WANG ANSHI'S (1021-1086) SEVEN-SYLLABLE JUEJU ON NATURE THEMES

by

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to introduce the main characteristics of Wang Anshi's (1021-1086) style as it manifests itself in his seven-syllable jueju on nature themes. I begin with a biographical sketch of Wang, highlighting his personality and motivations as a statesman/poet. Except for this section, any further discussion of his reforms, or New Laws, for which he is best-known, is avoided. Instead, the focus is on illuminating the salient qualities of his technique and his nature imagery.

Chapters One and Two provide background information in order to establish an understanding from which to approach Wang's poetry. First, the structural features of the jueju form, as well as its historical development, are outlined. Next, the influence of Wang's predecessors, such as Du Fu, Mei Yaochen, Ouyang Xiu and others, on his typically "Northern Song" style is analyzed. This involves briefly touching upon the features of the pingdan style and Wang's views on literary theory.

Chapter Three examines in detail Wang's positive response to nature in his landscape poetry, particularly during his retirement years. His voice as a poet is evident in the patterns which emerge. Copious examples are translated and explicated, many for the first time here in the English language, which illustrate his preference for rugged mountains, rippling rivers, fragrant flower blossoms, and man harmoniously interacting with nature in springtime. His poetry emphasizes the careful selection of words, simplicity of language, the judicious and subtle use of allusion, and everyday events enriched by philosophical overtones.

Finally, I summarize Wang's accomplishments and contributions, and suggest other aspects of the study of his jueju that warrant further investigation. This thesis shows that he was a poet bound by tradition, yet he managed to successfully express his individuality with freshness. Thus, as an adept craftsman of serene, sensitive, and sincere nature poetry, he earned a place for himself among the Eight Masters of the Tang-Song Period.
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Introduction

Wang Anshi (1021-1086 A.D.), the statesman-scholar-poet, is best known as a reformer from the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127 A.D.). While his contribution to the political realm has been well studied with regard to his Xinfa (New Laws), little has been written in English analyzing and criticizing his poetry, especially his jueju. In my opinion, the pinnacle of Wang Anshi's broad range of literary accomplishment is the poetic artistry of his jueju. Focusing specifically on his seven-syllable jueju which explore nature themes, this study attempts to identify and analyze the characteristics of his refined technical skill and subtle style.

Generally speaking, Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) poetry has been neglected by Western scholars in comparison to the large amount of material which is available on the poetry of the Tang (618-907 A.D.). Consequently, despite the fact that Wang Anshi is recognized as a prose master and a major poet of the Tang-Song period, no comprehensive English translation of his poetry exists. Although my goal is to assist in filling this gap, a sweeping examination of Wang Anshi's poetry is too difficult a task to tackle in this thesis. Wang's shi are numerous and therefore I am concerned here primarily with his jueju which emphasize nature themes. Wang Anshi had a genius for this form and the skill and refinement of his jueju provide ample material for analysis. Despite their brevity, his jueju embody handsome images

1 Note on romanization: A comment must be made concerning the choice of romanization system that I use throughout this thesis. I consistently employ the modern pinyin system for terms and names with the exception of quotes, which I leave in their original form. This is the reason why the reader will occasionally see two versions of the same word, such as jueju and chüeh-chü, or Tang and T'ang. I do not change authors' personal names to pinyin, such as Shuen-fu Lin.

2 The seven other masters are: Han Yü (768-824), Liu Zongyuan (773-819), Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072), Su Xun (1009-1066), Su Shi (1037-1101), Su Che (1039-1112), and Zeng Gong (1019-1083). See Liu Shih Shun 劉師舜, Chinese Classical Prose: The Eight Masters of the Tang-Sung Period, The Chinese UP, 1979).
and simple language which merit the reader's admiration. They are worthy of much closer examination by scholars, among whom the study of jueju is fortunately becoming increasingly popular.

According to the Linchuan xiansheng wenji edition of Wang Anshi's collected works, there is a total of 493 jueju. Wang's jueju make up approximately one-third of his poetic corpus of 1,400 extant poems. Of these 493 jueju, 423 are seven-syllable, 68 are five-syllable, and 2 are six-syllable. Not only is Wang Anshi's poetry quantitatively vast, but also qualitatively significant. Thus while acknowledging the disadvantages of trying to draw conclusions from the small sampling of his jueju in this thesis, I am convinced that the reader can still gain valuable insight into the characteristics of Wang's jueju and his approach to poetry.

Beginning with a classification of the jueju genre, Chapter One focuses on the formal qualities of the jueju form, such as its tone and rhyme patterns and basic aesthetic properties. As well, the form's historical evolution before Wang Anshi's time is touched upon with an emphasis on examples of Tang jueju. These examples, taken from the best known Tang poets, demonstrate the criteria for good jueju which the reader needs to know in order to appreciate

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3 This number varies slightly between anthologies, ranging from 489 in the Sibu congkan 四部丛刊 edition of the Linchuan xiansheng wenji 至川先生文集, Vol. 51, (Shanghai,196_), to 493 in the Linchuan xiansheng wenji 至川先生文集, (Shanghai,1964).

4 In the excerpt written by the scholar Jan Walls in Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry, Liu Wu-chi and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds., (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1975), it states, p. 588: "There are thirty-eight chüan of poetry in his complete works; they contain approximately four hundred ancient-style poems, and one thousand in the regulated form, including chüeh-chü. He [Wang Anshi] composed only a few verses in the tz'ü form, which flourished in the hands of other Sung masters." See also The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, William H. Nienhauser Jr., ed., (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1986), pp. 854-5, in which Jan Walls estimates Wang Anshi's poems "number more than 1,500."
what is special about the *jueju* form. With a general understanding of this genre, the stage is then set for an explication of Wang Anshi's *jueju* later in Chapter Three.

In order to better appreciate the beauty of Wang Anshi's *jueju*, however, the reader must also be aware of the tradition in which Wang wrote poetry. Consequently, Chapter Two is devoted to analyzing the influence of Wang Anshi's predecessors and contemporaries, such as Du Fu, Mei Yaochen, Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi, so that an assessment of differences and similarities can be made to determine Wang's uniqueness. In addition, by referring to Wang Anshi's literary views on the function of poetry, the reader will perceive his refutation of ornateness and clever technique which belonged to the *Xikun* style of poetry and his advocacy of a more natural approach. Thus, Chapters One and Two consist mainly of background information and definitions. This explanatory material is necessary in order to analyze and interpret Wang’s *jueju* and his poetic achievement in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Three encompasses a representative survey and analysis of Wang Anshi's *jueju* that are specifically concerned with the theme of nature. Although the three other main themes found in his *jueju* poetry are briefly outlined, the main objective is to apply the information introduced in Chapters One and Two to the practical exercise of explicating his *jueju* in Chapter Three.

Using the results of Chapter Three's translations and interpretation, Chapter Four makes a thorough analysis of the significance of Wang Anshi's *jueju*, which differ from Tang *jueju* in many respects. An assessment will be made of traditional critics' opinions of Wang Anshi's poetry, his overall contribution to the Chinese poetic tradition, and the impact of his style.
Biographical Background to Wang Anshi's Jueju

The objective of this biography is to attempt to understand the man responsible for writing the *jueju* which will be analyzed in this thesis. Unlike most biographies which focus on the official positions of a statesman as a guide for discussion, instead, I take a fresh approach by highlighting his character and investigating his motives as a poet and a political/economic reformer. (The reader can always refer to a chronological chart for details of his career appointments.\(^1\) I take as a justification for this method James J.Y. Liu's statement: "...a knowledge of the author's cultural world and a sympathetic understanding of his created world are both necessary for a successful reading of a poetic work."\(^2\)

Using poetry to deduce biography can be misleading. Thus, the reader must be wary of any attempt to equate Wang's poetic world with his real life. With that said, however, to a certain extent a few of his poems are autobiographical and can be justifiably viewed as documents of experience. The pictures they provide, which allow the reader a glimpse into the man's character, serve as illustrations for this biographical outline to support and enhance the well-established historical facts about his life.

Wang Anshi (1021-1086 A.D.), *zi* (style name) Jiefu 介甫, was a native of Linchuan 臨川 in the Fuzhou 樟州 prefecture of Jiangxi 江西 province. As one of ten children, the third of seven brothers, Wang lived for a long period in Nanjing where his father Wang Yi 王益 (994-1039/ jinshi 1015 A.D.) was posted as a minor official. He often had

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\(^1\) See pp. 1-11 of Yang Jialuo's 楊家駿, *Wanglinchuan quanjii 王臨川全集* (Taipei, 1988), for an excellent chart of events in the empire year-by-year as they correspond to Wang's career and significant matters with regard to his family.

the opportunity to accompany his father traveling. The description of Wang's father bears a striking resemblance to the son himself:

We find him a man of literary tastes, devoted to his family, and with a keen interest in the welfare of the people. He had a passion for justice, and was possessed of a determined will. He was fearless in administration, economical in his manner of life, and impatient with all manner of make-believe.  

Wang Anshi received the jinshi 進士 degree in 1042 at the age of twenty-two. However, his promising early career was somewhat limited by his family's strained finances after his father's death in 1039. These circumstances forced Wang to seek appointments which allowed him to fulfill financial obligations to his large, extended family. As a young man, like most neo-Confucian scholars he was multi-talented and participated in many spheres of activity. However, what was exceptional about him was his character. Later, even critics of his policies would concede that he was an individual of morally superior stature.

Although Wang's character is hard to evaluate at such a distance, evidence of his moral fiber can be found in Mei Yaochen's poem, "Seeing Off Wang Jiefu [Wang An-shih]—on his Departure to Become Prefect of Piling (送王介甫知昆陵)." Written in 1057 A.D., this five-syllable gushi 古詩 (ancient-style poem) describes Prefects as people lacking in humanity who exploited the peasants. Coming from a family of humble/ non-aristocratic means, Wang's desire for political and economic change shaped his life and career. On the occasion of his promotion, Mei suggests that Wang would be a different kind of Prefect because he did not value silver and silk, but instead had an unusual compassion for the

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4 James, T.C. Liu, 剃子薫. Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and his New Policies. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1959; rep. 1968), notes on p. 2: "Wang's family prospered in farming at the time of his great-grandfather. Turning to scholarship, it produced in the next three generations no less than eight holders of the doctorate degree (chin-shih), including Wang himself."
impoverished peasants. In Mei's experience, Wang was a man who put his concern for others above personal benefit and comfort. In this respect, he was uncommon because he "never follow[ed] the world's fashions." Mei's opinion is relevant and useful to include in this analysis of Wang's character. The following excerpt comes from his poem:

But you [Wang] aren't like this at all;
Your horse has a leather bridle and mudguards black with dirt.
Proceeding slowly, you inquire about local customs;
Full of humility, you ride an old nag.
Popular opinion never fails to reach you,
Significant points are heeded, trivialities ignored.
Has it ever been your purpose to differ from the mob?
Yet you never follow the world's fashions.

Simply stated, Wang was an honourable man in the tradition of ancient sages. According to Yoshikawa Kôjirô, "The core of Wang An-shih's character was his fastidiousness, which found expression in his politics, his writings, and his daily life, and which people who did not understand him mistook at times for irascibility." The fact that Wang was staunchly and consistently virtuous throughout his life is also supported by Huang Tingjian, who wrote, "Wang An Shih regarded riches and honours as a fleeting cloud. He was

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6 Chinese text found in Mei Yaochen jipian nian jiaozhu 梅尧臣集編年校注, (Shanghai guji chuban she, 1980), Vol. 3, p. 946.
not addicted to the accumulation of wealth, and remained aloof from every form of vice. He was a real gentleman.\textsuperscript{8}

From 1042 to 1060, Wang served in local government posts in the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui. He was repeatedly promoted on the recommendations of others such as Ouyang Xiu. An example of such a posting is the time Wang spent from 1047 to 1049 in Yin County, where he got a taste of official life. His impressions of the experience are communicated in the following \textit{jueju}:

"The Western Pavilion of Yin County"

Receiving merit, there is no way to resign, and no fields to retire to—

Merely stealing food, I have passed two years in this impoverished city.

Again and again I imitate the attitude of the young people in the world,

Randomly planting flowers and bamboo to nourish the wind and mist.\textsuperscript{9}

Written in 1049 A.D., this poem presents Wang as a disgruntled official. In the first line his mood is one of impatience that his talent is not recognized. There seems to be no road to success. Yet simultaneously, line 2 expresses his modesty—he feels that he has received more than he has earned in this poor county, and that he has been "merely stealing food." The reader quickly draws from this comment an understanding of Wang's frustration and desire to change his situation and that of the peasants. His inability to do so results in a feeling of

\textsuperscript{8} Williamson, Vol. 2, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{9} Zhou Xifu 周錫馥, \textit{Wang Anshi shi xuan} 王安石詩選, (Hong Kong, 1983), p. 6. Unless otherwise stated, all of the translations of Wang Anshi's \textit{jueju} in this thesis are my own. The English-speaking reader must be aware that although I chose not to sacrifice the beauty of the Chinese verse by forcing it into a rhyme scheme in English, the original Chinese does follow a rhyme scheme. My goal is to allow the beauty of Wang Anshi's poetry to shine through in the English translations.
powerlessness. Wang's attitude is substantiated by Henry R. Williamson's statement that Wang "...shows signs of a reticent and humble disposition, that he was not keen on pushing himself forward, but trusting that hard work and strict discipline would eventually win for him the recognition and opportunity which he deserved." In fact, this sentiment is apparent in the wittiness of the last line in the poem. Wang still has hope that his situation will improve. He has no specific plan of action, but he suspects that he will somehow manage to survive like the flowers and bamboo which are randomly planted by young people.

Evidence of Wang's upright character is again conspicuous in his seven-syllable, eight-line allegorical lāshi律詩 (regulated verse) "Old Pine (古松)"

Towering, thick, its straight trunk soars a hundred rods and more,
Up into blue depths, it does not depend on the forest.
Winds born of a myriad valleys become its voice in the night;
The moon shining on a thousand hills hangs in its autumn shade.
This strength couldn't have come from tending with manure;
It is endowed with a mind in tune with creation.
The court that lacks men of talent would do well to take it;
But a world without a good carpenter had better leave it alone.  

森森直幹百餘尋
高入青冥不附林
萬壑風生夜響
千山月照掛秋陰
豈因糞壤栽培力
自得乾坤造化心
廟廟之材應見取
世無良匠勿相侵

[References]
The pine is the epitome of strength and purity, probably intended here to represent Wang's own personality. As a tree he should be utilized, but he has yet to meet a carpenter, that is, Emperor, who is enlightened enough to realize his potential and employ his ideas for the benefit of the nation. Wang suits this image of the strong, lone pine because he too later faced fierce winds of criticism. Indeed, it was not until 1067 under Emperor Shenzong 神宗, who reigned from 1068 to 1086, that his talent would be truly respected. Both Emperors Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023-1064) and Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1064-68) overlooked Wang's ideas and suggestions.

An intensely private man, Wang's loyalty to his family can be perceived in his response to personal tragedy. In 1047 he suffered the misfortune of losing a baby daughter. His sorrow is captured in the following poignant poem about her death:

"Bidding Farewell to My Daughter in Yin"

At the age of thirty I am already an old, weak man;
My eyes are filled with worry and grief—I have only myself to blame.
Tonight a small boat comes and I must say goodbye to you,
From now on, the one who is dead and the one who is living shall each go his separate way.¹³

This poem was written to her on his departure in 1050 from Yin County, where she was buried. Wang's farewell filled him with remorse. His skill is evident here in his ability to capture a parent's grief over the death of a child in just four lines. The fact that he chose to express his emotion in a jueju is also significant, because it demonstrates that this form of poetry was considered worthy of such profound sentiment.

¹³ Zhou Xifu, p. 16.
Wang was frequently inspired by personal events to articulate his feelings and ideas in a creative way. For example, in 1054 he wrote a prose piece entitled "Record of an Excursion to Mount Baochan (遊衡山記)." In it, he interprets the failed exploration of a cave in Anhui province with a group of friends, as a broader philosophical inquiry into the determination and courage needed to reach one's goals in life. The experience of not going to the deepest reaches of the cave and later regretting it caused him to raise the question, would he ever be an official of high stature able to effect changes? The lesson he learned from this disappointing incident is explained in the "Record":

...when the way is level and the goal near, there are many visitors; but when the road is precarious and the goal distant, only a few succeed. Yet the most extraordinary and awesome sights are to be found precisely in those dangerous and out of the way places unfrequented by men. Thus one can only reach them with a strong will.14

As this excerpt demonstrates, Wang was an honourable man constantly concerned with the improvement of his own moral well-being.

In addition, he conscientiously displayed sincere consideration for the welfare of the people. The basis of Wang's reforms can be found in his famous 1058 A.D. Memorial of a Myriad Words 萬言書 to the Emperor, in which he identifies the problems of government and suggests solutions to address them.15 He advocates a return to the ways of ancient rulers in order to counteract the threats of hostile border peoples and the poverty of the countryside; he debates the best methods to cultivate, select, and maintain officials needed to achieve a smooth-running government; and he scrutinizes worthy and unworthy officials, using examples from history and quoting from Mengzi 孟子 (371-289 B.C.) and other sages to


15 Translated in its entirety in Vol. 1 by Williamson, pp. 48-84.
prove his points. Wang's purpose was ultimately to improve the well-being of the people and ensure national security. The simple, fair-minded ideas of this memorial—such as people being given positions according to their abilities and experience—later served as a manifesto which inspired his New Laws.

Written in 1061 A.D. when Wang was a jinshi examiner in the capital, the following poem makes a statement about government, as well as the conflict between a man's outer and inner worlds:

"Written on the Spot Behind the Examination Hall on a Fine Spring Day"

Leisurely dreaming alone, the veranda west of the stream,
Mynah birds\(^{16}\) on the tips of the branches, their speech is much more disorderly.
Mountain birds could not know this place was off-limits,
For they promptly chirp noisily upon encountering the warmth of spring.\(^{17}\)

The examination hall Wang refers to in this jueju belongs to the forbidden grounds of the palace.\(^ {18}\) Although he is spiritually connected to the realm of nature, and thus by extension to the birds, he finds himself restricted by the confines of official life. On the other hand, the birds, which are unaware of the boundaries set by man, are free to respond instinctively to

\(^{16}\) The myna or mynah bird is one of various Asiatic starlings. They can mimic human speech and are often trained and kept as pets. *Bai she 百舌* in the second line could also be interpreted as simply a great number of birds.

\(^{17}\) Yang, pp. 173-4.

spring. These two worlds are at odds in Wang's heart, reflecting the fact that this jueju was written early in his career. However, while contemplating such a serious issue, Wang could also be playful and amusing. He accomplishes this effect by giving human qualities to the birds, which are described as having the ability of speech.

Wang spent 1063 to 1066 in official mourning for his mother. In 1067 he was appointed Governor of Nanjing and received further promotions. Wang held many offices, but the most important was that of Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{19} It is noteworthy and unusual in the advancement of his career, that he refused invitations to go to the capital to take the examination which would allow him to enter higher ranks, and yet he eventually ended up in the highest office in the land. (See the poem in Chapter Two entitled, "Casual Lines on Being Called Upon in Shuzhou to Go For Examinations, But Refusing.") He always cited family demands as the reason for declining such offers, preferring provincial posts which allowed him to be close to his loved ones. However, there is also the possibility that he realized the time was not yet right for him to be in the capital promoting his ideas for reform. Seen in this light, Wang's many refusals are described by some critics as clever tactics. However, his actions are consistent with his sense of filial duty and his intelligence to wait until circumstances in the capital were most propitious for his chances of success. Evidence of his astuteness as a politician can be seen in a letter he wrote to a friend:

He [the real man] will ever seek to improve his talents and cultivate his character. He will hold fast to his lofty ideals through every vicissitude of fortune, so that when his opportunity comes, and he stands in favour with the Emperor, he may bring about such changes in his environment and so reform affairs as to make them conform to his ideals.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} A list of Wang's appointments, found in Williamson, Vol. 2, pp. 27-58, gives a detailed account of his life and the posts he held. They vary from such offices as county magistrate, chief justice and Private Imperial Secretary, to Draftsman of Imperial Orders and Decrees.

\textsuperscript{20} Williamson, Vol. 1, p. 42.
Emperor Shenzong played an important role in Wang's implementation of the New Laws. Advancing quickly under his patronage, Wang accomplished what he did because of this support. Although Wang always initially refused the honours offered to him, the Emperor had confidence in Wang's abilities and admiration for him. They were kindred spirits who shared a special relationship based on honesty. According to Su Shi, "The trust which the Emperor placed in him [Wang] has never been surpassed."\(^{21}\) Indeed, unlike other ministers, Wang "...was not afraid of warning his Emperor against possible perils. He had also the moral courage to tell the Emperor wherein he thought he had failed, regardless of the odium in which that might place him... ."\(^{22}\)

Later, when the time was right, he introduced the New Laws—including the Agricultural Loans Act, Militia Act, Trade and Barter Regulations, Land Tax Survey, and many more reforms affecting state finance. In general, Wang's policies showed foresight. His selection of other good men to serve in the government was impeccable. Even the way he treated his political rivals was exemplary. Williamson notes that although he incurred the wrath of many because of his ideas, "...he extended the utmost generosity and even leniency to his political opponents."\(^{23}\)

Of his policies, however, Wang's desire to nurture capable thinkers who would criticize the government in a constructive way, is particularly admirable. He felt this could be accomplished by abandoning the rote memorization of texts in schools, and instead encouraging an understanding of their fundamental meaning. Wang was also responsible for setting challenging questions on the imperial examinations by emphasizing practical experience and current affairs, so that those who passed would be ready to properly and efficiently serve the government.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 387.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 377.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 127.
Some people hindered Wang's progress because his reforms threatened their rank and/or pocketbooks, and they resented him for trying to change the status quo. However, Wang maintained the belief that the government's policies needed to be transformed in order to ensure the survival of the empire. It must be stated that, in hindsight, it is not clear that Wang was necessarily right and his political rivals were wrong.

A diversity of opinion exists concerning Wang's reforms. The comments of the later philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200) represent critics' unfavourable view of Wang:

Wang An Shih was a man of high and resolute principle, but lacked magnanimity of temperament. He had the noblest of ideals, but had only commonplace intelligence. His theories and proposals, being limited to his own observation and judgment, were of quite ordinary or even second-rate quality, yet he regarded them as being so exceptional as to make him of sagely capacity. This, to him, seemed to obviate the necessity of scientific investigation into things with a view to extending his knowledge, or of denying himself so as to return to propriety. He thus remained oblivious of the inadequacy of his own ideas, of the necessity of complementing his own limited capacity. Hence he committed the primary mistake of adopting a headlong and self-opinionated attitude to matters of the gravest import to the State, and became extremely obstinate and self-centered later on. It was this which accounted for the failure of his policy.24

In a memorial to Wang, Lu Xiangshan (1139-1192) comes to the same conclusion, albeit somewhat more diplomatically: "Wang An Shih failed to fulfil the great purpose of his life, his knowledge being inadequate to the carrying out of his noble intention."25 Indeed, in this debate it is hard to separate the man from his policies in order to assess which is the factor responsible for the failure of his reforms. According to John Meskill,

...[Wang's] stubbornness, lack of tact, and short temper were qualities least likely to promote the political atmosphere of cooperation that might make broad reforms possible. The hostility Wang provoked among influential men and the reaction that followed his fall point to the impractical nature, politically speaking, of Wang's behavior.26

But Meskill also notes, "Even so, there have been those who argue that Wang faced a hostile majority of officials who feared changes such as he proposed and could not be moved by either argument or diplomacy."27 James T.C. Liu's assessment of Wang's failure is summarized here as well:

[It] could be blamed partly on the impracticality of his reforms in a certain objective sense—one or another of his policies gave grounds for complaint to almost all important groups of society and won the unswerving support of none of them—and partly on his impracticality as a politician, in that he failed to win the strong loyalty of any important group of the bureaucracy.28

In 1074, Wang hoped to gain a respite from the conflicts of political life in the capital by retiring. However, at the request of the Emperor, he was obliged to return in 1075 because his presence was needed to restore stability in the court. His second and final retirement came in 1076. This time it was due to a combination of ill-health and the death of his son Wang Fang, 王雱 (actually Pang, 1044-1076).

The ten year period of Wang's retirement in 1076, until his death in 1086, is important to this thesis because many of his nature poems were written during this time. It was a period of happiness when he was free to devote himself to poetry. He retired to a monastery on Zhongshan 锺山 near Jiangning, a place which features prominently in his poetry. Later he lived on another mountain named Banshan which was located between Zhongshan and Jiangning (also known as Jinling) or modern-day Nanjing 南京. In fact, his hao 号

26 Ibid., p. xii.
27 Ibid.
(nickname), Banshan 半山, is derived from this place name. Williamson notes that during this time,

...[Wang pursued] a simple and unpretentious life, reading voraciously, and labouring hard at literary pursuits. He revised his New Classical Interpretation, completed his dictionary, wrote Commentaries on the Analects, Mencius, and Lao Tzu and essays on the Book of Changes and the Li Chi. He also continued his poetical writings, which became very extensive.29

There is also a quaint anecdote about him which provides a vignette of an aging poet who refrained from indulgence:

In his travels around the neighbourhood, visiting the monasteries and temples, he usually rode on a donkey, followed by a group of small boys. If he visited the city he would take a small boat. He never rode a horse, nor was he ever carried in a sedan chair. He lived on an open plot of land, in a very unpretentious house. It looked like a roadside inn.30

These images evoke pleasant feelings toward Wang on the part of the reader. They reveal his humility, as well as his determination and persistence in maintaining and promoting his convictions. In one of Wang's own poems from this period, the reader gains an insight into his peaceful frame of mind:

Miscellaneous Odes (No. 2)

As a white-haired man I return again to Taining palace,
Fine jade ceremonial pendants on officials' girdles remain in my mind.
Singing and dancing, alas, the people have changed unnoticed—
Flowers bloom, blossoms fall, so many spring winds have passed!31

30 From the Xu Jiankang Zhi 絢建康志 quoted in Williamson, Vol. 1, p. 368.
31 Zhou Xifu, p. 145.
This poem is undated, but the references in it to Wang as a "white-haired man" and the passing of many spring winds, that is, seasons, make it safe to state that it is from his later years. The poem embodies a sense of nostalgia, but not sorrow about growing old. His mind remains lucid and his memories fresh.

Wang's retirement passed rather uneventfully, except for persistent illness. In 1080 he was invested as Duke of Jing 蓬國公. After a severe stroke in 1084, he offered his house to the Emperor as a gesture of gratitude for his life-long friendship. It was turned into a monastery called the "Zen Temple of Requited Peace." At the same time he also donated his land to the Buddhist temple on Jiangshan. Much of his retirement was spent studying Buddhism and Taoism, and these influences can be readily seen, not only in the manner in which he distributed his property, but also in his attitude toward nature in his jueju. Upon Emperor Shenzong's death in 1085, Wang's policies were repealed. The Emperor's mother, who disliked Wang, took charge when her ten-year old grandson inherited the throne. Consequently, every single one of Wang's measures was reversed by the new Prime Minister Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), who represented the Conservatives and enjoyed the approval of the Empress.32

Unfortunately, Wang lived just long enough to witness the reversal of the reforms which he had fought so hard for and dedicated his life to as Prime Minister for eight years. He died a year later in 1086 at the age of sixty-five. Upon his death he was conferred the title Grand Tutor 太傅, and later in 1094, he was further honoured with the posthumous designation, Wang Wengong 王文公.

Of Wang's five children, two were prominent. His son Fang followed in his footsteps as a scholar-statesman, but died early at the age of thirty-three. One of Wang's daughters also had literary ability and exchanged poems with her father. As for the rest of Wang's family,

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32 Meskill, p. xvii. Sima Guang felt that, "All he [Wang] wanted was to satisfy his own ambitions, without regard to the best interests of the nation."
two of his younger brothers, Wang Anli 王安礼 (1034-1095) and Wang Anguo 王安國 (1028-1074), were well-known in politics.³³

As a practical man, Wang Anshi strove to get at the root of the troubles in China which he felt needed to be addressed. His persistence was admirable, but critics branded him as stubborn and autocratic. The rise of factions at this time also contributed to the later denigration of his reputation. The negative description of him in Song dynasty histories can be attributed to his critics' biased opinions which were adopted and compiled during the Yuan dynasty (1234-1638), thus casting doubt on the reliability of the Dynastic Histories.³⁴ As a result, however, his reputation suffered for many hundreds of years. It was only in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) that the man and his career were re-examined by the scholars Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Cai Shangxiang 蔡尚翔, who questioned this defamation and managed to successfully rehabilitate his tarnished image.

While Wang is referred to by later generations as a Legalist because of the emphasis he placed on regulatory systems of government, according to James T.C. Liu, he must be regarded, "as essentially a Confucianist."³⁵ Liu reasons that,

Wang's principal emphasis was not upon the promulgation and enforcement of law. Nor did he believe the objective of 'enriching the state and strengthening the army' to be of prime importance. His ultimate goal was to improve the social customs of the people, looking toward a perfect social order.³⁶

Thus, today it is possible to say, despite detractions by his critics, that Wang's life was guided by the principle of loyalty—to his ideals, friends, family, Emperor, and country. This fact is

³³ For further information on Wang Anshi's siblings, see Williamson, Vol. 1, pp. 257-63.


³⁶ Ibid., p. 114.
reflected in his friendships with men of the highest calibre such as Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi. Despite their political differences, Wang remained on good terms with them personally. Above all he was an idealist, which led Su Shi to write in a tribute upon the occasion of Wang's death: "Heaven endowed him with a character of such lofty determination that he was enabled to influence the whole country. His loyalty and devotion to duty have never been equalled...."\textsuperscript{37}

As a person who desired change, it was inevitable that he encountered opposition. However, even Wang probably did not realize the extent of the opposition to his reforms until they were repealed just before his death. Fortunately, his poetry survived his subsequent vilification. Those responsible for writing slanderous remarks about him were people who had opposed his reforms. Attacked as a cunning strategist, he was even falsely used as a scapegoat for the fall of the Song dynasty in 1279 A.D. This accusation is ironic, because it had been Wang who aimed to introduce new military policies which he hoped would prevent the Liao and Tartars from invading China—which they ultimately did. Whether or not this was a result of the failure to adopt Wang's policies is impossible to determine.

The personality traits attributed to Wang in this brief biography will become evident with further analysis of his poetry. His jueju reflect his refinement, grace and determination, in the pursuit of the highest standards which he held up for himself—not only as a statesman and scholar, but also as a poet.

\textsuperscript{37} Williamson, Vol. 2, p. 111.
The Jueju Genre

Modern critics talk about jueju in glowing terms. For example, the American scholar Shuen-fu Lin expresses his admiration in the following declaration: "Chüeh-chü, perfected in the hands of the T'ang masters, is one of the lyrical forms that best characterize the Chinese poetic genius and spirit."1 Other scholars echo this approval, such as William H. Nienhauser who states that the jueju is "a lyric vehicle of extraordinary range and capability, a verse form particularly suited to encapsulating a lyric moment or driving home a pointed argument or witty idea."2 In addition, Shirleen Wong quotes the Tang critic Sikong Tu 司空圖(837-908), author of "The Twenty-Four Categories of Poetry," as saying: "The writing of chüeh-chü requires extreme artistry. Displaying a myriad of modes and a thousand variations, the chüeh-chü attains divine qualities without any trace of trying to be divine. How could this be easy?"3 These comments illustrate the esteemed position which the jueju genre holds in the eyes of contemporary scholars because it is a particularly challenging form for poets to work with. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the reasons why jueju warrant such praise, and to establish the salient characteristics which define this genre.

Classification

The jueju genre is a sub-division of the category of Chinese shi 詩 poetry known as jintishi 近體詩 (modern-style poetry).4 The other major genre in this category is lūshi 呂詩.

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2 Nienhauser, p. 687.
4 The word 'genre' as I employ it in this thesis, and how it differs from the term 'form' needs some clarification. 'Genre,' as defined by M.H. Abrams in A Glossary of Literary Terms, fifth edition, (Toronto,
律詩 (regulated verse) which was developed and refined during the Tang dynasty.\(^5\) Modern-style poetry contrasts with *gushi 古詩* (old-style poetry), which also has lines of five- or seven-syllables arranged in couplets with rhyming and parallelism. However, the distinguishing difference is that *gushi* "were unrestricted in length and did not demand verbal or tonal parallelism."\(^6\)

The Japanese scholar Hirano Hikojirô points out that sometimes "the term *lūshi* in a broad sense is simply the equivalent of *jinti 近體* (modern verse, that is, regulated verse), and can include both *jueju* and eight-line *lūshi.*"\(^7\) This suggestion relies on the fact that *jueju* and *lūshi* are both regulated verse and reflects the problem of ancient versus modern terminology. However, such a general use of the term *lūshi* can leave the reader with the mistaken impression that the *jueju* is a sub-genre of *lūshi*. This confusion is further

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\(^5\) Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1985, p. 72, "...denotes a type or species of literature, or as we often call it, a 'literary form'." Similarly, as noted by Abrams on p. 69, "form is one of the most frequently used—and variously interpreted—terms in literary criticism. It is often used merely to designate a literary genre or type, or for patterns of meter, lines and rhymes." Thus, the terms 'genre' and 'form' seem roughly interchangeable. However, I am inclined to use the term 'genre' to refer to the literary category of *jueju*, and the term 'form' when referring to its structure. As for the term 'prosody,' which I have chosen not to use in my discussion here, Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan's *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1993), p. 982, points out that it "...is the traditional term for what is now called verse theory, which is the study of verse form, i.e. structures of sound patterning in verse, chiefly meter, rhyme, and stanza."

\(^6\) Altogether there are three forms in this category. The third, lesser known form, is *pailu 排律* (regulated couplets). The *pailu* is defined by Hans Frankel, p. 215, in *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry*, (New Haven, Yale UP, 1976; rep. 1978), as "an extended variation of *lū-shih*. It runs to more than four couplets, without any limitation on its length, and observes rules 2, 4, and 6 of the *lū-shih* form. More than one rhyme is employed in every couplet except the first and the last."


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exacerbated by the fact that jueju were sometimes classified under the category of lūshi in the collections of individual poets during the Tang. Even in the anthologies of Wang Anshi's poetry, jueju are not grouped under a separate category but are instead included under the umbrella term lūshi.

Another aspect which complicates the classification of jueju is that while most jueju followed the rules of regulated verse during the Tang dynasty, there was a second distinct style of jueju, known as the guti jueju 古體絕句 (ancient-style quatrain), which did not. However, this study focuses only on the regulated quatrain.

Definition

The term jueju 絕句 itself requires some explanation. Although it is literally translated as "broken-off lines," there is some debate about the meaning and origin of the term. At different times in its development it has been known by various other names, such as jue 绝, duanju 短句 (short poem) and duanju 断句 (cut lines), lianju 连句 (joined/linked verse), lianju bu cheng 联句不成 (uncompleted lianju), lianjue 連絶 and xiao lūshi 小律詩 (little regulated verse). The latest research on the controversy surrounding the term jueju indicates that its origins are still unclear. Since there is no conclusive extant evidence, it is almost impossible to convincingly prove the superiority of any one theory. The most concise and thorough survey of the various explanations is provided by Daniel Hsieh. His Ph.D. thesis identifies over ten theories which attempt to explain the origin of the term jueju and almost as many variations in the term itself.¹¹

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¹ See Lin, p. 298, for further information.

⁹ Hsieh (pp. 46-51) outlines these names. According to Hsieh, the meaning of lianjue is unclear.

¹⁰ Lin notes on p. 297 that xiao lūshi was "another Tang name for the chüeh-chü."

As for how to translate the term *jueju* into English, its four-line structure lends itself to the English translation 'quatrain.' However, the term 'quatrain' encompasses much more than just *jueju*. As the basic building block of Chinese verse, the quatrain can be found as a unit in many other types of poetry. In addition, this word could imply that the only significant feature of the *jueju* form is its four-line structure. In fact, as the reader will discover in the following discussion, the *jueju* is multifaceted. Therefore, although the term 'quatrain' is commonly used as an English translation for *jueju*, it must be applied with caution.

Since *lushi* and *jueju* share similarities (as demonstrated in the confusion of classification previously noted), the essential rules of the regulated verse form need to be scrutinized with respect to how they specifically apply to *jueju*. The difference between the *lushi* and *jueju* is reflected in the fact that the *jueju* does not share all of its rules. Of the following six rules for *lushi*, summed up by Frankel, the *jueju* employs (with some modification) numbers 2, 3, 4 and 6:

1. The poem consists of eight lines (four couplets).
2. The line length is constant throughout the poem, either five or seven syllables.
3. A single rhyme is used. It is nearly always in the level tone, and occurs at the end of the even-numbered lines. In addition, the first line of the poem may end with the same rhyme; it usually does in the seven-syllable form, and occasionally in the five-syllable form.
4. The distribution of level and deflected tones follows a fixed pattern.
5. The fourth line parallels the third line, and the sixth line

Other important sources also discuss the various possible origins of the term *jueju* and its historical development, such as Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄, translated into Chinese by Wang Fuquan, "Jueju suyuan" 绝句溯源, *Yusi* 語絲 5.12 (1929), pp. 57-72, and Hung Wei-fa, 洪為法, *Jueju lun* 绝句論, (Shanghai, 1934), pp. 3-22.

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12 Hsieh, p. 112.
parallels the fifth line.

6. There is a caesura in the five-syllable form between the second and the third syllable of every line. In the seven-syllable form, there is a major caesura between the fourth and the fifth syllable, and a minor caesura between the second and the third syllable.13

Compared to the lūshi, in general, these rules are even less rigorously imposed on the jueju. For example, qualifying conditions such as the flexibility of the rhyme word to be in any of the four tones are allowed in jueju. The most important distinguishing point to be aware of is that the jueju form is an independent unit and thus embodies a completeness which contradicts the idea that it might simply be a fragment of the lūshi.

Meter

The two most common meters for the jueju are pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic. In the case of the heptasyllabic line which interests us here, it is divided by two caesuras into three feet after the second and fourth syllables. As Hsieh notes, this meter has special qualities with implications concerning diction: "It could be very dense and sophisticated, but it was also the meter that could closest approximate the flavor and rhythm of speech, and so if one wanted to compose in a simple, colloquial flavored style, seven-syllable meter was often called upon."14 This feature will be explored in later analyses.

Tonal Prosody

This term refers to the pattern of tones. Most Chinese verse relies on tonal variation and the jueju is no different. The significant role which tones play in alternating the rhythm of poetry was organized into an accepted system by Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513 A.D.), who is credited with simplifying the four tones into two categories: ping 平 (level/ even) and ze 反.

13 Frankel, pp. 213-4.
14 Hsieh, p. 579.
(oblique/uneven).\textsuperscript{15} The \textit{ping} category is made up of the first tone, while \textit{ze} incorporates the other three tones: \textit{shang} \(\uparrow\) (rising), \textit{qu} \(\Downarrow\) (departing/falling), and \textit{ru} \(\wedge\) (entering).\textsuperscript{16} This eventually led to the establishment of regulated verse, or \textit{jintishi}.

Basically, in the standard Tang pattern of distribution for a seven-syllable quatrain, a couplet consists of two lines that are tonally the exact opposite.\textsuperscript{17} Eight combinations of tones also exist which are to be strictly avoided according to Shen Yue's principles.\textsuperscript{18} The application of these tonal rules mark a high point in the development of the \textit{jueju}. Wang Anshi's \textit{jueju} conform to this established standard with few exceptions.

**Rhyme**

The goal of a rhyme scheme is euphony. The most common rhyme scheme for the \textit{jueju} is AABA or sometimes ABCB. A reader cannot necessarily know from modern standard Mandarin the rhyme or tone system used in the Song dynasty and earlier. Consequently, it is very difficult to analyze rhymes and tones unless the reader consults dictionaries of ancient pronunciation such as Chou Fa-kao's \textit{Hanzi gujin yinyin} 漢字古今音義.\textsuperscript{19} Since Wang


\textsuperscript{16} Parallels are sometimes drawn between this bipartite system of tones and the English system of long and short syllables, in which the \textit{ping} (level) category would represent long syllables, and the \textit{ze} represents short syllables. Kao Yu-kung (p. 353) notes that this hypothesis of comparison attributed to Wang Li 王力 in his \textit{Hanyu shilu xue}, 漢語詩律學, (Shanghai, 1962; rep.1979), pp. 6-7, is not necessarily accurate.


\textsuperscript{18} Hsieh, pp. 465-6. Hsieh outlines these eight combinations, or "eight maladies" as they are known. However, an understanding of the basic patterns will suffice here. See also Mather, pp. 57-9.

Anshi's rhyme scheme conforms to the standard, it is not necessary to pursue this point further. Techniques involving rhyme such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and reduplication are also used in jueju and will be discussed later.

Form

Form, that is, structure, dictates to a certain degree the content of a poem and the poets' means of expression. An examination of the jueju form is crucial, because as Hsieh notes: "A literary genre is a complex phenomenon; it has an individual personality and character that is made up of the themes and occasions it is associated with, the voices with which it can speak, and the various other traditions and precedents that have shaped it."20

The following analysis examines the basic features of this form which give it a unique "personality." Regardless of whether one is discussing five- or seven-syllable jueju, they share these same basic features.

The most salient trait of the jueju is its brevity. This economy dictates the necessity of conciseness which is the essence of the jueju. The typical seven-syllable jueju consists of only four lines with a total of twenty-eight characters. This is a deceptive fact because despite its shortness, the force of the jueju is found in this structure which compels the poet to say much with few words. This feature, while obviously also desirable in other forms of poetry, is fundamental to the effectiveness of the jueju.

The prevailing structural model of the jueju is one in which each of the four lines has a specific function. The formula for addressing "the best way to distribute the semantic weight within a quatrain"21 is one in which the jueju should typically move from "a crisp introduction (ch'í 譴) to a swift reinforcement of the theme (ch'èng 聁) and then to a 'turn' or transition (chuan 轉) which is capable of sweeping what went before into a climatic conclusion (ho

20 Hsieh, p. 355.
This structure, also frequently associated with drama and essay writing, injects the poem with continuous movement from beginning to end. The flowing pace it creates can be vividly seen in one of Wang Anshi's jueju:

"Mengzi"  
Your yin spirit sinks and your yang spirit floats  
and cannot be beckoned,  
The book you left behind, once read, reminds us of  
your moral character.  
What harm is there if all the world rejects my  
impracticality?  
After all, there is this man to console my loneliness!  

This poem refers to the ancient Chinese belief that upon death, the yin part of the spirit sinks to earth and the yang floats to heaven. However, in addition to its philosophical insight and the possible political commentary found in line 3, what is important to notice is that the poem's structure agrees with the qi cheng zhuanhe (起承轉合) outline. The first line introduces the reader to the idea that Mengzi's spirit cannot be beckoned to return to earth, while the second line reinforces the opening statement by reassuring us that his presence can still be felt through the writings he left behind. The transition comes in the third line when Wang Anshi poses a question, leading directly into the last line which supplies the answer. This fourth and final line completes the thematic circle with Wang Anshi's realization that Mengzi's spirit will console him in his loneliness, because the two men are intertwined by their mutual understanding. As will be seen in many examples in Chapter Three, Wang Anshi rarely deviates from this typical structure.

Of the four lines of the jueju, the penultimate line has received special attention in traditional literary criticism. According to Yang Zai's 楊載 (1271-1323) manual of "Poetic

22 This structure is outlined by Hsieh, p. 106.
Rules of the Masters": "The skill of sinuousness and transformation resides entirely in the third line. If the turn or transformation is well executed, then the fourth line will be like a boat following the current."\textsuperscript{24} And as Wong notes, this transition can be explicit or implicit.\textsuperscript{25}

Explicit change is usually indicated by "a change of mood, of temporal framework, or of spatial relationship in the third line; and the change is signaled by certain time-space indicators."\textsuperscript{26} Implicit change on the other hand "takes the form of a change in subject matter, a shift in visual perspective, or a leap in thematic scope."\textsuperscript{27} In the third line of the previous example, an explicit change can be observed. The use of this kind of rhetorical question is a stock trait of \textit{jueju}. Interrogatives most often appear in the third or fourth lines. Lin suggests that this feature might be derived from the influence of earlier poetry in which "the form of a question and an answer is a common device found in the \textit{shih} poetry of the late Han [25-220 A.D.] and early Wei [220-265]."\textsuperscript{28}

The second fundamental aspect of the \textit{jueju}'s structure is its division into two couplets. By down-playing the traditional outline of \textit{qi cheng zhuan he} (起承轉合), Shuen-fu Lin recognizes that a special relationship exists between the two halves, which both contrast and complement each other. Lin prefers to emphasize the fact that "the structural integrity of the quatrain depends upon the dynamic complementation of two juxtaposed couplets."\textsuperscript{29} Hsieh


\textsuperscript{25} Wong, \textit{Kung Tzu-chen}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 86.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 87.

\textsuperscript{28} Lin, p. 304.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
takes this idea even further with his comment that "the second couplet is more important than the first as it is in the second couplet that all the invention occurs."\(^{30}\)

In order to balance the traditional stress which critics put on the importance of the third line, Shuen-fu Lin also draws attention to the function of the fourth line, which he believes is sometimes overlooked: "It often appears that the last line functions as a kind of 'punch line', and that it is at this juncture that the 'point' of the poem is actually made."\(^{31}\) Such is the case in the next example of a jueju by Wang Anshi, which demonstrates why the power of the fourth line should not be underestimated:

"Traveling to Zhong Mountain"

Two mountains' pines and oaks obscure the vermilion vines,
One stream in their midst triumphs over the beauty of Wuling peach blossoms.
Afternoon chanting heard from beyond the clouds informs me there must be a temple nearby,
The sun sets and I return home without meeting a monk.\(^{32}\)

The entire poem is inspired in its beauty, but the surprise comes in the last line rather than the third. As Shuen-fu Lin suggests, in this case the second half of the poem is most significant, while the first couplet sets up the scene for its development. Following the hint of the proximity of the temple in the third line, the reader expects that Wang Anshi will encounter a monk. However, ultimately Wang does not meet a monk and thus the reader is left with the uncertainty of whether the chanting that he heard is real or simply a figment of his imagination. This line is thematically important in Chan/ Zen Buddhism. Wang does not actually need a

\(^{30}\) Hsieh, p. 110.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 108. Hsieh is discussing observations by Shuen-fu Lin.

\(^{32}\) Zhou, p. 214.
monk to become enlightened or grasp the concept of emptiness while in nature. (This technique of surprise in the last line is also reminiscent of Wang Wei.) Thus, the tendency to focus exclusively on the traditional outline can distract the reader's attention from the subtle interaction between the two couplets evident in this poem, as well as the possibility that the fourth line rather than the third can be a significant factor in the impact of a poem. In "Traveling to Zhong Mountain," the first three lines provide a contrast to the fourth, which delivers a refreshing twist to intrigue the reader.

In this example the reader can also see the continuation of a poem's meaning beyond the limits of a small number of words. This is another main characteristic of the jueju genre. Wong states that "a chüeh-chü should be trimmed to the utmost simplicity and yet remain haunting in its reticence, so that 'when a line ends, its meaning does not end'."33 In "Traveling to Zhong Mountain," Wang Anshi does indeed leave a great deal to the reader's imagination. This important aspect of brevity embodies the most critical aesthetic quality of the jueju—its suggestiveness. Thus, jueju possess deeper meaning than can be glimpsed by a cursory reading. Shuen-fu Lin notes that, "This approach of clothing a profound meaning in simple and almost transparent language became one of the dominant components of the T'ang quatrain."34 Therefore, as a principle, using few words was considered an asset because the reader's imagination had to be engaged in order to interpret what was not explicit. This aesthetic is the key to the beauty of jueju, and should be kept in mind during the later analysis and evaluation of Wang Anshi's jueju.

With respect to another feature of the jueju's structure, Nienhauser proposes that the division of the jueju into two couplets can be regarded as a distinction between imagistic and propositional language:

33 Wong, Kung Tzu-chen, p. 74, is quoting Yang Zai.

34 Lin, p. 316.
'Imagistic' language, characteristic of the first couplet of a poem, packs lines with one or more noun images or intransitive sentences; hence it reads slowly. 'Propositional' language, characteristic of a poem's last couplet, stretches out a single sentence or thought to fill both lines; thus it reads quickly.\(^{35}\)

In other words, one often finds in jueju that the first couplet sets the mood with images, while the second couplet conveys the poet's feelings in more direct terms. This strategy conforms to a familiar device found not only in jueju, but in Chinese poetry in general: "[T]o open with the scene (jing 釵) and then close with a statement or description of the individual's emotions (qing 情)."\(^{36}\) This trait can also be described as a contrast between descriptive and expressive halves of the poem which form a cohesive whole. For example, the following jueju by Wang Anshi shows how two couplets should complement each other:

"Walking in the Suburbs"

Tender mulberry leaves so completely picked that green shade is scarce,
On reed frames silkworms become tightly-wound, plump cocoons.
For a short while I ask the villagers about their customs:
How can they work so hard and yet still go hungry?

This poem expresses Wang Anshi's obvious dissatisfaction with a system in which peasants who work hard are not rewarded for their efforts. One can see the shift (indicated by the introduction of a time word in the third line) away from descriptive observations of the poet's natural surroundings in the first couplet, to the poet's response in the second couplet after his direct interaction with the villagers. In addition, the last couplet is colloquial in flavour, which contrasts with the image clusters of the first two lines. Here, once again, the main impact of

\(^{35}\) Nienhauser, p. 684. Here, Nienhauser is incorporating the ideas of Mei Tsu-lin and Kao Yu-kung.

\(^{36}\) Hsieh, p. 437.
the poem is made in the fourth line, when the *jueju* follows the formula of using a question to reveal the poet's feelings.

As noted earlier, the brevity of the *jueju* form forces it to be concise. Thus, allusion is a tool frequently used to achieve economy, while simultaneously injecting deeper meaning. The use of allusions, both historical and literary, adds complexity to the simplicity of language and content as seen in another *jueju* by Wang Anshi:

"Wu Jiang Pavilion"

After countless battles, weary and exhausted, the brave men are sorrowful,

In the central plains, once defeated, it is hard to reverse this situation,

Although east of the Yangzi River there are now young men,

Are they willing to help stage a comeback for their king?³⁷

In this *jueju*, Wang Anshi is using a historical allusion. Wu Jiang is the name of a river at Gaixia in modern-day Anhui province. It is significant because it refers to the location where Xiang Yu (232-202 B.C.) lost an important battle and then committed suicide. His name is associated in history with cruelty and thus, according to Zhou Xifu, Wang Anshi's underlying comment is that Xiang Yu's ruthlessness made it inevitable that he would lose the battle.³⁸ This poem might have even deeper moral parallels to Wang's own attempts at political reform, but such speculation is unnecessary here. The point I am making is that poetic associations with place names, people and elements of nature such as flowers and rivers are important in the interpretation of *jueju* because they carry clues to meaning which enhance a deceptively simple surface. However, as for Wang Anshi, fewer of his *jueju* have historical or

³⁷ Zhou, p. 234.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 235. Zhou also notes that Du Mu wrote a *jueju* with the same title.
political allusions than a reader might expect. The reasons for this point will be examined in Chapter Two, which deals with Wang Anshi's literary views.

**History of the Jueju**

Although it is not necessary to retell the development of the *jueju* which has already been thoroughly and definitively outlined in Hsieh's thesis, I would like to draw the reader's attention to a few examples of *jueju* before Wang Anshi's time. In order to understand the sophistication of this form and the standards by which Wang was judged by his contemporaries, I must first talk about different kinds of *jueju*. In the following discussion I select examples almost completely restricted to the Tang dynasty, so that an analysis of the ways Wang Anshi's *jueju* differed from those of Tang poets can be made later.

The primary consideration when discussing its origins is to remember that the *jueju* form has a long and complicated evolution shrouded in mystery. This may be a symptom of a lack of extant material which could explain its development, or it may simply be attributed to the fact that the seven-syllable form did not become popular until the Tang. As well, it should be noted that the five- and seven-syllable *jueju* evolved separately. Although it took some time for the seven-syllable *jueju* to develop, it made up for its late blossoming by eventually surpassing the five-syllable *jueju* in popularity.

The Tang dynasty is commonly associated with the *jueju* form because it was then that it flourished. Thus, from the Tang onwards the term *jueju* can safely be applied to this form. The best known *jueju* poets of the Tang include Wang Wei 王維 (699-761), Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698?-756?), Li Bai 李白 (701-762), Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Du

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39 Perhaps the best solution to the dilemma surrounding the *jueju*'s origins is to recognize that many other influences, in addition to the *yuefu* which is singled out for particular attention, contributed to the creation of the *jueju*.
Mu 杜牧 (803-852) and Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813?-858), all of whose poems can be found in the Tang anthology Wanshou Tangren Jueju 萬首唐人絕句.40

Regarding quatrains written before the Tang Dynasty, however, there is much debate on which early quatrains can be classified as jueju.41 Concerning proto-jueju, two pre-Tang poets are particularly important: Shen Yue (noted earlier for the establishment of tonal rules), and Emperor Jianwen of Liang 梁簡文帝 (503-551 A.D.) also known as Xiao Gang 蕭鸞.

As for Shen Yue, his writing "reveals a strong predilection both for the 'expression of emotions' (ch'ing-li 情理) and for 'vigorous plainness' (ch'i-chih 氣質)."42 These are both key elements in the jueju genre. Yuefu 樂府 (music-bureau poems) were also very important in the development of jueju, as seen in Shen Yue's pentasyllabic poems which were often written on such topics as yuefu titles. He also contributed to the development of gongti 宮體 (palace-style poetry) which is significant because it often used the jueju form. His initiatives were fully developed later by poets such as Wang Changling. In summary, Shen Yue used language in an artful, yet controlled manner and approached topics from fresh a perspective.

A century earlier Bao Zhao 鲍照 (ca. 414-466 A.D.) also wrote quatrains that anticipated Tang developments. Daniel Hsieh states that the first true seven-syllable poem is

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41 The origins of the jueju have been traced as far back as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Some sources suggest that the jueju form can be traced back even earlier to the Shijing. However, as Hsieh notes (pp. 11-12), such attempts to trace the jueju back to the Shijing are misguided. Although the poems in the Shijing have quatrains, they are four-syllable in length and thus quite different from jueju. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the earliest examples of the jueju, except to say that they can be found in Han yuefu and gushi quatrains.

42 Mather, p. 61.
most confidently attributed to Bao Zhao in his "Xing lu nan" 行路難. 43 Although it is not a quatrain, this poem embodies sophisticated seven-syllable verse which might have influenced the quatrain. At this time a transformation was taking place in attitudes toward poetry, which was advantageous to the promotion of the quatrain. Bao Zhao explored new themes and used the jueju to express personal concerns.

In the Liang dynasty (501-557 A.D.), the seven-syllable jueju became increasingly prevalent and widened its thematic range. Due to its roots in yuefu, which thrived on the theme of love, the jueju was suited to meet the need for the expression of intimate feelings and thoughts. Thus, it was utilized in salons and courts for literary games because it possessed both the conversational style of popular song, as well as elements of the literary tradition.

This period is epitomized by Emperor Jianwen (r. 550-551) who participated in the salon scene as a writer of palace-style poetry. In contrast to the traditional utilitarian function of poetry, his theory of literature involved the idea that "creative literature meant artistry achieved only through the natural, untrammeled expression of emotion, elegantly conveyed." 44 Commonly employed to express personal feelings, the jueju was successfully transformed from a minor form to a popular genre.

Two examples of early quatrains by the Liang dynasty Emperor demonstrate the struggle which poets faced during the development of jueju to make a statement in just four lines. Some attempts were unsuccessful, while others show the beginnings of real jueju which meet the criteria outlined earlier. Emperor Jianwen wrote more five-syllable four-line poems than seven-syllable ones, and his poems can be found in the Yu tai xin yong 玉臺新咏 (New Songs from a Jade Terrace) anthology, 45 or John Marney's excellent book Beyond the

43 Hsieh, p. 566.
45 Compiled in 545 A.D. by Xu Ling, it includes "656 poems in 10 chüan dating from the late third century B.C. to the mid-sixth century A.D. It is traditionally held that Hsiao Kang, crown prince of the Liang
Mulberries. The first example I shall analyze is particularly significant because Emperor Jianwen explicitly defines it as a *jueju* in the title:

"A Chüeh-chü on Seeing the Water Catchers on a Temple Spire at Night"

In the light discern the hanging phoenix;
In the mist see the flying roc.
They must be using rain basins:
Brimming full—the dew catchers.46

In this poem, the reader can see parallelism in the first two lines. While this is not uncommon in *jueju*, it is a problem here because it creates a sharp distinction between the two couplets which are consequently left without a proper closure. While the brevity of this *jueju* evokes mystery, the reader is left with fragments which do not fully convey the poet's message. However, in all fairness to the poet, the Buddhist allusions found in the Chinese title do add another potential facet of meaning. For example, *futu* 浮屠 literally means "Buddha," and *xianglun* 相輪 refers to the Buddhist symbol of "nine wheels or circles at the top of a pagoda."47 Thus, perhaps the impenetrability of the poem is not such a clear-cut issue of it simply appearing to be an underdeveloped *jueju*.

46 John Marney, *Beyond the Mulberries: An Anthology of Palace-Style Poetry by Emperor Chien-wen of the Liang Dynasty (503-551)*, (Taiwan, Chinese Materials Center, 1982), p. 186. Regarding some poems other than those of Wang Anshi, I chose to use the translations of other scholars, making certain revisions where I deemed it necessary to accurately convey the meaning.

In contrast, however, the reader can see a much more successful and accessible attempt at writing jueju in the following seven-character poem:

"Four Poems on Spring Parting, Matching the Shih-chung Hsiao Tzu-hsien" (No. 3) 和萧侍中子顯春別四首

How delightful! The River Huai, washing to and fro! 可憐淮水去來潮
Willows on the spring embankment canopy the Ho Bridge. 春隈楊柳覆河橋
Will my tearstains, not yet dry, end with the morning? 淚跡未燥詰終朝
My footsteps hear jade pendants already keeping tryst. 行聞玉佩已相要

Here, the Emperor employs a full range of sensory images in order to conjure up rich meaning in the brevity of four lines. The poem starts with a depiction of natural scenery, or jing (景), as explained earlier. It is spring and there is a sense of vitality in the action of the waves. Youthfulness is suggested in the willow as it embraces the bridge. In accordance with the criteria of jueju, there is the characteristic shift of mood in the third line so the qing (情) of the poet can be expressed. The third line, which takes the form of a question, suggests that the tears of the young woman in the poem will probably not end in the morning. Sadness pervades the last couplet—a sadness caused by the separation of lovers. The sound of jade pendants tinkling as they brush against each other is a melancholy music in the darkness of the night. Thus, the interaction of the two couplets and the effective closure make this an example of a successful early jueju. It is well on its way to becoming a jueju like those of the Tang dynasty. In fact, as Marney notes, "Examples of the seven-character-line quatrain common in the folk songs but rare in Chinese poetry of the time are found in Hsiao Kang's palace-style poems." Thus, he proved to be a very influential model for Tang poets.

48 Marney, Beyond the Mulberries, p. 212.
49 Idem., Liang Chien-Wen Ji, p. 103.
This poem, however, has the underdeveloped rhyme scheme found in early jueju in which all four lines rhyme. It is not until jueju consistently follow the rhyme scheme of AABA that they can be considered to have attained a certain degree of sophistication. Both of these proto-jueju reflect the Emperor's literary view, which advocates the avoidance of didactic allusions and political commentary, focusing instead on the expression of emotions. However, the first example does not meet the criteria previously outlined for good jueju, because the emotion which the poet is trying to express is somewhat unclear—whereas in the second poem, there is emotional depth available for the reader to explore.

The Emperor's role as a palace-style writer dictated that his most commonly used themes concerned women or descriptions of still-life objects known as yongwu (絵物). Later, jueju poets like Wang Anshi would expand the limited set of themes with which Emperor Jianwen worked. Wang Anshi preferred to concentrate on nature, and his poems were more philosophical in tone. And yet the poetry of both men shares an immediacy of imagery, emotion, and in particular, the technique of emphasizing sound, fragrance, and colour, to achieve subtlety, rather than using historical or political allusions. In this sense, there is a certain principle of pure feeling at work in both poets' writings.

The jueju did not reach its maturation until later during the Tang with such poets as Li Bai, who was influenced by Shen Yue, Bao Zhao and Emperor Jianwen. Wang Anshi wrote jueju relatively late in this genre's development. Examples of successful Tang jueju relevant to his poetry from different standpoints will be discussed next in chronological order.

First and foremost among poets who influenced jueju is Wang Wei 王維 (699-761). While he is best known for his landscape poems, his corpus also includes Buddhist-inspired meditations and personal thoughts. The reader can find both new and traditional elements in Wang Wei's poetry, because he lived during a time of change in the Tang dynasty. His main contribution acknowledged by scholars was his development of the jueju involving two aspects: First, his approach to the closure of jueju, which tended to use an "enigmatic statement—a statement, a question, or an image that was so single or seemed so incomplete
that the reader was compelled to look beneath it for the importance expected in quatrain closure";\(^{50}\) and second, "teasing the reader to look for profundity beneath a mask of simplicity."\(^{51}\) Both these points were highlighted earlier as main characteristics of the jueju form. As for Wang Wei's style, it is marked by restraint and simplicity. He also dared to experiment with meter, themes and styles as well as helped to establish the jueju as the ideal vehicle for departure poems 送别诗 (songbie shi).

The jueju I have chosen to represent Wang Wei is one that best embodies these features. Cited here from the famous Wang Stream Collection, this pentasyllabic jueju demonstrates the reason for the success of his jueju, which influenced later poets such as Wang Anshi. This jueju is an excellent example of the powerful relationship between man and nature, as is found so often in Wang Anshi's poems:

"Deer Enclosure"

Empty mountain, no man is seen.
Only heard are echoes of men's talk.
Reflected light enters the deep wood
And shines again on blue-green moss.\(^{52}\)

This seemingly simple poem is actually complex, and thus it is up to the reader to discover its implied meaning. What strikes the reader first is its philosophical quality. Associations with the word kong 空 are significant, because of its connection to Buddhism and the atmosphere of quietude it creates. Also noteworthy is Wang Wei's unique way of perceiving a scene. As


\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 39.

Stephen Owen remarks, Wang Wei is original in his curiosity about "how things are seen, how the physical world controls how things are seen, and how the forms of perception have inner significance."53 In this case, the reader's eye initially focuses on the large mountain and eventually ends up resting on the moss. The light in the third line introduces brightness to penetrate the darkness of deep woods, as well as shed light on the meaning of the poem. The reader will notice a distinct lack of allusion and a reliance on straightforward language—traits shared by Wang Anshi's poetry. As with Wang Wei's other poems, Pauline Yu notes, "We find here the same transcendence of temporal distinctions, the awareness of boundlessness, the emphasis on perceptual and cognitive limitation, and, running throughout, a sense of harmony of man and nature."54 This meditative approach (best left unspecified as either Buddhist or Taoist), is another key element in Wang Anshi's jueju.

Wang Changling 王昌龄 (698?–756?) was the next poet who made a significant contribution to jueju. Regarded as a master of the quatrain, he is best known for his palace-style poetry 宫体 (gongti) and frontier poetry 边塞 (biansai), the latter being derived from an influx of songs from Central Asia in the Tang.55 His style is summarized perfectly by Owen:

...[O]nce rarely finds the serious intellectual concerns that played such an important role in the poetry of Wang Wei. Instead, Wang Ch'ang-ling sought a poetry that in a few quick strokes could evoke a mood, a figure, an emotionally fraught situation. He was the master of the evocative image, the dramatic gesture, and the suggestive scene.56

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55 Most Tang poets such as Li Bai and Du Fu wrote some poems of this kind. For more information on this type of poetry, see Ronald C. Miao's article "Tang Frontier Poetry: An Exercise in Archetypal Criticism," in the Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies, New Series X, No.2, (July 1974). These frontier poems, as well as many other boudoir poems, can be found on pp. 25-34 of Liu Baishan 刘拜山, Tangren jueju pingzhu 唐人绝句评注, (Hong Kong, rep. 1986).
56 Owen, The Great Age, p. 97.
These elements are prominent in the following example which typify Wang Changling's style:

"Boudoir Lament"

In her boudoir is a young bride who does not know sorrow;

One spring day she makes her toilet and climbs the kingfisher tower.

With a pang she notices the tender green of roadside willows

And regrets having urged her husband away to seek official appointment. 57

In this poem, the reader can see how Wang Changling is the master of mood. He develops descriptions of women introduced by earlier poets such as Shen Yue and Emperor Jianwen. However, his jueju are different because they do not strive to have deeper meaning as is the case in most jueju, and yet they remain charming vignettes in and of themselves.

The last two Tang poets I shall discuss are Li Bai 李白 (701-762) and Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), who are often linked together. However, unlike the other poets previously mentioned, neither was best known for his jueju. In the case of Li Bai, his yuefu and songs were more popular. 58 Yet, his spirit of imagination and wit were an important influence on later poets. Throughout his career he took pleasure in violating rules on his quest to define himself through poetry. This creative journey is marked by his willingness to experiment with meter which can be seen in his yuefu. Li Bai stressed simplicity over ornamentation, and his energy and so-called "strangeness" are rooted in his interest in Taoism. His poems usually deal with drinking, immortality, and sensuality. A palpable sense of spontaneity can be felt in the following example of his jueju:

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58 Owen, The Great Age, p. 119.
"Dialogue in the Mountains"

You ask me why I lodge in these emerald hills;
I laugh, don't answer—my heart is at peace.
Peach blossoms and flowing waters go off to
mysterious dark,
And there is another world, not of mortal men.59

Such enthusiasm and playfulness breathed new life into Tang *jueju* and this poem in particular has an intensely personal perspective. The structure is looser than in most *jueju*. While conforming to the most basic criteria of *jueju*, freedom reigns supreme above other considerations in Li Bai's manner of expression. This relaxed atmosphere is supported by his colloquial use of language. In particular, the unusual use of the character *er* (*呃*) in the second line conveys to the reader that Li Bai is having a casual conversation with himself. The second line also embodies the philosophy of Taoism in its depiction of his response to the inquiry of why he enjoys spending his time in the hills—he just laughs and remains silent.

As a model for later poets, his fearlessness in expressing himself challenged others like Wang Anshi. While compared to Li Bai, Wang Anshi might seem more reserved, he too was striving towards a similar goal of expression—simplicity and sincerity. But Wang Anshi was not obsessed to the same degree as Li Bai of reaching another world "not of mortal men." The "mysterious dark" Li Bai mentions is unfathomable except to the writer himself, and he does not elaborate for the benefit of readers. He seems to cater primarily to his own needs rather than those of the readers who, nonetheless, are able to derive great pleasure from his poems. Wang Anshi, as we shall see later, deals more with the real and concrete, but shares Li Bai's eloquence in conveying his ideas.

59 Ibid., p. 136.
Du Fu's poetry, on the other hand, had a "shifting style" of topic and mood, best seen in his lūshi which he raised to new heights in "Autumn Meditations" (秋興). Although his lūshi are traditionally considered more important than his jueju, he did make significant contributions to this genre. However, Du Fu's jueju are surrounded by controversy. As noted by Shirileen Wong, many Ming critics felt that, "Among Tu Fu's poems, there are excellent works of every form, with the exception of the chūeh-chū which he knows nothing about." Wong strongly disagrees with this assessment and believes that their judgment is based on a misunderstanding of Du Fu's frequent use of parallel lines. Such critics worked on the assumption that "a chūeh-chū does not have to observe the rule of parallelism." Instead, Wong asserts that parallelism is acceptable in jueju as long as there is no "awkwardness and lack of movement which results from its strained use." The reader can see how Du Fu employs parallelism in the following jueju, the third in a series of four:

"Four Quatrains" (No. 3)

Two yellow orioles sing on the emerald willow.

A row of white egrets soar into the blue sky.

My window takes in the perpetual snow of Western Peak.

My door anchors the distant boats of Eastern Wu.

In contrast to the previous poem by Li Bai, the structure of Du Fu's jueju initially appears to be more rigid. Two different personalities and visions of life in the world are obviously at work.

60 Ibid., p. 192.

61 Wong, "The Quatrains (Chüeh-chū) of Tu Fu," p. 142.

62 Idem., Kung Tzu-chen, p. 75.

63 Ibid.

64 This translation is from Wong, "The Quatrains (Chüeh-chū) of Tu Fu," p. 145.
Despite the independence of each line in this *jueju*, from a thematic perspective it is whole. Here, Du Fu views the world first microscopically with images of singing birds, and then he expands his perspective. Overall, he seems less self-absorbed in his outlook than Li Bai.

Like Li Bai, Du Fu is non-conformist. In particular, Du Fu was not afraid to explore new uses of language. While in Du's poem the relationship between the two couplets can be seen more clearly than in Li Bai's poem, the unique aspect of the structure of "Four Quatrains" is the prevalent use of parallelism. There are parallels here between number, colour, birds, and place names. For example, in the first couplet each line starts with a number description (兩個 and 一行), followed by an adjective of colour + a noun (黃鸛 and 白鶴), and finally a verb + colour adjective + noun (鳴翠柳 and 上青天). In the last couplet there is still more parallelism: noun + verb (貧賤 and 門阨), then the place names Eastern Wu and Western Peak (西嶺 and 東吳), followed by two-syllable adjectives + final nouns (千秋雪 and 萬里船). In fact, the effectiveness of the poem as a whole hinges on this parallelism. However, the *jueju* is still acceptable because it meets Wong's criteria of "total cohesion through the resonance of ideas and the coordination of sounds and images."65 The uniqueness of his use of parallelism actually represents Du Fu's genius. As is often the case, a lesser poet would not have been able to carry the effect off successfully. "Four Quatrains" represents an exception to widely-held rules, but at the same time opens new avenues of experimentation and acceptability in poetic licence.66

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65 Wong, Kung Tzu-chen, p. 81.

66 Du Fu is also known for a series of poems on poetry called "Six Quatrains Written in Jest" 講為六絕句 which represented a new topic for *jueju* and encouraged the development of lunshi 論詩 and shihua 詩話. (As noted by Wong in "The Quatrains (Chüeh-chü) of Tu Fu," pp. 152-4.) According to Owen, in The Great Age, p. 218: "Tu Fu was the first poet to develop fully the poem sequence, in which individual poems made full sense only in the context of the sequence as a whole."
Not only was Du Fu's use of parallelism unusual, but he also deviated from the norm in his disregard for tonal rules, as evidenced in the first two lines of a poem called "Ten Songs of K'uei-chou in the Chüeh-chü Form (No. 1)"

East of Middle Pa stretch the East Pa mountains.  
A river runs through them from the earliest times.  

In the first line, all the tones belong to the ping category. In the second line there are three oblique tones in a row at the end, which conflict with the standard model described earlier for jueju, which consists of alternating and contrasting tones. Du Fu freely departed from convention, and while this aspect of his jueju is sometimes criticized, it adds to the multiplicity of his verse. His use of a wider range of topics was a great influence on Song poets like Wang Anshi. Thus, in these examples of Du Fu's and other Tang poets' jueju, the reader can see what different kinds of jueju accomplish as poems, and how, despite their diversity, they all meet the criteria of good jueju. Wang Anshi combines all of these elements: the meditative philosophical attitude of Wang Wei, the pure emotional expression of Wang Changling, the imagination and wit of Li Bai, as well as elements of Du Fu's technique.

In this chapter, I demonstrated how the jueju is distinct from other verse forms and identified the criteria which define successful jueju according to the standard established by Tang poets. My objective was to introduce the essential characteristics of the genre in order to provide a solid foundation on which to build an understanding of Wang Anshi's jueju which will be analyzed in Chapter Three. The main aesthetics of this form are brevity, conciseness, and a four-part form sub-divided into two couplets which employ direct and simple language. These are the constant principles which give jueju its unique personality. The long development of the jueju represents a transformation from popular folk songs to a refined

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67 Wong, "The Quatrains (Chüeh-chü) of Tu Fu," p. 156.
literary genre, culminating in the versatile seven-syllable *jueju* form, which at its height in the Tang, was used for a variety of styles and occasions. Thus, keeping in mind the poetic criteria by which Wang Anshi’s contemporaries judged his work, in Chapter Two I shall examine his literary theory concerning the function and style of *jueju*. 
II

Characteristics of Wang Anshi's Jueju Poetry

In Chapter One, the jueju form and its aesthetic standards, as established by Wang Anshi's predecessors, were outlined. This chapter focuses on the specific characteristics of Wang's style and technique, examining his jueju in the context of general tendencies of Song dynasty poetry. Since a detailed record of Wang's literary theory does not exist, his attitude toward poetry and its function is best understood from an investigation of the views of those poets for whom he expressed admiration, such as other major poets of the previous generation and contemporaries like Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060), Ouyang Xiu 欧陽修 (1007-1072) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), who are regarded as the creators of the Song style of poetry. Thus, it is useful to briefly look at these poets and analyze how they inspired and influenced Wang.

Mei Yaochen

Of the poets in the Northern Song, Mei Yaochen devoted himself the most single-mindedly to poetry, while others like Ouyang Xiu were often busy serving in government posts. Since Mei did not write a systematic explanation of his poetic theory, what is known of his ideas comes from Ouyang's shihua "Remarks on Poetry 六一詩話" in which he

1 Wang's opinion of other poets can be indirectly derived from the order in which he placed poets in his anthology Selections from Four Poets, which was as follows: Du Fu, Ouyang Xiu, Han Yü, and Li Bai. (See Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎, trans. Burton Watson, An Introduction to Sung Poetry, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, No. 17. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard UP, 1967, p. 93.) In addition, Yoshikawa notes on p. 94 that, the little of Wang Anshi's literary criticism that exists can "be found in chüan 22 of the Tiāo-ch'i yü-yin ts'ung-hua, which quotes them from the now lost Ts'ai K'uan-fu shih-hua."

2 Ouyang began a new trend by putting his theory about poetry and literature down in writing. In the Tang it is rare to find such theoretical literature.
commented that, "Mei Yao-ch'en thought deeply and went to the subtle essence of things; his [poetic] thoughts were deep and far-reaching, yet calm and plain." Mei's basic view of poetry was as follows: "He believed that [it] should not be left to the domination of sentiment, but that a new type of poetry should be created through the introduction of reason and intellect." The term which best describes this "new" type of poetry promoted by Mei is pingdan 平淡.

Yoshikawa Kôjirô clarifies our understanding of pingdan by stating that it means "calmness" or "easiness." Mei was one of the first poets to use this term in a positive sense, taking it to mean "poetry which is based on the poet's real, personal emotion, but which expresses that emotion in understated terms. By contrast, the poetry of the Hsi-k'ún school was based on artificial emotion, and was extravagant in its expressive techniques." Jonathan Chaves also states that Mei "...used the term p'ing-tan as a sobriquet for realistic poetry, poetry which took as its main inspiration from the experience of the real world, rather than from a corpus of conventional images and allusions." Thus, the importance of realism and detailed observation in the Song found poetic expression in Mei's hands as he explored and promoted pingdan, a quality which had been anticipated by Tang poets like Bai Zhuyi 白居易 (772-846) and Han Yu 賀開 (772-863) whose poetry "moved in the direction of a simpler, more relaxed style, greater variety of subject matter, and more discursive or philosophical treatment...."
Mei also applied the concept of *pingdan* to diction. According to Chaves, he "seems to be advocating a rough, even vulgar diction as a reaction against the excessive refinements of Late T'ang and Hsi-k'un poetry." Commenting on his style in the last few lines of a poem entitled "Olives," Ouyang compared reading Mei's poetry to eating bitter olives:

His recent poems are dry and hard;  
Try chewing on some—bitter mouthful!  
The first reading is like eating olives,  
But the longer you suck on them, the better they taste.

The following example of a poem by Mei which embodies the spirit of *pingdan* describes a domestic incident in minute detail. Since Mei and Ouyang are better known for their *gushi* than their *jueju*, the example chosen here to demonstrate Mei's contribution to innovations of the Song style is a *gushi*. However, this poem illustrates his "...ability to observe and depict with great precision, and [his] interest in unusual or even 'low' subject matter." Despite the fact that Mei emphasized social commentary in much of his poetry, there is no apparent moral message in the following poem. Written in 1044 A.D. when he was thirty-three, it is witty and realistic like the later poems of Su Shi:

"When Hsieh Shih-hou and I Stayed Overnight in the Library of Mr. Hsü, We Heard the Sound of Rats and Were Greatly Alarmed"

The lamp is dim; everyone's asleep.  
Now famished rats come scurrying from their holes.  
The crash of toppled bowls and plates  
Wakes us with a jolt from our dreams.

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9 Chaves, Mei Yao-ch'en, p. 124.  
10 Ibid., pp. 125-6. Translation according to Chaves from Watson.  
11 Ibid., p. 191. In Chaves' opinion these are the second and third characteristics of Mei's poetry. The first is a didactic tendency.
I fear they may knock down the inkstone on the desk
Or gnaw the volumes on the bookshelves.
My foolish son tries meowing like a cat—
Certainly not a very bright idea!\textsuperscript{12}

This poem is a good example of \textit{pingdan} because it demonstrates a mundane topic being treated realistically—the idea for its composition being derived from an amusing personal incident. Mei's response to Xie Shihou's attempts at scaring the rats is honest and humorous. His sincerity combined with the simplicity of mood and diction represent the poetic features considered admirable in the Northern Song. Rather than imitating the stylistic idiosyncrasies of the \textit{Xikun} style which were excessive and superficial, Mei chooses instead to use colloquial directness.

Besides the attributes of \textit{pingdan}, the other important idea Mei promoted was that language should be thoroughly explored in order for it to reach its fullest potential. The following quote summarizes his own standard for what constitutes good poetry:\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{quote}
Only if a poem, fresh in meaning with language well-worked, brings before us things left unsaid, should it be called good. It has to form the scene that defies description, as if before our very eyes. To hold the meaning without end, realize it beyond words—then, we have reached it.
\end{quote}

Thus, in poems some things are naturally left unsaid, because the ideas which the text conveys are multifaceted. According to James T.C. Liu, Ouyang appreciated Mei's "simple and concise
style that drew the maximum of meaning from the minimum of words."\textsuperscript{15} Due to the brevity of the jueju form, this point is especially pertinent. Wang Anshi admired Mei's poetic skill and greatly benefited from his contributions to the development of shi poetry.

Concerning Wang Anshi's style, Jonathan Otis Pease notes that, "Much of his verse is 'plain' or 'bland' (pingdan 平淡) in the manner of Mei Yaochen and many of Ouyang Xiu's circle...."\textsuperscript{16} The following famous jueju by Wang epitomizes the very essence of pingdan and provides a sample of all the best qualities of Song poetry:

"North Mountain"

In the time when the north mountain transported the green waters, swelling the levels and slopes,
The straight ditches and winding ponds were inundated.
Carefully counting the falling blossoms, I sit for a long time,
Leisurely searching for fragrant herbs, I'm late returning home.\textsuperscript{17}

While Wang Anshi is "less overtly passionate and idiosyncratic than his poetic forebears were,"\textsuperscript{18} Yoshikawa's astute observation that "a quiet passion lurks behind the serenity of


\textsuperscript{17} This is the third poem in a group of four jueju entitled "Roses" (蕃薇四首). Zhou Xifu, p. 188, notes that it was written in 1084 A.D. Concerning the parallel between \textit{yin} and \textit{de} (因...得), I think it indicates a causal relationship: Because he sat for a long time, he arrived home late. However, Zhou states (but in violation of Chinese grammar) that \textit{yin} here means "imperceptible" or "unnoticed", that is, the time passed unnoticed.

\textsuperscript{18} Pease, p. 239.
Sung poetry"\(^{19}\) is applicable to Wang's robust poetry. Here, the first line sets the \textit{jueju} in the familiar Jiangning area—North Mountain being a reference to Zhongshan 鐘山 (the same mountain found in the poem "Traveling to Zhong Mountain" discussed in Chapter One).\(^{20}\)

As I explained in Chapter One, the first half of the \textit{jueju} serves to introduce the scene, and the second half involves the poet himself in that scene. This is a \textit{jueju} that reaches out to all the senses of sound (water), sight (large mountain), and smell (fragrant herbs), in order to provide a full picture of nature. Wang juxtaposes the activity and noise of the first couplet with the silence of the second. This contrast can be seen as a dichotomy between outside/ nature/ sound versus inside/ man/ tranquility. Lines 1 and 2 produce an atmosphere of flood-like conditions with the sound of flowing water (emphasized by the reduplicated verb \textit{yan yan} 漣 漣), while the last couplet portrays the poet's peaceful state of mind. The falling blossoms indicate that it is the end of spring, and his return home suggests he is approaching old age. Although this is a time of year and life which is usually associated with sadness, it is not so for Wang. His attitude, especially in the second half of the \textit{jueju}, has Buddhist/ Taoist overtones, making him appear content in the world of nature, and calm in accordance with the ideals of \textit{pingdan}.

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\(^{19}\) Yoshikawa, p. 37.

\(^{20}\) Su Shi uses the rhyme words of lines 1, 2, and 4 (\textit{pei} 陂, \textit{shi} 时, and \textit{chi} 追) from this poem "North Mountain" to create a new one, "Reply to Wang Anshi's Rhyme 次荊公韻," which I have translated here:

\begin{quote}
Riding a donkey, I come from afar to enter the desolate hillside,

Thinking of you at a time when you were not sick.

You urge me to try and strive for a three hectare residence,

I'd follow you, but I feel it is already ten years too late.
\end{quote}

(For the Chinese, see p. 150 of \textit{Su Shi shixuan 蘇軾詩選 [中國歷代詩人選集]}, Joint Publishing [H.K.] Co. Ltd., 1991.)
Ouyang Xiu

Ouyang Xiu, who was Wang's senior, influenced Song poetry in two respects: (1) its serenity, "...which has a positive and conscious objective—emancipation from the preoccupation with sorrow,"\(^{21}\) and (2) "...its liberality of outlook."\(^{22}\) Like Mei, Ouyang wrote on common themes of the time such as daily life, everyday objects, politics and philosophy. However, in Yoshikawa's opinion, "Ou-yang Hsiu's poetry is neither as minute in description as that of his friend Mei Yao-ch'en, nor as broad and profound as that of... Wang An-shih."\(^{23}\) Renowned as a master of prose, Ouyang's most noteworthy contribution to poetry was his "...conscious attempt to transfer to the medium of poetry the skill which he had learned in prose, working to make his descriptive passages freer than ever."\(^{24}\) Later on in this chapter, the reader shall see the influence of this sense of freedom on Wang's jueju.

In the following example of one of his seven-syllable jueju entitled "Leaving Ch'u" (刘廻), the reader can get a hint of Ouyang's mature style:

The blossoms are brilliantly bright, the willows are light and soft.

Wine is poured in front of the blossoms to send me off.

Let me be as drunk today as everyday,

And don't have the strings and pipes play parting songs.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{21}\) Yoshikawa, p. 64.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 71.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., pp. 69-70.

\(^{25}\) The Chinese original comes from Ouyang Xiu's complete works: Ouyang Xiu Yong ji 歐陽修全集 (Shanghai, Shangwu yin shu guan, 1958), Vol. 1, p. 79. It can also be found on p. 68, Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, Songshi xuanzhu 宋詩選注, (Hong Kong, 1990).

\(^{26}\) This English translation comes from p. 7 of Ronald C. Egan's The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007-72), (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1984).
Written in the spring of 1048, this poem again exemplifies the subdued tone of *pingdan*. Ouyang Xiū rejects any attempt by others to indulge in the sentimentality of parting songs. There is no sense of remorse about the time he has spent in exile at Chuzhou, just simple acceptance of his circumstances. This attitude reflects his striving toward "emancipation from the preoccupation with sorrow" mentioned earlier. Ouyang's choice of adjectives in the first line is particularly original, making translation into English difficult. The willows, of course, are a traditional symbol in parting poems, and the reference in line 3 to his daily imbibing provides evidence to support his adoption of the name "Old Drunkard." However, without relying on ornate description, Ouyang manages to achieve an aura of dignity. In the same respect, Wang Anshi is a scholar whose poetry is characterized by refined grace.

Ouyang also believed in the ideal of *chang* (universality). Ronald Egan states that, "Ch'ang literally means the permanent and the universal, but sometimes also the ordinary and the common." Ouyang's comments on poetry in his *shihua* frequently praise his friend Mei Yaochen for being both "profound and far-reaching in meaning as well as leisurely and nonchalant in expression." Therefore, like other Northern Song poets, his goal was to be thoughtful about deeper issues yet express his concerns in a relaxed and straightforward way. While the beginnings of the optimistic trend in Song poetry are evident in Ouyang's work, there is still an element of *sao* (sadness, grief). Song optimism, however, blossomed in Wang's *jueju*, and is also apparent in the poetry of Su Shi which follows.

Su Shi

In order to better appreciate the beauty of Wang Anshi's *jueju*, it helps to compare his *jueju* with those of probably the most celebrated Song poet—Su Shi. Su displayed an


exemplary attitude by praising Wang’s poetry despite his negative opinion of Wang’s political reforms. In fact, from 1071 to 1079, Su Shi was out of favour with the ruling party in the capital, and in 1077 when Wang’s New Policies Party was in control, Su was forced out of Kaifeng to Jiangsu. And yet Su said about Wang, "Since the time of Ch'ü Yuan I have not seen anything so closely to resemble his work." Thus, in July of 1084 at present-day Nanjing, Su paid a visit to Wang, who had just suffered a stroke at the age of sixty-three. The forty-nine year old Su was en route from his Huangzhou exile, where he had been banished due to his opposition to the New Policies Party. He expressed the wish that he could have joined Wang in retirement, but that it was ten years too late. (See Su's poem "Reply to Wang Anshi's Rhyme.") In the end, it seems that their respect for each other as poets overshadowed any difference of political opinion or personality they may have had.

As part of a small circle of literati, it was Mei Yaochen who brought Su Shi's talent to the attention of his life-long friend Ouyang Xiu. The first of Su's jueju which I will examine here was written in 1072, when Wang Anshi was fifty-one, the same year in which Ouyang Xiu died:

"Traveling Alone to the Auspicious Temple on the Day of Winter Solstice"

At the bottom of the well the sun's gentle warmth returns and then retreats,
Soughing wind, cold rain wets the dry grass.
Who could be like Scholar Su?
Willing to come alone when no flowers bloom?30


30 All translations of Su Shi's poetry are mine. For the Chinese version of Su's poem quoted here see p. 51 of Xu Yuanchong 許淵沖, Su Dongpo—A New Translation 蘇東坡詩詞新譯, (Hong Kong, 1982).
According to the lunar calendar, the winter solstice is the shortest day of the year (that is, the yin part of the year [Dec. 21]), after which the days get longer, which is symbolized by the yang (or sun's warmth) returning to the bottom of the well. As is the case here in the first line, in many of Su's poems the reader is impressed by his ability to make images jump out from the page. This poem also turns the reader's expectations upside down in a humorous way. Su Shi is the only one at the temple on the bleakest day of the year, because no one else except an unconventional person like him would want to visit the temple at such a time. His purpose is to challenge the reader to question why he would go there under such conditions.

Technically, Su Shi puts lines together in a sophisticated fashion. Their twisting and turning, such as the repetition of the hui 回 character in the phrase hui wei hui 回未回 of line 1, is an essential aspect of the poem's wit. Line 2 has compact images and strict order which display Su's talent for describing objects in detail. The xiaoxiao 萧萧 of line 2 suggests the soughing of the wind and dreariness of the rain. The third line is sinuous as well, with the character geng 更 added for emphasis, and provides a contrast with the conventional solidity of the last line. As well, the closure in line 4 is special because it uses more syllables than is necessary to convey the idea.

The next poem, the first in a pair by Su Shi, is exceptionally well-crafted:

"Two Poems for Monk Hui Chong:  
Evening Scenes on a River at Spring"

Beyond the bamboo, there are two or three branches of peach blossoms,  
When the water warms in the river at spring, the ducks are the first to know.  
Water plants overflow onto the land, and rushes are just budding,  
It is precisely the time when blow-fish wish to swim upstream.  

31 Ibid., p. 173.
Written by Su Shi in 1085, when Wang was sixty-four years old (the same year Emperor Shenzong died and Sima Guang became premier), this *jueju* was composed to accompany a picture drawn by monk Hui Chong. In the painting there are no fish as Su has described here, but this addition is part of his way of injecting spirit into the visual picture in order to make it life-like. The *louhao* (or *Artemisia vulgaris*) referred to in line 3 is an edible water plant. The blow-fish of line 4 (also known as the globefish or puffer) usually spent early spring by the sea and then migrated up the river. They also happened to be a popular food source which was made into a thick broth with water plants. Su makes it seem like a perfectly natural transition to move from remarking on the bamboo and peach blossoms to anticipating the pleasure of eating blow-fish. He is not only delighting in the arrival of spring, but also in the wonderful taste of local cuisine it brings.

Finally, Su Shi's ability to capture nature but simultaneously give it more profound meaning is again seen in the *jueju*, "Presented as a Gift to Liu Jingwen (贈劉景文)":

The lotuses are already withered, they have no canopies to hold up against the rain,
The chrysanthemums are fading, but there are still some branches braving the frost.
A year's most beautiful scenery, you must not forget,
Is precisely when oranges are yellow and tangerines are green.32

Su wrote this *jueju* in 1090, after Wang Anshi had died in 1086. Written at Hangzhou where Su had been appointed governor the year before, it was sent to Liu Jingwen, who was an elderly official and one of his friends. On the surface it appears to simply describe flowers and

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32 Ibid., p. 184.
the change of season. However, the flowers in fact symbolize upright officials. Huang Yongwu notes that "the chrysanthemum [can represent] the hermit emerging belatedly and against his own will in order to do his duty." The flowers also represent the time of year: the lotus symbolizes the summer and the chrysanthemum symbolizes autumn. The lotus, which is associated with Buddhism, "...comes out of the mire but is not itself sullied; it is inwardly empty outwardly upright; it has no branches but it smells sweet; it is the symbol of purity, and one of the eight Buddhist precious things." The withering of these flowers indicates the onset of winter and old age. And yet the tone here is not sad at all, but hopeful. Although it is the winter of Su's life, he is still young and green like the tangerines in line 4. Indeed, Su indicates that it is a time when life should be at its best.

While the passage of time and process of aging in this jueju are common themes in Chinese poetry, Su Shi displays a unique joie de vivre. Pre-Song poets were automatically dismayed about the brevity of life. Su, however, is not attached to things in life and so instead he celebrates it in a combination of Buddhist philosophy and wit. In this way Su believes a person will not suffer from the passage of time. His poems in general all embody the spontaneity and rich imagery of these jueju. Similarities to Su Shi's imaginative use of language can be seen in Wang Anshi's exceptional ability to create images in poems such as "The Nan Pu" which will be explicated later.

33 According to William H. Nienhauser Jr., ed., in The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, (Bloomington, 1986), p. 133, this technique is called jieyu 僞喻 or anbi 暗比 (cryptic metaphor), in which "both the tenor and the ground are omitted while the vehicle itself tends to become a symbol."


Tao Yuanming

The influence of the pre-Tang poet, Tao Yuanming (or Tao Qian 陶潜) (365?-427 A.D.), is also worthy of mention. A favourite poet of Mei Yaochen and others like Wang Ansh, Tao often talked about the rapid passing of time and the importance of being happy. In his poems he straightforwardly expresses his opinions about life and poverty, as found in the first six lines of the poem "Back to the Gardens and Fields (No. 1)"

From my youth I have loved the hills and mountains, 性本爱丘山
Never was my nature suited for the world of men, 少无适俗韵
By mistake have I been entangled in the dusty web, 谬落尘网中
Lost in its snares for thirteen long years. 一去十三年
The fettered bird longs for its old wood. 羣鸟恋旧林
The fish in the pond craves for its early pool.36 池鱼思故渊

This poem shows how Tao was more hermit-like than Wang. As a recluse, Tao Yuanming is very much like the chrysanthemum which survives in the autumn frost. In fact, his poems are usually filled with chrysanthemums, orchids and willows. Acutely self-aware, Tao lived a melancholy life of hardship, but enjoyed drinking. He wished to discard worldly things, tending to focus on his unfulfilled dreams and finding comfort in nature. Both poets, however, derive pleasure from the basics in life. Although they admire the strength and beauty of nature, Tao suffers from a yearning for the unattainable, which is absent in Wang's poetry. In the tradition of Confucian gentlemen, Tao regretted not having lived during the time of ancient sages. While Wang also modeled himself on the sages, he was not burdened by such

oppressive thoughts as Tao whose overall message is stated directly in a couplet from his poem "Miscellany (No. 1) (雜詩八首選一)":

Treasure every moment, then, before it slips by; Mark, the passing years will wait for no man.\(^\text{37}\)

Even though Wang's and Tao's attitudes were different, however, their goal of living in harmony with nature was the same. Both poets expressed a longing to return to the mountains they loved.

Yet another aspect of their poetry which is similar is their basic approach to writing poetry. The proponents of pingdan considered Tao Yuanming to be one of their teachers. Later in the Song dynasty, Wang Anshi shared Tao's desire to avoid ornateness and preference for simple, direct language. As Liu Wu-chi notes,

At a time when Chinese poetry and prose suffered from over-elaborateness and artificiality, Tao Ch'ien [Tao Yuanming] stood staunchly for the simplicity of style and content. His language is direct, precise, and devoid of the ornateness and affectation that was the hallmark of the works of his contemporaries.\(^\text{38}\)

Thus, although the two men were separated by seven centuries, Wang's approach to poetry was surprisingly similar, especially with regard to simplicity of diction and understated style.

**Wang Anshi's Approach to Poetry**

While Wang occasionally expressed opinions concerning literature and poetry, unlike Ouyang Xiu, he did not write a *shihua 詩話* (Talks on Poetry). Thus, although an attempt at reconstructing Wang's literary views as they can be grasped from fragmentary evidence spread over a variety of sources might be interesting, it is more practical to examine the way in which

\(^{37}\) Fang, Gleanings, pp. 76-7.

\(^{38}\) Sunflower Splendor, "Tao Ch'ien" by Liu Wu-chi, p. 543.
Wang embodies the styles and techniques best associated with Song poetry, such as the idea of pingdan advocated by his contemporaries Mei Yaochen and Ouyang Xiu. As the reader shall see, Wang Anshi’s uniqueness is found in the philosophical content of his jueju and his refined technique.

Northern Song poets like Wang Anshi faced a choice: to continue late Tang poetic trends or strive to create their own path. In other words, they could write poetry "primarily as a response to the works of the T'ang masters,"39 or pursue the belief promoted by Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) that "the ultimate source of poetry is the primal energy of the universe itself, as embodied in the world."40 In the latter case, it was critical for a poet to experience the world in order to convey it through poetry.

As the reader can glean from a line in one of Wang’s own jueju, the act of writing poetry for him was a personal response to the inspiration provided by nature:

"The Nan Pu"

The Nan Pu river, east ridge, during the second month...

This beautiful scene provokes me to write a new poem.41

After the first line, the reader is tempted to heave a sigh along with Wang. Indeed, Wang is so moved by the scene that it inspires him to put his response into words for posterity. The direct connection between his reaction and the act of writing is demonstrated in line 2 in which he states, "This beautiful scene provokes me to write a new poem." Thus, from Wang’s own words, the reader can observe how nature triggered his creative impulse.


While Yoshikawa Kôjirô expresses the opinion that, "Sung poetry is no mere continuation of the poetry of the T'ang, but a distinct literary development, exploring directions which T'ang poetry had shunned or ignored, and striving deliberately for new effects and new values," at the same time Chaves notes that although Song poets searched for a new path, they still respected established literary traditions. Chaves states that "...far from being revolutionaries, they turned to certain poets of the past for fresh inspiration." Eventually Song poets succeeded in striking a balance between these two approaches, and so poets such as Wang Anshi had room to further develop the jueju's potential.

From the examples of Song jueju discussed so far in this chapter, the reader can sense that they differ from those of the Tang which I previously examined in Chapter One. The crucial question is, how is Wang's approach to poetry different from his predecessors like Du Fu? The following poem, the second of seven in a series entitled "Walking Alone by the Riverbank Seeking Flowers (江畔獨步尋花七絕句)," might appear to be from the hand of Wang Anshi—except for one point. The only clue to its true authorship, Du Fu, is the stereotypically melancholy flavour of the Tang which is usually absent in Song poetry:

Teeming with flowers, a riot of stamens, I fear the riverbank,
But I walk on, leaning precariously, truly afraid of spring.
Song and wine urge me on, I'm still enduring—
Not yet disposed of—this hoary head of mine.44

42 Yoshikawa, p. vii.
43 Chaves, Mei Yao-ch'en, p. 69.
44 Translation mine. In line 2 the third character is usually pronounced qi, but here it is read yi (third tone), and means "to pull to one side." See Stephen Owen, The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang, (New Haven, Yale UP, 1981), p. 207, for the Chinese. Du Fu's style, which highlights compressed language and refined technique (particularly prominent in line 1 of this jueju), greatly influenced Wang.
Here, Du Fu is indulging in self-pity because although he is "not yet finished off," he dwells on the fact that he soon will be. His complaint reinforces the popular Tang attitude that human life is characterized by sorrow alone, while Song poets like Wang consciously moved away from sentimentality and a preoccupation with melancholy.

This avoidance of melancholy evident in Wang's jueju is just one of several poetic tendencies of the Song. What makes his style distinctive is its contrast to the Xikun style 西崑體 of the late Tang, which continued to be popular at the beginning of the Northern Song. It derived its name from an anthology titled Xikun chouchang ji 西崑酬唱集 (Anthology of Poems Exchanged in the Xikun Archives). William H. Nienhauser notes that the poems in this anthology "are characterized by the use of ornate and allusive language with much parallelism. There is also heavy use of mythical allegory, in conscious imitation of the ninth-century Li Shang-yin school of poetry."45

According to the aesthetics of Wang Anshi's time, pingdan was preferable to the Xikun style. Although Wang and others before him opposed the mannerisms of the Xikun style, contrary to some assumptions, their criticism was primarily directed toward the imitators, not the originators of the style. All Chinese poetry is derived in some respect from the traditional corpus, and this fact was not considered unacceptable, because poets admired the vast storehouse of literary images and forms from which they could draw upon. However, eleventh century poets turned away from the ubiquitous use of allusion. Thus, while Li Shangyin's 李商隱 (813?-858) poetry was appreciated by Wang, according to the standards of poets like him, the poems written in imitation of Li by such followers as Yang Yi 杨億 (974-1020), Liu Yun 刘筠, and Qian Weiyuan 钱惟演 (both flourished in 1016), appear as mere shadows of their original inspiration because they contain no moral message. An example of this tendency can be seen in a poem by the Fujian poet Yang Yi:

45 Nienhauser, The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, p. 412.
"Untitled"

Blue mist rises from fragrant herbs in the bronze plate;

Incense sachets hang at the four corners of the round canopy.

Shen Yüeh, grieving, grows emaciated in vain;

Hsiang-ju's feelings are secret: who can convey them for him?

The rain has passed at the golden pond; it still seems a dream.

Kingfisher sleeves turned back in the wind: perhaps it was a fairy.

Every day she climbs the Ch'in tower; but cannot send him poems:

He rides to the east in a screened carriage, surrounded by a thousand horsemen.46

This poem is laborious and disjointed because Yang Yi tries too hard to merely pile up allusions. It lacks spontaneity and the resulting artificiality leads to the characterization of Xikun poetry as frivolous and decorative. I use it here as an example of how the obscurity of some Xikun poetry, which is typically nostalgic, melodramatic and sentimental, prevents the reader from grasping its meaning. Such extravagance and exaggeration as this eventually led Wang Anshi and others to oppose the Xikun style. However, some of the poems in the Xikun anthology can be considered quite pleasant, and Li Shangyin's poetry in particular still has vitality and charm, such as that found in one of his jueju which deals with a Tang preoccupation—love:

"Chang E"47

Behind the mica screen the candle's shadow burns low,

The Milky Way is gradually descending, the morning stars are sinking.

Chang E must regret having stolen the elixir,

Between the emerald sea and the blue sky she broods night after night.

This poem has a remorsefulness that tugs at the reader's heart strings, whereas in the Song, poetry turned away from primarily being "a vehicle of grief"48 as it had been in the Tang and instead embraced a new sense of optimism. Li Shangyin's *jueju* is intricate yet still accessible, lending itself to many different readings besides the literal one given here.49 In addition to this attitude of transcending sorrow, Yoshikawa states that Song poets were also inclined toward narrative poetry; followed their social consciousness; captured with wit and sincerity the realities of daily life; expressed philosophical insights; and described objects with almost scientific precision.50 The combined result of these features is the general description of Song poetry as being "...calm, even cool."51

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49 See Teresa Yu, Ph.D. diss., "Li Shangyin: The Poetry of Allusion," (University of British Columbia, 1990), pp. 110-11, for four other interpretations which offer allegorical and possibly symbolic meaning.

50 Summarized from pp. 28-38 of Yoshikawa's analysis of the differences between Tang and Song poetry.

51 Yoshikawa, p. 32.
Yet another characteristic was that, rather than the ornate, florid style of late Tang, in the middle of the Northern Song, poets strove for "diction that [was] plain and concrete." In order to achieve this ideal, Song poets used more colloquialisms than ever before. According to Jonathan Chaves, they "were more concerned than any of their predecessors to find precisely the right language for the accurate evocation of a particular phenomenon or event." Wang Anshi's power of description verifies this point.

The final question which needs to be addressed concerning Wang's approach to the nature and function of poetry, is what role did Confucian ideals play in his jueju? In fact, the revitalization of Confucianism in the Song dynasty had a great impact on his ideas because Wang Anshi as well as others like Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen helped develop the humanistic concern of neo-Confucianism by injecting poems with didactic purpose. Du Fu of the Tang dynasty also often expressed concern for the suffering of the common people. Wang Anshi admired Du's social awareness because he too was concerned with the welfare of the poor and social injustice. Indeed, one of Wang's best known poems, "Confiscating Salt" (a seven-syllable gushi), deals with the subject of the government trying to prevent peasants from making money through salt production. Thus, Wang's attitude toward poetry, particularly in his early works, reflected the humanitarian influence of neo-Confucianism, which manifested itself in an awareness of the plight of the common people.

There is also a spiritual dimension of neo-Confucianism which is different from the Tang interest in everyday experience. It is the idea that the everyday and the absolute are connected in Song thought, linked by the principle of li (理). Reduced to its basic substance this means that if there is a correspondence between literature and nature, then there is also a connection between the intellectual process and the world. This emphasis on philosophy affected their whole approach to writing poetry. Consequently, the Song dynasty was a period

52 Ibid., p. 39.
of rationalism in which poets wanted to explain everything, sometimes even in scientific terms, which was a particularly prominent feature in the style of Southern Song poets such as Yang Wanli.

Confucianism at that time was further enriched by Taoist and Buddhist ideas, which "...added metaphysical richness and breadth of vision to the old Confucian worldview, [and] Confucianism in turn modified these ideas in the direction of greater warmth and accessibility." Wang Anshi's poems on nature themes possess this glowing philosophical richness. Unfortunately, an investigation into the philosophical sources of his jueju is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is usually unnecessary to label the tremendous energy pulsing in Wang's jueju as either Taoist or Buddhist in order to grasp their meaning.

Thus, to summarize Wang's approach to poetry, it is best to say that although he was not the originator of Song poetic trends, he had a clear voice of his own. He worked within the boundaries established by others like Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen, but succeeded in transcending them in spirit. This explains how, according to Jonathan Pease, "He [Wang] could be disarmingly, frankly himself—unadorned, unallusive, individual yet wholly traditional." Although he did not completely reject all late Tang poetry, he preferred the pingdan style as a mode of expression and thus assisted in its development. He never shocked his readers with jueju that were odd or contrived. Instead, he felt that poetry should state the spiritual and the abstract in positive terms by using simple language, while simultaneously infusing it with profound meaning, as will be seen in the analysis of his literary technique which follows. His attitude toward poetry was complex but balanced, and it is fair to conclude that he shared many of the same basic traits of Mei Yaochen, Ouyang Xiu, and Su Shi, who established the new trends in Song dynasty poetry.

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54 Watson, Chinese Lyricism, p. 205.
55 Pease, p. 242.
Wang Anshi's Literary Technique

Wang Anshi's poetry is lyrical and transcendental. However, it is his technical skill which makes his poetry outstanding. This impression is supported by a quote from Chen Shidao (1053-1102), another eleventh century poet and scholar, who said "...Su Shi succeeded through 'freshness' 於, Huang Tingjian through 'strangeness' 奇, while Wang Anshi succeeded with his 'skill' 巧." Thus, the devices which demonstrate Wang's technical virtuosity shall be examined here, such as his careful use of words and creative use of allusion.

As for technique, Wang's jueju are exquisitely polished. He demonstrates the most remarkable skill in the way he uses individual words. For example, he can create objects through colour rather than actually naming them outright. In the last couplet of the poem "The Nan Pu (南浦)," the gosling-yellow colour represents the willow's curvaceouess and softness:

The wind blows over the duck-green [water],
producing [crystal clear] ripples,
Playing with the sun, the gosling-yellow [willow branches] droop gracefully.

含風鴨綠粼粼起
弄日鶴黃袅袅垂

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56 Ibid., p. 233.
57 Wang employs the use of such prosodic devices as reduplication and alliteration, but they are not unique to his poetry and so will not be discussed in detail. Readers have already seen reduplication in line 2 from the jueju "North Mountain" ("The straight ditches and winding ponds were inundated 直壑回塘濶濶") in which the word yan was repeated to emphasize the vast amount of water. The same line is also onomatopoic because yanyan sounds like rushing water. Alliteration is yet another common feature. A reader should never ignore a poem's rhyme patterns because there is an intimate relationship between rhyming in poetry and its literary effect. For example, see Wang's jueju "Going to the Outskirts of Town" in which both alliteration and reduplication are evident in line 2: "In the dark obscurity of dense trees, no flowers can be seen 深樹冥冥不見花."
58 See Zhou Xifu, p. 156, for a detailed explanation of the use of colour in this poem.
The same method is used to conjure up the water by describing it simply as duck-green. This device is known as *pangjie* (metonymy), which Nienhauser defines as "substitution of a characteristic or trait of an entity for the entity itself, the location for the entity, the author or producer for the entity..."59

Yet another example of this technique can be found in the last line of the next *jueju*, in which Wang Anshi talks about shade in terms of the green colour of trees without directly naming the trees:

"Written on the Spot About Early Summer"

Stone bridge, thatched hut, there is a winding path over the mountains,
Flowing water gurgles into two small lakes.
The fine weather and warm breeze give rise to flourishing wheat,
The green shade and hidden grasses surpass spring blossoms.

Tension is created between parallel lines 3 and 4 by the contrast of the masculine and feminine, as symbolized here by the sunlight and shade (*yang* and *yin* respectively). A pattern is emerging here concerning Wang's technique of identifying objects indirectly, which can be seen once again in line 2 of the following *jueju* "Afternoon Nap (午枕)":

Taking an afternoon nap in front of the flowers, on a flowing bamboo mat,
The sun hastens the red shadows [of flowers] enticing them to shine upon the window curtain.
Peeking at me a bird chirps, rousing me gently from my dream,
Separated by a stream, the mountain contributes to my pervasive melancholy.

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59 Nienhauser, p. 133.
60 For Chinese, see Zhou Xifu, p. 175.
61 Ibid., p. 296.
Wang's preference for indicating the scenery through its colours, fragrances, sounds and shadows gives his poetry sensuality. His perception of everyday experiences provokes idyllic scenes in the mind of the reader, and the creation of these images demonstrate his effective and skillful use of words.62

Personification, a common technique used in Song poetry, can be seen in the last line of "The Nan Pu":63

The wind blows over the duck-green [water],
producing [crystal clear] ripples,
Playing with the sun, the gosling-yellow [willow branches] droop gracefully.

The verb *nong* WARDED (to play with or to mock) endows the willow with a human quality, as if it were intentionally playing with the sun as it flickers in its branches and receives a sense of enjoyment from this action. The use of personification in the Song was a device which could infuse life into poems if the subject was quite commonplace, as it is here. In Tang poetry personification is much less common than it is in Song verse. The last two lines are also well-balanced. There is parallelism between the two types of birds (duck and goose), adjectives of colour (green and yellow), reduplicated adverbs, and final verbs.

The last couplet of "Going to the Outskirts of Town (出郭)" again demonstrates the Song fondness for talking about the intentions of inanimate objects:

62 Another aspect of the careful use of words corresponds to the popular phenomenon in the Song of "tz'u-yün or ho-yün, 'rhyme following' in which one composes a poem employing the same rhyme or rhyme words as those of some previous poem, usually when responding to the poem of a friend or visitor." (Yoshikawa, p. 40). To use a poet's rhymes as inspiration for one's own poem was considered a compliment, and despite the challenge of writing a poem around the rhyme words, there are many examples in which the reply often surpasses the excellence of the original poem.

63 Nienhauser, p. 133, notes that personification is "a type of metaphor involving the presentation of the animate in terms of the inanimate (and vice versa) or the human in terms of the non-human (and vice versa)."
The river plain, a vast expanse of interlocking green,
In the dark obscurity of dense trees, no flowers can be seen.
The wind and sun have feeling, but no place to express it,
They begin to shift their light and warmth to the mulberry and hemp.64

In the English translation I have tried to preserve the effect of alliteration in the Chinese phrase shenshu (深樹) "dense trees" by combining it with the word "dark" in the reduplication of mingming (冥冥)—an extended sound in the Chinese original which emphasizes the darkness. The sun and wind literally "have feeling," but because of the darkness of the dense trees, they cannot "express" themselves to the hidden flowers. So they "decide" to shine upon and nourish the mulberry and flax crops. In this jueju Wang uses colour masterfully by contrasting the darkness of the woods with the warm, bright sunlight. A contrast also exists between the vastness of the plain and the closed quarters of the forest. Ending on a solid note of hope, there is a sense of continuity and growth, as well as a confidence in the quiet strength of nature.

The second most important technique of Wang Anshi's jueju was his judicious employment of allusion. Nienhauser notes that jigu 矯古 (allusion, cf. exemplum): is "a reference to incidents, stories, or events contained in an earlier text (the source need not always be given)."65 Allusions are typically references to myths, important historical figures and events or literary works.66 According to Pease, Wang believed "a poet should use allusions or

64 See Zhou Xifu, p. 190, for the Chinese version. The sign of a good poet such as Wang is his judicious choice of words. However, any terseness of language here is from my translation, and is not found in the Chinese original. The style of this poem is vaguely reminiscent of Tao Yuanming. As Zhou notes, p. 190, Wang adapted a line of his favourite poet Du Fu (杜甫) to create line 1 here.

65 Nienhauser, The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, p. 134.

66 Teresa Yu lists seven different categories of allusion, pp. 24-5, adapted from an article by James Hightower.
historical references to jolt or change the reader's perception. Too many poets simply chose allusions that made a single point...⁶⁷ Therefore, unlike the obscurity of the Xikun style caused by the excessive use of allusion, Wang was striving for an effect compatible with the pingdan concepts so that the meaning of any given poem would not be too difficult for the reader to penetrate. Allusions are also quite practical, especially when they are "...used as an economical means of presenting a situation,"⁶⁸ as is the case of the jueju form in which space limitations are critical.

Liu suggests that a guideline for judging the effectiveness of an allusion is to ask: "Does this allusion add anything to the total poetic effect or does it simply show off the poet's learning?"⁶⁹ Wang's jueju "Peeping at the Garden (窺園)" provides an example of a good use of allusion in which the meaning is revealed and enriched by linking it with the past, and in doing so, "...stretch[es] both the spatial and temporal dimension of [the] poem":⁷⁰

With a walking stick, I look at the garden, inspecting it several times a day, 拄杖窺園日數巡
Picking up flowers and playing with grass is often interesting and always new. 攀花弄草興常新
Scholar Dong is only deluded by the Gongyang commentary. 儒生只被公羊惑
Would he be willing to believe that the phrase "throw away books" is true!⁷¹

This jueju contains allusions to the literary work Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals) and the Gongyang commentary, as well as the Han dynasty scholar Dong Zhongshu (c.179-c. 104 B.C.) who, as an expert on the Chunqiu, was known for uniting Confucianism

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⁶⁷ Pease, p. 294.
⁶⁹ Ibid.
⁷⁰ Teresa Yu, p. 18.
⁷¹ For the Chinese see Zhou Xifu, p. 138.
with the principles of yin and yang. This is an example of a type of allusion in which, "unless the [allusion] is identified, one does not know what the poem is about." Wang's message in this jueju is that if Dong were alive, he would not have spent so much time studying the Chunqiu, but would instead have enjoyed the beauty of life such as that found in a garden. Indeed, he is said "to have concentrated so hard on his books that he did not peek at his garden for three years." Wang Anshi is advocating a more relaxed and open attitude toward life. If people shared his approach they would be as refreshed as he is by learning from observations of nature, in addition to academic study. According to Pease, Wang hoped to enlighten readers to the point that, "One should step beyond the classics to learn directly from common sense, Nature, and folk wisdom."

In the case of Wang Anshi, his purpose for employing allusion was to enhance the richness of meaning by putting his vast knowledge of poetry to good use. For example, this practice can be seen in line 3 of the poem "North Mountain" (previously analyzed):

Carefully counting the falling blossoms, 細數落花因坐久
I sit for a long time.

According to Pease, this line "evolved from a popular song based on a poem attributed to Wang Wei":

A long time sitting; many blossoms fall 坐久落花多

Wang Anshi echoed this line by Wang Wei almost verbatim. Pease also suggests that line 4 of the same poem—"Leisurely searching for fragrant herbs, I'm late returning home (緩尋芳草得歸遲)"—might be derived from Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689-740), or

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72 Teresa Yu, p. 24.
73 Pease, p. 292.
74 Ibid., developing Zhou Xifu's idea, pp. 294-5.
75 Pease, p. 558.
even earlier from the Chuci: "(...I would go seek fragrant herbs, If it did not mean leaving a friend behind 欲尋芳草去，惜與故人違 )." Wang borrows these lines from Tang poetry, but he changes them slightly and in doing so adds deeper meaning. Despite his erudition, Wang restrains his bookishness, using just enough allusion to entice the well-read reader who can appreciate the subtlety of his skill. However, in this poem the reader does not need to understand the allusion in order to grasp the meaning of the poem—the allusion simply enhances it.

Another example of his effective use of allusion can be found in the poem "Following My Desire... (隨意)":

Following my desire, I open the brambles with my own hands, 隨意柴荆手自開
Along the ridge, crossing the moat, again I climb the tower. 沿罇渡壑復登臺
Small bridge, wind and dew, a skiff-shaped moon, 小橋風露扁舟月
Lost birds, with their fettered mates, sense my comings and goings. 逐鳥羣雌覺往來

76 Ibid., p. 559.

77 A technique which is typically assigned to Wang Anshi's style (and thus one for which he is sometimes mistakenly credited with inventing), is jiju 紛句 (line-collecting or quotation as it is also known), in which, according to James J.Y. Liu, in The Art of Chinese Poetry, p. 141, "isolated lines were taken from poems of the past, particularly those of the T'ang, and were put together to form a new poem." This is another form of allusion in which a poet integrates whole borrowed lines into new poems. Such "quotations" serve a similar purpose as does allusion, which is to evoke the past in order to add significance and meaning to an experience in the present. As to whether or not such a practice is praiseworthy depends on the poet's reasons for borrowing lines. This technique, however, should not be condemned by the modern reader as simply pilfering. The reader is justified in such a criticism only if a poet quotes lines merely to show off his erudition. However, poets such as Wang were able to give borrowed lines a new twist.

It is the last line of this *jueju* which is of particular interest. Pease states that the phrase "Lost birds, Widowed She-birds," is an allusion to a Xie Lingyun poem titled "Going Out From the Western Archery Hall at Twilight (曉出西射堂)".  

...Widowed she-birds cherish their old mates,  
Lost birds long for their former woods.  
They have emotions, and they know love's labor  
How can I part from the one my heart admires?\(^{80}\)

Such allusions tend to have a ripple effect. In fact, line 2 of Xie Lingyun's poem is in turn a variation on a line by Tao Yuanming, which I found in his poem "Back to the Gardens and Fields (No. 1) (歸園田居)"

The fettered bird longs for its old wood  

In line 3, *bian zhou yue* 扁舟月 literally means "shallow-skiff moon," or coracle moon. A coracle is a small, light boat made of a wooden frame, covered with waterproof material. According to Pease, "shallow-skiff" is a name Wang was also known by in his retirement. Thus, it is an example of yet another type of allusion, one in which "the line makes perfect sense; the allusion, when identified, adds overtones that reinforce the literal meaning."\(^{82}\)

\(^{79}\) Pease, p. 605.  
\(^{80}\) Ibid., p. 606. Emphasis Pease's. In addition, Pease argues that the fifth character in the fourth line should be *jue* 賢, rather than 結 or 竣, as it appears in some editions, which he supports with a reference to a Du Fu poem:  
...No one senses when I come or go,  
Stopped, listless, how long this feeling lasts!  

\(^{81}\) Ronald C. Fang, 方重譯 *Gleanings from Tao Yuanming* 陶淵明詩文選 (Hong Kong, The Commercial Press, 1980), pp. 40-1.  
\(^{82}\) Teresa Yu, p. 24.
Wang's superior skill is also demonstrated by his wit and his plainness of language. He was often humorous, but his wit was usually accompanied by didactic meaning, as in the case of the following jueju:

"Casual Lines on Being Called Upon in Shuzhou to Go For Examinations, But Refusing"

Supporting a tray on one's head it is hard to (simultaneously) view the sky,
I laugh at my own empty reputation, and loathe myself.
Rotten soil and sacrificial animals each have their own taste,
Is it possible only the earthworm is a clean, honest and capable official?

Wang is comparing himself to an earthworm in this jueju, written in 1051 A.D. at a time when he was exempt from capital service and assigned to Shuzhou. Wang was working in agriculture then, and his closeness to the earth is paralleled with the earthworm that lives in decaying soil. It is paradoxical that a lowly creature like the earthworm, that is, Wang, knows what it means to be a good official, while other higher officials do not. As conveyed in the title, Wang prefers his life away from the capital and resists being part of the official court life, because he could see its hypocrisy. The first couplet is especially clever. In line 1, Wang adapts the expression daipan wangtian 戴盆望天, which literally means "to try to view the sky with a tray on the head," into a phrase. The word tian 天 is traditionally associated with the court, thus the tray represents the obstructions put in Wang's path by his enemies.

As for plainness of language, the final example of this chapter embodies this feature as well as another example of allusion:

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83 Zhou Xifu, p. 27.
"Entering the Pass"

Wild clouds, cold rain, river far and vast.

Saddled horses everywhere, the drums and whistles have stopped.

There are still a few people of Yan who shed tears,

Turning back to look, the tears flow south of the border.

At age thirty-nine in 1060, Wang was in the capital. This jujie is an example of a poem in which the reader must understand the allusion in order to benefit from the poet's message, otherwise its meaning would suffer greatly. However, in Wang's poetry his allusions are always easily accessible. A dramatic event is obviously taking place, which is indicated by the wild weather in line 1. The second line further jars the reader. There is a static quality introduced by the horses, which are motionless. Silence emphasizes the tension of the poem. This is relieved in line 3 when emotions are displayed by the tearful Yan people. Their homelessness could be a metaphor for an official like Wang, whose duties force him to leave his family and travel to distant parts of the country, or it could parallel Song history and the shift of the capital to the south, during which people in the north living under enemy occupation were longing for the south. In either case, a bleakness of mood is successfully achieved through the use of simple, direct language, particularly poignant in the image clusters of line 1.

Thus, in this chapter I demonstrate the link between Wang's views on the admirable qualities of poetry and the way he achieves these ideals through technique. He strove toward applying Mei Yaochen's quality of pingdan, which consisted of calmness of mood, realism of theme, and plainness of language. Like Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen, Wang also explored new subjects previously considered too mundane. He used allusion in an apt and precise way

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84 Ibid., p. 75.
in order to stretch the meaning of his *jueju* (the indirectness of allusion providing complexity and contrast to the directness of *pingdan*), making a deliberate effort to counteract the excessiveness of the previous *Xikun* style. However, most insightful is the wit and intelligence he expressed through the skillful manipulation of individual words as seen in the analysis of such poems as "The Nan Pu." In this respect a glimpse of Su Shi’s freedom and flair for language can be seen in Wang’s style. In Chapter Three, I shall expand upon these characteristics in a more detailed examination of Wang’s *jueju*, which further demonstrate how he applied his keen perception to capturing the beauty of nature.
III
Nature Themes

The stage is now set for an in-depth analysis of Wang's response to the natural world around him. In this chapter, I discuss how the sensitivity of his voice as a poet is captured in the imagery of his jueju. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Wang's attitude toward nature reflects the generally more optimistic mood of the Song dynasty. However, in his poetry Wang does more than merely describe nature, he enhances the world he observes with his artistic skill and imagination.

According to J.D. Schmidt, "Without a doubt, the most important theme of Sung poetry, and possibly of Chinese poetry in general, is nature."1 Although the jueju in this chapter all share the theme of nature, it would be incorrect to label Wang a "nature poet" as such, because his eclectic style encompasses a diverse scope of themes. The varied life and career of Wang, like that of other Northern Song scholars such as Su Shi, are expressed in the wide range of topics in his poetry. Wang's willingness to explore different topics also reflects a common trend at that time toward experimentation. This broadness of outlook is the reason why he did not belong to any particular school, nor had a group of followers after his death, unlike many other poets.

Yoshikawa Kôjirô expresses the opinion: "It would seem an anomaly that a great political leader like Wang An-shih should have had such a fondness for poetry that was purely lyrical, and consequently extremely apolitical in nature."2 However, this fact is not unusual when it is remembered that Wang was a complex man with many interests. Yoshikawa's comment is also somewhat misleading because, in addition to nature jueju, Wang did write

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politically-oriented poetry, especially as a young man.\(^3\) Accordingly, the Canadian scholar Jan Walls has divided Wang's poetry into four thematic categories: (1) political and historical concerns; (2) personal relationships; (3) idleness; and (4) Buddhistic matters.\(^4\) While it is sometimes difficult to categorize poems exclusively as historical or personal, the emphasis in this thesis is primarily on the third category of idleness, because most of Wang's nature poems coincide with his "idle" or retirement years. As for the subject of love, it is rarely found in Song *shi* poetry, and Wang's *jueju* are no exception. The issue at hand, however, is not which category of Wang's poetry is better, but identifying and highlighting the salient features of his nature poetry.

Since this thesis concentrates on his *jueju* with nature themes, it is important to place Wang within the tradition of Chinese nature poetry. The realm of nature is vast and complex and therefore it is necessary to clarify the term "nature." There are two genres of Chinese nature poetry: *shanshui* "mountains and rivers" (or landscape poetry), and *tiányuān* "fields and gardens" (or bucolic poetry).\(^5\) While the *Shijing* and *Chuci* are sometimes referred to as the beginning of Chinese nature poetry, the natural imagery found in these works is used in a formal way, and is not intended as an appreciation of the beauty of nature. The true beginning of nature poetry started around the third century A.D. with the poets of mysterious learning or *xuānxué*, who were first inspired by such activities as

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\(^3\) Jan W. Walls, "Wang An-shih" in *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*, Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds., (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1975), p. 588, states that Wang's poetry roughly approximates stages of his life: "The historical and political poems mostly reflect the strong views of Wang's youth, while poems of idleness and Buddhistic thought stem largely and naturally from his later years in retirement; poems to friends and relatives span his whole life."

\(^4\) Ibid.

climbing mountains to write down their impressions and observations. Since then the poets most commonly associated with nature are Tao Yuanming (also known as "the spiritual ancestor of all nature poets in China..."), Xie Lingyun, Wang Wei, Meng Haoran and Liu Zongyuan. These poets can be roughly divided according to the two nature genres. For example, Xie Lingyun represents the typical landscape poet, while the bucolic poet is epitomized by Tao Yuanming. Although there are elements of both Xie's landscapes as well as Tao's rural scenes of cottages and fields in Wang's jueju, he tends to favour the former.

Of Wang's 493 jueju, only a small sample are included in this thesis for close reading. In the process of choosing poems which best represent Wang's poetic voice, it is inevitable that many are overlooked. It should be noted that some of his historical poems are also excellent (such as several poems named after historical figures like "Jia Sheng", "Xie An", and "Han Xin"), as well as the Buddhist-inspired poems, "Inscriptions on the Wall of the Banshan Temple." The analysis of the following poems will suggest that in Wang's hands the jueju form seems particularly well suited to exploring nature. Specifically, his treatment of man's relationship with nature, mountains, rivers, flowers, and the change of seasons will be examined.

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6 William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, (Bloomington, 1986), p. 66. This type of poetry, also known as the poetry of emotion, was part of a "quest for spiritual meaning" at that time. It is a transitional period which took as its dictum: "Poetry is based on emotion [expressed in] patterned splendor." Poets of the Six Dynasties Period include Lu Ji (261-303 A.D.), Ruan Ji (210-263), and Cao Zhi (192-232). (The Six Dynasties Period refers to Wu [222-280], Eastern Jin [317-420], Liu-Song [420-479], Qi [479-502], Liang [502-557], Chen [557-589]). See Kang-i Sun Chang's excellent article "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry," in The Vitality of the Lyric Voice, (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1986), pp. 332-85 for more information.

7 Schmidt, Yang Wanli, p. 118.
Man and Nature

The crucial question to consider is how Wang depicted nature in his poetry. He had a special relationship with nature, which he regarded as a positive force. For Wang Anshi like Wang Wei before him, "Nature is neither forbidding nor comforting: it simply is." Indeed, in Wang Anshi's opinion, if nature is either of these two alternatives, it is sympathetic to man. However, with regard to Tang poets' view of nature, Burton Watson states that, "...when they stopped to consider the matter at all, [they] usually saw nature as wu-ch'ing, 'heartless' or 'unfeeling'..." This was not the case in the Song dynasty. Although Wang Anshi created landscapes with emotional overtones, he did not think of nature as an escape which it had been for others such as Xie Lingyun who, "...consciously aimed at identification of the self with the cosmos." Nor did Wang Anshi ever actually lose himself in nature as Wang Wei managed to in his Buddhist-inspired philosophical landscapes.

Wang's attitude toward nature was strongly influenced by Du Fu, whose "...main theme is not solely nature but man and nature..." Wang also identified closely with nature, regarding man as an important part of it. He shared Du Fu's preference for depicting the world in its rugged state rather than in the ways it is cultivated by man. The following pentasyllabic jueju is a little gem which demonstrates Wang's harmony with nature:

8 Eoyang, p. 118.
"In the Mountains"

Following the moon out of the mountains,
I search for clouds to accompany me home.
A spring daybreak, there is dew on the flowers—
Their fragrant scent clings to my clothes.\(^{12}\)

In this poem, the clouds and moon act as Wang's companions by guiding him through the mountains. An atmosphere of peacefulness, seclusion and quietude prevails, which Wang experienced while in retirement. The early morning hours have special meaning for him and they help produce an enchanted environment in which the clouds "...float naturally from the outer into the inner world."\(^{13}\) As Wang comes back to the ordinary world, the fragrance from the other world still clings to his gown. There is a strikingly feminine quality to the scent of flowers clinging to his clothes like the perfume of a woman. This is supported by the presence of the moon, which is associated with \textit{yin} (or feminine) traits. The last line is worthy of a poetic genius—the fragrance of the flowers is the thread that connects Wang's mystical surroundings with his calm inner self.

Once again in the \textit{jueju}, "Two Poems Written on Master Huyin's Wall"

(書湖陰先生壁二首), Wang shows how nature and man can co-operate:

Under thatched eaves the frequently well-swept path has no moss,
Flowers and trees form a plot planted by my own hand.
A river protects the fields, encircling them with its green—
Two mountains push open the gate delivering a blue shade.\(^ {14}\)


\(^{13}\) Wells, p. 21.

\(^{14}\) Zhou, p. 199. Master Huyin was one of Wang's neighbours on Zhong mountain.
The last couplet of this poem is significant because it captures nature and man interacting harmoniously. Here, Wang conveys a sense of satisfaction with his life and finds comfort in the natural, unthreatening environment. In particular, the river encircling the fields of line 3 shows how nature can be protective towards man. However, the most noteworthy aspect of the poem is the human qualities ascribed to the mountains. According to Yoshikawa, "Sung poetry makes frequent use of personification and the pathetic fallacy, drawing nature, as it were, into the world of human activities." An example of this is evident in line 4 with the image of the mountains pushing open the gate as a man would. Here the mountains are taking on the characteristics of a guest bringing a gift to a host. In this case, the mountains bring blue shade to their host's thatched house. In addition, this poem appeals to the senses. Wang has a fondness for the colour green found in the river of this jueju. Green is the colour which symbolizes spring, life, and happiness. The manner in which sensations play a role in Wang's poetry is another aspect of Du Fu's significant influence on his style.

Wang's keen sensory perception is also evident in the next poem, which again demonstrates the union of man and nature:

"Traveling to Qi An Temple in the First Month of the Gengshen Year"16
North of the water, south of the water, drooping, drooping willows,
Behind the mountain, in front of the mountain, everywhere plum blossoms.
Until this body of mine follows the changes of nature,
Year after year I will take advantage of coming at this season.

15 Here, Yoshikawa in An Introduction to Sung Poetry, p. 46, is pointing out the opinion of another Japanese professor, Ogawa Tamaki.

16 Yang Jialuo 優家駒, Wanglinchuan quanji 王臨川全集, (Taipei, 1988), p. 159. The year is 1080 A.D. Once again in this poem Wang was inspired by the area of Nanjing where, according to Pease, p. 596, "the Qi An Temple (Temple of Undifferentiated Peace), [is located] outside the east gate of Jiangning, by the road into town from Wang's house at Banshan."
His response to the natural surroundings is clear and succinct. Wang excels others in the degree of conviction with which he is able to convincingly, but not overtly, express his emotions. The poem reinforces a common theme in Wang's poems—acknowledging the cycle of life and death. He believes that as part of nature, man must accord with and submit to the transformation of all things. This poem, however, is also notable for its linguistic aspects. The first couplet strictly observes parallelism according to categories of direction indicators, flowers, and other nouns. Despite the brevity of the *jueju* form, Wang dares to fill the precious space with repetition. There is alliteration not only between words such as *chongchong* 重重 and *chuchu* 處處, but also between lines, with the words *shan* 山 and *shui* 水 in lines 1 and 2. Such alliteration and repetition make this *jueju* pleasant to read aloud. Wang's phonetic patterns, in this case the use of doublets, reinforces the emotions he is trying to convey. The repetition beautifully expresses the link between the scenery and Wang's desire to return again and again.

In the next *jueju*, "The Tops of the Trees" (木末) which depicts man relying on nature for his livelihood, Wang's profound colour sense and power of suggestion make it exceptional:

The tops of the trees on North Mountain, 
the mist moves in gradually; 木末北山煙冉冉
The roots of the grass by the Nan mountain stream, the water gurgling. 草根南澗水泠泠
Silk like white snow, mulberries green again— 綢成白雪桑重緑
Finishing the harvest of yellow clouds, rice seedlings now sprouting up green.17 割盡黃雲稻正靑

The parallelism of this *jueju* is notable, especially in the first couplet. Different vantage points are gained from the tops of the trees and the grass roots. Parallel direction-words and

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17 Zhou, p. 159.
reduplicated verbs end lines 1 and 2. In addition, the second couplet is filled with an abundance of parallel colour adjectives. Here, Wang is emulating his predecessor Xie Lingyun's, "keen awareness of the tone and gradation of colours."\footnote{Chang, p. 44.} Wang also uses the technique which I defined in Chapter Two of simply describing an object by its colour in order to imply the identity of the object itself. For example, his colour image in line 4 allows the reader to extrapolate that the "yellow clouds" actually refer to yellow fields of wheat. This evocative power of Wang's pen makes his descriptions all the more persuasive. As in the previous landscape poems, this j"uej"u conveys the vitality of nature as it transforms and renews itself, as well as the ways it interacts with and benefits man.

Mountains

The mountain landscape is a particular favourite of Wang's. In fact, in Chinese culture the mountain has been "...an object of reverence from remote antiquity."\footnote{Ibid., p. 2.} I quote a Han dynasty interpretation of Confucius' words in the Analects (論語) about mountains here, because it is important for understanding the prominent role they play in Wang's nature j"uej"u:

Mountains are what the people of the realm look up to with reverence. Plants and trees grow on them. A myriad things find a home on them. Birds flock to them; beasts rest on them. People from all directions obtain benefit from them. The clouds emerge from them; the winds blow over them. They stand up right between heaven and earth; they complete heaven and earth. They bring security to the State. For these reasons do the virtuous delight in the mountains.\footnote{Ibid.}

Thus, relatively speaking, mountains are solid and long-lasting forms which serve as home to many creatures and are responsible for the production of mist and rain. The reader will notice that many of Wang's poems refer specifically to Zhong mountain. His nature poems reflect the importance of this mountain located in Jiangning, which he knew intimately during his
retirement. According to Jonathan Pease and others, Wang's best nature poetry comes from this period. Perhaps it was one of his most creative phases because he concentrated on writing poetry rather than spending his energy fighting over political issues.

A poem which employs the symbolism of the mountain is "Climbing the Peak of Feilai Mountain (登飛來峰)." This jueju was written early in Wang's political career between 1047 and 1049, when he was in Yin County:

On the summit of Feilai Mountain there is a pagoda eight thousand feet high—
I have heard that when the cock crows, one can see the sunrise.
I am not afraid of the floating clouds blocking the distant view,
Because I'm perched on the loftiest peak.\(^{21}\)

The reader has already seen a poem on a similar theme from the same stage of Wang's life, entitled "The Western Pavilion of Yin County" (縣西亭) in the biographical outline. This poem also has political overtones, but it conveys Wang's optimism rather than his frustration. He has supreme confidence in his ability to achieve his cherished desire of attaining high political office. By using the floating clouds as a metaphor for the crafty, fawning individuals at court who hope to block his advancement, he makes a persuasive comment about their superficiality. Positioned at the top of the mountain above this sea of clouds, Wang has a vantage point from which to look down on such people. The clouds will not obstruct his view, nor will these individuals impede his path to fame.

The most praiseworthy aspect of Wang's style in this jueju is the sense of grandeur he creates. If the political overtones of the poem are disregarded, the nature imagery still forms a completely satisfactory picture of a pre-dawn scene. High amongst the mountains surrounded by clouds, Wang becomes part of a mystical atmosphere. Although the distant view of the sun

\(^{21}\) Zhou, p. 10.
rising, that is, Wang, is obscured by the clouds, he is not afraid. He still manages to climb to
the top of the mountain and is perched like a bird at its peak.

Mountains often have religious significance in China, and thus provide suitable
surroundings for spiritual contemplation. J.D. Schmidt comments that,

By the time that Buddhism became firmly entrenched in Chinese thought, the
mountain was already a symbol for ultimate truth, so it is no wonder that
Buddho-Taoist nature poets such as Hsieh Ling-yûn wrote of the enlightenment
they had attained midst wild and craggy peaks.\footnote{Schimdt, \textit{Yang Wan-li}, p. 123.}

This is also the case in Wang's journey for truth, as seen in the \textit{jueju} "Awareness of Truth
Temple (懺真院)," which dates from his retirement years:

\begin{verbatim}
Untamed waters flowing in all directions cleanse
the front steps of the temple.
Disturbing my afternoon dream, birds cry to each
other outside the window.
Day after day the spring breeze blows the fragrant
grass,
To the north of the mountains, to the south of the
mountains, the paths are about to vanish.\footnote{Zhou, p. 197.}
\end{verbatim}

The title of this poem indicates that Wang's reflections are influenced by Buddhism—the idea
of "awareness of truth" being one of this philosophy's tenets. In line 1 the proximity of the
"untamed waters" to Wang's house is particularly revealing. The water is acting as a cleansing
agent, both physically and spiritually. In line 2 Wang's dream-like state is disturbed by the
cries of birds which usher him back to reality, while in line 3 the wind brings the sensual
fragrance of grass to Wang's nostrils as he ponders where the paths of the mountain lead. In
line 4 the disappearance of the paths is probably a reference to Chan/ Zen Buddhism, which
was most popular in the Song dynasty. An individual such as Wang could experience
enlightenment in an instant, but then realize that the path did not exist in the first place, or that there is no difference between the path of someone unenlightened versus someone enlightened. Although Wang was not seeking immortality, the significance of the mountains as defined earlier lifts his quest in this jueju to a cosmic level. His reflections in this poem were obviously influenced by Buddhism, but this does not necessarily imply that he held a systematic philosophy of life. His mood is meditative, yet his poetry is generally more concerned with emotions than intellectual issues. Thus for Wang, nature is a source of both pleasure and enlightenment.

Prompted by the experience of sitting face to face with Zhong mountain, Wang conveys his impressions of this encounter in the next jueju:

"Written on the Spot at Zhong Mountain"

The mountain stream, without a sound, flows around the bamboo.
West of the bamboo, flowers and grass play with the gentle spring.
Under thatched eaves, face to face, sitting from morning till night—
Not a single bird chirping, the mountain is still more tranquil.

This jueju incorporates many of his favourite landscape images, such as mountains and streams, as well as flowers and birds. He uses juxtaposition to create compound images, which engage the reader intellectually. The brevity of the jueju form lends itself to this style. Although Wang does not state directly that he is facing the mountain, the reader infers this idea from the description of the scenery in the first couplet. He is a master of the jing/ qing interplay of scenery and emotion. Thus, the silence of the mountain stream in the first line sets the tone for the whole jueju. In this case, silence is more effective at creating a mental and

24 Yang, p. 166.
physical environment than noise. An unspoken dialogue exists between Wang and the mountain, but it is apparent that the relationship is one of mutual respect and harmonious interaction. They meet as equals, and so while there is no indication of humanity except the thatched eaves, Wang is not really alone.

Again in this jueju Wang uses personification for effect. In the second line, spring is ascribed the human qualities of softness and tenderness. The poem is further injected with life by the contrast between the dynamic force of the flowing water and the static image of Wang sitting in contemplation. The result is a broadening of the poem's meaning: Wang is not only facing the mountain, but all of nature—the stream, the bamboo (a traditional symbol of integrity), and the flowers. Finally, in the fourth line, the silence of the birds brings the noiselessness of the stream introduced in line 1 full circle, provoking an ever-deepening, more profound silence.

Rivers

The antithesis of the permanence of mountains is the mutability of water. Wang wrote many poems in which rivers and streams feature prominently. The next four jueju represent this category of his nature poetry:

"By A Stream on Mt. Tiantong"

The stream water is pure and rippling, the trees are old and grey.
Walking through the woods by the stream,
I tread upon the spring sunlight.
The stream is deep, the woods are dense in this uninhabited spot,
There is only the fragrance of hidden flowers crossing the water.25

25 Zhou, p. 3.
Although this is an early *jueju* (dated 1047 A.D.), its serene quality is similar to the mature style of Wang's poetry written in retirement. The stream is mentioned no less than three times in the first three lines, indicating that it has philosophical significance for him. Water is often associated with Taoism, and here the stream symbolizes purity. It is also a conventional symbol for the passage of time connected with the journey of life. The *jueju* is sophisticated and graceful, yet Wang makes what took great effort to create seem informal and spontaneous. His phrasing is precise and his images are rich with nuance. As Wang does in many of his poems, he juxtaposes the sense of sight in the first three lines with the sense of smell in the last line. By doing so, he successfully produces the illusion of leaving mundane matters behind and becoming caught up in a magical, separate world that exists deep in the woods.

The *jueju* "Mooring A Boat At Guazhou (治船瓜洲)," often found in Chinese anthologies of Wang's works, is one of his most popular:

Jingkou and Guazhou—a river between them,  
Zhongshan separated only by a few layered mountains.  
The spring wind again greens the southern bank of the Yangzi River,  
When will the bright moon illuminate my return?\(^26\)

According to Pease, this poem's rhymes are based on those of a *jueju* by Li Bai entitled "Leaving Early From Bodi Town (早發白帝城)\(^27\):

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 141.  
Leaving Bodi in the morning amongst the colourful clouds,
The thousand li to Jiangling we went back in a single day.
On both shores the sound of gibbons' cries do not cease—
The light boat has already passed a myriad of layered mountains.28

Comparing these two poems, it is evident from the absence of chattering monkeys in Wang's jueju that he has a preference for refinement, while Li Bai leans toward romanticism. From clues in Wang's poem, it is safe to assume that it was written on his journey back to the capital after his first retirement. Once again the poem's events are taking place during Wang's favourite season—spring. In the last line he indicates his wish to return to Zhong mountain as soon as possible. The moon, a symbol used by virtually all Chinese poets, represents separation, melancholy and loneliness. The serenity and calmness with which Wang accepts being recalled to the capital is admirable, and on occasions such as this when he expresses his personal feelings, they deeply move the reader.

Line 3 provides yet another example of Wang's careful selection of words to convey the right image. As in all artistic undertakings, whether visual, literary or musical, it is often the exceptions to rules which make a work of art remarkably beautiful. Here, for example, Wang uses the adjective "green" (lu*) as a verb, reflecting the attention and creativity he applied to refining the language in his poetry through the manipulation of individual words. Pease states that, "It took almost a dozen revisions before he arrived at the word 'green'."29 Thus, within the demands of the structural tightness of the jueju, Wang has taken a word and given it new meaning.

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28 Translation mine. See Pease, p. 517 for the Chinese.

29 Pease, pp. 521-2. In the process of deciding on the word "green," Wang also tried the words "comes" 到, "crosses" 過, "enters" 入, and "fills" 滿, to name just a few.
Wang's skill at writing poetry improved with experience. Thus, the poetry written in the later period of his life is generally regarded as superior to his earlier efforts. This is the basis for the parallel Pease draws between Du Fu and Wang Anshi when he states that for both, "constant honing of technique let the insights of old age find their best expression."30 Such is the case in the next jueju by Wang:

"The Nan Pu River"

南浦

南浦随花去

On the Nan Pu following the flowers,

南浦随花去

My boat loses its way returning home,

迴舟路已迷

Their subtle fragrance can be found nowhere,

暗香無覓處

The sun sets on the west side of the painted bridge.31

日落畫橋西

Wang possesses the ability to evoke emotion through sensory images. In this jueju the light of the sunset highlights the decoration on the side of the bridge, and the phrase anxiang 暗香 of line 3 (which also appears later in the poem "Plum Blossoms"), carries the scent of a light but persistent fragrance. However, Wang was never overcome by emotion because he was restrained by the rationalism of the day. Although he avoided the eremitic tradition of Tao Yuanming, the state of being lost in this poem creates a fantasy-like quality which resonates with aspects of Tao Yuanming's poems mentioned earlier. Thus, there is the subtle indication that this jueju harks back to earlier models, but Wang accomplishes this effect without using specific allusions.

The next jueju on the topic of rivers is filled with tension:

30 Pease, p. 233.
31 Zhou, p. 194.
"On the Yangzi River"

On the Yangzi River the gloomy autumn sky
has half-opened and cleared,
Evening clouds filled with rain still hover low.

Blue mountains rising around one upon another;
it is doubtful there are paths—
Suddenly a thousand sails can be fleetingly
glimpsed. 32

Wang finds himself alone on a boat. Will his solitude be interrupted? Is a storm about to break on this autumn evening? Suddenly not just one, but a thousand sails appear on the horizon which alleviate the tension. Wang produced this tension not only by controlling the content of each line, but also by exploiting the structure of the jueju. In line 4, the word "suddenly" grabs the reader's attention, performing its function according to the qi cheng zhuan he outline as a "punch line." It also happens to be the most powerful line in the poem. Wang masterfully creates palpable anticipation of the unknown by harnessing the unpredictability of nature. Even in the final line the sails appear only intermittently—first hidden, then visible again. In fact, Wang's hope is embodied in these sails. Never once in this jueju does he directly state how he is feeling, and yet it is clear to the reader. Wang frequently uses imagery in this way to suggest emotions.

The compelling force of the next poem, which shares the same title as the previous jueju, is the wind. It is the connecting element that holds all four lines together and prevents the poem from becoming static. Wang's poems usually contain this kind of dynamic motion, whether it is derived from the movement of the wind, clouds, or water:

32 Ibid., p. 212.
"On the Yangzi River"

The river water is rippled by the west wind,
And river flowers, late-blooming red, are stripped.
The sentiment of separation reaches him through the flute,
Blowing over the scattered mountains to the east.\(^{33}\)

It is rare in Wang's jueju to find melancholy, but in this case, leaving his friends has made him unusually sad. The only link which remains between him and the people he is separating from is the mournful tune of the flute. The wind is rippling the water, blowing the petals off the red river flowers, and carrying the faint sound of a flute playing a parting song over the mountains. It is even acting as the force which pushes Wang's boat to a new destination. This west wind, as well as the disappearance of the red colour of the flowers, indicates that it is autumn. Wang expertly captures this occasion, but also simultaneously manages to avoid superfluous details which would detract from the poem's timelessness. The jueju is highly polished, thus giving the reader the impression that Wang never loses control of his emotions. His feelings are expressed in a genuine, yet unromantic manner. However, Wang consistently balances this careful refinement of language with spontaneity of feeling, so that his poems do not have an artificial tone.

It is useful to compare this jueju to a nature poem on the same theme from the Tang dynasty by Wang Wei. His influence on Wang Anshi is important because he contributed to the endowment of "...the object-laden world of court poetry with a greater philosophical and emotional significance."\(^{34}\) Wang Wei's poetry embodies lightness and graceful contemplation, as seen in the seven-syllable yuefu entitled "Wei City Song" (渭城曲):

\(^{33}\) Ibid, p. 198.

Although parting is a common theme in Chinese nature poetry, Wang Anshi treated it differently than Wang Wei. The key to the success of Wang Anshi's jueju is that the typical Tang dynasty clichés of separation, such as wild geese and willow branches, are absent here. This reflects the fact that Song dynasty poets were generally more innovative than those of the Tang in their use of expressive imagery. Song poets also tended to down-play their emotions, thus the sympathy of the reader is engaged by poetry which does not succumb to sentimentality, but is instead stoic in the face of sadness and loneliness. Wang Anshi does not explicitly state how he is feeling, yet it is apparent through his description of nature, such as the condition of river flowers stripped of their blossoms. Wang Wei, on the other hand, tells the reader exactly how he is feeling in the last line of his poem.

**Flowers**

In the next section, I will analyze four poems which deal with Wang's treatment of flower blossoms, two of which are examples of pentasyllabic jueju. According to Hans Frankel, "It was during the Sung dynasty that poetry inspired by the plum reached the height of its development."36 Before I discuss these poems, however, there are a few basic characteristics of the plum blossom (梅) in Chinese tradition of which the reader should be aware. First, they blossom in late winter; second, they have a reputation for being a hardy

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plant; third, they are rare in North China; fourth, they have a fragrance, but it is faint; and fifth, they are often used as a metaphor for the exiled scholar. It is also noteworthy that associations between plants and human personality traits became popular in the Song dynasty.

It is evident in the following *jueju*, that by identifying with the plum blossom, Wang is taking on these qualities as his own:

"Red Plums"\(^{38}\)

It is just now in mid-spring that the blossoms shoot forth—

Chances are that they probably cannot endure the cold.

Northern people at first do not understand,

Mistaking them for apricot blossoms.\(^{39}\)

In this poem, Wang is playing on the word *mei* 梅 (plum). As Frankel notes, "Chinese plum blossoms may be white, red, pink, yellow or pale green."\(^{40}\) Although the *hongmei* shares the

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37 For more details about the characteristics and motifs of the plum blossom see Frankel's excellent article, "The Plum Tree in Chinese Poetry," which traces its depiction in Chinese poetry from pre-Han times to the Song dynasty.

38 I have translated this poem's title as "Red Plums," but it is actually a different variety from the regular *meihua*. Although they both use the same character *mei* 梅, the *hongmei* 紅梅 blooms later than the *meihua* 梅花, which blooms in late winter or early spring. Consequently, the *hongmei* is often mistaken for the apricot blossom. Su Shi has a series of poems with the same title "Red Plums" 紅梅三首 (see p. 131 of *Su Shi shi xuan* 蘇軾詩選, ed. by Xu Xu 徐績 [Hong Kong, Joint Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991]). Zhou notes, p. 210, that Wang's poem matches the rhymes of a poem on the same topic by Yan Shu 嚴殊 (991-1055), another native of Linchuan, Jiangxi province. He was known for transplanting the *hongmei* to the north. See the *Zhongwen da cidian* 中文大辭典, Vol. 25, p. 237, (1967) and the *Zhongguo zhishi tujian* 中國植物圖鑑, ed. by Mai Zuzhang 賈祖璋 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju chudian, 1958) for further details.


moral character associated with the true plum, here it represents a different variety of flower. Its red colour, like that of the peach and apricot blossom, causes it to be confused with these other plants, which is evident in the last line of Wang's poem. The red plum blossom symbolizes a stranger from another place, that is, Wang himself. He shares a comradeship with the red plum blossoms. Because the plum tree is rare in the north, thus northerners do not recognize the hongmei. The implication is that they also cannot recognize a true scholar of integrity like Wang, which is supported by the fact that he held many posts while waiting for his administrative talent to be appreciated.

The second jueju on plum blossoms can also be interpreted as autobiographical:

"Plum Blossoms"

In a corner between two walls there are several plum branches,
Braving the cold, blossoming all by themselves.
From a distance I know it is not snow,
Because there is a light but persistent fragrance floating about.41

Simplicity is the key to Wang's style. Indeed, he uses such simple language it verges on everyday speech. However, he combines this clarity of expression with complexity of meaning. The reason the plum blossoms might be confused with snow refers back to the fact that they blossom in late winter and are typically white in colour. Wang uses this image to suggest that a person can never be absolutely sure that what he/she sees is real. In other words, appearances can be deceiving. Thus, the turning point of this poem is line 3 in which he says, "From a distance I know it is not snow." The sense of smell is the crucial factor in making this distinction between the blossoms and the snow. Although Wang does not have a personal system of symbols, stylistic patterns emerge regarding his use of images and phrases.

41 Zhou, p. 209.
For example, in the last line Wang uses one of his favourite images, *anxiang* 暗香, which means "an aroma or fragrance which is not strong but very persistent."42

Another aspect of Wang's handling of imagery is that, "In Chinese poetry, the effect of imagery often depends on symbolic significance and emotional associations rather than visual appeal."43 This is true when it comes to interpreting Wang's *jueju*. As the symbolic plum blossom, Wang finds himself in a corner between two walls. These walls could represent the boundaries of the civilized world and nature, while the cold he braves could be hostility from the court. Although he seems trapped in a corner and appears as tiny as the plum blossom, he is not oppressed. Just like the blossoms that are able to bloom without assistance because of their hardiness, Wang too is extremely independent.

The next *jueju* on the topic of plum blossoms was praised by Yang Wanli for its superior refinement and meticulous use of language:44

"Three Poems Written on the Spot in Jinling" (No. 1) 金陵即事三首

On the water's edge, a brushwood door is half open—水際柴門一半開
A small bridge branches into a deep green, mossy road.小橋分路入青苔
Behind me reflect the shadows of countless willows,背人照影無窮柳
Next door blows a fragrance entirely of plum blossoms.隔屋吹香併是梅

45 Yang, p. 165. The Zhou edition, p. 202, has the character "cang" 苍 rather than "qing" 青 in line 2. However, regardless of which of these two editions is preferred, the meaning of the line is basically the same.
Dating from Wang's later years, the poem's scene is in Jinling (another name for modern Nanjing). His poems have a potential for lingering meaning beyond their mere twenty-eight words. These undertones provide for richer appreciation. However, Wang's imagery is never overly abstract. For example, the brushwood door of line 1 implies that it belongs to the home of a poor family. The willows and plum trees found together here are a popular combination of trees in poetry. The fragrance of the plums featured prominently in the last line creates a quaint, ethereal atmosphere of serenity.

Finally, the last poem to be analyzed about blossoms is "The Apricot Blossoms of North Slope (北陂杏花)":

On a slope the spring waters encircle the blossoms' forms,
The shadows of the blossoms, seductive and graceful, each foretelling spring.
Even if they are blown by the spring wind into snow—
That is much better than being ground to dust on the South Path.46

This jueju is outstanding because of its philosophical depth. It is undated, but judging by its tone it is probably from the period when Wang lived in Jiangning. The first couplet begins peacefully with Wang emphasizing the seductive qualities of spring, like that of a woman—another motif of the plum tree. However, as he indicates in line 4, the fate of the snow-like blossoms being scattered in the wind is better than that of settling on the path to be trodden into a white powder under the feet of man. The very last character of the jueju (chen 塵) literally means "dust," which refers to the transient human world. In Taoism it is associated with the span of a lifetime, while in Buddhism it symbolizes impermanence. This closure provides a forceful punch line which contrasts with the calm beginning.

46 Ibid., pp. 155-6.
Du Fu's influence on Wang's use of flowers is apparent in this *jueju*. Wells notes that, "In the flowers he [Du Fu] sees the intensity of pleasure and, conversely, the brevity and precariousness of all life's joys."\(^{47}\) Likewise, in Wang's opinion it is inevitable that a scene of beauty would end this way. The falling petals of the blossoms are symbolic of the loss of youth and beauty. Wang often showed the transformation of nature in his poems, and because nature is not static, he did not depict it as so. He lived in the real world and accepted life in all its changing forms. Consequently, the fate of the blossoms was not a source of sadness.

**Seasons**

Du Fu was also highly aware of seasons. According to Henry Wells, "In many eyes the prime feature of the natural world is its propensity for change..."\(^{48}\) This process of change is often reflected in Wang's poems. While autumn was Du Fu's favourite season, spring features most predominantly in Wang's nature *jueju*.

In the *jueju* "On Night Duty" (夜直) which describes an evening scene when students took turns on night shift at the academy, Wang responds to the natural scenery, in a way that shows his awareness of this particular time of year:

Metal incense burner, the fragrance burned off,  
only the sound of dripping water remains—  
The biting wind brings an intermittent chill.

The spring scenery vexes me, unable to sleep—

The moon shifts, the shadows of flowers climb up  
the wooden balustrade.\(^{49}\)

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\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 15.

\(^{49}\) Zhou, p. 105.
Wang develops a picture through the contrast between the scenery and the feelings it evokes in him according to the jing/ qing pattern mentioned in Chapter One, which explained how a poet sets the scene and then responds to it emotionally. In this case, the surroundings of the spring season make Wang restless. The expression chunse 春色 (translated here as spring scenery) also has erotic associations because springtime signals a burgeoning of life. In line 1 the sound of dripping water is a reference to an instrument used for calculating time. Thus, in a subtle way, he is suggesting the fleeting passage of time. In addition, the wind prevents him from sleeping. The vexatious quality of this biting wind is emphasized by two examples of reduplication in line 2. Fortunately, however, the last line brings the poem full circle by restoring peace and calm. Here, Wang employs one of his favourite images, huaying 花影 "the shadows of flowers," previously seen in "The Apricot Blossoms of North Slope." However, the most prominent feature of this jueju is the contrast between Wang's inner feelings of turmoil and the outer scene of silence. In other poems the opposite is sometimes true, so that Wang is at peace internally while things are chaotic externally.

The assorted themes and occasions to which Wang applied the jueju form is evidence of both the form's flexibility and Wang's resourcefulness. Throughout this thesis the reader has witnessed Wang pursuing various activities such as napping, boating, mountain climbing, and strolling in nature. Although Wang experimented with a wide range of topics in his jueju, the following poem is yet another example of his preoccupation with the spring season:

"The Snow is Gone"

The snow has disappeared, the clouds are gone... I can see the distant hill top. On the southern footpath between the fields, I can again seek fragrance and beauty. Exchanging thousands of frowns for a smile— The spring wind blows the willows—a myriad gold pieces.

50 Yang, p. 149.
In this *jueju* Wang has captured the freshness and newness of spring. He ultimately trades in the knitted, furrowed brows of worry, grief, and anxiety, for the promise of spring and the cheeriness of a smile. The effect of spiritual rejuvenation is intensified by the physical signs of the return of spring—the melting snow, the dissipating clouds, and the blowing of the wind in the willows. Walking amongst the fields with Wang, the reader can share his sense of youthfulness and delight.

The final *jueju* of Wang’s which I will analyze in this section is "The Sloping Path (斜徑)." It returns to the basic underlying current of his nature poetry examined earlier—the amiable union of nature and civilization:

The sloping path crosses Southern Dam Road unobstructed, 斜徑通穿南埭路
Several houses face the distant peak of North Mountain. 數家遙對北山岑
Grass tips, butterflies, late-blooming yellow flowers; 草頭蛱蝶黃花晚
Water caltrops, dragonflies, burgeoning bluish-green creepers.51

A spirit of youthfulness, lushness, and tranquility prevails in this poem. The first couplet features man-made structures such as the dam and the houses, which fit into the natural surroundings without any conflict. In the second couplet, the structure of lines 3 and 4 is based on parallelism between the grass tips and water caltrops; butterflies and dragonflies; and late-blooming yellow flowers (a reference to chrysanthemums which bloom in the fall), and burgeoning bluish-green creepers. Although Wang’s style is rather sparse compared to the ornate descriptions of the Tang, his poetry is no less beautiful. He was a great admirer and promoter of Tang dynasty poet Du Fu, and so it is likely, as Pease notes, that the last couplet may in fact be adapted from one of Du Fu’s works:

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51 Ibid., p. 167.
Crossing through flowers...butterflies
deepp, deep revealed,

Touching the water...dragonflies
purposefully loft.\textsuperscript{52}

These dense images from Du Fu's poem are also found in the series of juxtaposed images in Wang's poem. Using his power of observation, Wang often creates compound imagery by putting objects next to each other without linking them directly.

In addition, this poem demonstrates Wang's adroit manipulation of perspective. He starts off with a distant view of nature, gradually moving from inanimate to animate objects until he is close-up to the flora and fauna. In fact, this is one of the few poems in which Wang actually incorporates insects into his characterization of nature.

Although Song poets made detailed observations of nature, Wang was not inclined to examine small things such as insects. He did not relate to insects or animals on an intimate level, nor did he transfer human emotions to them. Consequently, his poems provide few glimpses of interaction between man and animal, or even animal and animal. Instead, as previously mentioned, Wang relates to mountains, streams and flowers. However, by exploring a greater variety of themes and being interested in everyday life, Northern Song poets like Wang enriched the stereotyped nature poetry of the Tang. This statement is supported by Burton Watson's observation:

\begin{quote}
Whereas the T'ang poets had for the most part been content to view the landscape from a distance, or to evoke it through the naming of a few symbolic plants or creature, those of the Sung seem much more disposed to examine the components of the natural scene and render an accurate, detailed report of what they find.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

This tendency was probably inspired by the philosophy of the time. The combination of neo-Confucian humanism with Buddhism and Taoism led to the new way Song poets related to

\textsuperscript{52} See Pease, p. 557. From Du Fu's poem "Crooked River" (曲江).

\textsuperscript{53} Watson, p. 201.
nature. Wang had an eye for realism, but not necessarily minute details. He attentively observed the physical world, but did not dissect it in a scientific way. Later in the Song dynasty the exercise of describing objects would be taken further by poets such as Lu You 陸游 (1125-1210), Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) and Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206).

If Wang is compared to a Southern Song poet like Yang Wanli this fact becomes clear. One of Yang's poems, "The Cold Fly" (凍蠅), is solely concerned with an insect:

By chance I see a fly warming itself on the windowsill,  
Rubbing his legs, enjoying the morning light.  
He seems to know when the sun's light will shift,  
A sudden buzz... and he's at another window.  

隔窗偶見負喧曠  
雙腳揉挲弄曉晴  
日影欲移先會得  
忽然飛落別窗聲

Yang's beautifully constructed jueju makes no pretense of dealing with profound ideas. It is simply charming and has a surprise twist in its closure. Wang never took descriptions this far in his poetry. Instead, he preferred to have lingering meaning. In fact, in Sikong Tu's opinion, "...the best poetry, which arises out of the poet's intuitive identification with the cosmos, does not aim for precise mimetic description of external phenomena but rather employs those objects to suggest something ineffable and intangible." However, this is also the reason why Wang's poems, while conveying emotion, can sometimes appear detached. Wang often chooses to down-play emotions or leave them completely unstated.

After explicating a representative survey of Wang's nature jueju, several patterns emerge concerning his depiction of nature and his technique. He writes predominantly, but not

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54 Translation mine. For the Chinese see Zhou Ruchang, ed., Yang Wanli xuanji 楊萬里選集, (Hong Kong, Zhonghua shuju, 1972), p. 93.

55 Yu, Imagery, p. 208.
exclusively landscape poems. In his poetry the grasses are always fragrant, the wind is always one of springtime, and mountains provide a backdrop to most events. Unlike others such as Yang Wanli, Wang was not interested in insects, except in passing. His fluid style generated a sense of grandeur which was achieved by combining simple language with complex ideas and feelings. In the poems analyzed in this chapter, I have demonstrated that Wang could simultaneously strive for perfection of word selection, and yet create an impression of spontaneity. This style reflected his personality, which was a mixture of modesty, confidence, and forthrightness.

Most impressive, however, is the way Wang's poetry displays his great sensitivity to both nature and language. His choice of words and selection of images, used to indirectly express his feelings, are presented in a refined manner. Using simple language to sketch word pictures for the reader, his poems avoid unnecessary decoration. Each of them is a perfect little world in itself. The immediacy of his poems is derived from his talent for capturing an experience in a way that makes it appear as fresh for the modern reader as it was for him when he actually experienced it, more than nine hundred years ago.

Thus, in the detailed examination of jueju in this chapter, the reader has seen the characteristics of Wang's style as they reveal themselves in his nature poetry. In Chapter Four, I shall assess his place as a poet in Chinese tradition, and analyze the significance and impact of his jueju.
Wang Anshi's Place in the Poetic Tradition

The objective of this thesis was to identify and analyze the essential characteristics of the jueju form with regard to Wang Anshi's seven-syllable jueju on nature themes. In the previous three chapters, I outlined the technical skill and subtleties of his style. In the final chapter, I examine and summarize his accomplishments in these areas, as well as establish Wang's contributions to the jueju form and his place in the Chinese poetic tradition.

As I mentioned earlier, Wang did not belong to any particular school of poetry. This makes it difficult to label him as a particular kind of poet because his views on the function of poetry were broad and complex. Although he did not write a systematic treatise of poetry, a parallel can be drawn between Wang's approach and the four views of literary criticism as outlined by James J.Y. Liu. In his work, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, Liu defines four traditional views of Chinese poetry: Didactic (poetry as moral instruction and social comment), Individualist (poetry as self-expression), Technical (poetry as literary exercise) and Intuitionalist (poetry as contemplation). These categories are useful for discussing Wang's poetry, but they are not necessarily distinct and are not meant to be used to distinguish Wang as either a "didactic" or "technical" poet. Indeed, elements of all four of these views can be found in Wang's jueju.

First, concerning the didactic view, Liu notes that:

Somewhat paradoxically, didactic critics, who advocate imitation, at the same time condemn artificiality and over-elaboration in poetry. Simplicity is their ideal. This is partly due to the fact that early poetry, especially poetry before the end of the Han dynasty, tends to have a simple style, and partly due to the ideals of moderation and correctness...  

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2 Ibid., p. 68.
This attitude is embodied by Song poets such as Wang, who advocated the ideal of simplicity, which corresponded to the pingdan style. As Jan W. Walls notes, "In Wang's view, literature should be functional, and the function of literature was first to work for the improvement of society."³ Although Wang was an ethically-minded social and economic reformer, his compassion for the suffering of the lower classes is not prominent in this thesis, because it is not a significant component of his nature jueju.

Secondly, in accordance with the individualist view, poetry was considered to be "an expression of the heart."⁴ Poets with this outlook relied on "...spontaneous feelings rather than technique of learning or imitation."⁵ In the case of Wang's jueju, they are not only an expression of his emotional response to nature, but are also examples of well-honed technique and borrowing from models of the past. Thus, while his emotions were spontaneous, the process of writing down those emotions in a poem was not. The most important consideration, however, is that Wang successfully managed to make them seem as if they were easily composed. He appreciated the value of inspiration and this was the reason why he condemned the imitators of the Xikun style.

Thirdly, Wang's style demonstrates the technical view of poetry because he shared Du Fu's belief in experimenting with language in order to get the most from it. In this sense, Wang viewed poetry as a literary exercise useful in achieving different effects of language and imagery. As noted in Chapter One, he was influenced by Tang predecessors such as Du Fu who was known for his fondness of parallelism and new use of language as seen in the poem "Four Quatrains."

⁴ Ibid., p. 74.
The fourth view of poetry represented by the intuitionalist school is summed up as, "...an embodiment of the poet's contemplation of the world and of his own mind." Wang's poetry is profound because of its philosophical richness. His nature jueju frequently contain elements of Buddhism and Taoism which reflect his observations of the cycle of nature. In this respect his jueju on nature themes are his most memorable poems because he derived energy from nature itself for his inspiration, rather than from his duty to Confucian morals or political issues.

Wang combined all of these perspectives to create beautiful scenes, which resemble the visual imagery of Chinese painting. He exemplified the strikingly modern view of nature at that time, which understood and accepted the cycle of transformation.

Accomplishments in his Jueju

The skill with which Wang employs the jueju form was discussed in Chapter Three. The patterns which emerged demonstrate Wang's place in the poetry of the Northern Song as a convincing, creative, adept craftsman of jueju. From his nature jueju the reader can also derive an understanding of Northern Song poetry in general because Wang's poetry embodies its popular trends toward the plain and precise use of language, rationalism and philosophical insight, as well as an emphasis on the power of observation and realistic descriptions of mundane topics. The following jueju is an example of all these elements as they are manifested in his polished, restrained style:

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6 Ibid., p. 81.
"Raven-Black Pond"\textsuperscript{7}

Raven-black Pond—vast indistinct green—level with the embankment.\textsuperscript{8}

On the embankment people walk, each carrying things along with them.

"Let me ask, where is the spring wind finest?"

"West of Mulberry Ridge the magnolia trees are like snow."\textsuperscript{9}

This poem describes the spring scene at a pond where Wang played in his youth. The dynamic quality of his \textit{jueju} is evident in the contrast between the two couplets according to the structure of the \textit{jueju} outlined in Chapter One. The last couplet uses a question and answer format to bring it to life. In the penultimate line, a shift takes place when Wang inquires of the people on the dike where the spring wind is finest. The language here is straightforward and the transitions are logical.

In this \textit{jueju}, as in the others, Wang specifically structured his poems within the limits of the \textit{jueju} form by following the rules for regulated verse, and yet he still brought vitality to it. However, Wang did not allow his concern for following the rules to overshadow his brilliant use of words, nor did he need to use ornate language to make his \textit{jueju} rich. The maturity of his later, fruitful years demonstrate his partiality toward simple, plain language.

\textsuperscript{7} See Yang, p. 149, or Zhou, p. 62. Raven-black Pond is located east of Linchuan in Jinxixi county where Wang grew up.

\textsuperscript{8} This line could also read, "Raven-black Pond—vast and clear—level with the embankment," because the Zhou version (p. 62) uses the character 清 instead of 清 as it appears in the Yang edition (p. 149).

\textsuperscript{9} The \textit{xinyi}, or \textit{Magnolia kobus}, is a deciduous flowering tree. According to Zhou, p. 62, it has large blossoms with six white petals and is sometimes called the \textit{mubi} 木筆, because the flower is shaped like the tip of a pen. This type of tree grows in the area of Zhogang, which is located 20 \textit{li} west of Raven-black Pond.
The use of allusion is frequently suggested by scholars as the main trait of Wang's poetry, and yet this poetic device is not prominent in his nature jueju. Although he employed allusion judiciously in a few of the poems analyzed in this thesis, such as "Wu Jiang Pavilion" and "Peeping at the Garden," and he reworked lines from other poets like Wang Wei in the poem "North Mountain," Wang Anshi distanced himself from allusion in his jueju on nature themes. He used it sparingly because he believed that otherwise it was a liability which inhibited lyricism. However, allusion does help achieve economy in jueju, and so Wang applied his vast knowledge to suggest imagery from previous poems without directly referring to them. Thus, when he did use allusion, he avoided the pitfall of artificiality.

Contributions

An assessment of Wang's contribution to the jueju form can be made with the assistance of the judgements of both his contemporaries and his successors. However, the crucial question that needs to be answered with regard to Wang's style in his jueju on nature themes is whether or not he was innovative. In order to do this, it is first necessary to make a distinction between the terms originality and creativity. According to James J.Y. Liu, "The former means doing something that has never been done before or doing it in a way that has never been done before, whereas the latter means producing something that did not exist before." Using this definition to assess Wang's contribution, it must be concluded that, strictly speaking, he did not use language in a way that had never been done before. However, this does not diminish the excellence of his jueju. Wang's voice was uniquely his own because it embodied sincerity.

The reader can glean some understanding of the importance of Wang's contributions from the introductions of various editions of his poems issued after his death. For example,

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from the introduction of a 1561 edition of Wang's works written by Wang Zongmu comes the following quote: "His [Wang's] style is direct, penetrating, and pure. He really forms a school by himself." The first part of this statement is accurate, but in the second sentence the scholar over-idealizes Wang's contribution by attributing a whole school to him. Wang did not represent a school unto himself. The desire to categorize poets into schools is perhaps a reflection of the fact that after Wang, "The increasing proliferation of 'schools'...changed forever the way the Chinese poet viewed his own work in relation to the work of the past."  

Regarding the contributions Wang made to *jueju* on nature themes, the following points are most important:

(1) Wang supported and promoted the principles of *pingdan* which had been established by Mei Yaochen. He applied Mei's beliefs to his nature *jueju* in order to arrive at his own individual style. Thus, Henry R. Williamson is incorrect when he credits Wang with transforming the *Xikun* style, "from its high colouring and sickly conceits to a bold, concise, and direct style of composition." Wang wrote *jueju* relatively late in the development of this genre, so he played a role in exploring and expanding upon what Du Fu, Mei Yaochen and Ouyang Xiu had already introduced.

(2) Wang embodied the underlying attitude of the *pingdan* style—moderation. Wang Anshi's style combines freshness with refinement, as well as depth and resonance with spirit and style. He mixes simplicity and directness with literary skill and sophistication. The beauty of naturalness was considered greater than that of ornateness. For example, although he used words carefully, Wang did not take this technique to the ambiguous excess of Huang Tingjian

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12 Nienhauser, p. 71.

黃庭堅 (1045-1105), who preferred complex allusions. Yoshikawa Kôjirô notes that Huang's "introverted personality is reflected in the extreme attention which he gave to the selection of words, an attention which at times led him into obscurity."¹⁴ For example, "Huang admire[d] poets like Tu Fu not for their thoughts and feelings but for their skilful manipulation of tones and pauses and their subtle use of particles and verbs."¹⁵ In contrast, Wang pursued a more balanced approach. There is no aspect of his style which is shocking or extreme. He drew upon the whole poetic tradition in his pursuit of a middle path of moderation and rationalism.

(3) Wang's nature jueju were admired and emulated by later poets. For example, the Southern Song poet Yang Wanli looked to him as a model, particularly emphasizing the colloquial use of language. Yang also helped carry on the tradition of landscape poetry, while the bucolic type of nature poetry was continued by Fan Chengda. Wang Anshi's belief in the benevolence of nature became even more popular in their poetry. Huang Tingjian also admired Wang's work, but was not his student. His assessment of Wang is found in a Song dynasty work quoted by Williamson: "The shorter poems [i.e., jueju] written by Wang An Shih in later life are unequalled for their purity, elegance, and perspicacity. He rose far and away above current styles of writing."¹⁶ This is supported by the statement in another Song dynasty work which asserts:

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¹⁴ Yoshikawa, p. 124.

¹⁵ Liu, The Art of Chinese Poetry, p. 79. Thus, Huang was later known for the techniques of "Changing the Bone" (huan ku 換骨) and "Evolving from the Embryo" (to t'ai 育胎). According to Liu, p. 78: "The former means imitating the idea while using different words; the latter means imitating the words while using a somewhat different idea."

Great improvement is noticeable in Wang An Shih's poetry, as he grows older. At first his style was direct and obvious, but later much progress is observable in art and depth. His writing became so concise and the language so apt that it could not be improved upon.17

Perhaps Huang's admiration for Wang's jueju is the reason why the two poets are sometimes mistakenly identified as belonging to the same school despite the vast differences in their styles. For example, Williamson incorrectly includes Wang in a school along with Su Shi and Huang.18 However, this is not the case at all. Huang's style was very different, as noted by J.D. Schmidt who states, "Wang Anshi's poetry has little in common with Huang Tingjian."19 In fact, Wang was much less concerned about literary theory than Huang, who is recognized as the true founder of the Jiangxi School of Poetry.

(4) Wang maintained the popular attitude in the Song dynasty of optimism and transcendence of sorrow. An appreciation of life prevails in his poetry. He deliberately avoids melancholy, self-pity, and affectation. Wang saw nature as a non-threatening force, and therefore it provided an excellent conduit for expressing his own feelings. Man was an integral part of nature, and Song poets enjoyed personifying it in their poetry. Wang's overall positive perception of the world around him is displayed in his sensitive use of colour, words, and imagery.

(5) Wang contributed to the study of poetry, especially Tang poetry. The most important extant work written by him is the Anthology of the Tang Poets. In it he collects and presents the work of Tang poets in a way that provides the reader with a good idea of the character of Tang poetry. He also wrote many other works on the study and interpretation of Chinese literature, such as commentaries on the Analects, Mengzi.

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17 Ibid. Williamson is quoting from the Shi Lin shi hua 石林詩話.
18 Ibid., p. 291.
20 For a complete list of his works, see Williamson, Vol. 2, pp. 264-5.
(孟子解), and Laozi (老子注) as well as others, but these are all lost. His broad scholarship earned him a reputation as "...master of every form of composition, [having] every art and device of fine writing at his command." Thus, while he did not write a systematic work on his literary theory, he obviously continued the tradition of studying past models in order to improve his own poetry.

Conclusion

The critical examination in this thesis of Wang's literary style, as it manifests itself in his seven-syllable nature jueju, provides only an initial understanding of Wang's work. His success in writing jueju, despite the high degree of difficulty in making a statement or creating beautiful images within the strict confines of the form, is commendable. Although this thesis is not a diachronic study of the changes in his jueju throughout his lifetime, Chapter One and Two do touch upon the historical evolution of the jueju with regard to how Wang fits into the tradition of jueju and nature poetry, and the poets who influenced his literary development. In Chapter Three, however, the analysis of each jueju from a mainly descriptive rather than historical viewpoint is synchronic. In fact, since most of his nature jueju coincide with the later period of his life, this study is fundamentally synchronic because it deals with a single type of poetry within a particular time frame.

Due to the difficulty of separating Wang's roles as statesman and poet, the reversal of his reforms meant that his poetry would be neglected by his detractors, despite the fact that its beauty has never been disputed. While his jueju were not forgotten, they were destined to be eclipsed by political events. The later incompleteness of Wang's works resulted from this neglect. Consequently, although Wang is one of the most notable poets of the Northern Song, his poetry never quite attained the popularity as that of Su Shi.

21 Ibid., p. 289.
Another explanation for the later oversight of his poetry is perhaps the fact that there is no mention in historical sources of Wang's disciples. Considering that special relationships often existed between poets and their followers, it seems unusual that Wang did not have students to promote his work after his death. This makes it difficult to establish links between Wang and later poets or to assess his influence on posterity, because the interval during which he was in political disfavour negatively impacted on the preservation and promotion of his poetry.

Wang's seven-syllable jueju, however, are worthy of additional study, because although they are readily comprehensible, their deeper layers of significance have the potential to reward the intelligent reader. For example, even though a great deal has been written on his New Laws—most of which is now outdated—his political thought has not been definitively outlined in an unbiased manner. In addition, concerning previous studies specifically about his poetry, the most in-depth monograph in the English language is Jonathan Pease's 1986 Ph.D. thesis on Wang Anshi's poetry. However, its goal is not to provide a detailed analysis of Wang's style, but "to show what were the events, pressures and thoughts that eventually produced his remarkable outpouring of late verse."[22]

Fortunately, James T.C. Liu's book from 1968, Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and his New Policies, provides useful background information about Wang's life, while An Introduction to Sung Poetry from 1967 by the Japanese scholar Yoshikawa Kōjirō is an excellent source for gaining a general understanding of Song poetry. A few good Chinese anthologies of Wang's work exist, such as Zhou Xifu's 周錫馥 1983 work 業安石詩選, but at present there is no English anthology of Wang's poetry.[23] Due to this scarcity of sources in Western languages, it is necessary to rely on

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23 The Canadian scholar, Professor Jan Walls, is currently working on a book about Wang Anshi's poetry which is due to be published by the end of 1994. It will include 130 translations of a variety of Wang's
general books about Song poetry and Wang's contemporaries in order to attempt to understand his approach to poetry. It is hoped that this thesis will help fill the gap of knowledge in English language sources about Wang's nature jueju. Although his poetry is the least-studied aspect of his career, plentiful material exists which still needs to be analyzed and translated. In fact, most of the jueju in this thesis are translated for the first time here in English.

In addition, the analysis of Wang's jueju in this thesis revealed Buddhist elements in his works which were only briefly touched upon, as in the poem "Awareness of Truth Temple." The role of Buddhism in the intellectual life of the Song is complex as it relates to Wang's poetry. He was interested in Buddhism, but in his poems he preferred to hint at it rather than go into the details of the doctrine. Thus, his jueju achieve an effect of religious serenity without being overtly religious. Wang's nature jueju allude to infinity—reaching out to something in the distance—but its not clear that it is Buddhism specifically. Unless Wang quotes from the Buddhist scripture, it is not prudent to draw too many close parallels. In the tradition of landscape poetry, Wang Anshi like Wang Wei subtly disguises Buddhism in most of his jueju. An investigation of the philosophical/religious aspects of his jueju would contribute to a more detailed understanding of his relationship to nature, which is especially important considering the fact that Buddhism played an increasingly significant role later in his life. A good starting point for studying the philosophical and intellectual richness of the Song dynasty is Peter Bol's 1992 work, This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in Tang and Sung China.

Yet another area which may warrant further research is the similarities between Japanese haiku poetry and the jueju form. A haiku is "a lyric form that represents the poet's impression of a natural object or scene, viewed at a particular season or month, in exactly poems (the choice of which was determined according to the readability of the poems in the English language), as well as a critical introduction with a discussion of Wang's "modes of awareness."

Like the jueju, it uses concrete images to convey the essence of various subjects in free verse employing common speech. In both genres, poets describe everyday topics in a witty way.

The most distinctive qualities of Wang's style are naturalness, purity, directness, simplicity and eloquent sophistication—the qualities which also make him a fine writer of essays, memorials and records. Able to evoke a mood in just a few lines, Wang creates vignettes which sometimes seem austere and reserved, because his emotions are restrained by rationalism. However, they are examples of lyric, suggestive phraseology, keen sensory perception, subtle juxtaposition of images, and contrast between motion and stillness. His understanding of nature and the transience of life in his poetry testify to the central importance of optimism in the Song dynasty.

Wang's poetry bears the unique stamp of his individuality, yet remains within the bounds of tradition. According to Yoshikawa, "Wang An-shih's poetry, like his personality and his politics, is marked by fastidiousness and sensitivity, its lyricism deriving from the latter quality." These aspects of his character are evident in the way he responds to nature in his jueju. He consistently shows appropriateness and flexibility in his style. Above all, Wang excelled in the use of language. Although Wang's poem titles often start with the words, "Written on the Spot at...", which indicate his spontaneous response to nature, the skill he uses to express his impressions is complex and purposeful. Indeed, Wang was one of "the last


26 Yoshikawa, p. 96.
poets ever to command a mastery of the entirety of the Chinese poetic tradition." Thus, his style was the result of a combination of vast learning and great skill. Wang's poems from this time show the benefits of experience and mature technique, yet in spirit they are as youthful as the springtime which he adored.

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27 Nienhauser, p. 71.
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Appendix

A List of the Poems Analyzed in this Thesis

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