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Poetic Approaches to Zhao Mengjian's *Narcissus*

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in History of Art and Architecture

by

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September 2021

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September 2021

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ABSTRACT

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by

Jing Cao

Zhao Mengjian's (1199–before 1267) *Narcissus*, a monochrome ink painting of a field of intricately interwoven daffodils, exemplifies the nuanced relationship between literati painting and poetry in the late Southern Song (1127–1279). In Chinese painting the narcissus flower has thematic associations with two potent symbols of dynastic loyalty: the patriotic poet-hero Qu Yuan (c. 340–278 BCE) and the Xiang River goddesses, who were loyal consorts to the mythical Emperor Shun. Later collectors and art historians came to interpret Zhao's *Narcissus* as a symbol of loyalty to the Song dynasty, both because of its iconography and because of Zhao's relation to the Song imperial family. However, biographical data suggests that Zhao's original intention could not have been to eulogize the Song since he died before the fall of the dynasty.

By reexamining *Narcissus* through the lens of literati poetry and painting during Zhao's lifetime, new interpretive possibilities emerge. Zhao's *Narcissus* may have originally been a sensual, apolitical work that borrowed from the literary and painterly traditions of *yongwu* 咏物 "singing of things" poetry and *xiaojing* 小景 or "small scene" landscape painting. These late Southern Song forms revel in the rich allusive meanings of objects to express an author's intents obliquely. They concentrate attention on an object through the use of small scenes and emphasize poetic mood over naturalistic representation. The repetitive, miniature world of *Narcissus* allowed Zhao to align himself symbolically with a

patriotic hero while capturing a poetic mood that echoed the erotic imagery and impressionistic form of the poetry of his time.

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I. Introduction

Later generations of Chinese historians have characterized the Southern Song as a period of economic decadence and moral decline, which paved the way for a foreign invasion by the Mongolian forces, leading to the establishment of the subsequent Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368). They accused the Southern Song political elite of caring too much about art and culture and too little about politics and war. Indeed, cultural pursuits such as painting, poetry, and calligraphy flourished during this period and were an important dimension of social life for the educated elite. As the number of educated men increasingly exceeded the number of bureaucratic offices available to them, the literati increasingly diverted their status-seeking activities away from statesmanship and into the cultural sphere. And in order for their cultural artifacts to function as social currency, these literati men displayed their erudition through dense literary allusions and developed signature styles that made their works recognizable to one another. Among these distinctive works is the Metropolitan Museum's *Narcissus* (*Shuixian tu* 水仙圖), a 33.2 cm x 374 cm monochrome ink handscroll by the late Southern Song aristocrat, calligrapher, and painter Zhao Mengjian 趙孟堅 (1199–before 1267) (Fig. 1). Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll exemplifies the nexus of interactions—between painting and poetry, artist and audience—that characterized literati painting at the end of the Southern Song.

In *Narcissus*, Zhao depicts a vast field of daffodils, referred to by convention as narcissus flowers.[1] The delicate ink outlines of their white flowers float above a sea of boldly articulated interwoven leaves, which fan out languorously in a dense, crisscrossing pattern. At the base of their stems, a gently undulating ink wash represents the ground,

dotted with small, dark calligraphic marks that represent tufts of grass or patches of moss. Reaching upward, the tips of their leaves gently twist toward the empty space that denotes the sky. There is no visible horizon to create an illusion of depth behind these flowers, nothing to draw the eye beyond the painting's primary object: the narcissi.

Zhao sustains his intricate, repetitive composition over the nearly thirteen feet length of the scroll. Each flat, slender leaf is carefully articulated through subtle shading, with a different tone of silvery monochrome ink for each side. What at first appear to be bold outlines reveal themselves to be graduated washes which nonetheless give the illusion of confidently executed lines (Fig. 2). Leaves twist in exaggerated patterns, sometimes making multiple rotations or revolving in unnatural contortions both clockwise and counter-clockwise; nonetheless, the composite effect convincingly evokes the movement of narcissi swaying in a gentle breeze.

The composition opens gradually. It begins with the tips of a couple outstretched leaves and slowly rises to form a crescent shape, until the flowers fill up most of the vertical space in the composition. Within the composition, seals mark the top and bottom along vertical seams at two points, about a third of the way in, and again roughly a third from the end, where the paper was joined.[2] In the final section, the composition ends abruptly—an indication that the painting was truncated.[3] Wen Fong and Marilyn Fu note that a section of the scroll, which contained Zhao's signature as well as seals from prominent Song-Yuan collectors including Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) and Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1308), had been cut and removed from the *Narcissus* scroll.[4] While the leftmost edge of the picture features several additional seals, there is no signature or inscription from Zhao Mengjian himself.

Today, three sections of colophons follow the painting. These are marked off by a strip of dividing paper, which serves as a visual bridge from the image itself into colophons that comment on it.[5] The first section of colophons contains a *ci* 詞 lyric poem written by Zhou Mi in semi-cursive script. The second section contains three separate inscriptions: a *shi* 詩 poem by Qiu Yuan 仇遠 (1247–1327), written in squat semi-cursive script, followed by poems by Lin Zhong 林鍾 (active early 14th c.) and Li Zhigang 李至剛 (1368–1425). The final block of colophons, on a lighter, smoother paper, contain three much longer inscriptions by Chu Deyi 褚德彝 (1871–1942). These colophons, especially the first two by Zhou Mi and Qiu Yuan, would become as important to the interpretation of the work as the painting itself and will be discussed in more detail in Section 3: "Literary Treatment of the Narcissus."

The art historical record of Zhao's *Narcissus* began with an entry in his friend Zhou Mi's early Yuan Dynasty text *Yunyan guoyan lu* 雲煙過眼錄 (Records of Clouds and Mist Passing before One's Eyes).[6] The work was also mentioned in numerous Chinese painting catalogs of the Ming and Qing dynasties, as detailed in Fong and Fu's *Sung and Yuan Paintings*.[7] English-language scholarship on this work began in the 1970s, when the object entered the Metropolitan Museum's collection through a gift from Wang Jiqian (C. C. Wang) 王季遷 (1907-2003).[8] Wang was a Chinese expatriate who fled the political turmoil in early 20th century mainland China and immigrated to New York. After the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911, descendants of the imperial family sold off works of art from the palace collection to meet their financial needs. Wang acquired some of these works, and in the early 1970s made a gift of twenty-five paintings from the Song-Yuan period to the Metropolitan

Museum of Art. These paintings helped build the core collection of the museum's holdings in Chinese art.

To commemorate Wang's gift, the Metropolitan Museum asked art historians Wen Fong and Marilyn Fu to produce a catalog of the works from Wang's collection, entitled *Sung and Yuan Paintings* (1973). This catalog was one of the first English-language documents on *Narcissus.* In it they provide a discussion of the physical condition of the work, presenting it as an "extraordinary example of the lofty and elegant nature of a scholar-painter." [9] They reported that the painting arrived at the museum in good condition, albeit with minor abrasion, cracks and holes due to age. In addition, they noted that several sections of the scroll had been cut, edges trimmed, and several seals, including the artist's own seal and self-inscription, had been removed from the opening section.[10] Vertical creases indicated that the scroll had been folded rather than rolled either prior to or after painting.[11]

Roughly a decade later, *Narcissus* again played a prominent role in two Metropolitan Museum publications on Chinese painting: *Peach Blossom Spring: Gardens and Flowers in Chinese Paintings* (1983) and *Along the Border of Heaven* (1983), both written by art historian Richard Barnhart. *Peach Blossom Spring* was a major exhibition that advanced the interpretation of literati painting by viewing the images through the accompanying colophons. The exhibition approached the numerous images of birds and flowers that it assembled not only as mimetic works that aimed to imitate nature, but also as expressive works that aimed to reflect the ideas and sentiments of literati artists.

Barnhart's descriptions of *Narcissus* comment on the "intricate architecture" of the composition, the "sweeping movement" of the brushwork, and the stylized mode of representation.[12] He accounts for these stylistic features by contextualizing *Narcissus* within

the conventions and theory of literati painting—a set of ideas and practices that emerged among an elite group of scholar-painters in the Northern Song (960-1127) and would define the standards of taste in Chinese painting for the next thousand years. Barnhart notes that the fluid quality of Zhao's brushwork complemented Zhao's repetitive composition to emphasize rhythm, pattern, and movement over definition and set focal points.[13] He demonstrates that this composition was produced by recursively following "a few simple rules repeated over and over," while the style favored "[a] silvery palette of ink tonalities, flat linear forms, and [the] rejection of atmosphere, space, and naturalistic illusion."[14] Composition and style operated in concert to create an image that was set in the world of ideas rather than reality.[15]

Barnhart supports this reading of Zhao's *Narcissus* by pointing out that Zhao's painting style is loosely based on Li Gonglin's 李公麟 (1049–1106) *baimiao* 白描 (ink-outline) technique for figure painting. For Barnhart, this *baimiao* technique was central to the establishment of the literati genre. Prior to Li Gonglin, ink outlines were used for sketches and preliminary drafts, but Li elevated them to the status of a finished work.[16] This bare-bones style reduced an image to what Barnhart called its "linear essence."[17] Eschewing ostentatious displays of color or strict naturalism, it approached the aesthetic of calligraphy and the realm of ideas. With its absence of color and tone, Li's *baimiao* technique was "an assertion of the philosopher and the aesthetic of the scholar over those of the professional painter."[18]

While Zhao's use of tonal washes differentiates his technique from Li's strict ink outlines, his emphasis on line, elimination of color, and adherence to literati painting theories all lead this work to be read in the *baimiao* idiom. Although Zhao was a member of

the imperial family, which was closely associated with the academic palace style of painting, *Narcissus* does not reflect the realism of the Song court. Instead, Zhao's repeated patterns gesture towards the *idea* of the flower.[19] Barnhart writes that Zhao, like most literati painters, was after something beyond mimesis, something resembling "pure resonance."[20] Barnhart makes an analogy between literati painting and poetic descriptions, which unlike naturalistic representations aim to capture the essence, rather than the phenomenon, of a thing.[21]

Some years later, Maggie Bickford challenged Barnhart's interpretation of *Narcissus* as an embodiment of late Southern Song literati painting and suggested that Zhao's painting likely acquired the label of literati painting posthumously, as a consequence of Zhao's personal association with literati painters rather than the inherent qualities of his painting.[22] Bickford expanded on the relationship between Zhao's style and the literati tradition by drawing a comparison between *Narcissus* and another popular literati genre in the late Southern Song, *momei* 墨梅 or "ink plum." She argued that Zhao chose to paint in monochrome and repeat a singular motif in order to reinforce the image's symbolic meaning.[23] While *Narcissus* was similar to these ink plum paintings in theory and aesthetic, Zhao's style was too technically demanding for most scholar-painters to replicate.[24] Bickford suggested that Zhao's technical proficiency reflected his rarified access to the academic painting techniques of the Song imperial court, and that *Narcissus* might find closer parallels in Song decorative arts than in literati painting.[25]

Setting aside stylistic issues, Barnhart discussed a second and equally important interpretation of *Narcissus* as a symbol of literati virtue during the Song-Yuan dynastic transition. This painting has been understood primarily from the perspective of the colophon

writers. While in the West the narcissus is associated with a beautiful Greek youth who fell captive to his reflection in a pond, in the Chinese tradition the narcissus is associated with two signs of loyalty: the Xiang River goddesses and the patriotic hero Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BCE).[26] The Chinese name for narcissi, *shuixian* 水仙, can literally be translated as "water immortals," and they are often associated with two goddesses of the Xiang River, consorts to the mythical Emperor Shun, who threw themselves into a river out of loyalty to him when the emperor died.

They are also associated with the legendary poet Qu Yuan, himself a semi-mythic figure, who dedicated two of his songs to these goddesses.[27] Qu Yuan served as a minister to the southern state of Chu during the Warring States (ca. 475–221 BCE) period and is best known for his poem "Li Sao" 離騷 (Encountering Sorrow), an epic lament that recounts the plight of a loyal minister who chose to sacrifice his life rather than debase himself through political flattery or disloyalty.[28] Qu Yuan himself is said to have drowned in the Miluo River, a tributary of the Xiang. He is revered as a man of unwavering moral integrity who chose to commit suicide when he was banished from court.[29] While the historical truth of this account is debated, the narcissus became associated with Qu Yuan, and by association became a symbol of purity, loyalty and mournful beauty among the Chinese literati.[30]

After the fall of the Song dynasty, members of the literati who still felt loyal to the Song imperial family, known as "leftover subjects" (*yimin* 遗民), drew on these pre-existing connotations in order to reinterpret Zhao's *Narcissus.* Drawing on the first two colophons that follow Zhao's painting, Barnhart demonstrates how after the Song-Yuan transition, Zhao's painting became a symbol for patriotic mourning, an interpretation which remains dominant in the present day.[31]

Zhou Mi's colophon immediately following Zhao's painting contains the following *ci* or lyric poem to the tune of "*guoxiang man"*:[32]

Jade smooth and golden bright,

I remember the folding screen and the low table,

The leaves cut back, the roots transplanted.

Year after year I see her again,

Her slender silhouette, graceful and elegant.

Wind and rain surround her like a belt and collar sloppily,

Yet she moves as smoothly as a cloud,

While geese call to announce the arrival of spring.

We met by chance in old Luoyang.

Her pure white dimples were blackened by soot;

Frost forms in the immortal's palms.

The nation's fragrance falls and drift away, such regret!

Just as the ice is melting tender green

Who remembers a hairpin left behind?

The waters are vast and the heavens far,

One ought to think of brother cassia and brother plum,

So distant: fish-scale waves as far as the eye can see,

Fifty lute strings, sorrow fills the mist rising from the Xiang River.

Desolate and cold, grief without words.

My dream enters the east wind of spring,

The snow has stopped and the river is clear.

玉潤金明 ，記曲屏小几，剪葉移根 。

經年汜人重見，瘦影娉婷 。

雨帶風襟零亂，步雲冷，鵝管吹春 。

相逢舊京洛，素靨塵緇，仙掌霜凝 。

國香流落恨，正冰銷翠薄，誰念遺簪？

水空天遠，應想樊弟梅兄 。

渺渺魚波望極，五十絃，愁滿湘雲 。

凄涼耿無語，夢入東風，雪盡江清 。

Qiu Yuan’s colophon follows Zhou’s:

The ice is thin, the sandbank is dark, and the grass is short and withered,

The one who picked the fragrant flowers is distant, separated by the far bank of Lake Xiang.

Who has left these immortal jewels beneath the evening moon?

They [the narcissi in this painting] surpass even “Nine Fields of Orchids in the Autumn Breeze.”

Pale and bright, the overturned bronze vessel spilled over with immortal dew,

Clear and splendid, the precious jade is smashed like broken coral.

I pity the narcissus for not being the orchid,

Who at least had known the sober minister of Chu.

冰薄沙昏短草枯，采香人遠鬲湘湖。

誰留夜月群仙佩，絕勝秋鸝九畹圖。

白粲銅槃傾沆瀣，青明寶玦碎珊瑚。

卻憐不得同蘭蕙，一識清醒楚大夫。

Barnhart and Fong both discuss these first two colophons, poems by Zhou Mi and Qiu Yuan, as symbolist poems of the narcissus as a metaphor for their lost homeland. In Zhou's poem, *Narcissus* evokes "the fragrance of a nation [that] falls and drifts away," while Qiu's poem equates the image with a smashed and ruined homeland, as well as with a memory of undying purity and perfection.[33] Both poems also reference Qu Yuan, fortifying the image's connection to nationalistic loss.

The imagery of these poems will be discussed in more detail in **Section III Literary Treatment of the Narcissus**. However, as Barnhart points out, the painting dates to before the fall of Song, and the actual occasion and intention of its production are unknown.[34] This thesis redirects the scholarship, which was cast from the retrospective view of the later colophon writers, back towards an interpretation that speaks more directly to Zhao's own time.

This interpretation will use a poetic reading, working with the distinctly Southern Song poetic genre of *yongwu ci* 咏物詞 (singing of objects in the *ci* form). While the term *yongwu* 咏物 (singing of objects) refers to a broad category of symbolist poetry that dates to the Eastern Han Period (25-220), the *ci* form of *yongwu* emerged in the Northern Song and gained popularity in the Southern Song.[35] It therefore developed in parallel with literati painting. I am interested in how the formal qualities of *yongwu ci* may have cross-pollinated Zhao's stylistic innovations in painting. By looking at Zhao's poetic influences, I hope to offer greater context for the Metropolitan Museum's *Narcissus* and to suggest that it was part of a trend in late Southern Song painting and poetry to depict small intimate worlds which focus one's attention on a symbolic object that represents the artist's intent.

II. Zhao Mengjian and the Metropolitan Museum *Narcissus:* Biography and Object History

Because of his surname, Zhao Mengjian is frequently connected to other aristocrat-artists from the Zhao clan. However unlike his wealthier imperial relatives from previous generations, such as Zhao Lingrang 趙令穰 (active ca. 1070 – after 1100) and Zhao Boju 趙伯駒 (active early 12th c.), Zhao Mengjian grew up both socially and geographically distant from court life.[36] Zhao Mengjian is also sometimes associated with the Yuan literatus Zhao Mengfu, a distant cousin. However Zhao Mengjian was 55 years older than Zhao Mengfu and shared a closer relationship to Zhao Mengfu's father Zhao Yuyin 趙與訔 (1213-1265), who was fifteen years his junior.[37]

Zhao Mengjian and *Narcissus* both belonged to the Southern Song, but their histories were forged in the Yuan. Historical and contemporary accounts of Zhao portray him as a

consummate scholar-official: a member of the imperial family, an educated official frustrated with political life, and a serious bon vivant who paired his artistic pursuits as a poet, calligrapher, painter, collector, connoisseur, theorist, and critic with a life of leisure, friendship, heavy drinking, and pleasure boats.[38] Less idealized elements of his biography, such as the relative poverty of his childhood, the hardships he endured in his personal and professional life, and his patronage relationship with the grand chancellor Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275), were discussed in Zhao's own essays, collected in the encyclopedic Qing dynasty anthology *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections) as *Yizhai wenbian* 彝齋文編 (Anthology of writings from the Wine Vessel Study), but rarely mentioned afterwards.[39]

Zhao Mengjian was born in 1199 in Guangchen zhen 廣陳鎮, a small town in Haiyan county, Jiaxing prefecture (modern day Zhejiang province), roughly 100 kilometers northeast of Hangzhou.[40] Although he was an eleventh-generation descendant of Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927-976), or Song Taizu 宋太祖, the dynasty's founder, his imperial lineage belied the strained financial circumstances of his life. The Yuan literatus Wu Liangcai 吳亮采 (early 14th c.) described Zhao's hometown as "the coarsest (*lou* 陋) prefecture in western Zhejiang. Of wealth, influence, drink and women there are plenty, but when it comes to men of learning and refinement, there are no others [besides Zhao Mengjian]."[41] Zhao himself wrote that his childhood was bitter and his hometown poor, that he lacked friends and teachers to learn from and reading materials to study from, and that he endured every possible kind of hardship.[42]

Zhao's childhood poverty can be attributed in part to the death of his father when he was young, which left only his mother to support him and his younger brother, Zhao

Mengchun (趙孟淳) (mid-13th c.).[43] Zhao initially struggled to get an education because of his family's strained financial circumstances; he wrote that his family did not have the resources to educate him and find him a good teacher.[44] However, upon hearing of the young Zhao Mengjian's situation, his grandfather's elder brother stepped in to pay for his education.[45] Once he was given this opportunity, Zhao was determined to gain high position in the government bureaucracy, promising his mother that he would win a prestigious title and repay this debt of kindness.[46]

Zhao passed the *jinshi* 進士 (presented scholar) examination in 1226 at the age of 27, a relatively early age for his time.[47] However, after this initial success, his career stalled, and he worked in a minor position as a prefect of Yanzhou 嚴州 (in modern day Zhejiang province) for eighteen years before he finally received a promotion to county magistrate.[48] Eventually, he served as a scholar in the Hanlin Academy, but like many educated men of his time, Zhao felt frustrated with official life and overlooked for professional advancement.[49]

Zhao's relationship with Jia Sidao, a powerful Southern Song political patron and art collector who would eventually become grand chancellor, demonstrated that Zhao was not above flattery in trying to get a higher position. His relationship with Jia dated back to at least 1241, and while his earlier writings to Jia contained admonitions and coded critiques, his later writings from 1254 were pure praise and flattery.[50] Far from what his sterling posthumous reputation would suggest, Zhao was concerned with advancing his career and financial interests and willing to bend his moral principles in order to do so.

Like many frustrated officials in the late Southern Song, Zhao turned to artistic activities to seek refuge from his stalled bureaucratic career. He studied with the famous

literatus ink plum painter Tang Zhengzhong 湯正仲 (active 12th c.), who was the nephew and stylistic heir of the innovative ink plum painter Yang Wujiu 杨无咎 (1097-1169), another member of the literati.[51] Zhao's talent was broadly acknowledged and admired among his peers, and he eventually became a director of the Hanlin Academy, the imperial training grounds for professional painters.[52] Testifying to Zhao's reputation, Zhou Mi wrote that Zhao was skilled in painting plum blossoms and bamboo, and "extremely addicted to calligraphy."[53] In addition, Lin Zhong wrote in a now missing colophon to *Narcissus* that in Zhao's painting every blade of grass was worthy of admiration, while Zhao Mengfu wrote that Zhao Mengjian's efforts at ink flower painting were superior to his own.[54]

While Zhao's artistic career brought him some satisfaction, his family life continued to be tinged with tragedy. Zhao was the father of two children, a son and a daughter. While his son followed the traditional path of a successful literatus and gained an official position in the government bureaucracy, his daughter, who was praised as filial, caring, virtuous and kind, died in her youth of a painful degenerative neurological condition.[55]

Although Zhao was passionate about the arts, his collecting was limited by his modest financial means. Only nine works bear seals from Zhao's collection, and each acquisition had to be carefully considered, with the purchase planned far in advance.[56] For example, thirty-three years passed between when Zhao first saw a copy of Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) famous calligraphy scroll *Lanting xu* 蘭亭序 (Preface to the Orchid Pavilion) and when he finally purchased it.[57] This careful planning, as a collector of limited means, ran contrary to Zhao's later image as a carefree and spontaneous bon vivant.

Instead, in the Yuan dynasty, an idealized version Zhao Mengjian was presented as a man who represented the Song royal family in his lineage, epitomized the aesthetically

oriented Southern Song gentleman in his collecting and leisure activities, and refused to bend his moral will to suit practical and political expediency. Historical details that did not fit this narrative, such as his limited financial means or his expedient relationship with Jia, were glossed over. This idealized Yuan narrative cast Zhao as an embodiment of all that was lost—morally, aesthetically, and dynastically—with the fall of the Song.

One of the primary authors of this narrative was Zhao's close friend Zhou Mi, who recounted a number of hagiographic stories about Zhao in his collection of informal writings *Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語 (Rustic Language from West of Qi).[58] In Zhou's account, Zhao's relative poverty is turned into a literati virtue, evidence that he valued humanistic pursuits over the mundane attainment of wealth and status. Zhou describes how Zhao spent much of his time on a houseboat, traveling the rivers and lakes of Hangzhou, drinking and taking pleasure in music, painting, calligraphy and poetry. Zhou wrote:

> [Zhao] roved about from east to west with few possessions, carrying everything he had along with him. This one boat was piled with [Zhao's] things every which way, leaving only one small space where he could recline and rest. He could reach any item he wanted from left or right and would play on his instruments and chant poetry to the point where he would forget about sleep and food. Wherever he went, whether they recognized it or not, gazing at it people would know this was the Mi Family houseboat of calligraphy and painting.[59]
>
> （子固）東西薄游，必挾所有以自隨，一舟橫陳，僅留一席爲偃息之地，隨意左右取之， 撫摩吟諷，至忘寢食。所至，識不識望之，而知爲米家書畫船也。

Zhou further burnished Zhao's reputation as an eccentric bon vivant dedicated to literati pursuits by recounting a story of Zhao singing Qu Yuan's patriotic rhapsody *Li Sao*. Zhou writes:

> In the year 1260, near the capital [Hangzhou] on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival, I had the good fortune to invite Zhao Mengjian to bring art works from his collection [to attend a viewing party]. We hired a boat in West Lake to enjoy the lakes and mountains and at the same time appreciate the pleasures of wine. Zhao removed his hat, poured wine onto his head, stretched out his legs, and loudly sang *Li Sao*.[60]
>
> 庚申歲客輦下會菖蒲節，余偕一時好事者，邀子固(趙孟堅)各携所藏，買舟湖山相與評賞飲酬，子固脫帽，以酒晞髮，箕踞歌 離騷。

> In another story, describing Zhao's purchase of the *Lanting* scroll, Zhou writes, "Zhao Mengjian returned from the senior gentleman [the prior owner of the *Lanting* scroll] in extremely high spirits. He took a boat at night to return, but the rain grew heavy, the mountain wind blew, and the boat flipped over. Luckily, they were close to harbor. Luggage, clothing, bedding, everything capsized; nothing was left. Just then, Zhao, covered in wet clothing, stood in the shallow water, hands clutching the *Lanting* scroll. He showed it to everyone, saying: 'The *Lanting* [scroll] is here! The rest is not enough to trouble me.'"[61]
>
> 子固復從壽翁善價得之，喜甚! 乘舟夜汎而歸，至霅之弁，山風作，舟覆，幸

值支港， 行李衣衾皆渰溺無餘，子固方被溼衣立淺水中，手持褉帖示人曰，

蘭亭在 此，餘不足介意也，

Even the Yuan dynasty stories about when Zhao Mengjian died do not match the historical evidence. Initially, many scholars thought Zhao was a survivor and loyalist in the Yuan, based on an erroneous account of Yao Tongshou 姚桐壽 (active mid-14th c.). In his collected stories *Lejiao siyu* 樂郊私語 (Private Notes from the Pleasure District), Yao portrayed Zhao Mengjian as a "leftover subject" of the Song dynasty. Yao described Zhao as a hermit who lived into the Yuan, choosing a life of seclusion rather than service to the new dynasty.[62] This portrayal would have fortified Zhou Mi's image of Zhao as an ideal literati artist and Song subject, a man both passionate about the arts and firm in his moral and political principles.

However, art historian Xu Bangda pointed out that a colophon on Zhao Mengjian's *Poems on Painting Plum and Bamboo* (*Meizhu shipu* 梅竹詩譜) (Fig. 3) suggests that Zhao passed away prior to 1267.[63] In addition, the Tianjin Museum *Narcissus* has an inscription by Gu Guan 顧觀 (born mid-13th c.) that suggests Zhao passed away in the year 1264.[64] In either case, Zhao would not have lived to see the fall of his dynasty, suggesting that the loyalist interpretation of *Narcissus* did not come from Zhao himself but rather was constructed by his survivors in the Yuan.

Although Zhao's surviving body of work is limited, it spans the stylistic spectrum from the technically demanding realism of the palace style to the bold expressionism of literati painting. His two works *Three Friends of Winter* (*Suihan sanyou* 歲寒三友) (Fig. 4)

and *Ink Orchid* (*Molan* 墨蘭) (Fig. 5) demonstrate this versatility. The first work, *Three Friends of Winter*, is a technically demanding, finely detailed rendering of a bouquet containing flowering plum branches and sprigs of bamboo and plum—three plants that endure despite winter's freezing temperatures.[65] Both the style and substance of this painting epitomize the palace style. The motif contains popular symbolic allusions to steadfast moral virtue, while the style emphasizes virtuosic realism over individual personality.

In contrast, *Ink Orchid* operates in the literati idiom, aiming to capture the essential spirit of the flower rather than its formal likeness. Like the narcissus, the orchid is a literati symbol of loyalty associated with Qu Yuan. In addition, Zhao's stylistic approach shows off his calligraphic training: each leaf and flower is articulated with freehand brushstrokes that are as expressive as they are precise. The intense emphasis on line that Zhao employs in *Ink Orchid* places it even further towards the literati end of the spectrum than the *Narcissus* paintings, which employ both ink wash and outlines.

In addition to his paintings, Zhao left a number of calligraphic works, including his calligraphy scroll *Poems on Painting Plum and Bamboo*. This work, currently in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, contains three poems that reveal Zhao's personal attitudes towards artistic tradition and innovation. In this work, Zhao composed the following verses for his friend Wang Cuiyan 王翠巖 (13th c.), who was known for painting bamboo:

> The ancients did not follow fixed forms (i.e. models),
> But learned directly from nature and achieved a trueness.
> Today, those who follow tradition are bound to their mentors;

Like stamping in clay, they only follow in their footsteps.

I still suspect this is like rebuilding a house on its own foundation,

But add to it some new ideas and there is satisfaction.

Many hundreds of years have passed since the time of the Jin and Wei;

Who shall renew the traditions of Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi,

Not to mention a lofty binding to the works of Li [Bo] and Du [Fu]?

Poets today compete in buying the latest verses to read.[66]

古畫畫物無定形，隨物賦形皆迫真。

其次祖述有師繩，如印印泥隨前人。

尙疑屋下重作屋，參以新意意乃足。

晉魏而成幾百年，羲獻斷弦誰解續。

何况高束李杜編，江湖競買新詩讀。

Later, Zhao appended a colophon to *Poems on Painting Plum and Bamboo* which describes an exchange between Zhao and Wang regarding the prior poem:

Several months after receiving this poem from me, [Wang] Cuiyan suddenly asked, "What I requested was a poem about painting bamboo. Why did you write about the poetry of Li Bo and Du Fu?" I laughed and answered, "It is not that you do not understand, but no one has spoken of this to you before. 'If when someone composes a poem it must be a certain poem, He is definitely not a man who knows poetry.' Have you not heard [these poetic lines by Su Shi] before?"[67]

翠巖得詩後數月忽問余曰:“所求畫竹詩耳, 乃及李、杜編，何也？”余笑曰：“非君不解, 世無人爲君言耳。‘作詩必此詩, 定非能詩人。’不聞此語耶？”

These two passages suggest that Zhao supported the belief that form likeness was secondary to attaining a deeper “trueness” within the work. In addition, they suggest that Zhao supported artistic innovation, as opposed to slavishly following set rules. Although some scholars have suggested that Zhao was a conservative traditionalist, in these lines Zhao advocates for timely innovation.[68] For Zhao innovation was the truest form of loyalty to tradition, since it honored the spirit of past artists rather than simply mimicking their forms.

In fact, Zhao painted at least three *Narcissus* scrolls, all remarkably similar.[69] Fong and Fu describe three extant paintings of narcissus flowers by Zhao Mengjian: one presently in the Tianjin Museum collection (Fig. 6), a second reprinted in the Japanese catalog *Shina nanga taisei*, and a third, documented in Bian Yongyu's卞永誉 (1645-1712) Qing dynasty catalog *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫彙考 (Analyses of calligraphy and painting in the Hall of Testing Antiquity) and various other catalogs, which is now the Metropolitan Museum's *Narcissus*.[70] Xu Bangda suggests that colophons appended to the Tianjin scroll were Qing dynasty copies from the Metropolitan Museum's *Narcissus*.[71]

Although it currently bears no seal, signature, or inscription from the artist, the Met *Narcisuss* was originally signed “Yizhai” 彝齋, the name of Zhao's Wine Vessel Studio, and affixed with two seals: a white character seal reading *Zigu* 子固, his honorific name, and a red character seal of *Yizhai*.[72] It also originally bore an inscription from Zhao, saying:

I haven't worked in this fashion in a long time. Furthermore, the issues with my

eyesight have not improved. Ziyong[73] came seeking this and pressed [me] to finish it, so I force myself to get up and sketch it out. All I've managed to do is add to the clumsiness. Those who encounter the painting, if they are seeking something beyond formal likeness, maybe they will find it acceptable.

余久不作此， 又方病目未愈。子用征索諾良急，

強起描寫， 轉益拙俗， 現着求于形似之外可尔。"[74]

Because Zhao's inscription began with: "I hadn't worked in this fashion in a long time," it is likely that the Met Museum's *Narcissus* was painted in his later years.

Although the exact circumstances of the painting are unclear, the backgrounds of the early colophon writers indicate that the scroll circulated among highest circles of the literati elite. According to Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶 (active 19th c.) writing in the *Shuhua tiba ji* 書畫題記 (Records of inscriptions and colophons on calligraphy and painting), the scroll originally bore eleven original colophons by Yuan literati.[75] While most are undated, the first, by Xianyu Shu 鮮于枢 (1246-1302), was signed in 1296.[76] Xianyu, who served under the Yuan, would have written for this painting in the early decades of the Yuan, and merely comments on the occasion of the viewing. Next is an inscription by Zhao Mengfu, who, like Xianyu, reserves his commentary to the painting itself, discussing the artistry of Zhao Mengjian's difficult technique. Several additional Yuan colophons praise Zhao's skills and habits as a painter, his character and connection with the Song imperial family. Liu Fu 刘箚 (active 14th c.) comments that Zhao was "pleased with himself" (*deyi* 得意) and that Zhao himself considered the flowers in the painting to "float on air" (*piaoran* 飄然).[77] Liu's inscription also comments that Zhao Mengjian had "the spirit of the Song imperial clan"

(*Zigu wei Song zongshi jing* 子固为宋宗室精), marking the artist as a symbol of the Song dynasty.[78]

A few colophons comment on the conditions of the viewing. One brief but interesting colophon, immediately following Zhao Mengfu's, indicates that the landscape painters Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374) and Chen Ruyan 陈汝言 (late Yuan-early Ming) viewed the painting at the invitation of the prominent Yuan collector Guo Tianxi 郭天錫 (1227-1302):

> On the last day of the third month of 1352, Ni Zan and Chen Ruyan viewed this work together at the Studio of Rapid Snow (studio of Guo Tianxi). [79]
>
> 至正十有二年三月晦日瓚同陳惟允兄觀於快雪齋。

This colophon opens up interesting questions about the influence of Zhao's painting on Ni's and Chen's work. It also suggests that a century after his death Zhao's painting had already become a canonical work of literati painting that was sought out by the most elite artists of the Yuan Dynasty.

However, most of the Yuan colophons, starting with Zhou Mi's, contain poems that connect the imagery in the painting with images of dancing, shivering water nymphs and themes of dynastic loss. In addition to the extant poems by Zhou and Qiu, originally the scroll also contained poems by Deng Wenyuan 鄧文原 (1258-1328), Zhang Ying 張楧 (1260-1325), Shu Ye 叔野 (active 14th c.), Lin Zhong, Li Zhigang, and Zhang Bochun 張伯淳 (1242—1302). These poems echo the imagery and tone of the existing colophons by

Zhou and Qiu: emerald sleeves for leaves, socks stained with dust, water goddesses dancing in waves, and discarded belt ornaments and precious goods. The continuity of imagery between these poems suggest that Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll became the site for a collective expression of grief, in which later viewers echoed the poetic themes of Zhou and Qiu.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties the scroll continued to pass through the hands of illustrious collectors such as Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590), Yuan Shu 袁樞 (17th c.), and Xu Xiaoxian 徐孝先 (17th c.), all of whom added their seals to the painting.[80] It also appeared in a number of painting catalogs, including Wang Keyu's 汪珂玉 (b. 1587) *Shan hu wang* 珊瑚网 (1643), Bian Yongyu's 卞永譽 (1645–1712) *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫彙考 (1682), Gao Shiji's 高士奇 (1645–1704) *Jiang cun xiaoxia lu* 江村銷夏錄 (1693), Wu Sheng's 吳升 (active 18th c.) *Da guan lu* 大觀錄 (1712), Yu Fengqing's *Shuhua tiba ji* (1802), and Gu Wenpin's 顧文彬 (1811–1889) *Guoyunlou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記 (1882).[81] While Yu's book includes all twelve original colophons, Gu's only describes the four Yuan colophons currently attached to the painting, suggesting that the Met Museum's *Narcissus* had already been cut in half, most likely at some point in the 19th century. [82]

The final three colophons at the end of the Met Museum's *Narcissus* scroll bring it into the 20th century. Two poems and one descriptive essay written by the collector Chu Deyi echo the earlier Yuan colophons. Although Chu is lamenting the loss of the Qing dynasty, not the Song, his poems borrow from Zhou Mi's imagery of a "nation's fragrance passing away" (*guoxiang zong liuluo* 國香縱流落). Chu's second poem mirrors the form of Zhou's "Guoxiang man," with two stanzas of a similar rhythm and rhyming pattern and an opening line in the second stanza that is a clear echo of Zhou's.[83] Chu's final inscription is an

essay describing the painting, its history, and how he came to own it. After Chu, the painting passed on to Wu Puxin 吳普心 (1897–1987) and then C. C. Wang, who moved to New York and donated it to the Metropolitan Museum, where it became part of a collection of literati works that ignited a new wave of scholarship in North America on Song-Yuan painting.[84]

III. Literary Treatment of the Narcissus

It is difficult to separate Zhao's *Narcissus* handscroll from the period of Song-Yuan transition that it has come to represent. Since there are no colophons from Zhao himself on this painting, the work "speaks" through the voices of later inscriptions by Zhou Mi, Qiu Yuan and others. Writing from the Yuan dynasty, Zhou and Qiu interpreted Zhao's painting through the lens of their political circumstances. Their colophons, dense with metaphors of desecrated beauty, fixed the iconographic reading of *Narcissus* for future generations, who would accept the flowers as symbols for both the fallen Song dynasty and for the loyal men who grieved her loss.

However, the discovery that Zhao did not paint *Narcissus* in the Yuan dynasty but rather died before the twilight of the Song complicates these interpretations of Zhao's painting. Zhao certainly would have been familiar with the same literary allusions that these poets drew upon, but in the dynastic turnover that followed Zhao's death some of these allusions took on a darker tone. We must be careful not to read Zhao's intentions into Zhou and Qiu's poems. Rather, if we compare these Yuan dynasty poems with poems on narcissi from the Northern and Southern Song, we can see a pattern of imagery that is less concerned with dynastic turnover and more evocative of beauty, femininity, and a romantic aesthetic ideal.

A prime illustration of these themes is a couplet of heptasyllabic regulated verse entitled "Matching the rhymes of Zhongyu's poems on Narcissus, two verses" (Ciyun Zhongyu shuixian hua ershou 次韵中玉水仙花二首) penned by the Northern Song literatus Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105).[85]

Wherever there is water, narcissi will bloom, each one a rarity;
Submerged water comprises its bones, jade its flesh.
Its hidden fragrance surpasses [the bold scent of] the white spring rose,
One can only compare it with the winter plum blossom, but without its lovely branches.

From muck, it knows how to make the roots of a white lotus,
From manure, it can bloom yellow jade blossoms.
What a pity this fragrance of a nation is ignored by heaven,[86]
So that their fate is to descend to common households.

次韵中玉水仙花二首

借水开花自一奇，水沈为骨玉为肌。

暗香已壓酴醿倒，只比寒梅無好枝。

淤泥解作白蓮藕，糞壤能開黃玉花。

可惜國香天不管，隨緣流落小民家

Zhao and his contemporaries would almost certainly have known of Huang Tingjian's couplet, written in the Northern Song. Huang establishes his intent to write *yongwu shi*, or "odes to things" in the *shi* style, in an established *yongwu* sub-genre of praising flowers for their natural beauty. However, compared to the Yuan poets' complex political metaphors, Huang's poems seem unconcerned with matters of the state. His first poem praises the formal beauty of the flower. He begins by commending each narcissus as a rarity and likening their bones and flesh to "submerged water" and "jade." Huang is probably using these lines to allude to a similar poem by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) that praises plum blossoms. Su's poem opens with the line: "Jade and snow comprise its bones, ice its soul" (*yuxue wei gu bing wei hun* 玉雪爲骨冰爲魂).[87] Huang closes the poem with another comparison between the narcissus and the plum blossom, a further indication that he is positioning his poems in conversation with Su's.

Only in the first verse's third line, "Its hidden fragrance surpasses [the bold scent of] the white spring rose" (*an xiang yi ya tumi dao* 暗香已压酴醿倒), does Huang depart from the verse's descriptive program to comment on a larger aesthetic issue. By preferring the narcissus's delicate scent to the overpowering fragrance of the rose, Huang aligns himself with the *pingdan* 平淡 (even and bland) aesthetic, which epitomized good taste to the Song literati.[88] This aesthetic elevated subtlety and simplicity over bold extravagance and became an aesthetic strategy for literati artists to differentiate themselves from professional painters trained at the imperial academy. However, overall Huang's first verse is remarkably object-oriented, describing the flower itself instead of using it as a metaphor for something else.

While Huang's first quatrain is an objective observation, his second quatrain operates

entirely on the level of metaphor. However, the image he alludes to is that of a beautiful woman (*jiaren* 佳人), not an idealized state. We see the elements of Zhou Mi's famous phrase "the fragrance of a nation falls and drifts away, such pity!" in Huang's last two lines, but Huang uses *guoxiang* 國香 (nation's fragrance) to reference exquisite female beauties, not the glory of a dynasty, and *liuluo* 流落 (fall) to describe the private declines of these women into lower class households, not the political decline of a dynastic family. And where Yuan poems on narcissi abound with images of winter frost and broken artifacts, Huang's second poem opens with two lines emphasizing the narcissus's resilience. He commends the flower for its ability to grow in mud and manure and maintain its beauty regardless of its base surroundings. While one could read Huang's second verse as a metaphor for overlooked literati officials, it is clearly still a song of praise rather than a lament.

Two Southern Song poems on narcissus demonstrate considerable development in the imagery associated with the narcissus as well as a stylistic shift from the *shi to ci*. In these Southern Song *yongwu ci* the emphasis shifts from the narcissus's resilience to her erotic beauty. This personification also grew more concrete, evolving from the abstract fallen beauties of Huang Tingjian's poem to literary references to specific allegorical figures.

Writing in the early decades of the Southern Song, Xin Qiji's 辛棄疾 (1140–1207) "Ode to the Narcissus (To the tune '*He xinlang*') (*He xinlang fu shuixian* 賀新郎賦水仙) illustrates how the iconography of the narcissus changed between Huang's time and Zhao's. Xin was a rare poet-warrior and veteran of several military campaigns between the Southern Song and the Jin.[89] His poetry is commonly characterized as heroic, but in this *yongwu ci* on narcissus he reveals a softer side:

"Ode to the Narcissus (To the Tune '*He xinlang*')"[90]

Lying on the clouds, clothing steeped in cold,

Aloof and at ease, ahead of the wind and beneath the moon,

A mysterious silhouette beside the water.

Silk socks stain with spray as she skims across,

Bathing in the vast mist-covered waves.

I adore each point of tender gold [blossoms] turning into a halo.

[The narcissus] doesn't remember when we met and I removed my belt ornaments.[91]

So filled with emotions! For me, she releases her fragrance.

Holding back soft tears,

Withering away.

When Qu Yuan wrote his timeless *Huaisha fu* he was full of regret.[92]

In that time of regret, he was writing in a hurry and forgot to include

The narcissus.

In misty rain the narcissus is lost and desolate.

Emerald sleeves shake in the wind; who will straighten them?

Write her into [Xi Kang's lyric] *Youfen* and forget it.[93]

After the lute string breaks,[94] no one to recite "Summons of the Soul".[95]

There is only [her] golden vessel, iridescent and soft.

Depressed, [I] drink to forget,

But regrettably am sober and wide awake.

贺新郎赋水仙

雲臥衣裳冷。

看蕭然、風前月下，

水邊幽影。

羅襪生塵凌波去，

湯沐煙波萬頃。

愛一點、嬌黃成暈。

不記相逢曾解佩，

甚多情、爲我香成陣。

待和淚，收殘粉。

靈均千古《懷沙》恨。

恨當時、匆匆忘把，

此仙题品。

煙雨淒迷僝僽損，

翠袂搖搖誰整？

謾寫入、瑤琴《幽憤》。

弦斷《招魂》無人賦，

但金杯的皪銀台潤。

愁殢酒，又獨醒。

Xin's poem follows the basic pattern of Huang's, with the first verse offering praise for the narcissus's beauty and the second verse expressing pity for her desolation. However, the narcissus of Xin's first verse is not the literal flower of Huang's first verse, but rather a water nymph of other-worldly beauty, presaging the forlorn women of the Yuan poems. Whereas Huang's poem tells us matter-of-factly that the narcissus grows by the water, Xin's personified narcissi "move gracefully as if walking on water" (*lingbo qu* 凌波去) and appear "bathing in vast mist-covered waves" (*tangmu yanbo wanqin* 湯沐煙波萬頃).

Xin's descriptions are also full of erotic detail. While Huang describes the narcissus anatomically, praising its "bones" and "muscles," Xin offers images of silk socks, unclasped belt ornaments, and wind-swept sleeves. His poem opens with an image of the narcissus laying alluringly on a bed of clouds, then cuts to a scene of half-dressed goddesses bathing under the moon. The narcissus's scent is also made into an intimate erotic gesture: "*For me* she releases her fragrance" (*wei wo xiang* 爲我香). And the poet's mood, like that of a lover, shifts from adoring and full of emotion to mournful and depressed. These details set precedents for later Yuan poets.

Similarly, Xin established a precedent for using the narcissus to lament political losses by alluding to the narcissus's connection to Qu Yuan. Compared to Huang's poem, Xin's "Ode to Narcissus" is more desolate. Instead of Huang's milder word "pity" (*kexi* 可惜), Xin is filled with "strong regret" (*hen* 恨); instead of heaven merely taking a laissez-faire approach and "not interfering" (*tian bu guan* 天不管), the narcissus is explicitly

"forgotten" (*congcong wangba* 匆匆忘把). Xin's opening line describes an "empty and desolate" (*xiaoran* 蕭然) scene, and the closing lines describe him crying and trying to drink away his sorrows, respectively.

Yet for all its melancholy, Xin's poem is still not as hopeless as the Yuan colophons of Zhou Mi and Qiu Yuan. Although his description of the wind disturbing the narcissus's "emerald sleeves" (*cuimei* 翠袂) anticipates Zhou's images of "smoke stained emerald sleeves" (*chenyan xun cuimei* 沉煙熏翠袂) and "wind and rain surround her like a belt and collar" (*yu dai feng jin ling luan* 雨帶風襟零亂), Xin's poem is still set in a season of hope. He describes "tender" (*jiao* 嬌) blossoms of the narcissus and characterizes the weather as "a misty rain" (*yanyu* 煙雨), two clear indications of spring, in contrast to Zhou's poetic landscapes of endless winter.

Writing in the early Southern Song, Xin's poem marks an inflection point in the symbolism of the narcissus. He transforms a Northern Song theme of beauty and resilience into something more intimate and erotic. However, unlike the Yuan odes to narcissi, his narcissus flowers-as-water nymphs are objects of both pity and desire, signs of both hope and sorrow. His poem expresses a degree of subjectivity and emotional ambiguity that all but disappears in the Yuan poems.

Even closer to Zhao's own time, the celebrated late Southern Song *ci* innovator Wu Wenying 吳文英 (c 1200-1260) took the analogy between the narcissus flower and its alluring feminine persona one step further. Like Xin, Wu described an intimate encounter with the narcissus, but Wu shifted the scene of this rendezvous from a natural landscape to a domestic setting. In Wu's poem, the narcissus is a secret lover who meets the poet in his

private courtyard and whom he eventually takes to his bed.

Hua fan (Guo Xidao presents narcissi and requests a *fu*)

Small, graceful and elegant,

Pure lead-white dimples,

The golden yellow of her petals hides a secret halo.

Emerald jade hair ornaments cross at her temples.

Last night in the cold chill of the courtyard,

Under the moon we became acquainted.

Deep asleep, even bitterer grew the grip of this icy wind.

Startled awake, my heart was unsettled.

Dawn arrived with a pot of verdant green,[96]

Only then did I realize the accuracy of my flower dream.

The flowers of the Xiang River goddesses make this delicate fragrance.[97]

Skimming along the road as if dancing on waves,

Ever longing for the old riverbanks and misty sands.

Casting her shadow by the terrace steps, her cold fragrance wildly wafts

Even the icy plum conceals her charms![98]

Placed next to the incense burner[99]—soon she is moved to be by my pillow,

Still I see her—jade-like beauty with cascades of raven hair.

I imagine you praised in song by Qinghua's pond pavilion;[100]

Stacks of wine cups are poured and emptied!

花犯（郭希道送水仙索賦）

小娉婷，

清鉛素靨，

蜂黃暗偷暈。

翠翹欹鬢。

昨夜冷中庭，

月下相認。

睡濃更苦淒風緊，

驚回心未穩。

送曉色、一壺蔥茜，

才知花夢準。

湘娥化作此幽芳，

凌波路，

古岸雲沙遺恨。

臨砌影，

寒香亂、凍梅藏韻。

熏爐畔、旋移傍枕，

還又見、玉人垂紺鬢。

料喚賞、清華池館，

台杯須滿引。

Wu's *yongwu ci* is remarkable for its sensual imagery and celebratory tone. Like Xin, Wu emphasizes erotic, rather than patriotic, associations with the narcissus. Like Xin, Wu personifies the narcissus flower, comparing its leaves to a woman's hair ornaments and its corona to a lead-based cosmetic powder used to lighten women's skin. Wu also alludes to the Xiang River goddesses, compares her favorably to the plum blossom, and uses the flower's scent to suggest intimacy between lovers. These familiar patterns from Huang Tingjian and Xin Qiji establish that Wu is familiar with the conventions composing poems to narcissus.

But in contrast to prior *yongwu* poems on narcissus, which primarily describe outdoor scenes of riverbanks where daffodils naturally grow, Wu's narcissus moves into a domestic world of warmth, comfort and leisure. Wu describes himself getting acquainted with the narcissus in the "cold chill of a courtyard," casting a shadow near "terrace steps." But he brings the narcissus, most likely in a bowl or plate, into his warm bedroom, "placed by the incense burner" and then "moved to be by my pillow." He hints at a consummated romance and transitions from night to day, imagining her by a "pond pavilion," with "stacks of wine cups." Wu's use of these domestic settings emphasizes the image of the narcissus as an erotic lover and distances her from associations with Qu Yuan and drowning loyal subjects.

In addition to its domestic setting, Wu's poem is noteworthy in that its dominant tone

is celebratory, not despairing. While Xin's flower wilts, Wu's arrives at dawn "with a pot of verdant green." To the poet's surprise, she is not a mere memory or dream, but possesses "accuracy" or "veracity" (*zhun* 準). And while in Xin's poem alcohol is a salve for the poet's sorrow, in Wu's poem the narrator drinks to celebrate the gift of the narcissus and the friendship that he shared with Gu. Wu's poem derives much of its significance from the context of its creation: it was composed as an artifact of a literati friendship and an acknowledgement of the presentation of a real potted narcissus. Thus Wu's poem strikes a celebratory tone that contrasts with the poems that preceded and followed it.

The elements of sensuality and voyeuristic pleasure that pervade these Southern Song *yongwu ci* may have similarly contributed to the appeal of Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll. Zhao almost certainly knew of these poetic images of the narcissus as a personified feminine object of pity and desire and may have even had them in mind as he constructed his work. A Southern Song literati viewer of Zhao's work would also likely have been familiar with both Xin's and Wu's poems, and his mind would have automatically transformed Zhao's images from narcissus flowers into the alluring nymphs, goddesses, and lovers described in these poems.

A comparison between Zhao's *Narcissus* and a narcissus attributed to the Tang dynasty painter Diao Guangyin 刁光胤 (c.852 - c.935) (Fig. 7) underscores this point. Compared to the relatively vertical, upright leaves from the album leaf, Zhao's innovative style, which depicts languid narcissus leaves stretching in gentle, nearly horizontal ripples that themselves resemble waves, seems to encourage poetic associations between the flowers in his image and the seductive water goddesses that share their name. Zhao's small, pale narcissus flowers, concentrated in the top third of his composition, seem to skim above

the leaves like Xin's and Wu's goddesses dancing in the waves.

Compared to the *yongwu* poems written on narcissus from the Northern and Southern Song periods, the colophons written by Zhou Mi and Qiu Yuan in the Yuan dynasty were increasingly desolate in tone and narrow in scope of interpretive possibilities. They situated themselves within the literati tradition of poems about narcissus by using phrases such as "fragrance of a nation," from Huang Tingjian's poem, and metaphors and motifs established by Xin and Wu, such as the pitiable beauty and the associations with Qu Yuan and the Xiang River goddesses. However, they rejected Huang's hopeful iconography of the narcissus as a resilient beauty that emerges out of mud and sanitized the erotic undertones of Xin and Wu. Instead, Zhou and Qiu emphasized the narcissus as a pitiable emblem of loyalty to a lost dynasty, repurposing the iconography of Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll to express their patriotic mourning during the Song-Yuan transition.

This can be illustrated through a second look at Zhou Mi's colophon:

Jade smooth and golden bright,

I remember the folding screen and the low table,

The leaves cut back, the roots transplanted.

Year after year I see her again,[101]

Her slender silhouette, graceful and elegant.

Wind and rain surround her like a belt and collar sloppily,

Yet she moves as smoothly as a cloud,

While geese call to announce the arrival of spring.

We met by chance in old Luoyang.

Her pure white dimples were blackened by soot;

Frost forms in the immortal's palms.[102]

The nation's fragrance falls and drift away, such regret!

Just as the ice is melting tender green

Who remembers a hairpin left behind?[103]

The waters are vast and the heavens far,

One ought to think of brother cassia and brother plum,[104]

So distant: fish-scale waves as far as the eye can see,

Fifty lute strings, sorrow fills the mist rising from the Xiang River.

Desolate and cold, grief without words.

My dream enters the east wind of spring,

The snow has stopped and the river is clear.[105]

玉潤金明 ，記曲屛小几，剪葉移根 。

經年汜人重見，瘦影娉婷 。

雨帶風襟零亂，步雲冷，鵝管吹春 。

相逢舊京洛，素靨塵緇，仙掌霜凝 。

國香流落恨，正冰銷翠薄，誰念遺簪？

水空天遠，應想樊弟梅兄 。

渺渺魚波望極，五十絃，愁滿湘雲 。

凄涼耿無語，夢入東風，雪盡江清 。

The theme of dynastic loss pervades the poem. Zhou turns the narcissus into a symbol for the lost Southern Song state. In his first verse, he emphasizes the rootlessness and displacement that the Yuan survivors also likely felt, portraying a plant with "The leaves cut back, the roots transplanted." Images of bitter cold heighten the poem's desolate tone: Zhou's narcissus is surrounded by "melting ice," "crisp cold," and "snow." In its most frequently cited line, "The nation's fragrance falls and drifts away, such regret!" Zhou echoes Huang's lines "What a pity this fragrance of a nation is ignored by heaven, / So that their fate is to descend to common households. "[106] However Zhou's forceful use of the emphatic *hen* unleashes a greater measure of mourning than Huang's gentler *kexi*, underscoring the despairing tone of Zhou's poem.

Zhou's line "frost forms in the immortal's palms" is particularly poignant, since it combines the frigid mood of the poem with an allusion to a historical dynastic decline. This line is a reference Li He's 李賀 (791-817) poem "Song of the Bronze Immortal Bidding Farewell to the Han" (*Jintong xianren cihan ge* 金銅仙人辭漢歌), in which a bronze statue from the Han palace weeps as she is about to be transferred to the court of the succeeding Wei dynasty. The statue mourns because her dew-collecting bowl, in which she collected the dew from Heaven for the Han emperors, is broken off.[107] The grieving statue is a symbol of dynastic loss; by invoking her image, Zhou suggests that Zhao's *Narcissus* is also an artifact of a halcyon past.

A second *yongwu ci* by Zhou enriches our understanding of how Zhou interpreted the symbol of the narcissus:

“*Hua fan* (Narcissus)”

By the Chu River’s banks,

The Xiang River goddesses suddenly appear

Silently spreading pure tears.

Faint and indifferent is spring’s notion.

Empty and alone, face to the eastern wind,

To whom can I entrust these fragrant thoughts?

The path for skimming waves has chilled, an autumn without end,

Fragrant clouds rise step by step.

Casually, I remember the immortal’s palm of the Han palace,

Glistening with dew under the bright moon.

Plucking icy strings conveys [my] grievances, [the narcissus] has deeper feelings,

The lamenter’s sorrow,

Wrongly wasted on the fragrant orchid and hidden iris.

Spring thoughts so distant,

Who will grieve and appreciate

The sweet smell of the nation’s fragrance?

In each other’s company, let us be midwinter companions,

The small window is clean,

Laden with smoke that permeates your emerald sleeves.

Awakening from my hidden dream,

Drops of pure dew,

A branch under the lantern’s shadow.

《花犯（水仙花）》

楚江湄，

湘娥乍見，

無言灑清淚。

淡然春意。

空獨倚東風，

芳思誰寄。

凌波路冷秋無際，

香云隨步起。

謾記得、漢宮仙掌，

亭亭明月底。

冰弦寫怨更多情，

騷人恨，

枉賦芳蘭幽芷。

春思遠，

誰歎賞、國香風味。

相將共、歲寒伴侶，

小窗淨、沉煙熏翠袂。

幽夢覺、涓涓淸露，

一枝燈影裡。

This second *yongwu ci* from Zhou clearly echoes Wu Wenying's *yongwu ci* of the same title. Zhou not only uses the same tune, or rhyming pattern, as Wu, he also echoes much of Wu's imagery. Both poems are set at night, and both poets encounter icy winds and end up going to bed with the narcissus. The two poems also share references to the Xiang River goddesses, descriptions of the goddesses "skimming the waves," and mournful images of distant shores. Wu's celebrated status as one of the foremost *ci* poets of his time makes it highly likely that Zhou would have been at least familiar with Wu's *yongwu ci* on narcissus and may have even chosen that tune precisely with the intention to extend and subvert Wu's established themes and imagery.

Compared to Wu's poem, Zhou's is less erotic and more desolate. While both poets encounter a cold wind, Wu experiences his in his sleep, and it quickly dissipates when he wakes to both daybreak and a sure sign of spring: "dawn arrived with a pot of verdant green." The cold wind in Wu's poem functions a metaphor for unsettling private thoughts rather than a commentary on external affairs. In contrast to Wu's poem, with its ultimately celebratory tone, Zhou's poem emphasizes his feelings of abandonment in a landscape of eternal winter. Throughout Zhou's poem, we see that spring and the narcissus are metaphors for the fallen Song state. Zhou sees narcissi growing by a river, yet laments that "spring is a distant memory." He professes that "the road is cold and the season is boundless." He

dreams of inviting the narcissi to be his “companion in midwinter,” yet knows that the spring flower could not survive a harsh winter. His version of Wu’s poem thus becomes a powerful metaphor for the “left behind” Song loyalists who themselves experience an inability to go on without their “spring.”

The different usages of the word *qing* 清 are illustrative of the differing intentions of the Zhou and Wu. Both poets use the word in their opening and closing lines. However, in Wu’s poem, *qing* is best translated as “pale” or “clear,” and functions to highlight primarily aesthetic qualities: the pale skin of a beautiful woman and the clear water in a reflecting pool. Zhou’s usage, on the other hand, is best translated as “pure” in what can only be read as a moral, rather than aesthetic, sense. He describes “pure tears” in the first line and echoes that imagery with “pure dew” in the closing. Both the tears, shed by the personified narcissus, and the dew, accompanying the flowers in his bedroom, suggest an unsullied, virginal purity.

Zhou’s version of *hua fan* was initially published in the *Yuefu buti* 樂府補題 (New Subjects for Lyric Songs), a collection of thirty-seven *yongwu ci* written by Song loyalists in the early years of the Yuan dynasty in order to commemorate the desecration of the Song royal tombs, which included a number of Song royal women.[108] Within this context, Zhou found it important to not only highlight his own despair, but also to emphasize the purity of the narcissus, in contrast to the seductive qualities favored by earlier Song poets.

Qiu Yuan’s colophon on Zhao’s *Narcissus* echoes the despairing tone of Zhou’s two *yongwu ci*, but while Zhou’s poems follow the popular Southern Song idiom of *ci* poetry, Qiu’s employs the older, more structured rhyming pattern of Huang Tingjian’s *yongwu shi*:

The ice is thin, the sandbank is dark, and the grass is short and withered,

The one who picked the fragrant flowers is distant, separated by the far bank of Lake Xiang.

Who has left these immortal jewels[109] beneath the evening moon?

They [the narcissi in this painting] surpass even "Nine Fields of Orchids in the Autumn Breeze."[110]

Pale and bright, the overturned bronze vessel[111] spilled over with immortal dew,

Clear and splendid, the precious jade[112] is smashed like broken coral.

I pity the narcissus for not being the orchid,

Who at least had known the sober minister of Chu.[113]

冰薄沙昏短草枯，采香人遠鬲湘湖。

誰留夜月群仙佩，絕勝秋飌九畹圖。

白粲銅槃傾沆瀣，青明寶玦碎珊瑚。

卻憐不得同蘭蕙，一識淸醒楚大夫。

Qiu's poem, like Zhou's, is dense with metaphors of dynastic loss. The vessel is overturned and the dew is spilled; the jade is broken like shards of coral. Like Zhou, Qiu also places his poem in the bitter cold of winter, opening the poem with an image of ice. However, Qiu's poem turns further towards the past. Not only does Qiu reject the popular *ci* lyric form for the structured meter of the earlier *shi,* Qiu's is also the first poem on narcissus

since Huang Tingjian's to contain no personified images of the flower as an eroticized female lover. Qiu does not write of bathing beauties skimming waves or of secret meetings under the moon. He offers no images of emerald sleeves or elegant silhouettes. In part, this is because of the less imagistic nature of the *shi*. However, the images that Qiu does offer all hint of a departed lover rather than a current object of desire. Rather than descriptions of beautiful women, Qiu describes an overturned bronze vessel and a smashed jade ring, both artifacts that allude to Tang poems about women left behind by dynastic change.

The first is another reference to Li He's "Song of the Bronze Immortal Bidding Farewell to the Han." The second artifact, the smashed jade ring, references "Lament for the Prince" (*Ai wangsun* 哀王孫), a poem by Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) that deals with the slaughter of Tang royal family members during the An Lushan rebellion (755-763). Du Fu's line is "腰下寶玦青珊瑚，可憐王孫泣路隅" *yao xiao bao jue qing shan hu, kelian wangsun qi lu yu*, which Stephen Owen translates as, "A precious *jue* ring at his waist of blue coral, a pitiable young prince weeps at the roadside."[114] Qiu's choice to present Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll in the context of these artifacts left behind by dynastic change underscores the Yuan Dynasty shift in poetic interpretations of the narcissus. He shifts the poetic imagery away from the flower's erotic connotations in the late Southern Song and towards a patriotic homage to a bygone dynasty. Taken together, Zhou and Qiu's poems about narcissi transform Zhao's painting of narcissi into a memorial for the lost Song dynasty.

By studying the colophons accompanying Zhao's painting within the broader context of Song Dynasty poetry concerning the narcissus, we are better able to understand the iconography of the *Narcissus* scroll and how its interpretation may have evolved from the time of its creation to the Yuan. Huang's poem connected the narcissus with the blossoming

plum and suggested that it was a symbol of perseverance and subtle beauty, not political loyalty. Xin's and Wu's poems raised the possibility that Zhao's painting may have had sensual, even erotic implications. However Zhou's and Qiu's colophons, as well as Zhou's *Yuefu buti* poem on narcissi, reconstructed the iconography of Zhao's painting by repurposing elements of prior narcissus poems so that they all pointed towards one meaning: dynastic loyalty.

A poetic analysis can reveal dense layers of meaning alluded to in Zhao's painting. However, this method also has its limitations. Too much focus on iconography erases the painting altogether. Zhao's *Narcissus* scroll is more than just a signifier for a matrix of poetic meanings—it is a concrete visual object that employs a visual program of objected oriented repetition and abstraction that is both novel and ambitious.

IV. *Yongwu* Aesthetics in Zhao Mengjian's Narcissus

In the previous section I discussed the iconography of the narcissus in Song Dynasty poetry and its implications for the interpretation of Zhao Mengjian's *Narcissus* handscroll. Now I turn to the formal elements of Zhao's painting, which find parallels in the late Southern Song poetic form of *yongwu ci*, or "singing of objects" in the lyrical style. *Yongwu ci*, with its emphasis on exquisite objects, vivid imagistic language, and dense allegorical wordplay, enjoyed immense popularity during Zhao's time. These poems allowed the poet to use the object as a metaphor for himself, retreating into the miniature world of the object. Indeed, the subject, style, and composition of Zhao's *Narcissus* all seem to be steeped in the aesthetics of *yongwu ci.*

Zhao's *Narcissus* draws on a principle that is common to both Chinese painting and

poetry: “using objects to express one’s intent” (*tuowu yanzhi* 托物言志).[115] This phrase comes from the 5th century literary theorist Liu Xie 劉勰 (b. ca. 465) who used it to describe *yongwu* poetry.[116] The concept of “using objects to express one’s intent” reached its apogee in *yongwu ci,* in which, literary scholar Kang-i Sun Chang writes, “every allusion works primarily as an image**…**intimately linked to the aesthetic presence of the dominant symbol…that in turn becomes a metaphor of the poet’s self.”[117] This chain of referents [image --> symbol --> subject] is critical to interpreting poetry about objects. With the rise of literati painting in the Song Dynasty, it also came to characterize one approach to flower-and-bird painting.

A particularly illustrative example is *Autumn Mallows* (*Kuihua jiadie* 葵花蛺蝶), a 12th century fan painting of a butterfly hovering above three full-blossomed flowers. (Fig. 7). This small format painting was commissioned by Empress Wu, one of the consorts to Emperor Gaozong, the first ruler of the Southern Song Dynasty. It illustrates the close connection between early Southern Song flower painting and *yongwu* poetry and was among the first to combine flower paintings and *yongwu* poems on a single work.[118] On one side of the fan, a colorful palace-style flower painting depicts a blue and black butterfly visiting a cluster of three broadly petaled yellow flowers in full bloom. On the other side, a *yongwu* quatrain laments the theme of a neglected flower—a metaphor for an overlooked woman.[119]

The full poem reads:

White [autumn] dew no sooner passes than the eighth month hurries in;

Purple chambers and red leaves share the somber mood.

Yellow flowers chilled and pale—no one looks;

I alone, with full heart, follow the setting sun.[120]

白露才過催八月，

紫房紅葉共淒涼。

黃花冷淡無人看，

獨自傾心向夕陽。

Art historian Hui-shu Lee suggests that Empress Wu selected this poem, originally composed by the Northern Song poet Liu Chang 流長 (1019-1068), to represent her own intents. The autumn mallow is a flower that blooms in mid-autumn, the same time of year as Empress Wu's birthday. The mallow is known for turning its face to follow the movement of the sun throughout the day. By comparing herself to the mallow, Empress Wu presented a metaphor for her own unwavering loyalty to her emperor. However, Lee argues that the poem also contained a veiled commentary on the emperor. The poem laments that: "the yellow flowers chilled and pale—no one looks; / I alone, with full heart, follow the setting sun."[121] Lee argues that the poem should be read as "an expression of Empress Wu's enduring love for and commitment to her emperor, who, like the visiting butterfly in the accompanying painting, might be attracted to other flowers."[122] Thus Empress Wu used the flower painting to contrast Emperor Gaozong's interest in other women with her own constant loyalty.

In *Autumn Mallows*, the pairing of painting and poetry on a single fan provides evidence that late Southern Song flower-and-bird paintings could be interpreted as symbols for the painter-poets' idealized selves. Both painting and poem work in the idiom of an image alluding to a symbol, which in turn stands in for the subject. While the painting alone

can only hint at symbolic meanings, and the poem alone can only suggest an image, both the visual and literary form can be read as a metaphor for the empress and her loyalty. The juxtaposition of the flower painting and *yongwu* poem on one physical object allows for a richness of interpretation and clarity of intent that Zhao's *Narcissus* does not provide. However, the principle of using an object to express one's intent clearly influenced Zhao's painting.

An even earlier example of a literati painter representing himself through an object was the Northern Song painter Wen Tong 文同 (1019–1079), who used paintings of bamboo as symbolic self-portraits to represent his own upright moral character.[123] Wen, a close friend and older cousin of Su Shi, is best known for his paintings of ink bamboo, as exemplified by *Ink Bamboo (Mozhu* 墨竹*)* (Fig. 8), a large 131.6 cm x 105.4 cm hanging scroll. Su's writings on Wen help to shed light on the intended meaning of these paintings. In "Ink Gentleman," a poem that Su composed in early 1071, around the same time that Wen painted an image of ink bamboo at the Jingyin Yuan 淨因院 (Cleansed Causation Temple in Kaifeng), Su refers to the bamboo stalks as "gentlemen," and suggests that the bamboo is a representation of Wen.[124] While the idea of a literati artist using an object to represent himself would become commonplace by Zhao's time, for Su this act of self-representation was specific to Wen.[125] For those who knew him, Wen's ink bamboo would have seemed like a self-portrait.[126]

Wen's *Ink Bamboo* also set a precedent for another element of *yongwu* aesthetics—the dissolution of the artistic subject and his retreat into the object. Wen grounded his work in the philosophy of Zhuangzi 莊子 (late 4th c. BCE) and aimed to paint in a state of detachment, in which he could become one with the object and leave the human world

behind.[127] Remarking on Wen's ability to understand the true nature of bamboo, Su spoke of Wen as becoming "one with the bamboo."[128] Thus Wen provided an early example of the fusion of the artistic self and object.

However this concept of the formal erasure of the subjective voice creates a paradox—how could a painting or poem be at once intensely subjective--as "thinly veiled personifications" of the author-artist, and yet "un-self-conscious," with no reference to a lyric self? Chang points out that these interpretive possibilities are not mutually exclusive, but rather each adds another layer of richness to the text. In her discussion of repetition in the *Yuefu buti*, Chang writes that through the device of "imagistic repetition, readers are continuously provoked to infer something more…until all the symbolic possibilities are exhausted."[129]

By portraying a repetitive field of narcissi rather than an isolated specimen, Zhao partakes in the aesthetics of *yongwu* poetry. The recursive painting encourages the viewer's mind to move from one interpretive possibility to another as the eyes move from one cluster of flowers to another. The imagery can be read as an allegory for Qu Yuan, a sensuous gathering of goddesses, a self-portrait of a Song loyalist, a skilled depiction of botanical beauty, and a place of retreat from the human world. This repetitive presentation allows for the painting to be read as a symbol of a person, a series of allegorical references for the litearti artist to express his intents, and an expression of nature in which the artist can experience the dissolution of self.

Wen Tong's ink bamboo paintings set one final precedent for Zhao's *Narcissus* to draw on—as in *yongwu* poetry, these paintings suggest that a small scene can have a big impact. In Su's best-known text on ink bamboo, "Record of Wen Yuke's Painting of the

Dipping Bamboo of Yundang Valley," he described an encounter with Wen that illustrates this principle.[130] After the two men joke about using 250 bolts of silk to paint bamboo that is 10,000 feet long, Wen presents Su with the painting "Dipping Bamboo of Yundang Valley." Wen says: "This bamboo may be only several feet in length, but it has the force of ten thousand feet."[131] This concept of a small work standing up to a big one became important to a new genre of painting: *xiaojing* 小景.

"Xiaojing" has been variously translated into English as "small scene," "intimate mode," "small format," and "refined brush."[132] The term's origins are usually attributed to the Northern Song monk Huichong 惠崇 (ca 965–1017), who was famous for his paintings of birds on wintry shores and distant banks with level distance compositions. A generation after his death, Huichong's work gained popularity among Su Shi and his circle of litearti artists, who admired the monk for his literary skills and for the poetic mood he achieved in his paintings. These Northern Song literati began to include the genre of *xiaojing* in the literati painting canon, although the definition of the genre was still unclear.[133]

Another early use of the term came from the celebrated Northern Song landscape painter Guo Xi 郭熙 (after 1000–c1090). While Guo Xi is best known for monumental landscapes such as *Early Spring* (*zao chun tu* 早春圖), art historian Ping Foong argues that his small landscapes, such as the handscroll *Old Trees, Level Distance* (*shuse pingyuan tu* 樹色平遠圖), were equally as impressive and perhaps even preferred within literati circles of his time.[134] Guo wrote in his *Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致 (Lofty Message of Forests and Streams) that "[a landscape] as vast as a monumental painting should yet have nothing superfluous; [a landscape] as compact as a *xiaojing* should yet have nothing lacking" (*pushu*

wei hongtu er wu chu, xiaosuo wei xiaojing er bu shao 鋪舒為宏圖而無除，消縮為小景而不少).[135] This principle that *xiaojing* painting should be "compact" yet have "nothing lacking" concerned what Foong refers to as the "efficient achievement of expression in a smaller format."[136]

This drive towards efficient expression in *xiaojing* mirrors a parallel trend in *yongwu* poetry. Literary scholar Shuen-fu Lin describes how in *yongwu*: "the poet shrinks from the vast world of his lived experience and concentrates his creative vision on one tangible object…By focusing on a small object, the poet's vision retreats into a miniature world that, at its extreme, can become very private."[137] In both *xiaojing* and *yongwu*, the litearti artist reduced the number of compositional elements, concentrating the viewer's attention on key details and intensifying the significance of each element as well as the proximity of the scene to the viewer or reader. This extreme reduction of size and scale paradoxically focus the viewer's attention on an object.

While the term *xiaojing* was clearly in use by Guo's time, it entered the art historical record through the emperor Song Huizong's 宋徽宗 (1119–1125) catalog *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Xuanhe Painting Catalog), which records 6396 works by 231 artists in Huizong's collection.[138] The *Xuanhe huapu* grouped a number of disparate genres of painting under the term "*xiaojing,*" including a handful of intimate landscapes containing birds and flowers as well as flower-and-bird paintings and ink bamboo paintings. Among the canonical works listed as *xiaojing* are small-scale landscape paintings by two artist-aristocrats from the imperial family, Zhao Lingrang 趙令穰 (active ca. 1070– after 1100) and Zhao Shilei 趙士雷 (late 11thearly 12th c.).

The landscape paintings of the two Zhao's help illustrate the particular features that

characterize *xiaojing* paintings. Zhao Lingrang's *Summer Mist Along the Lakeshore* (*Huzhuang qingxia tu* 湖莊清夏圖) (Fig. 9) and *River Village in Autumn Dawn* (*Jiangcun qiuxiao tu* 江村秋曉圖) (Fig. 10), both depict idealized scenes of rural landscapes.[139] Groups of waterfowl fly over tranquil, mist-covered rivers. Lush foliage hints at the temperate southern climate. Although small huts and bridges gesture at human activity, figures are absent from the scene. Zhao Lingrang occupied the same Northern Song literati circles as Su Shi, Mi Fu 米黻 (1052–1107), Huang Tingjian, and Li Gonglin and was involved in the forming of the literati canon.[140] Zhao Lingrang's paintings were executed in monochrome ink with a light color wash, suggesting that his aim was to capture a certain poetic mood rather than to naturalistically portray an existing landscape.[141] His peers praised his *xiaojing* for their "poetic mood" and compared his work favorably to the Tang literati painters Wang Wei and Huichong[142]

Zhao Lingrang's emphasis on poetic mood over naturalistic representation is strengthened by the fact that he likely never traveled to south China.[143] As a great-great-grandson of the dynastic founder Song Taizi, Zhao Lingrang's travels were restricted to 300 li (about 150 km) from Kaifeng, the Northern Song capital. The images he portrays in his *xiaojing* were based on the artist's knowledge of past paintings and of poetry that described southern settings. The artist then attempted to translate a particular poetic mood into a *xiaojing* landscape, in what could be described as a "mindscape" of the artist.[144]

Zhao Shilei's *Intimate Scene of the Countryside by Xiang River* (*Xiangxiang xiaojing* 湘鄉小景圖) (Fig. 11) is an important work because it is explicitly named as a *xiaojing* painting in the *Xuanhe huapu*. The painting shares many of the same motifs as Zhao Lingrang's: pairs of waterfowl, lush foliage, an absence of human activity and a tranquil

winding river. Its reference to the Xiang River suggests that the artist wanted to allude to certain poetic themes, such as Qu Yuan's *Nine Songs* and the Xiang River goddesses, while the blank space left for an inscription gesture towards the increasingly close relationship between poetic imagery and landscape painting. Stylistically, Zhao Shilei drew on a number of precedents from academic painting: the stocky tree trunks recall those in the painting *Along the River at Qingming* (*Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖) attributed to the Northern Song painter Zhang Zeduan 张择端 (1085-1145) while the smooth riverbanks resemble those in the unattributed *River Landscape with Geese and Other Birds.*[145] These references placed Zhao Shilei's *xiaojing* in an established art historical lineage.[146]

While the small-scale landscape paintings of these two Zhaos exemplify the traditional definition of *xiaojing,* the *Xuanhe huapu* did not limit the term to landscapes—it also compared *xiaojing* to bamboo paintings. In the Xuanhe painting catalog, these two genres are organized under the same theme of using small details to represent an expansive world. Echoing Su Shi's story of Wen Tong in "Record of Wen Yuke's [Wen Tong's] Painting of the Dipping Bamboo of Funding Valley," the *Xuanhe huapu* states that both ink bamboo and *xiaojing* have the ability to capture a scene of ten thousand miles without having to fill the composition.[147] These passages from Huizong's painting catalog and Su Shi's written inscription provide a critical link between small-scale landscape painting and literati variants of flower-and-bird painting, as exemplified by Wen Tong's ink bamboo.

In *Narcissus*, Zhao Mengjian continues this familial tradition of merging academic technique and literati style in an intimate landscape**.** While traditionally categorized as a flower-and-bird painting, Zhao's *Narcissus,* which shrinks the viewer to the size of an insect, can be better understood within the context of *xiaojing* painting and its connection to

yongwu. Zhao's ink narcissus may take a flower as its subject matter, but its interpretation need not be limited to artistic self-representation; like *xiaojing* landscapes it can also be seen as representing a poetic mood within a miniature world. In *Narcissus,* the artist retreats into the miniature world of the object, a microcosm that condensed meaning and intensified intimacy.

Zhao was not the only artist of the late Southern Song working in this miniature, symbol-laden idiom. In Zhou Mi's painting catalog, Zhao's *Narcissus* is said to imitate Tang Zhengzhong 湯正仲 (11th-12th century),[148] an ink plum painter associated with his better known uncle Yang Buzhi 楊補之 (1098-1169). Yang was a master of the "cut branch" (*zhezhi* 折枝) style. In these works, Yang presented isolated branches of a plum tree against a blank background. His *Four Stages of Flowering Plum* (*Si momei tu* 四墨梅圖) (*Fig.* 12) exemplifies the literati ink plum tradition, and Zhao, whom Maggie Bickford describes as "the codifier of Yang's methods,"[149] would have had an intimate and considered familiarity with Yang's painting techniques and theory.

The cut branch technique shared a stylistic similarity with *yongwu ci*—both made use of image fragments to decontextualize an object.[150] Hui-shu Lee argues that this mode of representation "effectively removes [the plum blossoms] from their presumed natural environment and transplants them into a domesticated space."[151] Much as Wu Wenying's 13th century *yongwu ci* on narcissus transports the flower from the riverbed to his bedside, Yang's use of cut branch composition severed the plum blossom's connection to the objective, natural world and situates it within the human world of artifice and allegory. However the space that they are transplanted into is not necessarily domestic—it's blankness lends itself to various interpretations, from the intimate and personal space of a domestic

interior to the abstract, universal space of symbolic meanings.

Untethered to a specific place or a concrete time, the image's sensory specificity becomes what Lin refers to in *yongwu* poetry as a "morphology of feeling"—a richly evocative assemblage of image fragments and symbolic meanings scattered across a picture plane.[152] Lin Shuen-fu argues that *yongwu ci* operate by bringing together a plethora of fragmentary sensory descriptions—a sight, a sound, a feeling—but refraining from fixing these descriptions to a larger place, time, and context.[153] In the case of *yongwu ci*, where a convention of the genre is to avoid directly naming the thing that is described within the body of the poem, these sensory perceptions are not even fixed to that object—only in the title are these perceptions fixed to a referent. Instead of focusing on the thing itself, Lin argues that the true subject of *yongwu ci* is "the immediate sensuous experience of the lyrical [expansive, universalized] self."[154]

A similar description could be applied to Zhao Mengjian's *Narcissus.* While Zhao's *Narcissus* does not employ the cut branch style of flower painting or rely on linguistic devices to fragment the unity of an object, it achieved a similar end through the visual practice of densely overlapping leaves, which slice through one another, fragmenting the flowers into a dense, repetitive assemblage of parts. The painting is a masterful representation of the formal, perceptual qualities of narcissus flowers that Zhou and Qiu later describe in their poems—the gracefully billowing leaves, the pale coronated flowers, and the roots grounded in muck. However Zhao's painting too lacks a "referential context"—we do not know the specific time, place or context of its creation. Without an inscription from the artist to commemorate the occasion for which he painted, we do not know what his mind state was or whether friends, patrons, or other parties were involved. In

this absence of context, *Narcissus* too becomes a "morphology of feeling"—an image with sensory specificity but a largely absent "lyrical subject," which leaves the painting untethered to a specific space and time and grants it the universal quality of an "immediate sensuous experience."

Looking at Zhao Mengjian's *Narcissus* handscroll through the lens of late Southern Song poetry opens the work to interesting new interpretations. Historical records indicate that the convenient narrative of *Narcissus* as an expression of grief over the fallen Song Dynasty could not be accurate since Zhao did not live to see the Yuan dynasty. While his Yuan biographers emphasized Zhao's associations with the imperial family and focused on the theme of dynastic loss in their colophons on *Narcissus*, the poetry of Zhao's own time suggests that his painting may have evoked romantic, even erotic undertones.

Zhao's *Narcissus* also reflects a set of aesthetics that mirrors the developments in poetry of his time. The structure of literati painting and poetry changed considerably from the Northern Song dynasty to the Yuan, and Late Southern Song painting and poetry both show a trend towards depicting intimate private worlds in which objects are used to express one's intents. They explore the power of small scenes to narrow and focus attention, reproducing the same degree of intensity as much larger compositions. And they increasingly moved objects out of the natural world and into a domestic or symbolic realm.

The proliferation and maturation of *xiaojing* painting on the one hand, and the densely allegorical style of late Southern Song *yongwu ci* on the other, relied on an economically prosperous society that supported a class of highly educated men of leisure. Decoding painting imagery became a status game among the literati elite, who built a kind of social currency on exercises in interpretation structured after literary practices. In this

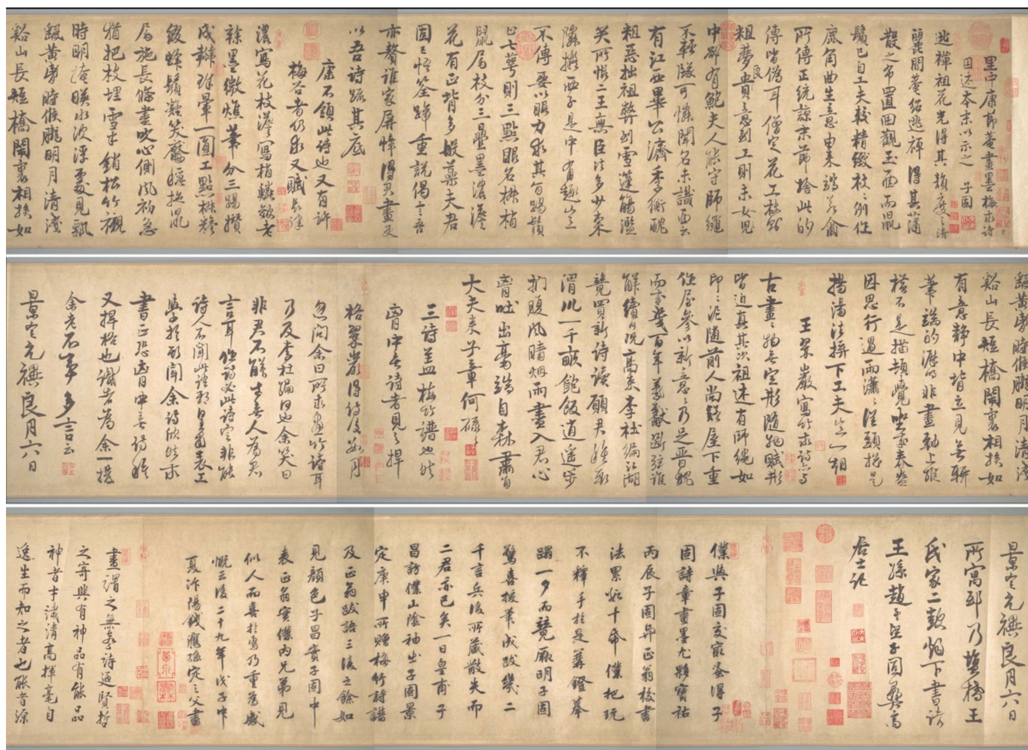
environment, Zhao's *Narcissus*, with its dense, repetitive imagery, became the ultimate playground, in which viewers could contemplate the myriad interpretive possibilities as their eyes travelled across the scroll.

Images

1. Zhao Mengjian. *Narcissus.* Metropolitan Museum
2. Zhao Mengjian. *Narcissus.* Metropolitan Museum (detail)
3. Zhao Mengjian. *Three Friends of Winter.*
4. Zhao Mengjian. *Ink Orchid.*
5. Zhao Mengjian. *Poems on Painting Plum Blossoms and Bamboo.*
6. Zhao Mengjian. *Narcissus.* Tianjin Museum
7. Anonymous. Formerly attributed to Diao Guanyin. *Narcissus and Strange Rock*.
8. Anonymous. *Autumn Mallows* and *Poem on Autumn Mallows.*
9. Wen Tong. *Ink Bamboo.*
10. Zhao Lingrang. *Summer Mist Along the Lakeshore.*
11. Detail from Zhao Lingrang. *River Village in Autumn Dawn.*
12. Zhao Shilei. *Intimate Scene of the Countryside by Xiang River*.
13. Detail from Yang Buzhi. *Four Stages of Flowering Plum*.

1. Zhao Mengjian (1199–before 1267), *Narcissus*. Mid-13th c., Southern Song. Ink on paper, 33.2 × 374 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

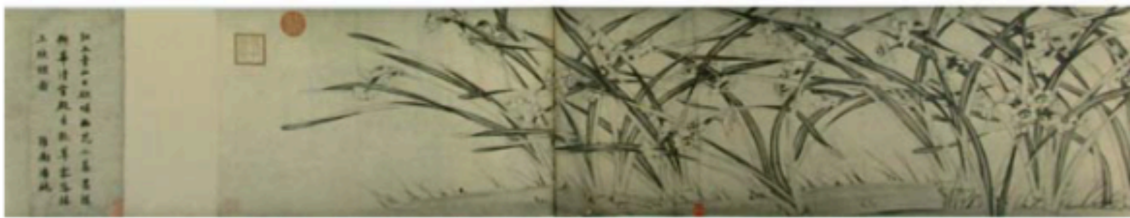
2. Zhao Mengjian, *Narcissus* (detail). Mid-13th cent, Southern Song. Ink on paper, 33.2 × 374 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York.



3. Zhao Mengjian, *Poems on Painting Plum Blossoms and Bamboo*. 1260, Southern Song. Ink on paper, 34 × 353.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

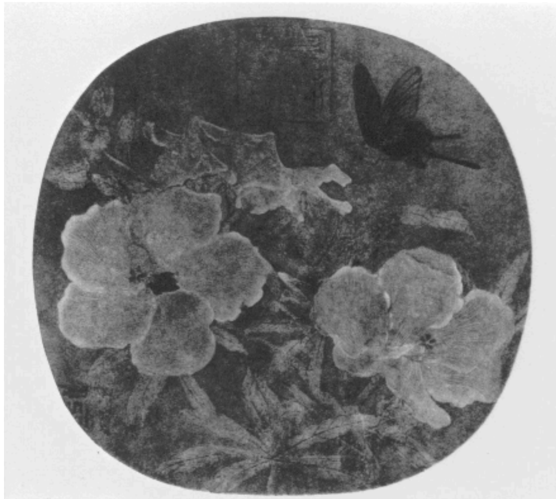
4. Zhao Mengjian, *Three Friends of Winter.* Southern Song, Ink on paper, 32.2 x 53.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

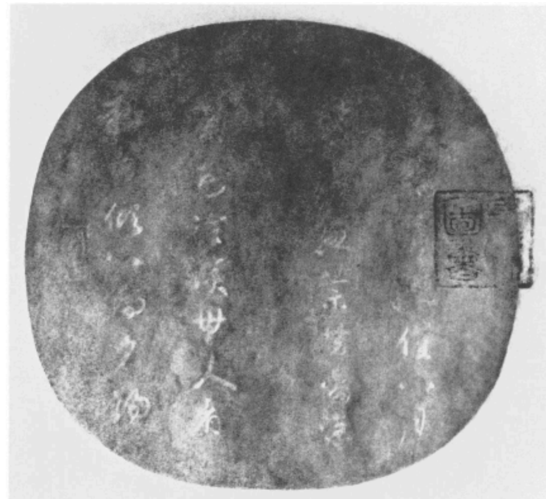
5. Zhao Mengjian, *Ink Orchid* (detail). Southern Song Dynasty. Ink on paper, 90.2 x 34.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



6. Zhao Mengjian, *Narcissus.* Mid-13th c., Southern Song, Ink on paper, 24.5 x 670.2 cm. Tianjin Museum, Tianjin.

7. Anonymous (formerly attr. Diao Guanyin), *Narcissus and Strange Rock.* Ming or Qing Dynasty. Ink and color on paper, 34.1 x 36.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

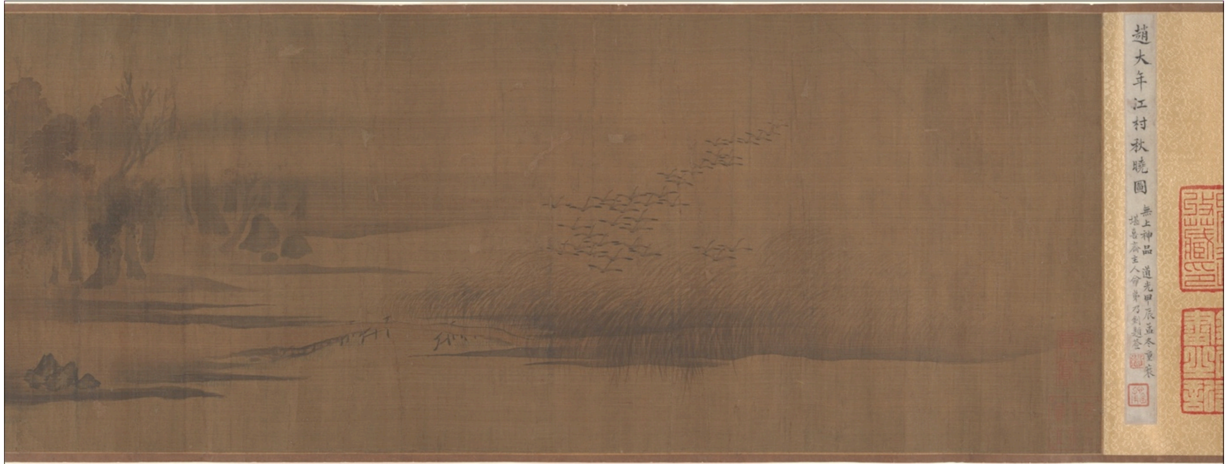




8. Anonymous (formerly attr. Emperor Gaozong), *Autumn Mallows* and *Poem on Autumn Mallows*. 12th c., Southern Song. Ink, color, and gold on silk, 24.3 x 25.5 cm. Shandong Provincial Museum, Jinan.

9. Wen Tong (1018-79), *Ink Bamboo.* Ca. 1075, Northern Song. Ink on silk, 131.6 x 105.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

10, Zhao Lingrang (late 11th – early 12th c.), *Summer Mist Along the Lakeshore*. Ca 1100, Northern Song. Ink and color on silk, 19.1 x 161.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



11. Zhao Lingrang, *River Village in Autumn Dawn* (detail). Northern Song. Ink and color on silk, 23.7 x 104.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

12. Zhao Shilei 趙士雷 (late 11th - early 12th c.), *Intimate Scene of the Countryside by Xiang River*. Northern Song. Ink and color on silk, 43.2 x 233.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

13. Yang Buzhi (1098-1169), *Four Stages of Flowering Plum* (detail). Southern Song. Ink on paper, 37.2 x 258.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Beijing.

Notes

[1] Daffodils and narcissi both refer to the same genus of flowers, which by convention is translated into English by its scientific name: *narcissus*. Within this genus *Narcissus poeticus* and *Narcissus jonquilla* are more common in North America, while *Narcissus tazetta var orientalis*, the bunch-flowered narcissus or the Chinese sacred lily, is most common in China*.* These species all originated in the Mediterranean and have compressed stems, long flat leaves, a ring of petals ranging from pure white to deep yellow, a short yellow corona, and a sweet floral fragrance. While N poeticus usually produces one flower to a stem and N. jonqilla has between one and three, the N tazetta may have up to twenty flowers to a stem. Zhao depicts narcissi with five flowers to an umbel. Most narcissus varietals are spring flowering, but a cultivated N tazetta may flower any time between autumn and spring. In the Chinese horticultural tradition narcissi were cultivated indoors in shallow dishes of water and pebbles and forced to bloom for the New Year's Festival. A technique of cutting the bulbs produced the desirable effects of crooked stems and coiled leaves seen in Zhao's *Narcissus.* For further reading on narcissus cultivars see McDonald, "Royal Horticultural Society System of Classification." For a discussion of the historical practices of narcissus cultivation of within China see Li, *Chinese Flower Arrangement* 48-49.

[2] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, 144.

[3] Fong and Fu's comments suggest that the missing section would have established a more thorough collecting history and suggested that this object was the work discussed in Zhou Mi's painting catalog. See: Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings,* 144; Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes*, 182.

[4] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*,144.

[5] For an introduction on colophons, see Wang, *Looking at Chinese Painting.*

[6] Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes* offers a fully annotated translation of Zhou's catalog. For Zhou's discussion of Zhang's *Narcissus* see 254.

[7]See Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, 144 for a listing of Ming and Qing records of Zhao's work.

[8] Wang Chi-ch'ien 王季遷 (C.C. Wang) (1907-2003) was a Chinese collector and painter who emigrated to the US in the 1940's during the Chinese civil war. In the 1970s Wang donated *Narcissus* along with a number of additional works that helped establish the Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection of Chinese paintings. See: Hearn and Fong, *Along the Riverbank*; Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*.

[9] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings,* 68.

[10] Ibid., 144.

[11] Ibid., 144.

[12] Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, 37.

[13] Ibid., 37.

[14] Ibid., 37.

[15] Barnhart uses this description of style in order to suggest that it is an antecedent for Qian Xuan's 錢選 (ca. 1235–before 1307) painting style in the Yuan Dynasty. Barnhart speaks of Zhao's *Narcissus* as 'anticipating' Qian Xuan's use of such features and to argue that there was significant continuity between the literati painters of the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties. *Peach Blossom Spring,* 37; *Along the Border of Heaven* 110-113.

[16] Barnhart, *Li Kung-lin's Classic of Filial Piety*, 18.

[17] Ibid., 19.

[18] Ibid., 19.

[19] Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, 37.

[20] Ibid., 37.

[21] Barnhart, *Li Kung-lin's Classic of Filial Piety*, 19.

[22] Bickford, "Flowers and Birds in Sung-Yüan China," 296.

[23] Bickford*, Ink Plum Blossom,* 105.

[24] Ibid., 105.

[25] Bickford, "Flowers and Birds in Sung-Yüan China," 297.

[26] The Chinese word for narcissus (*shuixian* 水仙) can also refer to a water nymph (*shuixian* 水仙 or *lingbo xianzi* 凌波仙子), and when Zhao's *Narcissus* first entered the Metropolitan Museum collection, it was referred to as *Lingbo tu* 凌波圖 (*Riding the Waves*). Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, 110; Fong, *Beyond Representation,* 302-303; Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings,* 143.

[27] Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 104-109; Fong, *Beyond Representation,* 302-303.

[28] Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 67-95.

[29] Ibid., 32-33; Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 302-303.

[30] Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, 110.

[31] Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, 39.

[32] Tune names describe the rhyming patterns and are often left untranslated since their names are unrelated to the content of the poem. However, in this case "*guoxiang*" 國香 or "the nation's fragrance" is also referenced in the body of the poem.

[33] Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, 39; *Along the Border of Heaven,* 111; Fong, *Beyond Representation,* 302-303.

[34] Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven,* 111.

[35] Kang-I Sun Chang likens the fusion of the self and the object in *yongwu* poetry to French symbolist poetry in her article "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yueh-fu pu-t'i*," 362. For further reading on the historical development of *yongwu* poetry, see also Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry*; Fong, *Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry.*

[36] John Chaffee suggests that this distance was emblematic of the imperial family's declining power and reflected an identity shift for imperial family members, who by the Southern Song identified less with court culture and more with the literati. While in the Northern Song, it would have been unthinkably beneath his station for a member of the imperial family to seek office, by Zhao's time it was commonplace. Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, 271.

[37] Wei, "Cong shangyi dao fugu," 21. For a discussion on Zhao Mengjian's influence on his younger cousin Zhao Mengfu, see McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*.

[38] Franke, *Sung Biographies,* 2-7; Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven,* 271; Wei, "Cong shangyi dao fugu," 19-39.

[39] This anthology was named after Zhao's studio, the "wine vessel studio" or *yizhai* 彝齋. Zhao also used a seal with the characters *yizhai* to mark works in his collection and occasionally signed works of painting or calligraphy with these two characters instead of his name or honorific.

[40] Wei, "Cong shangyi dao fugu," 19.

[41] Bickford, "The Painting of Flowers and Birds in Sung-Yüan China," 296.

[42] “天支末裔，苦節癯儒，面牆獨 學窮鄉，艱辛備至” “既無師友以切磋，又蔑簡編之閱復。” Wei, “Cong shangyi dao fugu,” 21.

[43] Ibid., 22.

[44] “孟堅兒年家否，貧無學資，惟公延師拾教誨.” Ibid., 23.

[45] Ibid., 23.

[46] Ibid., 22.

[47] The average age for passing the *jinshi* in the Southern Song was slightly over 31. Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes*, 10.

[48] Wei, “Cong shangyi dao fugu,” 23.

[49] Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*. 271; Franke, “Chao Meng-chien,” 2.

[50] Wei, “Cong shangyi dao fugu,” 25.

[51] Bickford, *Ink Plum*, 144.

[52] McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 36.

[53] “Extremely addicted to calligraphy” (*kushi shufa* 酷嗜法書) Translation based on Zhang, “Porous Privacy,” 89-90.

[54] Lin's colophon ends: “The scroll seen today was complex yet not course, with excellent feeling; worth seeing! …in this work, every blade of grass is worth looking at!” 今此卷繁而不俗，尤覺可觀…此作其可草草觀耶。 Zhao Mengfu's colophon ends: “today, looking at my ancestor Zigu's ink flowers, spreading in all directions, completely filling the page, each one properly arranged, this is difficult. I myself, I confess, am not able to accomplish this.” 今觀吾宗子固所作墨花於紛披側塞中，各就條理亦一難也，雖我亦自謂不能過之. Yu, *Shuhua tiba ji*. 7.11b.

[55] Wei, “Cong shangyi dao fugu,” 22.

[56] Ibid., 38.

[57] Ibid., 38.

[58] Ibid., 38.

[59] Ibid., 36; Zhang, "Porous Privacy," 89-90. The Mi Family boat was a celebrated floating studio created by Mi Fu. See Sturman, *Mi Fu*, 177.

[60] Wei, "Cong shangyi dao fugu," 35.

[61] Ibid., 35.

[62] "子固入本朝，不樂仕進，隱居州之廣陳鎮。" Ibid., 19.

[63] Written by the Song-Yuan literatus Ye Longli 葉隆禮 (jinshi degree, 1247), the colophon read: "予自江右歸，頗悟逃 禪筆意，將與之是正，而子固死矣。...咸淳丁卯(1267)五月晦日， 隆禮書於春詠堂。" Ibid., 20.

[64] "冉冉眾香國，英英群玉仙。星河明鷺序，冠佩美蟬聯。甲子須臾事，蓬萊尺五天。折芳思寄遠，秋水隔娟娟。" "甲子" refers to the year 1264. The phrase "甲子須臾事" suggests Zhao died in 1264. Xu, "Song Zhao Mengjian de shuimo huahuihua he qita," 18.

[65] For a further discussion on the significance and popularity of the "three friends of winter" motif, see Bickford, "The Painting of Flowers and Birds in Sung-Yüan China," 297.

[66] Translation after Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 303.

[67] The full lines from Su Shi are: "If anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness, /His understanding is nearly that of a child. /If when someone composes a poem it must be a certain poem, /He is definitely not a man who knows poetry. /There is one basic rule in poetry and painting: /Natural genius and originality." See Bush, *The Chinese Litearti on Painting*, 26

[68] Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 303.

[69] Xu, "Song Zhao Mengjian de shuimo huahuihua he qita," 18.

[70] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, 144. This thesis draws heavily on the historiography of the Met Museum's *Narcissus* laid out in Fong and Fu's text, as well as that in Xu Banda's "Song Zhao Mengjian de shuimo huahuihua he qita," 18. Both object histories draw on records of the painting from the late Ming and Qing dynasties, by which time this scroll was already well known and documented among collectors.

[71] Xu, "Song Zhao Mengjian de shuimo huahuihua he qita," 18.

[72] Xu, *Xu Bangda ji.* 222. While these exact seals are no longer visible, similar stamps from other works that Zhao made or owned can be found in Wei, "Cong shangyi dao fugu," 41.

[73] This could be a reference to the Song literatus Bian Yingsheng.

[74] Xu, "Song Zhao Mengjian de shuimo huahuihua he qita," 18.

[75] Ibid., 18.

[76] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, 144.

[77] Yu, SHTBJ. 7.11b.

[78] Ibid.

[79] The colophon states that the two viewed the painting in the "fast snow studio" 快雪斋 (*kuaixue zhai*), which was the name that Guo selected for his studio.

[80] Met Museum, "Zhao Mengjian | Narcissus."

[81] Fong and Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, 144.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Chu's second stanza opens with the line "Year upon year the country is lost, such regret!" (*jingnian wangguo hen* 經年亡國恨), while Zhou's begins "The nation's fragrance falls and drift away, such regret!" (*guoxiang liuluo hen* 國香流落恨).

[84] Met Museum, "Zhao Mengjian | Narcissus".

[85] Huang Tingjian, Shangu ji 山谷集 (Collected works of Huang Tingjian), Siku quanshu ed., 17.9a–9b. This poem belongs to a genre called *zushi* 組詩 or series of *shi* poems, in which multiple *shi* were composed on a single topic. These were meant to be able to stand alone as well as compound meaning when read together. The title alludes to a preceding set of poems by Ma Cheng 馬瑊 (d. 1102), style name Zhongyu 中玉, who was a friend and poetry partner of Huang's with whom Huang stayed after returning from exile in Sichuan.

[86] 國香 Guoxiang literally means nation's fragrance. This term is used most frequently to refer to the fragrance of an orchid. However in this context Huang is using nation or national to indicate extremely high esteem for these narcissus flowers and for the women he alludes to through metaphor.

[87] Translation based on Edwards, *The Heart of Ma Yuan,* 60.

[88] For a book-length discussion of this aesthetic, see Jullien, *In Praise of Blandness*.

[89] Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, 276.

[90] Tune names refer to specific meter patterns used in *fu* and *ci* poetry and would not have added semantic meaning to the reading of the poem. For more on tune names, See: Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*.

[91] Removing one's belt ornaments was a symbol of a literati's resigning from official position.

[92] *Huaisha* 怀沙 (Embracing Sands) is an anthology of poems Qu Yuan is said to have written right before drowning himself in the river. While the actual attribution of the poems is debated, Xin uses this reference to set the scene, referencing both Qu Yuan's mental state of anguish and his physical location by the riverbank. For an English translation see Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 169-172.

[93] Literally "Hidden Resentment." Xi Kang was famous for zither playing.

[94] *Xian duan* (弦断), literally "string breaks," implies the death of a wife. The "string" refers to the *qin* and *se* two string instruments that were played together in harmony. This pair of instruments was used as a metaphor for a happy couple, and a string breaking became a metaphor for the death of a spouse, particularly a wife.

[95] "Summons of the Soul" refers to a poem from the *Chu ci* that was meant to be recited as part of a funeral ritual for a Chu king. The poem first warns the soul not to wander off and then entices the soul to return, with the intention of restoring the soul to the dead man's body. See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 219-231.

[96] The phrase *cong qian* (葱茜) refers specifically to two plants: the scallion (*cong* 葱) and the common madder (*Rubia cordifolia*) (*qian* 茜). The madder is an evergreen plant that has been cultivated for the red dye that its roots produce. Together, *cong* and *qian* suggest a plant that is fresh and green, like the scallion, and thriving or flourishing like the madder.

[97] Xiang River is associated with the narcissus flower as well as with Qu Yuan who drowned in one of its tributaries.

[98] Literally "charming tune," Wu is comparing the narcissus with another winter flower, the plum.

[99] May be a reference to a poem by the Song poetess Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084—1155) that describes a lonely woman watching plum blossoms falling in a courtyard: "髻子傷春慵更梳，晚風庭院落梅初。淡雲來往月疏疏。玉鴨熏爐閒瑞腦，朱櫻斗帳掩流蘇。遺犀還解闢寒無？"

[100] Qinghua was Guo Xidao's honorific. Wu composed this poem for him.

[101]"Her" is a translation for 汜人 *yiren*, an allusion to the narcissus anthropomorphized into a beautiful woman.

[102] "Frost forms in the immortal's palms" is an allusion Li He's 李賀 (791-817) poem "Song of the Bronze Immortal Bidding Farewell to the Han." See Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yueh-fu pu-t'i*," *359.*

[103] Refers to women from the Song dynastic family.

[104] 樊弟梅兄 *fandi meixiong* refers to the cassia and plum as two relatives (literally brothers) of the narcissus.

[105] Based on translation from Sturman, "Sung Loyalist Calligraphy in the Early Years of the Yuan Dynasty."

[106] The same phrase, 流落 *liu luo*, is translated as "descends" in Huang's poem and "falls and drifts away" in Zhou's, making the parallel between these two poems more evident in Chinese than in the English translation.

[107] Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yueh-fu pu-t'i*," 359.

[108] Ibid., 375.

[109] Literally "the immortal's pendants," 群仙佩 (*qunxianpei*) this phrase refers to belt ornaments.

[110] Likely refers to a lost painting of orchids, which itself would be a visualization of a field of orchids described in Qu Yuan's *Li sao* 離騷. 20th century painter Wang Lanre's *zilan jiuwan* 茲蘭九畹 is a good example.

[111] Another allusion to Li He's poem.

[112]寶玦 *baojue*. Literally a jade ring or pendant shaped like a ring with a small break in the circumference, this phrase is a literary allusion to Du Fu's 杜甫 (712-70) poem *Ai wangsun* 哀王孫 (*Lamenting the Princes*). See Sturman, "Song Loyalist Calligraphy."

[113] "The sober minister of Chu" 楚大夫 refers to Qu Yuan. Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 303-304.

[114] Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, 249. See also Sturman, "Sung Loyalist Calligraphy," 68.

[115] Liu Xie, a 6th century scholar, first theorized this principle with regard to yongwu fu. The fu, or rhapsody, was the original yongwu form. However each new successive form of poetry eventually developed its own model for "singing of things"—the yongwu shi, or poem, in the Tang dynasty, and the yongwu ci, or lyric, in the Northern Song.

[116] The concept of "using objects to express one's intent" may in turn borrow from an even older concept from the preface to the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes) that "poetry expresses intents" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志). For a

discussion on how "poetry expresses intents" relates to "using objects to express one's intent," see: Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition*, 11.

[117] Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yueh-fu pu-t'i*," 363.

[118] Harris, "Ch'ien Hsüan's *Pear Blossoms,*" 54.

[119] Lee, *Empresses, Art and Agency*, 145; Lee, *"*The Emperor's Lady Ghostwriters,*"* 76; Harrist, "Ch'ien Hsüan's 'Pear Blossoms,'" 56-57; Blanchard, *Song Dynasty Figures of Longing and Desire*, 220-221.

[120] Translation after Lee, *"*The Emperor's Lady Ghostwriters,*"* 76.

[121] Lee, *Empresses, Art and Agency*, 145.

[122] Ibid., 146.

[123] Sturman, "The Subject in Wen Tong's *Ink Bamboo*"; Bush, *The Chinese Litearti on Painting.*

[124] Sturman, "Su Shi Renders No Emotion," 21.

[125] Ibid., 25.

[126] Sturman, *Ink Bamboo,* 428.

[127] Sturman, "Su Shi Renders No Emotion," 29.

[128] Ibid., 29.

[129] Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yueh-fu pu-t'i*," 363.

[130] Sturman, "Su Shi Renders No Emotion," 16-22.

[131] Ibid., 19.

[132] Lee, "Small Matters," 1.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Foong, "Guo Xi's Intimate Landscapes," 141-85. Foong argues that the small handscroll format offered intimacy towards a group of like-minded friends, from whom the artist could seek approval, while the nostalgic subject matter spoke to the literati's preoccupation with the past and disillusionment with their contemporaneous politics. Thus the small scene format resonated with Guo's literati circle of friends in a way that monumental landscapes did not.

[135] Foong, "The Small Canon," 192-193.

[136] Ibid., 193.

[137] Lin, "Ci Poetry," 11.

[138] The most artistically inclined of the Song emperors, Huizong was also the last of the Northern Song, since focus on artistic pursuits made him an easy target for the Jurchen invasion in 1126. Most of his works described in the *Xuanhe huapu* were lost in the transition. For more on Huizong and his influence on Chinese art see: Sturman, "Cranes above Kaifeng"; and Ebrey and Bickford, *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China*.

[139] See Murck, "Su Shi and Zhao Lingrang" and Sturman, "Citing Wang Wei" for further discussions on Zhao Lingrang's *Summer Mist Along the Lakeshore*.

[140] Blanchard, 2013.

[141] Murck suggests that Zhao Lingrang's painting *Summer Mist Along the Lakeshore* is informed by poetry not only in its motifs but also in its composition. She argues that the undulating composition, which rises and falls in four quartiles, could be modeled after the common poetic form of the quatrain: four lines of regulated verse. See Murck, "Su Shi and Zhao Lingrang."

[142] Foong, "The Small Canon," 197.

[143] For a discussion on how the travel restrictions placed on Zhao Lingrang helped inform his landscape paintings, see Sturman, "Citing Wang Wei."

[144] Foong, "The Small Canon," 197.

[145] Ibid., 197.

[146] Foong argues that as imperial family members Zhao Lingrang and Zhao Shilei used their access to Hanlin Painting Academy masters and masterpieces, as well as their knowledge of poetry and understanding of litearti painting principles, to promote this new genre of *xiaojing* painting. Foong 197.

[147] "不盈咫尺，而萬里可論" Ibid., 192.

[148] Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes,* 254.

[149] Bickford, *Ink Plum*, 155.

[150] Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition,* 78-82.

[151] Lee. *Empresses, Art and Agency*, 228.

[152] Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition,* 81-82.

[153] Ibid., 94.

[154] Ibid.,70.

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