



“Objectification” and “Anti-Objectification”

On the Female Writing of Female Poets in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract. This article analyzes the female writing of female Ci poets in the Song Dynasty through the classification of the Ci lyrics of female poets in the Song Dynasty, combined with feminist research on "objectification". Specifically, this article uses emotion as the basis to analyze and classify the female writing of the female Ci poets in the Song Dynasty. The Ci lyrics are divided into four categories: expressing longing for distant people and expressing warnings to distant people; expressing the thoughts and personalities of the poets themselves; expressing sadness and desolation after being abandoned; expressing thoughts of melancholy. At the same time, this article combines Nussbaum's eight-point definition of the expression form of "objectification" with analyzing the writing of female images in different types of Ci poems, pointing out that the first and third categories of Ci poems include writing about the "objectification" of women, and the second category of Ci poems includes writing about the "anti-objectification" of women, and analyze the reasons for the writing of "objectification" and "anti-objectification" in the above Ci poems.

Keywords: Song Dynasty; female Ci poet; "objectification"; "anti-objectification"

1 Introduction

In the realm of Ci research during the Song Dynasty, the examination of female Ci poets has emerged as a noteworthy trend. Contemporary scholarly investigations into female Ci poetry of this era typically adopt one of two approaches: a macroscopic analysis delves into the female consciousness and the attributes of the female subject portrayed in the Ci lyrics [1, 2], while a microscopic perspective scrutinizes the depiction of women in the works of individual female Ci poets [3-12]. These methodologies primarily center around textual analysis, occasionally complemented by insights from earlier lyric theorists. In terms of their outcomes, these studies predominantly involve the synthesis of female personas and feminine awareness [13, 14]. Nonetheless, there exists a discernible disconnection between these inquiries and contemporary feminist literary criticism theories, with a primary emphasis on textual dissection. Even in cases where certain research endeavors incorporate elements of feminist literary criticism such as “female consciousness,” they often lack precise theoretical guidance and tend to remain

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somewhat abstract. In terms of the “objectification” theory, foreign scholars have already carried out research on the “objectification of women” theory earlier and have made considerable achievements. Throughout the country, in the field of ancient Chinese literature, some scholars have also conducted certain research on the phenomenon of “objectification of women” in literary works, such as studying the objectification of women in erotic poems of the Southern Dynasties, the objectification of women in Song poetry, and the objectification of women in novels of the Ming and Qing Dynasties [15-17]. However, in general, there are few research results in this area, and the research on “objectification” in the field of Song Ci mostly starts from the works of male Ci poets, while the works of female Ci poets are hardly covered. Research on the “objectification” phenomenon of female Ci poets' lyrics in the Song Dynasty is still weak.

The above are studies by Chinese scholars. As far as foreign countries are concerned, Ronald Egan, in his work on Li Qingzhao, points out that the works of female writers of the Song dynasty that have been handed down to the present day - including those of female lyricists - have often been filtered through the culture of male elites, and those that have been preserved tend to present a fixed style. The discourse points to the possibility of further research on Song women's lyrical works, that is, to examine the works of Song women lyricists in terms of gender culture from the male discourse. [18]

Currently, an emerging trend in the field of ancient literature revolves around the fusion of contemporary foreign literary criticism theories with classical Chinese literary works. This endeavor not only symbolizes a novel direction in the realm of ancient literature but also plays a crucial role in furnishing the essential theoretical foundation for the exploration of ancient literary texts. Within the broader context of ancient Chinese literature, it is clear that female authors have historically occupied a non-mainstream position. Paradoxically, this unique positioning bestows upon ancient Chinese female literature a vast expanse of uncharted research territory.

The question of how to harmonize ancient Chinese women's literature with burgeoning foreign feminist literary criticism theories, all the while bridging the existing research gaps in this field, is a matter that warrants careful consideration. In line with this objective, this study embarks on an examination that melds the lyrical creations of female poets from the Song Dynasty with the concept of “objectification.” The investigation seeks to explain the dynamics of “objectification” and its counterbalance, the “anti-objectification,” as manifested in the portrayal of female personas within the lyrics of Song Dynasty's female poets.

2 How to Define “Objectification”

The word “objectification” was first seen in Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. In the chapter “Objectification and Proletarian Consciousness”, Lukács mentioned the phenomenon of “objectification” that exists in capitalist society:

The relationship between people acquires the nature of things, and thus acquires a “ghostly objectivity”. This objectivity conceals its essence with its strict, seemingly perfect and reasonable self-discipline, that is, the relationship between people and each other. All traces of relationships between people. [19]

In addition, Lukács also analyzed the “objectification consciousness” brought about by “objectification”:

As the labor process becomes more and more rationalized and mechanized, workers' activities increasingly lose their initiative and become an intuitive attitude, thereby losing their will more and more. [19]

It can be seen from this that “objectification” has at least the following two characteristics: first, people treat each other as objects for use only; second, people lose their initiative and will.

The term “objectification” originates from the realm of social economics, but since the 1990s, feminist scholars have explored and imbued it with a feminist perspective. In 1997, Fredrickson and Roberts jointly introduced the Objectification Theory, delineating the objectification of women as the reduction of women to sexual objects, with the implication that a woman’s existence is primarily for the purpose of fulfilling the needs of others. [20] In recent years, several studies have bridged feminism with the Objectification Theory. American scholar Martha Nussbaum, in her work *Fortress of Pride: Sexual Assault, Accountability, and Reconciliation* identifies eight facets of women’s “objectification.” These eight facets encompass: instrumentalization, denial of autonomy, lifelessness, fungibility, infringement, ownership, negation of subjectivity, and silence. Nussbaum emphasizes that “these eight characteristics are not necessarily equal, and they do not always coexist.” [21]

The concept of “objectification” can be traced back to Lukács, and through the research conducted by feminist scholars, Nussbaum has established more defined criteria for recognizing the objectification of women. This not only furnishes valuable guidance for the analysis of contemporary cultural phenomena but also offers insights when examining cultural phenomena in ancient societies, including the study of ancient literature.

3 Different Categories of Women’S Ci in Song Dynasty

Ci lyrics are the most outstanding and representative literary style of the Song Dynasty and the carrier of social life during that time. The large number of customs, historical events and personal experiences recorded in Song Ci poetry provide rare first-hand information for studying the society of the Song Dynasty. According to statistics, among the Complete Song Ci, there are female Ci lyricists 85 position and their Ci lyrics 200 remaining head [22]. The Song Ci lyrics created by these female authors can better reflect the living conditions and inner emotions of women in the Song Dynasty than those Ci poems created by men who “doing the boudoir voice” that imitate women’s tones. It also shows the social role and status of women in the Song Dynasty.

Through collection and screening, the author eliminated the fragmentary sentences, the lyrics of fictional characters included in the *Complete Song Ci* and those Ci whose author were anonymous, and finally obtained the female Ci lyrics in the *Complete Song Ci* 96 head. The authors of the Ci lyrics have many identities, including geishas, palace maids, concubines and Taoist priests, etc., which to a large extent can represent the creative style of female Ci lyricists in the Song Dynasty.

After collecting, the author divided the collected Ci lyrics into four categories based on the main emotions reflected in the Ci lyrics:

In the first category of Ci lyrics, the authors express her longing for people far away and give them reminder. This type of Ci poetry is represented by Chen Fengyi's *A Large Bunch: Farewell to Jiang Longtu, governor of Sichuan* and Wei Furen's *Singing of the Riverside City: Sorrow in Spring*:

Here in Sichuan, the river's spring unfolds,
With mist thick as the colors spring holds.
My lover, by twin banners embraced so tight,
Soon he will depart, into the morning light.
The plum blossoms weep, their petals descend,
As if crimson tears for his leaving, they send.

Where will you ride, on your journey's quest?
New is the riverside path, yet unguessed.
In the palace grand, with the emperor's grace,
As you're adorned with regal gifts, I inquire:
Will you remember me in the Xilou place?
Will thoughts of me, in your heart, be on fire?

—Chen Fengyi's *A Large Bunch: Farewell to Jiang Longtu, governor of Sichuan* [23]

In this poem, the author not only expresses the sadness of separation and the uncertainty about the future after separation, but also reminds “Jun”: when being rewarded in the imperial court, please don't forget that his lover is still waiting for him to come back.

Here is another example of this kind of Ci:

Parting is easy, seeing you is tough,
I no longer look in the mirror, it's been long enough.
My beauty has grown frail, my attire feels loose,
Outside, the red plum blossoms will wither, who will believe,
If they in person do not see?

In the morning, I adorn, gazing at Chang'an's wall,
Afraid of the slight chill, avoiding the railing's call.
The eastern wind, I fear, it stirs the frown on my brow,
Return soon, I pray, don't keep me waiting, allow
Me the leisure of a springtime's grace, don't let it fall.

—Wei Furen's *Singing of the Riverside City: Sorrow in Spring* [23]

The emotion expressed by this word is more inclined to the longing for “Lang” after parting with him. The protagonist of the poem is “haggard” due to longing, and she doesn't even have the heart to appreciate the red plums outside the window. At the end, she hopes that “Lang” will not forget her as a “concubine” and hope that he will return as soon as possible so as not to delay the “concubine”'s youth.

The second category are some works of self-expression. Among such works, the most famous are undoubtedly Li Qingzhao's two poems:

Where water and sky meet, the morning fog is a gentle shroud,
 Mingling with cloud waves, like a silken, silver crowd.
 The Milky Way traverses the night sky, its stellar song,
 A thousand sails dance upon the waves, all night long.
 In dreams, my spirit soars to celestial heights,
 I hear the Heavenly Emperor's words, their gentle light.
 He asks, “Where will your journey's end be?”

“The road is long,” I reply, “alas, and day is not near to see.
 I've learned to craft verses, though they amaze,
 Yet the vast expanse, endless skies, in a daze.
 Nine thousand miles of open space, a soaring flight,
 Great Roc in the winds, on celestial journeys we alight.
 Oh, winds, never cease your gentle song,
 Carry my little boat to the Penglai Isles along.”
 —Li Qingzhao's *The Fisherman's Ballad* [23]

Golden hues of osmanthus, not striking, yet they grace,
 Delicate and slender, in a tranquil place.
 Unobtrusive, they linger, shunning the spotlight's glare,
 Their essence, a fragrance, a gift that none can compare.
 No need for vivid shades or fiery reds to be,
 Osmanthus, pale in color, but rich in reverie.

Amidst the floral realm, they claim their sovereign throne,
 In autumn's tapestry, they stand alone.
 Compared to osmanthus, plum and chrysanthemum blush,
 In the realm of autumn blooms, osmanthus takes the hush.
 Alas, Qu Yuan, why in your verses, no sweet osmanthus song?
 Their beauty and scent, deserved to belong.
 —Li Qingzhao's *Sky with Partridges: Osmanthus* [23]

In this type of Ci lyrics, the poet may use the animals and plants in nature as a reflection of her self-image and praise them in the form of chanting things; or she may express and portray herself in a fantasy and straightforward way.

The third category is to express the sadness and desolation after being abandoned and forgotten. Such words express emotions with restraint or directness, such as:

A creek embraced by the evening's golden glow,
 Mountain peaks and water, a tranquil tableau.
 Gentle breezes stir the ripples, green waves rise,
 Reflecting pavilions in the water's guise.
 They seem to sway, in the ripple's dance,
 Startling mandarin ducks into a prance.
 On the creek's banks, only a few homes remain,
 Amidst the beauty, untouched by city's strain.

One vibrant apricot branch peeks its head,
 From a courtyard wall, where it's softly spread.
 By the willow-lined path that meanders and winds,
 A solitary soul, there each day, he finds.
 He watches the willow catkins drift on high,
 Three springs have passed, still, he wonders why.
 The ties of home, so long left behind,
 Yet, he lingers here, a wanderer of a different kind.
 —Wei Furen's *Bodhisattva Barbarian* [23]

In tears, I penned a letter, Yan Zhang, to you I sent,
 For worldly fame and fortune, you chose to be content,
 But forgot the one who waited, by the hearth I stayed,
 While you pursued your dreams afar, my love began to fade.
 Once you achieved your lofty goals, you did not return,
 Your heart so hard as iron, not a flicker of concern.

The sun rose high in the sky, three bamboo poles or more,
 Yet I remained in slumber, my youth I did deplore.
 Wasting precious hours, my beauty slowly waned,
 When will my beloved return, release me from this pain?
 I watched the yin and yang, in pairs, so harmonious and free,
 Feeling neither envy nor shame, for your love is all I plea.
 —Yi Zu's wife *A Cut of Plum* [23]

The first poem expresses complaints, incomprehension, and one's own loneliness and depression about the lover's "betray" through memories and comparisons between the past and present; the second poem is more colloquial and expresses similar emotions straightforwardly.

The last category of lyrics focuses on expressing one's own sorrow. Among such works, the more famous one is undoubtedly Li Qingzhao's *Spring in Wulin: Late Spring*:

The wind has ceased, petals wither, their fragrance fills the air,
 Midday has passed, yet I'm in no mood to comb my hair.
 All is changed, all is done, the final chapter's been writ,
 I long to speak, but tears fall first, in sadness, I admit.

They say the spring in Shuangxi is still a splendid sight,
 I plan to go and drift along the river with pure delight,
 Yet I fear the little boat, like a grasshopper, so small,
 Can't carry the weight of all the sorrows in my heart, after all. [23]

This poem takes "things are the same and people are not the same" as the emotional point of origin, and it expresses the loneliness after the hustle and bustle and the sadness of no longer seeing old friends. However, the specific content of the sorrow is not clearly stated in the poem, but only "many sorrows" are mentioned. It leaves readers with endless reverie. But in this type of Ci lyrics, in addition to the sadness of "things

have changed and people have changed”, the helplessness and loneliness of the passage of time, there are also descriptions of unreasonable melancholy, like:

Moonlight spills through the bamboo grove in the courtyard’s grace,
Whispering zephyrs in the night, a gentle, calming embrace.
Late hours, the City’s watchman’s lantern calls, echoing near,
Startled birds take to the sky, in the wood, a sudden fear.

Time’s fleeting, youth slips away, like grains of drifting sand,
Only the plum blossoms by the river, as my quiet companions stand.
In dreams, I return to my homeland, a place of memories and delight,
But alas, the dream is shattered, and the past remains out of sight.

—Sun Daoxuan’s *Drops of Gold: Plum* [23]

Camellia blooms have withered, spring’s essence starts to fade,
Sparse petals cling to branches, in a delicate cascade.
As the wind stirs gently, locust trees cast dappled shade,
Though the orioles have aged, their songs still softly made.

Alone, I lean upon the balcony, gazing at the scene,
In the distance, rolling hills of smoke and clouds convene.
Descending the stairs, I choose to shield myself, unseen,
My heart too small to hold the weight of sorrows, so serene.

—Wu Shuji’s *Overlapping Hills: Sorrow in Spring* [23]

Spring is halfway through its reign, and in my gaze I see,
A world touched by its fleetingness, where sadness dwells in me.
I lean upon the railing, with springtime’s woes I’m filled,
Even the heavens can’t help lift the weight that has me stilled.

In gentle warmth and breezy days, a world so bright and clear,
Yet unlike joyful birds in song, I cannot find good cheer.
The courtyard’s strewn with fallen blooms, curtains remain unfurled,
The one I long for, like the grass, goes to the distant world.

—Zhu Shuzhen’s *Waiting for Emperor at Golden Gate: Half of the Spring* [23]

None of the authors of these poems write about why they are “sad”; instead, they use the natural scenery in their surroundings as imagery to convey their indescribable sadness.

Admittedly, the actual situation of the works of female Ci lyricists in the Song Dynasty is still more complicated than the above. The same Ci poem may express a variety of emotions, and it is also difficult to determine the type of emotion in many Ci poems. It is also unknown whether there are works by female writers among the large number of poems written by anonymous people in the Song Dynasty. At the same time, the lyrics listed above are only some of the works in each of these four categories. There are still many works in each category that cannot be listed one by one due to length

limitations of the essay. Some of the works that are not listed will also appear and be analyzed below.

4 Female ci and “Objectification”

Combining “objectification” in feminist theory with the above classification and analysis of Ci lyrics, there will be a glimpse of the “objectification” and “anti-objectification” phenomena of female images in the works of female lyricists in the Song Dynasty. Specifically, Martha Nussbaum’s eight specific manifestations of “objectification” proposed in *Fortress of Pride: Sexual Assault, Accountability, and Reconciliation* - instrumentalization, denial of autonomy, lifelessness, and fungibility, infringement, ownership, denial of subjectivity, silence [21] - not only can be used to analyze the various “objectification” phenomena of women hidden in current social life, but can also be used to analyze the “objectification” of women in literary and artistic works. The judgment criteria of “anti-objectification” can also be deduced from these eight forms of expressions.

Among the Ci lyrics created by female lyricists in the Song Dynasty, those with the most distinctive feature of “objectification” belong to the third category of lyrics discussed above, which express the protagonist or the author herself being abandoned by her lover. The lyrics are about the sad and desolate emotion after forgetting. In such works, while the lyrical protagonist expresses her longing for people far away, she also implies another statement: those people who are far away from her are not connected with her own thoughts, and they have no way of understanding what it is like to be a woman alone in the empty boudoir and the loneliness of time passing by with no one to share, let alone the thought of coming back to their lovers as soon as possible, such as “Hasten home, I pray, Your love awaits beneath the verdant bay, By the emerald window, she stands serene, Her beauty radiant, a bloom in spring’s sheen.” In Mrs. Wei’s *Bodhisattva Barbarian*, “Three springs have passed, still, he wonders why. The ties of home, so long left behind. Yet, he lingers here, a wanderer of a different kind.” seems to be just stating a fact: three years have passed, and her lover has not returned yet. In fact, the word “still” can not only show the eagerness of the protagonist’s inner hope, but also reveal the protagonist’s unwillingness but helplessness towards the passage of time, as well as her complaint about her lover: he has no way to know the protagonist’s inner thoughts and emotions, and he has not returned to the protagonist after traveling outside for many years; Yi Zu’s wife’s *A Cut of Plum* even directly denounced her lover in almost vernacular language: “Your heart so hard as iron, not a flicker of concern.”; You Qing further expressed this kind of “sorrow” caused by the disconnection of thoughts and emotion between lovers in her *Waves Washing Sands*. In the poem, the sentences “Left behind, a heart full of sorrow to bear, furrowing my brow with a weight of care.” “The lotus blooms late, missing spring’s gentle breeze, betraying the season’s promise with unopened ease” [23], express the dilemma that even though she is full of grievances, she has nowhere to say anything. And only the protagonist herself can understand these emotions. The “heartbroken man” who abandoned the protagonist is indifferent. The *Hairpin Phoenix* [23], written by Tang Wan, the original wife of the Southern Song Dynasty writer Lu You, shows the low status of women and

being dominated by others, as well as the situation of being full of grievances, having nowhere to express the sorrow, and not being understood either from a broad social perspective.

This estrangement from the protagonist’s inner emotions is also an estrangement from the emotions that are unique to women. For women at that time, it was very important to be able to live with their sweetheart during their youth. Once there are signs of aging on their face, the sweetheart’s love for them will be threatened. However, men do not regard appearance as an important tool to maintain love, so they naturally have no way of understanding the fear of time passing. In addition, it can be seen from the Ci lyric of You Qing and Tang Wan that there was still such a situation in society at that time: for lots of male and female, there was a marriage contract in their early years, but later on when the man went out to work hard to earn an official position, and in order to keep his occupation, he ignored his supposed wife. In this case, maybe the man is not absolutely hard-hearted, but he still chose to turn a blind eye to his original wife and her inner emotions. These situations are the “objectification” of women in a way of “denying subjectivity”. Nussbaum defines “denial subjectivity” as “the objectifier view the object as something that does not require consideration of his or her experiences and feelings (if the object does have them).” [21] In the third type of Ci lyrics mentioned above, the feelings of the female subject are either ignored or not considered, and these feelings and emotions are always in a passive or even absent position. To a certain extent, the female images in the Ci lyrics are already “objects” that have lost their will.

The second type of works by female lyricists of the Song Dynasty that can embody “objectification” are the first type of works that express longing for and reminders about lovers that are far away. In *History of Women’s Ci*, Deng Hongmei analyzed Chen Fengyi’s *A Large Bunch: Farewell to Jiang Longtu, governor of Sichuan* mentioned above, and pointed out that in the poem “the shadow of extreme inequality between herself and the person being sent has damaged the emotional authenticity and moving nature of words.” [24] Judging from the content of the Ci poem, it indeed reflects the author’s humble status in the heart of her lover. It seems that she is an “item” that can be discarded at will. The same situation can also be seen in Zhao Caiqing’s *Swallows Flying Back to the Roof Beams*:

In the barracks bold, a general stand,
Valiant and skilled, he commands.
Surrounded by beauties at the feast,
My song catches his heart, a love released.
He grants me company, amidst the game,
In joyous hours, we're not the same.
Each day, with him, in pleasure we dwell,
As the Han dynasty's ambitions swell.

The monarch seeks warriors, strong and true,
To expand the borders, a quest to pursue.
The imperial decree calls my general away,
To the capital, to heed the emperor's say.

Our oaths and promises, like dreams, dissipate,
 Illusions shattered, a twist of fate.
 I weep in vain, tears on my face,
 Unable to hold him, in his destined chase. [23]

The first passage of the poem describes the joy she felt when she was with the “general” and when he allowed her to accompany himself and play the games, and they immersed themselves in joy every day. As for the second passage, it writes about the “general”’s abandonment of her. Comparing the two passages, the determination to abandon is even more prominent. The humble status of the author is also evident. Moreover, as mentioned above in *Jiangchengzi* by Mrs. Wei and other writers’ works such as Le Wan’s *Song for Fortune Telling* [23], Hua Zhongyin’s wife *Short Song of Yizhou, Singing for Zhu Yingtai* by Dai Fugu’s wife [23], Li Qingzhao’s *Singing for Duoli: Ode to White Chrysanthemums* [23] all attribute their lover’s abandon and betrayal to them to the lack of *Yuan* in their previous life, or they try to tell the lover not to forget themselves through earnest reminders, or they directly express the helplessness and sadness caused by feeling that they are insignificant in the lovers’ heart. In this type of Ci lyrics, the status between the lyrical protagonists and their lovers is extremely unequal. The former are often humble and passive, and often appear in the lyrics as accessories of the latter, rather than as person. An equal status to the latter is never shown. The latter often treats the former by forgetting, abandoning, etc., while the former can only respond with missing, reminding, being sad and helpless.

In this way, Nussbaum’s definitions of “ownership” and “lifelessness” can be used to analyze the “objectification” of female images in those Ci poems. “Ownership” means “the objectifier views the object as something that is or can be owned by someone, that can be bought and sold, or that can be treated as private property.” [21] It is true that the status of the object and the owner of the object are naturally two extremes, and the object can be disposed of at will by the owner; “lifeless” means “the objectifier believes that the object lacks agency, and perhaps also lacks initiative.” [21] The subject can neither respond positively to external stimuli nor take conscious actions to create a favorable situation for itself. In this type of Ci lyrics, the status gap between the lyrical protagonists and the objects of their longing shows that the latter does not really regard the former as “person”, and therefore have no relationship with the former’s thoughts, emotions. Furthermore, the relationship with the former, and the promises that had been made to the former were all ignored by the latter. The former just serve as an accessory to the latter, which can be owned or discarded as needs change. Even in some cases, the former has already imagined in their mind the fate of being abandoned by the latter as an accessory; while the lyrical protagonists are unable to “break away” in the face of their own status, but can only express their inner feelings and get no respond. Worry, helplessness and sadness are given to the Ci lyrics, and also admonishment that may not be received by the people they miss. Sometimes, even expressing the determination to “break up” in the lyrics or just express dissatisfaction and blame is also hard to some female. All these women poets can do is to follow the fate and wait for the return of those who are far away. This type of Ci poetry written by female poets in the Song Dynasty contains obvious “objectification” color, which is manifested in the fact that

the female image in the poetry is given “ownership” and “lifeless”, unable to get rid of its own appendage status, let alone actively change their inferior status.

5 Female ci and “Anti-Objectification”

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the “objectification” of female images in the Ci lyrics of female poets in the Song Dynasty is obvious. The women in the lyrics are either “denied their subjectivity” and their own emotions and thoughts are not taken into account, or they are given “ownership” and become appendages, or they are “lifeless” and cannot make a positive response to reality. However, in addition to this series of “objectification”, there are still some works by female lyricists, which show a positive spiritual world, construct a positive image of women, and counteract “objectification” to a certain extent, embodying the phenomenon of “anti-objectification”. This is the second type of self-expression works mentioned above.

Li Qingzhao, as one of the most famous female Ci poets in Song Dynasty, should be regarded as the representative of “anti-objectification” among female lyricists. Her *The Fisherman's Ballad* uses fantasy and sleepwalking to construct a virtual fairyland and “emperor’s place”, and engage in questions and answers with the Emperor of Heaven in a dream. Finally, the poet uses the commanding word “not” to express her hope to stay away from the world and go to the fairyland of “Three Mountains”; *Sky with Partridges: Osmanthus* writes about the characters of “osmanthus” such as “light”, “soft” and “far and fragrant” through chanting techniques, and she believes that osmanthus “does not need to be light blue and deep red, it is naturally the best among flowers”, which also places the poet’s own unique morality in it; *Short Song for Magnolia: Flower Selling Pillar* [23] describes a common scene between lovers: the girl bought a budding flower from the “flower selling pillar”, but she was afraid that the lover would think she was not as beautiful as the flower, so she put the flower on her temples to let the lover judge the beauty of her.

In the series of works listed above, the female figure is clearly visible and distinctive. The protagonists in the poems may be otherworldly, ethereal and independent, or they may not compete and adhere to their own characteristics, or they may be young, love beauty, and have a little habitual comparison. Nussbaum’s eighth definition of “objectification”- “silence”- means “the objectifier regards the object as an ineffable object.” [21] However, in these works of Li Qingzhao, the female voice as the lyrical protagonists is not only unconstrained, but also conveys an ultra-independent female voice. The sadness and other negative emotions expressed by the previous female poets in their Ci lyrics are all swept away. And the positive attitude of female survival shown in this type of Ci lyrics is also a response against “denial of autonomy” and “lifelessness”. This kind of Ci lyrics written by Li Qingzhao is a refreshing trend in the lyrics written by female poets in the Song Dynasty, and it is also the best example of “anti-objectification” among them.

Another female Ci lyricist from the Song Dynasty, Zhu Shuzhen, who is often compared to Li Qingzhao in previous studies, although focused on poetry creation, the unique side of women can still be seen in her few Ci lyrics that have been handed down. Her *Pure and Simple Music: Touring Lake in the Summer*:

Midst clouds and mists, with dew entwined,
 Briefly, after play, my heart confined.
 Hand in hand, with my love so true,
 Admiring lotus blooms, in joy we strew.
 On the lakeside path, we happily roam,
 When suddenly, yellow plum rain finds home.

My whimsical, tender, and charming ways,
 Defying judgment, in love's sweet gaze.
 Lying unabashed in each other's embrace,
 Igniting passion, in love's tender grace.
 Yet, the hardest part, the moment we part,
 Returning home, an ennui-filled heart.
 No interest in the vanity fair,
 The dressing table, I can't bear too near.
 In love's departure, a profound woe,
 Linger, desolate, with nowhere to go. [24]

The first part of this lyrics describes the trip to the lake with a lover, and the second part describes the love scene of “Lying unabashed in each other’s embrace” and the inner monologue of “My whimsical, tender, and charming ways, Defying judgment, in love's sweet gaze.” The boldness, the sincerity and simplicity of the Ci lyrics are evident. Women’s sincere and unique love experience and feelings are vividly expressed in the lyrics, and women’s “subjectivity” is also more distinct in the backlash against “silence”.

In the Song Dynasty, there was another unique female poet-Yan Rui. She was a geisha in the Southern Song Dynasty, and only three of her Ci poems have passed down to this day. In addition to one *Song for Dream* about peach blossoms and one *Fairies on Magpie Bridge* about Chinese Valentine’s Day, there is also a lyric called *Songs for Divination: Not Loving the Mundane World*:

Not one for the worldly affairs, I claim,
 Fate's jest, in the dust, I'm but a game.
 Blossoms fall and bloom in their destined hours,
 Relying on the Spring God's decree, his powers.

One day, from this place, I'll take my flight,
 What remains, and how shall I find delight?
 If, in time, I could weave mountain blooms,
 Adorning my hair, free from life's glooms.
 No need to inquire about my abode,
 In the tranquil bliss, where wildflowers strode.
 I'll depart, leaving worries behind,
 In the freedom of life, my solace I'll find. [23]

This Ci poem begins with a self-statement of ambition: Falling into the mundane is not what I want. Then she expressed her helplessness and sadness as a geisha, having her own destiny controlled by others, and finally wrote about her desire for a free life.

Deng Hongmei commented on this Ci lyrics as “This is the first time that a prostitute has expressed dissatisfaction with her unfair fate of humiliation and persecution in her own words. Its significance is more than just showing Yan Rui’s innocence.” [24] Written by a woman, for the first time she denounces the unfair fate of geishas and bravely expresses her own voice. With this Ci poem, Yan Rui completes the counterattack against the “silence” and “denial of autonomy” in “objectification”.

6 Conclusion

In the creation of Song Ci lyrics by female lyricists in the Song Dynasty, the phenomenon of “objectification” of female images was relatively common. Among the Ci lyrics analyzed above, there are two types of works that embody the “objectification” of women to varying degrees. In the first type of Ci lyrics that express thoughts and admonition about lovers, female authors describe the unequal status between themselves and their lovers, and convey emotions such as helplessness, sadness, worry, etc., to realize the “objectification” of themselves or the lyrical protagonist; in the third category of Ci lyrics that express the emotion of being abandoned by a lover, the author implicitly expresses the lover’s neglect and disregard for women’s emotions and will through invisible statements that the lover is not in touch with their own mind, thus this kind of Ci poems reaches the “objectification” effect. The large number of these two types of poems shows to a certain extent that in Song Dynasty society, the phenomenon of “objectification” of women was relatively common.

Despite this, there are still a few creations by female lyricists in the Song Dynasty that reflect the phenomenon of “anti-objectification”, and most of these creations belong to the fourth category of self-expression works. In this type of works, the author successfully countered the “objectification” of women by displaying their own distinctive characteristics, boldly describing their own unique love experience, and expressing the dissatisfaction with their own destiny. However, the overall number of such Ci lyrics is relatively small, and they do not occupy the mainstream among the lyrics written by female poets in the Song Dynasty.

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