WRITING QIU JIN'S LIFE: WU ZHIYING AND HER FAMILY LEARNING*

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Preamble: The Burial of Qiu Jin (and of Wu Zhiying)

In February of 1908, two women took the initiative to give a proper burial to their friend Qiu Jin (1875?–1907), beheaded six months earlier for attempted insurrection against the Qing empire.[1] The ensuing memorial service, which drew a crowd of several hundred, became a forum for public protest and was duly registered as such by the government. Within the year, Qiu Jin's tomb by the West Lake was razed and the two chief mourners, Wu Zhiying and Xu Zihua, found themselves on the government's wanted list. After the success of the Republican Revolution four years later, Qiu Jin quickly became a celebrated revolutionary martyr. Today, her story still appears in patriotic educational texts for young readers, her image often visible on stage and in films.[2] So much symbolic significance is invested in the singular figure of Qiu Jin that in historical accounts of Chinese women's progress, she often functions as a "transitional figure" *par excellence*: a history of women of traditional China typically ends with her while a study of modern women begins with her. It is as if alongside her the last of "talented women" (*cainü*) was buried and through her the New Woman (*xin nüxing*) was heralded in.

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1 Qiu Jin was executed on July 15, 1907 in Shaoxing. At the time her brother's family went into hiding and her remains were gathered by a local charity organization and buried hastily in paupers' graves outside town. See *Qiu Jin yanjiu ziliao* (Research Material on Qiu Jin) 1987: 73, 133. Henceforth referred to as *Ziliao*. For a pioneer study of Qiu Jin in English, see Rankin 1975. For a well-documented study of contemporary response to Qiu Jin's execution, see Xia Xiaohong 2001: 208–43.

2 Wei Shaochang, "Qiu Jin de yishu xingxiang yongchui buxiu" (Qiu Jin's image in art, forever lasting), *Ziliao*: 512–32.

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The present study shifts the focus away from Qiu Jin and onto one of the two chief mourners in her shadow, Wu Zhiying (1867–1934). Wu wrote five biographical essays on Qiu Jin against the rapidly changing cultural and political backdrop of the last four years of the Qing and the first year of the Republic. Proclaiming herself the rightful heir to her "family learning"—the Tongcheng tradition—Wu re-interprets the classics such as the *Shiji* and the *Yijing* to legitimate Qiu Jin's participation in the public arena. Highly self-conscious of her own historical intervention, Wu Zhiying yet chose a path considerably different from the one taken by her friend Qiu Jin. Precisely because of this difference, her case offers an alternative construction of meaning from the more familiar one associated with Qiu Jin and the rise of the New Woman.

While one might say that the name of Wu Zhiying was kept in history because of her connection with Qiu Jin, it was rather a mixed blessing. This connection tends to obscure significant aspects of her life unrelated to Qiu Jin, such as her 1906 championing of the "women citizens' donation" for the Boxer's Indemnity debt (*nüzi guomin juan*), her donation to the women's army during the 1911 Revolution, and her 1912 letter to Yuan Shikai reprimanding his imperial ambition. In addition, the comparison with Qiu Jin was not always favorable to her: in fact, the higher Qiu Jin's stock grew, the lower Wu's sank. As Qiu Jin was increasingly represented as an extraordinary revolutionary hero in later history, Wu Zhiying became the negative foil, or in Guo Moruo's caustic words, "the pecking swallow" who could not possibly comprehend "the great aspirations of the magnificent roc."[3]

This negative picture may be traced to a particular self image that Wu Zhiying publicized in the aftermath of Qiu Jin's execution, a self image that may be said to give rise to others' unwitting or willful misrepresentations later. In a memoir of Qiu Jin written days after the execution and published barely three months later, Wu recounts a dialogue after Qiu Jin's return from Japan in 1906:

> From time to time, I [Wu] would caution her, saying: 'Your words are too shocking. Please be more circumspect. . . . Should a border official mistake you for a woman revolutionary, what then?' She [Qiu] laughed, 'There is a difference between revolutionary and revolution. Of course you of all people know that I'm not the sort of New Youth revolutionary.'[4]

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[3] Guo, "Nala de da'an" (Nora's reply). 1942. In *Ziliao*: 469.

[4] "Ji Qiu Nüshi yishi," *Ziliao*, 71–72. Qiu Jin's term for the particular kind of "revolutionary" in the last sentence is *xin shaonian*, a term usually associated with Liang Qichao since 1900, to be distinguished from *xin qingnian*, a term associated with the journal of the same title founded in 1915 by Chen Duxiu et al. While Qiu Jin's conversation with Wu possibly predates her official affiliation with a different kind of revolutionaries, namely the Revolutionary Alliance associated with Sun Yat-sen, it is important to note here that as reported by Wu, Qiu's reply is ambiguous.

Later citation of this conversation typically changed Qiu Jin's answer into "How do you know I am not a revolutionary?" thus portraying Qiu Jin to be a self-declared anti-Manchu revolutionary.[5] Given the timing of Wu's essay, her denial of Qiu Jin's revolutionary activity, the very crime for which she was executed, was largely motivated by the desire to clear Qiu Jin's name and implicitly to register her own critique of the Qing government. This is very much in concert with works published in Shanghai at the time, which typically painted Qiu Jin as a woman wrongly convicted (*yuan nü*), a modern version of Dou'er in the famous Yuan drama. In thus portraying herself as a more cautious interlocutor, Wu presents their conversation as circumstantial evidence for Qiu Jin's innocence. In portraying Qiu Jin as associating with moderates like herself, she was using her own social position to offer character witness. The stark contrast she draws between herself and Qiu Jin, deliberately glossing over political difference between them, is therefore for rhetorical and political reasons. Stripped of the immediate historical context, however, Wu's self- portrayal was later interpreted as a clear indication of her ties to traditional learning, at a time when "traditional learning" itself was fast being swept into the "dustbin of history." What became lost in this rapid historical process of transvaluation is one individual's critical engagement with this tradition.

It is by now a commonplace in historiography that in the consolidation of an accepted historical narrative, intelligibility is generated through the exclusion of other possible meanings. This is a process inherent in the writing of history and at which the May Fourth generation certainly could be said to excel.[6] A life like Wu Zhiying's may not have been in and of itself marginal at her time but becomes marginalized through the prevailing modern discourse of progress, and therefore becomes unreadable to us, heirs to this historical narrative. In studying Wu Zhiying's writing on Qiu Jin, my attempt is not so much a critique of later lionizations of Qiu Jin, nor do I aim at redressing the situation by reinterpreting Qiu Jin or Wu Zhiying as more-or-less "traditional" talented women. For to attempt either is to reinforce the dichotomy between "revolutionary" and "conservative" presumed in a teleological narrative of historical progress. Instead, in the following pages I attempt to restore the historical specificities of Wu's world on which the meanings of her intervention depends. My point is less to rehabilitate Wu than to observe that her apparently conservative motives contain intellectual possibilities toward imagining a different kind of modernity. I argue that Wu made full use of the occa-

[5] This is the version that appears in the official biography of Wu Zhiying by Chen Mi, found in the first issue of *Guoshi guan guankan* (Journal of the Institute of National History), 1/1:86 (1947). Also in *Ziliao*, 673.

[6] This line of argument came first from Foucault 1972 and de Certeau 1988. In the China field, among others, see Ko 1994 and Duara 1995.

sions of mourning Qiu Jin to introduce a radical perspective in understanding women's role in historical change. And this goal was accomplished not through application of Western models but through a highly creative engagement with classical texts. The hallmark of this engagement is her exercise of choice, namely, what part of a given classic to engage, which interpretive tradition to follow, and what model to choose or reject. These interpretive acts inject subtle meaning to her portrait of Qiu Jin as well as indicate her own position *vis-à-vis* her cultural heritage. Her works demonstrate a unique way to challenge deep-rooted cultural representations of the feminine and the masculine. In contemporary feminist parlance, here then is a woman who, through manipulation of available Chinese cultural repertoire, contested the very terms of gendered knowledge in the culture.[7] To restore meaning to Wu Zhiying's historical intervention, we need to ask first, what was her cultural repertoire and what did she do with it?

Family and Learning

Wu Zhiying was born in 1867 to a minor branch of the Wu family in Tongcheng, Anhui Province. Of her mother, née Zhang (?–1905), we know very little except that she was from Fengxian, Jiangsu. Her father, Wu Baosan (1838–90), was a poet-calligrapher without advanced degrees. In part because of his fine calligraphy, he was eventually promoted from a low level scribe to the position of district magistrate in Yuncheng, Shandong Province. The best known name in her paternal lineage was Wu Rulun (1840–1903),[8] advisor to several major statesmen of the time, prominent educator, and standard bearer for an important school in Qing literature, the Tongcheng archaic essay (*guwen*).[9] As first cousins, Wu Rulun and the less prosperous Baosan were brought up together and remained close through life.[10] When in her adulthood Wu Zhiying signed her name as "Tongcheng Wu Zhiying" as she often did in

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7 The classic statement of this feminist method is by Joan Scott 1999 [1986].

8 Wu Rulun became a *jinshi* in 1865, and soon became a member of the secretarial staff (*mufu*) of Zeng Guofan. After Zeng's death, he joined the *mufu* of Li Hongzhang. He was for a time District Magistrate at Shenzhou (1871–77) and Jizhou (1881–89), Hebei Province but retired early in 1889 (at 50 *sui*) to devote himself to educational ventures. Under Zeng and Li, he was interested in Western learning and was supportive of Yan Fu's translations. His extensive contact with Japanese educators was instrumental to Wu Zhiying's own broad outlook. Hummel 1943–44: 870–72. He wrote several biographies of women in which he exhibits a liberal attitude toward unconventional aspirations. See especially "Qinghe guancha Liugong furen shi xu," in Wu Rulun n/d: 452–54.

9 For discussion of Tongcheng guwen, see Huters 1989: 51–96. There has been a trend of reassessment of Tongcheng in Chinese scholarship of the past decade; see for example, Wu 1992.

10 According to Wu Rulun, Wu Baosan's mother died when he was quite young and Baosan was brought up in Rulun's family. See Wu Rulun, "Congxiong Yuncheng zhixian Wujun mubiao" (Epitaph for my paternal cousin Wu Baosan, Magistrate of Yuncheng," in Wu Rulun n/d: 53-–55.

her poetry, essays and calligraphic works, she was thus invoking more than just her native place but also implicitly an august classical tradition specifically associated with her uncle's name.[11] Her self-image and public persona is explicitly as the rightful heir to her family learning (*jiaxue*), broadly defined to include the study of classics and the practice of essays, poetry, and calligraphy.[12]

According to her biographers, Wu Baosan was past thirty years of age when Zhiying was born. There would be several younger siblings, both male and female, but none lived past childhood, thus making Zhiying the only surviving child.[13] Biographers cite her extraordinary precocity and the lack of male siblings as reasons for the excellent education she received as a child.[14] Indeed, under a specially hired tutor, she was educated as if she were a son. Biographers never fail to mention that Wu Rulun thought highly of Zhiying's precocity. In 1886, at the age of 19, she was married to the second son of her father's best friend and colleague, a young man with a reputation for literary talent named Lian Quan (Nanhu, 1868-1932). Except for a brief stint as a lower level bureaucrat in Beijing when Lian Quan was a colleague of Qiu Jin's husband and the two women first got acquainted, Lian did not hold official positions but was known for his publishing ventures and art collection.

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[11] The most extensive study of the Tongcheng scholarship lineage is by Liu Shengmu 1989 [1929]. This image of the solid Tongcheng tradition is challenged by recent scholarship. Kai-Wing Chow, for one, argues that the tradition of Tongcheng was invented by Fang Bao largely for "non-discursive" reasons of cultural and political authority. One could argue a similar case for Zeng Guofan's "revival" of Tongcheng. By the time of Wu Rulun, and even more so by the time of Wu Zhiying, Tongcheng was on the verge of extinction and yet appeared paradoxically very much a solid "school," so much so that someone like Liu Shengmu (1878–1959) would invest years tracing its genealogy.

[12] In Liu Shengmu's genealogy, two women are listed (215, 307) but not Wu Zhiying. Since Liu defines lineage through either formal teacher-student relations (*shouye*) or more informally copying a master's style (*sishu*), Wu's eclectic method was perhaps responsible for her exclusion. Regardless of her formal affiliation, Wu Zhiying was clearly aware of the accomplishments of earlier Tongcheng masters, one indication being her collection and imitation of the calligraphy of Yao Nai. See Hui 1936. For women's place in a "genealogy of learning" and its function to "strengthen a woman's ties to her natal family while enhancing her value to her marital one," see Mann 1997: 206. The ease with which Wu Zhiying practiced this "family learning" belies the dispute over a woman's right to such inheritance. When she attempted to use her inheritance to establish a new style local school in her father's name in 1906-07, her male cousins in Tongcheng successfully disputed her right as a married daughter to inherit her father's estate. For a daughter's inheritance rights in the Qing and the Republican eras, see Bernhardt 1999, Chapters 1 and 6.

[13] The earliest biography of Wu Zhiying was written by Yan Fu, "Lianfuren Wu Ziying zhuan," published in *Dagong bao*, December 1, 1908. An edited version can be found in *Ziliao*: 671–62. Soon after Wu's own death, her cousin Hui Yuming published *Wu Zhiying zhuan* (Biography of Wu Zhiying) which includes a collection of Wu's own works in addition to Hui's biography of her. A third biography can be found in the first issue of *Guoshi guan guankan* written by Chen Mi, Nanjing, December 1947. Also found in *Ziliao*, 673–75.

[14] Such themes are familiar in women's biography. See Mann's list: "talented women carry on and transmit the family's tradition of learning; they are taught by fathers; they come from families where sons are absent, few or disabled; they are child prodigies." Mann 1997:213.

Theirs seemed to have been an exceptionally companionate marriage, husband and wife well matched in matters of temperment and artistic taste.[15] They shared a studio name, promoted each other's literary reputation and had their poetry published together.[16] Both Wu and her husband were profoundly involved in Buddhist practice.[17] In addition to employing the literati tradition of family printing as she did in her poetry and art publications, Wu Zhiying also published her essays, poems, and letters in the newspapers and periodicals of her time.

Choosing Biography and Its Models

Within days of Qiu Jin's execution, Wu Zhiying wrote three essays: "Qiu Jin's Biography" (Qiu Nüshi zhuan), "Sacrificial Prayer for Qiu Jin" (Ji Qiu Nüshi wen), and "Memoir of Qiu Jin" (Ji Qiu Nüshi yishi), all published in Shanghai.[18] After the founding of the Republic, she wrote another two essays: "Sacrificial Prayer for Qiu Jin, the Woman Martyr" (Ji Qiu Nülieshi wen), and "Preface to *The Collected Works of Qiu Jin*" (*Qiu Jin yizhu* xu). Compared with her poems on Qiu Jin, which commemorate their friendship and offer solace to Qiu Jin's spirit—an important part of Wu's work not discussed in this paper—the essays serve a more public function. Because of the distinctively different political atmosphere of these two periods, the essays will be discussed in separate sections in the following pages.

The time when Wu Zhiying wrote the first three essays was a particularly dark period, with the Qing government making vain promises of constitutional reform while suppressing political dissent, including persecuting fam-

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[15] Contemporaries often compared their marriage to that of Zhao Mingcheng and Li Qingzhao of the Song dynasty: both men were essentially private scholars, both women noted for their poetic talent, both couples famous for their collections of art and especially their collections of stele rubbings. When Wu Zhiying couldn't go to the burial and memorial service of Qiu Jin because of a recent miscarriage, her husband was the one who, with Qiu Jin's brother, managed the details of the event and was personally present from beginning to end. *Ziliao*: 143.

[16] All her book publications were privately issued from their studio Xiaowanliu tang, including two volumes of poetry, the *Surangama Sutra*, and a catalogue of their collection of Wang Yun's paintings.

[17] This aspect of her life, to be discussed elsewhere, is also important in her commemoration of Qiu Jin, as she hand copied the *Surangama Sutra* in 1908 as part of her mourning ritual for Qiu Jin.

[18] "Qiu Nüshi zhuan" and "Ji Qiu Nüshi wen" were published on December 20, 1907 in the inauguration issue of the periodical *Shenzhou nübao* (Chinese Women's Journal). This periodical is the combination of Qiu Jin's own journal of a slightly different name, *Zhongguo nübao*, and another women's journal *Xinnüzi shijie* (New Women's World), edited by Chen Yiyi. Wu Zhiying's own calligraphy graces the front page of the two-hundred-page book-format monthly. "Ji Qiu Nüshi yishi" was written about the same time and published in September in the appendix to the book-length traditional drama about Qiu Jin's death *Liuyue shuang chuanqi* (The Legend of Frost in June), written by Guyue yingzongjinü (pseudonym) and published by the Fiction Society (Xiaoshuo huishe) in Shanghai. In *Ziliao*, 68, 71, 551.

ily members of political prisoners.[19] Indeed, months after the execution, Qiu Jin's body was yet to be properly buried and her family was still in hiding. Why, then, did Wu Zhiying choose to write these biographical essays at this time, since not all lives get translated into life writings and least of all the lives of executed criminals?

Here, Wu Zhiying's family learning may shed some light on her biographical practice. In part because of the high esteem accorded to the genre of the terse archaic essay (*guwen*), one significant category within the Tongcheng tradition had always been the biographical essay. Thus, in the personal collections of Tongcheng writers, we find more than the usual amount of biographies, prefaces, epitaphs, and the like. Even more noticeable are biographies of minor personages. Indeed, Tongcheng master Liu Dakui (1698–1779) explicitly valorized such a model from antiquity: "In ancient times, it was the task of official historians to write biographies for those who held high office or were otherwise prominent. When private literati wrote biographies, they featured either a bricklayer or a gardener."[20] Although not too many bricklayers are actually written about, there are certainly many biographies on unsuccessful examination candidates, literati doctors, and even people out of political favor. In the collections of early Tongcheng writers, we especially find biographies of those persecuted by the Qing for harboring Ming loyalism.[21] Fang Bao (1668–1749), founder of the Tongcheng school, was imprisoned for two years because of his involvement in a notorious case of early Qing literary inquisition. Among his uncollected works is one biography on a fellow prisoner who died while incarcerated.[22] In writing biographical essays of someone like Qiu Jin and voicing political dissent through biography, Wu Zhiying is thus following this particular strand of her family learning.[23]

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[19] The regime was inconsistent and sometimes ineffectual in its suppression, but evidently had not lost its terrifying power. The relatives of Wang Jinfa, Qiu Jin's close colleague, were imprisoned for months, and Qiu Jin's other colleague Xu Xilin's family was also persecuted. New-style schools in the region were ransacked, and some were forced to close. See Qiu Yuzhang, "Dao Xuanqing chang'ge bin xu" (Long poem and preface in commemoration of Qiu Jin), in *Ziliao*: 571–72, "Zhe'an yupo" (Aftermath of the Qiu Jin's case), published in *Yuehen*, special edition of *Nübao*, August 1909, and Xia Xiaohong, 229–30.

[20] This principle was made more influential by another Tongcheng master Yao Nai in his preface to his widely circulated *Guwenci leicuan*. See Yao, "Guwenci leicuan xu," *Tongcheng pai wenxuan* (Collected Works of Tongcheng Essays), ed. Qi and Wang 1984: 236.

[21] On the Tongcheng tradition of using the *guwen* as a vehicle of remonstrance, see Elman 1990:288, 294–95.

[22] Fang, "Yu Shimin aici," Qi and Wang 1984: 97. Fang was incarcerated for writing a preface to *Nanshan ji*, collected works by Dai Mingshi (1653–1713). For persecution of Dai and those around him, see He Guanbiao 259–75 and in English see Chow, 189.

[23] We also find a good many biographies of chaste widows and the like in Tongcheng *guwen* (Liu Dakui, in particular, has a great many of these in his collection), the model that Wu Zhiying does not choose.

Judging by the different kinds of biographies Wu Zhiying wrote, these essays were to accomplish a multitude of goals. The informal memoir (*yishi*), for example, is primarily aimed at contesting the official record of Qiu Jin as a criminal and protecting her family from further persecution. Traditionally, the memoir is an anecdotal character sketch written by family members or intimate friends of the deceased, typically the vehicle for little known events not recorded in formal history, sometimes written with the expressed purpose of correcting a prevailing judgment of the deceased.[24] Here Wu's basic argument is that Qiu Jin was convicted of a far larger crime than justified by her action. Even if she had committed a crime, Wu rhetorically argued, there is "explicit regulation from antiquity" (*guyou mingxun*) that "relatives of criminals should not be persecuted" (*zuiren bu'nu*). At the end of the memoir, Wu Zhiying states her motive for the narration thus:

> Since I could claim some acquaintance (*yiri zhi ya*) with Qiu Jin and am able to speak of her life, I would like to vouch for her family with my life, and hope that those in power and responsible for the preparation of the constitution would open one side of their legal net and give orders so that the innocents could survive. Please do not continue to weave nonsense cases against her family so that the spirit of the dead could rest in peace. This is my intention for the writing of her biography and memoir.[25]

In a direct plea to bureaucratic and legal authority, Wu's memoir is clearly meant to have an effect on real life and contemporary events, in addition to bearing historical witness to a remarkable life.[26] Also noteworthy is Wu Zhiying's direct address of the constitutionalists as potential sympathizers or at least lenient handlers of Qiu Jin's case. It is a clear indication of her awareness of the political forces at play, since the gentry and merchants in favor of the constitution were very active just around then,[27] and they were, as later

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[24] Shih-Hsiang Chen describes this phenomenon as a struggle between "unique character" versus "conventional virtue." Chen 1953: 49–62. Another way of discussing the same phenomenon is offered by Denis Twichett as compartmentaliztion of biographical information. Twichett 1962: 27.

[25] "Qiu Nüshi yishi," *Ziliao*, 71.

[26] One of the functions of biographical writing was quite concretely political intervention in the sense of either saving someone from political persecution, or of redeeming someone who has been persecuted. Wu Zhiying's biographies of Qiu Jin clearly fulfilled the latter goal. When Wu herself was blacklisted, her friends Yan Fu and the American missionary educator Luella Miner (1861–1936) published biographies of her in Chinese and English newspapers in an effort to prevent the government's persecution, thus pursuing the former goal.

[27] Rankin argues that local self-government and educational associations were the new avenues for political activism created after 1907, around which time Wu Zhiying wrote her biography. Rankin 1971:5.

events would prove, instrumental in loudly expressing public opinion and thus exerting pressure on the Qing court to punish officials responsible for Qiu Jin's death.[28]

If the informal memoir portrays Qiu Jin from the angle of a private friend, the formal biography (*zhuan*) aims more directly to secure a place for Qiu Jin in public history. Of all the sub-categories of biographical writing, *zhuan* had the closest ties to official history, a generic precedent set by the paradigmatic history of the *Shiji*. Even as privately written *zhuan* proliferated in late imperial times, the public significance of this sub-genre was not far from people's minds.[29] Indeed, private scholars wrote formal biography often with the intention that their writings would supply drafts for dynastic history.[30] Given this context, it might bear emphasizing again that at the time of Wu's writing, Qiu Jin was far from a celebrated revolutionary hero but a convicted state criminal, thus not a proper subject for formal biography, for, typically, "nobody would have dared to write, much less to submit to the Historiographical Office, an 'account of conduct' of a rebel."[31] This may in part explain why among the many works lamenting Qiu Jin's death published or circulated before 1911, none called itself formal biography. Part of Wu Zhiying's basic message thus lies in the deliberate choice of the formal biography form itself: it is an act of defiance, subtle as it may be, both in terms of insisting on a public place for Qiu Jin's memory and also on her own authority as a public historian.

One of the generic markers of the formal biography is the judgment statement in which the historian steps forward at the end of the biography to pronounce his opinion on a variety of matters. It is here that Wu Zhiying explicitly assumes the role of the official historian. In the last passage of the biography, she steps into this special position by stating unapologetically: "Wu Zhiying proclaims . . . " (*Wu Zhiying yue*).[32] Rather than assuming the conventional

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[28] Zeng Pu, author of *Niehai hua* and one of the most active Zhejiang constitutionalists, played a central role in these events. See Xia Xiaohong, 229–30.

[29] Gu Yanwu, for example, said that "if one were not in capacity of an official historiographer, one should not write anybody's biography (*zhuan*)," a line repeated by many. For Gu, the same injunction evidently did not apply to private memorial stele and epitaphs. See Chen Shih-hsiang: 53. Another indication that writers of *zhuan* were conscious of its public nature is the many compound names that designate the unofficial nature of privately written *zhuan*, such as *xiaozhuan, sanzhuan, waizhuan,* and *biezhuan*.

[30] Twichett 1962: 26. Retrospectively this is indeed the case with Wu Zhiying's biography of Qiu Jin, as it got incorporated into official history of the founding of the Republic.

[31] Twichett 1962:33.

[32] This feature was first made famous by Sima Qian, although even his use of this format had generated debate hinging on the issue of whether it wasn't too presumptuous for him to use such a self-reference. Later historians starting with Ban Gu typically avoided the direct use of the first person while retaining its usefulness by starting the commentary section with the neutral terms of *lun, zan*, or *ping*. For discussion of this issue, see Watson 1958: 131–32, 181.

feminine self-deprecatory position or hiding behind a more neutral third-person, Wu Zhiying instead plainly presents herself as the authoritative voice in history, an authority that comes from the long-established textual convention of formal history. In concert with this public role, Wu ends the biography with a satirical lament, again inserting her comment on the historical moment: "Alas, and we call our time one in which to prepare for the constitution!" This is a direct comment on the Court's announcement in 1905 that it was preparing for a future constitutional monarchy, an intent that by 1907 came under increasing suspicion in progressive circles. In appointing herself the formal task of writing history and commenting on contemporary events, Wu Zhiying thus parallels her biographical subject in intervening in the public domain.

An even more explicit demonstration of Wu Zhiying's writing as public protest can be found in her "Sacrificial Prayer for Qiu Jin." The typical sacrificial prayer (*jiwen*) is a tetra-syllabic, rhymed or partially rhymed prose-poem, to be chanted during ritual sacrifice to the deceased; its content may range from personal lamentation to public commentary on the life and times of the deceased.[33] Wu Zhiying's essay is a variation of this generic norm: a satirical prose essay intended for publication, it serves quite openly as forum for political critique. Reversing the prevailing sentiment of lamenting Qiu Jin's victimization, the essay begins by declaring that it is only natural that "when a great building is about to collapse, the major columns and pillars are to be broken." The metaphor of the country as a collapsing building is a recurrent one in late Qing literature; what is striking in Wu Zhiying's use of the metaphor here is that a woman is described as the pillar of this collapsing building, a position usually reserved for great statesmen. Continuing the logic of reversal, Wu then proclaims Qiu Jin lucky to have died and thus to have escaped "the possible fate of becoming slaves like the rest of us"—an index of her own sense of the dire direction of Chinese history at the time.[34] Departing from her usual restrained style, the satire of rest of the essay is quite biting in its critique of the Qing officials who executed Qiu Jin: " What is depraved and unnatural is voracity; those who wallow in voracity are brutes. The governor of Zhejiang is an honorable man, surely not to be compared to such brutes?" It is avarice for career advancement that led Qing officials to "calumniate Qiu Jin," as Wu Zhiying repeatedly points out. Perhaps in verbally savaging the Qing officials, Wu Zhying's essay is metaphorically performing the sacrifice that ritually accompanies such essays in antiquity.

Part of the meaning of Wu Zhiying's three biographical essays can thus be located in their immediate political context, as they function to contest offi-

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[33] Bossler, 71–72.

[34] The rhetoric of slavery was prevalent at the time. For analysis of it, see Karl 2001.

cial record, to protect Qiu Jin's family from further persecution, and to insert Wu Zhiying's own alternative record in public history. In constructing this alternative record, Wu Zhiying as the biographer also had a wide range of interpretive choices to make. An iconoclastic life like Qiu Jin's inevitably invites multiple interpretations, and if a biographer aims to reveal the hopes and aspirations of one who led such a life, still greater interpretive space is opened up. The Chinese tradition of biographical writing, as Denis Twichett pointed out some years ago, typically uses standardized conventions and models to interpret a life.[35] As Wu Zhiying deliberately chooses certain models from a range of possible alternatives, the meaning of her portrait resides as much in the historical real as in the accumulated cultural signification of the chosen models. Thus while Wu Zhiying's essays claim to offer no more than eyewitness accounts, like her choices of genres, her choices of models are also acts of interpretation.

In order to appreciate Wu Zhiying's choices, it is instructive to observe first what available models she does not choose to employ in her construction of Qiu Jin's life. Most notably, she does not choose Western models popular at the time,[36] although she does mention them once in passing in the formal biography:

> The lady [Qiu Jin] by nature was forthright. When she happened to meet benighted ones, she would confront them head-on, leaving little room for compromise. People often held this against her. Some even compared her to Sophia [Perovskaia] and Mme Roland. She would answer [to such appellations] without much thought (*man yingzhi*).

Thus, the Western models appear in a somewhat negative light, coming as they do from those who did not like Qiu Jin's uncompromising personality. Further still, Qiu Jin herself appears only to answer to such comparisons casually. While it is clear that the West was present as a frame of reference, as it is inescapably the case in much of late Qing writing, Wu Zhiying ultimately did not use Western women like Sophia Perovskaia and Mme Roland as models to portray her friend. In addition to the danger of confirming Qiu Jin's revolution, it seems as if, for Wu, such models are not as compelling nor do they have much explanatory power.

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[35] See Twitchett 1962: 35.

[36] For discussion of popular western models in the late Qing, see Xia Xiaohong, 179–208 and Hu Ying 2000, Chapters 2 and 3.

Another notable absence is the Chinese tradition of *Biography of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan*), a tradition that still carried a good deal of its moral authority and enjoyed much hold on people's imagination at the time.[37] Arguably, Qiu Jin does not fit easily into the established categories: not a "wise mother" (*xianshu*) for having left her young children to go to Japan, nor a "faithful wife/widow" (*jiefu*) for having initiated separation from her husband, nor even a "talented lady" (*caiyuan*) since it does not describe all of her life. Yet, the category of "heroic martyrs or suicides" (*yilie*) might have offered a model, a category that was specifically remade to interpret more recent lives with heroic overtones and was to become the more protein model for later hagiographies of people like Qiu Jin as martyr or *lieshi*. It is notable that Wu Zhiying did not locate Qiu Jin's death in terms of self-sacrifice, however noble that might have made it appear. Instead, she consistently interpreted Qiu Jin's death as a tragic result of malicious slander, a central topoi from classical literature and history.

To appreciate her rejection of the tradition of female exemplars, a brief comparison with two other contemporary essays on Qiu Jin may be illuminating, one by Xu Zihua (1873–1935) and the other by Zhang Binglin (1869–1936), both written within months of her execution.

In a essay written in February of 1908 for the stele inscription (*mubiao*), Xu Zihua clearly felt the need to defended Qiu Jin's virtue in traditionally feminine terms:

> In closely examining [Qiu Jin's] conduct, [we see that] she was careless of details, tended to give free expression to her emotions, and loved wine and swords—all as if she were not to be reined in by convention. Yet, in her true essence, she was exceptionally upright and prudent. . . . Although she loved freedom, in matters concerning propriety, she never transgressed.[38]

With telling conjunctions of "as if," "yet," and "although" (*ruo, ran, sui . . . er*), Xu Zihua is clearly building a case to explain away Qiu Jin's transgressive behavior. Juxtaposed with Qiu Jin's outward disregard for conventionality, Xu argues for a different "true essence" (*benzhong*) that lies deep in Qiu Jin, an essence that is "upright and prudent" (*duanjin*), standard terms in descriptions of female paragons of virtue.[39]

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[37] Even in new-style textbooks for young female citizens, the *lienü* existed side-by-side with western female exemplars. See Judge 2004: 102–135.

[38] First printing of this stele inscription is in 1908 through Beiqiu ge ("The Garret for Mourning Qiu Jin," Wu Zhiying's private press), and later in 1912 in the third volume put out by the Southern Society.

[39] This is very much in concert with contemporary depictions of Western women heroes; the more radical her political actions, the more virtuous her personal morals had to be. See Hu Ying 2000, Chap. Three.

In a preface to the first collection of Qiu Jin's poetry published in Japan, Zhang Binglin addresses what clearly appears to him a very problematic aspect of Qiu Jin's personality, namely, her talkativeness.[40] While he cannot but applaud Qiu Jin's revolutionary intent, three times Zhang voices criticism over her love of speech making. Such a trait with its connotation of rash speech is conceived as diametrically opposed to one of the four feminine virtues, "prudence in words" (*jin yan*). As such, it had long been considered a feminine vice, and thus counts as one of the seven reasons to warrant expulsion of one's wife.[41] That even people in the progressive circles like Zhang Binglin would be discomforted by Qiu Jin's love of speech making is indicative of the pervasiveness of this misogynistic strain. Clearly Zhang himself was quite attached to traditional norms of femininity, as he takes pains to point out that Qiu Jin's birthplace Shanyin is also the native place of Cao'er, famous filial daughter commemorated in the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, and therefore the place where "the way of the feminine was long established."[42] Zhang Binglin thus concludes: "I heard that in ancient times, those who were good at swordsmanship held true spirit within and exhibited placid appearance without. Few were garrulous." In other words, despite Qiu Jin's aspirations to being a swordswoman/ revolutionary, her departure from "the way of the feminine" is what prevents her from truly fulfilling her mission—a rather harsh judgment from a fellow revolutionary. To commit to the tradition of female exemplars at all, it appears, one would either have to censor Qiu Jin as Zhang Binglin does or defend her on intractable ground as Xu Zihua attempts to do.

Xia and *Zhiyin:* Uses of the *Shiji* Tradition

In contrast, Wu Zhiying's portrait of Qiu Jin pointedly does not refer to any such "feminine way" or "feminine virtues." She sidesteps the need to defend Qiu Jin's transgression against gender norms by avoiding this tradition altogether. Instead, she draws from another tradition, namely, the time-honored

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[40] Zhang Binglin, "*Qiu Jin ji* xu" (Preface to *Qiu Jin's Collected Works*), originally published in *Qiu Jin shici* (Qiu Jin's Collected Poetry) ed. Wang Zhiyu (Tokyo, 1907). It also appeared in *Min bao*, no. 17 (October 25, 1907). *Ziliao*: 341.

[41] The seven reasons (*qichu*) are: unfilial, no male issue, lasciviousness, jealousy, offensive illness, loquaciousness, and theft. The earliest citation comes from *Kunzi jiayu*, a compilation from 2–3rd century purporting to be Confucius's own family doctrines. Although the seven reasons had been incorporated into the legal codes since Tang dynasty, at least in late imperial times, except in cases of extramarital sexual offense, expulsion of wives was relatively rare, and rarer still for the offense of loquaciousness. See Wang Yuesheng and Guo Songyi.

[42] Where Zhang praises Qiu Jin's poetry, he describes her style in the narrowest feminine terms, prompting one reader of his preface to exclaim that he must not be talking about a large number of Qiu Jin's poems. Liang Yizhen 1927: 247-57.

motifs in historical/ biographical writing whose *locus classicus* is Sima Qian's *Shiji*, specifically "The Biographies of Assassins."

More than a major work in the Chinese cultural repertoire, the *Shiji* is a particularly revered classic in the Tongcheng tradition. Repeatedly Wu Zhiying's forebears turn to the *Shiji* for practical models of ethical importance and as well as for narrative techniques, deriving from it the principles of Tongcheng "moralizing method" (*yifa*). In her choice of interpretive models as in her choice of the subgenre of the official biography, then, Wu Zhiying indicates "the content of her form," as if to say: what better ways to legitimize the moral worth of a highly unconventional life than to use the most conventional, that is to say, the most culturally sanctioned, models to interpret it. Specifically, Wu returns again and again to the motifs of knight-errant (*xia*) and that of seeking recognition (*zhiyin*), the main threads with which she weaves the story of Qiu Jin's life.

Qiu Jin identified herself most profoundly with the image of *xia*: in many of her poems, she uses the terms *xia* or *xiagu* to describe herself; her courtesy name was "The Female Knight-errant from Jianhu" (*Jianhu nüxia*) adopted since 1903;[43] in her own handwriting of large cursive script were the characters "Reading books, practicing the sword" (*dushu jijian*), an allusion to "Biographies of Assassins."[44] In choosing *xia* as her public persona, Qiu Jin no doubt expected to be identified by others as playing a recognizable role with a rich history.[45]

Generally speaking, the figure of *xia* as depicted in historical and fictional narratives is typically male and tends to have the following qualities: (1) martial abilities, (2) bravery in action, (3) self-sacrifice in assisting others, (4) correspondence between words and deeds, and (5) disregard for wealth and power. And, because the above traits are supposed to be unlike the ordinary, the *xia* is often not recognized for her true worth by those around her.[46] With

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[43] The courtesy name first appears in a letter to Qinwen, May 5, 1903. For the original, see *Qiu Jin Shiji*. For dating and brief discussion, see *Nianbiao* : 49. The name was used in her later publications in the periodicals *Baihua* (1904, Tokyo) and *Zhongguo nübao* (1907, Shanghai). The adoption of this courtesy name predates her dropping of the feminine term in her original middle name "gui," the first record of which was sometime in July, 1904, when she first registered in the overseas student registry in Tokyo, *Nienbiao*: 59.

[44] They were written on the occasion of the opening of Datong shifan xuetang, the school Xu Xilin founded and Qiu Jin taught in her last year of life. One of her surviving seals is carved with the same characters in seal script and was given as a gift to Feng Yi, her student at Dangtong xuetang, who was fond of imitating her calligraphic style. Wu Changfang 1984: 21.

[45] Wright 1964:21. Departing from the conventional assumption of sincere identity, Eileen Cheng recently argues that Qiu Jin's adoption of this persona may be largely strategic. Cheng 2003.

[46] For discussion of the knight-errant in English, see James Liu 1967 and Wai-yee Li 1997: 46-73, and in Chinese see Chen Pingyuan 1992. In its relation to late Qing new intellectuals, see Chen Pingyuan 1998: 275–319.

a long established history, the figure of *xia* is *the* conventionalized category to depict unconventional personality or behavior. In other words, the established tradition of the category provides ready-made authority to inscribe transgressive behavior that would have been otherwise unrepresentable, while the very traditional rendering of such behavior has the tendency to de-radicalize it. In part because of this inherent tension between transgression and domestication, the chief characteristic of the category of *xia* is its elasticity. In accordance with the immediate political context, Wu's first three essays use the *xia* category to shed favorable light on Qiu Jin's life, i.e. to some extent domesticating her transgression; in details chosen for highlight, however, an edge of ambiguity remains.

In her "Memoir," Wu Zhiying records an episode when Qiu Jin financially helped a political prisoner arrested for his involvement in the 1898 Reforms.[47] According to Wu, this was someone Qiu Jin did not at first know and came at a time when she herself was short on tuition funds for Japan. Here then is one anecdote that resonates with the *xia* category in more ways than one: bravery in action as it involves a political prisoner, self-sacrifice since the action was detrimental to her own immediate interest, and a cavalier attitude toward money which is typically seen as indication of disregard for worldly gains. And since Wu Zhiying was the one entrusted with the funds to be given to the prisoner, therefore one of the few who knew about this event, she then fulfills the personal and historical obligation to publish it to the world. Judging from the fact that this anecdote is repeated virtually unchanged in subsequent biographical accounts about Qiu Jin, it appears that this is the least problematic of Qiu Jin's qualities, and thus a good domesticating device. Because the receiver of this act of kindness is a political prisoner, recording this episode implicitly registers Qiu Jin's dissenting position. Incidentally it also parallels Wu Zhiying's own effort at commemorating Qiu Jin herself, an executed political criminal.

Another typical *xia*-like trait is also singled out for narration, namely, Qiu Jin's fondness for swords. In the "Memoir," Wu mentions Qiu Jin having her photograph taken in Beijing in a sword-dance pose, and she speaks highly of Qiu Jin's two poems on swords that were filled with heroic aspiration and melancholic lament.[48] To paint a more vivid picture of Qiu Jin as the swordswoman, Wu Zhiying recalls one particular episode in considerable detail. This was in February, 1906, when Qiu Jin had just returned from Japan

[47] The prisoner is Wang Zhao (1859–1933). Qiu Jin's diversion of her own tuition funds to help him was probably done in late March, 1904, three months before her departure for Japan.

[48] The photograph Wu speaks of is not extant, although one of the two poems composed before Qiu Jin left for Japan is. Among Qiu Jin's surviving poems, six have "sword" or "saber" in the title and several others discuss weaponry in the texts.

and came to visit Wu in Shanghai. At dinner, Qiu Jin recalled her adventure abroad: there she was, a lone woman traveling cheek to jowl with men of lower classes, her only defense the recently acquired Japanese saber. As the wine cups were drained, Qiu Jin got up to perform a sword dance. She then sang several verses of a Japanese song, which Wu's oldest daughter accompanied on the organ.[49] The music is said to be "solemn and stirring."

In choosing to highlight the sword and Qiu Jin's singing and dancing, Wu Zhiying adds depth and complexity to the portrait of a *xia*. No doubt the sword is singled out because it provides the requisite accessory for the *xia*, another term for which is indeed knight-with-sword (*jianxia*). Qiu Jin's fondness for weaponry is also consonant with the more recent veneration of martial spirit (*shangwu*), the dagger a ready symbol of anarchist assassins popular at the time. In later renditions of Qiu Jin's life, her fondness for the sword is simply interpreted as a sign of her dedication to radical revolution. If this is the case, what then motivates Wu Zhiying, herself by no means a radical revolutionary, to pay special attention to this aspect of Qiu Jin's life? The answer lies in a residual meaning that lies buried, perhaps because it is derived largely from traditional literati culture and therefore strikes a dissonant note with the revolutionary theme. For Qiu Jin's interest in weaponry can also be seen in the context of a long tradition of sword connoisseurship among literati collectors since the Ming.[50] Indeed, in her many poems written before and after her stay in Japan, Qiu Jin demonstrates considerable facility in the connoisseur language on weaponry.[51] While admittedly somewhat unusual for a woman, it is nonetheless a kind of connoisseurship that Wu Zhiying, herself an avid art collector, could easily appreciate.[52] Wu Zhiying's portrayal casts Qiu Jin's weaponry connoisseurship in the light of female *xia* on the road—rather typi-

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[49] Wu Zhiying's daughter is Wu Yan (1891–?), *Nianbiao*: 83. Xu Zihua also records a similar episode in which Qiu Jin did a dance with broad sword, with the indication that Xu was the only one present. In later accounts, the two episodes are typically combined so that Qiu Jin performed the dance in front of the Xu sisters, Wu Zhiying and her daughter and other women friends. In Xia Yan's play, Qiu Jin's audience is further enlarged to include her male comrade Wang Jinfa. See Qiu Canzhi 1955 and Xia Yan 1953[1942].

[50] As Craig Clunas notes, this is the one kind of connoisseurship that became particularly unreadable because it does not fit well with art collection of modern times. See Clunas 1991:9.

[51] A rough count shows at least twenty nominal terms for sword, many rich with historical connotation, including *ganjiang, moye, doumou, yujian, kunwu,* and *Luyang ge*. This is not to say that Qiu Jin was actually a sword connoisseur or collector but only that she participates in the language of sword connoisseurship that was current in history, drama, poetry, and fiction. Indeed, there is Japanese scholarship arguing that a dagger she saw at the home of her teacher Suzuki Shintarô in Japan was not an antique heirloom as she made it out to be in her poem. See Nakamura Takayuki, "Qiu Jin zazu" (Anecdotes on Qiu Jin), in *Ziliao*: 247-49. On Japanese sources on Qiu Jin, see Judge 2003.

[52] Wu and her husband were known for their collections of stele rubbings, antique fans, and paintings. They were also involved with Japanese connoisseurs and collectors, making it even more likely that Wu would appreciate Qiu Jin's fascination with the "Japanese saber."

cal of late Qing practice of melding together traditional literati interests with contemporary practice.

Qiu Jin's singing and dancing, lightweight if colorful details to modern readers, are central to the lyrical ethos of "The Biographies of Assassins." Before the assassin Jing Ke sets off on his doomed mission to kill the King of Qin, for example, he breaks into song, a song that has since become the hallmark of authentic heroism in Chinese cultural history. It is this song that sets the tragic mood and expresses the hero's "fierce determination that governed his fate."[53] It is precisely to play such a function that Wu Zhiying cites Qiu Jin's two poems, one song and one dance: through them, she portrays the hero in a spontaneous moment that gives authentic expression to her inner-most feelings. Notably, no words of either the poems or the song are recorded, only their impact on readers/listeners: Qiu Jin's poems of swords "elicited many responses in kind," and her song was "solemn and stirring." Like Jing Ke's song before departure, Qiu Jin's poems and songs envelop the entire narrative in an atmosphere of tragic lyricism, the ephemeral yet enduring music traces of an extraordinary presence which disappeared "all too quickly, not to be heard again."

Closely related to this tragic lyricism of the *xia* is the theme of *zhiyin*, one of those protean concepts in the Chinese cultural imagery, traceable to canonical texts and perennially alluded to by literati. The term is typically associated with a uniquely perceptive friend who recognizes one's true worth and aspirations, the assumption being that not having a *zhiyin* is the paramount misfortune of a man of talent although such recognition is acknowledged to be exceedingly rare. The role of the perceptive friend can be cast as an equal, as in the archetype of the zither player Bo Ya and his best listener Zhong Ziqi in the *Annuals of the Spring and Autumn*, or he could be cast as an appreciating employer/ruler, as in the biography of Yu Rang in *Shiji*. Further still, the perceptive friend could be cast as the historian, the one to preserve the name of the worthy for social and historical recognition, a task that Sima Qian, for one, repeatedly contemplated in his writing.[54]

There is another twist in the *zhiyin* theme that is particularly relevant here: as expressed in the famous parallel construction to be found, once again, in "Biographies of Assassins," it is said: "A gentleman dies on behalf of one who knows him, as a woman adorns herself for one who delights in her."[55]

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[53] Watson 1962: 161. For the connection between song poetry and historical narrative in *Shiji*, *Han shu,* and other related works, see Martin Kern, "Song Culture in the Western Han," forthcoming.

[54] For a thorough treatment of the theme of *zhiyin* through classical literature to later developments, see Henry 1987. Henry also links this theme especially to the image of the *xia*.

[55] In Sima Qian's letter to his friend Ren An, the expression is slightly altered: "A gentleman acts on behalf of one who knows him, as a woman adorns herself for one who delights in her." *Han shu*, *juan* 64: "Sima Qian zhuan," 1962: 2725–36. Translated by Hightower 1965: 95–102.

The superior man's desire to be recognized for his true worth has a long tradition of being couched in the metaphor of a woman being appreciated by her mate. More often than not, the sentiment is expressed in the negative, namely, when a gentleman is born out of his time and thus lives unappreciated, it is compared to a beautiful woman being rejected by her lover.[56] In its typical usage, as Eric Henry notes in his study of this motif, "Neglected-beauty stories were read as if they were actually neglected genius stories, so close was the literary identification of concubines with ministers."[57]

In portraying Qiu Jin as a woman of talent and aspiration, Wu Zhiying first points to Qiu Jin's misfortune in not finding a *zhiyin* in her husband and then steps in herself as the true friend and the one uniquely entrusted to preserve Qiu Jin's name in history.

In the formal biography, Wu Zhiying conspicuously leaves Qiu Jin's husband a complete blank: "When Qiu Jin was nineteen, she married so-and-so of certain rank from some province" (*jia moxian moguan mo*)—in other words, no name, no rank, and not even place of service.[58] This is of course highly unconventional in the narration of women's biography, in which a woman's marriage is treated as prominently as a man's passing of the civil service examination, namely, the beginning of her life-long career. More than a factual reflection of a friend's unhappy marriage, Wu Zhiying's implicit criticism of Qiu Jin's husband acquires cultural significance specifically in terms of the theme of *zhiyin*. It is striking that Wu Zhiying's use of this theme turns the table on the original analogy which contains several points of inequality: (1) between "one who knows him" (*zhiji*) and "one who delights in her" (*yueji*), there is the inequality of depth knowledge versus surface enjoyment; (2) between "a gentleman [who] dies/acts" and "a woman [who] adorns herself," there is the inequality of action that is self-transcendent versus action that is circumscribed by the physical self. In Wu Zhiying's hands, Qiu Jin is both the

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[56] The *locus classicus* of this theme is *Li Sao* and the associated legend of Qu Yuan, whose biography Sima Qian specifically cast in the light of a man not meeting his time. For a treatment of this theme in Sima Qian, see Durrant 1995, Chapter One. In Sima Qian's biography of Qu Yuan, the main motifs of this theme are laid out: "Qu Yuan was a man of undeviating duty who devoted all his loyalty and all his knowledge to the service of his prince; yet he was traduced by false witnesses. Well might he be called 'afflicted.' He was faithful, yet was disbelieved; loyal and yet calumniated." In insisting on "calumniation" by others as her cause of death, Wu Zhiying's portrayal of Qiu Jin also echoes Sima Qian's portrayal of Qu Yuan. The main difference is that for Wu the theme of public protest replaces that of loyalty, an ambiguity that has always been inherent in the reception of the Qu Yuan archetype.

[57] Henry, 29. For Qu Yuan, see Hawkes and Hellmut Wilhelm 1957: 310–19.

[58] Sometimes biographers used such blank designations when they did not know the specifics with the intention that those who did would fill in the blanks later. In the present case, since Wu and Qiu were close neighbors and their husbands were colleagues, the blanks are pointed omissions. In later works, such as the 1912 dirge, Wu's criticism of Qiu Jin's husband is more explicit.

"neglected beauty" as result of her failed marriage as well as an extraordinary statesman/genius born out of her time and not appreciated. In this context, Qiu Jin's unhappy marriage is no longer a purely private matter but takes on social and political significance. What is not appreciated is not her beauty nor even her personal talent but something more transcendent, namely, her aspirations. She is thus doubly tragic in not finding her *zhiyin*, her personal tragedy translated into a historical tragedy. In Qiu Jin's words as narrated by Wu Zhiying: "My songs find no one to accompany them (*wuchang wuhe*)," the ultimate lament of anyone brought up on the lyrical aesthetic of *zhiyin*.

And yet, someone did accompany Qiu Jin's song, if only for a brief moment, namely, Wu Zhiying's daughter. In scene after scene, unobtrusively yet consistently, Wu Zhiying inserts herself and family as Qiu Jin's friends with details that otherwise would have seemed extraneous given her good economical Tongcheng style. When Qiu Jin decides to study abroad in Japan, for example, Wu Zhiying describes the send-off party she and a few others organized, down to the precise location (Taoran ting in Beijing). When Qiu Jin sang her Japanese song, Wu particularizes even the musical instrument (a western organ) her daughter used to accompanied the song, much the same way that in "The Biographies of Assassins" Sima Qian supplies the detail of the specific musical instrument (*zhu*) the musician Gao Jianli used to accompany Jing Ke's famous song. Indeed, throughout her biographical essays on Qiu Jin, Wu Zhiying consistently appoints herself the position of the biographer/ historian, the one person who knew about Qiu Jin's aspirations and who bore witness to her last moments, the person who is therefore under obligation to tell the world about the deceased.

This sense of historical obligation recalls another character in "The Biographies of Assassins," namely, Nie Rong. When her brother Nie Zheng assassinated the prime minister of Han, thereby fulfilling his obligation to a true *zhiyin*, he defaced himself before dying in order to protect his family from further persecution. When Nie Rong heard of this, she went to the market and openly mourned by the corpse, saying "How could I, out of fear that I might be put to death, allow so worthy a brother's name to be lost forever?"[59] Given the implicit prohibition against proper burial of an executed criminal in Qiu Jin's case, the parallel to the *Shiji* story could not have been far from people's minds. Qiu Jin's own brother, Qiu Yuzhang, made a powerful allusion to Nie Rong in a poem about his deeply felt pain for not being able to attend to proper burial rituals.[60]

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[59] Watson 1964: 54.

[60] The couplet reads: "Nie Zheng had a sister, [but apparently] Qiu Jin had no brother." Qiu Yuzhang, "Dao Xuanqing chang'ge bing xu" (Long poem and preface in commemoration of Qiu Jin), in *Ziliao*: 571-72.

In the writing of Qiu Jin's life, Wu Zhiying thus follows in the footsteps of the grand historian Sima Qian specifically in two senses: to rescue from oblivion the intent of one whose action may not have accomplished anything, and to perform the task of the necessary intermediary who records the ephemeral intent. The goal of literature, as noted by generations of scholars, springs from the impulse for immortal fame, a name in history. This goal becomes all the more elusive for those failed heroes whose action did not influence the course of history and it is here that the historian's role becomes crucial, for, as Watson notes in his classic study of the Grand Historian, "an intermediary is needed if virtuous and deserving men, particularly those who did not succeed in achieving great power or eminence in their time, are not to be forgotten." Sima Qian's own work "is not so much a record of the facts of history as a record of the hopes, ambitions, and wills of men. . . . It is for this reason that speeches, conversations, the declarations of intent, are often more important in the *Shih chi* [*Shiji*] than the recital of actual deeds."[61] And it is in this respect that the *Shiji* may be said to provide practical models for Wu Zhiying's biographical practice. In modeling Qiu Jin on the famed assassins from *Shiji*, Wu Zhiying also models herself on the role of the Grand Historian.[62] Like Gao Jianli, Wu Zhiying performed the role of Qiu Jin's *zhiyin* during her life time; like Nie Rong, Wu Zhiying as the sworn sister of Qiu Jin mourned her death publicly; like Sima Qian, she then employed biographies to immortalize her friend in the pages of history.

Women in Revolution: Scripted in the Yijing

Soon after the founding of the Republic in 1912, Wu Zhiying wrote two more essays: "Preface to *The Collected Works of Qiu Jin*" (*Qiu Jin yizhu* xu) and "Sacrificial Prayer for Qiu Jin, the Woman Martyr" (Ji Qiu nülieshi wen).[63] No longer aimed at presenting Qiu Jin's life in a positive light, as her earlier biographies did, these two essays focus on giving meaning to her death, and this time, primarily through applying the *Yijing* as an interpretive framework. While in her earlier essays Wu Zhiying borrows authority and motifs from the

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[61] Watson 1958: 158, 164.

[62] In a fine textual analysis, Stephen Durrant compares Sima Qian's portrayal of Nie Rong with earlier sources and concludes that Sima Qian shifts the emphasis of the biography to Nie Rong, in large measure because "Rong negates the effacement and, through disclosing the corpse's past, becomes the attendant of the historian. . . . Sima Qian is a historian who has refused suicide, at least until the names of the past are preserved. In this decision to make names known, he is Rong." Durrant 1997: 108–09.

[63] The preface was written on June 24, 1912 for a limited edition of Qiu Jin's poetry put together by Qiu Jin's son Wang Yuande and her friend Wang Shize for Qiu Jin's memorial service in Changsha, Hunan. *Ziliao*: 345. The sacrificial essay is found only in Hui Yuming's collection, with no indication of original publication date. Wu says in the text that it was composed in November, 1911. Hui Yuming 1936: 9.

canonical interpretation of the *Shiji*, with the *Yijing* she performs an apparently conventional exegesis but draws from it a conclusion decidedly unprecedented in the long tradition of *Yijing* interpretation. Significantly, Wu's argument is not conducted through an application of alternative norms such as those from the West, but through an exegesis of certain parts of the *Yijing* itself, a practice of "immanent critique," in modern parlance.[64] Thus, she exclaims: "How amazing! The *Yijing* illuminates me! Isn't Qiu Jin what [the *Yijing*] means that it is for 'the young daughter' [*shaonüzi*] 'to make civilization joyous and luminous' [*yueli hu wenmin*]? '[She] attained a central position and resonated with the hard and the strong' [*dezhong yingang*]."[65] What her exegetical exercise achieves are two goals: justifying Qiu Jin's political participation specifically as a woman, and registering Wu's own political intervention in the early days of the Republic.

Both of these goals can be understood in the immediate historical context of her writing, when political power had changed hands but many battles continued to be fought on ideological and constitutional grounds. Qiu Jin's revolutionary activities, for example, no longer had to be camouflaged now that the Republic had been founded. The issue of women's political participation, however, was still a topic of considerable political contention. During this period, Wu Zhiying herself was actively engaged with women's activist groups. Earlier, in 1911 Shanghai, she financially sponsored the women's northern expedition army, which, when disbanded abruptly, served as a hotbed for suffrage leaders.[66] In February and March of 1912, she was among the representatives of two women's groups who sent in petitions to the Republican government to demand political suffrage, legal and educational equality.[67] Between March and November 1912, despite earlier promises from Sun Yat-sen, the demand for women's suffrage was repeatedly denied in the Assembly.

In the midst of this heated debate in June, Wu Zhiying wrote her preface to Qiu Jin's poetry, and later in November she composed the formal "Sacrificial

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[64] The term is associated especially with Theodore Adorno. In contrast to "transcendental critique," immanent critique is practiced through immersion in the internal form and structure of cultural objects. For a succinct description, see *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, 202–04.

[65] This is a cryptic citation/comment that Wu later explains more fully. It is an allusion to hexagram 58 Dui. Lynn: 505, Wilhelm: 224. Throughout my discussion of Wu's use of the *Yijing*, I will identify her citation and render it in Lynn's translation, but also supply citations from Wilhelm.

[66] Hui Yuming recounts Wu's donation to the uprising in Anhui during the 1911 Revolution. Du Wei explicitly links Wu with the Shanghai-based women's army in 1911. I am grateful to Mary Rankin, who introduced this last source to me.

[67] The first group of twenty was headed by Zhang Hanying and demanded immediate political suffrage. Their petition appeared in *Shibao*, February 27, 1912. The second group, named Shenzhou nüjie gonghe xieji she (Association of Chinese women for the promotion of the Republic), in a public letter to Sun Yat-sen, requested the Assembly to set up a special women's gallery in the parliament, thus preparing for full suffrage in the near future. *Minli bao*, March 3, 1912.

Prayer." In both essays, she used the occasion to commemorate Qiu Jin, recently elevated to the status of a revolutionary martyr, to make a strong case for women's participation in the political arena. The two essays are quite different in style, the "Preface" in terse Tongcheng archaic prose, the "Sacrificial Prayer" a lavish tetra-syllabic, partially rhymed prose-poem. Both make extensive use of the *Yijing* to interpret Qiu Jin and come to the same conclusion. Perhaps because of the stylistic constraints dictated by rhyme and semantic flourish, the "Sacrificial Prayer" does not develop the exegesis in as much detail as the "Preface."[68] The following analysis will cite the "Preface" alone as textual basis.

In choosing to engage this oldest of the classics, Wu Zhiying is both carrying forward her "family learning" and pushing the limit of acceptable women's learning. To situate Wu Zhiying's use of this classic, it may be helpful briefly to review the state of *Yijing* studies and the position of Wu Rulun's scholarship in this tradition.

Originally a divination manual, the *Yijing* is a text of many layers put together between the ninth and the second centuries BCE. The core text consists of sixty-four hexagrams (*gua*), their names and cryptic commentaries; it was conventionally believed to be invented by the sages of antiquity, Fu Xi, King Wen, and the Duke of Zhou. Later layers of the text, consisting of more elaborate commentary and exegesis, are collectively referred to as the Ten Wings (*shiyi*) and attributed to Confucius. The *Yijing* became canonized around 135 BCE as the first of the five classics of the Confucian tradition. Since then, the paradigmatic models offered by the basic images of the hexagrams and the accompanying statements have been used to explain every possible life situation, while the more explicitly cosmological parts of the classic have provided basis for a wide range of philosophical schools. Any well-educated literatus had some acquaintance with the *Yijing*, and those with pretension to serious learning added their interpretation to the long exegetical tradition. Wu Zhiying's uncle, the eminent Tongcheng scholar Wu Rulun, for example, wrote a two-*juan* commentary on the *Yijing*, posthumously published by Wu Zhiying and her husband.

During the Qing, the main contributors to *Yixue* studies came from partisans of Han Learning (*kaozheng*), which sought to purge Daoist elements from orthodox Song *Yijing* study. Its chief intellectual contribution was the questioning of authorship, namely, which part of the classic was composed by Confucius. Schematically speaking, the Old Text school of classical studies

[68] While it is true that a preface to a poetry collection is a perfect occasion to display one's learning, the fact that Wu delves into the *Yijing* in two separate compositions seems to suggest that the use of this classic text was more than a display of erudition, but that as an interpretive frame the *Yijing* was compelling to her.

(*guwen jingxue*) approached the *Yinjing* as ancient history. They held that Confucius and/or his followers were responsible for part of the Ten Wings commentary, and that Confucius himself was primarily a historian in preserving ritual usages and practice. The opposing New Text school (*jinwen jingxue*) held that Confucius was not the author of the Ten Wings commentary; instead, as an "uncrowned king," he was the author of the core text of the *Yijing*.[69] In the late Qing, Kang Youwei famously carried the New Text tradition to its logical extreme by proclaiming that Confucius invented the classics to justify his reforms; Kang also frequently cited hexagrams 49 and 50 of the *Yijing* to argue for institutional reform. In this context, Wu Rulun's study of the *Yijing* was both eclectic and unique. Without delving into the New-Text and Old-Text recessions of Han Learning, Wu nonetheless borrowed some of their techniques, especially historical philology. While his intellectual commitment was toward the neo-Confucian Song Learning, his interpretation of the classic goes back to the model of the Western Han scholar Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 AD) whose "Mystery Learning" fused the traditions of the *Yijing*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*.[70] This is a precedent denounced by Zhu Xi, and also an avenue of interpretation not followed by the New Text school of classical study.[71] In other words, Wu Rulun's study of the *Yijing* departs from both Han and Song Learning. Stated positively, he held a holistic and synthetic view of the *Yijing* in his search for philosophical principles enunciated by the sages; he used philological and historical methods without fragmenting the classic.

While we cannot firmly establish that Wu Zhiying follows her uncle's interpretation of the *Yijing*, there is no question that she was familiar with it, if only through preparing it for publication. As we shall see in what follows, her citations of the Ten Wings make no claim as to the authorship of the classic but assume the authority and centrality of the sages, a position similar to Wu Rulun's. Furthermore, her interpretation also stresses the responsibility of the human individual in the process of historical change, a version of voluntarism consistent with her uncle's commitment to statecraft neo-Confucianism. Her

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[69] This is a description of extreme positions: not all adherents of either school subscribed to them and there were many who eschewed partisan affiliation. For a succinct delineation of New Text and Old Text recensions, see Elman 1990: xxv–xxx.

[70] Wu Rulun 1904–05: 1/2. For Yang Xiong and his *Canon of Supreme Mystery*, see Nylan 1993. Wu's precedent in this may be traced to Han Yu (768–824) who also held high regard for Yang Xiong. Han Yu of course serves as a prime model of Tongcheng *guwen*, but his other works, such as his study of the *Yijing*, departs from orthodox Song Learning.

[71] On the contribution to *Yijing* study from Changzhou New Text scholars and the lineage connections between Zhuang Cunyu, Hui Dong, and Zhang Huiyan, see Elman 1990: 129–144. Note, too, that there is some degree of cross-over between Changzhou learning and the Tongcheng tradition. Zhang Huiyan, arguably one the two major Qing contributors to *Yixue*, also inherited and transformed the Tongcheng tradition through his practice of *guwen*.

departure from neo-Confucian ethics, once again, lies in her radical reformulation of the woman's role in historical transformation.

Further still, it is not possible to understand Wu Zhiying's foray into the exalted domain of the *Yijing* exegetical tradition without situating it within the context of the gradual expansion of traditional women's learning. In terms of the curriculum, the *Yijing* falls outside the proper domain of women's education. This domain, narrowly defined, means texts specially written for women, such as Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women*, Liu Xiang's *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, and other didactic books composed specially for women. Thanks to recent scholarship, we now know of women who operated beyond the typical range: their reading included the more broadly defined Confucian classics, typically the Confucian Four Books, the *Book of Songs*, and the *Book of Rites*.[72] Compared with these books of poetry and primers on ethics, still arguably texts for early grades if not specifically gendered, the *Yijing* with its difficult language and ambiguous philosophy is more of an advanced topic. There were indeed women's textbooks in which the *Yijing* is featured, but then only in brief excerpts on topics directly relevant to women's conduct, in other words, parts of it that are more like the *Book of Rites*.[73] In terms of writing, we know of erudite women who went well beyond poetry composition to compose essays, and even some who practiced classical scholarship. Yet we find them typically annotating and collating one particular classic, namely, *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, the most sanctioned of women's textbooks. Thus, their otherwise problematic incursion into the male literati world of scholarship could be justified on indisputable moral ground.[74]

In the context of the gradual expansion of women's learning in late imperial China, the range of Wu Zhiying's education appears not unique, but still impressive.[75] More pertinent to the immediate discussion, what is striking is

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[72] For curriculum content, see Ebrey 1993: 120–24, Ko: 53–59, Mann (1994): 19–49. Susan Mann makes the useful distinction between the small number of women who "undertook classical learning (*hsueh*) with the aim of becoming cultured (*wen*)" and a larger group of women who "received formal instruction (*chiao*) from special didactic books for women" (Mann: 20). Thus we know of a few women, such as Gu Ruopu of the seventeenth-century Banana Garden group, who were said to be conversant in the *Yijing*, but left no extant textual commentary (Ko: 238).

[73] For example, among the Six Classics, Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) includes only *Shijing* and *Liji* in his *Fuxue (*Women's Learning). See Mann, 1992. Lü Kun (1536–1618), on the other hand, includes a short selection of the *Yijing* in his *Gui fan* (Regulations for the Women's Quarters). Given that his language in this section is more erudite and not glossed as the rest of the text, it is not clear how much the *Yijing* section was intended as teaching material. Lü 1998 [1590]: 8–17.

[74] See Chang 1997: 147–70, Ko 1994, Mann 1997, Widmer 1997: 366–96 and 2002: 33-52, and Zurndorfer 1994: 249–70 and 2002.

[75] More than her upbringing as the only child of doting parents and uncle, her wide range of reading may be attributed to her own agency, and in part to her husband's support. After her marriage at the age of 19, she pursued her "family learning" steadfastly for the next forty some years.

that she made no reference to passages of the *Yijing* that are traditionally understood as relevant to women's conduct. Nor did she make the apologies or excuses conventionally required for trespassing into the male domain of high scholarship. Like her earlier unabashed use of the formal biography, she simply acted as if the *Yijing* were just another legitimate part of her patrimony to be put to use when the situation called for it.

In her preface to Qiu Jin's poetry, Wu Zhiying first celebrates the success of the revolution by comparing it to the founding of the legendary Shang and Zhou Dynasties, a gesture both appropriate for the *Yijing* and politically felicitous. She then laments the misfortune of Qiu Jin for having died before her aspiration was fulfilled (*chizhi yisi*). The obvious interpretation of the term *zhi* is the overthrow of the Qing monarchy and the establishment of the Republic, namely, Qiu Jin's revolutionary aspirations. But then, much as she did with the *Shiji* tradition, Wu Zhiying inserts a gendered perspective into her introduction of the classic:

> At the time of [Qiu Jin]'s life, it was said that women's job was to regulate the inner quarters, chiefly concerning the serving of food and wine. This was written down in the ritual classics. Great matters concerning the change of political system were not to be talked about by women. In the end [Qiu Jin] incurred the wrath of those of the time and was visited upon by enormous calamity. Isn't that a matter of great sadness? Yet I say [we should] not be sad—this is what the Ge hexagram of the *Yijing* means: 'Radical Change is such that only on the day when it comes to an end does one begin to enjoy trust.'[76]

The first point to note is the way Wu Zhiying treats a key *Yijing* concept, namely, time/ timeliness (*shi*), the theory that ""human activity proves efficacious only so long as it adjusts to the Dao's shifting operations."[77] Since Qiu Jin's personal fate was singularly inauspicious, how then to understand her "efficacy" with regard to her position in time, a question that is unavoidable within the *Yijing* frame? In answering this question, Wu Zhiying infuses "gender" into the concept of *shi* by locating Qiu Jin in a particular historical time frame with a particular gender norm: "At the time of her life, it was said that women's job was. . . ." And again, she locates Qiu Jin's death as having transgressed against this norm and thereby "incur[ing] the wrath of those of the

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[76] *Ziliao*: 345. The last line of this passage is a quotation of Judgement of hexagram 49 Ge, *siri naifu*. Lynn: 444, Wilhelm: 189.

[77] Nylan 2001: 243–44.

time" (*li shigou*). The result of this infusion is that gender norms are not seen as essential qualities of women or as definitive qualities of Chineseness—both views could be found among people of diverse political persuasions at the time—but as rules of behavior that change with the times.

In the above quotation, it is also notable that Wu points to the "ritual classics" (*lijing*) as the basis of stringent gender norms. Ritual classics, loosely used, include the *Liji, Yili*, and the *Yijing*. For the *Yijing*, with regard to female behavior, the most often cited is hexagram 37 *Jiaren* (The Family). In this hexagram, the second *yin* line commentary declares: "This one has no matters to set off to and pursue but stays within and prepares food," for which the Tuan Commentary further expounds:

> As far as the Family is concerned, the woman's proper place is inside it. (This refers to Second Yin), and the man's proper place is outside it. (This refers to Fifth Yang). Male and female should keep to their proper places; this is the fundamental concept expressed by Heaven and Earth. . . . When the family is so maintained with rectitude, the entire world will be settled and at peace (Lynn 1994: 363–65, Wilhelm: 143–44).

This normative principle of the separation of spheres has been cited throughout the ages by those who wanted to argue for a strict observance of gendered roles, a principle endowed with cosmic significance from the *Yijing*.[78]

While Wu Zhiying herself does not directly engage hexagram 37, her uncle Wu Rulun does, and it is here that we find already the seeds of critique. After an etymological study, he stresses an ancient meaning of the word *kui* in the commentary on the second Yin line "[she] stays within and prepares food (*kui*)." Wu Rulun argues that etymologically it does not mean ordinary food preparation but food for ritual sacrifice. The implication is that women's cooking is not just simple domestic routine but carries ritual significance; their domestic labor thus elevates them to the status of intermediaries between heaven and men, with considerable agency capable of producing effects.[79] In employing philological method, Wu Rulun implicitly criticizes as departing from the intent of the sages the late imperial interpretations that de-emphasize the ritual aspect of women's domestic labor. In her interpretation of Qiu Jin, Wu Zhiying took a different tack while maintaining a similar line of critique.

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[78] Lü Kun, for example chose nine hexagrams for inclusion in his *Gui fan*, none received as detailed a commentary as hexagram 37. *Ibid*. There is extensive scholarship on ritual precepts; see, among others, Ebrey 1989, Elvin 1984, Furth 1990, Munro 1988, and Rowe 1992.

[79] Wu Rulun 1904–05: 2/15.

Indeed, Qiu Jin's presence is ritually significant; her effect on history is produced through direct political participation rather than through domestic activity, however elevated.

To see how Wu Zhiying reaches her radical conclusion, we need to follow her exegetical procedure step by step, and parse her interpretive moves from the layers of apparently conventional citations of the Ten Wings within which she wraps her argument.

First she chooses two particular hexagrams for interpretation, hexagrams 49 *Ge* ("Molting" in Wilhelm, "Radical Change" in Lynn) and 50 *Ding* ("the Cauldron"). Her choice in itself is not surprising, if only because the saturation of *Yijing* terms in the Chinese language has long made *ding'ge* (or *dingxin gegu*, lit. "bringing in the new, getting rid of the old") the synonyms for dynastic change, therefore fitting for the moment of her writing. The term can be used generally without obvious value judgment; thus we find such usage frequently at the beginning of a dynasty, meaning no more than "turbulent transitional period." More specifically, the term can be used with direct reference to hexagrams 49 and 50, as radical reformers of the past derived their authority from the *Yijing* which describes change of dynasty as "bringing good fortune" when the heavenly mandate (*ming*) of a dynasty has been perverted.[80] Thus during the late Qing and early Republican era, revolutionaries specifically resorted to these two hexagrams to translate the western term "revolution."[81] Where Wu's reading of these hexagrams departs from the traditional or twentieth-century interpretations is her argument for a significant role for women at such historical junctures.

Having chosen the hexagrams, the next step in exegesis is to dissect each of them into its constituent trigrams, the three-line configurations. From this procedure, she obtains four trigrams: *Dui* and *Li* from hexagram *Ding*, *Xun* and *Li* from hexagram *Ge*.[82] Since two of the resulting four trigrams happen to be the same, in the end there are three trigrams: *Xun, Dui*, and *Li*. To explain their signification, she turns to one of the Ten Wings, "Explaining the Trigrams" (*Shuogua*):

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[80] The two hexagrams contain many reflections on the rise to power of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The *Yijing* has been used to argue for political activism in terms responsibility of restoring order at times of chaos. See Elman 1990: 144

[81] For discussion of this term's origins and translations, see Jianhua Chen: 355–74.

[82] She dissects the hexagrams in the middle, forming trigrams from lines 1,2,3, and another of lines 4,5,6. Another way of dissecting the hexagrams is to form trigrams from lines 2,3,4 and another from lines 3,4,5. The second way of dissection would naturally not lead to the conclusion she reaches. In other words, every step is an interpretative act of choice. For explanation of possible manipulations of the trigrams and hexagrams, see Hellmut Wilhelm 1960: 47–62 and Nylan 2001: 224–43.

> *Dui* is the same as *yue*, that is to say, joyousness; *Li* here means double brightness. This is why Judgment says of Hexagram *Ge*: 'Such a one brings about joy through the practice of civility and enlightenment.' [*wenmin yiyue*, Lynn: 444, Wilhelm: 190] *Li* means brightness within and *Xun* is compliant to the strong. This is why Judgment says of Hexagram *Ding*: 'Attain[ing] a central position and resonates with the hard and the strong.' [*dezhong yingang*, Lynn: 452, Wilhelm: 194]

While the exercise of dissection, citation, and re-interpretation clearly demonstrate her mastery of the classical text and the accumulated commentary, so far her exegesis follows conventional procedure.

Her next step, however, is critical and paves the way for the radical conclusion later. Continuing with "Explaining the Trigrams," she points out that the three trigrams are exactly the "three-daughters": "Thus '*Xun* is the eldest daughter, *Li* the middle daughter, and *Dui* the youngest daughter.'" To understand what Wu Zhiying does here, a brief digression on "Explaining the Trigrams" is in order.

As a later layer of the Ten Wings, this exegetical essay was most likely composed in the second century BCE. Purporting to explain the system and content of the *Yijing* as a whole, this essay does not discuss the individual hexagrams but the eight trigrams, the line configurations inherent in all hexagrams. After stating the sagely origins of the *Yijing*, the essay gives a detailed statement of what each of the eight trigrams symbolizes, with images drawn from the cosmological, vegetative, animal, and human realms. One trigram can thus have more than twenty symbolic meanings, and depending on the situation at hand, one or another of these meanings can be drawn forward for interpretation. One symbolic sequence, for example, interprets the eight trigrams as though it were a family consisting of the father (*Qian*) and mother (*Kun*), their three sons (*Zhen*, *Kan*, *Gen*) and three daughters (*Xun*, *Li*, *Dui*). And it is on this sequence of symbols that Wu Zhiying chooses to stake her interpretation: the three trigrams she derived from *Ding* and *Ge* are precisely the three daughters *Xun, Li,* and *Dui*. In the midst of discussing the life of a real woman, namely Qiu Jin, the highly symbolic properties of the three daughters are made to refer to just such women in the contemporary world.[83]

[83] To apply these trigrams to real women is not a move invented by Wu Zhiying: the poet Yuan Mei (1716–98) once used the trigrams *Dui* and *Li* to justify women's poetry writing in an epitaph for one of his favored female disciples, "Jin Xianxian nüshi muzhiming" (Epitaph for Ms Jin Xianxian). Yuan Mei, *Xiao cang shan fang wenji: xuji* , juan 32, 1995: 587-88. See also Chang 1997b:163. Where Wu Zhiying further develops this line of thinking is in using the trigrams to interpret the hexagrams *Ding* and *Ge*, and thus specifically to justify women's role in the political arena.

As if to boost the authoritative standing of her text after a particularly unorthodox interpretive move, Wu Zhiying gives three citations from the Commentary on the Appended Phrases (*Xici*) in rapid succession, a section of the Ten Wings that teaches the sacred value of *Yijing* and uses that can be made of it:

> 'When the eight trigrams formed ranks, the [basic] images were present there within them' [Lynn: 75, Wilhelm: 325]. 'This is why the Changes as such consist of images. The term 'image' means 'the making of semblances' [Lynn: 80, Wilhelm: 336]. 'The sages had the means to perceive the mysteries of the world and, drawing comparisons to them with analogous things, made images out of those things' [Lynn: 56, Wilhelm: 304]. How can it be said to be arbitrary?[84]

Not "arbitrary" indeed, since none of the above lines are in her own voice, therefore they are presumably devoid of arbitrary/personal/idiosyncratic interpretations. In thus treating the *Yijing* as a holistic text created by the sages and transmitted to later generations, Wu Zhiying is closely following her forefathers in Song neo-Confucianism.[85] Much as it sounds like meek or even pietistic self-erasure, what Wu Zhiying claims here is in fact much grander than the modern notion of "personal interpretation." For she argues, precisely through layers of citations, that the ensuing interpretation is formed from reflection on the images and judgments in accordance with cosmic laws, thus transcending individual will or personal bias.

Having thus carefully built up her textual basis, she finally reaches the conclusion: "Regarding 'matters concerning getting rid of the old and setting in the new'[*gegu er dingxin zhi*, Lynn: 115, Wilhelm: 635–46]. Are these matters perhaps the tasks of women? As for great tasks, I do not dare casually relegate them to women. Yet I do not dare not persevere." Ending her argument with a rhetorical question and emphatic double negative, Wu Zhiying argues that in the grand process of historical transformation, women's roles are scripted in the *Yijing*, as they are particularly endowed to contribute significantly to the greatest public matters. Using the *Yijing* as cosmic diagram, she thus inverts the age-old triadic formulation: Heaven, Earth, and (Wo)Man. Her revolution (*Ding'ge*), in the end, is revealed to be significantly gender-inflected.

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[84] All citations are from Xici. See Glossary under "bagua chenglie. . . ."

[85] In Wu Rulun's discussion of the *Yijing* he departs considerably from this orthodox view in arguing that the Ten Wings post-date Confucius by five hundred years. See his 1901–02 debate with the Japanese sinologist Tsumei Michiaki (1822–1906). Wu Rulun 1990 [1902]: 281–85. I am grateful to Joshua Fogel for information on Tsumei.

As a point of contrast, here is another use of the *Yijing* that is revolutionary in politics but conventional in terms of gender: Zhang Binglin's preface to the first collection of Qiu Jin's poetry discussed earlier. "Model[ing Qiu Jin's] moral character on the *Yijing*," he chooses hexagram 1 *Qian* to interpret her life and concludes that she is pure in revolutionary intent, thoroughly masculine in approach. In portraying her as not following "the way of the feminine," Zhang's Qiu Jin is at best an honorary man, exception to her own kind.[86] While in Wu Zhiying's subtle manipulation of the *Yijing*, the classic not only justifies a woman's participation in politics but allows her to be no less a woman in this process, her presence making a new form of civilization "joyous and luminous." Furthermore, Wu Zhiying's literal reading of the symbolic "three daughters" not only gives a liberating interpretation to Qiu Jin's meaning in history, but also implicitly makes it possible for other women, the living ones still fighting for suffrage for example, to continue participating in politics and history.

Postscript: Tongcheng and Wu Zhiying

Having discussed what Wu Zhiying did with her family learning, it may be useful to look briefly at what her family learning did for her, specifically in terms of providing a cultural repertoire that distinguishes her from her predecessors, contemporaries, and later generations.

In terms of historical agency, her family learning sets her apart from the main stream of elite women of late imperial China. This tradition, schematically speaking, prescribes one particular avenue for women to affect the political sphere: she could cultivate her virtue which would then emanate from the inner chambers outward and thus indirectly but powerfully influence history.[87] In contrast, Wu Zhiying opted for a more direct mode of political participation, not through emulating models from the West but through a reworking of models central to her family learning, namely, holding a close connection between the practice of refined arts (*wen*) and moral philosophy (*dao* or *yili*). As articulated by Su Shi (1037–1101), the Song poet/scholar and a principal model in the Tongcheng tradition, "engaging in *wen*" is one way an individual can respond to the universal process, or the *dao*.[88] For Wu Zhiying, who considered herself a natural heir to the Song learning practiced by her male forebears, the all-important *dao* was not defined as the transmission of some immutable orthodoxy or even the twentieth-century equivalent of it in nationalism,

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[86] *Ziliao*: 341.

[87] See, for example, Susan Mann's discussion of the use of *zhinü* and her argument that "the moral foundation of the realm lies in the authority of wives and mothers." Mann 1997: 209.

[88] See Smith *et al* 1990: 91–95.

but in terms of an active engagement with the public responsibility of literati/intellectuals. She thus responded to the sea change of the early modern period through a highly self-conscious practice of the arts of *wen,* very much in the politically activist mode that Su Shi advocated.

In terms of literary expression, her family learning also sets her apart from a major strand of literary and artistic practice that enjoyed a large following among women in late imperial and modern times, namely, the tradition associated with the name of Yuan Mei.[89] Its mottos of individuality in artistic creation and freedom of self-expression found contemporary echo in those advocating revolution, such as the anarchist-feminist He Zhen (1884? –).[90] In her preface to Qiu Jin's poetry, He Zhen castigates ritual teaching because it did not allow for authentic expression of women's "innate sensibility [*xingling*]," a term central to Yuan Mei's poetic theory.[91] In less than two decades, the New Woman of the May-Fourth generation would pick up this line of argument, albeit somewhat rephrased. The Tongcheng school, in contrast, advocated adherence to the classics both in ritual precepts and in literary expression; it is thus at least rhetorically in opposition to the Yuan Mei tradition invoked by He Zhen.[92] Rather than arguing for freedom from ritual precepts, Wu Zhiying interprets Qiu Jin's life through the models set up in the *Shiji* and *Yijing*. Wrapping her most radical argument behind layers of citations of the ancient history and ritual classics, her mode of writing is a model of careful control rather than free expression. Partly because of this mode, her subtle manipulation of and radical departure from tradition is less open to modern rephrasing and therefore more opaque to twentieth-century readers.

In terms of the process of cognitive transformation that spans the late Qing and May Fourth eras, the transformation that rapidly eroded the foundations of Confucian high culture,[93] Wu Zhiying's engagement with the classics may appear as an historical anomaly. Indeed, the political activism that her model Su Shi advocated is quite different from the kind that her friend Qiu Jin practiced. Contrary to Su Shi's idea of engaging in *wen* as a primary way to respond to the *dao*, Qiu Jin repeatedly admonished women friends about "wasting time in poetry," even as her own words of admonition were couched in poetry. The idea that *wen*, with its attendant meanings of moral authority and

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89 See Chang 1997a.

90 For a study of He Zhen, see Zarrow 1988.

91 "*Qiu Jin shici* huo xu" (Postscript to Qiu Jin's Collected Poetry), 1907. Also in *Ziliao*: 342.

92 Despite the differences of the two traditions, there are not without historical cross-fertilizations. Yao Nai's personal friendship with Yuan Mei, for example, may have influenced his literary conception of the Tongcheng *guwen*.

93 For discussion of women's uses of the moral and cultural authority of Confucian high culture, see Mann 1997, especially her comments about the erosion of this authority in her Conclusion.

a particular kind of culture production, was becoming superfluous would be a recurrent one throughout the tumultuous twentieth century. For Wu Zhiying, however, *wen* was anything but superfluous; nor was the traditional culture treated as if it were sterile. Indeed, her reworking of the classics indicates that radical political and social ideas could be framed without recourse to imported vocabularies of nationalism and women's rights.

Yet, what makes her use of the traditional cultural repertoire quite different from generations of talented women or *cainü*, in the final analysis, is the historical specifics of late Qing China, a prominent feature of which was the ubiquitous presence of the West. This absent presence, so to speak, functions as an unavoidable point of reference and comparison. Wu's awareness of imported vocabulary means that not using it was a conscious choice;[94] at the same time, her critical and gendered perspective was facilitated by the imported vocabulary, a vocabulary that Qiu Jin and the later suffragettes readily made use of. More than demonstrating the malleability of Confucian high culture, then, Wu's innovative use of the classics showcased a kind of intellectual energy that pointed to possibilities of imagining a different kind of modernity.[95] That her practice would appear to be an anomaly, as if it were an intellectual dead-end, is but the result of the later consolidation of a particular historical narrative, whose intelligibility is predicated upon the exclusion of other possible meanings.

Although her political intervention may have become unreadable to later generations, who are heir to a relentless narrative of historical progress, I hope this study at least demonstrates that Wu Zhiying did succeed in painting a picture of Qiu Jin and herself as real participants in public affairs and active agents in shaping history. Even though for much of the twentieth century, the Tongcheng tradition would at best furnish a target for the modernists as a symbol of an antiquated and useless tradition and at worst totally forgotten, Wu Zhiying found in it the authority and practical models for a close connection between her practice of *wen* and engagement with the *dao*. And both terms were in their turn redefined through gender in accordance with her own view of the historical process.

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[94] My assertion that Wu was not a secluded *cainü* but was aware of imported Western vocabulary is admittedly an educated conjecture. It is based on the following facts gleaned from her biographies: in addition to her friendship with Qiu Jin, her wide circle of associates included Japanese and western women; she subscribed to a number of current newspapers and periodicals and contributed to them as well; there was a photograph, possibly taken before 1900, of her posing in Victorian *haute couture*.

[95] This line of thinking is inspired by Timothy Weston's work on *tiyong* in Karl and Zarrow eds. 2002: 99–123. I thank one of the reviewers for *Late Imperial China* for pointing me in this direction.

Glossary

Trigrams and Hexagrams

Qian 乾 

Kun 坤 

Zhen 貞 

Xun 巽 

Kan 坎 

Li 離 

Gen 艮

Dui 兌 

Ding 鼎 

Ge 革 

Jiaren 家人 

Other terms

bagua chenglie xiang zai qizhong	八卦成列像在其中
Ban Zhao	班昭
benzhong	本衷
Boya	伯牙
cainü	才女
caiyuan	才媛
Cao'e	曹娥
caocao chenglian	草草成殮
chang yizhi	償遺志
chichizhe	蚩蚩者
Chizhi yisi	賚志以死
Cike liezhuan	刺客列傳
Dagong bao	大公報
dao	道
dezhong yigang	得中應剛
dingxin gegu	鼎新革故(鼎革)
Dou'e	竇娥
duanjin	端謹
dushu jijian	讀書擊劍
Fang Bao	方苞
fudao	婦道
Fuxi	伏羲
gaizhi dashi	改制大事
Gu you mingxun	古有明訓
Gua	卦
Guaci	卦辭
Guaming	卦名
Guan Hanqing	關漢卿
Guo Moruo	郭沫若
guwen jingxue	古文經學
Guyue yingzongjinü	古越贏宗季女
haozang	蒿葬
He Zhen	何震
Hui Yumin	惠毓明
Yijing	易經
ji祭	
“Ji Qiu nülieshi wen”	祭秋女烈士文
“Ji Qiu Nüshi yishi”	秋女士遺事
jia moxian moguan mo	嫁某縣某官某

Jianhu nüxia	鑒湖女俠
Jiansong liuying ji	翦淞留影集
Jianxia	劍俠
jiaxue	家學
jiefu	節婦
Jing Ke	荊柯
jinwen jingxue	今文經學
Jiu nülieshi yigao	秋女烈士遺稿
jiwen	祭文
Juyin xiaoxue	鞠隱小學
Kang Youwei	康有為
kaozheng	考證
Kui	饋
Lanpu	蘭譜
li shigou	唳時詬
Li	禮
Lian Quan	廉泉
Lienü zhuan	列女傳
lieshi	烈士
Liji	禮記
lijing	禮經
Liu Dakui	劉大櫆
Liuyue shuang chuanqi	六月霜傳奇
lunzan	論讚
Mai Meide	麥美德(Luella Miner)
manyingzhi	漫應之
ming	命
mingmen guixiu	名門閨秀
mubiao	墓表
Nie Rong	聶榮
Nie Zheng	聶正
nü yingxiong	女英雄
nüzi guomin juan	女子國民捐
Qiu Jin 秋瑾 “Qiu Jin yizuo xu” “Qiu Nüshi zhuan”	秋瑾遺作序 秋女士傳
Qiu Yuzhang	秋譽章
ran	然
renyi	仁義
ruo	若
shangwu	尚武
Shanyin	山陰
shaonü	少女
Shen bao	申報
Shenzhou nübao	神州女報
Shi bao	時報
shi	時
Shiji	史記
Shiyi	十翼
shouye	授業
Shuogua	說卦
Sima Qian	司馬遷
siri nai fu	巳日乃孚
sishu	私淑
Su Shi	蘇軾
su…er	雖…而
Taoran ting	陶然亭
Tongcheng guwen	桐城古文
tuan	彖

Wang Zhao	王照
Wen wang	文王
wen	文
wenming yiyue	文明以悅
Wu Baosan	吳寶三
Wu Rulun	吳汝倫
Wu Zhiying zhuan	吳芝瑛傳
Wu Zhiyin	吳芝瑛
wuchang wu he	吾唱無和
Wuyue chunqiu	吳越春秋
xia	俠
xiagu	俠骨
xianshu	賢淑
xianü	俠女
Xiao wanliutang	小萬柳堂
Xiao wanliutang Wang Yun huamu	小萬柳堂王惲畫目
Xiaolu	嘯廬
Xiaoshuo lin	小說林
Xici shang	繫辭上
Xici xia	繫辭下
Xin shaonian	新少年
Xingling	性靈
xingrong	形容
Xinnüzi shijie	新女子世界
Xu Zihua	徐自華
Xuantingxue chuanqi	軒亭血傳奇
Yan Fu	嚴復
yanbi wuju	掩蔽無具
Yang Xiong	楊雄
yang	陽
Yaoci	爻辭
yi shaonüzi yueli hu wenming	以少女子悅麗乎文明
Yili	儀禮
yili	義理
yilie	義烈
yimu	義墓
yin	陰
yiri zhi ya	一日之雅
yishi	遺事
yixue	易學
Yuan Mei	袁枚
Yuan Shikai	袁世凱
Yuannü	怨女
yueji	悅己
Zeng Guofan	曾國藩
Zhang Binglin	章炳麟
zhangnü	妘女
zhiji	知己
zhiyin	知音
Zhong Ziqi	鍾子期
Zhongguo nübao	中國女報
zhongnü	中女
Zhou gong	周公
Zhu Xi	朱熹
zhuan	傳
zuiren bunu	罪人不孥

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