.
Meeting along the paths, how could they recognize each other?

This couplet and the lines that follow reveal that the first fourteen lines of this poem not only allowed the persona to lead his readers into the palace, but also afforded him an opportunity to set the scene: the city of Chang’an from the broad avenues of the south to the palaces in the north, with a focus is upon the lives of the elite populace of the city. Lu Zhaolin’s cineaste vision first carried the reader aloft to a focal point above the streets of Chang an, where he had a birds-eye view of the bustling world of these indulgent men and women. In line 15 the persona and the reader are brought back to earth. On first reading these lines give pause. Who are the people who fail to recognize each other? Is this merely suggestive of the huge population of over half a million people in the capital city.32 But the lines may also suggest that the relationships between these young nobles are so ephemeral that even after meeting – at a party or an assignation – they still do not recognize each other. For this reader the lines remain problematic. The literal level suggests these lofted buildings a most likely to be those in the palace alluded to in the preceding lines. The passersby must then either be part of the palace populace, that is to say, palace women who are so numerous and so isolated they don’t recognize each other, or the courtesans and their guests who pass each other unrecognizing. However, given the lines which follow, it seems that these people who fail to recognize each other must be pairs of former or potential lovers. Has the persona turned inside himself here, dipping into a memory corpus, to project

29 Following the fu on Chang’an and Luoyang by Ban Gu, the Wen xuan collected the rhapsodies by Zhang Heng 張衡 and Zuo Si 左思 on their capital cities.
30 Fu, 2000: 236-7.
31 He Qinggu, 2005: 124-5. See also Knechtges’ excellent discussion of the problem of the location of this gate (Knechtges, 1982: 1:130, n. for lines 258-9). His conclusion is that many gates had phoenix acroteria atop them and that the Wen xuan reference is not a proper noun, but “simply the name of a common type of entrance gate, which had a bronze phoenix figure on the top.”
32 According to Thomas Thilo there were about 500,000 permanent residents of the city in 742 (300,000 registered citizens, some 100,000 military, 20-30,000 monks and nuns, and more than 50,000 foreigners, officials, candidates for examinations, and palace personnel (Thilo, 1997: 12-13).
Chang'an on My Mind: A Reading of Lu Zhaolin's "Chang'an, Thoughts on Antiquity"

for the reader first the residence of Liang Ji and Emperor Wu's pillars, then these new characters who meet, but don't recognize each other? It may also be possible that in this couplet and the following ten lines (through line 26) can be found the musings of a female persona, a jilted lover or even a courtesan.

At the allusive level, line 15 would seem to refer to the story of Qiu Hu. Although this tale is also recorded in the Lien 居樓传, the version that seems to be most related to the text of Lu Zhaolin's poem is that found in the Xijing zaji 西京雜記:

“Qiu Hu, a native of Lu, having taken a wife for three months, traveled [to another state] seeking an official post for three years; when he resigned and returned home, his wife was picking mulberry leaves in the outskirts [of the capital city?]. When Hu reached the outskirts, he did not recognize this wife. He delighted in her as soon as he saw her, and presented her with three-hundred grams of gold. His wife said, 'I have a husband who has traveled [to another state] seeking an official post and has not returned. In my secluded chamber I dwell all alone, for three years now, and have not yet been as disgraced as I am today.' She [continued] picking leaves without turning around. Hu was ashamed and withdrew. When he reached his home, he asked, 'Where is my wife.' She has gone to pick mulberry leaves in the outskirts and has not yet returned,' he was told. As soon as she returned, and he found he was facing the woman whom he had provoked, both husband and wife were equally ashamed. The wife [then] went to the Yi River and died.”

Line 15, “Before the lofted buildings they look towards, but do not know, the other,” seems to resonate clearly with this tale. Line 16 is similar in the primary meaning. However, because of the term moshang 阅上 which is associated with the ancient yuefu 栩上 Sang (Mulberries on the Path), it would seem to allude to Qin Luofu 秦羅敷. In the introduction to this title found in the Yuefu shiji 楚府詩集, Luofu's story, as related by Cui Bao 崔豹 in his Gujin zhu 古今注, is related:

This “Mulberries on the Path” came from the daughter of the Qin Clan. A native of Handan in the Qin Clan had a daughter whose name was Luofu and who became the wife of Thousand-chariots34 吴 Wāng Ren of that town. Wāng

33 Xijing zaji (SBCK ed.), 6.4a.
34 Lu, 1994: 60, gives the standard interpretation of qian cheng 千乘 as representing a large state that could support a thousand [war-] chariots. Yi ren 衣人 (429) was the highest administrative official of an yi.
Ren later became the Prefect of the Household of the King of Chao. When Luofu went out to pick mulberry leaves along the paths, the King of Chao ascended a tower, saw her, and delighted in her. Accordingly he arranged for a party intending to snatch her away from it. Only when Luofu skillfully played the zither and then composed the song “Mulberries on the Path” to make clear her feelings did the King of Chao desist.

The apparent allusive force of these lines situation makes them difficult to interpret, at least for this reader. For although the two stories are similar, the failure of the husband to recognize his wife is found solely in the Qiu Hu story, and the term mo shang seems traditionally to refer only to Luofu. Even if one accepts the argument that these two stories became confused or there was a tradition of combining the two narratives, making Qiu Hu Luofu’s husband, as Joseph Roe Allen has suggested, the tension between an obscure literal understanding of the couple and a clearer allusive reading that would then mark a sharp break with the preceding lines creates an aporia.

These lines, as noted above, place the persona’s feet are firmly on the ground again, beside the pathways that lead to and from the palace. This switch from descriptive style to a direct narration is typical of the yuefu-ballad style, as is the interrogations of the following couplet:

17-18
May I ask who played the flute and went into the purple clouds?
Who once to study dance passed the fragrant years of youth?

Although these lines can certainly be read as straightforward descriptions of the beautiful women who lived either in the palace or in the nearby courtesan district, the allusive vein that began in line 13 continues here. Xiao Shi 蕭史 and his wife Nongyu 蠻玉 are the subjects of line 17. Xiao Shi was such a skilled musician that when he played the pan-pipes phoenixes would gather. Duke Mu 穆 of Qin (r.
659-621 B.C.) married his daughter, Nongyu, to Xiao, and had a Phoenix Tower built for them. They lived there until one day Nongyu mounted a phoenix, Xiao Shi a dragon, and they flew off into the heavens. The reference in line 18 seems to refer to Zhao Feiyan, who ‘studied dance’ before she captivated Emperor Cheng of the Han (r. 33-7 BCE) so much that he made her his empress. But Feiyan was no innocent and a number of crimes are attributed to her. Moreover, this relationship ended in tragedy, Feiyan committing suicide after Emperor Cheng’s death to avoid a worse punishment. Nevertheless, both of these couples were devoted to each other and it is this devotion that the persona wants to emphasize, thereby providing a link with the following couplet.

19-20 得成比目何辭死，願作鸳鴦不羡仙。
21-22 比目鸳鴦真可憐，雙去雙來君不見？

Able to become ‘paired-eye fishes,’ how could they decline to die? Wanting to become mandarin ducks, they did not admire immortality.

In these couplets a female persona—it was also a yuefu technique to mix male and female voices in the same poem—continues to speak directly to the reader in a commentary of sorts on the lovers alluded to in the previous couplets. Lines 19-20 might also read: “If I were able to find a paired-eye fish for a partner, how would I decline to die (as Feiyan did)? / In my fish to find a mate loyal as a mandarin drake, I do not admire immortality.” Bimu are flounders which, because their eyes were on either side of their flat heads, were thought to have only one eye. They thus always moved in the company of their mates which had an eye on the opposite side of the head. Mandarin ducks are noted for their loyalty to a single mate. Thus the catalogue of lovers that began in lines 15-16 moves from a relationship in which only the female is loyal (Qiu Hu and Luofu) to that of loyal couples in lines 17-18, both of whom end up dying (or at least leaving their earthly existence) on behalf of their beloved.

23-24 生憎帳額雙孤鸞，好取門簾結雙雁。
25-26 雙燕雙飛桃畫梁，縫緞雨被郁金香。

Most hateful—the solitary roc embroidered on bed curtains, Much loved—the swallow pair attached to the door drop. The swallow pair flies paired around the painted rafters, Gauze hangings and feather coverlet steeped in exotic scents.

37 See Liexian zhuan 列仙傳 [Linlang mishi congshu 琳琅密室叢書 ed., in Baibu congshu jicheng 百部叢書集成], 1.15a-b.
38 See Han shu, 97B. 3988. Feiyan (Flying Swallow) got her name because she was so light on her feet.
39 To this reader lines 15-26 seem to suggest a female persona.
The female persona with these four lines concludes her exposition of true love from historical precedents down to her own experience as symbolized through selected elements of her boudoir.

27-28 片片行雲著蟬貂，纖纖初月上蛾黃。

Layer by layer hair moved into clouds, displaying cicada-wings brows. Slender and fine like new moons, rising in light yellow.

Although the translation adheres to the literal level meaning here, the entire description is not of the natural scene, but of an idealized Tang beauty. The speaker here is clearly a male. Tang readers would have recognized xìng yún 行雲 (moving clouds) as a popular Tang hairstyle, cicada wings (chān bìn 蝉鬚) as the fluffed-up eyebrows Tang women preferred, and the new moon or yellow crescent (see line following) which was applied (shàng 蘼 can also have the idea of “place above” or even “apply”) to the forehead.40

29-30 蛾黃粉白車中出，含嬌含態情非一。

Light yellow crescents on powered-white faces, they emerge from carriages, with such charm, with such bearing, their love not just for a single man.

These lines take us back to the opening lines (2-4) of the poem when “the Black oxen, white horses, and seven-fragrance carriages. / Jade palanquins crisscross, stopping at princess’s residences, / Golden whips in an unbroken string, heading for marquis’ homes.” Here the reader is afforded a glimpse of these young women on their way to such homes and residences, presumably to attend a feast or party.

31-32 妖童寶馬鐵連錢，嫖娼盤龍金屈膝。

Devilishly handsome lads on precious horses, piebald spotted; Singing girls with coiled dragons carved on their golden carriage-door hasps.

The last to arrive at the part are these bewitching young men (servants of the “marquises”) and courtesans, here to attend the noble men and women of the black oxen and white horses.

With this couplet some modern commentators have marked the end of the first section of the poem, a section which depicts (depending upon one’s reading preferences) the grandiose grid of Chang’an’s streets and lanes, those indulgent young people who travel about from one entertainment to another, as well as a background scene people with allusive lovers, some loyal, some dissolute, some clearly from the Han, others perhaps contemporaries of Lu Zhaolin. The matrix of

40 Cf. Xiao Gang’s “Meinu pian” 美女篇 (cited in Guo, 1979: 63.913): 這黃能使月，裁金巧作星
allusions must cause the reader to pause, sometimes to puzzle over lines, while also revealing Lu Zhaolin’s broad learning.

The second section begins again with allusions, in this case so dominant that failure to recognize them would lead to bafflement:

33-34 鄉史府中烏夜啼，廷尉門前雀欲棲。

In the office of the Grandee Secretary the crows sang at night,
Before the Commandant of Justice’s gates, the sparrow’s about to settle in.

Wu ye ti 烏夜啼 in line 33 refers to a passage in Zhu Bo’s 朱博 (d. 7 B.C.E.) biography in the Han shu (83.3405). There, in a discussion how power was repositioned among the top officials in the last years of the Western Han, Ban Gu notes that there were thousands of birds who would spend the night in the cypress trees inside the office of the Grandee Secretary, Zhu Bo. They would leave in the morning, but return every night. Then during Emperor Ai’s 哀帝 (r. 7-1 B.C.E.) reign they disappeared. (The expression wu ye ti was also a yuefu title and Lu Zhaolin may be playing on that secondary meaning here, since some of his diction in this poem resembles that of earlier “Wu ye ti” poems.) Line 34 is also allusive, referring to a comment by a Master Zhai 齊公 cited by Sima Qian in his comments to the biographies of Ji An 汲黯 and Zheng Dangshi 鄭當時 (Shiji, 120.3114). Sima Qian tells us that Master Zhai observed that when he was Commandant of Justice he had guests filling his gates, but when he lost his position he could have spread a sparrow’s net before his gates without catching a single guest. Eventually he regained his position and his admirers, but disparaged them as fair-weather friends. Thus both lines refer to times when good officials were forced out of office or had lost their power, so that even a Grandee Secretary or a Commandant of Justice (two of the highest positions during the Han dynasty) were controlled by lower-ranking favorites. This couplet thus sets the scene for the kind of moral laxity that results from the disempowerment of good government officials.

On the literal level, Lu Zhaolin continues to introduces the reader to the night life (another resonance of the term wu ye ti) of the capital, here focusing on the rowdy youth.

35-36 鮮欽朱城臨玉道，滌遁翠幃沒金堤。
37-38 拽韁飛鷹杜陵北，探丸借客消搖西。

In the haze of dusk the Crimson City Walls overlook jade pathways,
In the distance green curtains sink beneath golden dikes.
Crossbows clasped underarm, they give their raptors flight north of Duling.
Draw lots to help others seek revenge west of the Wei-River Bridge.

Here the persona depicts the departure of the rowdy youth from the palace. Why they have been in the palace is not clear, but they were presumably invited by someone other than the highest officials (who were revealed to be disempowered
in line 34). Or they may have been in the residence of some noble next to the Crimson Walls of the palace. Line 35 simply sets the new scene; line 36 depicts their green-curtained carriages as they move away from the persona, seeming to disappear beneath dikes or enceintes, which lined the way out of the palace. The dikes are golden in the setting sun. These young men often spent their days hunting (line 37) or visiting a patron, before visiting the courtesan quarters at night. Line 38 alludes to the closing years of Emperor Cheng 成 of Han's reign (r. 33-7 B.C.E.) when the streets of Chang'an were in chaos. Young men were killing officials for sport or contracting themselves to murder selected individuals. They cast lots by selecting crossbow pellets to see what kind of official they would kill: crimson meant a military man, black a civilian official, and white meant they would be in charge of the burial affairs. 金 Duling was a few miles southeast of Chang'an where Han Xuandi 宣帝 (r. 74-48 B.C.E.) mausoleum was located and must have been a favorite hunting-ground. The West Wei River bridge was one of three bridges across that river, about fifteen miles west-northwest of Chang'an a few miles southwest of modern Xianyang (Tan Qixiang, 5:41).

39-40 俱遊俠客芙蓉劍，共宿娼家桃李蹊。

All the knights-errant invited, with their hibiscus swords,
To spend the night in the singing girls' houses, streaming in beneath the peach and plum trees.

Here the scene changes again, back to narrower streets of the capital where the courtesans lodged. The allusion to “hibiscus swords” (line 39) refers to a comment Xue Zhu 薛蟠 (by a visitor from Qin) made upon seeing five new swords that Yunchang, the King of Yue 允常越王 had caused to be crafted: “They are as vigorous as hibiscus having just blossomed in a lake” 沉沉芙蓉始生於湖 In the ambience of the lines following, this allusion may heighten the erotic potential of this image. 金 Line 40 also contains an allusion—to an old proverb cited by Sima Qian in his comments on Li Guang's 李廣 biography: “Though the peach and plum do not speak, beneath them [admirers] form in streams on their own” 桃李不言，下自成蹊. Sima Qian was trying to suggest that although Li Guang was a clumsy speaker, his military talents, like the beautiful flowers of the peach and plum, brought him many admirers. Here the trope depicts rather the number of young bravos who “formed in streams” to visit the blossoming trees that were the singing girls.

41 Cf. Yin Shang’s 尹赏 biography in the Han shu, 90.3673.
42 The passage from the Wu Yue chunqiu 吴越春秋 is not found in modern editions of that text, but cited in Ouyang Xun 劉昫海 (557-641), 1985: 60.1078.
43 Cf. the poem titled “Langye wang” 伶歌王 attributed to Yao Bi 姚弼 (d. 416): “I have just purchased a blade of five feet, / and I hang it on the central pillar. / I stroke it three times a day, / more often than I would a maiden of fifteen” 新買五尺刀，懸著中樞柱；一日三摩挲，劇於十五女 (translation by Xiaofei Tian, 2007: 339-40; original text in Yuefu shiji, 25.364.)
44 Shiji, 109.2878.
In the singing girls’ house day and night, those purple-gauze skirts, 
As soon as they start their sweet songs, such fragrance exhaled.

In northern halls night after night the women (with complexions) like the moon.⁴⁵
On the southern pathways morning upon morning the riders are thick as clouds.

Here is clearly a male persona who has taken us, along with the rowdy youth, on a
nightly visit to the courtesans of Chang’an. The image of gauze skirts is
reminiscent of poems such as Shi Rongtai’s 施榮泰 (fl. late 5th c.) “Za shi” 雜詩 in
the Yutai xingyong and the Qi-Liang style in general.⁴⁶ These lines also suggest the
round-the-clock excitement of the city.

The southern pathways, the northern halls, connect to the Northern Ward,
The five crossroads and three boulevards join to the three markets.

The Northern Ward (Beili 北里) or Pingkang 平康 Ward was the primary location
of the courtesan residences in Tang Chang’an. As Victor Xiong points out, there
were several other quarters in the vicinity of the Eastern Market where houses of
pleasure were situated.⁴⁷ The three markets were the Southern, the Western and the
Easter markets, the latter the hub of commercial activity of all sorts.⁴⁸ “Five
crossroads and three boulevards” are a metonym for the busy streets in this area.

Pliant willow and green ash droop to sweep the ground,
Into the fine air red dust rises, darkening the sky.

In this couplet the persona paints a color and beauty onto the hubbub of activity
he visualizes. As before, this beauty is enhanced by associations readers would be
expected to recognize. Willows, for example, are part of the common euphemism
(jhuāliu gang 花柳港) for a pleasure district and thus the plant willows in line 47
remind one of courtesans. Similarly, the green ash has been a part of earlier
depictions of the rowdy youth in verse. He Sun 何遜 (ca. 472-ca. 519), for example,
writes “East of the city wall those handsome rowdy youth, / Who in indulging
themselves disregard millions. / They take up their crossbows, follow the jeweled

⁴⁵ Cf. the lines cited above from Shen Yue’s “Liren fu.”
⁴⁶ Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583), 1985: 4.168: “Silk skirts several dozen layers, Still lighter than a
single cicada wing” 繡裙數十重，猶輕一鳴蜉 (translation slightly revised from Birrell, 1986: 131.)
⁴⁷ Xiong, 1997: xxxix (Map 7.2).
⁴⁸ Xiong, 1997: xxxix (Map 7.3).
pellet, / On white horses with yellow-gold harness. / At the Nine Crossroads of Chang'an, / Green ash-trees planted to shade the roads are planted . . .”

The metaphor of the trees sweeping the ground has precedent in Xiao Yi’s “Lù liu”：

“Long branches droop to sweep the ground; / Flowers light rise to chase the wind.”

The “red dust” of line 48 is that raised by the horses and carriages that transport these groups about. This image, too, has been used earlier in poem related to this, Xu Ling’s “Luoyang dao” (The Streets of Luoyang): “Green willows darken the height of spring, / Red dust increases midst the hundred games” 綠柳三春暗，紅塵百戲多. In the next couplet color continues to remind the reader of earlier texts.

In the Han era, when a thousand riders from the Gilded Mace came, Glistening green was the fine Tusu wine in parrot cups.

With these lines the reader is transported more firmly back to the Han. Yet the need to explicitly mark the era reveals perhaps the poet’s concern that his images may be read only as depictions of the contemporary Tang capital without reference to the Han. The Bearer of the Gilded Mace (Zhi jinwu) is indeed a Han title (known as Commandant of the Capital, Zhong wei) designating a 2000-shi-rank official who was traditionally included among the highest officials, the Jiù qìng (Nine Ministers). He was in charge of law and order in the capital city outside of the palaces—essentially a chief of police for Chang’an. A number of subordinates (assistants, majors, captains) and many common soldiers (foot soldiers and mounted troops) were at his disposal. Tusu wine was drunk on New Year’s Day33 ‘Parrot cups’ were conch shells from southeast Asian that were thought to look like parrots. The intent here seems to be to continue the subplot of the reckless lifestyle of those in the capital who were supposed to preserve order.

Women from Yan and Zhao were especially known for their beauty as in the twelfth of the “Gushi shijiu shou” 古詩十九首 (Nineteen Ancient Poems): “In Yan
and Zhao many are the lovely girls, / The most beautiful have faces like jade; / They wear light-silken skirts, / Sit at the window going over their pure songs.

These lines bring to a close the second section of the poem which depicts the demimonde in Han, and by extension Tang, Chang’an.

In addition there were those influential men, ‘generals’ and ‘ministers’
Who could turn the sun, revolve the heavens, none yielding to the other.

Through will and spirit along they could drive out Guan Fu;
Holding such power their judgments would not defer to Chancellor Xiao He.

These lines opening the third section introduce a different class of capital citizens—those who held power. The fact that they are merely “called” (cheng 稱) generals and ministers may suggest Lu Zhaolin’s lack of respect. The allusion in line 55 is to Tian Fen 田蚡, one of Emperor Wu’s favorites. He was opposed by Dou Ying 邓铿 and Guan Fu 灌夫. Dou, like Tian, was an imperial relative. Tian had been replaced him as chancellor. Guan was a high-spirited and irascible general who remained loyal to Dou. Tian plotted to bring down both men. When Guan Fu lost his temper during a drinking party, Tian Fen found an excuse to condemn him to the emperor. As a result Guan Fu and his entire clan were executed and Dou Ying also disgraced. Thus the reference to these ‘generals and ministers’ here is intended to condemn them. Line 56 refers to Xiao He 肖何, a fellow-townsman and longtime colleague of Liu Bang. Xiao He managed Liu’s rise to power, but never distinguished himself in battle. After Liu Bang became emperor and wanted to enfeoff those who had supported him, he decided to rank of his followers, with Xiao He at the top of the list. Many of Liu’s generals argued that Cao Can 曹参, a veteran of all the campaigns, should be placed first. But E Qianqiu 鄂千秋 argued strongly in favor of Xiao He and eventually everyone deferred to Xiao He. He remained unparalleled at court until Liu Bang died in 195 B.C.E.

Monopolizing power, willful in spirit, the basis of these powerful heroes,
On a ‘green dragon’ or a ‘purple swallow,’ they ride the spring winds.

Green dragon is “the tutelary spirit of the eastern sky” ridden by the persona of the “Zi bei” 自悲 in the Chuci 楚辭; purple swallow is the name of one of the nine

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54 Wenxuan, 29.1348.
55 See their biographies in Shiji chapter 107.
56 See Xiao He’s biography in Shiji chapter 53.
57 “Qi jian” 七諫, Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句, 13.13a (cf. Hawkes, 1959: 129 and 221).
steeds that Emperor Wen 文 of the Han brought to Chang'an with him from Dai 代 when he was summoned to ascend the throne. Line 58 puts into metaphoric language the limitless nature of the power of these men.

59-60 自言歌舞長千載，自謂驕奢凌五公。

They opined themselves that their songs and dances would last a thousand years; They spoke with a pride and extravagance to exceed that of the Five Lords.

The Five Lords are again from the Former Han: Zhang Tang 張湯 (d. 115 B.C.), Du Zhou 杜周 (d. 95 B.C.), Xiao Wangzhi 萧望之 (ca. 107-47 B.C.) Feng Fengshi 馮奉世 (ca. 105-39 or 38 B.C.), and Shi Dan 史丹 (fl. 25 B.C.). Zhang Tang and Du Zhou both appear in Sima Qian’s “Kuli liezhuan” 酷吏列傳 (Biographies of the Harsh Officials), Shiji chapter 122, and were noted for their corrupt and unethical behavior. Xiao Wangzhi, chancellor in the mid-first century B.C., was also involved in corruption. Feng Fengshi fell from favor because of his failure to suppress a rebellion. Shi Dan was a powerful, licentious, and luxury-loving official under Emperor Cheng 成帝. Here again since the Five Lords were the most arrogant and extravagant men in the Han, it could only be men of latter eras who could compare to them in their vices—that is to say men of Lu Zhaolin’s own time.

61-62 節物風光不相待，桑田碧海須臾改。
63-64 昔時金階白玉堂，即今惟見靑松在。

Seasonal scenes and sights wait for no one; The mulberry groves and fields change into jade-green seas in a moment. From those golden staircases and white jade halls of old We see today only the green pines remain.

Here Lu Zhaolin simply points out that in contrast to the expectations of these Han predecessors that their “songs and dances would last a thousand years,” little remained of them in his time. Only nature—in the image of the green pine—endures. Perhaps Lu Zhaolin has borrowed the image of the “white jade halls” from his near contemporary, Wang Ji 王绩 (590-644): “Light green bright pearl curtains, a mandarin-duck white jade hall; in the pure morning they eat from precious cauldrons, in the idle evenings burn exotic incense; the heavenly horses come down the eastern road; the beautiful women lean towards to north” 光緑明珠帳，鶴鶴白玉堂。清晨寶鼎食，閑夜鬱金香。天馬來東道，佳人傾北方. The relationship between the two poems becomes stronger when the title of Wang Ji’s poem, “Guo Han gucheng” 過漢古城 (Passing the Old Wall of the Han Capital City), is considered.

58 Xijing zaji 西京雜記, in Ji Yun, 1983: 2.2b.
59 On Xiao, Feng and Shi see Loewe, 2000: 606-8, 474-6, and 98, respectively.
60 Chen, 2000: 24.206-7.
Line 65 introduces the fourth and final section of the poem, one in which Lu Zhaolin makes clear his own frustrations are not having found political success, comparing himself to the great literatus, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.-18 C.E.) of the Han.

65-66 寂寂寥寥揚子居，年年歲歲一床書。
67-68 萱有南山桂花發，飛來飛去襲人裾。

Silent and alone, Master Yang dwelt [in Chang'an], Year after year after year, his whole bed filled with books. Only when the cassia flowers bloom on Southern Mountain, Do they fly hither and yon, invading the lapels of one's robe.—

The reference to Yang Xiong, of course, continues the time line of the last section within the Han dynasty. There is a tradition of Yang Xiong living in isolation that begins in his biography in the Han shu, but here Lu Zhaolin seems clearly to be alluding to (or even imitating) Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250-ca. 305) fourth of eight "Yong shi" (On Historical Subjects) poems. Zuo's poem reads:

Countless were the officials in the [Han] capital city, Awe-inspiring the residences of the princes and marquises! Official caps and canopies cast their shadows over the four thoroughfares, Crimson wheels one after another on the long boulevards. Mornings they gather in the guesthouse of the Jins and Zhangs, Evenings they stay overnight in the quarters of the Xus and Shis. In the southern neighborhoods they strike the bells and musical stones, In the Northern Ward they play pipes and flutes.

How silent then was Master Yang's home! In his gate no excellencies' or ministers' car. All alone in his empty room, What he investigated was the abstruse and the empty. In his expositions he took Confucius as his measure, In his rhapsodies he modeled himself on Sima Xiangru. Long, long after a hundred generations have passed, His name will carry authority to the four corners of the earth.

濟濟京城里，赫赫王侯居。冠蓋從四衝，朱輪競長衢。 朝集金張館，暮宿許史廍。南鄰擊銘磬，北里吹笙竽。

61 "Jin, Zhang" referring to Jin Ridi 金日磾 (d. 86 BCE; Loewe, 2000: 196-7) and Zhang Tang 張湯, respectively; the Xus were the family of Yuandi's mother; Shi Liangdi 史良娣 was Xuandi's 広 grandmother.
What Zuo Si states explicitly, and what Lu Zhaolin implies through the image of eternity (the Southern Mountain), is that it is the reputation of a pedantic but untainted scholar like Yang Xiong, not the songs and dances of the powerful, that will endure.

Having discovered that Zuo Si’s poem seems to provide a back story upon which Lu Zhaolin’s verse, “Chang’an, Thoughts on Antiquity” may be understood in more depth, it seems that a rereading of Lu’s poem, following some comments on Lu’s biography, is in order before one can conclude or summarize what sort of Chang’an it was that Lu intended to present.

Towards a Second Reading
If it can be agreed that the fourth of Zuo Si’s “On Historical Subjects” was a model—if not the model—for Lu Zhaolin in composing “Chang’an gu yi,” two aspects of Lu’s work become clearer. First, that he, like Zuo, may have intended to take his readers back to Han-dynasty Chang’an. Second, that he has identified himself not only with Yang Xiong, but also with Zuo Si. Little is known about Zuo Si, but as David Knechtges notes in his potted biography, he was “rather homely and inarticulate, and perhaps to compensate for these handicaps, spent most of his time studying and writing.”

Lu Zhaolin was born in Fanyang about 634, a descendant of Lu Zhi (d. 192), a scholar-official of the Latter Han noted for his honesty. In 646 (age 13 sui) Lu left Fanyang to study the classics and the histories with Cao Xian in Yangzhou. Three years later (649), he went to Huanshui to study with Wang Yifang. In 652, at 18 sui, Lu first came to Chang’an and associated with the noble youth of the capital. He soon found a royal patron and friend in Li Yuanyu (before 619-665), the Prince of Deng. That same year he paid a courtesy call on Lai Ji and was warmly received, further enhancing his reputation when Lai was made a Chief Minister the following year. He was often in the company of the Prince and Lai Ji during 653 and 654 while serving as a Dianqian (Document Clerk) in Prince Deng’s library. In this a parallel to Yang Xiong’s inclinations to study or work as a collator rather than serve in the government can be discerned. In 654, the Prince was made prefect of Shouzhou (modern Shou County in Anhui) and the following

62 Wenxuan, 21: 980-90.
63 Knechtges, 1982: 1.483.
64 Crespigny, 2007: 622-3.
65 Much of the material on Lu’s life comes from Li Yunyi, 1998: 482-510. Besides the rather laconic texts of his official biographies, the commentary by Ren Guoxu to the entry on Lu in Fu, 1987:1.44-54, and Ge, 1998: 15-24, have all been useful.
66 Li Yunyi, 1998: 486.
67 Loewe, 2000: 638.
year Lu followed the prince to Shouzhou. In 657, as the prince's envoy, he went to Yizhou 益州 (modern Chengdu in Sichuan). Lu's writings first collected by Qiao Shiwang 喬師望 while he was in Yizhou (Qiao also wrote a preface). Also in 657, in a plot constructed by Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592-672), one of Empress Wu's strongest supporters, Lai Ji was dismissed from court.

The following year Lu returned directly from Yizhou to Chang'an. With opposition figures such as Lai Ji out of the way, Empress Wu was steadily gaining control of the government. Later that year (658), Lu went to Xiangzhou 襄州, where Prince Deng had been transferred, staying there through 664, when he moved with the Prince to Yanzhou 郓州 (modern Yanzhou just west of Qufu in Shandong).

In the seventh lunar month of 665 Prince Deng passed away and Lu returned to Sichuan to take up the position of Commandant of Xindu County 新都縣尉. He served in this position through 668, when he was sent on official business to Chang'an, arriving towards the end of the year; in the spring of 669 he returned to Sichuan. Probably in the fall of this year, he was imprisoned because of some matter that went awry (heng shi 橫事), but through a friend's influence was soon released.

Based solely on a poem written by Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (before 640-684), during his years in Sichuan Lu Zhaolin lived with a commoner named Guo 郭 and had a child (son? ) with her. The child was born after he left Shu and soon died. Lu promised to take her as a concubine, but never seems to have done so.68 During his stay he wrote a number of poems including “Yizhou cheng xi Zhang Zhao Ting guan ji” 益州城西張趙亭觀妓 (Watching a Courtesan at the Zhang Zhao Pavilion West of the Yizhou Citywalls).69

In 670 his term as commandant was fulfilled and he resigned, indulging himself in wine and verse. He wandered about Shu, visting a number of prefectures. At the end of the year he appealed to the officials in Yizhou for funds to return to Chang'an and in fall 671 he left for Chang'an.

By 672 he was in Luoyang resting in the family home there. In the second or third month of 673, however, he went back to Chang'an. The progressive rheumatoid arthritis that Lu had been suffering from for some time70 and this may had led him to seek out Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (ca. 581-ca. 682), the famous physician, with whom he shared official dwellings in the Guangde 光德 Ward. Lu also associating with members of the Mishu sheng 米書省 (Department of the Imperial Library), such as the Vice Director of the Department (Shaojian 少監), Cui Xinggong 崔行功.71 It is likely that about this time Lu wrote “Chang'an gu yi” (see the discussion below).72

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68 Cf. Lo's "Yanqing dai Guoshi zeng Lu Zhaolin" 奧情代郭氏贈盧國麟, cited in part in Ren, 1989: 499-500.
69 Chen, 2000: 1.207. Ren, 1989: 516, dates this poem to 656.
70 Cf. Kroll, 1986: 600.
71 See his biography in Jiu Tang shu 九唐書, 190A.4996.
72 Ren, 1989: 520, dates the poem to 669.
Despite his arthritis, Lu was looking for a position again. But he found himself bedridden for several months while Sun Simiao attended the emperor in the Jiucheng gong 九成宮 (Nine Completions Palace). At this time he wrote “Bing lishu fu” 病梨樹賦 (Rhapsody on a Sick Pear Tree) and later that year presented a poem to Xu yushi 許圉師 (d. 679, jinshi 657) the Assistant Director of the Left of the Department of State Affairs. Xu had been a Chief Minister from 659-662 and was not completely hostile to Empress Wu.

Lu Zhaolin was again in Chang'an in 674. While there he wrote a preface for Jia Yanzhong's 賈言忠 Yuefu zashi 樂府雜詩 (2 juan). Later that year his father died and he returned to manage the funeral arrangements to Luoyang. The following three years he was in mourning in the Taibaishan 太白山 (about seventy miles west-southwest of Chang'an; Tan 5: 52) where he also studied the Dao and tended to his illness. In 678, he returned from Taibaishan to the family home in Luoyang, before retiring the following year to Dong Longmen shan 東長門山 (East Longmenshan) where he again studied the Dao and ministered to his growing pain. In the remaining few years of his life his arthritis worsened quickly, causing a great strain on his family’s finances. Having retired again, this time to Jucishan 良渚山 (in Yangzhai 陽翟), he found himself barely able to move about and sometime after 683 he drowned himself.

Even this brief account reveals Lu to have been a man of all seasons. As a boy he had studied with some of the top scholars in the empire, then as a youth joined the coterie of one of the major literary patrons of the era, Prince Deng. His contacts included a close relationship with the highest level of officials (Lai Ji) which positioned him in opposition to Empress Wu. After this exciting period in Chang'an during the 650's, he spent nearly a decade in the provinces, mostly in Sichuan, before returning to the capital region in the early 670's. From a literary point of view, Lu was (in the words of Paul Kroll) “a fine scholar [who] was said to have exhausted the resources of the prince’s extensive library, [whose] erudition is evident in the many uncommon allusions in his poems,” which allowed him to be “an exceptionally gifted writer, with a total command of the classical literary heritage and tradition.” He ended his life in dire pain, no doubt reflecting in both thought and writing on his glory days.

A Second Reading
Without rehearsing every line of “Chang'an, Thoughts on Antiquity,” and in the light Zuo Si's precursor poem, perhaps a clearer poetic structure can be discerned. It would seem, as other scholars have argued, that the poem is set in Han times and intended to mirror the Tang parallels. Yet the time frame often flickers between Han and Tang; the reader is reminded of the Han setting only by repetition of the word Han itself (in lines 14 and 49). Thus although lines 1-4 could be read as referring either to Han Chang'an or to the Tang capital, the mention of “marquises” in line 4 tends to highlight the Han. These lines also reflect the first four lines of Zuo Si's poem.

73 Kroll, 1986: 600-1.
In the next eight lines there are resonances which could suggest the text is
depicting either the Jianzhang Palace of the Han or the Daming Palace of Lu’s own
time. Lines 13 and 14 allude to the architectural achievements of Liang Ji and
Emperor Wu of the Han. Whereas the first twelve lines of the poem hold the
possibility of referring to both dynastic capitals (Han and Tang), this couplet first
explicitly grounds the poem in the Han. These two lines therefore hold the reader’s
attention and trigger the conventional response that references to the Han in Tang
poetry are comments on contemporary times. Moreover, no mention of Liang Ji
could fail to suggest the lasciviousness for which he and his wife, Sun Shou, were
noted. The obvious Tang parallel would be Gaozong and his Empress Wu. Lines
15-16, “Those one gazes on before the lofted buildings are those one does not
know. / Meeting along the paths, how could they recognize each other,” could
simply suggest Chang’an’s huge population (and in this reading mo 隈，“paths,”
might also be read as “streets”74). On the other hand, the force of the resonance to
Qiu Hu and Qin Luofu may suggest the lines also introduce the concept of fidelity
and a reminder of the standards of morality. Lines 17-18 present two other pairs of
lovers who remained loyal to each other; this is followed by eight lines which
follow (19-25) speak to these moral standards in what becomes a commentary of
sorts on fidelity between lovers probably expressed through a female persona.
There is nothing like this in Zuo Si’s poem and how this section fits into the overall
structure of the poem remains conjectural.

Line 26 marks a transition in which the boudoir of the faithful lovers
provides an entrance for the courtesans whose “love is not just for a single man” to
enter. This first section of the poem concludes with the servant lads and singing
girls arriving to attend to their masters at a party. The physical juxtaposition of
palace to the pleasure houses of the Northern Ward in Tang times is reflected in
the interaction between these two disparate social groups, a situation similar to
that Zuo Si described: “Mornings they gather in the guesthouse of the Jins and
Zhangs, / Evenings they stay overnight in the quarters of the Xus and Shis.” Lu
Zhaolin seems to be commenting on the indulgences of the Tang royals, a lifestyle
he witnessed firsthand in the 650’s but which may have become exacerbated with
the rising power of Empress Wu in the 660’s.

In the second section of the poem we are reminded that when two of the
highest Han officials, Zhu Bo and Master Zhai, were removed disempowered,
corruption spread through the government. This was indeed the case beginning in
the late 650s as Empress Wu dismissed Chief Ministers at the rate of several a year.
Between 657 and 669, years that Lu had been away from Chang’an, twenty-two
chief ministers had left office: fourteen had been demoted, one was executed, one
imprisoned, four died in office, and two resigned.75 Lu Zhaolin may have been
alluding to two specific high Tang officials here, Lai Ji, who had promoted Lu’s
career in the 650’s, and Han Yuan 韓瑗 (606-659), another staunch opponent of

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74 On mo as referring to “east-west streets” see Xiong, 1997: 204.
75 Zhou Daoji 周道濟, 1978: Appendix, 56-58.
Empress Wu. Both had been chief ministers from 653-657 and both were removed from office with the help of Xu Jingzong, the Empress's staunchest supporter during the late 650's and 660's.

This second section unfolds (lines 34-52) through a series of descriptions of the lives of the rowdy youth and the courtesans, primarily in the demimonde itself. References to the “Northern Ward” (Beili 北里, line 45) and “three markets” (san shi 三市, line 46) are associated more with Tang Chang'an than the Han capital. Indeed, if the entire poem is limning the Han capital, what need is there for Lu Zhaolin to emphasize, in line 49, that it was “in the Han era, when a thousand riders from the Gilden Mace came”...
The reference (lines 37-38) to a city in chaos may also reflect the popular opposition to Empress Wu in Chang'an of the 660s.

In contrast to the second section that began with the removal of high officials from power, the third section (lines 53-64) brings forth those who have gained influence in their stead, those who are called “generals and ministers,” but do not deserve the titles. Nevertheless, these men are all powerful, able to “turn the sun and revolve the heavens” 轉日回天, imagery suggesting that they can also manipulate the emperor. In lines 55-56 Lu continues to depict the ruthlessness of these so-called ministers: “Through will and spirit along they could drive out Guan Fu; / Holding such power their judgments would not defer to Chancellor Xiao He” 意氣由來排灌夫，專權判不容薦相. The reader recognizes that Tian Fen was the one who drove out Guan Fu and Liu Bang's lieutenants who tried to overcome Xiao He, thus the mood here is conditional. If these ministers and generals had lived in the Han dynasty, they would have been the ones to drive out Guan Fu and master Xiao He. By inference then, such powerful men must be those of Lu's own day, those who were then supporting the empress and who had driven out opponents such as Lai Ji. A similar argument can be made for the allusion to the Five Lords in line 60.

This section concludes with four lines (61-64) that emphasize the mutability of fame and power— “from those golden staircases and white jade halls of old, / We see today only the green pines remain.” Today, that is the mid-seventh century.

In what could be considered a personal coda, Lu Zhaolin subsumes Zuo Si's closing lines four lines into a single couplet (line 65-66): “Silent and alone, Master Yang dwelt, / Year after year, his bed filled with books” 寂寂寥寥揚子居，年年歲歲一床書. Although Zuo Si has also referred to Yang's home as “silent,” the source for this epithet seems to have been a saying that circulated in Chang'an about Yang Xiong after he had tried to commit suicide by throwing himself from a building: “Still and silent, he threw himself from the Gallery. Quiet and tranquil, he composed tokens for the mandate” 惟寂寞，自投閣，爲清靜，作符命. The description of silent and alone must have also been applicable to Lu Zhaolin himself in the early 670s on his return from Shu to Chang'an, even before he retired into the

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76 “Yang Xiong zhuan” 楊雄傳, Han shu, 87B.3584.
several mountain retreats of his final years. Certainly his bed must have been filled with books already when he stayed in the family home in Luoyang in 673. Line 63 itself seems to have come from Yu Xin’s poem “Han yuan ji mu” (A Glance at Cold Garden) which reads: “The recluse has a bed of books.”

Although Lu followed Yang Xiong’s example and retired from the world, he realized that Yang still advocated a voice in politics, arguing that the rhapsody was meant “to criticize by indirection” (feng). Zuo Si who in his “Singing of Historical Figures” remonstrates indirectly against the government of his day, Lu Zhaolin must have felt that what Empress Wu was undertaking was leading to disaster. Lu had been away from the capital for over a decade and the political and social changes he found on his return must have been dramatic. Moreover, Xu Jingzong, who had engineered the fall of Lu’s patron, Lai Ji, and thus would have considered Lu Zhaolin a potential enemy, had been forced to retire in 669, removing some pressure from Lu. This last stay in Chang’an would have been the ideal time for him to have offered his “thoughts on antiquity” as well as on contemporary policies and activities in “Chang’an gu yi.”

The final couplet makes clear that Lu was not intending to go further in his opposition than indirect literary attacks in the feng mode advocated by Yang Xiong. In the final couplet of the poem, “Only when the cassia flowers bloom on Southern Mountain / Do they fly hither and yon, invading the lapels of one’s robes” the subject is no longer Yang Xiong, but Lu himself. The tiny, fragrant, fragile cassia flowers suggest reclusion. The Southern Mountain suggests a lasting influence, one such as that which Yang Xiong won through his retirement and which Lu Zhaolin sought with poems such as “Chang’an gu yi.”

Concluding Remarks

Some critics have compared this poem to Xiao Gang’s (503-551, Liang Jianwen di) set of four yuefu titled “Wu qi qu” and, indeed, some of the vocabulary (qing niu which opens Xiao Gang’s third poem, for example) and the depictions (of young gallants visiting courtesans) resonate with portions of Lu’s verse. But the tone in depicting capital life is one of admiration in Xiao Gang. This indeed is the main tradition of depictions of the capital in fu. Lu’s version of Chang’an is both personal and historical. It moves from the streets he knew well, depicted at the start of the poem, to the literature on the city stored in his prodigious memory, in subsequent lines.

77 Yu Xin, 1983: 4.3b.
78 Han shu, 87B:3575. On the various rhapsodies Yang composed criticizing imperial policy, see the two excellent studies by Knechtges, 1976, and Knechtges, 1982.
79 See the opening lines of “Zhao yinshi” in the Chuci: “The cassia trees grow thick / In the mountain’s recesses, / Twisting and snaking, / Their branches interlacing” (Ji Yun, 1983: 12.1b; the translation is from Hawkes, 1985: 244).
80 See Guo, 1979: 48.695.
81 Stephen Owen has argued that Bao Zhao’s (ca. 414-466) “Wucheng fu” (Weed-covered City) belonged to a separate tradition of capital fu and that this tradition also influences Lu Zhaolin’s poem (Owen, 1977: 39 and 104).
The poem itself, despite its fame, seems fragmented to this reader, revealing five different Chang’ans, five separate worlds. The first four correspond to the four sections of the poem: (1) Chang’an itself during the late seventh century depicted through parallels to the Han capital city (this in section one); (2) the demimonde of the Tang again told as if it were the Han pleasure districts (section two); (3) the corrupt politics of the early Tang (section three); and Lu Zhaolin’s assessment of how he failed to fit in any of these three previous worlds. The fifth world, possibly the most interesting for students of literature, was the Chang’an of Lu’s literary experience as revealed in the allusions and resonances of the poem. To recast Erich Auerbach’s description of characters in Biblical stories, one could argue that Lu Zhaolin “remained continually conscious of what has happened to him earlier and elsewhere; his thoughts and feelings had more layers, were more entangled.”

This paper has endeavored to reveal some of these layers and entanglements. Perhaps the only method to mine the full meaning of this poem would be to recognized the complementarity of Lu Zhaolin’s works—to follow the modern American poet Robert Frost’s (1887-1972) method for reading poetry: “The way to read a poem in prose or verse is in the light of all the other poems every written. We may begin anywhere. We duff into our first. We read that imperfectly (thoroughness with it would be fatal), but the better to read the second. We read the second, the better to read the third, the third, the better to read the fourth, the fourth the better to read the fifth, the fifth the better to read the first again, or the second if it so happens.”

Thus a poem like “Chang’an gu yi” may “flow into” or “be filled out” by other poems both in Lu Zhaolin’s mind and in the eyes of his readers. Poems like Lu’s own “Xinglu nan” 行路難 (Traveling is Hard) and “Jieke shaonian chang xing” 結客少年場行 (Scenes of the Rowdy Youth and Their Associates) may have formed a trilogy in Lu’s conception. This trilogy, along with a host of other capital poems other near contemporaries such as Emperor Taizong and Luo Binwang, contribute as well to the understanding of “Chang’an gu yi.” In the context of these metatexts, a context that would have been evident to all late-seventh century readers, Lu Zhaolin’s view of Chang’an may find completion.

82 Auerbach, 2003: 6.
83 Frost, 1951.
84 The idea of ‘complementarity’ in Frost can be traced to the writings of the poet Marianne Moore (1887-1972). Muldoon, 2006, 14. has described Frost’s poems as “flowing into” and “filling out” each other.
GLOSSARY

bao gai 寶蓋 “precious baldachins” (screening the carriages of the elite)
Bei ㄆ  “Northern Ward” (where the courtesans lived)
bimu 比目 “flounders” (literally ‘pair-eyed fish’ with eyes on either side of their heads)
chan bìn 潞鬟 “cicada wings” (the fluffed-up eyebrows women of the Tang preferred)
fei yìng 飛鷹 “let their raptors fly” (falconry or hawking with trained birds of prey, as practiced by the rowdy youth)
fen bái 風白 “powered white” (faces of the courtesans)
fèng 風 “to criticize by indirection” (as in the fu or rhapsodies of the Han dynasty)
fù dào 複道 or “covered passageways” (often linking palace buildings)
gàn lu “sweet dew” (collected from heaven)
jìn qu xi “golden carriage-door hasps”
ku li 酷吏 “harsh officials” (type of officials depicted in Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 [145-ca. 86 B.C.] Shi ji 史記 [Grand Scribe’s Records]
“Kuizhou ge” 蜀州歌 “Songs of Kuizhou” (Du Fu’s 杜甫 [712-770] famous series of ten poems)
liàn zhu 连珠 “anadiplosis”
lìu sù 流蘇 “tassels” (hung from carriage ornaments)
mo shàng 陌上 “on the paths” (raised paths between fields)
Nán shān 南山 “Southern Mountain” (located south of the Tang capital)
qìng niú 青牛 “black oxen”
sān shí 三市 “three markets” (used pars pro toto for the Tang capital)
shào nián 少年 “rowdy youth”
Tóng Jie 銅街 “Copper Street” (abbreviation for Tóng Tuō Jie 銅駝街, “Copper Camel Street,” the bustling market area of the capital city of Luoyang)
tóng zhú 銅柱 “bronze pillars”
“Wú yè tī” 鳥夜啼 “Crows Sing at Night” (a yuefu title)
Xīng Yún 行雲 “Moving Clouds” (the name of a popular Tang hairstyle for women)
yá huáng 鴉黃 “yellow crescents” (drawn on the foreheads as part of the courtesans’ toilet)
yn sì 游絲 “gossamer”
yuefu 業府 “music-bureau poems” (in the third century and after increasingly written by literati in imitation of the original folksongs)
xiǎ xié 狹斜 “narrow streets” (where the courtesans resided)
xuān zhāng 仙掌 “immortal palms” (basins in which ‘sweet dew’ was collected)
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