THE SAN-QU OF MA ZHI-YUAN

by

LOUISE YI-SHU LAW

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Department of Asian Studies

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date Feb 15, 1978.
Abstract

This thesis is concerned primarily with the investigation of the thematic content and the stylistic elements that underlie the san-qu verse of the most distinguished Yuan san-qu poet, Ma Zhi-yuan, and secondly with a study of his life.

There are three main divisions in this thesis. The first chapter provides a biographical account of his life, relying chiefly upon Zhong Si-cheng's records in the Lu-gui bu, and the apparently "autobiographical" contents of some of Ma's san-qu. It also gives a brief introduction to the rise of Yuan san-qu, and the particular political and social milieu of this dark period of alien rule which, to a considerable extent, influenced the personal "escapist" philosophy of Ma, as well as the Yuan intellectual climate as a whole. The various Yuan, Ming and Qing anthologies which contain Ma's san-qu and the related issue of authentic authorship will also be discussed.

In the second chapter, motives which recur frequently in Ma's san-qu - those of ubi sunt, the equation of life to a dream, fatalism, disillusionment with officialdom, fame, power and wealth, reclusion, carpe diem, oblivousness, and the attraction towards the supernatural - which represent Ma's personal philosophy, will be examined.

The multiplicity of subject matter, tone and mood which characterizes Ma's poems, expressed in either the lyrical, descriptive or narrative mode, and embracing such polarities as the beautiful and the ugly, the elevated and the
mundane, the private and public, the contented and the sarcastic, the lighthearted and the serious, the humorous and pathetic, the subtle and the garish will be included in this division.

The third chapter, which explores the poetic language of Ma Zhi-yuan, is subdivided into the sections of diction, syntax and parallelism, images, versification and sound. In the first section, the wide spectrum of his diction - from colloquialism and prose-like diction to allusion and quotation - is noted, while his constant repetition and reduplication of words, and his inclination towards the use of certain words will also be examined.

The second section of this chapter deals with some syntactic arrangements in Ma's san-qu that are of interest, such as his use of incomplete, composite and ambiguous lines, as well as kinds of parallel lines that he uses, the effects they achieve, and the context in which san-qu parallelism occurs.

The third section focuses on the images that appear in Ma's san-qu. It includes the sources from which his images are drawn, the various functions of these images, such as for scene-setting, symbolizing, evoking emotions and creating sensory impact, and the different techniques of his compound images, such as juxtaposition, explicit and implicit comparison, substitution and transference.

The fourth section of this chapter examines the sound elements of Ma's san-qu. It provides first an introduction of the prosody of Yuan san-qu and then the versification of Ma's poems which shows both his conformity to the peculiar features of the san-qu genre, as well as his skilful mastery of sound. Next, some sound
devices that Ma employs, such as internal rhyme, alliteration, reduplication and repetition of words, and onomatopoeia will be inspected.

Finally, the overall achievement and contributions of Ma as a san-qu lyricist are evaluated, based on comments from both past and modern critics, and from evidence that arises out of the investigation in this thesis. Despite dissenting views that undermine his significance, the conclusion here still inclines to favor his foremost prominence as a san-qu poet.
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Introduction

As a san-qu lyricist, Ma Zhi-yuan 马致远 is the most eminent. However, relatively little systematic research has been done on the san-qu genre in the past, and still less on the san-qu of Ma in its entirety. Avoiding the traditional approach which dwells mainly on the music or sound aspect of the san-qu, I have attempted to provide a structural analytical approach in the examination of both the theme and technique of Ma's san-qu, a treatment which has been overdue, considering the tremendous significance and impact of Ma as a san-qu poet.

This structural analysis embraces a dissection of the recurrent motives of Ma's san-qu which represent his philosophy, the diversity of tone and mood which is concomitant with the variegation of his subject matter, and an examination of the elements of diction, syntax, parallelism, imagery and sound which constitute what may be described as Ma's poetic language.

While some of these aspects may be regarded as characteristic of Ma's style, such as his versatility in mood and levels of expression, others are to be recognized as features common to the san-qu, such as the accommodation of colloquialism and the constant use of reduplication, still others to be accepted as universal, transcending time and space, such as the ideas of ubi sunt and fatalism that underlie so many of his san-qu. In order that the facets of individuality, conformity and universality of Ma's lyrics may be better understood, common features of the san-qu as a genre will be discussed where relevant, and cross cultural comparisons of
themetic motives will be provided where appropriate.
Chapter One

The Biography of Ma Zhi-yuan and the Historical Milieu

for Yuan San-qu

In the total absence of biographical recording of Ma Zhi-yuan, the celebrated Yuan playwright-poet, in the standard dynastic history of the Yuan period, the primary reliable and authoritative source of biographical reference for Ma Zhi-yuan is dependent on the highly sketchy records of him in Zhong Si-cheng's Lu-gui bu, or Records of Ghosts (completed in 1330). The "egocentric" nature of Ma's san-qu, amounting almost to an autobiographical outpouring in many parts, however, does provide the reader with a remarkably limpid view of his own personality, philosophy and private life, especially after retirement, compensating for the inadequacy of direct biographical account.

As the problem of dubious authorship besets not a few of Ma's lyrics, among which are some of his best ones, the relative reliability of the various Yuan, Ming, and Qing anthologies from which his present collection is drawn, will be included in the discussion here as well.

The particular political, social and literary milieu which nourished the growth of san-qu as the chief poetic genre of the Yuan Dynasty, and shaped its contents with a predominantly "negative" attitude towards life, not excluding the bulk of Ma's works, will also be discussed in this chapter.
A. Biographical Sketches of Ma Zhi-yuan

1. *Lu-gui bu’s Account of Ma Zhi-yuan*

Direct biographical information of Ma Zhi-yuan in Zhong Si-cheng’s *Lu-gui bu* includes references to his domicile, pseudonym, official post, and titles of plays that he had written. Brief as these accounts are, the extant versions of the *Lu-gui bu* differ in all of the above, except with regard to Ma’s place of origin.

Different versions of the *Lu-gui bu* include the *Shuo-ji 說集*, and the *Meng Cheng-shun 孟稱舜* editions of Ming times; the *You Zheng-qi 尤貞起*, the *Lian-ting cang-shu shi-er zhong 棲亭藏書十二種* editions of Qing times; the *Nuan-hong shi hui-ke zhuan-qi 暖紅室棗刻傳奇*, the *Du-qu cong-kan 讀曲叢刊*, and the *Chong-ding qu-yuan 重訂曲苑* editions of more recent times. There is also an appended version of the *Lu-gui bu*, the *Tian-yi-ge edition 天一閣本*, by the Ming playwright Jia Zhong-ming 賈仲明 (ca. 1383) who finished his revision of the *Lu-gui bu* in 1422.¹

Indirect biographical sketches of Ma Zhi-yuan in the *Lu-gui bu* are to be gathered from biographical accounts of other playwrights, as well as the appended eulogies that Jia Zhong-ming attached to Ma and his contemporaries in Jia’s revised edition.
2. Names

The Lian-ting cang-shu edition records "Dong-li 东篱," or "Eastern Fence," while both the Tian-yi-ge and the Meng Cheng-shun versions of the Lu-gui bu record "Dong-li lao 東篱老," or the "Old Man of the Eastern Fence," as Ma's pen name. The discrepancy that arises in the pseudonym of Ma can be resolved by an internal examination of Ma's san-qu. The exclusiveness of self-addresses to "Dong-li," rather than "Dong-li lao" in several of Ma's san-qu helps to authenticate the former as his true pseudonym. It is suspected that the character "lao" is added to "Dong-li" as a sign of respect by later men, just as Jia Zhong-ming addresses Ma as "Dong-li weng 東篱翁," (The Old Gentleman of The Eastern Fence) in reverence in one of his eulogies appended to the Lu-gui bu.

The pen name "Dong-li" has a distinct hermitic ring, whose origin can be traced back to two familiar lines from a poem of the eminent poet, Tao Yuan ming 陶淵明 (372-427), who wrote:

I pluck chrysanthemums under the Eastern Fence,
And leisurely I behold the Southern Hills.

These lines beautifully epitomize the ideal and sublime state of a recluse who has achieved a sense of harmony with Nature. Ma's identification with Tao Yuan-ming was no coincidence: both shared a convinced distaste for the mundane world of officialdom, and both resorted to Nature as a sanctuary for their thwarted ego, in addition to sharing a strong inclination for wine and poetry. The dominant Tao Yuan-ming influence in Ma can be observed also in the constant references to Tao, and in Ma's imitation of Tao's
Ma's courtesy name, "Qian-li 千里," or "Thousand Li" is mentioned only in Zhang Da-fu's 張大復 (fl. ca. 1653) Han-shan-tang qu-pu 寒山堂曲譜. However, as this is the sole reference of Ma adopting such a courtesy name, and as a lapse of almost four centuries existed between Ma and Zhang, this information is unreliable. Coupled with these are two other considerations: that Yuan playwrights were customarily addressed by their style, rather than given name, while it is also known that people of old often used the characters "Zhi-yuan 致遠" as a style rather than as a given name, such that "Zhi-yuan," rather than "Qian-li" appears more likely to be Ma's style. The latter, however, may be regarded as a complimentary reference to Ma.

3. Native Place

All the extant editions of the Lu-gui bu agree that Ma was a man of Da-du 大都 (in present day Peking). This alone, however, by no means authenticates that Da-du was Ma's domicile of origin, rather than his acquired domicile. As A.W.E. Dolby remarks, it is dubious if Zhong Si-cheng had access to accurate information of the actual native places of the fifty-six playwrights whom he placed under the section, "Celebrated gentlemen and talented men of the previous generation who have already died.......," considering the time gap between the death of these men and the date when Zhong wrote the Lu-gui bu, plus the generalized feeling that arises from the great number of times in which
he describes these playwrights as "a man of Da-du."9

Dolby also quotes Wang Ji-de 王鑾德 (d. 1623), a late Ming critic who likewise questioned the reliability of Zhong's accounts of the native places. Wang argues, "Wang (Shi-fu) 王實甫, Guan (Han-qing) 戲漢卿, Ma (Zhi-yuan), and Bai (Pu) 白裏, were all men of Da-du, but if one is to seek their native place, 乡, one is at a loss to give one word."10

Internal evidence from Ma's san-qu, however, supports the assumption that he was probably a native of Da-du. In one of his poems (no. 101), Ma writes:

The nine folds of Heaven,

Twenty years,

Dragon towers and phoenix pavilions have I seen.

The first and third lines, being explicit references to the imperial residence, strongly support the assumption that Da-du, the capital, was Ma's domicile at one time of his life.

That the early part of Ma's life was spent in Da-du, rather than some later period, is attested by lines from two other poems. In one poem (no.123a), Ma writes:

I am well familiar with worldly affairs,

Twenty years of drifting existence.

Here, the words "drifting existence" appear to refer to the period when Ma was transferred to several official posts in different parts of the country.

In another poem (no.50), Ma laments:
Dong-li has wasted half of his life,
and then goes on to describe the joy of retirement, as against the gruesome experience of officialdom, such that "wasted" comes to be interpreted as the years Ma spent in his official career.

This line when coupled with the lines from the two previous poems strengthens the speculation that while Ma spent the second half of his life (considered at the time when Ma wrote poem 50), a period which lasted for approximately twenty years, in a drifting official career, he spent the first half of his life, a period of again approximately twenty years in a more sedentary manner, in contrast, with Da-du as his residence.

4. Birth and Death Dates

The arrangement of playwrights in the Lu-gui bu in approximately chronological order of three sections provides a rough glimpse of the birth year of the individual playwright, although exact birth dates have to be determined by sources external to the Lu-gui bu. Death dates are provided, however, in some of the playwrights contemporary to Zhong himself. The division of these three sections are: firstly, playwrights of the immediate preceding generations who had already died; secondly, Zhong’s contemporaries who had died whom Zhong might or might not have befriended; and thirdly, contemporaries who were still alive whom Zhong might or might not have befriended. This rough chronological
framework with no concrete reference to the exact years covering each span gives rise to considerable disagreement as is discussed below.

Wang Guo-wei 王国维 (1877-1927) describes the period of flourishing activities of the playwrights of the first section, to which Ma Zhi-yuan belongs, as the Mongolian Period, and speculates that it begins from the time when Yuan Tai-zong 元太宗 took over northern China (1234), to the early years of the unification of China (1277) under Yuan Shi-zu 元世祖.  

Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) argues, however, that the period of playwriting activities of the first section occurs at a much later time, in the reign periods Yuan-zhen 元贞 (1295-1297) and Da-de 大德 (1297-1307) of the Emperor Cheng-zong 成宗, when drama was at its height, and when the two eminent playwrights Guan Han-qing and Ma Zhi-yuan first tried their hand in playwriting.  

Other scholars, such as Yoshikawa Kojiro 吉川幸次郎, arrive at a more convincing conclusion by shifting the activity period of the first section to a locus somewhere in between the two spans contended above, to cover a period which begins in the immediate years after the unification of China by Shi-zu and ends in the Yuan-zhen and Da-de reign periods.  

In part, Yoshikawa's argument is based on a close study of the Jin-yun ji 金errorMessage, a collection of Yuan Huai 元淮, who served as an administrator of the Piāo-yang lu 濂陽路 in the reign of Yuan Shi-zu. This anthology contains a number of verses gathered from the drama of the day, among which are at least three verses bearing remarkable resemblances to lines taken
from two famous plays of Ma Zhi-yuan, the Han-gong qiu 漢宮秋, and the Yue-yang lou 無陽樓. In one of these poems, entitled "Diao Zhao-jun 扁昭君," Yuan Huai actually annotated it as "Ma Zhi-yuan's 羅智遠 verse," although the second character "zhí 智 " differs from "zhi 智 " the character that is usually attributed to the playwright's name, the homophony of these two words, and the similarity of diction in the verse content attest strongly to the borrowing of Ma's dramatic arias by Yuan Huai.

The actual dates of these three borrowed verses were not recorded in the anthology, but as all the other poems that were dated fell between the years 1287 to 1291, it is not unreasonable to surmise that these three poems were gathered at about the same time, from which is drawn the premise that Ma was active in playwriting by the 1280s, prior to the Yuan-zhen period and was at least in his twenties when he reached such maturity of style. The deduction that Ma could not have been born later than 1270 follows.14

Zhong Si-cheng's placement of Ma in the early portion of the Lu-gui bu 也 gives some indication of Ma's approximate birth year. The unmistakable labelling of this section as men of preceding generations, instead of contemporaries who had already died, and the comparative proximity of Ma's position to the known birth years of such playwrights as Bai Pu 白樸 in 1226, and Guan Han-qing 謙 whose birth year is conjectured to be no later than 1250,15 suggest that there was a considerable lifetime length between Ma's birth year, and that of Zhong himself. As Zhong's birth year is before 1280,16 it is highly possible that Ma's
birth was at least one to two decades earlier than Zhong.

Another piece of evidence that helps to indicate Ma's birth year is based on the origin of the name "Jiang-zhe 江浙" (including present day Jiang-su, parts of An-hui, Jiang-xi, and the whole of Zhe-jiang and Fu-jian) for the province in which Ma was a one-time inspector (ti-ju 提举). Several places in the Yuan shi clearly mention that the name "Jiang-zhe" as a substitute for the Jiang-huai 江淮 province was not used until the twenty-second year of the reign of Zhi-yuan 至元 (1285). Subsequent changes, however, re-established Jiang-huai as the provincial name.

As argued earlier, Ma embarked on an official career for about twenty years, possibly between his twenties and forties, and as Ma could not have been an inspector of the Jiang-zhe province until after 1285, it is unlikely that he was born before 1245. In conclusion, the span from 1245 to 1265 appears to be the most plausible period in which Ma's birth year falls.

Ma's death date is less of a speculating problem. Zhou De-qing 周德清 (ca. 1314), in his preface to the Zhong-yuan yin-yun 中原音韻, dated 1324, mentioned the death of Ma in these words: "Guan (Han-qing), Zheng (Guang-zu)  鄭光祖, Bai (Pu), Ma (Zhi-yuan)......these gentlemen are gone, and men of later times can no longer emulate them!"18 As one of Ma's poems (no. 123a) was written at the occasion of the ascendancy of Ying-zong 永宗 to the throne (1321), with direct reference to the name of the reign period, Zhi-zhi 至治, it is estimated that Ma's death year falls from 1321
5. Degrees

Jia Zhong-ming's eulogy of Ma Zhi-yuan in the Tian-yi-ge version of the Lu-gui bu with the words:

"Battling in the examination hall, a Zhuang-yuan of the qu triggers off considerable debate over the truth of the ascription "Zhuang-yuan (or First Palace Graduate) of the qu," and indeed over the entire question whether playwriting was ever included as a subject of the civil service examination.

Proponents for the inclusion of drama into the examination curriculum, such as Zang Mao-xun (ca. 1595), argue that the prevalent weakness of the last act in most of the plays betrays the tense and time-pressed examination environment in which the plays were written. Hua Lian-pu, in his Xi-qu cong-tan quotes several Ming sources in support of his argument for the inclusion of drama into the civil service examination, in view of the resultant boom in Yuan drama, and the predilection of the Mongol rulers for dramatic entertainment.

However, as the Yuan standard history gives no mention of the addition of playwriting as examination subject, and as civil service examination was indeed suspended for a period of 78 years from 1237 to 1314 by the Mongol rulers,
dissendents to the above view are evidently nearer to the truth. Also, as Wang Guo-wei argues, the suspension of civil service examination, rather than its continuation, is to be viewed as a catalyst activating the flowering of Yuan drama, as drama provided an alternative outlet through which the energy of the aimless scholars could be directed in the debarment of opportunities to official service through the usual entrance of examination.

Moreover, the presence of anti-dynastic contents in some of the plays contradicts the likelihood of such plays being written for government examinations. The prolific number of known Yuan plays would also discredit the argument that these plays were written for examinations, as the number of examinations being held would have to be overwhelmingly great to match the number of play titles supposed to be examination questions.

The weakness of the argument for the inclusion of Yuan drama into the civil service examination in turn undermines the likelihood of Ma Zhi-yuan's award as a "Zhuang-yuan of the qu". In light of this, Jia Zhong-ming's description is interpreted as a metaphor emphasizing Ma's eminence as a dramatist.

6. Official Post

With regard to the official post of Ma Zhi-yuan, uncertainties arise as to whether the nature of the post "Ti-ju for the Affairs of the Jiang-zhe
Province " solely mentioned in the Tian-yi-ge version is identical with the post "Wu-guan of the Jiang-zhe Province " as mentioned in the Shuo-jí, the Meng Cheng-shun, and Lian-ting cang-shu versions of the Lu-gui bu.

The official title "Wu-guan " appears to be an abbreviated and generalized term, and in the absence of documentation of such a title in the Yuan shí, it is surmised to be a post related to revenue collection, supported by the titles of such posts as Dian-zhai wu 店先務, Shi-yi wu 市易務, Que-huo wu 椿貨務, which were invariably tax-collecting in function in the Song times.25

The title "Ti-ju " translated as an inspector, or a director, is a very popular term affixed to a wide assortment of highly different posts, such as the Xuan-ke ti-ju 宣課提舉 (an Inspector of Customs), a Yan-ke ti-ju 鹽課提舉 (an Inspector of the Salt Tax), the Ti-ju he-qu-guan 提舉河渠官 (an Inspector of the Rivers and Canals), the Guan-yi ti-ju 官醫提舉 (an Inspector of Public Health), and the Ru-xue ti-ju 儒學提舉 (an Inspector of Studies).26

If the post "Wu-guan" is identical in nature to the post "Ti-ju," as is evidenced by Zhong's revision of the first term into the latter in at least two other occasions in the same section, 27 then Ma would very likely be an inspector related to revenue.

Conventionally, however, Ma is believed to be a Ru-xue ti-ju, an official
of the fifth rank that supervises the schools, the rituals, the cultural activities, the records of storage, and the publications of the regional districts, a view that appears to be based on the association of a "scholar" with a more "genteel" post, rather than the presence of satisfactory proofs.

7. Contemporaries

Ma's contemporaries that are explicitly mentioned in Zhong's Lu-gui bu are the two actor-playwrights Hua Li-lang and Hong-zi Li-er, and the minor official Li Shi-zhong, all of whom co-operated with Ma in the production of the play Huang-liang meng. In his eulogy of Li Shi-zhong, mentioned in addition that they were all members of the Yuan-zhen shu-hui, a writing society of actors and playwrights formed around 1295 in the reign period of Ying-zong.

The association of Ma with actors in the production of a play raises the question whether he was a man of refinement and erudition, as traditionally actors are looked upon as uncultivated people of a lower social rank. Yoshikawa Kojiro is of the opinion that Ma's associates do not so much betray his inferior social status as reveal the intimate relations which existed between scholars and actors in the golden era of Yuan drama. This he believes to be partially evidenced by Ma's refined poetic diction traceable even in verses marked by colloquialism, and his skilful mastery of metrical rules, which could only be
the result of solid training in classical learning.

Wang Bo-cheng 王伯成, a less renowned playwright of about the same time, was mentioned by Zhong in his eulogy in the Lu-gui bu as a bosom friend of Ma. 少  

Little, however, is known of Wang's exact dates and his social status.

The friendship of Ma with two renowned contemporary san-qu writers, Lu Zhi 蘇 chết, and Zhang Ke-jiu 張可久, is not mentioned, however, in the Lu-gui bu. Lu, whose style was Chu-dao 葡道, and pen name Shu-zhai 疏齋, was a native of Zhuo-jun 湛郡 (in present day Hopei), and lived approximately around 1235 to 1300. He was evidently the most eminent of all the known associates of Ma Zhi-yuan in terms of social status, rising to the enviable posts of Lian-fang shi 藩使 (Judicial Commissioner), and later, a Han-lin xue-shi cheng-zhi 翰林學士承旨 (Han-lin Academician for the Transmission of Directives).

His friendship with Ma is revealed in the four lyrical songs that Ma wrote by the West Lake in reply to another four songs written earlier by Lu to the tune of Xiang-fei yuan, also by the West Lake. 高  

Ma's association with this high-ranking official apparently favors Yoshikawa's argument that Ma was not an untutored person of the same inferior social rank as the actors.

Zhang Ke-jiu, who was styled Bo-yuan 伯遠, pen-named Xiao-shan 小山, and a native of Qing-yuan 廉元 (in present day Zhe-jiang) was born around 1280. Though Zhang's poetic style noted for his painstaking craftsmanship
differs remarkably from Ma's versatility of style, they shared the common sentiment of frustration with officialdom. A set of nine lyrical songs written in reply to Ma by Zhang Ke-jiu to the tune of Qing Dong-yuan was centered on the theme of Ma's hermitic withdrawal from society. The time of composition of these poems, which is during Ma's retirement, and the address to Ma as a senior by Zhang Ke-jiu in the title suggest that Ma befriended Zhang at a later stage in Ma's life, aside from substantiating the postulation that Ma was born at least one or two decades before Zhang, that is, not later than 1270.

8. Private Life and Temperament

Unlike many of the san-qu writers who sought to conceal their true identity in their works, the egotistically oriented nature of Ma's san-qu reveals considerably the temperament, the philosophy and the private life of the man. Although it is to be argued in the absence of external biographical material, whether internal evidences from the poet's own works represent a fair and accurate picture of himself, the consistent vein of thoughts that marks Ma's san-qu, and the deliberate mentioning of his own courtesy name "DongHi," or of the first person "I" in many of his poems, do argue in favor of the assumption that these poems can be considered as outpouring of Ma's own self.

Though the bulk of Ma's san-qu displays a convinced disdain for the mundane and morose official world, a few of the poems do reveal a drastically
different attitude in Ma's youthful days when he was filled with high ambitions for a bright future in public service, when he nurtured

佐国心
A heart for assisting the nation,

and

拿雲手
A hand for gathering the clouds.

(no. 30)

The failure of advancement in official career, and the blatantly hypocritical role-playing nature of official service finally disillusioned Ma of the glamour of it (poem nos. 13, 50, 125a, 131e), and awakened him to the need of reclusion, a mode of life that was more in tune with Nature.

As disclosed by the poet himself, he was basically an idle person with no special skill in public administration, such that a continued public service would only prolong the contradiction with his natural temperament (poem no. 16).

Ma's anthology also reveals in great transparency his basic disposition - that free and romantic spirit that characterized him very much a Bohemian of his time, and manifested itself in a somewhat profligate life-style of self-indulgence, extravagance, and notorious promiscuity in the frequent company of prostitutes and close association with the theatrical circles before retirement. This is expressed clearly in his song-set "Enlightenment" written to the tune of Qing xing-zi (no. 123).
After retirement, this untrammeled spirit of his manifested itself in capricious and carefree activities in the bosom of nature when Ma prided himself as a "master of the wind and moon" (no. 59), and a "companion of recluses of the woods" (no. 131f). In another poem, (no. 123a), Ma epitomizes his reclusive life as one that is occupied with

剪裁冰雪
Tailoring the ice and snow,

追陪風月
Chasing the wind and moon,

管領鶯花
Commanding the oriole and flower.

Writing poetry under the moonlight (no. 16), chanting a fisherman's song by the fish pond (no. 50), playing chess or the lute with a friend (no. 124b) all become quiet activities that Ma performed at the call of his own impulse.

The life of reclusion was also one of poverty, or at least Ma would have his audience believe so. He professes his rice container is filled with dust, and his door is without a lock (an allusion to destitution in poem no. 35), although he is apparently satisfied with such a meagre existence as:

有一片凍不死衣
Having a rag of cloth that keeps me from freezing,
Having a mouthful of food that keeps me from starving.

Despite this professed poverty, Mass retired life was hardly one of austerity. It did not prohibit him from pursuing some of the more hedonistic activities as having carousals of wine, fresh crabs and fish while enjoying the full-blown autumnal chrysanthemums in the merry company of friends (nos. 14, 16, 35, 107, 130g, 131f), although he was positive that his abstinence from visiting the brothels was resolute, having passed the age of unbridled passion (no. 123).

Another aspect of retired life that is revealed in his anthology was his engagement in farming activities, which like other recluse-poets before him, is represented in the romanticized and idealized rather than the realistic or laborious version of farming, as the lines below show:

青門幸有栽瓜地
The Green Gate fortunately has land for growing melons,

誰義封侯百里
Who would envy the marquis and his hundred li?

桔槔一水韭苗肥
With water from the well, the leek sprouts fatten,

快活翁學圃曾遊
Happy is Fan Chi who learns how to garden!

What he prized in his retired life, apart from the indulgence of
whimsical activities, was the complete detachment from concerns of right and wrong and idle gossip, which such a life afforded him (nos. 130f, 131f). In shutting his door to the red dust, in being an observer of human society rather than a participant, he was

準備閉人洗是非
Ready to cleanse myself of the rights and wrongs of babblers,

and discovered

樂在其中矣
In this is real joy! (no. 125b)

Apart from revealing Ma as a basically idle person with salient romantic tendencies, Ma's works also expose his inclination towards various shades of Taoist thoughts, unquestionably spurred by the many disillusionments with reality, of which the twenty years of official career had convinced him. This is evidenced by Ma's preference for nature, his withdrawal from the world to return to the rustic simplicity of fields and woods, and his attraction towards the supernatural and the immortal. Four of his plays, Chen-Tuan gao-wo 陳摶高卧, Yue-yang lou 無陽樓, Ren Feng-zi 任風子, and Huang-liang meng 黃粱夢, are centered around the theme of Taoist enlightenment or of the attainment of immortality.

Ma is at the same time firmly convinced that life is saturated with helpless vicissitudes, constant flux and illusiveness which render all things impermanent and meaningless. Another obsession of his is fatalism and is best illustrated in
his play entitled Ban-ye lei-hong Jian-fu-bei (The Thunder Struck the Jian-fu Monument at Mid-night), in which the hero, Zhang Hao 張鎬, in all his affluence and adversity is shown to be a helpless prey to fate. The idea of resignation to fate is also underlined in many of Ma’s lyrical poems.

Glimpses of the family life of Ma are also seen in his san-qu anthology. In one poem (no. 28), he expresses his contentment of having "filial sons," and a "virtuous wife," and concludes that it is unwise to toil after fame and wealth as sources of contentment. In another poem, Ma reveals something of a fatherly affection by saying that it is only with the completion of the marriages of his sons and daughters, when his obligation is ended that he retires into the fields and woods (no. 128h).

9. Other Ma Zhi-yuans

Since "Ma Zhi-yuan" is a relatively common Chinese name, it is not surprising to note that there are at least three other figures in records bearing the same name in the one hundred years that straddle the late Jin and a large part of the Yuan period, and who come under the suspicion that one of them may have been the playwright-poet himself.

The first of these Ma Zhi-yuan appears in Wang Yun's 王愷 (1277-1304) Qiu-jian da-chuan ji 秋澗大全集, in the section dealing with records
of friends of Wang's deceased father that are inscribed in the tombstone. Among the 43 entries of friends is one which reads: "Ma Yin 马寅, styled Zhi-yuan 致遠, a native of Xu-zhou 许州 (in present day He-nan) is a gentleman of refinement and dignity with a taste for classical studies, reluctant to enter into officialdom." Although the latter part of the description fits the playwright Ma Zhi-yuan equally well, the discrepancy that arises in the native place, and the fact that Wang's father Tian-duo 天鏞 was born in 1202 would also render earlier estimation of Ma's birth year to be between 1245 and 1265 irreconcilable.

The second Ma Zhi-yuan in chronological order is Ma Cheng-de 马称德 (or Ji-de 马德), whose name appears in such works as Deng Wen-yuan's 鄧文原 (1258-1328) Ba-xi ji 巴西集, the Yan-you si-ming zhi 延祐四明志, and the Zhi-zheng si-ming xu-zhi 至正四明續志, who was a native of Guang-ping 广平 (in present day He-bei), and whose lineage could be traced as far back as his great-grandfather Ren 仁, his grandfather Jin 晉, and his father Xing 興. As Xing was born in 1249, according to Deng Wen-yuan's epitaph of him, and as Cheng-de was the eldest of his sons, the latter's birth date is conjectured to be around 1270. Although this birth year is not far from the estimated birth period of the playwright-poet Ma Zhi-yuan discussed earlier, and although their native proximate coincide, incongruity with regard to their death years and achievements as official tend toward the argument that they are not the same person.
Ma Cheng-de was recorded to be in active service in the government as late as 1323, in the third year of the reign of Zhi-zhi 周緯, and as the playwright Ma was known to be dead by 1324 in Zhou De-qing's reference to him, it would have meant that if the two Mas were identical, then Ma's retirement could not possibly have lasted longer than one year, if there was any at all. This is unlikely, as both the quality and contents of the poems written during the playwright's retirement indicate that Ma had withdrawn from government for a much longer period of time.

Also the dedicated and constructive performances of Ma Cheng-de while serving as a Fu-pan 府判 (Judge) of the Ning-guo lu zong-guan fu 宁國路總管府 (Bureau of General Administration for the District of Ning-guo), as Zhi-zhou 知州 (Governor) of the Feng-hua zhou 奉化州 of the Qing-yuan lu 建元路 (in present day Zhe-jiang), or as Governor of the Ji-shui zhou 吉水州 of Ji-an lu 吉安路 (in present day Jiang-xi), in opening up canals, improving irrigation, renovating embankments, expanding the village schools, in publishing the classics, easily categorized Ma into the rank of excellent officials. The respect that the people paid him, in erecting monuments for him even when he was alive, was not surprising.40

These dedicated performances are, however, quite incongruous with the picture of Ma the playwright-poet conveyed in his san-qu 調 that of a frustrated official who was nauseated with public service, and of the lax and dissolute life-style which he professed to live at least for the earlier part of
his life. 41

A third Ma Zhi-yuan is found in Zhang Yi-ning's 張以寧 Cui-ping ji 翡屏集 which has a poem entitled "Comments on Ma Zhi-yuan's Painting of 'Crossing the Clear Brook at Dawn'" and also the following annotation:

"Zhi-yuan 致遠, a prefect assistant of Guang-xi 广西; his son, Wan 瑾, is a student of mine." 42

There is a disagreement over the native place of Ma's son, Wan, also called Wen-bi 文壁. In the Zhuo-geng lu 辙政錄, Tao Zong-yi 陶宗儀 (ca. 1360) mentions that Ma Wen-bi was a native of Fu-feng 扶風 (in present day Shensi 陝西), 43 while Qian Qian-yi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) in his Lie-chao shi-ji 列朝詩集 mentions that Ma was a man of Qin-huai 秦淮 (in present day Jiang-su). 44 Possibly, as Sun Kai-di 孫楷第 suggests, Fu-feng was the native place of Ma's clan, rather than of Ma himself. 45

It is not unreasonable to assume that this Ma Zhi-yuan is about the same age group, or even younger that Zhang Yi-ning, considering that Ma's son was a student of Zhang, plus the likelihood that the painting in question was drawn at a time when Zhang retired from office in his forties, when Ma was still in active service, and was departing for an official post in Guang-xi. 46 As Zhang lived between 1301 to 1370, this Ma Zhi-yuan who was father to Wen-bi could not have been born in the 1245-1265 period calculated to be the birth date of the playwright Ma Zhi-yuan.
10. **Works — Plays and San-qu, and Problems of Dubious Authorship**

In combination the different versions of the *Lu-gui bu* attribute the authorship of thirteen titles of plays to Ma Zhi-yuan, although these versions vary slightly with regard to the exact play titles. Of these thirteen plays, the six that are preserved are *Po you-meng gu-yann Han-gong qiu*, *Jiang-zhou si-ma qing-san lei*, *Ban-ye lei-hong Jian-fu bei*, *Tai-hua shan*, *Chen Tuan gao-wo*, and *Lu Dong-bing san-zui Yue-yang lou*. The six plays, together with the one Ma wrote in collaboration with Li Shi-zhong, Hua Li-lang, Hong-zi Li-er, and entitled *Kai-tan chan-jiao huang-liang meng*, give a total of seven extant plays. Two plays in which fragments of the original script remain, or whose script is supposedly similar to the imitated work of a later playwright are *Liu Ruan wu-ru tao-yuan dong* and *Meng Hao-ran ta-xue xun-mei*. (The two alternative names to this play are *Feng-xue qi-lü* and *Dong yin-shi ta-xue xun-mei*. Although it is dubious if these three titles are of the same story.
The remaining four plays that are not extant are Da-ren xian-sheng jiu-de song 大人先生酒德頌, Lü tai-hou ren-zhi Qi fu-ren 呂太后人嚴戚夫人, Meng Zhao-yun feng-xue sui-han ting 盡朝風雪歲寒亭, and Lü Meng-zheng feng-xue fan-hou zhong 吕蒙正風雪飯後鐘.

The extant san-qu of Ma Zhi-yuan includes 115 xiao-ling 小令, or short lyrics, and 24 tao-shu 套數, or sets of lyrical songs, of which 19 are complete, and 5 exist only in remnants. In view of the highly scanty and sporadic nature of Yuan san-qu collections, Ma’s collection is considered to be very substantial, as often a total of less than a few tens of verses are collected from the major lyricists. Exceptions are seen in the san-qu collection of four Yuan poets, Qiao Ji 喬吉 (1280-1345), Zhang Ke-jiu 張可久 (b. ca. 1280). Zhang Yang-hao 張養浩 (1269-1329), and Tang Shi 湯式 (ca. 1383), whose collected works are considerably larger than the average.

The four anthologies in which the bulk of Ma’s san-qu appear are the Yang-chun bai-xue 陽春白雪, the Tai-ping yue-fu 太平樂府, the Li-yuan yue-fu 梨園樂府 (also called Yue-fu xin-sheng 樂府新聲) of Yuan times, and the Yue-fu qun-zhu 樂府群珠 of Ming times.

The first two anthologies were compiled by Yang Chao-ying 楊朝英 (fl. 1300), the Yang-chun bai-xue published around 1340, and the Tai-ping yue-fu a little later. It is apparent that Yang did not regard authorship as a highly important matter, and in the few cases where authorship conflicts in his two
anthologies, the second one is deemed to be more reliable, as it is more likely that errors in his first work are amended in the second. As for the third Yuan anthology Li-yuan yue-fu, cases of unstated authorship are much more numerous than Yang's two anthologies, while for the Ming collection, Yue-fu qun-zhu whose editor is unknown, authorship is handled with greater care, although its later date of publication puts it at a disadvantage as compared with the previous three.

A small number of Ma's verses are found in the Yuan anthology, Yue-fu qun-yu 楼府群玉, probably edited by Hu Cun-shan 胡存善 (ca. 1300) and is conjectured by Ren Na 任納 to be the earliest of all the san-qu collections. Other Ming anthologies which have smaller collections of Ma's san-qu are the Sheng-shi xin-sheng 盛世新聲 (ca. 1517), the Ci-lin zhai-yan 詞林摘豔, edited by Zhang Lu 張祿 (ca. 1525), the Yong-xi yue-fu 隆熙樂府, probably edited by Guo Xun 郭勋 (ca. 1500), whose early-nile edition was printed between 1522 and 1566, and the Ci-lin bai-xue 詞林白雪 of late Ming times.

One the whole, these Ming collections are even more neglectful than Yuan collections in their treatment of authors. For instance, in the Sheng-shi xin-sheng, authorship is very rarely stated, and while the original engraved edition of the Ci-lin zhai-yan is relatively complete in the listing of authors, in the revised and expanded version of it by Zhang Lu, authorship is deliberately deleted. For the Yong-xi yue-fu, authorship of 90% of the collection is not
stated, while the remaining portion is by no means free of errors related to authorship. The Ci-lin bai-xue is unreliable, as the compiler at times deliberately attributed the names of some poets to poems whose authorship is not known.55

In addition, a number of Ma's san-qu are contained in the qu registers of Ming and Qing times, as for instance, the Tai-he zheng-yin pu compiled by Zhou Xiang-yu 周祥鈜 , and the Jiu-gong da-cheng compiled by Li Yu (ca. 1644) of Qing times. The two best modern editions that contain a near complete extant collection of Ma's san-qu are the Quan Yuan san-qu compiled by Sui-Shu-sen 隋樹森 in 1964, and the one juan "Dong-li yue-fu" in San-qu cong-kan compiled by Ren Na in 1964.56

Of Ma's 115 xiao-ling, there are 8 with rival claims to authorship,57 and 24 whose authorship is not stated in every anthology that contains them.58 Of the 24 tao-shu, there are 3 in which authorship is simultaneously attributed to other poets,59 and 6 in which some anthologies do not state the author.60

The question of authorship is indeed a serious problem in Yuan san-qu. Sui Shu-sen estimates that out of more than 3700 xiao-ling collected, there are about 123 with rival authorship, which amounts to 3% of the total. While out of 450 tao-shu collected, there are 78, or 7% of the total with rival claims. There are times when one poem is attributed to 5 or 6 different poets.61
In the case of Ma's san-qu collection, the problem of authorship is more serious than the average, as 7% of his xiao-ling, and 12.5% of his tao-shu are attributed to other poets as well. The problem is aggravated when some of his best san-qu, such as the greatly loved "Autumn Thoughts" written in the tune of Tian-jing sha (no. 49), one lyric written in the tune of ヅォrbυ-δγαα (no. 115), and one tao-shu entitled "Ti Xi-hu," beginning with the tune of Xin-shui ling (no. 128) are all encumbered with the question of dubious authorship in which authentication has proven difficult.
B. Literary, Political and Social Milieu for Yuan San-qu

1. The Rise of San-qu

San-qu, literally separate or scattered songs, are lyric verses set to song music, each bearing the name of a tune, or qu-pai which belongs to a specific musical mode, or gong-diao. It embraces many sub-forms with xiao-ling and tao-shu as the two main ones. The former, which is in an independent single stanza, is relatively short and does not usually exceed twenty to sixty characters in length. The latter is made up of a sequence of two or more lyric songs of the same mode and the same rhyme scheme. San-qu, which is more a vehicle of personal expression, is different from the xi-qu, or dramatic arias sung on stage to the accompaniment of music and also interspersed with dialogue.

As a poetic genre, the san-qu is representative of the Yuan, (although drama at this time was the most significant literary achievement), as the ci is representative of the Song. However, rather than visualizing a clear-cut and direct succession of poetic types one after another, as traditional Chinese scholars were inclined to do in making too-perfect "parallels between the cycle of China's ruling houses and literary genres," it is more realistic to bear in mind that "major literary forms never spring full-blown from the pens of men of letters, but are usually end products of long traditions of growth and development."62

By nature, san-qu is a hybrid interweaving the long tradition of Chinese folk ballad, some special features, particularly the formal structure of the ci
poetry, and characteristics of foreign music that was newly imported into China.

The kinship of san-qu to folk song is observable in its flexibility both in form and content, its accommodation with colloquialism, its freshness and naturalness in style, and its heaviness of local color. Viewed as a continuation of the folk ballad tradition of China, rather than the direct successor of the ci form of poetry, the earlier prototypes of san-qu are to be traced far back into the literary history of China. The more immediate forms upon which san-qu built its foundation are, however, the "folk ballad and rustic songs" of the Jin. While for the tao-shu, its earlier models for narrating in sequence are found in the da-qu 大曲, gu-zì ci 鼓子词, zhuàn-tà 傳踏, zhu gōng-dìao 诸宫调, and zhuan-ci 答词 that were popular since Tang and Song times.

The close relationship between ci and san-qu can be seen in the borrowing of musical modes and tunes from the ci, as well as similarity in the sub-forms of both genres. With regard to modes, the nineteen modes in the Song ci, consisting of seven gōng 宫 and twelve diào 調 are reduced to seventeen modes with six gōng and eleven diào in the qu. As for the tunes, the qu sometimes borrow exactly from the ci in both titles and formal structure (that is, verse length and line length). In other instances, the tune titles vary while the formal structure is exact or slightly modified. There are also instances when the tune titles are the same, while the formal structure is modified. As for various sub-forms, such as the xiao-ling, tao-shu or the dai-guo 帶過 (carry-over) within the qu, close models are preceded in the ci.

The answer to the question of why the san-qu became more popular in Yuan
than the ci, is seen in the development of the ci in late Song times when it was reduced into a highly rigid and stylised form of poetry demanding great polish of diction, allusion, structure and prosody at the expense of freshness and spontaneity, so much so that the ci became the monopoly of highly educated people, totally separated from the masses. Development such as this, as so often happened in earlier literary history, signalled a change in a new literary direction for evolving a new form of poetry to rid itself of previous burdens and to make room for naturalness and creativity.

Often, the need to change was motivated by practical necessity, as for instance, the singing girls and performers who needed to compose and to sing songs for a livelihood had to draw upon folk ballads for fresh ideas and material. Indeed, while the aesthetic school of ci poetry was at its height in Southern Song, other ci poets had already begun to experiment with the use of the vernacular language in the ci. The abandonment of refined diction in preference for the spoken language can be regarded as an initial step in the rise of the san-ju.

Another impetus that hastened the rise of san-ju was the influx of foreign tunes and musical instruments from "barbarian" tribes of the north, as early as the reign period Xuan-he (1119-1225) in the last years of the Northern Song Dynasty, when the Tartars invaded north China, and with continued vigor in the Mongolian domination over China. These new tunes and new instruments with different tone, rhythm and melodies required the composition of new lyrics and outdated the existing ci which was written originally for music. As Wang
Shi-zhen (1526-1590) so aptly puts it, "....because the foreign music that came to China since the Jin and Yuan times was loud, mixed, plaintive and rapid in sound, interspersed with adagio and allegro, the ci could no longer accord with the music, so new songs were composed to suit it." 70

In brief, the decline of ci into an esoteric artistic production of the elite, stimulated a renewed interest in the folk ballad which had nourished greatly in Liao and Jin times and which, coupled with the newly imparted foreign tunes and musical instruments, hastened the creation of new verse forms to suit the literary climate of the time.

2. The Political and Social Milieu that Accounts for the "Negative" Contents in San-qu

The alien rule to which China was subject under Mongol domination was one that was met with resentment by the Han Chinese, and was particularly adverse to the Chinese literati from which many of the eminent san-qu writers came. This accounts for much of the "negative," pessimistic, and seemingly Taoist contents in the san-qu.

Politically, economically and socially, the Mongol rulers practised a discriminatory policy of divide-and-rule, by categorizing their subjects into four distinct classes which received different treatment in almost every aspect of life affecting government employment, the examination system, military service,
judicial practices, taxation and private ownership of land and property. The ethnic hierarchical system that was established placed the Mongols at the top of the ladder, and the Se-mu, Moslems, Central Asians, Europeans and other ethnic groups of the West on the second level. Then came the Han Chinese, and other tribes such as the Tartars who lived in the former territories of the Jin Dynasty in the north. Lastly, came the Southern Chinese who lived in the territories belonging to the former Southern Song Dynasty.

Discrimination against the Han and Southern Chinese with regard to government ranks was particularly grievous, as posts of primary importance were monopolized only by the Mongols, and peoples of the second class, while posts of secondary or minor importance were filled out by Chinese of the third and fourth classes. This discrimination was applied from the central to the local government. One Ming record depicts the plight of the Chinese in these words: "At that time, the important ministers of the tai and the sheng, the chief officials of the jun and the yi and all significant posts were seldom occupied by people of the central plains, who had fallen into inferior ranks and whose ambitions were not realized...... Consequently, they directed their talents onto verse and songs, so as to vent their pent-up indignation and melancholic emotions. This is what is called crying out in the face of injustice."

Recruitment to officialdom, either by direct government appointment, by civil service examination, or by inheritance was also marked by blatant racist practices, disfavoring the Han and Southern Chinese. This was true also in...
transfer of posts, promotion and demotion. In light of this, a grim view of life, charged with cynicism, and helplessness is not surprising.

Among the Chinese, the shi or scholar class out of which many san-qu poets came was hit the most as a result of this change of government. Traditionally, Chinese scholars were potential officials and enjoyed great social prestige even when they were not in office. The Mongol court, with a relatively inferior cultural heritage was not partial to the Chinese literati and was disposed to favor practical ability, as that of military, rather than literary talents. It was partly because of this that the civil service examination was suspended as it was viewed to be impractical and irrelevant.

The court's indifference to the Chinese literati effected a drastic change of their social status, and was graphically illustrated by ridicule levelled at them which placed them at the bottom of the social hierarchy, the ninth grade of a ten-strata system with the prostitutes above them and only the beggars below them. Although it is questionable whether the Yuan society was actually structured upon such a system, it was quite glaringly obvious that the Chinese literati suffered a reverse in prestige in Yuan times.

Deprived of a bright future in a political career, and shorn of social prestige, Chinese scholars were drawn to various forms of eremitism, Taoist, Buddhist or Confucianist, either in direct protest against the alien government, as ways of escapism, or as an alternative life-style which offered more meaning and purpose. This accounts for the considerable presence of pastoral or
eremitic contents in Yuan san-qu as well as in drama.

The increasing popularity of Taoism was seen in an atmosphere of imperial sanctioned religious freedom. Taoism with its newly developed sects of reformed doctrines and able leadership attracted many educated Chinese in the north. This explains the Taoist tinted contents in the literary works of the time, such as the constant motives of Taoist enlightenment and reclusion.

In conclusion, the two-fold discrimination policy directed against the Chinese literati in the Yuan society in depriving them materialistic and spiritual rewards helped to foment a predominantly pessimistic and "negative" intellectual climate characterized by thoughts of passivity, or even of repulsion towards public service, of thoughts of transience, vicissitudes and fatalism towards the affairs of men. The prevalence of Taoism especially in the northern part of China, undoubtedly encouraged this trend.
Footnotes


2. Ibid., p.167.

3. Poems no. 50, 59, 125a, 130g.

4. Zhong Si-cheng, op. cit., p. 204.

5. Tao Qian 陶潜, "Yinjiu 饮酒," Jing-jie xian-sheng ji 靖節先生集, annotated by Tao Shu 陶澍 (Hong Kong: Zhong-hua shu-ju 中華書局, 1973), juan 3, p. 27.

6. Constant reference to Tao Qian can be seen in poem nos. 107, 110, 130g, 131c. Imitation of Tao's diction can be seen in poem nos. 13, 14, 15, 16, 59, 128d.

8. Ibid.


10. Wang Ji-de 王骥德, Qu-lu 曲律, in ZGGD, IV, 146.


15. The birth year of Guan Han-qing is a much debated question which some hold to be as early as 1210-1215, and others as late as 1241-1250. See Leung Pui-kam’s "Guan Han-qing xing-nian kao-bian" and Sun Kai-di’s "Guan Han-qing xing-nian kao". Both are in Guan Han-qing yan-jiu lun-wen ji, I, pp. 15 and 61.


17. The change of names from Jiang-huai to Jiang-zhe can be found in Yuan shi, juan 91, p. 2a2, and juan 62, p. 1b2, in the Bai-na ben er-shi-si shi bai shi bai si shi (Taipei: Taiwan Shang-wu yin-shu guan, 1967). The reverse in later years is found in juan 14, p. 12a10.

ZGGD, I, 175, the preface.


22. This is the argument brought out by Liang Ting-nan 梁廷楠 in his Qu-hua 曲話, in ZGGD, VIII, 279.


25. The title Dian-zhai wu appears in *Song shi* (Bai-na ben), juan 165, p. 11 b3, and in *Qin shi* (Bai-na ben), juan 58, p. 10 a10. The title Shi-yi wu appears in *Yuan shi* (Bai-na ben), juan 165, p. 10 a1., while the title Que-huo wu appears in *Yuan shi*, juan 161, p. 25b9. In addition, Sun Kai-di construes the post Wu-guan as belonging to the department of tax collection in his *Yuan-qu-jia kao-lue* (Shanghai : Shang-za chu-ban she, 1953), p. 40.

26. These appear in *Yuan shi*, op. cit., juan 85, p.12b1; 91, p.11b6; 93, p.5b5; 91, p.9a1; 91, p.9a8 respectively.

27. See *Lu-gui bu* in ZGGD, II, 111, 112, 179, and 185 with regard to the official posts of Shang Zhong-xian and Dai Shan-fu.


34. Ibid., p. 806.

35. Poem nos. 30, 38, 42, 125a, 132e.

36. It is difficult, however, to establish the true authorship of tao-shu no. 128 to Ma, as Wang Bo-cheng is claimed to be the author in other anthologies.


39. Deng Wen-yuan, "Gu Jiang-ling gong-an xian-wei Ma-jun 公江陵公安縣尉馬君墓誌銘," Ba-xi ji 巴西集, juan 2, p. 34b - 36a, in Si-ku quan-shu zhen-ben, the third collection 四庫全書珍本第三集, (Shanghai : Commercial Press, 1972), ser. 1052. (Hereafter cited as SKQS).

40. Yuan Jue, Qing-rong ju-shi ji 清容居士集, juan 25, pp. 437, 441-2, in Cong-shu ji-cheng chu-bian 蒲書集成初編 (hereafter cited as CSJC), (Shanghai : Commercial Press, 1936), ser. 2070.

41. It is for these reasons that I disagree with Sun Kai-di's argument that Ma Cheng-de was identical with Ma, the playwright-poet in Sun's discussion of

42. Zhang Yi-ning 张以寧, Cui-ping ji 翠屏集, juan 1, pp. 16b-17a, in SKQS, the second collection, sect. 1352.


44. Qian Qian-yi 錢謙益, Lie-chao shi-ji xiao-zhuan 列朝詩集小傳 (Shanghai: Gu-dian wen-xue chu-ban she, 1957), jia qian-ji 甲前集, 1, 23.


46. Ibid.

47. Lu-gui bu in ZGGD, II, 108, 168-9. Here the abbreviated and the variant titles of Ma's plays in different versions of the Lu-gui bu are specified clearly.


51. *QYSQ*, I, ii.

52. Ibid., iii-iv.


55. For more detailed discussion of various Yuan, Ming and Qing collections, see Sui Shu-sen, "Guan-yu Yuan-ren san-qu zuo-zhe zhu-ming de yi-xie wen-ti," pp. 62-87.
56. I have by no means exhausted all those works of Yuan, Ming and Qing times, each of which contains only a very minor portion of Ma's san-qu. For more information, read the annotation that follows each of Ma's verses in Sui Shu-sen's Quan Yuan san-qu, I, 230-277.

57. Poem nos. 29, 30, 36, 37, 38, 49, 70, 115.

58. Poem nos. 2-12, 57-9, 60-67, 79, 80.

59. Tao-shu no. 128 is attributed also to Wang Bo-cheng, no. 121 to Author Anonymous, and no. 139 to Guan Han-qing. The first verse of tao-shu no. 136 is attributed also to Du Shan-fu 杜善夫.

60. Poem nos. 120, 122, 123, 124, 126, 130.


65. For more information of this, read Lu Ji-ye 魯冀野, Ci-qu yan-jiu 詞曲研究 (Shanghai: Zhong-hua shu-ju, 1934), pp. 85-106. Also Ren Na 任納, Ci-qu tong-yi 詞曲通義 (Hong Kong: Shang-wu yin-shu-guan, 1964), pp. 1-16.


67. Ibid.


72. Yuan shi, op. cit., juan 85, p. 1b clearly states this.


76. The ten-grade social system is recorded in Zhao Yi's 趙翼 Gai-yu cong-kao 陔餘叢考 (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu guan, 1957), juan 42, p. 943. However, as Chen Yuan 陳垣 points out in his Xi-qu ren hua-hua kao 西域人華化考 (Peking: Li-yun Books Co., 1934), p. 125b, that the above division is to be viewed as mocking remarks against the scholars by people of the Southern Song rather than factual statement describing the actual social system of the country. See also Yang, op. cit., pp. 338-9.


The concern of this chapter is to examine the cluster of recurrent motives in Ma Zhi-yuan's san-qu embracing such thoughts as are regarded representative of Ma's personal philosophy, particularly after his withdrawal from office. Such thoughts, when assembled together, may be loosely described as quasi-Taoist philosophy in the main, modified with hedonism. Negatively, they may even be considered as escapism, approaching nihilism, in the negation of all values, save that of hedonism.

The extensive scope of subject matter in his san-qu, and the versatility of tone and mood which matches this kaleidoscope of themes and which attest to his credentials as a poet of varied sensibility and skill will also be discussed.

A. Recurrent Motives Representing Ma's Philosophy

As poetic themes, the thoughts of Ma are discussed under the separate categories of ubi-sunt, the equation of life to a dream, fatalism, and the consequential disdain of officialdom, fame, wealth and power. The personal solution to such disillusioned concepts of life, is embodied in themes of reclusion, carpe diem, obliviousness, and to a much smaller extent, the attraction towards immortality.
1. Ubi Sunt

The ubi sunt motive in Ma's san-qu, which dwells on the transience and the vicissitude of virtually every thing under the sun, including youth, human life, fame, wealth, power, imperial enterprise, and human artifacts, is an exceedingly prominent one. Interestingly, the two simple lines below from Ma describing the transience of flowers:

今日春来
Today Spring comes,

明朝花谢
Tomorrow morning, the flowers wither away.

(almost an exact parallel to Robert Herrick's

And this same flower that smiles to day,

To-morrow will be dying.)

and very similar to the ancient Hebrew psalm:

....like grass which is renewed in the morning:

in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;

in the evening it fades and withers.

represent an ubi sunt expression that reverberates with universal resonance.

For the fleetness of human life, it is evidenced in man's rapid ageing process and in the inevitability of death which awaits us all at the end. This ageing process is revealed in the acceleration with which the dark hair turns
white, or of how the peach blossom face alters after middle age.

In one poem, Ma dramatizes the swift process of ageing in the lines:

紅日如奔過隙駒
The red sun as if fleeing, a cleft-passing horse,

白頭漸滿楊花雪
The white hair, like flakes of poplar blossoms,

gradually fills the head. (no. 104)

The same vein of thought is expressed in another poem:

能得朱顏
To have a peach blossom face,

幾回白晝
How many days are there?

· · · · ·

去雁來鴻
The departing wild goose, and the returning swan

有促皓首
Have prompted the white hair of man.

(no. 131c)

Indeed, the transience and fragility of human life, forever haunted by the overpowering force of death resemble very much a "lamp in the wind", which is quickly smothered, or of "the sparks amid the flints" (no.33) which glow for an instant and are then extinguished.
The idea of the inevitability of death is further elaborated in these lines:

古往今來你盡知
From past to present, you know for sure,

賢的愚的
The worthy and the foolish,

貧的富的
The poor and the rich,

到頭這一身
Have, after all, the same mortal body,

難逃那一日
Unable to escape from that Day.

While death annihilates all human life, disregarding the noble, the ignoble, and the obscure, it obliterates also all human achievement, might and heroic deeds, rendering human efforts both futile and nonsensical. This is illustrated in the following poem:

路傍碑
The roadside tombstone,

不知誰
Whose is it?

春苔綠滿無人祭
The green of the spring moss overgrows, with no one to worship.
Bi Zhuo with a cup of wine in his lifetime,

Master Cao with a tomb of three feet after death.

Better to be drunk and drunk again!

The celebrated historic figure Cao Cao's three-foot high tombstone and the desolation of his burial place imply his insignificance and obscurity after death. By this, Ma suggests that since death bypasses none, and human strenuousness, such as that exerted by Cao Cao is forgotten through the passage of time, the difference between Cao's striving and the recklessness of Bi Zhuo of Jin, the notorious drinker, is nullified.

The idea that death obliterates all human distinctions is underlined in another poem (no. 131c) in which Ma alludes to the story of Zhuang-zi (b. 369 B.C.) conversing with the skull.

You may occupy high posts of the eight prefectures,

But who can predict what happens a century later?

Though one may become as enlightened as Zhuang Zhou,
Still, it was with sighs that he stroked the skeleton. (no. 131e;)

The state of death as is brought home by the skull is one with virtually no absolutes, divisions, seasons, kings nor subjects. This state of non-distinction, coupled with the idea of the inevitability of death bring to mind the all-encompassing and the equalizing nature of death as in James Shirley's "The Levelling Dust":

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings;
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

In another poem, Ma harps on the vicissitudes of political achievement and dynastic fortune.

The palace of Qin and the halls of Han
Have all become wild pastures for the herd;
Otherwise, the fisherman and woodsman would have nothing
to talk about.

Rows of deserted graves, heaps of broken monuments —

No longer discernible therein are the dragons and snakes.

Here are fox tracks and rabbit holes;

How many heroes have been laid therein!

The tripod, resting on its legs, has broken at the waist.

Which period was it?

Wei or Jin?

(no. 130b,c; tr. by
Liu Wu-Chi)4

The palaces of Qin and Han, apart from representing the outward
physical magnificence of human artifice, imply also the imperial pomp and the
staggering political achievement of two of the greatest emperors in the history
of China, namely the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (reigned 246-214 B.C.),
and Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (reigned 141-86 B.C.). The dragons and snakes
refer either to the inscription on the tombs which have faded out, or to the
corpse of the once noble and the ignoble which are now indistinguishable. The
tripod here is an allusion to division of China into the Three Kingdoms (222-265),
and the breaking of it, plus the two rhetorical questions at the end signify the
rapid succession of dynasties in the course of history, highlighting the vicissitude
of dynastic fortune.

Thus, the awesome political achievement and splendor of Emperors and
dynasties are of no avail. They have proved to be ephemeral and therefore
inconsequential. Like Thomas Gray’s lines:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow’r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave
Awaits alike th’ inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.5

In a much shorter but equally vivid poem, Ma explicitly voices the
futility of political achievement on grounds that it is both mutable and illusory.
The grandeur of the Six Dynasties Palaces degenerating into lonely pastoral land,
and the desolation of the cemetery of the once renowned officials evoke horrors,
not unlike those of a nightmare.

Among the commoners,
I ask the hero:

What use is there for political ambition and imperial enterprise?

The palaces of the Six Dynasties amid high and low millet plants,
The graves of a thousand officials among the catalpa and firmiana far and near.

What a nightmare!

But it is not death nor the vast passage of time alone that accounts for mutability. Vicissitude of one's fortune is witnessed within the shortness of a life-time. This is evidenced in the rapid ebb and flow of the personal fortune of Xiang Yu (b. 232 B.C.), one of the chief figures in the political struggle for the Chinese empire after the collapse of the Qin Dynasty.

Strength that plucks the mountain,

Might that lifts the tripod;
Hissing and growling with rage, a thousand men are terrified.

North of the road, west of the bank of Wu-jiang.

Abandon the dream of returning east with a brocaded gown!

Better to be drunk, and be sober.

When sober, again be drunk!

The first three lines speak of the astonishing power and might of Xiang Yu at the zenith of his fortune. The immediate juxtaposition of these lines with the next two describing his plight after the defeat of a crucial battle and his confusion at the Yin-ling road, and later at the bank of Wu-jiang where he finally commits suicide, suggests something of the rapid turn of events within the brevity of a decade, and so drastic indeed as to be beyond human prediction.

The ruins into which the magnificent palaces of Qin and Han have fallen (no. 130b), or of the dilapidated and forlorn condition of the historic site, Xi-ma tai, where Liu Yu lived (ca. 420) and his officials once
gathered together for chanting poetry (nos. 9, 111) indicate that human artifacts, like political successes are susceptible to mutability.

Finally, the idea of the decay of wealth is conveyed in such lines as,

古時王謝堂前燕
The swallows of old that flew before the halls of Wang and Xie,

再不復海棠庭院
No longer do they visit the cherry-apple courtyard.

(no. 101)

The first line is an exact quote from a poem of the Tang poet, Liu Yu-xi, who laments the decline of wealth of the two fabulously rich families, the Wang and the Xie, while the cherry-apple courtyard is a reference to the past elegant mansion of these two families. The immortality of the swallows (as a specie rather than individuals) which even now visit the "homes of the ordinary folks" is thus brought into ironic contrast with the evanescence of human wealth.

Perhaps the lines that best embody the ideas of the transitory nature of all objects and the futility of fame, wealth and honor are the following:

繁華一夢天長大
Prosperity is a dream as big as the heavens,

風物盡人化
Scenes and objects follow man to decay.
62

Why struggle for a vain name?

Oh, to steer a solitary boat!

Success and fame have already become the talk of fishermen and woodcutters.

Better to drink three more cups!

( no. 128f )

2. Life as a Dream

While human life and achievement are evanescent in character, Ma is convinced at the same time that these things are illusory, as insubstantial as a dream which mark them all the more meaningless. The idea that distinction between the reality of life and the unrealness of a dream is very hazy is brought out in the following line:

A hundred years of time is but a butterfly in a dream.

( no. 130a )
This allusion is borrowed from Zhuang-zi who dreamt that he was a butterfly, flapping freely upon its wings, but who upon waking was aroused to the philosophical reflections of whether he merely dreamt that he was a butterfly, or indeed it was the butterfly who was dreaming that he was a man.

Another allusion that Ma borrows is the "Dream of the Southern Branch," where the Tang scholar Chun Yu-fen lying under the southern branch of the locust tree, dreams that he is made a prince consort, and later a governor of Nan-ke, or the Southern Branch. The totality of life as a dream is underlined in the line below from a distinctly flavored Buddhist poem:

從結靈胎便南柯
From the conception of the spirit, it is a dream of the southern branch.

(no. 33)

Since the whole of human life is one continuous dream, successes and failures that are intrinsic to it, are equally illusive. In one poem, Ma writes:

得又何歡
Why delight in successes?

失又何愁
Why distress in failures?

恰似南柯一夢
Exactly like the dream at the southern branch!
Ji-lun with his brocaded curtain,

Master Yuan with a broken pot at his window.

(no. 132b)

The second last line here refers to the extravagance of Shi-Chong 石崇 (styled Ji-lun) of Jin (249-300), who used exquisite brocade for the screen. This is in distinct contrast to Yuan An 元豊 of East Han, who in his destitution used a broken pot to fill out the gap in his window. The subsequent reverse in fortune, when Shi was executed and Yuan rose to a high official, vivifies the dreamy nature of life composed of drastic vicissitudes and unpredictable happenings.

What is particularly illusory in life is the struggle that is evidenced in the political arena. The rapidity with which Xiang Yu was overwhelmed, and Liu Bang 劉邦 (d. 195 B.C.) gained full control of the country thus establishing the Han Empire, differs little from the fantasy of a dream.

Xiang defeated in East Wu,

Liu rose in West Shu,

Dream-talk of the southern branch! (no. 51)
The hazards and vicissitudes which are associated with a political career aggravate it with the terrors of a nightmare. In one poem where Ma speaks of his preference for the life of a fisherman, (the traditional symbol for a hermit) he implies the peril of officialdom - like wrestling with the wind and waves, in the lines:

窮
In distress,

男兒未濟中
A man who has not yet succeeded.

風波夢
The dream of the wind and the waves,

一場幻化中
In one illusion.

(no. 36)

In much the same vein, Ma denounces the nightmarish nature of political ambition in a poem quoted earlier:

What use is there for political ambition and imperial enterprise?

········

What a nightmare!

(no. 111)
3. Fatalism

A third thematic subject in Ma's san-qu which is reiterated constantly is fatalism, his conviction in the predestination of good and evil fortune in the affairs of man. "Poverty and prosperity are all predestined," (no. 132b) so says Ma in one poem. As fate is perceived both as a potent and unpredictable force, the wise man is resigned to it and offers no resistance even in the face of adversity.

The unpredictability with which events shaped by the hand of destiny occur, so dramatic at times as to totally outrange human comprehension and anticipation is illustrated in the vicissitude of fortune of several historic figures. One of these is Han Xin 蒲信, a contemporary to Liu Bang;
The first line implies the intervention of fate in the affairs of men, thwarting the direct relationship between man's efforts and his rewards. It is fate which is responsible for Han Xin's undeserved adversity - his execution by Empress Lu despite his earnest efforts in establishing the Han Empire. The next three lines delineate the unpredictable nature of man's fate. Who would have known that Xiao He who had recommended Han to Liu Bang, and thereby raising him to the rank of a powerful general, was also the same man destined to bring upon Han his final disaster, in a plot conspired by Xiao and Empress Lu to victimize him? Han Xin's disbelief in Kui Tong's advice to rebel against Liu Bang at the ripe moment, and consequently foregoing the chance of escaping from his humiliating death, signifies Han's faultiness of anticipation over his future, as against the overpowering force of fate.

The same strain of thought expressing the unexpected turn of events in man's life is shown in the following lines:

若朝金殿
If you would turn towards the gilded palace,

時人輕馬周
The contemporaries had slighted Ma Zhou,

李斯雀解血沾裳
How could Li Si ever discern his fur smeared with blood?

孟父爭如饑喪囚
How could the Second Father be compared to a starved and

mournful captive?
Even unto old age was not able to retrieve the seal of Qin.

The rise of Ma Zhou 馬周, the poor Tang scholar despised by all, from insignificance to an eminent position, the downfall of Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 B.C.), the much-trusted aide of the First Emperor of Qin from all his honor and glory to an ignoble death, and the equally sorrowful fate of Fan Zeng 范增 (275-204 B.C.), once honored as a "Second Father" by Xiang Yu, and later mistrusted as a foe, serve to illustrate with mounted evidence the unpredictability of fortune.

Very often, the unpredictability of fate is allied with the belief that adversity in man's destiny is not justified, deserved nor comprehensible, and hence Fate is portrayed very much as a blind or random force that has mastery over the affairs of men.

For instance, the grave unfairness which the above mentioned historic figures, Han Xin, Li Si and Fan Zeng suffered, illustrates this. The description of the unfulfilled and unrecognised ambition of Confucius, despite his aptitude and great learning is another case in point.

Heaven has not destined me with the chance of success and fame,

Even stronger and more able men are mere sages under the woods.
Do not strenuously seek when Time is at odds.

Speak of talents and skill,

Zhong-ni when he was young

Should be enfeoffed as a marquis.

The lamentable failure of Zhu-ge Liang to win the Empire for the Kingdom of Shu, despite his astonishing talents, and his untimely death are instances attributable to Fate (no. 97). Also the "contradiction of scheme and desire" of two historic figures, Zhang Liang (d. 189 B.C.), and Yang Hu (221-278) whose skill and worth are "incomparable" (no. 99), is interpreted in the light of baffling Fate interfering unjustly in the affairs of men.

Although Fate is often depicted as unfavorable to men, there are other instances when Ma is convinced that Fate is auspicious, only if men await the propitious moment, or the right opportunity, resembling the Shakespearean idea that:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.6

In one poem, Ma says:
These are references to celebrated historic personages, Zhang liang (Zi-fang), Zhu Mai-chen (d. 115 B.C.), Fan Kuai, Han Xin, Fu Yue and Yi-Yin, respectively, who at one time of their life experienced humiliating situation when their hidden potentials were not recognised, but who upon the arrival of propitious opportunities arose to positions of significance.

In another poem, Ma enumerates in an impressive list, prominent personages in history whose "ambitions were once unfulfilled," and who succumbed to lowly means of livelihood prior to their recognition.

Han Xin begging for rice,
Although Ma's overall tone in this tao-shu is one of disillusionment in officialdom, the above mentioned figures did not always suffer adversity. They shared one thing in common: the appreciation of their talents when the tide of fortune turned to their favor.

Since Fate is all powerful in shaping the affairs of men, and even sages
cannot escape from the cyclical pattern of the yin and yang - the negative and positive forces of the cosmos, (no. 132d) it is only wise for men to accept good and evil fortunes placidly without either the wild frenzy of joy, or the doldrums of dejection. Ma's questions:

Why delight in successes?

Why distress in failures?

( no. 132b )

imply his readiness to resign to Fate. More explicitly expressed are these lines:

時與不時都總休
No matter if Time is auspicious or not, always take it easy.

( no. 132d )

命里無時莫剛求
When life has not that propitious Chance, do not forcibly seek,

隨時遇造休生受
Enjoy life at all times, never toil.

( no. 30 )

One has little doubt that Ma would have applauded Hamlet in his admiration of Horatio for his calmness in resigning to Fate:

..........for thou hast, been
As one, in suff'ring all that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. ..... 8

This philosophy of resignation is perhaps more distinctly expressed in Ma's actual withdrawal from official service after a firm conviction that Time and Fate were at odds against him, when he ceased to strain and toil to lead what he believed to be a carefree and unfettered life.

4. Disillusionment in Officialdom, Fame, Power and Wealth

In perceiving life and human achievement as transient, illusive and fatalistic, the corollary to this easily becomes one of total disenchantment with officialdom, fame, wealth, or any form of political struggle for power.

In retrospect, Ma finds that official career, far from being enviable, is a source of shame. In one poem, he confesses:

羞把塵容畫麒麟
Ashamed to have my dusty face painted in the Unicorn Tower.

( no. 13 )

The Unicorn Tower refers to the gallery of honor in the Han Palace where pictures of meritorious subjects were exhibited. In another poem, Ma implies the need to repress the shame associated with officialdom:
Why mention a captive who craves for office?

I am ashamed of it myself,

Better to be rid of it altogether!

(no. 131e)

Moreover, Ma intimates the hypocrisy and artificiality of officialdom by comparing it to the acting of a role on stage. He laments:

Half my life I have acted in a play,

This has nearly ruined the plan of my whole life.

(no. 125a)

In another poem, the days that he spent in public service are actually described as being "wasted," and therefore unfulfilling (no. 50). While the joy of liberating from the trammels of officialdom and the romantic, soul-lifting, almost intoxicating experience resulting from this is beautifully represented in the following poem (no. 115). The loosening of the hair clasp and the official cap is a symbol for breaking away from the bondage of officialdom. The image of the unlimited vista atop the mountain ranges before the eyes of the drunken poet, and of the strong fresh breezes blowing against his hair and the clouds,
evoke very much the feeling of emancipation. Also, words like "luan" (confused), "xu" (empty), "kuan" (broad), "duan" (break), "zui" (drunk) cohere together to connote ideas of spontaneity and release from restrictions and conventions.

立依變
Standing aloof the mountain ranges,

脫簪冠
Taking off the hair-clasp and the official cap.

夕陽倒影松陰亂
In the reflection of the setting sun, the pine shadows are confused,

太液澄虛月影寬
The heavens are clear and empty, and the moon's shadow broad,

海風吹漫雲霞斷
Breezes blowing over the vast sea break the tinted clouds;

醉眠時小童休喚
Lad, don't disturb me when I'm drunk! (no. 115)

In denouncing officialdom, or in justifying his own withdrawal from and distaste for public service, Ma goes beyond this to attack man's vanity to strive for power, fame and wealth on grounds that they are destructive, detrimental to man's peace of mind and even monstrous, apart from being illusory and mutable in nature.

The illusory nature of wealth is seen in a line quoted earlier:
Prosperity is a dream as big as the heavens.

(no. 128f)

The mutability of fame and honor by the inevitable power of death which blots out all human distinctions and renders the search for all these as insane is depicted in:

到頭來難免無常日
After all, no one is spared from the day of death,

爭利名
To strive for gain and fame,

爭富貴
To seize upon wealth and honor,

都是癡
This is sheer madness!

(no. 28)

The destruction of mental peace brought about by the pursuit of wealth and honor is clearly emphasized in the allusion to Shi-Chang, the proud and unhappy millionaire, as contrasted to Chen Tuan, the poor but carefree Taoist recluse.

便有勳績官誥
Even though an imperial edict may confer me with titles,

則是銀漢鵲成橋
This is like magpies building a bridge in the silvery Milky Way;
Even though there are heaps of bills and treasures,

They only resemble swallows fashioning nests on the beams.

Why can't Shi Chong fall asleep,

And Chen Tuan always carols **leep! Iikesfa?log?**

It's that treasure which turns the world

That blocks the path to immortality.

The imperial edict refers to the government invitation to officialdom, while the images of the magpies building a bridge, and the swallows building a nest underscore the ephemeral nature of honor and wealth.

But Shi Chong suffered more than a mere cheerless and inhibited life. The disaster hastened by wealth is seen in his premature and horrifying death in the "Eastern City" by execution, attributed to causes associated with the arrogance of wealth. In a cynical mood Ma laments:

Don't you know that plentiness of wealth is harmful to self?
It's only at the Eastern City that you realize!

Finally, the evil consequence bred by the struggle for power and fame is seen in the destructiveness and cruelty of warfare.

The mountains and rivers of Xian-yang equalling a force of two million soldiers,\textsuperscript{11}

Just two words: "Success" and "Fame,"

How many battles are waged!

It is with the political struggles centered around the strategic site of Xiangyang during the Warring States Period (403-222 B.C.) and later at the time of Liu Bang and Xiang Yu, accompanied by all the appalling devastation and violent bloodshed of war that Ma utters the above lament.
5. **Reclusion**

One solution to the withdrawal of the pursuit of fame, honor, power, glory and wealth is to lead the simple life-style of a recluse. Reclusion is therefore a very popular theme in Ma's san-qu, in which he dwells at great length on the many wonders of it.

Although Ma might have thought otherwise in his youthful days, he was perfectly convinced at the time of his withdrawal from public service that his own disposition of artlessness was quite repugnant to officialdom, as he confides:

```
原本義名利
Originally, I have no love for fame or gain,

嫌貧汚耳
The disdain of poverty soils my ear,

與鳥忘機
Together with the birds I forget to contrive.
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(no. 125d)

What disqualifies him, moreover, appears to be his ineptitude and indolence as an official:

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本是簡懶散人
Basically an idle man,

又無甚經濟才
And without much skill for administration.
```

(no. 16)
But even the awareness of one's true self and the conviction of the meaningfulness of fame and honor on account of their ephemeral, illusory and fatalistic nature are insufficient to sustain a man always who has renounced the world to lead a life of obscurity and apparent poverty. For rationalization and self-consolation, Ma draws upon classic historical models who have likewise displayed a disinclination or even disgust for the official world, by choosing, for instance, the path of reclusion.

These classic paradigms include those sages who have the foresight and the wisdom to evade from office despite their inherent skill and tremendous potentials. There is Lu Zhong-lian 鲁仲連 of the Warring States Period who was disinclined to serve except in times of crisis (no. 131c). There is Yan Guang 嚴光 (styled Zi-ling 子陵, 37 B.C. -43 A.D.) who refused to serve the Han court and spent a carefree and untrammeled life fishing and farming (nos. 50, 108). To forgo the many pleasures and freedom of a recluse and be bogged down by the fetters and burdens of officialdom is therefore a folly that the wise cannot help but amuse over. So concludes Ma:

Yan Zi-ling should laugh at me!

( no. 50 )

that is, for his willing bondage to officialdom. There is also Lin Bu 林逋 (Lin He-jing 林和靖, 976-1028), who refused to serve at court, and it is such people that Ma prides to be a "neighbor" (no. 1281).
History has also shown that those who are so unfortunate as to get involved with public service, are, nevertheless, disillusioned or disgusted with it. A good illustration is Wang Hui-zhi 王徽之 (styled Zi-you 子猷) of Jin whose unconventional, impulsive and reckless behavior as an official betrays the shackles which officials considered to be in the "norm" are subject to:

青雲興盡王子猷
Wang Zi-you's zeal of rising to the blue clouds was exhausted,

半路裹乾生受
Mid-way in the path of officialdom he suffered in vain.

馬踏街頭月
His horse treading onto the moon's shadow on the street,

耳聽宮前漏
His ear listening to the water-clock in front of the palace,

知此悠遊無所關內侯
How could he have envied a marquis within the frontiers?

(no. 131d)

The first line refers to Wang's nonchalance as a high-ranking official, while the third and fourth lines refer to the everyday monotonous routine of an official of early rising to attend court affairs. Being an impulsive person with little discipline, Wang's disregard for official service in the fifth line is understandable.

While some remain as wishy-washy officials, others have made a clear gesture of rejection by retiring as a recluse. This is exactly what Tao Qian
had done even at the prime of his life. It is not difficult to detect Ma's attraction to and even identification with Tao in his constant references to the latter, and in the adoption of the pen name "Dong-li," taken from words that appear in one of Tao's poems.

Another instance of retiring from officialdom to lead the tranquil life of a recluse is seen in the person of Pei Du (d. 838 B.C.), who, despite his marvellous achievement as an official, was finally disillusioned into an earlier withdrawal, and built his luxurious abode, the Green Wild Grass Hall as a place of retreat (no. 130g). So too was Fan Li (ca. 490 B.C.), who had the foresight to withdraw from public service to sail in a boat on the lakes when his assistance to King Gou Jian of Yue to retaliate the Kingdom of Wu was completed (nos. 23, 132d).

The sagacity of these men to abandon officialdom when times were unfavorable are in distinct contrast to Qu Yuan of Chu (b. ca. 340 B.C.) whose tenacity to stay in office despite the King's disfavor of him, resulting thus in his suicide, appears to be both lamentable and profitless. This is how Ma concludes in one poem after his earnest plea to get drunk:

Let Qu Yuan die an innocent death,
What difference is there between drunk and sober?

(no. 109)
Viewing reclusion in a positive light, it certainly has a host of advantages over public service. Nature is, in the first instance, a beautiful sanctuary which soothes and charms the wearied soul. Although true Taoist recluses recognise in nature the Dao, or the embodiment of truth, simplicity and harmony, as contrasted to the artificiality and disorder of the human world, Ma does not so much philosophize on these aspects as present nature in a picturesque way, dwelling on its serene beauty. In one poem, the beauty of nature is actually represented as a painting that the eye can glut upon for enjoyment:

滿眼雲山畫圖開
The eyes full of clouds and mountains as a painting unfolded.

(no. 16)

As further illustration, the following poem, for instance, describing Ma's retired abode, is certainly more pictorial and idyllic than meditative, although symbols and allusions are present. The green pines and bamboos are traditionally associated with fortitude, and therefore connote the lofty character of recluses, while the three paths and the five willows are reminiscent of Tao Qian's reference to reclusion. 15

翠竹邊
By the side of the jade-colored bamboos,

青松側
Near the green pines,
Two thatched huts among shades of bamboos and sounds of
the pines,

Fortunately in peace, this leisurely body of mine is yet alive,

Three trimmed paths,

Five planted willows,

Oh, to return home!

Peace of mind which one enjoys in the sanctuary of nature, away from all
the frets of officialdom, is another positive aspect of reclusion. Ma argues:

Poverty without worries awakens me to the value of leisure,

Say, to sail in a boat amid the wind and the waves,

How can this compare with returning to the fields and
gardens dusting off one's sleeves?
The perils and hardship encountered in the struggle in officialdom are likened to those a boatman has to wrestle with in a storm, and a life of poverty without such turmoil is therefore justifiable.

The tranquility and the seclusion conveyed in these poems, and the yearning to find in nature a sanctuary appear to transcend cultural and time barriers - Yeats' fancy to escape to the Lake Isle of Innisfree where he envisages the gentle peace of the bucolic hermit life, may be taken as an approximation:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

Activities which are associated with the life of a recluse, moreover, are not monotonous, inhibited, nor tedious, for there is no longer the compulsion for routinized responsibility; instead they are ever-changing, capricious, free and romantic. There is plenty of time for playing with the birds and enjoying the flowers. For instance:
I enjoy beckoning to the brightly coated pigeons on cloudy days,

And I love to whistle to thrushes among scented flowers;

Or, among dewy lotuses, in windy rushes, beyond misty willows,

To keep company with green-headed cackling ducks and chirping orioles.

There is leisure enough to enjoy the fresh freezes and the clear moon, to promenade in the garden, to sleep in the shade of the calabash trellis, to listen to the sound of the early bees, and feel the full force of tranquil joy in the absence of care.

Dong-li originally a master of the wind and moon,

Integrity even in my old age, I have fun in the garden,

Sleeping under the trellis of calabash,

A few lines of hanging willows,
What a joyous and restful place!

The term "Dong-li" brings to mind Tao Qian's "eastern fence," while the references to the willows, and having fun in the garden also remind us of Tao's description of reclusion. 18

The wind and moon may also trigger poetic inspiration:

With the fresh breezes and clear moon I return the debts of poetry.

Whims may lead him to play a fisherman's flute by the fish pond when he is sober, to chant a fisherman's song when he is drunk (no. 50), to have bamboo shoots and bracken roots with a visiting monk, to play chess or the lute with a guest, or to sip three cups of wine in the shade of the pear tree (no. 125b,d), all such pleasurable activities as are rarely permissible as an official.
6. Carpe Diem

It would be mistaken to believe that Ma indulged only in serene activities which befit a recluse, practising asceticism and abstinence from sensual pleasures as orthodox Taoism recommends. Rather, hedonism, the belief in the intrinsic value of pleasure by maximizing the joy of every moment, that is, reclusion without stoicism was what Ma subscribed to. If reclusion and hedonism appear incompatible, the rift between them may be modified by the rationale of "escapism" — "The apparent inconsistencies between this 'positive' hedonism and the 'Taoist' simplicity and passivity is much less than it might at first seem. The point of similarity lies in the fact that both constitute a withdrawal from mundane society and its conventional values. The standard existence or aim of a scholar in old Chinese society was the official career within mundane society. The hermit life amid Nature and the unfettered pursuit of romance, with its concept of living for the pleasure of the moment both represented a form of withdrawal from such an existence and such ambitions ....... " 19

This Epicurean inclination in Ma is delineated in the constant advocacy to grasp every moment so as to enjoy it intently. Such motives as the following are common:

Let us hasten with the forfeit cup before

night is spent and the lamp goes out.

(no. 130a; tr. Liu Wu-Chi 20)
Like Robert Frost's "Carpe Diem," in which Age gives the clarion call to

"Be happy, happy, happy,
And seize the day of pleasure."21

Ma's plea to lose oneself in happiness here and now is similar.

There are also constant references to the feasting of the "purple fat crabs," the fresh "newly bought fish," the delicious tangerines and of indulgence in good wine.22 Good-humoredly, Ma teases the soberness of Qu Yuan in forgoing physical pleasure derived from enjoying rare delicacies as

洞庭柑東陽酒西湖蟹
Oranges from Dong-ting, wine from Dong-yang, crabs from the West Lake.

The same vein of indulging the present moment in physical pleasure is conveyed in the lines beneath:

愛秋末時那些
What does one love at autumn-tide?

和露摘黃花
To pluck yellow flowers covered with dew

帶霜分紫蟹
To open purple crabs heavy with frost;

煮酒燒紅葉
To burn red leaves for warming wine.
想人生有限杯
Just think of the limited cups in a man's life

And the few "mountain days" that one can enjoy!

(no. 130g; tr. Liu Wu-chi'23)

For Ma, sensual pleasure exceeds food and wine. It includes absorbing oneself in musical entertainment, in dance performances, and enjoying the sight of beautiful girls (no. 131e). The call to enjoy good music and dance performance is seen below:

良辰媚景休空過
Do not let the good hour and charming scenes pass in vain,

琉璃鐘琥珀濃
The crystal goblet with amber wine,

細腰舞皓齒歌
Dances of slender waists and songs of white teeth;

倒大來開快活
How very leisurely and joyous!

(no. 32)
7. Obliviousness

Another alternative to evade the predicament of life, apart from indulging in sensual pleasure, is to resort to relativism and even obliviousness with regard to the standards of right and wrong, and indeed to all human and social concerns. Ma speaks of the attainment of obliviousness in the detached life of a recluse in these lines:

利名渇
Gain and fame I have discarded,

是非絶
Right and wrong forgotten.

紅塵不向門前惹
Red dust will no longer entice me outside the gate,

( no. 130f; tr. Liu Wu-chi 24 )

In more practical terms, Ma discloses that he is unmindful of petty human standards and values by shutting his mouth always to such concerns of right and wrong (no. 131f), and by closing his ear to such gossip (no. 125a). He speaks also of going to sleep and pretending to be foolish in order to avoid implication in human affairs:

不爭鏡裏添白雪
Caring not that snowy hair has increased in the mirror,

上牀與鞋履相別
I'll go to bed, parting with slippers and shoes.
休笑巢鴦計拙
Do not laugh at the foolish dove for failing to build
its nest;

葫蘆提一句裝呆
Taking life easy, I have all this time feigned stupidity.

( no. 130e; tr. Liu Wu-chi²⁵ )

The stupidity of the dove is ironic here, as in pretending to be clumsy in
building its own nest, it occupies the fine and secured nest of the magpie. In
the same sense, Ma hints that true wisdom lies in the pretension of muddleheaded-
ness and ignorance.

Obliviousness by sleep and intoxication, and the mental peace which ensues
from these are in fact constantly reiterated in Ma's san-qu. The following lines
suggest that peace of mind is disrupted when one awakens from sleep at the start
of the day:

蛩吟罷一覺才寧貼
When the chirping of insects has ceased,
only then will sleep be peaceful and sound;

雞鳴時萬事無休歇
As soon as the cock crows, there will be no end to
the multiplicity of affairs.

( no. 130g, tr. Liu Wu-ci²⁶ )

The blurring of distinction of the high and the low, the weak and the
strong, the right and wrong (no. 136b), by escaping to drunkenness and securing joy and relief in return is evidenced in the lines below. The years of Yao here refers to the heyday of the reign of Emperor Yao in ancient China.

不如長醉酒壘邊
Better to be drunk by the wine-shop

是非潛
Submerging all right and wrong

終日樂堯年
Enjoying the whole day peace as in the years of Yao.

( no. 44 )

Indeed, Ma's favorite lines below, and other similar ones,

不如醉還醒
Better to be drunk, and be sober,

醒而醉
When sober, again be drunk!

( nos. 95 - 100 )

can be said to represent his quintessential spirit, although they may be interpreted as possessing latent ironic undertones if we relate these lines to Tao Qian's "Drinking Wine" poems, one of which portrays both a drunken and a sober man. While the drunken man shams stupidity and ignorance, and the sober man diligently toils, Tao's preference is clearly for the former, implying, paradoxically, that he alone is wise and discerning.27
8. The Attraction Towards the Supernatural

One final way for Ma to divert frustration from the mundane world is to obsess himself with thoughts of the supernatural, and the immortal. Although Ma's plays reveal considerably his inclination in this area, his san-qu contains only faint traces of such thoughts.

The lines below betray a little of this enchantment towards the supernatural world of Taoist mythology and otherworldly imagination, although they are essentially descriptive of the beautiful scenery of the West Lake where the tao-shu was written.

想像間神仙宮殿娃
In my fantasy, the halls of the fairies approximate the Guan-wa Palace,

俯仰間飛來峰勝巫峽
Looking up, the Fei-lai Peak surpasses the Gorge of Wu,

葛仙翁郭璞家
The Ge Immortals, and Guo Pu,

幾點林櫻似丹砂
A few dots of cherry blossoms resemble the cinnabar.

(no. 128i)

The Guan-wa here refers to the grandiose palace built by King Fu Cha of Wu (d. ca 473 B.C.), while the Fei-lai Peak which a Buddhist monk claimed to have flown over from a mountain range in India, is near the West Lake, and
is the alternative name for the Peak of Spiritual Vulture. The Gorge of Wu which Ma describes as inferior to the Fei-lai Peak is an impressive geographic site in the Upper Yangtze River. The Ge immortals refer to the Taoists, Ge Xuan, and Ge Hong, said to have attained immortality, and Guo Pu (276–324) was the Jin poet who delighted in astrology and the occult. The cinnabar is a reference to the Taoist alchemical search for the elixir of life.

In one poem, Ma speaks of the legendary Tian-tai mountain where immortals dwell, and teases Liu Chen of East Han for leaving this fairy land which is obviously much better than the human world (no. 17). There appears to be a nostalgic yearning, in another poem (no. 21), for the mythological past, in the return of the legendary phoenix and dragon which carry the happy couple Nong Yu and Xiao Shi away into immortality.
9. Inconsistencies

Although the overall tone of Ma's san-qu is one of joviality and contentment in reclusion, some anthologies do attribute poems of an embittered or frustrated nature to his authorship. While it is dubious if such poems (notably three -- nos. 29, 37, 38) are truly his works, it is not totally unacceptable to view them as psychological slips of discontent on Ma's part, or as works of a more youthful period, when Ma was filled with high aspirations of a bright future in public service.

The following poem, which is attributed also to Liu Shi-zhong (ca. 1302), may be said to reveal a repressed melancholy that the conscious mind has to grapple with.

带野花
Bringing the wild flowers,

携村酒
Carrying the village wine;

烦恼如何到心頭
How does worry get to my heart?

誰能躍馬常食肉
Who can gallop a horse and always taste meat?

二頃田
Two hectares of fields,
The first two lines speak of a conscious escape from frets by devoting oneself to wine and the beauty of nature. The third line reveals the irrepressible emergence of worries because of poverty. Rationalization is found in recognizing poverty to be the rule, rather than the exception, and that satisfaction comes easily when one's basic needs are met.

The two other poems attributed simultaneously to Wu Ren-qing reveal a bitterness of tone that is unusual in Ma's san-qu. While these two poems can be explained as psychological slips, it is also possible to regard them as works of an earlier, more ambitious period of Ma's life. One (no. 37) refers to Zhu Mai-chen, a once poor and unrecognized scholar, who later rose to become an eminent official, and laments that while Zhu is appreciated, the poet's talents are left to rot away unnoticed as trunks of trees escape the eye of the woodcutter.

The other one (no. 38) is even more vehement and acrid in tone, employing such words as "kun" (distress), "bei" (grieved), and "hen" (embittered) to delineate the poet's thwarted ambition. The image of the eagle struggling to soar in the west wind in the depth of the night heightens the sense of desperation.
夜來西風裏
Dark in the west wind of the night,

九天鷹鷹飛
The eagle struggles to soar to the nine heavens.

困然中原一布衣
In distress, I'm still a commoner,

悲
Grieved!

故人知未知
Friend, do you realize this?

夢樓意
With ambition to ascend the tower,

恨無天上梯
I'm embittered that there is no ladder.
B. Diversity of Subject Matter and Tone

It has been remarked that Ma is the first Yuan poet who manages to pour his own soul into his drama and san-qu, in imbuing his work with marked egocentricity. While this is indisputable, it is equally true that Ma is a skilled master of many styles of writing, excelling in a great diversity of subject matter and multiplicity of tones. Perhaps, the high esteem which traditional scholars paid to Su Dong-po (1036-1101) with regard to his remarkable achievement in extending the thematic scope of the ci, is equally applicable to Ma in the realm of san-qu - that is, his success in attaining a state in which there is no idea that he cannot penetrate, and nothing that he cannot versify."

Roughly, the subject matter of Ma's san-qu can be categorized into three main types: his lyrical, descriptive and narrative poems. Wang Guo-wei's description of the multi-faceted merits of Yuan za-ju - "in expressing emotions they permeate one's heart, in describing scenes, they widen one's eyes and ears, in narrating, it is as though they emerge right from one's mouth," can be well taken to sum up the all-rounded skill of Ma Zhi-yuan as a san-qu poet.
1. Lyrical Poems

Essentially, Ma's lyrical poems can be sub-divided into two main types: the "tan-shi 嘆世" poems which embody his laments of the ways of the world and of his personal philosophy, and the love poems which range from the more traditional subtle boudoir types to the rather prosaic ones marked with realism.

Again, within Ma's "Poems of Lament," either with respect to officialdom, fame, wealth, power, or of life in general, there is a great diversity of tones. There are times when Ma appears to be mildly disillusioned, stating in a rather matter-of-fact way without much vehemence:

人間寵辱都參破
I have seen through the honor and the humiliation of
the human world.

(no. 27)

In other occasions, his tone is more sarcastic, realizing that man is totally at the mercy of fate, and that human achievement is futile in so far as it is ephemeral and illusory. It is with this cynical bent that he remarks:

Better to be drunk, and be sober,
When sober, again be drunk!

(nos. 95 - 100)

From cynicism, Ma at times approaches towards a satirical mood. His
contemptuous attack of the insect world of bloodthirsty and ruthless struggles, of its disgustful chaos and violence is seen as a veiled assault against parallel phenomena in the human world.

看眾匹匹蟻排兵
See how in throngs the ants form their soldiers,

亂紛紛蜂釀蜜
How disorderly the bees suck honey,

急攘攘蠅爭血
How noisily the flies fight for blood!

(no. 130g; tr. Liu Wu-chi)

It is not certain, however, if Ma ever embarks on a tone of severe bitterness. The poems that do reveal an ostensible frustration are beset with the problem of dubious authorship as has been previously discussed. To recapitulate, the following lines, if truly his, certainly appear acrid in tone:

......
In distress, I'm still a commoner,
Grieved!

......
With ambition to ascend the tower,
I'm embittered that there is no ladder!

(no. 38)

But the bulk of Ma's "tan-shi" poems expresses quite a different mood.
The overall tone is one of jocularity, contentment and recklessness, even when these poems are mingled with attempts at rationalization. The following poem is a good example:

子孝順
My sons are filial,

妻賢惠
My wife is virtuous;

使碎心機為他誰
For whom should I shatter my heart in drudgery?

到頭來難免無常日
After all, no one is spared from the day of death.

爭利名
To strive for gain and fame,

奪富貴
To seize for wealth and honor,

都是癡
This is sheer madness!

(no. 28)

If Ma has moments of gravity, there are times when he assumes a tone of playfulness, when he jests even at the life of the fisherman and the woodcutter, the traditional symbols for a recluse (rather than ridiculing reclusion per se).

This tongue-in-cheek mood of his is revealed in the following poem, in which
the straw raincoat represents the fisherman, and the purple silk gown the official.

The green straw raincoat, and the purple silk robe,

which is better?

Both are to no avail,

Even as a fisherman,

You're still in the wind and the waves,

Better to find a secured place to sit leisurely!

Finally, a rather rare tone of his is one of didacticism, in which, for instance, he admonishes ambitious politicians not to be too ruthless lest they themselves be destroyed (no. 114). Or like a Buddhist monk, he advises the world:

In the field of blessings do not grow misfortunes for posterity;

Make ties for purity and cleanliness for your reincarnations,
The love poems of Ma Zhi-yuan again attest to his ability in mastering different modes of expression. One group of these poems represents the traditional subtle boudoir style in which the lover usually relates his or her melancholic yearnings for the departed or unfaithful lover with immediate boudoir objects, or to scenes and phenomena from nature, instead of pouring out this anguish directly. In most of these poems, the female persona is adopted, and the psychological insights with which Ma portrays these secluded and lonesome ladies pining and languishing away in their intense yearning is noteworthy.

An instance of this lanquid mood attributed to the pathology of lovesickness is seen in the following poem in which the lover feels too lethargic even to play the lute or burn the incense. Her distracted mind is revealed in her insensitivity to the coming of spring, despite her longing for its arrival, while the lengthiness of the day and her escape into sleep betray her ennui. The startle from sleep from which she seeks ease, by the noise of selling flowers suggests, perhaps, her haunting fear of being abandoned by her lover.

Sorrowfully, I play the lute,
Wearily, I burn the incence,  

Longing for spring to come, not knowing it's there;

As the day is long, I slumber before the tiny window,

The noise of selling flowers startles me suddenly from sleep.

(no. 89)

Another poem which is also pensive in mood, but excels even the former in subtlety is this one:

The green gauze curtain,

The white ivory bed,

The cool of the evening arises, as the disk of the moon newly ascends,

Who is piping the jade flute to allure the phoenix,

Heaping the broken-hearted with more regrets? (no. 86)
The first three lines appear almost like a dispassionate description of the exquisite boudoir scene inside together with the quiet evening scene on the outside. This is deceptive as each of these scenes is latent with woeful associations and paradoxes. The comfort and the beauty of the luxurious ivory bed and silk curtain are inviting, but ironic -- there is no one to share the bed with. The coolness of the evening and the rise of the full moon are charming and amorous, but also incongruous -- they only intensify the present agony of solitude and vivify past memories of love. The last two lines are more explicit of this love-sickness by alluding to the blissful couple, Nong Yu and Xiao Shi, noted for skilful playing of the flute and admired as paradigms of happy and long-lasting marriage. The conjugal bliss of Nong Yu and Xiao Shi is a distinct contrast to self, and results only in greater sorrow and nostalgia.

The next two poems demonstrate quite a drastically different style from the former. Here the tone is embittered, reproachful and self-defensive, and the language is prosaic, gross, though highly realistic, befitting the utterance of the unrefined. In the first poem, the frustrated speaker is all flustered in exposing her departed lover to every one and actually upbraids him as a "two-timer." The curse at the end is based on the popular belief that one's ear lobe glows at the criticism of others.

Since you've left,
Your news are all gone;

You, two-timer, how awfully you've hurt me,

You may be sure to every one I meet I'll tell of you,

I don't believe that your ear lobe won't flush!

Another poem below strikes us again with its liveliness of tone and candor. Its colloquial style is revealed in the usage of such reduplicated structure as "can ke-ke 糜可可" (meaning terrible), and in inserting the negative "bu 不" between reduplicated words as "dong-bu-dong 動不動" (meaning unexpectedly), and "pa na bu pa怕不怕" (meaning afraid or not afraid).

The bosom thoughts of my heart,

I've told him.

At the drop of a hat you say we'll just break up,
You think it fun to say those awful words "break up,"
Deep in my heart, how can't I be scared!
2. Descriptive Poems

While Ma's "egocentric" lyrical poems possess an individuality that distinguishes him from the rest of the san-qu poets, his descriptive poems, particularly those vignettes which present a vivid natural scene with only a few strokes, rather than his "Poems of Lament" are sometimes regarded as the best — the invaluable gems of his entire san-qu collection. 39

Of these descriptive poems, the one that is cherished most, despite the gravity of the problem of authorship, 40 is undeniably the "Autumn Thoughts" written in the tune of Tian-jing sha.

枯藤老樹昏鴉
Withered vines, an aged tree, evening crows,

小橋流水人家
Small bridge, flowing water, folks' homes,

古道西風瘦馬
Old road, west wind, a lean horse,

夕陽西下
The dusk sun sinks west,

斷腸人在天涯
A heart-broken man at the sky's edge.

(no. 49)

This poem is descriptive of a distant traveller on an ancient road in one autumn evening. It is essentially a word painting studded with images, with
little direct reference to emotive words, although the poem is soaked with emotion and the overall tone is poignantly melancholic. The success and the beauty of the poem lie very much, therefore, in the skilful selection of images, which disconnected as they appear (due to weak syntactic links), nevertheless, cohere by reason of their dissonance into an organic whole to evoke the universal feeling of melancholic solitude.

The words "withered," "aged," "old," "lean," and "sinks" all denote a sense of decay and fragmentation, while the setting of the scene at evening, together with the unwelcoming crows, the chilly west wind which represents autumn, and the remoteness suggested by the words "tian-ya 天涯" (literally translated here as sky's edge) aggravate the general atmosphere of dissonance and dejection. The second line which portrays small cottages by the side of the flowing river over which runs a tiny bridge suggests, by contrast, a rather domesticated or at least populated scene which easily becomes a foil to the third line with the lean horse on the old road against the west wind, and sharpens the sense of desolation and solitude encountered here.

The ability to saturate a mere twenty-eight word poem with so many vivid impressions and so much deep feeling is indeed praiseworthy. Wang Guo-wei is appropriate in likening this poem to the intensity of the Tang jue-ju 绝句 (quartrain), so perfect as to be unrivaled by other san-qu poems, while its naturalness at the same time is extolled by Wang as though it were "a sound from nature."
The next two poems selected from a group of eight short lyrics describing the stereotyped poetic theme of the "Eight Scenes of the Xiao and the Xiang Rivers," demonstrate also Ma's consummate skill in word painting. The mood of these two poems, unlike the "Autumn Thoughts," is serene and dispassionate. The first of these, entitled "The Hill City in Fresh Mist," reads:

花村外
Beyond the flowery village,

草庐西
West of the grassy hut;

晚霞明雨收天霽
The rain stops, the sky clears, and the rosy clouds are bright,

四圍山一竿殘照裏
Hills on four sides, the length of one rod of dwindling light;

橫屏風又添鸞翠
The brocaded screen with added green jade.

(no. 60)

It describes a twilight scene in the hills after rain. The focus here is particularly on the changing effects of light. The third line delineates the brightening of the sky after rain, but this is evanescent, as the setting sun rapidly diminishes its rigor in the dying light. The length of one rod of light
is indicative of the shadow of the sinking sun while the brocaded screen is a metaphor for the surrounding hills, whose trees sparkle almost like jade in fresh greenness after a rain wash.

The second poem entitled "The Distant Beach with Returning Sails," is given below:

夕陽下
The evening sun sinks,

酒旗開
The banner of the wine-shop is at rest,

兩三艘尚未至岸
Two, three boats have not yet reached the shore,

落花水香茅舍晚
Falling petals, fragrant water and the late straw hut,

斷橋頭賣魚人散
At the broken end of the bridge, the fishermen scatter for home.

(no. 61)

The scene here is again one of tranquility though not of inactivity. The pace here is slow and leisurely. Even the flag of the wine-shop is not flurried by the wind and the returning boats of the fishermen are not anxious to speed ashore. Implicit in the last two lines is also a sense of satisfaction, as the day's labor is over, and the fishermen will soon be able to join their family in the straw
huts beside falling petals and fragrant water.

While the last three poems are noted for their naturalness and heavy imagistic impact with a few sketchy strokes, the following poem, entitled "Regrets for Spring," basically descriptive of the spring scene, displays yet another style of Ma Zhi-yuan, his ornateness of form and his consciousness of the art. The tone here is one of playful exaggeration, as the following lines show:

齊臻臻珠圍翠繞
Prin and proper are the surrounding pearls and the
encircling jade,

泠清清綠暗紅來
Cool and fresh are the pale green and the scanty red,

但合眼裏尋春去
Closing my eyes, I wander away to seek for Spring
in dreams,


威春情來來往往蜂蝶
Moved by Spring's passion, are the bee Cupids that
fly to and fro,

動春意哀哀怨怨杜宇
Touched by Spring's mood, are the cuckoos that mourn
and grieve,
Confused by Spring's heart, are the young orioles that feign and shy.

(no. 120b)

The parallel structure in the first two lines, together with the reduplicated compound "qi zhen-zhen" (齊臻臻) which matches with "leng qing-qing" (冷清清) and the piling of adjectives (describing the beautifully decked girls in spring, and the natural scene of the trees and flowers), demonstrate a deliberate attempt at exuberant expression. The triple parallel structure of lines four, five, and six with the double reduplicated compounds at the center of these three lines, "lai-lai wang-wang 来来往往," "ai-ai-yuan-yuan 哀哀怨怨," "qiao-qiao qie-qie 翩翩怯怯" (implying the erotic stirring of spring), and the personification of the bees, the cuckoos and the orioles also appear to be highly polished.

Another type of scene-describing poems is the group of four poems entitled "In Reply to Lu Shu-zhai at the West Lake," written in the tune of Xiang-fei yuan (nos. 91-94). The mood here is one of gaiety and playfulness, and as these poems are written in response to another poet, they suffer from the trappings of artificiality and even of formalism. The West Lake here is personified as the Chinese beauty, Xi Shi (西施), and each of the four poems represents a season of the year. The ending of each of these four poems reveals something of this artificiality in the deliberate repetition.
How very lovely is Xi Shi with ample sleep!

( no. 91 )

How very cool is Xi Shi as a summer resort!

( no. 92 )

How very romantic is Xi Shi intoxicated with wine!

( no. 93 )

How indescribable is Xi Shi covered with powder!

( no. 94 )

In addition to describing scenes, Ma's descriptive poems venture into the realm of less common topics as the "Six Arts" and calligraphy. Despite traditional respect paid to the Confucian-sanctioned faculties of studies, Ma's six poems that describe the "Rites," "Music," "Archery," "Charioteering," "Writing," "Mathematics" (nos. 39-44) are on the whole flippant in tone, expressing his preference for wine in which true contentment is found.

Ma's tao-shu entitled "Zhang Yu-yan's Grass Characters" (no. 124) written probably in praise of a contemporary's calligraphy is a descriptive poem of great elaboration and animation, loaded with details of Zhang's marvellous style of writing, revealing at the same time Ma's mastery of the luxuriant way of
expression. The following lines taken from this long poem will suffice for illustration:

**Soft as the willows dancing harmoniously with the wind,**

**Hard as the bolt that crashes in the vast sky,**

**How very delightful!**

**Calm and steady,**

**Now crooked, now straight;**

( no. 124d )

**One stroke is like a wisp of cloud,**

**One dot resembles a piece of outlandish rock,**

**One slant is like the roc spreading its wings;**

**Curved and bent, fiercely falling, like the sturdy dragon's bone,**
Stern and forceful, vigorously dragging, like the
titanic python's skin.

( no. 124e )

Lastly, for reasons of simplicity, the two poems of Ma (nos. 121, 133) that extol the "magnificent" Mongol reign, and are more eulogistic than descriptive by nature, are included also in the category of descriptive poems.

The date in which poem 121 was written is uncertain, although poem 133 appears to be written at the occasion of the ascension of the Yuan ruler, Yingzong to the imperial throne (1321), as is evidenced by the name of the reign period "Zhi-zhi 正治 " appearing at the beginning of the poem. Both these poems are pompous and hyperbolic in language, filled with cliché, impersonal and formal as most public poems are inclined to be, and conspicuously flattering in tone. The following stanza illustrates this:

Zhi-zhi ruling over the Hua and the Yi tribes,
Pompous and dignified is the magnificent reign of the House of Yuan,
Today is the auspicious day of the Flying Dragon,
the start of the supreme rule,
To last for millions of years,
Peace to the ends of the world.
The ancient land of Yan is a heroic place,
The sun and the moon illumine in brightness,
Together rejoice in this prosperity and harmony!

The first two words "Zhi-zhi," while referring to the reign of Ying-zong, can also be interpreted as a compound meaning "superlative rule." The Hua and the Yi tribes refer to all subjects under the Mongol rule. The "day of the Flying Dragon," in its original, is the "jiu-wu long-fei," a cliché taken from the Book of Changes, referring to the fifth line in the nine-stroked diagram of divination, when the dragon flies in the sky, and interpreted as the day when an emperor ascends the throne. The place "Yan" refers to the northern part of China where the Mongolian tribe originated.

The complimentary tone of the poem calculated to glorify the Yuan rule is a distinct contrast to the spontaneity of Ma's "Poems of Lament," or to the serene simplicity of some of his descriptive poems. It appears as though Ma,
as a celebrated poet, was called upon in special occasions, to compose public poems to serve political purposes. A schism between his public poems of praise and his private poems of honest outpouring is apparent.
3. **Narrative Poems**

Another aspect of Ma's versatility is his adeptness in the mode of narration. Several of these narratives are episodes taken from love stories. "The Wind Sends the Guest Off the Long River" (no. 116), for instance, is centered on the elopement of Su Qing, the charming courtesan, with Feng Kui, the gross but wealthy tea-merchant, and the chasing of them by Su's true lover, the poor scholar Shuang Jian. 45

The plot is familiar, but the atmosphere of suspense and desperation Ma recreates in his short narration is notable. The flickering candle light and the rolling of the curtain by the increasing speed of the wind out in the river is the objective correlative to Shuang Jian's inner turmoil and anxiety. The line

$$
\text{千里洪波夜永}
$$

*A thousand li of immense waves, and the beautiful night stretches on eternally,*

depicts again the anguish of Shuang Jian, who, in his desperation, perceives the night and the waves as dragging on intolerably, while the "beautiful night" serves to increase the irony of the situation. The ending of the poem in the line

$$
\text{猛擡頭觀見豫章城}
$$

*Suddenly raising his head, he saw the city of Yu Zhang*

is skillful, and is deliberately open-ended, inviting the reader to participate in the imagination of what happens as Shuang reaches the city of Yu Zhang, where Su and Feng have eloped to.
The psychology of a solitary traveller is certainly well depicted in another short narrative, entitled "The Rain Keeps a Traveller in the Lonely Inn" (no. 117). This distant traveller is portrayed as listless, too dispirited even to drink the good wine in the inn. He is insomnic moreover - his ears alert to the cawing of the crows in the cold, and the wind soughing through the leaves in the hills the whole night. His restlessness reaches such a level that his heart becomes feverish, and his attention has to be diverted to the incessant trimming of the candle.

While Ma succeeds in creating a depressive mood in the last poem, another tao-shu of his, entitled "Borrowing a Horse" (no. 126) demonstrates his uncanny skill in producing humor. Indeed, Ma's achievement as one of the greatest masters of Chinese comic poems cannot be underestimated. As the Zhong-guo wen -xue shi remarks of this tao-shu, "In the description, there is humor and satire .... This tao-shu is a break-through from the lyrical and descriptive modes of the san-qu, and succeeds in fashioning a character of remarkably vivid personality. Considering Ma Zhi-yuan's times, he is certainly to be acclaimed for his success in extending the subject matter of the san-qu."

The story is about a man who has recently bought a horse of good pedigree, and has attached great affection towards him. One day, however, an unknowing friend comes to borrow the horse for a day's ride, and the owner is therefore faced with the conflict of having to part with his beloved pet, or to offend his friend. This reluctance to lend his horse is delineated in the unvoiced feelings below:
There are such unmindful fools,

Who open their mouth to borrow,

But to refuse right to their face is hard.

As straightforward rejection is difficult, the owner resorts to indirect means of showing his unwillingness:

Sluggishly, I lead him (the horse) from the manger,

Reluctantly, I follow at the back,

Angrily, I dawdle to fix the saddle;

I become silent for a good while, not uttering one word.

But his heart is full of invectives:

Dumb idiot, can't you understand?
He can't be said to be insensible, though.

Doesn't the saying go, "You shouldn't pull another man's bow,"

"Ride another man's horse?"

(No. 126b)

Next, the owner resorts to profuse and repetitive directions as to how his friend should handle his horse. Below is a mere fraction of these injunctions:

When he's hungry, feed him with grass,
When he's thirsty, give him a drink,
When you touch his skin, don't you chafe it with a rough blanket,
Don't ever beat his "three-hilled bone" with a whip,
Don't ever make his hoofs trot on bricks and tiles.
Remember well the saying,

"Don't make him canter when he's fed,

Don't make him gallop when he'd drunk."

One cannot help laughing at the meticulous details and the urgent tone with which these directions are given. Much of the humor arises from the incongruity of attaching so much significance to the trifling act of lending a horse for a day. Ma's open description of the traditionally tabooed subject of defecation is also unprecedented in Chinese poems of standing, marking the poem as an audacious attempt on Ma's part. The lines below show this:

When he voids the dung, make him void in a dryy place,

When he urinates a lot, make him urinate in a clean place.

But humor is not the sole mood of the poem. It has humor skilfully blended with satire and pathos. It is satirical, as the owner is depicted as unusually stingy, and pathetic towards the end, as the owner's genuine and profound affection for his horse is revealed. The following lines show how broken-hearted
the owner is after parting with his horse before it even sets off for the trip.

早晨借與他
In the morning, he asked to borrow my horse,

日平西望你
When the sun levels west, I yearn for you,

倚門專等來家內
Leaning by the door, I especially wait for you at home.

柔腸寸寸因地斷
Inch by inch, my soft entrails break for you,

側耳頻頻聽你嘶
Bending my ear, I constantly hear you neigh.

道一聲好去
I make one bid for a good trip,

早兩淚雙垂
Already two rows of tears have fallen.

(no. 126h)

The poem ends with another pang of conflict of the owner and his final hard-won "courage" and "generosity" of lending his horse:

沒道理 沒道理
Oh, nonsense, nonsense!

忒下的 叢下的
Far too mean, too mean!
The words I've just spoken, sir, be sure to heed,

In one breath, I lend you the horse, not going back on my word.

(no. 126i)
4. Summary

To recapitulate, one significant aspect of Ma Zhi-yuan’s achievement as a san-qu poet is his power of embracing greatly diverse subject matter and tones into his poems, marking him an innovator in the thematic area of san-qu.

To emphasize the all-inclusiveness of themes in Ma’s san-qu, written either in the lyrical, descriptive or narrative forms, the subject matter may be dichotomized into such polarities as the beautiful and the ugly, the elevated and the mundane, the private and public, the self and other, love and hate, pleasure and suffering, sociality and solitude.

The beautiful is evidenced in such charming description as the returning sails from the distant shore at the close of the day; the ugly by the description of desolate burial places. The elevated themes include references to struggles for political power, and laments to the intrinsic value of life; the mundane includes the vulgar squabbles of estranged lovers. There are also his private poems written to sublimate his thwarted ambition, and the public, either to reciprocate poems with a friend, or to eulogize the "glorious" reign of the Yuan dynasty. There is so much of the self in his poems, not neglecting, however, references to other historic and mythological figures. There is also love in his lyrics, either of boudoir yearning or of the poet’s own attraction towards the myriad wonders of nature. But there is also hate, directed towards officialdom or towards unfaithful lovers. There is pleasure, the Epicurean tendency towards wine and delicacies, but also suffering, the Stoical readiness
to live the life of a poor recluse. Finally, there is also sociality in the description of festive occasions, and solitude in the portrayal of a faraway traveller of the secluded life of a recluse among the woods.

As for the variety of tones which accompanies these diverse subject matters, the polarities can be described as follows: contentment and sarcasm, gaiety and gravity, humor and pathos, subtlety and garishness, spontaneity and contrivance.

Most of Ma's poems of reclusion are written in a tone of contentment, as though he has attained "salvation" through withdrawal. But there is also sarcasm, poignantly revealed in his cynical attitude towards fame, and all forms of human achievement. There is lightheartedness, even playfulness, as when Ma is amused with associations attached to the traditional symbols of reclusion, such as the fisherman. There is gravity in the depiction of pangs of love, or of loneliness. There are humor and pathos: the tao-shu "Borrowing a Horse" fully attests to this. There is much subtlety in directing the lover's sorrow onto external objects, rather than voicing her anguish openly; and garishness in exaggerated and ostentatious glorification of the Mongol court. Finally, there is a marked feeling of reckless spontaneity in many of Ma's lyrical poems, almost a sheer delight in the catharsis of his own grievances, and deliberate consciousness in embellishing his poems for the sake of art, as is demonstrated by his exuberant description of a friend's calligraphy.

It is exactly with reference to this versatility of tone and subject matter
that Liu Da-jie remarks of Ma, "Though in the main his works are spontaneous and natural, there are others that are leisurely and serene, still others that are extremely exquisite and detailed. His subject matter is also multi-faceted." Zheng Zhen-duo's comments are to the same effect, "His san-qu are so very unrestrained, also so graceful, so incisive, and so very interesting and delightful." There is certainly little room for dispute.
Footnotes


2. Psalm 90, vs. 5-6, Revised Standard Version, Holy Bible.


4. Translation by Liu Wu-chi, in An Introduction to Chinese Literature (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. 188-190. For purpose of consistency, I have changed the Wade-Giles romanization system of proper names in Liu's translation to the Pjinp-yin system which I use throughout this thesis.


6. William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, in The Works of William Shakespeare,

7. According to Zheng Qian 鄭箋, Shen Gu was a famous singer of ancient days whom the operatic circle revered as one of the twelve gods of music. Read Zheng's Qu xuan 曲選 (Taipei: Zhong-hua wen-hua chu-ban shi-ye she, 1964), p. 46.


9. This poem again suffers from dubious authorship. The Yue-fu quan-yu attributes its authorship to Li Zhi-yuan 李致遠 (ca. 1354), while the Bei-ci guang zheng pu attributes it to Ma. However, Luo Kang-lie 羅謙烈 argues in his Yuan-qu san-bai-shou jian 元曲三百首箋 (Hong Kong: Long-men shu-dian 龍門書店, 1967), p. 48, that this poem is spontaneous, effervescent and invigorating, exactly in accord with Ma's usual style of writing, and quite unlike that of Li. Ren Na in his Qu-xie 曲譜, juan 2, pp. 57a-b, in SQCK, IV, also argues in favor of Ma's authorship, saying that its lofty and sublime flavor resembling Ma's, could not have been coincidental.
10. "Tai-yi 天液" can be taken to mean the grandiose Tai-yi Pool in the Han Palace, built by Han Wu-di in Chang'an, or the one built in Tang times in the Tai-ming Palace. But as a palace pool doesn't fit in with the context satisfactorily, I prefer to interpret it as referring to the clear and vast sky, which the two palace pools were probably named after.

11. The phrase "bai-er shan-he 百二山河 " has two possible interpretations. It either means that the Kingdom of Qin with its strategic geographic features is able to resist an enemy force of one million men with only twenty thousand soldiers of its own, or, it could mean that Qin's strategic advantages endow it with a resistance power equalled to that of two million men, that is, the double of its enemy force. For further information, read Luo Kang-lie's Yuanqu san-bai-shou jian, p. 48.

12. Poems that do show ambitions are seen in nos. 30, 37, 38, 42, 125a, 132e.

13. Poem nos. 13-16, 59, 107, 110, 128d, 130g, 131c.

14. For origin of pen name "Dong-li," refer back to footnote no. 5 of Chapter One.


22. Poem nos. 14, 16, 35, 107, 130g, 131f.


24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.


28. The *Yang-chun bai-xue*, the *Yue-fu qun-zhu*, and the *Yung-xi yue-fu* all attribute the authorship of poem 29 to Liu Shi-zhong, while only the *Li-yuan yue-fu* includes this work under Ma's name.

29. The *Li-yuan yue-fu* does not state the authorship of poem nos. 37 and 38. The *Yung-xi yue-fu* attributes them to the authorship of Wu Ren-qing. While only the *Yang-chun bai-xue* and the *Yue-fu qun-zhu* attribute their authorship to Ma.


33. Risking oversimplification, I have included lyrics of various shades which reflect Ma's attitude towards life into the broad category of "tan-shi" poems, in addition to those few which are specifically entitled "tan-shi" in the anthologies.


35. Refer back to footnote nos. 28 and 29 of this chapter.
36. Other poems expressing a similar vein of contentment are nos. 13-16, 30, 50-1, 125, 128, 132, 136, 137.

37. A number of Buddhist terms are used in this poem. The "fu-tian" is the field of blessedness, or the sphere in which kindness, charity or virtue is found. The term "san-sheng" translated here as reincarnations, is the Buddhist reference to the three periods of past, present, and future, alternately described as the periods of unborn, born, and dead. It could also be explained as the various stages in the process of becoming a Buddha. The words "jie" and "yuan," when used together as a compound in the Buddhist context, means to form a cause of connection for future salvation.

38. See poem nos. 69, 70, 75, 80, 81, 85-9.


40. For poem no. 49, both the Li-yuan yue-fu and the Zhong-yuan yin-yun do not state the author, while the Ci-lin zhai-yan attributes the poem to Author Anonymous. The Shu-zhai lao-xue cong-tan 亁齋老學叢談 with a somewhat modified text states that this poem, together with two others are lyrics written by scholars of the north in the deserts. (Read the footnotes to "Autumn Thoughts" in Sui Shu-sen's QYSQ, I, 242.) The Yao-shan-tang
wai-jì 廬山堂外紀, however, attributes the authorship to Ma Zhi-yuan, while the Ci-zong 詞綜 follows this assumption. Zhao Jing-shen 趙景深 in his Zhong-guo wen-xue shì xin-bian 中国文学史新编 (Shanghai: Bei-xin shu-ju 北新書局, 1935), p.217 argues in favor of Ma's authorship, contending that a very similar verse is found in Zhang Guo-bin's 張國賓 play - the He gan-san 合汗衫, and as Zhang and Ma were close associates, having collaborated in the production of the play Huang-liang meng, compilers of anthologies had thus deleted poem 49 from Ma's work, and included it only into Zhang's play. Zhao's argument, however, is questionable, as there are no reliable sources attesting that Zhang had collaborated with Ma in the production of Huang-liang meng. According to the Lu-gui bu, this play was written by Ma only in collaboration with 鄭之zi Li-er and Hua Li-lang.


42. This title is actually not affixed to this group of eight poems, but as each of the individual poem bears the usual sub-title that makes up the eight scenes of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, I have labelled these poems thus.

43. For poems 39-44, there are no rival claims to authorship, but as
they are collected only in one anthology, the *Yung-xi yue fu* and as the rules of prosody are constantly broken in these poems and the contents inferior, Chen An-na 陳安娜, in her "Ma Zhi-yuan yan-jiu 马致遠研究," *Shi-fan da-xue guo-wen yan-jiu-suo ji-kan* 國文研究所集刊* 13* (June, 1969), 970, questions the authenticity of Ma's authorship.

44. One of these poems, no. 121 suffers again from dubious authorship. The *Yang-chun bai-xue* attributes its authorship to Ma, while the *Bei-ci guang-zheng pu* considers it to be written by Author Anonymous. Despite this shortcoming, I have considered these poems worthy of discussion, as they are similar in style, and reveal yet another manner of Ma's expression.

45. Read Wayne Schlepp, *San-ch'u', Its Technique and Imagery* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 120-1. Also see Ren Na's *Qu-xie* juan 2, pp. 64-8, in *SQCK*, IV.


47. The "three-hilled bone" refers to the hind-brain here.

Chapter Three

Ma Zhi-yuan's Poetic Language

In this chapter, the different elements of Ma's poetic language, namely diction, syntax, parallelism, imagery, versification and sound will be analysed. Some of these aspects may be regarded as characteristics of the san-qu as a poetic genre, such as the accommodation of colloquialism into the lyrics, the extensive use of both the reduplicated words and the rather loose parallel structure, as well as the maximization of rhymes, the flexibility in line length, and the greater variety in rhythmic pattern.

Ma's mastery of the inherent potentials of the san-qu genre, his versatility in diction, constant reduplication and repetition of a word in a line, striking use of the syntax in some cases, frequent employment of parallel and semi-identical lines often for ornamentation, vivid portrayal of images, particularly visual ones, the ability to evoke appropriate emotions through these images, and finally his skilful and imaginative use of sound are aspects worthy of note.
A. Diction

Ma's versatility in the use of diction which in part conduces to the versatility of tone in his san-qu is demonstrated in his accommodation of a wide spectrum of diction, ranging from colloquialism to allusion and quotation from other works and poetry, with the occasional use of prose-like diction.

Repetition of words, used either in reduplicated compounds, the scattered repetition of words in the same line, or in the same poem is discussed as another aspect of Ma's diction. It is to be noted, however, that reduplication of words, in particular, is a common occurrence in san-qu rather than Ma's characteristic in diction. Finally, Ma's favorite words, those which he uses repeatedly, are cited.

1. Naturalness to Refinement: Colloquialism, Allusion, Quotation and Prose-Like Diction.

While colloquialism, noted for its naturalness, liveliness, crudeness and expansiveness, was accepted as a norm in san-qu - whose origin was intimately related to the folk ballad - it was avoided by later san-qu lyricists of the aesthetic school, such as Zhang Ke-jiu and Qiao-jii. Allusions and quotations whether exact or modified, on the contrary, are noted for their elegance and compression which san-qu in later periods came to be more saturated with, while prose-like diction, not so frequently employed in san-qu, reveals Ma's
readiness to experiment with different forms of diction.

a. Colloquialism

Ma's use of colloquialism is classified here into categories of one-character, two-character and three-character expressions. While many of these monosyllabic colloquial expressions are noted for their continual usage today (retaining the same qualities semantically and grammatically), many of the two-character (some of them may be regarded as disyllable compounds) and three-character colloquial expressions appear to be outdated as part of modern vernacular language.

Common monosyllabic colloquial expressions in Ma's ssan-qu include such words as the copula "shi 置," measure words as "ge 節," pronouns as "za 咱," and complement of degree as "sha 然" (meaning very).

Illustrations of these in respective order are:

**ben shi ge lan san ren**

Basically an idle man,

( no. 16 )

**za bian she**

Then I will be done with this.

( no. 82 )
How very romantic is Xi-Shi intoxicated with wine!

Other monosyllabic colloquialisms include the use of suffixes, such as the word "er" for nouns, the word "de的," which may function as an adjective suffix or adverb suffix; "zhe着," which is a progressive marker; and "le了" which is a perfective marker. Examples in respective order are:

心窝儿暖
Xin wo er xing
The recess of my heart glows,

命薄的窮秀才
ming bo de qiong xiu cai
An ill-fated poor scholar,

低低的嗓音相應
di di de ai sheng xiang ying
Softly echoing with sighs.

低啞着白雪歌
di ou zhe bai xue ge
Softly singing the "White Snow" song,

( no. 34 )

做了簡賞月人
zuo le ge shang yue ren

Having become a moon-enjoyer.

(no. 22 )

Two-character colloquial expressions are less numerous than either the
one-character or three-character ones. An example of a disyllable noun compound
is "jiu-li 立," meaning truth:

相識若知自就里
xiang zhi ruo zhi za jiu li

Friend, if you do know the truth,

( no. 90 )

There are also demonstratives such as "wu de 个的 " and "ren ban 您般,"
as in

兀的不快活煞
wu de bu kui huo sha

Isn't this exceedingly joyous!

( no. 123f )

您一般樓台正宜夏
ren ben lou tai zheng yi xia

This kind of pavilion is exactly fit for summer. ( no. 128c )
An instance of a disyllabic verbal expression is "du-mo 翌磨," meaning walking back and forth:

```
xian du mo
```

Leisurely pacing back and forth.

(no. 118c)

While an example of an adverbial disyllabic compound is "ken-fen 肯分," meaning "exactly," as in

```
jin lian ken fen die ban zhe
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Her bound feet curving exactly to half a length.

(no. 79)

As for three-character colloquial expressions, most of them appear to be padding words (chen-zi 補字) at the same time, which usually occur at the beginning of the line, and are quick in rhythmic beat as well as less significant in meaning. Grammatically, they often defy easy classification, although examples cited here are mostly adverbial for reason of simplicity.

Examples of adverbial usages are "yi-hui jia 一會價" (an instance), which is temporal; "ban-lu li 半路裡" (midway), which is locative, "dao da lai 倒大來" (very), which is an adverb of degree; and "hu-lu ti 蒟蘆提" (perplexedly), which is an adverb of manner. The respective lines below are examples of these:
一會兒上心來沒是處

(yi hui jia shang xin lai mei shi chu)

(Even for) an instance, to be that grieved is unbearable!

半路裏乾生受

(ban lu li gan sheng shou)

Midway (in the path of officialdom) he suffered in vain.

倒大來開快活

(dao da lai xian kuai huo)

How very leisurely and joyous!

葫蘆裡一句裝呆

(hu lu ti yi xiang zhuang dai)

Perplexedly (I have) always feigned stupidity.

An example of a less easy to classify three-character colloquial expression is "dao bu de" (meaning doesn't it say that), which is a phrase that usually precedes a rhetorical question or idiomatic expression, as in

道不得他人干莫挽

(dao bu de ta ren goong mo wan)

Doesn't the saying go, "You shouldn't pull another
man's bow,

他人骑休憩

Or ride another man's horse?"

( no. 126b )

Another example is "sheng niu zuo 生扭做" (meaning forcibly become),
which is a narrative made up of an adverb and a verb, as in

生扭做遂春杜甫

Forcibly, I become the spring-touring Du Fu,

( no. 120a )

b. Allusion and Quotation

While colloquialism is noted for its liveliness and naturalness, and at times
for its vulgarity, allusion and quotation, which are noted instead for their
refinement and rich associations, are often employed by Ma in his san-qu. On
the whole, allusions and quotations used by Ma are natural, and fit well into
the organic whole of the poem. They do not appear pedantic nor extraneous.
Allusion, in particular, represents a highly compressed form of expression, in
contrast to colloquialism whose connotative value is lower, and whose
expansiveness is evidenced sometimes in its function as auxiliary words with
little semantic significance.

Examples of how allusions are used as economical means to present situations are seen in the following lines:

子房鞋
The shoes of Zi-fang,

買桑柴
The firewood of Mai-chen.

(no. 113)

As mentioned earlier, both allusions refer to the predicament and hardship that Zhang Liang and Zhu Mai-chen endured before the rise of fortune, and form the basis of Ma's argument that even able men have to await for the arrival of the right opportunity. The "shoes" here connote associations of humiliation and the turning point towards good fortune, as Zhang Liang was said to have meekly picked up the shoes that an old man had deliberately dropped down the bridge. Zhang's respect for the old man turned out to be fruitful, as the old man later presented Zhang with the Tai-gong bing-fa 太公兵法, an important book of military strategy from which Zhang gained much knowledge and later rose in fortune. 4

The firewood of Zhu Mai-chen in the second line brings in associations of poverty, rejection by others, and of self perseverance in study while in poverty, and the subsequent arrival of auspicious opportunity later brought him recognition and fame. 5 The use of two lines, each with only three characters to embrace
such trains of thoughts, shows the condensed nature of allusions.

Another illustration of how allusion is used as an economical way of expression is seen in the line:

Why don't you follow Zi-you in his visit of Dai?

Zi-you refers to Wang Hui-zhi, whose whim of visiting his friend Dai Kui one snowy night, despite the discomfort of sailing through a cold stream and whose sudden change of mind not to visit Dai upon arrival when his fancy was exhausted demonstrates a capricious way of behavior that is clearly bizarre. The four words "Zi-you fang Dai" therefore become a shorthand way of saying to follow the bidding of one's heart, ignoring conventions as Zi-you had done.

Sometimes, exact quotations or slightly modified quotations are given instead of alluding to a past event or figure. Quotations, like allusions, have the benefit of endowing the present situation with authority of past experience besides bringing in rich associations, and a flavor of elegance.

An example of exact quotation is the line

The swallows of old that flew before the halls of Wang and Xie,

which is taken from the poem "Wu-yi xiang" by the Tang poet, Liu Yu-xi. The underlying meaning here is the same, that is, while swallows
continued to build their nests in others' homes, the wealth of the Wang and the Xie families had vanished, and prosperity has proved to be ephemeral.

Examples of exact quotations are, however, less common. More often, Ma prefers to incorporate complete or incomplete lines of others' works into his own poetry, while adding his own words before or after them. For instance, the last five words of the following line are taken from the exact wording of one of Su Dong-po's poems:

花開但願人長久
The flowers bloom and may man live on for long,

( no. 131f )

The blooming of the flowers which is transient is juxtaposed with the wish that men may live long to enjoy the pleasure of life, and the quoted words are reinforced and enriched by notions of Su's poem to enjoy the moonlight despite the moon's tendency to "wax and wane," and of the many imperfections of human life.9

The following example is taken from the exact wording of part of the line of another poem, but is given a twist in the meaning. It is taken from a Tang poem by Du Mu 杜牧.

丁香枝上
The lilacs at the branch,

豆蔻梢頭
The nutmeg at the tip of the stem.

( no. 122c )
The second line in its original refers to beautiful young girls who have just reached puberty, but in Ma's poem here, a new dimension of meaning is added. The context refers to fickle love, like the "easily vanishing colored clouds," and so both the lilacs and the nutmeg, for reason of their short blooming, strengthen the added idea of the inconstancy of love.\(^{10}\)

The following is an example of a modified quotation from two historical sources:

分香寳覆純狐媚
To distribute the incense and to sell the shoes are
purely the craftiness of a fox!

( no. 98 )

The line refers to Cao Cao whose death-bed order to his household to be frugal, that is, to distribute the remaining incense and to learn to make shoes in order to sell them, is taken in a negative way aimed at winning the hearts of the ignorant. The first four characters of the line are taken from scattered words form a description of Cao Cao in the Wei lue 魏略, while the last two words are taken directly from the Jin shu.\(^{11}\) The borrowing of words from historical sources, though slightly modified, gives the poem both a sense of reality and authority.\(^{12}\)
c. Prose-Like Diction

Another interesting feature in the diction of Ma's san-qu is the use of words that are peculiar to prose rather than poetry, that is, those words that are neither colloquial nor poetic in nature (although their appearance is less frequent). Such words again mark a versatility in Ma's command of words. Examples of prose-like diction are the use of the particles "ye 也," "hu 乎," and "zai 哉," as in the lines:

qiong tong jie ming ye

Poverty and prosperity are all predestined!

( no. 132b )

chu hu qi lei ba hu cui

To top its kind and crown its group.

( no. 124d )

gao zai fan Li cheng zhou qu

Lofty is Fan Li who sails away in a boat.

( no. 23 )
2. Repetition of Words

a. Reduplicated Words

One kind of diction which is very common in san-qu and is constantly employed by Ma is the reduplication of words, or die-zi 網字. The poetic function of reduplicated words is mostly for exaggeration. As Chen Wang-dao suggests, either "the complexity of sound (in reduplicated words) is borrowed to enhance the complexity of the linguistic feel, or the harmony of the sound is borrowed to emphasize the tone of harmony." Reduplicated words are also noted for their liveliness and may be regarded as one feature of colloquial expression, with which the vernacular-rooted san-qu is impregnated.

Examples of how reduplicated words are used for exaggeration are seen in the following lines:

愁恨屢屢
chou hen yan yan ...........

Regrets are vexing, vexing.....

(no. 116b)

燕水澄澄
yan shui cheng cheng

The mist and water are clear, clear

(no. 116c)

Sometimes a disyllabic compound is reduplicated to form a tetrasyllabic compound, again for exaggeration, as in the line
Moved by Spring's passion are the bee Cupids that
fly to and fro,

(no. 120b) 16

There are also instances when two tetrasyllabic compounds follow one after
another in two consecutive lines, to further attract the reader's attention, as in

哀哀怨怨
ai ai yuan yuan
Sorrowfully, Sorrowfully,

戚戚悲悲
qie qie bei bei
Grievously, grievously.

(no. 126g)

While the above reduplicated words are noted for the effect of exaggeration,
some of them, however, are not used for such purpose, as in the phrase "cha-cha
mo-mo 茶茶嘐嘐" (no. 118c) which simply means a young girl and an old
woman, and "ri-ri 日日 " (no. 127a) which means every day.

Another type of reduplicated words is the linkage of them to another word
immediately preceding them to form a trisyllable compound, as in the following
examples: "ya la-la 呸剥剥 " (no. 18), "hun can-can 馍懣懣 " (no.117c),
"lan she-shi 懶懶傻 " (no. 126b), and "yi sheng-sheng 一声声 "
These four examples may be regarded as representative of four different sub-types. For instance, the first one represents the imitation of actual sound. The second example (in which "hun" means "dim," and "can-can" means "sadly sadly") may be said to represent a type of compound in which the reduplicated disyllables themselves contribute to the meaning of the compound, apart from functioning as agents for exaggeration. In the third example, the reduplicated disyllables "she-she" which have no particular meaning of their own here, are simply added to the word "lan" (lazy), to emphasize the state of laziness. Finally for "yi sheng-sheng," which is an abbreviation for "yi-sheng yi-sheng," the compound takes on the meaning of "every sound," and does not serve to emphasize.

b. Repetition of Same Word in the Same Line.

Another form of repetition is to repeat a word, not consecutively, twice or more in the same line. This may lead to the establishment of internal parallelism which at the same time helps to arrest our attention. The following is an instance of an internally parallel tripartite line by using the same word "yi" thrice:

宜 歌 宜 酒 宜 詩
yi ge yi jiu yi shi
Fit for singing, fit for wine, fit for poetry.

(no. 91)

Another example is:

君知君恨君休戚
jun zhi jun hen jun xiu re

You know, you loathe, (so) don't you cause (it).

(no. 104)

Repetition of a phrase heightens the sense of symmetry and emphasis in the line as in

没道理 没道理
mei dao li mei dao li

Nonsense, nonsense!

成下的 成下的
tui xia de tui xia de

Far too mean, far too mean!

(no. 126i)

Sometimes a word is repeated in the line more for the sake of word play than for parallelism. One example of this is

她本倾城却倾吴
ta ben qing cheng que qing Wu

She originally topples city, but now topples Wu.

(no. 23)
The first "qing" here coupled with the word "cheng" is actually an idiom meaning a woman of exceptional beauty for whose sake a city is destroyed (referring to Xi Shi). The second "qing" in not an idiom by itself, but by extended connotation of the first "qing," it has come to acquire the meaning of toppling a kingdom by feminine beauty in this line.  

**c. Repetition of Same Word in the Same Xiao-ling or Tao-shu**

Lastly repetition of words is seen not only within a line, but deliberately within a short lyric or tao-shu. One good illustration of this is the constant re-appearances of the word "chun" in the tao-shu entitled "Regrets for Spring" (no. 120). The occurrences of this word for eighteen times in this tao-shu, and almost in every line in the second stanza, help to focus our attention on the theme spring, apart from revealing the poet's delight in word play.

In another lyric (no. 90), the compound "xiang-zhi " (friend) is used thrice in this short poem of only five lines. The repetition is more for the sake of realism, to imitate the actual spoken language in which repetition is frequent.
3. The Use of Favorite Words

The words Ma uses most in his san-qu appear to be the cluster of diction associated with wine drinking, which to a large extent reflects his philosophy of seeking escape and obliviousness in wine.

The word "zui 醉" (drunk) is undoubtedly Ma's favorite word, which appears at least thirty-five times in his san-qu, while the word "jiu 酒" (wine) altogether appears twenty-five times, and the word "xing 醒" (sober) eighteen times.

Associated with wine-drinking are the words "lao 醒" (also refers to wine), "yin 饮" (drink), "zhen 斟" (pour), "bei 杯" (goblet), "zun 樽" (bottle) which are extensively used. Another word which implies obliviousness is "shui 睡" (sleep) which appears also in high frequency. The word "meng 梦" (dream) related to sleep, and implying the quality of illusion, thereby reflecting Ma's Buddhistic notion of reality, is another of his favorite words.
B. Syntax and Parallelism

In this section, syntactical structures in Ma's san-qu that are of special interest and parallelism, a device greatly employed in Ma's san-qu and in Yuan san-qu as a whole will be discussed. Syntax (which shows relationship between words in a line) will be seen under the separate categories of incomplete, composite and ambiguous lines. Parallelism (which shows relationship between lines) will be seen in the light of how Yuan san-qu parallelism differs from other genres, the effects of parallelism, and the various kinds of parallel and repeated lines. This variety of parallelism and repetition includes simple, triple, quadruple, multiple, alternate parallel lines, as well as incremental repetition, repetition of semi-identical or identical lines, and parallelism and repetition outside a poem.

1. Syntax

a. Incomplete Lines

Incomplete lines that are particularly noteworthy include those which juxtapose two or more noun phrases in the total absence of verbs, or of any linking word. The lack of syntactic links between these noun phrases produces a syntactic rhythm that is discontinuous, and enables the individual image to stand out in an independent and vivid way. The following lines are good illustrations:
Withered vines, an aged tree, evening crows,
Small bridge, flowing water, folks' homes,
Old road, west wind, a lean horse, ...

(no. 49)

These lines strike us with the complete absence of syntactic links, and
the intensity of their visuality or concrete sensory impact. As one critic puts
it, "this poem operates pictorially" - the disjunct images are like elements that
appear in a Chinese painting. Also, it may be added that the successive
images here "do not constitute a linear development (such as how this leads to
that). Rather the objects co-exist, as in a painting, and yet the mobile point
of view has made it possible to temporalize the spatial units." 19

Another instance of the incomplete sentence that captivates our attention
and differs from the above type is a line which lacks a complete predicate:

休道是蘇學士
Not to say the scholar Su,

韓退之
Han Tui-zhi (was the same).

(no. 94)

Here the sense of incompleteness is more poignant than in lines where only noun
phrases exist, for this line is not visually oriented, and a predicate, such as
"was the same" is forced upon the reader to render the line semantically sound.
b. Composite Lines

As differentiated from incomplete lines which consist of the juxtaposition of noun phrases, composite lines that are of interest here are those which consist of the juxtaposition of verb phrases with no linking words between them. The composite lines abound in verbs, and as each of the verb phrases can well be regarded as an independent sentence of its own, the composite line appears both discontinuous and compressed. Illustrations of these are:

天遠雲歸月滿樓
The sky is far, the clouds return, the moon fills the tower,
(no. 8)

月暗星稀天欲曉
The moon dims, the stars are scarce, the sky is about to dawn.
(no. 117a)

Discontinuity in syntactic rhythm produces images that are separate and self-contained, and yet unlike the images in noun phrases, the images here are even more quality-oriented than substance-oriented. In the noun image "withered vines," the noun "vines" is still more significant, although it is preceded by an adjective "withered" describing its quality. In the verb image "the sky is far," the quality of remoteness assumes greater importance than the sky itself, and since quality is more abstract than substance, verb images here are less concrete than noun images.
c. Ambiguous Lines

Ambiguity, or more positively termed as "plurisignation," enhanced by syntactic looseness in Chinese verse, when used desirably may yield relevant nuances which lead to richer interpretation and help to pivot our attention in the line. It occurs when two or more grammatical constructions co-exist in a line.

One example of this is the appearance of a noun phrase at the beginning of the line, which can be taken either to represent the subject of the sentence, the locative modifier, the instrumental modifier, or the indirect object, as in

清風明月還詩債

The fresh wind and bright moon return the debts of poetry.

or (In) " " " " " " (I) " " " " "

or (With) " " " " " " (I) " " " " "

or (To) " " " " " " (I) " " " " "

(no. 16)

If the "fresh wind and bright moon" are the subjects of the line, then the line is complete on the grammatical level. If, however, the other interpretations are adopted, the subject "I" is considered to be omitted, as so often happens in literary Chinese. Even when the poet himself is understood to return the debts of poetry, the "fresh wind and bright moon" may be interpreted as a locative modifier which describes the circumstance in which the poet returns his debts. They may also be regarded as instrumental, that is, the means by which the poet
returns his poetic debts, or as indirect objects, meaning that the wind and the moon are the receivers of the poetic debts.

The following is an example of how syntactical ambiguity interplays with semantic ambiguity which gives rise to several interpretations thus enhancing the associations and intensity of the line:

```
cinnabar maple (leaves) drunk fall autumn mountain color
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Even if the word "dao" (fall) is excluded from referring to the falling of leaves, as is the literary convention not to do so, this line still leads to several possible interpretations. They are:

- The cinnabar maple leaves in great drunken redness among the autumnal mountain colors.
- The cinnabar maple leaves cause me to drunkenly fall for (be overwhelmed by) the autumnal mountain colors.
- The cinnabar maple leaves are overwhelmed by the sight of the autumnal mountain.

In the first interpretation, the words "zui dao" are taken to refer to the extremely red hue that is derived from drunkenness. The red maple leaves are therefore seen as one dominant color that beautifies the autumn mountain. In the second interpretation, the object "me" is added, and the line takes on the meaning that the red maple leaves cause the poet
to be very much overwhelmed as if he is intoxicated by the beauty of the autumnal mountain colors. In the third interpretation, the word "se色" is taken to mean sight or appearance rather than color. The line is also considered as inverted, which means that the sight of the beautiful autumn mountain overwhelms the red maple leaves greatly as though they were drunk.

Grammatical ambiguity may lead to variations in the rhythmic pause, as

春歸時/寂寞景物疎
When Spring departs, / the lonely scenes are sparse.
春歸時寂寞/景物疎
When Spring departs (it is) lonely, / (and) the scenes are sparse.

(no. 68)

The line is originally seven-worded, and the change to an eight-word line by the addition of the word "shi時" yields usually a 3/5 caesura pattern which the first interpretation prefers. If "shi" is regarded, however, as a padding word which is read quickly and lightly, the line is still considered seven-worded ("shi" has no beat of its own) and yields the common 4/3 caesura pattern which favors the second interpretation.
2. Parallelism

a. Parallelism in Yuan San-qu

Parallelism is a fundamental feature of Chinese poetry not exclusive to the San-qu genre. Its use in the san-qu differs from other genres in two main ways. Firstly, parallelism in san-qu enjoys far greater freedom than those that occur in Tang regulated poetry. Tonal antithesis (that is, the matching of a level tone with the corresponding oblique tone, and vice versa) is no longer required. Semantic antithesis (that is, the matching of words from related but contrastive semantic groups in corresponding positions) is more often than not disregarded. Indeed, the use of the same word in parallel lines, strictly forbidden in Tang poetry, is a usual feature in the san-qu. Only grammatical symmetry appears to be the more important rule in san-qu parallel structure.

Also, as parallelism is no longer rigidly prescribed in certain positions of the verse, parallelism in san-qu becomes more a matter of personal taste and an indicator of the Closeness of the verse to the literary style as contrasted to the colloquial style which is characterized by naturalness.

Secondly, parallelism in san-qu does not only occur in units of two lines. Frequently, it appears as triple parallel lines (ding-zu dui), quadruple parallel lines (lian-bi dui), or multiple parallel lines (lian-zhu dui). Parallel lines in san-qu may even occur alternately (ge-ju dui), a feature rarely seen in Tang shi or Song ci.
b. Some Effects of Parallelism

A generalized remark that is made with regard to the use of parallelism is that it can either be employed for the purpose of ornamentation (giving symmetry and emphasis to the poem), or that it achieves more than the mere effect of ornamentation (those parallel lines which add to our knowledge of the theme and which are also interdependent on each other as a unit in expressing a broader idea). 23

An example of parallel lines which is primarily ornamental in Ma's san-qi is:

緑髪衰
The green locks wither,

朱顏改
The red color (of the face) changes.

(no. 13)

Both lines express the same idea of ageing and are therefore static and intensifying in effect. The parallel structure is used for both the purposes of emphasis and symmetry.

The following parallel lines which are still regarded as ornamental, have, nevertheless, a forward movement in them:

夕陽下
The evening sun sets,
酒旗闊
The wine flag rests.

(no. 61)

Each of the line adds to a different aspect of the scene, and the two lines are therefore not repetitive on the semantic level, although they are grammatically identical. There is, however, little interdependence between these two lines, and one may well argue that apart from giving a sense of symmetry to the poem, the parallel structure here serves no other purpose.

An example of parallel structure which rises above ornamentation is given below:

項廢東吳
Xiang defeated in East Wu,

劉興西蜀
Liu rose in West Shu,

(夢說南柯)

)(Dream talk of the southern branch!

(no. 51)

The two lines are in fact antithetical and interdependent, and the existence of them as an antithetical unit is necessary to express two aspects of the larger idea behind, that the "ups" and "downs" in human affairs are dramatic and unpredictable. Without either one of these lines, this idea would have been incomplete, and the lines therefore function more than mere agents of symmetry.
c. Kinds of Parallelism and Repetition

In Ma's san-qu, simple (the basic unit of two lines) and triple parallel lines appear frequently. Of the simple parallel lines, the three-character lines occur in greatest number. An example of this is

蝶態戲
The butterflies too lazy to frolic,

鸚倦啼
The orioles too tired to sing.

(no. 81)

Sometimes chen-zi (padding words) are added to the basic three-character lines, which may upset rather than sustain the grammatically parallel structure, as in

不因這玉環
Not because (of) this Yu-huan,

引起那霧山
Roused up that Lu-shan.

(no. 20)

These two lines actually mean that "If it had not been for this Yu-huan (Concubine Yang), it would not have roused up that Lu-shan." The first two words of the two lines are padding words, and grammatically they are asymmetrical, as "bu yin 不因," is a negative modifier plus a verb construction, and "yin-qi 引起," is a verb plus a verbal complement.
One example of triple parallelism in Ma's san-qu is

张良放火连云根
Zhang Liang set fire to the Link-Cloud Pathway,

韩信独登拜将坛
Han Xin solitarily ascended the Respect-General Podium,

霸自刎過江岸
Ba-wang self killed at the Black River bank.

(no. 112)

In these triple parallel lines, each of the first two characters are proper names of a person, and the last three characters are place names. The third and fourth words in the first line "fang-huo 放火" (set fire) consisting of a verb and object are different from the third and fourth words in the second and third lines grammatically, as "du deng 独登" (solitarily ascended) and "zi wen 自刎" (self killed) both consist of an adverb and a verb. Semantic parallelism in these lines, however, makes up for the lack of grammatical asymmetry, and gives the lines a strong sense of regularity.

As expected, occurrences of quadruple, multiple and alternate parallel lines are far less frequent in Ma's san-qu. Apart from incurring the appearance of ornateness, there is the practical difficulty involved in propelling the lines forward (that is, in advancing the ideas of the verse) in these forms of parallelism, except mainly for those lines which are primarily descriptive, and
the addition of details to the scene does not constitute a disruption in the flow of the lines.

One example of quadruple parallel lines is:

雪外塔
The tower beyond the clouds,

日邊霞
The (rosy) clouds near the sun,

橋上客
The traveller over the bridge,

樹頭鷹
The crow atop the tree.

(no. 128j)

Each of these lines does add to the vividness of the scene and does not appear to be repetitive, despite syntactic exactness.  

The following is an example of multiple parallel lines:

任相吹笙
Minister Wu blowing his flute,

沈古歌謠
Shen Gu singing a song,

陳辛禪社
Chen Ping administering the sacrifice,
Mai-chen carrying firewood,

Xiang-ru selling wine.

Each line alludes to a different historic figure, but the underlying idea is the same: that even great men are once unrecognized and unfulfilled. Although the lines are static, grammatical and semantic symmetry serves to strengthen the intended emphasis.

Alternate parallelism is given in the example below:

爱煞当年
(How I) greatly cherish those years,

鲁连乘舟
Lu Lian sailing (in a) boat.

那如如今
Who (is there) today,

陶潜种柳
(Like) Tao Qian planting willows?

Parallelism in the second and fourth lines is more immediately apparent than the first and third lines whose parallelism is confined to the second half of the lines, that is "dang-nian 當年" (those years, or the past) matching with
"ru-jin " (the present). There is no stagnancy in these lines despite the fact that both Lu Lian (properly known as Lu Zhong-lian) and Tao Qian refer to the abandonment of officialdom. This is because the past in which wise men like these lived, is contrasted with the present, in which few appreciate the wisdom of withdrawing from public service. The lines are therefore antithetical semantically.

In trsome.me parallel lines, several words are repeated in exactness in the second line (as contrasted to the Tang regulated poetry in which repetition of the same word is forbidden in parallel lines). Lines like these may be used to enhance the effect of paradox, as in

成功萧何
Success because of Xiao He,

败也萧何
Failure because of Xiao He.

(no. 51)

One would have expected that failure would be brought about by some other agent. The exactness of the last three words of the two lines serves to intensify the contrast between the words "success" and "failure," which are the only different elements in the lines, and consequently sharpen the sense of irony.

Sometimes, lines are linked together by incremental repetition, as in:

堂堂儒
Lamenting a poor scholar,
Toiling in studies,

Studies must lead to writing on the bridge,

Writing on the bridge although may lead to riding a four-horse carriage,

(Even) Riding on a carriage, who is willing to buy the "Long Gate Fu?"

These lines refer to Si-ma Xiang-ru, a poor Han scholar, who once wrote on the pillar of a bridge that he was bent on gaining recognition, and would not cross the bridge without riding on a "four-horse carriage" (a sign of prosperity). His wish was subsequently fulfilled when his prose-poem, the "Long Gate Fu" won the appreciation of the Emperor. Ma's lament in these lines is that, unlike Si-ma Xiang-ru, most scholars do not eventually gain recognition. Although a poor scholar studies hard, then conceives great ambitions (such as Xiang-ru writing his ambition on the pillar), and manages later to ride on a carriage, it is still extremely difficult for him to have his talents completely recognized. The leading of one thing to another and the increasing difficulty of fulfilling a scholar's growing ambition are effectively conveyed by the use of incremental repetition
which tightens the relationship between lines.

On rare occasions, lines are repeated in full to produce identical rather than parallel lines. An example of this is

真箇醉也麼沙
Oh, really to get drunk!

(no. 128g)

which is repeated immediately in the next line, and in the last line of the tune, Zui niang-zi. In cases like this, it is more often the convention of that particular tune that calls for repetition of the line, rather than an originality on the poet's part.

Ma sometimes repeats a line in a number of xiao-ling which may be taken as a set bearing the same theme. For instance, the line

則不如尋箇穩便處安樂生地
Better to find a secure place to sit leisurely!

(nos. 53-6)

is repeated in four poems which harp on the theme of escapism. Repetition of the same line reinforces the uniformity of theme.

In some occasions, instead of using identical words throughout, certain words are changed in a line which is parallel with another line in the next poem, as

不信你耳輪兒不熱
I don't believe that your ear lobes won't flush!

(no. 72)
is parallel with

不信你眼皮會不跳
I don't believe that your eyelids won't jump!

(no. 73)

This device again strengthens the oneness of theme (cursing the unfaithful lover)
in different poems.
C. Images

This section deals with images in Ma's san-qu. The word "image" as used here is defined as "a verbal expression that recalls a physical sensation or evokes a mental picture" with or without involving another object. Where an image involves another object, that is, to "describe one thing in terms of another, or translate one kind of experience into another," it is termed here a "compound image."

The sources from which these images are derived, that is, either from the human, natural or supernatural world, will be examined. Also, the poetic functions of these images, or the use of them for scene-setting, symbolizing, evoking emotions, and triggering sensory responses will be discussed, in addition to the different techniques in which compound images are used, as in juxtaposition, explicit comparison, implicit comparison, substitution and transference.

It may be remarked that Ma draws his images from a wide range of sources and succeeds to a large extent in creating concrete images which have a strong visual appeal on the screen of the readers' mind, often in a succinct way. There are also images which appeal to other senses and give us sensual pleasure, although at times, Ma deliberately creates images that give unpleasant associations. Many of Ma's images also succeed to set the right mood or to evoke the appropriate emotions for the poem. Ma also employs diverse techniques in compound imagery, in likening one thing to another, or in translating one kind of experience into another.
However, it should be noted that many of Ma's images are not original. Some of them are extremely conventional, but as "familiarity, more readily call(s) forth the desired response and the relevant associations," unoriginal images are not always considered inferior.

1. Sources of Images

a. Natural World

Images from nature appear with the greatest frequency in Ma's poetry compared with those that are drawn either from the human or supernatural world. These nature images are again sub-divided into those that are drawn from the flora and fauna, the celestial bodies, meteorological phenomena and the landscape.

Flower images recur frequently. They include the plum flower, peach blossom, lotus, chrysanthemum, cherry-apple flower and pear blossom. Of these, the plum flower and the chrysanthemum appear most often. Tree images used in Ma's san-qu include the firmiana, paulownia, bamboo, pine, willow, catalpa, maple, plantain and the locust tree, of which the willow and the bamboo are the most popular.

The more common bird images used include the oriole, swallow, wild goose, phoenix, crow, cuckoo and pigeon, with the swallow and oriole appearing most frequently. The most used insect images are the butterflies and the bees, while the cicada, cricket, fire-flies, ant and flies also make their appearances. Other
animals include the horse, oxen, sheep, dragon, snake, fox and crab.

Celestial images include the moon in its various phases and different degrees of brightness, the milky way, the evening sun and the red sun. The moon is the second most common image in Ma's san-qu. Meteorological images include the rain, clouds, and various kinds of wind. The rain and clouds when appear together, usually connote eroticism, while the wind is the most frequently occurred image in Ma's san-qu, and is also used as a multi-faceted symbol.

Landscape images are made up of the fields, which sometimes suggest reclusion, the rivers and lakes, the vast or blue seas, the moving tide which represents the flux of things, and the green mountains representing permanence and naturalness.

b. Human World

Images from the human world include parts of the human body and human artifacts. The former is exemplified by references to the hair usually in the process of turning white, the charming eyebrows, white teeth of beautiful girls, and the tears of lovers. The latter is made up of images pertaining to buildings, other constructions, indoor furniture, clothing, stationery material, and other instruments such as the wine cup, the water-clock and the lute.

Buildings include the splendid mansions, the phoenix and dragon towers, and the straw huts which may function as symbols indicating financial status. Kinds
of doors and windows, such as the door without a lock, the brushwood door, and the window filled out by a broken pot symbolize poverty, while the vermillion door symbolizes wealth. Other human constructions include the painted boat usually associated with pleasure, the solitary boat associated with reclusion, and the desolate tombs representing mutability.

Indoor furniture is usually drawn from the boudoir chamber, such as the brocaded curtain, the gauze curtain, the incense burner, the dressing table and the ivory bed. Clothing is often symbolic in function, as for instance, the purple robe is associated with officialdom, the straw raincoat with the life of a fisherman, the cotton clothing and the loose sleeve with a commoner. Stationery material includes the black and fragrant ink, the frost-white hair of the brush, the white silk or the flowery writing paper.

c. Supernatural World

A small number of supernatural images also appear in Ma's san-qu, which are drawn chiefly from Taoist and folk mythology. Examples of these are the black frost, and the cinnabar which are sophisticated Taoist decoction, the lunar palace, the immortals who ride on the phoenix and of fierce-looking spirits who lurk behind withered trees.
2. Functions of Images

a. Scene-Setting

Images may be utilized for scene-setting indicating the place, the time of the day or year of the events of the poem. The wu-tong 棕桐 (firmiana and paulownia), and the red maple leaves are, for instance, traditional emblems for autumn. As for flower images, the peach blossom, the lotus, the chrysanthemum and the plum blossom represent the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter respectively.

The orioles are usually associated with spring in Ma's poetry, the swallows with summer, and the crows with autumn or winter, while insects such as the bee and the butterfly represent spring or summer.

For heavenly bodies, the extremely beautiful moon is emblematic of autumn, and the sinking of the moon signifies the coming of dawn. The east wind is an indicator of spring, and the west wind of autumn. Animals like the dairy cattle and the sheep, for instance, may set the pastoral scene for the foreign land of the Xiong-nu 鲜卑 (no. 18). Landscape like the blue water and the green hill usually sets a rustic scene for the theme of reclusion, while images of brocaded or bead curtain, or of the dressing table set a boudoir scene for love poems.
b. Symbols

Often, images function as symbols in Ma's poems which enhance the thematic richness of the poem in a compressed way. Some of these symbols may represent several things at once, or different things in different context. The chrysanthemum, for instance, is symbolic of joviality, reclusion and autumn simultaneously in Ma's san-qu. It usually appears with wine and crabs which together imply sensual pleasure. As a symbol of reclusion, it has its origin in the poetry of Tao Yuan-ming, whose reclusive pastime is once depicted as plucking chrysanthemums by the eastern fence. 43

The willow tree, which recurs constantly, represents different things in different context. The "five willows" are symbolic of hermitic existence (no. 15), while the frailty of the willow may represent delicate female charm or the slender waist of a woman (nos. 79, 127c). The "willowy gate and flowery door," on the other hand, represents the brothels (no. 123d), while the willow branch at the crossroad symbolizes the ideas of fickle love, or of passive disposal to the pleasure of others who pluck the willow branches at will (no. 122d).

The phoenix (including the luan and the feng) represents also several things. It may be a symbol of conjugal bliss (nos. 21, 76), of auspiciousness, as in the appearance of a red phoenix (no. 132d), or of fine calligraphy when the phoenix is said to be dancing or flying (no. 124b). It may also represent graceful dancing and charming manner (no. 122c).

The wind, which is the most reiterated of Ma's images, is a symbol of
diverse functions. The fresh wind may represent the moral integrity of a retired official (no. 57), while the violent wind may symbolize a destructive (nos. 38, 120c) or seductive force (no. 123f). The wind when coupled with the moon is symbolic of a love affair (no. 82). The wind and the cloud together may symbolize heroic people of a talented act (nos. 124b, 133c), while the wind and the wave together represent peril or vicissitude (nos. 36, 50, 53).

c. Evoking Emotions

Another poetic function of the image is to set a mood for the poem, or to evoke emotions in the reader through the techniques of objective correlatives, pathetic fallacy, or incongruous juxtaposition for ironic contrast.

One example of the use of images as objective correlatives for the melancholic feeling of a solitary traveller is this:

鞍馬隨山遊路邊
Uncomfortably riding on a horse, the road is far,

月暗星稀天欲曉
The moon dims, the stars are sparse, and the sky is about to dawn.

雲氣布荒郊
Clouds spread all over the desolate wilderness.
The inns on the way are few,

Only this to escape from the wind and hail.

Hurriedly to spend a few days in this inn;

The rain whistles at the gauze window, and the soul is about to dissipate.

Far far away from one’s native country,

The brushwood door is silent,

I have no heart to drink the fragrant wine.

Listen to the forest:

The cold crows caw,

The desolate inn and the village have not reached dawn,
The wind blows the leaves into wild confusion in the mountains,

The fishermen and woodcutters must be shivering with cold in the front village,

The selection of "objective" details evokes a feeling of dreariness and gloom. The dimness of the night, the thickness of the clouds over the countryside, the presence of the wind and hail, the rain splashing and whistling loudly, the crows crying in the cold, the leaves flying in confusion, all constitute a sense of dissonance. The desolation of the countryside with only a single inn, the quiet door, and the shivering fishermen and woodcutters also add to the sense of gloom and solitude which correlates with the internal emotion of the distant traveller.

Another instance of how the feeling of the poet is projected out into the external scene, rather than endowing the external objects with emotion is this:

A gust of wind,

A shower of rain,
The whole city is filled with falling flowers and flying catkins.

Outside the gauze window, the sound of the cuckoo is suddenly heard,

Cry by cry, it summons the depart of spring.

The poem is essentially descriptive of a late spring scene. But the choice of external objects, such as the sudden gusts of wind and showers of rain, the profusion of the falling flowers, the cry of the cuckoo, traditionally associated with a traveller, evokes a feeling of dismalness and dejection in the reader.

In other cases, images employed may be endowed with human emotions which echo the internal feeling of the persona in the poem. An example of "pathetic fallacy" is:

The night drags like a year,

My lover has suddenly departed.

The sound of the horn is cold, and the jade plum
flowers wither in fright.

夢迴酒醒燈盡也
When awake from dream and sober from wine, the light
has gone out,

對着冷清清半窗残月
I face the solitary withering moon shining on half the window.

(no. 87)

The emotions of the female voice are those of solitude and shock. She has not accepted the sudden departure of her lover and her stupor and depressed feeling are reflected in similar emotions in external objects: in the startled and withering jade plums, the cold and saddening sound of the horn, and the deserted and quiet waning moon.

Inanimate objects may also be endowed with emotions which contrast, apart from corresponding, with the sentiments of the persona, as in:

人初靜
People have just quieted down,

月正明
The moon is shining brightly.

紗窗外玉梅斜映
Outside the gauze window, the jade plum flowers slantingly reflect their shadows,
Stop flaunting your shadows, you plum flowers who
sneer at me,

You will just be as lonely when the moon sinks.

The plum blossoms are depicted here as shining and flaunting their shadows in
the bright moonlight in a state of elation, in contrast to the implicit loneliness
of the voice. When the moon sinks, however, they are predicted to experience
the same feeling of loneliness. The plum flowers are therefore animated first
to contrast, and then to parallel, the emotions of the solitary lover.

Sometimes, incongruous images are juxtaposed to evoke a sense of ironic
contrast. In the previous illustration, the lonely shadow of the persona is
implied, and differs from the following line of another poem which juxtaposes
the shadows of the plum twigs with the lonely shadow of the lover:

The plum twigs under the slanting moon, the lonely shadow
of oneself.

The line appears "objective" in the sense that the plum twigs are not endowed
with human emotion, but a poignant feeling of irony is produced in this single
line which embodies two kinds of shadows: one of company and one of
loneliness immediately placed alongside one another in a state or tension.

Incongruity by juxtaposition is also experienced in these lines:

百尺台
A hundred-foot tower,

堆黄壤
Heaped with yellow soil.

The first line conjures up the image of a lofty tower suggesting great human splendor which is discordant with the next line portraying a pile of yellow soil, which immediately brings to mind mutability, the tragic sense of the decay of all things through the passage of time.46

d. Sensory Impact

Some images are used particularly for the purpose of producing strong sensory impact. Many of Ma's images succeed to appeal to the readers visually. The often quoted "Autumn Thoughts" which begins with, "Withered vines, an aged tree, evening crows" illustrates the powerful visual content of the poem. Ma's group of eight poems which describes the scenes of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers also examplify the visual-oriented nature of some of his poems.

The following lines, which describe the autumn night, elicit much visual pleasure in the reader:
On the green-mossed steps, she watches the silvery milky way,

A few dots of flowing fire-flies,

One firmiana leaf by the well,

A new moon crooked on the balustrade.

The minuteness of visual details, such as the sight of a few dots of fireflies gliding smoothly around, and one firmiana leaf, as well as the beautiful shadow of the crescent moon projected in a crooked way on the balustrade impress us again in a special pictorial way. It is noteworthy to see that Ma is able to create concrete visual images without piling them with strings of adjectives.

The next example which describes the imperial court strikes both our visual and olfactory senses with its bombardment of colors and its strong odor of incense. The golden lion here refers to the incense burner which is shaped like a lion's head. The maple abode is a reference to the imperial residence and, together with the cinnabar platform, suggest the color of reaness:...
The curtain unfolds, the purple mist appears,

Fragrance gushes out from the golden lion,

Facing the maple abode and bowing eight times
to the cinnabar platform.

(no. 121d)

The two lines below describing the inside of a mansion appeal to several senses in the reader:

In the painted hall with spring's warmth the embroidered curtain hangs heavier,

Fragrance from the incense burner slightly moves.

(no. 45)

While the painted hall and the embroidered curtain impress us visually, the warmth of spring and the resulting heaviness of the curtain are thermal and tactile in appeal. The fragrance of the incense and its movement through the air trigger both our olfactory and kinetic responses.

However, not all of Ma's images are intended to elicit sensual pleasure. Some are actually desired for the opposite purpose: to shock the reader in
the repulsiveness or crudeness of the images. The curse which incurs the
dissolving of the lover herself into a pool of blood even before she leaves the
chamber door if she is guilty of any fault at all, is an example of a repulsive
image which reflects the irritated and provoked mood of the jilted lover
(no. 129c).

The open descriptions of horse dung and urine in "Borrowing a Horse"
(no. 126e) constitute images of extreme vulgarity seldom encountered in
Chinese poems, which are, however, not completely incongruous in a poem
intended to shock and amuse the reader with its many deliberate exaggerations.

3. The Different Techniques of Compound Images

Where images involve the presence of two objects constituting the tenor and
the vehicle (instead of simply eliciting a physical sensation without employing a
vehicle), the following divisions which classify images according to the degrees
of connection between the tenor and the vehicle are made: juxtaposition,
explicit comparison, implicit comparison, substitution and transference. As James
Liu puts it: "These images differ from one another in degree rather than in kind:
they represent various stages of the same mental process - that of connecting two
things."48
a. Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition is simply to put "two objects (or more) side by side without making any overt or covert comparison between them." The following is an example:

望吟罷一覺才筆貼
When the chirping of insects has ceased,

Only then will sleep be peaceful and sound;

雞鳴時萬事無休歇
As soon as the cock crows

There will be no end to the multiplicity of affairs.

何年是徹
This striving of fame and gain,

When will it ever come to a halt?

看稀臣軍蝨排兵
See how in throngs the ants form their soldiers,

亂紛紛蜂齧蜜
How disorderly the bees suck honey,

急攘攘蠅爭血
How noisily the flies fight for blood!

裴公綠野堂
The Green Country Hall of Lord Pei,
The White Lotus Club of Magistrate Tao-

(no. 130g; tr. Liu Wu-chi)

The description of the struggling of the ants, bees and flies for self-interest in the natural world is juxtaposed with the human world in the preceding lines which show that there is no peace in the multiplicity of worldly affairs from morning till night. The insect images are again juxtaposed with the last two lines which suggest a tranquility brought about by reclusion. These insect images may be considered as simple images for evoking a repulsive sense in the reader in their blood-thirsty struggle, without necessarily be considered as comparison to the human world. Most readers do not, however, fail to see the insect images as an analogy to the striving human world, and a contrast to the tranquil world of reclusion.

Another case of juxtaposition is this:

月織絹人自綿婷
The moon is delicate, the attractive girl alone in her charms.

(no. 7)

Here, the beautiful moon is juxtaposed with the attractive girl and although there is no explicit nor implicit comparison between them, one cannot help likening the girl to the charms of the moon. Meanwhile, the beautiful moon can also be regarded as the place-condition under which the girl displays her
b. Explicit Comparison

Explicit comparisons are employed frequently in Ma's san-qu. They are easily detected, as a connective word, like "ru如," or "si似," always binds the tenor and the vehicle together. Other less common connective words used in Ma's images are "lei類" (resemble), "tong同" (the same as), "xiao效" (imitate), "sui随" (follow), and "sheng勝" (excel).

An example of an explicit comparison using the common linking word "si似" (like) is:

聲清恰似蠶食葉
The voice is clear, exactly alike the mulberry worms biting the leaves.

(no. 124c)

A less common linking word for comparison is "sui随" which likens fickle love to the evanescent tinted clouds:

....情何在
.... Where is love?

愁隨彩雲易散
I'm afraid that it may follow the easily vanishing colored clouds.

(no. 122d)
c. Implicit Comparison

Implicit comparisons are those images which compare the tenor to the vehicle without using linking words. "These images, in which the tenor and vehicle are, as it were, hyphenated, have an extremely condensed form and a strong immediate impact."51

The vehicle may appear in the form of a noun, as in the image "kingfisher slope" (fei-cui po 翡翠坡 in poem no. 1) which likens the greenness of the slope to the color of the feather of the kingfisher. Another example using a noun compound is "goose-feather winter snow" (e-mao rui-xue 鹅毛瑞雪 in poem 106) which aptly compares the winter snow flakes to the whiteness and softness of the goose feather.52

Images that implicitly compare may involve a verb or verb phrase for the vehicle. One example is:

半世逢場作戲

Half my life I've acted in a play as occasions arise,

(no. 125a)

Here life is compared to the acting of a role in a drama and the vehicle "zuoxi 作戲" is a verb phrase.

Another instance of a verbal construction used in implicit comparison is:

直待齊邦捲地亡

Until the Kingdom of Qi experienced a sweeping defeat.

(no. 114)
The defeat of Qi is compared to the sweeping of the floor which suggests extermination of an overwhelming nature.

While inanimate objects are often used in comparison with other inanimate objects explicitly or implicitly, there are occasions when tenors pertaining to human beings are compared to inanimate objects (vehicles) or vice versa.

An example of a human image that is "dehumanized" (as contrasted to personified) is "ren-hai 人海 " (literally "man-sea" in poem 35 ) in which the world of man with its huge population and uncertainty is compared to the vast and unfathomable sea.

An example of personification is

"媚似楊妃絹羽衣"

Charming as Consort Yang fluttering in her feather dress.

(no. 124f )

Here the fine calligraphy of a friend is compared to the grace of Yang Gui-fei 楊貴妃 as she dances elegantly in her soft feather dress.

d. Substitution

In substitution, the tenor is not mentioned and is substituted by the vehicle. Images of this type, which are quite frequently employed by Ma, are usually of a hackneyed nature. The difficulty involved in producing noun substitutions of an original nature is explained by Wayne Schlepp: "Noun
substitutions are associated most often with concrete referents that are less easily shifted into new perspectives than abstract qualities or actions. Highly original noun substitutions run the risk of being misunderstood or completely incomprehensible."

Examples of noun substitutions in Ma's images are: "golden lotus," which stands for the tiny bound feet of women (no. 79); "golden well," which stands for the autumn well (no. 7); and "ancient mirror," which stands for the moon (no. 118a). Some of these noun substitutions are actually metonymy, such as the "purple silk robe" which stands for an official or a nobleman who wears such clothing (no. 53). Others are synecdochic, such as the "white teeth or bright pupils," which are beautiful features, and are taken to represent beautiful girls (no. 122c).

Some substitutions involve verbs, as in

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{举月行} \\
\text{Carrying the moon to walk,} \\
\text{披星走} \\
\text{Wearing the stars to run.}
\end{align*}
\]

( no. 31 )

Both lines stand for the idea of travelling through the night, usually in a hectic manner. Another example which is less common is to "hold the broom" (no. 122d) which stands for becoming a housewife, that is, doing household chores within a marriage. 55
e. Transference

Transference occurs when the vehicle is not identified, or when qualities or actions are attributed to objects which normally have no such attributes. Transference may involve the use of verbs, as in

雨哨紗窗
The rain whistles at the gauze window, ......

(no. 117b)

Here the verb "shao 聞," which means to whistle, may describe the shrill sound of the rain itself, or taken as a causative verb, that is, the rain causes the gauze window to make high-pitched sounds. In both cases, whistling is an attribute not commonly related to objects as the rain and window. Also the exact vehicles to which the rain or the window are likened are not identified. It could be the whistle of man, some musical instrument, or some kind of bird.

The following examples involve the use of stative verbs in transference:

蔥的爽厲又嗔
Written out they become charming, but fierce,

怒又喜
Angry but joyous,

千般醜惡十分媚
Very hideous but exceedingly seductive.

(no. 124f)

Here the calligraphy of a friend of Ma is described as appearing "charming,"
"fierce," "angry," "joyous," "hideous," and "seductive," all of which are qualities not usually attributed to inanimate objects. Also the exact vehicles to which the calligraphy is likened is unidentified, for words like "hideous," "fierce," can refer to a human, a beast or some evil spirit.

Transference involving adjectives in Ma's san-qu appears often to be commonplace. One example is the "fragrant carriage" (xiang-che 香車 in no. 2) in which the object to which the carriage is likened is not identified, although it is known to emit fragrance.

Sometimes, transference involves the process of personification, in which case, the foreign quality attributed to the tenor is understood to derive from a human source. Much of these are, however, highly conventional such as the "solitary boat" (gu-zhou 孤舟 in no. 63) and the "proud horse" (jiao-ma 騎馬 in no. 91) which are animated with human emotions.

Often, two or more of the above techniques of imagery are used together instead of falling into a clear-cut division. An example of this is the "willow leaf eyebrow" (liu-ye mei-er 柳葉眉兒) which acts both as an implicit comparison (by comparing the eyebrow to the curve of the willow leaf), and a substitution (a synedochic way of representing a beautiful girl).

Another example of combined imagery is the description "cherry-apple blossom" (shui hai-tang 睡海棠 in nos 20). It is an image of transference, as the flower is given an attribute which it does not normally possess, and the vehicle is at the same time unidentified. Also, as the poem centers on the
description of the famous beauty, Yang Gui-fei, the flower may be a
substitution for her, or a juxtaposed image, which sets the scene, or serves
to bring an analogy for the qualities of unawareness and beauty between the
flower and those of Yang Gui-fei.
This section attempts to provide a brief introduction of the prosody of san-qu as a genre, and to discuss Ma's skill in the use of sound. As san-qu lyrics, Ma's poems are characterized by many features common or acceptable to the san-qu, such as the reduction of lines from a poem, the flexibility in line length, the great variety in rhythmic patterns, the different treatment with regard to certain tones of the level and oblique classes, and the high frequency of end rhymes.

Ma's ingenious and imaginative use of sound is demonstrated not so much in the meticulous observance of metrical rules as in the appropriate correlation of sound effects with the underlying theme, mood or structure of the lines. His deliberate and impeccable use of difficult rhyme words in some cases also testifies to his skill in the mastery of sound. Some special devices which Ma uses, such as feminine rhymes, rhyming compounds, internal rhymes, alliteration, reduplication and repetition of words, and onomatopoeia which likewise indicate his adeptness with sound will also be discussed in this section.

1. Prosody of San-qu

The prosodic features of the san-qu genre have always been noted for their flexibility which is evidenced in the fluidity of the total number of lines in a tune, tremendous freedom with regard to line length, the diversity of rhythmic
patterns, and the apparent laxity in the use of end rhymes.

However, certain qualifications must be made with regard to this flexibility or amorphousness of san-qu prosody. The reduction of lines in a tune in particular, is rarely found, while the addition of lines is allowable only in eighteen tunes out of a total of 400 tunes in the san-qu. 56

The words that are added to a line in the san-qu may be classified into two main types: the chen-zi 補字 (padding words or extrametrical words), and the zeng-zi 增字 (added words). While the former are made up of semantically and grammatically less significant words, usually of a colloquial nature, which are read over lightly and quickly, the latter are made up of words which are more important semantically and grammatically, and are difficult to be distinguished from the zheng-zi 正字 (basic words) of the line. While "padding words" added to a line, may range from one to twenty, 57 consecutive "added words" introduced into a line, do not as a rule exceed the number of three, although their scattered addition to a line may exceed this number.

Also the employment of "added word" must not interrupt the prescribed caesura patterns. The general rule, according to Zheng Qian's 鄭遷 "Dan-shuang 當雙 " (odd-even) theory is that, if the line is originally an odd numbered line, the number of words added to this line must yield a caesura pattern in which the number of words that appear after the caesura (there is usually only one caesura in the line, but if there are more, the final caesura is taken into account) must also be in odd number. The reverse is true for an originally even
numbered line. The reduction of words from a line, although permissible, seldom occurs and is limited only to certain lines in a few tunes.

As for the tones of the words, the san-qu must also follow prescribed patterns, although strictness is more pronounced in the final position of the lines, and secondly in words before the caesura as is in the Tang regulated poetry. In a certain sense, the tonal pattern may be said to be more rigid in san-qu than in other genres, for words of the rising and falling tones, which are conventionally regarded as oblique tones, are sometimes carefully differentiated in san-qu and cannot always be interchanged, especially at the final position of the line. On the other hand, words of the level tone and the rising tone, which are conventionally distinctly differentiated, are sometimes made interchangeable in san-qu.

With regard to rhymes in san-qu, words of different tones, that is, either level, oblique, or of the former entering tone are permitted to rhyme at the prescribed position at the end of the line. This is apparently more lax than rhymes in the Tang shi where words of different tones - level, rising, falling and entering - rhyme separately, or in the Song ci, where words of the level tone rhyme only with those of the level tone, and words only of the rising and falling tones rhyme together, while words of the entering tone rhyme separately.

Also, the same word may be repeated for end rhymes in the san-qu. "Xu-zi" (empty words) which are often grammatical particles of little semantic significance, and polysyllables, moreover, are permitted in rhyme positions. All these tend to maximize the occurrence of rhymes in san-qu.
The two stricter rules regulating rhymes are: the differentiation of the rising and falling tones (both belonging to the oblique tone) in end positions, and the use of rhyme words from the same rhyme category (there are nineteen of these rhyme categories in san-qu) throughout one xiao-ling or tao-shu.

As for the rhythmic patterns, more variety is found in san-qu, partly owing to the addition of words to a line which creates new rhythmic patterns. The following are examples of caesura patterns not uncommon to san-qu but unusual for the ci and the shi: 1/3 for a four-word line; 1/4 and 3/2 for a five-word line; 3/3 for a six-word line; 3/4 for a seven-word line, and 3/3/3 for a nine-word line.

2. Reduction of Lines

There is no instance of the addition of lines in Ma's san-qu. Reduction of lines, which is an uncommon practice, however, occurs twice in his anthology. One of these is in the tune of Fu-ma huan-chao 隆恩還朝, variously called Xiang-gong ai 相公愛, which belongs to the shuang-diao 雙調 musical mode, (no. 128i). This tune according to the Tai-he zheng-yin pu 太和正音譜 should have five lines, but a line is deducted in this tune in one of Ma's tao-shu entitled "Ti Xi-hu 题西湖."

In another tune, called the Yuan-yang sha 鳳凰煞 (no. 129c) also belonging to the shuang-diao mode, the reduction of a line is complicated with
the simultaneous combination of several lines into an extraordinarily lengthy line.

According to the Tai-he zheng-yin pu, this tune should have ten lines with five four-word lines from lines three-to seven. In Ma's case, only seven lines appear. Several lines are combined together to form an impressive seventeen-word line, which when sung or chanted in one breath hurriedly, accords with the highly aroused mood of the persona:

唱道但得半米兒有擔擎成千錦紙數天教
While singing, if you have just a tiny bit of decency, may heaven pardon you with nine thousand sheets,

(no. 129c)

As it is permissible to omit lines in cases when several lines with the same number of words occur consecutively, it is suspected that Ma omits one four-word line from this extended line here, while at the same time combining lines five to eight.

3. Line Length and Rhythmic Pattern

The inherent irregularity of line length of the basic words (zheng-zi) of the san-qu, plus the practice of introducing "padding words" and "added words" to a line result in the tremendous difference of line length in san-qu.

In the tune Jin-zi jing 金牛經, for instance, the fourth line is originally a one-word line, whose extraordinary shortness serves to attract the
reader's attention. In poem 36, where Ma uses this tune, the key word of the poem "qiong 頑 (distressed, or in poverty) falls exactly on this one-word line, which easily becomes the pivotal point of the poem to which our attention is gravitated.

The basic words of a line in the san-qu do not usually exceed seven, but as "padding words" and "added words" can be introduced into the line at the same time, the appearance of a line of ten words or more is common. In Ma's san-qu, "padding words" are widely used. Their number may range from one to four consecutive words in a line.

The following line, for instance, should be a five-word line in the tune of Xiang-fei yuan 湘妃怨, and the padding word "wei 儀 (for) which is semantically and grammatically less significant occurs at the beginning of the line:

(為)西湖燃斷髭
((For) the West Lake he snapped his beard.

(no. 94)

The next example shows the consecutive addition of four padding words "zhi bu-ru qie 只不如且 " at the beginning of the line, and with another padding word in the middle of the originally four-word line. The tune used is the Bo bu duan 撥不斷:

( 只不如且 ) 醒子 舊 ) 胡握
( Only that it's better ) to hang on (in) muddleheadedness.

(no. 113)
Usually, only two to three "added words" are employed in a line in Ma's san-qu. The following is an example of the addition of three words which have the same grammatical and semantic significance with the basic words of the line. The tune here is the Si-kuai yu 四塊五:

細腰舞皓齒歌

Dances of slender waists, songs of white teeth,

(no. 32)

As mentioned earlier, the use of "added words" must conform to the "Dan-shuang" (odd-even) theory regulating the caesura patterns of san-qu. On the whole, Ma complies with this rule rather consistently. The following, for instance, is originally a three-word line in the tune of Qing dong-yuan 慶東原, and the addition of two words "gao-cai 高才" gives rise to a caesura with three words, that is, odd number of words behind it:

高才 『天下知

Tremendous talents, all the world knows.

(no. 97)

The next example is again a three-word line in the tune of Si-kuai yu, with the addition of three words - "liu-li zhong 琉璃鍾" - which yields again an odd number of words after the caesura:

琉璃鍾/琉璃瓊

Crystal goblet, amber wine

(no. 32)
The following two examples taken from the tunes of Qing dong-yuan and Man-ting fang, respectively, demonstrate how an even numbered four-word line, after addition, still yields an even number of words after the caesura. In the first case, one word is added, while in the second instance, three words are added to the beginning of the line.

摺人衣/柳花

The willow blossoms that spring onto one's dress,

(no. 128b)

裳龍衣/垂拱無為

In ceremonial dragon costume, folding one's hands in inactivity.

(no. 121d)

4. Tonal Pattern

It has been the metrical convention for Tang shi and Song ci to classify words of the yin-ping and yang-ping tones as belonging to the category of level tone, and words of the rising (or shang-sheng), falling (or qu-sheng), and entering (or ru-sheng) tones as belonging to the category of oblique tone.

Gradual changes in the actual spoken tones of the words since the Song
times, however, necessitated some new practices in the meter. It must be noted, however, that disagreement arises among different scholars as to the underlying linguistic causes that brought about these new metrical practices. One theory conjectures that the rising tone of Yuan times which was still in the higher register became similar to the yang-ping tone which was a rising tone in the middle register, and consequently words of the rising tone traditionally considered to be oblique, often became interchangeable with words of the level tone. On the other hand, the qu-sheng, which was a falling tone in the lower register became incompatible with the rising tone, which therefore necessitated the careful differentiation of the rising and falling tones in certain positions of the san-qu.64

In the tune Qing dong-yuan, for instance, the last character of the fourth line of the tune should preferably be in the level tone, but in actual practice, the rising tone may be used in its place. Of the five Qing dong-yuan tunes Ma writes for his xiao-ling, there are two instances in which he uses the level tone in the final position of the fourth line—the words "hūi 回 " (huī),  "ji 基 " (ki+). There are three instances when he uses the rising tone in the same position—the words "bēi 北 " (piq), " qǐ 起 " (ki+), "lǐ 李 " (li+).65

The careful differentiation of the rising and falling tones is demonstrated in Ma’s meticulous usage of tones in several poems written in the tune Shou-yang qu （寿陽曲）（also known as the Luo-mei feng 落梅风）. According to the qu register, the ending of the last three lines of this tune should be in the respective tones: falling, rising, falling.66 In poem 61, for instance, the ending
of the last three lines in the words "arı " (on, falling tone), "ван " (van, rising tone), "сан " (san, falling tone); and in poem 62, the ending of the last three lines in the words "shu " (sru, falling tone), "lu " (lu+, rising tone), "qu " (khiu+, falling tone) conform completely with the prescribed tonal pattern.

5. Rhymes
   a. End Rhymes

   Certain rhyme practices in the san-qu help to facilitate the occurrence of rhyme in the final position of the line. One of these is the permission of words of different tones to rhyme, irrespective of whether they belong to the level, oblique, or the former entering tone. One example of the use of different tones for end rhymes in Ma's san-qu is no. 13 in the tune of Si-kuai yu where the prescribed tonal endings for the mandatory rhymes of lines two to four are, in respective order, rising, level, and falling. In this poem, Ma uses the words "gai " (koi, rising tone), "tai " (thai, level tone) and "zai " (tsai, falling tone) as end rhymes for lines two to four, thus demonstrating that words of different tones can be rhymed in san-qu.

   Another rhyme practice permitted in san-qu is to repeat the same word as rhyme in compulsory rhyme positions at the end of the line. Ma sometimes resorts to such a practice, as in poem 36, written in the tune of Jin-zi jing,
where both lines five and seven use the word "zhong 中" (tsru-in) as rhyme words.

The permission to use xu-zi, or empty words, and polysyllables, in rhyme positions again facilitates the maximization of end rhymes. The following two lines, in respective order, are examples of the use of empty word and polysyllable as mandatory rhymes. It must be noted, however, that in the second example, it is the prosodic requirement to use the polysyllable "ye-ma-sha 酉麻沙" (which has no semantic content) in this line.

豫章城故人来也
yu zhang cheng gu ren lai ye

(ia)

An old friend from Yu-zhang city came.

( no. 67 )

真醉也麻沙
zhen ge zui ye ma sha

(ia muo sra )

Oh, really to get drunk!

( no. 128g )

Finally, the occurrence of rhymes in run-on lines also increases the frequency of rhymes in san-qu. Normally, rhymes should occur at the end of a sentence division which marks a semantic completion, and rhymes in run-on lines become a deviation from this practice. Ma occasionally uses rhymes in run-on lines as in the following example which is in the tune of Xi chun-lai 喜春来.
The first line here which ends in the rhyme word "xin 'xin" (si 'm) is enjammed with the second line:

不関心
bu guan xin

(sim)

I don't care

玉漏滴残淋
yu lou di can lin

(li 'm)

The jade water-clock dripping the remaining drops.

(no. 40)

The adroitness of Ma in the use of rhymes is seen not so much in complying to prescribed rhyme patterns at the end of the lines as in his imaginative use of rhyme words which correlate with the thematic development of the poem, as well as his ability to use difficult rhyme words from a rather "narrow" rhyme category. The following is an example of the adept use of end rhymes which has an important bearing on the theme of the poem. It is entitled "Night Rain at the Xiao and Xiang Rivers," written in the tune of Shou-yang qu:

Yu deng an
yu deng an

(om)

The lights of the fisherman's boat dim,
The traveller returns from a dream,

The sound of each drop of rain drips the heart to pieces.

The solitary boat at the fifth watch; ten thousand li from home,

Every traveller with a few rows of heartfelt tears.

All the lines of this poem rhyme, except for the first line. The final words of the five lines are at the same time key words in the thematic movement of the poem. Their occurrence as rhyme words helps to attract greater attention. In the first line, the last word "暗(dim)" which is not a rhyme, nevertheless, sets
the scene for the gloomy mood of the poem. In the second line, the word "hui " (depart) shows how the traveller is awakened from sleep, and reflects his restlessness. The word "sui " (break) in the third line dramatizes his melancholy which is intensified by the sound of the rain. The fourth line of the poem, which has a caesura pattern of 4/3, as contrasted to the third and fifth lines which have a 3/4 pattern, is the climactic line of the poem. Moreover, the tones for the last three words of the line - "jia " (ka), "wan " (van), and "li " (li) - in the sequence of level, falling and rising, are outstanding and constitute what is called the "wu-tou " or the apex of beauty of the poem. The semantic significance of the end rhyme "li " which occurs in the pinnacle of this climactic line is easily underlined, and hence the stretch of distance between home and the traveller, or the central theme of separation is highlighted. The last word of the fifth line, "lei " (tears) brings about a closure in the poem, for it is a return to the description of the traveller's emotion after a deviation in the previous line revealing the cause of his melancholy.

The highly favorable comment which the Yuan lyricist and critic, Zhou De-qing made in regard to Ma's use of difficult rhyme words (words seldom used in verse) in the tao-shu entitled "Autumn Thoughts," beginning with the tune of Ye xing-chuan (no. 130), also testifies to Ma's uncanny skill in the use of rhymes.

Zhou observes that in this tao-shu, "there is no repetition of the same rhyme
word; there are no padding words. The rhymes are difficult and the diction is fine. The saying goes, 'one out of a hundred.' But I would say, 'one out of ten thousand.' Just see how he uses the words 'die 蝶 (ti̯a̯q), 'xue 雪 (hia̯q), 'jie 值 (kia̯q), 'bie 勃 (pia̯q), 'jie 舒 (kia̯q), 'jue 绝 (tsia̯q) which are all words of the former entering tone now used as the level tone. The words 'que 闕 (khiuaq), 'shuo 說 (sria̯aq), 'tie 跳 (thia̯q), 'xue 雪 (sia̯aq), 'zhuo 拶 (tsria̯aq), 'que 問 (khiuaq), 'tie 跳 (thia̯q), 'xie 洗 (hia̯q), 'che 嗆 (tsria̯aq), 'xue 血 (hia̯q), 'jie 跳 (tsia̯q) are all words of the former entering tone now used as the rising tone. The words 'mie 滅 (mia̯q), 'yue 月 (iuaq), 'ye 葉 (ia̯q) are all words of the former entering tone now used as the falling tone. There is not one word which is inappropriate. All later poets should learn from him.'

b. Feminine Rhyme, Rhyming Compound and Internal Rhyme

While the laxity of rules with regard to end rhymes has made possible their high frequency in san-qu, rhyming compounds, other internal rhymes at natural breaks or in important positions within a line, and feminine rhymes are also greatly employed in san-qu. These types of rhymes which are not prescribed by prosody reflect more of the poet's personal preference for and to a considerable degree his skill in using rhyme words. The appearance of appropriately used feminine rhymes, rhyming compounds and internal rhymes in Ma's san-qu indicates
his adeptness and imagination in the use of rhymes.

An example of feminine rhymes which Ma uses is:

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shou xing hai
(hi-in hai)
Emaciated frame,
men qing huai
(tshi-in huai)
Melancholic feeling.
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These two lines are grammatically and semantically parallel, and the use of rhymes for "xing形" (hi-in) and "qing情" (tshi-in), and again for "hai骸" and "huai懷" (which are also alliterative) in corresponding positions further adheres the two lines and results in greater emphasis on the depressed state of the poet. 69

Ma sometimes uses the traditional device of rhyming compounds, or die-yun (that is, a pair of syllables with the same final and which is at the same time a semantic or grammatical unit) to create special effects. In the following example, the two rhyming compounds that are used at the end of the two parallel lines, "yao-rao妖娆" (iau-riau) and "Dou-sou抖擞" (tu-siu) foster a sense of symmetry in sound which is in keeping with the semantic and
grammatical parallelism of these two lines:

體面妖娆

ti mian yao rao

(iau riau)

Their appearance seductive,

精神抖擞

jing shen dou sou

(tiu ssiu)

Their spirit animated.

(no. 122c) 70

The following two lines which are again parallel, demonstrate Ma’s skilful use of internal rhymes:

丁香枝上

ding xiang zhi shang

(tian hian tsr srian)

The lilacs at the branch,

葱茏梢头

dou kou shao tou

(tiu khiu srau thiu)

The nutmeg at the tip of the stem.

(no. 122c)

The rhythmic pause occurs after the second word of both lines, such that the
words "xiăng 香" (hîn) and "kōu 拐" (kîu) which rhyme with the last words of the two lines "shàng 上" (srian) and "tōu 頭" (thîu) respectively, are given more attention. As internal rhymes occur in the same positions in the two lines, parallelism in sound becomes allied with semantic and grammatical parallelism. Also to be noted is the concentration of nasal ending sound in the first line, and of "u" vowel sound in the second line.

Another instance of the appropriate use of internal rhymes is found in these lines:

¡çì bu zhi cai duo hai įu
(khi+) (tsrî+) (ki+)

Don't you know that plentiness of wealth is harmful to self?

zhî dao 道 shi fang zhi
(tsrîq) (srî) (tsrî+)

It's only at the Eastern City that you realize!

(no. 100)

The concentration of words of "ê 梱 rhyme in this poem (although not from the same rhyme category) at the density of three out of seven words in the first line - "qi 具" (khi+), "zhî 知" (tsrî+), "ji 己" (ki+), and another three out of six
words in the second line - "zhi ⾳ " (tsri+iq), "shi ⽊ " (sr+i), "zhi 知 " (tsri+i), creates a sense of repetition and consequently of certainty which correlates with the poet's firm conviction of the detriment of wealth.

6. Other Sound Devices

a. Alliteration

One common sound device that Ma uses is alliteration. It includes the use of what is traditionally called the shuang-sheng 香聲 (that is, a pair of syllables with the same initial, and which is at the same time a semantic or grammatical unit). One example of shuang-sheng is the compound "qi-qie 悽切" (tshi+i-tshiaq, meaning sorrowful). The repetition of the same affricate initials helps to emphasize the depressed feeling of the persona whose melancholy is aggravated by the scenes of the cloudy moon and the wind blowing against the iron pieces hanging from the eaves:

_南 般 兄助人凄切_
liangban er zhu ren qi qie
(tshi+i-tshiaq)

These two scenes add to my melancholy.

(no. 70)

In many cases, alliteration involving more than a compound of the same initial is used. The following line strikes us with its predominance of initial "s"
and "sh" (sr) sounds:

順西風晚鐘三四聲
shùn xi fēng wǎn zhōng sān sì shēng

Moving with the west wind are the three or four chimes of

the evening bells.

(no. 64)

Uniformity of initial sounds suggests a kind of harmony which is congruous with the concordance suggested by the meaning of the line (that is, the sounds of the bells moving in accord with the wind). The consecutive occurrence of "s" and "sh" sounds in the last three words of the line attract our attention on the auditory level and sharpen our imagination of the actual sound of the bells. Moreover, the concentration of the "ng" nasal finals in the line - "fēng 風" (fuǐn), "zhōng 鐘" (tsruǐn) and "shēng 聲" (sriǐn) - produces both the legato and booming sound effects, not unlike the chiming of bells.

The occurrences of alliteration at the key words of the line help us to focus attention on the meaning of the words. The following is an example of the correlation of alliteration with the important words of the line- "shēn 身" (sriǐm, what), "shēn 聲" (sriǐm, Master Shen Yue), "shòu 瘦" (sriù, emaciated):

偏倉先數郎郎瘦
piān shēn xiān jiào shēn lláng shòu

(sriǐm) (sriǐm) (sriù)
Contrarily, what is this that makes Master Shen so emaciated?

( no. 122e )

Alliteration may be used to foster a sense of parallelism between lines, as in

莫效臨歧柳
mo xiao lin qi liu
(lim) (liu)

Do not follow the willow at the crossroad,

折入時人手
zhe ru shi ren shou
(sr) (srui)

Which when plucked enter into others' hands.

( no. 122d )

Although these two lines are not parallel grammatically nor semantically, they are equal in line length and together as a unit they express the idea that one should not be fickle in love. The alliteration that occurs with the third and fifth words of the first line is parallel with another case in the second line in the same positions, thus enhancing their cohesion as a unit.
b. Reduplication and Repetition of Words

Reduplication of words, that is, the repetition of the same word in a consecutive manner may be utilized to produce appropriate sound effects. The following line, by reduplicating the word "su 躞" (su-ťao, meaning in plenty), repeats the sound of the word simultaneously, and the additional sound helps to stress the idea of an unusual amount of tears:

落簌簌淡如傾
pu su su leı́ ru qing
(su-tao su-tao)

Falling in plenty, the tears as if in pours,

(no. 116a)

In the next example, the word "man 慢" (meaning slow) which begins and ends with a nasal sound already produces a legato effect, and when coupled with reduplication, intensifies even more this lingering feeling which is in keeping with the meaning of the line:

慢慢的淺斟慢唱
man man de qian zhen mi chang

Slowly, slowly, pouring a little wine and softly humming.

(no. 105)

The two reduplicated compounds in the following line, "qiao-qiao qie-qie 喃喃絮絮" (khiau-khiau khiaq-khiaq) with the same initials and middle vowels, and hence having very similar sound, highlight the feeling of coyness of
the young orioles:

乱春心乔乔怯怯鸳鸯

luan chun xin qiao qiao qie qie ying chu
(khiau khiau khiau khiau)

Confused by the Spring's heart, are the young orioles who

feign and shy.

(no. 120b)

The following is an example of how repetition of the word "chao潮" (tsrhiau, meaning tide) within a space of two lines is used to imitate the quick and repetitive motion of the tide (its recurrent advance and retreat from the shore) not only on the semantic and imagistic levels, but also on the sound level:

看潮生
kan chao sheng
(tsrhiau)

I watch how the tide arises,

潮来潮去原无定

chao lai chao qu yuan wu ding
(tsrhiau) (tsrhiau)

The tide comes and the tide goes, it never rests.

(no. 108)
c. **Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia is another sound device that Ma employs constantly in his san-qu. An example of this is the expression "pu-tong 撲通 (phui-q-thu4n, meaning "plop") which suggests the sound of something heavy sinking into the water. The imitation of actual sound here serves to vivify the action of sinking and hence underlines the idea of the absence of the lover who, resembling the rock, disappears into the sea with not a trace.

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pu tong de shi chen da hai
(phui-q thu4n)
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Plop goes the rock that sinks into the vast sea.

(no. 127a)

The following two lines are examples of onomatopoeia in parallelism. The first one "bu ru gui 不如歸 " which literally means "better to return," (referring here to the withdrawal from officialdom) is an imitation of the actual sound of the cuckoo, while the second one "xing bu de 行不得 " which literally means "cannot walk," (referring here to the difficulty in the path of officialdom) resembles the sound made by the partridge. Parallelism in sound is therefore congruous with semantic parallelism;

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qia dao bu ru gui
(pu4q riui-lu4i)
```
As if saying "Better to return,"

又叫行不得
you jiao xing bu de

(hi^in pu^q ti^q)

Also crying out, "Cannot go."

(no. 54)
Footnotes

1. For more examples of monosyllabic colloquial words, see poem nos. 18, 20, 23-26, 31, 34-5, 37, 43, 51, 53, 56, 58-9, 71-3, 78, 81, 83, 89-90, etc.

2. For two-character colloquial expressions, see poem nos. 48, 64, 123b, 125c, etc.

3. Other examples of three-character colloquial expressions are in poem nos. 28, 113, 123e, 125a, 1291, 131c, 134c, etc.

4. Han shu, Bai-na ben, juan 40, pp. 1b-2b.

5. Ibid., juan 64, pp. 11a-13b.

6. For the biography of Wang Hui-zhi, see Jin shu, Bai-na ben, juan 80, pp. 6a-b.


For more examples of complete and incomplete quotations, see poem nos. 4, 13-5, 51, 131e, 124g, etc.


12. For other examples of modified quotations, see poem nos. 1, 59, 66, 122d, 124d, etc.

13. This is actually a modified quotation from one of Mencius' prose essay, "Gong-sun niu shang-pian 公孫丑上篇," in Meng-zi 孟子, juan 3, p. 26, SBCK, vol. 10. Although the word "hu" appears in the
original text, Ma's quotation of a prose line in his poem, without deleting the prose particle, is a practice not so common in poetry.


For more examples of reduplicated words, see poem nos. 27, 84, 116a, 117a, 118a, 119a, 121e, 124l, 126c,d, 133b, 135c, etc.

16. Other examples are lines following this in 120b, and in 135c.

17. Other examples of reduplicated words attached to a word in front are in poem nos. 74, 79, 87, 116a, 120b, 125e, 126b, 130g.

18. Other examples of repetition of the same word in the same line are in poem nos. 1, 6, 37, 74, 103, 108, 125b, etc.

For more examples of incomplete lines with noun phrases, see poem nos. 15, 91, 107.

20. Kao Yu-kung 高友工 and Mei Tsu-lin 梅祖麟 in their essay, "Syntax, Diction and Imagery in T'ang Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 31, (1970-71), 71-81, argue that even noun based images in Chinese poetry are less "thing oriented" than English poetry. This is because of the intrinsic orientation towards qualities in the majority of nouns in Chinese. Also the weakness of syntax in noun juxtaposition enhances the tendency for similarity and contrast between these noun images, and in comparison, quality again becomes more dominant than substance.

21. Other examples of ambiguous lines are in poem nos. 29, 88, 125e, etc.

22. Ren Na, *Zuo-ci shi-fa shu-zheng* 作詞手法疏證, p. 32b in SQCK, IV.


24. For more examples of three-character simple parallel lines, see Liu Chun-jo's 劉君謙 "Some Observations on the Parallel Structure in

25. For other examples of chen-zi added to simple parallel lines, see Table VII of Liu Chun-jo's essay, pp. 86-7.

26. For more examples of triple parallel lines, see Tables VIII and IX of Liu's essay, p. 87.

27. Two other examples of quadruple parallel lines are in poem nos. 120b and 128k.

28. For more examples of semi-identical lines, see poem nos. 25, 126f, 126g, 131a, 132b, 136b.

29. Other examples of incremental repetition are in poem nos. 21, 74, 95-100. For reference to Si-ma Xiang-ru, see Chang Qu's Hua-yang guo-zhi, collated by Gu Guang-qi (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu guan, 1958), juan 3, pp. 33-4.

30. See also poem nos. 131b and 133b.
31. See also poem nos. 13-6, 32-5, 95-100.

32. See poem nos. 91-4, 29-31.


36. See poem nos. 7, 47, 110, etc.

37. See poem nos. 2, 80, 88, 9, 130g, 131b, 12, 66, 94, 106, etc.

38. See poem nos. 1, 91, 46, 119a, 121, 117b, 58, 81, 119c, 120b, etc.

39. See poem nos. 7, 52, 75, 118a, etc.

40. See poem nos. 2, 45, 49, 131f, etc.

41. See poem nos. 14, 125a, 130f, etc.
42. See poem nos. 10, 81, 86, 119a, etc.

43. See poem nos. 9, 14, 107, 128d, 130g.

44. See also poem nos. 34, 63, 67.

45. See also poem nos. 68, 99, 127d.

46. See also poem nos. 7, 47, 119a, 130b.

47. See also poem nos. 46, 61, 64, 122c, 124a, etc.


49. Ibid.

50. For more examples of explicit comparison, see nos. 42, 62, 85, 104, 116a, 117c, 120b, 124d, etc.

51. James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, p. 239.

52. For more examples of implicit comparison, see nos. 41, 35, 40,
42, 79, 101, 116c, 118a, 120a, etc.


54. For more examples of noun substitution, see poem nos. 55, 104, 118c, 120c, 121c, 127c, 128e, 128l.

55. For more examples, see poem nos. 23, 38, 127a, etc.


59. Ibid., pp. 11-17.

60. Zheng Qian, "Bei-qu ge-shi de bian-hua 北曲格式的變化," *The Continent Magazine (Da-lu za-zhi)* 大陸雜誌, 1, No. 7 (Oct., 1950),
61. Zhu Quan 朱權, *Tai-he zheng-yin pu*, 太和正音譜, ZGGD, III, 156.

62. Ibid., p. 172.

63. The tonal pattern of Ma's line supports the argument of the deduction of a four-word line. The three extra words of this extended line are considered as padding words.

64. See Wayne Schlepp's *San-chiu*, pp. 20-22. Also see Wang Li's *Han-yu shi-lu xue*, pp. 773-87, who argues that the rising tone which is level and in the upper register, resembles both the *yin-ping* (which is level) and the *yang-ping* (which rises to the upper register) tones.

65. The transcriptions hereafter shown in brackets are according to Hugh M. Stimson's *The Jongyuan In Yunn*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1966). For actual pronunciation of his transcriptions, read pages 5-23 of his book. The tone mark here - "\~", "\^", "\~", "\^", "\~" - stand for the tones of *yin-ping*, *yang-ping*, rising and falling, respectively, for both Stimson's transcription system and the Ping-yin system. Also, the tone mark "*" stands
for the neutral tone in the Ping-yin system.

There is actually another poem of the same tune using the word "de 的" (tì-iq) in the same position, but as this word can be pronounced in various tones, I have excluded it in the discussion.


67. The Zhong-yuan yin-yun and the Yao-shan tang wai ji entitle this tao-shu as "Qiu-si 秋思" (Autumn Thoughts). Other anthologies, however, have different titles, such as "Qiu-xing 秋興" in the Ci-lin zhai-yan and Bei-gong ci-ji, and "Jing-shi 綜世" in the Nan-bei ci guang-yun.


69. For more examples of rhyming compounds, see poem nos. 59, 118a, 122c, 124d, 130e, 131e, etc.

70. Other examples of feminine rhymes are in poem nos. 14, 63, 108, 122e, etc.

71. The word "zhi 贞" (tsí-iq), a word of the former entering tone, was grouped into the level tone of the "qi-wei 起微" rhyme category in the
Zhong-yuan yin-yun, and is therefore considered as a rhyme word here despite its different ending with other words just quoted. The word "shi 帳" (sr̥) which ends with the "i" rhyme, belongs, however, to the "zhi-si 支思" rhyme category, as against the other words here which all belong to the "qi-wei" rhyme category.

72. For more examples of internal rhymes, see poem nos. 29, 53, 65, 99, 114, 120c, 122e, 125b, 130c.

73. Other examples of alliteration are in poem nos. 57, 62, 113, 115, 120b, 122c, 125d, 125e, 128k, 132d.

74. For more examples of reduplicated words, see poem nos. 74, 79, 87, 117a, 119a, 135c, etc.

75. For other examples of repetition of words, see poem nos. 26, 37, 74, 103, 104, 132b. etc.

76. For more examples of onomatopoeia, see poem nos. 18, 63, 95, 117b, 125e, 128f, etc.
Conclusion

The nonpareil significance and accomplishment of Ma Zhi-yuan as a san-qu lyricist has long been recognized. The Ming critic, Zhu Quan (d. 1448) who ranks Ma as the foremost of the 187 eminent san-qu poets of the Yuan period, acknowledges the singularly brilliant achievement of Ma in these words: "The lyrics of Ma Zhi-yuan are like a singing phoenix in the morning sun. They are refined and elegant, comparable to the splendor of the Palaces of Ling-guang and Jing-fu. It is as if when he shakes his mane and elicits a long neigh, a myriad horses are mute. He also resembles a celestial phoenix flying and singing in the nine heavens. How can other birds be his equal? It is only fit to rank him as the first of all the eminent poets."  

The modern critic, Ren Na, also pays tribute to the extraordinary and unique achievement of Ma as a san-qu lyricist in these words: "As regards the Yuan playwrights, four of them are to be acclaimed. As for the san-qu, I would only acclaim Dong-li. Xiao-shan (Zhang Ke-jiu), although an expert in san-qu, has nevertheless, a different flavor from Ma. All the rest are by no means experts. As Ma is proficient in both san-qu and za-ju (drama), it is but highly appropriate to acknowledge him as a leader among eminent poets of the past and present."  

The tremendous impact which Ma's lyrics had on later poets is noted by Lu Qian in these words, "Zhu Quan, the Prince of Ning-xian of Ming, in his criticism of poets, elevated Zhi-yuan to the foremost position, perhaps because after the mid-Yuan period, most lyricists modelled themselves upon Ma's poems. His
influence on Jin and Yuan playwrights is by no means slight."

Other critics are, however, skeptical of the astounding merits of Ma as a qu poet. Wang Guo-wei, for instance, considers Guan Han-qing, rather than Ma Zhi-yuan, to be the indisputable leader of qu poets. Both in making such a criticism, Wang has in mind more of the overall achievement of the qu poets in both the capacities of san-qu lyricists and playwrights, rather than as san-qu lyricists alone. Wang comments, "...Han-qing has independently fashioned great poetry. His lyrics are saturated with human emotions. Every word is so natural. He is necessarily the best of all the Yuan poets. Bai Ren-fu and Ma Zhi-yuan's styles are elegant and grand, profound and illuminating, not unworthy of first rate caliber. All the rest of the qu poets cannot exceed the achievement of the eminent four (Guan, Ma, Zheng, Bai). If Tang shi is taken to compare with Yuan qu, then Han-qing's resembles Bo Le-tian's 白樂天 (Bo Ju-yi 白居易), ... Dong-li's resembles Li Yi-shan's 李義山 (Li Shang-yin 李商隱), ... If Song ci is taken to compare with Yuan qu, then Han-qing's resembles Liu Qi-qing's 柳耆卿 (Liu Yong 柳永), ... Dong-li's resembles Ou-yang Yong-shu's 歐陽永叔 (Ou-yang Xiu 歐陽修), ... The Prince of Ning-xian of Ming in his appraisal of the qu, elevated Ma Zhi-yuan to the uppermost position, and degraded Han-qing to the tenth position, possibly because after the mid-Yuan period, most qu poets imitated Ma and Zheng (Guang-zu) closely, and followed Han-qing laxly. This accounts for the criticism of the Prince of Ning-xian, which is not, however, a faithful appraisal."
Taking the psychology of the literati of the Ming period into consideration, Zheng Zhen-duo explains their "partial" appreciation for Ma and their lack of sufficient acknowledgement for Guan Han-qing's works in this way: "He (Ma) is the first Yuan qu poet to pour his own emotion, thoughts, and self into his plays and san-qu. He complains. From complaining he abhores the world of man. From abhoring the world of man, he deliberately employs the language of transcendence. This is greatly sufficient to move the hearts of the (Ming) literati, although this deviates far apart from the masses..... After him, Yuan qu gradually became the monopoly of the literati, a tool with which they discharged their frustration....." So, it is mainly with the disillusionment and the "transcendence" in the subject matter of Ma's san-qu that the Ming literati found identification and consequently their "exorbitant" attraction towards Ma and his works.

There is also a diversity of views as to which antecedent in the past literary history of China Ma resembles most. Both Wang Guo-wei and Wang Ji-de appear to be more impressed with Ma's deliberate consciousness in art and refinement in writing when they make their respective comparisons.

Wang Guo-wei, in particular, is probably obsessed with Ma's extremely elegant style in the play Han-gong qiu when he compares Ma to Li Shang-yin, noted mostly for his sophistication in the art. However, Han-gong qiu, although the best of Ma's plays, is not a fair representation of Ma's style nor theme of his plays and san-qu in general. Wang Guo-wei's judgement here is therefore partial. Wang Ji-de's comparison of Ma to Du Fu, noted for his craftsmanship and
meticulousness, is evidently inclined again to view the painstaking facet of Ma's style of writing, rather than treating his works in a comprehensive way.10

Other critics who liken Ma to Tao Yuan-ming, Li Bo and Su Dong-po, veer, on the contrary, more to the gist of Ma's subject matter and to his spontaneity in style. With Tao Yuan-ming, Ma shares the common vein of resignation in tone and a similar naturalness in style. It is Zheng Zhen-duo who applies Su Dong-po's description of Tao Yuan-ming's style to Ma's works, commenting that, "externally (his poems are) withered, but internally opulent; apparently insipid but actually beautiful."11 This criticism is true of the philosophical flavor embodied in some of Ma's apparently unadorned and artless poems.

Both Liu Da-jie and Luo Jin-tang have likened Ma to the great Tang poet, Li Bo, arguing that just as Li Bo is representative of the Tang shi, Ma is representative of the Yuan san-qu.12 It is undoubtedly also in the highly romantic and unrestrained nature of both the subject matter and style of Li's and Ma's works that similarity is found.

Perhaps the best comparison of all is to liken Ma to the eminent Song ci poet, Su Dong-po. As mentioned earlier, both Su and Ma succeed in extending the subject matter of both the ci and the san-qu, such that in their hands, there is practically nothing that cannot be expressed in poetry.13 There is also a versatility of style that both poets share, the capacity to write at times with reckless spontaneity, and at other instances with elegance and grace, although their inclination is tilted towards the area of romanticism.14
Despite all these differences in comparison, one obvious fact remains unaltered - that Ma is compared to poets of gigantic stature in their respective genres. His exceeding eminence as a san-qu poet is unquestionable. Although when Ma's za-ju (drama) is taken into consideration, his combined achievement as a qu poet may not emulate Guan Han-qing, and although the thematic nature of Ma's works attracted the undue recognition of Ming critics, his exceptional contributions to the san-qu genre and his extraordinary adeptness in it, favor the argument that he is indeed the most outstanding san-qu lyricist.

To recapitulate, the contributions of Ma as a san-qu lyricist lie in his unique versatility of subject matter and style, and the accompanying diversity of mood and tone which result in the extension of the thematic boundaries of the san-qu and the elevation of the san-qu as a genre in its own right representing the Yuan period, just as the shi is representative of Tang and the ci representative of the Song.

The versatility of Ma's subject matter, mood and style is seen in his inclusion of both mundane and elevated topics into his san-qu, his frivolity and sobriety of tone, as well as his vulgarity and refinement in different modes of expression.

At the time of Ma Zhi-yuan, the san-qu was still very much a folk ballad marked with naturalness and freshness, unencumbered by the many literary conventions and cliché that saturated the Tang shi and the Song ci in the latter stages of their development, and the endeavor of a great poetic genius in a newly arisen form of poetry had its outcome in the spurring of that new form
into a more matured genre with increasing symmetry and elegance, and yet simultaneously retaining its qualities of freshness and spontaneity. Ma's contributions to the maturation of the san-qu genre is seen in his use of refined quotation, copious employment of parallelism, skilful method of word-painting and his imaginative and ingenious use of sound, apart from introducing topics of gravity or of philosophical flavor into his poetry.

Luo Kang-lie's tribute to Ma stresses his enormous contribution to the san-qu: "It was after Dong-li that the worlds of the san-qu became elevated and their boundaries expanded, being cleansed from the jest and flippancy that the san-qu was accustomed to. His san-qu are filled with sudden emotions, elegant, heroic and lofty. Like Su Dong-po, there is no idea that he cannot penetrate, and nothing that he cannot versify, such that the san-qu becomes dignified. Mu-an 牧庵 (Yao Sui 姚燧, 1239-1314), Yun-zhuang 雲莊 (Zhang Yang-hao 張養浩, 1269-1329), Shu-zhai 疏齋 (Lu Zhi 呂薌, 1235-1300?) together helped in commencing such practices. Xiao-shan 小山 (Zhang Ke-jiu 張可久, b. ca. 1280) and Meng-fu 梅竹 (Qiao-Ji 喬吉, 1280-1345) assembled these traditions and followed after, and so the san-qu succeeds in keeping abreast with the Tang shi and the Song ci." 15 Although Luo's view overlooks the presence of crudeness in Ma's san-qu in emphasizing the gravity of his subject matter and tone, it is undeniable that as a san-qu lyricist, Ma's innovations and contributions are invaluable.
Footnotes

1. Ling-guang and Jing-fu are the two magnificent palaces built by Prince Gong of Lu of the Eastern Han, and Emperor Ming of Wei respectively.

2. In this metaphorical description of the outstanding achievement of Ma, Zhu Quan takes the poet's surname in the literal sense, that is, referring to him as a horse, and hence the image of muteness of other horses (poets) in the presence of this extraordinary horse.

3. Zhu Quan, Tai-he zheng-yin pu, ZGGD, III, 16.

4. These four playwrights refer to Guan Han-qing, Bai Pu, Ma Zhi-yuan, and Zheng Guang-zu.

5. Ren Na, Qu xie, SQCK, IV, 57.

6. Lu Qian, Yuan-ren za-ju quan-ji, postscript to the plays of Ma Zhi-yuan, p. 2.


10. Wang Ji-de, *Qu-lu 穿*, juan 4, in ZGGD, IV, 156.


Bibliography
Abbreviations

CSJC - Cong-shu ji-cheng chu-bian 蕃書集成初編

SBCK - Si-bu cong-kan 四部叢刊

SKQS - Si-ku quan-shu zhen-ben 四庫全書珍本

SQCK - San-qu cong-kan 散曲叢刊

QYSQ - Quan-Yuan san-qu 全元散曲

ZGGD - Zhong-guo gu-dian xi-qu lun-zhu ji-cheng 中國古典戲曲論著集成
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Appendix

Poem Numbers that Correlate with the Mode, Tune Title, Poem Title, and Page Numbers in the Quan-Yuan San-qu

Xiao-ling

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