

Orienting Mimesis: Marriage and the *Book of Songs*

DESPITE DISAGREEMENT OVER THE NATURE of the Chinese aesthetic tradition, sinologists generally situate its origins in the Han dynasty's (206 BCE–220 CE) Mao school writings on the *Book of Songs*.¹ In the most frequent etiology, prudish scholar-officials repressed the romantic and sexual frankness of the opening poems in an effort to legitimize their edition as one of the Five Classics of the new Confucian canon.² Their new aesthetic program enabled the refiguring of romantic imagery into moralizing political narratives. Their silencing of the *Songs*' true meanings in turn exemplifies the Han dynasty inauguration of a regime of Confucian sexual repression that has endured to the global present. Both canonized and ridiculed over subsequent millennia, the *Mao Songs* have taken center stage in modern debates over cross-cultural aesthetics. Little critical attention has been paid, however, to the importance of the so-called love and marriage *Songs* in these debates, or to the repressive hypothesis of Confucian prudery they assume.³

This article argues for the importance of gender and sexual politics, ancient and modern, to the ongoing debate about Chinese aesthetics. It challenges the timeless, cross-cultural transparency of “love and marriage,” whose open poetic expressions could be repressed or liberated over successive generations of commentators. It returns to the Han dynasty context in which diverse forms of desire and alliance were being debated; in which rival groups of scholar-officials had to compete for political favor with—as well as against—“inner-court” women and eunuchs; and in which women first enter the picture as imperial sovereigns and as the ethical subjects of prescriptive texts. The Mao school's aesthetic program needs to be read as part of these gendered historical and discursive upheavals, and not as the moral silencing of sex on the one hand, and a politicized rewriting of history on the other. Before we “free” the poems' sexual symbolism or mimetic realities, we need to ask: whose version of sexual freedom are we using? Into which forms of marriage are we “liberating” the pre-Confucian Chinese?

The first part of the article introduces the *Book of Songs* and the role of mimesis in debates about Western and Chinese critical terminology. The second examines

ABSTRACT Modern critics generally locate the beginning of the Chinese aesthetic tradition in the Confucian commentarial repression of the “love and marriage” poems of the *Book of Songs*. This article argues that these commentators were actually using the *Songs* to engage with Han dynasty debates about desire, and in doing so formulated a new, gendered way of presenting poems as parables. / REPRESENTATIONS 94, Spring 2006 © 2006 The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734–6018, electronic ISSN 1533–855X, pages 53–79. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

the overlooked commentarial interpolation of a female subject of mimesis. I interpret her elision from critical analysis as part of a long-standing convention of reading the *Book of Songs* through a narrowly defined literary history that dismisses her presence as politically trivial. Embedded in her historical and discursive Han setting, she and her desires take on a new significance. The third part goes on to argue that the regulation and reorientation (rather than repression) of poetic desires was part of the aesthetic project of the Mao editors. The last section places this reading of mimesis, marriage, and the *Book of Songs* in the broader context of contemporary translation.

Mimesis and the *Book of Songs*

Until recently, critics turned to the *Book of Songs* to illustrate the argument that traditional China did not produce a theory of mimesis. Without a representational concept of language as sign and referent, as in the West, early Chinese critics of the *Songs* elaborated theories of ethical expression rooted in the axiom: “poetry expresses the mind’s intent.”⁴ More recent works have turned on the comparison itself, engaging diverse genealogies of mimesis and critiquing the very project of finding “Eastern” counterparts of “Western” concepts such as allegory and democracy.⁵ My aim here is not to discover a Chinese theory of mimesis, although I will build upon scholarship that presents one such instance. “Mimesis” here is an already revised and revisable term—there is no Platonic original whose Chinese copies may or may not be found. After introducing its role in cross-cultural debates over the *Book of Songs* and Chinese aesthetics, mimesis will simply offer a way for me to describe the gendered processes by which the *Book of Songs* has been woven into Chinese history.

The main difficulty for modern readers of the *Book of Songs* is interpreting the dense accumulation of exegetical addenda upon which we rely when translating the *Songs*’ archaic language into modern Chinese or English. Critics generally date the *Songs*’ composition to the period between the eleventh to the seventh centuries BCE, before, as legend has it, Confucius himself compiled 305 of them into one anthology.⁶ In the shift from song to poem, the music was lost, and quotations of the *Songs* circulated like proverbs in literary speech. And after the first emperor of China burned all copies of the *Songs*, scholars of the subsequent Han dynasty had to piece together new versions from memory and fragmentary records. Much of the language of the preserved poems thus belongs to the Han dynasty, when the *Songs*’ archaic sounds and characters already demanded glossing.⁷ Our present-day anthology derives from this renaissance period, when scholar-officials competed to present their own version of the text and its meaning in canonizing the *Songs* as one of the Five Classics. The Mao school’s edition became dominant over its rivals toward the end of the Han dynasty and remains the only complete version today.

Critics often trace the beginnings of a Chinese aesthetic tradition to this Mao school edition's *Great Preface*, which introduces both the famous first "love" poem, "The Ospreys Cry," and the *Book of Songs* as a whole.⁸ As one modern critic puts it, the *Great Preface* is "the most authoritative statement on the nature and function of poetry in traditional China."⁹ The *Great Preface*, the *Small Prefaces*, the *Mao Commentary*, and Zheng Xuan's *Annotations* that comprise the composite Han dynasty Mao-Zheng tradition generally provide word glosses and a brief narrative (or array of related narratives) that accompany each poem.¹⁰ The interpretive problem often lies in understanding quite how poem and story relate. In "The Ospreys Cry" and in many poems of the largest "Airs of States" (*Guo Feng*) section of the *Book of Songs*, the pattern is (most famously) to accompany poems apparently about love with historical vignettes of ancient court politics.

The Mao editors' alleged reading of love poems as political narratives has formed the central template for divergent theories about Chinese poetics. These theories have focused on two related questions: first, how does the poem relate to the world it evokes? Second, how does the commentarial story relate to the poem it accompanies? Composition and commentary have been debated as separate but related processes, demanding cross-cultural explanation. ("Love" itself warrants little or no explanation within these theories.) So, for example, the Durkheimian anthropologist Marcel Granet presented the *Songs* as mirrors of the ancient, pre-Han, world in which they were first sung in popular festivals. The love songs are Granet's central example. They reflect the premarital courtship rituals in which they were sung, and their rich imagery of flora and fauna simply record their bucolic setting. For Granet, the Mao tradition misreads the *Songs* as "symbolic" and obfuscates this original context with allegorizing stories.¹¹

As literary critic Pauline Yu has argued, Granet was one of many Western scholars who have wrongly framed the Mao interpretations as "allegorical."¹² Victorian missionary James Legge, Bloomsbury-affiliate Arthur Waley, Harvard oralist C. H. Wang, and even the poet Ezra Pound all sought to "recover" the true courtship poetry from the Han moralists. But the problem, Yu argues, is that the Mao readings do not correspond to Western notions of allegory, and traditional Chinese poetry was not composed on mimetic principles. She reminds us of the *Mao Great Preface's* articulation of poetry's function as "expressing the mind's intent" rather than as representing reality. Poetry was based upon what she calls a stimulus-response method of production rather than a mimetic one; it sprang forth as "the literal reaction of the poet to the world around him of which he is an integral part," and not as the imitation of nature or actions. The *Songs* used what Yu calls "categorical correspondences" (類 *lei*), by means of which "[t]he connections between image and meaning were taken for granted from the very beginning, unlike the case in the West."¹³ The commentators' aim was to identify these correspondences.

Take the imagery of the most commented upon first poem, “The Ospreys Cry,” of the *Book of Songs*:

- 關關雎鳩、在河之洲 ◦ “*Guan guan!*” cry the ospreys, upon the river’s islet.
 窈窕淑女、君子好逑 ◦ A retiring and good woman, a fine mate for the lord.
 參差荇菜、左右流之 ◦ Rough and rugged the watercress, searching for it left and right,
 窈窕淑女、寤寐求之 ◦ A retiring and good woman, waking and sleeping thinking of her.
 求之不得、寤寐思服 ◦ Seeking her without getting her, longing to lay down alongside,
 悠哉悠哉、輾轉反側 ◦ Oh the yearning, oh the yearning! Tossing and turning over and back.
 參差荇菜、左右采之 ◦ Rough and rugged the watercress, picking it left and right,
 窈窕淑女、琴瑟友之 ◦ An enticing and good young woman, lutes and zithers befriend her.
 參差荇菜、左右芼之 ◦ Rough and rugged the watercress, culling it left and right,
 窈窕淑女、鍾鼓樂之 ◦ A retiring and good woman, bells and drums delight her.¹⁴

The relation between the first and second line of the poem exemplifies for Yu the poetic method of the *Book of Songs*. First of all they “juxtapose the natural image to human situation, rather than leaving the latter unstated,” and it is the task of the commentators to relate the two elements according to their prefixed categorical correspondence. Since both the ospreys (line 1) and the virtuous woman (line 2) are drawn from the concrete realm, the poem “does not create a two-level literary universe predicated on an ontologically dual cosmos,” and thus is not allegory.¹⁵

Rather, the *Mao Commentary* takes the first image as the key term *xing* 興 (to which I shall return later), the opening stimulus and literal reaction of the poet to the world around him. The *Mao Commentary* on the first two lines begins:

This is a *xing*. “*Guan guan!*” is a harmonious sound. The osprey is a royal bird. It is a bird of prey and maintains the proper distance [from its mate]. . . . The queen consort takes pleasure in her lord’s virtue. . . . Furthermore, she does not debase him with her sex. She remains resolutely retired in secluded [quarters], just as the osprey maintains the proper distance [from its mate]. In this way it was then possible to transform the empire.

In Yu’s interpretation, the *Mao Commentary* serves to identify a Chinese analogy or correspondence between the ospreys, as a species that virtuously maintains the separation of the sexes, and the virtue of those peopling the poem. Although there is great debate as to the identities of these people, the point is that contextual truth, and not higher allegorical meaning, is demanded by the poem.¹⁶

While Yu and other contemporary critics such as Rey Chow have rightly highlighted the problems in directly applying “Western terminology” to premodern Chinese texts, many of the interpretive positions cross-cut traditions. The twelfth-century scholar Zheng Qiao had already attacked the Mao school for concocting “moral meanings” (*yili* 義理). For him the eponymous ospreys held no structural categorical correspondence to the marital desires of the people in the poem; they

were simply what the poet saw at the time.¹⁷ His contemporary Zhu Xi's new edition laid the groundwork for the modern Western (and Chinese) "liberation" of the poems' sexual imagery by physically editing out most of the Mao commentaries, identifying yet more "licentious poems" (*yin shi* 淫詩) and bifurcating the poems into those with morally "proper" (*zheng* 正) and "improper" (*xie* 邪) meanings.¹⁸ The early-twentieth-century Chinese scholar-poet Wen Yiduo found yet more evidence of eroticism in what he saw as transcendently sexual symbols scattered throughout the poetic imagery.¹⁹

A historical assumption underlies these different critical positions: namely, that the authentic *Songs* belong to a time long before the Mao distortions. The truth of the erotic nature of the songs depends in part on (an otherwise little substantiated) historical Golden Age of sexual freedom prior to the Han. But the recent revisionist models of Hermann-Josef Röllicke and Haun Saussy have challenged the attempt to find the true meaning or original historical context of these pre-Han *Songs*. The *Songs*, from at least the time of Confucius, are better seen as purposive quotations, like proverbs or parables.²⁰ Well before the Han dynasty they were already "poems for use," to be appropriated for any political claim. The Mao tradition in turn did not view the poems as reflecting history in the Platonic sense, but as plotting it out in an Aristotelian one. The poems plotted out, in the form of history, the Mao version of an exemplary ethical world.²¹ Thus the poems have no authentic meaning that we moderns can "free" from their commentaries, sexual or otherwise.

If one cannot recover "what the text says" from "what the reader makes it say," then existing disputes about poetic mimesis and commentarial allegory make less sense.²² Saussy reads the Mao edition's "use" of the poems in terms of mimesis rather than allegory (or not-allegory). In his interpretation—which my own will draw on and revise—the Mao editors presented the 305 *Songs* as moral exempla for their Han rulers. Each story accompanying the poems narrated the exemplary actions of a historical sage that could be reenacted through proper ritual reading of the poem. Thus, in making poems into parables, the commentaries bent the "weak" text of the poems into the "strong mimesis" of their commentarial templates. Then, to integrate the *Book of Songs*' alarmingly frank courtship poems, they produced a theory of what Saussy calls "ironic mimesis."²³ Commentators could now choose to read certain poems ironically, as examples of moral degeneracy to be shunned, not imitated.

This theory of ironic mimesis is illustrated in the contrast between commentaries on "The Ospreys Cry." While we have seen the *Mao Commentary* present "The Ospreys Cry" as an ethical model for empire, the dominant rival readings in the Han interpreted the poem as satire. They identified the male persona of the poem as a notoriously licentious ruler of former times and ironically juxtaposed him with the call of the virtuous ospreys ("Guan guan!"). Irony is thus one of the crucial ways in which the *Songs* open themselves up to being read as ethical models that differ from commentator to commentator, rather than demanding a single allegori-

cal (or categorical-correspondence) reading.²⁴ This theory of ironic mimesis overturns the alleged opposition between Western mimesis and Chinese “stimulus-response” traditions.

In illustrating the *Mao Songs*’ mimetic principles, Chinese critical terms have also become deracinated. Like the term mimesis, *xing* (also transliterated *hsing*) has been seen as both foundational to its aesthetic tradition and as having its own complex genealogy of meanings and usage. The first line of “The Ospreys Cry” (quoted earlier) is most famously marked as a *xing* by the *Mao Commentary*, as are many of the first lines of subsequent poems. Since these first lines are often images of nature—birds, the sea, and so on—most interpreters of the commentaries have understood *xing* as meaning “opening evocative stimulus” or the evocation of the main topic of the poem. *Xing* is the key mechanism in Yu’s theory of categorical-correspondences; it is the “means of placing the situation at hand within a larger, more general context—of linking it with other members of the category to which it belongs, be it proper (or improper) male-female behavior, as in [“The Ospreys Cry”] and numerous other marriage and courtship songs.”²⁵

Saussy, by contrast, argues that the Mao tradition uses *xing* within its broader mimetic strategy to mark out where the poetic language or imagery offers multiple interpretations. Just as the *Great Preface* forewarns of the need to read certain “decadent” poems ironically, so the *Mao Commentary* signals where the riddling language of the poetic text needs “decoding” or expository rewriting. *Xing* essentially marks out commentarial pressure points in the stamping of the “weak mimesis” of the poetic text into the “strong mimesis” of an ethical world. *Xing*, like the theory of ironic mimesis, becomes a mechanism for ensuring that the reader will read the entire *Book* within its larger historical parable.

This relation between poem and parable is derived not from “The Ospreys Cry” or the so-called love poems, but from the later sections of the *Book of Songs*. The victory of the Mao didactic message over the ambiguous language of *xing* is found in fable form in the Mao presentation of *Song* #155 (“Kite-Owl”): during a time of turmoil, the sage Duke of Zhou composes this *Song* as an indirect message to his superior before withdrawing. His *Song* is later discovered by the king who recites it, whereupon the world is rectified. For Saussy, the Duke of Zhou “embodies” *xing* in his political and linguistic evasiveness. It is in the proper interpretation of his actions and speech (that pattern the *Songs*), that one understands the relation between poem and history:

Produced by the actions of sages such as the [Duke of Zhou]—ritual-political actions patterned after the strong mimesis of the [*Book of Songs*]’ poetics—China is poetry writ large, the product of the mimesis of mimesis.²⁶

Here the ethical order or overarching parable of the *Mao Songs* becomes embodied in the figure of the Duke of Zhou—a legendary sage and ruler revered by Confucius

himself. The Duke of Zhou is the ultimate aesthetic as well as ethical paradigm binding song and nation.

While I agree that the *Songs*' tradition should be sought in the framing of poems as parables (and not as having some original authentic meaning), the concluding figure of the sage-ruler raises further questions. For in finding the exemplary method of the Mao critics in the "Kite-Owl" and in the later sections of their edition, Saussy shifts the interpretive core of the *Mao Songs* away from "The Ospreys Cry" and the so-called love songs with which the anthology begins. This makes sense inasmuch as these later sections have always been seen as the oldest compositional strata and thus may have had more established interpretations or uses. But it does not follow that these more hymnal *Songs* simply provided the paradigm for the more recent ("love") poems. Indeed, the fact that the significant divergences between the Han dynasty schools only concerned these more recent poems suggests the reverse: that the politics of the new anthology's meaning (or use) was being fought out precisely over these less "fixed" poems.²⁷ Given the political rise and fall of rival editions, it seems unlikely that differences over the opening poems were simply quibbles over the best extension of an agreed method and common parable.²⁸ And if a sage-ruler like the Duke of Zhou supposedly set the mimetic pattern for all poems and all history, why is it that a different figure overshadows him in this most politicized section of the *Mao Songs*? Let us now turn to her.

(En)gendering Parable

"The Ospreys Cry" is [about] the virtue of the queen consort. It is at the beginning of the Airs of States [section] used to transform the empire and to rectify [the relations between] husband and wife.

—Opening of the *Mao Great Preface* to the *Book of Songs*

When the *Mao Great Preface* framed its foundational aesthetic program with comments on "The Ospreys Cry," it cemented the singular importance of this opening poem. One modern critic even attributes to the reinterpretation of this poem alone the political rise of the Mao edition over its competitors.²⁹ If "The Ospreys Cry" did indeed lie at the core of Han rivalries, then we must return to the Mao "The Ospreys Cry" and its Han dynasty context to understand what the Mao editors were doing that was so innovative and so welcome that other versions fell into disuse. Critics have argued that the Mao masterstroke was framing "The Ospreys Cry" as a poem of praise, not blame. Thus could the new Confucian Classic begin with an unironic parable of virtue. Prior to the Han dynasty, "The Ospreys Cry" had also been cited unironically as a model of proper desire.³⁰ But what sets the Mao edition far apart from both this tradition and its Han dynasty rivals, is its unprecedented *regendering* of the ethical subject.

Modern scholars have overlooked the importance of the new female ethical subject introduced by the *Mao Great Preface* and *Mao Commentary* and the two discursive innovations of the Han dynasty enabling her radical conception.³¹ The virtuous actions of “the queen consort” (*hou fei*)—not her husband—dominate the Mao presentation of the opening songs of the most controversial *Airs of States* section. For the *Mao Prefaces*, 66 of the 160 songs of the opening *Airs of States* section concern female ethics (mainly) or relations between the sexes. Like the Duke of Zhou or the kingly sage, the queen consort is celebrated as a mimetic exemplar whose virtue has empire-wide influence. But, as I argue, she does not simply resolve into a replica paradigm of the male sage; the female subject of mimesis has larger implications. Take the *Mao Prefaces* to the opening seven songs:

[*Song #1*] “The Ospreys” is [about] the virtue of the queen.³²

[*Song #2*] “The Cloth-Plant Spreads” is [about] the natural disposition of the queen consort. The queen consort is in her parents’ household, and therefore her mind focuses on the affairs of women’s labor; she is economical and frugal; she wears her washed clothes; she honors and reveres her teacher. Therefore she is able to return [at the arranged time to visit] her parents, and to transform the empire using a woman’s way.

[*Song #3*] “Cocklebur” is [about] the mind of the queen consort. It is also about her sense of obligation in assisting her husband; to search for worthies and to examine officials; to understand the travails of her subordinates. Within she has the intention to advance worthies, but she does not have the heart to use insinuating speech to introduce her own [relatives]. Morning and evening she obsesses over it, to the point of anxiety and strain.

[*Song #4*] “Drooping Boughs” is [about] the queen consort reaching out to her subordinates. It says she is able to reach out to her subordinates without feeling jealousy toward them.

[*Song #5*] “Locusts” is [about] the multiplication of the queen consort’s progeny. It says that they were like locusts: since she was not jealous, her progeny multiplied.

[*Song #6*] “Peach Tree” is [about] the queen consort’s directives. Through her freedom from jealousy, the relation between males and females was made right; marriages were celebrated at the proper times; and there were no unmarried people in the kingdom.

[*Song #7*] “Rabbit Nets” is [about] the queen consort’s transforming influence. When that influence, as celebrated in the “Ospreys,” went abroad, all loved virtue, and worthy men multiplied.

In a formulaic grammar of predication, the queen consort becomes the key to each poem’s meaning.³³ Each poem must illustrate a different aspect of this anonymous exemplar: her virtue, her natural disposition, her ambition, her sexual reproductivity, and so forth. The influence of her actions extends beyond the domestic to the sociopolitical (for example, #2, #7): she helps promote officers without advancing

her relatives (#3); she mends universal relations between men and women, pressing all the unwed into marriage (#6). The negative locution of these scenarios is important. They specify anxieties about this woman of influence and about the world at large: female jealousy, female nepotism, a population of the unwed.

During the post-Han period, followers of the Mao tradition identified this anonymous queen consort. In the name of subcommentary, they matched her with a historical personage (“Taisi”), and gave her a biographical significance that merely shadowed that of her sage husband (King Wen). Read from the *post-Han* dynasty standpoint, the Mao method was indeed to plot together past and future through the mimetic actions of the male sage figure. But if we read the innovative Mao-Zheng version strictly within its formative Han dynasty context, a different set of hermeneutic possibilities for the archetypal queen consort emerges.

Two discursive innovations of the Han dynasty directly relate to the figure of the queen consort. The first is the emergence of an unprecedented discourse of Confucian ethics explicitly directed at a female subject. Its two central texts, Liu Xiang’s (79–78 BCE) *Biographies of Exemplary Women* and Ban Zhao’s *Precepts for My Daughters* (45–114? CE) laid the foundations for the prescriptive texts for women that proliferated for nearly two millennia across East Asia.³⁴ Women had hitherto featured little in the Confucian tradition, in which they were largely defined by their subordination to father, husband, and son or as potentially dangerous objects of desire. During the Han, their relationships to daughters and mothers-in-law, and to their own activities and ambitions, came under increasingly vocal scrutiny, elaboration, and direction.

The Mao regendering of the ethical subject needs to be read against Liu Xiang’s reorientation of a Confucian tradition of “praise and blame” toward women. By culling historical stories about women from diverse sources and presenting them as moral parables, he established an enduring generic template for women’s education. The original purpose of these parables sheds some light on the political context of the Mao innovation.

[Liu] Xiang saw that customs were getting more extravagant and licentious, and people like [Empress Zhao and Consort Zhao] and [Consort] Wei were rising up from poor backgrounds and overstepping ritual propriety. Xiang believed that the teaching of the early kings started from the inside [*nei*] and extended to the outside [*wai*]. So from the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Documents*, he selected the sage consorts and virtuous women who had made states prosper and families become distinguished, and thus could be emulated, as well as the illegitimate and the favorite, who brought chaos and destruction. . . . [Liu Xiang] used [the *Biographies*] to admonish the Son of Heaven.³⁵

Three elements of this etiology are important. First, that the future moral primer for women was originally used as a historically specific critique of the emperor. Second, although the object of critique was the emperor, it is his consorts’ actions, and not his own, that pattern the moral fabric of society. And third, that the para-

digmatically transgressive action is both classed and gendered—the upstart consorts who dominated court politics during Liu Xiang’s time were not only not male, they were also not of the elite background appropriate for imperial consorts.

In contrast to the Mao tradition, one of Liu’s *Biographies* cites “The Ospreys Cry” ironically—as a parable of vice. However, Liu’s underlying advocacy of parables about women for the instruction of men, and his belief in education radiating from the “inner” realm (*nei*, generally associated with women and domestic affairs), to the “outer” (*wai*, associated with men and state affairs), are echoed in the *Mao Commentary* on “The Ospreys Cry”:

She remains resolutely retired in secluded [quarters], just as the osprey maintains the proper distance [from its mate]. In this way it was then possible to transform the empire. . . . [For] when husbands and wives maintain the proper distance, then fathers and sons are close. When fathers and sons are close, then lords and ministers are respectful. When lords and ministers are respectful, then the court is rectified. When the court is rectified, then the royal transformations are completed.

Mao’s description of the ripple effect of the queen’s virtue from marital relations to filial relations to ministerial relations explicates Liu Xiang’s model (that is also found in ritual texts such as the *Book of Rites*).³⁶ Like the paragons of Liu’s *Biographies*, Mao’s discrete queen consort does not “[overstep] ritual propriety” or cause an (un)ethical chain reaction. If the Mao regendering of poetic parable can be compared to the Liu regendering of prose parable, can we tie its “use” to a similar (and roughly contemporaneous) politics? It is interesting to note that while the *Mao Commentary* was probably composed a century before Liu Xiang’s *Biographies*, it was not imperially accepted until the years following Liu’s critique. That is, unlike its rival schools that had already been formally recognized, Mao’s regendering version was not given an imperially sanctioned “academic chair” until Emperor Pingdi’s reign (1 BCE–6 CE), at a time when political and military power was still dominated by the rival consort courts condemned by Liu.

While Liu Xiang invented the female ethical subject for the emperor, Ban Zhao’s *Precepts for My Daughters* oriented her didactic use toward women. The earliest in the (extant) Chinese canon of female authors, Ban Zhao laid out an influential textbook for how a woman should live her life. Like Liu Xiang, she supplemented and transformed an ongoing literary tradition of prescriptive and ritual texts.³⁷ In its intimate attention to a model woman’s actions, speech, duty, and ambitions, it resembles the litany of virtuous aspects of the queen consort in the *Mao Prefaces* to the first seven *Songs* (her speech, her disposition, and so on). Ban Zhao cites “The Ospreys Cry” to promote a normative model of marriage relations, but she sets it within a plea for the education of women:

[The way of husband and wife] . . . is truly the greatest duty of heaven and earth, the highest norm of human relationships. That is why the [*Songs*] expiate the meaning of “The Ospreys Call.” To judge from these books one must take the way of husband and wife most seriously.

If the husband is not sage (*xian*) he will be incapable of governing his wife and if the wife is not sage (*xian*) she will be unable to serve her husband. . . . Does not instructing only the sons and not the daughters betray a total ignorance of the different norms governing the one and the other? According to the *Rites*, children should be taught to read and write when they are eight years old and at fifteen they should be sent to school. Cannot we simply make this the general rule?³⁸

Ban Zhao's *Precepts for my Daughters* frames her affirmation of a wife's proper servility to her husband within a more urgent call for female literacy and education in the creation of marriage's docile female subject. Ban Zhao does not use "The Ospreys Cry" to promote one of the more egalitarian models of marriage found in other Han sources. However her polemic for equal education does make visible a gendered struggle over the readership of canonical texts and the constraints about whom the parables (however normative) were intended for.³⁹

Ban Zhao's promotion of her new ethical text and the classical canon generally for a female (and not just male) readership is important in rethinking the political context of the Mao edition. Ban Zhao herself had tutored and politically advised the Empress Dowager Deng (81–121 CE), the childless erudite who rejected her brothers' help in governing China for the fifteen years of her widowhood. The *History of the Later Han* records that Empress Dowager Dou "by twelve [years old] fully understood the *Songs* and the *Analects*. Whenever her brothers recited the Classics and commentaries she would pay close attention and pose hard questions."⁴⁰ We do not hear which commentaries the future *de facto* female emperor interrogated (the Mao tradition was not yet dominant but had expanded by this time to include the *Prefaces*, including the *Great Preface*). However it is clear that the notion of a female reader, and a royal female reader in particular, would have been very present (and politicized) for the commentarial parable makers of the later Han dynasty.

Historiography, the second discursive innovation of the Han, consolidated the figure of the female political subject. The Confucian ethical subject was Everywoman: her range of background was diverse though generally humble; her virtue lay in the ritual propriety of her actions (weaving, self-sacrifice, sage advice, and so on), not her status. By contrast, the new, related political subject became a knowable "type" only through her status as imperial consort. She had a pivotal, and generally destructive, role in the rise and fall of dynasties that historiographers saw patterning Chinese history. Sima Qian's *Records* and the *History of the Han* detail over and again periods in which full executive power was formally as well as informally in the hands of Empress Dowagers and rival consorts. As one Han minister, citing "The Ospreys Cry" as an example of degeneracy not to be imitated, argued: "It is the institution of the queen consort that determines whether one will live long or die prematurely, government will be well-ordered or in chaos, and the state will survive or perish."⁴¹

The pre-Han archive does include scattered narratives of royal wives and references to their narratives. However the new Han historiographies devoted a chapter

specifically to the collected biographies of consorts and even filed within their “annals” of successive emperors one for the widow of the first Han emperor, Empress Dowager Lü. The chapters on imperial consorts and their families begin with the prescriptive ideals of marriage and female aid to male rulers, but unfold as a chronicle of consort domination of court affairs. They recount with tabloid detail and repetitiveness the murders, child-substitutions, and machinations of rival consorts. As Lisa Raphals rightly points out: “[The argument] that ‘virtuous women’ were a useful rhetorical trope precisely because of their irrelevance to politics, implies that women lacked ‘practical power.’ The evidence of Warring States and Han histories . . . and a plethora of inner court stories suggest otherwise.”⁴²

This new, more sustained and phobic discourse of the manipulative consort coincided with the expansion of an imperial bureaucracy that formally invested imperial consorts with a status, income, and retinue on par with (or exceeding) that of the highest ranked male officials.⁴³ The empress herself received a private income higher than that of any of the kings of the Chinese empire and managed an independent retinue of high ranking eunuch officials and female slaves that functioned like a small court. Widowhood brought the highest possible status: the empress dowager could choose the imperial successor, and if that successor was underage (as they often conveniently were), then she held the full sovereign rights of an emperor. When the Empress Dowager Lü ruled the Han empire for eight years (188–180 BCE) and Empress Dowager Deng for fifteen years (106–121 CE), their detractors attacked their personalities, not their legitimacy.

The consort thus became the crucial nexus by which a clan expanded its military, economic, and political power. Within this structure, an official’s—or a scholar’s—position often depended on his favor or kinship to members of the so-called inner court. The histories record empress dowagers determining the kind of texts as well as the educational setting and tutors appropriate for the court.⁴⁴ While many vulnerable scholars may have *wished* for the Confucian ideal of the separation of the sexes, they chronicled the political traffic between inner and outer courts as the norm of the Han.⁴⁵

The Mao tradition was created against just such a backdrop of imperial marriage norms, and in the context of unprecedented debates over popular and elite gender relations.⁴⁶ Unlike the other Three Schools, the *Mao Songs* did not receive an academic chair until a period when political and military power was dominated by four rival consort courts. The *Mao Prefaces* and *Zheng Annotations* were completed in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Han by the ruling Empress Dowager’s nephew (9–23 CE).⁴⁷ During this time the number of the lowest paid concubines and eunuch officials multiplied into the tens of thousands. (The latter are portrayed in Han and post-Han histories as bringing down the entire Han dynasty.) Historians such as Michael Nylan have recently argued that the gaps between prescriptions for women and actual practice so visible in the Han (when the prescriptions were first being written) became narrower only in post-Han generations. Thus we must

be careful not to mistake later canonical explications of the Mao-Zheng writings as necessarily “true”; they too are appropriating the Mao tradition for their own gendered claims. The Mao school’s use of the *Songs* to celebrate a particular model of a queen consort needs to be read as part of a *historically specific* shift in gendered practices and discourses.

The Nuclear Harem

The Mao commentaries did not silence the eroticism of the *Songs* but rather used the *Songs* to engage with the new Han debates about desire and alliance. They read the *Songs* as providing an incitement to marriage (at the proper time) and reproductive sex (in marriages without jealousy).⁴⁸ And they found in the ironic parables denunciations of the specific licentious desires and relations to be eschewed. Their interpretations may often have excluded the kinds of unmediated heterosexual encounters that contemporary critics wish to liberate from the poetic imagery; but at the same time they excluded a range of possibilities that were equally controversial for the Han reader. For example, the Mao editors exclude debates visible in other Han texts and commentaries about class differences between marriage partners and about the emperor’s male favorites.⁴⁹ And if, as is alleged, the Mao commentators politicize marriage beyond recognition, that may be because marriage—and imperial marriage in particular—was always already political. This problem of recognition I shall explore here through the example of what I call the “nuclear harem.”⁵⁰

Marriage—both in theory and in practice—underwent a lasting revolution during the Han. Prescriptive texts on elaborate marriage rituals were compiled; legal cases on divorce, remarriage, rape, and kinship pondered; marriage’s preeminence amongst the Confucian human bonds reiterated in politic discourse; bed-chamber texts choreographing sexual acts circulated. At the same time the historical archive records the sheer diversity of cultural norms across the empire and the glaring chasms between textbook and reality.⁵¹ “Amongst ritual prescriptions, only marriage demands complete attention,” pronounces Sima Qian, before recounting the tumultuous histories of ritually incorrect Han consorts.⁵² As scholars of marriage and family relations agree, few of the marriage rituals or gender subordinations demanded by the (later canonical Confucian) *Book of Rites* were actually practiced at a popular or elite level during the Han.⁵³ And, as I argue, the ritually unspeakable—rape, incest, sexual obsession, widow remarriage, the failure of women to appear for their weddings, and the substitution of wife with concubine—became ritually speakable and part of a larger ethical design through the *Mao Prefaces*.⁵⁴

To return to “The Ospreys Cry,” rival readings differed over the gender of the ethical subject (as well as the historical identities and authorial intent) while agree-

ing on the essential configuration of male desire for the female. For many Han scholars it was a depraved King Kang for his wife; for others it was a virtuous King Wen for his wife; for many a modern scholar “The Ospreys Cry” represents “a simple epithalamium for some nobleman and his bride.” However in a radical but influential interpretation that consolidated the Mao tradition, the late Han scholar Zheng Xuan (127–200 CE) redesignated the gender of the yearning subject from male to female. The *Mao Great Preface* had already suggested this, but in annotating the entire poem, Zheng fully articulated the poetic persona as the queen consort instead of the king. It is she who now tosses and turns in sleepless anxiety over finding the right match, though Zheng Xuan’s larger interpretation seems to constrain the sexual suggestion. The line that the *Mao Commentary* interpreted as: “Sleeping and waking, [the lord] thought about her,” Zheng Xuan corrects to: “Sleeping and waking, [the queen consort] thought about [her] work [shi].”⁵⁵

The queen consort’s work in finding the right women begins, as in the *Mao Great Preface*, as a matchmaking activity for her lord. But as Jeffrey Riegel argues, male desire and male presence have been written out of the song and its meaning altogether.⁵⁶ Like the *Mao Great Preface*, Zheng Xuan ignores the *Mao Commentary*’s claim that the poem is about the queen consort’s pleasure in her lord’s virtue. The virtue is now all (unironically) hers. Her pleasure has been redirected:

“The Ospreys Cry” concerns the [queen consort’s] pleasure in obtaining good women as matches for her lord. She is anxious about advancing worthies, and does not debauch [him/herself] with [their] beauty. She is [earnest*] about their withdrawn [nature], and obsesses over their worth and talent, [eager in her search*]. This is the meaning of the “Ospreys Cry.”

Zheng Xuan shifts our attention from (what we would understand as) marriage relations to harem relations proper. His amendments to the *Mao Great Preface*, asterisked here, highlight his primary concern with the ethical relationship between the queen consort and the other women and the total erasure of the male-female aspect of marriage: hence the “nuclear harem.” Where the queen consort once grieved resentfully over the retiring, withdrawn qualities of the ideal women (in the *Mao Great Preface* version), she is now “earnest” (that is, approving). She eagerly searches for women who possess the qualities once attributed to her. Zheng goes on to detail the number of palace women and concubines and how they will assist her without jealousy in her ritual plant-gathering activities.⁵⁷

Why is Zheng Xuan so interested in the relationship between queen consort and concubines? Why does he spend so much effort replacing a male persona and ethical subject with a female one in the foremost poem of the collection? I agree with Riegel that Zheng’s concern needs to be read against the backdrop of the rise of inner court politics during the Han. But, as I argued in the previous section, the affairs of the inner palaces were not conceived at that time as simply “petty harem

politics” or “trivial domestic matters.”⁵⁸ Many may have wished the women and their quarrels could be trivialized or withdrawn from the outer court. However, the unusual prominence during the Han period of de facto female rulers and the perceived destabilization of empire by inner court rivalries were central to the fears of Zheng’s contemporaries. His ethical valorization of the consort-concubine relation needs to be read within this context. The term “jealousy” especially deserves defamiliarization from the overly sexualized harem assumed by contemporary scholarship. As in the case of male officials, jealousy is part of a vernacular of political power.

In presenting a female-centered idealization of the nuclear harem, Zheng Xuan shifts the subject of desire from king to queen consort. In doing so, he rewrites the ritual prescription for the matchmaker. In ritual texts, the matchmaker is a professional outsider. In historical texts, parents, officials, consorts, and relatives maneuver their chosen bride into position. Zheng Xuan’s is a radical revision. Now the queen consort is praised (not vilified) for choosing “on [the king’s] behalf” his own object of desire, and her relation with these new concubines provides the strange new foundational pattern for empire (for father and son, ruler and minister). The queen consort occupies a position similar to that of the “mediator of desire” in René Girard’s account of “triangular desire” in chivalric literature. There the mediator of desire is the perfect knight of legend whose desires are imitated by every knight. Here it is the queen whose choice of concubine must be imitated by the king. But unlike the knight of the chivalric novel, the king’s shining exemplum of desire is also his wife, his supposed object of desire. Here it is the wife’s desire that has hijacked the narrative.⁵⁹

Ancient and modern commentators do not explain the queen consort’s desire for the concubines as erotic or marital. As Zheng Xuan replaces the king-queen relation with that of the queen-concubine, he idealizes their relationship as leader and subordinate coworkers—a new paradigm for marriage. But the bedchamber frustrations (“Oh the yearning! Oh the yearning!”) of the poem (the “weak mimesis” of the text) at times escape the regulatory Confucian plot. One should note that desire between palace women was not unconscionable: indeed it featured in a police report of events surrounding the mysterious death of the Han emperor in 7 BCE (that is, right before the imperial acceptance of the *Mao Songs* and amidst the consort rivalries of the mid-Han). A palace woman who tutored the empress in the *Book of Songs* gave birth to a son by the emperor. After the empress forced her tutor to commit suicide, the tutor’s female lover (a slave) submitted a report to police investigators. Employing a rare phrase, the *History of the Han* relates that the two women *dui shi* 對食, literally, “ate face to face” (or “ate as a couple”). A second-century CE contemporary of Zheng Xuan elucidates the phrase as follows:

When palace women attach themselves to each other as husband and wife it is called “coupled eating” (*dui shi*). They get extremely jealous of each other.⁶⁰

It is interesting that the marriage relation is evoked as a negative analogy: in acting like husband and wife, jealous passions arise. Proper relations between palace women were a new focus of anxiety in the Han and this commentator warns that inner court couplings should not be based on marital ones. Zheng Xuan's revolutionary jealousy-free queen consort–concubine relation reverses the very proposition: the nuclear harem offers the much needed mimetic paradigm for marriage.⁶¹ Desire has not been silenced, but emerges (albeit in negative locutions) through a strange new blueprint for marriage.

The Mao-Zheng tradition's desire to press the *Songs* into the service of the nuclear harem becomes even clearer in another early poem, "Drooping Boughs" (*Song* #4). As in the "Ospreys," the seemingly most stable referent in the poem is the stock figure of early Chinese literature, the *junzi* or "lord" (as in, "a fine mate for the lord" in "The Ospreys Cry"). The *junzi*, generally translated in the poems as lord or prince, is also the ethical persona of Confucian texts: the "sage" or the master Confucius himself. Any contemporary reader and most post-Han readers of a classical text would assume the *junzi* is male.⁶² But not so the Mao readers of "Drooping Boughs," in whose first stanza the *junzi* features:

In the south is a tree with drooping boughs,
The cloth-creeper binds it.
Oh, happy is our [*junzi*];
Blessings and boons protect [him/her].

Arthur Waley's translation, adapted here, translates the *junzi* as the "lord," and where other commentators read the clinging of a wife to her *junzi* husband in this imagery, the *Mao Preface* explains the poem thus: "'Drooping Boughs' is about the queen consort reaching out to her subordinates."⁶³ The queen consort has become the *junzi*, and the concubines cling to her appropriately. Like Zheng Xuan's "The Ospreys Cry," the poem has become a parable of the ethical relations between the queen consort and the concubines. Though here, through a radical regendering the *junzi*, the triangulated husband has been excised altogether.⁶⁴

Translating Desire

While Zheng Xuan's triangulation of "The Ospreys Cry"'s desire is physically fossilized as part of the standard Chinese edition of the *Book of Songs*, its refutation by prominent scholars such as twelfth-century Zhu Xi and nineteenth-century Ma Ruichen has been adopted in every modern English translation of the *Book of Songs*.⁶⁵ Rejecting the Mao tradition's presentation of the *Songs* as a prudish repression of its original, pre-Han eroticism, "The Ospreys Cry" is almost universally presented as the beginning of a long Chinese tradition of courtship and marriage poetry.

- James Legge 1871: “Waking and sleeping *he* thought about *her* . . . ”
- Arthur Waley 1937: “Day and night *he* sought *her* . . . ”
- Bernard Karlgren 1950: “Waking and sleeping *he* wished for *her* . . . ”
- Ezra Pound 1954: “To seek and not find
as a dream in *his* mind,
think how *her* robe should be . . . ”
- Stephen Owen 1996: “[O]n and on *he* thought of *her* . . . ”⁶⁶

As my added emphases show, the translations constrain the possibilities of desire within a husband-wife model. The male *junzi* is the poem’s ethical subject and the desiring subject. Even when Owen does reintroduce the “traditional” interpretation of the song as “the Queen Consort of King Wen of Zhou, who ‘delighted that pure and fair maidens had been found to be mated with the prince’” (31), his translation does not reflect this implicitly Zheng interpretation. For to render the line as “[O]n and on *she* thought of her,” as Owen’s (or rather Zheng’s) interpretation requires, would produce a form of desire that escapes the regulatory Confucian plot. It is only through the linguistic requirements of translation into English that this overlooked contradiction between the female ethical subject and female subject of desire becomes so explicit.

In the *Book of Songs* we begin with destabilized genders that become fixed and refixed through the commentary traditions. It is erotic desire, then, rather than (either) gender, that becomes the danger generating questions about allegory and mimesis. The Mao tradition has fared badly in Europhone translations of the *Book of Songs*. This is partly because its relation to the poetic text often seems forced (the gap between weak and strong mimesis), but it is also because it presents desires that do not easily “translate.” The problem of the nuclear harem translates less well than the hetero-erotic and marital desires proposed by pre- and post-Han scholarship. (And the prevalent theory that it was Confucian prudishness that refigured the *Songs*’ sexual content as political makes the Mao scholars more recognizably “Victorian.”) In order to understand the broader issues of the desires of the “Ospreys,” I shall sketch a set of problems structuring the translation of gender and desire in both the *Book of Songs* and early Chinese texts.

First, gender ambiguity is rife in the *Book of Songs* in part because there is no gendered pronoun in classical Chinese. Furthermore, the sentence subject or object may remain implicit, and epithets and adjectives are grammatically uninflected by gender. To show how the classical Chinese language of the *Book of Songs* resists the kind of gender specifications of poetic personae produced by English translations, I shall use a brief comparison. This excerpt is from an ancient poem by Sappho, composed around the time many of the *Songs* were allegedly composed, in the seventh century BCE:

... [F]or when I look at you . . .
 . . . Cold sweat covers me, and trembling
 Seizes my entirety, and paler than grass
 I am, and little short of dying
 I seem to myself.⁶⁷

When reading this poem in Greek, one is actually supplied with more information about the speaker than the English accommodates. For what one actually reads is:

... ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω [F]or when I look at you [already established as f.] . . .
... μ' ἰδρῶς ψυχρὸς ἔχει, τρόμος δὲ παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας	... [c]old sweat covers me, and trembling Seizes my entirety [f], and paler [f] than grass
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὐτ[α].	I am, and little short of dying I seem to myself [f].

Adjectival endings in Greek register the (here female) gender of the speaking persona and her (female) addressee, in ways that cannot be conveyed in English anywhere in the poem. As is often the case in translating ancient Greek or Latin poetry into English, those gender specifications are commensurable with or in excess of what English translation accommodates. Compare this with an excerpt from “Out in the Bushlands a Creeper Grows” (*Song #94*) in its standard translation by Arthur Waley:

... There was a man so lovely,
 Clear brow well rounded.
 By chance I came across him,
 And he let me have my will.

When reading this in Chinese, one is actually supplied with *less* information than the English translation requires:

有美一人、	... There was a [man/woman] so lovely,
清揚婉兮。	Clear brow well rounded.
邂逅相遇、	By chance [I/you/he/she] came across [him/her],
適我願兮。	And [he/she] let me have [my/your/his/her] will.

Neither the person encountered nor the person encountering is specified. Where the poem leaves open the genders of the people involved in this (apparently sexual) encounter, Waley silently invokes a long history of commentary, starting with the *Mao Preface*, which interprets this as a meeting between man and woman, through to Zhu Xi and James Legge, who specify the speaking subject as a woman encountering a (“lovely”) man.

While certain words *can* be inflected by gender through their written form or historical usage, this rarely constrains their use in early texts. For example, the char-

acter translated by the epithet “well rounded” (*yuan* 婉) contains the radical *nü* 女, meaning “woman.” While this might suggest that a female person is being described, the word is used in reference to a hunting man (as well as a woman) elsewhere in the *Songs*, and the Han histories use it to describe the emperors’ male favorites.⁶⁸ The adjective “lovely” (*mei* 美) is also less gender-determined in early Chinese texts than in later imperial and modern ones (where a woman is usually assumed). To take a more general example: early bedchamber texts even use the well-known term *yin* 陰 (the “female” principle used to complement the “male” *yang*) to refer to male genitalia.

In “Out in the Bushlands a Creeper Grows,” as elsewhere (for example, *Songs* #1, #76, #81), the commentaries are at odds as to the genders involved. Indeed Han Ying’s second-century BCE commentary has Confucius quoting this *Song* to celebrate his serendipitous encounter with another “worthy” man and to rebut his disciple’s accusation that “young men should not meet in the middle of the road, and women should not marry without a matchmaker.”⁶⁹ More recent histories of Chinese homosexuality retain the erotic suggestion of poeticized beauty to suggest that this poem is among the earliest representations of male-male affection.⁷⁰ However, unlike in the case of Sappho or Plato, whose translation histories are fraught with (correctable) misreadings of gender, nothing other than the *Book of Songs*’ own history of applications constrains the song within one gender configuration over another.⁷¹

The problem in the very translation of desire has fueled the broader “repressive hypothesis” about the Mao tradition. While many scholars have recognized the problem of gender ambiguity in translating “Out in the Bushlands a Creeper Grows,” this poem remains a classic example for the theory of commentarial repression. As they point out, the *Mao Preface* is less celebratory about the poem than Han Ying’s Confucius:

“In the Bushlands a Creeper Grows” is [about] the longing thoughts for the season of meeting. The lord’s favor did not flow down to the people [who were] exhausted by military uprisings. Men and women lost the proper season and thought longingly about random encounters.

Critics have read this as typical Mao prudery—of the silencing of the erotic freedom celebrated by the poem’s original composers. Besides the flawed notion of an archaic “authentic” *Songs* upon which this depends, it is important to note that sexual longing is actually being talked about, not silenced. The *Mao Preface* uses the poem to elaborate what constitutes proper and improper mating between men and women. While condemning “random encounters,” it also promotes a proper “season” for mating. The poems here and elsewhere (as we saw with “The Ospreys Cry”) offer Han scholars an opportunity to deliberate on desire, courtship, and marriage. They do not replace erotics with politics; rather they read the problem of desire through the political context of war. Unappealing as their ideals may be,

it would be a mistake to read this as censorship or to romanticize an “authentic” setting for the poem. Ironic mimesis must not be mistaken for repression.

In sum, modern scholars have consistently overlooked the most radical revisions presented by the Mao-Zheng tradition through which our received *Book of Songs* was originally preserved. Any discussion of the *Mao Great Preface*'s poetics and the Mao tradition's aesthetic premises needs to take into account its unprecedented regendering of the mimetic subjects of “The Ospreys Cry” and other poems. To understand Platonic and Aristotelian mimesis we must understand the gendered conventions of ancient Greek drama; likewise, to understand the mimetic project of the *Mao Songs*, we must understand the gendered politics of the Han dynasty court. We need to denaturalize the “genetic” links between μίμησις and *mimesis*, and between 興 and *xing*, even as we juxtapose *mimesis* and *xing*. Since cross-cultural critics have found the exemplary peculiarity of *Book of Songs* (and hence the Chinese aesthetic tradition as a whole) in the Mao refiguration of the so-called courtship poems (as allegory, categorical correspondence, or ironic mimesis), the stakes in historicizing desire with more precision are high. The distinctive historical circumstances that the Mao editors strove to represent through the *Songs* has been buried beneath the *Songs*' later traditions. The political queen consort has been translated as a chaste maiden of Neo-Confucian or orientalist dreams; a new blueprint for concubinage has become obscured behind romanticizations of archaic Chinese heterosexual “free love” and nuclear marriage.

In prizing poem from ethical frame, post-Han scholars have read their own sage-emperor-centered Chinese history back through the poems. This is a history that constrains the Mao-Zheng use of parable and overlooks the possibilities of the poetic text: of poems as parables for the queen consort as well as the king; of a female ethical exemplar; of labor relations between queen consort and concubine as a model for marriage (and all human relations). But when we start to ask what the female tutor might have taught the unuxorious Han empress as they each performed “The Ospreys Cry,” and how this might have shaped and been shaped by the aesthetic project of the embattled Mao editors of the Han dynasty, we resist seeing mistakes of translation as simply misunderstandings between East and West. We are rereading the texts in their historical idiom and beginning to expose the contingencies of (one of the many) tales of ancient “civilizations” that animate the modern East-West fable.

Notes

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1. *Shijing* 詩經. Also variously translated as *The Book of Odes*, *The Classic of Odes*, and *The Book of Poetry* and transliterated as *Shi-ching* and *She-king*. Numbering and text according to Kong Yingda, ed., *Maoshi zhengyi* (Hong Kong, 1964). Among the Mao school writings, the *Mao Great Preface*, attributed to a first-century CE scholar Wei Hong, is seen as the primary statement of traditional Chinese aesthetics.
2. The Five Classics (*Wu jing*), comprising the *Songs*, the *Documents*, the *Rites*, the *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, were imperially sanctioned as the basis for state education in 136 BCE. It remained at the core of the state curriculum until the early twentieth century. I use the term “Confucian” advisedly in relation to the Han (as well as the present day). See Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven, 2001), on the shifting composition of the “Classics,” and on the often inaccurate association of the term “Confucian” with a diverse array of classical theories, texts, and scholars in early China.
3. Chinese scholarship generally refers to these songs as *lian'ai hunyin shi* (“love and marriage songs”) or simply *qing shi* (“sentimental songs”). They are also referred to as “courtship” songs in English. See Hong Zhanhou, *Shijing xueshi* (Beijing, 2002), 680–84, for an account and bibliography of the intensified interest in these “love and marriage” songs in modern Chinese scholarship. Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Harvard, 2001), 15–38, is an important exception in scholarship on these particular songs, both in challenging the notion that the commentaries created a “sexual repression” and in reading the redefinition of women as part of a larger “Confucianization” project. However, his central example of an “artificial” Mao reading that “den[ies] a courtship reading” and erases female presence in a poem still implicitly gives primacy to a courtship interpretation and to an authentic female presence (derived from other commentaries, not the poem—as he elsewhere points out). I am borrowing Michel Foucault’s use of the term “repressive hypothesis,” as outlined in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1990), 10–13, as a useful methodological (rather than historical) analogy.
4. This is perhaps the most famous phrase of Chinese poetics: *shi yan zhi* 詩言志. The *Mao Great Preface*, as well as prior texts, elaborate upon it. For the argument that the concept of imitation or mimesis “did not form the basis of any major [Chinese] theory of literature,” see James Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago, 1975), 49. See also Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Harvard, 1992), 46. William F. Touponce challenges Liu’s argument in his review article, “Straw Dogs: A Deconstructive Reading of the Problem of Mimesis in James Liu’s Chinese Theories of Literature,” *Tamkang Review*, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 359–90. Marston Anderson in turn defends Liu in *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley, 1990), 12.
5. For different aspects of this problem, see Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China 1900–1937* (Stanford, 1995), 36; Haun Saussy *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (Stanford, 1993), 27; and Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Indiana, 1993), 123. Michael Taussig’s *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York, 1993) explores mimesis as a colonial space between the West and its “primitives.” He documents a non-Western “tactile,” or sensate, model of mimesis that he argues is repressed in the West’s visually centered tradition.
6. The legend of Confucius’s authorship of the *Songs* became prominent during the early

- Han dynasty. The *Songs* are divided into four sections: “The Airs of States” (*Guo feng*), “The Minor Odes” (*Xiao ya*), “The Major Odes” (*Da ya*), and “The Hymns of Praise” (*Song*).
7. See William Boltz, “Zhou and Han Phonology in the *Shijing*,” in William Boltz and Michael Shapiro, eds., *Studies in the Historical Phonology of Asian Languages* (Philadelphia, 1991), 30, on how the received *Shijing* “is a Zhou text in Hân clothing: both its script and, to some extent, its text have been influenced by post-*Shijing* phonology, and are not always reliable guides to the phonology of the old Chinese.” Martin Kern’s philological analyses of the recently excavated manuscripts of the *Songs* (the Guodian, Mawangdui, Shuanggudui, and Shanghai Museum manuscripts dating to the fourth to the second centuries BCE) in “The *Odes* in Excavated Manuscripts,” in Martin Kern, ed., *Text and Ritual in Early China* (Seattle, 2005), 149–93, show the high proportion of graphic variants in the quotations of the *Songs* outside the “four schools” tradition of Han dynasty *Songs* studies (namely, the Lu, Qi, Han, and Mao pedagogic lineages). Kern argues that the written text of the *Songs* was only standardized during the Han, and that the canonization of the Mao text probably influenced how the more uniform written texts of the other three schools came to be transmitted.
 8. 關雎 *Guanju* (*Song* #1). For the sake of clarity, I use the titles of the poems as they appear in the most widely available English-language translation of Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York, 1996).
 9. Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Harvard, 1992), 37.
 10. The scholar Kong Yingda (574–678 CE) published his own *Subcommentary* (*shu*) together with the Han dynasty materials: the *Mao Songs* text, the *Mao Commentary* (*zhuan*), the *Great Preface* (*da xu*), *Small Prefaces* (*xiao xu*), and Zheng Xuan’s *Annotations* (*jian*) as the standard Tang dynasty version (*Maoshi zhengyi* [*Correct Significance of Mao Songs*]). This in turn was accepted for the imperial Qing dynasty edition of the Chinese Classics that is still standard today (the *Mao Shi zhushu* section of the *Shisanjing zhushu*). Given the limited scope of this article, I shall be dealing only with the Han dynasty materials, and I will not complicate my argument with the much greater complexity and composite authorship of the commentaries. For excellent introductions to these, see Joseph R. Allen, “Postface: A Literary History of the *Shi jing*,” in Waley, *Book of Songs*, and Stephen Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford, 1991). See Zhao Peilin, *Shijing yanjiu fansi* (Tianjin, 1989), for a comprehensive bibliography of modern scholarship in Chinese.
 11. Marcel Granet, *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (Paris, 1929).
 12. Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton, 1987), 45–46.
 13. *Ibid.*, 44. Yu emphasizes the initially dynamic nature of these correspondences or “sympathetic responses” perceived (from at least the Han dynasty on) between an image or object and a human situation (or another phenomenon). She does not, however, pursue how or when certain usages became dominant and “systematic” (42–44).
 14. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. I have used poetic license in avoiding (as far as possible) determining subjects and genders that are not specified by the poem. See Wai-Lim Yip, ed. and trans., *Chinese Poetry: An Anthology of Major Modes and Genres* (Durham, N.C., 1997), for a translation that makes the fewest possible determinations, and see the final section of this essay for a fuller discussion of this.
 15. Pauline Yu, “Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Classic of Poetry,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, no. 2 (1983): 390–91.
 16. As Yu puts it: “From the Chinese point of view it was not a process of attributing true otherness of reference at all: natural object and human situation were seen literally as

- belonging to the same category of events—it was not the poet who was creating or manufacturing links between them. They were linked by analogy, but not—as in Western allegory—one between two distinct orders. The critic’s task lay simply in identifying the general type to which both belonged”; *ibid.*, 399.
17. Zheng Qiao, *Shi bian wang* (Beijing, 1933), 13. Zheng Qiao also argues that the Han dynasty scholars mistook ancient comments about the licentious nature of the (by then lost) music of certain songs for comments about the poems’ words. See Wong Siu-Kit and Lee Kar-Shui, “Poems of Depravity: A Twelfth Century Dispute on the Moral Character of the *Book of Songs*,” *T’oung Pao* 75, no. 4–5 (1989) for a further discussion of this, and Martin Kern, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer* (Stuttgart, 1997), 33–38, on the early politics of music.
 18. Zhu Xi, *Shi jizhuan* (Hong Kong, 1961). While Zhu Xi classified the poems in order to condemn the licentious, modern scholars draw on his classificatory system in reversing the moral judgment.
 19. Wen Yiduo, *Wen Yiduo quanji* (Taipei, 1946), vols. 1 and 4. Compare Paul Rakita Goldin, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (Honolulu, 2002), 8–47, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany, 1997), 221–38, for literary, philological, and textual transmission accounts of erotic imagery in the *Book of Songs*.
 20. Saussy, *Chinese Aesthetic*, 65, 74, 149–50; Hermann-Josef Röllicke, *Die Fährte des Herzens—Die Lehre vom Herzensbestreben (zhi 志) im großen Vorwort zum Shijing 詩經* (Berlin, 1992), 67–69.
 21. Saussy calls the way in which the *Mao Prefaces* bring into being the historical and ethical order to which they pronounce that the poems refer, reading in a “performative mode.” See Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1982), for a general explanation of performatives. Briefly put, language, when successful, performs acts, bringing into being the new reality to which it refers. Performatives succeed by the repetition of established conventions, their meaning coming from the social and linguistic context and not from the intentions of the speaker. In Derrida’s account (*contra* J. L. Austin) there is no “real” meaning behind any given speech act, since the conventions that lend it meaning are themselves rituals, which, as rituals, are subject to change. Mimesis or citation is what makes the performative possible at all.
 22. Saussy, *Chinese Aesthetic*, 59. Like so many other cross-cultural critics, Saussy illustrates his argument about aesthetics using the “scandal” of the love songs as his example.
 23. *Ibid.*, 94–97.
 24. Compare Angus Fletcher’s discussion of ironies as “collapsed allegories” that confuse or collapse contradictions (or two levels of meaning) into “one ambivalent statement,” in Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1964), 230.
 25. Yu, “Allegory,” 398. See Jeffrey Riegel, “Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no. 1 (1997): 162–65, for a lucid summary of uses of *xing* ranging back to the third-century BCE *Wuxingpian Commentary* to the *Book of Songs*. Due to the constraints of this article, I will not be discussing *xing*’s relation to two other key critical terms: *fu* 賦 and *bi* 比. For introductions to these, see Michelle Yeh, “Metaphor and *Bi*: Western and Chinese Poetics,” *Comparative Literature* 39 (1987): 237–54; and Saussy, *Chinese Aesthetic*, 129–47.
 26. *Ibid.*, 151.
 27. On the dating of the compositional strata of the *Songs*, see W. A. C. H. Dobson, “Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of the *Book of Songs*,” *T’oung Pao* 51 (1964): 322–34.

- On the centrality of performance and ritual to the *Songs*, see Edward Shaughnessy, “From Liturgy to Literature: The Ritual Contexts of the Earliest Poems in the Book of Poetry,” *Hanxue yanjiu* 13, no. 1 (1994), and Martin Kern, “*Shi Jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of ‘Chu Ci’ (Thorny Caltrop),” *Early China* 25 (Berkeley, 2000), 49–112. For Saussy, the early poems were read as programmatic accounts of their own (idealized) ritual performance contexts. My suggestion that the Mao tradition redirected key *Songs* for a female “user” does not necessarily contradict these arguments for the importance of ritual to the purpose of the *Songs*. The participation of women in state ritual was controversial in the Han dynasty, and thus the interpretation of plant-gathering rituals amongst palace women in “The Ospreys Cry” may have been politicized. The Han conception of marriage as ritual demands further analysis in this context, especially since, as Kern points out, the *Songs* of the “Airs of States” differ only in their vocabulary and themes, and not in their formal structures (meter, rhyme, and so forth), from the *Songs* of those sections traditionally distinguished as more “ritual.”
28. See Riegel, “Eros,” on the importance of reading the commentaries in light of the political relationship between Han schools and their imperial sponsors.
 29. See Mark Asselin, “The Lu School Reading of ‘Guanju’ as Preserved in an Eastern Han *Fu*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 3 (1997): 427–43. The second-century BCE Han Ying has Confucius explain the positioning of “The Ospreys Cry” thus: “‘The Ospreys Cry’ is perfection. . . . It is that which connects all things and on which the life of human beings is dependent. . . . Now the writings of the *Six Classics* all are devoted to exhaustive discussion, but they derive [their matter] from [‘The Ospreys Cry’]. The subject of [‘The Ospreys Cry’] is great!” Translation by James Hightower, *Han Shih Wai Chuan: Han Ying’s Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs* (Cambridge, 1952), 159.
 30. Indeed the Mao tradition draws on the language of Confucius’ laconic summary of “The Ospreys Cry” (*Analects* 3.20) in Yang Bojun, ed., *Lun yu yi zhu* (Beijing, 1980): “Pleasure [but] not to the point of licentiousness; grief [but] not to the point of [self-] harm.” The *Wuxingpian Commentary* uses “The Ospreys Cry” to dramatically illustrate the process by which the reader experiences the erotic desires of the poem in order to come to an understanding of his (or her) even greater desire of ritual. See Riegel, “Eros,” for a translation and excellent discussion of this document and its relation to other commentaries on this poem.
 31. Riegel, “Eros,” is an exception, although he does not pursue her relation to the discourses I outline below. The queen consort (*hou fei*) appears sporadically in pre-Han literature (e.g., the *Annals of Lü Buwei* and Han Feizi), but the Mao tradition is to my knowledge the first to explicate her and her importance so systematically.
 32. The *Mao Preface* to “The Ospreys Cry” is the *Mao Great Preface*, of which only the first sentence is included here. The *Mao Prefaces* to the remaining *Songs* are known as the *Small Prefaces*, which are themselves subdivided. I will not complicate my account with Zhu Xi’s reorganization of the *Great Preface* and with the subdivisions of the *Small Prefaces*.
 33. Each preface begins with the typical formula of predication: A, B 比.
 34. For a lucid introduction to the transmission problems in, and influence of, Liu Xiang’s text (for which we rely on much later editions), see Sherry J. Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions for Women’s Lives: A Thousand Years of Biographies of Chinese Women* (Armonk, N.Y., 2004), 26–27. Ban Zhao’s work is preserved as part of her biography in Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu (History of the Later Han)* (Beijing, 1965), 2784–91. See Michael Nylan, “Modes of Persuasion, 100 BC–AD 100,” in Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, eds., *Supple-*

- ment to the *Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge, forthcoming), for the simultaneous rise of “prefaces” (such as the *Mao Prefaces*) and of “biographies” as new genres relating to the personal.
35. Ban Gu, ed., *Han shu (History of the Former Han)* (Beijing, 2002), 1957–58. Translation adapted from Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions*, 10.
 36. *Li ji (Sibu beiyao)* (Shanghai, 1936), 4b–5a. See the *Book of Rites’* chapter on marriage in Wang Wenjin, ed., *Li ji yi jie* (Beijing, 2001), 2:913–19.
 37. E.g., *Annals of Lü Buwei (Lüshi chunqiu)*, *Book of Rites*.
 38. Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu (History of the Later Han)*, 2788. Translation adapted from Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush, Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, 2004), 37–38.
 39. Translators of the Mao reading of female “worthies” (*xian, xian nü*) sought in “The Ospreys Cry” often pass over the resonances of (male and female) sagacity and education in favor of notions of chastity and beauty. See also the *Mao Preface* to *Song* #218.
 40. Fan Ye, *Hou Han Shu*, 418.
 41. The minister Du Qin in Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 2669, following the translation in Riegel, “Eros,” 156.
 42. Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, 1998). I am shifting the focus from the relation between trope and women’s historical realities to that between trope and new discourses about women.
 43. See Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge, 1980), 69–74.
 44. For example, Empress Dowager Dou in Sima Qian, *Shi ji (Records of the Grand Historian)*, (Beijing, 2002), 3117, and Empress Dowager Deng in Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 428.
 45. As Bielenstein, in “Wang Meng, the Restoration of the Han Dynasty, and Later Han,” in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, *The Ch’in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220* (Cambridge, 1986), 280, puts it: the political history of the later period of the Han “becomes synonymous with that of the consort families and their allies. The elevations and divorces of empresses were wholly motivated by politics, even though the sources prefer to explain them in personal terms.”
 46. My point is not that the discursive emergence of women as ethical and political subjects marked an improvement in the “real” lives of real women during the Han (or even an improvement in their “representation”). Indeed I would argue the opposite: the rise in prescriptive texts and historiographical anxieties about the inner court enabled the gradual institutionalization of normative gender, marriage, and kinship practices toward the end of, and following, the Han dynasty. See Michael Nylan, “Domestic Life, Gender Roles, and Sexual Practice, 4th Century BC Through 3rd Century AD: ‘Til Death Do Us Part,’” in Nylan and Loewe, *Supplement to the Cambridge History of China*, for a richly documented argument that Han Dynasty women lived less constrictive and more diverse everyday lives than was previously thought. See C. Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China in the Former Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.–A.D. 25* (Chicago, 1943), on the situation of slave women.
 47. Wang Mang’s brief reign chronologically divides the two halves of the Han dynasty, known as the Former Han (or Western Han) and the Later Han (or Eastern Han) periods, respectively.
 48. For example, the *Mao Prefaces* to *Songs* #5, 20, 63, 89, 93, 94, 95, 140.
 49. See for example, Asselin, “Lu-School,” on the second-century CE poeticized dispute over the propriety of an elite male’s desire for a “lowly maidservant.” The *Mao Preface* to *Song* #24 on a royal marriage in which the woman was of a higher status might be

- seen as an exception. See Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 3191–96, and Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 3721–42, on the centrality of emperors' male favorites to court politics.
50. As opposed to the kind of “one-husband-one-wife” nuclear marriage and “free love” ideology outlined in Xu Ruzong, “*Shijing* qing shi de hun ai guan,” in *Shijing yanjiu congkan* (Beijing, 2002), 233–45, for example.
 51. The Qin and Han legal documents detail cases of both male and female rape, and issues surrounding divorce and remarriage, for which see A. F. P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law: An Annotated Translation of the Ch'in Legal and Administrative Rules of the 3rd Century B.C. Discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province, in 1975* (Leiden, 1985), and *Zhangjiashan Hanmu zhujian ershiqi hao mu* (Beijing, 2001). For the bedchamber texts, see Donald Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (New York, 1998). For the problematization of incest at the northern frontiers of empire, see Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 2899–2900, and for group sex in brick art in the south, see Jessica Rawson, “Tombs and Tomb Furnishings of the Eastern Han Period (AD 25–220)” in Robert Bagley, ed., *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures of a Lost Civilization* (Seattle, 2001).
 52. Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 1967.
 53. See *Book of Rites [Li ji]*, chapters 10 and 41 for the prescriptions. On the rift between prescriptive marriage texts and Han practices, see Jack Dull, “Marriage and Divorce in Han China: A Glimpse at Pre-Confucian Society,” in David Buxbaum, ed., *Chinese Family Law in Historical Perspective* (Seattle, 1978).
 54. For examples of these, see the *Mao Prefaces* to *Songs* #27, 42, 45, 73, 88, 96, 101, 140, 143, 229.
 55. His subsequent comments make clear that this work concerns finding women to help her with her sacrificial duties (rather than serving her husband).
 56. Riegel, “Eros,” 158–59: “[The] strange and radical excising of male desire, or any male presence in the song at all, is one of the most extreme textual moves in the entirety of Zheng Xuan’s [*Book of Songs*] commentary.”
 57. *Ibid.*, 2: [Zheng Xuan:] “[The queen consort] was able to pacify the resentment of a group of concubines on behalf of her lord [*wei junzi*]. This means that all [the concubines] were transformed by the virtue of the Queen Consort and that they were not jealous.”
 58. Zhu Xi’s allegation that has prevailed since. See Van Zoeren, *Poetry*, 136 ff.
 59. René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore, 1984), translated by Yvonne Freccero: “The disciple pursues objects which are determined for him, or at least seem to be determined for him, by the model of all chivalry. We shall call this model the *mediator* of desire.” Since the poem is explicitly about her virtue and not his, it cannot be that he is her mimetic exemplar or mediator.
 60. Ying Shao (ca. 140–206 CE), glossing the phrase *dui shi* found in Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 3990, on the events of 12–7 BCE. The relationship is not presented as criminal. When the female tutor (Cao Gong) gave birth to a son by the emperor, the empress forced her to commit suicide. The tutor’s lover, Dao Fang (a palace slave), was among those submitting a report to the police.
 61. Compare the *Mao Preface* to *Song* #6 quoted earlier: “Through her freedom from jealousy, the relation between males and females was made right; marriages were celebrated at the proper times; and there were no unmarried people in the kingdom.” For an excellent critique of the ways in which female same-sex relations in Chinese literature have been discussed, see Tze-Lan D. Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago, 2003).
 62. More precisely, the *junzi*’s textual persona. See Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian*

- Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E.* (Honolulu, 2002), 164–71, on the evolution of the term *junzi* from denoting (male) noble birth to denoting ethical character.
63. The remaining two stanzas are only slight variations of the first.
 64. Although Zheng Xuan’s reading of “Drooping Boughs” restores the triangle, presenting the harmonious relations between the queen consort and the concubines before affirming their collaboration in giving pleasure and wealth to their lord. See the *Mao Preface* to “Small Stars” (*Song* #21) for another parable of the relation between wife and concubines.
 65. Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 (1782–1853) argues that the *Great Preface* says the consort in the poem is anxious about presenting herself, not about presenting other women (as Zheng Xuan reads it): *Maoshi zhuanjian tongshi* (Taipei, 1968), 2:1. Seventeenth-century scholar Yao Jiheng had influentially argued that the poem’s sentiments concerned husband-wife, not lord-concubine relations. See above for Zhu Xi’s rejection of the Mao tradition.
 66. My emphases. For the translations see Bernhard Karlgren, trans., *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm, 1950); James Legge, trans., *The She King* (1871; reprint, Hong Kong, 1960); Ezra Pound, trans., *The Confucian Odes: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* (New York, 1954); Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York, 1996). For a comprehensive compilation of translations of “The Ospreys Cry” from 1750 to the present, see John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, vol. 1, *From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty* (New York, 2000). No translation utilizes the once-canonical Zheng Xuan reading.
 67. Sappho 31, excerpt from lines 7–14; text following D. A. Campbell’s reconstruction in D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (London, 1967). Translation mine.
 68. See *Song* #47, *Song* #106, and Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 3191. Sima Qian does not use this word in reference to women at all. Bernard Karlgren, *Glosses of the Book of Odes* (Stockholm, 1964), Van Zoeren, *Poetry*, and Brett Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley, 1990), make similar points—as does Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*, using a different poem. I differ, however, with Van Zoeren and others’ conclusions about the Mao suppression of the eroticism of the *Song*.
 69. Lai Yanyuan, *Han shi wai zhuan jin zhu jin yi* (Taipei, 1986), 61.
 70. See Hinsch, *Passions*, 17. See Xiaomingxiong (Samshasha), *Zhongguo tongxingai shilu*, rev. ed. (Hong Kong, 1997), on *Songs* #84, 86, 87, 91, 92.
 71. On the deliberate misreading or obscuring of gender in the translation of Sappho see Yopie Prins, “Sappho’s Afterlife in Translation,” in Ellen Greene, ed., *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission* (Berkeley, 1996); and Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546–1937* (Chicago, 1989). In the case of Plato see, for example, Benjamin Jowett’s nineteenth-century translation of Plato’s *Symposium*, reprinted in several editions to the present, e.g., Scott Buchanan, ed., *The Portable Plato* (New York, 1977).